



St Anns Allotments

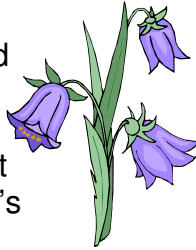
Nottingham's unique heritage gardens

Gardeners' Newsletter

Spring April 2014

Spring is here!

Welcome tenants new and old to our gardeners' newsletter. This issue contains information about tenancy matters and what's happening on site over the next few months.



St Anns Community Orchard

The Community Orchard continues to run its monthly activity days every third Sunday of the month, open to all tenants, their families and local people.

Sundays, 11am - 4pm

**18th May
15th June
20th July**

Just come along on the day or ring STAA for more details.

The Community Orchard entrance is on Ransom Road opposite the Hill View Community Centre, about 200yds up from the junction with Hungerhill Road; look out for the yellow sign!

Spring Blossom Day

Our Spring Open Day is planned for

Saturday 10th May, 11am - 4pm

We have these big open days twice a year to allow visitors to see the gardens – it's also our chance to raise some money for the site.

What does this mean for me?

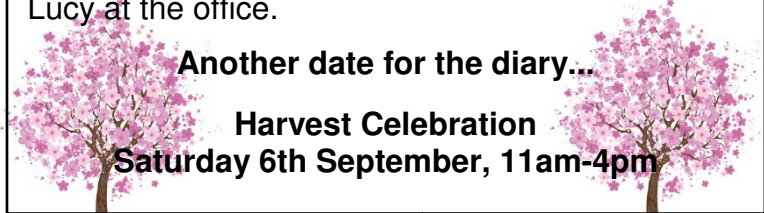
You can:

- Come and see the Visitor Centre, Community Orchard, other projects and gardens. There will be plenty of stalls and activities to keep you entertained – look out for posters around the site.
- Bring along the kids and grandkids as there will be lots of activities for children.
- Open your garden to visitors.
- Help out at the Visitor Centre on the day.

Involvement is not compulsory – so please feel free to keep your gates closed! If you are interested in being involved, please contact Mo or Lucy at the office.

Another date for the diary...

**Harvest Celebration
Saturday 6th September, 11am-4pm**



Rankin

Thanks again to all the gardeners and friends who voted for famous photographer Rankin to come to the allotments. He's coming on **Friday 16th May!** He'll be taking photographs of gardeners, which will be exhibited here on the Friday evening. We'll try to fit in as many people as possible, but if we're oversubscribed we'll have to put names in a hat. If you would like your picture taken please let the office know by **Monday 28th April**.

Free timed tickets for the evening exhibition are available from the office from **Tuesday 22nd April**. Tickets are limited, so it will be first come first served.



Talks, tours and visitors

You may occasionally come across groups of visitors on the site. STAA runs tours for different groups and delivers talks around the county. We do this to raise the profile of the gardens – the more allies we have the better, but it is also an important way to raise income for the project. The Visitor Centre is open to the public on Wednesdays and Thursdays. We have self-guided tours (books and audio) and refreshments. If anyone is interested in helping with this work, we would love to hear from you!

The Gardening for Disabled Trust is a voluntary organisation which gives grants to disabled people to help them to continue to garden. Grants go towards tools, raised beds, access paving, sheds and greenhouses.

To find out more, write to

**The Secretary, P.O. Box 285,
Tunbridge Wells, TN2 9JD**

or info@gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk



Have you visited Oliver's Plot yet?

Named after the last tenant Mr Oliver, we have a heritage garden off 1st Avenue which shows the gardens through time. Our lovely volunteers manage the garden and you can visit on Wednesdays between 10am and 3pm. Just follow the signposts or ask at the office.

Fancy a walk?

We run Heritage Walks around the site from March to September on the last Wednesday of the month at 1.30pm, starting from the Visitor Centre (booking is essential, £2 suggested donation). If you want to learn more about the history of the gardens why not join us?



Update on the STAA committee

We've recently welcomed some new committee members; Clare Soar, Adrian Williams, Andrea Heinlein and Kelley Parfitt will be joining Rob Wood (chair), Charlie Wesson, Cathy Symes, Glenys Rozkalns and Paul Freeborough.

"My garden"

You may have spotted that some gardens have gate notices, telling people about the tenant or the garden. If you and your family would like one on your gate, contact Mo at the office and we can discuss designing one with you.



Goodbye Jill

For those new to the allotments (and to some extent that includes myself, though I've been here since 1997), it's easy to take a lot of things for granted. New roads, a visitor centre, a waiting list and, give or take the odd gripe, things generally working. It wasn't always like that.

A little over 20 years ago, there was no perimeter fence, at least half the plots were abandoned, the Council was largely inactive and the threat of housing development loomed. The concerted efforts and imagination of a few committed gardeners turned this around and Jill Westby, who is finally giving up her plot after many years up on Gorsey, was right at the heart of it. A woman of warm intelligence and strategic savvy, Jill dedicated immense time and energy over a couple of decades to, first, building the case for allotment renewal and then, with a dogged determination, making it happen. From campaigner to founding director of STAA all the way through to the securing of the massive HLF renovation contract, Jill's steadiness, eye for detail and simple straightforward passion for the place moved administrative and logistical mountains and created the space for other people to bring in their energy and ideas. All with the ultimate aim, as she always said, that she and everybody else could just go back to gardening safe in the knowledge that the site would be secure long into the future.

Jill left the Committee in 2008 and is now finally leaving her beloved plot. On behalf of STAA and all present and future gardeners, may I offer her a deep and heartfelt thanks for what she has achieved and the spirit in which it was done. And I wish her long and happy days doing something else!

Richard Arkwright from the Community Orchard



Rent Payments

Thank you to all those who have paid their rent promptly. The money generated from rent is a major contributor to the overall budget we have to maintain the site. If you have not yet paid, the office is open 9.30am to 4pm Monday to Friday and at other times by arrangement. You can also post a cheque or pay by BACS transfer. If you cannot pay the full amount in one go, please contact us to discuss the options.

Cancelling your agreement

Receiving the rent bill often prompts gardeners to consider handing back their allotment, particularly if they are not using their plot. If you are thinking of giving up your allotment the first contact should be with the STAA office. We may be able to offer help to support you to keep your allotment. If, however, you do simply wish to give up we can make sure your agreement is cancelled and that money matters are sorted as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Instead of telling us, often people decide not to pay and think that is the end of it. Please note that until a tenancy is cancelled formally you retain liability for what happens and you must still pay any rent owed. In the meantime, the plot's condition is deteriorating. Letting us know early means you can cancel your agreement and we can get the plot offered out to people on the waiting list.

Around the site

Hopefully you will have noticed the site team's work over the past six months. We have removed a number of trees to improve light to plots and continued with hedge cutting work. If we have not got round to a hedge near you it is not for the want of trying! We cut many miles of hedges by hand and sometimes we might miss the odd bit. These will be picked up again from late summer onwards once bird nesting season is over. Some paths have been improved, new gates secured, locks upgraded and we continually fill skips of rubbish from around the site. In the conservation areas we are now benefitting from regular volunteer days and the Stonepit Coppice area offers a much improved habitat for wildlife.

STAA's budget for site management and maintenance is always under pressure from the sheer scale of the work required to maintain 75 acres of allotment site. The expectation from some gardeners is that we should do anything and everything they ask for but we simply do not have the capacity. Priority will be given to supporting new gardeners trying to clear the debris from previous tenancies and to maintaining safe access and use of the site for all. Where feasible we help wherever we can and will offer the site team's skills and labour for free but we do ask for donations towards the cost of materials. On the odd occasion we will have to say no.



STAA Membership

Included in the envelope with your rent bill was a letter and application form for the new STAA membership scheme. There is now a £3 annual membership fee and another £2.25 if you wish to be affiliated to the National Allotment Society. Through the membership scheme we hope to provide discounts and services for things that gardeners want. We have received some feedback and top of the wish list so far from the new members is tool hire and some collective purchasing of bulky items like compost and manure.

As well as having a say on how the site is managed, STAA members currently benefit from a 10% discount at Brookfields Garden Centre on Mapperley Plains and free delivery/ collection and a 5% discount off the hire of gardening equipment on invoices of £20 and above from Atom Tool Hire in Carlton. We are looking into sourcing grow bags and compost – so please tell us what you want. Members also joining the National Allotment Society will benefit from a heavily discounted seed scheme via Kings Seeds. We will contact members when the new seed catalogue is available.

Remember – if you're not a member you can't access any of the above benefits. Joining is simple - fill in your form and hand it to the office or post it to us with your subscription fee.

The Management Committee will have a STAA members' stall at our Open Day on 10th May. You will be able to collect your new membership card and speak to someone about forthcoming member events and activities. You can even join on the day as forms will be available.

Tenancy matters

Cultivation

Allotments must be cultivated in line with your tenancy agreement. Please contact the STAA office if you are having trouble maintaining your plot. There are always options available and we'll do our best to respond positively. The subsidised support for garden work has now ended, but not before many people took advantage of Alice the Gardener's assistance. Alice will continue to provide advice and support - the fruit tree pruning and advice service proved very popular - this will be a chargeable service not arranged by STAA. For further details, please contact Alice on **07766 516342** or alicethegardener@gmail.com.

Rubbish disposal

Last year we spent over £2,000 on rubbish removal and skip hire. Please do not leave rubbish in car parks and on lanes expecting us to remove it. There is no rubbish removal service on site and you must take home, compost or burn the waste you generate. Any requests for assistance must be approved by the office first. We can help remove some bulky items in return for a donation, which will help keep the site supplied with more skips for longer.

Vehicles and parking

St Anns Allotments benefits from excellent vehicle access, good lanes and ample, designated parking areas. The lanes can be narrow and hilly in places so please drive carefully in anticipation of what you might meet around a bend – other vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, children, dogs, etc. We suggest a maximum speed limit of 10mph. Please park with consideration at all times. Parking right outside your allotment might seem great but there is minimal turning space for people stuck behind you. We will ask anyone blocking a lane with their car to move it if found to be causing an obstruction.

Over the past six months the site team has extracted at least seven different vehicles stuck along one of the lanes. As a general rule, if it does not look like your car will get down the lane, it more than certainly won't – especially during winter conditions. We recommend that you do not take any vehicle down a lane that does not have a tarmac surface. You do so at your own risk and we reserve the right to charge you for the time and effort taken to extract you and your vehicle safely.

Dogs on site

We have received a few complaints recently about dog mess along the lanes. It is anti-social to other site users and gives a bad impression to visitors. All dog waste should be picked up and bagged for disposal outside the site in designated bins or at home. Please be aware that dogs are allowed on site but must be under your control and kept on a lead at all times. You are not allowed to leave a dog unattended on your plot, particularly overnight.

Livestock

With prior written permission you are allowed to keep chickens and rabbits. Some gardeners have historical permission to keep pigeons but no new permissions are granted. All livestock must be properly looked after with appropriate shelter, food and access to fresh water. They must be secured on your plot and not allowed to escape. Please think long and hard about your commitment before considering keeping livestock on your plot.

Unless my ears deceive me there is at least one cockerel greeting me every morning. This is a breach of tenancy as cockerels are not allowed under the rules of the site. If it is yours, please arrange for it to be re-homed off site as soon as possible as we have had complaints recently from the residents living nearby. If we trace the plot(s) we will be left with no alternative than to take action against any tenant found with a cockerel.

Bonfires and smoke nuisance

We have also received a number of complaints regarding bonfires. Whilst a small bonfire is acceptable, please do not burn plastic, or light them in the heat of the day.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

*Michael, STAA Project Co-ordinator
on behalf of the STAA Management Committee*



Introducing Lucy

Hi I'm Lucy, the new Partnership and Volunteer Development Officer. I have been a volunteer on the site myself for over six years with the Urban Nature project, and have worked in various roles in volunteer coordination, wildlife conservation and community outreach.



I am thrilled to be here as a full-time member of staff, and will be working with other groups to visit and work on the site, and supporting our volunteers and developing new opportunities for volunteer involvement.

If you'd like to get involved with volunteering, or know a person or group who would like to help across the site, contact me at the STAA office, lucy.kennedy@staa-allotments.org.uk

Urban Nature

What's wild on your allotment? Send us your sightings!

We particularly want to know if gardeners have seen (or have never seen...)

- **HEDGEHOGS**
- **ORCHIDS**
- **MIDLAND HAWTHORN** (a version of Hawthorn most easily identified from Common Hawthorn by having two (or more) pips in the Haws, and two or three styles in the flower.
- **AMPHIBIANS** (frogs, toads and newts)
- **OWLS AND BIRDS OF PREY**
- **DRAGONFLIES AND DAMSELFLIES** – we challenge you to get photos and send them to us!



Send sightings, photos, and anecdotes to Lucy. Please include the location (plot number) and some contact details.

Urban Nature volunteering sessions



Every Friday, 10am – 2pm
and
once a month on a Saturday,
Contact Lucy for more information

Wildlife Weekender

We're holding a 'Bioblitz' on St Anns Allotments – That means we'll be identifying as many species as we can in one weekend on **19th - 20th July**. We'll be inviting local wildlife experts and enthusiasts to the site, and hosting a range of activities. Watch out for further details – and if you would like to volunteer, or simply send us your sightings, get in touch with Lucy.

Meanwhile, if you have any **wildlife-friendly plants** that you could donate to STAA, that would be fantastic, especially for our 'bee friendly cottage garden' by the Visitor Centre, or in the car parks – please see the article about the borehole car park for some of our plans in these areas.



Feedback from volunteers

We have a great team of volunteers who support the management of the Community Orchard, Urban Nature Gardens, and the Heritage Display Garden (Oliver's Plot).

Volunteers also help run heritage tours, deliver talks, run activities at our open days, and have even developed our databases and design posters.

The existing volunteers have recently given us an insight into why people volunteer with us:

"Being involved on a beautiful site like St Anns is a joy in itself but the exercise and fresh air is a bonus, as is working with the friendly team".

"Volunteering is a good thing to do so long as you're doing something you enjoy and can see the results of your efforts and it's fun!"

"St Anns Allotments has got me through; I have a better quality of life".

"St Anns Allotments is very special".

A huge thank you to all of the volunteers at St Anns Allotments!

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

A-maze-ing!

You may have noticed lots of activity around the entrance from Ransom Road to the Visitor Centre. Both the heritage maze and a wildlife friendly garden are now near completion!

A group of young people on a Prince's Trust programme spent two weeks creating terraces in a very difficult steep terrain, using materials they sourced and fundraised for themselves. This area will be a demonstration bee friendly garden, which will be maintained by Urban Nature volunteers (the wildlife project on site).

The heritage maze on the opposing bank by the centre has been developed with the Dig-In, Stay Out project from Groundwork Greater Nottingham, and filled in with soil with help from the Community Orchard volunteers. This will be seeded with grass seed to make an ideal place to wander around. This maze is a representation of the original Shepherd's Race or Robin Hood's Maze which was originally located near the Wells Road.

The final, exciting step of the makeover will be with the installation of the St Anns Allotments time capsule at the centre of the maze.



New planting and maintenance plans at the borehole car park

Long standing tenants will remember how the car parks were often used as rubbish tips before the Restoration Project. Hopefully those days are over, but how do we want the areas around the car parks to be used and maintained now? Volunteer gardeners are working with STAA on a new idea.

The plan is to create a high-impact perennial flowering meadow, which will be visually stunning, wildlife friendly, and a joy for tenants and visitors alike!

First steps

In the last few years there have been plenty of wild flowers growing on the site, usually flowering in the early summer, and then STAA have strimmed things down to grass. This year we're not going to strim, because we want to see what may flower later on, and to see how the plants look after they've flowered.

As well as the wild plants already there, we'll be introducing new plants. Nottingham in Bloom have already donated 250 daffodil bulbs and we're aiming to have about ten varieties of late summer flowers which we'll plant in a colour rainbow.

Getting involved

Gardeners can help out in a number of ways:

- Please help to keep the whole area clear of litter.
- Don't panic! Things might look a bit wild at times this year but STAA isn't neglecting the car park maintenance.
- If you'd like more information or want to get involved, please contact Lucy at the STAA office.

Alan Schofield, Volunteer Gardener and Tenant



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

