

SUNNYSIDE VIEWS

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH THE JOY OF ALLOTMENTS

Happy New Year !

So 2023 is now a disappearing memory. It was the year of the Coronation of course, Elton John showcased at Glastonbury and it is the first full year that earth hosted 9 billion people ! We look back at our Sunnyside highlights later in this edition but for now Happy New Year to you all - here's to a prosperous, healthy and brilliant growing season for everyone.



Are you free ...

*Working parties are continuing so if you can spare some time then please pop along. The next dates are **14 January** and then again on **11 February** and finally on **10 March**. As always we will focus on communal areas and refreshments will be served.*



Notes from the Chair ...

Winter is here (according to the calendar) and winter veg is ready to be harvested. In my case some tasty, non-prize-winning parsnips and a few leeks. But the point of gardening is to keep improving so luckily the seeds for 2024 have arrived - and as always thank you to Andy James for sorting the order out with King's Seeds.

During 2023 we had an Open Day and Christmas Drinks and now look forward to our AGM in January - details later in this edition - and amazingly all these events remain 'in person' - so although Covid remains for some it is fortunately not stopping our gatherings.

On a personal note I will be standing down as chairman from the January AGM. Fortunately Diana Ball is willing to stand as Chairperson and I am willing to remain on the Committee - all of course subject to members' votes.

John Eaton

£250 raised for local charities

As a result of your generosity the Committee have donated £125 each to both St Francis Hospice and the Pepper Foundation from the money raised at the Open Day Raffle!

From plot to plate

Why not try out our rhubarb chutney recipe.

Ingredients

- 1lb eating apples peeling and finely chopped
- 2oz fresh root ginger grated
- 1/2 pint of red wine vinegar
- 8oz of dried cranberries or raisins
- 1 tbsp mustard seeds and 1tbsp of curry powder
- 14oz of light muscovado sugar
- 1 1/2 lb of rhubarb sliced into chunks
- 1lb of red onions, sliced



Preparation

Step 1 : put the onions into a large pan with ginger and vinegar, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 mins.

Step 2: add the rest of the ingredients, except the rhubarb, plus 2tsp of salt and bring to the boil, stirring.

Step 3: allow to simmer uncovered for about 10 mins until the apples are tender.

Step 4: stir in the rhubarb and cook uncovered for 15-20 mins until the chutney is thick and jammy. Stir to prevent sticking. Spoon into warm sterilised jars and seal.

Your AGM - have your say

This years Annual General Meeting will be held on **Saturday 27 January** - and you are all invited. Doors will open at 1000 am for a 1030 am start so come along to hear about plans for the Sunnyside year ahead as well as your chance to vote in a new chairperson or committee member. This year's event will again be held at the Sunnyside Rural Trust Activity Centre between B and C Road on Sunnyside Old and as always refreshments will be served.

Christmas drinks ...

A strong gathering turned out to sample a range of drinks and delights just before Christmas - not to forget John Goffey's mulled wine !

A bitter wind was blowing but the sun was also shining. The rain held off and by midday tenants from both Old and New sides had gathered for the annual Christmas drinks.

Those who were there brought a good array of assorted drinks - mostly alcoholic of course - together with a few home made treats - not to mention the delights of John Goffey's home made mulled wine - which was definitely worth turning out for if nothing else.

Other than that there was no specific tales to tell - no really embarrassing dancing or tell-alls but instead a really nice gathering to bring the growing year to a Festive close.



Housekeeping ...

All tenants are reminded to avoid driving on the site "roads" during the wet winter months to avoid damage - or the risk of being stuck in the mud. Please also look out for - and report to the police - any instances you see of fly tipping on the site including the dumping of wood chip. You are also reminded that you are responsible for your own green waste and rubbish and please keep checking your sheds during the winter months.

What £4 buys you ...

Last year the Council decided to increase the number of tenants across the borough who are covered by public liability insurance - and added the £4 subs to annual tenancy bills.

It was a move that was unexpected and unannounced by the Council but it is worth remembering just what the £4 actually buys you.

First of course it is public liability insurance cover. This covers you as a tenant should for instance anyone suffer an injury on your plot caused by anything you have built or left there.

But there is more. The £4 subs also opens up the annual seed ordering scheme for you if you pay - bringing with it savings of up to 40% according to the Kings Seeds website.

So yes it was a shock for most of us - yes it does mean we now lose the voluntary nature of the charge - but what else can £4 buy you these days.

That was the year that was .. 2023 !

For some it flashed past before we knew it - yet so much happened across the world in 2023 while here across Sunnyside Allotments we remember when ...

28 tenants joined Sunnyside in 2023 - and at the same time we said goodbye to 33 friends but what else happened across both Old and New in 2023. We look back and capture some the highlights.

2023 started with snow on the ground - albeit closely followed by one of the wettest January's many can remember leading to repeated warnings to avoid driving on the roads and many examples of cars - and indeed vans - being towed off the site when tenants became stranded.

While away in sunnier climes Sarah Marshall - one of our longest standing tenants on New Side - won Gold in the Blind Bowling Championships.

We then had a sneak peak behind the scenes and followed the journey of six tenants who took their flower growing skills to the RHS Hampton Court Palace Festival. Thousands visited their display promoting the theme of "reusing and recycling" to celebrate the idea of rejuvenation felt by spending time outdoors focused on nature.

It was also a year when tenants - Angela and Malcolm - tied the knot after being together for 31 years - they met if you remember when



Malcolm turned up to help Angela with some decorating. But it was also a year of sadness when we lost a friend to many - Penny MacGregor - who sadly passed away in the Spring.

Above all then a year like so many before it - ups and downs - twists and turns. For some a successful harvest - for others a year when their crops didn't turn out as expected or hoped. But we all came together as always - that is the community of Sunnyside. Here's to 2024 !

Never too cold !

Winter is a great time to get ahead of the game in preparation for the new growing season.

Repair and renew !

Check your plot regularly for wind and rain - and even potentially snow damage. Left without attention will only bring more work later in the year.

Plan ahead !

Crop rotation is a great idea to get the best from your plot - and there are some great free apps to help available on the internet.

Stay sharp !

How frustrating to find loppers, secateurs or pruning saws blunt when you need them later in the year. Many charities in Berkhamsted, Tring and Chesham offer repair and sharpening services for a small donation!

Sow a seed or two ...

A time to look at every windowsill you can to sow early cropping veggies in trays - Kale Shoots in a shallow tray for instance could be ready in under 4 weeks while now is a time to sow a layer of pea seeds in a repurposed butter tub.

Forcing rhubarb

If you have rhubarb and it is starting to show signs of life then now is the time to place a forcing cover over the plant to encourage early long tender stems.

With allotments no month is a quiet month !

Sunnyside wonders ...

From giant veg contenders to winter working parties .. Sunnyside never stops ...



Only one way to carry a giant pumpkin for Oliver A27



Feed the whole family from one parsnip for Lauren on A34B



Carrot to end all carrots for Tom A25



While Simon B35 gets in on the act with a bumper tomato crop



And braving November's working party - Sian, Paul, Jenny, Clive, Judy, Trish, Neil, Carol, Kate. Lily is hiding.

Our joiners and leavers ...

Since our Autumn Edition of *Sunnyside Views* we have welcomed 15 new tenants and said a fond farewell to 15 people. There are over 30 people waiting for plots and only 3 half plots at present are available.

Welcome to ...

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Nathan Coon | A3B |
| Thomas Walsh | A7 |
| Nicola Fulcher | A18A |
| Chloe Knight | A27A |
| Philip Biss | A30 |
| Daniela Amodeo | A37 |
| Anthony Phillips | B7 |
| Charlotte Latimer | B28A |
| Winnie Mac | B11 C, D |
| Simon Green | B32B |
| Paola Genazzini | N3 |
| Anita Nielsen | N1C, D |
| Luke Briggs | N9 |
| Zara Bullock | N48 |
| Natalja Drapee | N62 |

Goodbye to ...

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| John Eaton | A3B |
| Steven Gibbon | A7 |
| Lin Phillips | A18A |
| Cynthia Fulks | A30 |
| Ann Bird | A36B |
| Steve Warr | A37 |
| Dave Thomas | B7 |
| Helen Beesley | B11C |
| Serena Rach | B31B |
| Elliott Brooks | B32B |
| Spencer Wilson | C7B |
| Victoria Lajer | N1C, D |
| Vicky Sibley/ Nick Westwood | N3 |
| Ntiana Chasiridi | N9 |
| Adele Whitmore | N48 |

A warm welcome to all newbies !

Getting to know you ...

Over 150 people have plots across Sunnyside - so *we* took time out to find out a little more about some of our fascinating tenants. This time we are back on New Side where we met Gemma.

Hi Gemma can you introduce yourself please ? Hi I'm Gemma with a plot on New Side N66.

Where are you from and what was your first car ? I was born in Luton and my first car was a Vauxhall Corsa - I called it *Danger Mouse!*

Why did you take on your plot ? I took my plot on during lockdown in 2020. I got it a lot quicker than I thought and with my young daughter we found it perfect to escape the restrictions at the time.

What has been your most successful crop ? Pumpkins, runner beans and cucumbers have all been especially successful.

What has been your most unusual crop ? Lemon cucumbers - who knew that some cucumbers were round in shape!

What three words would you use to describe your plot ? Healthy growing and fun.

What advice would you give to any newcomers? Perseverance - not everything will work straight away but when they do it is all worth it - and watch out for the local wildlife introducing themselves nibbling away at your produce.

Your favourite garden centre?

Chipperfield Garden Centre in Kings Langley has a great selection of seedling vegetables - and a brilliant place for lunch.

And finally how would you describe Berkhamsted?

I feel right at home here !

Thank you Gemma !



Order ! Order !

For those who placed an order as part of the seed ordering scheme then seeds should now have been picked up from Andy James.

Seed potatoes normally arrive in January and live plants will be sent to tenants directly at the appropriate time.

Kings Seeds, who are affiliated to The National Allotment Society, run the scheme and prices here are about 40% less than the normal price.



Here to Help !

With so many tenants from so many backgrounds and with such varying degrees of gardening knowledge as well as on occasions the odd muscle to help out - then always remember that as a Sunnyside Allotment holder you are not alone.

Always reach out to a member of the Committee if you need help or advice. And it is amazing what others can help with - from the loan of tools; to advise on what to plan when and where to well just frankly a helping hand. Never be afraid to ask. Sunnyside is a community and we are all here to help when we can.

Almost three years on ...

In 2021 Lauren took on A34B so we caught up to find out how she is getting on ...

"I had three plots to choose from when the call came in 2021" says Lauren looking back. "The one we chose was wild and came complete with a random metal shed but we could see potential so in we jumped" she says now sharing the plot with her mum

(Pauline), her partner (Chris) and their young daughter.



"We started small at first. Sweetcorn, onions, French beans, sprouts and some tomatoes - it was our first try

and we felt awesome. Ok so we lost the onions to local wildlife but it is hard to explain how proud I felt to be serving up my own sprouts that Christmas".

"Then our planning kicked in. I recruited my partner Chris to help in levelling the plot and adding raised beds and we replaced our strange metal shed when it blew over in a storm with a brand new wooden version. And now well a 2-foot parsnip as well as pumpkins and turk turbans squash have added to my sense of pride this year."

"But for me it is not all about growing. My 3-year old daughter loves being up there with us and the joy I get from seeing her eating straight from the plants is overwhelming while she loves playing with her own mud kitchen and gardener's set.

"And it is also great to be sharing with my mum. She has a gardening background and is a source of constant help - and if she doesn't know then a growing pile of gardening books is always on hand.

"So that's our first two years. Yes I know that we need to protect our sweetcorn with our lives; and I know that it is all very trial and error at times but its our place - and nowhere better after a stressful week at work.

"Here's to the future - building my knowledge; having fun and seeing my daughter grow into an *allotmenteer* of the future."

Did you know

Spanish allotments - often called "Patios de Invierno" or "Huertas" - are typically the largest plots in the whole of Europe. Each plot can be around 800 metres compared to around 100-200 meters found elsewhere.

Your Committee

Sunnyside Allotment Society Committee is there to represent your needs and interests. Please click on the links below to contact any member.

Chairman:

[John Eaton](#)

Vice-chair:

[Diana Ball](#)

Secretary

[Jenny Sippings](#)

Treasurer:

[Andy James](#)

Newsletter editors:

[Clive](#) and [Julie](#)

Other members:

[Angela Wheeldon](#)

[John Goffey](#)

[Kate Rankin](#)

That's all for now folks !

We are back again in **April 2024** and if you have any ideas for the newsletter then please contact me on cli.mic@sunnysideallotments.org.uk. For now I am off back to my New Year resolutions - what's left of them.

Have a great 2024 everyone !
Clive (A17)

In praise of my plot ...

Ade (B34) opens up on his passion for sheds and petrol powered tools ?

"In a bittersweet gesture a deceased friend of mine - himself a keen gardener - left me some money recently and I thought what better way to honour his memory than to buy something new for my plot. But what ? A bench, sunshade or maybe a fancy new tool? but the more I thought the more I realised just what my plot means to me.

"You see I have been on B Road for 15 years now. And let me be honest - I got the plot originally not because I wanted to grow anything - well apart from the odd daffodil maybe - but more to escape my teenage children at the time. I wanted somewhere to myself - and the rest of humanity would be invite only. After all my wife had a studio to escape to, my kids had their bedrooms (and the rest of the house) - so I needed my own place too.

"I didn't realise it then - but I got the best deal. Not only was I given B34A but also I discovered a new obsession - my love of sheds, petrol powered tools and growing things! The spell cast was inescapable. Nature is now in my heart, body and soul. For me it brings frustration, stimulation, calm and well things to eat! I grew a melon! I know what the word 'vernalisation' means. I know about mycorrhizal fungi. I have birdsong in my life, pollination and can breathe. Tulips that look like velvet - I could oh so go on. My plot is now one of the great riches of my life - part of my identity as a Berkhamstedian! - and I wouldn't be without it.

"So where is all this taking me. Well firstly to honour my friend I ended up buying a dwarf apricot tree - it will be perfect next to my fan trained plum. But you know what - as we all look towards a new year - lets remember how special Sunnyside really is. With our hands in the soil, in a haze of pastoral contemplation, surrounded by like minds there is no better use of my time." Thank you Ade (B34).



One dwarf apricot tree ready for planting - well almost !