



Flitwick Gardeners' Association

Issue 126

Summer 2025

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 23rd August - Annual Show
Saturday 11th October - Autumn Show
Thursday 20th November - FGA Quiz

Flitwick Gardeners' Association

We are an association run by members, for members. Our aim is to promote gardening in Flitwick and the surrounding villages.

We have a members' shop, The Seed Box, where we try to stock useful items including seeds, tools, compost, pots and chemicals at very competitive prices. We also have a library and a small range of loan equipment.

We run shows, organise an annual quiz and run the occasional trip to visit a garden. We're always pleased to welcome new members and always looking for help in running the Association and activities. We'd love to hear from you – just a few hours here and there would make all the difference.

How to find us

The Seed Box is situated behind the site of the old Flitwick Leisure Centre on Steppingley Road, MK45 1TH.

Construction of the new development on the Old Leisure Centre site is well underway, so temporary access to the Seed Box is now via the back of the New Leisure Centre car park. If you're unsure, see the colour map at <https://www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk/fgaopen.htm>

What3words:

///octopus.downhill.sprayer –Seedbox location

///wake.perfumes.every - Approximate position, at the back of the leisure centre car park, of the start of the access track to the Seedbox

New phone number: **07592 996139**

Seed box Opening Hours

Saturday	2.00 pm to 4.00 pm Feb to Nov (closed on Show and Outing days)
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Telephone

Outside of these hours you can always leave a message for us on the answering machine on **07592 996139**.

Email addresses

General enquiries etc.	enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk
Magazine	newsletter@flitwickgardeners.co.uk
Show info and entries	fgashow@flitwickgardeners.co.uk

Website / Facebook address

Facebook Group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/flitwickgardeners
Website	www.flitwickgardeners.co.uk

Executive Committee

Ian Holman	Chairman, Magazine Editor and Show Committee
Colin Stennett	Secretary and Show Secretary
Daniel Doyle	Trading Coordinator
Leonie Coverley	Treasurer
J-P Carter	Deputy Chairman and Show Committee
Siân Jones	Deputy Secretary
Laurie Arnold	Seeds and Deputy Trading Coordinator
Kath Stennett	Show Committee
Francis Prior	Membership Secretary, Deputy Treasurer
Ann Lutley	Publicity Officer
Sue Titchener	Seed Box Rota Coordinator

Show Committee (not mentioned above)

Sue Foster

Honorary Life Members

Linda Pitts, Syd Pye, Maryan Pateman, J-P Carter, Anne Godden, Colin & Kath Stennett, Laurie Arnold

Chit Chat from the Chair

They say every cloud has a silver lining, but for much of this Spring (and as I write this) it's felt like there haven't been many clouds to see, let alone rain. Given the need to water seeds and establishing plants, at least the dry weather seems to have slowed down the growth of weeds (bindweed notwithstanding). We all garden for different reasons, whether it be for the pleasure of a beautiful garden, to grow fresh healthy food, to impress the neighbours, to promote biodiversity or many other reasons. For me, to add to this list this year, we're trying to grow the flowers for my elder son's wedding so if you see me looking stressed in August, you'll know it's not going well!

You'll see later in the magazine that the FGA made a significant financial deficit last year. Whilst Leonie, our Treasurer, outlines the reasons for this and what we (the Committee) are doing about it, you can help too! By this I don't mean spend more money down at the Seedbox (though of course you'd be most welcome!), but to help increase our membership and therefore prospective purchasers. Please do extol the benefits of the FGA to family, friends and neighbours and bring them down to the Seedbox so that they can see for themselves.

This will also help them navigate the (changing) route to the Seedbox! Thank you for your patience with this. Whilst the Developers have been very communicative with us (and many thanks to Colin, our Secretary, for so actively liaising with them), hopefully by the time you read this, the tarmacking will have been completed and you can once again drive in by the 'normal' route from the back of the Leisure Centre car park.

As you'll read later in the magazine, the FGA have been supporting gardeners in Flitwick for more than 50 years. Long may it continue.

Happy Gardening, and see you on the 23rd August at the Annual Show!

Ian Holman (FGA Chairman)

2025 Spring Show Report

By 2:00pm, when the judges arrived the hall was full of flowers and there were several cakes and pasties to be judged. Throughout the hall there were daffodils, tulips, hellebores and other flowers and shrubs. The weather had been kind to us with most classes having several entries and a few classes with so many entries it was difficult for the judges to decide as to which was the best. It was great to see so many people putting entries into the show.

Once again, the people making cakes for refreshments brought some tempting and tasty supplies meaning everyone that came to look around had a really great selection to choose from.

Thanks to everyone that put in entries to the show and those that helped with the show in every capacity. Now we just need the weather to be right for people to bring things to the annual show in August.

Colin Stennett
Show Secretary

2025 Photographic Classes

The classes for the 2025 Annual Show on Saturday 23rd August are:

103 Clouds or Mist	104 Sunshine
105 Rain	106 Frost or Snow

The children's photography class will be 'A Sunny Day'.

Do you have the occasional hour to spare?

The FGA is dependent on our members volunteering their help. If you've got some time and interest, you could:

- Promote the FGA locally on Facebook
- Keep an eye on a stock area in the Seedbox, helping to keep your shelves stocked and advising Dan on re-ordering;
- Help with Seedbox maintenance
- Or anything else you think you could help us with.....

If you can, have a word with any of the helpers down at the Seedbox or email us on enquiries@flitwickgardeners.co.uk

TRADING Update June 2025

First and foremost, I would like to thank all the volunteers that help keep the Seedbox running, especially those hoofing the various compost products we offer (for those of you that are unable to move your own) and to those who have supported with taking their own.

I am still looking for a few Volunteers who are willing to take over-sight of specific sections of the Seedbox, to keep the shelves presentable and stocked and advise on stock requirements. I will obviously spend time with each person in each section and with enough people it will become a very quick and easy task. Thank you to those who have already put their hands up in support.

Despite the mixed reviews of the peat free products it has been great to see that our members have still been coming in regularly to buy the same as they would previously but using our Westland brand. We still have many products at our usual old prices but be aware these are previous years stock that did not need replacing. However once that stock clears it will inevitably be at a higher price due to inflation, as some of you have probably already noted.

At the time of writing, we still have a small amount of potatoes and onions which we will be selling at a reduced price. Details as displayed in the seedbox. I'm sure many of you will still be able to make something out of it.

Keep an eye on the reports for future developments and keep checking in for new stock availability As always I wish everyone every planting success.

Dan Doyle
Trading Secretary

2025 FGA AGM

This year thankfully 15 members turned up for the AGM, with a further 11 members sending their apologies for not being able to attend, meaning that the AGM was quorate.

Ian Holman, chairman, thanked everyone for coming and proceeded to thank all those that had helped with the association over the past year in various capacities. He said that as well as an excellent trip to RHS Hyde Hall there had also been 3 successful shows, and a quiz held during the year.

The End of Year Accounts were presented at the meeting. These showed a deficit of just over £5,000 compared to a profit of £2,700 the previous year. This was primarily due to the reduced sales in the year, mainly in compost sales (where we now only stock peat free products) and spending nearly £2,000 on replacing the lighting in the Seed box (which was necessary). It was pointed out that we are taking steps to improve the situation for 2025. It was also reported that we now got a 3-year lease for the Seed box, which covers the period whilst the care home construction takes place, and the next lease should be forthcoming once this is complete.

The membership report shows that we currently have 241 members, slightly down on the same period last year, with 63 2024 members who have yet to renew for 2025.

All existing FGA Officers and Committee members were willing to stand for another year. These appointments were accepted by all those present.

A discussion then took place about the need for more members in the Association. It was agreed that we should try and advertise in the local magazines – this will be progressed by the committee. One member then thanked all those involved with running the FGA, either on the committee or helping at the Seed box or at the shows. He said that in all areas people were courteous, helpful and showed the association in a good light.

Colin Stennett
Secretary

FGA AGM's – the early years

In the early days the FGA were primarily managing Flitwick allotment sites alongside Flitwick Town Council.

1972. The first AGM was held on 23rd June where 12 of the 29 FGA members attended. Plans by the council to sell the Station Road allotment site had been defeated but there was still a possibility that the allotments off Maulden Road would be sold. The accounts showed an income of £24.85 and expenses of £1.98

1976 – Proposal to hold a Summer Flower and Vegetable show

1977 – 55 members present at the AGM!!!! Everyone was pleased with the first Pumpkin competition that had been organised.

1978 – The first Summer Show was held, with 53 classes and 487 entries. Membership was now at 287 and the stock value of goods for sale was £685. The FGA made and entered a float into the Flitwick Carnival and had a stall advertising the existence of the FGA.

1979 – 180 different items were offered to its members. Sales of 2,571 packets of seeds, 1,000 3kg of Own Pack items and 240 bags of compost.

1980/81 – Sales at the FGA's distribution centre off Maulden Road reached £6,500 during the year with expenses of £2,000

1982 – Introduction of a Spring show

1983 – The AGM had to be cancelled, as during the meeting the Chairman collapsed, and an emergency ambulance called. Unfortunately, the chairman did not recover.

1985 – The Maulden Road allotments were sold to developers, along with the FGA distribution centre. FGA use of a building near the Steppingley Road allotments was approved by the Town Council and everything was moved from 1 site to the other within 3 days!!!

The FGA also won 'Garden Society of the month' in May in the Garden News National competition. Membership of the FGA was now just over 400.

1988 – Town Council take over full responsibility of all allotments in Flitwick.

Colin Stennett
Secretary

Treasurer's Report – 2024 Accounts

2024 has been a mixed year from a financial perspective. I will begin with the good news that the Seed Box lease agreement was finalised, and we were very glad to sign this and have a three-year lease in place again after a long period in limbo. The Town Council have kindly agreed not to charge FGA for rent, which is a great help financially.

However, we did struggle financially last year – in part due to the ongoing access issues to the Seed Box, which has made accessing the site a challenge for members, and has deterred new members. I did mention in my 2023 report that a deficit in 2024 was likely, and that is indeed where we have landed. Here's a breakdown of the key numbers:

- **Total Sales were down fairly significantly** (£15,370 this year vs £19,155 prior year). This was driven primarily by reduced sales of Compost. The FGA consciously decided to stock sustainable peat-free composts, while some members have chosen to shop elsewhere and buy more traditional peated composts. We do encourage everyone to experiment with the peat-free composts, which are continually being improved, hoping that in time we will all embrace these and be sustainable gardeners.
- This year we again did a lighter restock so **Purchase costs were lower** (£15,199 this year vs £17,057 prior year).
- Due to the reduction in Sales, **Trading Surplus was significantly down on last year** (a deficit of £1,401 this year vs surplus of £4,716 prior year).
- There was also a large one-off cost in 2024 of £1,959 for various electrical works at the Seed Box. These were critical from a health & safety perspective so this was not an expense we could avoid!
- After taking into account all additional expenses, such as bank charges, telephone costs and insurance, the **Net position in 2024 was a deficit of £5,137** (vs surplus of £2,731 prior year).

We are keen to reduce this deficit going forward, therefore have implemented several changes in 2025 to cut costs, without negatively impacting the service at the Seed Box or the products that FGA sell. These changes are:

- **SumUp card machine introduced** instead of Barclaycard contract, reducing monthly standing charges – this is expected to reduce Bank & PDQ charges by c. 50%
- **Mobile phone** has replaced the BT landline – this is expected to reduce Telephone costs by more than 90%
- **Insurance moved** from a single shop-keeper's policy to a group policy available through FGA's RHS membership – this will reduce Insurance costs by c. 70%

Thank you to everybody for supporting these changes, for using the new mobile phone number to contact the Seed Box, and particular thanks to the till helpers and keyholders who have adjusted to operating the new SumUp card machine admirably!

Despite the overall picture for 2024 being a deficit, it's worth noting that Shows brought in net combined funds of £280 (vs £207 prior year). We were also able to use Quiz profits again to help the local community, this year splitting the profits with Keech Hospice and the Flitwick Village Hall – both of whom were very grateful – so thank you everyone for supporting all the events that the FGA hosts.

Please do contact me if you have any questions about the FGA's finances, or any thoughts about how we could save money or increase sales going forward – we are always open to ideas! Many thanks,

Leonie Coverley
Treasurer

Flitwick Gardeners' Association
Notes to the Accounts - 2024

Trading Assets and Depreciation

<u>Item</u>	<u>Purchase Date</u>	<u>Cost</u> £	<u>Yrs Dep</u>	<u>Previous Dep</u> £	<u>Current Dep</u> £	<u>Current Value</u> £
n/a					-	-
Seed Box Lease	Sep-98	9,800	20	9,800		-
New lease was signed Feb 2024, agreeing no charge due on Seed Box rent.						-
Total Assets						-

Show and Social Events

<u>Event</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>		<u>Income</u>	
	<u>2023</u> £	<u>2024</u> £	<u>2023</u> £	<u>2024</u> £
Spring Show	110	108	156	126
Garden Trip	350	-	175	-
Summer Show	203	212	248	259
Autumn Show	86	96	173	180
Quiz Night	121	168	325	300
Sundry	-	-	-	-
Totals	870	585	1,076	865
Net Profit			207	280

Bank Reconciliation

	<u>2023</u> £	<u>2024</u> £
Current Account per statement	9,220	3,961
Less unrepresented Payments	(136)	-
Plus unrepresented Receipts	-	-
Less early payment received re: next year's trading	-	-
Add back early payment made re: next year's trading	-	1,110
Current Account adjusted	9,084	5,071
Business Savings Account	25,508	25,870
TOTAL Bank balance	34,593	30,941

L Coverley 01.01.2025
Treasurer