

Letchworth District Gardeners Association

Affiliated to the BFC, NCS, NDS, NSPS, NVS, RHS & RNRS

President: Mr John Hoyland

Annual Report and Accounts 2009-2010



Chairman's Report

The gardening year got off to a late start but it certainly blossomed once it got going. In March we ran four workshops to help people who were new to 'growing their own vegetables'. The feedback that we received was very positive so we intend to run them again next year. If you or anyone that you know might be interested in attending then please look for details in your next copy of the 'Compost Heap' or on our web site www.ldga.org.uk

Having the trading store open on the first Wednesday of the month was a welcome addition and pleased many members so next year we will extend it even further and the store will be open every Wednesday from 13.00 to 14.30 from February to June inclusive.

On 22nd and 23rd May we took up a new challenge to have a stand at the Letchworth Food Festival. It was a very rewarding weekend with lots of encouraging comments and amazement as we demonstrated how many vegetables can be grown in a small space. I think we could have sold most of the display on the Saturday morning! The result was numerous new members and this trend has continued throughout the year.

Since we changed the venue for our monthly meetings, attendance has increased significantly. I think this is also partly due to the range of guest speakers that we have had during the season. This is something that we plan to continue through 2011.

The outings to East Ruston Old Vicarage and Thompson & Morgan Trial grounds that Thelma arranged were thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended. Since they were subsidised by the association this year it has been decided that in future non-members will still be most welcome to join us but they will be asked to pay an additional £2, on top of the cost to members, for the outing. Sadly Jack Collins has had to stop driving and consequently he is no longer able to distribute the bundles of the 'Compost Heap' to those who deliver it. Jack has done sterling work over the years for which we are sincerely grateful. I am delighted to say that Lauren Cameron has agreed to take on this role which is a great relief.

As in previous years, the reports that follow have been prepared by the relevant members of the committee and I am most grateful to them all.

Finally I would like to thank members of the committee as well as the many people who give a helping hand at the trading store, at monthly meetings, at the shows, at other events, to collect membership fees and to deliver the 'Compost Heap' for all of their hard work. We rely on you all to help us to continue the work of the LDGA.

Maureen Hersee

Meeting Secretary - Laurie Cook

After a slow start in the year with changeable weather the talks and demonstrations were very well attended. The visits to Thompson & Morgan Trials, Old Ruston Vicarage, the wormery and lavender fields were excellent with the weather being good. I trust that next year's programme will be as good.

Show report - Paul Heydon

Yet again, the small band of dedicated exhibitors did not let me down. We held our usual two shows, which were excellent. All entries were up to our high standard, causing the judges problems in which were the best.

In the summer show, I suppose, the most outstanding were the sweet peas, in colour and perfume.

In the autumn show, sorry to the other classes, but it was the array of dahlias that caught the eye. The most pleasing was to see the return of the chrysanthemums. There was also a larger number of jams than usual as with the photography.

My grateful thanks to those who exhibited and came to visit the shows, it makes it all worthwhile.

A big thanks to my small band of helpers and to those who sponsored the classes.

The only real disappointment was the lack of visitors who came to see the shows. For this reason, I have been asked to find a new, more central location. There will also be a few alterations to the usual classes, so please check the new schedule carefully.

Trading Report - Peter Faulkner

Sales this year were, generally, on a par with 2008 – 2009. This is very gratifying and reflects the steady up of membership numbers.

The dreadful start to the year meant that the seed potatoes were not delivered until three weeks after we re-opened at the end of January. Despite this set back we eventually sold 93% of the order – helped in no small way by the prolonged cold spell inhibiting chitting whilst in the store. It was rather surprising that Pentland Javelin (an early) suddenly appeared to be unpopular after a number of good years. The order for 2011 will reflect this.

Other seeds, especially the vegetables, mostly sold well but the limited range of organic seeds did not really catch on. Several thoughts spring to mind – did we advertise them enough; was the display prominent enough and do our members really mind!

Autumn onion sets (Radar) have been and gone. The spring onion sets (Sturon and Red Baron) plus the shallots (Red sun) have just been ordered. The spring supplies will not be from Tuckers because they had already sold out when I contacted them – it will be interesting to see what the quality will be like.

Compost sales have been variable. SHL sold well – as usual - but John Innes, while still appreciable, was lower than of late.

Sundries remained steady and our new line – Figo connectors for bamboo canes – sold reasonably well. Raffia sales were very slow. The rate at which bamboo canes left the store was, once again, unbelievable. The future of Chempak fertilizers looks to be secure – they are now part of the Thompson & Morgan empire.

The new opening times have been largely successful but August – November may need to be trimmed. As explained in my last report we are often at the hut on a Wednesday afternoon, especially during the first half of the season. Although we are there to re-stock the shelves we will not turn members away. The trend of opening officially on the first Wednesday of each month from February to July was very successful for five of those months but July was noticeably quieter. During the year we said a sad farewell to my predecessor, Bob Cooper. Next year two more of our stalwarts (Bob Batten and Ron Clarke) will be unable to continue. We offer them our most sincere

thanks and trust that they will enjoy their 'retirement'. We do hope they can get back occasionally just to socialise. My most sincere and grateful thanks are also extended to the rest of the team without whom there would be no store. We really are in need of more helpers, especially if you are capable of transferring goods to member's vehicles. The more people we have the less each one has to do. If you don't feel you can join the rota you can always call me on an ad-hoc basis to see if help is needed that particular Sunday.

Membership Secretary's Report - Jo Schurch

As usual we have lost more members for various reasons this year but due to vigorous recruitment at the Food Festival, monthly meetings and other events we have also managed to gain 92 new members. A good number of these have been persuaded to volunteer for helping at the shed, show or other events. The total membership at the end of the year is now 726.

Treasurers Report - Roger Cannon

Again it is time to give the annual report, which with the present financial situation we need to take an extremely hard look at how we run the association.

The cost of last year's shows totalled £1,889 we have 700 members, less than 100 people attended this year's summer show. We need to evaluate, if this a good use of our resources. Do we need to be affiliated to so many other societies like the RNRS which cost up to £40 per annum?

The store stocking levels require close scrutiny, we should not hold stock levels exceeding what was sold the previous year plus 10%. This should stop the excessive movement of stock around the store together with damage and spoilage of stock. If we use Till and Stocktaking records in a businesslike manner we should be able to achieve sensible levels of stocking.

Members can also help themselves by stocking up on items in the Autumn that are required for Spring use thus avoiding the mad rush in the store at the start of the new season.

Finally please tell your gardening friends about our association and get them to join us.