

WALGA Chairman's report 2014

This year WALGA has had Committee meetings in February, July and September – plus the one attached to the AGM.

We decided not to run a programme of talks this year but to suggest that people who were keen to go to gardening talks should look at the programmes or the several close-by Garden Clubs that run interesting programmes and gave the contact details for Woodbridge, Kirton and Falkenham and Bucklesham in our programme. Some members of WALGA have joined the Woodbridge Horticultural Society for their talks.

December found the usual suspects playing with flowers and greenery under the tuition of Emma Saunders Gilbert – there was a spring incarnation of this event as well.

January saw another highly successful Pruning and Grafting workshop run by Mariah Skellorn with Marina O'Connell of the Apricot Centre demonstrating in the morning and Mariah herself leading the afternoon.

Open Gardens was programmed for June 1st, but it proved to be too difficult to attract enough gardens, in spite of a lot of work going into promotion by Chris Lyon and Rosalind Erskine and a new plan for using it partly as a fund-raiser for a local children's charity. We also decided that with the wonderful Newbourne event perhaps that was enough locally for the year.

The Produce Show in September was better attended than ever before and with more entries, several of them new and vociferously enjoyed. The Committee worked very hard!

The Apple Pressing, however, was a wash-out – perhaps due to the relatively poor local harvest, perhaps to inefficient advertising. Other local apple pressings have gone well.

The three projects under WALGA auspices continue to do well in their various ways, though also posing some problems – please see separate reports for the Scattered Orchard, the Community Apple Preserving Equipment and Waldringfield Community Composting.

Our plan this time last year to find an allotment site has born little fruit: land for allotments is in very short supply – agricultural prices are up and people are not willing to consider parting with their land. There are still some avenues to try, but several possibilities have proved not possible.

Betsy Reid

WALGA Chairman November 2014

Community Fruit Preserving Equipment Report.

For the first time this year the WALGA CFPE has proved financially viable: this is largely due to sourcing, after much research, insurance at nearly a third less than we have been paying. The number of borrowings continued to be about the same as last year, with community events in Boyton, Woodbridge and at Foxburrow Farm well attended again – and a new borrowing from Brettenham Garden Club who were well pleased with their event. This level of borrowing is encouraging in a year when the apple crop was considerably less good than 2013.

The equipment has again passed seamlessly and without fuss from one lender to the next with users cascading their knowledge of the process and its glitches efficiently from one to another. This has involved me relatively little, which has been a relief and increased the degree of responsibility that users have shown.

The star performance was again from Charlie Zaks of ttWoodbridge and her helpers who processed double what they did last year – it is distributed by the Salvation Army to food banks and shelters and refuges.

WALGA CFPE custodian – Betsy Reid
November 2014

Waldringfield Community Composting.

This project is now at the end of its second full year of operation and has continued, though rather slowly, to survey households about their composting habits and to encourage greater home-composting and the take-up of Hotbins, Bokashi bins and Wormeries. The four members of the steering group have not been as diligent in monitoring and reinforcement as they should have been and the project is in need of some new blood. Tim Eliot's volunteer contribution of a web-site to record inputs is up and running – some participants use it well, others significantly less so. So we are still not at the point as which we can ask Suffolk County Council to agree to pay us landfill – tax diversion credits. We have a particular responsibility to try to achieve this, being still the only Community composting organisation in Suffolk.

One of our funders, Suffolk Coastal District Council, has supported us in monitoring the waste bins (all of them) of seven of our volunteers. We have failed to follow up on this, and will probably have to start it again from scratch.

All this has been achieved with grants from the Suffolk Foundation, Suffolk Coasts and Heaths, SCDC's Greenprint Forum and Awards for All, totalling more around £6,000.00.

Betsy Reid
Pp Waldringfield Community Composting.
November 2014

The Scattered Orchard.

All the trees planted since 2012 have been checked and the few failures noted for replacement. Another little group of trees was planted in the path between the school and the village hall, which has been extensively cleared, in March. These were two of our Grafting Workshop apples, two cobb nuts and a damson. We also planted a pear and two damsons in the hedges around the village hall. We also planted a loganberry in the margins of the playground.

The first planting – the espaliers in Village Way – are looking big enough to make an impression now, and several bore fruit, which residents enjoyed, in the summer. Village Way residents also volunteered for the summer pruning.

The figs against the walls of the Village Hall are doing particularly well and will need frameworks for training support to be erected shortly.

In January last year the Scattered Orchard group – mostly Mariah Skellorn – organised another highly successful Pruning Workshop run by Marina O'Connell of the Apricot Centre, followed by a Grafting Workshop run by Mariah herself, with some overlap of clientele, but some new takers. We plan the same in January 2015.

We have a few trees grafted last year to find homes for – and are happy to consider other planting opportunities!

Betsy Reid, Linda Wilkins, Christine Fisher-Kay (Mariah Ballam busy with baby Milly)

November 2014