

DIGGER'S DIGEST



WAHGA SPRING 2017 NEWSLETTER

Editorial comment

Welcome to the Spring issue of *Digger's Digest*. The recent death of an 80-year-old allotment secretary in north-west London, which police are treating as murder, highlights the importance of allotment security at all times. With more daylight hours and increased activity on sites – especially in the evening – it is vital to ensure that gates are locked at all times where applicable. And don't forget, if you have any items stolen from your sheds, report it via email to jon.brooks@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk.

All change for the Committee

Following the AGM in January, there have been a number of changes to the Management Committee of the Association. First, Frank Tarrant stood down as chair. On behalf of the Association we would like to thank Frank for all his hard work, including his many valuable contributions to the Committee, his help at the Fairground trading shed, working on the bar at Gardeners' Hall and on the Fairground site. Frank has also been responsible for organising the fete in the past. Our President Harold Mitchell has taken over as Chair, but will also continue as President.

Membership Secretary Lesley Spence will be standing down at the

end of 2017, so a replacement is sought. If you are interested in taking on this role and have experience with databases, or are willing to learn, please speak to Lesley at the Maidenhead Road trading shed or email membership@wahga.org.uk to find out more.

There are three new Committee members, namely David Eglise, Malcolm Osborn and Lesley Upton. All three have allotments on the Maidenhead Road site. There is still one vacancy for a committee member, so if anyone is interested in finding out more please ask a Committee member. A full list of the Committee is available on the website at www.wahga.org.uk/Resources/Management_Committee_2017.pdf or go to your local trading shed.

No fete in 2017 We are sorry to report that the decision has been taken not to hold a WAHGA fete in 2017. Kay Eglise has done a great job for the past two years, but it has not been possible to find anyone to take over from her. In addition, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find volunteers to help with the preparation and on the day. This decision has not been taken lightly, but the Committee felt it was important to let the members know what was happening and why. If you have any ideas for

alternative social events, please do contact the newsletter at newsletter@wahga.org.uk.

Winter blooms for bees A recent Government statement has encouraged more people to plant flowers that bloom in winter to help bees survive the cold weather. Although it's spring now – or hopefully it will be soon – now is the time to help increase the bee population next year by planting evergreens and leaving small undisturbed areas for hibernation. Suggestions include planting winter-flowering mahonia and winter-flowering clematis. If you've got a few spare borders, plant some crocuses, primroses and snowdrops, which are useful for hungry bees as the winter ends. So start thinking about how you can do your bit to help Britain's bees.

Takeaway shed orders The trading sheds offer a wide array of seeds, potatoes, onions and shallots each year, as well as other essential allotment needs. But if you have a special request for a variety that isn't currently available, ask the trading shop volunteers if they can help by making a note to order it. The trading sheds have regular deliveries and may be able to help source the items that you require.

Cyber allotment hackers! Computer hackers can cause a lot of damage though the loss of personal information that is held by companies and organisations holding your data. And it appears that such cybercrime isn't being targeted just at banks and other financial institutions. Recently, a hacker demanded £3,000 from Tiverton Town Council in Devon after a clerk opened a message that

unleashed a virus that subsequently wreaked havoc on the Council's IT system. Although the main financial and planning records were not affected, plans and waiting lists for allotments were.

Feedback required We are constantly endeavouring to bring members the best selection of potatoes, onions and shallots to plant on their allotments and in their gardens. Many varieties are established favourites, but we would appreciate any feedback on successes or problems members have encountered. Email your comments/suggestions to sheds@wahga.org.uk.

Changed your address? Please let us know if you have recently changed your email address or home address so we can keep our records up to date and keep you fully informed. Email Lesley Spence at membership@wahga.org.uk with your new details.

Growing something different? Are you planning to grow any unusual vegetables or fruit this year, that are different from the established favourites, or have you done so in the past? We would be interested in your tips and advice later this year on successes or failures.

Discounted entry to RHS gardens The Association has two reduced price entry tickets that can be used by members of WAHGA at any of the four Royal Horticultural Society gardens, the closest RHS Garden being Wisley, near Woking in Surrey. The two tickets allow up to four people access to the gardens at a reduction of 30% per person. Contact the Association Secretary, Fran

Hartridge by email at secretary@wahga.org.uk if you would like to use the tickets.

Ongoing site maintenance

Don Hartridge, the Allotment Secretary, together with his team of site supervisors, is responsible for the maintenance of the nine WAHGA allotment sites. As well as the ongoing work and clearance of neglected plots, there are always new issues to tackle. For example, to address concerns about security, Don has started a programme of repair and reinforcement of various boundary fences. He is also looking at the possibility of installing new high security fences, where appropriate. On Clewer Park allotment, the road was in poor condition and has been partly resurfaced. It is anticipated that further repairs will be carried out in the future. The trading shed at Fairground has been rebuilt, as described in 'Trading shed news' (below). There are also plans for more new fencing and a new kitchen for Gardeners' Hall.

Trading shed news The seed potatoes and onion sets arrived mid-February, and while we have run out of some varieties there are still plenty left to choose from. The number of orders for potatoes has been diminishing year by year, so if you don't buy 'em we won't be able to offer the service. We are often asked how many potatoes are needed per row, and a rough rule of thumb is that you need 2kg to plant a row across your allotment (8-9 metres or 27 feet).

The Dobies vegetable seeds have been on sale since January. We have to guesstimate how many packets to order, so if you hurry up

and make your purchases soon we may be able to replenish stocks before it is too late. Note that we have stocks of Aquadulce Claudia broad beans for November sowing. We generally sell out of these quickly, so buy now and save them for the autumn. Visitors to the Fairground trading shed will have noticed that progress has been made with the extension, which is to be the new shop area. We now have power and lighting and some shiny new furniture. The doorway to the original building had to be moved to allow deliveries of pallets and we are now able to re-stock items such as peat bales and farmyard manure. By the time you read this, we hope to be serving people from the new area.

Weaving with willow

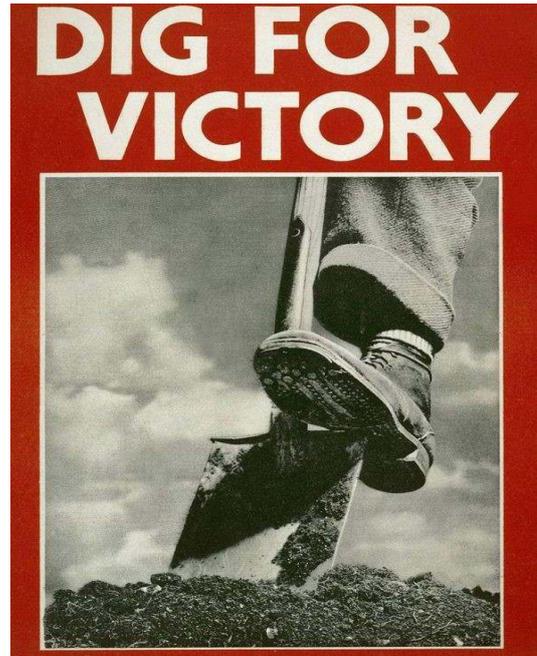
Willow in different colours is suitable for basket weaving and numerous other traditional crafts, as featured in many country oriented TV programmes. There are many books available, plus advice via numerous websites, on how to use willow to make baskets, wreaths and so on. So why not give it a go? Now is the perfect time to start to learn a new skill and you don't even have to buy the willow, as there is willow available free of charge to anyone willing to harvest it from where it is growing on an allotment site at Stag Meadow/Spital (see picture below). If you're interested, please send your enquiry to newsletter@wahga.org.uk.



Willow is available free of charge on the allotment site at Stag Meadow/Spital if you're prepared to harvest it yourself (see story above)

Why no mention of allotments?

We're sure that many members will have followed the recent BBC TV series *Further Back In Time For Dinner*. But in the penultimate episode portraying one family coping with food shortages after the outbreak of the Second World War, we were surprised that there was no mention of the Dig For Victory campaign that was launched by the Ministry of Food. Official rationing began on 8 January 1940 with bacon, butter and sugar. It continued until 1954.



The pioneering Ministry of Food's Dig For Victory campaign encouraged self-sufficiency, and allotment numbers rose from 815,000 to 1.4 million. Open spaces everywhere were transformed into allotments, from domestic gardens to public parks – even the lawns outside the Tower of London were turned into vegetable patches! But the 'Beeb' must have forgotten how important this was to the health and survival of the nation as it failed to mention the campaign at all in this popular TV series.

Need some advice?

There will be a talk for newish (and other) allotment holders on 'Working Effectively, Useful Tools and Other Tips' at The Rose Bar, Gardeners' Hall on Sunday 16 April at 10.15am.

WAHGA is the Windsor Allotments and Home Gardens Association Ltd.

**Visit the website for details: www.wahga.org.uk. Spring 2017.
This newsletter is written, compiled and designed by Caroline Jones, Lesley Upton and Philip Upton.**