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Issue 16



EAA News

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This is ideal growing weather for the allotments, sun and showers. The plots are looking great, filling up quickly with all manner of fruit and veg and with luck and a following wind, we can look forward to a bumper harvest this year!

The two EAA mowers have seen some use already, they are both now fully functional and fuelled ready to go.

The plant sale is now in full swing, with plants arriving and being sold very quickly. If you have spare plants, don't throw them away, recycle them. Please place them on the racks next to the EAA shed for sale at 20p per plant, don't forget to mark what they are. Please return the pots after planting out.

This is EAA's only source of revenue as it was decided at the AGM to suspend any membership fees for this year and rely on the proceeds of the plant sale to fund the Association. If enough money is raised, it is hoped that useful equipment can be purchased for the use by members. Any suggestions gratefully received.

We are lucky to have toilet facilities on the site, the toilet is cleaned and stocked by Peter and Sheila Lumber, plot 4, on a voluntary basis.

It has been noticed lately that the toilets have been left in a condition less than that which is expected. Please make sure that the toilet and basin are left clean after use.

Manure

You may have noticed the sign by the shed regarding manure for sale. This is well rotted cow manure, which is ideal for quick draining soil like ours. The manure comes from a herd of Dexters traditionally farmed in Newbury, where no fertilisers or weed killers are used on the pasture.

A load cost £50, a load is a Transit flat bed truck full, one of our members has taken delivery of a load and is pleased with it. If anybody wishes to see what the manure is like, there is still some piled up on plot 59 and Roger is willing for anybody to come and have a look.



The driver will deliver in the evening as he lives in Winnersh, but be warned, he will drop it on the track next to your plot, so it will have to be moved straight away.



Maybe a whole load is too much for your needs, how about sharing a load with others? Now is not exactly the correct time for using manure on your plot, but store it until Autumn, it might not be available then.

Seasonal Tips

June is one of the busiest months of the year. The days will be lengthening and the temperatures rising and everything on the allotment will be growing energetically – not least the weeds. June can be a surprisingly dry month too, so there may be a lot of watering to do in order to keep your newly planted seedlings growing healthily.

Dig out any perennial weeds, then hoe regularly, especially on dry days to prevent annual weeds competing for moisture. Spread mulches such as garden compost or bark chips. These will help to suppress weeds and if the underlying earth is damp before you apply them, they will also delay evaporation.

Continue successional sowing of salad crops, beetroot, lettuce and spring onions. Why not try the more unusual, we have sown mooli, a long white radish, I will let you know.

Brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflowers, celeriac, courgettes, outdoor cucumbers, French and runner beans, leeks, pumpkins, squashes, sweet corn, outdoor tomatoes can all be planted out into their final position now. As with all young plants water in carefully and protect from birds with netting.

Cabbage root fly attacks the roots of brassicas. Female flies lay the eggs on the surface of the soil next to the stem of the plant. When transplanting out young plants, place a piece of cardboard around the base of the plant to create a collar, this will stop the flies from laying their eggs on the soil. You can also buy brassica collars.

Watch out for black fly on broad beans, spray the plant with soapy water (diluted washing up liquid) or squash the flies with your thumb and finger. You can remove the tip of the plant where the black fly congregate.

Beetroot, broad beans, early peas, lettuce, rhubarb, spring onions, and radish, can all be harvested now.

Start to harvest the first strawberries, if the birds have left any. Net blackcurrant bushes

Lift the earliest potatoes towards the end of the month and continue earthing up the rows of your other varieties.

June is the end of the asparagus season, so stop cutting and give the plants a top dressing of general fertiliser to help build up the crowns for next year.

Continue to thin out seedlings of beetroot and lettuce. When thinning out carrots, this is best done in the morning on a still day and water afterwards. Companion planting with aromatic plants - garlic, basil or marigolds may disguise the smell, but covering with mesh is better.

Dahlias can be planted out now.

Cookery Corner

Another of Sue Bonham's recipes for using all that rhubarb, serve warm as a pudding or cool or cooled as a cake.

Rhubarb and Ginger cake



Ingredients:

150g soft butter
150g caster sugar
3 large eggs
100g SR flour

1 tsp baking powder
100g ground almonds
2 balls stem ginger, finely chopped
40g rhubarb cut into small pieces
2tbsp syrup from ginger jar

Topping

45g Demerara sugar
100g SR flour
75g cold butter
1tsp ground ginger
1tbsp syrup from ginger jar
50g
Flaked almonds

Method:

1. Preheat oven 180°C, fan 160°C, gas 4. Grease and line a 20cm loose bottom square tin.

2. Beat together the soft butter, caster sugar, eggs, flour, baking powder, ground almonds, chopped stem ginger and syrup for 2 minutes.
3. Stir in chopped rhubarb.
4. Spoon into the tin.
5. To make the topping – whizz the sugar, flour, butter and ground ginger in a food processor.
6. Add the syrup and briefly whizz again. Stir in the flaked almonds. It should be crumbly.
7. Scatter the topping over the cake mix.
8. Bake for 1 hour, if it looks like burning, cover with foil.
9. Serve warm with cream or custard or cool in the tin.

Strawberries

How are your strawberries? A bit more sun will do no harm.

Watch out for the strawberry snail, Its shell can be anything up to about 15mm across, with colour ranging from dirty yellowish-brown through chestnut brown or even a purplish-grey; usually has five or six whorls in a flattened cone, with growth ridges running across each whorl. Feeds on a wide range of low vegetation, damaging strawberries, lettuce plants as well as the foliage of many garden flowers. Mainly nocturnal, but can be found feeding in the daytime, especially after rain. Found in any well-vegetated habitat, especially in lower-lying areas with plenty of moisture.



Straw mulch can be useful in deterring the snail and will help to keep the fruit off the ground and increase air circulation. Other deterrents are crushed eggshells, a ring of rock salt and the oddest of all, human hair, it might be just an old wives tale, but worth a try.

Beside the attack from ground level, netting the crop will deter the birds.

Pick the berries every day as once they start to turn red, they ripen quickly. If they need to be stored for a day or two, select berries where the ends are still white, these will continue to ripen in a bowl, do not store in the fridge.

Some plants will be sending off runners already, these should be removed so all the plants strength is used for producing fruit.

If you want to propagate new plants, peg down the strongest runners in pots of compost and water in. This can be cut away from the parent plant after a few weeks,

Vermicomposting

In recent years worm composting has become more and more popular. A single worm composting bin can dispose of garden waste and kitchen scraps as well as providing an endless supply of high quality worm compost.

Worm compost concentrates goodness, in much the same way that passing grass through the gut of a cow produces high quality manure, those thousands of worms pass your kitchen and garden waste through their gut to make a high quality growing medium and compost supplement.

Worm casts and compost is best used as a first class natural fertilizer, use it sparingly and selectively around the garden - a little goes a very long way! Studies have shown that worms convert organic waste into the best natural fertilizer known - worm compost.

It contains from 5 to 11 times the quantity of available "NPK" (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) than the soil the worms consume to produce the cast.

The worms also drastically improve the soil structure. Each worm can convert up to their own weight of waste into worm compost each day.

It's easy to make your own!

Worms will be happy in any home that meets their basic needs: air, darkness, and moisture. It also shouldn't get too hot or cold. There are several ways to make a wormery. The easiest is to use an old plastic (or wood) box with lid, a drill, 2 bricks or pieces of wood to stand it on, some newspaper or cardboard, some worm bedding and most important, the worms.

You can get the right sort of worms on line, from a fishing tackle shop, or a compost heap. A common name for the worms you use in wormeries is Tiger worms. You only need one variety, but if you have more than one your wormery can be more efficient. Collect 300 – 500 of these, or as many as you can. The more you start with, the faster your wormery will become productive. An established, healthy wormery will contain several thousand worms.

Scarecrows

Once again there will be a Scarecrow competition this year, the judging will be on **Saturday 26th July at 12 noon.**

Last year there was a varied selection of scarecrows, the imagination showed no boundaries.

Can it be repeated this year?

The rules are, there are no rules, if a scarecrow is on your plot on judging day, it will be judged. All plot holders are eligible to enter, members of the EAA or not, the more the merrier.

New scarecrows if possible please, they can be refurbished, they probably need it after being left out over winter.



Allotments in WW1

In August this year, the world will mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War.

It was during this time, that Dig for Victory or Victory Gardens were encouraged with the population in Britain as means of having food on the table when British ships were being attacked and the normal routes for importing food from abroad were closed. The model was recreated again in World War 2 where it became even more popular and was a major source of food to feed the troops on the frontline.

By 1914 there were somewhere between 450,000 and 600,000 allotments in England, and although the 1907 Smallholdings and Allotments Act had forced local authorities into providing allotments, there was still some resistance.

That resistance soon faded as the severity of the impact that Germany's blockades had on food supplies came into realisation. There was then a serious move to increase the number of allotments and local authorities were given powers to turn any derelict land into allotments. By 1917 there were over 1.5 million allotments in England.

One source of land suitable for allotments but not large enough for general agricultural use was the land owned by railway companies. These parcels of land were often allotted to the railway workers and this is the reason that you will often see allotments by railway lines today.

After the war, demand for allotments was still high, and returning servicemen joined the waiting lists for plots. Unfortunately much of the land that was requisitioned for the war (50,000 acres) was returned to its original purpose – often recreational land and the interest in allotments began to decline.

During the war, a large number of postcards were printed and published for propaganda purposes bearing a clear message reinforcing Government information campaigns. Post cards typically focused on one specific theme usually to evoke powerful and intense feelings.



Vegnapping!

This was reported in the Daily Telegraph

Police caught a gang of allotment thieves after holding a bizarre identity parade - of stolen VEGETABLES.

Two men were caught carrying a bag of stolen fruit and veg at allotments in Brampton, Cambs.

To get evidence against the duo police lined up the food on the roadside and asked allotment holders to identify their stolen vegetables.

They instantly spotted their crops, including a marrow with a distinctive stripe, rhubarb, leeks and cabbages.

Police spotted the offenders run across the road into the allotment and when they stopped and searched them, they found stolen produce.

Police carried out a unique investigation by photographing the fruit and vegetables and then putting them on the verge, asking people if they could recognize the vegetables.

Could you spot your crops?

And finally!

Did you know - just **30 minutes** of gardening on your allotment can burn around **150 calories**, the same as doing low impact aerobics.

Spending as little as 15 minutes a day out in the summer sunshine can build up your levels of **vitamin D**.

So you have no excuse, get out there, enjoy the sunshine and tell yourself the exercise is doing you good, it's cheaper than gym membership.

If you start flagging, think of all the healthy vegetables that will be the result of all that effort.

Enjoy your plot!