



# NEWSLETTER

## Looking towards a better Summer.

Associations across Birmingham have spent the last year working hard to support plot holders through the Covid crisis. Now, as the pandemic restrictions begin to loosen, we can all look towards a “more normal” Summer but need to continue to be cautious.

The BDAC has restarted Executive meetings and we are able to visit sites once again when needed.

### Competitions 2021

After a year with no competitions, our plot and site judges are looking forward to visiting sites in July. It is always a privilege to be invited to your sites to give recognition to all the skill, hard work and dedication of plot holders and Associations. Details of the competitions can be found on page 3. If you need entry forms, they are downloadable from our web site <https://bdacallotments.co.uk>

## Dates for your diary

The next **Executive meeting** will be on zoom June 7th  
Meetings starts at 7 p.m.  
(Meetings are generally on the first Monday of the month)

**General Meeting:** Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September at Bordesley Green Allotments starting at 2.00 p.m.

If you wish to attend any meeting as an observer please contact Clive Birch

**BDAC Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Competition**  
Saturday August 14<sup>th</sup>

**National Allotments Week**  
August 9th to August 15<sup>th</sup>

## ALLOTMENTS ARE POPULAR!

There continue to be a surge in interest in allotments and vegetable growing not only here in Birmingham but across the country. If you are new to allotments welcome! This has led to full sites and many community initiatives to enable people to grow locally.

**General Meeting Notice**  
**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021**  
**To be held at**  
**Bordesley Green Allotments**  
**On**  
**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021**  
**Starting at 2.00 p.m.**

Due to the pandemic, we have not been able to hold an AGM. We normally hold it in June every year. September was chosen for 2021 in the hope that all restrictions will be lifted by then and members will be able to attend in person.

## In this edition:

Page 2: Chairman's Comments and Environment challenges

Page 3: Competition information and contacts

Page 4 Best Plot? Thought provoking Article from a Plot holder.

Page 5 Heritage project in honour of a top Iris grower from Harborne Hill Allotments

Page 6: BBC filming on Moor Green Allotments and a chance to win the Shed to be featured in the upcoming TV Drama!

## Chairman's Comments

Hopefully when you read this newsletter the weather will be kinder. We have had no shortage of rain, certainly everything is growing along with the weeds.

BDAC executive has been meeting since February, zooming together. Life is fairly quiet but much industry can be seen on sites. The last 14 months has helped every plot holder who has been able to get to the site. I would like to thank everyone. Forbearance has been so important and I know there has been a great deal of support for those self-isolating. Thank you.

The uptake of allotments has been evident with many sites having waiting lists again!

A positive piece of news was the person fined for fly tipping outside an allotment site.

If you are suffering with fly tipping report it please, if you are lucky you may find evidence of the offenders.

Bonfires are to be allowed in November starting this year. There has certainly been a large increase in complaints this year, maybe more people are at home. It is a help to the environment.

BDAC discussed this at its March meeting and agreed to advise the Allotment Officer to exclude March for burning. Complaints in November are a rarity! Your help will be appreciated.

Insurance has been updated to April 2022. Certificate and details available on our website.

Florence Pickering Fund, I have been advised today (24th May) that the contractor has declined the work and another one has been approached. It is taking too long to get this work done.

Allotment Officer, Bernie, was approached about her work load, she had over 700 emails to catch up at one time, fortunately this has reduced considerably. She is getting some support for parts of her work. We have advised the position of Allotment Officer should be a full-time job with assistance at certain times of the year. I recall being in the allotment's office during rent time, the room was covered in rent related papers and many tenancy agreements, Three experienced people were working to deal with the work.

Let us trust to a successful growing and harvesting year.

Stay safe and well.

Clive Birch

## Impact of Environment Concerns

As Global warming and concerns about the environment grow, we Allotmenters will have to change some of our practices.

Metaldehyde slug pellets will be illegal to use outdoors after March 2022. Although there will be alternatives available that are not damaging to wild life.

The Government are also keen to ban peat in compost so peat-free alternatives will be the norm in a few years' time. Our peatlands are important habitats that store up carbon dioxide in the atmosphere it's hard to understand, but when we use peat, we are releasing Carbon Dioxide in to the atmosphere. Many TV gardening programs are now encouraging us to include wildlife in our planning, making places for hedgehogs, bees and other beneficial insects to come to our gardens. What do you think? Are you actively trying to increase the wildlife in your plot and gardens?

If you have any tips or are starting a project on site please let us know so that we can share your ideas and experiences in our next newsletter due in September.

## BDAC Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Show



The BDAC will be holding a Fruit, flower and vegetable competition this year at Bordesley Green Allotments. Because we were not certain what restriction might be in place, we decided on a scaled down version of our show. There will be fewer competition classes and the big Association stands will be replaced by a **Display of twelve kinds of vegetables and four kinds of fruit** to be displayed in a standard size fruit box ( the type used in supermarkets to display vegetables) The prize money for this starts at £45 for first place reducing to £10 for 6<sup>th</sup> place. This competition is now much more accessible. So, if your Association have never entered before, why not give it a try?

There will also be an **Association Flower Display competition** and many individual classes to enter including ones for children.

To enter download the schedule from our website where you will also find the entry form and instructions of where to send your entries. Alternatively, contact the Show Secretary Derek Cullen on 07476057915 or email Barbara Smith on [bdac.allotments@gmail.com](mailto:bdac.allotments@gmail.com) and request a schedule.

***IMPORTANT message to all those who have already downloaded the schedule note this amendment!***

Important update 21/05/21 for Vegetable Competition Exhibitors.

Schedule change to Exhibitors Access for Vegetable Competition at Bordesley Green.

**Access** to Competition benches for exhibitors from 8.0am Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

- A. Competition Arena will be closed for judging at 4.0pm Friday 13th August 2021.
- B. Only those persons officially appointed shall be present during the judging of exhibits.
- C. No exhibit is to be removed before 5.00pm on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021.
- D. Competition Arena will open to view at 9.00am Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021.
- E. Competition Closes 5.0pm Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

Regards Derek Cullen

***If you haven't entered before have a try, it's fun to take part.***

### Plot and Site Competitions up date

You have until the end of this month- 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 to get your entry forms to Clive for our various Site Competitions.

**The Florence Pickering Trophy competition** for the Best Newcomer to Allotmenting- each Association can enter two plots

**The Cliff Jones Memorial Trophy competition** for the Best Plot -Associations are invited to enter two plots.

**The Thorpe Trophy competition** for the Best site

**The Robins Trophy competition** for the Most Improved Site

**Entry form can be downloaded from our website alternatively email the BDAC using [bdac.allotments@gmail.com](mailto:bdac.allotments@gmail.com)**

#### Contact the BDAC

**Chairman:** Clive Birch phone 0121 354 1512 e-mail: [clivebirch@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:clivebirch@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Secretary:** Barbara Smith phone 07746062410 e-mail : [bdac.allotments@gmail.com](mailto:bdac.allotments@gmail.com)

**Assistant Secretary:** Anne Murphy phone 0121 449 7340

For lots of information visit our Website [www.bdacallotments.co.uk](http://www.bdacallotments.co.uk) Join us on our Facebook page-

BDAC Birmingham allotments <https://www.facebook.com/groups/674161326681373>

Follow us on Twitter [@BDAC\\_allotments](https://twitter.com/BDAC_allotments)

## The Best Plot?

During a recent, brief lunchtime visit to my plot, I was greeted at the main gates by a gas engineer, a member of a team working to lay new pipes underneath the pavement which borders the allotment site. In his gloved hands was curled a sizeable hedgehog which had just been rescued from one of the holes in the pavement. The caring engineer asked if the hedgehog could be placed in relative safety on the allotments, which he/she duly was and as word about our new spiny friend spread around the site, many positive comments and reactions followed, including a committee request to use only hedgehog-friendly pellets in the future.

Just one negative comment ensued, and it is one which has stayed with me. It followed along the lines of having used slug pellets on a plot for the past fifteen years and having never seen a hedgehog during that time, why should he stop now?

It is an indisputable fact that slugs and snails are heart-wrenchingly destructive and can wreak havoc on a plot in just one night. I have been a plot holder for eighteen years and have lost countless brassicas, sunflowers and mesembryanthemums in this way and the list could go on. I have never used slug pellets and had never seen a hedgehog on an allotments site until our new prickly friend arrived.

June is approaching and the thoughts of some plot holders will be focussing on site competitions and adherence to the list of point-earning vegetables, flowers, herbs and fruits which need to be grown in order to be in with a chance of winning a prize. It is not just growing them at the right time that counts, it's how they look, but is any consideration given to how these looks are obtained? How many sprays, pellets and replacement plants have gone into creating something close to perfection for the eyes of the judges? Does it matter that some content of some of the best plots would have been added just days before judging with replacements, imported, polytunnel-grown specimens purchased from garden centres? (Yes, it does happen, I have witnessed it!) Likewise, does it matter that the winning candidate adheres so closely to the list of competition items to grow that they are left with a glut of edibles which they do not like to eat and therefore just throw away? (Yes, this happens too!)

Do the judges give any points for provision made for butterflies, bees, hoverflies or other pollinators on a plot? How about the habitats and places to drink for mammals which are created by a pond? And don't forget the birds; who has provided nest boxes and feeders and left the caterpillars for blue tits to collect as food for their chicks?

This is all about personal choice, of course, as not every plot holder wants to relinquish any element of control over their allotment to nature. Some strive for perfection and have done so for as long as they have been tenants on site. That is their prerogative, and their efforts are likely to be rewarded on plot-judging day. But is it time for the judges to expand their marking criteria in order to be able to reward that one plot holder who created a hedgehog habitat area within 24 hours of one arriving on her site? Or the plot holder who is well aware of the mouse who has set up home in his polytunnel, but instead of setting a trap, leaves a small amount of seed to be eaten as an alternative to the seedlings?

Lockdowns saw a rise in demand for allotments across the country and many new first-time plot holders have been welcomed onto sites. The number of younger plot holders and families has also risen, and many of these people really do care about their allotment environment. Some of them may be wondering (as I still am after eighteen years and counting) just how environmentally friendly they can be without triggering a letter from the council about plot tidiness. Is it acceptable to leave a patch of nettles as an egg-laying haven for the Peacock butterfly or a pile of logs for the amphibians? If a few dandelions and buttercups are left for pollinators, will they be counted as weeds?

There is no solution which pleases everybody at the same in any aspect of life; there will always be plot holders who strive for perfection at all costs and those who prefer to take a step back and try to work along with nature. But is it time for plot judges to reward all good intentions and not those which

adhere to the best plot syllabus? And if I leave some flowering dandelions on my plot and then dig them up before the heads go to seed to land where they might well be unwelcoming, is that ok?

Rachel

Lower Tinkers Farm Allotments

*What do you think? What have you done to work in tandem with nature? We would welcome your comment for the September edition. BDAC*

## The Bob Nichol Birmingham Iris Collection

### Iris Flowers at Harborne Hill 1970-1996 and 2020-21

Bob Nichol grew Tall Bearded Iris on the Harborne Hill allotment site from about 1970 until shortly before his death in 1996. He was a judge for the British Iris Society, won many prizes on the show bench for his irises, (including in Florence at an international competition) and was well respected amongst iris breeders here and in America. He had two and a half allotments at our site.

A couple of our older plot holders do remember Bob and his flowers.



He had such a large number of iris as he hybridized his own new introductions. If you take the pollen from a purple iris and pollinate a cream iris then grow on the seed, in three years you have a completely new coloured flower. Therefore, on his plots he had a kaleidoscope of different blooms. The best of these he would 'register' and they would become official new iris, but the rejects would be given to friends or composted.

Bob decided to name most of his creations after the people and places in the Poldark series of books from 1975. The flower on the right is 'Elizabeth Poldark'.

In 1983, Bob sent some seedlings to enter the International Competition in Florence. In 1986 he won third prize with 'Morwenna'. I have visited the 'Giardino dell'Iris' – little did I know then that a Brummie iris had been growing on that sunny hillside.

Between 1984 and his untimely death in 1996, Bob registered 22 new irises. After his death, his allotments were cleared and a nursery took all the plants away. Bob's widow, Jean, had naming rights for new registrations and up to 2003, she registered a further 21 introductions.

I am no stranger to gardening nor to allotments. I've been a gardener all my life but I'm no expert on iris. My introduction to Birmingham's allotments came in June 2000 when I visited the site and I saw some striking tall iris on several plots and asked about them. "Oh, they were grown by the famous iris breeder". He had died in 1996. My curiosity



was aroused enough to buy a book about iris but that was all – then. For the next twenty years I was involved in other gardening and allotment projects.

In March 2020, during a chance meeting, I offered to help a neighbour with her allotment at the site and during the first lockdown we spent three mornings a week working hard. One day I asked, “what happened to the iris”? No one seemed to have any on their plots, but a long-standing committee member dusted off a framed copy of an obituary hanging in the meeting hut which had been published by the West and Midlands Iris Group.

So, without having anything better to do in lockdown, I had the wacky, rather romantic idea of bringing them home’.

I have about 20 plants now with 8 different introductions – a couple more are hopefully expected in July, when rhizomes can be divided as plants are dormant. (Sadly, many of the 44 introductions have disappeared over 20 years.) Most of the rhizomes are small and I have kept them in pots so that they could be moved under cover over the winter – they don't mind the cold, but they hate the rain. The large ones will be planted out soon. Those in bold type below have flower stalks in early June 2021 and have been moved under cover again to avoid the recent torrential rain and hail damaging them. Most of the plants are too small to flower this year but should next year.

- Morwenna 1984** – pale blue
- Demelza 1984** – creamy yellow
- Trenwith 1985** – violet and white
- Elizabeth Poldark 1987** - white
- Amadora 1991** – pale blue and violet
- Caroline Penvenon 1993** – pale blue and violet
- Kayleigh-Jayne Louise 1996** - yellow
- Garlanda 1998** named by Jean – pale lemon



**Have you heard of Bob Nichol and his iris in Harborne? Are you interested in iris and would you like to know more about the West and Midlands Group of the British Iris Society?**

**If so, please get in touch with me by email on [griffslines@gmail.com](mailto:griffslines@gmail.com).**

*Article by Sue Griffith of Harborne Hill Allotments 2021*

## **My Name Is Leon'**

**Birmingham's Moor Green Allotments to feature in major BBC Drama!**

Sir Lenny Henry's film company Douglas Road Productions have adapted Birmingham author Kit De Waal's novel 'My Name is Leon' for television to be shown on BBC 1 this autumn. The cast includes Sir Lenny Henry, Monica Dolan, Christopher Eccleston and Malachi Kirby.



This is the story of Leon, a nine-year-old mixed-race boy growing up in foster care in Birmingham in the 1980's. Leon finds refuge from difficulties at home on his neighbourhood allotment site where he befriends the plot holders. The novel is a real insight into how allotments can bring not just the life



affirming pleasure of gardening and growing but also how they foster tolerance and understanding across the diverse population of plot holders to be found on most urban allotments.

Moor Green are planning a film premiere screening at their clubhouse when the release date is known.

The allotment scenes were filmed at Moor Green allotments where the film company filmed for two weeks including designing a set featuring an allotment plot compete with a shed specially made for the film to match that of one of the story's main character's, Tufty. It was made in sections off site and assembled on the plot.



The film company have kindly donated Tufty's shed to Moor Green to raffle to raise money for the Association. It has been taken down and stored and can relatively easily be reassembled. Raffle tickets are £5 and can be purchased from the clubhouse at Moor Green or email [madahal.sitemanager@gmail.com](mailto:madahal.sitemanager@gmail.com)



**TUFTY'S SHED RAFFLE**

Your chance to win Tufty's Shed, as featured in the BBC 'MY NAME IS LEON' adaptation filmed at Moor Green Allotments

**TICKET PRICE £5**

Purchase from the clubhouse bar or email [madahal.sitemanager@gmail.com](mailto:madahal.sitemanager@gmail.com)



[Article from Moor Green Allotment Association](#)

[So, if you want a unique and famous shed on your plot contact the site manager!](#)