

# Climate Crisis

## Brief - Summer 2022



### “Climate Change” and Gardens

Many will have the good fortune and opportunity to spend more time on and in their gardens in the interesting times that we are now living. We have all been made very aware of the vulnerability of both ourselves and our economic system to disruption by a simple virus. Hugely concerning as this, there is an even bigger “elephant in our room”.

An updated analysis of the annual UK temperature records from the Met Office shows that since 1884 all of the UK's 10 warmest years have occurred since 2002. As usual 2019 has been declared an “exceptional” summer. For the UK, three of the four hottest summers have occurred since 2000. “Exceptional” appears to be the new norm for our weather. There is no doubt that these changes in our weather are due to Climate Change - or more accurately Global Warming.

For those who might be a little doubtful on this, as confirmation, along with injecting ourselves with disinfectant to combat Covid 19, past President “fake news” Trump declared climate change to be a hoax invented by the Chinese to disadvantage US industry!

#### **So what is Climate Change and what might we do about it?**

Climate Change refers to a large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns and average temperatures. There has been a 1.1°C increase in global temperatures since 1850. This is forecast to increase to a possibly catastrophic 4° C by the end of the century, unless we take action now. The effects of Arctic ice disappearing, glaciers melting, and warming of the permafrost releasing yet further greenhouse gases is largely unknown.

Climate Change largely results from significant increases in greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, caused by the burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas, along with our intensive food production. The destruction of the planet's ecosystems including the tropical rainforests of South America for soya production and cattle, and those forests in the Far East for palm oil have also resulted in massive releases of further carbon dioxide. There has also been the huge losses of carbon from our own soils arising from modern intensive agricultural practices. Consequently, over the last 150 years the carbon dioxide levels have increased from 270 ppm to a staggering 417 ppm on 8 June - the highest for 4 million years! The solution lies in ceasing our use of fossil fuels and

So as responsible citizens, as opposed to being merely “consumers”, what action might those of us who are fortunate to have a garden, or an allotment, take to contribute towards being part of the solution and reduce the impact of Global Warming?

Here are a few ideas.

- As well as flowers, grow salad, veg or herbs in the borders or window boxes. No food miles, fresh and organic!
- Subject to space, wherever practical plant trees. Trees will take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store the carbon in their branches, roots and also the soil. The leaf litter will further build the soil humus. In the long term trees store more carbon in a given area of garden than other plants. Trees can also provide shade, blossom, fruit. Trees also reduce the risk of flooding, and some species can even capture particulates and reduce urban air pollution.
- Create a pond and boggy area - more interest and will encourage more insect variety and birds.
- Minimise or avoid using powertools where practicable. This saves burning fossil fuel and emitting more carbon dioxide from the petrol or electricity, and saves money and gives us some exercise.
- Insist when buying compost that it is peat free, same in potted plants – if unsure challenge the supplier. Half the carbon in soils in the UK is in our peatland. Its removal results in further emissions of carbon dioxide, not to mention ecosystems/biodiversity loss and destruction.
- Compost your garden and kitchen organic “waste”. It makes an excellent soil improver. It saves the methane emissions from landfill, or carbon dioxide from the municipal waste incinerator.
- Minimise the use of decking and paving. Cement is a significant source of further carbon emissions. Paving also increases rain runoff and contributes to flooding. Grass will capture carbon dioxide and return it to the soil. As will composted grass cuttings. Grass will also be cooler on a hot summer day.
- Minimise or avoid the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides
  - particularly nitrate fertilisers which result in the emission of nitrous oxide – a very powerful greenhouse gas - all produced from fossil fuels.
- Consider installing green roofs on sheds, garages and flat roof extensions. Can result in home energy savings due to a cooling effect in summer and an insulating effect in winter.
- Attend local garden group meetings, and if making garden visits plan to share transport, save fuel – more emissions. You never know whom you might meet, or learn chatting!!

And this summer, enjoy your garden or allotment and the nature it supports.

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**Residents are welcome to join our Grimley Parish Council climate crisis working party.**

The working party was set up by the parish council in late 2021 and consists of residents and parish councillors. The group works broadly within the remit of the climate declaration made by the parish council in 2008. The articles released by the group chair Cllr Dave Stanley are published at his own expense in the local parish magazine (and in the Worcester News (local newspaper)), are not voted upon by the councillors and are included on the parish council website in order to provoke thought and debate and encourage residents to educate themselves on the topics included.

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