

SUNNYSIDE VIEWS

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH THE JOY OF ALLOTMENTS

Hello everyone ...

So here we go again ... the 2026 growing season is almost upon us - in fact many will have already started with seedlings - so as you plan your new season please sit down and enjoy our latest newsletter. Contributions to future editions as always very welcomed. Thank you Clive (A17)



Date for the diary !

*Winter working party dates continue for 2026 on **15th February, 8th March** and another to be arranged for April. As always these will look to tackle areas of communal use with focus on clearing up after the winter and making improvements for the benefit of all. Please volunteer with free lunches provided.*



Notes from the Chair ...

Hi everyone. So here we go into another year and if it is not too late then let me please wish you all a very Happy New Year (is that allowed as late as early February?).

It was lovely to see some of you at the recent Annual General Meeting which we held earlier in January. As always I would have liked to have seen more turn out as this is a key moment each year when we collectively look to plan ahead for the good of us all on Sunnyside but for those who did turn out thank you and your contributions were very welcomed. I will leave the details of what we covered until later in this edition but please be reassured that we on the Committee are continuing to represent your interests not least with our landlords - the Council - in as positive way possible.

And talking of the Committee it was a tremendous privilege for me to use the AGM as a chance to recognise some of our long standing members. Jenny Sippings (A26), Andy James (N57) and John Goffey (B18) between them have served the Committee and you our tenants now for 48 years so I thought it was very fitting to award vouchers to each as a token of our collective appreciation.

So now what does 2026 hold? Well we will all have our own ideas on what to grow and if this rain ever stops then for a start a good chance for us all to get down there and dig out those tools once again. For now though happy gardening !

Diana Ball (A24)

Congratulations!

The Sunnyside Committee is there to represent your interests. At the moment we have 9 members and during the recent AGM, Diana Ball, presented vouchers to three very special long serving members.



Jenny Sippings (A26) is our longest serving member having joined the Committee in 1999



John Goffey (B18) joined in 2016 with now over 9 years looking after our water supplies



And Andy James (N57) who has been our Treasurer since 2015

As costs continue to rise why not take on the £5 allotment challenge

Allotment success doesn't need huge ongoing investment - why not try the £5 allotment challenge?

Rising costs doesn't necessarily mean smaller or less varied harvests. The £5 plot challenge is about seeing just how much you can grow with almost no spending at all - and even enjoying the creativity that comes with it at the same time.

Rely on what you already have

We all know that whenever you buy a packet of seeds you tend to get a lot more than you really need. So for a start check those old packets as often old seeds will germinate such as quickly as anything new. Place a few of whatever you find on a damp sheet of ticket towel, fold it over to sandwich the seeds and slide it into a plastic bag to stop it drying out. Leave somewhere warmish but not sunny and after around 5 days see if anything has started to germinate.

Save your scraps

Its amazing what you can do with old scraps. Potatoes may sprout, spring onions with roots or even celery bases can all be regrown.



Coppiced Hazel in use on Sunnyside Old to create a natural and attractive border

And that is not all

Cardboard with tape removed can be used to suppress weeds, while yoghurt pots and mushroom trays can work perfectly for planting your seeds and nurturing your seedlings.

And of course we can all swap

Sunnyside has its very own seed swap scheme. Seeds are often left in on the table in the Tea Hut on B Road (Sunnyside Old) as well as later in the season small fledgling seedlings when others find they have just too many for their own plots. So please get involved - the more we share the more variety there is for us all.

What are the latest trends when it comes to gardening and allotments

According to the Royal Horticulture Society (RHS) gardening and even allotments are subject to a number of new trends. Have you tried any of these?

Edible landscaping

Mixing edibles with ornamentals (like chard in borders or herbs in flowerbeds) is now a top trend according to 80% of respondents to a RHS survey.

Is Tech taking over?

76% of respondents say they now use sensors, AI and other online tooling to help with monitoring soil moisture, temperature and irrigation.

Upside down gardening

The idea of growing plants hanging downwards is particular popular it seems now with tomato growers who want to avoid pests and weeds.

Hanging baskets for veg

Yes it seems the idea of using hanging baskets for bedding plants is now increasingly a thing of the past - instead survey responders say they are using them for radishes, herbs and small tomatoes.

And out with the traditional

And finally responders say they are increasingly swapping traditional crops for easier alternatives such as malabar spinach instead of lettuce.

Early winter mornings !

A walk around Sunnyside on any suitable winter morning is just the tonic we all need. Thank you for sharing your pictures.



A touch of colour to a misty morning on New Side



Even narrow pathways look atmospheric in the early morning light



Sun rising over cold bleak plots



Winter crops all tucked up and protected against a heavy frost



Not really snow but sleet settling early morning

From Plot to Plate ..

How many of us grow just too many potatoes - well why not try potato curry! This recipe serves 6 with a preparation time of 10 minutes and takes 25 minutes to cook. Hope you enjoy.

Ingredients

225g of small red or new white potatoes;
1 tbsp olive oil;
1 tsp cumin seeds;
1 tsp mustard seeds;
1 teaspoon garlic, crushed;
½ can of tinned tomatoes;
½ tsp chilli powder
1 tsp cumin or coriander powder;
½ tsp of turmeric powder;
1 tsp lemon juice;
1 tbsp of coriander leaves, chopped.



Method

Boil the potatoes unpeeled for 10-15 mins.

Allow to cool and then peel and slice in half.

Heat a pan and add the oil, cumin and mustard seeds. When the seeds start to pop, add the garlic, tinned tomatoes and spices and cook for 5 minutes.

Add the potatoes, bring to the boil and let them simmer gently for 3-4 minute. Add a little water if they seem too dry.

Stir in the lemon juice and garnish with chopped coriander just before serving.

Part of a global community

Being an allotment holder means you are part of a truly global community - here we look at a few variations on the theme from across the world.

Allotments may feel like a very local affair, but they're part of worldwide tradition with some surprising twists.

In Japan you will find *citizen farms* for instance where office workers rent tiny plots near train stations and garden before and after work. While in Cuba you will find *organoponicos* which are highly productive urban allotments run to strict guidelines and like in so many examples originate from times of famine.

Scandinavia's allotments often include small summer cabins; while in Poland many plots double as weekend retreats for families. During both World Wars, "victory gardens" appeared across the UK, USA and in Australia helping to feed millions and boosting morale at the same time. In all instances the trend has continued and in all three countries the use of allotments is set in statute and subject to stringent planning rights.

What is more in Australia allotments will typically include state funded BBQ and social areas; in the Netherlands many plots are required to devote at least a third to growing flowers. In Singapore you will find tightly run and strictly governed community gardens on rooftops, while in Canada some allotments are adapted for snow gardening, using cold frames and deep mulch to extend the season well into the long winter months.

And finally in Bhutan, some community gardens are planned around traditional lunar calendars, with planting days chosen according to astrology - so for instance a common approach is to plant leafy crops like spinach or coriander during the waxing moon when energy is believed to rise upwards into leaves.

Allotments it seems are truly global - we are all part of that community.



Meanwhile back on Sunnyside - the winter mist slowly rises

Our joiners and leavers (and some movers) ...

We welcomed 7 new tenants and said goodbye to 2 in the last quarter. There are xx people on the waiting list at the moment so please if you wish to give up your plot let a member of the Committee know. Thank you.

Welcome to ...

Zoe Robertson	A21
Geoff Smith*	A21
Amy Cook	N8
Adam White	N11
Jessica Dowdeswell	N13
Henry Atkins	N55B
Katie Braddell	N56A
Mira Cutting	N58B

* now a co-worker with Zoe

Goodbye to ...

Geoff Smith	A21
Nina Holliday	N4A&B
Darren Hogg	N55B

Heart Matters!

There is a SRT defibrillator which is located on the front of the Sunnyside Rural Trust Building at the end of B Road. If anyone is having or suspected to be having heart issues then use the location number and call the ambulance service on 999. They will talk you through how to open and use the machine which is in a carry case and ready to go. The SRT defibrillator is checked on a regular basis.

First Aid Kits

There are first aid kits available including in the toilet hut on A Road Sunnyside 'Old.

Getting to know you ...

Over 150 people have plots across Sunnyside - and it is so nice to reach out and learn more about your neighbour - this time we meet Jane and John(ny) on B37 and B39A

Hi Jane and John can you firstly tell us a little about yourselves?

We took our plot on 14 years ago and it is still one of our favourite places in the world! When we are not digging we are sat with maps planning our next backpacking adventure.

What prompted you to take on your plot?

Childhood allotment nostalgia - passionate about working outside, peaceful sanctuary, growing and eating fresh fruit and veg - nothing tastes better.

What has been your most successful crop so far? One year it was physalis, but mostly beetroot, onions, beans and cucumbers.

What ideas do you have for your plot?

Eventually a gnarly old grapevine climbing next to a shed that doesn't leak. But for now we plan to replace our redcurrant and blackcurrant bush beds and to learn more about how to cultivate medicinal plants and flowers.

What three words would you use to describe your plot?

Rustic, bountiful and "next to Simon" - nuff said.

What are your plans for the new growing season?

To finally get an asparagus bed in - oh and get the greenhouse up!

What is your favourite garden centre? Our very own Woods and also, hidden away, Stantock Nurseries in Bovingdon.

And finally - and a tad randomly - moving away from gardening can you tell us about your first car and how would you describe Berkhamsted? A clunky and stiff old VW polo and our words for Berkhamsted - nowhere better - how lucky we all are!.

Thank you Jane and John(ny).



Say "hello" to Jane and John(ny) when you see them on B Road.

Myth-Buster!

There are many myths around what you can and can't do during February and into early March around your plot. Here we look to bust just a few.

Nothing grows in February

Wrong. Hardy crops like broad beans, garlic, onions and winter salads will already be growing but often out-of-sight under the soil.

You shouldn't touch the soil

Some will say you should leave the soil alone during winter months. But if the soil isn't sticky or solid then now is a great time to get rid of long standing tough weeds not to mention mulching.

Frost is your enemy

Definitely not! Frost helps break down heavy soil; kills off some pests; and improves the flavour of any parsnips or sprouts already growing.

February is a time a stay away

No. February is a great time to visit your plot; looking for any winter damage; and to start your planning for the new season.

Winter plots are lifeless

Maybe quieter but definitely still full of life. The ecosystem that supports your crops is already under way and winter is an ideal time to introduce ponds or other wildlife homes.

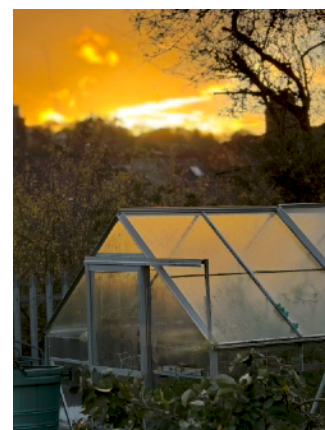
So make February matter - a few steps now can make all the difference.

News from your AGM ..

The Annual General Meeting was held in January and here we bring you the main headlines on all items discussed

Diana Ball opened up this year's AGM with a warm welcome to all those who attended although numbers were low and Diana and all committee members were keen to point out that the more who attend then the more who will have a say in how the allotments are run in the future. This is your event so please take the time.

On a more positive note the AGM opened with thanks to those who do give up their time and in particular committee members and those who attend working parties. The AGM also noted that both Lesley Johnson and Tom Hall have decided to step down from the Committee while Stacy Taylor (A36B) and Claire Collins (N50) have volunteered to join.



Congratulations to the Committee's longest standing members - Jenny Sippings, John Goffey and Andy James - are covered earlier in this edition.

The AGM also discussed the fact that rents will increase again this year. An extra £10 per full plot with proportional increases for half plots will all be introduced from September. The decision was taken by the Council with no consultation and again is a reminder to us all that the more tenants who turn up to AGMs then the more possible "voice" we could all have in such decisions.

And also discussed. The Committee are looking for ideas to potentially revamp the annual Open Day. These take an awful lot of organisation and are always subject to the weather. But how about a "visitors' day(s)" instead which could be held at different times of the year.

Your ideas as always are welcomed so please speak with a member of the Committee. Remember though we are all tenants and we all need a say - so please take time to get involved. Other items from the AGM are covered elsewhere in this publication.

Please remember

The bonfire site on B Road is for use by Working Parties only and not just for dumping your own cuttings. And keep comfrey and alkanet under control - these spread very easily and have very deep roots meaning it is hard to get rid of when out of control.

Your committee

Sunnyside Allotment Society Committee is there to represent your needs and interests. Please click on the links below to contact any member.

Chair:

[Diana Ball](#)

Vice-chair:

Vacant

Secretary:

[Jenny Sippings](#)

Treasurer:

[Andy James](#)

Newsletter editors:

[Clive](#)

Other members:

[Angela Wheeldon](#)

[John Goffey](#)

[John Eaton](#)

[Stacy Taylor](#)

[Claire Collins](#)

That's all for now folks !

Sunnyside Views is back again in **April 2026** and as always your contributions and ideas are very welcomed.

For now I am off to see how my plot has survived the winter - well when the rain stops anyway. Happy gardening everyone.

Clive A17.

Not in the supermarket !

Great ideas for veggies that you might not find so easily on supermarket shelves

Unusual, heritage or even quirky crops that wouldn't necessarily survive the long journey from field to shelf - or not survive it without some significant and often unattractive help - is where your plot can bring real dividends.

Take for instance purple sprouting broccoli, whose tender purple shoots taste sweeter than the supermarket version, or the vibrant rainbow chard that can bring interest and colour to any stew. Or more heritage varieties of carrots in shades of purple, white and yellow with flavours that can often outshine the orange varieties find in supermarkets.

Then there are herbs like lovage, shiso, or lemon balm which are less common in supermarkets or on the high street but can help transform a dish or a cuppa into something for more satisfying.



Even some fruits, like ground cherries or unusual berries, thrive in small allotments and are rarely seen in shops. Try Wolf Berries for instance - these can grow in pots and are rich in antioxidants and while the fruit itself is tart and chewy, they are perfect for drying out and using in smoothies. And don't forget the gooseberry while rare varieties of blackcurrant cultivars such as Ben Sarek or Ben Lomond can produce bigger berries and a richer flavour than the standard ones.

Remember though to always check before you grow to make sure what you do grow are in fact edible and safe.

So while of course the supermarket is just there and so convenient, don't forget the joy we can all get from our plots - the joy of discovery and of sharing with friends and family some tastes which are a lot harder to find.

Just remember to always put safety first. Do your own research and make sure you are planting safely.