



KENILWORTH ALLOTMENT TENANTS ASSOCIATION K.A.T.A.



NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2022

As we start the countdown into Autumn, yes I can't believe I'm saying that already... It's time to reflect once again on what a stunning year, yet a challenging year we've all just come through, and I seem to repeat myself annually as more and more records keep being broken weather-wise. Almost daily, we are told on the weather news that this past year has been the hottest and the driest since whenever... (I've just stopped taking notes on the subject)! Suffice to say that the extreme heat this year has been particularly dangerous for us mortal beings (and our beloved pets), and it stands to reason that it's been damaging to some of our crops and perhaps we should think more seriously about how we grow, what we grow, and ways to protect anything that *is* actually growing!

I have asked one of our tenants, Committee member Ann Barry to put something together on a different method of growing, and I hope that you will find it helpful. There have been some positives though, and we have found that our soft fruits have benefitted from the early extreme heat and they have been plentiful and ripened that bit earlier (even the blackberries, which started ripening at the end of July).

You will note at the bottom of this page that since our request for new Committee members, we have had two volunteers who have joined our Committee. Both are from the Odibourne site, and they are Sheila Franks from plot 2a, and Tor Clark from 'north of the river' on plot 101a. We welcome them onto our Committee and are confident that they can contribute to our team.

Sadly though, we have lost some of our membership due to ill health and we send sincere condolences to their families. They are David Blackburn from Spring Lane, Bob Aulton from our Beehive Hill site, who some of you may remember as one of our lovely shop volunteers from days past. Bill Meaton, who tended and looked after the Kenilworth Brownie plot until he became too poorly, and

finally Dennis Jones, a past Committee member, who our previous Chairman, Mike Hitchins, will agree was a tremendous help when we started to develop the area where our trading shed now stands. Dennis's engineering background was immensely helpful in both the planning of the retaining wall, as well as the laying of the foundations for the concrete base. His engineering skills also led to the solid construction of the concrete steps at 'The Common' end of the site, when he and Robin Ashby completely reconstructed the then dangerous and steep crumbling steps at the far end of Lower Ladyes Hills. Mike Hitchins, then Chairman, and in charge of the shed building project commented were that he quickly learnt that anything Dennis did was always first class.

Lily Brownjohn (Secretary for KATA)

Plot Inspections and our Waiting List...

So, completely unaware of what intense weather conditions were ahead of us, we started the season with our usual enthusiasm and before we knew it, plot inspections were upon us at the beginning of May. A few plot holders had to be nudged along, and some fell by the wayside. Others struggled along and lost crops completely due to the extreme heat and dryness, but overall the majority of tenants battled on bravely, albeit producing some weakened crops. However, this has prompted us to tighten up on plot inspections as we have also noted that there are some plot holders out there who are not using their plots to their full capacity, and this is unfair on those people on our waiting list, which is now in excess of 100. Plots are usually 'kept an eye on' throughout the year by Committee, but we have now taken the decision to do **an additional 'formal inspection' in August each year.** Just as a reminder, plots should be at least 80% cultivated. More on our plots later to include 'wildlife areas' and water usage!

Committee members

			Plot/Site:
<i>Chairman</i>	Chris Coton	513268	3a Spring Lane
<i>Vice Chair</i>	Pete Hayes	07970 891954	60 Odibourne
<i>Secretary</i>	Lily Brownjohn	855291 or 07768 525007	51 Odibourne
<i>Treasurer</i>	Philip Jordan	733407	37a Odibourne
	Ann Barry	857240 or 07799 564451	70b Odibourne
	Paula Hallam	07763 129678	44 Odibourne
	David Hoy	07770 652874	20 Beehive Hill
	Peter Jones	853930	18b Odibourne
	Sheila Franks	779348	2a Odibourne
	Tor Clark	07867 113235	101a Odibourne

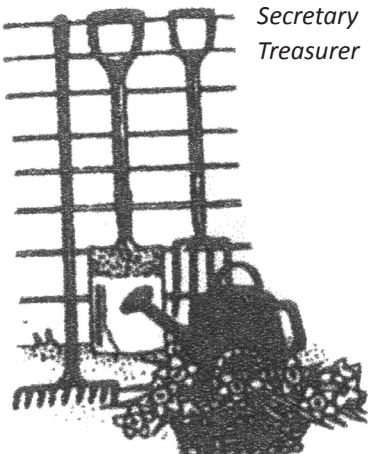
Committee may also be contacted through our email address

katatradingstore@yahoo.com

Items of interest for the Website to: www.kenilworthallotments.org

Facebook Kenilworth Allotments

Or contact the Secretary direct: Email: lilybrownjohn@btopenworld.com



Beehive Hill NGS Open Day....

So, this was our first 'formal' event of the year, taking place on Sunday June 19th. Regrettably, I couldn't be there, and I really love the Beehive Hill event! But I understand that it was another successful afternoon with around 90 visitors (out of a total of 354) to our beautiful Beehive Hill site. Our plant sales raised £90 in total for the Association with all gate takings being donated to the NGS charities. I understand from David that an overall total of £2980 was raised by all the participating gardens in the surrounding area. All credit to Madeleine for organising, and to all the Beehive tenants who volunteered to man the entry gate, look after the plant stall, and to those who donated such beautiful plants for us to sell. Well done to all at Beehive Hill

And while we are there....

There are plans afoot to extend the car parking area at the rear of the site - watch this space...

And I believe that David Hoy is organising a work party for hedge trimming shortly. Many thanks to David for his continued work as our Site Rep. and for keeping the site up to its usual exemplary standard.

Potato Weigh-in...

This was our first competitive event of the year and the weigh-in was held on Sunday 26th June, which once again I sadly missed, but by all accounts, it went down extremely well. The competition was the inspiration of Caroline Faulkner back in 2017, and the 'Competition Potatoes' which she organises have to be purchased through the shop to ensure that everyone starts off on a level footing. And the winners were:

ADULTS:	CHILDREN:
1 st Caroline Faulkner 1749g	1 st Hallie Watkins 465g
2 nd Martin Poole 1585g	2 nd Saul Gormley 428g
3 rd Trudy Hayes 1314g	3 rd Conor Wehring 362g

And this year, after accidentally creating a children's section last year, we have a new, bright shiny Trophy to present to our Junior Champion at our Presentation evening in November! Well done Hallie.

Plot Judging, 12th July by Sarah Ridgeway from Hinton's Nurseries...

This year, the task was particularly arduous as both Robin and Sue Ashby, who pre-selected the entrants, and Sarah Ridgeway and myself had to endure the highest temperatures on our rounds. But that's the name of the game I'm afraid, and equally there have been years where we've had to duck into someone's greenhouse to seek shelter from torrential rain! We have been most grateful to Robin and Sue over the last five years as they have made our Judge's job a lot easier by whittling down the eligible plots to roughly somewhere between 20 - 25 on the shortlist (to include novices). This means that Sarah has to only spend half a day with us, for which, once again, we are most grateful – after all, she does have a business to run and gives her time to us free of charge.

Please note - Some New Procedures...

From next year, we are going to try a different approach, and that is to ask tenants to 'opt in' to the competition. This can go either of two ways, one giving us more entries

than we need, (in which case, someone will still have to go through the entries to whittle them down), or we may not have many entries through modesty or simple apathy, and standards may slip, which is very sad, meaning that those who win may not be a true representation of the actual 'best' plots, which is after all, what the competition is all about! So if you are one of those who regularly hit the pre-selection list, then **'please do not be backward in coming forward'** as they say. Let's just see how it goes next year!

Novices Category to stay the same....

These new rules do not apply however to our 'Novices' Category. All new tenants within a two year limit are eligible to be judged as a 'Novice'. The pre-selection for entry into this category will be done in the usual way. You don't have to enter anything.

So, here are this year's results:

MAIN COMPETITION WINNERS: (just the top three)

	PLOTS	POINTS
1 st Nigel Wells	74 Odibourne	94
2 nd Keith Rockett	6 Beehive Hill	87
3 rd Richard & Brid Reeves	1 Beehive Hill	85½

So once again, on behalf of the Committee, huge thanks go to Sue Ashby (RHS qualified) and husband Robin who have been most generous with their time over these last five years for helping us with the pre-selection of some of our best plots. They kindly took on the role when past Committee member, Alan Savage relinquished the task after falling seriously ill. Our thanks also once again go to Sarah Ridgeway BSc (Hons) MI Hort. from Hinton's Nurseries, Warwick, who kindly donated her day to us for the final judging of our plots. Please return her support by visiting her Nurseries (Hintons), where you will find lots of end of season bargains.

And some advice from our own successful 'no dig' gardener /Committee member Ann Barry...

My experience of "No Dig"

We took on our half plot which slopes down from the hedge bordering Lower Ladyes Hill in 2010. The soil is light and sandy, the top half is overshadowed by large trees which suck up moisture from late spring onwards. We worked the plot in the "normal" way, digging and incorporating compost/manure, frantically digging down for the roots of mareetail which as everyone knows you never quite get down to! We struggled to improve the soil and it dried out very quickly.

About 4 years ago I stumbled across Charles Dowding's method of growing whereby the soil is undisturbed, its organisms working and multiplying, building on the existing network of life. These organisms are fed with a layer of one to two inches of compost in the autumn and the worms take this down into the soil. I compost everything suitable I can get my hands on from garden prunings, kitchen vegetable peelings, chopped brassica stems, annual weeds, leaves, grass clippings and wood chippings – adding any manure I can source; it all goes onto the compost heap where it sits for most of a year. I have a bin where I put the very few perennial weeds, including mareetail and bindweed, they stay covered in water for a year or two and then the contents get poured onto the plot or compost heap. It is all food for the plot and I take none of this goodness home for the green bin!

As marestalk emerges I pull it out by hand, it weakens if unable to grow in the light and it doesn't take over – the same goes for bindweed. The hoe is my best friend as soon as weeds start to germinate. When marestalk is vigorous in the spring I hoe that off too, it's very effective. It's amazing how quickly you can hoe a half plot and keep the weeds away.

When harvesting, crop roots are left in the ground which also helps prevent soil erosion. With root vegetables I just minimise disturbance. I use homemade comfrey tea, nettle tea, and seaweed feed from the shop. This along with the compost feeds my produce and the soil.

I found that the benefits of going "no dig" were huge. Crops increased and the light soil retained moisture. The number of worms in the soil increased and other beneficial insects moved in too. We plant two crops a year in most beds.

The other half of our plot, now being cultivated "no dig" too, runs down to the brook where the soil is totally different and the same benefits apply. It is more difficult to dig a hole to plant a potato but the rewards, especially the water retention, are worth the effort.

There is an interesting article in the **Allotment & Leisure Gardener** magazine, Issue 2 of this year. This link will take you to it: <https://online.flipbuilder.com/cwao/nvuk/> (For quick ref. go straight to page 54)

This is the link to Charles Dowding's website with lots of free information and guidance <https://charlesdowding.co.uk/>
Happy gardening, Ann!

Many thanks Ann, for all of that wonderful advice, and I have to say that Ann's plot reached the high end of our top twenty plots this year. I must however mention that we also have another 'No Dig' gardener within our fold and that is Madeleine Sexton from our Beehive Hill site. Although she opted out from the competitive world just for this year, she is regularly one of our top winners of our Best Plot competition, so there is more proof that it does actually work!!!

Following on from Ann's article and the subject of moisture and our soil drying out...

I can totally understand the frantic watering that has been going on this year with the exceptional dryness, but please take care not to overfill your watering cans, spilling and wasting this precious commodity as you lift it out over the edge of the bath. Committee have also noted that there are still plots with structures on, where guttering could be attached, and butts could be used to collect rain water (when it eventually arrives). It makes more sense to water in the evenings to save evaporation, and mulching your crops to prevent moisture loss is a must. We have predicted a massive water bill for this year, far exceeding any other in our history! With utility price increases imminent, please help us to save money. Remember, watering your plot with a hosepipe is not permitted and is one of the rules in our tenancy agreement. Breaching of this rule may lead to the termination of your lease with KATA.

So with all that talk of money matters...

RENTS ARE DUE THIS MONTH!!!

As usual, rents will be taken at the shop over the last two weekends in September preceding our **End of Allotment Year on the 29th**. Please put this and the following dates in your diary as fines will be issued immediately for non-payment

of rent if the last day is missed. Committee will make themselves available for Rent Taking at the shop (during regular opening times 10am- 12noon) on the following dates:

SAT/SUN 17TH/18TH SEPT

SAT/SUN 24TH/25TH SEPT

And if the allocated dates are inconvenient for you, please let Lily know and alternative arrangements can be made. Also, this is an opportunity for you to pick up your **King's seed catalogue** from the shop.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

The usual methods of payment are fine – CASH (Correct money if possible please), CHEQUES (payable to Kenilworth Allotment Tenants Association) –NOT KATA! and CONTACTLESS.

One further option is now available – We can invoice you and you can pay ON-LINE. Details of how to do this are contained within your last Newsflash.

PLEASE NOTE – WE ARE PROPOSING TO RAISE RENTS NEXT YEAR AS THERE HAS BEEN NO RENT INCREASE FOR THE LAST 6 YEARS

Open Day 21st August, with the official Bridge Opening...

A huge feature of our Open Day are our lovely Scarecrows! They are fun, they promote smiles, and they bring out the creativeness and competitive mischief in our tenants. **We love them – and apparently so do our visitors!** And we must thank the Courier, who kindly devoted a whole page in their newspaper to them for us plus on-line coverage to help promote our event this year. We also encouraged tenants to grow a variety of **Sunflowers to sell at our Open Day to help raise funds for the Ukraine** (The Sunflower being their National Emblem). The Sunflowers were judged slightly earlier than the usual end of August, but in fact some had 'peaked' quite early due to the extreme weather anyway!

What follows is a report from Paula on our very successful day:

What a day, and the temperature was just right and the visitors turned out in their droves. We had approximately 600 visitors to the site in the three hours that we were open. The Deputy Mayor attended and thoroughly enjoyed herself. The site with its Scarecrows and Sunflowers looked great even if the weather had left other areas looking a little brown around the edges. A big thank-you to all plot-holders for making their plots look so good considering the tough summer we have endured. Another big thank-you to all the volunteers who helped on the day with all aspects of the event – we couldn't do it without you. We have made a donation to the Mayor's charities and will be donating to the Ukrainian cause. We had lots of positive feedback from visitors on what is a fantastic community event. **Once again – a Big Thank-you, Paula.**

Thanks for that report Paula, and I must also add huge thanks to Nick Wood, creator and responsible for the upkeep of our website. Nick spent the whole afternoon interviewing and capturing the atmosphere of the event, plus the Bridge opening/christening, which was superb. His brilliant Podcast can be heard through a link if you go to our website - kenilworthallotments.org

Best Scarecrow judging 16th August (Just the winners in each category):

ADULT TRADITIONAL:

Clare Spruce & Gary Holmes Wordle Gummage

ADULT TOPCAL:

Chris Coton (Jt) Happy Birthday Boris
Lily Brownjohn (Jt) Hasta la vista baby

ADULT NOVELTY:

Margaret Carpenter Troll on the bridge

CHILDREN:

Hallie Watkins Queen and Flags

Tallest Sunflower judged 20th August:

Margaret Carpenter 3.15m

Well done to all participants – you helped to make our Open Day 'Special'

Vice-Chairman/Shop Manager Newsletter Report...

Well, 2022 seems to have flown, after the first year of the new bridge it was formally opened by Deputy Mayor Pippa Austin at the Open Day on 21st August when she named it "Splendid Bridge". This name has now even made it to Google Maps and a plaque will soon be placed on the bridge after it's formal naming.

The Trading Store has continued trading well with various new products introduced from a range of new suppliers. Our pledge continues to keep the prices as low as we can and all the "profits" from the Trading Store are ploughed back into the allotment sites and projects. After our trimmers were starting to show their age we have invested in a battery powered version along with a hedge trimmer both of which are available for hire.

The dry spell we have all experienced this summer led to some new challenges for the growing of vegetables on the KATA sites. It also led to 2 willow trees falling into the brook which has meant clearance work even before the annual pollarding.

This autumn has seen the sourcing of a reliable source of manure from Tim Wade with a huge amount of muck being distributed across many plots which is fantastic to see. Tim will continue to deliver across all 3 sites and I'm hopeful that his high-quality horse manure will become part of KATA into the future. We met Tim through another of his businesses and he is able to provide greenhouse glass on request via the Trading Store. All of this could never have happened without the ongoing support of the team. We love running the Trading Store but without Trudy and Paula then many, many giggles would have been missed out on. We also started reintroducing the volunteers back into the shop and this will continue next year.

As for 2023, I'm going to tempt fate.... It'll be wetter, easier and smoother! (Excuse the hysterical laughter!)

Thanks for that up-date Pete.

But I must also give Pete credit for the new storage arrangement for the Manure and Woodchip, as it looks much tidier and easier I'm sure for our delivery guys to offload into. The constant supply of the above is also appreciated as proved by its rapid turnover! The re-siting of the water bath has enabled this great improvement. Also a big thank-you to Pete and Chairman Chris for the speedy replacement job of the gatepost in sweltering heat just days before our Open Day!

Wildlife areas...

Whilst this topic has come under discussion at Committee, the jury is out as to how tenants are interpreting so called acceptable 'wildlife areas'. Some are simply letting a proportion of their plots go to weeds (from which seed heads will spread on the wind onto other tenant's clean plots). This seems unfair on their neighbours. Others have areas where they have simply run out of time to plant up, deeming the now uncultivated patch to be their 'wildlife' area. Again, this seems unfair when we have a waiting list of well in excess of 100 people and blocks of land are being unused. A more practical suggestion would be to create a pond to offer a habitat to our much valued frogs (nature's own slug hunting brigade) – maybe somewhere underneath our fruit trees, slightly shady where nothing else will grow? We (especially at Odibourne) are fortunate enough to be surrounded by bountiful hedges and trees, and our site shares the benefits of a lush riverbank. Our hedges and trees and the river bank already provide copious habitats for our wildlife, and many of us grow flowers for our pollinators to share. *Further discussion definitely needed on this one!*

Dates for the Diary still to look forward to...

Macmillan Coffee morning Sunday 25th September, 10am – 1pm at the Trading Shed

Pumpkin Weigh-in Sunday 2nd October outside The Engine at 12.30. Free lunch supplied.

AGM Thursday 27th October (**Note change of date**) 7.30 at the Sports and Social Club. If you would like to see a copy of the accounts prior to the meeting then please register your request at the shop or simply contact

katatradingstore@yahoo.com

Presentation Evening Friday 18th November, Sports and Social Club

Assisting Refugees...

If you feel that you have the time to befriend and help refugees to learn to speak English, then please contact tenant Peter Jones, on 07756 281231

And Finally...

A big 'thank-you' to Martyn Partridge...

Who has assisted KATA with the layout and printing of this newsletter for around 10 years??? (I've lost count). Sadly his Printing Press equipment is getting old and creaky and overheating. (Some of us will be familiar with that state), so fingers crossed that my photocopier can hold out!!!

So have a good Autumn/Winter everyone and continue to enjoy your harvests

Lily

