



Newsletter

March 2019: "No Matter How Long The Winter, Spring Is Sure To Follow" (Proverb)



Killandean Community Allotments, Livingston.

Study Trip to Killandean Community Allotments

FEDAGA has secured funding to facilitate a study trip on **Thursday 28th March** to Killandean Community Allotments in Livingston. This will be of interest to anyone on the allotment waiting list who is interested in getting involved in setting up a new allotment site.

Community Empowerment legislation requires all Scottish Councils to increase allotment provision to cope with the increasing number of people who would like to have a plot. The waiting time for a plot on an established site in Edinburgh currently varies from 6 or 7 years to well over a decade while the law states no-one should wait for more than 5 years. Edinburgh Council recognises the solution is more sites but chooses not to make this a priority(*), so future plotholders may have to be prepared to set up their own site on land provided by the Council. This event should be a useful first step along the road and will provide an opportunity to speak to some of the people who can help make the project a success. Killandean, which is 5 years old, comprises 35 allotment plots and a community garden. It is the largest allotment site in Livingston. The initial site investigations and planning were covered by West Lothian Council. The actual creation of the allotment site including fencing, paths, sheds, community facilities, rainwater harvesting equipment and composting facilities was made possible by a £100,000 grant from the Climate Challenge Fund. This pioneering site is the template for new allotment sites in Edinburgh.

The minibus will leave the City Chambers at noon, returning for 4pm. Contact committee@fedaga.org.uk if you are interested in occupying one of the few remaining seats.

(* - Edinburgh Council Parks and Greenspace recently put in a request for £4m to develop enough allotments to comply with Community Empowerment legislation but this was rejected.)

SASA Potato Club Continues in 2019



Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture

Our partnership with Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) continues for a fifth year.

We are delighted to announce that SASA will again supply sample varieties from their seed potato store to any FEDAGA members willing to grow them. Three tubers of a named, yet commercially unavailable, variety will be supplied in time for planting. This is usually around the beginning of April. All you have to do is grow them and report back via a short online questionnaire on how you got on and what they tasted like. We'll also try to put on a small display at the Allotment Show in September.

It's fun to try a piece of potato history and, who knows, you may discover the tastiest potato you've ever tried. A few people have!

If you'd like to take part this year then email - sasatrials@fedaga.org.uk. We're a little late this year so please do it now, or at least before **Friday 22nd March** with your name and site.

Reminder to Keep 7th September Free

As flagged up in the [February Bonus Issue](#), FEDAGA will be repeating the exclusive members-only offer of £6 coach tickets to the Dundee Flower and Food Show.

Tickets for the show itself should be available in June when booking information will be posted. A great day out is guaranteed.



Potato Scab: Good or Bad?

A purchaser of Maris Piper seed potatoes through the FEDAGA Trading Scheme contacted us regarding their appearance. She said "I am concerned that they are very scabby looking. Do they always look like this or do they have an infection?".

Before long the advice was in full flow:

"Growers are allowed a percentage of seed potatoes with scab, just the luck of the draw you get them. I have grown Desiree in the past and they are susceptible too. I planted them on top of grass cuttings that kept the ground more acid and kept scab away. Heather at SASA has her own view of scab on potatoes, she says she prefers scabby baking potatoes as you get a more crispy skin!"

"These do not look too bad. The supplier is certified to very high standards as demonstrated by our visits to SASA and talks at SAGS conferences. Scab is not a serious disease, there is no real cure, it is exacerbated by environmental conditions and type of soil. I would chit and plant."

"Scab is only an issue if you want to eat with skins on, unless you want crispy scabby potatoes!"

So if you too have some scab on your seed potatoes we hope this puts your fears to rest. In this case the infection was considered to be mild, and thus acceptable. The full low-down on the matter can be found [here](#).



The scabby tatties in question.

More Allotments = Better Mental Health: Conclusive Proof

Children who grow up with greener surroundings have up to 55% less risk of developing various mental disorders later in life. These findings from a new [study](#) by Aarhus University, Denmark, emphasise the need to design green and healthy cities for the future. Based on satellite data from 1985 to 2013, researchers from Aarhus University have mapped the presence of greenspace around the childhood homes of almost one million Danes and compared this data with the risk of developing one of 16 different mental disorders later in life. The study published in the Journal PNAS, shows that children surrounded by high amounts of greenspace in childhood have up to a 55% lower risk of developing a mental disorder -- even after adjusting for other known risk factors such as socio-economic status, urbanization, and the family history of mental disorders.

(Thanks to Greenspace Scotland.)



Access to greenspace in childhood improves mental health as adult.

RHS Cellar Slug Hunt



A representative of the invading Green Cellar Slug community.

Another citizen science opportunity for allotment research. The Royal Horticultural Society is asking members of the public in the UK to submit records of Yellow Cellar Slugs and Green Cellar Slugs.

The Yellow Cellar Slug is known to have lived here since 1884. In the 1970s a second similar looking species, the Green Cellar Slug was spotted. Since then, records of the Yellow Cellar Slug have declined sharply. Has the Green Cellar Slug taken over? Are we about to witness the extinction of a slug in Britain? With your help we can find out!

The RHS invite you to look for both or either of these species, and help identify what garden features may influence where these slugs are residing. For more information and details of how to take part, click [here](#).

By the way, these slugs are not our enemies. They confine their diet to dead and decaying vegetation and so aid the composting process.

Scotland: Good For Food

As a FEDAGA Newsletter subscriber you are obviously interested in growing your own food. You may also be interested in the wider food debate. The Government is consulting until **Friday 29th March** on how to develop Scotland as a Good Food Nation.

Click [here](#) to get an overview on how the project intends to develop understanding of the benefits of healthy local foods and ensure the sustainability of the food industry.

Nourish Scotland, an NGO campaigning on food justice issues, are encouraging everyone to get involved. They share their views on the Good Food Nation Bill proposals in this [blog](#). They have also produced a “How to respond guide” which may be of help when taking part in the consultation. There is also a [link](#) to a quick e-action telling the Government you care.



The Community Growing Fund

For community groups, public sector bodies and third sector organisations applying for funding to support local growing projects.

The Scottish Government's Community Growing Fund grant scheme is now open for applications. The closing date is **Sunday 31st March.**

Details of the grant scheme, the application form and guidance notes can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions or comments about the grant scheme or require further information please email : communitygrowingfund@gov.scot.



First Minister plants tree.

Botanic Market Garden: Workshop

A practical workshop is coming up on **Saturday 23rd March**. Learn skills and techniques required to provide a year round supply of fresh vegetables. Places are limited and preference given to those involved in community growing. Email jpaul@rbge.org.uk explaining how you would benefit. A telephone number must also be supplied. Closing date: Tuesday 19th March.

Treasurer Tries To Give Away Cash

FEDAGA has tried and failed to get in touch with anyone at a worryingly large number of small Council sites. We are holding unpaid site funds on your behalf. If you are at any of these sites we need to hear from you:

Findlay Avenue, Barons Court, India Place, Dean, Hutchison Loan, Drumbrae, Kirkliston, Victoria Park and Prospect Bank.

Sums vary from a few quid to over a hundred. If we don't hear from you there is no way we can return the site funds raised by subscriptions and participation in trading schemes. If it is not feasible to pay cash then a payment in kind can be arranged. This will be in the form of 20kg bags of Garden Solutions compost.

To contact us, e-mail: committee@fedaga.org.uk.

Data protection legislation prevents the Council from passing on their contact details to us, so this Newsletter is the only way we can directly get in touch with you. The problem is that to get it you must sign up. Catch 22!

...and Finally

Make a date in your diary for the Edinburgh Allotment Show: **14th September**.

FEDAGA is planning to produce short instructional videos to help members get the most out of their allotment. Meanwhile you might be interested in what's on our [Gardening Help](#) page.

There was a sickening act of vandalism at **Bridgend** recently: 2 sheds were burned down, clearly aided by accelerant. The Police are taking this crime seriously and are investigating. Plotolders are advised not to store petrol in their sheds.

Council sites will have their **water** turned back on at the end of March.

The Allotment Officer reports a record number of **new plotholders** for this stage of the year. Good weather has been helpful in getting people onto their plots and most are already getting down to work with enthusiasm.

Many sites, including Pilrig Park, Leith Links, Inverleith and Saughton Mains are benefitting from **woodchip deliveries**. These are a great mulch for paths. Please be aware that uncomposted this material will leach nutrient, especially nitrogen, from the soil.

It is hoped that negotiations between the Council and Boys Brigade will see the proposed **Letham Park** site (close to Ferry Road allotments) up and running later this year. There should be 80 half-size plots here.

The Council's online allotment application form is obviously very effective. Since it started numbers on the **waiting list** have shot up to over 3000.

Many potential new allotment sites are not making progress to fruition as they are on **Common Good** land. FEDAGA would argue that an allotment is for the common good but this doesn't seem to help. Any good legal opinion out there that may aid our case?

Next year's Council **allotment fees** will rise again. In 2020 expect to pay £120 for a full plot and £60 for a half plot (up 5.3%) with concessions reducing the price by half. However, the Council has decided to set the age threshold for these back from 60 to 66. FEDAGA regularly points out to officials and councillors that Edinburgh has by far the most expensive allotments in Scotland and among the costliest in the UK. The counter-argument is that the level of support is a lot greater than elsewhere. Feedback from plotholders consistently suggests that if faced with devolved management to reduce rental costs the majority want to keep things as they are and enjoy an easy, if expensive, life.