

# Slopefield News

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## A Note from the Chair

Well, congratulations everyone! What an amazing year it has been for the Slopefield community. Apart from the challenging weather which has played havoc with everyone's plans this has been a notable year for us and one we should celebrate. All of your hard work has been recognised through our award of the standard of "Thriving" in the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood/Britain in Bloom Awards. The judges were very impressed how far we all had come in ensuring plots were cultivated with a diverse range of produce produced, rubbish was absent, composting and recycling were active, water was being conserved, biodiversity enhanced . . . the list went on and on. In addition, there was acknowledgement that the Association was an important vehicle in helping to support allotmenting and wider community activities. So congratulations to all.

You will find much in this edition of Slopefield News to highlight our achievements. I'm sure you all noticed the efforts that Terry and the happy helpers have made in the establishment of wildflower meadows at the ends of the site and the development of the Crocosmia bank under the trees. But were you aware that the drainage and provision of additional parking space at the site entrance was supported through liaison with Bancon construction who are building the retirement home on Craigton road? Some nimble negotiation resulted in expanded and improved space for us and a community project for the builders. Thank you Dave, and thank you Bancon!

We still have challenges at Slopefield, and in this time of austerity it is very much our responsibility to make things happen as we cannot look to others to support us as they did in the past. Every little helps, so please take that last bit of rubbish home with you and put into your bin rather than leave on site; close the gate to stop the fly tipping that has spoilt the site so many times; compost your green waste on your plot; recycle when you can and offer a helping hand or piece of advice to your neighbours or those struggling.

Slopefield is a beautiful place, and a place where we all enjoy the opportunity to spend time doing the thing we love, enriched by a spirit of community which is there to support and assist. Please respect our shared environment and your fellow plotters and remember if things are looking tough – there are always the home-bakes on Community Sunday!

I hope you enjoy reading the articles about what has and is happening at Slopefield and if the Association can help with any issue from new starter questions to composting tips to plot difficulties – we are here to help, so please do not hesitate to get in touch. And remember, that the AGM will take place on 7 March so put that date in your diary and come along and have your say.

Best wishes,  
Sue (#80)



## Slopefield Yahoo Site/ Email/On-site notice board/ The Red Box



## Communication, Communication, Communication !

The association can only really help you if we know what your issues are. Although we try as much as we can it is important that we receive your feedback, either by email, a note in the red letter box, or through chatting to one of the row reps or Committee. No issue is too small.

We have provided a new whiteboard on the Community shed on plot 11, for people to leave messages. So if you have spare plants or are looking for a new shed or greenhouse – why not write it up and see if anyone can help. We want messages to go both ways – offers and requests, so why not get in the habit of looking at the board and see what available. You will be amazed what offers turn up.

If you have not already done so, you can become a member of the Slopefield Yahoo group by accessing the website

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/slopefield/>

and following the instructions to join. Newsletters, minutes of Association meetings etc can be found on this site.

You can contact Slopefield group members by sending an email to [slopefield@yahogroups.com](mailto:slopefield@yahogroups.com)



And check out the website! <http://slopefield.webs.com/>

## Row Reps

### Row Reps

Representative	Where to find them	Rep for plot numbers
Wendy	Plot 4	Plots 1–16
Gordon	Plot 17	Plots 17–30
Loraine	Plot 40	Plots 31–44
Anne	Plot 55	Plots 45–58
Ethel	Plot 52	Plots 59–72
Val	Plot 82	Plots 73–86

## Site Security

(See Newsletter 3 for more info)

### Site Security

Earlier this year we applied to the Flytipping Small Grant Scheme, run by Zero Waste Scotland, for a grant of over £1000 for a heavy-duty lock and chain for the front gate, and a key cut for everyone. We had hoped that this grant would allow us provide keys free of charge to all plot holders, making the site more secure and to deter flytipping. Unfortunately, in October we found out that we had not been successful, however our details are being kept on record and we will be notified of any other similar schemes. Fingers crossed!

## AGM

### AGM

The 2012 AGM was very successful with over a third of plotters attending. Bob (#79) put together a very informative presentation, followed by some lively discus-

sions. It was an enjoyable and very sociable evening all round, and a great chance to meet up with fellow plotters over a glass of wine. Thanks to everyone who brought food to share. We hope you will be able to attend the 2013 Slopefield Allotment Association AGM on **Thursday 7 March** at 7.30pm at Aberdeen Grammar FP Club, 86 Queen's Road.

## AGM (cont'd)

## BBQ

We had a fantastic turn-out of around 35 ploholders, along with wonderful weather at our 3rd annual summer BBQ on 9th September. We had a great mix of long-term plot holders as well as welcoming some new faces, and we all enjoyed a wonderful feast of grills, salads, relishes and homebakes. The annual Competitions were popular as usual. However, in the Heaviest Vegetable section methinks there was a bit of cheating going on as this was won by the Community Plot (#11) for producing a 8lb bag of potatoes! Congratulations to all our winners! The results of the Competitions were as follows:

## BBQ

Category	Winner	Runner-up
Best Bouquet	Emily (#1b)	Johan (#54)
Best Single Bloom	Moira (#23)	Wendy (#4)
Biggest Onion	Terry(#24) (1lb 6oz)	Bob (#79) (1lb 5oz)
Kids' Flower	Dominic (Well done Dominic for his wildflowers!)	
Longest Carrot	Terry (#24)	Tracey (#83)
Heaviest Veg	Plot #11! (8lb bag of tatties!)	Wendy (#4) (a 7lb courgette)

## Community Days

Community Days are on the last Sunday of each month except November, December, January and February. It's always an interesting day, and good fun with a motley crew of plotters, plus tea/coffee and exceptionally good cake after the afternoon's work. Come to the Community Plot (Plot 11) from 2 o'clock, new plotters especially welcome. Or just come for tea about 3.30pm if you're busy with your own plot. This year's activities included:

## Community Days

- preparing and planting wildflower beds and renovating verges around the site
- filling pot holes in the roads
- plant & seed Swap Shop, BBQ & Annual Show; composting demonstration
- preparing compost in the redundant communal bays for giveaway to plotters
- creating experimental vegetable & strawberry beds on Community Plot
- unearthing rubbish from communal areas & transporting to council tip
- clearing areas of abandoned woody material for burning

For all these efforts, by groups & individuals, Slopefield received a national "It's Your Neighbourhood" award (see p.5) for improving the site, a great start – however much more help is needed from plotters to improve standards in order to attract funding for road repairs, site security etc. All sorts of skills are needed besides gardening and manual labour, for example:

- basic joinery
- sign writing
- cake making
- painting
- dry stone dyking
- fundraising

Community Days are also a great chance to catch up with news and to air ideas & concerns in an informal setting. The date for your diary is **31 March** (see p.8).



## Composting

### Don't Leaf Me This Way!

What are the three most important ways to improve soil? The answer is a resounding “organic matter, organic matter, organic matter”!

As a compost, leaves are near-perfect as they decompose readily (often in months rather than years) and so work almost magically to loosen the soil. Organic matter helps clay soil by physically separating particles and allowing better drainage. Conversely, organic matter helps sandy soil bind together and so hold water better.

You can improve most soils by incorporating a 3 or 4 inch layer of ‘neat’ leaves, about 6 or 8 inches deep in the autumn, using a spade or tiller.

But don't dig soggy soil – just spread the leaves over the surface and leave them there. If you have raised beds perhaps also cover with tarpaulins, as this will suppress weeds and also allow the ground to heat up more quickly for planting in the Spring. If your plot is waterlogged, you could also consider having extra-high raised beds as this takes the roots further from the water table.

You may also want to incorporate more leaves when preparing the soil for planting in the spring.



Leaves can be composted by layering with soil, and a handful of regular fertilizer aids decomposition. Shredding the leaves and turning frequently also helps.

So ‘Don't Leaf me this Way’ – I don't like it here in this lonely old compost bay! Please take me to your plot and I can invigorate your soil!

At Slopefield we are very fortunate to have a supply of leaves in the compost bays at both ends of our site, which were kindly provided by Aberdeen City Council.

You can find good articles on-line about using of leaves as organic matter to improve soil.

## Wild Flowers

### Wild Flowers

This years theme from the RHS ‘Britain in Bloom’ was Wild about Wildflowers. As Slopefield Allotments was to enter ‘Its Your Neighbourhood’ Award we decided we should try to grow some Cornfield Annuals. We identified four suitable areas: two at the top end and two at the bottom end. Each area was cleared of rubbish and dug over on Community Days in March and April. The Wild Flower seed was sown in trays and grown in polytunnels for four weeks, then the plugs were planted out on the only fine Sunday there was this summer! The wildflowers have brightened up these areas for everyone to enjoy. It is hoped that these areas will produce seed and will germinate again next year (if they set enough seed after the poor summer we had). These lovely wildflowers produce nectar for the insects which are very beneficial to the allotments and encourage pollination.



Terry (#24)



## It's Your Neighbourhood Awards 2012

Slopefield Allotment Association has received a 2012 It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) Award of 'THRIVING' from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and Beautiful Scotland, presented at the Albert Halls in Stirling on 31st October. This was a fantastic achievement for our first year!

## Award for Slopefield

The commendation stated that the group has become 'a vibrant allotment community that has vastly improved an obviously ailing site. Environmentally, the group has adopted a zero waste policy, encouraged recycling and water conservation. A highly visible network of community participation exists through encouragement and sharing of knowledge to enhance the success, pride and enjoyment for all.' Sounds impressive!

During presentations by George Anderson of the Beechgrove Garden and John Frater, Operations Director of Keep Scotland Beautiful, several of the lovely photographs taken by Lorraine around the Slopefield site were used as a back-drop. Her pictures of our wildflower verges looked particularly impressive blown up on the 'big screen', and were enjoyed by the several hundred delegates in the hall.



George Anderson with Wendy (#4) and Ethel (#52)

Representatives of Slopefield Allotment Association, and also of Cove in Bloom who also received an IYN award, were invited to join Council members on their minibus down to Stirling. This was much appreciated, although an early start! (6 am!) However, it was a very worthwhile day, and an inspirational event, as we got to see what other community groups get up to, forged new links, and got ideas for how we may be able to get funding and support for Slopefield.

To read a delegate's first hand account of the IYN awards ceremony, see the Environmental Quality Blog on the link:

<http://www.keeptoscotlandbeautiful.org/blog.aspx?id=102>,

All of the presentations from the day are on the Beautiful Scotland website:

<http://www.beautifulscotland.org/entrant-support.asp>.

There is a lot of interesting stuff on these sites if you have time to browse.



## Recycled Bottle Greenhouse Project

Please continue to save your 1.5 and 2 litre plastic bottles for our Recycled Bottle Greenhouse Project. 1500 bottles will be required! Please rinse bottles and remove labels, then you can pop them in plastic bags and leave on Plot 11. We hope to start building our greenhouse in the Spring. Please contact Ethel (#52) or Wendy (#4) for further information.



## Greenhouse

## Quiz

### One Minute Quiz: compiled by Loraine

The answers are all girl's or boy's names.

- 1 ---- Innes Nos. 1,2,3 & 4 composts.
- 2 ----- Thrower presented BBC Gardener's World from the Magnolias.
- 3 ----- Plum, popular heavy cropping variety.
- 4 ----- Fennel, aniseed flavoured plant.
- 5 The ----- Welch Winter Gardens, Duthie Park, Aberdeen.
- 6 ----- Craig, early fruiting tomato and reliable onion.
- 7 King ----- a main crop potato variety
- 8 --- Thumb, another name for nasturtium
- 9 Rose of -----, common name for Hypericum. (Solution given in next Slopefield News)
- 10 ----- Grieve, a juicy apple & good pollinator.

## Solution to last issues crossword

<b>Across</b>	26 Eternal	7 Extole
1 Plots	27 Catalogue	8 Norma
4 Broad beans	28 Erica	14 Asparagus
9 Rotor	29 Eternal	15 Pie
10 Rainwater	30 Gates	17 Scientist
11 Foghorn		18 Shedloads
12 Nigella	<b>Down</b>	21 Divulge
13 Landscape	1 Portfolio	23 Iceberg
16 Roses	2 Octagonal	24 Ruche
19 Sit	3 Serious	25 Mated
20 Oiled	4 Baron	26 Enemy
22 Pesticide	5 Onion sets	
24 Remover	6 Dowager	

## Plotters' Calendar

(The full version is available with this newsletter.)

## Month by Month Plotters' Calendar

Not sure what to plant and when?? Confused about your pruning schedule? Don't even know when to sow your wild oats? Fear no more! A Month by Month Plotters' Calendar with all this information (and more) is soon to be posted at the Community Plot. The monthly schedule will also be available on the Slopefield Yahoo site.



## Woodland Trust

### Woodland Trust Tree packs

The Woodland Trust offers free packs of trees/hedging for community groups and Slopefield has been successful in securing a pack of 105 trees called Wild Harvest, which will be delivered in early March. These will enhance the environment at Slopefield and encourage wildlife. We will let you know when our trees arrive and will be looking for volunteers to help plant them at our first Community Day in 2013 (see p.3 & p.8). Should be fun! Anne (#55)

## Turnip and Squash Mash

### Ingredients

500g squash  
400g turnip  
olive oil  
1 head garlic

1 large onion  
crème fraiche  
chives



### Method

Chop the peeled squash into 3cm cubes, toss in olive oil and seasoning, place in a roasting tin along with a whole, unpeeled, head of garlic. Roast for 40 minutes in a 200°C oven until soft. Cut the turnip into chunks and cook in boiling water until soft. Drain, mash and keep warm. Fry the sliced onion gently in oil until nicely browned. In a large bowl combine the lightly mashed squash, squeeze the cooked garlic out of its skin, add mashed turnip, crème fraiche and the chopped chives. Mix lightly and decorate with the onions.

## Aberdeen in Bloom (A Bloomin' Success!)

Aberdeen City has won a Silver Gilt Award in this year's Britain in Bloom Competition, with judges being particularly impressed by the efforts Aberdeen's community groups, including Slopefield Allotments. Because of our contribution to Aberdeen's success, representatives from Slopefield were invited to attend an 'In Bloom' reception earlier this month at the Winter Gardens at Duthie Park. The event was hosted by the Lord Provost George Adam, who said:

*"Although we are disappointed not to have gone a step further in the City Category we have thoroughly enjoyed our experience and we now set our sights on going for gold next year.*

*Receiving the Silver Gilt is a tremendous achievement and I extend heartfelt congratulations to all the council staff, communities, businesses and volunteers who made this possible."*

So our beautiful wildflower borders, which were the 2012 RHS theme for Britain in Bloom, not only enhanced our environment and benefitted wildlife, but also helped Aberdeen City Council to win a prestigious award!

The 2013 Britain in Bloom theme will be 'Herbs', and the Council is very keen for Slopefield allotments to participate next year, which we can do once again through the It's Your Neighbourhood Scheme. So with some more hard work from our volunteers, and perhaps a bit of luck, we could be instrumental in Aberdeen City winning its first Gold award ever. That would certainly be quite an achievement!

We welcome any ideas for our herb planting for 2013.



Seasonal  
Recipe

Aberdeen  
in Bloom

## Events Diary and Competitions

### Events

All events at **Plot 11** unless otherwise stated. Please read the Newsletter articles for more details. If you have any ideas for events/projects/educational days please let us know!

- **AGM**

Slopefield Allotment Association AGM **Thursday 7th March** 7.30pm at Aberdeen Grammar FP Club, 86 Queens Road. Very important – please come along! There will be a pay bar, finger buffet and raffle.

- **Community Days**

First one to be held on **Sunday 31st March** (tree planting), and then on last Sunday of the month until October. Meeting at plot 11 at 2pm. Tea and bakes at about 3.30pm. please join in for refreshments and a chat even if you have been busy working on your own plot! Check notice board/Yahoo for more details.

- **Tree Planting Day**

Woodland Trust Tree Planting Day on **Sunday 31st March** (see p.6).

- **Swap Shop**

April Swap Shop – **Sunday 28th April** 2pm. Bring seeds, plants, herbs, seed potatoes, jams, chutneys, unwanted tools, etc. to swap.

May Swap Shop – **Sunday 26th May** 2pm. Again, bring along anything you have in excess to swap

- **Summer BBQ**

Annual BBQ and competitions **Sunday 15th September** 2–4pm. Not to be missed! We are happy for entries (on the day please) for the following categories:

- **weirdest-shaped vegetable**
- **biggest onion (weight)**
- **longest carrot**
- **kids flower**
- **heaviest vegetable**
- **best single bloom**
- **best bouquet**
- **kids best vegetable**

All will be judged! Any other suggestions?

- **Quiz Night**

Quiz night. Date to be confirmed!

- **Photo Competition**

Photo Competition. Snaps wanted! We plan to choose the best to make a Slopefield Calendar to raise funds for the Association. Judging date and social event to be confirmed.

- **Pallet Competition**

We hope to organize a Pallet Garden Competition. More info to follow.

- **Bonfire**

**November.** Date to be confirmed. More info to follow.

Check the Yahoo Site for more details  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/slopefield/>

and the website!  
<http://slopefield.webs.com/>

