



NEWSLETTER

Message from our new Secretary!

"On 20th June at the AGM when Barbara Smith and Clive Birch stood down as Secretary and Chairman of the BDAC, I volunteered to become the new BDAC Secretary. I am a plot holder at Northleigh Road Allotments in Ward End, Birmingham 8 and also Secretary of the Ward End Gardeners Association which manages 5 sites in Ward End (including Northleigh Rd).

There have been other changes to the Executive Committee of the BDAC. New members are: Sue Griffith (who was co-opted earlier this year) from Harborne Hill Allotments, David Read from Ward End Gardeners, Luke Richards from Thornbridge Allotments, Ross White from Harborne Lane Allotments and Keith Yardley from Station Road Allotments, Stechford.

Continuing Exec members are: Cheryl Butler (Thornbridge), Clive Fenn (Birches Green), Stuart Guest (Tennal Lane), Dave Hubball (Thornbridge), Len Tubbs The Brambles), Peter Thomas (May Lane), and Dave Rawlings remains the Treasurer.

We could do with more representation from some parts of the city on the Executive - areas such as Northfield, Acocks Green, Yardley, Handsworth, Erdington, so that we have a better idea of the issues concerning them. While there are lots of common problems, every site and area is distinctive with its own history, and it's only possible to tackle something if you know about it.

We will continue to deal with the day-to-day enquiries coming in through the BDAC email postbag, at the same time as setting up working groups to consider various issues which need to be looked at in more depth. There's a lot of experience and ideas amongst the people running Birmingham's sites which should feed into this process, so if you have something to contribute, please get in touch - whether it's about the lettings process, the relevance and importance of allotment rules (or how to interpret or enforce them), or anything else which affects whether sites develop and thrive or have problems and conflicts that don't get resolved.

I'm hoping that we can do more to share 'good practice' between the sites. Having visited a number of sites since taking on this new role, I think we could all benefit from seeing how things are done elsewhere and using the best of what works. Or just trying simple ideas such as seed swaps, or recycling containers to harvest rainwater. Any ideas welcome.

Hester Blewitt

Dates for your diary

The next **Executive meeting** will be on 1st August at Bordesley Green Allotments. Meetings starts at 7 p.m. (Meetings are generally on the first Monday of the month)

If you wish to attend any meeting as an observer please contact
Hester Blewitt
bdac.allotments@gmail.com

BDAC Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Competition
Saturday August 19th

National Allotments Week
August 7th to August 13th

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BDAC Fruit, Flower and Vegetable Show

The BDAC will be holding our Fruit, flower and vegetable competition again this year at Bordesley Green Allotments.

The number of classes in the Schedule remains the same as 2022 and includes several classes for novice growers. A good time to start your showing journey.

If your site has not entered before why not consider entering a Display of Vegetables or a vase of flowers in the Association competitions to showcase the skills of your site!

There are many individual classes to enter including **ones for children.**

Entries close at the end of July so don't delay !

To enter download the schedule from our website where you will also find the entry form and instructions of where to send your entries. Alternatively, contact the Show Secretary Dave Hubball 72 Longstone Road Birmingham B42 2DP, phone 07528 521304 email davehubball72@gmail.com

Important update for August 2023 for Vegetable Competition Exhibitors.

- a) Access to Show benches for exhibitors will be between 9.00 am and 8.00pm Friday 18th August 2023 and Saturday 19th August 2023 between 8.00 am and 8.45am.
- b) Show Bench Arena will be closed for judging from 9.00am until judging is complete.
- c) Only those persons officially appointed shall be present during the judging of exhibits
- d) No exhibit is to be removed before 5.00pm on Saturday 19th August 2023
- e) The Show Area will open to the public at approx. 12.00pm, closing to the public at 4.30pm.
- f) Presentation will be at 4.30pm on the day of the show.



If you haven't entered before have a try, it's fun to take part

Birmingham Allotment Heritage Project

Chris Poolman has worked hard over the past three year to create a record of our Birmingham Allotment Story. He is currently working with a band of volunteers to finalise the displays that will be installed in the Library of Birmingham in September. Please try to publicise the event to all family and friends. Here is the official flyer !



THE BIRMINGHAM ALLOTMENT PROJECT

WOTTA LOTTA CULTURE!

EXHIBITION:
SATURDAY 16TH
SEPTEMBER

TO SATURDAY
25TH NOVEMBER
2023

THE LIBRARY
OF BIRMINGHAM
THE GALLERY
(FLOOR 3)

A snapshot of Birmingham's
vibrant allotment culture
from the 1960s to the
present day

Visit the exhibition and
find out why allotments are
so important to the city



Exhibition
Opening:
Saturday 16th
September
2.00 - 4.00pm

Wanted: your site/plot improvement tips

This is the time of year when tenants who've neglected their plots get the news from the Allotments Officer they dread: "Notice of Re-entry". Not a pleasant task for Association Committee members to have to commence the procedure which leads to someone being evicted.

So, what does your Association do when people don't keep on top of the weeds and don't stick to rule 5.2 of the Allotment Rules: "Allotment Gardens must be kept clean, free from weeds, well-manured and maintained in a good state of cultivation and fertility."

Over the next few months, the BDAC wants to hear what is happening at site level around Birmingham and how committees are attempting to keep their sites up to a reasonable standard of cultivation. Whether or not you have a waiting list of people anxious to take on neglected plots, do get in touch and tell us:

- * Do you do anything special when tenants first sign up, to set a standard of cultivation for them to aspire to?
- * Do you do plot inspections and if so, how do you organise them?
- * How do you handle matters when tenants' plots are overgrown and uncultivated?

It would be good if we can share ideas which work. Maybe your experience could help the BDAC develop some good practice guidelines that will help other association committees deal with one of the most difficult parts of their role..

Please send contributions to bdac.allotments@gmail.com

Plot and Site Competitions up date

The BDAC would like to apologise as there will be no Plot or Site competitions this year as we do not have any judges.

Contact the BDAC

Chairman: Position vacant

Secretary: Hester Blewitt : bdac.allotments@gmail.com

For lots of information visit our Website www.bdacallotments.co.uk Join us on our Facebook page- BDAC Birmingham allotments <https://www.facebook.com/groups/674161326681373>
Follow us on Twitter [@BDAC_allotments](https://twitter.com/BDAC_allotments)

News from the lovely folk on Uplands!

Uplands are pleased to inform other Local Allotments that the garden store is open for most gardening products and materials.

Open Monday to Saturday at the following times: 6am until 9am then 1pm until 4pm
Sundays : 6am until 9am only

Also, you are all welcome to come to our **"Uplands Allotments Fruits and Vegetables Show held on Saturday 16 September 2023.**

*For more details, please contact Dorothy Secretary of Uplands Allotments Association,
326, Oxhill Road, Handsworth. B21 8EX. Landline 0121 554 7742*

Gardening Club at St Margaret's Road Allotments, Ward End

In 2019 Ward End Gardening Association started a gardening club on a vacant plot at St Margaret's Road with the help of a 12-month Age Concern grant. Four years further on, the plan is to cultivate a second plot and extend the benefits of club gardening in to new people.

It's been an interesting experience because soon after we set up, the pandemic lockdown was imposed. Undaunted by this, the club kept going through the whole period with a small group of people including a retired plot holder from another Ward End site called Ivan Bullard who helped us put together Grow-your-own-at-home kits for Unity Hub to distribute to people who were self-isolating. Ivan died in 2022 but we remember him with a bench donated by his family, a rose tree on the plot and a bay tree in a pot on our patio.

Our original plot is now overflowing – we've got fruit trees, raspberry canes, herbs and strawberries in boxes, raised beds full of lettuces, peas and onions, loads of pots and boxes of flowers, other beds with beans, potatoes and pumpkins, not to mention the polytunnel bursting with tomatoes and peppers.

The club has been self-financing since 2020, with everyone chipping in via £10 membership fees to pay for seeds, or donating gardening items and bringing along tea, coffee, bananas or cake for our breaks. But it has remained a small group, so this year, we decided to try and build up the membership and take on a second plot. WEGA applied for a 12 month grant from the Hodge Hill Neighbourhood Network Scheme, to target older and disabled people. We've bought wood for raised beds including a special one for use by people in wheelchairs and a three-step raised bed to cater for people with limited mobility. The site toilet is also going to be refurbished with additional provision for wheelchair users.

The impetus for this project has also come from experience of a lot of our new plot holders struggling to sustain their interest and time commitment. We've found that for many with family, care or work commitments, it's just too much of a responsibility and the turnover of tenants is higher than it should be. So, the option of a club means that people can still enjoy gardening without the hassle factor, and if they enjoy the social side too, it's a good combination.

The club relaunch is happening on 13th July on St Margaret's Road Allotments, Birmingham B8 2BA. We're hoping that it will attract local people living in flats and small houses living nearby curious to find out what's going on at small site that a lot of them aren't even aware of.

After that, we'll be running 2 sessions a week, the existing Thursday one led by the WEGA Secretary Hester and the Tuesday one by our new sessional worker Meena who brings flower gardening experience partly from her role at the Birmingham Central Library. Hopefully we'll gain a new band of plant enthusiasts who will be able to tap into the experience of our old timers and rejuvenate the oldest of our five Ward End sites. See photo on the next page!



News From Birches Green

Like a number of other sites across the city Birches Green Allotments were successful in getting a grant from the City's Food Legend Fund. At BGAA the money is going towards installing raised beds on a plot that for some years has been water logged and unusable. The plan is to install hard standing and 8 raised beds that will be let as individual beds. These will be let to local individuals and groups. In the hope of increasing access to the allotments for young, old and disabled users. Work was quick to get going but unfortunately we were unable to get the digger on to the plot as it was too wet so stalled for a couple of months. The current dry spell means we are able to start making a difference.



BDAC are keen to hear from other sites that successfully bid and what progress they are making

First Aid for Allotment Association Members and Plotolders

First aid isn't something you want to do on an allotment, but sometimes it's vital to have someone on site who knows what to do in an emergency.

In March this year, Ward End Gardeners Association paid for and ran an in-house First Aid course aimed at allotment users through Natalie White of New Training (natalie@new-training.co.uk). 12 plot holders did the course and a couple of them have already used that new knowledge.

The course has been specifically adapted to enable allotment people to carry out basic life support, and deal with the most common injuries and instances of ill health, when working onsite. So, the people who should attend and become first aiders are those who spend a fair amount of time on the site. They are most likely to be there if accidents happen, and they can also be alert to things which might happen – such as people getting dehydrated or collapsing because they're overdoing it!

Now through the BDAC, Natalie is going to run another 4 courses in October and November and because there is European Social Funding available (for this year only – it ends in December) through the Brandwood Centre, it will be at minimal cost. This is provided the participants are mostly eligible ie are retired or not working.

The plan is to have courses running in different parts of the city, to make them more accessible. Currently, two associations have agreed to do this and it's hoped that two others will offer their facilities shortly – all that's needed is a reasonably sized room (pavilion or other space) big enough to accommodate 12 participants doing practical exercises like CPR and bandaging, an electrical supply for the presentation of training material, and the usual toilet and kitchen facilities, so refreshments can be provided. **Paid Places** People who are at work and so are not eligible for a free place can also attend, but only 2 in every course of maximum 12 participants, at a cost of £35 per non-eligible participant. Natalie's training fee is covered through the ESF funding. Associations sending participants are asked to contribute to the costs of the venue and refreshments through a £6 per person upfront payment, refundable if the course is cancelled but not if the person doesn't turn up and is not replaced. If you're interested in attending or nominating someone from your association, please contact Hester at the BDAC – Venues, dates and times to be confirmed probably in August.

First Aid Training for Allotment Association members and plotolders 2023

Name of Association.....
.....

Contact person/contact details (email address & mobile number).....

Name of proposed participant.....

Eligibility for free training (please tick 1st & 2nd boxes and one of the others):
NB Eligibility will be checked beforehand and evidence required on the day; self-declaration for people not economically active

Over 19	Living in Birmingham or Solihull	Not working and not in receipt of benefit	Not working and in receipt of benefit	Retired

If not eligible: £35 payable in advance (2 paid places per funded course of 12)
All participants: We will pay £6 per person once the course date and venue are confirmed. Refundable if the course has to be cancelled.
Send this form to BDAC at bdac.allotments@gmail.com

Make the Case for Birmingham Allotments.

Every one of the thousands of ploholders in Birmingham understands the benefits of allotments. They produce food, reducing the need for sourcing produce from further afield or overseas. Some of the food goes directly or indirectly to the poorest people in our city. They improve well-being, both physical and mental, thus probably saving money in terms of NHS and caring services costs. And they sustain the environment – these are green and biodiverse spaces. So why doesn't Birmingham City Council give us more priority? Partly because we don't have the evidence to prove those benefits. The secretary of Moor Green Allotments has contacted the University of Birmingham Centre for Urban Well Being (we've never heard of it either) and they might be up for a detailed research project to

1. To examine and quantify the benefits of the allotment estate to the city's residents and to Birmingham City Council (BCC) as the landlord.
2. Benefits defined in terms of
 - a. Food production especially benefits to the wider community including links to food banks and other charities
 - b. Environment – biodiversity, carbon capture, reduced carbon footprint/water footprint
 - c. Mental and Physical Well-being.

It's likely the research will mainly be through questionnaires to individual ploholders. At the moment all we need to establish is whether other sites are interested in participating. If there is a good response, we'll organise a meeting at Moor Green with free tea and biscuits for all interested parties! Just drop an email to madahal.secretary@gmail.com and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

David Draycott

News from Harborne Lane Allotment Association, Harborne Lane, Selly Oak

HAAA is a site over around 6 acres with 86 plots and around 94 tenants from diverse backgrounds and existed since around 1902. The relocation of the site due to the building of the Battery Retail Park some 15 years ago and subsequent offset funding to HAAA provided opportunity for us to invest in capital projects to further improve the site.

These projects included converting a plot for 13 raised beds for use by the less-abled and installing a communal poly-tunnel for members. Both these initiatives also bring in additional nominal funding each year.

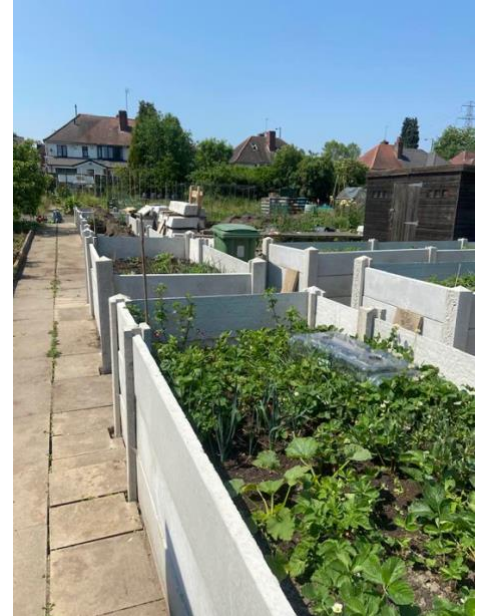
HAAA recently received Birmingham City Council Food Legends funding to replace the rotting wooden raised beds with longer lasting concrete gravel boards. We are about halfway through completing this. This project has been a challenge.

HAAA normally manages a couple of site maintenance days where anywhere from a handful to a dozen members give up most of a day to help site upkeep (litter picking, communal area maintenance as strimming or pruning, etc). We also normally manage a couple of on-site socials each year (off-site never really worked consistently). We found combining last year's AGM with a social event held straight away afterwards was popular and helped attendance. AGM allotment bingo, where members won a free bag of compost or manure for a Full House probably helped! I've never seen anyone dance after an AGM before. I think we'll be doing that again...Recently we managed to secure periodic deliveries of free soil-conditioning compost for the site. Hopefully this will continue. This has reduced annual sales from our stores, but better serves our core aim of helping members grow their produce and has been a service valued by HAAA members.

We manage 6 beehives for the association, taking up one plot that is otherwise unlettable anyway. We run two seedling and plant sales events' each year to raise funds for Project Bee, in operation since 2011. One sale is on-site and one at the local Selly Oak Festival. The aim is to provide plants at low prices to help members, and then later to help the public, grow their own produce. The external event *continued* also helps promote the site in the local area. Proceeds help supplement honey sales to our association

members and offsets the cost of providing for the bees. The bees help the local flora and fauna in return. Hopefully, its win-win-win.

Most recently we embarked on measuring the carbon footprint directly due to HLAA site operations (electricity supply and water usage) and how this is offset by the carbon absorption of the natural environment on site. Early calculations indicate HLAA was responsible for 0.18 tonnes CO2 last financial year. We are currently surveying trees on site for type and age to then calculate their carbon absorption rate.



News from Eastern Road Allotments

Eastern Road is a quaint site consisting of only 11 allotments, we are without a committee and as a site thrive on self-management.

I have been at this site for 4 years and it's been a lot of work but I'm really starting to see a return now , I specialise in growing chillies, aubergines and peppers but I do also grow lots more than this .

There's a great community spirit here and everyone is very approachable, a truly harmonious site .



BDAC Note This site is a 'Guinea Garden', each plot is surrounded by a high hedge on all sides and entry to individual plots is by a door! Eastern Road is directly managed by the Council with BDAC support.