

August 2015

Issue 23



Chairman's Chatter

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What a great time of year – lots of fruit and veg to harvest from your plot and July's weather a bit of everything including record highs to start and record lows to finish has helped it all to grow along. The allotments are looking great at the moment.

That is probably why 10th – 16th August is national allotment week as organised by the National Allotment Society (<http://www.nsalg.org.uk/>). They have a number of events across the country during the week and this is a great time of year to be pushing both allotments and grow your own. The nearest event is in Winchester on Sunday 16th August which is either a long way to go if you are not used to travelling in that direction or not far at all if you happen to work in Southampton.

As anyone who has seen our plot will realise that there is a bed of bee mix on the front for a reason – I like bees and realise that we kind of need them to pollinate lots of the good stuff we enjoy growing and eating. As Einstein allegedly said:

If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live.



Like many people I am therefore rather concerned that the UK has lifted a ban on pesticides linked to serious harm in bees for a small percentage of oil seed rape fields. The ban has been lifted in a part of East Anglia following an application and lobbying from the NFU (National Framer's Union) and pesticide

manufacturers.

Neonicotinoids, the world's most widely used insecticide, have been linked to serious harm in bees, including a drastic reduction in queens, and were banned across the 27 countries of the EU in 2013. Bees and other pollinators are essential for many crops but are in decline due to the impact of pesticides, loss of habitat and disease.

On a much happier note it will soon be time for the annual EAA BBQ which this year is on Saturday 5th September 2015 – see Page 3 for details. There will be a variety of competitions to enter and show who has grown what – all with a relaxed mix of competition and tasting.

An update on the EAA shed: we have fixed the padlock on the shed and it has the same code as before, 354. Apologies for the temporary lock out – we believe someone accidentally changed the code whilst using it. My thanks to Linda and Dave for lock breaking and replacing the padlock. If you have suddenly found you are one watering can up maybe you wandered off with the green one we keep at the shed for watering seedlings for sale on the rack – please return it. In the meantime I have replaced it with one that will be harder to take away by mistake.

Finally thanks to everyone for being careful with the gates and keeping them closed. I have not heard any reports of the Muntjac deer returning to the plot – we need to stay vigilant as with all the beans and other crops on the site at the moment they would have a field day if they were to get in at the moment .

Richard

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Seasonal Tips

August is a busy month on the plot, whether it is harvesting, preparing for Autumn or squeezing in a few last minute sowings.

Continue with the harvesting of all vegetable crops and keep up with the picking of runner beans to maintain cropping well into the autumn.

Continue with the lifting of potatoes. Prepare to lift onions towards the end of the month. Wait until the tops begin to fall over as this indicates that the bulb has stopped swelling. Dry them before 'stringing' and putting into store. These bulbs will then keep until next March.

Water tomatoes regularly so they don't succumb to blossom end rot or splitting. Ensure you water them at the base of the plant to avoid 'ghost spot', pale rings on their skins that sometimes turn yellow or orange, though the fruit can still be eaten.



Tomato 'ghost spot'

Watch out for any signs of blight on your tomatoes and potatoes, if you suspect blight, remove and burn affected foliage, do not add to the compost.

Start to thin apples and pears down to one or two fruits per cluster. The apples and pears will soon begin to colour up. The plums and damsons will be in full flow so harvest regularly.

Harvest soft fruit. Summer prune gooseberries and currants once all the fruit has been picked.

Prune summer fruiting raspberries by cutting all the canes that had fruit on this year. Tie in all the new canes. The late fruiting raspberries and blackberries will be cropping well by now.

Apples and pears grown as cordons, espaliers or fans can be pruned towards the end of the month, leave the trees and bushes until the winter.

Carrot flies are laying their eggs again this month. Protect with fleece or environmesh.

Pick off caterpillars on brassica leaves if you find them.

Slugs and snails are still a nuisance so they still need controlling in whatever method you choose.

Powdery mildews can be a problem in dry, warm summers and can be found on peas, courgettes, squashes and cucumbers. Make sure you water regularly to avoid this.

Check for blackfly on runner beans, french beans, globe artichokes, etc. Rub them off between the finger and thumb, but if you are a bit squeamish use a soft soap.

Remove fruit infected by brown rot on apples, pears, plums and quinces and destroy it.

In dry weather, remember, keep up the watering.

Cookery Corner - Stuffed courgettes with herbs

An easy, light meal using courgettes

Ingredients:

4 tomatoes

Large handful of fine white breadcrumbs

2 cloves fo garlic, finely chopped

50g/2oz Permesan, finely grated

Handful of thyme leaves, chopped

4 courgettes, topped and tailed and sliced lengthways

5 tbsp. olive oil

Method:

1. Skin the tomatoes, chop the flesh and put into a bowl.
2. To the bowl, add the breadcrumbs and season.
3. Stir in garlic, Parmesan and thyme leaves.
4. Rub each courgette with olive oil (use 3 tbsp.), place in a roasting tin and spoon the tomato mixture on to each one.
5. Drizzle over the remaining oil

and place in oven for 25 to 30 minutes until golden brown.

6. Remove from oven, garnish with thyme stalks.



Annual BBQ 2015

The annual EAA BBQ and show is on **Saturday 5th September** this year, 12.30 -15.00 for Allotment Holders, Friends and Main Helpers



Bring what you'd like to eat and drink and a salad or sweet to share, picnic tables and chairs.

The BBQ's, plates, cutlery and tumblers will be supplied.

This event free to EAA Members and children. Non members £1.00 or free if you join on the day.

As last year there were a couple of entries of boxes of vegetables, it has been decided to add this as a separate class. There will still be the individual fruit or veg class and the plot produce class. Entries accepted on the day of the BBQ between 12.30 and 13.30 and everybody present will be able to take part in the voting which takes place from 14.00.

If you have sunflowers on your plot, these will be judged by Richard during the morning of the BBQ, with a prize for the tallest and broadest head.



As well as the Best Allotment Award presented by ETC each year, it was thought that the EAA could also give an award for the most Innovative plot. It could be planting patterns, growing methods, crops/flowers grown or different uses for the plot, anything that is a bit different.

The award will be presented at the BBQ.

AGM 2015

This year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 28th October at 7.30pm in the Parish Room, Radstock Lane Earley.

The nomination forms for committee members will be sent out in due course. As most of the existing committee has been in office since the inception of the EAA, there will be a need for new members, especially a Newsletter Editor, (a format will be provided, all it needs is the words filled in!) Do you think you could help?

The winner of the Best Allotment Award and the Most Improved Allotment will be announced by ETC at the meeting. A Question and Answer session could follow the presentation as a councillor will be present.

This will be followed by a quiz and refreshments. Please come and support **YOUR** allotment association.

Green manures

Green manures are generally under-used, yet they are easy, cheap and have a number of benefits.

- First, they are a great way to hold nutrients in the soil that would wash out over winter. Nutrients that would leach from the soil are held onto for the spring crops. With light sandy soils, where there would be little benefit to winter digging, a green manure is ideal.
- Secondly, they suppress weed growth. Two plants cannot grow in the same place and a green manure will prevent weeds from getting a hold.
- The third benefit is that green manures improve the soil structure and add humus. The roots keep the soil friable as well as drawing up minerals and nutrients that would be otherwise wasted.

As well as holding nutrients in the soil, some green manures have the ability to fix nitrogen from the air. This ability to fix nitrogen means that the plants are actually providing you with fertiliser.

Two green manures are worthy of special mention, mustard and French beans.

After you lift potatoes, planting agricultural mustard will help to reduce eelworm by hardening their cysts and preventing them from emerging on time, confusing their breeding cycle. Be careful though if you have club root because mustard is a brassica and mustard green manure can further spread the disease.

The second is a plant not normally considered as a green manure, French beans. They grow quickly and being legumes they fix nitrogen. The seeds are large enough to handle easily and cheap enough to use as a green manure. Whenever you have cleared a crop and will have some vacant soil for a few weeks, densely sow some French beans.

If plans go wrong and the space is required you can harvest the beans. Rather than digging the French beans in, you can just use them.

What does not go in the Compost Bins?

Below is an identification chart of the most common perennial weeds, please **DO NOT** add these to the compost.

 <p>Bindweed leaves</p>	 <p>Bindweed flowers</p>	 <p>Bindweed roots</p>
 <p>Couch grass</p>	 <p>Couch grass roots</p>	
 <p>Ground elder shoots</p>	 <p>Ground elder roots</p>	
 <p>Dandelion roots</p>	 <p>dock roots</p>	