

November/December 2018 - Time To Reflect On Achievements



The Edinburgh Allotment Show: A Growing Success



John Grace writes:

The 2018 Edinburgh Allotment Show was held on Saturday 8th September in the Methodist Church Hall, one week later than usual - to avoid a clash with the Dundee Flower and Food Festival. The Show succeeded in its aim of bringing together the Edinburgh allotment community, thanks to a high level of publicity and the tactic of appointing committee members as advocates of the show, thus 'spreading the word' and encouraging plotholders to exhibit their produce. Ian Woolard (Edinburgh City Council Allotment Officer) assisted the publicity by emailing plotholders.

Entries were submitted from 17 sites, the most coming from Lady Road (8) with significant numbers coming from Claremont Park (7), Saughton Mains, Inverleith and Stenhouse (6 each). An analysis of the gender-balance of competitors showed that 32 were female and 25 were male, with 6 entries coming from male/female partners and a few giving their initial only and thus of unknown gender. Entries were dominated by vegetable classes, and this year we saw large numbers of entries in

beans, tomatoes, potatoes, and many good quality apples reflecting the favourable summer weather.



The Lord Provost, who presented the prizes.

In 2017 we increased the children's classes from 4 to 9 and tried to make them more 'fun', attempting to make the show more of a family event. However, in 2017 we had rather few children's entries, and therefore we reduced the classes for 2018. Perversely, more children came, and some parents complained that runner-up medals were not awarded this year. Similarly, one member complained that the chutney class that had been undersubscribed in 2017 and deleted this year, rendered his chutney-making efforts to no avail. Probably, it is best not to make many changes from year to year as it can cause disappointment.

We introduced a bench of not-for-competition items, billed as 'Interesting and Peculiar'. It attracted several entries, including historical documents, old tools, and malformed fruit. A scarecrow appeared from Midmar, occupying a somewhat theatrical position next to the Church Organ. There were displays of heritage potatoes and the apple press was on display along with an opportunity to taste various different apple varieties.

Entry to the Hall was free to all and no charge was made for competing. The cost was £1064.94 which is equivalent to £16.14 per entrant and £2.15 per exhibit. The largest items of expenditure were engraving of the trophies (£283) and hire of the hall (£225).

Thanks are due to the staff at the Methodist Hall, especially the janitor; SASA (Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture); Mark Hocart, Dean of Edinburgh Centre of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), on hand to

give gardening advice; the judges (John Dyce, vegetables, and Muriel Pate, plot to plate); the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Frank Ross who presented the prizes, and - last but not least - all FEDAGA volunteers who worked throughout the year to plan the event and made it happen on the day.

Useful Composting Guide



Here is a very useful [guide to composting](#) containing virtually all you need. It originates from the USA but the advice is good for Scots as well.

Tips are given for cold and hot composting but the exciting stuff is a comprehensive [vermicomposting guide](#). This is composting with the aid of worms.

Most of us use cold composting: pile it up and watch it rot. Larger operations can edge towards hot composting, which is preferable as this kills pathogens. But this may be beyond the scope of the humble allotment operator. The way to go could be vermicomposting.

Alternatively, if you're squeamish about wriggly worms chill out with some [compost tea](#).

The RHS also has an excellent guide to composting available [here](#).

If you have any stories or advice about composting using worms please [get in touch](#).

Financial Section: The Good News and The Bad News

The Bad News First

The Council will raise Edinburgh's allotment rent again next year. They claim this is in line with inflation and is 4%. Our calculations say it's a 5.5% rise and dispute that any inflation rate is this high. For a full plot the annual rent will be £114. Half plots will be £57. 50% concessions still apply.

FEDAGA is dismayed at a further increase but recognises that Councils across Austerity Britain are suffering from a decade of swingeing cuts. This increase is not negotiable as the 2019-20 budget has been agreed. We'd advise that ploholders write to their Councillors if they feel that they would like to influence them to not apply another similar increase in 2020. It might be worth pointing out that this year's rise outstrips inflation.

Now, the Good News

FEDAGA is holding some fairly substantial sums of money for four allotment sites who we have not been able to contact. They are **Baronscourt, Hutchison Loan, Kirkliston** and **Victoria Park**. If you are on any of these sites please [contact FEDAGA](#). Arrangements are in hand for handing over moneys owed to **India Place, Findlay Avenue, Drumbrae** and **Prospect Bank**. Payments have recently been made to **Wester Hailes** and **Dumbryden**. All other sites had their payments made some time ago.

The Council offers ploholders an opportunity to pay their FEDAGA and Site Committee subscriptions along with the plot rental. (This is £1.50 for FEDAGA and £1 for the Site Committee.) FEDAGA pays the sites their subs - but only if we have contact details. If you don't have a bank account for your site, don't worry. Our Treasurer is open to discussing how your site could benefit in kind.

Bridgend Growing Communities

Come along to our Christmas event on **Sunday 16
December from 12:00 to 15:00**

Food, music, childrens' games, making Christmas wreaths
and natural decorations.

All ages welcome.

We are based at 41 Old Dalkeith Road.



For more information please contact bridgendgrowingcommunities@gmail.com

Trading Reminder



The FEDAGA Trading Scheme is still open. Details of what's on offer and prices are in the [October Newsletter](#). Contact your site representative and make a payment with your order. Sites have until **30th November** to get orders in to our Trading Secretary.

The Rock Dust offer (also detailed last month) is about to come to a close - so get your orders in pronto!

Remember, the online Kings Seeds trading scheme never closes.

Massive discounts to members are available. It is available [here](#).

Scottish Food Growing Strategy



The Scottish Government's Food Growing Strategy has been published. Keen readers can see it [here](#).

FEDAGA is talking to the City of Edinburgh Council about this on the Allotment Strategy forum. The Government's words are very fine and the new Allotment legislation well intentioned but to put boots and plants on or in the ground a bit of funding would be nice. However, as noted above, the Council has no money available to spend on this. One possibility is that if the strategy is intended to improve health and well-being then surely it would make sense for some health budget to be diverted towards grow-your-own? Prevention is better than cure.

By law, starting now, no-one should wait for more than 5 years for an allotment. This will require (1) better management of waiting lists and (2) more allotments. As there's no money, in Edinburgh all new sites must be self starts. FEDAGA is making suggestions as to how this may best proceed. If you are on the allotment waiting list you should soon be hearing from the Council who will be enquiring if you're still interested and, if so, what size of plot you'd like. In areas where suitable ground has been identified for a new allotment site then you will be invited to meet up with others interested in starting up a new independently managed allotment. Advice and assistance is promised. Funding should

be available from community grant providers. FEDAGA is hoping to take Councillors and officials to the successful Killandean Community Allotment in Livingston next spring to show them how the self start model can work.

One important initiative FEDAGA is keen to support is education for new wannabe ploholders. It could be that in future, aspirant ploholders will be required to provide some sort of bona fide to show they are competent and are aware of what is involved in running a plot capable of providing food.

End Of Year Round-Up



A spate of break-ins at **Claremont Park**: sheds were damaged but nothing taken. Advice remains don't lock your sheds. A nail and hasp will do. Padlocks only make villains think there's something worth taking - and usually there's nothing appealing to 13 year olds. Always report such incidents to the Police. Another site clean-up saw 6 vanloads of debris taken to the dump.

A productive day of action at **Saughton Mains**: loads of volunteers to coat the perimeter fence with anti-vandal paint.

Women are in the majority on **Warriston** and **Craigentinny Telferton** committees following well-attended AGMs. Advice from the latter on how to maintain communal plots: ask for Scouts and Guides to get stuck in. They get a badge to sew on their shirt for their trouble and the community becomes involved in protecting and appreciating the allotment.

Community grants can be awarded by Neighbourhood Partnerships - so we'll be looking forward to Craigentinny and Duddingston NP allocating funds for the essential water supply to **Northfield**. Who ever heard of growing veg without water?

Wildlife report: abundant foxes at **Lady Road**, **Cambridge Avenue** and **Inverleith**. The rabbit population at the latter is down to one very plump bunny.

Strangely enough, waste uplifts have ceased at **Lady Road**. If your site has problems with waste uplifts [get in touch](#).

The prize for the Most Unusual Enquiry of 2018 goes to **Saughton Mains** who wondered during our long hot summer if FEDAGA had a policy on nudity on allotments. (We don't, as we assume this must be the responsibility of someone else... like the Police.)

Finally, thanks to **Tom Forster** of Summerhall talking about vertical allotments and the estimable **Ian Woolard** of the Council's allotment service (oh, sorry, he *is* the allotment service) for interesting and stimulating presentations at the **FEDAGA AGM**. Thanks, too, to all who attended. Standing room only for the first time since anyone can remember. And welcome to **John Nisbet** of Craigentinny Telferton who joins the management team.