



# Flitwick Gardeners' Association

Issue 120

Summer 2023

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**SEE BACK PAGE FOR ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS TO THE SEED BOX**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 19th August 2023    Annual Show  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023    Autumn Show  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023    Quiz Night (8.00pm)

## **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, compost, pots 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.

Construction of the new development on the Old Leisure Centre site is well underway, so temporary access to the Seed Box is now via the back of the New Leisure Centre car park. See page 12 for details.

## Seed box Opening Hours

Friday	Closed until further notice
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
Daniel Doyle	Trading Coordinator
Leonie Coverley	Treasurer
J-P Carter	Deputy Chairman and Show Committee
Laurie Arnold	Seeds and Deputy Trading Coordinator
Kath Stennett	FGA Online Administrator and Show Committee
Francis Prior	Membership Secretary
Ian Holman	Deputy Secretary, Magazine Editor and Show Committee
Ann Lutley	Publicity Officer
Sue Titchener	Seed Box Rota Coordinator

## Show Committee (not mentioned above)

Sue Foster

## Honorary Life Members

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

## Chit Chat from the Chair

Finally the weather seems to be warming up! What with the very wet Spring, a month's rain in the first week of May then none for the rest of the month my plants seem to be confused. My veg seeds seem to have been germinating randomly and I've no idea why. Still, now most things are in the ground, and I'm just trying to get and keep the weeds under control and await the produce.

In the previous chit chat I promised an update on my direct sowing of seeds for veg. Brassicas seem to have been just as good as those sown in trays and having planted many out have good root and top. They do need more water when first planted but that's not unexpected. French beans had such poor germination I ended up pre-germinating the seed and growing them on in the greenhouse. Leeks are very similar whether sown in the greenhouse or outside- I'll certainly be growing these in a seed bed rather than in the greenhouse in future.

There is a brief report of the trip to Shuttleworth in this magazine but I was disappointed in the poor response from members. However, there are also suggestions on how we may be able to provide trips in future.

Those of you who may have visited the Seed Box will have seen how large the care home building is. I don't think the committee had fully appreciated the scale of it until now. To date there has been little or no disruption to the FGA and we have a good working relationship with the builder. In fact they have been offering their services to unload our bulk delivery and move pallets of compost from our compound onto our car park saving us a lot of work.

The needs of the building project have recently led to some narrowing of our access road, so please drive carefully and **DO NOT PARK ON THE GRASS VERGE**. If you only need small items then please turn left into the allotments and park there just inside the gate.

There have been some recent small changes in the FGA:

First: I'd like to thank Carolyn and Alan for their period as Magazine Editors. I'm glad to be able to welcome Ian who is taking over as Magazine Editor from this issue.

Second: I'd like to thank Kath for her long stint as membership secretary. I'm very pleased to welcome Francis who has taken this role on. To date the change has been seamless so thanks to them both for managing the handover so well.

I seem to remember that Tesco once had, and my still have, a policy that if their tills were busy they would open additional tills until either they run out of staff or tills. I'm delighted to say that the FGA has the same policy. I'm sad to say it's less obvious because we only have one till, please be patient when we are very busy. One suggestion is come later in our two hours of trading as it's normally quieter then.

Jim Godden  
FGA Chairman

### **Seed box concerns**

It was mentioned at the AGM that some of our members that volunteer as helpers at the Seed box on a Saturday had suffered verbal abuse from members. There will be times when there is a queue of people waiting to be served at the till or for compost to be taken to their vehicles.

We insist that ALL members respect our volunteers and have patience while waiting to be served. We will not tolerate any unacceptable behaviour and per FGA rules we will cancel a person's membership of the FGA if this happens.

FGA Executive Committee

### **2022 Final Accounts amendment**

A minor change to the accounts was noted by the examiner resulting in £17 being transferred from the Potato income to General Income. The figures show now read: General Income £8,251 and Potato Income £1,977

Leonie Coverley  
Treasurer

## **TRADING Update June 2023**

2023 has been off to a good start with some really high sales weeks, some of this brought on by the recent growing interest in self-sufficiency and new members we have accumulated this year thus far and from all those dedicated customers' buying of compost. Please also keep in mind the world going Peat free.

We are finding ourselves running out of certain popular lines due to demand. Who would have thought chicken fertiliser would be so popular this year!

I would also like to thank you all for your continued support with the constant changes and challenges with the building works going on. However, please can I ask that you continue to walk the track from the leisure centre or park in the allotment opposite our entrance if you do not plan to buy compost as this helps all members with the parking space restrictions. Please also note that our dedicated Saturday Volunteer team, as fantastic as they are, will unfortunately not bring the compost to the leisure centre car park despite best efforts of persuasion.

There are plans being discussed to bring in stock to top up on our popular stock lines, which creates a potential opportunity to order some things we may not sell (price depending) and would be but to order only. Please speak to our key holders or contact us via email and we will endeavour to help.

Finally, as always if you have any comments, questions or suggestions please see the key holder or contact us via the email address on the website. Once we know what they are, we can consider what action to take to address any comments

Wishing you growing success

Daniel Doyle  
FGA Trading Co-ordinator

## **2023 FGA AGM**

Thankfully we were able to hold an in-person AGM this year and 18 members attended with a further 6 sending their apologies.

The chairman, Jim Godden, thanked everyone for attending and that the construction of the care home was not causing too many problems to the operation of the Seed box. Farrans, the builders, had used one of their forklifts on bulk delivery day to move all the pallets to the required places and subsequently moving things from the compound to the Seed box. He also reported that we'd organized a guided tour of Swiss Gardens for members but so far not too much interest had been shown.

The membership report showed that we currently have 246 compared to 262 at the same time last year. 80 members have not renewed for 2023 but we have had 64 new joiners during the year.

Jim then thanked Carolyn and Alan Kirkdale and Sue Livens for all their hard work on the committee, as they are standing down. Francis Prior is joining the committee to take on the Membership Secretary role and Sue Foster is joining the Show Committee.

Discussions took place concerning parking at the Seed box, wood cladding requirements for building renovation, the removal of offers on bulk buys of compost and some changes to the FGA rules.

It was also mentioned that some volunteers at the Seed box had suffered verbal abuse from members. All present agreed that this will not be tolerated and if it occurs the incident should be reported to the key holder for the Executive to take appropriate action against the member.

Finally for his many years of service to the FGA Laurie Arnold was given life membership.

Colin Stennett  
Secretary

## **2023 Spring Show report**

As is becoming normal for the Spring show the weather was not kind again this year with heavy rain and fairly strong winds in the week before the show, but at least there was no snow this year. Once again, our members were still able to bring some wonderful exhibits to the show to ensure visitors were able to see some glorious daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, other spring flowers and flowering shrubs.

The re-introduction of 2 cookery classes were also very well supported.

Thanks to everyone that entered exhibits for the show, helped with the organization and baked some extremely tasty cakes for us all to enjoy and to those that came to look at the exhibits and enjoy the refreshments. Let's hope for similar success at our shows in August and October.

Colin Stennett  
Show Secretary

## **2023 Annual Show Photography classes**

The classes for the 2023 Annual Show on Saturday 19th August are:

103 A Bedfordshire Building    104 A Bedfordshire Landscape  
105 Bedfordshire Water        106 Bedfordshire Life

The children's photography class will be a photograph of 'My favourite Bedfordshire place'.

Show Secretary



## Have a go at the FGA Annual Show

As a new or longstanding member of the FGA, have you ever thought about entering one of our Shows but don't know where to start? If so, the Annual Show on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August is your opportunity to find out!

You'll soon be receiving the Show Schedule which lists the many vegetable, fruit, flower, home produce / cooking, arts and crafts, homemade wine, photographic and children's classes. So there's a class (or classes) for everyone.

On the day, check the schedule to find out how many items you need to bring along for your chosen class(es) – generally, the more similar they are to each other, the better. When you arrive for 'Staging', between 09:00-11:45, there will be plenty of FGA helpers and your fellow exhibitors on hand to answer any questions you have. You can also look at the FGA guide to showing which is available on the website at <http://www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk/shows.htm> for lots of hints and tips.

You can enter any classes but, if you've never exhibited at one of our shows before (or have never won a first prize in the main flower and vegetable sections), then you might like to start in the Novice vegetable or flower classes. As an introduction to exhibiting, they're ideal- you have a good chance of not only getting a rosette, but, depending on the standard of entry, maybe winning the Novice trophy, which you hold for a year.

See you at the Annual Show

Ian Holman  
Show Committee

## Shuttleworth trip report

21st May 2023. Weather forecast fine and dry. Pick up two car sharers and we're off on the not long trek to Shuttleworth clutching our tickets. 25 minutes later: here we are. Go and find our guide, oh not one but two, we're spoiled. Collect tickets which include a 30 day entry to the garden and aircraft hangers on non-air show days, and a drinks voucher for the café with each ticket. We were actually the first tour they had done for some time as, like so many organisations, they have lost quite a lot of volunteers since Covid but it barely showed.

A little early, we go into the Swiss Garden after a brief introduction in the reception building. Having never been to the garden before I had no pre-conceived ideas as to what was there. Just inside the entrance gate, pick up the guide brochure, nice reminder of the highlights but not really needed. For those who know it, skip the next bit. It is not a huge garden, as it is not a formal garden, but is the garden of the house and evolved over many years and owners. The guides complemented each other with one most knowledgeable on the garden and the other on the history. Many vistas and viewpoints were suggested which would have not been obvious without the guides. I thought it was an excellent morning.

So, afterwards, outside for lunch, and that free drink, shame the wind was so cold but it was sunny. Then the afternoon was spent on a leisurely wander around the hangers looking at the amazing collection of planes.

For me the shame was that, although we only had 14 tickets available and the FGA sold the tickets for exactly what we had pre-paid, we could only sell half the tickets. Normal day tickets cost £15.50, tea/coffee £2.50(ish), guided tours not available (our price £25 pp). Remember even the best author of a small free guide cannot tell you much and certainly cannot say 'look up now and.....' and it definitely cannot answer questions. But our excellent guides could do both and more.

Based on the above trip I can now answer a question often asked in the Seed Box, 'Why don't the FGA organise trips any more?'. The answer is above.

However, as a committee we want to provide whatever we can for members. We are affiliated to the RHS which allows one free group visit a year to an RHS gardens. The nearest RHS Gardens are Hyde Hall in Essex (normal entry price £13.85) and Wisley (normal entry price £16.50) which is just off the A3/M25 Junction. Please note these are group visits and we must enter as a group. The best plan we can think of is to drive there in cars, meet in the public area to form the group. It would be good to try and car share to minimise the cost (Coach hire has become too expensive for it to really be an option). If you are interested please let us know and we will try and organise something.

Jim Godden

### **Contactless payment – please don't rush off!**

If you're using contactless payment for your excellent-value FGA purchases, please wait for the FGA till helper to confirm that your payment has gone through. We've had a few instances recently where members have inadvertently left without a successful contactless payment. It only takes a moment to check, but avoids a lot of hassle all round!

## Temporary route to the Seed Box

Construction of the development on the Old Leisure Centre site is well underway, so access to the Seed Box is now via the back of the New Leisure Centre car park, shown pink in the plan below.

Limited parking will be available 'inside' the Seed Box area.

Parking will also be available in the allotment site. Please do not obstruct the drive ways if using the allotment area.

