

# Bulletin

December 2025

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***Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our members. We look forward to a productive growing year in 2026***

*Image: Snow at Lower Common East site.*

*Photo by Charlie Love*



## Breaking News



We've discovered where Santa's shed really is! It's not Lapland, but an allotment shed somewhere in BA1. Of course it's top secret.

## A sad day for Combe Down Allotments

It is with much sadness that we have been forced to say goodbye to the allotments at Combe Down because the private landowner has refused to renew the Council's lease on the land. The allotments holders said farewell to their plots with style, organising a bonfire party and a 'give-away' day for items that the evicted tenants could not repurpose. But we haven't given up the fight. The allotment site has been designated an Asset of Community Value which means that the Friends of Combe Down allotments must be given a chance to purchase the land if the owner decides to sell or lease. We have also made a big effort to get the site included in the new B&NES Local Plan as a Local Green Space. Thank you to all those who have submitted letters of support to the Council and have added their voices to the 'Save Combe Down Allotments' campaign.



*Plot-holders at farewell bonfire at Combe Down Allotments*

*Photo by Jacqueline Burrows*



*Annie, a long-standing tenant on the Combe Down site, with her cherished fork and spade.*

*Photo by Erica Draisey*

It is such a shame that 130 years of cultivation has now come to an end. If you want to know more about the history of the site then do read the fascinating article that Jacqueline Burrows wrote by following this [link](#)



## The AGM

Our AGM was held at the Museum of Bath at Work on the evening of 18th November. The full agenda and reports relating to the formal business of the meeting can be found [here](#). The event was well attended and donations collected on the evening amounted to just over £90. The money was split between two local charities – Dorothy House and the Peggy Dodd Centre. The formal business of the evening was concluded in double quick time so that we could hand over to the evening's guest speaker, Kate Collyns.



Kate and her partner run a 4.5-acre market garden just southeast of Bath, near Winsley. <https://www.hartley-farm.co.uk/>. Her business is certified organic by the Soil Association.

We were all very curious to know how they managed to provide a constant supply of vegetables without the use of chemicals. Well, it turns out that it's not all a bed of roses, luck plays a role and that you need to be a bit philosophical about the ups and downs – which fits Kate's profile well as she is a graduate in Philosophy. Kate provided a rundown on the pests and diseases she encounters, with some common-sense solutions - though she warned that there's no magic bullet! Jacky Wilkinson has kindly provided a short summary of Kate's talk for this bulletin, and you can look at Kate's presentation [here](#).



## Resources

For tips on what to do in December and much more, look at our website.

Click [here](#)

## Trading Hut

The Trading Hut is now closed until the New Year. We will be opening again in January when the seed orders come through.

## Key Tips from Kate Collyns talk at the AGM

Kate listed the key pests she encounters and ways she has found of dealing with them. From the show of hands in the audience, these were our members main culprits too. Given that no environmentally friendly pest control technique is fool proof, she suggests succession planting to hedge one's bets.

1. **SLUGS.** Kate recommended enhancing habitat for natural predators and making a beetle bank. She suggested keeping the soil as dry as possible, regularly check seed trays and pots.
2. **APHIDS.** Ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies are our best friends in tackling aphids – these are attracted by flowering coriander, parsley and calendula. You can also spray with a water/garlic and soap mix.
3. **CATERPILLARS.** Use Enviromesh to cover the ground when seedlings are small Build up habitat for the predators of caterpillars, such as birds and parasitic wasps, by having a wild area.
4. **MICE, RATS and BIRDS.** Kate has developed mouse-proof seeds tables for her poly tunnels. Covering seed trays with fleece can also work.
5. **ALLIUM LEAF MINERS.** Apparently, this is a new pest on the block, having only become a problem recently. Again, use a fine mesh and encourage predatory wasps. Kate also suggested picking leeks early and recommends « blue leafed » varieties, which are more resistant.
6. **OTHER LEAF MINERS.** Kate doesn't try growing leafy plants from the mustard family e.g. rocket, until later in the tunnels.
7. **BLIGHTS and MILDEWS.** Choose blight resistant varieties only. Ventilate greenhouses, tunnels well, pick off lower tomato leaves, be consistent with watering but don't water too much, and don't plant too early to avoid stress.
8. **DEER, RABBITS and BADGERS.** No easy solutions here. Maybe get a webcam to spot the intruders and then have a strategy to upset their routines (but not always viable for allotments). See Jacky's [full article](#) for other practical suggestions.



For more details on natural predators take a look at the [RHS information](#) on beneficial insects and bugs

Just in case you didn't know, the Trading Hut stocks Enviromesh, fleece and various forms of netting that help to minimise the damage to crops.

Kate also recommended Ferramol as an organic slug bait. The Trading Hut stocks an identical organic product called Slug XX

# The Association's Priorities for 2026. Have Your Say !

At the AGM our Chairperson, Erica Draisey, outlined the Association's priorities for 2026 as:

1. Continuing to work with officers and councillors to maintain current sites and secure new allotment sites in Bath.
2. Securing a BANES Allotment Strategic Plan and fully costed and resourced management plan.
3. Delivering Water my Plot Year 2 priorities, which are:
  - Plot rescue and creation. Increase numbers of plots on sites by taking into commission hard-to-let and marginal land on sites;
  - Increase number of microplots on sites for those new to growing;
  - Promote sustainable soil management and biodiversity;
  - Provide members with the resources to capture, store and use rainwater.

Do you think we have got this right? Is there something you would like to add or change. Have your say by emailing Erica at the following address.

[chairman@banes-allotments.org.uk](mailto:chairman@banes-allotments.org.uk).



*Some cheering, late autumn colour at St Stephens allotments (before the recent cold snap!)*

*Photo by Anne Love*

# Festive Cocktail Ideas using Sloe Gin

## Sloe Gin Royale

Add 1 part sloe gin to 4 parts prosecco with a twist of lemon and serve in a chilled flute.

Or for something slightly less alcoholic

## Sloe Gin Spritz

Add 1 part sloe gin to 3 parts lemonade (and, optionally, add 3 parts prosecco). Fill tumbler with ice and add combined ingredients. Top with a frozen blackberries or any summer berries you have in your freezer.

Or maybe create your own new cocktail! If so, do let us know.



*This year saw a bumper crop of sloes. If you have made sloe gin, take a look at our ideas for festive cocktails or just enjoy it by itself as a warming festive tipple.*

*Image by James Wainscott on Unsplash*