



SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk
email: info@sunnysideallotments.org.uk

No: 1 January 2016

What a strange winter we are having – strawberries in October, daffs in January! Thanks to Cynthia Fulks, A30 and Alison Down, SSN 30, for sending in these two photos – Cynthia said her strawberry was delicious! And Alison says, “Just walked down from my allotment on this very grey damp afternoon. I spotted these on an allotment a few down from mine. I had to stop and take a photograph - so beautiful, and put a Spring (excuse the pun) in my step walking home!”



You may have noticed the very elegantly refurbished Sunnyside loo on A Road. The refurbishment is entirely due to the hard work of Clive Smith and Jamie Fulks, ably supported by Jenny and Cynthia. They spent the last two months at least, giving up a lot of time and energy to remove the old rotten plywood covering, re-clad the structure with beautiful tongue and grooved wood and polyurethane it, as well as redoing the roof. They have covered every detail and the result is truly impressive, so a huge thanks to them all!

Finally, thanks to all those who have sent in contributions to this issue – they really make such a difference to the look and feel of what could otherwise be quite a dry document. So, please note that the deadline for the April issue will be Sunday, 3rd April. I will ask Jenny to remind you before that time, but in the meantime, keep your eyes open, cameras (or phones) to hand, and send me any thoughts, reviews, ideas, even notices of items for sale or disposal, to share with your fellow allotment holders. Thanks!

What does the SAS Committee do, anyway?

You may have wondered, from time to time! The committee is required to meet 6 times a year, to manage the allotment allocations and vacancies, and to inspect the plots 3 times a year to ensure that they are being actively cultivated. The Chairman then meets with Berkhamsted Town Council to report on these activities. In addition, your Sunnyside Committee organises the annual Open Day, the Christmas Drinks, and other events, as well as planning and overseeing projects such as the working parties and the current one to erect a communal storage shed on the roadway on SSO. The meetings are held on a Tuesday evening; they're pretty relaxed, though we do try to keep to the agenda and get away on time!

If you are considering joining the Committee, you are very welcome to come along as an observer to one of the meetings. They are held in the Town Council offices – just speak to any one of the committee and we will let you have details, and be sure to be on hand to welcome you.

Your Current Committee Members

Chairman:	John Eaton	865307
Vice Chairman & Newsletter Editor:	Lin Phillips	862882
Secretary:	Jenny Sippings	865890
Treasurer:	Andy James	865061
Minutes Secretary:	Cynthia Fulks	879410
Other members:	Wendy Calder	767289
	Adrian Scarborough	384974
	Angela Wheeldon	874440
	John Goffey	

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

Tenancy Changes

Welcome to:

N2 Simon Hyde
N66 Jacob Gower

Goodbye to:

N1D James Berry
N7B Jamie Bradley
N27 Billy Wall
N42 Lawrence O'Shea

Amazing new scientific findings; gardening is good for you!

Gardeners have long extolled the virtues of losing an afternoon digging and weeding, but now scientists have confirmed that tending an allotment is good for your mental and physical health.

A recent study by the Universities of Westminster and Essex has found that just 30 minutes a week spent working on your plot can boost feelings of both self-esteem and mood by dissolving tension, depression, anger, and confusion. Also, those who have an allotment were found to be in better physical shape than their less green-fingered counterparts, with a significantly lower body mass index.

Researchers said that the positive impact was found across all social classes, and suggested that allotments could help cut back growing NHS costs caused by lack of exercise and obesity.

Also, Dutch researchers at Wageningen University in the Netherlands have found that allotment keepers in their 60s tend to be significantly healthier than their more sedentary neighbours (though it may be that those who keep allotments may simply be more active individuals). Their findings were based on a poll of 121 gardeners in the Netherlands, plus 63 neighbours who did not keep allotments as the control group. They were asked how many times they had contacted their GP in the last two months, how stressed they felt, and how they rated their health and wellbeing.

The Dutch study concluded: "Around the world, allotment gardens are increasingly under pressure from building and infrastructure developments. Considering that allotments may play a vital role in developing active and healthy lifestyles, governments and local authorities might do well to protect and enhance them".

Other research has found that spending half an hour in an allotment leads to twice the drop in the stress hormone cortisol as does reading a book (22 per cent drop compared to 11 per cent). Other studies have found that the health benefits of exercising in green spaces are greater than exercising in the gym.

(Taken from articles in the Telegraph, November 2015, and thanks to Geoff Halls, A31 and Will Facey, C17b for sending me the clips – Ed.)

Please Note: To offset rising printing costs, an electronic version of future editions of the newsletter will be sent to all those people that supply an email address to Jenny Sippings – (jennysippings@virginmedia.com).

Christmas Drinks 2015

Thanks to all who attended our annual Christmas Drinks and made it such an enjoyable and sociable event. In spite of such a wet, windy winter, our al fresco gathering was again blessed with a mild dry day.

Among the seventy-plus guests, we welcomed old friends and made new ones; we enjoyed the amazing variety of snacks which you all provided, as well as the warming mulled wine; thanks go to Cynthia for ably replacing David Lassman as muller of the wine. We are grateful to David, whose mulling skills over the years have greatly contributed to our Christmas drinks events, and we wish him well in his new life in Israel.

Special thanks go to Juliet and Imogen, who entertained us so well with carols on their recorders; they made a very creditable collection of over £55 in aid of the Hospice of St Francis. Perhaps we have started a trend for music at this event? What about adding a choir next year?

Angela Wheeldon, B13



Turn over an old leaf ...

The leaf bins near the car parks are full of the autumn harvest waiting for you. There is not a lot of nutrient in leaf mould, but it is excellent for lightening heavy soil. You need a lot of it to make a difference, but it is easy, free and effective. You could wait until the leaves rot down in situ, but that is slow and you will have to pick out the bindweed roots; much better to take them now and control the process on your plot.

Builders' bags work well, or even better, inside a crate used for slates or tiles. The bags are porous, but not too much, so you get enough moisture with no risk of water-logging. Fill the bags to the brim and top up after a couple of weeks. Give them a good soaking, if the rain gods do not oblige, tie the handles together and forget.

Welcome back to winter digging. Remember what's in that bag over there? It won't be fully rotted but good enough to fork in and the worms will do the rest. Leave the bits that haven't rotted at all in the bag and start all over again - and it's cost you nothing except a little light labour.

Neil & Tricia Kennedy, C23 & B33B
neil@sunnysideallotments.org.uk

Chairman's Notes

Once again, it's the start of a year and time to plan for a better season. Wet, dry, frosty - who knows? The seed orders have been delivered (thanks to Andy James) but it's too early to sow anything except the very hardy ones; check the instructions on the packet.

If the weather is not too bad and the ground not sticky, there's still the time to dig - warm work and a way of shedding the seasonal pounds. The roadways are very wet, so please try to avoid driving on them.

Some gardeners have dug manure 'pits' at the end of their plots on the low side of the road. This can encourage the road edge to collapse, so please try not to dig down - just have a higher heap.

The AGM was held on November 21st 2015 and was attended by 26 plot holders. Do put next year's AGM in your diary - Saturday 19th November from 10.30am. It is a great opportunity to meet up with other allotment holders over a cup of coffee, as well as to review the issues and events of the past year and be part of generating ideas and developing plans for the future. The minutes and accounts can be seen on the SAS website, which is <http://www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk>, but a couple of points are:

- John Goffey (B18) was elected to the committee (more volunteers welcome)
- the finances are in good order, even though a large part of the subscription goes in affiliation fees to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, for which members can access their website for lots of good advice and information, and buy discount seeds - so do please pay up your £3.50, if you haven't already, to Andy, our Treasurer (see the subs payment form below).
- the project to clear tree roots prior to erecting a shed and wood store on SSO is still not yet done, but we live in hope!

There is still plenty of woodchip around, especially on SSN - so please help yourselves.

At the moment there are no vacant plots on Sunnyside Old; there are a few on Sunnyside New, so please invite any likely gardeners to apply to the Council.

Good gardening
John Eaton



Urgent - stones needed for next Working Party!

The dates for the remaining working parties are Sundays 7 Feb and 6 March. In February, we will be working to repair the top road on SSN, and we'll need as many stones as we can get. If you have any that you can bear to part with, please either dump them near the roadway or let Neil (neil@sunnysideallotments.org.uk) know where we can collect them.



Sunnyside Allotment Society Subs

Subs for 2015/2016 (£3.50) can be sent with this slip to Andy James (4 Field Way) or left at the tea hut on B15. (Cheques payable to Sunnyside Allotment Society please).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Plot Number: _____ Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Amount enclosed: _____ cash/cheque (please circle)