



WAGS News

July 2016



Wallingford Allotments and Gardens Society
Affiliated Member of the Royal Horticultural Society No. 10572234

www.wags-wallingford.com

Trading Store at Centre 70 open to members only Every Saturday 11-12 am (except August)
Annual subscription £4.00 (per household)

Hello Everyone,

I am Denise Irwin, a gardener and a newbie allotmenteer on Plot 82B in Wallingford and the new editor of 'WAGS News'. I am writing in this Summer newsletter after recently being inspired by all the glorious gardens and fabulous flower and plant displays of that wonderful institution, The Chelsea Flower Show, and what a show it was this year with the 90th Birthday celebrations for the Queen. I watched it all on TV and was just amazed at some of the ideas that were on show this year. How to put it all into our own gardens and allotments is the thing – I am starting with those oh so gorgeous blue Salvias.

I am really enjoying the start of the summer on my small half plot, as we have had a real mixture of rain and sun, rain and sun – with the resulting explosion of growth that it brings. My beets are a wonderful mixture of red and bright green, I have a few flowers on my potatoes and the onions and lettuces are all looking pretty impressive – tall and strong and way too good to pick!! The lettuces and red chard have grown as wide as they are tall. This will be a first for me, being able to pick what I have grown, some from seeds, some from small plants, and taking them home to eat, which is what I have just done this weekend. So good luck everyone with whatever you have decided is going to be worth all your hard work this summer! I have been looking at some examples of people using potato bags this year. It has surprised me at how many potatoes were harvested from these large bags and I think they are a good idea if you are short on space and also if you find that digging those deep trenches for your pots gets you in the back. I may just try them next year.

I have had some encouragement in this growing on an allotment from another beginner, another local newbie Annabelle, who writes the 'Life at Number 27' allotment blog. Her blog is like a diary and gives an interesting and fun insight into the moment she fell in love with an overgrown and weedy patch of land. Those of you who are interested in reading her blog can find it at lifeatno27.com – it is inspiring and helpful when you are about to give up, to see that someone else is dealing with a problem in an entirely different way, and yes that someone else is suffering (*See Annabelle's article later in this newsletter*). As my mum always said 'Misery loves company'! This is also good for all you experienced growers, to get new ideas you had never contemplated.

Below are some of the other gardening and allotment blogs that I have found useful, and don't forget all that YouTube has to offer also. I have found some of the tutorials about growing just about everything you are interested in growing, in gardens and allotments with a guided tour of their own gardens and plots has given me some good ideas. It is very inspiring to see how different everyone's garden or plot is – which just shows you how individual we all are. One thing we share though is our friendliness. I have had some good help from some of my allotment neighbours. In my experience so far, it is not what to grow but WHEN to grow or pick it. Thanks everyone and happy gardening or allotmenteeing. Do pop over and say hello.

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Blogs

Clairesallotment.com

RealMenSow.co.uk

themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk

theanxiousgardener.com

thedahliapapers.com

The Allotment Shed - this one is on Facebook

Also don't forget the many local village gardens on show throughout the summer, there are web sites that will give you dates and times of opening, such as The National Garden Scheme, listing local gardens that open for charity and gardens further afield, such as Blenheim Palace, Stonor Park and many others.

e.g. greatbritishgardens.co.uk

gardenvisit.com

ngs.org.uk

Just to finish off, here is a recipe for those of you who grow asparagus and are looking for something familiar and yet different, I hope you like it. It comes courtesy of one of my favourite cookery books and favourite London restaurants: Ottolenghis in Islington

Asparagus and chive bread pudding

The ideal companion to roast chicken, although I can easily eat this on its own with some dressed green leaves alongside. Serves eight as a side dish.

1kg asparagus spears, woody ends removed	5 medium eggs
80g unsalted butter, diced and left at room temperature	300ml double cream
1 clove garlic, crushed	200ml full-fat milk
40g chives, finely chopped	¼ tsp ground nutmeg
300g stale sourdough loaf, crusts on, cut into 0.5cm slices	Salt and white pepper
20g parmesan, finely grated (or vegetarian alternative)	200g feta, crumbled

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Blanch the asparagus for one minute, until semi-cooked, drain, refresh under cold water and dry with a cloth. Put half the spears to one side and cut the others lengthways into two or three strips. Cut each strip into two or three segments, so you've got roughly 5cm-long, thin pieces.

Put the butter, garlic and 35g of chives in a small food processor bowl and blitz smooth. Spread this thinly over both sides of the bread.

In a large bowl, lightly whisk the eggs. Add the cream, milk, nutmeg, half a teaspoon of salt and a quarter-teaspoon of white pepper, and whisk.

Place a layer of buttered bread over the base of a 25 x 32cm ovenproof dish, scatter the asparagus pieces on top and sprinkle over the feta. Top with the rest of the bread, pour over the custard and top with the whole spears. Press down the top with your hands, so all the bread is immersed in liquid, cover with cling-film and place a small tray on top weighed down with something heavy. Refrigerate for at least an hour.

Heat the oven to 170C/335F/gas mark 3. Remove the weight, tray and cling-film from the pudding dish, sprinkle the parmesan and the remaining chives over the top, and bake for 50–55 minutes (cover the dish with foil at the very end if it gets too dark). To check it's cooked, stick a knife into the centre and press gently – if no liquid comes to the surface, it is ready. Remove from the oven and leave to rest for five to 10 minutes before serving.

Enjoy!

DI

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Madam Chairman's Piece

I would like give a warm welcome to Denise Irwin who has joined WAGS and the committee as Newsletter editor and thank those members who again helped look after the bedding plug plants this year and helped on plant sale day.

We are still looking for help in lots of areas though, so please do look again on the web site <http://www.wags-wallingford.com/news> and get in touch if you can help in any small way.

If you have any suggestions on any aspect covered by the Society, please tell me or one of the Committee, we welcome any new ideas. I am particularly interested in any ideas to boost membership numbers.

I wish you a great summer, and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Autumn Show.

Sandra Halstead

WAGS Spring Plant Sale

This year's plant sale came at the end of another cold Spring, but we still had a good selection of annuals and vegetables, with the exception of tomatoes which didn't like the cold weather. Everything sold well, the annuals, perennials and veg. We had significantly less bedding to sell this year as there wasn't enough greenhouse space to grow the mini-plugs on. If anyone could baby sit 10+ half-size trays of bedding next year during April/May, let us know as then we could grow more. For example we didn't have any geraniums and they were asked for by several people.

Thank you to those of you who came and supported the sale, and a special thank you to those who grew plants to donate and looked after the bedding. **Please do remember to return the bedding trays** so we will have something to grow next year's plants in (you don't have to wash them!).

The money we make goes towards helping run WAGS, and in particular to cover some of the costs of staging the Autumn Show. We have raised about £300 this year.

WAGS Store

Hi Everyone!

I hope your seeds are growing well with the mixture of sunshine and rain that we are having.

Hopefully you are all already aware that the store is now only open for 1 hour on Saturdays between 11am and 12pm. Hope to see you there soon. The WAGS Store stocks a variety of composts, fertilizers (by the kg), liquid fertilizers and tomato feeds, not to mention canes, seed trays, string, labels, etc. Let me know if there is something you need that is not in stock.

The Dobies seed catalogues will be available in late September or early October.

If you are able to help out on the odd Saturday during the year – or maybe you are interested in being Assistant Store Manager – please contact me at the Store.

Colin Timmins, Store Manager

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THE AUTUMN SHOW: Saturday September 10th

The show schedule comes out with this newsletter and is also on the website, please do take a look at it and consider entering. We hope to have some entries for the new class 94 this year, for anyone who has never entered the show before, so take a look, this class is free to enter!

The show gives WAGS members a chance to meet and to see what we have all achieved this year, to talk about successes and failures, get advice and have a laugh. As always, I would love it if you could all enter something, but if not, please do still come along to see the exhibits, between 2-4 on Saturday 10th September.

There are a few changes to the schedule; there is no wine section this year due to a lack of entries in recent years and the sad loss of our judge Peter Agar. There is also a change to the recipe for class 48 in Specialities to give the bakers a new challenge.

If you won a trophy last year, please return it to the store **by latest Saturday 16th July** (earlier is even better!). Remember the store is **closed 23rd & 30th July and all of August**, so please don't miss the deadline.

See you show day if not before. If you can bring us a cake to sell with the teas, that would be much appreciated as well.

Sandra Halstead & Toni Littledale
Show Secretary & Deputy

P.S. Help the weary: The hall has to be cleared away at the end of the day, so please offer to stay and help for 10 minutes, it would be much appreciated by a very tired show team.

Annabelle Padwick, a new allotmenteer!

Since 2012, I had dreamed of having my own haven of fresh air and tranquility to grow my own produce. Roll on April 2015, I moved to the countryside, put myself on the council allotment waiting list and started growing my own fruit and vegetables in pots and containers at home.

After waiting for the right plot, the emailed arrived on 28th October and No.27 was mine. The plot is roughly 7.5 x 19.5m, so certainly big enough for just me. With minimal experience, an overgrown waist high plot full of perennial weeds but bucket loads of enthusiasm and determination, I was excited but apprehensive of the journey ahead. I was determined and still am to make it a highly productive vision; full of colour, inspiration and my own small attempt to change the 'allotmenteer' stereotype.

After doing plenty of research in between working full time and studying at university, I decided that best way for me to approach the daunting sight before me was to trim back the growth, see what I had to deal with and organically double dig my way to finish line. The plot is now getting greener and full of activity; with beetroot, carrots, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, chillies, cosmos and sweet peas to name a few.

I have met so many wonderful people since I got my allotment and am certainly loving the journey. In the short time I have been gardening and building my knowledge, I have decided that no matter who you are or what age you are, gardening will always be a non-stop learning process with lots of excitement along the way. Life at No.27 is my allotment journey, which you can follow at lifatno27.com, on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Drystone Radio on the first Thursday of every month.