

## NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION

### *NEWSLETTER, SUMMER 2018*

#### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am writing this towards the end of May, as spring draws to an end, with the sun shining brightly and the temperature well into the 70s Fahrenheit. The 2018 spring was not all like this. It has been the coldest spring that my diaries, covering many years, have recorded, with bitterly cold winds from directions from NW, veering round through N and on to the Siberian easterlies dominating March and April. We have had snow, frosts, and lots of dark, dank days with thick cloud. Not surprisingly spring bulbs, leaf-opening of our deciduous trees, and growth of early vegetables such as broad beans and the first garden peas have been late and slow. Yet things are slowly catching up.

Not that our members have been hindered by the dreadful climate. Our Sales and Advice Hut has been a welcome hive of activity, and the Hut Helpers, New Members' Scribe and Till Keeper have returned home on Saturday and Sunday lunchtime in need of a quiet lie-down! Membership is thriving, sales have done well (perhaps especially of plants from the polytunnel), and we have been delighted to meet new members and give tips and advice to those who are a bit new to gardening.

**If you are a new member or new to gardening or have a vegetable and fruit plot for the first time or have *any* gardening problem:** come to the Hut and seek help. And as in the Spring 2018 Newsletter, on page 4 are pointers to some of the products that we sell that you may find useful (pin it up inside your gardening shed for future reference).

**A thank you to all those members who gave their surplus plants to our polytunnel:** It has been great to be able to provide members with lots of inexpensive young plants of things like tomatoes, peppers, brassicas, leeks and onions, as well as the bedding plants we buy in, in March. In 2019 Graham Yorke and I hope to produce seedlings of some special varieties of vegetable as we did this year (Red Baron onion, clubroot resistant varieties of brassicas and rust resistant varieties of leeks) and you will be able to pre-order them (see page 2). We would ask you all, if you have seedlings or other plants surplus to your requirements, to pass them onto the Polytunnel team.

**A plea for help:** We need a few more young (i.e. not an Oldie like me) Hut Helpers. If you are fit and can manage the odd Saturday or Sunday morning, or Wednesday evening, please let us know.

**We are an Association for amateur gardeners. Membership cards must be shown before making a purchase.**

Malcolm Greenhalgh

## NLWGA ACTIVITIES AND DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Just one TALK & DEMONSTRATION remains for this year; it will be held at Newton Sports & Cricket Club, Crow Lane East. Entry free; non-members welcome:

25<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm Marguerite Hughes – Roses

The 2019 programme will be published in the Winter Newsletter.

### SHOWS:

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August : Newton Town Show, Mesnes Park

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> September: Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Show, Penkford School, Wharf Road, Newton-le-Willows.

### TRIP:

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September: Harrogate Autumn Show. Book by 12 August. Coach and entry £30.

This is an outstanding Show and well worth visiting.

### HUT OPENINGS:

Saturdays and Sundays up to and including 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> October: 10.30am – 12 noon.

Wednesdays up to 20 June: 7.00-8.00pm.

FOR YOUR DIARY: from **13<sup>th</sup> July** Raffle tickets will be on sale in the Hut for our Grand Prize Draw which will be held at our Annual Flower Show on the 8<sup>th</sup> September, there are 10 fantastic prizes (see the poster at the Hut). Tickets are £1 each.

**During September** you will get an email informing you when winter onions and garlic will be on sale, it is first come first served for these items and many are disappointed because they didn't read the email so watch out for the notification.

I will be taking orders for next year's potatoes and summer onions **during September and October** and you can email your order to me or leave it at the Till in the Hut, with your name and telephone number please. Lists and contact information will be available at that time informing you which varieties we will have. We will also have from **September** the Kings Seed Catalogues available for you to borrow for 1 week maximum, so you can order any seeds you would like for next year, especially if you want flower seeds as we don't stock them on the shelf. Don't go by the price in the catalogue as we get a discount, which we pass on to you.

This last year we sold lots of vegetable seedling (see page 1) and we intend doing this again in 2019. You may pre-order in **October** (pre-order for Red Baron seedlings by the end of October, please) **or February** at the latest. Speak to Malcolm, Graham or Sheila at the Hut and they will sort out your order.

## NLWGA SHOW 2018

Preparations for the 2018 Show are well under way. The Show schedules have been sent to last year's exhibitors and copies may be collected at the Hut or downloaded from the website. The Sponsors list is also available for those kind members who wish to sponsor their chosen category for a small fee of £6.00 per category. This is particularly popular for those who wish to remember loved ones who have sadly passed by sponsoring a category which best reflected their favourite fruit, flower or plant. Please ask at the hut to complete the form.

We are pleased to announce our regular sponsors are on board again this year: The Rotary Club, Winwick Parish Council, Loaches, Kings Seeds, Newton Hair Design, Lapwing Gardening, Hilton Holidays, Jewellery by Silvana, Think Ahead Community Stroke Group, Greyhound Hotel and, new in 2018, The Stonecross Pub in Golborne, with the James Cropper Paper Mill providing all our table coverings. A massive thank you to all our sponsors whose generosity and funding helps make the Show the success it is today.

Although sponsors are essential to fund the Show, it is YOU the people of the local community who make the show come alive with your beautiful exhibits..... so please spread the word to other growers, allotmenters and children and novices in all things horticultural to have a go at exhibiting.....I entered for the very first time in my life and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Not just for the green figured amongst us...those who wield a camera or paintbrush are also most welcome as are the children in your family with artistic flair in baking or art. So have a look at the schedule and then get out in the fresh air to grow flower, fruit or vegetables, or to paint or photograph your entries for this year....and have a great summer doing it!

All the awards remain the same as last year with the exception of the Rose Society which has sadly folded, but we have kept the category and will award the Rose Shield for best exhibit and £5.00 prize for most points gained in the section. To encourage more Rose growing we have also added an extra Rose category : Most Fragrant as a people's choice. Garden News is no longer sponsoring Top Tray and Vase, so our association will sponsor Top Tray and Vase this year.

The BERT JACKSON MEMORIAL CUP remembers a great character from the Rob Lane allotments and member of our Association. This is for NEW MEMBERS, who joined our Association in 2018. All new members will be sent 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!)  
NEW MEMBERS: All we need is one plate (any size) with *your* selection of fruit or vegetables that *you* have grown. You can choose a plate of one variety, or you can mix, say, carrots and turnips and onions in a nice arrangement. It is entirely up to you. It will be judged by our table officers: chairman, vice chairman, secretary and treasurer.

Tickets for the GRAND PRIZE DRAW, which was such a success last year, will be on sale at the Hut from the 13<sup>th</sup> 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.

Angie Murray (Show Secretary)

## IN THE HUT

### COMPOSTS

We stock six composts based on peat: *Jack's Magic* (popular, a very good seed compost), *Clover* (yellow/green bag) and *Clover enriched with John Innes fertiliser* (orange/red bag), *Sinclair* (expensive but very good, with wetting agent\*), *Ericaceous* (for plants that hate lime in the soil, such as azaleas and blueberries) and *Bulb Fibre* (for growing bulbs in containers)

\*A major problem with peat-based composts is that if you let them dry out it is very difficult to get them thoroughly wet again. DON'T LET YOUR PLANTS GROWING IN THESE COMPOSTS GET DRY! This is one advantage of Sinclair.

Soon (by 2020?) peat extraction will be banned so these composts will no longer be available. Instead *Coir* produced from coconuts husks may be the best alternative. We sell *Coir* blocks so that you can have a go at making your own composts. Dead easy! Ask at the Hut.

We also sell *New Horizon Peat Free* compost; this is more expensive than peat-based composts. 'Green' or organic growers ought not to use peat composts.

*John Innes (JI)* composts are loam-based: John Innes 1 is seed compost, JI2 for 'growing on' and JI3 is for mature plants.

### FUNGICIDES

Although we can still sell fungicides to prevent things like black spot and rust on roses, IT IS ILLEGAL TO SELL ANY FUNGICIDE TO TREAT FUNGUS DISEASES ON FRUIT AND VEGETABLES, so things like Bordeaux Mixture, which we used to use to eradicate blight on potatoes, are no longer available.

The RHS recommends that we space things like onions, leeks and garlic (that may suffer from rust) further apart to allow more air movement between plants, and to give foliar-feeds to keep the plants as healthy as possible. *Maxicrop Brown-bottle* is suggested.

### INSECTICIDES

As this Newsletter was being prepared, the EU has banned three insecticides and is looking at others. Those we sell now are not amongst those banned. Watch this space.

Advice: spray with insecticides last thing at night, when the bees have gone to bed.

### Two "Old Husband's Tales"

**"Always put crocks at the bottom of plant pots to aid drainage,"** is incorrect, for crocks do not help in drainage. Instead give the plants more compost!

**"Never water plants when it is sunny, as the leaves will get burned,"** is just not true! Water droplets on leaves do NOT focus the burning sun's rays on the leaf. They reflect them away from the leaf. While the best times to water in hot weather are first thing in the morning and last thing at night, if a plant seems to be suffering; give it a good watering.