

Suddenly it's Springtime: April '13



You know you're getting on when ploholders start looking considerably younger.

The Money-go-round

If you rent a plot from the Council you will recently have paid your annual rent. This includes membership subscriptions to FEDAGA (£1.50) and your Site Association (£1). These rates were set a decade ago by the FEDAGA AGM.

Around now the Council distributes the money to FEDAGA, which in turn passes the £1 per member to the individual Site Associations.

Our treasurer makes every endeavour to ensure that the cheque (made out to the relevant association - *not* an individual) is distributed correctly.

It is important that these funds are used in an accountable fashion. Together with the commission earned by sites through the FEDAGA Trading Schemes this probably comprises your site's only form of independent income.

It is YOUR responsibility as a member of your Site Association to ensure that the money is used in an accountable manner.

Forest Gardening



Here's news of a forthcoming meeting organised by Transition Edinburgh that may be of interest. However, allotment rules will prevent you from trying it out on your own patch!

“Forest gardening” is not about hacking your way through a jungle with a machete! It’s about growing food in the way nature likes to grow. In the UK, untouched land is woodland with trees, bushes and small plants. The deep, permanent root systems and fungal networks mean that nutrients are recycled very efficiently within the system and are rarely lost.

A forest garden mimics the structure of an open woodland to produce food and other necessities, from trees, shrubs and ground-layer plants. The plants range from traditional favourites like raspberries to unfamiliar ones like day lilies which are used in Chinese cookery. A forest garden is about as productive as a regular vegetable garden, but it doubles up as a wildlife oasis and a beautiful garden in the same space. Once one is

established there is little work to do digging or weeding, but plenty of picking.

You don't need a forest-sized plot of land to do forest gardening - it is perfectly suited to an allotment scale.

The meeting is in the Quaker Meeting House, Edinburgh on May 9 from 7 – 9 pm.

The speaker will be Alan Carter, a forester, gardener and greenspace consultant based in Aberdeen. He has been experimenting with perennial food plants for twenty years and has a ten year old forest garden on his allotment.

[More information about Transition Edinburgh here.](#)

Plotholder's Guide



FEDAGA has produced a handy guide for plotholders. It's attractive and concise and will perhaps answer a few regularly posed questions. The Council has printed up a good quantity for new plotholders and FEDAGA

will distribute more to Site Representatives. You can [download](#) it from the Council's website.

The Alloted Month



J Greenfingers writes a monthly blog following his ups and downs on the plot for the FEDAGA website. He is proving a worthy successor to B A Plotter whose earthy prose has inspired the sons and daughters of toil across the city since the inception of fedaga.org.uk
[Here's the latest installment.](#)

Last few eco-kegs available

Calum Carmichael of the Hanging Bat Beer Cafe writes:

We still have a small number of 50L eco-kegs we're looking to get rid of. Hopefully your members that have already picked up some from us are happy with them, and are perhaps interested in some more?

If you could let them know that it's strictly first come, first served since we have limited space. Phone 0131 229 0759.

[Link to original posting on the website, with further information.](#)

It's Your Neighbourhood



Lindsay Grant, Senior Development Officer, Parks & Greenspace, The City of Edinburgh Council writes:

It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) is a non-competitive scheme that brings members of the community together to make a positive change to the place they live, work or spend their leisure time. The scheme is open to groups of all sizes who are interested in cleaning up and greening up their local area, whether that is the street where they live, a derelict space on their estate or the grounds around the local community centre. Eligible groups who can participate include the likes of Allotments, BME groups, Businesses and Associations, Cemeteries, Church groups, Community Councils, Community Gardens, Friends of Park groups, elderly groups and youth groups, Neighbourhood Partnerships, day centres, Resident and Tenant Associations, Schools, After-school clubs and Sheltered Housing developments.

There are three main themes that are assessed: Community Participation, Environmental Responsibility and Gardening Achievement and there are five levels of certificate (Establishing; Improving; Developing; Thriving; Outstanding) that are designed to reward a group's efforts, whatever their level of experience or ability.

If your group or some friends, neighbours or colleagues want to improve your local area and help to make it cleaner, greener, safer and help to create a sense of pride, why not take part this year? We'd really like to hear from you if you're thinking about taking part and if you require support with your efforts, however big or small.....it could be help with identifying funding sources, access to tools or general gardening and maintenance advice.

Registration is open now and closes at the end of April.

Further information and how to register can be found [here](#)

Please contact Lindsay on 0131 469 5257 if you're thinking about registering and if you have any queries.

Let's get our priorities sorted



The Allotment Officer has given FEDAGA a list of works requiring action on many Council-managed sites. Here is a quick breakdown, site by site. The current city-wide budget of £16,000 won't stretch to much of this.

At the 7th May FEDAGA Management Committee meeting there will be an attempt to agree priorities. Please let your Site Representative know what you think should be done and which seems less important.

BRIDGEND: Remove toilet, regular grass cutting, whin dust for paths, new noticeboard, bin for bark chips.

CAMBRIDGE AVENUE: Renew main path, additional security on main gates, replace 3 wooden water tap posts.

CARRICK KNOWE: Flood prevention measures, perimeter fence repairs, yellow line box (?), prune overhanging trees, new step at container, 10m of new rabbit fence, new noticeboard, removal or upgrade of wheelbarrow shed, renew 1 water tap post.

CHESSER CRESCENT: Renew 3 water tap posts.

CLAREMONT PARK: Vegetation clearance.

CRAIGENTINNY: Raised beds for area prone to flooding, renew second main path, renew 2 water tap posts.

FERRY ROAD: 30m of new rabbit fence, refelt toilet roof.

INVERLEITH PARK: Refelt toilet roof, extend water supply, remove non-fruit trees, re-establish grass paths, improve path at west gate.

LADY ROAD: Build raised beds on plots prone to flooding, upgrade water taps, infill pot holes on main path.

LEITH LINKS: Build raised beds.

MIDMAR: Build handrails at certain locations, renew east fence.

RESTALRIG: Upgrade water taps to doubles.

REDHALL: New noticeboard.

SAUGHTON MAINS: Upgrade side paths.

STENHOUSE: Bin for bark chips.

WARRISTON: New main paths, wall pointing, 30m of new fencing at lower fields, new leaf mould bin, extend water supply to plots 2 to 6, bin for bark chips.

WEST MAINS: Bin for bark chips.

Consultation exercise for review of allotment regulations

The Scottish Government is reviewing the outdated and often contradictory mess of intertwining legislation which covers allotment rules and regulations. They're after your opinions. This fresh

consultation has grown out of the recent Edinburgh Council exercise which you may already have contributed to.

Click [here](#) for further information.

FEDAGA President Peter Wright writes:

This new consultation on allotment law came as a result of the many replies to the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill (CERB) consultation saying that the allotment acts need to be updated, so well done to those who got involved in the CERB consultation.

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) are working on a reply to the new consultation, which we will circulate to all our members as the SAGS recommended response, to be put into your own words.

Perhaps we should also do a joint response from FEDAGA and each affiliated association. The more individual responses and responses from organisations we can produce the better for allotments.

Within SAGS we are concerned that the Local Authorities and CoSLA will take this opportunity to dilute their legal responsibilities, so we need a big effort from all plot holders.

There's a commentary [here](#) on land campaigner and writer Andy Wightman's website.

Grow Your Own Info - in Bite Sized Chunks

Still confused? Click [here](#) for handy, quick-reference Growing Instruction Cards from Garden Organic.

Edinburgh In Bloom Competition 2013: How Does Your Allotment Grow?



Midmar won last year's site competition. Please note - this year there is no site competition: we are concentrating on individual plots only.

Is it like Mary, Mary's - with silver bells (to keep off the pigeons) and cockle shells (to define the paths) and pretty flowers all in a row?

Do other plot holders remark on your fine vegetables? Are you pleased with the fruits of your labour? And do you ever wonder how your plot compares with other plots in the city? Well, you can certainly find out as FEDAGA are, once again, running their best allotment plot competition. Plots will be judged on a range of aspects including the quality of plants, attractiveness of the plot, innovation and biodiversity. The competition is designed to support Edinburgh Council's Britain in Bloom entry which this year has Edible Britain as its theme. More information can be found on the [FEDAGA](#) and [Edinburgh Council](#) web sites as well as on your own site notice board.

So why not give it a go? You can ask for feedback on your plot and I can guarantee it will be friendly and helpful. If you enter it may not just be the silver bells that are jingling as with free site rental and a cash prize your pockets may be jingling too!

John Mckinlay

Help required on the plot?

Daunted by weeds or heavy work on your allotment?

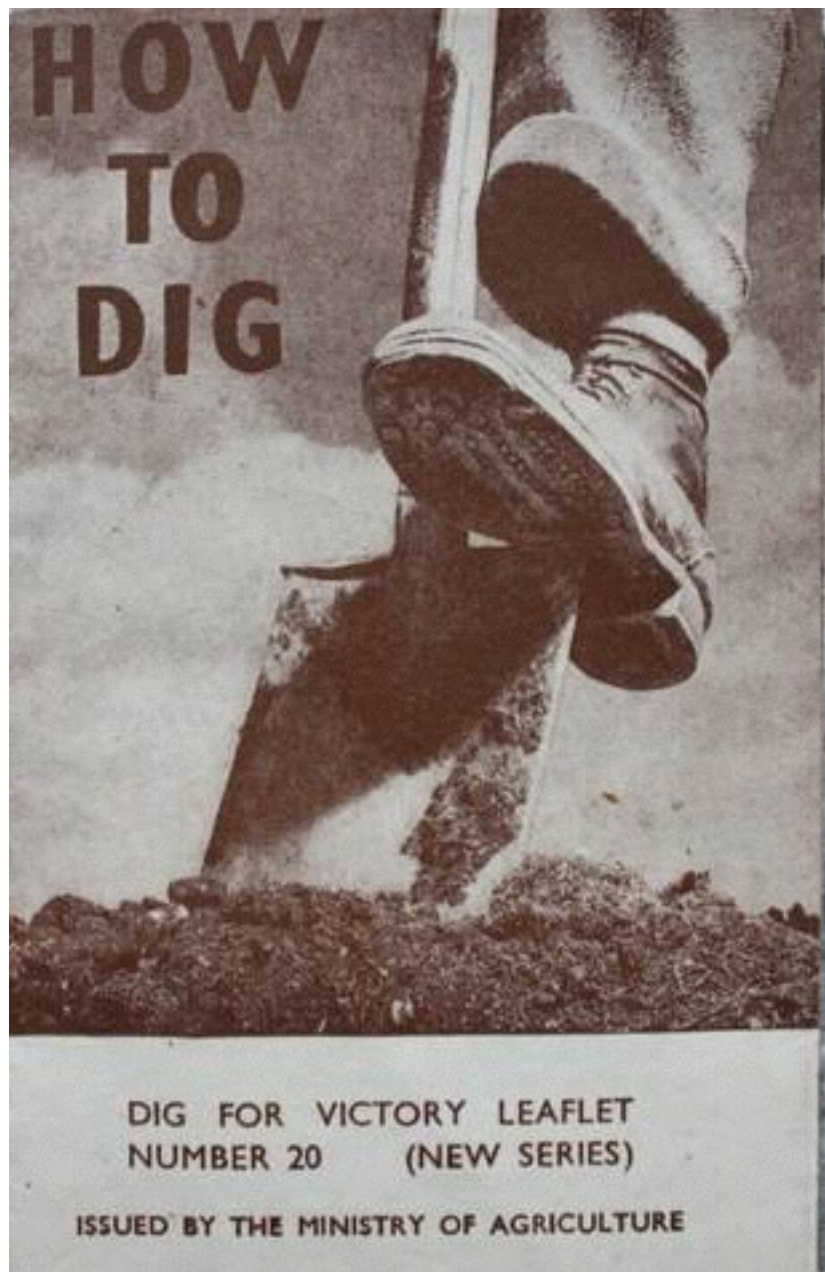
Would you like advice or help getting things up and running?

Fruit trees need pruning?

[Help](#) is at hand...

(FEDAGA would suggest that this assistance is intended as a one-off. It is not a good idea to consider getting someone to do all the heavy manual work on a permanent basis, no matter how attractive the prospect! If it's really all too much, maybe it's time to consider giving up and letting someone on the Waiting List have a go.)

How I Dig



Inverleith Allotments were asked a few months back if a school party could visit. The young people were interested in allotment use during the war. It gave us the opportunity to decorate our site meeting space with 'Dig for Victory' posters – a reminder of our past reason for existence. Whilst finding the posters I also discovered a leaflet issued by the Ministry for Agriculture entitled 'How to Dig'. I was first quite surprised that it was considered important enough to produce a leaflet, but having just finished my digging and planting my potatoes this year; I wondered if some very simple advice could make your digging a bit easier. I started out just turning the ground over with a spade and bashing it a bit to break it up. This works fine but it is actually harder work than it needs to be.

If you are digging a large piece of ground always work with your back to the uphill slope, you'll see why in a moment.

Dig out the first row and put the soil into a wheelbarrow, you will use this to fill in the last row you'll dig. Now, when you dig the second and subsequent rows, you can simply drop the spade-full into the trench in front of you and because you're digging up hill good old gravity helps you move the soil.

Use a length of wooden board; a scaffold board is perfect, and stand on it to dig, you'll find you don't compress the ground which makes it easier. Dig the ground and move along the board to the end of the row and then simply flip it over and you're ready for the next row. The board also provides a solid 'fulcrum' (remember levers?) for your spade to lever out the soil.

Carry on digging to the end of your ground; when you fill the last row with the soil from your wheel barrow. I actually organise my plot to have short rows of about five feet so that a row's worth of soil will fit into a single barrow.

You can also use this technique when planting potatoes. The books tell you to dig a trench, add compost, plant the spuds and then fill it in with the soil you just took out. What a lot of digging!

I dig out the first row into a wheelbarrow, add compost/fertilizer and plant the row of potatoes. Now flip over the board to the next row and fill the first row with the soil you're digging from the second. Next the compost and potatoes go in, flip the board and you're onto the third row. Finally, the wheelbarrow load goes into the last row. Finished – with half the digging I used to do.

I also found this wartime [film](#) extolling the virtues of digging rather than queuing for your vegetables. Watch out for the digging lesson, especially showing the benefit of having a trench to dig into, about two minutes into the film. Next time – “Gardening on Rooftops”, you'll see what I mean!

Do enjoy the film and of course; digging.

Stuart McKenzie



Is The Future Worth A Conversation?

The first session of the Carbon Conversation took place last week in Edinburgh. Although, it was a small group the conversations were lively and fun!

[New Caledonian Woodlands](#) would love to get more people involved as they explore ways to help reduce our personal carbon impact. Their next session will concentrate on home energy and the low-carbon house. Join them for a coffee and enjoy an informative, fun, interactive and practical session on Tuesday 30 April, 7 pm at Augustine United Church (opposite the Elephant Cafe on George IV Bridge).

And finally...



Dean Gallery Allotments - the most recent independent site to affiliate to FEDAGA. Welcome to you artful plotters!

...a request for information from affiliated Site Associations about events that may be of interest to the rest of us.

Maybe you're staging an Open Day this summer? Publicise it here.

On the other hand, perhaps there's something really getting on your wick and you want to get it off your chest. If it's at all to do with allotments, let us know. It's possible someone else might have a solution.

Whatever you want to say, fire it [this way](#)

©2013 Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotment and Gardens Associations I
FEDAGA