



Gnosall Allotments & Gardens Association Newsletter

Issue 28

August 2015

Committee members wanted

To run and manage the activities of GAGA's committee for the benefit of our members we do need "new blood" (new committee members and volunteers) due to the usual reasons of moving from the area, retirement and illness.

The role of the committee members, including that of Officers is not an arduous one. We meet once a month on the second Wednesday in a month, in the evening for no more than 90 minutes to review a pertinent and simple set agenda. The Officers have occasional meetings with Gnosall Parish Council with whom we have a very good working relationship.

Members should be aware GAGA has a standing order rule that no Officer (Chairman, Secretary or Treasurer) can be in office for more than 3 years. This rule is simply to ensure the organisation is not dependent upon one person and to promote freshness of ideas and a thriving, active and on-going organisation for years to come. Current Officers have held all three Office positions for 2 to 3 years and in October we need to appoint a new Secretary, due to GAGA's 3-year standing order rule. Hence our appeal to members for any member coming forward to fulfil this important but not arduous role.

Good news we have been increasing the numbers of Garden members but the bad news there is insufficient representation of Garden members' views on our present committee. Hence we are making a plea to all GAGA garden members to volunteer to be on the committee.

For the start of the 2016 gardening season (March) we also need volunteers to assist Committee members on GAGA's Shed opening days so that members can make their purchases at convenient times. Training will be given and serving in the Shed to members is educative, sociable and fun.

For information on the roles of Committee members, of the Secretary and Shed volunteers do call Lynn Whittick on 01785823466. We look forward to hearing from you.

Annual General Meeting

GAGA's AGM will be held on Wednesday the 14th October at 7.30pm. Location The Horns Pub (provisional as renovation work may be taking place).

Please note in your diary as we look forward to members attending to raise their views on what GAGA should spend its funds on or questions on current issues.

GFest: Open Gardens event



Committee members were on duty throughout the event, on July 12th, including Ray Woodward accompanied by his wife Jane.

Despite the many potholes in the road to the Allotments preventing the "GFEST Gardens Open day" Coach bringing visitors to the Allotments a larger number of interested and enquiring Gardeners, than last year, did make the journey by foot to view Allotments and have a chat.

Allotment flood alleviation

Source: The current Parish Council Newsletter.
"Weather permitting Gnosall Parish Council plans to carry out work on twenty plots along the Doley Brook, only so much can protect these lowest lying allotments on the floodplain when we experience serious wet weather. As part of the project, soil will be banked-up away from the brook to raise the level of the land- this will reduce the area of the cited plots but ensure they stay above the level of main flood events." Those Allotments members affected by this planned work should have been contacted by GPC.

2015 Last Shed Opening

The last two shed opening dates will be on 23rd August and 6th Sept (both a Sunday 10 till 12.00). Two end of season special offers for members!

1. Lime 25Kg bag £8.50 reduce to £6.00
2. Lawn feed with Moss retardant 3Kg bag at £3.50 – note limited stock available.

Autumn Lawn treatment

Source © www.rhs.org.uk

Autumn is the time to examine lawns for signs of summer wear-and-tear, and treat if necessary. At this time of year, any treatment has time to take effect before temperatures fall and growth stops.

Any treatment is best carried out during September, when there is time for the grass to respond before the soil temperatures fall and growth terminates for the season.

One or more of the following tasks may be required:

Autumn Lawn treatment

Scarifying: Regular raking (or scarifying as it known) keeps levels of thatch (old grass stems, dead moss and other debris) at an acceptable level. Layers of thatch greater than 1cm (3/8in) deep can impede water and fertiliser penetration.

To remove thatch, rake vigorously but carefully with a spring-tined rake. For larger areas powered tools are available as single units or mower attachments.

Note: Turf is damaged if scarified too deeply. Do not scarify in spring - opt instead for a light raking, as the lawn may not recover in summer conditions.

Aerating (spiking): Aerating (or spiking) lawns allows better movement of air and water in the root zone. A well-aerated lawn will manage better in periods of drought or waterlogging. For an average lawn, aeration every two to three years should be adequate. Concentrate on areas that receive the most wear and those that are compacted.

Small areas can be spiked with a garden fork, spacing holes 10-15cm (4-6in) apart and deep. On clay or waterlogged soils use a hollow-tine aerator every three to four years. This extracts plugs of soil from the lawn. Hand held and motorized hollow tines are available. After hollow-tining, sweep up the plugs and then rake a top-dressing (see below) into the holes to improve air and moisture penetration.

Top-dressing: Top-dressing is the application of loam, sand and well-rotted organic matter to a lawn in order to correct surface irregularities and improve the texture of difficult soils. This encourages greater rooting and thickening of turf.

The top-dressing mix is three parts sandy loam, six parts sharp sand and one part compost or leaf mould (by volume). Apply 2-3kg per sq. m (4.4-6.6lb per 10 sq. ft.), working the dressing in well with the back of a rake.

Flattening: To correct bumps and troughs, use an edging iron or spade to slice through the turf and roll it back. Fork over the underlying ground and add or remove soil as needed. Replace the turf, pressing the edges together, and water thoroughly.

Lawn problems: For specific treatments of red thread, fairy rings, take all. Leather jackets, chafer grubs and warm cast detailed technical information is available on the RHS web site. For those members who do not have access to the internet contact Tony Barrow 01952 763051.

Allotment reminders

Source © National Allotment Society web site

September can be regarded as the start of the new gardening year.

Harvesting: Top of the list has to be onions and potatoes they need to be got out of the soil before the cold, damp days of autumn arrive. They have completely the opposite storage requirements.

Onions must to be kept in the light and potatoes need to be stored in the dark to prevent them from turning

green, but both have to be stored somewhere that will keep the frost out. Harvest apples and pears as they become ready and pick the late season strawberries and raspberries to keep them producing. They will keep cropping right up until the first frost. Cut courgettes and marrows regularly because they will be finished by the end of the month, as will outdoor tomatoes. Remove any green tomatoes and place them in a drawer or shoebox to ripen.

Sowing and planting: Now we have shorter, cooler days it is the perfect time to sow the seed of the Oriental vegetables. They will germinate quickly and are hardy enough to withstand the cold of winter and will provide a steady supply of fresh leaves well into the Spring of next year. Also make a sowing of hardy winter lettuce and spinach. There is still time to sow an early variety of turnip to be able to use the tops as greens. Plant out earlier sown spring cabbage and protect with netting or fleece.

General: Complete the summer pruning of soft fruit bushes, apple and pear trees. Continue with their training and tying in. Feed all late crops with a general fertiliser such as pelleted chicken manure.

Dig up and compost any plants that have finished their season. Clear the soil of spent crops and leave it rough dug over for the winter. It is also a good time to sow winter grazing rye as a green manure. It can be dug back into the soil as part of your spring preparations.

Pests: Wasps are attracted this time of year due to the ripening of your fruit. Hang wasp traps in fruit trees and protect any grapes from wasps with netting or mesh. But also remember that wasps are the gardener's friend because they are major predators of aphids and caterpillars at this time of the year.

GAGA Committee members

- Ray Finney (32) Chairman
- Simon & Lynn Whittick Secretary (29/30)
- Susan Howlett (A) Treasurer (Gardener)
- Bob Colman (J)
- Ray Woodward. (11)
- Phil Barnes (55)
- Ann Newman (B/D)
- Neil Fletcher (13)
- Frank Insull (10)

All Committee members are always keen to help all members and keep you informed on what is happening. If you have any questions, or want information, please do contact us.

Emergency information for Allotments area

In the event of an accident when calling for an ambulance / emergency services use the post code ST20 0EZ and the NGR: SJ 82733 20660.