



# Flitwick Gardeners' Association

Issue 123

Summer 2024

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

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2024 - FGA outing to RHS Hyde Hall**  
**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2024 - Seedbox closed**  
Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024 - Annual Show  
Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024 - Autumn Show  
Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 - FGA Quiz

## **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 or the colour map at <https://www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk/fgaopen.htm> .

### 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 and Outing</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.	enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk
Magazine	newsletter@flitwickgardeners.co.uk
Show info and entries	fgashow@flitwickgardeners.co.uk

### 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

Ian Holman	Chairman, Deputy Secretary, Magazine Editor and Show Committee
Colin Stennett	Secretary and Show Secretary
Daniel Doyle	Trading Coordinator
Leonie Coverley	Treasurer
J-P Carter	Deputy Chairman and Show Committee
Laurie Arnold	Seeds and Deputy Trading Coordinator
Kath Stennett	Show Committee
Francis Prior	Membership Secretary, Deputy Treasurer
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, Anne Godden, Colin & Kath Stennett, Laurie Arnold

## Chit Chat from the Chair

I'm writing this 'Chit Chat from the Chair' with a great sense of bemusement at being the new Chairman of the FGA. As anyone who has seen my allotment at Station Road will know, I'm not particularly green-fingered and the most successful plants on my plot are self-sown! At this time of year, my plot (rather than me) puts on a great display of foxgloves, poppies and comfrey (I think) to the great delight of the bees. You may have heard about the worrying decline in insect numbers, if not aphids, sometimes referred to as the 'insectageddon' and have noticed the reduced numbers, compared to a decade ago, of insects splattered on your windscreen or car number plate after long journeys. As gardeners we are dependent on insects to pollinate many of our crops and to help naturally control pests, so please do consider how you can make your own plots more insect friendly. As well as vegetable seeds, we sell (at discount prices) a range of flower seeds at the Seedbox that will encourage pollinators – if in doubt, ask one of the helpers.

I hope that you all value what the FGA provides for you– great value gardening products, friendly advice, Shows, quizzes, outings etc. But all of this is 100% dependent on a (very small) group of volunteers. – as you will see, many of us on the committee have to have multiple roles to keep the FGA running Please do consider how you might be able to help, even if only for the occasional hour.

Happy Gardening!

Ian Holman (FGA Chairman)

## **FGA outing to RHS Hyde Hall (Saturday 29th June)**

After last year's very enjoyable outing to Shuttleworth and the Swiss Garden, this year we're going to RHS Hyde Hall on Saturday 29th June. This wonderful garden established in the 1950s will be sure to inspire you, from its Dry Garden and herbaceous borders to its global vegetable garden We'll be using the FGAs RHS discount card to get a 50% discount off group entry on the day. If you're interested in coming along, please either email us at [enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk) or let us know at the Seedbox. We'll help arrange car shares where needed.

Hope to see you there!

Colin Stennett (Secretary)

## **Seed Box Lease Update**

We are very pleased to report that the new lease for the Seed Box premises has been signed between the Town Council and the Flitwick Gardeners' Association. Due to the redevelopment of the old leisure centre site, and the impact that had on access to the Seed Box, it has taken much longer than we hoped to resolve, but "All's Well that Ends Well". This new lease is for a period of three years, which is fantastic as it gives us certainty over that time. Hopefully after that period the new development will be complete, with clear agreed access to the Seed Box, and we can revert to a longer term lease again

Leonie Coverley  
Treasurer

## **TRADING Update May 2024**

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the volunteers that help keep the Seedbox running and especially those hoofing the various compost products we offer.

I am looking for some Volunteers willing to take ownership of a specific section of the Seedbox, to keep the shelves presentable and stocked and advise on stock requirements. I will obviously spend time with each person in each section and with enough people it will become a very quick and easy task.

The recent changes to government plans and our decision around removing Peated products are making members become very resourceful and it has proven that we are all adaptable. I commend everyone for their out of the norm thinking and advise all to seek advice from on duty staff if unsure of what is possible with what is available now and going forward, as you will be surprised what a difference to compost a bit of fish blood and bone and other additives can create. We also have a sheet to explain what each of our own-pack products support available in the own pack section at the back of the Seedbox.

We will be putting on and offer for the smaller clover peat free multi-purpose but you will need to come in to see what it is but it will make it cheaper to purchase and make our price more competitive.

Wish everyone every planting success.

Dan Doyle  
FGA Trading Co-ordinator

## **Do you have the occasional hour to spare?**

Everything that we do at the Seedbox and the FGA is dependent on our members (you!) volunteering your time, whether occasionally helping at the Seedbox's till, washing up at the Shows, doing the annual stocktake or a thousand and one other activities. If you've got some time and interest, we can find something useful and enjoyable for you to help with. Examples could include:

- Keeping an eye on a stock area in the Seedbox, helping to keep your shelves stocked and advising Dan on re-ordering;
- Helping with Seedbox maintenance
- Promoting the FGA locally on Facebook
- Or anything else you think you could help us with.....

Have a word with any of the helpers down at the Seedbox or email us on [enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk)

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

If you're using contactless payment for your excellent-value FGA purchases, please wait for the volunteer 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!

## **2024 FGA AGM report**

Disappointingly only 11 members (including Committee members) turned up for the AGM with a further 3 members sending their apologies for not being able to attend.

J-P Carter, acting chairman, thanked everyone for coming and said it was such a shock to hear of Jim Godden's sudden death that found him back in the chairman's seat again. He then said that Jim's contributions to the Association should not be underestimated, and we should some way of honouring this – perhaps a trophy for one of the shows.

The membership report shows that we currently have 240 members, slightly down on the same period last year, with 71 of the 2023 members who have yet to renew for 2024. We did have 30 new members join during the year.

Ian Holman had put himself forward to be chairman of the Association and his appointment was accepted by all those present.

A discussion then took place about the need for more members being needed to join the Association committees and helping with the running of the Seed box. To ensure the Seed box can continue to operate we really need people to come forward and help not only on a Saturday afternoon but also supporting Dan with the trading tasks – such as looking after stock areas to ensure that stock is on the shelves and making sure Dan knows when items need re-ordering.

As you will have seen elsewhere in this magazine the seed box is staying where we are and our relationship with Farrans, the construction people, remains excellent. A member raised the question as to whether we could approach them in helping with materials for the outside of the building and the fencing and gates for the compound, all of which needs work doing to improve their appearance and usability. This suggestion will be progressed by the executive committee.

Colin Stennett  
Secretary



## **2024 Spring Show report**

The weather is never right for gardeners – so it was no surprise that after we'd had a period of mild, wet, and windy weather a lot of flowers normally seen in the Spring show had already finished flowering. Thankfully some of our members were still able to bring in some glorious blooms to the show ensuring the hall was a blaze of colour. The cookery classes were also well supported.

Once again, the people making cakes for refreshments brought some really tempting and tasty supplies meaning everyone that came to look around had a really great selection to choose from.

Thanks to everyone that put in entries to the show and those that helped with the show in every capacity. Now we just need the weather to be right for people to bring things to the annual show in August.

Colin Stennett  
Show Secretary

## **2024 Photographic Classes**

The classes for the 2024 Annual Show on Saturday 17th August are:

103 Wish you were here

104 Grand Designs

105 Wild Isles

106 Portrait artist of the year

The children's photography class will be 'My favourite photograph'.

Colin Stennett  
Show Secretary

## **Have a go at the FGA Annual Show**

Whether you are a new or longstanding member of the FGA, have you ever thought about entering your vegetables, flowers, home produce, handicrafts or photographs at one of our Shows? If so, the Annual Show on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August is a great opportunity to give it a go!

The Annual Show Schedule, which should be arriving together with this magazine, 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.

For the vegetable, fruit, flower classes, check the schedule on the day 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 – and there's no such thing as a daft question. 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!

Show Committee

## Walk this way!

Earlier this month, I exchanged my welly boots for walking boots and set off on an arduous hike across the county of Bedfordshire. Why?

Together with my friend Juliette, I was attempting to complete the Greensand Ridge Walk in two days, a challenge that we were both a bit nervous about! But we weren't just doing this for the nice views. We were doing this to raise awareness and funds for a very important local cause.

Did you know, Flitwick Village Hall is over 50 years old? It was built using funds raised from the local community in the 1960s and has been well loved



and incredibly well used ever since! I'm sure we could all list out many different events that we have attended at the village hall: from the Friday market and coffee mornings, to regular meetings, to parties, to (of course!) tri-annual Gardening shows. It is absolutely the heart of our local community.

Unfortunately 50+ years have taken their toll on the village hall. It now has a rather leaky roof, which I can testify for, having hired the hall on a rainy day, where we needed buckets in various places dotted around the building to catch the drips!

The village hall committee needs to raise a whopping £20,000 in order to mend the leaky roof. I wanted to do my bit towards this, and a sponsored walk was a great way to help out.

Juliette and I managed to complete the hike. We walked 44 miles in total, got very tired legs, stung by nettles and wet feet! But I sincerely think it was worth it for every penny that we can raise that goes to help the village hall. The fundraising page is still open, and all donations are hugely appreciated, or you can contact the village hall for details of how to donate in other ways. I'm sure you would agree with me that Flitwick Village Hall is an asset well worth looking after!

[www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/greensand-ridge-walk](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/greensand-ridge-walk)

[flitwickvillagehallbookings@gmail.com](mailto:flitwickvillagehallbookings@gmail.com)

Thank you, Leonie

## 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.

