

# grass CUTTINGS

FEB:2024

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Not a lot from me this time. January is now behind us thankfully. I would not go so far as to say that Spring has sprung, but at least the snowdrops and crocuses are showing their faces.

I am sure we all hope that we have seen the back of Storm Agnes and her siblings for this year at least — I am still looking for some of the lids to my compost bins!

Winter weather has kept many of us away from our plots with the place seeming very quiet, but hopefully by the time you read this, you will have been able to buy your onions and potatoes from the Trading Hut and we will all feel that the gardening season is underway again. There had been moments when we thought the usual February potato/onion delivery would be put back or our order reduced, on account of the bad weather in

Scotland where the seed potatoes come from, but in the end all was well and it was business as usual.

Trading Hut opening dates for this year are advertised on the gates and website. The water to the site will be turned back on sometime in March, weather dependent and the Hoedown can then be reopened.

Our first calendar event of the year is the AGM on 5 March 2024. The new lease will again be on the agenda, but hopefully for the last time. The documentation is now in its' final form and it may even be legally completed by the AGM — fingers crossed.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the AGM to start the year off.

**Chris Abbott, Chairman**

## SOCIAL EVENTS

Planning is underway for the forthcoming allotment year with social activities which will hopefully spark and satisfy every interest.

### SPRING

#### 'Top Ten Gardening Lessons'

Wednesday 22 May 2024, 7.30pm  
Salvation Army Hall, Ashton Lane, Sale  
£2 including refreshments



We have invited the excellent Maureen Sawyer back for a second time to give her new talk entitled 'Top Ten Gardening Lessons'. Her talk last year on 'The Organic Kitchen Garden' was inspirational, so make this new event a highlight of your gardening year.

### SUMMER

**Garden Visit** We are hoping to arrange a private visit to a local garden of interest. Keep your eye on Grass Cuttings for further details.

**Scarecrow Competition** Last year's Royal themed entries were of a very high standard so continuing with the topical theme, this year our focus will be 'The Olympics'. So plan ahead now, be inspired and let your creativity shine forth. Date of competition judging to be announced later.

**Allotment Picnic** This will be held as usual in July, the date of which to be announced later.

### AUTUMN

**Pumpkin Competition** Buy your seeds and plan now.

Categories will be the same as last year: Heaviest, Fattest, Ugliest and Smallest pumpkin with prizes for each category. A few people entered some really wonderful specimens last year, so grow your own Hallowe'en special and bring it along to the Hoe Down. Date of 'Weigh In' and measurement to be announced.

**Apple Pressing Day** Bring along your apples, a sharp knife, chopping board and some plastic bottles and take home delicious juice.

Dates and more details of all events to be circulated later.

**Valerie Mulligan, Social Secretary**

### AGM DATE AND DETAILS

This year's AGM will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 5 March 2024 at the Salvation Army Hall, Ashton Lane, Sale. The agenda and other details will be circulated to plot holders in advance of the meeting.

### NEW PLOT HOLDERS

Welcome to our new plot holders. We wish you all a most enjoyable and productive allotment experience.  
**David Beacham 15b / Janet Burrell 17b**  
**Elizabeth McCullough 18b**

### PLOT NUMBERS

It would be really helpful if each plot could display their plot number on a sign in a visible position. These could be painted on a piece of timber, a log, a large rock or paving slab or attached to a shed if you have one. Have a look at what fellow plot holders have used.

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## A GUIDE TO COMPOSTING

As an allotment, we are always mindful of how we can better recycle and encourage our plot holders to do the same. Recycling green waste into home-made compost is easy and environmentally friendly, below are some brief composting tips.

Adding compost to the soil helps improve its structure, texture and soil fertility. A thick layer will help deter weed germination and hold moisture in the soil. It can be used as potting compost when sieved.

For a good compost, try to mix both **BROWN** and **GREEN** waste in equal quantities to maintain a healthy balance of nitrogen and carbon.

**BROWN MATERIAL** can be dry plant stems, dried leaves, wood ash and cardboard

**GREEN MATERIAL** can be (raw) fruit and veg peelings, grass cuttings, annual weeds, manure, bedding plants, flowers, tea and coffee grounds

Chop up long stems/prunings before adding to the compost heap as this helps them to break down.

You can use a compost bin, or construct a heap of wooden boards. Ideally, if there's space, have two compost heaps or bins on the go. One you are adding to and one which is rotting down.

A successful compost heap should exclude some rain, retain warmth, allow drainage and let air in. Stand it on the soil which gives access for soil organisms and drainage. It's a good idea to regularly turn your compost with a fork to introduce oxygen and help the compost break down.

Once it's well-rotted and turned into 'black gold', it is ready to use. This can take anywhere from six months to two years depending on what you are composting. Larger heaps compost more quickly than smaller ones. For best results add the compost to the ground in either late winter or early spring.

Composting is also great for garden biodiversity, with many kinds of fungi and soil micro-organisms contributing to the process. Worms, woodlice, slugs and other invertebrates feed on the decaying material which in turn, provide food for birds, hedgehogs, toads and other valuable wildlife.

Why not give it a try. Look around the site and speak to other plot holders about what they do. The RHS website has some good information about composting.

HAPPY COMPOSTING!



## COMMITTEE CONTACTS

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**Valerie Mulligan** Social Secretary, Plot 8  
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**Louise Black** Plots, Plot 36  
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**Janet Cripps** Newsletter, Plot 44  
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**SHAS Website** [www.shas.org.uk](http://www.shas.org.uk)



## SECURITY

For the security of plot holders and equipment, gates should always be locked on entering and leaving the site.

## WHEELBARROWS

If you are borrowing the wheelbarrows from the white shed, please return so other plot holders can use them, and ensure the padlock is securely locked. There have been instances where the shed has been left open.



## KINGS SEEDS

If you haven't already got an account with Kings Seeds to purchase discounted seeds please contact Janet Cripps, email: [janetcripps@ntlworld.com](mailto:janetcripps@ntlworld.com) who can set you up with an account where you can view and download the 2024 catalogue and order online.

