



**SEA Report to STC  
Services Committee  
September 2024**

**Elwell Woods**

Councillors are probably familiar with the serious invasion of Elwell Woods by winter heliotrope, *Petasites fragrans*, with its large round leaves. It forms a dense cover that smothers native plants and seriously reduces biodiversity. It is recognised as a foreign invasive species. It has now spread to both sides of the orchard, alongside the pathway down from the Celtic Cross, and is beginning to crop up in several other areas of the woods.

Heliotrope is not easy to treat because of its underground rhizomes. These can be weakened by repeated mowing/pulling throughout the year, and may be possibly eliminated by 3 years or so of this treatment. Because of the labour involved, a herbicide treatment is often used, and was recommended by our visiting ecologist. However, SEA, like the Council, are keen to avoid herbicides wherever possible.

SEA would be willing to organise regular working parties throughout the year to pull heliotrope in the areas of the woods, hedges and pathways, and would like to request that Councils Service Delivery would undertake mowing of all the heliotrope in the orchard throughout the year (more exact timing would have to be judged by the response, and at a guess might be about once a month throughout the year but twice a month in September and October when it grows particularly rapidly).

**Adrian White**

**Allotment**

The community allotment is gradually shaping up. We are aiming to make it an exemplar for low impact, wildlife and climate positive gardening that produces an extensive range of nutrients with sustained, low level effort that is good for physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The injection of a small grant from the Coop Community Fund has enabled us to put in a notice board, safe, level access, and two planters, one to stand at or perch on, and one that is wheelchair accessible.

We are now working to complete the stroll and pick fruit garden area where we are growing a range of berry and top fruit and nut plants in bush form. These will be easy to maintain and easy to harvest from a standing position.

After an extremely wet and cold spring our leafy veg is starting to catch up and we hope to have crops through the winter.

The emphasis across the plot will be ease of access so that anyone can have a go at growing food sustainably. We will be completing remedial work on interior paths and access areas this autumn, to minimise the possibility of slips and trips.

Last week we held our first allotment week, running a series of 'open sessions', inviting people in to learn about sustainable methods such as no-dig, and how we are working to create an attractive edible garden with minimal inputs and no waste.

We currently have four regular volunteers with other community members attending for advice or events of specific interest.

We have a container gardening experiment ongoing. Four containers: Large plastic plant container, cardboard box, synthetic coffee bag, old sink, have been sown with root vegetables. We are waiting to find out which is best for a quick, low cost container garden. Presently the coffee sack looks to be outperforming the other containers.

Nothing goes to waste on the allotment. The dumpy bags that compost for the planters was delivered in are now being prepared by a volunteer for a potato growing experiment starting in early spring.

Depending on the outcome of the container gardening experiment we may expand it out into the local community. Houses in the Grenfell area have a lot of underused garden space that could provide cheap or free nutrients for people on lower incomes. We will endeavour to explore this with Cornwall Housing but opportunities to connect with them are limited.

We continue to rely on gifts of tools and reclaimed items. We would benefit from some cloches to fit over the raised planters and may fundraise for these.

We will be very happy to receive wood chip from STC for paths and to improve the fruit garden area.

We are always on site on Monday mornings 10 - 12 and will be running weekly volunteer activities throughout the year. All will be advertised on the noticeboard.

Our work has exposed the level of historic damage caused by waste dumping and lazy and wasteful garden practices in the area. The process of cleaning the soil is painstaking as the amount of historic buried waste is quite considerable. Handpicking fragments of plastics and metals from every part of the plot is a time consuming task. Our finds include e-waste, light filaments, building waste presumably dumped by workmen as they often park their vans next to the plot. Every area we work is carefully cleaned before planting. At the same time weed control is also done by picking out root fragments. Bindweed and brambles are now eradicated from two thirds of the site.

We would recommend the Town Council place limits on the use of plastics on allotments generally as their impact on soil health is considerable and will last for centuries. Responsible use of plastics can be beneficial but monitoring and safe use and disposal is necessary to avoid microplastics getting into the food chain.

Any questions, turn up and ask on Monday mornings or contact Rebecca by email: [saltashcommunityallotment@proton.me](mailto:saltashcommunityallotment@proton.me)

***Rebecca Pearce***

## Tree Saltash 2024/25 planting plans

We are conscious that the iconic Monterey Pine in Victoria Gardens will become unmanageable within 10-20 years – branches will increasingly die back and risk dropping. At some stage it will need to be felled, and will be sorely missed by the community. We therefore suggest getting a replacement going before that happens.

We are also aware that a Christmas tree is purchased each year which costs a lot of both money and carbon. Planting a permanent tree would match the Councils environmental objectives.

The standard Christmas tree is Norwegian spruce; this is fine where there is space, as its eventual spread is about 4m. A Serbian spruce forms a narrower pyramid, 3m at most, and has the same type of needles, though slightly more blue.

Possible locations include A where there is plenty of space, or B which is close to the power supply and on a central line looking up from Fore Street.



Adrian White  
SEA