

August 2014

Issue 17



EAA News

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Thank you to everyone who donated and bought plants from the racks this year, all together £70 was raised, more than enough to cover the annual membership fees. Thank you once again.

The EAA Social Secretary, Julia Tredgett, has served for three years and will be standing down from that role at the AGM.

It has been decided that the committee should downsize, the constitution has been amended to state that only **three** officers are required, Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary and they will be elected at the AGM.

As well as the officers, at least four other people are required on the committee.

So this is an appeal for new committee members, no experience required, only six meetings are held each year.

If you are interested and can spare the time, the nomination forms will be sent out to all EAA members on 15th September, along with the form for any resolutions that will be discussed at the AGM.

The EAA is run for its members, why not join the committee and make a difference.

Please keep the turning circle at the far end of the site clear, some plot holders have experienced difficulty in manoeuvring their cars due to parked vehicles.

Sickly plants?

When plants are not quite looking their best, it's tempting to attribute it to the lack of a single nutrient. If a supply of this missing element is ladled on to try and make things better, the result is likely to be disappointing.

In many cases deficiencies in a plant are the result of it struggling to access the nutrients for reasons such as poor soil structure, unsuitable pH, waterlogging or erratic water supply.

On a long term basis it would be far better to focus on these: solutions such as foliar feeds are a short term remedy that may mask a longer term underlying problem.

If a plant is looking pale and yellow, it could be running out of nitrogen.

It's one of the most soluble of the plant nutrients and is quickly washed out of the soil. Growing green manure when the plot is empty will retain 80% of the nitrogen so that it is not washed away.

Plants that have been fed excessive nitrogen take up lots of water and develop an excess of sappy foliage at the expense of the fruits or tubers. Aphids are more likely to come from miles around to suck the nitrogen rich sap from the plants. Excessive foliage can also reduce air circulation, making ideal conditions for fungal diseases. So go easy with the chicken pellets!

What if potatoes have a hollow heart? This is caused when it grows too quickly and the centre ruptures.

This usually happens when there are dry periods followed by high rainfall. A soil with plenty of organic matter added is likely to retain moisture more evenly.

If brassicas have a purple tinge to the leaves and stunted growth, this could indicate a lack of phosphorus. To help build up the nutrient levels add manure and compost over the long term.

Blossom end rot is caused by the plant tissue dying due to lack of calcium, or rather the inability of the plant to access it. Erratic watering or acidic soil is to blame.

A healthy soil means healthy plants. Use plenty of organic matter so that crops have all the nutrients they need.

Seasonal Tips

After all that sowing, planting and watering now comes the best bit, the harvest.



Recognize these? Just one crop that never seems to fail, even though they turn into marrows as soon as your back is turned.

There are still quite a few things that can be sown in August - quick maturing crops such as lettuce, spring onions, radish, spinach and pak choi for Autumn harvests.

Pinch the growing tips out of runner beans and tomatoes, when the top of the supports are reached. This is so that the plant's energy is diverted from the foliage to the fruit. Keep picking runner beans to ensure a continuous supply. Remember runner bean flowers will not set if the temperatures are too high.

Side shoots on tomatoes should be removed, as there will be more tomatoes if there is not masses of foliage. Keep them well watered and fed.

Keep picking raspberries daily, otherwise they will spoil on the plants. The blackberries are beginning to ripen about now, there is an abundance coming over the fence between the plots and the motorway embankment, these are large and very sweet.

Summer strawberry varieties can be tidied up now, cut off all the old tired leaves, water and feed well to revive for your next years crop. If new plants are wanted, peg down any runners into 10cm pots, half buried next to the parent plant, water well and when new growth appears, snip off the runner, a new strawberry plant for free.

Keep up the hoeing to try to defeat the weeds and water daily in hot weather.

AGM

The **AGM** will be held on **Tuesday 7th October 2014** at the Parish Rooms, Radstock Lane at **7.30pm**.

After the official part of the meeting, which will include the election of a new committee and resolutions to be discussed. there will be a quiz followed by refreshments.

New membership cards will be available for distribution.

Gazpacho Soup

This cooling soup originated in the Andalusian region of Spain. A good way to use up all those tomatoes.



The basis of this soup is tomatoes, garlic, wine vinegar and olive oil.

Ingredients:

750g ripe tomatoes, skinned
 ½ cucumber
 1 yellow pepper
 1 red pepper
 4 cloves of garlic
 200g wholemeal breadcrumbs
 300ml water
 3tbsp white wine vinegar
 3tbsp olive oil
 Salt and ground black pepper
 2-3tbsp tomato purée

Method:

1. Roughly chop skinned tomatoes, peppers, garlic and cucumber - leave the skin on.

2. Blend together tomatoes, cucumber, peppers, garlic, breadcrumbs and water in batches using a food processor. Turn each batch into a large bowl.
3. Beat in the wine vinegar, oil and plenty of salt and pepper. Stir in enough tomato purée to give the soup a delicate red colour.
4. Stir in extra chilled water to thin the soup's consistency if preferred. Chill thoroughly before serving.
5. Serve in bowls or glasses garnished with croutons, chopped spring onions and cucumber.

Annual BBQ

The annual BBQ will be held on **Saturday 6th September, 12.30 - 2.30pm** at Culver Lane Allotments

All Plot Holders, Friends and Main Helpers are welcome.

The marquee will be sited in the car park and the BBQ's, 1 meat, 1 vegetarian, plates, cutlery and tumblers will be provided. Please bring what you would like to eat and drink and a salad or sweet to share. Picnic tables and chairs will be useful.

Free to EAA members and children, non-members £1, free to those who join on the day.

As there was little or no interest in the scarecrow competition this year, you can have another chance at the BBQ. The rules are, there are no rules, if a scarecrow is on your plot at midday on BBQ day, it will be judged.

All plot holders are eligible to enter, members of the EAA or not, the more the merrier.

Again this year, there will be Competitions for the **Best Fruit or Vegetable** and **Items using Plot Produce**, such as jam, wine or cakes.

All entries should be in place by **1.30pm**, and everyone can take part in the voting that will commence at **1.45pm**. Everyone present can have a chance of voting for the two classes of Best in Show, prizes in both these categories.

Calling all you photographers out there, there will again be a display board with photographs of the allotments through the year. Also this year there will be a section for 'guess what it is' showing fruit, veg, flower or gardening implement from a weird angle. If you have any photographs, why not bring them along and add them to the board.

Update on Plot 46 Watering System

In the February issue of the Newsletter there was an article about Richard and Julia's ideas for a watering system on their plot. This is now up and running and the following is Richard's report on it.

Living 15 minutes cycle ride from the plot it can be a pain popping down most days to the plot to water those crops that struggle without a daily dose of water. We therefore set about installing a watering system that would deliver a small quantity of water accurately to those plants that need it.

We have a pair of linked water butts fed from the roof of our shed fed by a slightly Heath Robinson arrangement of corrugated roofing and gutter.

The front water butt has a tap that we connected to a Hozelock watering timer. This is supposed to be weather proof but we chose to cover it with an old plastic lunch box.

On the other end of the timer is a hose pipe buried under the path to run to a 15 metre soaker hose. This

runs around whichever bed most needs watering help – in our case this year cucumbers, courgettes and butternut squash.



It has now run for four weeks and seems to be working fine – although we don't have a control bed with the same plants and no watering system to compare with.

The plants get an hour of watering a day. It is a low flow system – in four weeks it has delivered about 200 litres of water – so maybe 7 litres a day. This rate of flow will drop as the butts empty so this should be seen as an average.

The system therefore delivers a small volume of water accurately to the plants once a day. It will be interesting to see if the roots of the plants have gravitated to the soaker hose.



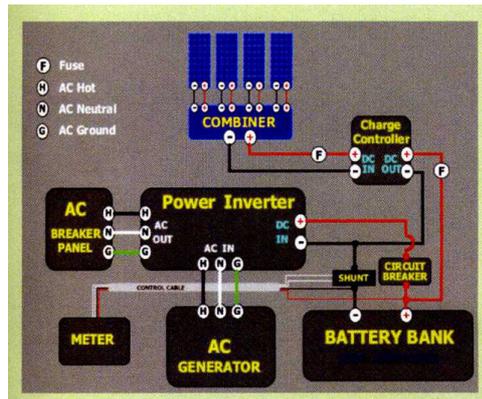
If you have an idea that helps with your plot, why not share it and it will appear in the newsletter.

Ideas for the future?

On a visit to Chelsea Flower Show this year, one of our members stumbled (not literally) across the Leeds & District Allotment Gardeners Federation demonstration garden. As well as a beautiful array of fruit and vegetables, there was information about two improvements that have been made.

The following is a copy of the information contained in a leaflet that they supplied.

The schematic shows the basic features of the installation. The original installation in 2007 used one panel only (pole mounted), the displayed wiring board mock up and was designed to power a burglar alarm, two fluorescent tubes and a double socket ring main. Overall power output was limited by the inverter to one kilowatt. The system cost just short of £2000 and was paid for by grant funding from the local authority - the Well Being Fund and contributions from local ward councilors.

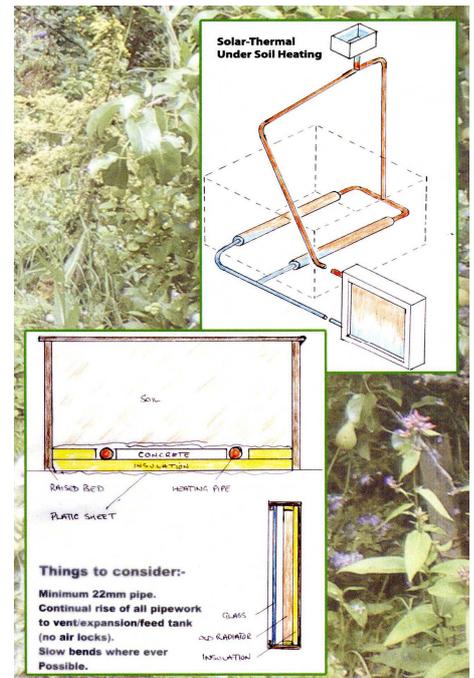


In 2011 the system was upgraded to include a second panel, two further batteries, a more sophisticated battery monitor and three more power sockets. The latter were used for recharging points for cordless tools, a cordless mower and a further set of fluorescent lights. The same one kilowatt inverter is still in use. The cost was just short of £1000 and funds were again obtained from the local authority.

Their other addition was a solar heated hot box.

This was constructed as the diagram, the old radiator used should be painted black.

Food for thought!



Centralised compost bins

It has been suggested that making a centralised composting area is an idea worth considering.

What are the benefits

More allotment waste will be added

Bigger heaps get hotter, helping to break down the contents

Therefore quicker results

What are the disadvantages

Further to walk to deposit allotment waste

Less control over the contents

Need for regular turning, volunteers will be required.

The system will work on a 'who puts

in and helps with the turning, takes out' basis.

The positioning of the bins will be subject to discussion, but as at least three will be required, the area next to the EAA shed has been suggested. The bug hotel would be repositioned.

Hopefully, ETC can be persuaded to erect the bins or at least provide the wood, otherwise it will be collecting pallets and a working party to build the bins.

This is only a suggestion at the moment, but as the idea requires the members participation your ideas on the subject would be most welcome.

And finally!

WE DONT HAVE ANY VEGETABLE JOKES YET



SO IF YOU DO

LETTUCE KNOW