March 2023

BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENT CONFEDERATION

NEWSLETTER

Let's Celebrate Spring 2023

As Spring begins, we can all look forward to meeting people on site once more and a bountiful growing season. Thank you to all the busy Associations that have taken the time to share their winter project with everyone, judging by the amount of responses to my request for stories you have all been very busy over the winter. It only demonstrates how important and valuable our Allotment Spaces are, and how hard plot holders across the city are prepared to work to ensure that they thrive.

The next few months the BDAC will be looking forward to a new start with a new Chair and Secretary, as both Clive and myself will be standing down at the next AGM on Saturday 20th May. It provides an opportunity for new volunteers to take over and make a positive impact, supporting Associations and developing new ways of working with the Council for the benefit of us all.

The BDAC is also looking for new Executive members. We have recently welcomed Sue Griffith from Harborne Hill onto the Executive but still have spaces to fill after the sad losses of Derek Cullen and Mick Merrill in 2022.

All Birmingham Allotment Tenants are eligible for election to the Executive at the AGM. ***We are a friendly bunch so please consider joining us.***

If you are interested in making a difference please contact the BDAC for more details and ask for an Application Form to register your interest. *It is very simple to complete!*

Site Competitions

Judges will be coming around your sites once more in July to look at wonderful plots and Association communities making the difficult decision of which **plot is the best, which site is the best and benefits its community the most**. Don't miss this opportunity to get a reward for all your work on site and on plot. Be in it to win it.
Forms will be sent out to Secretaries and ready for download from our Website. **www.bdacallotment.co.uk**
Go to the website to down load :
SITE COMPETITION ENTRY FORMS, ANNUAL SHOW SCHEDULES/ENTRY FORM and the **APPLICATION FORM** for a position as an Advisor or Executive member

Dates for your diary

Executive meetings are held at Bordesley Green Allotments
Meetings starts at 7 p.m.

Monday 3rd April
Monday 15th May
Monday 5th June
Monday 3rd July
Monday 7th August

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

AGM Saturday May 20th
at Bordesley Green Allotments

National Allotments Week
August 7th to August 13th

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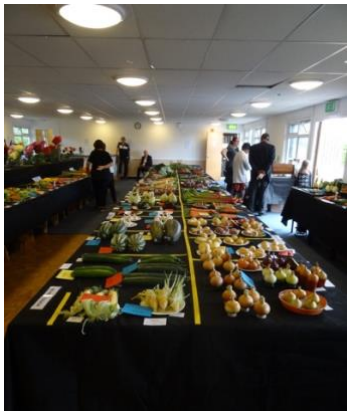
Working party report

The Allotment Management Agreement Working Party have submitted the Draft new Agreement to the Council with a positive reaction from them. They are now working through the attached Schedules that form part of the Agreement, looking at the Management Manual and the Rules to make sure that all these document work together. Once again can I express the Executive's appreciation for all the hard work these volunteer plot holders from across the city have done.



CALLING ALL PLOTHOLDERS!

Please consider entering the Birmingham Annual Show at Bordesley Green Allotments on, Saturday 19th August our new Show Secretary, Dave Hubball, is prepared, ready and waiting for show entries.

JOIN IN THE FUN!

And it's open for all plot holders and you don't need to be an expert. We will be continuing our successful **Novice Section** to encourage new exhibitors to our show.
Visit our website **bdacallotments@co.uk** go to the show pages and download information**. Also, all Associations will be sent electronic copies of all Show information.**

Calling all children and grandchildren of plot holders! There are classes especially for you to enter and prizes too!

Contact either the Show Secretary Dave Hubball Or BDAC Secretary, Barbara Smith using the following e-mail address:
bdac.allotments@gmail.com

Birmingham Allotment Heritage Project up date

The project leader Chris Poolman, and his band of Allotment plot holder volunteers are now beavering away looking toward creating an exciting exhibition space in the Central Library that will run this year between September 16th until November 25th and they **NEED YOUR HELP!** He wants a display of vegetables that are capable of standing and looking good for the duration of the show. So, we are looking at onions, shallots, squashes in particular winter squashes that store well, and gourds. Could you grow any for donation to the exhibition? If you have any other suggestions please get in touch. AS part of the display he would like to have three giant pumpkins as a centre piece display, can you help by trying to grow one? He also wants a display of dried flowers grown on allotments and is happy to send information on how to dry flowers out to anyone who is interested helping. See below for other items he is also looking for to be in the exhibition. **Can you help? Or Do you know someone who can help? It's an exciting opportunity to be part of the Exhibition.**

'Compost for Growing' @ Wheeler's Lane Allotments

Over the Winter, a team of enthusiastic plot-holders at Wheeler's Lane Allotments have been working hard clearing brambles to make space for their new communal composting area. Six large pallet bays have been built, and are now used for hot-composting large volumes of materials. Plot holders can drop their chopped materials into a labelled input area, and are encouraged to join in on the regular work party afternoons, where volunteers come together to fill and turn the bays. These sessions are great for plotholders who would like to learn how to compost effectively, or for those with small plots with little space for their own bays. The communal area also provides an alternative for plotholders who usually burn materials, cutting down on smoke which can be a nuisance to neighbouring houses.

Feedback from these sessions is that they are a valuable time to meet fellow allotment holders, share skills, and for some, get a good workout!

Thanks to a grant from The National Lottery Community Fund, and in partnership with The Compost Connection, the site will be hosting free workshops on a range of topics which might be of interest to growers: hot-composting, bokashi, composting science, rat-proofing, wormeries, and tips for sourcing free, local materials to create lots of great compost.

Dates for workshops are below - it would be great to see allotment holders from across the city coming together to share conversation, cake and composting!

Introduction to composting

Practical advice on how to create great compost and make this a enjoyable, trouble free process. Sundays 2nd April, 4th June, 2nd July @ 11.30am-1pm

Wormeries

Learn how to build a wormery, keep your worms happy and healthy, and how to harvest and use your worm castings. Sunday 7th May @ 11.30am-1pm

Hot composting in large bays

Large compost bays are a cheap, practical way of creating lots of compost quickly on allotments. Come and see how we run our communal composting area at Wheelers Lane allotments. Sunday 6th August @ 11.30am-1pm

We will also be running work-parties on Friday mornings throughout the season, get in touch if you would like to come along and learn about the communal composting site, or how to hot-compost in large pallet bays. Fridays 24th March, 19th May, 7th July @ 10.30am

Email info@thecompostconnection.co.uk to book a place, or sign up at www.thecompostconnection.co.uk for updates.

Quinton Allotments work to support plot holders with mobility issue.

Well done Quinton Association they we were awarded a grant of £10K as part of the Celebrating Communities Fund grant programme as part of the Commonwealth Games.to build a raised bed plot for the use of people with mobility issues. What a wonderful resource.

News from Marsh Hill! (a very busy Association!)

Just to keep you up to date here at Marsh Hill Allotments.
We have been trying for approximately 8 years to build a nature area & make repairs to the road that leads to it.
At last, we have now been able to get funding for both.
We will have a nature pond, bog area, stumpery, it will also have our beehives where we will do courses, animal boxes, local hedgerows and a wild flower meadow.

The area will be used for art classes and classes with our schools on site, with the hope we can bring others on too, plus we now have the charity Mencap on site, this will be a very important part of how they can enjoy the area.
We have been asked to join the Mayor of Brum, Andy Street, for a lunch in May, all to do with how we have used our funding.

Also, we are holding a plant sale at our main gates on 29/4/23 at 11am with the hope this will help people grow their own.
And, we are in talks with two funding groups with the hope of helping the lonely, isolated and those below the breadline to grow together & grow their own..

So watch this space...

Big thanks to Birmingham Open Spaces Forum (BOSF) for all their help.

Marsh Hill Allotments are in Stockland Green B23 7HE

Ward End Gardeners project to keep plot holders safe

On allotment sites, we all became a lot more aware about health issues during the lockdowns in 2020-21, and that's left a few helpful legacies like taking more care with handwashing. But one thing we didn't fully address was the possible consequences of people having accidents on the site – especially if they are on their own, or the only people around aren't geared up to deal with accidents and emergencies.

In June 2020, Ward End Gardeners Association lost a much-valued member called Graham Smith, who used to do all sorts of maintenance work at his site Blackpit Lane in Ward End – renewing fencing from recycled wood, making brick paths between plots and an attractive contact sign by the gate. He also looked after the cats who take care of the rodents on site. One day he was using a strimmer on a vacant plot covered in tall grass and had a brain haemorrhage: he collapsed and died instantly (according to the post-mortem), but it was a shocking as well as upsetting event for us because no-one found him until 36 hours later. As he was a person living on his own, no-one raised the alarm when he didn't go home that day. That was a wake-up call that we needed to pay more attention to health and safety matters and develop a policy and practices to address the possibility that catastrophic things can happen.

Health and safety on Allotment Sites is not the easiest thing to manage. We aren't employers with a decent budget to spend on training and safety equipment. We rely on people using their common sense to look after their own health, safety and welfare when they come to garden on their plots. Prevention is better than cure, so our Health and Safety policy (which has taken a long time to develop) is about trying to make sure we DON'T have accidents on the site and that people do take precautions. WEGA has a lot of new plot holders including people new to gardening, so it's extra important that more experienced gardeners give guidance on things like use of unfamiliar tools, or not over-doing it especially if you are getting on or have a health condition – or just not working too long in hot weather with nothing to drink! We've had some 'near misses' with people falling on trip hazards and getting dehydrated during heatwaves, and that has reinforced the need to do regular checks and risk assessments as well as give warnings to 'newbies'.

The near misses and minor accidents tell us that we can't rely on prevention all the time: we need to be ready to act when things happen, and not just hope they won't.

So last year the WEGA Committee decided to organise an Emergency First Aid training course: the idea was to train up at least a few plot holders on each of our five sites in Ward End. We asked Natalie White from New Training to run the one-day certificated course she delivers, and customise it for the allotment situation. We were thinking of accidents like garden forks though your foot, canes in the eye, or reactions to plants and insect bites – that sort of thing.

On Saturday 4th March, the course took place in the Northleigh Road pavilion for 12 people. She is an excellent and well-informed trainer, starts from where you are at and explains clearly with diagrams the background about how the body works so you understand why you follow certain First Aid

procedures. After demonstrating the techniques, she gets everyone involved in trying them, and makes it fun even when you're thinking about the possibility of a cardiac arrest or a bad accident.

In the 6 hour programme (including breaks and lunch) we covered all the things you would expect in a First Aid course so you can cope with serious and not-so-serious situations – from unconscious casualties and head injuries to muscular sprains, wounds, eye injuries and allergic reactions. And participants had a chance to share their experience and get to know each other while wrapping each other in bandages or thumping each other to help eject a choking object.

The only problem is now that we have to review our first aid kits and throw away out-of-date items or things which shouldn't be included such as creams and pills. And we need to think about how to make the First Aid box more accessible without making it easy to steal.

Another issue which came up is the availability of defibrillators which can save lives if someone has a cardiac arrest or heart attack. They cost around £1000, and can be found in various places, but not necessarily accessible – and obvious a target for thieves. With the number of older people and others with health problems coming on to allotment sites, having a defibrillator available would be a very useful piece of equipment to have, but not really affordable or possible to keep secure.

Hopefully the Association will be able to run the course again to enlarge the pool of people able to be First Aiders when the need arises. After all, in the height of summer allotment sites could be in use 14-16 hours a day 7 days a week, so it would be hard to have too many First Aiders. We have 5 sites to manage, but the same applies to all allotment sites, big or small.

I haven't heard of any other First Aid courses being run for allotment people and associations and can definitely recommend this company if you're thinking of doing something similar.

Article by Hester Blewitt, Secretary Ward End Gardeners Association
Email: hester_blewitt@hotmail.com; tel: 07812 248447

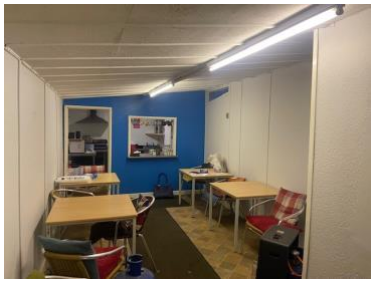
Thornbridge Avenue welcomes the help of the Probation Service.

We have provided space in a secure shed for the Probation Service to store some basic supplies, spades, shears, strimmers, wheel barrows etc, and also access to our kitchen area, so they are able to carry out works on our site, plus with other community groups in the area when required.

So far, the PoP's (people on probation) have cleared a plot that was abandoned and covered in broken glass, bricks, and buckets full of random chemicals, cleared our raised plot that is specifically for people who are physically less able to work a standard plot – clearing these 2 plots has filled a large builders skip!

They have also started to give all of our buildings a coat of paint inside, starting with our café area. There is still plenty of work to be done, but they are doing great work so far and we are very happy to be working alongside them.

We will continue to work with them during the season to work alongside us to maintain our garden areas, shed etc.



National Allotment Society AGM 2023

10th June 2023 at Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa

The AGM will be held at the conference centre hotel in the heart of Leamington Spa, with a series of speakers and workshops available for attendees. All members are invited to attend. For those who are unable BDAC Executive member is happy to receive any proxy votes.

Email him on davehubball72@gmail.com.

Official Opening of Communal Allotment Garden
At
Edgbaston Guinea Gardens

You are all welcome to the official opening of the new Communal Allotment Garden by Councillor Deidre Alden on **Saturday April 15th at 11am**.
The communal allotment garden comprises six raised beds, half of which would be made available to those potholders who wish to downsize from their plots but still wish to maintain a link to the Guinea Gardens; the other half would be for new gardeners from the waiting list. Each tenant will also have a share in a polytunnel as well as other communal areas in the garden.

The address is: Edgbaston Guinea Gardens, off Westbourne Rd, Edgbaston B15 3TR
We would like to acknowledge our funders: the National Lottery, National Allotment Gardens Trust and the Wisdom Factory CIC.

GOSPEL LANE ALLOTMENTS Recycling the recycling

Whilst perusing Face Book one day, I came across an interesting site dealing with recycling. Always a cause close to my heart, (as with any allotmenteers, I recycle, reuse, and re-purpose) I began to read. A local schoolboy by the name of Ryan, asked for crushed aluminum cans. The monies raised was then donated to the local food banks. I was impressed. He has encouraged wider community participation, with various drop off points around the area.

So, what started out as my individual contribution from home has taken root (no pun intended) and blossomed. I asked if Gospel Lane Allotments committee would also like to get involved, and this has turned into a site effort. The aluminum drinks cans, something that would be thrown away, can be reused to help others in our community. Times are so much harder now and Ryan has shown the way that we can all make a difference. He has encouraged the local community to come together and combine their efforts to collect as many soft drink cans as they can. By opening up a collection point at our allotment on Gospel Lane, the number of cans recycled has potentially increased tenfold. It is then collected, sent to scrap metal dealers, converted to cash and contributes towards the effort being made by the foodbanks. One can or ten, it all goes to make a subtle but distinct change in all our recycling efforts. It doesn't cost you anything other than time and it keeps your recycling bin a little less full. The only request is that the cans be empty, crushed and bagged. We have already had one collection from our site, with a further bin bag ready to go. Obviously as the cans are light, the greater the number of participants, the greater the number of cans collected. As has been reported by the various Councils, the amount of recycled items is less than 9% due to the amount of contamination that occurs. By recycling the aluminum cans, at least some of the recycling gets put to better use.

Below is the information if you would like to join in the great Can Collection!

Useful links: FB Cans Collection. (Karima Chaouch, Ryan Hulance)

Solihull Food Bank Network (visitsolihull.co.uk)

Around Again Charity. (aroundagain@colebridge.org)

By Gospel Lane Association.

Wanted: Sessional worker with green fingers!

Ward End Gardeners Association is an allotments association in East Birmingham which manages 5 allotment sites of various sizes. In recent years we've been welcoming people without gardening or allotment experience on to the sites and actively encouraging more groups and organisations to rent plots and develop gardening projects for their client groups. We've found that new gardeners – whether older people, people with disabilities or children – benefit from support, encouragement and experience which they can

get from ‘old-timers’, but many of ours have died or retired, leaving only a few on our sites who can fill this void.

So we're now in the process of setting up grant-funded projects to give us the resources to pay for a mentor or gardening guru! One of these is a 12-month project targeting people over 50 and adults with mental and physical disabilities of all types, based at St Margaret’s Road allotment site in Ward End, Birmingham 8 where we also run a weekly gardening club for non-plot holders.

Do you have what it takes to be a gardening guide and are you available several hours a week, starting in April?

This opportunity could suit people with a variety of backgrounds. It could be someone young with gardening skills and knowledge, looking to put into practice what they’ve learned on their horticulture course and keen to promote a green agenda. Or someone with no qualifications but years of experience of growing vegetables, fruit and flowers. More importantly, it needs to be someone who gets on well with people of all ages and backgrounds, and is able to communicate their enthusiasm and skills to help build the confidence of inexperienced gardeners. Ideally we’d also hoping to find someone who can speak Punjabi as many of the newcomers are older people born in Pakistan, with limited English, but it’s more important that the person can appreciate different cultural backgrounds than be fluent in any language. If you’re interested and want to know more, please contact Hester Blewitt, Secretary Ward End Gardeners Association, on hester_blewitt@hotmail.com or phone 07812 248447, or contact us through our website: www.wardendallotments.org

Your BDAC Contacts

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