

Newsletter Winter 15/16

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Web. www.altonlocalfood.org.uk



Group. Alton Local Food Initiative

Dates For Your Diary

2016

Alton Farmers' Markets

13 Feb, 12 March

ALFI Seedy Saturday

6th Feb. 10am-12noon

Alton Methodist Church

Energy Alton Meetings

20th Jan 7.30pm

Alton Community Centre

'How low can the average Joe get?'

16th March 7.30pm

Alton Community Centre

AGM & Film

ALFI Harvest Feast was delicious

We had our annual Harvest Feast at the Methodist Church Hall on Saturday 10 October. The hall was decorated with berries, autumn leaves, and flowers and some pumpkins grown by Ellis, our treasurer. At coffee time there was delicious homemade produce, including homemade biscuits, beetroot and chocolate cake, and apple cake with coffee or tea.



At lunchtime we added a variety of homemade soups including spicy parsnip, butternut squash, and watercress soup with homemade bread, rolls or muffins. A display showed our current work. We offered bags of eating apples and packets of seeds and green manure. People dropped in to look around and sit and have a chat over coffee or lunch.

Donations were invited and profit from the event will be used for materials needed for the twelve sites around Alton that ALFI garden.

Round up of some of our plots in 2015

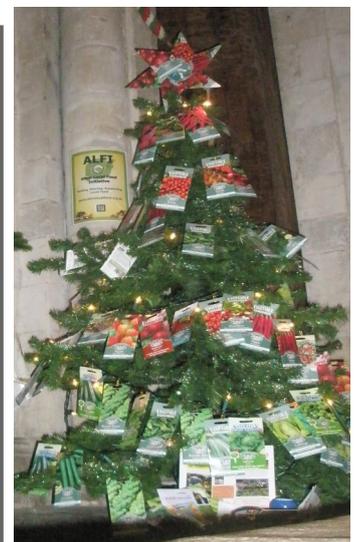
The herbs in our **Allen Gallery** raised beds have mainly grown well as usual. The marigolds, nigella, sunflowers and violas, in the front bed with the thymes, flowered well and attracted plenty of insects, and made a colourful show. The woodruff and marjoram were too vigorous for the space in the rear bed, and the angelica got infested by blackfly. Thanks to the Gallery volunteer gardeners for the watering they did for us.

The Limes Sensory Garden at the Limes Day Centre

Two ALFI volunteers started work on the The Limes Sensory Garden around Easter 2015. The main tasks initially were to prune and tidy the main bed. The garden was planted up originally about four years ago. Once spring growth had started it was clear the gardens were mainly shrubs and mixed perennials. Pruning, training and preventing some plants spreading, along with dead-heading and tidying has continued in this main area. During the spring the tubs and narrow flower beds were also planted up with sweet peas and other annuals chosen for colour and scent.

The **Station Plot** has had yet another good productive year. The pear tree and fruit bushes are all well established now and have produced a lot of fruit. Other good croppers have been peas and beans, courgettes, leeks, lettuces and sweetcorn along with a large variety of herbs.

The Rings opposite the Railway Arms were officially taken over by ALFI earlier this year. Steve Dearing painted them in ALFI colours and they have been planted with bee/insect friendly herbs and flowers along with French beans, onions and tomatoes, thus demonstrating that even the smallest area can be both productive, bee friendly and attractive.



ALFI tree decorated with seed packets at this winter's Christmas Tree Festival at St Lawrence Church, Alton.

For a chance to pick up your seeds for the next season make sure you put 6th February in your diary, when we will be holding our annual 'Seedy Saturday'.

'Greening Grey Britain' - our theme for 2016

Nearly one in four UK front gardens are completely paved over

Nearly 54% of the total surface area of front gardens is hard surfacing (grey)

Almost one in three front gardens in the UK today have no plants

Planting has decreased 15% overall.



The RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) is calling on the residents of Britain to get Greening Grey Britain following surveys revealing that the trend to pave over front gardens is steadily increasing year by year. The RHS believes that this must be reversed for the health of the nation, for wildlife and to help solve problems caused by pollution, heat waves and flooding. We support them in this endeavour. You can pledge your support for transforming hard, grey areas into living planted up beautiful places to enrich lives and benefit the environment at rhs.org.uk/ggb

Even the smallest space can be green and inviting, while still providing room for a car or two and refuse/recycling bins. During this year we will have articles on plants that will survive in small inhospitable places (even under cars), suitable paving materials which allow rainwater to soak away into the ground, and simple design ideas.

By ensuring front gardens contain a balance of hard landscaping and plants, we can:-

Prevent flooding by soaking up rain from summer storms

Provide habitat for up to 260 species of wildlife

Absorb pollutants and noise

Keep us cool in summer and help insulate our homes in winter

Raise our spirits as we arrive home!



Alton Climate Rally and the London March

The Alton Climate Rally took place on Saturday November 28th in a miraculously dry break in the wet and windy weather which dominated late November. The event was opened by the Mayor, Councillor Pam Jones, and skilfully compered by Jerry Janes. James Willis, Lucy Bayliss, Rachel Hubbard and Councillor Graham Hill all spoke briefly, explaining why they felt it was crucial that the UN talks (which opened in Paris on November 30th) should be successful in achieving a global consensus for action on climate change. And the recorded voice of Rebecca Boardman spoke from the Philippines describing the desperate plight of low-lying Pacific Islands.

At noon, David Quick launched his photographic drone which made a video of over 250 people saying 'Count Me In' and which opened the South Today News in the evening.



On Sunday November 29th, over 20 people from Alton joined the London Climate March, carrying 16 placards made at the Rally. These were covered with over 200 personalised hand prints collected at the rally which formed a most colourful and eye-catching display as the group marched along Piccadilly and Whitehall.

The news at the end of the Paris Climate talks on December 13th was that 195 countries had reached an agreement on tackling climate change. This is a most encouraging sign that the many events held by local groups around the world –like the Alton Climate Rally – had, indeed, influenced the negotiators and politicians who met in Paris. Of course, there are huge hurdles ahead, and we must all keep up the pressure on our own politicians to turn their words into actions.

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PLEASE KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEW ALFI WEBSITE.....COMING SOON