

# Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association

## **Pre-reading materials AGM 2025**

### **Introduction**

This pre-reading material is intended to help new plot holders understand how Saintbridge Allotment Gardens Association (SAGA) supports Gloucester City Council in running the Saintbridge allotment site and update all plot holders on recent developments. We invite your comments and feedback to inform the committee and AGM.

### **Background**

Gloucester City Council are responsible for the overall management of the allotment site and issue the tenancy agreements, collect the rent, and manage the waiting list of prospective tenants. The activities of all plot holders are governed by the tenancy agreement they sign with the City Council and the allotment rules and responsibilities. The allotment site is maintained by each individual tenant working their own plot in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

Please make yourself aware of the tenancy agreement and allotment rules and responsibilities, particularly around the construction of sheds, poly tunnels, and planting of fruit trees. All these items require written approval from Gloucester City Council before proceeding. Failure to do so could result in much wasted time and money if the structure is inappropriate and must be removed by the plot holder. If you would like an up-to-date copy of the allotment rules and responsibilities, please email [sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk](mailto:sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk).

SAGA was founded in 2009, and our mission is to ensure the Saintbridge allotments are made available to local residents who wish to follow the recreation of gardening to benefit their health and wellbeing. We are a voluntary organisation; all plot holders are members and can choose to play an active role if they wish. There are no subscription fees as we fund raise from sales of green manure seeds, hazel bean poles, and horse manure to cover annual operating costs. We hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to elect a new committee and guide the activities of SAGA.

SAGA supports the City Council by showing vacant plots to prospective tenants. SAGA also keeps an updated data base of all plot holders. When plots are left uncultivated or other breaches of the tenancy agreement occur SAGA informs the City Council who then contacts the tenant to seek a resolution of the situation, or if necessary, terminate the tenancy.

SAGA receives an annual maintenance grant from Gloucester City Council of £ 540.00. This funding is used to carryout routine maintenance such as hedge cutting, repairs to fencing, gates, water supply etc. Where vacant plots are badly infested with perennial weeds or have large amounts of rubbish on them, SAGA clears the plots and may carry out weed control to make them ready to be re let. This activity is also funded by the maintenance grant.

## **Routine activities**

Throughout the year SAGA collects horse manure which is stored in a compound on the community garden. The manure is sold to plot holders in October at £ 3.00 per wheelbarrow. This year's sales totalled £ 487.90 with all the proceeds going to fund SAGA'S activities.

Many plot holders see the benefits of mustard as a weed suppressing crop sown in the autumn. Bulk buying the seed enables SAGA to pass on huge cost savings to plot holders and make a small profit for SAGA. We continued this scheme with seeds available for sale in September. Total sales came to £ 74.50.

Coppicing the hazel to produce bean poles is carried out in the winter, with one sixth of the area cut each year on a six-year rotation. Last year's bean sticks were sold at one pound each, or twelve for £10.00 and made a total of £ 85.00. However, not all the sticks were sold, indicating the price could be too high and may need to be reduced in future. SAGA will request a working party to cut, and bundle more bean sticks later this winter for sale in spring 2065.

Trimming the hedgerows is usually carried out twice a year in the summer and autumn. The hedgerows were planted by SAGA to improve security and provide habitat for wildlife. The trimmings are shredded using a mower and composted.

Only vacant plots that are badly infested with perennial weeds or have large amounts of rubbish on them require intervention by SAGA to get them ready for relet. This year 24 plots were cleared prior to re-let.

The wildflower meadow strip is cut, and the vegetation removed once a year usually in August. The wildflower strip along with the hedgerows and hedgerow margins provide habitat for beneficial insects and wild birds helping to create a vibrant ecosystem. SAGA welcomes this activity and if you would like to look after a similar area near to your plot please contact us.

You may have noticed the cottage garden floral display on the corner between Cheney Close and the track leading to Birch Avenue. This was established by SAGA to give an attractive feature, provide habitat for pollinators and discourage fly tipping. This is because the land is heavily contaminated with broken glass, stones and other debris making it unlettable. Feedback from plot holders and local residents continues to be appreciative.

## **Community garden**

SAGA established a community garden with the vision to provide a vibrant, welcoming place for people of all ages to come, enjoy pleasant surroundings, and get involved in activities that encourage health and well-being.

Users of the community garden currently consist of a group of adults with special needs from the community group GloActive, attending every Thursday. This year a large section of the garden was re-purposed to supply produce that was routinely harvested for the local food bank at the Redwell Centre in Matson. We replaced the rotting wood on one raised bed with a more permanent solution using reclaimed paving slabs standing on edge and buried one third in the ground. This allows us to save £200.00 originally donated for raised beds. We plan to use this money, together with reclaimed fencing materials from an abandoned apiary, to erect badger fencing on the community garden. This will allow a more diverse range of crops to be grown. As a result of the fencing, we plan to relocate the swap shop to another part of the site.

We are looking for volunteers to help run the gardens, possibly with additional groups attending on different days, or an individual basis. If you would like to find out more or be involved in this activity, please contact [sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk](mailto:sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk)

### **Actions from the 2024 AGM**

Install anti-climb mesh on the double gates by the balancing pond. This is scheduled for winter 2025.

Put antivandal paint on the tops of the gates, subject to agreement from GCC. This would require warning signs to be put on all the gates, making the site appear unwelcoming. Action on hold, to be reviewed should unauthorised access to the site become a problem.

Cut back overgrown areas at the back of the garages on the Cheney Close side of the site to allow contractor mower access. Action implemented.

Install bench seating around the large Walnut tree. This activity is pending due to financial constraints. Should anyone know of any suitable benches that could be donated to this project please email [sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk](mailto:sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk) . The aim is to provide a place for quiet contemplation to remember all the plot holders that have passed, possibly including a commemorative plaque. We are all custodians of our plots at Saintbridge allotments, and we should remember those that looked after the ground before us. Action carried forward.

Information was requested regarding fruit trees allowed on the site. Gloucester City Council have confirmed that all fruit trees to be planted must be of a dwarf type and kept pruned to around five foot (1.5m) high. The trees must be planted so they do not encroach on paths and neighbouring plots. An email should be sent to [allotments@gloucester.gov.uk](mailto:allotments@gloucester.gov.uk) to request permission prior to planting fruit trees. The welcome pack will be updated to include this information.

Plant new hedging to fill gaps in the newly planted hedgerow on Cheney Close. Action implemented.

Put up signage to stop usage of grassed overflow parking in wet conditions. Action implemented.

Repair the potholes along the stone track leading to Birch Avenue and areas around the main gates. Action implemented. The drainage ditch for this track was also cleared and extended.

### **Any other business**

In addition to the topics covered above, the meeting will give time to discuss matters raised by plot holders. If you have any points or issues you would like to raise at the meeting, please contact [sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk](mailto:sagasecretary@saintbridge.org.uk)