

MAY 2021

MAGA

MARTIN WAY ALLOTMENT NEWS



Welcome to the Spring Newsletter



It has been a busy winter for the committee with many improvement projects on the go around the site, so apologies for the long wait for this seasonal update. I hope you find the newsletter informative and entertaining, and I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming months around the plots, at the AGM when we have one, and hopefully at some long awaited social events.

HAPPY GARDENING *Jadzia (MAGA Chair)*

Tenants

Welcome

Welcome to our 19 new tenants in late 2020 and early 2021. Andy has been doing 1:1 plot viewings once we were allowed to, so many of you may have new neighbours. Please say hello and make them feel welcome. As we have not been able to have working parties Andy and I have been clearing plots, paths and marking out plots that have not been let for some time. You can even see Andy operating a stump grinder.

We now have all the available plots let on the west side and just 1 vacant plot on the east side which we are hoping to let shortly! This has been made possible by clearing all the east side wild plots of self-seeded trees and brambles, and putting up perimeter fencing. Once the 1 vacant plot is let, the east side will be fully occupied which has not been seen for probably over 30 years.



We still have a waiting list of over 70 people wanting plots so hopefully we will be able to clear some more areas on the west side in due course which have been allowed to become overgrown with bramble and self-seeded trees to reclaim very old disused plots.

MAGA Martin Way Allotment News is produced 2-3 times per year by Committee members and volunteers.

The MAGA committee accept no liability for any errors or views expressed in this publication.

The views of contributors do not necessarily match the views or policies of the MAGA committee.

To provide a submission for the next issue, please email ivorstocker@sky.com

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PATHS



Thank you to those who are maintaining the paths around their plots. It is much easier to get around when they are kept clear, level and 1m wide. When plots have become vacant we have been placing posts on the 4 corners of each plot allowing sufficient for the path to be the correct width and to clearly mark out the cultivatable area of the plot. There are many plots around the allotments still where these paths have not been marked out and we hope to get around to all of them eventually. If the path around your plot is not clear or is not wide enough please contact the committee and we will endeavour to help sort this out.

WATER TAP POINTS



We are hoping that Graham Buzwell is on the final leg of the journey this year to update all the tap points with the new double tap stands and updating the support for all the tanks on new stone beds. All the latest tap stands have lever taps which make it easy to see if they have been turned off. This will mean that all tap points by water tanks will have 2 taps per stand to give better access to all to the water.

Please remember not to hog the tap point if another plot holder would like to use it and don't connect 2 hoses to both taps for use on your plot! You are reminded that hoses must be hand held at all times and not left wedged in fork handle, laid on the ground, etc. Sprinklers are strictly forbidden. Some tap points are also connected to other multiway tap points where plot holders leave hoses buried or laid out of the way, so that they don't have to get out their hoses each time they wish to use them. If you have this facility you must ensure that the tap is turned off before you leave your plot and any multiway system disconnected from the MAGA tap points when not in use. We have had instances of connections/hoses leaking wasting a lot of water.

There should not be any hoses permanently attached to the standpipe taps. Any multi way tap systems after the MAGA tap point must be connected only when you are on your plot and need to use the water supply. We are charged for water on a commercial rate (it's expensive!) and care must be taken not to use it waste it.

FENCES



Significant lengths of fences have been put up in February to 3 corners of the east side and the boundaries with Martin Way and part of Whatley Avenue on the west side. This has closed off numerous gates from neighbouring gardens and made secure areas where there were low fences or no barriers at all. It has also stopped dogs coming from gardens on the east side and our neighbours in Martin Way have said that they are grateful for the increased security to the back of their houses. If finances allow we will be able to extend the new fence in the future.



GATES

The work on the gates is now complete. On both sides new locks were fitted in the gate and extensions added to the tops of the gates to enable it to stay in line with the height barrier. On the west side the height barrier was replaced with a heavier duty one, the uprights made vertical and a steel beam added under the road to help to prevent the uprights from moving. In order for the gates to

operate correctly you need to ensure that the drop bolt in the centre is in the right place (into the steel tube in the road). The gates will then line up and the latch mechanism will work smoothly. If the key/lock is stiff to operate then please check that the drop bolt is in the correct position, if it isn't lift the drop bolt and move the gates slightly so that the bolt can be put into the metal tube in the road.

Thank you to Simon for researching and designing the gate lock system, and to Steve and Michael for installing it.

SECURITY



It has been noticed that the gates are being left open occasionally, possibly so that someone else can come in a little bit later. Please do not do this as it makes the allotments vulnerable to theft and fly tipping. If you open the height barrier for any reason please close it after you have come through as the vehicle gate cannot be shut unless the height barrier is closed. The correct alignment of the gates relies on the closed height barrier.

If you need an extra gate key for your partner or co-worker they are available from the shop or the committee at £5 each.

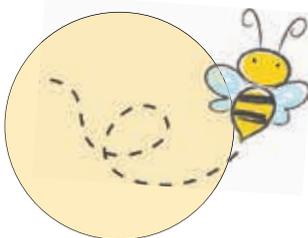
FLY TIPPING on the East Side

We have now had 2 separate reports of vans coming onto the east side, often at dusk, and depositing rubbish in the waste bays. If you happen to be on either side and see people depositing rubbish suspiciously then could you please make a note of the registration number and if you can, photograph it. Please send any information to the committee.

To improve security further we are also planning to change the height barrier padlocks shortly. If you have a genuine need for a height barrier key (i.e. your normal vehicle is over 2m high) please contact the committee.



The APIARY in *Spring*



As you will have noticed, the weather at the time of writing this article (31st March) has been sunny and lovely! So our bees have been able to get out in their hundreds to do their cleansing flights, to



do foraging flights for pollen and nectar and also to gather water as they need water to help regulate the temperature inside their hives plus they use water to moisten older stores of honey so they can eat it.

We as beekeepers can soon plan to do our first Spring inspection of the hives, meaning that we can have a quick look on a warm day to check that the Queen is still present and laying eggs, that there is enough food and pollen stores, and to check for any

bee diseases. Then by May we are on high alert, as this is typically the season for the first swarms to issue from hives. May and June are classic months for us to be super aware of the possibility of swarming, which tends to cause panic and mayhem in the general population! I thought this was a good time to explain a bit about swarms and what you can do if you ever see one.

Firstly.... DON'T PANIC! I will explain why shortly. Understanding why bees swarm is helpful. Swarming is nature's way for the honey bee colony to make increase. Although the Queen bee will laying thousands of eggs each month, this will only make an increase WITHIN each hive, so does not help the honey bee as an colony expand and thrive. If, however, a colony can split into (at least) two parts then they can indeed expand. So imagine a beekeeper looks in their hive in May, and finds a special type of cell called a Queen cell. It looks different from other cells as it hangs down from the comb (frame) resembling a short thumb. Then that beekeeper knows that the hive is intending to swarm and has to take preventative action. **As soon as we see even the smallest start of a Queen cell we will do a manipulation called "artificial swarm control". We do this by finding the original Queen (often easier said than done given the hive can have 50,000 bees in it!), taking her carefully out and placing her into a small hive called a Nucleus box.** We then add more frames of bees and some honey stores and this gives the hive the impression that they have swarmed although actually we have managed the swarming artificially. Then we have to go back through the original parent hive to choose one good Queen cell which will develop into the new reigning Queen, then check each and every other frame of bees in case they have made more Queen cells, as if we miss one then the hive may still swarm.





We all do our very best not to lose a swarm as if we do, we lose our honey crop that year and lots of our bees. When a swarm leaves the hive, about half the adult bees leave with the existing Queen. They will settle quickly on a nearby tree or similar. Then “scout” bees will be sent out as they try to find a suitable new home. These scout bees are quite particular. They know the height from the ground that they ideally want and even know the internal ideal dimensions. As scout bees return to the clustering swarm they will “dance” on the surface of the swarm to pass on information and at

some point a consensus is reached and the swarm will all take off together to follow the scout leader to set up in a new home.



Although seeing a swarm for the first time can scare people, in actual fact this is the time most bees are at their calmest as all they want is to protect the Queen in the cluster centre and to find a new home. You can sometimes see pictures of beekeepers who place their bare hands right into a gathered swarm, knowing how calm they will be!

What should you do if you see a swarm? Apart from not panicking.....bear in mind that bees do not have good sight but do notice flapping motions. So simply keeping still and not waving your hands around will help. Or calmly and quietly move away into your shed or greenhouse if you have one. Also bees do not have ears so cannot hear but DO feel vibrations so again keeping calm and quiet means they are far less likely to investigate you!

Finally, you can always contact our Swarm collector, John Clarke, who both co ordinates swarm collecting and comes out to collect swarms as needed. His mobile will soon be up on the notice-boards and he is on 07835 322 771. Swarms that are collected are then passed on to beekeepers on a waiting list as in effect it means they get free bees!

I am always happy to be asked or contacted about bees so you can also call me if needed on 07946 759 551. I would ask of course that both John and my numbers are used with respect as they are our personal ones, thank you.

So I hope this has given you some insight into the swarm process and reassured you that we do our best to prevent swarms happening in the first place. It is impossible to guarantee that we will never lose a swarm of course (and we know of several other hives kept by nearby beekeepers in their own gardens) but now you have more information on what to expect and what you can do to help. Remember that the association between humans and honey bees has been going strong for many centuries!

As ever thanks to all who care about the bees and to those growing pollinator friendly plants. Enjoy your Spring!

Best wishes Alison

WASTE BAYS

We are very lucky to have this facility at Martin Way as other allotments do not have collections as they are so expensive. The green waste bay should only have woody and green material that you cannot compost on your plot. Please do not put leafy waste and soil from your plot on the pile as this must be kept and composted on your plot. A number of plots are low lying and can be prone to flooding, and this is made worse if soil, such as seen in the photo on the green waste bay, is removed from the plot.



Spreading your compost on the plot will help build up the level, improve your soil condition and will help keep the green waste pile small. A proposal from the committee at the AGM will be that each plot will need to have at least one compost area/bin/pile. Did you

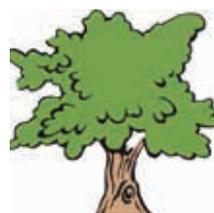


know that anything put on the non-green waste goes to the incinerator at Beddington Lane? If you have glass, cans or plastic containers which you could put in your domestic recycling, this is a better option for the environment and again helps to keep the non-green pile smaller.

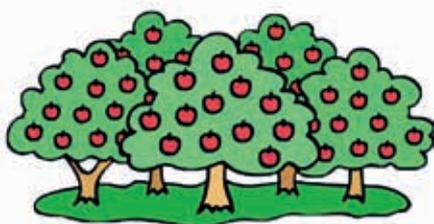
Any glass panes or broken glass need to be wrapped in an old compost bag or similar to avoid getting shards of glass all over the car park when the digger scoops it out of the pile. We have been told that IdVerde will now be clearing the bays every other month so please put the stuff as far back as you can and remember not to put anything man made in the green pile.

COMMUNITY ORCHARD TREES

The plot at the corner of the road on the west side is an orchard for the use and enjoyment of all plot holders. The fruit from the trees is there for all to use. We will be putting up signage, opening up some access points and separating it from adjoining plots in order to make its communal status more obvious. We will keep the fence along the road to prevent cars cutting the corner.



We have had quite a lot of tree work done in February, partly to enable the fence installation where trees had been allowed to grow on the boundary but also on many plots where non-productive trees had been allowed to grow. This work was necessary so that plots could be let for cultivation. Taking out oaks, self-seeded ash and wild cherries cost us all a significant amount and without these measures eventually means that a plot cannot be used for its intended purpose. Please do not allow non-productive trees to take root on or around your plot. Please also read the guidelines for the dwarf root stocks for fruit trees on the allotments before you plant one.



Possible AGM in June

(if Government guidelines allow)

We hope to be able to have an open air AGM on Sunday June 27th if we are legally allowed. With that in mind would you please consider volunteering to help run our Allotments. There are various roles that need filling as over the past year several people have stepped down from the committee due to family commitments and we are in dire need of new people to contribute to the running of our self-managed society. Peter Flintoff, our Treasurer for many years, is stepping down and has provided a job description.

We need the following committee members for these roles:



If you are interested in finding out what these jobs entail please email the committee and we will send you a job description.

committee@maga.org.uk

We are intending to send out 'Resolutions' for members to consider and to discuss at the AGM. The email consultations about expenditure proved very successful. Many more people engaged by replying and giving opinions than would normally have attended an AGM. We will send out information about 'Resolutions' shortly.

CHILDREN on the Allotments

Please keep your children safe on your plot. The allotments is a large area with many hazards such as glass, metal stakes, ponds, ditches, etc which are not always obvious. It is very easy for children to be quickly out of your sight. Please bring them to enjoy your plot but do not let them run around the site, it is not a playground. Please be considerate of your neighbours.

DOGS on the Allotments

There have been a number of complaints about dogs wandering around and dog mess on plots/paths on east side. There



were holes in some of the fences to Botsford Road where dogs could get in, which have now been covered by the new fencing. One householder had a hole in the fence which was uncovered for the dog to come in to the allotments and this has been blocked off.

You are very welcome to bring your dog to your plot but they must be kept under control and on a lead unless on your plot. If your dog has a tendency to wander off from you and your plot, then you must keep them on a lead and always clean up after them.

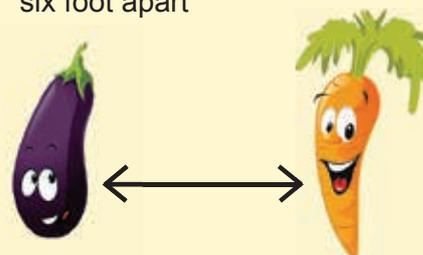
Table by the SHOP



This table is for sharing plants and garden related items with your fellow plot holders. Your excess plants and produce, pre-loved tools and garden magazines are all very much appreciated. There is also a crate beside the table for recycling plastic pots/trays. Please don't put household items/goods on this table as we end up having to take them away.

ALLOTMENT

she said
explained
to him
patiently
very patiently
and slowly
no I do not
think that
you actually
need to plant
all the vegetables
six foot apart



because of the
Covid restrictions
but right to
worry love

cuppa?



pmcmanus

s722



Merton Garden Streets - poster



Let's make Merton more bee-friendly!



LET'S TURN OUR STREETS GREEN!

From Mitcham to Morden to Merton Park, let's make our streets green



We want to help residents plant up their streets with bee-friendly flowers and shrubs: in front gardens, under street trees, in window boxes, hanging baskets and on top of bike/bin sheds.

Greener streets help reduce urban flooding, keep us cool in hot months, filter pollution, benefits wildlife and improves our wellbeing.

Everyone welcome -- no gardening experience or knowledge required.

To take part, find out if your street is registered via the web site and get in touch with your street coordinator (and get planting!). If it hasn't, register your street at the link below to become a street coordinator-- get a few neighbours to join in too.

We can provide some plants and compost to make the scheme accessible to all, but you are encouraged to provide your own.

Small prizes to be won in a number of creative categories.

COMMUNITY PLANTING DAYS:

15th May 19th June 17th July

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Go to the website:
www.frontgardenfriendly/Mertongardenstreets

Join our Facebook Group:
Merton Garden Streets

Instagram:
MertonGardenStreets

Twitter:
@ClimateMerton

Kindly Sponsored By:



Thank you to B&Q Merton Store for their support



Merton Garden Streets is a community-led project of the Merton Climate Action Group; a community partnership taking forward climate action projects together with Merton Council



Encourage **POLLINATING** Insects (Bee Bus Stops and Insect Friendly Flowers)



It is important for us to consider the homes of the creatures that once inhabited our cities. Since the 1970's it has been shown that 41% of all U.K. insects has declined.

So what can be done about it ? How can we make a difference ?



Utrecht council in Holland in 2019 collaborated with Clear Channel (they are a media owner and specifically roadside posters and bus stops) and they have transformed 310 bus stops into '**BEE BUS STOPS**'.



Most of our cities will have bus stops so how difficult would it be to find sponsors in every city in the U.K. The local community could form groups of volunteers to plant and maintain the sites so no cost to the local council. What do you think? Is it such a stupid idea? Think of all the benefits it will bring to the pollinating insects including bees.

I leave the thought with you.

Meanwhile if you want to be a friend to the insects you could consider planting one or more of these plants:

Pussy Willow • Chives • Comfrey • Laburnum • Geraniums • Foxgloves • Wallflowers • Buddlia
Field Scabious • Marjoram • Catmint • Lavender • Alliums • BlackBerry • Crocus • Snowdrops &
Crocus (*bulbs*) • Forget me nots (*annual*) • Cosmos (*annual*) • Borage (*annual*)
Echinacea (*perennial*) • Phacelia (*annual plus a green manure!*) • Ivy • Ice plants

Not an exclusive list and you will have your own favourites, but whatever you plant will benefit the polinating insects.

For planting ideas try visiting the web sites of beehappyplants.co.uk and the BBKA (British Bee Keepers Association).

