



Chairman's Chatter

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Greetings – as I write this the sun is beaming down and for several evenings the plots have been busy as the sun sets with people watering after hot sunny days. By the time you read this I suspect we will be back to a more typical English summer - cool and damp.

As I hope you are aware 8th – 14th August is national allotments week! The theme of the week is “growing together” recognising that allotments can appeal to all parts of society and working to make sure that this is the case.

A recent report by the Kings fund (Gardens and health Implications for policy and practice) into the health benefits of Gardening and Allotments found that gardening and allotments can benefit our physical and mental health in a way that is far more fun as well as effective than spending time indoors on a treadmill.

As a result the report recommended that:

- The government needs to be more coordinated in terms of recognising the benefits of growing and gardening in their activities such as planning developments and housing. No surprise here, we probably only need the first half line of this finding.
- More explicitly green spaces including allotments should be included in new housing developments – as we can all see in areas around Earley housing is getting denser with less green space provided as we push for more homes that families need.
- The NHS should see growing and

gardening as an appropriate treatment for both physical and mental health issues. Again – most of us did not need a report to tell us this.

(The King's Fund is a think tank in England, which is involved with work relating to the health system in England.)

All sounds good – let's see if any of this gets joined up enough to happen – apparently the new Prime Minister is rather busy at the moment.

Annual BBQ

Hoping that the sun will last it is time to remind you that we are approaching the annual EAA barbecue on Saturday 3rd September running from 12.30 to 15.00. Allotment Holders, Friends and Main Helpers are all welcome. This will be the usual mix of food, fun and gentle competition – more details inside the newsletter.

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.

Happy harvesting and I look forward to seeing you on the plot or at the BBQ

Richard

Tredgett@gmail.com

(Plot 46)

HPHS News

Trading shed & News

The Trading shed continues to meet the needs of plot holders and other members as well as offering great value.

A team of new volunteers are working towards taking on the running of the shed to help us maintain the current opening hours. More volunteers are welcome to join the team – training is provided and there is a very flexible booking system set up.

If you are able to help on the occasional Saturday or Sunday please contact Liz Atkinson from plot 35 on lizatkinson28.8@btinternet.com or pop in to the shed and have a chat with the volunteers in there.

We have had another delivery and is all stocked up with the things you need to make your plot a success. Two recent new arrivals are:

- **Pet and wildlife friendly slug pellets.** We know slugs are bad news and earlier in the year were having a very busy time (one plot holder recently removed 97 slugs from a single bed in one visit). Several people have asked for these and John has got some in from the regular supplier he uses.
- **Aguadulce Broad Bean** is the hardiest broad bean there is, for sowing anytime from September until April. It's highly prolific and easy to grow, and yet remains one of the most delicious in terms of flavour and texture. This can either be planted directly into the ground or in pots for early planting out – probably depends how organised you are.

As in June we have attached the current price list for the Trading shed to this newsletter. This allows you to see what good value it is and also the great range of goods that is carried.

2016 Earley Allotment 75th Anniversary BBQ



As you will have seen in our Chairman's' Chatters earlier, the annual BBQ is fast approaching so now is the time to start thinking about what you may wish to entre! Our Judging categories for this year, as a reminder, are:

- Best Fruit and Best Veg
- Box of Produce (veg, fruit, herbs)
- Preserves, chutneys and cakes
- Flowers
- NEW: The People's Choice

The People's Choice replaces the Most Innovative Plot. This will give everyone the opportunity to wander around the site and make their own 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices. Simply leave the voting slip below in the EAA money box.

Don't forget, we'll also be judging the tallest Sunflower - Judging will take place on the day!

We hope to see you on Saturday 3rd September between 12:30 - 15:00

1st Choice

Plot Number:

2nd Choice

Plot Number:

3rd Choice

Plot Number:

How to... use Green Manure

I've sown various types of so-called green manure for the previous 4 years. As you'll have seen from our plot (68), we rarely grow in rows and mix flowers, herbs, veg and fruit.

I'm not claiming any proof that green manures work in any kind of measurable way. Sorry to disappoint those of you who like to see statistics, charts and the like. But to me, it just made sense to grow plants that can be dug back into the soil once a planted crop had finished. If you like a tidy looking plot, this may not appeal, for once you've cut or chopped the green manure, it will lie on or just below the surface. This allows for worms and micro-organisms to take the decaying matter into the soil, which is what they naturally do.

I like the word 'natural', especially in an age where 'fast' seems to equate with 'good'. I suppose in motor racing that's true, but not with a hobby that rewards a longer term view. Besides, it saves me plucking out plants that would otherwise inhabit the space for no apparent benefit!

3 particular favourites of ours:

- Phacelia is a quick growing hardy annual green manure that germinates at low temperatures and is ideal for sowing from March until September. It will grow up to 1m in height and has the most gorgeous blue flowers that bees & butterflies enjoy. It's tolerant

of cold temperatures and may over-winter if it's not too cold.

- Crimson Clover Green Manure is a good choice for smothering weeds, fixing nitrogen from the air and is a fast growing bulky green manure. It has deep roots that penetrate the soil and bulky furry foliage that once dug in helps to improve soil structure. The crimson flowers are attractive and again, appeal to bees & butterflies.
- Winter Tares, also known as 'Vetches' is a hardy annual that can be sown March-May or July-September for over-wintering. It is good at nitrogen fixing and for weed suppression on heavier soils but avoid acid or dry soils and dig in before flowering.

I have found out lots of easy to digest information on this website: www.greenmanure.co.uk. They also sell seed. I've found it useful to be able to choose from a dozen or more plants to sow in August & September when gaps appear & other seed choices are limited.

If you'd like to have a chat about any of this, do pop along to plot 68 or leave me a note in the HP shed.

Pete Burton

Plot 68

Leeks - Growing, Pests and Diseases

Growing

Many of you will already be growing leeks and know how to cultivate them. For those that don't here are a few tips.

Start, in late February, by sowing the seeds thinly in a large deep tray of seed compost. Leeks are part of the allium (onion) family, which do not need a great deal of warmth to germinate. So put the seed tray in an unheated greenhouse, on a cool windowsill or in a cold frame. When the seedlings are big enough to handle unearth them carefully from the compost. Refill the tray with John Innes No 2 compost, water well and then make a grid of holes about 4 to 5 cm apart with a small dibber (a pencil or old biro works well). Put the largest of the leek seedlings individually in each hole. Leave these growing until late June, making sure that they do not dry out. Give them an occasional feed with liquid seaweed. By this time, they should be nearly the thickness of a pencil and ready to put in their final position. Choose a fairly sunny spot with good fertile soil. Water the soil well before planting and then with a dibber make holes 15 - 20 cm deep and 15 - 20 cm apart. Take the leeks from the seed tray carefully shake off most of the soil then wash them gently in a bucket of water. Choose the largest ones putting one in each hole. A gentle turning will ensure that they go to the bottom of the hole. If the

roots are very long, pinch off a little to leave about 5 - 7 cm. Water each leek by filling the hole and when the water has soaked in repeat this process.

Pests

There are now three major pests affecting all members of the onion family including leeks, namely leek moth, allium leaf miner and onion fly.

Leek moth

This moth is around 6 mm long and appears twice in the year (May-June and August-October). First signs of infestation are holes eaten in the leaves. Having laid its eggs on the leaves of the plant, these hatch and form small larvae that bore down through the stem causing destruction and allowing other diseases to take hold. With careful observation it is possible to find these, take them off with tweezers and destroy them. However, protection is the better route and covering the leeks with Enviromesh, or similar fine mesh, from the moment they are put in the ground really helps. This can be either be just draped over the leeks and held down all round with anything that gives a good seal with the earth or you can make a wooden frame or plastic hoops that can be easily lifted off for weeding.

Leeks - Growing, Pests and Diseases..Con't

Allium leaf miner

This is a very small grey fly (3-4mm) with a yellow head. Its behaviour is similar to that of the leek moth in that it too lays its eggs that turn into very small, brown, seed-like pupae. First signs of infestation are whitish marks appearing regularly down the leaves followed by the leaves



contorting and twisting. Eventually the leek or onion withers and becomes mushy. Mesh is the best protection but this has to be much finer. Ultramesh, or similar, should do the trick. Some success in preventing these flies from

attacking the onion family has also been achieved by mixed planting with poppies and calendula.

Onion fly

These occasionally attack leeks so it is worth looking for signs of dead and wilting young plants and softening and decaying of mature plants. Also the larvae are often found within the roots and they are 8-10mm long white coloured maggots.



About the onion fly

- Adults emerge from pupae that have over-wintered within the soil.
- Pupal cases are brown, oval shaped and about 10mm long.
- The flies have several generations a year, the first generation usually emerges about May-June time.
- The first generation of adults to emerge are able to reproduce within a few days and females then lay batches of eggs (small, white and elongated, with darker stripes that run longitudinally) onto or nearby onion seedlings.
- Second and third generations attack the onion sets, which will have developed from the seedlings.
- The damage is caused not by adult flies but by their grey, legless maggot-like larvae (8mm long) feeding on the onion sets and moving from one to another in the soil.
- Adult onion flies are similar in appearance to house flies however they are grey, slightly smaller and have longer legs.

- Larvae can often cause secondary damage such as rotting when they bore in and out of the roots.

Prevention

- Regular observation of crops to check for damage or infestation and remove any affected plants immediately and incinerate.
- Keep weeds under control that could be alternative host plants e.g. dandelions.
- Fleece barrier to stop flying adults.
- Avoid planting in soils that have un-rotted organic matter present.

Diseases

White rot

All of the onion family can suffer from white rot for which there is no cure. The rot is often not really apparent until the plant is harvested when white, downy-like fungus can be seen around the base of it.



This is a serious problem and it is recommended not to grow any of the onion family in that bit of ground for at least seven years. If you are prepared to dig out an area and introduce fresh compost, then you might reduce the risk of getting it. However, keeping an annual record of what was planted and where will help to create a healthy rotation of crops and avoid using the infected area of soil too soon.

Rust

- This mostly affects leeks and appears as a rust-brown coating of spores on the leaves.
- Small amounts can be addressed by simply removing the infected leaves. These must not be composted but either burnt or put in a green waste bin.
- If allowed to spread, it can seriously weaken the plants.
- Good air circulation around the plants helps.
- When first sited putting a small amount of petroleum jelly on the spores stops them from spreading.
- If several crushed cloves of garlic are allowed to steep for a day in full-fat milk then strained off the resulting liquid can then be used as a spray. The milk forms a globule around the spores and prevents them from spreading whilst the garlic kills them.



Rob Hine

Plot 24

Seasonal Tips - August & September

August

It's a cliché, but August really is the month of plenty. Almost everything you've sown, planted and nurtured through the spring and early summer will be coming to fruition now. Daily trips to your plot should see you returning home laden with everything from peas, beans, carrots, beetroot, sweetcorn, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, onions, and salads to berries, currants and so on.. August is also the traditional month for summer holidays. Your most pressing problem may well be what to do about watering and harvesting while you're away. Perhaps ask a neighbor to help out.. maybe in exchange for a few bits of ripening produce.

Top Tasks for August

- Harvest your last broad beans and first sweetcorn plus summer fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, chilies
- Check your French beans, runner beans and courgettes as often as you can and harvest them regularly – they seem to double in size overnight!
- Sow your last batch of carrots, beetroots and salads for this year plus onion seeds and spring cabbages for next year
- Feed your pumpkins if you want huge Halloween giants
- Dry out garlic, onions, and shallots so they can be stored over winter
- Check potatoes and tomatoes for signs of blight and spray in warm humid weather

Other jobs

- Weed and water
- Spread surface mulches – if you have any rotted-down compost left, use it up now. You'll be starting a new heap with this year's waste material next month
- Pinch out tops of climbing beans – whilst flowers still appear, new pods should continue to grow
- Pinch out and feed tomatoes and tie them up along with peppers and cucumbers
- Earth up brassicas and potatoes to stop tubers being exposed
- Plan green manures (see article from Pete)
- Prune summer-fruiting raspberries



September

Tis the onset of autumn. Early crops will be coming to an end if they haven't already. On the other hand, later crops are coming into harvest now and you should be lifting maincrop potatoes, cutting your first winter squashes and picking autumn raspberries. You may even have your first Brussels sprouts and leeks – it not over yet.

Top Tasks for September

- Continue to harvest
- Pick mid-season apples and autumn-fruiting raspberries
- Sow the last of your oriental and salad leaves for this year
- Still time to plant spring cabbages and onion sets to overwinter for next year
- Clear away dead foliage and other plant remains as soon as crops have finishes
- Add everything you can to your compost heap – provided the plant material has no signs of disease

Other jobs

- Water when necessary
- Sow green manures (see article from Pete)
- Turn your compost heap
- Harvest any remaining onions
- Ripen and pick tomatoes – to prompt tomatoes to fatten up and ripen, cut off all the lower leaves especially if they're turning yellow
- Cut down asparagus
- Earth up of stake Brussels sprouts
- Ripen pumpkins and winter squashes – remove a few leaves so that the sun can get to the fruits. Continue watering and feeding until you're ready to harvest, September or October
- Harvest sweetcorn – cobs are usually ready for picking when the silk tassels turn brown or black. Pick cobs just before you need them as the sweet flavor deteriorates with storage. Test for ripeness by peeling back the outer leaves and digging a fingernail into one of the kernels. If ripe, it will exude a milky, not clear, juice.
- Prune blackberries

Cookery Corner - Too many currants?

Here are two long tested recipes that are great for gifts at Christmas!

An adaptation of Nigel Slater's Raspberry vinegar

Place 450g of currants in a stainless steel or glass bowl and crush lightly with a fork or potato masher. Pour over 450ml of white wine or cider vinegar, stir then cover and set aside for at least 2 days. Give the fruit an occasional stir. Drain the fruit through muslin and leave for 2 or 3 hours – longer if you have time- and squeeze bag gently to get last of syrup. Pour the liquid into a stainless steel saucepan and tip in 80g of sugar. Bring to the boil, then lower the heat and simmer for about 10 minutes, scraping off any foam. Leave to cool, pour into sterilised bottles and store in a cool dark place. It will last for a year.

Use the vinegar over vanilla ice cream. Use to deglaze cooking pans after sautéing lamb or liver or any other meat. It gives a fruity depth to the caramelised flavours in the pan. Pour over ice then fill up with mineral water or lemonade. Beat into salad dressing with olive oil and black pepper and use to dress spinach or mixed leaf salads.

Creme De Cassis - from Jane Grigson's Fruit Book

5 kg ripe blackcurrants
5 litre red wine
8 kg approx. sugar *
4 liter approx. eau de vie blanche or brandy **

* Use 800g sugar for each litre of juice - see recipe
** Use 1 part of eau de vie at 40% per 3 parts syrup.

Macerate the fruit in the red wine for about 48 hours. Ideally in the sun. Little by little, smash up the fruit in the blender, then press well in a cloth to extract all the juice. When all done, measure the volume and add 800g sugar per litre of juice. Put into a jam pan and put over low to moderate heat to dissolve sugar. When dissolved, warm gently to about 140F and start timer for 15 minutes. When timer goes off, stir gently and check temperature. Repeat 2-3 times, then set timer for longer intervals (say 1/2 hour.) Make sure temperature stays steady, as it shouldn't rise above 160F. After some time (>2 hours) the volume will have reduced slightly and the liquid will have become slightly thicker. Remove from heat and cool.

Using a mug, transfer 3 measures of syrup into a clean container, followed by 1 measure of alcohol, added while stirring carefully and continuously, until all the syrup is added. Towards the end, adjust the volumes maintaining the ratio of 1 part of eau de vie to 3 parts of fruit syrup.

Pour into sterile bottles, cork and leave a couple of days before drinking.

Sarah
Plot 42a



Dates & Reminders

- * *Don't forget - You can still place any surplus plants on the shelving by the EAA Shed and if purchasing any, pop your pennies in the box next to the door. (20p is the suggested amount) Many thanks!*
- * *Please earmark some of your veg for the Reading town Meal being held on 1st October. Crates will be placed on shelving near the notice board boards. Collection will be sometime around 24/25th September*
- * *The AGM will be held on 26th October where the Best Plot and Most Improved Plot winners will be announced. We will communicate that to you all separately after the event.*
- * *Remember - if you find anything interesting on your plot please do let me know.. For the next newsletter, we will have quite an exciting article with details of a large stone block that has been found on a plot... and could possibly form part of a post medieval tombstone or a machine base to support some sort of industrial process....more will be revealed..*

And finally!

