

MAGA



Message from the Chair



MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS

It's been a difficult growing year with early sunshine followed by floods but hopefully everybody is now able to get into the full swing of growing veggies and flowers and enjoying the summer.

Many thanks to everybody who helped with the Plant Sale and BBQ, and all those volunteers who keep the shop open, clean the toilets, help with plot inspections, mend the plumbing, fix the gates, turn up for working parties and those who are on the Committee. The allotments would be a very different place without all these willing people ready to give up their time for the general good of all.

We are looking forward to the **Produce Show** in September. Do look at the classifications to see which ones you can enter and join in a little fun competition with your neighbours.

Finally, thanks to the rest of the Committee, especially Margaret, for all their support and teamwork in what has been a very difficult time for Simon and I. Thank you to those of you who have expressed your sympathy for the loss of our youngest son Michael, who was just 24 years old.

Our hearts are broken **Jadzia
Bruton**

(Chairperson on behalf of MAGA Committee)

WASTE

WEST SIDE ENTRANCEWAY & GATES

Despite repeated requests to the Council to clear them, the waste bays are once again full to overflowing, particularly on the West Side. As a result, and to prevent the waste overflowing onto the roadway, we would ask ploholders not to use the bays until they have been emptied.

The Council finally repaired the entranceway to the West Side on 9th June, after much chasing and one no-show. We've had to wait for drier weather to re-fit the repaired gates, which will be given added support struts on the Merton Mansions side to prevent the main upright from moving. Hopefully this work will be completed very



Please compost your green waste on your plots. We will continue to chase the Council to complete the necessary road repair works on Thank you both East and West sides and will keep you informed of the scheduling of any further works.

2016 PLOT INSPECTION Update



Plot inspections are usually carried out twice a year to help keep the allotments as a healthy vibrant community. You can read more about plot inspections on the MAGA website: <http://maga.org.uk/p/general-info/plot-inspections>. There are over 250 plots covering about 11 acres and it requires a lot of effort by Committee members and volunteers to carry out the inspections, which are a requirement of our management agreement with Merton.

In 2015 over the two sets of plot inspections there were 16 tidy up notices and 46 notices of non-cultivation sent. This led to 23 plots being made available for re-letting. In 2015 there were over 50 plots let to new tenants. In 2016, the Committee thought that a sympathetic approach would be to give plot holders who have had their plot less than a year a gentle email reminder of what cultivation was expected. In the May inspections this led to 7 gentle emails, 9 tidy up notices and 9 notices of non-cultivation being sent. This has resulted in only 4 plots being made available for re-letting with the remainder being brought back into cultivation.

There have been some adverse comments made again this year about plot inspections but please remember that follow up checks are done to have a look at the progress of certain plots. If the inspections and checks weren't done then perhaps you would be complaining about the overgrown plot next to you, spreading weeds into your plot! So please remember that all we are trying to do is

to ensure that the allotments stay as well used as possible. 😊

TOPSOIL from **oasisgrass**

The sharp-eyed among us may have noticed that we have received a few deliveries of topsoil (deposited in front of the BBQ, West Side. This comes from OasisGrass, a reputable Wimbledon company which fits artificial grass, part of the process for which they remove a few inches of topsoil. The soil they give us is largely weed- and stone-free and can be a valuable resource for those of us wishing to raise soil levels/add raised beds to reduce flooding problems. As with the woodchips and manure, we don't know when they'll deliver, so you'll have to keep your eyes peeled if you want some of the soil (it goes quickly!), and we will try to get them also to make alternate deliveries to the East side.

COMPOSTING: Don't throw away those weeds and grass!



Composting is a great way to boost the health of your allotment. It's a win-win situation – you dispose of your garden and allotment waste (old plants, leaves, trimmings, windfall fruits, annual weeds and grasses (as long as they haven't gone to seed), crushed eggshells, teabags, coffee grounds, vegetable and fruit peelings, shredded cardboard/newspapers) and, after six months or so, you are left with a nutritious 'black gold' which will give a fantastic feed to your plants, as well as improving the soil texture. Throwing away all those weeds and grasses (and the soil on the roots)

means you're losing a valuable source of compost which could maintain and improve your plot's soil levels, so helping to reduce the risk of flooding. A small- to medium-sized compost bin will yield the equivalent of at least 2 or 3 bags (50 litre) of compost, and you wouldn't want to throw that away! So a compost bin is an essential for any keen gardener.



There are all sorts of compost bins, ranging from the well-known black plastic 'dalek' bin to those made out of wooden pallets, which give you lots of room. You can even just make a pile and cover it with eg. carpet or ground cover, to keep in the warmth which, together with the bacteria, helps create the compost, though this may take a bit longer to rot down than in a bin.



Raised bed filled with home-made compost

But it doesn't just have to be in the compost bin, you can also 'trench compost', by digging a trench, filling it with your compostable material and covering it again with soil. The compostable items will rot down in their own good time, creating a healthy base for your next crops (this method is especially recommended for crops grown in rows eg. beans).

There are many websites giving good guidance on methods of composting, for example:

www.growveg.co.uk/guides/composting-techniques-how-to-compost-in-situ

www.recyclenow.com/reduce/home-composting/making-compost

www.rhs.org.uk/Advice/Profile?PID=444

If you're having problems with an existing compost heap, there's some guidance here:

www.growveg.co.uk/guides/how-to-fix-common-compost-problems/

And if you find one of these chunky fellas while digging out your compost, don't worry. It's the larva of a rose chafer beetle and it is great at making compost. So put it to work again and toss it back into your compost bin!

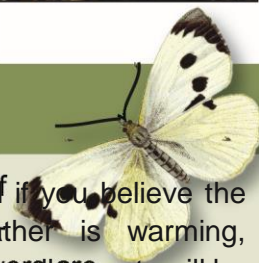


SPRING has sprung . . .



Summer is (allegedly) here, and if you believe the weather forecasters, the weather is warming, flowers are blooming and soon the allotments will be full of beautiful butterflies ~~including those~~ delightful cabbage whites, whose caterpillars will decimate your crops at the first opportunity! And if they aren't

enough, the pigeons will enjoy feasting on anything they can lay their little beaks on. So you might want to protect your crops with a netted frame or cloche. Ken's Shop has a number of items to help, including flexible uPVC piping which can be curved into a cloche and covered with soft netting or mesh, or bamboo canes which can be linked with cane connectors to make a frame and then covered with stiff netting mesh.



PRIVATISATION of parks and green spaces services

Merton Council have announced that their preferred bidder in the privatisation of Parks and Green Spaces services is The Landscape Group. The Committee will be approaching the Council to see how this will affect the services which we receive.

PLANT Sales

The Plant Sale held on 14th May was another great success, thanks to the hard work of Philippa Tribler and a host of helpers, so much so that we were almost sold out by 2pm! The weather was kind and the day was rounded off by a relaxed BBQ enjoyed in the warmth of the setting sun. Very many thanks to all those who helped make it such an enjoyable day.



FLOODS

The floods caused by the torrential rain overnight on 22/23 June hit the allotments badly, with many plots being severely flooded. Hopefully things are getting back to normal now that the weather has improved. Flooding compresses the soil by squeezing out the oxygen, so it's important to dig over the affected areas to replace that vital oxygen which the plants need.

NEW Strimmer

We have invested in a rechargeable, battery-powered Bosch strimmer to add to our existing equipment. A fully-charged battery provides up to 45 minutes' strimming, and takes up to 1½ hours then to fully recharge. The advantage of this strimmer is that it is considerably lighter than the heavier-duty petrol-driven strimmer, so we hope it will make a useful addition to our equipment (not least to enable plotholders to trim the paths around their plots, which is a requirement often forgotten!).



WATCH OUT!!! There maybe a thief about

As always, summer seems to attract thefts and a few have already been reported, so if you do see anybody around the allotments whom you don't recognise as a plotholder, do enquire who they are. If potential thieves know they have been noticed, hopefully

they will be less likely to go through with opportunistic thefts.

Pick up entry forms from **Ken's Shop** (if the shop's closed, you can find them in the container on the door) or download them from the website and, as usual, entries are free.

As usual, exhibits need to be brought in on the day between 12.00 noon

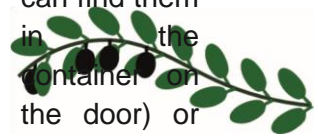


MAGA PRODUCE & FLOWER SHOW

Saturday 3rd September – All Welcome!

Just a quick note to remind you to start thinking about your entries for this year's **Produce & Flower Show**, which will be held on **Saturday 3rd September**.

2016 has been a very testing time for many of us with the floods and dreadful weather, so everyone's in with a chance. Whether you're a novice allotmenteer or a veteran, there's a category you can enter, from beautiful veg to lovely flower arrangement and home produce, there's even a kids' section.



and 2.00pm. The judges will be deliberating during the afternoon and results will be available at 4.00pm. **Everyone's welcome at 4.00pm, to view the exhibits, taste the home produce and enjoy a drink and a bit of fun.**

*pmcmanus
r964a*

IDEAS!

OLIVE BRANCH

when she tentatively held out the olive branch he with his sharp secateurs quickly started pruning it back and when getting dangerously close to her fingers she wisely decided to drop it

If you have any ideas or suggestions for improvements to the allotments, do let us know at **committee@maga.org.uk**