



**St Anns Allotments**

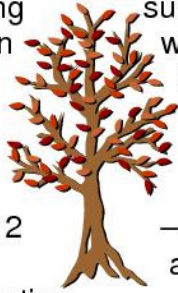
Nottingham's unique heritage gardens

# Gardeners' Newsletter

**Autumn October 2012**

## Welcome to autumn!

After a disappointing summer we are rushing into autumn with frosts and declining sunlight. Have a look at ideas of what to do at your allotment on page 4. Also note the AGM on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012 – we'd really like you to come along! See page 2 for formal notice.



## Your Committee Needs You!

STAA is a tenant-led organisation supported by a management committee of allotment holders and other people with an interest in preserving and improving the allotment site. The committee is looking for new recruits at the AGM in November and all STAA members are entitled to put themselves forward. The management committee supports the staff team to deliver the allotment project and meets monthly to talk budgets, personnel, tenancy issues, site management and maintenance, and generally anything that affects the site and its tenants. If you want to get involved and have a say in how the project develops – this is your chance. For more information on joining the committee contact the STAA office.

We'd also like to thank Hilary Hammond, who has recently resigned from the committee. Hilary has been invaluable during recent recruitment and personnel issues.

## Staff Changes at STAA

STAA welcomed Annalisa King as the new Admin Support officer in August. Siân Brookes was helping out in the office during the summer and has now left to start her degree in politics at the University of Brighton. We wish her well with her new studies and thank her for all the help she has given over the past three months.

## St Anns Community Orchard

The frost is on the ground, fruit has fallen and trees are bare, but there's still plenty of activity down at the Community Orchard. Fun for all the family – rain, snow or sunshine – no need to stay indoors!

Sunday 21 October – Apple Day

Sunday 18 November

Sunday 16 December – Winter Activity Day

## And talking about Christmas...

We have lovely calendars of the allotments. They cost £5 (or £20 for 5) from the office or you can buy them on Apple Day at the Community Orchard.

## Our new allotment centre

Work has been progressing well on the new allotment centre with completion due January / February next year. Our office staff will be based there, and there will be an area for visitors. This move opens possibilities - what would you like to see there? There's been suggestions of seed swaps, gardeners' coffee mornings, library of magazines, produce market etc. We have limited staff resources, but if gardeners want to arrange activities we'll try and make it happen. Contact Mo at the office to discuss your ideas!

**STAA LTD  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
19th November 2012**

All gardeners on the St Anns Allotments who are members of STAA \* are invited to the Annual General Meeting which will be held on 19th November 2012, at 6.30 pm in the Sycamore Millennium Centre, Hungerhill Road, St Anns, Nottingham NG3 4NB.

**▶▶▶ To ensure that there is enough seating available, it would be helpful if you could tell us in advance if you are going to attend. ◀◀◀**

The objectives of STAA are: To preserve the historic allotment gardens in St Anns, to promote and support allotment gardening in general, to encourage the regeneration of the St Anns area of Nottingham and to conserve and enhance the natural environment of the gardens.

We hope you will be interested in the work that STAA is doing to regenerate the allotments. Please come along, particularly if you feel you would like to volunteer to actively and constructively contribute towards the work that STAA is doing.

Any gardeners who are not members of STAA will not be permitted to participate in the AGM proceedings, although they may attend to observe.

If any STAA members\* are interested in joining the Management Committee they should contact the office by email or telephone to discuss what this will entail, particularly the regulatory and other statutory compliance issues involved. Nominations, duly proposed and seconded, must be received at least 24 Hours before the AGM.

**AGENDA FOR AGM**

- Apologies.
- To receive The Report and Accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.
- Election of the Management Committee.
- Appointment and Fixing of the Independent Examiner's Remuneration.
- Allocation of Surplus.
- Any Other Business that may be properly conducted at the AGM.

After the formal business of the AGM has been concluded, there will be an opportunity to hear the answers to questions already submitted in advance and raise topics of general interest to St Anns Allotment gardeners.

**A copy of the Accounts will be posted on the website no later than 19th October 2012. Any member who does not have internet access and would like to receive a copy of the accounts should contact the STAA office to either collect a copy in person, or arrange for a copy to be posted to them. In view of the high cost of printing and postage, a large stamped addressed envelope will be required.**

**If any member of STAA has any questions concerning the accounts or the management of the allotments in general, these must be submitted in writing no later than 12th November. This is to avoid duplication of questions and allow time for any investigations needed to ensure an accurate answer.**

**In the event of this AGM not achieving a quorum, that is fifteen members (including proxies), a second AGM will be held on 26th November 2012, 6.30 pm at the same venue.**

**If you are unable to attend in person, you may appoint a proxy to attend and vote for you. Please contact the STAA office if you wish to appoint a proxy.**

**\* If you are not a member of STAA but would like to become a member – please contact the office. Membership costs nothing but it does entitle you to participate in the AGM and to stand for election to the Management Committee if you wish to do so.**

## **Management News**

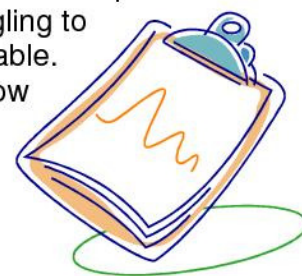
### **Tenancy Management**

Over 100 'Notices to Cultivate' were sent following recent inspections of plots. STAA understands that it has been a difficult year for gardeners but a large number of plots have become overgrown and are not being actively cultivated. All tenants must ensure that their plots are maintained in accordance with the tenancy agreement and are not allowed to become overgrown. There is a waiting list of 80 people wanting their opportunity to take on an allotment so it is only fair that we challenge those tenants who are not cultivating their plots.

When we write letters it is important that tenants respond. Sometimes people feel angry when they receive a letter but a call or message into the office can help explain the process. If we do not hear back from tenants after a period of time and their plot remains overgrown, we will take action to terminate their agreement and offer the allotment to the next person on the waiting list.

If you have experienced problems, or if there is a reason why you have not been able to cultivate your allotment, please contact the office to discuss it with us. Once we are aware we may be able to offer advice, guidance and support, but if we have no contact we will assume the plot has been abandoned. If you have more than one plot, or a very large plot, and are struggling to keep on top of things, contact the office to discuss what options might be available.

We are here to help and can find solutions to most problems, but only if we know what they are...



### **Why do inspections?**

Tenants may wonder why they cannot be left in peace to use their allotments (or not) as they wish, especially if they have paid their rent for the year. Within reason this is the case, but there are restrictions on how allotments should be used and this involves more than simply paying the rent. Some people struggle with their plots due to genuine reasons but there is also some misuse of allotments which affects everyone's enjoyment of the site. This is why we check plots to make sure they are being used properly.

STAA is responsible for managing the allotments on behalf of Hungerhill Developments Ltd. Part of this agreement requires STAA to ensure that tenancies are properly managed and that the allotments are used for their intended purpose – to grow vegetables and fruit. We have to report to them that plots have been inspected and action taken against misuse. Hungerhill Developments Ltd has an agreement with Nottingham City Council (the land owner) to be responsible for the allotments. From time to time the Allotment Officer of Nottingham City Council will check the use of allotments on site and report his findings to us. That is because the City Council has a duty to provide allotments for the residents of Nottingham. Even though they have transferred the management of the site at St Anns to another organisation, they still need to be sure that the allotments are being used appropriately.

So, if you see a man carrying a clipboard and a set of ladders around the site, chances are they will be inspecting plots. It could be Michael, Chris or Rob from STAA, Harry from Hungerhill Developments Ltd or Alex Begg from Nottingham City Council. Now you understand why!

### **Water**

The water will be turned off towards the end of October. This is to drain the system to prevent damage from winter weather. The water is turned back on again in the spring.



### **Thefts on site**

There were some thefts from gardens over the summer. Please try and help yourself by not leaving expensive equipment on site, smart watering your tools and fixing an alarm to your shed (alarms can be obtained from STAA). Also be vigilant on site, keep an eye open for unknown vans, don't let vans tail gate you into the site, and don't let non gardeners in at gates.

It's up to all of us to protect the site.



## Garden Support

In previous years we were fortunate to receive funding to offer a 'garden support' service to tenants. This meant that we could help clear and prepare plots and provide expert advice on pruning larger fruit trees.



Unfortunately the funding for this service ran out in May and we do not have the capacity to provide the same level of support as before. STAA is actively looking at opportunities to bring back the garden support service but there is currently no funding in place. There is still plenty of knowledge within the team so if you have a question about fruit trees, or cultivating your plot in general, please do contact us. Our ability to provide any physical help will be extremely limited but we will do our best to offer support via our volunteers whenever we can. In the first instance contact Michael or Rob in the office if you have a problem and we'll decide how best we can help.

One avenue we are exploring is to offer a subsidised garden support service. Funding will dictate that it can no longer be free to tenants, but there may be a way to offer a subsidised garden support service for jobs such as tree pruning, hedge cutting and clearing vegetation. We need to find out if tenants would be willing to contribute a small fee to help towards costs of such a scheme.

*If you have any views please call the office or e-mail [info@staa-allotments.org.uk](mailto:info@staa-allotments.org.uk)*

## Cultivation tip - make use of autumn and winter

It has been a poor year weather wise and many allotment holders up and down the country have been disappointed with their crops. The only things that have grown well are weeds! As we enter autumn, our advice is to make use of any settled weather to clear beds, lay a thick mulch of manure or compost, cover fallow areas or sow a green manure, and do as much preparation as possible before spring. It is also a perfect time to give hedges one last cut, although you can leave those carrying fruit until late winter so birds have a source of food.

Many people make the mistake of leaving their plots alone between October and March and then struggle to keep on top of weed growth in the spring. Of course you cannot cultivate the ground when it is frozen solid or saturated but any work you do over autumn and winter will keep you one step ahead in spring. Areas with overgrown vegetation should be cut back now and you can burn the material, taking all necessary precautions, on or around 5<sup>th</sup> November.

From April onwards, weeds and grasses grow faster than you can pull them out, so act now when they are not growing and you will be prepared and ready to sow and grow as soon as the weather starts to improve next year.



## Apple Day

The annual Apple Day is on 21<sup>st</sup> October. This year has been particularly wet and cold and apple trees across the country have suffered. STAA is asking all allotment holders if they can spare any apples, particularly named varieties, for the event. The day celebrates everything to do with apples and this year we want to focus as much as possible on the many varieties that can be successfully grown on the site. There will be apple displays, apple products and juicing – all taking place in our Community Orchard. Please contact the STAA office if you have any apples available for us to use. We will even come and pick them for you if you need help and we'll make sure you have plenty left for crumble!



### Teaching tomorrow's gardeners

STAA recently hosted a visit from Nottingham High School, for boys to learn about the importance of the allotments especially in relation to wildlife. The high school kindly donated a high level hedge trimmer to help us with our work.



### Celebrations at Oliver's plot

Our heritage display garden will be formally opened this weekend by Mr Oliver, the previous tenant at the plot. The garden is open to tenants every Wednesday to see what our volunteers are up to. The garden is just off the top car park, off Ford's Avenue. Thanks to Friends of Brackenhurst Walled Garden and Brookfield's Garden Centre for their kind donation of plants. See <http://www.brookfieldsgardencentre.co.uk> for updates of Brookfield's winter events.



Volunteer John at work in the Victorian greenhouse

### Heritage news

Only space for a little update in this edition. Heritage tours have finished for the season, and will start again in the Spring.

With our new allotment centre we'll be able to provide space for visitors and exhibit our research.

Our Heritage Open Day was great success, thanks to gardeners who opened their gardens for visitors. Visitor numbers were down and we are reviewing whether there is too much competition over this national heritage weekend.

We did get further feedback about proposals for our time capsule, so will be pulling artefacts together over the winter. The final content will be agreed by a small group of tenants and children – if you are interested in participating in this please contact Mo.



The other big job for the winter is signage on site. We'll be putting up avenue signs, and signposting, to stop people getting lost, and have some signage at the gates so that people can find us!

### Paul's a Diamond Champion!

STAA trustee Paul Freeborough has been selected as one of 60 Midlands Diamond Champions "in recognition of the outstanding work as a volunteer in our community". The WRVS have organised the awards to celebrate the contribution of older volunteers as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Paul is a trustee, committee member, and contributes to our wildlife and conservation work as well as delivering talks and tours on the heritage of the site.

We think Paul is a diamond too!



## Urban Nature

Thanks to those who continue to record wildlife sightings on the Wildlife chalk board at the Ransom Road entrance. It was great to note that a tenant had spotted a Red Kite over the Allotments. There have been other occasional sightings across the city, but the likelihood is that they are just passing through. Red Kites are unlikely to be allotment residents, although we do already have regular bird visitors and residents, such as kestrels, tawny owls and lots of smaller birds.

Also recorded on the Wildlife board were sightings of newts, which is very encouraging for the allotments, particularly as it is a **Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC)**. We have three small ponds on one of the conservation sites, a pond and the Rag Beck in the Community Orchard, one at Oliver's Plot (Display Garden), as well as numerous ponds on other tenanted plots. Urban Nature is hoping to improve the existing ponds and create others as opportunities present themselves, including important maintenance work during our autumn Task Days.

Also without regular monitoring of our ponds there is a real worry that future declines in plant and animal groups like dragonflies and amphibians will go undetected. To help improve our knowledge of the allotment's ponds, continued volunteer and tenant surveillance will be much appreciated by Urban Nature. If you want to know more about the maintenance of your existing pond, want to create a new pond or would be interested in helping as a volunteer on pond conservation work, *please contact Urban Nature via the STAA office.*

Urban Nature continues to run work parties alternative Saturdays. Future dates are

- 20 October
- 10 November\*
- 17 November
- 1 December
- 15 December



\* Thanks to the Woodland Trust who have given us 400 trees which we'll start planting on **10th November**.

## Plot too big for you?

Transition Sherwood are running a Garden Share Scheme for people who want to grow food, but have no garden, or where people have land but no time to use it. This is sharing of space, not a voluntary project – *for more information contact Sherwood Transition group Tel 07516 244 657 or email sherwoodgardenshare@gmail.com*

## Prefer mail online?

To save on postage and printing costs, if you wish to receive the quarterly newsletters by email *please email annalisa@staa-allotments.org.uk*

**Print too small? Contact the office for a large-print version**

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Promoting and enhancing  
the historic allotment gardens  
in St Ann's, Nottingham



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