

Newsletter Spring 2020

Guildford Allotments Society
PO Box 1081
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Message from the Editor

Many of you like ourselves are social distancing at home due to our age. However we are very fortunate in being able to access our allotment directly from our back gate, so we are able to get our daily exercise on our allotment or in the garden. No excuses for me this year, for not keeping my allotment up to scratch as we have gone from full diaries to completely empty ones. Now that the weather has finally brightened up after the dismal wet winter there is much to look forward to as we prepare the ground and sow our seeds.

However, depending on how long the social distancing continues I will miss having the grandchildren 'help' me on the plot - they enjoy picking the beans and of course the soft fruit (most of which they eat immediately). They also enjoy seeing all the wildlife - the different insects, butterflies and birds and the occasional slowworm. I hope you are all able to get to your allotments and enjoy them.

GAS website

Those of you who look at our website will have realised that it is not very up to date with current news and events in GAS. Do you have skills in maintaining and updating websites? and would you be prepared to use these skills for GAS? You don't have to be on the committee to do this but it would be helpful if you could attend some of the committee and warden meetings. **Interested?** Contact Philippa for more details.

GAS AGM

You will be aware from our Chairman's accompanying letter that the AGM has been postponed until 30 September. Information on the AGM will be in the Summer Newsletter which, all being well, you should receive at the end of

August. The AGM date will of course be subject to advice at that time from the government.

Please also consider joining the committee to help run GAS. We always need more assistance, and if you aren't sure how you can help, email or phone Philippa, our chairman. Normally we would invite you to come to a committee meeting to see how we operate; but at present GAS business is being done by emails and telephone calls.

Current Advice on Coronavirus

We hope that you have all seen or are aware of the guidelines from the National Allotment Society and Guildford Allotments Society. Please follow them. Here is the latest from NAS:

Covid 19 Emergency Measures

The National Allotment Society is working to provide clarity for our members on what the virus outbreak and ensuing impacts will mean for Allotment Holders. As more information becomes available, we will be updating our advice to our members, please read the Q & A below (as of 8 April 2020) on how the outbreak is affecting Allotment Sites and their use.

NAS Q & A On Allotments and Social Distancing

Protect yourself and your family

We are all living through a crisis, the likes of which the country has not experienced since war time. The community spirit that exists on allotment sites is now vitally important. Please remember to look out for one another during these very difficult times and take all the steps you can to reduce the risk of contagion from the Covid- 9 virus when you visit the plot.

Covid-19 - The virus that causes Covid-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. The droplets are too heavy to hang

in the air and they quickly fall and contaminate floors and surfaces.

Smaller airborne particles can remain in the air for some time. You can be infected by breathing in the virus if you are within close proximity of a person who has Covid-19 - hence the 2m social distancing requirement, or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands.

Can I still work my allotment during the Covid19 lockdown?

Yes, allotments are a great way of both getting exercise and obtaining food during this crisis.

Can I visit the allotment with my family?

Yes, government guidelines state that you can exercise with members of your household.

GAS ruling on this is "Access to this site is reserved for registered tenants, co-workers and those with special permission from Guildford Allotments Society or the Warden". Therefore, you need to inform the Warden who the members of your household are that will be joining you on the plot. Also please note NAS comment below.

Why then is the NAS suggesting that we consider going alone to the plot?

This is just a suggestion and plot-holders can decide for themselves but we are looking at the bigger picture and concerned about the risk of sites being shut – as they have been in Ireland and France. If some plot-holders are happy to visit alone or stay away for a few weeks that reduces this risk.

How long can I stay at the plot?

Government Ministers have suggested that an hour's walk is reasonable and asked us all to limit time spent outside the home. The Society believes that if you are using your plot for daily exercise it would be reasonable to spend an hour or two doing the jobs that need doing for that day and then to return home.

How can I ensure my family's and everyone else's safety at the plot?

Do not attend the plot if you have coronavirus symptoms or a family member is self-isolating

- Take a flask of hot water, soap and paper towels to the plot with you (cold water will work too).
- Use hand sanitiser (should be 60% alcohol

content) before entering the site and opening any gate locks

- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds after closing the lock, dry with a paper towel
- The most effective part of hand washing is the drying using preferably paper towel to remove the layer of dead skin scales - on which virus and bacteria sit. **Paper towels should be taken home for disposal.**
- DO NOT touch your face after using anything that has been touched by other people- use an elbow to work the push taps.
- Wash your hands again for 20 seconds, dry with a paper towel before opening and closing the lock to leave the site
- Use hand sanitiser after closing the lock
- Wash hands when you get home
- DO NOT gather together for a chat even if you are 2 metres apart
- Observe "Social Distancing" with each other 2-3 metres
- If you take your children to the plot, ensure that they stay within its confines and do not run around on communal paths and spaces.
- Do not share tools
- Do not wash your hands in water troughs

Can I drive to my allotment?

We do not have an overall answer to this question. Some police forces are clamping down on non-essential travel, some have said that a short drive to the plot is permitted if there is no other choice, others are still enforcing the prohibition on driving to exercise. Walk to the plot if at all possible and do not take public transport. **STOP PRESS Government recently announced driving to exercise is permitted provided the drive time is shorter than the exercise time**

What about if I have hens or other livestock to care for at the plot? **GAS only has bees**

Animal welfare considerations mean that this would be seen as essential travel even if further movement restrictions are put in place.

What changes should Allotment Associations make to site management?

Pin up information about social distancing and hygiene on a notice board or the gate.

Undertake risk assessments and take appropriate action to reduce hazards around any areas of the site that could cause contagion e.g. communal water troughs, taps, and gate locks.

The NAS does have further detailed information on risk assessments and the duty of care for Self-Managed Associations please email natsoc@nsalg.org.uk if this is required.

All communal facilities including toilets should be closed

It is essential that no un-authorized people are allowed onto the plots for the duration of this emergency, if you do wish to bring someone to assist with work on the plot, please ensure that that this is notified either to the Secretary or Site Manager. Careful consideration should be given to introducing anyone over 70, those with underlying illness or pregnant women.

Shops - those Associations who operate shops should close or put an on-line scheme in place. Where goods are ordered by email, payment is electronic and goods are placed out for collection.

Bonfires - Could those Associations who allow bonfires all year round ask people to consider their neighbours and not burn anything during this Covid-19 emergency. Many sites are surrounded by houses where vulnerable people may be getting their only bit of fresh air through an open window.

Plot inspections and allocations should be postponed until they can be done safely and within government guidelines

It is likely that a percentage of plot-holders will be unable to visit their plots, perhaps a buddy system could be put in place, untended plots could at least be covered.

The latest NAS advice can be found via this QR code:



Government advice about the Coronavirus is updated on a regular basis at this link.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

HOWEVER please check your site noticeboards, with your site wardens, or look at the GAS website for any changes to this advice about allotments.



Last year GAS had over 80 entries and 10 achieved the Gold Award. Les and Stella Hind, gold award winners, were judged **Best in the Allotment Category** for the third year running - and were awarded **Overall Guildford in Bloom Winners!** At the Wardens meeting in January Les was presented with a filled hanging basket and a Garden Centre Voucher.

Many Congratulations Les and Stella!



Congratulations to all our Gold Award Winners!

Les and Stella Hind	Burpham
Christine Allen	Larch
Halow Project	Lido
John Steer	Larch
Peter and Janice Sedgwick	Burpham
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School	

Aldershot Road

Tom and Heather Hall	Dagley Lane
Alex Colbert	Merrow Street
Charlotte Waitt and Ian Knee	Burpham
Julie and Peter Lee	Burpham
Russ Pickin	Epsom Road

Also special congratulations to Dagley Lane (Warden Peter Morley) which won a gold award for **Best Neighbourhood Project.**

Guildford in Bloom 2020

At the time of writing a decision had not been made on the format of the 2020 Competition due to the restrictions of Covid-19. Please check the GBC or GAS websites, your site wardens and noticeboards for details when available.

Bellfields Redevelopment

Submission for permission to close the Bellfields Allotment site was made by Guildford Borough Council to the Secretary of State at the end of January. His response is not expected at least until the end of April. The Council are confident it will be granted and have been continuing their surveys despite the fact the GAS have requested that Council employees should not visit the site (except for some emergency) during the Coronavirus restrictions. **Philippa Wright**

Bellfields tenants continue to campaign against the planned closure and have submitted a comprehensive, and detailed objection to the Secretary of State. Their Facebook page is enjoying national coverage and support. The report from the National Allotment Society which is a statutory requirement in any case of disposal of allotment land is likely to support the Bellfields tenants' submission. Even if the Secretary of State approves the GBC request NAS may choose to challenge that decision as they have done in other similar cases. **Alastair Watson**

Help your fellow allotmenters at Bellfields

The Bellfield tenants want to cheer themselves up as they prepare to leave their beloved site. They want to scatter flower seeds on all the empty spaces so the colourful array will make the emptying plots less sorrowful.



Please donate any flower seeds that you have, even out of date ones, and let us make Bellfields beautiful! Please post them to the Warden Simon Fear, 9 Stoughton Road, Guildford.

Selling Produce.

Please remember that selling produce grown on your plots is strictly forbidden and will lead to immediate eviction from your plot.

Allotment Shop - Reminder

Some of you may not be aware of the Allotment shop at the Bellfields site. The shop sells a wide range to meet your gardening and allotment needs - seed potatoes, onion sets, seeds, fertilisers, compost, bamboo canes etc etc etc. Since late 2018 the shop has been run by Peter Fitzpatrick who took over from Wally. The shop is usually open every Sunday morning 10 -12 between mid-February and the end of October.

However due to difficulties of people maintaining the 2 metre distance when visiting the shop it has been decided that it will remain open but on an appointment basis only. Anyone wanting supplies should call Peter on 07745 753690 to arrange a convenient time. All customers must follow whatever guidelines Peter then gives.

New Woodside Road Allotment Site

In February the Council held a drop in day to show the plans for the **Woodside Road Allotment Site, adjacent to the Aldershot Road site**. The plans were well received by those that came. The work was due to start in June, once Planning Permission was granted, but this now remains to be seen due to the restrictions. However, GAS persuaded the Council to do the tree clearance for the bee plots on the Aldershot Road site and this was done in time for the bees to settle before the Summer and before the restrictions came into play.

Philippa Wright

Rewilding or Poor Management!

As allotment holders we not only want fresh produce but are more likely to have an interest in the wildlife around us and want to encourage it and the environment generally.

By growing our own fruit, veg and/or flowers we are already doing a great deal towards reducing carbon emissions and improving the natural uptake of carbon. However, we cannot just let our plots go wild for the sake of the environment. Our plots, to be in accordance with our tenancy agreements, must be cultivated and kept in good order. Whilst wildlife love nettles and brambles it is not appropriate for these to grow wild on our plots.

However, it might be possible on some sites to find areas of land that are not let as plots that would be suitable for a bit of rewilding. A small corner could maybe have some small logs and twigs in a pile to encourage hedgehogs and insects. As mentioned above, stinging nettles are much loved by butterflies but can have most unpleasant consequences for humans. However, an out of the way area may be given over to nettles provided the roots are contained and not allowed to spread on to the plots. The same applies to brambles – they all need to be kept under control.

Or maybe you have a spot for a pond, a unique biodiversity source. Nationally about two thirds of Britain's freshwater plants and animals can be found in ponds. Frogs will find a pond at breeding time and supply a natural predator for slugs and snails. There is a good variety of plants available but why not go for one of the protected species like starfruit or adders-tongue spearwort? And remember ponds must have suitable protection to stop children falling in!

If you are using chemical pesticides you might consider what it is and what it might do to the plant. Would you really want to eat it? There are a number of natural alternatives available from garden centres and on the internet plus there are many that you can make at home, for example soap spray for aphids and whitefly. Again the internet has a number of suggestions. It is appreciated that these home remedies may not be as effective as the chemicals but are much kinder to the environment.

The same applies to fertilisers. These can run off into the water supply as well as damage the soil as recognised in the recent Agricultural Policy published by the Government. Soil condition is becoming the next environment subject. Fortunately, most allotment holders are more likely to use natural compost and mulch.

GAS wants to encourage environmental schemes on its sites. However, rewilding requires careful planning and management in order to make sure it is effective and appropriate to the area. Let the committee know of any schemes you may want to take up.

Philippa Wright

News from your allotment sites

Your committee are always pleased to hear about social and community events held on our allotment sites. Here are a selection of pictures from events held last summer and autumn:

Bellfields



In October last year tenants on the Bellfields site had a clear up weekend

Burpham

Burpham Tenants Brave Storm Dennis for Pruning Demonstrations.

Despite the wind and rain from Storm Dennis. 20 Burpham Tenants turned out to learn more of the dark art of Winter Fruit Tree Pruning over two weekends.

We are lucky enough at Burpham to have Mike Beckwith as a tenant who was trained at RHS Wisley and Merrist Wood.



He then went on to spend his entire working life as a horticulturalist.

He agreed to impart some of his extensive knowledge and experience to other tenants as regards pruning apple and pear trees in winter. There were so many applicants for these demonstrations that we had to split into two groups so that everyone could see and hear.

We were lucky enough on the Saturday morning group to time the lesson in a lull in Storm Dennis, the rain even stayed off until after the coffee and cake. The Sunday morning group was not so lucky it was blowing a hoolie and pouring with heavy rain, the roads to the allotments were flooded so we were forced to delay until the following Saturday, when Mike gave another interesting display followed by coffee, chocolate

biscuits and chocolate cake kindly baked by one of the tenants.

All the attendees agreed it was a very useful exercise. Its all very well reading about how to prune, but having someone show you and answer questions made it all much more understandable.

A vote of thanks was sent from all attendees to Mike Beckwith for giving up his time, and we have also bent his arm into continuing this lesson by giving a follow up on Summer Apple and Pear Pruning at the relevant time. You never know we may even persuade him to cover soft fruit like gooseberries and blackcurrants too if there is enough demand.

Mike Flarry

Dagley Lane



Another clear up by the warden and tenants and a bonfire on November 3rd.

Larch Avenue

Larch Avenue site held it's 2nd successful Barbecue of the year in August. The weather was kind to us on the day with Les Daubney, Leon Steward and myself arriving at 10-00 o'clock to start setting everything up. What was good to see, was the tenants arriving early, eager to mingle and enjoy themselves plus 4 visiting wardens.

Once the barbecue was fired up Mark Daubney set about cooking; there were a good selection of meats to choose from, Burgers, Chicken, Chipolata Sausages ordinary Sausages, Sliced Cheese and chopped Peppers and Onions to top them off with and finished of with some lovely home made cakes donated by Jan Osgood - you could say we were spoilt for choice.

Unfortunately the live Country and Western band that was booked, failed to turn up, due to unforeseen circumstances. Luckily for us Brian

Blackwell had his guitar in the back of his car and provided us with some good music which everybody joined in the singing.

We held a raffle with some prizes donated, a £20-00 voucher for Kings Seeds, a tin of biscuits and various bottles of wines. All in all there were about 45 people in attendance and a few children who thoroughly enjoyed playing games with one another.

The day finished of at 8-30 pm with everybody having had a thoroughly enjoyable day. Funds raised from the barbecue are going to be used to finish of our Communal Shed Project.

A big "Thank You" to Les for organising it.

John Steer



Wardens and tenants at Larch Avenue have also been busy building a new patio area outside the toilet and communal shed project which will be completed in 2020. In front of the communal shed area, the patio border is going to be planted up with some lovely Lavender plants so as to attract our little friends the bees, all in the name of nature conservation.

John Steer



Finally from Larch a photo from Alastair Watson, of vines recently planted for all the Larch community to enjoy.

Lido

Welcome to our new warden - Dylan Thomas and Assistant warden - Vicky Russell.

Dylan reported a surprising find on his plot: Today digging over my plot, I found some

interesting items as you do when clearing a site and digging it over. Today's find was 5 coins. These were buried 4/5 inches deep in a very rotten purse that couldn't be saved. Also found in a small pond type area were 7 mussels. Not sure what else I'm going to find but everything comes in 3s as they say.

After a little research the coins were identified as 5x £5 coins minted for the 2002 jubilee celebrations.

Dylan Thomas



Merrow



John Thomas, Chris Rzechorzek, Ross Rzechorzek
Photograph Melissa Pickering

Merrow Street site had their annual BBQ and skittles evening on Saturday 20 July. It was attended by over 30 people and everyone enjoyed themselves. We held a raffle and the skittles was won by Vinu. We held a draw for a vacant shed. This was won by Sarani.

The weather was kind to us – thankfully!

Chris Rzechorzek



On 9 March - Mrs Stephanie Friend-Smith (a plot holder at Merrow Street and teacher at Bushy Hill School) came to our site with another teacher and 11 pupils. The pupils were divided into twos

and threes. Some helped Stephanie plant peas. Three boys helped me plant sunflower seeds, two girls helped tidy up our bark section, two pupils helped Alison Hewson by preparing the soil and planting onion sets and two pupils helped Tina Minns with tidying up her recently acquired plot.

The children were all very polite and well behaved and it was a pleasure to have them on site. They may come back in the summer to see the fruits of their labours. Stephanie asked if we could accommodate the children yesterday for a couple of hours as this week is mental health awareness week at the school. They all had a good time and were very grateful to us for allowing them to visit.

Chris Rzechorzek

Correct Cultivation of Allotment Plots

Tenants are expected to keep their plots in good order throughout the year. Plots should generally be kept tidy, well cultivated with surrounding paths regularly trimmed. Tenants should not bring carpet, rubber tyres, old baths or kitchen waste to their plot. Plots should be kept free from rubbish.

GAS is responsible to Guildford Borough Council for maintaining all sites in a good condition. Therefore the following procedures are in place for ensuring responsible tenancies.

1. The Warden has the authority to report to the GAS Committee any plot on their site that is showing signs of neglect at any time of the year.
2. GAS arranges annual inspections in May/June. Wardens are notified in advance of the exact date.
3. The Inspector will record that each plot is either:
 - Good Condition
 - Needs Improvement
 - First warning – this is given if (a) the plot is deemed “needs to Improve” and the tenant received a “Needs to Improve” notice the previous year or (b) there are no signs of cultivation and grass and weeds are growing. The tenant will be given 21 days to improve their plot.
 - Final Warning – this is given if (a) no response is made to the First Warning

within the given time frame or (b) if the plot is deemed a First Warning and the tenant had been issued a "First Warning" the previous year. The tenant will be given 15 days to improve their plot.

4. GAS will terminate the tenancy if there has been no response from the tenant or no progress has occurred by the end of the Final Warning 15 days. The tenant will receive a notice of eviction.

However if you are unwell and/or unable to keep your plot in good condition - please let your warden know.

FORBIDDEN ITEMS

The following items are not allowed on our sites:

ASBESTOS



CARPETS



FOOD WASTE



BATHS



CAR TYRES



UPDATE YOUR DETAILS WITH GAS

Please remember to let the Secretary know if any of your contact details have changed as trying to contact you can take an enormous amount of time and all the committee are volunteers giving our time to help run GAS. For example last year 54 reminders had to be sent out for non payment of invoices by the required date. This took **6 hours of work**.....

Who to contact at GAS

Your site notice boards have details of your warden's email and contact details; please contact them initially with any queries you have.

If you need to contact the committee, details are as follows for queries relating to:

Existing tenancy matters, security and general enquiries:

secretary@guildfordallotments.org.uk

Invoices

treasurer@guildfordallotments.org.uk

Waiting list and new tenancies:

waitinglist@guildfordallotments.org.uk

There is also information on the website:

www.guildfordallotments.org.uk

Please do not copy your emails to everyone on the committee; and remember we are all volunteers and are unlikely to be able to respond to you immediately.

When you contact the committee please give your full name, plot number and site name.

Many of the contact details given in the newsletter and above, use email addresses, however we know that some of you don't have access to email. Please contact us at:

Guildford Allotments Society

PO Box 1081

Guildford, GU1 9HU

Next newsletter

The next newsletter will be available late summer. Please send any contributions, articles, letters, gardening tips, comments etc to the editor – Jean Wickens - by mid July
jeanpwickens@gmail.com

Community Seed Swop

GAS has been contacted by Michael Knight to ask whether any of our tenants would be interested in joining a community seed swapping website that he had recently launched?

The website is www.seedswap.org.uk and it's purpose is to facilitate the swapping and exchange of heritage/open pollinated seeds (not hybrids). It's aim is to promote the practice of seed saving in Great Britain in much the same way as 'face to face' seed swaps do but doing it online instead. The website is free to use.