



Chairman's Chatter

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Whilst there are still some crops to harvest we are heading for the season of clearing down summer crops into the compost heap and planting for the next season. I hope your plans include spring bulbs and over wintering onions from the Trading Shed. These have been selling fast but there will be some left if you hurry along to the shed.

We have been working hard with Earley Town Council (ETC) to develop a partnership to address other issues of concern to plot holders, building on the work David Pelling has done for a number of years as our plot rep.

On 10th August Dave and I met with Jo the deputy Town Clerk and Stuart who runs the maintenance teams for ETC to discuss the plots still closed because of mare's tail. It was agreed that actions to date have not solved the problem as there is still mare's tail on three plots in the block.

Going forward it has been decided that the five plots will be cleared and strimmed (high) then sprayed methodically. If, in the spring, we are still seeing it as it is today i.e. it has not reduced any, then the idea is to sow grass and mow for at least a season as this has been found to be a possible solution. By mowing, the weed does not get chance to photosynthesize and as such the roots die.

We will also set up a plan for spraying mare's tail where it arrives on other plots. We know some has "escaped" and these need to be treated - more info about this soon.

In addition to the above we are working with ETC to raise standards more generally on the site. There are a number of problems with overgrown or weedy plots:

- They spread weeds to adjacent plots
- They can hide mare's tail in long grass
- It disappoints those plot holders (the majority) who keep their plots in great order

We challenged the council this year on the management of a particular plot that was in effect unmanaged by the plot holder. Their contract was terminated, the plot cleared by the council and it is now able to be split and let to two new plot holders.

If you have any questions or concerns about any of the above please feel free to speak to me.

On the 5th of August we had a stall at the Earley Green Fair to raise the profile of our allotments as it often feels as if few people know about them. This turned out to be the case as many of the folks we talked to at the event were unaware Earley Town Council had any allotments. We talked to a lot of people and signed enough up to join the waiting list for a plot to double the number on it to 14. My thanks to those people who donated crops or gave their time on the day to help.

A successful BBQ was held on September 2nd, there was a good selection of entries for the various categories.

Richard

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Seasonal Tips - October/November

October will see temperatures drop and clear frosty nights are likely in most places. At this time of year the work on the plot is primarily about clearing away and composting the remains of the summer's harvest. When the ground is cleared, cover beds with sheeting - use polythene or weed suppressant membrane (available in the shed), this keeps weed growth at bay and allows you to sow earlier next spring.

Dig up the rest of your potatoes and store them somewhere frost free (before the slugs get them).

Finish harvesting beans and peas. When beans and peas finish cropping simply cut the plant away at ground level, leaving the roots in the soil. These crops fix nitrogen which is slowly released into the soil as the roots break down.

If you plan to grow beans next year, start preparing the site by digging trenches, lining them with newspapers (six sheets thick) and filling with manure or kitchen waste.

Leave pumpkins and squashes to "cure" in the sunshine. This hardens their skin so they will keep longer, but harvest before the first frosts, they will quickly turn mushy if left outside.



Cut back yellowing asparagus foliage to within 5cm of the ground.

Plant autumn onion sets (available in the shed), protect with mesh against the dreaded leaf miner and pigeons.

Spring cabbage plants can be planted out and covered with netting to protect them from pigeons.

Sow overwintering broad beans (Aquadulce) and Peas (Meteor) for an early crop.

November

Plant garlic cloves with their pointed ends up, on well drained soil and in full sun.

Rhubarb should be entering the dormant period now, so now is the best time to divide and replant old crowns.

Fruit Bushes - plant new, bare root bushes this month, allowing them time through autumn to get their roots down before start of next growing season.

Sweet pea seeds and other hardy annuals to plant out in spring can be sown in the unheated greenhouse.

Continue to rake up fallen leaves from the plot and make leafmold. Pop the them in black bin bags pierced a few times with a fork and shove them somewhere out of sight. Open in a year's time to discover crumbly 'leafmould', which is great for potting composts and for use as a low-nutrient mulch.

Clear out the greenhouse and give it a good clean.

Cookery Corner - Pumpkin and peanut curry

Surprise, this month's recipe is not Pumpkin soup!

Ingredients

2 tbsp crunchy peanut butter
1 tsp tomato purée
Zest and juice of 1 lime
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp sugar
Small handful fresh coriander
2 red chillies
4 cloves garlic
1cm piece fresh ginger
2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 red onions cut into thin wedges
800g pumpkin or butternut squash
400ml can coconut milk

Method

1. Stir the peanut butter into a jug containing 200ml hot water, until it dissolves. Stir in the purée, lime zest and juice, soy and sugar.
2. Remove the leaves from the coriander and set aside. Chop the stalks as finely, along with the chilli, garlic and ginger.
3. Heat the oil in a wok or good sized pan and fry the onions quite briskly for a few minutes, so that they catch slightly. Add the pumpkin and stir-fry for a few minutes. Stir in the chilli mixture and fry for 1 minute, then add the coconut milk. Stir, then add the peanut butter mix.

4. Cook at a brisk simmer for 15-20 minutes, until the sauce has thickened slightly and the pumpkin is tender. Season to taste or add more soy sauce if liked. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve with cooked rice.



HP Trading Shed



There is a new way of ordering specific Suttons seeds in the shed. HPHS are now members of Suttons group scheme and as such members can order seeds and have them delivered to their home address.

All packet seeds attract a 35% discount, other items (raised beds etc) are at 10% discount on the catalogue prices.

Pick up a catalogue and order form in the shed. Of course there will still be supplies of individual packets in the shed of the most popular varieties and green manure.

We still have supplies of bulbs in the shed, large daffodils, red and yellow standard tulips and white crocus.

There are also Japanese onions and broad bean seeds in packets.

The garlic bulbs are in and the fruit bushes should be in by the end of the month depending on the weather.

2017 EAA BBQ

A pleasant EAA BBQ was held on September 2nd in the car park when members enjoyed the sunshine, good food and great chat.

The competition categories were judged during the afternoon by all that were present. The entries this year were all of a high standard and displayed extremely attractively.

The winners were:

Best Fruit and Best Veg - Julie Snow, Plot 38 - Chillies

Box of Produce - Dougie Hern Plot 26

Preserves, chutneys and cakes - Richard Tredgett, Plot 46 with a beetroot and chocolate cake.

Flowers - Kate Corder, Plot 21 - marigolds and sunflower

Tallest & broadest head sunflower - Harry Dawe, Plot 11

Reading Town Meal

This year's Town Meal was held in Forbury Gardens on Saturday 30th September.

People sat down to a meal of vegetable tagine, crunchy green salad, a beetroot and cucumber salad and focaccia, followed by fruit crumble, all washed down with freshly pressed apple juice.

All the ingredients used were donated from local allotments and cooked by the catering students of Reading College.

This was Culver Lane Allotment's contribution:



Thank you very much for all your donations.

Dates for Diary

EAA AGM

This will be held at the Parish Rooms, Radstock Lane on **Wednesday 8th November** at 7.30pm.

Jo Shaw the Deputy Town Clerk for Earley Town Council will be there to answer your questions.

There will also be a discussion to consider the merging of the EAA with the H&P Horticultural Society forming one organization.

After the business, the evening will end with refreshments and a quiz.

Christmas Meal

This will be held at the Roebuck, Auckland Road, Earley on **Wednesday 6th December**, 7.30 for 8pm.

A copy of the menu is available in the shed, the price for three courses is £19.99 each, which includes mince pies and coffee (Gluten Free available).

If you would like to be part of this sociable occasion please let Julia know your menu choices and dietary requirements by **Sunday 26th November**.

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