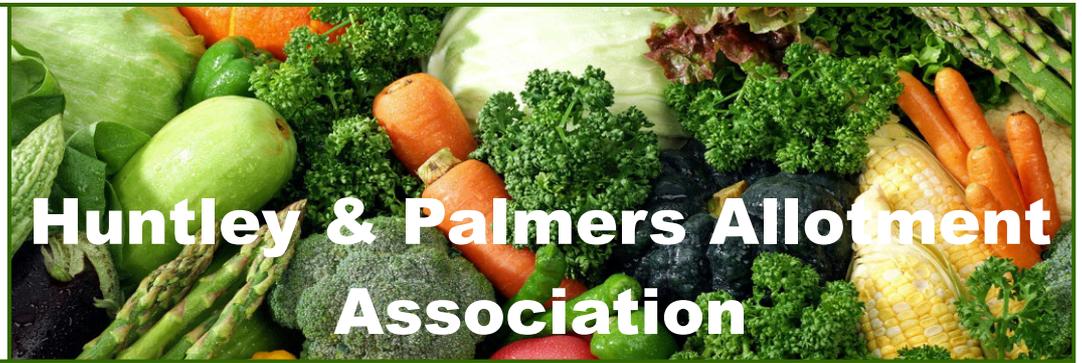


October 2018

Issue 3



Chairman's Chatter

Inside this issue:

<i>Chairman's Chatter</i>	1
<i>Seasonal tips</i>	2
<i>Cookery Corner</i>	2
<i>HP Trading Shed</i>	3
<i>Free shed</i>	3
<i>HPPA BBQ feedback</i>	4
<i>HPPA Christmas meal</i>	4

As the growing season draws to a close it is a good time to reflect on the year. We had plenty of both rain and sun, it was just that the rain came all at once and then we had a long dry spell. As a result, some crops thrived (tomato anyone?) and others disappointed (our carrots) but that is really nothing new. The good news is that September had a better mix of sun and rain – and the weeds have taken off as a result. Maybe allotment holders, like farmers, are never completely happy with the weather.

Helping the Bees

As long-standing members will know I have a bee in my bonnet about the health of our black and yellow friends. The fact that they pollinate seventy different British crops and many of these are the ones we like to grow and eat means that we should all think what we can do to help them along.

You are probably aware that neonicotinoids long used as a pesticide are harmful to bees and as a result their use across Europe has been greatly restricted. More recent research has now made a further discovery – that these neonicotinoids are addictive to bees. Following work by the London based Royal Society B (for biology, not bumble bees), their report states that “Our findings that bumblebees acquire a taste for neonicotinoids ticks certain symptoms of addictive behaviour, which is intriguing given the addictive properties of nicotine on humans, although more research is needed to determine this in bees.” So in a similar way that many folks became addicted to tobacco our bees are addicted to the Weedkiller that is bad for them.

What can we do?

At the far end of the Culver Lane allotment site there is a vacant plot 37 that has not been taken up for several years. The reason is that two sides of the plot are surrounded by mature trees that provide both shade and take up a large proportion of the water that falls on the site.

We are talking to Earley Town Council about making this plot over to appropriate plants to support bees. Looking at Google Earth not only are the allotments a large block of green land, the houses around the site are older style and as a result have larger than average gardens and over the railway is the open space of Palmer park.

There is also talk about using this space to introduce a beehive or two. We would need to find someone to manage the bees as this is specialist work and look after them – although it also raises the prospect of allotment honey. Bees roam up to two miles to collect pollen so hives here would benefit not only our allotments but a large part of Earley and north west Woodley including the Reading Road allotment site.

At the moment this is just an idea that I am putting out for consultation. If you have thoughts on this, for or against, please let me know by email or by having an old-fashioned conversation next time you see me.

Richard Tredgett

Plot 46

Tredgett@gmail.com

Seasonal Tips - October/November

October is known to be wet, windy and cloudy and fog is more likely, frosts can also occur this month.

At this time of year the work 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, this keeps weed growth at bay and allows you to sow earlier next spring. Or you can 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. Sheeting and green manure seeds available in the shed.

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.

Stake brussels sprouts, when laden they can be blown over in heavy winds.

Earth up leeks and celery to keep the stems blanched.

Cover late crops, use cloches to cover and protect any late sown crops, especially salad crops.

Harvest fruit, continue picking apples and pears, cook or eat any that are damaged straight away, only store perfect fruit, any that are blemished will simply rot and infect the others stored.

Sow over-wintering broad beans and peas and plant Japanese onion sets, protect with enviromesh against the dreaded leaf miner and pigeons. Now is the time to plant overwintering garlic. Garlic is one of the easiest vegetables to grow, provided it is planted at the right time of year. An October planting will allow the plants to establish before the freezing weather, meaning that when spring arrives the plants will be able to take full advantage.

Rhubarb should be entering the dormant period, 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.

A shredder or mower will come in handy for chopping up a pile of autumn leaves. This will speed the process of transforming them into valuable leaf mould and save a considerable amount of space. Put them into wire cages in a shady corner or tie them up in black bin bags with a few holes punched in.



Happy Halloween

November. Fruit bushes and trees will have shed their leaves and will be entering their dormant phase, now would be a good time to prune them, but not cherries and plums.

Cookery Corner - Hubble bubble pumpkin pot

A quick and easy microwave recipe to use up the pumpkin flesh.

Serves 4

Ingredients:

2 leeks, thickly sliced

8 rashers of bacon, chopped

350g/12oz pumpkin flesh, or use butternut squash, cut into chunks

50g butter

1 chicken stock cube

250g long grain rice

Method:

Hubble. Toss the leeks, bacon and pumpkin together in a large microwavable bowl. Dot with the butter and cover with cling film or a plate. Pierce cling film if using. Microwave on High for 5 minutes.

Bubble. While veg is cooking, make 700ml/1¼ pints of stock using the stock cube. Remove the bowl from the microwave and uncover. Tip in the rice and season with salt and pepper, pour in the stock and stir to mix.

Worth the trouble.

Cover the bowl with fresh cling film or plate and microwave on High for 10 minutes. Uncover, stir, then microwave on High for 5-10 minutes until the rice is cooked. Leave to stand for 2 minutes, stir and serve.



Trading Shed

For ground cover the shed offers the following:

Black Film ground cover available in a four-metre width sold by the metre length at the great value price of 75p per metre

Alternatively we also have woven Phormisol – weed suppressant matting that comes in a one-meter width and is available by the meter at 80p per meter.

There are also green manure seeds suitable for overwintering, one packet will cover 10²m, 12 sq yds.

There are still spring bulbs available in a choice of varieties and colours - now it has rained get your spring colour in. The onion sets have proved popular and have sold out I am afraid.

For the 2019 growing season we will be selling the following seed potatoes:

1st earlies	Arran Pilot, Foremost, Lady Cristi
Salad	Charlotte, Pink Fir Apple
Main crop	Desiree, King Edward, Majestic, Picasso and Maris Piper

We have held prices the same as 2018 so seed potatoes are £1 per KG or £2.70 for 3KGs.

There will also be onion sets, shallots and loose peas and beans available

Onion sets for Spring planting
Sturon, Stuttgarter Giant, Turbo and Red Barron

Shallots
Golden Gourmet, Red Gourmet, Pikant Red and Topper (yellow)

Peas and beans
Enorma Runner beans
Imperial Green Windsor Broad Bean
Kelvedon Wonder peas

The shed will as usual be closed for December (open every Saturday and Sunday till then) and reopen in January, the exact date depends on the delivery of the seed potatoes

You will also be able to renew your membership – still the best value in town at £1.50 for the year.

Free shed

Potting shed 8' x 6', in need of a little minor attention. The shed would have to be collected from Earley area.

Contact: Ron Tel: 01189268954



HPPA BBQ feedback

The weather was kind to us and there was a hearty gathering for the annual BBQ on Saturday 1st September. As usual two communal BBQs were provided for people to cook their own meat or veggie offerings along with shared salads and accompaniments.

The BBQ is a great opportunity to gather and chat with fellow members and celebrate successes and bemoan those crops that failed to shine this year. There is also friendly competition for four classes:

- * Best fruit or vegetables
- * Best box of six vegetables
- * Best container of flowers
- * Best food item using plot produce

Unlike more serious allotment shows judging is by everyone present, with the added advantage we all get to test the preserves, cakes and other goodies entered in the plot produce class.

My thanks to everyone who attended and especially those who helped with setting up and striking the gazebo – always a fun challenge.



HPPA Christmas meal

Yes it is that time of year again!

This will be held at the Roebuck, Auckland Road, Earley on **Wednesday 5th December**, 7.30 for 8pm.

A copy of the menu is available in the shed, the price for three courses is £19.99each, 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 25th November** to Julia at juliatredgett@googlemail.com

Bank details: Acct. No. **82629309**. Sort code: **09 01 51**

Acct. name: **Huntley & Palmers Horticultural Society**