

## Focus on the English allotment gardeners



### **“Growing Together” National Allotments Week, 8-14 August 2016**

Our “Growing Together” theme for National Allotments Week 2016 draws attention to the inclusive nature of allotment gardening, appealing to all sections of society from the unemployed to the professional, all races and religions and all levels of ability. Allotments may offer individuals the opportunity to manage a plot of their own and grow their own food but they also host projects that range across many areas e.g. adapted plots for people with disabilities, educational visits from schoolchildren, therapeutic growing opportunities for the bereaved, refugees, those with mental health issues and gardening on prescription. During National Allotments Week the Society is encouraging allotment associations across the UK to hold events during the week to welcome the wider community into their sites to see for themselves; events have been advertised on the Society website over the last months.

Our members support many initiatives, Hazel Grove Allotments have created an area suitable for people with restricted mobility; Newdigate Allotments in Bedworth welcome children from the local school who help out with their sensory garden and have met up with the resident beekeeper; another member in Porthcawl shares his plot with a group of people with a learning disability and helps them to cook the produce that they have grown and the internationally renowned People’s Community Garden\* in Ipswich, which provides opportunity for all with food and leisure gardening, training courses and community events. Often situated in built up urban areas allotment sites contribute a significant amount to the health and well-being of communities and sites in rural areas are often important community hubs.

There is a general acknowledgment and raft of academic studies that examine and highlight the importance of access to green space and gardening opportunities for everyone. However pressures to build houses, create jobs or make a profit often seem to compromise decision makers and allotment land along with other important green space is slowly being eroded and budgets being cut. A recent report commissioned by the National Garden Scheme from the Kings Fund “Gardens and Health”\*\* calls for more joined up strategic thinking between government departments responsible for health, the environment, planning and local government in order to exploit the potential of all forms of gardening to support their priorities.

Karen Kenny, the National Allotment Society President, would like to invite you to visit an event during National Allotment Week and experience the joy of allotments for yourselves.

“We are proud of the Allotment Movement in Britain and its continued success in offering opportunities for families to provide for themselves, whilst also being a valuable resource to diverse groups of people. Social inclusion is an important part of allotment life and there are many projects for those with both physical and mental disabilities, as well as projects which target the socially disadvantaged. We also see whole families from toddler right up to and including Granny and Granddad enjoying working together on their plots.”

The NAS aims to protect, promote and preserve allotments and we call on all those who value allotments to support us in this endeavour, we can all do our part-

- Allotment associations: protect your site, register as a community asset. Allotment Federations: keep allotments in the public eye, make sure they are mentioned in the Local Plan and lobby your councillors and MPs.
- Councils preserve and value your allotment service: it has the potential to deliver some of your public health targets.
- Plot-holders: join the National Allotment Society and support your regional allotment network to promote the allotment movement.
- Aspiring plot-holders: do not be put off by the thought of a long wait – sign up for a plot now; without waiting lists allotment authorities cannot assess demand.

Check out [www.nsalg.org.uk](http://www.nsalg.org.uk) for details of NAW events near you and more details about collective action to protect our plots.

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