



# Newsletter

## Midsummer Bulletin (June 2018)



### Important Message To Dundee Show Trip Applicants

We still have a few coach tickets left for the trip on 1st September. Please reserve your seat by emailing [dundee@fedaga.org.uk](mailto:dundee@fedaga.org.uk).

**If you have already applied but have not had an acknowledgement please reapply.** Apologies, but we've had problems with the technology.

Successful applicants will be sent an acknowledgement quickly. Guidance to help with the online payment process will follow. We recommend that you delay purchasing your ticket(s) for the show until after your payment for the coach tickets.

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## MY Harvest - Get Involved!



FEDAGA members recently heard an interesting presentation from the University of Sheffield team investigating the productivity of allotment plots across the UK. The project has been going for a couple of years and has now reached Edinburgh.

Although the main aim is to literally Measure Your Harvest, an important adjunct to this is to gauge soil quality. This has not been attempted on such a scale since the days of Dig For Victory. It was pithily stated that the soil we depend upon for survival is just treated like dirt.

So far it has been shown that, compared to commercial agriculture, allotments punch above their weight with 3% of the population being fed from 1.5% of the land (based on measuring consumption of "5 a day").

Due to the addition of compost and manure rather than chemical nutrients, soil on allotments is in better health than farmers' fields.

However, due to urban pollution there is concern about the presence of heavy metals. It is important to find out how much finds its way into our food.

Also, the amount of land on the average plot (based on a survey in Leicester) actually used for production is as low as 52% when paths, sheds, paved areas, flower beds, etc are factored in. Raised bed areas are a particularly poor use of land as they have a greater ratio of path to plot than elsewhere. (It's worth remembering that the rules in Edinburgh state you must use 75% of your plot for production.)

This project is citizen science in action. There are 4 sites in Edinburgh participating with 5 plots on each being actively measured. However, anyone can join in. You are invited to get involved in this important research project. The more participants, the better the results. Click [here](#) for more information. Submit your harvest data [here](#).

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# Edible Edinburgh: What's That?



[Edible Edinburgh](#) is an organisation tasked with helping Edinburgh become a more sustainable city. To do this it is exploring areas from community access to land for growing to concerns about food and health, food waste and food poverty. You can read about the Sustainable Food City Plan [here](#).

As an allotment holder you are at the forefront of putting this into action. You may wish to contribute to the policy and there is an opportunity to do this on Wednesday 4th July, if you can spare the time. (The meeting starts at 10am).

FEDAGA has been invited to attend. Sadly, work commitments and holiday plans prevent the usual suspects from going. If you're interested in finding out more, promoting sustainable local food growing and reporting back to FEDAGA, please [get in touch](#).



## PROPAGATE

Further reading: [Propagate](#) are a group of local food producers aiming to transform Scotland's cities and overhaul the country's food landscape by creating urban farms on vacant land and in empty buildings. They are mainly active in Glasgow. Their projects are inspiring and you can read more [here](#).

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# Allotment Crops Hectored By Storm



Thursday 14th June was a day of destruction across many allotment sites as Storm Hector battered tender crops, newly surfaced, in fresh leaf, and unprepared for the mauling that came their way. Particularly affected were courgettes and squashes, many of which had only been planted out a few days previously. Potato shaws were flattened and runner beans, snaking up bamboo frames had their leaves shredded. Usually the seasonal problems at this time of year are either drought or slugs'n'snails on radar patrol in wet weather. It's not easy trying to get juvenile plants established outdoors once they are past the seedling stage in the greenhouse. Now we have to deal with the unpredictable unseasonal challenges thrown up by climate change as well.

Many growers were quite heartbroken by the damage they surveyed once the storm had blown over. However, it is also worth noting that the power of nature to recover is surprisingly strong. A few plants were gonnors (such as those courgettes whose necks were wrung) but many potato shaws reinflated as if by magic (or maybe it was the welcome downpours of the following days) and the runner beans kept on running despite their bare patches.

Planning ahead pays dividends. It is always a good idea to keep a few rows of infantry back to plug the gaps where devastation has been wrought. Instead of substituting for crops eaten by pests this year, the

"B Team" were brought out to replace the plants savaged by Storm Hector. Today the damage is not nearly as severe as was anticipated.

Sadly, the same can't be said for the damaged greenhouses (see picture) that don't repair themselves but require us to either clear away or patch up. Solid foundations and strong fixings are more important than ever. This unpredictable weather looks like it's here to stay. And that's a firm prediction.

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## Open Days

The West Mains Open Day is scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday 5th August and here's a fantastic poster advertising the Midmar bash...



## Coming Soon...

The Edinburgh Allotment Show on Saturday 8th September. More information in the July FEDAGA Newsletter.