

MAGA NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2015



'Watercolour effect' photo by Simon Bruton

Seasoned Gardener Scheme

We have a new idea: the 'Seasoned Gardener' scheme. Are you an allotmenteer with over 30 years gardening experience? Would you be interested in sharing your knowledge with less experienced gardeners? We have noticed that new gardeners, who have not had an allotment before, often give up quite early on. Sometimes they are put off by plants not growing well, or by it being more work than they had thought. To help new people try out allotmenting and learn as they are going along, we would like to start a scheme where 'Seasoned Gardeners' can sign up to mentor a new allotmenteer. The new person will not have their own plot to begin with, but will help the Seasoned Gardener with their plot, in exchange for some of the produce. It means they can learn as they go along, and get a sense of whether they could really manage their own allotment. For the Seasoned Gardener: you get to share your experience and gain an extra pair of hands! If you are interested please contact the Committee, by either dropping in at the shop leaving your name, plot number and contact details or by emailing the Committee: committee@maga.org.uk with the same information and with 'Seasoned Gardener' in the subject line.

Take a walk on the wild side

If you thought having an allotment was just about gardening, think again! Our allotments host a wide range of wildlife, many of whom also play their part in the success of your allotment. Some of whom are also protected by law. Here are some of our local residents:



Foxes are sometimes thought of as vermin but they can be a friend to the allotments as they hunt the mice and rats which can damage seeds and crops. Foxes are carnivores, so they will not eat your crops (though they may occasionally root about for large grubs/larvae). And, contrary to popular myth, they do not eat cats (with the possible exception of roadkill), so the local moggies which also visit to catch mice and rats are perfectly safe.



Slow worms look like small, silvery snakes but in fact they are legless lizards. They are totally harmless and eat slugs, snails and small insects, so are very much the gardener's friend. They hibernate in winter and emerge in spring, usually taking refuge in nice warm compost heaps (so take care when you dig out your compost) or under carpet. Slow worms are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is **against the law** to intentionally kill or injure them.



Frogs don't always live in ponds, though they are often there during the breeding/spawning season. At other times you may find them on moist land areas such as in long grass, where they hunt for their favourite foods, slugs and snails, which makes them the allotmenters' friends.



Newts are also likely to be seen in a pond or water tank during the breeding season but they also like moist areas like long grass. In summer/early autumn they may roam on land, usually at night, looking for slugs and snails to eat.

During the winter be careful when disturbing logs, leaf piles and compost heaps as these may be hiding hibernating newts. Newts are **protected** under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Produce & Flower Show

Just a reminder that the annual Produce & Flower Show is on **Saturday 5th September**. There is no entry fee and we will be having simple entries like the tallest sunflower, the heaviest pumpkin, the longest runner bean, a selection of mixed veg, jams and chutneys, cakes with an ingredient from the plot as well as a photography section. There is a separate section for children under the age of 13, including an award for the longest piece of bindweed root! The category list/entry form is available in the shop. And on the website Enter as many entries as you like and join in the fun.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback, be it good or bad, but please make sure it is **specific**. If you would like to give feedback on this newsletter for example, good or bad, that is very welcome, but saying "the newsletter was wonderful/rubbish" is not very useful, it doesn't allow us to improve where we need to, or keep doing what is helpful. An example: asking for a larger print version of this is something we can act on, just saying you found it hard to read doesn't help us improve.

Best wishes,
MAGA Committee
<http://maga.org.uk/>

