



# SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Editor's Note

This really is a bumper issue, with many and varied contributions sent in by your fellow Sunnysiders. It's a year since those first days of the pandemic, when we had no idea how Covid 19 would affect us all, and what a blessing our allotments would prove to be. The President of the National Association of Allotments and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) had this to say about the past year:

"This year every week has been National Allotments Week, with more people than ever realising that growing your own food is a great way of eating healthily, getting some outdoor exercise in the fresh air and acquiring new skills. Plot-holders have also benefited from the contact with nature and the easy camaraderie on allotment sites, helping to retain their mental health and stay positive during these worrying times."

I couldn't agree more. Hope you enjoy reading this issue,

Lin Phillips

## Chairman's Notes

This time last year we were cautiously optimistic that Covid would be over soon – we were wrong. This year we have dusted off the optimism, and the Committee will be putting together a plan for a scaled-down Open Day in August.

As we approach normal times, the system of plot inspections will soon restart. The idea is to ensure that tenants comply with the Tenancy Agreement obligation to keep plots clean, tidy and under cultivation. There is a process of warning before notice of termination, but please be aware that, because of the demand for allotments, the time-scale is likely to be shorter than in the past. If you are ill or otherwise prevented from gardening, please inform a Committee member – you will have a sympathetic hearing.

Some plot-holders are occasionally assisted by friends, and sometimes this help may develop, over time, into something more permanent. If, or when, the plot-holder chooses to reduce to perhaps a half-plot, or give up altogether, there is sometimes the expectation that the friend can automatically just take over the tenancy. This is not so, unless the friend has been registered with the Council as a co-worker. There are only a few such cases, but if you think it applies to you, please let me know.

Please drive along the allotment roadways as little as possible, particularly when wet. Do not park on the roadways and if you are dropping something off

move your car straight after. Lastly keep your speed down!

And finally, if you are unfortunate enough to have anything stolen or damaged on your allotment, please inform the Police directly, to get a crime number; and afterwards inform the Town Clerk and a member of the SAS committee, please.

Get those jobs!

Stay well and good gardening,

John Eaton



The joys of spring! Clive Smith

### **The Sustaining Garden**

Six years ago I wanted to create a herb garden, without really knowing anything much about growing things. Angela subtly persuaded us to take on half a semi-wild allotment – B17a. The ground is extremely stony and quite steep, but suitable for the sort of plants I wanted to use; mainly Mediterranean types, able to withstand periods of drought and to provide year-round greenery.

Rosemary hedges and various sorts of English lavender, more hardy than the French, border the garden, with box hedges lining an inner stone path. These enclose a carpet of many types of thyme, camomile lawn, marjoram, oregano, and bay trees, with saxifrages here and there for early colour. Standing tall in the centre is a rescued-from-London olive tree, which has thrived in its Sunnyside home. A wild rose tree is the 'monk' presiding over this medieval monastery herb garden. In summer I add pots of cosmos and erigeron for sparkle and movement, and echinaceas in hot pinks spring up (hopefully). Needless to say, many butterflies visit, and the garden is a-buzz with honey-bees and bumble-bees.

The whole allotment is overshadowed by large hawthorns and bird cherries, magnificent in spring and summer but not conducive to usual vegetable growing. The shadiest area, under a lovely old Mirabelle tree, is now given over to a bog garden with flourishing ferns, acornites and wild leeks.

And then, four years ago, I took on the upper half of B17 to grow citrus fruit: bergamot, oranges and lemons. These have turned out to be not too tricky to grow, as long as they have their winter stay in a bubble-wrap box in the greenhouse; lots of delicious fruit as well as heavenly scented flowers all year round.

At the top is an experimental meadow area, which is left unmown for the spring and summer. As well as being a fascinating wild flower plot, with many varieties of plants and grasses, it is also great for insects. Nearby is the pond, home to a number of frogs. Among the meadow areas grow apple, cherry and plum trees, and especially the old Bramley tree, under which we have frequent picnic lunches.

Our allotments have always been a precious resource for us, as our only outdoor space, but during this troubling pandemic period my sustainable garden has truly sustained me.

Marsha Facey, B17A

### **Thanks to the toilet cleaning Team!**

Just to say that Cynthia and her team are resuming the cleaning and maintenance of our Sunnyside toilet as of this month - not the most glamorous job, but absolutely essential to keep the facilities in good order and pleasant to use. So, thanks to Cynthia, Philippa, and Fiona, and also to Juliet and Charly, the newest recruits to the team!

### **Before and after a great deal of work!**

For a couple of years, there was a plot on SSO which was covered in thistles, head-high, and unsurprisingly, impossible to let. Then along came Penny, who got stuck in and has transformed the plot – see her Before and After photos!



Penny's plot July 20 - all thistles!



Penny Macgregor, March 21, A37

## Bonfires

Although most people love a good flare-up, please remember that it's not an allotment-holder's divine right... in fact, we are very fortunate to be allowed them at all.

That said, if you plan to dispose of dry waste and arisings by burning, please take note of the following:

**What:-** Dry vegetation, old wood. Please don't smoulder green/damp matter (so try to cover heaps in wet weather). No synthetics or household waste. Don't be tempted to use petrol/paraffin or oil to start the fire - dry crunched-up newspaper, cardboard and kindling such as twigs/sticks are usually sufficient.

**When and weather:-** Not on lovely warm days when windows might be open or people nearby enjoying their gardening downwind - so avoid bank holidays and weekends if possible. Assess the wind direction regarding a downwind smoke nuisance.

**Where:-** A clear area away from flammable structures, trees or dry standing crops, not upwind of houses or gatherings of people. Sometimes it is best to start a small fire and feed from your original heap. This will also protect hibernating wildlife.

Open fires are preferred to dustbin-type incinerators, the former allowing more oxygen for faster, hotter fires. Slow, continuous smouldering is not permitted. In short, burn it quickly and efficiently, with as little smoke as possible.

**How often:-** Once or twice a year is the norm. Build up a quantity of dry materials over a few months, to avoid frequent fires.

**Safety:** Recommended to wear gloves, eye protection and strong footwear; a pitchfork is handy to feed the fire safely. Remove trip hazards anywhere near the fire. Never leave your fire unattended.

And finally – make sure the fire is safe, before you leave. If necessary pour water over the embers, and scatter them with a rake before leaving.



Allotments in the mist



Snow in April, by Clive Smith



Raindrops from the greenhouse



Well controlled bonfire despite the snow! Clive Smith

### How Not to Grow Plums

I planted my first plum tree, a Victoria, in about 2001; it flourished, and produced its first fruit a year or so later, so I planted a second one. The first one has produced large quantities of fruit every year since, and in recent years most of its branches have fallen off under the weight of its plum crop. The second tree has barely grown, and produces about a dozen small plums every year. Both trees are still there on my plot; the first one is old, in bad shape and propped up with a fence post to stop it falling over, so in 2017 I decided it was time to plant a replacement.

In January 2018 I planted a Mirabelle tree (variety Mirabelle de Nancy - there are other varieties), hoping it would flourish and replace the Victorias with a nice, but smaller, crop of Mirabelles. It suffered badly in the extremely hot, dry conditions in summer 2018, and in spring 2019 deer chewed off its new leaves. It didn't like the hot, dry conditions that summer either, and fearing that it was not going to survive, I bought another. So that explains why I now have two Mirabelle cherry plum trees, neither of which have yet produced a single fruit, and two Victoria plum trees, one of which produces so much fruit that its branches break and another which produces next-to-nothing.

This year, the original Victoria is to come down; it is growing bracket fungus and possibly other nasties. So this year will be its last crop; as the gardening books say, Victorias are "prone to disease". High hopes for my Mirabelles, then, now that I protect them every spring from the deer - and no "prone to disease" for them in my gardening book. Mirabelles are not common in England, though some people may remember John Powell (SAS's previous Treasurer) used to bring them to sell on Open Days.

My acquaintance with Mirabelles dates from the late 1960s, when my sister married a Frenchman and went to live in a French village near Nancy in north-east France. They had an allotment upon which was a large, mature Mirabelle tree, and when they moved into Nancy city, they kept the rights to the Mirabelle tree, although they no longer cultivated their allotment - an arrangement I've never really understood. Mirabelle trees grow along roadsides in that part of France, but my brother-in-law informed me that they all belong to somebody, and my habit of stopping my car to pick a few Mirabelles would get me in trouble if the owner saw me. Why this strange affection for Mirabelle trees, you may ask; my answer would be "tarte aux mirabelles", a local speciality sold in every café during the season. In shops in and around Nancy you can find Mirabelle jam, "sirop de Mirabelles", a cordial popular with children, and "crème de Mirabelles", an 18% liqueur resembling sweet sherry. I'm hoping to make the jam, and maybe the tart, but I've got to grow the fruit first!

John Goffey, B18

### Your Current Committee Members

<b>Chairman:</b>	John Eaton	865307
<b>Secretary &amp; newsletter layout and production :</b>	Jenny Sippings	865890
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Andy James	865061
<b>Newsletter Editor:</b>	Lin Phillips	862882
<b>Other members:</b>	Angela Wheeldon	874440
	John Goffey	864967
	Diana Ball	875277
	Geoff Halls	878176
	Kate Rankin	866827
	Jeanne Woodcraft	872852
	Steve Atkinson	

You can email any member of the committee by putting their first name in front of:  
[@sunnysideallotments.org.uk](mailto:@sunnysideallotments.org.uk) apart from John Eaton who is: [johne@](mailto:johne@) and John Goffey who is: [johng@](mailto:johng@)

### Tenancy Changes

#### *Welcome to:*

Christopher Binks	N61
Tanya Stirling	N65

#### *Goodbye to:*

Joe Yates	N61
Chelsea Mundy	N65



Spring blossom



Doll's house and other buildings, Jeanne Woodcraft

### 2021 Subs and Seed Order – a reminder

Thanks to those of you who have already paid to become full members of Sunnyside Allotment Society for 2021 – you will be registered with NSALG, and, among other benefits, be included in the seed-ordering scheme this Autumn. If you haven't yet paid, it is not too late! If you join before the end of May, you will be registered for this year and will receive the seed catalogue and ordering details around September – so don't delay!

It is easy to join – send £4 to me at 4 Fieldway, HP4 2NX (cheque - payable to Sunnyside Allotment Society – or cash) or if you wish to pay by bank transfer then please contact me on [andy@sunnysideallotments.org.uk](mailto:andy@sunnysideallotments.org.uk) for the bank details. Last year your orders raised over £400 for Society funds, which, in the absence of any other fund-raising activities, was welcome income! And don't forget that you also gain from the reduced prices offered by Kings Seeds to participants in this scheme.

Andy James, Treasurer, N57

Subs for 2021 (£4.00) can be sent with this slip to Andy James, 4 Fieldway, HP4 2NX. (Cheques payable to Sunnyside Allotment Society please).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Plot Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ cash/cheque (please circle)

## Communal Work on Sunnyside

The community spirit on Sunnyside is alive and well. Although working parties could not take place after our initial one in October due to the pandemic, many tasks have been tackled by individuals around the sites. Not all of these are yet complete.

### *Heritage Orchard Area*

Most of the trees have been pruned and weeded. Work has continued on the raised compost area above the heritage orchard (not to be used by tenants - this is for orchard arisings and clearances).

The area that has been grassed at the top has been mowed, and more turf has been laid in the spring.

### *SAS Sheds and Wood Heap*

The three wood heaps have been consolidated into one pile, ready to move to the new covered scaffold-based storage when completed (please do not take scaffold poles or corrugated iron that have been set aside for this project).

### *Millennium Coppice*

The top half has been coppiced, and bean-poles and pea-sticks are available for tenants to collect. The sign for the coppice has been repaired and re-installed.

### *Grantham Mews Entrance*

Silt, wood and weeds have been cleared, including the broken fence and overhanging trees on the approach into the site. The Bee Bar below Grantham Mews entrance and the border flower beds leading to the first car-park have been tidied.

### *Gate-posts*

Four new gate-posts provided by the Council have had their bases haunched up with concrete, as contractors left wells for water to collect at the bases and rot the wood. These large posts should now last a generation or two.

### *Roadways and Car-parks (an ongoing project, so please bear with us)*

Parts of A-Road have been strengthened by laying reinforcing grids filled with chippings, while in other places chippings or a combination have been used. The conifer branches overhanging A-Road from the flats have been cut back.

On SSN, the edges of the sloping roadway have been stabilised with concrete gravel boards, banked up level, and the surface improved by laying chippings. Undergrowth has been cleared, allowing a clear, wide track. Access to plots SSN 2, 4 and 5 have been improved by making steps down to the allotments.

The car-park on SSN has been tidied up, removing litter and cutting brambles back (please watch for dumping and littering amongst those brambles!)

On SSO B-Road has been reinforced with chippings; also, the car park area has been improved a little.

### *Ted's Memorial Garden*

A post holding up the trellis has been reinforced with angle-iron, after breaking in the recent high winds.

### *Toilet*

The toilet has been spring-cleaned and spruced up with the mirrors repainted. The door has been repaired, and a new hinge installed so the bolt works better.

A handrail has been installed down the top of the path to improve access. Work to the path is still to take place to make it less steep.

New volunteers have been recruited for the toilet-cleaning rota.

### *Other Tasks*

The handrail to the tea hut has been - or is about to be - repaired.

All the arisings from the October working party have now been burnt, along with rotten wood and pallets.

Scrap metal and other detritus have been removed in various places, notably that dumped near B-Road car-park (please do not use any peripheral areas of the allotments as a dump for anything).

Maintenance work has been carried out on some of the tanks, and particularly taps. More work is to be done.

The road and storm drains on Ivy House Lane have been cleared, as well as the silted gulleys. Brambles have been cut back over the barriers over the winter, to allow space for pedestrians and vehicles.

The notice-board on Sunnyside New is still in need of repair.

Thanks to everyone involved, and sorry if anyone's contribution has been missed.

Jenny Sippings, A26

*(Editor's note: although Jenny doesn't specify who has carried out the work, I suspect that the two Clives on A Road have a hand in much of it - so a big thank-you to them and the rest of the good people who have achieved this impressive amount of maintenance and improvement to our allotment site).*

### **Sunnyside Rural Trust in the News**

Do have a look at the link before for a very uplifting account of how gardening projects, including the Sunnyside Rural Trust, have made such a difference to individuals with personal difficulties;

<http://digitaleditions.telegraph.co.uk/data/566/reader/reader.html?social#!preferred/0/package/566/pub/566/>



Roadworks on Sunnyside New



Hot air balloon over Sunnyside



Bonfire Paul Ham



Roadworks on Sunnyside Old



Rainy day view