

October 2014

Issue 18



EAA News

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If it's October, it must be AGM time again!

The AGM will be held at the Parish Room, Community Centre, Radstock Lane, Earley RG6 5UZ again this year on Tuesday 7th October at 7.30pm.

It can be seen from the notice that was sent out on 15th September, the main Resolution is 'Amendments to the Constitution'. This will be the first time that the constitution has been amended since the EAA was formed in October 2011.

After the official business, there will be refreshments, tea/coffee, cake and biscuits, followed by a vegetable quiz, prize for the winner.

Leek moth has been noticed on the allotments again this year. It may be too late, but cover your leeks with environmesh, they might be saved.

Strange happenings on the plot this year.

Splitting tomatoes - irregular watering is the usual cause, but whether they were grown in a polytunnel or outside, the results were the same. Plum and beefsteak tomatoes do not appear to have suffered this fate.

Onions that rotted off early on, but just grew through it, leeks going to seed before they were large enough to harvest.

It has certainly been a strange year, but 'Keep calm and carry on',

Horsetail

There has been a major growth of Horsetail (AKA Mare's tail), this year on some plots. This is obviously making cultivation both difficult and time consuming for the plot holders, as the only way to remove it (without a spraying licence) is to continuously dig it out.

During the last visit of Terry from Earley Town Council on Wednesday 10th September this was brought to his attention and subsequently he has been in discussion with their "weed control contractor".

Following an in depth discussion it has been agreed that ETC, at their cost, are prepared to treat this issue and have the affected plots sprayed so that the weed is eradicated.

However this does present some issues for the plot holders.

The plots have to be clear of any soft fruit bushes and any other permanent growth and the plots have to be sprayed by the end of October before the dormant season.

However once treated it should be eradicated and continue to provide workable plots.



I 'Googled' horsetail!



That's better!

The weed spreads by seed but usually arrives via rhizomes from neighbouring gardens, or stem fragments in composts or manures.

The creeping rhizomes of this pernicious plant may go down as deep as 2m (7ft) below the surface, making them hard to remove by digging out.

In spring, fertile light brown stems, 20-50cm (10-20in) tall, appear with a cone-like spore producing structure at the end of the stems. In summer fir tree-like shoots that appear.

Hoing off the shoots in Spring might slow down the invasion, but the only way to eradicate the problem is by spraying with an industrial strength weed killer.

Seasonal Tips

October will see the temperatures drop and clear frosty nights are likely in most places. The days are drawing in so there is less time to work on the plot, it's a good month for rough digging the ground for the winter weather to break it down.

Sow a green manure like field beans that will hold the nutrients in the soil over winter until spring when you dig them in to add both humus and nutrients

Consider where you intend to plant your runner beans next year and start a bean trench, The beans will really benefit from this, especially if next summer is hot.

There is very little that can be successfully planted at this time of year, Try putting in Japanese onions sets, protect with mesh against the dreaded leaf miner and pigeons. Leave shallots and garlic until next month,. Autumn planted broad beans and peas, stand well through the winter and the resulting crops are much earlier than those sown in spring.

The main harvesting season is coming to an end but you could still be picking artichokes, runner beans, beetroot, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower,

celeriac, courgettes, cucumbers, leeks, parsnips, spinach, squash, and turnip. Don't forget those pumpkins, they'll be needed later this month.



October is the most popular month to clear summer plants out of the greenhouse and give it a good clean. Many experts recommend using a dilute disinfectant, Jeyes fluid or similar, as this will kill any viruses, fungal spores or other nasties which may be lurking around and waiting for next year's plants.

Flour free chocolate and beetroot cake

Trying to keep up with Jean!



Ingredients

1. 300g cooked, unseasoned beetroot, peeled and puréed
2. 4 large free-range eggs
3. 4 tablespoons honey
4. 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
5. 1 tablespoon raw cocoa powder, plus extra for dusting
6. 1 teaspoon gluten free baking

7. powder
7. Pinch of salt
8. 125g ground almonds
9. 125g dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa solids), broken into small pieces
10. 4 tablespoons cold-pressed olive oil

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Grease and line a 22cm loose-bottomed cake tin.
2. In a large mixing bowl, beat the beetroot, eggs, honey, vanilla extract, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt with an electric hand mixer. When these ingredients are thoroughly combined, fold in the ground almonds.

3. Place a heatproof bowl on the top of a saucepan containing a little water. Put the chocolate pieces in the bowl and allow to melt over a low heat, then mix in the oil. Gently stir the chocolate and oil into the cake mixture until well combined.
4. Scrape the mixture into the prepared tin and bake in the oven for 35-40 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Remove from the oven and leave the cake to cool in the tin before turning out onto a wire rack.
5. Once the cake is completely cool, dust with cocoa powder. Serve on its own or with crème fraiche.

Gluten free and no carbs.

BBQ 2014

The Annual EAA BBQ was held on a sunny Saturday afternoon in early September.

A week before it was not sure that this would be possible as ETC deposited a lorry load of compost in the car park and forgot to tell anybody that it was free to everyone.

Once this was established, the speed at which it disappeared was amazing. Many thanks to those that helped clear the pile and commiserations to those that missed out, hopefully a further supply can be obtained, with more notice this time!

Back to the BBQ, this was enjoyed by those present and the entries for the competitions were varied and surprisingly numerous this year.



There were only two entries for the scarecrow competition, both lady scarecrows this year, but the sash went to Sheila and Peter Lumbar, Plot 4 for 'Lucinda', congratulations for bringing the holiday feel to the plot.

A mention of the of the lady scarecrow, 'Samantha' she is on plot 38a, Liz and Julie were her creators.

The best vegetable prize was won by Dougie Hern Plot 26, for his box of mixed vegetables.



The Plot Produce prize was won by Jean Hackett, Plot 70 for her delicious courgette and apple cake. This was one of four cakes entered by Jean, all using plot produce and her raspberry bakewell cake received the same number of votes, truly a winner.



As there was such a diversity of entries, maybe next year more categories could be added or at least, split the existing ones. Your comments are welcome.

More photographs were added to the display board, it's good to see the progress of the plots throughout the year and remember what they were like last year.

All things considered, a pleasant few hours were spent chatting, eating and generally putting the world to rights, can't be bad!

Cabbage folklore

Cabbages belong to the Cruciferae family, so called because their flowers have four petals arranged as a cross. A cross with arms of equal length is a symbol of the sun.

In Irish folklore, cabbages are supposed to reveal a lot about future spouses. Blindfolded girls were sent out in pairs to pull the first cabbage they could find. If there was a lot of earth attached to the root, they would have plenty of money but if there was only a little earth, they would be poor.

The taste of the heart of the cabbage

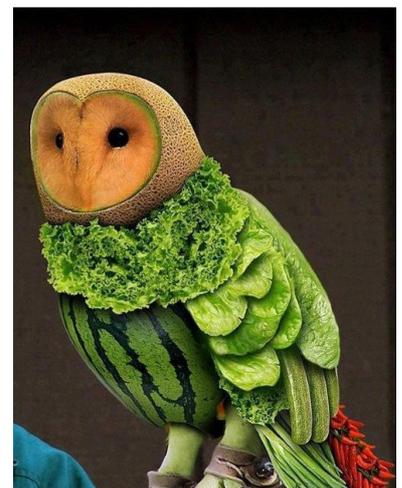
would reveal a lot about the future spouse's disposition - sweet or sour!

Sage, mint, thyme and rosemary all improve by being planted near the cabbage.

When you plant your cabbages, plant a stick of rhubarb with them - this prevents club root. Twist a narrow strip of tinfoil round the roots of your cabbage plants to prevent cabbage fly.



And finally!



*Work of art!
No Photoshop involved*