



Earley Allotment Association Newsletter

A Word from the Chair

As a nation we seem to enjoy a good rant about the weather. It is either too dry or too wet, or is it too hot or too cold; well I am one for enjoying the hard frosts. As I write there is a receding cover of frost and the thermometer is showing a night time low of minus 5°C., I welcome a period of temperatures below freezing. Long periods of hard frost break open the soil and kill off eggs and larvae of slugs and other pests and garlic is all the better for standing over a period of low temperature. Nights are shortening and our thoughts turn to the increased activities required in drawing the best out of the allotment – it is the same with our association.

While we (your committee) have been active during the winter

months, we are approaching a time when we need to draw on reserves. A number of social events are scheduled BUT they need support. I have asked Julia to pull together a team of four or five members that can contribute by way of labour and ideas to help the events run smoothly.

Please contact Julia if you can contribute. juliatredgett@gmail.com
Plot 46a

The growth in EAA membership has flattened, which I am sure is the effect of the winter period. However we can all help to spread the good word by talking with fellow plot holders about the association. Membership forms are available through Roger.

The arrival of the EAA 'Shed' should stimulate membership activity however we are not much closer in achieving this. We had hoped that our Council would be able to support us but that is now a pipe dream as the majority of their funds are allocated for the new Sol Joel pavilion. We do have a possibility of acquiring a battered container and if this comes off, we will need materials and labour to bring it up to scratch.



A Shed like this will do!

Seasonal Tips

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As we eagerly await spring there are several vegetables that can be started off outdoors in February. Garlic 'Solent Wight' won't be hurt by being planted in the cold as it actually needs temperatures of 0°-10°C for a month or two for good bulb development. On our lighter soil they can be planted a little deeper at 10cm for better returns.

B r o a d B e a n s
'Superaguadulce' and 'Aquadulce Claudia' can

be sown at this time of year. Both Richard and Margaret Plot 69 and Roger Plot 59 are trying Aquadulce this spring – s e e t h e E A A Spreadsheet.

Dig a trench where you're growing climbing beans and fill with kitchen waste layered with soil. It will rot down and your beans will love it.

Indoors, peas can be started off in lengths of guttering in an unheated greenhouse and then slipped into trenches

outside after they have been hardened off. Protect from pigeons although I haven't seen so many lately, perhaps the foxes have had them!

Something to consider - the RHS have been conducting trials using peat-free growing media for germinating seeds and have found that Green Waste and Vermiculite at the ration of 1:4 by volume produced good germination rates and development for medium and fine seeds.

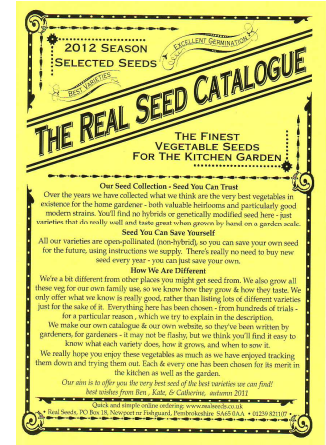
The Real Seed Catalogue

This seed company, based in Pembrokeshire, Wales, sells both heirloom and good modern strains of vegetable seeds. All their varieties are open-pollinated (non-hybrid), so you can save the seeds for next year.

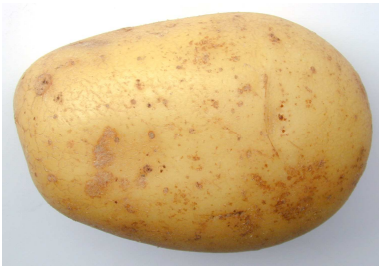
The seeds are not genetically modified or fungicide coated and most of the seeds are organic.

They are chosen for their growth and taste and have undergone hundreds of plant trials.

Visit the website, www.realseeds.co.uk, or send for the catalogue, the list isn't exhaustive, but if you want something different, like yellow mange tout or a white beetroot, you will find them in there.



Potato Facts



Potatoes originated in the Andes mountains of southern Peru and have been cultivated for at least 7000 years.

The potato is now a staple food for two thirds of the World's population.

Brits are the third largest consumers of potatoes in Europe.

Only the Portuguese and the Irish eat more than us.

In 1974, in England, Eric Jenkins grew 370 pounds of potatoes from one plant.

In 1995 potatoes were taken into space aboard the shuttle Columbia, this is the first time food had ever been grown in space.

The world's biggest potato was grown in Germany in 1997 weighing in at 3.2kg, that's the size of a small dog.

Potatoes are 72-75% water, 16-20% carbohydrate, 2-2.5% protein, 0.15% fatty acids 1-1.8% dietary fibre.

Potatoes contain no cholesterol.

An medium sized baked or boiled potato has about 110 calories.

Potatoes pack in 10 times more potassium than pasta.

The first bio fuel? During the second World war petrol starved German forces developed a potato based alcohol to fuel aircraft and military vehicles.

About 5kg of potatoes are required to make 1 litre of vodka.

Potato crisps were first manufactured in the UK by Frank Smith of Smith's Crisps in the 1920's.

Cookery Corner

Many thanks to Julie and Mike Porter Plot 55 for this recipe.

Easy apple cake

Apples to about 225g weight

225g self raising flour

1tsp baking powder

125g cold butter, diced

125g caster sugar (plus extra for dredging)

2 medium eggs, beaten

Preheat oven to 190°C/ Gas mark 5 and lightly grease a 20cm round cake tin.

Peel apples and dice.

Sieve the flour and baking powder into a large bowl, rub in the butter to form fine breadcrumbs.

Stir in the sugar and diced apple, then gradually stir in the beaten eggs to form a stiff mixture.

Spoon into the tin and level.

Bake for 30 - 40 minutes until springy to the touch. Dredge with

sugar and leave to cool for 10 minutes before turning out.

The mixture for this cake is very thick but it does bake into a moist cake with lovely consistency. You can be quite flexible and add more or less apple, add mixed spice and/or lemon juice to taste. You can also add sliced apple to the top before baking for decoration. I make it as a tray bake and cut into squares which works really well. It's also lovely served warm with cream or ice cream.

Dates for the Diary

Plant/Seed Swap

Following the success of the December Seed Swap, we will be holding another one on **Saturday 21st April**, this time plants will be included. The marquee will be sited in the car park as usual. Time to be advised



Bring your surplus veg seedlings, herbs and garden plants, clearly labelled and swap them, maybe for something you have never grown before.

If you have any seeds that are surplus to requirements, you can swap them too.



Don't worry if you have nothing to swap, there will be some plants and seeds available for a donation to EEA funds.

Free refreshments.

Sunflower/Best Vegetable Competition

As well as the Plant/Seed swap in April, we will be holding a barbecue on **Saturday 1st September**.

I know this is a long way off, but we would like to involve the children by running a 'Tallest Sunflower' competition, there will also be a prize for the 'Biggest Sunflower Seed Head'. So get sowing as soon as the ground warms up.



There will also be a 'Best Vegetable' competition, just bring along your best specimen on the day, straight from the allotment and join in the voting.

Feedback

The New Plot Holder's Induction held last November was very informative to those who attended. Many thanks to Michelle Leek for hosting this event, it is hoped that it will be repeated.

Mulled Wine and Seed Swapping

On December 10th about 20 hardy souls gathered in the marquee and enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine during the seed swap.

Several members had brought along carefully collected seed, well labelled and packaged. Others brought a few seeds left over seeds from something they had been particularly pleased

with last year. Members busied themselves seeing what was on offer and perhaps deciding to try something new. The general opinion was that seed swaps were a good idea.

Equipment to Share

The people below are willing to share equipment:

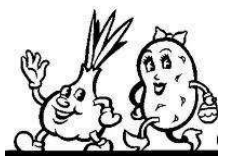
Sarah del Tufo	plot 8	Strimmer and wheelbarrow
Julie Tredgett	plot 46a	Hand mower
David Pelling	plot 18	Strimmer (willing to use on anybody's plot) & Telescopic (2.3m) lopper
Elizabeth Debonaire	plot 38a	Push mower
Doreen Osborne	plot 37	Wheelbarrow
Richard Holdstock	plot 64	Petrol mower he has donated to EAA

If you wish to borrow any of the above, please contact the plot owner.

HPHS News

There are still a few seed potatoes available for sale in the Shed in 3kg lots, please bring a bag.

There are also onion sets and shallots and pea, dwarf and runner bean seeds available all at reasonable prices.



Eyes to the Skies

Too much digging can cause back pain! Sometimes in an attempt to relieve the aches I find myself arching backwards so that my eyes end up looking up towards the sky. Not sure it brings that much relief but is there anything worth seeing in the skies above the allotment?

For starters there is an interesting variety of birds to be seen and heard. So if you have a moment when you need that break from the digging then take some time and see if you can improve on the number of birds that I have managed to record having been seen or heard over the last couple of years.

There are a large variety of birds that inhabit or visit the motorway embankment, the dense vegetation means though that smaller birds are often heard but not always seen!

Last summer a number of warblers held territories and attempted to breed and hopefully were successful. For a number of weeks in early summer the songs of Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Garden Warbler were heard on a daily basis.

On a murky day in November I heard Goldcrest and saw a flock of 15-20 Long Tailed Tits move along the embankment. A few Redwings flew over head and once the mist lifted a bit the Red Kite put in its usual appearance. Goldfinches were also heard overhead and at one point a Bullfinch was heard from the embankment.

In October I placed some sun flower heads in the trees above my shed. A few days later I saw Greenfinches feeding and the seeds were soon gone.

So here is my list up to November, (note it includes birds flying over as well as birds seen on the allotment, and also some song birds heard only) – there are some common species missing – can anymore do better?

Cormorant	Swallow	Redwing
Grey heron	House Martin	Song Thrush
Mute Swan	Meadow Pipit	Mistle Thrush
Red Kite	Pied Wagtail	Carrion Crow
Sparrowhawk	Wren	Blue Tit
Buzzard	Duncock	Great Tit
Kestrel	Garden Warbler	Tree Creeper
Black Headed Gull	Jackdaw	Chaffinch
Lesser Black Backed Gull	Blackcap	Greenfinch
Common Tern	Whitethroat	Siskin
Wood Pigeon	Willow Warbler	Goldfinch
Magpie	Chiffchaff	Bullfinch
Stock Dove	Goldcrest	Starling
Swift	Robin	Jay
Green Woodpecker	Fieldfare	TOTAL =
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Blackbird	47 species

Likely – Cuckoo should be heard during the summer time but I have missed it so far.

Less Likely – Sand Martin flying over on migration with flocks of Swallows and House Martins.

Fanciful but you never known – Black Redstart breeding in an abandoned allotment shed one summer.

So, eyes to the skies! Tim Alexander Plot 3

EAA Spreadsheet

A Way of Sharing our Ideas

Richard and Margaret Cocks Plot 69b, have put together an Excel spreadsheet, which has been sent out with this Newsletter. Members of the committee have followed Richard and Margaret's example and added details we'd like to share about our planting plans, favourites, etc. Take a peak and see if you'd like to add your say and share something with fellow plot holding members. Please E-mail back contributions to Juliatredgett@gmail.com and she will collate and send them out with the next newsletter.

A Park ranger was giving a talk explaining the difference between a crow and a raven. He said the raven has six pinions on each wing and the crow has only five on each wing, making the difference a matter of a pinion.

