



# Newsletter

## October 2019: Allotment Poetry



*Jacob Swarbrick, from Ferry Road, with his prize for Midnight Snack tomatoes.*

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# This Year's Show: A Celebration Of Success In A Difficult Year

Official statistics show Edinburgh enjoyed a 50% spike in rainfall this summer and the effects of the deluge were felt at the Edinburgh Allotment Show. Some plants put on a lot of lush growth and did well, but this was outweighed by those that struggled. Accordingly, the headline figures this year showed a dip in numbers of exhibitors and exhibits. However, that's not what it's about; it's the fun, enjoyment and pride (if you win) that really matters. The site with the greatest level of participation is **Stenhouse**, followed closely by **Lady Road** and **Ferry Road**. **Restalrig** won the prize for Site Vegetable Collection. A notable statistic is that this year's gender profile is 2:1 in favour of women. Last year the divide was just about equal. What's going on?

Our picture shows a delighted Jacob Swarbrick of Ferry Road who outdid his supposedly greenfingered dad with his delicious Midnight Snack tomatoes which got second prize in the Children's Exhibit Classes. They gained acclamation when sampled in the new Tomato Tasting event. The remains of his crop are stored away in the freezer for use on his pizzas over the winter. By the way, Tomato Tasting will return next year so select your seed carefully and prepare to join us in 2020. This year, the selection of Things Interesting And Peculiar also proved to be popular (perhaps a round-up of these will appear in a future issue) but in this month's Newsletter we'd like to highlight the selection of wonderful allotment-related poetry that was produced...



*A Midnight Snack tomato ripens to red with a beautiful glossy black-purple overlay when exposed to sunlight from the accumulation of anthocyanin pigments, which also give blueberries their colour and contain healthy antioxidants*

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## Allotment Poems

### Three Haikus

#### Raspberries

A raspberry glut.  
Cordial, coulis, and jam.  
Red fingers, red chin.

#### Evening

Dusk is falling now.  
The gardeners have gone home.  
Small creatures emerge.

## **Slug**

Early morning dew.  
The eager slug gorges on  
My spinach. Bastard.  
(Anon.)

## **Springtime**

Jist hoo dae ye ken, ma bonny wee floo'er  
That this is the time and noo is the 'oor  
Tae spring intae life? Ye seem awfy sure  
But hoo dae ye ken?

Jist hoo dae ye ken when winter's awa?  
That springtime's cam back, there is nae mair snaw?  
That freezin' cauld winds are no' gonnae blaw?  
But hoo dae ye ken?

Jist hoo dae ye ken tae poke yer wee heid  
Up through a' the soil and show yer no deid?  
Jist look at ye noo, nae longer a seed  
But hoo dae ye ken?

Jist hoo dae ye ken, when under the groond  
Wi' oot ony light and scarce ony soond  
That guid growin' days have fin'lly cam roond?  
But hoo dae ye ken?

Jist hoo dae ye ken, it's fair puzzlin' me  
Each year at this time, jist hoo can it be?  
Sae please, ma wee floo'er, can ye tell tae me?  
Jist hoo dae ye ken?

*'Cause ah dinnae!*

*(Somerville)*

## **Five Untitled Haikus**

Under dark clay pots  
Pink rhubarb stretches, hopeful  
Searching for sunlight.  
(Sue Soutar)

The greenhouse  
Tomatoes swell and ripen  
Basil awaits.

Winter's coming  
Potatoes dug, Brussels sprouting  
Happy Solstice.

Autumn moonlight  
A slug munches silently  
Leave me some.  
(*Stuart McKenzie*)

Swallows are leaving.  
Displays of autumn fruits  
Among golden leaves.  
(*Lucie McKenzie*)

#### **Four Limericks**

There was a young woman from Plockton  
Who moved to the district of Saughton  
She wanted a plot  
But all that she got  
Was a wait of ten years, down at Saughton.

There was an old fellow from Leith  
Who grew cabbages from his front teeth  
He said that the pain  
Was a terrible drain  
But radishes gave him relief.

There was a plothead called George  
On beetroot he liked to gorge  
His pee came out red  
To the doctor's he sped  
That ig-nor-ant plothead George.

There once was a lady of leisure  
In gardens she found all her pleasure  
She loved men with dibbers  
They gave her the shivers  
She measured her leisure with pleasure.

(*Columbine*)



## Two Final Haikus

Fierce battles rage  
In the soil  
They make plants grow.

Rusty fork and old bones  
Turn winter soil  
To make summer flowers.  
(Anon.)



*The GM Stewart Memorial Cup for Site Vegetable Collection, won by Restalrig and presented by Cllr. George Gordon, Chair of Edible Edinburgh (second from left)*



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# Help For Independent Sites

Independently managed allotment sites will need to access funding for projects. Help is at hand. Whether you're a newly formed group looking at setting up an allotment from scratch or are established and motoring along but requiring help with new projects the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) has put together a [page](#) of links that will lead you to where you want to be.

The main providers of funding are: [Funding Scotland](#) and [Scottish Education and Action for Development](#)



# First Aid Kits

The FEDAGA Magic Money Tree has been given a thorough shake and out has popped First Aid Kits for each site! To claim your site's First Aid Kit, please come along to the AGM - details below. Click [here](#) to see what is in each kit. The First Aid kits are a "one-off" and extra gloves are being supplied to augment the kit. Once supplied it will down to each site to maintain and manage the contents. The supply of the kits does not indicate any responsibility or liability for FEDAGA for health and safety on any site. This remains the responsibility of individuals and their landlord.





# The Foxes Of Warriston On TV

There was a beautiful film of the allotment foxes at Warriston shot during lovely sunny weather on the 19th September edition of the One Show. It will be available on the BBC iPlayer until 18th October. To view it please click [here](#). The foxes, being the stars of the show, are kept until last so scroll forward to 22 minutes to see them. It's a real gem. There's also some useful "fox facts" and some tips on how to minimise their impact on your plot.



*Photo: Bex Hudson*

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# The Federation's AGM

The date for your diary is **Tuesday 22nd October**. The FEDAGA AGM commences at 7pm in the Southside Community Centre (Nicolson Street, opposite Tesco's).

All affiliated sites have been sent AGM packs and the Agenda should be on your noticeboard. Many nominations have been received - but the Secretary will be willing to take late nominations from the floor on the night.

It is essential that we receive good support to continue as a vibrant and effective representative body for Edinburgh allotment sites - **and we crave fresh blood**. Please consider standing for the committee or maybe taking on one of the important jobs that we do. The official positions to be filled are President, Secretary, Treasurer, Trading Secretary and Show Secretary. (*"This Newsletter could do with a fresh editor as well" - Ed.*)

The AGM is also an opportunity to catch up with in depth reports on all aspects of allotment life in Edinburgh. We hope to see all affiliated sites represented this year.

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# Noticeboard Repairs

Across the city the Council-supplied noticeboards are crumbling, rusting and rotting away. Council cutbacks mean that repairs and replacements are no longer viable. FEDAGA has taken the initiative of arranging for running repairs to be directly applied and our Treasurer, Dave Roberts has stepped up as Handyman In Chief. Sites completed are Leith Links, Claremont Park, Cambridge Avenue and Saughton Mains. At Midmar, one board has been completed with the other one still outstanding. At Warriston, two out of three are completed. Outstanding: Hutchison Loan and Stenhouse. The former will be repaired this year, but the latter will have to wait unless there is a window of opportunity over the winter.

The main issues are corroded hinges and the pin board being in contact with the floor of the board wicking water up and damaging the notices. Solutions are to cut 25mm off the bottom and using non-absorbent support to keep the board out of the water. If the pin board is beyond redemption it will be removed, the back panel painted and magnetic pins provided to hold up notices. It's worth noting that laminated notices will last a lot longer. If your site has not been mentioned here and your noticeboard is falling apart [let us know](#).



*Deluxe slate roofed allotment noticeboard with bird feeder (not available)*



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# Edible Edinburgh: A Food Growing City

The Community Empowerment Act 2015 requires Local Authorities to prepare a Food Growing Strategy by February 2020. To this end a gathering has been arranged for Saturday 9th November for anyone interested in community food growing who wants to find out what the Edinburgh Food Growing Strategy can do for us, and work together to shape it. It is also an opportunity to share ideas for promoting and supporting a network of community growing projects - what do we need, and what would help, to make Edinburgh a food growing city? More details and how to book: [here](#).

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## News Clippings



Northfield expects a water supply to be installed next spring.

Pears are being stolen from trees at Inverleith and Saughton Mains. Plums are going missing from Midmar. Who would stoop so low? Results of the West Mains plothead survey will be revealed at their AGM (2.30pm, Saturday 12th October).

Craigentinny Telferton plotheaders enjoyed a "pop up cafe" event recently. Two chefs foraged the food on site, including edible fungi, and then cooked up a *ten course* meal for participants on a bonfire and barbeque.

Applicants for Council allotments in Edinburgh are now averaging 100 per month. The recently eviscerated waiting list is now rising steadily again, lofting confidently above the 2000 mark.

The Allotment Officer will switch off the water taps at the end of October. Don't tamper with them once they're off. This year there was an unusually high number of bursts, raising suspicion that some might have been switched back on again unofficially.

New sites and more plots on the horizon: up to 25 plots at the big housing development at Newcraighall (Section 75 planning gain), Piershill (Neighbourhood Partnership initiative), and extensions to Leith Links and Baronscourt. Plus, the possibility of DIY sites, self-built and self-managed.

FEDAGA welcomes the 75 plotheaders on the Boys Brigade site at Letham Park.

Rabbits are staging a fightback at Carrick Knowe and Bridgend. Measures to discourage them are in hand.

Council Allotment Rules and Regulations are back on the table for review. FEDAGA will discuss the proposals and the draft will go out for consultation soon. The Transport and Environment Committee anticipates it will discuss them next March.

FEDAGA is in touch with the Scottish Ambulance Service to ensure that they have access to accurate grid references for each allotment site after some confusion resulted in a potentially life threatening delay.

SAGS will hold an EGM on 18th October to discuss converting to a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation). More information [here](#).

FEDAGA is thinking of a fresh logo. Got any ideas or suggestions? [Let us know](#). More on this at the AGM.

Ordnance Survey have updated their Greenspaces database. You can find greenspace anywhere in Scotland, England or Wales [here](#). Allotments are in brown, by the way. Not a weed in sight, apparently.

Saughton Mains will be the only site to enjoy freshly dropped leaves delivered straight to their compost bays from Princes Street Gardens this autumn. Contamination issues prevent leaves from the street being distributed. This is due to restrictions in the provisions of the Trade Waste License. In the past waste products from the abattoir were spread on allotments. Changed days...

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