



Alsager Gardens Association

December 2025



 **SEASONS GREETINGS** 

TO ALL MEMBERS

FROM

The Alsager Gardens Association Committee 

*As the year draws to a close your committee would like to
update you on the progress we have made during 2025*



Our website

Our website now contains extensive information, and this is now the “go to place” for all the information you need as members. We are directing all traffic, including new member and plot applications, through the website which has reduced manual processes and is making better use of our limited volunteer time.

This process links in with the implementation of the new Scribe Allotment System which is how we are now managing the Allotment Process including managing the plot tenancies, inspections, vacancies and allocation. This is now a centralised process which stores all the key data including the signed Tenancy Agreement and the Inspection Notices. From this data we can produce the Allotment Invoices and manage the payment process via the “Accounts” module in the system.

Online Banking

We moved to Banking online earlier this year and now have access to all payment and income electronically which speeds up the processes of invoice reconciliation and debt management. This move has also enabled us to introduce a “Deposit” system for new plot holders with individual deposits being held securely in a Deposit Account.

These electronic processes have enabled us to make better use of the time our volunteers give to supporting and managing the AGA. To maximise this, we need all members and plot holders to have an email address to enable us to communicate quickly and easily and for payments to the AGA to be made by bank transfer. Payments by cash and cheque incur an administrative overhead so please make all payment to the AGA by bank transfer.

Annual Open Day

Our open day was held on Sunday 18th May at our Cedar Avenue Allotment from 10am to 2.30pm. It was an excellent turn out as the sun shone! Thanks to our Amazing team of volunteers and particularly to Jane Worsdale who co-ordinated the event.

The Allotment Awards 2025

The AGA held the “Best Allotment” awards presentation on the evening of Monday 1st September 2025 at the Alsager Cricket Club. This year we invested in new trophies and a new overall “Best Allotment” award, the Keith Biggs Memorial Trophy. Keith Biggs was an active member of the AGA for many years and was instrumental in developing the facilities and improvements we now have on all allotment sites.



Pic 2 Bob Shaw - Best Allotment Winner 2025



Pic 3 The Keith Biggs Memorial Trophy



Pic 1 Winners of Awards

More details and photos of all our events are available on our website at <https://www.alsagergardens.org.uk>



Allotment and Membership Stuff

Your email address

For the very few individuals, who have not provided us with an email address, in recognition that they have been members of the AGA for a long time, we have had to print out information such as Newsletter, Tenancy changes and the Annual Invoice and post them to the individual. This is a time consuming and costly process which we cannot sustain.

From 2026 this manual process will not be undertaken. Members will be sent automatic email updates from the Scribe System together with Newsletters by email.

All members are expected to provide us with their up-to-date email address and refer to the website for information. Please remember to tell us if your email or home address changes!

Your help with keeping the administrative overheads of the AGA to a minimum, is much appreciated.

Membership Fees and Plot Rental Fees

At the meeting held on 25th November and 9 December 2024, the committee looked at the income we would need to meet our anticipated expenditure in 2026 including the cost of water which the AGA is now responsible for.

To cover some of our costs the AGA Committee agreed to implement a “water charge” of £2.50 per quarter plot. This will be seen on your invoice as “Water”. The annual plot rental has been increased by £1 per quarter plot to £23.50. Even with these increases the AGA will be using its reserves to absorb a significant part of the operating costs. Membership rates remain unchanged.

Allotment Plot Invoices for 2026

The Allotment Invoices for the period 1st January to 30th September (9 months) were sent out to all tenants from our new Scribe Allotment System on 25th and 26th November 2026.

I would like to thank the 41% of our tenants that have already paid their invoice and paid by bank transfer.

Paying by bank transfer has saved the AGA a huge amount of time as we can easily track the payment through the “online banking” process and quickly transfer the payment details to the Scribe System. We can also now produce reports from the Scribe system of who has/has not paid and easily take any follow up action that is needed.

All invoices are due for payment on or before 1st January 2026, if you have not already done so, please pay by Direct Bank Transfer to: Alsager Gardens Association Sort Code: 60 01 12 Account Number: 01020420.

A reminder to everyone that the payment for your plot is up to 30th September 2026 (9 months) and that the next invoice that will be for the 12-month tenancy period from 1st October 2026 to 30th September 2027. These invoices will be sent out in August 2026.



Allotment Rules

A copy of the updated Allotment rules was sent out electronically with each invoice, a copy is also available on our web site in the member's section. The rules have been updated, and we have included an index to help locate any section of interest as well as a helpful summary of the "Key Requirements, Must Do and Must not Do".

Key Changes

- P4 - The introduction of a deposit for new tenants
- P 13 -The requirement to give 2 months written notice should you wish to end your allotment plot tenancy
- P12 - All plots must display their plot number; this is now a tenant requirement. Some plots already do so in various ways. All tenants are encouraged to add their plot number by 30th September 2026. Your plot number(s) can be found on your latest invoice. Please contact your site manager if you need advice or assistance on this.

Tenancy Agreements

The task of obtaining a signed tenancy agreement for all plot holders is nearly completed. We have stored over 140 jointly signed tenancy agreements within the new Scribe System. All new tenants are automatically sent an agreement as part of the process, and the plot cannot be let until the agreement is signed and returned.

We have a small number of current plot holders who have not yet signed and returned the document. If this is, you then you will be receiving a further copy of your agreement with your invoice. Please sign and return this as soon as possible as this is part of the legal process, we are required to action on behalf of the Town Council.

Your Allotment Concerns

1. Increased sighting of Rats

Rats are unfortunately a common problem on allotments due to readily available food (produce, bird seed), water, and shelter (compost heaps, sheds, overgrown areas). Control focuses on removing these resources: keep plots tidy, secure food/compost in wire-mesh bins, don't leave fallen produce, cover water butts, and block gaps in shelters, using regular disturbance (turning compost, making noise) to deter them. Get rid of rubbish/rotten wood heaps.

2. Maintain the Paths around your plots

The paths around your plot are either your responsibility to maintain or a joint responsibility with the adjoining plot. Please talk to each other to agree who does what.

3. Use of Weedkiller

If you have use of weed killer - please ensure it does not spray onto neighbouring plots and destroy their crops!

4. Chippings

Chippings can be arranged with and delivered by local tree surgeons. Before you arrange any large deliveries, please contact your site manager to ensure you can access the site and to agree where the delivery will be deposited.



Chippings should be from a reputable source and are excellent for creating durable paths (often over cardboard for weed suppression) and as a long-term mulch. Avoid chippings with a high quantity of “Green” particularly with young conifer content as it contains high tannins.

Do not use Laurel chippings as they are **not safe to use as mulch or compost** because the leaves and wood release **cyanide compounds**, especially when cut or shredded, posing risks to humans, pets, and livestock through skin contact,

5. Manure

If anyone would like to organise and manage a delivery of manure (pesticide free) on behalf of your site and from a reputable source, contact your site manager

Positive Inspection Outcome - Alsager Town Council

The annual inspection Allotment Site Health and Safety Inspection took place across all four sites in September. We received a lot of positive feedback with all sites stated as “generally well maintained”

The Town Council have several actions regarding our boundary fences, and the AGA have actions relating to some weedy/grassy plots and plots with rubbish. These actions have been picked up via our inspection process.

Our attention was also drawn *to a small number of water butts* that are either not covered with a hard lid or not covered at all. If you have such a water butt, please can you take the appropriate action to ensure we comply with this requirement. This specific issue will be dealt with again during the March 2026 inspection.

The report stated:

“The annual inspection has shown that the allotment sites are generally well maintained, with only a small number of issues requiring remedial action. The clear division of responsibilities between Alsager Town Council and Alsager Gardens Association will ensure that these matters are addressed effectively. By continuing to work in partnership, both organisations can support the safe, sustainable, and enjoyable use of the allotments for the benefit of the local community.”

The AGA represents Value for Money

As part of the requirement to demonstrate “Best Value” earlier this year, Alsager Town Council assessed the potential costs if they were to undertake over the sole management of the allotments.

Unfortunately, this process was not well communicated to the AGA committee, leading to the committee and members expressing their concerns to the Town Council.

However, the ATC report highlighted the excellent value that the AGA delivers in managing the four allotment sites, with the Town Council acknowledging “the exceptional value for money we receive from the volunteers who make up the AGA.”

The Town Council has since apologised for the poor communication and any distress it caused members.



Trading Hut

Many thanks to everyone who used the Trading Hut this year. A “Big Thanks” to those that participated in the Trading Hut Rota, generously volunteering their time to staff the Trading Hut and a huge thanks to Mike Brookes who organised the rota during 2025

Adrian Ford will be contacting people after Christmas to confirm your continued support.

The more people join the rota, the less work there is for each person. Teams of three, staff the Trading Hut for about two hours on each Sunday between late February and the end of September. If you can help, please contact Adrian by email at

treasurer@alsagergardens.org.uk or [mob 07976978976](tel:07976978976).

Guidance will be provided for new volunteers.

The 2026 Trading Hut opening times are **Sundays**

22nd February 2026 to	7th June 2025	10am – 12 noon
14th June 2026	to 27th September 2026	10:30 am - 11:30 am

Help! – Your Association Needs You!

As a committee we have tried to spread the work amongst as many people as possible, but volunteers are thin on the ground!

Breaking down a job role makes it easier to find suitable candidates, as the position is more focused and less overwhelming. In larger teams, rotating jobs gives multiple people experience in each role, so they can fill unexpected gaps when needed.

Involving a broader team makes the AGA more resilient to crises. We've already begun by assigning multiple site managers per site and appointing both a Treasurer and Accounts Officer, which distributes responsibilities and ensures knowledge transfer. Committee members don't need expertise in every area; a larger team brings diverse skills that no single individual can provide.

As a result of introducing the Scribe Allotment system the roles of site manager and secretary have reduced as a significant amount of the admin and paperwork is now done by the system.

However, to enable the AGA to run the allotments effectively and therefore reduce costs to plot holders, we need to have a range of volunteers who can assist with the running of things.

Many of the committee are undertaking more than one role to fill the gaps. This is not sustainable and we need people to volunteer for various roles.



At this point we know that **we need a secretary** as this post has remained vacant while we have assessed the impact of Scribe on the role. We also know that we need **site management support**.

We are exploring the feasibility of forming a small Allotment Inspection Team of three people to conduct the inspections across all sites each March, June, and September, and then report the results to the Scribe Data Manager for action and issuing notices. If this role would be of interest, please let us know.

We also urgently need to identify someone to be **“Show Secretary”** if we are to have an Annual Show in 2026. A decision on this will need to be made early in the New Year.

Other roles include an **Editor** to produce our Newsletter and a **Website Administrator** to add and update the information on our website - which uses Word Press.

We would also like to add to our **Scribe Administration** and are looking for members who feel they would be able to use and update the Scribe Allotment system for which training will be provided.

We are asking people to come forward and let us know if they are willing to help with any of these roles and we will be happy to discuss in what way you could provide support.

**If you can help your AGA by contributing your time,
then please email chair@alsagergardens.org.uk**

What Can I Plant in December and January?

Winter may seem like a quiet time on the allotment, but it is a good time for maintenance and tidying up and there are still several crops you can sow or plant during December and January. While growth is naturally slower due to shorter days and lower temperatures, this period is ideal for preparing for an abundant spring harvest.



Vegetables to Plant Outdoors

- **Broad Beans:** Hardy varieties such as 'Aguadulce Claudia' can be sown directly outdoors. They will germinate slowly and overwinter, giving you a head start in spring.
- **Garlic:** Plant individual cloves directly into well-drained soil. Garlic needs a cold spell to develop properly, making December and January ideal months for planting.
- **Onion Sets and Shallots:** Autumn or winter-planting varieties can be started now if the soil is workable, though in colder, wetter areas you may wish to wait or start them in modules under cover.
- **Rhubarb Crowns:** Plant dormant crowns to establish a new patch for future harvests. Avoid harvesting in the first year to allow the plants to settle in.
- **Asparagus Crowns:** Weather dependent, you can begin planting asparagus crowns towards the end of January for an early start.



Vegetables to Sow Indoors or in a Greenhouse

- Salad Leaves: Quick-growing varieties like lamb's lettuce, winter purslane, and rocket can be sown in trays or containers under cover for a continuous supply of fresh greens.
- Herbs: Parsley, coriander, and chives can be started indoors on a sunny windowsill or in a heated propagator.
- Early Peas: Hardy pea varieties can be started in guttering or trays under cover, ready for transplanting out in early spring.
- Broad Beans: If your plot is exposed or the ground is frozen, sow broad beans in pots indoors and transplant them when conditions improve.

Other Tasks for the Winter Allotment

- Soil Preparation: Take advantage of clear beds to dig in compost or well-rotted manure, improving soil structure and fertility for spring planting.
- Fruit Trees and Bushes: Continue to plant bare-root fruit trees, bushes, and canes (such as raspberries, currants, and gooseberries) while they are dormant.
- Planning: Use this quieter time to plan your crop rotation, order seeds, and repair or clean tools and structures.

Tips for Successful Winter Planting

- Protect young plants with cloches, fleece, or cold frames to shield them from frost and heavy rain and ensure good drainage, as waterlogged soil can rot seeds and bulbs.
- Keep an eye out for pests such as mice, which may dig up seeds and bulbs.

With a little forward planning and attention to protection, your winter allotment can set the stage for a productive and rewarding growing season ahead. **Happy Planting!**

CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE AGA COMMITTEE

- President, Treasurer and Trading Hut – Adrian Ford
treasurer@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Chair – Pauline Hubbard chair@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Vice Chair - Lynn Jackson vicechair@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Secretary – secretary@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Membership Secretary – Julie Moore membership@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Accounts Manager – Jane Pender accounts@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Events Co-ordinator – Jayne Worsdale – events@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Site Manager Coronation Ave – Richard Barron and Cleo Leigh
coronation@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Site Manager Talke Road – John Nixon and Adrian Humpage
talke@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Site Manager Lawton Road – Kev Lawrence and Ange Lawrence
lawton@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Site Manager Cedar Ave – Lynn Jackson and Pauline Hubbard
cedar@alsagergardens.org.uk
- Trading Hut Rota - rota@alsagergardens.org.uk



A Christmas Message



From your President Adrian Ford

Thank you all for your hard work and support in 2025. As there have been a lot of changes recently we hope you find this newsletter informative.

Alsager Gardens Association needs you - if you can help in any way let us know.

I hope you all have a very happy Christmas and New Year, and I look forward to seeing many of you in 2026.

Adrian Ford



General Meetings



Monday 26th January 2026, and 23rd February 2026, 7pm Alsager Cricket Club

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Monday 16th March 2026 at Alsager Cricket Club

Open Day

Sunday 17th May 2026 – 10.30am – 1pm, Cedar Ave Allotment Site

Annual Show

Saturday 5th September 2026 - 2pm, Alsager Civic – subject to securing a volunteer to act as Show Secretary.

***** Please put these dates in your diary and please come along if you can *****