

January 2020

Issue 9



Chairman's Chatter

A happy new year to you – I hope you had a restful break during the festivities and the (relatively) quiet time on the allotment and in the garden. The arrival of the seed potatoes this month, marks for me, the start of the new growing year.

Inside this issue:

<i>Chairman's Chatter</i>	1
<i>Help needed</i>	1
<i>Chitting seed potatoes</i>	2
<i>Cookery Corner</i>	2
<i>Trading Shed</i>	3
<i>What we stock</i>	4
<i>Single use plastic</i>	4
<i>Manure</i>	4

Good news

It is always good to start with good news so here are two such items:

Your 2020 membership is now due for renewal and it remains the best value in town at £1.50 for the year. Simply renew your membership when you first come to the shed to stock up. If you joined up in the later part of 2019 you may already have a 2020 membership card.

We have reviewed our pricing following the growing success of the shed and as a result new items coming in stock at the shed will be even better value – starting with the seed potatoes, onion sets, shallots and beans.

Details of the potatoes are inside the newsletter but as ever if you are particular about the variety of spuds you grow, I suggest you come the first weekend we are open.

More seeds in stock

Our Suttons seeds are proving increasingly popular and for 2020 we have increased the range we carry in the shed. We now carry 111 different varieties of seeds for vegetables, flowers and green manures. A full listing is attached to the email sending this newsletter, or come down and see us.

Richard Tredgett

tredgett@gmail.com

Help needed

Seeking new shed volunteers

We could do with a couple of new faces to help run the shed and look after our lovely customers. Full training will be provided by doing a couple of shifts alongside an experienced volunteer till you are happy to go solo, meeting, greeting and serving our customers. It is a great way to get to know other plot holders and members.

Ideally volunteers do one shift a month on a Saturday or Sunday. If you want to know more about what is involved talk to any of the existing volunteers, or drop Richard an email at tredgett@gmail.com

A new secretary

After several years of acting as our secretary Sally is standing down so we are seeking a new person to take on the role. The responsibilities are not onerous as the committee only meets every couple of months, and this is at the Roebuck public house just up the hill from the Culver Lane site. The secretary sends out the agenda before the meeting and keeps notes at the meeting, and in addition at the AGM. If you are interested then talk to Sally or Richard about the role.

Thank you.

Chitting seed potatoes

Why chit seed potatoes?

The reason for chitting early and second early seed potatoes is to give them a head start over those that are not chitted. There seems little point however, in chitting main crop seed potatoes, simply because they have a much longer growing season, and therefore chitting has no real advantage.

To chit a seed potato simply means to break the dormancy and encourage shoots to form prior to planting. This routine can be carried out from late January for early cropping varieties and around mid-February for second earlys.

How To Chit Potatoes

Potatoes will start chitting when exposed to light and heat, so place them somewhere warm and light. A temperature of around 8C-10C should do the trick, but most importantly, it must be done in a frost free space or a greenhouse.

Place the seed potatoes in a single layer with a large amount of eyes facing up. If you've only got a small amount of seed potatoes, recycling old egg boxes for this purpose is ideal. For larger amounts, use seed trays with ruffled-up newspaper at the bottom, to keep the tubers upright.

Once each of your seed potatoes have got 2-3 good sized 'chits' or sprouts on them, it's time to plant them out. If any tubers have more than 3 chits/sprouts on them, rub the excess off. This is to ensure a better harvest, as there will be less underground shoots to share the goodness sent underground by the plant, so you might get less tubers, but the ones you get will be bigger.



Cookery Corner - Winter vegetable Gratin

A creamy vegetable supper dish: Serves 4

Ingredients:

250g Brussels sprouts

½ Savoy cabbage, roughly chopped

2-3 leeks, thickly sliced

50g butter

500ml milk

Pinch of salt & ground black pepper

1 tsp ground nutmeg

1 tbsp wholegrain mustard

200g grated cheese

Natural breadcrumbs to cover

Method:

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil, add in the sprouts, leeks and cabbage, bring back to the boil and cook for 4-5 minutes. Drain vegetables in a colander and refresh under cold water. Leave to drain.

2. Preheat oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas MK 6.
3. Melt butter in a pan over a low/medium heat. Stir in flour to form a paste and cook for 2 minutes.
4. Pour in milk a little at a time and continue stirring until a thick smooth sauce forms. Add salt and pepper, nutmeg and mustard and stir to combine. Add half the grated cheese and stir again until melted and combined.
5. Place the drained vegetables into an ovenproof gratin dish. Pour over the sauce and mix. Sprinkle the rest of the cheese on top, followed by the breadcrumbs.
6. Place the dish in the centre of the oven for 30 minutes until golden brown on top.



Trading Shed

The shed will reopen this weekend, Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th January 10am until 12.30pm.

Seed Potatoes are now in

These herald the start of the allotment year and generally you buy them in January to take home and chit them – letting little shoots grow before planting, (see opposite)

More information on growing potatoes is available from the RHS here <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=716>

In the past we have been able to provide bags for all our potato customers. Thanks to efforts by Sainsbury's to reduce their reliance on single use plastic bags we have a limited supply this year. If you can bring your own bag or container for your spuds, that would be a big help.

The varieties we are stocking this year are:

All Potatoes Priced at 80p for 1kg or £2.20for 3kg		
Type	Variety	Characteristics
1st Earlies	Arran Pilot	White skin colour. Very Early. Good Flavour. Boil well. Bake well.
	Foremost	Russet skin colour. Good scab resistance. Boil well. Bake well.
	Red Duke of York	Large, oval red skinned tubers. Moist yellow flesh with superb flavour. A good all rounder, excellent for roasting.
Salad	Charlotte	High yield. Waxy long light yellow tubers. Good flavour. Boil well.
	International Kidney	Long oval shape with yellow flesh. Good flavour. Boil or Steam. When grown on Jersey this variety is known as Jersey Royals.
Main Crop	Desiree	Red skin colour. Fairly waxy. High Yield. Drought resistant. Boil well. Bake well. Roast well. Chips well. Mash well.
	King Edward	Part red skin colouration. Good flavour. Boil, bake, roast, chip and mash well.
	Pentland Crown	Oval shaped tubers with white skin and flesh. Floury texture perfect for boiling and mashing. Excellent disease and drought tolerance.
	Maris Piper	Uniform in shape and size. Good yield. Good flavour. Boil well. Good chipper. Bake well. Roast well. Chips well. Mash well.
	Picasso	Stunning red eyes. Massive yields. Mild taste. Stores well. Some resistance to blight. Boil well. Bake well. Roast well.
	Sarpo Mira	High resistance to blight. Good boiler. Bake and mash well. Good in salads.

Onion Sets, Shallots, Beans and Garlic:-

Onion Sets - 95p for 500g	Shallots - £1.60 for 500g	Broad Beans per 125g	Runner Beans - £1.60 per 125g
Red Barron	Golden Gourmet	Masterpiece - 60p	
Sturon	Pikant Red	Aquadulce - 80p	
Stutgarter Giant	Red Sun		
Turbo Spring	Yellow Moon		

Also available is Garlic at 80p per bulb

Trading Shed News continued on P.4

What we stock

One of the challenges of running a trading shed is knowing what to stock. If you don't stock it you can't know whether there is a demand for it.

We do try new lines, for example we started selling bird seed in the autumn and have sold five sacks – more came with the January potato delivery.

If there are things you think we should stock but don't, please let us know by talking to the volunteers in the shed.

We can also do orders at cost price from our wholesaler. They sell a variety of things that may be of interest:

- * Tools
- * Large quantities of materials such as 100 litre bags of perlite
- * Particular fertilisers such as hoof and horn

Cost price purchases are made on the following basis:

- * The price you see is the price you pay, however please check the quantity – a very few things are priced for ten rather than one for example dibbers. If it says ten then this is the number you have to buy.
- * As this is a cost price purchase please note that payment will be required when the goods are ordered. Items can only be returned if they are faulty, not if you change your mind.
- * Items will be delivered when we have a delivery from Horticultural Supplies which is usually March (once the spuds have all sold and freed up space in the shed) and May. If you need things urgently this is probably not for you as we can't guarantee the delivery date. Deliveries from Horticultural Supplies are usually during the week but collection will be from the shed during the advertised opening hours.

Single use plastic

The shed has been relatively dependant on single use plastic including:

- * Bags for seed potatoes
- * Bags for a variety of fertilisers and feeds
- * Bags of grass and now bird seed

Our customers have been challenging us to reduce our use of single use plastic and this is something we have been looking at.

Our current paper bags are not strong enough for the 3kg bags of feed and fertiliser - we have tried. We are therefore looking at other ideas including:

Encouraging customers to reuse bags and containers that they have previously bought materials from us in.

Bringing in your own container for filling from our bulk bins or sacks. These could be bags, boxes/tubs or even empty milk bottles. We can sell in multiples of 1kg to suit the size of your container

We could even buy in containers for customers to buy and fill multiple times with their favourite loose sold item.

We will of course continue to supply loose materials pre bagged, but we and our customers would prefer to move towards multiple rather than single use containers.

Manure

This is a popular time of year to top up the organic matter in your soil which is often achieved by adding well-rotted manure.

Manures are strictly speaking derived from animal faeces, urine and bedding, typically straw but sometimes wood chips or hemp fibre. Manure can be 'fresh' straight from the farm or stable, or it can be well-rotted. The latter is much more hygienic and easier to use, but the former can be richer in nutrients. Any manure with recognisable straw or wood chips is best stacked and allowed to rot for a season, ideally under cover or at least covered with a plastic sheet to exclude rain.

A source we have used for a couple of years now is Mick whose mobile number is 07769 876908. Mick is based in the Hurst area and he is happy to deliver a load of between three and four tonnes for £30.



What £30 worth looks like