

**Hackney Allotment Society
Minutes of AGM held on Tuesday 3 October 2023
Church Rooms, St Mary's Church
Stoke Newington Church Street**

Attendees: Deborah Allwright
Lucy Carter
Peter Carter
Guy Dehn
Ian Dick
Heather Finlay
Val Gorbould
Jana Hasegawa
Jane Hough
John Hudson
Sue Kay
Sarah Kissack
Nancy Korman
Jennie Long
Betty Manning
Jeff Manning
Dave McCarthy
Judy McGrail
Marie McShea
Hugh Naylor
Julia Rockcliffe
Maggie Ross
Val Shepherd
Ginny Srawson
Philip Turner
Annie Wilson

Apologies: Rowena Altheer
Marianosa Frasca
Ruth Gladwin
Tim Maby
Penny Miller
Mairin Power
Neal Purvcis

Sophie Verhagen, Head Grower at Growing Communities, *Living Without Pesticides*

Sophie gave some simple principles for growing:

- Feed the soil, not the plant. Plants thrive on their own in a healthy and fertile soil.
- Don't dig too much. Remove weeds carefully, disturbing the soil as little as possible.
- Don't walk on the soil, you will compact it.
- Aerate the soil with a fork and work it back and forth to loosen the soil. Don't use it to dig far down.
- Add organic matter as much as possible.
- Use a green manure for a year if you can. Chop the leave to help decomposition.
- Thin plans out. Do not make the mistake of thinking you can get more produce by cramming in more plants. They will not like it. Plants need air and space around them to grow. Follow the spacing information on the seed packets.
- Everybody knows about bee hotels but don't forget bugs - leave a woodpile for beetles and other small creatures - they too eat things we do not want.
- Use comfrey tea as a general feed. You can also chop its leaves and leave around the base of fruit bushes.
- Grow Cosmos for bugs that eat aphids.
- Do your spraying at the end of the day when our bug friends have retired for the night. Spray with natural pesticides such as garlic water.

Sophie took a number of questions and best of all, will send on an information sheet which will be circulated to all members.

2023 AGM

1. Minutes of the 2022 AGM

These had been circulated with the notice of the AGM. Nancy reported that she had neglected to circulate members 6 weeks in advance of the meeting to ask for nominations. Aside from this, the minutes were approved.

2. Chair's report

Nancy, speaking for Penny, reported that HAS has 163 members, of whom 17 are on the waiting list. Nine of the 17 are waiting for a plot in N16 and four are not ready for a plot right now. As we have more plots in E5/8 than in N16, all those on the waiting list are offered a plot in E5/8 when these are available, in case they have transport of their own which makes those plots accessible to them. The recommendation is that the Committee gives priority to opening the waiting list early in 2024, and **this was approved by the meeting.**

Eleven plots had been let during the year, which is a record. During the year, two Lime trees have been removed from the Queensbridge Road site, due to the amount of shade they cast, and the moisture removed from the soil; two fruit trees will replace them in them spring. Springdale Road had scaffolding and netting put up to protect plot holders

from potential danger of falling rendering. There was also a new fence put up at the rear of the site due to a difficult neighbour. Both these were paid for by the Council. There was also some remedial work carried out at Overbury Street to the raised beds.

Sadly, the death of four members was reported: Marco Bojcun and Sylvia Cummins from Spring Lane, Henrietta Soames from S Kilda's and Raef from Spring Lane. All had been members for many years.

3. Treasurer's Report

Hugh reported that we are in good financial shape and that our income from membership fees and plot rentals covered our expenditure last year, although expenditure was fairly low. The Society received a donation of £250 from the family of Sylvia Cummins, a collection taken at her funeral service. Her family thought that it could be used by Spring Hill site for something that would be a memorial for Sylvia. Hugh also mentioned that HAS has been left two legacies by a former member but that these would not be realised for several years as the asset is still in use.

4. Election of Officers

Both Penny Miller (Chair) and Nancy Korman (Secretary) had previously announced they would not stand for office again.

Helen Bishop nominated Julia Rockcliffe as Chair and this was seconded by Susan Kay. Guy Dehn nominated Jana Hasegawa as Secretary and this was seconded by Philip Turner. There were no other nominations and so Julia and Jana were unanimously elected.

5. Site Representatives

Nancy asked each of the site representatives present to stand and received a show of appreciation for the work they do throughout the year, not all of which is pleasant. They are volunteers and give of their time freely, and without their work the organisation could not work. Those present were: Sue Kay, Val Shepherd, Guy Den and Ian Dick, Philip Turner, Julia Rockcliffe, Annie Wilson, Marie McShea, Elsa Hamaz and Helen Bishop, Ginny Strawson. (Nancy wishes to record here those site representatives not at the meeting: Marian Shaughnessey (CW), Jack Eldon (LS), Laurence Sgroi (SH). There were two other site representatives who resigned during the year (Catherine Wensley, Sophie Mathias and Bren Cunningham, all from Spring Hill).

In addition, Nancy mentioned for recognition Annie Wilson and Amanda Scope for the production of the newsletters and Bob Geater for looking after the website.

6. Revision of the Bylaws

The last AGM recommended that the bylaws be revised to reflect the commitment to cultivation in line with best practice for the treatment of the environment. This has been

manifested in a revision to paragraph 15 and this was unanimously approved by the meeting.

In addition, the Committee suggested a revision of paragraph 6 which is concerned with the treatment of a plot when the plot holder is away. The existing paragraph 6 was thought to be unnecessarily complicated and ambiguous, and the committee now asks that any member who will be away for two months or more be reported to the committee by the site representative and the committee will decide how the plot will be handled. This is to avoid a situation in which a plot is left unused during the main growing season. This revision too was accepted by the meeting.

7. Best Plot awards

Aden Terrace

Best newcomer	Anna Brojer
Best plot	Sarah Vaughan-Roberts

Leaside

Joint Best Plot	Lorna Hayes Gill Harris and Al Wallace
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Spring Lane

Joint Best Plot	Ben Myhill Brighid Lowe
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Spring Hill

Best Plot	Cedric Rey and Aurora Sebastien
Best Joint Newcomer	Heather Finlay

Small sites

Joint Best plot	Rosanna Preston (SD) Deborah and Martin Jeffries
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8. Items raised by members - Water Supply on Spring Lane

Spring Lane currently does not have piped water but uses a manual pump to pump water from a bore hole. This is both taxing for members on site and the pump for a variety of reasons often required expensive repairs. Nancy and the site representatives are exploring the possibility of both getting piped water on site (contact with Thames Water) AND making better use of the bore hole by using an electric pump. We have a plumber involved advising us, have submitted an application to Thames Water but still have more information to collect. At the end we would like to be able to compare the costs of different systems in terms of capital outlay and running costs and arrive at a decision which would improve the water facilities at Spring Lane. At the same time, there are two other sites which have issues with a water supply and Nancy hopes that contact with Thames Water would help to explore possible solutions to the water supply on the other sites.

9. A thank you to Nancy and Penny

Julia, on behalf of the Committee. expressed the appreciation of the Committee for the work Penny and Nancy had done over the past 12 years and mentioned some of the tasks done. In turn, Nancy thanked the Committee for the support they had given her and said how much she had enjoyed getting to know members and visiting the sites, learning from what others were doing. The years flew by, and they were enjoyable ones too.