

WALGA report for Parish Council 2013



WALGA has had an interesting year! Our two informative talks in 2012 aroused considerable interest from those who attended. These were the Folklore of Garden and Hedgerow Herbs (with experience of making your own soap and potions) by Julie Foster from Newbourne and Organic Pest and Disease Control by Marina O'Connell of the Apricot Centre near Manningtree. Her advice that if you accept disease and pests – but plan-in the predators and plan your system to maximise plant health – then sit tight holding your nerve while things balance themselves out might be hard to follow, but made good sense.

The weather was against many aspects of gardening in 2012: torrential rain up until the last minute led us to cancel the Open Gardens in April; the apple harvest locally was so poor that it was not worth having an apple pressing in October and though the Produce Show went ahead it was poorly attended with a reduced number of entries. Many competitors loyally made an extra large supply of cakes though! Our companionable fabrication of Christmas festive decoration was as much fun as usual in December.

Our first talk this year, by Suffolk Radio personality Ric Staines, was a delightfully informal conversation about plants for places. We plan a visit to Katy's Garden in May and all our other activities are events (Open Gardens, Produce show, Apple and Pumpkin day) or courses / skill exchanges.

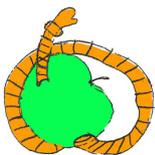
The exciting part of our 'interesting' year came with two projects for which WALGA is providing governance and financial management: the Scattered Orchard was well established as a concept this time last year, but Waldringfield Community Composting only began in May 2012.



Waldringfield, Newbourne & Hemley
Scattered Orchard

Paul Read's talk in 2011 (Suffolk Traditional Orchards Group) inspired Mariah Skellorn to set up an orchard following Incredible Edible Todmorden's example of

planting food in public places. Following the 2012 planting of 47 trees in the Village Halls, Churchyards and playgrounds in Waldringfield Hemley and Newbourne with funding from Suffolk Acre, Networking Nature and all three parish councils the final 13 trees went in in February 2013: all the trees were celebrated at the Jubilee event in June 2012 and most of the trees are registered with the Woodland Trust as some of the six million target. The children at the school have been involved in training the trees that they helped to plant in Village Way. Two pruning and maintenance courses have been run by Marina O'Connell of the Apricot Centre in Manningtree in January and March, with financial help from Suffolk Acre; and a skill-share on grafting, an essential skill for fruit growers, in February. At least two other local communities have been followed our Scattered Orchard idea and set up their own.



Waldringfield Community Composting

The steering group has undertaken a door-to-door survey of the village's composting habits (still to be completed) and held six workshops demonstrating the three different foodwaste processing kits on offer at very reduced prices. The most expensive and probably the most successful of these is the Hotbin and the first 12 of these arrive in the second week of November to be set up the following week with the help of the inventor, Tony Callaghan.

They are bought, at about half their list price, by individual households, but will be shared by other households so as to work optimally. Wormeries and bokashi bins are also on offer as alternative ways of dealing with food-waste – the most intransigent item in home compostables. There are now 17 in operation in the village.

This project will decrease the village's carbon footprint through increasing home composting, increase neighbourliness through sharing materials to put into the kits, the kits themselves and the output – beautiful compost to increase the fertility and water retentiveness of our local soils. Look forward to (even) more beautiful gardens! The funding obtained from Awards for All, The Suffolk Foundation, the AONB Sustainability Grant and SCDC's Community Environmental Action Fund (about £6,000 in all), also covers promotion and education (hence the 'Energy and Community' afternoon up-coming on 13th April), two trips to Great Blakenham to see how all our waste is processed, a film to be made by and for secondary-age children (the filming by Kesgrave School film club in March was deferred due to the horrid weather) and a shredder. It may be that fairly soon we need to start thinking about a site on which to process what cannot be dealt with by householders – though not yet, as WCC's primary focus is to reinforce or re-establish knowledge, confidence and ownership of home-composting. Possibly such a community composting site could be on an allotment site – yet to be obtained.

With these projects firmly established and four years of organised activity behind us we should soon be in a good position to work actively towards an allotment site in the village. We have 13 paid up members and several others on our contact list.

