

S.H.A.G.S. CHRISTMAS 2023 NEWSLETTER

Misty mornings, heavy dew, dripping trees and the last of the autumn leaves means we are approaching the quiet time in the allotment calendar. There are still many plots with crops standing, leeks, brassicas, butternut squash awaiting collection - and the grass and the weeds are growing all the time.

Now is the time to get some of the digging work started, get manure spread where required, then plan what and where next year's produce will be planted.

Over the next few weeks our site reps will be inspecting their sites and looking hard at some of the less well maintained plots. We came in for some criticism from the Harpenden Town Council annual inspection and suggested we should be more proactive. In the current rules, plotholders are required to attain a minimum of 50% cultivation within their first year and then maintain and increase cultivation each season. At our site reps meeting earlier this year we made a recommendation that the neglected plot procedure should be instigated earlier so in the event of a plotholder receiving a termination notice it can be as late as September before the plot is available for someone else. If you feel that you may have to relinquish your plot before next Spring or that you need additional help please let your site rep know or contact our lettings secretary, Alex Davies.

PAID HELP ON PLOTS:

There has been protracted discussion over the last few months regarding the situation with plotholders paying for help. It is complicated in some circumstances to undertake some of the very physical activities of maintaining a plot. The Society holds two insurance policies – a Public Liability policy that covers all our members, friends and family, for any damage or injury to a third party and an Employers Liability policy that covers members working on community jobs, site clearing, volunteering participation and the work of our site reps.

If you pay a third party to carry out work for you that person is classed as a Contractor, and is NOT COVERED under either of the SHAGS policies so it becomes the plotholder's responsibility for any accident or injury that might occur. This extends to plotholders being paid to work on other plotholders' plots. Any damage, loss or injury caused by such Contractors are the liability of the Contractor and the members who brought them onto the site. Contractors should not use SHAGS' resources, especially but not restricted to machinery, fuel and electricity. Contractors must remove all waste arising from their actions. Contractors must not be given keys or access codes and must be seen on and off site on each occasion.

These notes are for your own protection. It may be that you have Employer's Liability cover within your own household policy so please check before paying someone to carry out work for you, or arrange to set up your own individual policy.

TREE PRUNING TRAINING:

For many of our fruit trees and bushes there is a strict timetable and procedure for pruning to get the best for following seasons. We have received an approach from a pruning expert who is offering an introduction to pruning demonstration and also to offer a tree pruning service. To gauge support for the demonstration course please contact Rachel Andrew. The first course would likely to be held at PH

site, with a wide selection of fruit trees and bushes, probably on a Saturday in December/January and would include a cup of tea/coffee to warm the numb fingers and cold feet. There would be a small charge £2.50 per person payable for the course. Individual tree pruning work would be charged at £30/hr.

ALLOTMENT SHOP UPDATE:

The shop will be open up to and including 3rd December and will reopen, following stocktaking and a major clean up with a few modifications.

There are a few bags left of Mushroom compost, but the supplier we have used has gone out of business, so we are looking for new supplies for 2024. The last few bags are available at £4.50 per bag.

Steve managed to find winter sowing Aquadulce Broad Beans and a few packets of 50 are remaining.

ROGER GLANVILLE R.I.P.

We were all saddened to hear of the death of Roger Glanville, who had worked tirelessly as the society Secretary and as a Trustee. His well attended funeral was held on Wednesday 15th November.

Our sincere condolences to his wife Carrie and the family.

A plaque will be installed on the memorial bench at PH in the near future.

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BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR FROM S.H.A.G.S. COMMITTEE