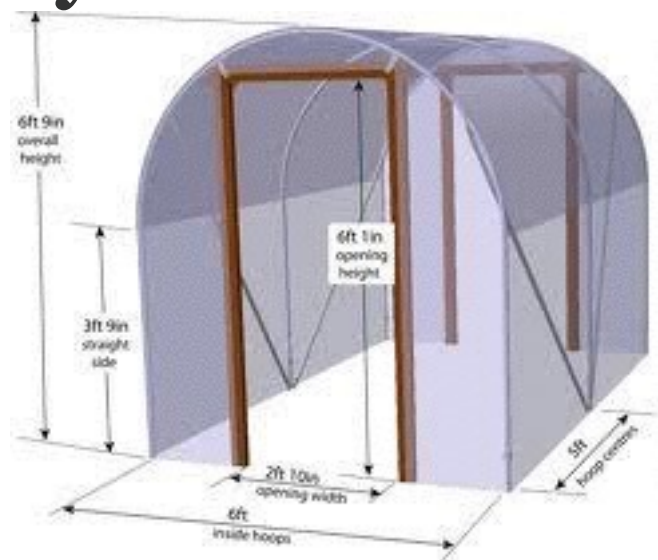


Bloomin' heck: it's Flaming June!



The latest on polytunnels



At this month's FEDAGA Management Committee meeting it was decided to recommend to the Council that polytunnel applications be treated as they would be for greenhouses. There should be no bias against polytunnels. However, they should be no larger than 6.25 square metres - around an 8 by 10 foot size and should not cause a problem for neighbours in terms of shade or rain runoff.

Since last month's item an interesting response has been received from a plotholder in Edinburgh. She writes:

For me, polytunnels are not in the spirit of what allotmenting is all about. They are un-neighbourly, and anti-social – exclusive and excluding, and will lead to inequality, since not everyone – surely – can have one. Nor are they kind to the environment – encouraging infestations which need chemical treatments to cure: encouraging over-tilling which damages the soil; affecting biodiversity by being a barrier to beneficial insects; making excessive water demands; and requiring more vehicles on site to erect and take down. And when the polythene wears out – they are yet another source of non-degradable rubbish to get off site. In short, they are more factory farming than sustainable gardening.

I note that people have located polytunnels right up to the boundaries of their plots. I find it hard to imagine how unpleasant it would be to have to till a plot hemmed in by a wall of stretched polythene. Thank goodness I currently have real gardeners as neighbours, but things can change unless the issue is addressed.

Frankly, I think they should be banned, for the reasons above, but if the decision is made to permit them in certain instances, then I think the following conditions must apply (in addition to the size limit of 6.25 square metres which is under consideration):

- Ability to object to planning permission should extend to neighbouring plotholders not just neighbouring properties, or (if the planning department say this isn't feasible) then the council needs to bring in a means through which neighbouring plotholders' views can be taken into account in the decision-making process.
- Permission to have a polytunnel on a plot is for a fixed period and non-renewable.
- The location that a polytunnel can occupy on the site is prescribed – it must not touch the plot boundaries and must be oriented to minimise shade to neighbouring plots
- Polytunnel owners have to meter their water use and pay for it.

- A limit is set as to the (small) number of polytunnels an allotment site will permit.
- Plots where polytunnels are permitted are designated and made public, so people know where they are and can avoid being sited next to one. Ideally, the polytunnel plots should be those where it is hardest to garden in the open, e.g. on north facing slopes of the allotment site, not the best land on the site.
- Neighbouring plotholders can be fast-tracked to the waiting list to move plot.

In short, I believe there should be a presumption against polytunnels, and this needs to be set out in the allotment rules, strategy etc, underlining that the policy is to actively discourage it.

Finally, can I suggest that no additional polytunnels are permitted until this matter is resolved?

All fair comment, apart perhaps from the point about metered water. Individual water meters for each plot won't work as most plots share access to a tap. Furthermore, FEDAGA is fundamentally opposed to any hint of extending water metering to more sites. A few already "enjoy" a metered water supply and if this is pushed out across the city the impact on rents will be severe. So let's say no more about that.

There have also been pro- polytunnel comments, arguing that with this particularly cold spring and the general unpredictability of the weather, a polytunnel is essential to do any meaningful food production, particularly on windy and north facing plots. FEDAGA remains in favour of properly managed polytunnels and is grateful for any helpful contributions that will influence and refine the Council's policy.

Allotment Competition: Deadline extended



The deadline for entries has - in recognition of the late spring - been extended to June 21st.

A swift reminder of the incentives:

1st Prize: One year's free plot rental (up to £100)

2nd Prize: 50% reduction on plot rental (up to £50)

3rd Prize: £25 donated by FEDAGA.

Thanks to the City of Edinburgh Council for sponsoring the top two prizes.

To enter please email your:

- 1 Name and contact details;
- 2 plot number and site;
- 3 any other information you'd like the judges to consider; to bloom@edinburgh.gov.uk or call 0131 469 5257.

Entry criteria can be found on the FEDAGA [website](#) or at edinburgh.gov.uk/bloom

Judging will take place between 24 June and 31 July. The results will be announced shortly afterwards.

More on bees



Since last month's item, bees are back on the allotment agenda.

The Council's Allotment Officer intends to survey sites with a view to recommending possibilities.

What was said last month regarding a prohibition on bees in Council allotments is incorrect - and apologies are offered. It is not the case that they are prohibited. The following is taken from the latest Allotment Strategy document, published in 2010:

Management rules for the keeping of bees

- 1 There should be no automatic right to keep bees on any allotment site or plot. Some sites will not be suitable due to the proximity of footpaths or houses. Other sites may be too insecure, leaving hives open to vandalism.
- 2 Where conditions are suitable there should still be a limitation on the number of hives. Two hives would be a reasonable number on one plot and the total number would need to be governed by the size of the site. Six hives should be considered the maximum even on the largest sites. Initially, it would be best to allow only a single beekeeper on any one site in order to gauge the reactions of fellow plot holders over a period of time.
- 3 Only beekeepers with reasonable experience should be given permission to keep bees on an allotment. An applicant should hold a "Basic Beemaster Certificate." This is a qualification awarded by the Scottish Beekeepers Association (SBA) to beekeepers who have passed a foundation examination the theory and practice of beekeeping. It is usually awarded to beekeepers who have kept bees satisfactorily for one or two years. An allotment is not a suitable place for a new beekeeper to start with a first hive and, even if they have one or two years experience, it would be wise for them to be members of their local association where they would have access to an experienced mentor.
- 4 Beekeepers must be members of the Scottish Beekeepers Association as membership provides £2,000,000 Public Liability Insurance. This covers public footpaths and houses.
- 5 All plot holders adjacent to the proposed apiary site must be in agreement. Dissenters should not be over-ruled by a majority vote as the wishes and needs of gardeners should be paramount. On smaller sites it would probably be necessary for all the plot holders to agree. There would also need to be some protection for an established beekeeper. An adjacent plot that becomes vacant should not be let to someone opposed to bees.
- 6 Manipulations of hives should not be carried out when other plot holders are working nearby. Time must be allowed for bees to settle after these manipulations.
- 7 There must be provisions in place to deal with any situations arising during a beekeepers absence. Reliable contact numbers

should be available, somewhere on the site, in case of problems. Cover must be arranged if the beekeeper is away.

- 8 Bees could cause problems because of poor management but it might well be possible to resolve these. Plot holders who are experiencing problems from bees should bring these to the attention of the Allotments Officer, who will be able to call upon advice from an Edinburgh and Midlothian Beekeepers Association member. Very aggressive bees should never be permitted on a plot.

FEDAGA is pleased to have received the following comment from an experienced beekeeper who has an allotment plot (at Bridgend, we think). He writes:

The 'dangers' of bees are grossly exaggerated. The extreme allergic reaction is found in 1 in a million people. The issue of nearby houses is not an issue - they are more than 200 yards from the site and it is highly likely there will be wild colonies in the Craigmillar woods anyway. The only time that bees sting is when they are disturbed and there are people in the immediate vicinity, ie within about 20 feet. An adequately screened apiary should be no problem to anyone. But even if the odd person gets stung - this is surely a small price which any allotment holder would pay to ensure the survival of honey bees - and they are seriously under threat. And of course there is the added benefit of improved pollination for everyone's plots.

So now you have the Council's position and that of an experienced beekeeping allotment holder. What do you think?

PS - On my own plot in Leith our flowering chives have been ignored this year. Usually they are buzzing with "orange bottomed" bees. Last week I spied one. Only one bee appears to have survived. Elsewhere the number of bees, to my eye, has catastrophically crashed. We really are in trouble.

Feedback from the allotments consultation



The Allotments Consultation Team at the Scottish Government have written to thank FEDAGA for our contribution to the Legislative Framework Governing Allotments consultation. They have received a considerable number of responses and to enable them to thoroughly examine all the issues raised they have revised the publication deadlines as follows:

They intend making all non-confidential responses to the consultation available to the public in the following ways:

On the Scottish Government consultation [web pages](#) and at the Scottish Government Library, K Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD by 19 July 2013. Copies of responses can be viewed by visiting the library or can also be provided by post. Charges for photocopies are made on a cost-recovery basis. To request copies by post and enquire about charges or make an appointment to view responses at the library, contact the Library on 0131 244 4565.

Offer of plot at Slateford Longstone Church



FEDAGA has received the following interesting e-mail:

I am contacting you on behalf of Slateford Longstone Church after reading about the shortage of allotment sites in south Edinburgh. We have an area of garden behind our church which is now not looked after as well as it should be. It was previously cared for by members of our congregation but with an ageing congregation fewer people are able to tend the garden. We have tried to advertise the garden to all our Church members and been in contact with other community groups to see whether someone would like to take over the care of the garden. If this is something we could discuss with you to allow local residents in the Redhall/Longstone area to have access to the garden to take on the care of it we would be delighted to meet with you.

This may well be of interest to those of you on the waiting list. Or maybe you only have a half plot and are itching to get to grips with a bit more land. Interested? Contact [Angie Simpson](#).

Classifieds, etc.

A couple of items from recent issues are followed up:

At last we have a date and venue for the Inaugural Meeting of the Friends of Warriston Cemetery!

Thursday 4th July 2013 at 7.30pm, St Serf's Church Hall, 1a Clark Road.

Also, a plotholder writes:

I've visited Sofie Rogers at Ikea; as the new environmental officer, she is keen to find people to take the heavy duty trays that pot plants arrive in -

they come in sets of 6 and the smallish ones might do for sowing, and the bigger ones would come in handy for potting on. She also has large containers that are rejected when they are chipped - always useful. Also, she is wondering what to do with crockery items such as planters and tableware which has to be binned when its not perfect, too. In fact, she says, let her know what would be useful, and she will look it out!

Contact Sofie [here](#).

And Sam Simpson writes:

I have a load of gravel in a pile in my front garden in Restalrig and wondering if FEDAGA could make any use of it? If you would be interested and would like to have a look or any more info [e-mail](#) me.

Watch out: there's a thief about!



A plotholder at Claremont Park has contacted FEDAGA to say he has been the victim of an unusual theft. His shed door was kicked in and upon examination he noticed that the lumps of lead he had used to weigh down fleece and membranes were missing: around 7kg worth. With the increasing price of scrap metal it was only a matter of time before thieves moved on from strimmers, etc.

FEDAGA urges all plotholders who suffer at the hands of vandals or thieves to contact the police and report the crime. Ensure that each incidence is reported separately and gets recorded individually. Insist on getting an Incident Number.

You could ask your allotment association to request community police officers to include the site as part of their rounds. They can be given a key to gain access. And ensure that everyone knows to lock the gate after them.

FEDAGA has asked the Council to make security the number one issue for allotment improvements this year.

and finally...

...thanks to Council Leader Lesley Hinds who took time out from her busy schedule to attend this month's FEDAGA Management Committee meeting. We hope it was less arduous than her dealings with the tram project.

Cllr. Hinds undertook to enquire about the possible loss of the Balgreen site, which has recently been used to store equipment and materials for the trams. It appears that although half of the site will be sold for housing, the half nearest the Water of Leith will be retained for allotments. She is also trying to move forward the scheme for allotments on the site of the former Burdiehouse Primary School site.

FEDAGA used the opportunity to explain to Cllr. Hinds the problems that face city ploholders.

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