Dunchurch Allotment Association



By Paul Sanders

Scraping at the soil today, I again find another relic from the past. I now have quite a collection of clay pipe stems of varying bore size. As the allotment site has been in use for hundreds of years and is marked on ancient maps as the 'poor plots' it should be of no surprise that these ceramic artifacts from a bygone age remain in the soil unchanged. It makes me wonder what objects future generations will find in this same soil left by the current gardeners. The most likely finds will surely be plastic products.



In recent years members of the Allotment Association have been getting more conscious of and concerned about environmental issues. This led to the Association developing an environmental code of practice. This aims to promote actions that make the allotment site and the surrounding area more sustainable and enhance the natural environment, and to avoid practices that damage and degrade the site, the wider environment and its users.

Recent manifestations of the policy include the sale of peat-free compost thereby avoiding the degradation of peatland, an increasingly rare habitat, an important carbon sink and flood water regulator. The Association has also pushed for a carpet-free allotment. Carpets have been used for many years by some allotment holders as a sturdy ground cover for reducing weed growth. Unknown to the users, the carpets would have been releasing noxious chemicals potentially hazardous to human health and the environment.

Plastics in carpets don't rot away like organic materials, they physically breakdown into smaller pieces with exposure to light and weathering. These secondary microplastics fragments that have broken down from larger objects can be harmful in soil environments. Research has already shown that microplastics are ingested by earthworms causing them to lose weight and reducing their biological fitness and lifespan.



The start of the new 2022 allotment season has seen the removal of all carpets from Dunchurch Allotments, which easily filled two large skips