



# Sustainability Newsletter

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## We did it! 60% of waste is recycled!



The Council's target that 60% of the District's waste be recycled, has been met in 2018. This makes St Albans District residents the 13th best recyclers in England! We want to thank you for doing your bit. Let's not stop there. Our aim is to be in the top 10 for recycling in the country. We will continue to look for ways to promote waste reduction and to make our recycling services as easy as possible to use so everyone gets involved.

Our focus this year is on encouraging food waste recycling. Every year 1/3 of our food waste is thrown in rubbish bins. In St Albans, food waste collected from your green caddy is turned into energy. Our local anaerobic digestion plant, which accepts food waste from homes and businesses in Herts and Essex, produces enough energy to power 6,000 homes and offsets the carbon emissions from 89,000 cars. Every apple core helps!

# BIRDS, BUGS AND BEES

To many people, insects are just pesky bugs to be gladly avoided. The truth is that insects are essential to the functioning of all terrestrial ecosystems. Since they are responsible for pollinating the majority of plants, and are the base of the food chain, all land creatures depend on them, including us. Without insects we would have serious problems producing our food.



Globally we have lost 80% of insect mass in the last 30 years.



According to recent scientific research in the [Journal of Biological Conservation](#), insect populations are in tragic decline and we are losing about a quarter of insect species every 10 years. At this rate there will be none left in 50 years.

You may have noticed fewer insects in the air on a summer's day, or the absence of the swarm of insects that used to be visible in the beam of the car headlights. The research highlights that globally we have lost 80% of insect mass in the last 30 years. The changes are visible.



Agricultural intensification and pesticide use are thought to be the major cause of these changes. In the UK we use around 31,000 tonnes of pesticides each year. These are persistent in the environment, interfere with insect breeding and can also leave residues in food.

Nature reserves aren't immune to these changes as pesticides are spread in the wind. Much investment has been made into how we can kill insects to increase food production, but we know far less about the impacts of this.



## What can we do now?

1. Eliminate the use of pesticides on your land or allotment. Over the last 10 years we have been reducing our pesticide use on public land and we continue to adopt mechanical means to control weeds and pests where we can.
2. Select insect-friendly plants for your garden, containers or allotment. Look for the Plants for Pollinators label and lists online. Council planting employs insect-friendly plants wherever possible.
3. Choose organic produce to encourage chemical-free agriculture and reduce your chemical exposure.
4. Reduce your intake of meat and dairy products. The majority of agricultural land is used for producing feed for livestock. This land could be used for direct food production if more diets were plant-based.
5. Grow Local, Seasonal and Organic. See page 3 for ideas on how to do this.





# GET GROWING IN ST ALBANS

We know that the best way to reduce the environmental impacts of food production is to grow as much of our food locally and organically as possible. Thankfully there are plenty of ways to help you grow local in St Albans.

## Incredible Edibles St Albans

Incredible Edibles is a local community-led initiative that gets people together to grow food on unused pieces of land. The group now manages two pieces of land in the town centre adjacent to the Alban Arena, and behind Russell Avenue car park.

Everyone is welcome to enjoy the land and pick food and flowers as they wish. Volunteers are also invited to come along and help tend to the gardens on designated weekend work days.

## Open Food Gardens

Not quite sure how to go about growing your own food? Go along to an Open Food Garden event and learn how others make the most of their gardens for food cultivation.

## Allotments

The Council has 11 allotment sites in the District providing around 800 plots for local people to use. While some sites have a waiting list there are some with available plots. There are also private plots locally.

## Foodsmiles

FoodSmiles is a community-based agriculture project based at Hammonds End Farm in Harpenden and at the allotments in Hixberry Lane. At Hammonds Lane, members get together to cultivate a half acre to grow produce that they share in a weekly organic box. Together Foodsmiles members produce around 1.6 tonnes of food per year.

There is lots to do from weeding to building polytunnels, but members still get to enjoy tea and cake together at the end of each work day. To become a member all you need to do is commit to a minimal number of hours per month on site (14, 7 or 4 hours on Wednesdays or weekends) and pay a small membership fee. In return you will receive a veg box for at least 40 weeks of the year.



**Pick up your FREE pocket Seasonal Food Calendar from the Council Offices.**

# THE APPS THAT MAKE BEING GREENER EASIER

Technology has transformed our lives in so many ways. One benefit is that it is creating solutions to some of our difficult environmental problems. Here are some apps we have found that help to cut waste and make more informed choices. These are all free to download and use. None are associated with, or endorsed by the Council in any way.

## **OLIO**

Olio connects people who have food (or other small items) to give away. Perhaps you grew a bumper crop of courgettes or you are going on holiday and have salad you can't make use of. With Olio you can easily snap a picture and post it online for nearby people to see and request.

## **Too Good To Go**

This app allows food outlets to advertise any meals they have at the end of the day to sell at cut price.

## **Giki**

Giki has been designed to help people make more informed choices when shopping. The app scores products by a range of criteria such as health benefits, additives, packaging, country of production and carbon footprint. It also lists nearby alternatives with higher ratings.

## **Good On You**

This app provides environmental information and scoring on clothing brands by assessing their activities around labour and environment. Information is provided on things like the brands carbon reduction targets, renewable energy use and ethics

policies. It also allows users to provide feedback, make requests and ask questions of the brands.

## **Farmdrop**

Farmdrop delivers food from the closest farms to your home in electric vehicles. Animal produce is free-range and grass-fed.

## **Refill**

The Refill app helps you locate sources of free drinking water wherever you are. In St Albans we now have 58 Refill stations so keep your bottle with you and have the app to hand for when you are thirsty.





# News Bites

## Sustainable St Albans Festival of Sustainability is coming!

Following three previous events, Sustainable St Albans are now bringing an even bigger, 3 week long, festival to the District.

Between 11th May and 1st June there will be over 150 events taking place to promote all aspects of sustainability. Keep some time free as there will be lots of fun interactive activities for all the family.

A highlight of this year's event will be the Market Takeover event in the City Centre on Sunday 19th May. There will be lots of stalls and activities focussed on living sustainably. To find out more visit: [sustainablestalbands.org](http://sustainablestalbands.org).

## Chippy awarded Green Business of the Year Award

Godfrey's Chip Shop in Harpenden has been named St Albans Green Business of 2018 in the Chamber of Commerce's Business Awards. Their green credentials include:

- Only MSC certified Cod, Haddock and Rock is sold which means that the fish is sustainably produced.
- Sausages are made from free-range pork.
- Food is sold in compostable packaging.
- 100% renewable electricity is used in the shop.
- Recycled rainwater is used in the toilets.
- Paper, card, glass, tins and plastic are recycled.
- Food waste is sent to an anaerobic digester.



producing compost and power.

## New Refill St Albans fountains come to town

Two new water bottle refill points are being installed outside Verulamium Museum and in Clarence Park this March.

These provide free filtered drinking water and add to the 58 outlets available now in the District.



This newsletter contains information about living more sustainably and is brought to you by the Sustainability Officer at St Albans City and District Council. The information provided is not an endorsement of any of the products, sources or organisations mentioned. For inquiries or comments, please contact [sustainability@stalbands.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@stalbands.gov.uk).