

SUNNYSIDE VIEWS

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH THE JOY OF ALLOTMENTS

Hello everyone ...

A committee member no less once told me that people only read the first page of any newsletter if that - so assuming this is the case let me grab this spot to say a massive thank you. This is my last edition of Sunnyside Views and hope you have all enjoyed taking time to at least read some of the content since I took on the role in 2023. But I can't go without saying thank you to everyone who succumb to my at times pleading for articles and participation; for posing for photos with often odd looking but prized veg and for answering questions for the "Know your Neighbour" feature - thank you and good luck to who ever takes on this role in the future. Clive (A17)

Date for the Diary !

*A reminder to everyone that our annual Open Day is currently scheduled for **Sunday 23rd August 2026** and we are looking for volunteers to help set up and take down as well as help with stalls on the day. Anyone interested please contact Stacy Taylor (A36B) who is now organising this event on behalf of the Committee.*



“A Rant” from the Chair ...

A few things I would like you all as tenants to remember please:

- 1) You are all responsible for removing your own waste!
- 2) Plot B22 is for use by Working Parties only and no one should be putting anything on this plot! If you have been told in the past that you can put anything on here for burning then this is now revoked.
- 3) Parking is only allowed in the designated car parks on both Sunnyside Old and New. Do not park anywhere else and if you are unloading then please move your car to the car parks as soon as you finish.
- 4) Please ensure your dog is on a lead at all times when it is not on your plot and ensure it stays on your plot if it is off its lead!
- 5) Finally please remember you are responsible for mowing the paths between your allotments.

Rant over - happy gardening!

Diana Ball (A24)

Working Parties !

Claire Collins (N50) and Stacy Taylor (A36B) have taken on the role of organising working parties so what better time than to update on what has been achieved this year and a massive thank you to Tom Hall (A25) who is now stepping down.

During the past winter months many of you turned out in often bitter weather to clear the area around the heritage orchard at the end of B Road; weed the car park and repair the fence on Sunnyside New as well as tidying up the hazel coppice providing free bean poles in the process.

In addition we have come together to remove mud from the pathways that was causing flooding; burnt a year's worth of arisings; and fixed the tea hut roof and window.

And finally thank you to Clive Smith (A13), Brian Hughes and friend for their work in fixing the top gate on Sunnyside New after it was hit by a van and for the renovation of Ted's Bench on Sunnyside Old - a former chairman who founded our Committee and who passed away in 2016.



Your gate gang fixers - Brian Hughes (N48), Clive Smith (A13) and friend

Let's all remind ourselves - the joys of getting our hands dirty ...

25 people have taken on allotments in the last 12 months or so ... so why do we take on allotments in the first place?

There's something wonderfully optimistic about taking on an allotment. One day it's an overgrown patch of mystery weeds and abandoned canes; a few months later, you're proudly carrying home a courgette the size of a cricket bat while insisting, "I've got far too many tomatoes again."

Allotments are one of Britain's great traditions – part gardening, part gentle exercise, part outdoor therapy session. They offer a brilliant escape from screens, traffic, and the endless temptation to stay indoors watching gardening programmes instead of actually gardening.

You don't need to be an expert grower to start. In fact, most allotment holders begin with ambitious plans, several seed packets, and absolutely no idea how many slugs live in Hertfordshire. That's part of the fun. You learn as you go, usually with helpful advice from neighbouring plot holders who somehow know everything about onions.

Then there's the food. Few things taste better than potatoes dug up five minutes before dinner, or strawberries that haven't travelled 1,000 miles to reach your bowl. Growing your own produce saves money, reduces food waste, and gives you a new appreciation for weather forecasts.



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

But perhaps the greatest virtue of allotment life is the community. Allotments are full of cheerful chats, shared seedlings, borrowed tools, and occasional debates about giant pumpkins. So if you've ever fancied fresh air, fresh vegetables, and a hobby that rewards patience, muddy boots, and optimism, an allotment could be exactly what you need. **(Clive A17)**

Turning rubbish and waste into “Black Gold”

We all build compost bins in varying sizes and out of varying materials but according to the Royal Horticultural Society there are a few important tips to remember in order to get the best out of your garden waste.

Balance is key

A balance of greens (grass cuttings, veg cuttings and roots) and browns (cardboard, straw or dried leaves) is a must. Too many greens leave the pile soggy and smelly while loads of browns leave the heap looking as lifeless as last year's marrows. Generally 2-3 parts browns and 1 part greens is perfect.

Air and moisture

A quick turn with a fork every few weeks gives the compost a breath of fresh air and helps the rotting process. Overall the heap should feel damp and not a swamp or look like a dried out prune.

2-3 bins is best

Three bins is ideal - one for new fresh materials, one for active compost where bay one contents can be added in due course; and the final one for maturing compost. But the first two will do. Ideal size is minimum of 1m x 1m x 1m but up to 1.2 m is perfect.

Getting Hotter

And finally a good compost can reach up to 60 degrees celsius so keep the pile covered if you can but add water or rain to avoid drying out.

Pteridological and more !

We tend to know the big gardening organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) but there are many more

During a recent visit to the BBC Gardeners World Spring Fair I found myself at the **British Pteridological Society** tent and must admit had no idea who they were or what they did. Well they cover all things “ferns” and that got me thinking about how many other associations and organisations are out there that we don't know about and which all offer wonderful if often specialist advice.

Estimates suggest there are over 3000 such organisations in the UK alone but here we focus on just a few. For those interested in growing unusual crops, the **Heritage Seed Library** works to conserve rare vegetable varieties that are no longer widely available. Members can access seeds that might otherwise disappear from cultivation altogether.

Those of us with a leaning towards inviting wildlife on to our plots there is **Buglife** which promotes habitats for pollinators and other beneficial insects. Their advice can help us all create plots that are productive while supporting biodiversity.

Fruit growers among us can join specialist groups such as the **Northern Fruit Group** or local orchard societies, where members share expertise on everything from grafting to heritage apple varieties. Meanwhile the **British Cactus and Succulent Society** offers a fascinating diversion for us “allotmenters” into the wonderful world of variants such as Bunny Ears Cactus, Bishops Hat, String of Dolphins and Hens and Chicks - all varieties of cacti and succulents found in the UK.

And I believe some among us are members of the **Henry Doubleday Research Association** - often better known as Garden Organic. They have long promoted organic methods and championed the art of companion planting.

The **Seed Sovereignty Programme** encourages gardeners to save and share their own seed, helping preserve biodiversity and local varieties. Similarly the **Bean Seed Preservation Group** works to conserve heritage beans, many handed down through generations of allotment families and some dating back as far as the 1700's. This group is made up of a number of local associations one of whom used to meet in the Rising Sun in Berkhamsted but no record for such a group can be found since 1957 - maybe you fancy setting up your own - fancy a drink down “the Riser” anyone ? You see help is out there in all sorts of forms.

From Plot to Plate ..

Yes believe it or not some of you are already picking your early season crops so here is a simple recipe to make the most of those early offerings - early summer garden frittata !

Ingredients

- 6 eggs
- 150g cooked and sliced new potatoes
- 100g fresh peas
- 3 spring onions
- 75g grated cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- a handful of chopped chives, parsley or mint
- salt and pepper.

Method

Heat the olive oil in an overproof frying pan

Add the sliced potatoes and spring onions and cook gently for 3-4 minutes

Stir in the peas and herbs

Beat the eggs with a little salt and pepper and pour over the vegetables

Sprinkle the grated cheese on top

Cook over a low heat for 5 minutes until the edges begin to set

Transfer under a hot grill for 3-5 minutes until golden and puffed up

Serve warm with fresh green salad or enjoy cold the next day.

What's in a name ...

Have you ever wondered why vegetables often have strange-sounding scientific names - well the answer takes us back almost 2000 years

So those of you who studied Latin will probably be well ahead when it comes to why simple vegetable plants are often given such complex sounding names. But lets all go back 2000 years to the language of Ancient Rome - Latin to find out more.

Scientists use Latin names to identify plants because common names can vary from country to country. For example, what one region calls a "courgette" may well be known elsewhere as a "zucchini". A Latin name, however, is recognised worldwide.

Many familiar vegetables have surprisingly elegant Latin names. The humble carrot is *Daucus Carota*, asparagus is *Asparagus officinalis*, and the potato is *Solanum tuberosum*. The name often describing more the plant's appearance, origin or traditional use.

Vegetables also have some remarkable stories hidden behind their names. The tomato - *Solanum lycopersicum* - was once feared across Europe as it was considered highly poisonous.

And others have played a significant role in science as we know it today. For instance Gregor Mendel chose pea plants - *Pisum sativum* - for his experimentations which now forms the basis for our understanding of genetics. While largely ignored during his lifetime, Mendel - an Austrian Monk who worked in the 1800s - discovered that by cross-breeding pea plants and recording the results; he was able to map how characteristics such as flower colour and seed shape are often inherited according to predictable patterns - the foundation of modern genetics and our understanding of heredity.

So while "Latin" may feel like a dead language and for many of us a distant and let's face it not often welcome memory - it does continue to live in the very plants we are loving today.



Or are veg just veg to you and the rest is just well Latin?

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

We welcomed 7 new tenants and said goodbye to 4 in the last quarter. There are also 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 ...

Nick and Nicola Fulcher	A14
Catherine Dimmer	B28A
Thea Mills and Andy	B43
Anna King	N58A
Mathew Hall	N4A & B
Maria Shyrochenko	N32
Maria Bahamonde	N52

Goodbye to ...

Peter and Betty Fowell	B1 & B3
David Hencke	B27B
Charlotte Latimer	B28A
Sarah Cave	B43

This Summer!

Time on your hands this summer? Why not visit some of the following horticultural events in this area.

National Garden Scheme Open Gardens with a number of private gardens opening across Hertfordshire throughout the summer. Great places to get ideas for your plots and wildlife gardening.

Plant fairs and Gardening

Events with details often on the Sunnyside Rural Trust website including their own Hemel Food Garden Events which are great for affordable plants and advice.

And **Bennington Lordship Gardens and Chilli Festival** - 30 mins away with their chilli festival over the August Bank Holiday.

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 Cathy and Andy Johnson on A1A and A1B

Hi Cathy and Andy can you firstly tell us a little about yourselves? We took on the top half of our plot around 18 months ago and the lower half for the last 9 months. We are novices at growing veg but are keen gardeners at home. Our hobbies include walking and travelling - oh and yoga which helps with the gardening! Andy also volunteers for Rennie Grove Peace so you may see him driving their van collecting and delivering to the charity's shops.

What prompted you to take on your plot? We wanted to try growing food we like and simply haven't the scope for it in our own garden at home.

What has been your most successful crop so far? Well we have only had one season but our potatoes did well and oh yes our rainbow chard too.

What ideas do you have for your plot? We've already added a pond to the bottom half of our plot and now on the look out for the wildlife which we hope will use it.

What three words would you use to describe your plot? Diverse; natural and peaceful - just the way we like it!

What are your plans for the new growing season? Similar to our first season but adding more variety including squash and pumpkins.

What is your favourite garden centre? It has to be Four Acres and the one in Great Gaddesden - Hemel Hempstead Garden Centre.

And finally - and a tad randomly - moving away from gardening can you tell us about your first car and how would you describe Berkhamsted? Andy's was a Mini Clubman Estate while I (Cathy) drove a Morris Traveller. And Berkhamsted - a great place to live.



Say "hello" to Cathy and Andy and their new pond on A Road.

Sparrow Grass!

Have you heard of etymology- where a strange or foreign word gradually changes into more familiar-sounding words? Well that's the case with **asparagus** - originally called "sparrow grass" in the 17th and 18th centuries and recorded as such by no less than Samuel Pepys and Jonathan Swift. But what else surprises us about the wonder of asparagus.

Related to lilies

Yes asparagus is actually technically closer to ornamental flowers than veggies and is part of the same family as onions, garlic and lilies.

Food of lovers and health

Historically asparagus had a reputation as an aphrodisiac as well as being used by Greeks and Romans to cure tooth ache, kidney pains and bee stings.

Long lasting and debate raising

A single spear can last up to 20 years but what makes the perfect spear is debated across the world although in China - the largest producer by far - all asparagus has to be thin and purple.

Its a fast grower ..

One stem can grow up to 18cm in one day with the world record currently standing at 11.54 ft.

And there is even a museum ...

Yes it can be found in Germany where "Spargelzeit" - the asparagus season - is treated like a holiday.

News from around the Committee table ..

Back in early Spring your committee met with a busy agenda to cover

Diana Ball as your Chair opened the meeting which covered updates on the Working Parties held during the winter; feedback from the AGM held in January and tenancy changes amongst other items.

Tom Hall (A25) has now stepped down from the Committee with his duties of arranging the Working Parties taken on by Stacy Taylor (A36B) and Claire Collins (N50). Both are open to ideas on what you would like the

working parties to cover but in the meantime the Committee noted the extensive work carried out by you as volunteers during the winter months and covered elsewhere in this publication.

Clive has also now left the Committee as Newsletter Editor.

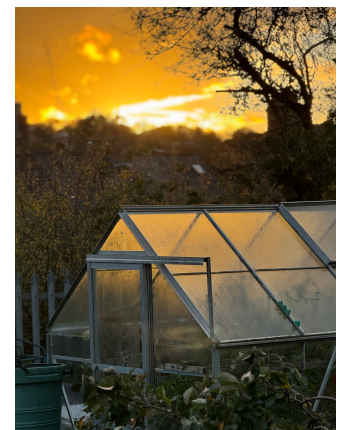
The Committee also discussed the annual Open Day. This is being held on 23rd August and

Stacy Taylor has also agreed to take on the role of lead organiser. Again any ideas on what to include on the day should be passed to Stacy for what is usually a key date in our collective diaries.

Also of note and as a reminder for everyone it is worth remembering that rent has increased now from £50 to £60 per year but with no increase in water charges; and also all tenants are asked to remember that it is vital you don't block the paths between plots as these are technically for communal use and must be kept open and tidy.

Finally Diana is keen to see more people join the cleaning rota for the communal toilet which sits on A Road between plots A15 and A17. This is a facility used by a lot of tenants from both sides of Sunnyside so please if you are a regular user then take your turn in the cleaning rota and pass your name to Diana.

Remember the Committee is there to represent your ideas and views so please approach any member should you have any matter you wish to see raised.



Remembering Ted !



Ted Dyer was a great friend to so many on *Sunnyside*; was the founder of the Sunnyside Allotment Society; and its chairman for many years. Ted sadly passed away in 2016 so to celebrate 10 years since his sad passing his bench and garden have been spruced up on A Road for all to enjoy.

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:

[Claire Collins](#)

Secretary:

[Jenny Sippings](#)

Treasurer:

[Andy James](#)

Newsletter editor:

[Vacant](#)

Other members:

[Angela Wheeldon](#)

[John Goffey](#)

[John Eaton](#)

[Stacy Taylor](#)

That's all for now folks !

Budget Garden Guardians

As we all rush to plant out for the new season think about how to protect those seedlings without breaking the bank.

You are not the only ones who will enjoy your crops over the new growing season. Slugs, birds, insects and even the weather can damage a crop almost as soon as you plant it so protection is key.

One of the simplest tricks is to reuse everyday items. Cut the bottoms off plastic bottles and place them over young seedlings to create mini greenhouses. This can help protect plants from wind, cold nights and hungry pests.

Because did you know that a single slug can eat twice its body weight in one night? To discourage them also use crushed eggshells or coffee grounds or even the beloved beer traps where out of date beer placed on a saucer can bring huge dividends.



Then of course there is netting - good for preventing pigeons and other birds from pecking cabbages and keeping butterflies away from laying eggs on your brassicas. And reducing the risk of cabbage white caterpillars.

And mulch - a layer of grass cuttings, compost or shredded leaves - placed around your plants can help retain moisture, suppress weeds and improve soil health and lets face it healthy plants are naturally better at resisting pests and disease.

But perhaps the best money saving tip is companion planting. Marigolds planted near vegetables can attract pollinators and may help deter some unwanted insects; while for instance planting onions or herbs near to carrots can deter carrot fly and even mice and rats who hate the smell.

So you see protecting your seedlings does not to break the bank. It is not necessary to spend money on elaborate cages; just a few simple steps often using what you already have will do just as well.