

# Sustainability Newsletter

Issue 5  
Summer 2019

## In this Issue

- St Albans takes action on climate change
- Busting the climate change myths
- Making your garden a valuable habitat for wildlife
- News Bites



## St Albans Council takes action on climate change



Whether it was the Extinction Rebellion, Climate Emergency Declaration or Schools Strike 4 Climate, this year has been filled with movements and protests by the public, demanding leaders to take the scientific reports on climate change more seriously.

On 10th July, a petition from 1,700 members of the public, was presented to St Albans City and District Council, urging the Council to declare a Climate Emergency and take dramatic action to cut emissions across the District. Politicians voted unanimously in favour and we are now working hard behind the scenes to prepare our action plan.

# BUSTING THE CLIMATE CHANGE MYTHS

We have been hearing about climate change in the media for decades now. Unfortunately these messages have sometimes been conflicting and confusing. We want to help dispel the myths by bringing you easy to understand information from experts such as NASA, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UK Met Office.

**Myth:** Climate changes are due to increased solar energy and volcanoes.

**Truth:** False. Changing solar radiation and volcanoes account for less than 11% of the increased surface warming in the 20th century. This is taken into account in climate models.

**Myth:** Climate changes are part of a natural cycle and nothing new.

**Truth:** The scale of current warming cannot be explained by natural factors alone and are not reflective of natural

cycles. The science is clear that human activities have been the dominant cause of the observed rise in global temperature since the mid-20th century. In fact, we knew about the impacts as far back as 1912.

## How long have we known this?

The furnaces of the world are now burning about 2,000,000,000 tons of coal a year. When this is burned, uniting with oxygen, it adds about 7,000,000,000 tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere yearly. This tends to make the air a more effective blanket for the earth and to raise its temperature. The effect may be considerable in a few centuries.

Rodney and Otamatea Times, Waitemata and Kaipara Gazette, 14 August 1912

**Myth:** The earth can't be getting warmer. It was really cold recently.

**Truth:** False. Weather describes the day to day fluctuations in temperature, humidity, precipitation, cloudiness, brightness, wind and pressure. Climate, on the other hand, describes changes over much longer periods of time. As the climate changes, weather patterns are also affected.

**Myth:** There is no consensus that climate change is caused by human activities.

**Truth:** False. Doubts and arguments voiced in the media are not reflective of the scientific evidence. 97% or more climate scientists, virtually all the world's governments, leading businesses and economists agree.





# BUSTING THE CLIMATE CHANGE MYTHS (CONTINUED)

**Myth:** Climate models are not accurate.

**Truth:** There are many elements of our environment that scientists are still learning about or that they are unable to predict in advance. So far we have seen that average surface temperature changes are within range of modeled temperatures. The models are, however, fairly conservative and glaciers for example are melting hundreds of times faster than expected (ref: New Scientist).

**Myth:** Global warming will improve the UK climate bringing us warmer summers just like the Mediterranean.

**Truth:** Yes, summer temperatures in the UK are likely to increase. This will be appreciated by many though our buildings and infrastructure is poorly adapted for it. This is likely to come with more extreme and unstable weather. Global warming affects weather patterns in complex ways and we will see more storms, floods, droughts and unseasonal weather.

Government scientists predict water scarcity and effects on ecosystems, soils and biodiversity, including risk of invasive pests and diseases. Some places in the world may become uninhabitable and this

will lead to impacts to international food production, trade, conflict and migration. Many of these impacts are already occurring.

**Myth:** The warming trend is over.

**Truth:** False. Each year is warmer than the previous year. June 2019 was the hottest June ever, and then so was July.

**Myth:** It's a conspiracy theory.

**Truth:** Climate scientists have no vested interests in claiming climate change is happening. It is not an easy task to transform the way that society generates and uses energy so it is not in anyone's interest to 'create' a climate emergency.

**Myth:** 2 degrees is a tiny temperature rise. What's the big deal?

**Truth:** False. Remember that this is a global average. Scientists believe that a 2 degree rise in temperature, at such a rapid rate, could push our ecological systems over a tipping point. Runaway climate change is when the changes feed more changes and cannot be stopped.



## Sources:

[NASA](#)  
[Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)  
[New Scientist](#)  
[National Geographic](#)

# WATER-EFFICIENT GARDENS

Our region has received below average rainfall over the past 3 years which means groundwater levels are low. With the recent warm temperatures drying out our gardens, here are some tips for keeping your flower beds and containers healthy while protecting groundwater resources.

## Create a DIY Plastic Bottle Irrigation System:

You can create an environmentally friendly drip-feed watering device using old plastic bottles. Simply pierce some holes in the lid so that the water can escape gradually, fill with water and insert into the ground. More detailed instructions can be found [here](#). You can purchase low priced 'stakes' which allow the water flow to be more easily controlled.

**Collect your rainwater:** Affinity Water is selling discounted water butts to help you save water. You can also purchase submersible water pumps that connect to a hosepipe and pump the collected rainwater around the garden.

**Reduce evaporation:** Never water on a hot sunny day as more water will be lost to evaporation. Water before 9am or after 7pm to reduce loss. You can also use a layer of mulch to reduce evaporation. Not only does this look good, it can also help keep the snails off your plants.

**Replace small pots:** Cut down on the number of small pots you use and replace them with a few larger ones as these won't require as much watering.



**Don't let domestic waste water go down the drain.** Make use of water from the bath, washing up or boiling vegetables. Most soaps will not harm the garden though it's recommended that you don't use strong cleaning products.

## Get your free trigger hose attachment.

Affinity Water is providing free trigger hose attachment and packets of Swell Gel to their customers. Trigger hose attachments save water by ensuring it can be directed to where the plant needs it. Swell gel packs are mixed with soil and will absorb water and then release it to the plants when needed. To get your free products visit the [Affinity Water Product page here](#)





# News Bites

## Green Burials

St Albans City and District Council offers a green burial service at Hatfield Road Cemetery. This provides the opportunity to have a grave in a quiet secluded place with wildflowers and trees.

Graves can be marked with a wooden memorial, either an upright 18" log provided by the cemetery or one carved or placed by the family. There is no outlining of graves.

The area of the site is kept as natural and waste-free as possible. Eco friendly and biodegradable coffins such as cardboard, willow or bamboo are recommended and plastic pots are not allowed. Cut flowers are fine.

To find out more visit:

[www.stalbans.gov.uk/cemeteries](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/cemeteries)

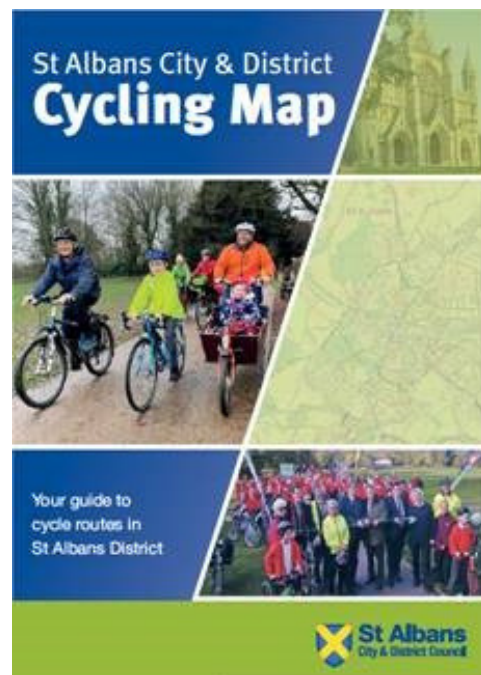


## Taking away less plastic

Omsins Thai restaurant in Fleetville is featured in this edition because they are taking steps to reduce their and their customers' waste by offering the option of borrowing or purchasing environmentally friendly reusable containers for their take-away meals.



## New Cycle Maps are now available



A District-wide cycle map is now available, to help both new and experienced cyclists plan their routes across the District.

You can pick up your free copy from local libraries, cycle shops, Tourist Information points and at the Council offices. It is also downloadable from [www.stalbans.gov.uk/cycling](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/cycling).

If you would like to be sent a paper copy please email: [contactus@stalban.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@stalban.gov.uk)

This newsletter contains information about living more sustainably and is brought to you by the Sustainability Team at St Albans City and District Council. The information provided is not an endorsement of any of the products, sources of information or organisations mentioned.

For inquiries or comments, please contact [sustainability@stalban.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@stalban.gov.uk).