FROM THE CHAIR
The Association’s AGM is on Tuesday, April 26th in the Village Hall. 6.45 for 7pm start. See the back page for the Agenda plus details on page 6 of the annual programme of events including the Plant & Cake Sale on Sunday 29th May. As usual, we will elect the Committee for the next twelve months. We have vacancies for a Treasurer and new Committee members.

THE YEAR IN RETROSPECT!
The Association had a solid year in 2015. Store takings reversed the downward trend of the last 2-3 years and were about £300 ahead of 2014. With takings from the monthly community market counted in, sales of fertilisers, seeds, bird foods, tools and other gardening bits and pieces were just north of £5,000. A strong harvest supper added over another £1,000. As usual the Association ran two successful summer and winter shows and a spring plant sale. The shows broke even and the plant sale yielded a small surplus. A successful tour of the Ashridge gardens for the membership on a pleasant summer evening in July replaced the annual trip to RHS Wisley.

Following the debate at the April 2015 AGM we acted on suggestions to keep the VPA relevant to the Village by extending opening hours each Sunday to 10am to 12 noon, expanding the range of products sold in the store and running a successful scarecrow workshop for children, for which many thanks to Alison Townsend.

Once again, the VPA made a financial donation to support the Village Christmas Tree. We also contributed £200 to the Glanfield Children’s Group, a charity run from within the village that provides respite care for seriously and terminally ill children and their parents. Our funds however were depleted this year by the need to spend nearly £900 on weather-proofing (more or less) the store and replacing the soffits. The store has
had very little investment for many years and in 2016/17 we may look to some refurbishment of the interior if funds allow and the Committee can agree what to do! As we write, we are also replanting the garden in front of the store. Whilst verdant, this grew somewhat beyond intentions and obstructed the view of the playing fields from the Nightall bench!

As ever, the Association is indebted to the group of volunteers who help staff the store across the year and organise and run the village shows.

RHS GARDENS TO VISIT IN 2016 ON YOUR SPRING TRIPS AND HOLIDAYS

Forde Abbey, Chard, Somerset  
*Spring bulbs are in their element here with tens of thousands of tulips.*

Wisley, Woking, Surrey  
*Well known to many of us, it’s famed for 2000 rhododendrons that look astounding en masse and beautiful close up.*

Arley Hall, Northwich, Cheshire  
*A fine kitchen garden, we are told, as well as a lovely woodland walk.*

Hyde Hall, Chelmsford, Essex  
*A colourful setting in spring. Also a centre for courses and workshops.*

Harlow Carr, Harrogate Yorkshire  
*The woodland edge has been given a boost this year with nearly 200 pulmonarias added and intensely purple Atropurpurea. Massed tulips are remarkable.*

Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon  
*Noted for its Japanese cherries!*

Wollerton Old Hall Garden Shropshire  
*Lovely shaded areas which are at their most colourful across the spring. See treasures in the Shade Garden and the Lime Allee.*

Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire  
*Walk among the mass of alliums here – more than 2,500 planted a year ago are settling in the Monks Garden Walk.*
BOX TREE MoTH
A native of East Asia, box tree moth has become established in Europe in the last decade.

The moth’s caterpillars feed on box and are capable of rapidly defoliating plants.

In recent years the moth has started to spread in the UK. In 2015 the RHS received almost 450 observations. It is now well established in south east England especially London. The threat to box comes at the same time as the fungal pathogen box blight, which can also cause defoliation of box plants.

Many infestations are not noticed until significant defoliation has occurred. If plants are inspected thoroughly they can be avoided. The most noticeable signs are the caterpillars themselves and the webbing they spread across their feeding area. Newly hatched caterpillars are greenish-yellow with black heads. Older caterpillars can reach 1.25 inches and have a green body with thick black and thin white stripes along their length.

Caterpillars can be controlled by hand removal. More extensive infestations can be treated with insecticides such as Bug Clear (available at the VPA store). Although box is slow growing, plants will recover from defoliation caused by the caterpillar. But the pest is likely to reappear so be vigilant and apply controls early.

JOBS FOR APRIL
Kitchen Garden

• Plant second early potatoes in the first half of the month, main crop cultivars in the second.
• Pot tomato seedlings into individual pots when they have their first true leaves
• Formative pruning of plum and cherry trees can start once leaf buds open
• Cover crops with horticultural fleece to keep pests off brassicas and carrots
• Sow beetroot, carrots, Swiss chard, summer cauliflower, kohlrabi, lettuce, leeks, radish, turnip, spring onions, peas and perpetual spinach
• Sow late-maturing brassica such as Brussels sprouts for transplanting in June or July
• Finish planting shallot and onion sets and seed-grown onions
Lawns and Turf
- Repair bumps and hollows by peeling back turf and adding or removing simply
- Apply a spring lawn feed. Combined products containing moss killer, weedkiller and fertiliser can be bought or ordered in bulk at the VPA store
- After applying moss killer to lawns, rake out blackened moss and thatch. Compost or send to green waste collection.

Wildlife
- Plant annuals and perennials that attract insects – classic choices include single flowered marigolds, oregano and thyme
- Create log, twig or rock piles in out of the way areas as shelters for wildlife
- Sow or plant a wildflower meadow – cornfield annuals for an instant display this summer or perennial mixes for the longer term
- Ensure birdbaths hold fresh water and bird seed displays remain well stocked for a while

Ornamental Gardens
- Plant out autumn sown sweet pea plants or direct sow outdoors
- Plant evergreen trees and shrubs including Mediterranean climate shrubs such as Hebe and Ceanothus
- Remove faded daffodil and tulip flowers: leave foliage to die back
- Renovate evergreen shrubs such as Choisya, laurel and photinia
- Remove winter protection from tender plants but keep an eye open for later frosts

OPEN GARDENS EXHIBITION
This year, Glenda and Liz Toop are holding their Open Gardens event in the village on 19th June, 11 o’clock to 5.30.

Admission will be £5.00 for a programme giving full details of all the gardens to be open to family, friends and residents of Little Gaddesden.

Janet Stupples and the VPA will be running a plant stall on the village green with proceeds to charity. Mary and Andrew Sheaf as well as Stasia Tereszczuk will be helping.
CAROLYN WISE – GARDENING FOR BEES

Bees need flowers to provide them with nectar and pollen. Without these vital sources bees cannot stay alive. But not all flowers need pollinating insects and not all flowers provide suitable food for insects. There is no merit in intensely bred or hybridised plants which often have double flowers and no nectaries, either rendering them sterile or having so many petals the bees are unable to access the centre of the flower. That is not to say, that cultivated plants are not suitable but the nearer the plant is to its “natural” original the better. Native wild flowers (weeds to some) are more beneficial sources of pollen and nectar and are some of the bees’ favourite food sources. You can provide nectar and pollen to encourage honeybees to visit your garden by planting single flowering plants, vegetables and herbs. Go for all the allium family, all the mints, all beans except French beans, daisy-shaped flowers like asters and sunflowers, also tall plants like hollyhocks, larkspur and foxgloves. Plants with nectar or pollen flowers that bloom in winter/early spring are essential; please plant snowdrops and crocus, hellebores, witch-hazel and pussy willow. Bees are usually spoilt for choice during the summer but the very last nectar is obtained from ivy, as late as November.

WHAT BEES LIKE

- Open, single “flat” flowers such as asters or daisies
- Bell shaped flowers such as foxgloves
- Herbs, such as marjoram
- Lots of variety
- Plants native to Britain
- Wildflowers and “weeds” like dandelions, clover and thistles
- Fruit tree blossom

BEES DON’T LIKE

- Exotic or highly cultivated flowers that are not native to the UK
- Double or elaborate flowers as they often contain little or no nectar
- Most annual bedding plants for the same reason
OUR CALENDAR FOR 2016–17

Sunday May 29th 2016  Plant Sale
Saturday August 29th 2016  Summer Show
Saturday 17 October 2016  Harvest Supper & Quiz
Saturday 4th February 2017  Winter Show
Tuesday 25th April 2017  AGM
Sunday 21st May 2017  Plant Sale
Saturday 26th August 2017  Summer Show
Saturday 21st October 2017  Harvest Supper

Weekly Store: 10.00am to 12 noon by the Village Hall
Monthly at the Community Market in the Village Hall 9.30am to 12 noon

WINTER SHOW PRIZEWINNERS 2016

Champion Pet Cup – Freddie Thon & Otto the dog
Wilson Cup for Under 5’s – Beatrice Crampton
Young Exhibitors’ Cup – Toby Bunting
VPA Junior Cup – Toby Bunting
CM Cup – Rebecca Platt
VPA Senior Cup – Victoria Kelly
Daphne Brooks Cup – Pat Seymour
Basil Thorne Prize – George Sear
The Nan Parker Prize – Toby Bunting
Kathleen Talbot Rose Bowl – Sean McCarthy
Duncan Cup – Barbara Sheard
VPA Winter Fruit & Vegetable Trophy – David Moore
Reg Bond Cup – David Moore

An exhibit judged by the public in celebration of The Queen’s 90th birthday
– Jill Hancock & Barbara Sheard – joint winners
HON TREASURER (VPA)

The Gaddesden District Village Produce Association is looking for a part-time, Hon. Treasurer to help run the affairs of a voluntary working Committee.

The VPA movement was originally founded in 1943. Since then, it has become locally a general Gardening Club, organising horticultural shows, talks, annual outings to the RHS and running a successful Community Store on Sunday mornings. The role of Treasurer would be to keep the books of account, pay suppliers, manage the stock control system, conduct relationships with the bank and ensure financial due diligence generally.

Automatic membership of the VPA Committee follows and although this post is currently unpaid, the reward comes, instead, from being a central part of our local community.

Please contact Rob Irving (843779)

FINANCIAL REPORT

![Graph showing Store sales and Peanuts sales (lbs) from 2007 to 2015]
MICROGARDENS – GUY BARTER – RHS

Microgardens are intensely cultivated small spaces such as patios, small yards, balconies and rooftops, many relying on containers such as plastic lined wooden boxes, hanging planters, metal frames and even old car tyres.

The microgarden approach enables you to cultivate plants no matter how small your growing space. The benefits of the proximity of plants and the practice of gardening to human health and well-being are supported by scientific evidence as well as general experience. It is unnecessary to have large gardens to benefit.

In Britain, growing space is limited for many people, even in rural villages. Modern houses have small gardens, older houses have been subdivided or their gardens built on. Allotments are not always available and opportunities for community gardens are not available everywhere. However, microgardens are not just about space. Many people have work and family commitments or health issues which rule out large scale gardening. They can still benefit from small scale activities.

To start a microgarden the best and cheapest growing material is garden soil with extra organic matter. For containers, two parts by volume of garden soil and one of peat-free growing media is usually effective. Potting media, or growbag compost, ideally peat free, are well suited to pots and boxes. For raised beds, a foot of top soil (from the VPA store) over enough coarse sand to raise the soil level to with 5cm of the lip of the bed is an inexpensive way to get sufficient depth of growing medium.

Rainwater collected from roofs and stored in a water butt should be sufficient for a microgarden. Grey water from washing vegetables for example, is suitable in moderation, dirtier water from washing up is best used for short periods in summer.
on ornamental plants only. Bathwater is only suitable for ornamental plants. It does not pay to scrimp on feeding. Homemade compost is ideal but if you don’t have space for a compost bin, seaweed fertiliser (available at the VPA store) is organic and reliable. Liquid feeds such as Miracle Gro are also highly effective and available at the VPA store too.

Microgardens are often in areas shaded by nearby buildings, fences and trees. Shade is damaging to most fruits and vegetable but offers potential for evergreen ornamental plants such as viburnum, mahonia and skimmia that can fill unpleasant, dry or dank places with green vegetation. By using ericaceous potting media, camellia and rhododendron are good potted choices for shady gardens. A microgarden in a suntrap also offers potential. Culinary herbs such as basil, coriander, rosemary and thyme will be well flavoured, while tender ornamentals such as canna, dahlias, pelargoniums and potted lilies are other options.

Space is an area where microgrowers sometimes get caught out. Container planting sees more light coming in from the sides allowing spacing to be closer but only by a little say 10 per cent. Carrots grown in rows 25cm apart in a garden can be grown at say 20 cm apart in a microbed. Climbing crops offer ways to use trellis walls and wigwams such as climbing French beans, cucumbers, squash, climbing courgettes and most productive of all, runner beans.

Even in urban heat islands winter is tricky but planting hardy salads, roots and greens in August and September is productive. Baby turnips and kohlrabi offer tender roots and greens; chicories, endives and oriental greens can be grown for loose leaf salads. Kales can be selectively picked over for greens all winter.
PEAT FREE GROWING MEDIA
Due to concerns about the damage done to the environment, peat will be phased out of growing media used by home gardeners by 2020. The growing media industry is currently working on finding sufficient sustainable non peat feedstock and developing formulations of acceptable growing media that do not contain peat. The RHS has endorsed SYLVAGROW.

PHOTOS FROM THE WINTER SHOW
Prize Vegetables

Prize Cups
AGM

Tuesday 26 April 2016
Village Hall, Little Gaddesden
AGM 6.45 FOR 7.00pm

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of previous meeting & Matters arising
3. Chair’s Report for 2015
4. Treasurer – presentation of accounts
5. Election of Officers & Committee for 2016–17
6. Any other business
7. Close of formalities

Swiftly followed by an illustrated Talk: