
FROM THE CHAIR

I wish the weather would make its mind up – one minute my seedlings are getting scorched, and the next they're drowning. Not the greatest start to the growing season – harrumph!

Welcome to the May newsletter and thank you to our editorial team for yet another fine issue! The MAGA year is now in full swing, having kicked off with the AGM at the end of April and just recently a very successful plant sale.

The AGM was well attended (in spite of gale-force winds and horizontal rain) and we welcomed members to the new MAGA marquee. Committee contributions were recognised and members were updated on the status of self-management. It was noted that the handover date for this has slipped due to LBM taking longer to prepare terms of agreement. The committee confirmed that a site meeting will be called to review the contract when it's nearing completion. We also discussed the need to reconstitute the Association and confirmed this would take place at a General Meeting to be called (with suitable notice served) at some point in the future. The new committee for 2012-13 were elected and I'm delighted to confirm its membership as follows:

Caroline Trumper (Chair)
Phil Neale (Secretary)

Peter Flintoff (Treasurer)
Geoff Gregory (Shop Manager)
Ivor Stocker (Site Coordinator)
Tina Watts
Ashleigh Weinman
David Cotterill

Congratulations to the winners of our Margie Mulder Trophy: Becky Beasley and family (plot 87A) who have been presented with their trophy. And to the runners-up: Sylvie Avery & family (plot 125) and Anne & Peter Young (plot 38A). All received a voucher for Ken's Shop to keep up the good work!

The MAGA Annual Plant Sale took place over 12-13th May. Thanks to fabulous weather, we had a good number of people attending who bought over £1200 of plants, shop products and cakes! An enormous thank you is due to Henrik Tribler for nurturing over 1400 tiny plug plants into healthy specimens that looked wonderful and were at the heart of the event's success. Thanks too to all who delivered leaflets, baked cakes, turned up to help on the day – a great MAGA event that has topped up the coffers. According to one person I spoke to, we are now known for our great cakes as well as great plants! Thank you everyone.

Enjoy the rest of May – particularly the lighter evenings when we get a break in the clouds!

Good growing
Caroline

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MAGA Mad Hatters Tea Party -
Saturday 14 July 3-6pm Dress
code = silly hat



MAGA's Annual Produce Show -
Saturday 8 September noon (for
set-up), 4pm results
announced

MAGA Pumpkinfest - Saturday
3 November 5 - 7pm

Hampton Court Palace Flower
Show - 3-8th July at Hampton
Court

JOBS FOR THE MONTHS OF MAY, JUNE AND JULY.

The February Newsletter
forecast we would have some
adverse weather to come and
sure enough there has been
cold, wind and lots of rain. With
the weather being so bad no
doubt many of us have a lot of
catching up to do! But the days
are getting longer and hopefully
the temperatures will soon start
to rise. You may be tempted to
sow seeds outside but beware -
the soil is still cold and they may
fail to germinate. Or we may

have a late frost or you may be
fighting off an attack from slugs!

Nevertheless here are the top
jobs for May:

- Sow outdoors if the weather is mild
- Harden off seedlings and start planting them out
- Plant the last of your seed potatoes
- Weed regularly
- Protect tender plants from any late frost
- Net fruit bushes to protect from the birds

Crops to sow in May:

- Beetroot
- Sweetcorn
- Runner beans
- French beans
- Cucumbers
- Marrow
- Swedes & turnips
- Brassicas
[cabbages, cauliflower,
Brussels sprouts, etc]
- Peas
- continue to sow salad items

June is a key month, signalling
the midpoint of the year and if
you have been lucky you may be
harvesting crops such as new
potatoes, onions, broad beans
and salad crops including
spinach and baby beetroot.

Jobs for June include

Try to keep on top of the weeds.
If you have the dreaded horsetail
[Equisetum] keep on pulling up

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the heads. Wait until they're big enough to get a good grip on and pull slowly. It's very satisfying when you haul out a foot or so of underground stem - and after around 10 years you may have won the war!

Mulch growing plants with garden compost, mushroom compost, well-rotted manure or bark chips.

- Check nets to ensure the birds are not getting fat at your expense
- Feed tomatoes
- Continue to earth up potatoes
- Put in your runner bean poles
- When your broad beans are finished cut down and compost the stems but leave the roots in the ground as they will continue to fix nitrogen
- Pot up some strawberry runners

Crops to sow in June:

- Late sprouting broccoli
- Maincrop carrots
- Leeks
- Courgettes, marrows, squashes and cucumbers
- Sweet peppers, chilli peppers and aubergines
- A second sowing of French beans, runner beans and peas
- Continue to sow beetroot, swedes & turnips and salad crops

If we are lucky July is the height of the summer: the days are

long and temperatures are at their highest. By now you should be well into harvesting your crops. With luck the water supply will still be available for you to fill your watering can!

Jobs for July include:

- Weed regularly
- Water - only when necessary to prevent plants bolting, or when there's visible sign of wilting
- Continue to mulch
- Continue to check your nets
- Lift & dry out garlic, onions and shallots
- Pinch out tops of climbing beans and spray runner beans with water to encourage pod formation
- Pinch out tomato shoots and feed the plants regularly
- Cover the heads of cauliflowers
- Continue to earth up potatoes
- If your brassicas look unsteady then pull soil around the stems and firm it down – or stake the taller ones like Brussels & broccoli.
- Crops to sow in July - this may be your last chance!
- Brussels sprouts, cabbages and cauliflower
- Cabbages for harvesting next Spring
- Salad crops
- Peas and French beans
- Leeks

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- Beetroot
- Carrots
- Turnips

Many of you will grow a much wider variety of crops including fennel, kohlrabi, Swiss chard, chicory, endive, celeriac, pumpkins etc. if you have any tips you can pass on please send an e-mail to ivor@redshadow.plus.com

Once you are up-to-date with all the seasonal jobs you could ponder what you are going to enter in this year's produce show...

CATEGORIES FOR MAGA PRODUCE SHOW

FLOWERS & HERBS

Class 1: Mixed flower arrangement in a vase (vase not taller than 20cm)

Class 2: One scented rose to be judged on perfume only

Class 3: A single bloom / flower spike

Class 4: A gentleman's buttonhole / lady's spray

Class 5: Tied bunch of 5 different herbs

VEGETABLES & FRUIT

Class 6: Selection of vegetables (min 5 different types) within 12" square (to be provided)

Class 7: Longest runner bean

Class 8: Biggest marrow (judged on both weight & size)

Class 9: Biggest onion (judged on both weight & size)

Class 10: Five tomatoes

Class 11: Heaviest pumpkin (weighed on plot)

Class 12: Funniest vegetable

Class 13: Selection of home grown fruits on a plate (min 3 different types)

Class 14: Five apples on a plate

Class 15: Selection of mixed berries

HOME PRODUCE

Class 16: Jam, jelly, marmalade or fruit curd

Class 17: Chutney/pickles/relishes

Class 18: Cake (to include at least one home-grown ingredient)

Class 19: Home-made or home-brewed alcoholic or soft drinks

PHOTOGRAPHY

Class 20: Plant portrait

Class 21: The weather

Class 22: Views of the allotment

Class 23: Allotment wildlife

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Class 24: Dusk-to dawn

CHILDREN'S (under 16 yrs only)

Class 25: Photograph of my plot

Class 26: Tallest sunflower (judged on plot)

Class 27: Best scarecrow (under 8 yrs)

Class 28: Best arrangement of garden flowers in a jam jar (8-16 yrs)

Class 29: Three decorated cup cakes (under 8 yrs)

Class 30: Decorated stone (8-16 yrs)

ADVERT

.... If you're not up-to-date with your allotment jobs you may need help...

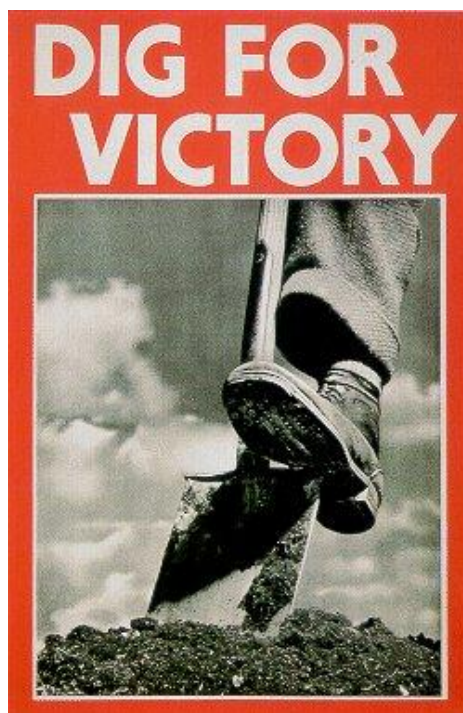
I had a very nice chat with a gentleman who has posted an advert on the east side gates - "Henry the gentleman gardener". The title is somewhat amiss as his area of speciality is much more around plot clearance rather than specifically gardening. He has a number of rotavators at his disposal however so I thought there may be interest from some of our newer (and maybe not so new) ploholders. He's a ploholder at Phipps Bridge (so has access to our site as they

use the same key).

Details:

Henry the gentleman gardener
Friendly & reliable, very competitive rates, vegetable plots a speciality.

Contact: Henry Ayres 07810 165 888 (daytime) or 020 8644 4431 (evenings) or email ayers77@virginmedia.com



IN THE APIARY

The past couple of months have been very confusing for both the bees and us humans. The initial warm start gave way to endless cold wet weather and our bees rarely had the chance to get out of their hives to forage for nectar and pollen. The effect of this was that the Queen in each hive slowed down her egg laying rate as there was no food to raise the young, and the lack of forage meant the worker bees were unable to produce wax to build up the cells for new eggs to be laid into. So, a very, very slow time for the bees! It has been so bad that most beekeepers have had to feed their bees with sugar syrup or fondant just to keep them alive.

At last the sun and warmth of this past week has allowed more plants to flower and release nectar, and the bees have gone mad in an effort to catch up. Suddenly there is honey in the hives again (for the bees!) and eggs being laid, what a joy to see.

Whilst we all try our best to manage our hives so that they do not swarm (nature's way of increasing colonies), there will occasionally be one that gets away.....especially if it was pouring with rain just when we wanted to check the hive! In case anyone spots a swarm, please do let me or one of the other beekeepers know when and where you saw it. We have dedicated swarm collectors and I have helped collect easy to

reach swarms before. My email is alipelikan@btinternet.com and my mobile is 07946 759 551.

As ever, don't forget to plant something for all the bees, including bumbles, and to leave some brassicas to flower before you pull them up. Thank you!

Alison Pelikan

BEE NEWS

BEE LOSS 'could cost £1.8 bn' Pollinating crops, without bees would cost £1,8 billion a year, Friends of the Earth warned as it launched a scheme to save the threatened insects. Hand pollination is already widely used in China due to the loss of bees' habitat and the intensive agriculture policy. Several causes for the fast decline in bees might exist, but evidence has emerged that a dangerous group of pesticides play a key role. This is not 'new' news but we should all be aware that neonicotinoids used in insecticides drastically reduce the navigation ability of bumblebees and cut the production of queen bees. No queen bees = no new colonies. Bees are essential to nature and to humans. So maybe we all need to consider this when we next feel we need to buy an insecticide.

GARDENING HINTS

RHUBARB FLOWERS.

Rhubarb flowers should be removed as soon as they are seen, if they are left on the plant it will become weakened and less productive.

GROWING SWEET POTATOES

Growing sweet potatoes is not easy but can be very rewarding. You can buy pot-ready plants or 'slips' from late April onwards. If you choose to buy slips soak them overnight and plant them deeply in pots or root trainers filled with multipurpose compost and water in. The slips need to be watered and kept in good light until late May when they can be planted out. The gardening books recommend planting by laying down black plastic sheeting and growing through slits in the plastic, spacing the plants about 50cm apart. Good luck and do let us know how you get on.

SLUG & SNAIL TRAPS

If you don't like using pellets there are a number of ways to tackle slugs and snails and slug pubs are one of the most popular. Filled with beer or other sweet liquids they do attract the pests from 3-6ft away. You can also use other organic solutions such as a layer of grit or ash. Some people use crushed egg shells! Steve Pierce [plot 127] reports that his granddad used large buttons, pushed edgeways into the soil, to make slug barriers.

TOMATO BLIGHT

Last year the allotment site again had a problem with tomato blight and as we all know once it attacks your plants it is catastrophic. Blighted tomato plants should be removed immediately to limit the spread of the disease. Burn them or put them in black bags on the brown waste dump [please not in the green waste]

What can you do to prevent it? The most important trick is to keep your tomato foliage as dry as possible. Grow under glass or plastic covers if possible. Water very sparingly onto the soil around the plants, not on the leaves. And never grow toms near spuds. The spuds can get the same blight but don't succumb to it so quickly. They just pass it on to your toms! If all else fails you can try spraying with Dithane 945 at 14-day intervals from late June to mid September. Bayer Fruit and Vegetable control can also be used. Check in the MAGA shop to see what is available. If anyone has any other method which has been successful please tell us and we will post it on the MAGA web site.

POETS CORNER

We recently sent Patrick McManus, MAGA's Poet in Residence on plot 99A, back to the 16th Century to see how it was done then...

WYVES WINNOWE

wyves winnowe
make malte
washe and wrynge
and make hay
shere corne and
in time of neede
helpe to fyll
the muck wayne
dryve the plough
loode haye corne
and suche other
ride to market
to sel hither
butter mylke chese
egges hennes chekyns
capons pygges gese
and all manner of corne
wyves winnowe
make malte
washe and wrynge.

pmcmanus M380

*inspired by
'The boke of husbandry'
Sir Anthony Fitzherbert -1534
a bit of allotment history
first published in 'Earth Love'
an environmental magazine*

GRUMPY OLD GIT'S GUIDE TO ALLOTMENT WILDLIFE:

An occasional series highlighting
some species you may spot
around Martin Way.

No 1 - The Warterhog

Was seen regularly during the
hot spells last year and this
March. It seems to be most
commonly encountered when
you visit your plot hoping to do a
careful bit of watering [of only
those plants that look like they

really need it]. The waterhog has
beaten you to it and water is
spraying in all directions over a
nearby plot.

The waterhog seeks dominance
over other species by
monopolising the limited supply,
ensuring that rivals die out, not
of thirst but of exhaustion
caused by lugging watering
cans. It can sometimes be
located by following its
characteristic green trail [which
we zoologists call "the
hosepipe"] back to its lair -
although as often as not it has
gone home for lunch.

Control of this species is difficult.
Shouting and waving your arms
about generally have little effect.
Reports from elsewhere [not me
Guv] that the Waterhog's
characteristic "connector" has
become something of a
collectors' item may suggest one
avenue of potential control.

Currently rare/endangered
[particularly if Thames Water
finds out]

FROM PLOT TO PLATE

The crop I most look forward to
at the start of a new growing
season is broad beans. Home-
grown ones picked when a
decent size, but still young, are
so much nicer than the tough,
starchy old things served up in
school lunches.

Here's my favourite recipe, often
served as a starter in Catalonia

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and the Balearic Islands, but easily turned into a substantial main course. If you must you can omit the black pudding. It will still be tasty but nothing like as unctuous and succulent!

Quantities are just a guide – don't fret over it.

2lb broad beans [podded weight]
1 lb belly pork, rind removed, half of it chopped small, the rest in chunks.

½ lb good quality black pud, preferably from Bury [remove skin and chop]

big bunch spring onions, or shallots, or a medium onion

glass of white wine

olive oil

salt, sugar, bayleaf, sprigs of mint.

To finish:

Pastis or anis or pernod, plus sweet white wine [ideally Spanish muscatel]

Chop the onions small and fry in a big pot with a big glug [say 4 tablespoons] of olive oil until softened, then add the chopped pork and fry until starting to brown and release its oil. Add the chopped up black pud and stir for a minute or two to encourage it to disintegrate then add the beans. Stir & fry until everything is oily and glistening [say 5 mins] then add the chunks of pork, the wine, bayleaf, stripped mint leaves, a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of sugar. Stick a lid on and simmer gently for 30 minutes or so until the larger porky pieces

are cooked, stirring occasionally to stop it sticking. When it's ready stir in a tablespoon or 2 each of pastis and muscatel. If you don't have the latter add a small splash more of the wine you added earlier plus another teaspoon of sugar.

Serve with Spanish red, good bread and maybe a salad containing tomatoes and sweet peppers.

