



# Flitwick Gardeners' Association

Issue 115

Autumn 2021

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 2nd April 2022      Spring Show

# **Flitwick Gardeners' Association**

We are an association run by members, for members. Our aim is to promote gardening in Flitwick and the surrounding villages.

We have a members' shop, The Seed Box, where we try to stock useful items including seeds, tools and chemicals at very competitive prices. We also have a library and a small range of loan equipment.

We run shows, organise an annual quiz and run the occasional trip to visit a garden. We're always pleased to welcome new members and always looking for help in running the Association and activities. We'd love to hear from you – just a few hours here and there would make all the difference.

## **How to find us**

The Seed Box is situated behind the site of the old Flitwick Leisure Centre on Steppingley Road, MK45 1TH.

For security reasons there's currently a temporary fence around the old leisure centre in Flitwick. The entrance gate has been fitted with a padlock that works with an allotment key. Please be sure to close and lock the gate behind you every time you use it.

When The Seed Box is open for trading a committee member will remove the padlock and then secure the site on leaving. We ask everyone to be vigilant to ensure no unauthorised persons enter the site.

## Seed box Opening Hours

Friday	Currently not open owing to Covid
Saturday	2.00 pm to 4.00 pm Feb to Nov ( <b>closed on Show Days</b> )

## Telephone

Outside of these hours you can always leave a message for us on the answering machine on **01525 717289**.

## Email addresses

General enquiries etc.	<a href="mailto:enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk">enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk</a>
Magazine	<a href="mailto:newsletter@flitwickgardeners.co.uk">newsletter@flitwickgardeners.co.uk</a>
Show info and entries	<a href="mailto:fgashow@flitwickgardeners.co.uk">fgashow@flitwickgardeners.co.uk</a>

## Website / Facebook address

Facebook Group	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/flitwickgardeners">https://www.facebook.com/groups/flitwickgardeners</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk">www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk</a>

## Executive Committee

Colin Stennett	Secretary and Show Secretary
Jim Godden	Chairman
Leonie Coverley	Treasurer
J-P Carter	Deputy Chairman and Show Committee
Laurie Arnold	Seeds and Deputy Trading Coordinator
Kath Stennett	Membership Secretary and Show Committee
Ian Holman	Deputy Secretary and Show Committee
Alan & Carolyn Kirkdale	Magazine Editors
Ann Lutley	Publicity Officer
Sue Titchener	Seed Box Rota Coordinator
Daniel Doyle	Trading Coordinator
Sue Livens	Trading Coordinator

## Show Committee (not mentioned above)

Sonia Corfe

## Honorary Life Members

Linda Pitts, Syd Pye, Maryan Pateman, J-P Carter, Jim Godden, Colin & Kath Stennett

## Chairman's Report

Hello folks it's me again! I seem to spend a lot of my time thanking all the volunteers who have done such wonderful things volunteering to assist FGA in the last year and a half. Sorry, but with very good reason, I do so again in this magazine - THANK YOU ALL FOR HELPING.

This time I'd also like to include all those visiting the Seed Box and the show for their continued vigilance, wearing face masks and using the hand sanitiser we've provided. It protects us all.

Just yesterday I was in Luton; blood donating and afterwards I met my wife who had been in the Mall Shopping. There were an awful lot of people with no masks, the one way system was still marked out but unheeded and in fact, I generally just wanted to get out. The Mall experience just highlighted that at the Seed Box you support us so well by continuing to wear masks and sanitising hands as you enter, for which I thank you all. (We do have a small stock of masks so if you forget to bring one please ask, as we keep them behind the counter.)

The most asked question for a long time has been about what is happening to the FGA and the Seed Box in the near term. I hope that it is now well known that the site around us is to be developed into a care home and assisted living apartments. We are working with the development team to ensure we can continue trading as near to normal as possible. Currently we expect the development to start in December. We have begun work to clean up the Seed Box and so far we've started dusting, washing and re-organising the killers, lawn goods and food areas. We have discussed a lot of other things that need doing and I've produced another article with current ideas. I'll probably repeat this later, but if you can help with any of these, please get in touch using the FGA general email address on the web site, or see us at the Seed Box one Saturday.

It was great to see one little step for FGA that put our show back on the road (well in the village hall). Our Annual Show was a great success, despite our fears that it would not be. Well done all those who visited us, helped or showed their exhibits.

I've seldom recommended any plants I've experimented with, however this year I would strongly recommend this one, called Malabar "spinach". I've grown it up part of my runner bean frame and it is now 6 feet tall, with 4 plants producing more leaves than we can use! It is a good raw leaf for salads etc. and a substitute for spinach in many cooked recipes. Its last big advantage is that it does not bolt, so lasts for ages.

So, at the end of another difficult year, enjoy the rest of the magazine and happy gardening all and here to hoping that 2022 is a better year than the last two have been.

Jim Godden Chairman

## **Committee Positions**

If anyone is interested in taking on the role of FGA Magazine Editor, or Membership Secretary and would like to know more about what's involved, please contact us by email :-enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk

### **Annual Show Report**

It was so good to see so many of the people that normally put exhibits into our shows bringing some excellent items, as well as some new exhibitors. I also think that they appreciated the fact that the show was happening and had clearly been growing some great vegetables, flowers and fruit as well as making some excellent kitchen and handcraft items and some good photographs. The only disappointment was in the children's classes where there were very few entries.

I had some concerns about suggesting the show went ahead, but all exhibitors and visitors to the show behaved in line with the request to wear a mask, when not enjoying the usual high quality of homemade cakes.

I'd like to thank all those who helped on the day of the show, all the people who made cakes, the exhibitors and everyone that came to look around when the judging was complete. Without you all, we could not have run the show.

Colin Stennett  
Show Secretary

### **Autumn Show and Quiz 2021 - Cancelled**

Members of the Show and Executive Committee have decided that with the number of cases of COVID increasing nationally and not being able to easily ventilate the Village Hall it would be best to cancel the Autumn show and Quiz for this year. We are hoping that in 2022 everything will be back to normal, starting with the Spring Show.

Colin Stennett  
Show Secretary

### **2022 Annual Show Photographic Classes**

103 Near

104 Far

105 Fast

106 Slow

The Children's photographic class will be a photograph in one of the above classes.

## **FGA AGM 2021 Report**

Due to the restrictions in place in April it was decided that we would hold the AGM, using Zoom video and audio conference facilities.

Jim Godden, Chairman, thanked people for attending and all those people who had kept the Association running during the last 12 difficult months. He also stated that the Seed Box would not be moving, however there would be a change of access to the Seed box during the building phase of the new care home etc.

Leonie Coverley, Treasurer, reiterated the financially difficult time we had faced during the last year, with sales being obviously lower whilst expenses remained at roughly the previous year's level. A discussion took place about the money currently in the Associations Charity account and a decision was taken to donate it to the Flitwick Combined Charities.

Kath Stennett, Membership Secretary, reported that we currently have 317 members compared with 283 at the same period the previous year. GDPR consent forms have been completed for 316 members which is an excellent result.

After the election of officers from nominations received, we were still looking for someone to take on the Trading Secretary role. Following a discussion, Daniel Doyle and Sue Livens said they would both be interested in the role – Jim set up a meeting with them to take them through the 'duties' with a view to them gradually taking over the role from him.

At the end of the meeting Colin and Kath Stennett were given life membership to the Association for their many years of hard work for the Association.

Colin Stennett  
Secretary

### **Membership renewals for 2022**

We hope you are enjoying your membership of the Flitwick Gardeners' Association and will want to continue to be a member for many years to come. It is now possible to renew your membership for 2022 for only £2 (there is an additional charge if you require your magazine by post). Of course, if you renew now your membership will be valid until the end of December 2022 and you will be helping us by spreading the work of processing renewals over a longer period. We look forward to seeing you at the Seed Box soon!

Kath Stennett  
Membership Secretary

## Seed Box Improvements

After several years of uncertainty, we are staying at our current premises. There is much work to be done on the Seed Box and it would be good to have it well under way before December. The jobs identified so far are:

- Woodwork; the barge boards facing the parking area need partial or complete replacement and the doors are in urgent need of attention. We have scoped the work and I have a volunteer to do it!
- Painting; the path on the Millwright Way side of the Seed Box needs painting, the cutters cleaned out and the down-pipe(s) rodded.
- The compound needs clearing up, the blackberry cut back, old trolleys etc removed, shed cleared out etc.
- The compound gates need to be repaired.
- Parking side gutters need clearing out and down pipes rodded. (As a condition of our insurance all gutters and downpipes need to be cleaned/rodded twice a year).
- The electrics inside and outside the Seed Box need to be modernised.
- The Stratton Room needs a spring clean.
- General cleaning throughout has been badly neglected. Two volunteers are manfully working through, but more help is always useful!
- Water pressure to the sinks is almost non-existent and I have no idea why!

If you can offer time or specific skills in any of the above please contact the FGA email or pop in and see Colin or me at the Seed Box one Saturday afternoon.

Thank you in anticipation.  
Jim Godden

## TRADING Update March 2021

I've not heard anyone mentioning inflation but as I'm working through the initial ordering for potatoes and onions for next year I'm amazed at the price rises I'm seeing from our two suppliers. Unfortunately this will result in an increase in the prices for you. I'm hoping this will not be reflected in the rest of our orders for December, but fear it will.

Please remember that all stock is priced when it is put on the shelves, provided there is enough time to do so. For items such as pots and trays, I am looking for an alternative pricing system rather than individual labels, to hopefully reduce work.

Some of you may have been in the Seed Box recently and observed that we have a slight problem with the till just stopping. We've identified the problem and unfortunately the spare part to repair it is no longer available. I'm investigating options but it would be good to get through this trading year before any change is made. I think we have a temporary fix but if it is worse than thought please bear with us.

Previously, if anyone wanted bulk amounts of compost they could request it, but unfortunately, because of the development, this will not be an option this year. If you want bulk amounts of any other products please still ask I may be able to offer very good prices! As always please contact us via the general email address or at the Seed Box.

The UK Government is introducing legislation to stop the sale of compost containing peat by the end of 2024. Interestingly, a major campaigner for this change has the target to go peat free by 2025 on their website, that campaigner is ..... The RHS! I've produced an article for this magazine (based on an internet trawl) of the impact of this change, which is very confusing. The FGA committee has decided on a different compost strategy for next year, offering you the opportunity to try Clover peat free compost and learn how to best to use it. This will replace the 'buy 4, pay for 3' (cheapest free) offer of the last few years. I will adjust our order to support that offer.

As I pen this (well type actually) I'm trying the Spalding Auctions to try and get autumn planting onions and garlic and will go and fetch them if they are available. If I do go to Spalding I will look at the bulbs on offers and purchase some for sale so in the next few weeks it could be well worth seeing if we have those items in stock. I'll send a note out on the FGA Facebook site if I get some so do watch there.

A new Trading Secretary has volunteered and we are moving towards me taking a back seat. One area this has really energised me to progress in is de-stocking. Starting with the water goods, we will be re-introducing the 'bargain table'; to clear shelf space in the compost room. I'll also be looking to clear odd stuff from around the Seed Box. Ultimately we want to make the Seed Box a much better place to visit with less clutter, better decor and more room to move, a few less "excuse me's" I hope.

Jim Godden

FGA Temporary Trading Secretary

### **PEAT-FREE COMPOST – SUMMARY**

With the UK Government's announcement of their intention to ban peat in all compost by 2024 I've scoured the internet for a bit more information. The content below is summarised from the RHS, National Trust and 'letsrecycle.com' websites.



### *Why is peat being banned?*

Quite simply peat bogs are a diminishing resource, store large quantities of greenhouse gas which are released and store large amounts of water so helping to reduce flooding. Add to that the advantages they offer for wildlife and you have compelling arguments to stop using it for gardening.

The Government stated 'As England's largest carbon store on land, peatlands play a vital role in trapping carbon, helping to control flooding and encouraging plants and vegetation that act as homes for wildlife, but when damaged, for example when mined for compost, they can end up emitting their carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.' Further they are providing £50m in grants to restore 35,000 Hectares of degraded peatland.

### *What's used in peat-free compost?*

- Wood; Wood-based mixes can be tailored to the requirements of most plants as they have excellent drainage properties as well as a low pH.
- Coir; Coconut fibre or 'coir' is mainly imported from Sri Lanka. Coir is a waste product. It has excellent natural water-holding ability and a sufficient mix of fine and coarse fibres to hold air in its pore spaces, making it a good growing medium. It does not hold nutrients well, however.
- Green compost; Many local authorities and private companies are collecting and composting green waste. The resultant compost tends to have a high nutrient content and a high pH making it an excellent soil improver or mulch.
- Locally available materials; Research continues into suitable items, e.g. straw waste, wool waste, paper, cardboard and more
- Home-made; Mix well-rotted, home-made compost, leaf mould and inorganic materials (loam and sand) to make own peat-free growing media, but results tend to be variable. It is difficult to standardise pH, moisture retention and available nutrients, and to ensure that the final mix is weed-free. However, as the materials are all made locally, this compost has a low carbon footprint. You need a mix that retains moisture but does not get water logged. (These are best avoided for seed sowing to avoid fungal harm to seedlings.)

How can peat-free compost be used?

**Chris Trimmer, Nursery Manager at the 'National Trusts Plant Conservation Centre, tells us about how he and his team garden peat-free.**

*When I first started, we mixed our own potting compost by hand using a blend of coir, loam, leaf mould and potting grit, but it soon became difficult to keep up with the demand.*

*In 2004, whilst conducting compost trials with ADAS, a replacement was found that out-performed our own mix: Petersfield's T 2 blend of fine grade bark, wood waste and loam. We've successfully been using this blend now for over 10 years for everything we grow from Acers to Zanthoxylum.*

*All the plants we grow are 'peat free' from day one, using coir plugs for rooting cuttings, bio-degradable wood fibre pots for growing on and Air Pots for the final stages. With expert care, even ericaceous plants such as Rhododendron & Camelia are produced using the same blend.*

What the FGA is doing to help our members?

For many years we have stocked New Horizon peat-free compost. Several years ago the RHS ran a test of the available peat-free products and only this one produced results even close to those of their control peat based Levington compost. We have seen sales of this increase slowly and the New Horizon grow bags were also gaining in popularity.

Last year (2020) I ordered a trial pallet of Clover Peat-free compost which completely sold out. I tried one bag with very good results, although I do find it needs a bit more feeding than the Clover general purpose compost. The FGA also supported the Beavers in growing Potatoes in a bucket. The winning bucket from 60+ contained more than 750g of potatoes and had used a peat-free compost, I suspect Clove but cannot be sure.

To offer experience using peat-free compost next year we intend ordering significantly more peat-free compost from Clover next year, depending on availability of the various composts, and modifying our 'pay for 3 get one free' offer to 'buy 3 large bags of compost (not John Innes), get a free bag of peat-free compost'.

I hope this helps slightly, but I fully expect things to move on very quickly. Look at the speed of cars going electric, once the government got really serious about moving away from fossil fuel for them.

Jim Godden

**Flitwick Gardeners' Association**  
**Telephone - 01525 – 717289 (24 hour answerphone)**  
**Pre-Season Potato and Onion Sets Order Form – 2021**

Name ..... Address  
 .....

Telephone .....F.G.A. Membership Number .....  
*Please reserve the following packs of Seed Potatoes and Onion sets for me when they  
 are delivered*

***Orders handed in by the end of Dec 20 will be telephoned to advise when they are  
 ready for collection.***

Number of Packs		Variety	Cost	
3kg	10 seed		3kg	10
<b>“First Earlies”</b>				
.....	.....	<b>Duke of York (RED)</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Epicure</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Casablanca</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Foremost</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>International Kidney</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Maris Bard</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Lady Christl</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Pentland Javelin</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Rocket (EARLY)</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Swift (VERY EARLY)</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Winston</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
<b>“Second Earlies”</b>				
.....	.....	<b>Charlotte</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Estima</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Kestrel</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Marfona</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....
.....	.....	<b>Wilja</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60) .....

**“Main Crop”**

.....	<b>Cara</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Carolus</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Desiree</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>King Edward</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Majestic</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Maxine</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Maris Piper</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Picasso</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Setanta</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....
.....	<b>Vales Sovereign</b>	<b>£ 3.75</b>	(£1.60)	.....

**Salad variety**

.....	<b>Pink Fir Apple</b>	<b>£ 2.35</b>	.....
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**“Onion Sets and Shallots”**

.....	<b>Golden Gourmet Shallots (0.5 Kg)</b>	<b>£ 1.80</b>	.....
.....	<b>Red Sun Shallots (0.5 Kg)</b>	<b>£ 1.80</b>	.....
.....	<b>Yellow Moon Shallots (0.5 Kg)</b>	<b>£ 1.80</b>	.....
.....	<b>Red Baron Onion Sets (0.25 Kg)</b>	<b>£ 1.30</b>	.....
.....	<b>Sturon Onion Sets (0.5 Kg)</b>	<b>£ 1.30</b>	.....
.....	<b>Stuttgarter Onion Sets (0.5 Kg)</b>	<b>£ 1.30</b>	.....

**Total Due £.....**

**Less Deposit Paid £ .....**

**(Minimum Deposit 50p per pack)**

**BALANCE DUE £ .....**

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**For F.G.A. use      Telephoned .....**