

RESERVOIR DIGS

Stuart Road Allotment Society Newsletter



NEWS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the spring newsletter. I hope everyone is looking forward to another year of growing. We will be having our Annual General Meeting (AGM) this year on Sunday 17th March 2024, at 10am. The venue will be The Hut on-site, same as last year.

The AGM is an opportunity to get together and meet other plotholders. During the meeting we review the previous year, elect or re-elect officer positions and committee members. The AGM is also your chance to debate and vote on changes to the rules and site management practices. Stuart Road Allotments is a democratic place: motions to introduce a new rule or amend existing rules can be proposed by any named plotholder. Everyone who attends on the 17th March has a vote in approving or rejecting those proposals.

So this is a great chance to get together and have your say in how the site is run. We are always striving to make the allotments truly representative of all of our members and love hearing new ideas.

If you would like to submit a motion to the AGM, there are three options:-

- You can send it to the site email address: stuartroadallotmentsociety@gmail.com.
- You can post it to our registered address: Stuart Road Allotments, 347A Ivydale Road, London SE15 3ED.
- You can put a copy in the letterbox of The Hut, which is also the entrance to the Shop (please don't put it in the letter boxes at the gates as we don't check these very often and things get very damp in there!).

Please word your motion in the following format:-

"I move that the Society agrees to adopt the following... [and then your suggestion in straightforward language in no more than one short paragraph]". If you want help or are uncertain about what you are proposing, please do ask one of the Committee members in person or email us.

Note that we are unable to accept motions during the meeting itself on the 17th. Therefore please submit your motion by 29th February, 2024

The Committee will be putting forward a motion this year to increase the penalty for late rent payments. We are a big site and collecting rent every weekend in September takes up a lot of our resources. All Committee work is voluntary; no one is paid for these efforts.

There are four or five opportunities for rent payment in September. Chasing non-payers in October and beyond is time-consuming and can be avoided. We therefore propose to increase the penalty for late payment to £30 for a half plot and £60 for a full plot. So if you forget to pay your rent in September, the total cost will be £60 (half) and £120 (full). This motion will be voted on at the AGM.

I hope to see lots of you there on 17th March.

Midge Cameron, Chair

STOCK UP FOR SPRING GROWING

As we inch closer to spring, here is a quick update from your favourite spot – the Allotment Shop!

We are now stocking fruit bushes and dwarf-stock fruit trees, starting from £9. We have ten varieties of potato for chitting, including three First Earlies and four salad potatoes, starting from £1.50 a kilo. There are three types of onion sets, including Red Baron and Pink Panther, as well as garlic bulbs and shallots.

Now is the time to get all of these fruit bushes and root vegetables into the ground, before the soil starts to warm and dry.

Many of you will be itching to begin growing your own from seed at home or on-site here. We have a wide range of seeds just delivered. If there is anything you don't see on the shelves, please ask and we will try to order it in.

Plotholders are encouraged to save each other money by leaving spare packets of seeds in the shop for free exchange. We will be having another big seed swap after the Annual General

Meeting on 17th March.

Before then, we will be hosting a tea and coffee morning on 25th February. This is going to be a regular event, on the last Sunday of each month, where plotholders can come and have a cosy chat, eat cake and share their gardening tips and experience. Recent gatherings such as the Potato Fair have been a great success in this regard, thanks to barista Alan Downes' hard work and the excellent cakes plotholders have brought in.

Steve Sheppard



Shallots of choice In the shop

WHO CAN GROW THE BIGGEST PUMPKIN?



This year The Shop is hosting a competition to grow the largest pumpkin on site!

This is a friendly competition that is open to all.

Each plotholder is welcome to come into The Shop and claim one free seed.

We will all be growing the same variety from the same batch: Atlantic Giant, for which the current world record is 1,247kg.

Good luck to all participants!

HAVE YOUR SAY! ALLOTMENT SURVEY

We are now conducting an annual survey of plotholders. This is to better understand what you want more or less of on site. From last year's survey, the most popular request was for wholesale delivery of manure, which is now happening. We have had 22 tonnes already this winter. There is one more load to come before the growing season starts.

Plotholders wanted to see longer opening times in The Shop. Although it remains limited to Sunday mornings for now, Steve Sheppard is doing a terrific job expanding the range on offer and acting on ideas from customers. The Shop has sold over 130kg of potatoes for chitting in February alone. There is more to come, so thanks to Steve and all the volunteers.

In terms of communication, we are doing far more by email now because it allows for rapid response – 82 of you filled in last year's survey electronically. We have also started two voluntary WhatsApp groups. The first is for plotholders generally to exchange produce, tools and ideas on growing. The second is specifically for anyone who wants to help with communal growing of new plants in the Polytunnels (*see story on page 3*).

In terms of waste management, please note there is a shredder available to all in The Workshop (*see Tools R Us, page 3*). We also hope to have more talks in The Hut to educate plotholders about what can and cannot go on their compost.

This year's survey will be distributed shortly by email. Hard copies will also be available in The Shop if you want to respond in writing. We welcome all responses.

TOOLS 'R' US



Richard with the tree loppers

There are several tools in The Workshop available for use by any plotholder. The Workshop is the pale building next to the main Hut.

Tools include extendable loppers for pruning trees and a strimmer for keeping paths tidy. There is also an electric-powered shredder for branches up to four centimetres in diameter. This has to be operated next to The Workshop and the shredded material has to be taken away by the plotholder (we do not yet have communal bins for organic or non-organic material).

These tools have been purchased by the Allotment Society to enable plotholders to keep the site tidy. They are free to use, apart from the strimmer. A small donation to pay for its petrol is expected. Later this year, we hope to get a replacement electric model, which will be better in several ways including cost. The tools belong to all. If you wish to borrow them, please see Richard (pictured above) in the Workshop any morning Monday to Saturday from 9am. On Sundays, please ask in the shop.

POLYTUNNEL UPDATE

There are two communal polytunnels on site, situated behind The Hut. Polytunnel 2 is open to all plotholders, any time of year. This is an excellent place to nurture from seed or young plants if you have no space at home or on your own plot.

All you need to do is clearly mark tray or pots with your name and plot number. There is no booking or reservation required, although please note that space is limited to the right-hand side of Polytunnel 2.

The left-hand side, Polytunnel 1 and the greenhouse on plot 8 are used to grow plants and produce for sale in the shop and at the Nunhead Cemetery Open Day in May. If you want to be part of this activity, please go into the shop on a Sunday morning or contact the usual allotment email address: stuartroadallotments@gmail.com

There is another way that plotholders can contribute to these communal efforts. If your growing this season is overly successful, the polytunnel group will gladly take excess plants and produce, either to grow on or sell in the shop. All revenue goes back into improving the site and its services. We are a non-profit organisation.

LEVELLING UP

Many of the shared paths on the Allotments are becoming dangerous to walk on. There is a tendency by plotholders to cut away on the lower side as they turn over and prepare soil. This situation is made worse by the natural slope of the terrain.

Every plotholder's responsibility extends to the paths around their plot. The state of those paths forms part of the monthly inspections. Frail plotholders and those carrying heavy loads in wheelbarrows must be confident that they won't have an accident on uneven ground.

Levelling some paths requires constructing a wooden flank on the lower plot to stop further erosion. Soil or wood chippings can then be used to fill the gap. If you need help with the construction, please contact the Committee: stuartroadallotmentsociety@gmail.com



It is with great sadness that we report the

passing of Remesis (Alvin) Watkins, one of our oldest plotholders, who died on 2nd January from chronic kidney disease. Alvin was a plotholder for more than forty years. Latterly, he shared plot 74 with his daughter, Yvonne.

His style was full soil; no paths or grass. That left more room to grow cucumber, tomatoes, marrow, pumpkins and beans. Alvin always made time for passers-by walking up from the Borland Road gate. He would stop digging, lean on his fork and greet everyone courteously. We will miss him.

WE ARE ALL ARTISTS



Local artist, Andrew Carter, used The Hut throughout autumn as a studio to create linocuts inspired by the allotments. He also held classes for plotholders to learn how to make their own.

The classes were well attended and all the art made was celebrated at a special event in January. We are very grateful to Andrew for his kind teaching and excellent work.

Our next artist-in-residence will be Kim Norton, a plotholder whose creations all come from the nature surrounding us. Some of her work is shown below. Kim's tenure will start in April and details of the classes will be publicised then.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

COFFEE MORNING

Sunday 25th February

The first coffee morning to take place in The Hut. Please bring a cake if you can. Tea, coffee and conversation are free. Open during shop hours, 10-12pm

ALLOTMENT AGM

Sunday 17th March

Our annual general meeting takes place at 10am, and will be followed by a seed swap, organised via The Shop. Everyone is welcome.

NUNEAD CEMETERY DAY

Saturday 18th May

We have a stall booked for the Nunhead Cemetery Open Day. Produce is being prepared in the polytunnels for sale on the day. Volunteers who wish to help raise these plants or transport and sell the plants on the day would be very welcome. Contact stuartroadallotmentsociety@gmail.com

TRIP TO RHS WISLEY

Date to be confirmed

After last year's successful return to Wisley, we will definitely be planning another journey there this summer. The date has not yet been fixed - plotholders will be notified when the date is confirmed.