



Newsletter

# November 2016 - Changes and Initiatives



*Globe artichokes and rainbow over Blackford Hill (Midmar allotments) (pic: Valeska Andrews)*

# New Blog Launched



FEDAGA has started a blog - available on our website. To read it click [here](#) [*The blog has subsequently been discontinued so the features referred to are appended to the end of this edition*]. The first 4 entries are already up: a feature on Valeska Andrews (pictured here on her Midmar plot), communal storage solutions on no-shed site Dumbryden, a chat with newly elected FEDAGA President Stuart MacKenzie, and details of the fresh approach that the new committee hope to steer towards.

We want to encourage plotholders wishing to improve communications on their own sites. So FEDAGA will run a workshop for anyone interested in setting up a blog, newsletter or website for their own site - and also for new participants who would like to contribute to the FEDAGA platforms: you will be made most welcome. It will take place from 7.15pm on Tuesday 10th of January 2017. If you'd like further information or register interest please contact FEDAGA [here](#).

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# Another Sting In The Tale...

FEDAGA has recently received a Repair and Maintenance Report from the Allotment Officer. It details progress made (or not) across the city's sites. It also contains a bold note in the margin against the annual spending budget of £20,000: "£5000 will be removed as a cost saving."

FEDAGA is canvassing site reps for (a) previously requested but undelivered actions and (b) fresh repair and maintenance requests. We hope to meet with the Allotment Officer in the New Year to press him to deliver what is required and has been agreed and paid for.

A breakdown of where your rent money goes:

Overall budget: £38,000.

Annual standing charges for water, electricity, refuse collection: £18,700.

Repairs to vandalised gates at Dumbryden: £900.

Communal container at Dumbryden and gate repairs at Bridgend: £482.

New locks and chains (all sites): £990.

New keys and locks at Stenhouse: £200.

Roofing felt for Craigentenny communal shed: £450.

2 tons of whin dust for Cambridge Avenue: £200.

Extra security at Dumbryden: £800.

Water pump repair at Bridgend: £650.

Roof refelted at Saughton Mains chalet: £850.

Fence repair at Redhall: £150.

Fence repair at Claremont Park: £186.

Fence repair at Warriston: £198.

Fence repair at Northfield Drive: £140.

Strimming at Northfield Drive: £153.

Tool shed dividers in containers at Dumbryden: £2000.

Water charges for Drumbrae: £285.

Hedge cutting at Ferry Road and Warriston: £400.

All the above have been completed.

Orders have been issued for the following:

New gates at Lady Road: £2395.

New beech trees for burnt out hedge at Pilrig Park: £40.

Extend water supply at Warriston: £1200.

Extra security at West Mains: £175.

Also - new notice boards for Claremont Park and Leith Links (£450 each) may not be possible.

The creation of a hard standing area for waste bins at Midmar (£260) has not had an order issued - so is on hold.

30m of new fencing at Warriston (plot 98) is also on hold as the price (£3000) is too expensive.

Tree cutting at Carrick Knowe (requested years ago) is termed "ongoing" (£400).

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# Classified Section



*IKEA are selling really excellent plastic trays which are perfect for standing pots or seed trays on.*

Is it a potted plant tray or a seed tray? It certainly could be. It's actually an optional extra for the Ikea self assembly shoe rack. A heavy duty plastic tray measuring 31cm by 70cm. Perfect for greenhouses and shelves.

Just £1.50. Product name is BAGGMUCK, reference is 603.297.11. Full product information [here](#).

Stuart Watson of Grierson Road (EH5) writes: "As a result of building works I have a pile of topsoil that's surplus to my needs. Please notify local allotment holders [Inverleith, Ferry Road or Warriston] to see if there are any takers. I'll need to get rid of it within about 3 weeks or so. Don't mind helping with loading and unloading." Interested? Contact Stuart [here](#).

Sandra Eden writes: "A friend of a friend is looking for a new home for this rather splendid greenhouse and I thought I would send the photos to you so that, if you see fit, you might circulate them to the troops. It is free." Interested? Then click on the [News](#) page of the FEDAGA website and scroll down to Greenhouse For Uplift for photos and contact information.

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# Warriston Website



Alice Bain writes: "The new Warriston website went live in April this year and includes a bumper crop of plot advice, images and news. Pest or Guest of the Month and Variety of the Month are among the sections we update regularly, with Recipe of the Month a recently added plot holder suggestion. The redeveloped site includes helpful advice on rubbish removal, recycling and more. Please contact us through the Warriston website if you would like any further information, if you would like to join our newsletter, or if you have any allotment thoughts/ideas you would like to share. It's all at: [www.warristonallotments.com](http://www.warristonallotments.com)"

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# Coming Next Year: The Return of the Allotment Forum

Head of Parks and Greenspace, David Jamieson, has indicated he is keen to re-establish the Allotments Forum. This is an opportunity to bring together the Council officials (and hopefully some actual Councillors, maybe?) who are responsible for running the allotment service and you, the "Service User".

These have taken place in the past and were good opportunities to vent opinions and cut through the fog of half-truth and rumour. It is likely that a meeting will be scheduled for the springtime. Watch this space.

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## First New Allotment Site of the Post-CEA "New Era" On Its Way.



FEDAGA has secured agreement from the Council to kick start the planning process that will lead to the creation of a new allotment site on the grounds of the former Lismore Primary School. This site is immediately to the south of Bingham Park, on the corner of Duddingston Row and Bingham Avenue.

The Council have said they have no funds available for capital expenditure on creating new sites - but they have an obligation to meet demand under the provisions of the Community Empowerment Act. This will be achieved by contacting those in the locality who are on the Waiting List for a plot. They will be brought together to self-organise a working group to access grants and take the project on themselves. This is the way allotments will be created in Edinburgh in the future.

A recent Central Scotland Greenspace Network workshop identified £1.5bn available to community groups for the creation of growing spaces (including allotments) over the next 35 years to 2050. It is notable this funding is NOT available to Councils. The figure was calculated by collating all the present funding streams and adding them together. It is not "new" money: just what is already on stream. If people can work together and successfully attract the necessary funding then the future is bright for new allotment sites in Scotland.

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## **A shed or no shed at the bottom of the plot**

RAINBOW lover Valeska Andrews has found her pot of gold. She counts the nuggets constantly. "Every day I say thank you," she says.

A townie to her toes, with 22 years and still counting inner-city living in the heart of the Grassmarket helter-skelter, it's her beautiful blue shed, not only her haven, but her thinking, planning, creating, growing and storing space in her Midmar Shangri-la that lights up this woman's life. On a jaunty little blackboard just inside the door she has chalked 'Welcome to Paradise'.



“I waited eight years for a plot on this site,” says self-employed massage therapist Valeska as she boils the kettle for our Sunday coffee cup, “And still I know that I am very fortunate indeed. When I cycle from my home, unlock the shed door and prepare for a day’s gardening, it’s as if I have arrived in another world.”

While Valeska can keep up a good conversation about the bountiful berry fruits on her plot, the asparagus, broad beans and artichokes, it’s her concern for how her fellow citizens cope with stress that really enlivens her. “I’m concerned for anyone feeling excessive stress and distress due to a lack of connection with themselves and the natural world,” she says. “We need to think much more about how this kind of life, outdoor living, can help to alleviate the stresses that all of us routinely deal with in daily life.”

However, Valeska’s shed is possible because right from the start (early 1900s) it was a given that Midmar offered a plot that came with shed and/or greenhouse permissions. Today, in the light of security concerns, space issues and good neighbour considerations, City of Edinburgh Council has reconsidered such approvals.

## A new approach



RECENT newly-established sites are currently set up on a no-sheds basis, with communal storage areas within central lock-ups offered as the alternative. Dumbryden has recently had conversions done to two on-site containers. They offer tool storage in bays for each plothead. Vice-Chair Rena Linton highlights these below.

Head of Parks, Gardens and Green Spaces in Edinburgh David Jamieson knows that this changes the quality of the plot-holder experience. Does he question that this would necessarily be in a negative way?

“Not necessarily,” he says. “There are many examples of where a communal hut or store has helped create a sense of collectivism and neighbourliness amongst plot holders. Given the amount of space that individual huts take up it usually also makes sense to maximise the available growing area at an allotment site by providing a single central facility rather than myriad individual sheds.

“In some locations these come in the form of converted existing buildings (e.g. Victoria Park), and at other sites by creating secure new facilities (e.g. Dumbryden). Occasionally resources allow plot-holders to really push the design boat out, as seen at the stunning and innovative India Place allotments.

These new ideas create a range of alternatives to the shed at the bottom of the plot. But for those sites already dotted with structures of all shapes and sizes, in various states of usefulness and repair, challenges present in a different way.

At Inverleith, rabbits have had a field day creating under-floor burrows. From these safe havens, they decimate leeks, carrots and spring greens. Site Chair Stuart McKenzie says: “The key issue is that sheds need to be well maintained and set on a good slabbed base. If not, they can cause nuisance to your neighbour’s plot. The problem is actually exacerbated by halving plots, which tends to double the number of sheds at a site.”

A shed or no shed at the bottom of the plot. What’s it to be? Times are changing, green space is highly prized, and numerous sheds in a small space don’t seem to match the current trends.

But then . . . there’s that pot of gold . . . don’t we all hanker after it just a little?

# Committee profile: New Chair Stuart is going for a winning plan



We asked a few searching questions about his interest in allotments.

First, he talked about his v...e...r...y l.. .o.. .n.. .g association with FEDAGA:

“I first went along to a FEDAGA meeting in the early 1990s. It's proof of the benefits of allotmenting that a few of the people I met then are still around today. It is my experience that the sites who engage with us do benefit, educationally, socially, and even financially.

We asked: “When and why did you apply for a plot? Stuart said: “My local greengrocer only stocked one variety of potato and he wouldn't even consider getting others. So I got a plot and grew my own. I have found that the greatest benefit is enjoying fresh vegetables that you know are well grown.

“A friend’s father grew seed potatoes on his farm, so I grew rare varieties he supplied. I’m still doing that now thanks to the SASA Potato club. I got my first plot in 1988. That’s 28 years. Blimey!

We asked: Do you hold a post on your own site? Stuart said: “Yes, I have been President of Inverleith Allotments since 2009. I went away on holiday, missed the AGM and was nominated in my absence. There's a great community spirit amongst the committee there; hands-on, can-do approach to everything. Fantastic people.”

We asked: What are your aspirations for us as committee members:

Stuart said: “Having an allotment is supposed to provide healthy food, fresh air, exercise and mental stimulation. Let's maximise those aspects and not get hung up on substandard plots and waiting lists, these are the Councils' responsibilities.

“OK, if they fail, then sites must try to put them right, but let's assume there will be problems, and help manage them in partnership with the Allotment Service.

“We know conflict doesn't work, so let's try co-operation.”

## **A new group stakes a claim on future directions**



## FEDAGA future directions

To reiterate the objectives of the Federation:-

- a. The co-ordination of Allotment and Garden Associations and their work in all its branches.
- b. The protection of their interests (especially of their security of tenure in the case of Allotments Associations).
- c. The improvement of their conditions.
- d. To stimulate interest in and to encourage a commitment towards horticulture in allotments and gardens.
- e. To purchase, on a co-operative basis, supplies for the use of the members of the Federation.

We will therefore...

Provide help and advice to all associations on request using the previous experiences of our membership. We will not deal directly with CEC. Sites will be encouraged to do so, via Councillors as necessary.

Strategy for future of allotments will be discussed with CEC as required. More involvement from more site reps will be sought to enable a broader influence.

Add interest to allotment growing via initiatives such as SASA potato partnership, visits to shows, visits to places of interest, social events, our show

Negotiate bulk purchasing opportunities; e.g. seeds, potatoes and onions. Machinery?

Distribute a monthly newsletter, website, blog - Beyond the notice board...interesting/stimulating.

Explore how we reinstate the CEC/Plotholder Forum to allow plotholders a voice with the Allotment Service.

Recognise that we will always have substandard plots on sites but concentrate efforts to minimise impact on neighbouring plots by actions through site committees; clear ups, pest proofing etc.

Invite the Allotment Officer back to meetings, treat him with respect.

Stop complaining about rents, we live with what we're charged but get the best value we can.

We will not...

Confront the Allotment service, it simply doesn't work. Far better site reps/councillors.

Concern ourselves with new allotment site provision other than offering advice to groups wanting to establish new sites as part of the Community Empowerment Act. New sites will become members as they wish to enjoy the benefits I've outlined.

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