

March 2016... "Already the highest local authority allotment rents in Scotland, Edinburgh digs even deeper into the pockets of the plot holders"



The City of Edinburgh Council plans to renege on an agreement with FEDAGA to freeze rent rises until 2020 by applying a 4% increase in 2017.

FEDAGA has expressed its sadness and frustration at the move. President Peter Wright said "We thought we had a deal to 2020. The City of Edinburgh Council have moved the goalposts and recalculated the costs of the allotment service at £30,000 more than their original figures. This rent increase has not been agreed by the plot holders' representatives. It was decided upon by the Council on 26th January but the first we heard of it was 5 weeks later at a meeting held on 29th February. So much for openness, transparency and good communications."

At £100 per year for a full plot, allotment rents in Edinburgh are among the highest in the UK and by far the highest in Scotland. Comparable prices elsewhere are around £35. The cost of renting a plot in Edinburgh nearly doubled between 2009 and 2014 in a controversial programme agreed to by FEDAGA. The increase was supposed to improve services to allotment users and to create new allotments to satisfy the huge waiting list.

By agreeing to this FEDAGA secured an undertaking by the Council to freeze allotment rents for the 5 year period following the final increase in 2014. Last year the Council came back for astronomical increases of up to 500% which were cancelled after a vigorous campaign of opposition. Sadly, this time the rise has been imposed without consultation and is now a done deal.

Although this increase is much more modest than before it is still way above inflation, well above average wage rises (some may say "what rises?") and breaks the good faith that FEDAGA has been trying to build with the Council. It also sits uncomfortably with Council policy supposedly promoting healthy outdoor exercise for citizens and good locally-grown food. The Council should be standing for inclusivity but instead is pricing allotments out of the reach of those of us on modest means.

The 2017 prices for allotment plots can be found at the foot of page 36 of this [document](#).

Parsnip Corner



Parsnip, or spectral wraith-like Doctor Who- style apparition?

Two sowings of parsnips in April, direct into the ground with a germination result of two plants (plus a neighbouring plot holder smugly pointing out his fabulous rows of germinated parsnips) suggested a new approach was needed. Or was I practising the wrong mistakes? Being a convert to using root trainers to germinate discreet numbers of seeds, having tired in general of the "disperse the whole packet in a row and spend forever thinning out the results" method, I root trained 12 parsnip seeds late May. Mid June and I had a 100% germination. Wow, and no intersowing with radishes to remind me where the parsnip seeds might be hiding!

Our happy dozen were planted out and seemed more than willing to carry on growing. The results were satisfying: something to enjoy eating. As for winning prizes, the picture shows the curious shapes predicted by the naysayers to transplanting parsnips. The stragly bits go into the veggie stock pot.

This year I intend to try again though this time using kitchen rolls for the germination support system. My Biodynamic calendar suggests two windows in late April when sowing could be opportune. I shall excavate deep holes in which to place the germinated baby parsnips. If you Google "growing parsnips in tubes" you will discover I do not walk alone in trying this way.

PS - if you are averse to planting military rows of veg then this method supports mix and matching plants around the plot. It might be called companion planting.

Charles Passmore (Midmar).

Shop Update: Stocks flying out the door

Stock has sold out extremely quickly this year. If you are intending to visit the FEDAGA Shop at Inverleith allotments (West Gate, East Fettes Avenue, 2 to 3.30pm, Sunday 6th March) please note that all the shallots and onions have long gone and only the following potatoes are available...

- 3 Kestrel
- 3 Vivaldi
- 2 Picasso
- 1 Sharpes Express
- 1 Sarpo Mira
- 1 Nadine
- 1 Catriona

1 Anya

Make a note to get your order in with your Site Representative in the autumn.

Before and After the Deluge



This has been the wettest winter since time immemorial. Quite a few sites have experienced flooding and plot holders may be wondering how best to respond. If you are at Carrick Knowe expect standing water on the plots by the tram track. The field drains were wrecked by the construction work and attempts by FEDAGA and site representatives failed to rectify the situation. Something to do with David and Goliath. Lady Road enjoys very unpleasant flash floods when the heavens open. Storm sewers divert into the Pow Burn running through the site bringing raw sewage onto plot and path. Delightful! FEDAGA and site representatives have given up banging their heads against the wall trying to get Scottish Water to take appropriate action. Sadly, the expensive flood prevention work recently completed is **down** river. Thanks to Ricardo Leith of Claremont Park for prompting these thoughts. Here's a link to a piece in the [Guardian](#) which in turn has more useful links. Worth a peep.

"Some of them were dreamers, some of them were fools

Who were making plans and thinking of the future

With the energy of the innocent, they were gathering the tools

That they would need to make their journey back to nature.

When the sand slipped through the opening

And their hands reached for the golden ring
And their hearts turned to each others hearts for refuge
In the troubled years that came before the deluge"
... bet you didn't know **Jackson Browne** had a plot at Carrick Knowe.



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Shamelessly plagiarised from the latest West Mains Newsletter:
Now is just the right time to be splitting clumps of plants like sorrel and chives, taking roots off mint and offsets from artichokes and herbaceous flowers, or digging up wayward raspberries.
It's Chuck and Swap Week at West Mains from 12th to 20th March.



Gorgie City Farm

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