

Countesthorpe Gardens & Allotments Society

Newsletter: Spring Edition

Pumpkin Competition

A pumpkin competition was held on the rather dull, slightly damp and windy afternoon of 24 October. This, in effect, closed the year for the allotment in terms of any social activity. These, it is hoped, would return this year when much fuller social calendar can be put in place. Though at the time of publication we are now in a post Christmas lockdown, so this may look less likely than before. However, the weather didn't put off those who wanted to take part or just look at the different pumpkins on display.

Despite the initial rain, the afternoon went well and the rain ceased until just after everyone had left. Then the heavens opened. What good timing we had on that day.

There were two categories of pumpkin size. Giant and normal. A couple of the giant ones threatened to collapse the tables set up to display the competitors, so needed to be placed over the legs. And so to the results.

Giant

1st — Dave Merrick, plot 17 — 56lb (25.45kg)

2nd — Donna Footitt, plot B — 6.5lb (2.95kg)

Normal

1st — David Millar, plot 50 — 20lb (9.09kg)

2nd — Oli Emmersun, plots 15 & 44 — 18lb (8.18kg)

3rd — Karen & Alan Wilson, Plot 24 — 14lb (6.36kg)

Guess the weight winner

David Millar, plot 50 — 13lb (5.9kg)

Thanks go to Gill, allotments officer, for organising it and Tony, her husband for his support in setting up the tables and decorations, as well all those who supported the event.

Winter work

Some of the U3A raised beds edgings needed replacing as the wood around them was so rotted that they were falling to pieces. It was decided that they would be

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replaced with sleepers as these enabled easier access than the suggested concrete slabs. Janet Walker and her husband volunteered for the work which was completed just before Christmas. A big thanks to Janet and her husband for giving their time and effort to restore the edgings.



As you will have noticed, access to the lower part of the allotments has been roped off. This is more to protect the ground from damage, as happened last year, than to stop vehicles getting stuck, as also happened last year. If you decide to circumvent the rope then it will be your responsibility to recover your vehicle, as there is now no access to the tractor, which was previously inconvenienced, to pull vehicles out. So as a reminder, could those holders whose plots are down the grass track please refrain from taking their vehicles past the rope until such times that the ground is less saturated. Usually towards the middle of March.

Meanwhile, some of you braved the cold

and frosty weather to continue work on your plots here are some photos from the 7 January when Gill ventured to the allotment only to find some other 'mad' allotmenters there as well.



The same occurred later on in January when the snow came. Here are a few 'snowy' shots with of the allotment, along with Gordon and Wendy who were turning the ground over.



Christmas at the allotment

It was good to see some festive cheer at the allotment over the days leading up to

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Christmas. To show that Christmas hadn't been cancelled and could still be enjoyed, Gill got into the mood early and put a Christmas tree up at the allotment for everyone's enjoyment. Being well anchored down with some serious pegs, it stood up to the ferocious winter winds that blew across the allotments, and all the decorations survived the battering as well. Various people commented on what a nice touch and also getting into the festive mood. Thank you Gill for the purchase.



Spring Open Day

It is hoped, to hold an Open Day sometime during this year to show villagers what the allotment is like and also for you to show your family and friends the allotment and what you are doing with your plot. There was a specific date in April proposed last year. However, this now seems unlikely to be realised with the current restrictions in place and will hopefully happen later in the year when we are all able to mix in a safer

environment.

Rental Items

Again as a reminder for new tenants, the society has a number of items to rent. These are 2 rotavators and 2 x 240v power generators for plot holders to use. The fee for renting any of these is £15 per half day. The generators are useful for those with electrical tools. Should you wish to borrow any of these items please contact Gill Postlethwaite the Allotments Officer at gillposs20@gmail.com or via the website email link or see her at plot 32.

Also, we have a First Aid kit positioned near the Houghton's business and plot 32. If anyone injures themselves please use the kit which contains such basic items as different sized bandages, sterilised wipes and saline solution for washing dirt from cut and abrasions and eyes.

Donated Feature

Some of you will remember Chris and Kath Heaton who had a plot down the grass track for many years. Chris was a well know allotmenteer and held the position of chairman for quite a few years before Keith Stretton took over after his sad demise due to cancer.

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Kath continued to look after their plot for a few more years, until she had to give it up due to advanced stages of dementia. She is now being well looked after in a care home.



Their daughters, Jude and Racheal, knew that their parents loved the allotment and wanted to donate a metal sculpture, that was made for Chris, and had been a feature in his and Kath's front garden for many years, in remembrance of him for his work as chairman of the society for those years.

Seed orders

During 'normal' times the Kings seed order would have been fulfilled and despatched to Fiona before Christmas. I know quite a few of you, me included, have been waiting for that package to be delivered so that we can get the early seeds started. Unfortunately this year has been an exception and Kings seeds is no exception to the reduced production capacity of other businesses, as we have found out. They, at least, sent an update keeping us informed of the delay. If you haven't seen the email link to the

update, here it is:

Dear NAS Members and Seed buyers

We are writing to assure you that we are doing everything we possibly can to ensure all members receive their Kings Seeds orders as soon as physically possible. The number of orders that we have received this season is unprecedented – double the usual rate. We therefore have double the orders but, to comply with social distancing rules and to keep our staff safe, we only have half the number of staff. We have been unable to take on extra staff, something we would have done under normal circumstances.

All our staff are wearing protective masks and visors whilst picking orders, which means they need to have extra breaks so they can remove their masks for short periods.

We are just grateful we have not been told to close as many industries have and do understand your frustration, but I can honestly say we are working 7 days a week and very long hours. In order to concentrate on existing orders we are not presently accepting new orders via the website or telephone, we will review this in 2 weeks' time.

Kings employees' safety is our priority and if it were possible to keep them all safe but take on extra staff I certainly would.

*Tracy Palmer
Managing Director
Kings Seeds*



At the time of writing there was still no news as to when the orders would arrive.

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Allotment Tips & Techniques

If you have any tips and time savers that you employ on your plot either, for growing any particular veg or plants or ways and techniques for managing your plot why not share this information with your other allotmenters.

Tips & techniques

1. If recycling and using empty containers, such as those used for chicken pellets, to grow pot plants in, don't drill the water drain holes in the bottom. Instead, drill them about 2 inches (50 cm) up from the bottom. This will allow some water to remain in the container and stops the compost from drying out so soon.
2. Aphids can be a problem particularly with beans, and other veg. Companion planting the strong smelling herb **Summer Savoury**, can help keep them away. It can also be used as an alternative to thyme.
3. If growing onions from seed, sow them indoors during the first week in February or outdoors last week in March. If growing onions from sets, try starting them early by growing them in pots indoors.
4. Watering different veg can seem a simple thing to do. But did you know that

some veg need more, or less, water than you thought? Here's a guide to what some veg need.

Cucurbits	Squash can survive and produce minimal watering, but courgette plants need to be kept constantly moist.
Fruiting crops	Aubergines, cucumbers, sweet corn and tomatoes need constant water throughout their growing period.
Leafy vegetables and salad crops	Crops such as cabbages, chard and spinach along with salad crops need water at every stage of growth.
Legumes	Avoid watering peas and broad beans when young, but they will need water at flowering time and about 2 weeks later. Runner beans need constant moisture, but French beans can cope with dryer conditions
Onions etc.	Water to establish and then only in dry spells.
Potatoes	Water regularly from 6 – 10 weeks after planting and when they start to produce tubers.
Root crops	Carrots and parsnips will split if watered irregularly. Water before dry conditions develop.
Stem vegetables	Celery, celeriac and Florence Fennel need copious amounts of water to develop and will be damaged by drought conditions.

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