

Meopham and District Allotment Association – July 2023 newsletter



Dear fellow plot holders,

Welcome to our July 2023 newsletter.

You should have recently received notice of our AGM on Saturday 22nd July, starting at 4 pm in the Village Hall. If you haven't received the notice, it probably means either that our notice is sitting discontentedly in your 'junk mail' or we don't have a correct email address for you. If it's the latter, please inform our secretary (secretary.mdAA@gmail.com) of the correct address so that our records can be updated.

In this newsletter, you will find reports from: Victoria, our new Lettings Manager; David, our Treasurer; Dom, our Toilets and Central Roadway Projects Champion; Dave, our indefatigable Maintenance Officer; and Lizze who is inviting us to go 'organic'.

As you will see, Rodney, our Secretary, has handed over the computer keyboard to ChatGPT.

As it often goes unnoticed and un-appreciated, I would like to thank all those on the Committee for their efforts over the last year.

Best wishes,

Mark, Chair MDAA

Lettings Update

I took on the role at the beginning of this season and have really enjoyed meeting new tenants. I've checked back on all of you and I'm amazed at the progress, especially with some of the very neglected plots. A massive well done!



I've had a lot of admin to deal with, which I enjoy doing, but this is still on-going and I'd just like to take the opportunity to remind everyone that the committee are volunteers with families, work, etc, so please do have patience. There's lots happening in the background even if it doesn't seem that way sometimes.

I've had several emails about taking on a 2nd plot and from people on the waiting list wondering why they don't have a plot yet when there's overgrown plots they assume are vacant.

These plots will be formally assessed during the annual WeedWalk, and as soon as more plots become available the waiting list will get moving again. We are doing well considering Gravesham have a 2-3 year wait.

There have been some issues such as people on the waiting list from 18 months ago asking when they will get to the top! So, I've had to prioritise when things like this come up, as the wait isn't normally that long! I've also had some prospective tenants look around but then ask to wait until one with less work becomes available.

So, on that note, the Committee have discussed identifying plots that may be suitable for turning into half plots, which will give more options to people when choosing something they can manage. We've also discussed setting up a community team to help people get back on top of their plots after a period of illness, etc. If you would like to offer any help please email me.

I first had a plot here ten or so years ago but had to give it up as I couldn't manage with a young family including a baby, so if I knew that help was available back then I may have been able to continue as an active plot holder.

I'd also really appreciate your help too, if you'd like to give your plot up please email me, don't just leave without letting us know, as we're then left with more neglected plots and lots of admin work to determine whether it's vacant or not.

I love the community aspect of our allotments, I've got to know quite a few of you now and I've especially loved talking about heritage seeds and old plants with some of you. F1 varieties have been adapted for us, but I much prefer the idea of growing old heirloom varieties of crops that have been lost over time and not used commercially anymore, seed saving and then allowing the crops to adapt to conditions themselves over a few seasons. My favourite crop at the moment is Champion of England pea, which dates back to the 1800s and can reach 10ft. This is

my first time growing it. Please come and find me if you're an heirloom seed saver and maybe we can get our own little allotment seed bank going!

Enjoy the rest of the season, I hope it's very productive for you all.

Victoria lettings.mdaa@gmail.com

Organic Gardening

Lizze Brooker has provided links to the 'Garden Organic' website and some articles that may be of interest:



Website - <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/>

Step by step guide to organic composting fact sheet.

<https://gardenorganic-assets.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/Composting-step-by-step.pdf>

No dig gardening information

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/expert-advice/garden-management/soil/the-nodig-method>

Know your soil fact sheet

<https://gardenorganic-assets.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/Know-your-soil.pdf>

Managing your soil fact sheet

<https://gardenorganic-assets.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/Managing-your-soil.pdf>

'Garden organic' also have a heritage seed section at:

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/hsl>

When a plot holder has to go...

Composting Toilets

We are currently seeking permission from Meopham Parish Council to install a composting toilet. Once we get the okay, the current portable chemical toilet will change to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative. Furthermore, it will be a wooden structure, so will blend more into its surroundings.



Basically, composting toilets are designed to decompose human waste and transform it into usable compost, without the need for water or sewer connections. This process takes about 1 to 2 years for the waste to become usable. It can then be used on surrounding trees, shrubs, and flowers.

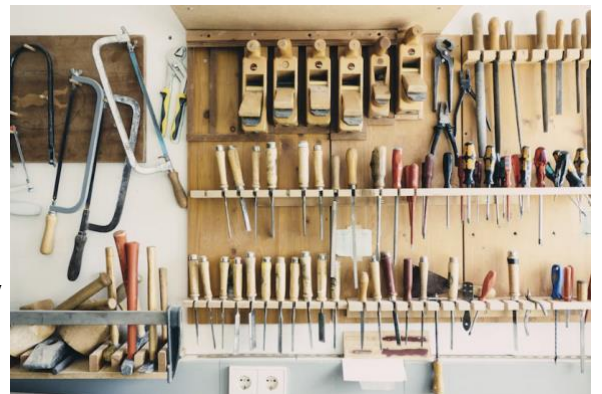
Some basic rules for using a toilet are: Everyone needs to be seated for the entire performance! Even the boys must sit down to wee so the waste is kept separate. After a No. 2, take a handful or two of sawdust, and cover it to keep it dry. A dry No.2 will not smell. And most importantly, **CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF.**

Dom Sullivan

The Maintenance Department

Hello everyone,

I'm pleased to say that I think the recent allotment improvements are heading in the right direction. We now have a Portaloo, we get a regular delivery of manure, wood chips and pallets and I've recently fitted five splitter tap attachments with more on the way.



You might find the valves a little stiff to start with, but they will soon loosen up. Splitter taps save you waiting around for someone to finish before you can use the water supply.

I would like to thank Andrew at plot 1A for cutting the grass at the front near the main gate and along the side of our domain facing Wrotham Road. He also regularly volunteers to help bring 'delinquent' plots up to a state where applicants are not immediately frightened off.

Please remember that it is the plot holder's responsibility to keep pathways clear and accessible. This is important in case anyone requires medical help in an emergency.

The bird boxes that I fitted just over two years ago have been a real success with the majority being taken up by Blue and Great Tit families. I can also report that the two bat boxes have bats in too.

Please can you make sure that all your water butts are filled after use to stop birds drowning in them? Sadly, we have had some such cases. If you find a piece of wood floating in the water butt, then please can you leave it there? It's just another way the bird can escape.

The free store has been a real success since it was built and there's nothing more satisfying than up-cycling rather than dumping stuff into landfill. If you have a glut of produce then please can you put it in the free store rather than let it rot on your plot, I'm sure people will appreciate it considering the price of vegetables now.

Please also, can you remove items that you have left in the store if they haven't been taken after, say, 2-3 weeks.

If you have any other maintenance issues or questions, then just post on our Facebook site and I will try and get to it as soon as possible.

David Brown

A word from our Treasurer

Allotment Insurance

The main element of our insurance is Public Liability. This covers damage to third parties caused by our allotment activities. The policy also covers damage to property, personal injury or death.

Our previous policy was very cheap and cheerful. It covered only the actions of the plot holder. Our current policy, as well as protecting the Association and individual plot holders, covers the plot holder's immediate family, spouses, parents, children as well as friends when they are working on the allotment.

The important limitation to the cover is that the claimant must be undertaking allotment activities at the time of an event. An accident from zooming up and down the central roadway on an electric scooter would not be covered.

We are covered for £ 5,000,000. That may seem a lot but accidentally starting a fire in the farmer's field in a dry summer could result in rather a large claim

There is an irritating requirement that users of machinery, which would include mowers and strimmers, must be 18 or older.

The other significant exclusion is ponds. Because the site has access to the public we do not have public liability cover for ponds. However, we can have bonfires but only when they are supervised. The bonfire must be completely extinguished before leaving it unattended.

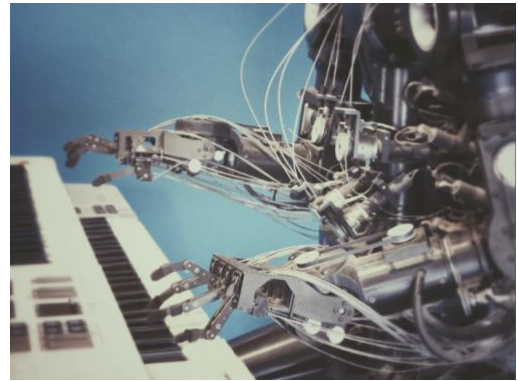
On a brighter note we can have up to three open days a year but cover is limited to 999 visitors per day - we will have to go easy on the advertising.

David Aspinall

And now for something completely different

Hello everyone!

ChatGPT here – I'm an AI chatbot that uses natural language processing to create humanlike conversational dialogue. The language model can respond to questions and compose a wide variety of written content, including articles, social media posts, essays, computer code and emails.



Your secretary asked me to compose a limerick for your delectation. Here is the result of less than 0.0001 seconds of my CPU time:

There once was a plot holder named Fred,
At Meopham Allotments he tread.
With spade in his hand,
He'd cultivate the land,
Growing veggies from green to bright red,

His carrots were plump, oh so sweet,
And his cabbages couldn't be beat.
With tomatoes so juicy,
His neighbours got woozy,
From the deliciousness they'd eat.

Fred's plot was a sight to behold,
With flowers and herbs that he strolled.
He'd spend hours in bliss,
Caressing plants with a kiss,
And his garden would never grow old.

At Meopham Allotments, he'd shine,
With his green thumb and heart so kind.
Sharing tips with delight,
And his harvest, a sight,
Fred's plot was a treasure, we'd find.

Did I hear someone say: "I could do better than that"?

Go on then (for the next issue of our newsletter)!
