

## NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION

### NEWSLETTER, SUMMER 2017

#### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The first half of the year 2017 has been a very busy and successful one. Our membership continues to be strong with a good number of younger people joining us for the first time. It has been especially satisfying seeing parents with young families visiting the Hut and seeking advice on growing this and that as well as taking advantage of our low prices compared with the garden centres. The sales and advice Hut has been a hive of activity from 10am to noon on Saturday and Sunday mornings (and we don't officially open until 10.30!) and Wednesday evenings.

Plant sales from the polytunnel have been tremendous and most of the hundreds of hanging basket/container/bedding plants we potted on from plugs in March were quickly sold after we opened the polytunnel for sales in April. The Association owes a special thanks to the many members who freely gave of their surplus cuttings and seedlings for us to sell on. As you all know, we add little on to the wholesale price that we pay for things like fertilisers and composts, which keeps our prices dead low. What we make from selling the plants that *you* members pass on to us is a great financial help. So thank you for all those tomato and dahlia plants, for the rhubarb crowns, for the leek seedlings, and for the rooted strawberry runners, and so on and so on.

Our monthly talks were (mostly) excellent and, with the exception of May, well attended. Our thanks go to secretary Silvana who organises these.

As we go to press, we have had one great trip, to the RHS garden of Harlow Carr in North Yorkshire. It is, beyond doubt, the finest large garden of its type in the north of England and on our early June visit it was wonderful, so wonderful that those who joined us have asked if we could go there again, in 2018, in a different season. So it is on next year's list for an autumn visit. As we are affiliated to the RHS, entry to the garden for our members is free, so we only pay for the cost of the coach. Watch this space!

We also had a stand at the Willow Park Show on 29 May. There we sold lots of plants and bird food, and met members and potential members.

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#### IMPORTANT

The great success of *our* Gardeners' Association is, in a very large part, down to the tremendous work carried out by the Committee and a band of Hut volunteers, all of whom give their time and effort, and extra costs beyond the £4 membership fee in travel, telephone etc. incurred in volunteering. Alas we are all ageing, and some of us are getting 'a bit past it' when it comes to lifting bags of compost on the trolley, wheeling them out and loading them into car boots. SO: WE ARE IN GREAT NEED OF SOME YOUNGER, FITTER, HUT HELPERS!

At our AGM in January eleven members were elected to be on the committee and Dave Hemingway agreed to continue as our Webmaster. The majority of us are, like me (aged

71), getting on in years and we desperately need a couple of new younger committee members. Our committee meetings are monthly, on a Thursday evening, in the Pied Bull, and they usually last about one hour.

Being a committee member or a hut helper is great fun, as promised by the adage, 'The more you put into something the more you get out!' We all learn from each other, become good pals and, by talking to other members at the Hut, contribute to the social generosity that is Newton-le-Willows Gardeners' Association.

Malcolm Greenhalgh

*DID YOU KNOW* that the first potatoes grown in England were grown at Formby, between Liverpool and Southport, in 1670 and that, in 1680, a tax was imposed on wagons transporting potatoes from the south-west Lancashire mosslands to the market in Wigan!

#### SHOW SECRETARY

We are very fortunate that Angie Murray has taken over the onerous task of being our new Show Secretary (see below).

#### NIWGA ACTIVITIES: 2017

##### HUT OPENING TIMES

Saturdays (up to and including 28 October): 10.30am-12 noon.

Sundays (up to and including 29 October): 10.30am-12 noon.

TALK: at Newton Sports & Cricket Club, Crow Lane East at 7.30pm on 26 October:

Sue Beesley – *Herbaceous perennials throughout the year*

##### SHOWS:

Saturday 5 August: Newton Town Show

We have a stand at this Show and welcome members who would like to 'give a hand' or just come and say, 'Hello!'

Saturday 9 September: Newton-le-Willows Gardeners' Association Flower & Vegetable Show. Penkford School, Wharfe Road.

This is OUR Show and we look forward to as many members as possible putting in exhibits, volunteering help, or simply just coming in the afternoon to admire the judged exhibits and having a cup of tea and a piece of cake.

TRIP: *Saturday 19 August: Southport Flower Show.*

Take the hassle out of getting there! We depart by coach either from Stocks Tavern (near the Parish church) or Lime House (the Lowton end of Newton Road) at 9am. Cost £30 including Show Entry. Last date for booking: 23 July. Bring your friends and relations: non-members are welcome on our trips! Book in at the Hut.

SOIL pH TESTS: If you want your soil's pH tested, take a sample at least 2 inches below the surface and dry it thoroughly. Bring it to the sales and advice Hut. Cost 50p.

### FLOWER AND VEGETABLE SHOW 2017

Hello everyone, from your new Show Secretary Angie Murray.

After visiting the Show for the last two years I was inspired and in awe of the exhibits, especially the size of the GIGANTIC CABBAGES!!! And the precise way the produce and flowers were shown, and how those onions were coiffed like the hairdresser's do, and the parsnips whose roots were clean to the finest of tips, and the shiny red tomatoes and the spotlessly clean spuds. What beautiful flowers. And the effort that had gone into it. So when the call came, that the Association needed a Show Secretary, I thought, Why not? It's would be a good way to learn and understand the passion that people have for growing beautiful plants and the "community spirit" within the Show.

As a complete novice to this growing things malarkey I have learned much and am continuing to learn with the help of the committee and our Hut Helpers, and this year I intend to show some flowers that I have grown. Why don't you? Having a go is the best way to learn. I am now gaining 'ground' and 'growing' in confidence by talking to the volunteers in the hut (please excuse the puns). So all those new boys and girls out there: Have a go and get growing! And if you have any queries: head down to Rob Lane...service with a smile....what are you waiting for....enough of my ramblings!!!

*The 2017 SHOW:* We are thrilled that our regular sponsors continue with their support: the Rotary Club of Newton, Winwick Parish Council, Loach (Horticultural), Kings Seeds, Lapwing Gardening, Jewellery by Silvana, and Penkford School. We welcome two new sponsors from Newton High street, Hair by Design and Hilton Holidays, whom I recommend from personal experience. In future we hope to increase our links with the Newton High Street Hub and to garner increased community spirit.

**BUT WE NEED MORE SPONSORS:** If you would like to sponsor a Class of flowers, fruit or vegetables ask at the Hut. The cost is piddling....only £6 per Class!

*SHOW SCHEDULES* can be downloaded from our web site or a copy can be picked up from our Hut. Although the vegetable and fruit classes will no doubt be as popular as ever, we are trying to encourage more flower exhibits. So please get a Schedule, think of what you are growing, and get some in the Show.

*The BERT JACKSON MEMORIAL CUP* remembers a great character from the Rob Lane allotments and member of our Association. His family have kindly donated funds that have enabled us to purchase this Cup that will be awarded, in 2017, to the best exhibit of a plate of any fruit or vegetables grown by a member who joined the Association for the first time in 2016 or 2017. All new members will be receiving by post a copy of our schedule together with a letter explaining how they could win the Cup (or come second or third and still win a prize!).

What we are trying to do is to encourage all you new 'Growers', no matter what your age, to show what you have grown, and to join in the fun, friendliness, community spirit and competition in our Association's Show. So get the kids off their iPads and tablets for a few hours each week and spending more time in the fresh air helping you to grow things that look lovely or taste great. Get them baking or painting or taking photographs (the Show includes them)...it's got to be better than watching TV or playing mindless computer games. With your help we can make this and subsequent Shows great fun for all, and further develop the important true sense of community.

The Annual Show GRAND PRIZE DRAW is new. In previous years we have had a small raffle at the Show but this year we are having a Grand Prize draw with ten amazing prizes. Tickets will be on sale at the Hut from the beginning of July and cost £1 each (in books of five). We hope that members will take books and sell tickets to their friends and relations and work colleagues, to help raise funds for the Association. The prizes are:

1 <sup>st</sup> prize: £50 cash	6 <sup>th</sup> prize: £15 voucher for Red Bank Farm shop
2 <sup>nd</sup> prize: Meal and evening out for 2 at Greyhound Hotel	7 <sup>th</sup> prize: Hand trowel and fork
3 <sup>rd</sup> prize: Spectacular cake by Quintessential Cakes	8 <sup>th</sup> prize: Assortment of seeds by Kings Seeds
4 <sup>th</sup> prize: A seascape painting by Brian Gill	9 <sup>th</sup> prize: Assortment of bird food
5 <sup>th</sup> prize: Massage at the Healing Gardens Salon	10 <sup>th</sup> prize: 6 wine glasses and a bottle of wine

See you at the Show!  
Angie Murray

BACK-END ONIONS AND GARLIC Autumn-planting onion sets will be available, in the Hut, from late August and garlic from late September. You will be informed of the varieties and prices by email. We are not taking individual orders this year. Instead it will be first-come, first-served.

*In his General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster, published in 1795, John Holt tells us that, "The mechanic [= farm labourer] is generally furnished with a small patch of ground adjoining his cottage; and from this little spot is extracted not only health, but derived pleasure, and which may not a little contribute to sobriety; intemperance not unfrequently proceeding from want of recreating to fill a vacant hour."* I suppose that infers that, instead of opening a bottle I should pick up the spade, instead!

DON'T THROW AWAY YOUR SPARE PLANTS AND SEEDLINGS. Instead, bring them to the Hut properly labelled and we can sell them for Association funds.

*Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was inordinately fond of eating white haricot beans in great quantities (don't forget that potatoes had not been grown in England during her reign: see above). So to make the atmosphere in her Court more wholesome she had her gardeners grow lots of winter savory, which is an anti-flatulent.*