



Flitwick Gardeners' Association

June 2020

Update for FGA Members

What a year! Too wet in the beginning, then along came Covid-19 and now too dry. Throw in a fairly hard late frost to set back the potatoes and beans, while killing those early marrows and I wonder why we bother gardening? Personally the answer is simple; during the lockdown my garden and allotment have been my way of remaining sane (I think).

From the beginning of the lock down, the FGA had to shut the Seed Box, but fortunately nearly everyone had already collected their potato and onion orders - phew! Any remaining stock was donated to the two allotment sites in Flitwick and gratifyingly, the total given away was considerably smaller than the quantity of potatoes 'skipped' the previous year. Now that we are open again, if any recipients of those potatoes wish to make a small donation to Keech Hospice, we have a collecting box in the Seed Box.

Since the Government decided that Garden Centres could re-open the Seed Box has opened for partial trading on Saturdays. These seem to

have been very well received and the amount of trade has been gratifying. Owing to the age of many of our helpers/volunteers, we are asking them all to indicate whether they are willing to continue assisting whilst the uncertainty continues. If you are a volunteer helper at the Seed Box, please do not feel pressured in any way. At present we are only confident we can trade on Saturdays, so ***we will only be open 2-4 pm Saturday afternoons*** for the foreseeable future and we will not be open Friday evenings.

We have not been able to work out how to allow normal trading because of the constricted spaces in the Seed Box, making social distancing, almost impossible. Rather than allowing 'free for all browsing' please tell us what you want and we will get it off the shelves and deliver it to you outside the Seed Box. Compost will be delivered to your car and loaded directly into the boot, so little change there. We will give you a list of what you have purchased and then one person at a time will be invited into the Seed Box to pay. Payment will preferably be by card and if the amount is under the £45 limit, contactless is preferred. I'm sorry for any inconvenience, but we must reserve the right to manage access as safely as possible. If you are asked not to browse, please accept this and work with us, as the last thing we all want is to put the volunteer helpers and other FGA members at risk.

Somewhere during lockdown, the day of the Spring Show came and went. Thanks to all those who created a virtual show on our Facebook site and please keep sharing all your pictures; it is a little lift.

We did not have an AGM because of the lockdown but all the reports and the now reviewed and agreed accounts were printed in the last magazine. Please feel free to raise any issues you may have taken to the AGM with any of the committee, or by email to the FGA email address and we will get back to you.

Personally I'm pleased that I've started cropping and put 6Kg of broad beans in the freezer just yesterday. The blackflies were just starting, so watch the spring sown beans, as the aphids do not seem to be having any problems with Covid-19.

Where do we go from here?

I wish we knew but:

- Trading - see above. Also note that we are getting low on some items, particularly Clover Multi-purpose compost and Vermiculite/Perlite and I'm not planning to restock.
- Any Saturday - If both the gates on Steppingley Road (in the middle of the boarding) are open, then we are probably also open.
- We will not be opening the parking right next to the Seed Box, so please continue to use the Old Leisure Centre overflow car park.
- Autumn sowing onions etc. - I am hoping to be able to get the relevant stock for seeds and onions/garlic/bulbs.
- We will be ordering potatoes, onions, etc. for spring sowing as usual.
- When we are clearer on what we can do we will be producing a newsletter with at least a potato order form for next year. Hopefully you will also need a show schedule for the Autumn show, but only if we are allowed to hold it.

Seed Box future

Short but sweet, no new information.

Shows and Quiz

We feel it sensible to cancel the Summer Show, as have the majority of shows around the country. At present the village hall is not allowed to open for public events and it does not seem likely that the current restrictions would be lifted sufficiently to allow members and the public to wander around the show and enjoy the refreshments that we normally have on offer. I would not want to risk the summer weather by trying to hold the event outdoors!!

As far as the Autumn show (October 10th) and Quiz (November 26th) are concerned we have not come to decision yet, but we will announce it on the Facebook group and FGA website as soon as we know, or via a newsletter if we manage to put one together. If the Autumn Show can go ahead, the show committee will look at whether we could extend the classes; to include some of the vegetables / flowers normally only seen in the Summer Show.

Membership Renewals

Considering everything that has and has not happened, we have decided to make this a double year. If you have not renewed yet there will be a £2 re-joining fee but the membership does now go through to the end of 2021 and you can keep your existing number. If you have already renewed, your Gold/yellow membership card will also be extended to the end of next year!

Finally thank you for all your co-operation over the last 3 weeks of opening and all the supportive comments; which are very much appreciated.

Jim Godden
Chairman FGA