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Issue 16



## Chairman's Chatter

Greetings from your allotment association. It is the time of year when we get the benefit of all the hard work we have put in as we harvest beans, courgettes, root vegetables and a great selection of fruit from our plots.

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Recent research by the University of Sheffield involving some nifty citizen science discovered that the average plot holder:

- Visited their plot 87 times in a year
- Spent thirty six minutes a year tending each square meter
- During that time they added to each square meter: thirty litres of water, four litres of manure as well as three and a half litres of compost

If that does not sound much think that there are 25 square meters in a pole so a six pole plot involves 750 litres of water and a ten pole plot a thousand litres of manure. It is no wonder we might feel weary at the end of a day working on your plot or garden!

In terms of what we get from our plot, a typical meter if used to grow a single crop would produce 6.5 KGs of French beans or 6 KGs of courgettes or just over 5 KGs of tomatoes.

The research can be found here: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/13/5/2628>

### Our annual picnic

To be fair we usually have an annual BBQ, but to help people feel safe we felt a picnic that avoids folks huddling around a shared BBQ might be a better plan. Please put Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September in your diary and come and join fellow members for a sociable lunch at the Culver Lane site – more details inside.

### HAPAA website reminder

Remember that you can find lots of information about the association on our website <https://hapaa.org.uk/> which also has information about the trading shed such as opening hours, stock and price list and details of the Suttons seeds we have in stock.

You can also use the contact us page to email the association – queries, questions and suggestions welcome – especially things you think we should be stocking in the trading shed.

Thanks

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## Bogs not Bags

After the debate in the last newsletter we invited plot holder Margaret Cocks to write an article explaining why she believes gardeners need to end their peat use and move to other growing mediums. Here it is:

*As gardeners we are probably more aware than most people of the problems being caused by climate change. The cold and wet May this year is just one example of how our climate is upset.*

*We need to keep as much carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere as possible. When we use peat we are releasing more carbon dioxide into the air both from the peat being broken down in our gardens and from the damage to the peat bogs.*

*Peat is a great natural carbon store and destroying that for bags of potting compost is putting our convenience before the health of the planet.*

***One of the actions we can take, to protect the environment, as gardeners, is to stop using peat***

*The RHS is now 98% peat free and no longer sells any peat-based compost. The government set up a voluntary commitment for retailers and manufacturers to stop using peat by 2020. This has been ineffective and they are now consulting on stronger measures.*

*It is now easier to buy peat free compost although it is usually more expensive. Some compost manufacturers hide their use of peat by not making it clear that it is an ingredient and unless the bag is labelled "peat free" you can assume it has peat in it.*

*The climate cannot wait for foot-dragging by the industry and government. We need to stop using peat ourselves now and the industry needs to find good alternatives at a fair price.*

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## Cookery Corner - Spinach & Courgette Lasagne

At this time of year we might challenge the expression "you cant have too much of a good thing" if you planted too many courgette plants or they have been overly successful. This recipe suggests a use for two crops prone to over success: Courgettes and spinach.

### Ingredients

- 400g spinach
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 250g mascarpone
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 100g parmesan (or vegetarian alternative), grated
- 9 lasagne sheets
- 100ml double cream
- 3 large courgettes, sliced lengthways

### Method

#### Step 1

Pour boiling water over the spinach in a sieve or colander to wilt it. Leave until cool enough to handle, then squeeze out any excess liquid. Heat the oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat, add the garlic and soften for 1 min.

Tip in the nutmeg and cook for 1 min more, then add the mascarpone, spinach, half the cream and half the parmesan. Season generously, stir well and set aside.

#### Step 2

Heat oven to 180C/160C fan/gas 4. Spread a third of the filling over the base of a 20 x 30cm baking dish, cover with 3 lasagne sheets, then add a layer of courgettes. Repeat twice more. Pour the remaining cream over the final layer and sprinkle over the remaining parmesan. Bake for 40-45 mins or until the sauce is bubbling and the pasta has no resistance when you push a skewer through. Rest for 5 mins, then serve

With thanks to <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes>



## Seasonal Tips – Aug/Sept

**August** is a great time to enjoy the rewards of your labours earlier in the year.

If you notice signs of Potato Blight, cut all the foliage down put it in the council green waste. Leave the tubers in the ground for two weeks for the skins to harden. Carefully dig them up and lay them out to dry, before storing in hessian or paper sacks in a cool dark place. (Paper sacks available to buy in the shed)

Harvest onions and garlic when the foliage collapses and let them dry in the sun if you want to store them. Store onions, garlic and shallots in net bags in a cool, dark airy place.

Pick courgettes regularly while they are small if you don't want marrows.

Sweetcorn are ready when the silks go dark brown, test every cob before you pick. Peel back the outer husk and press a thumbnail into one of the kernels. If the water runs clear, leave it on the plant; milky white and it's ready for picking.

Pinch out runner beans when they have reached the top of their supports and encourage plants to produce flowers by watering at the base daily.

Remove lower trusses from tomato plants

Prune summer fruiting raspberries

Pin strawberry runners, still attached to the parent, into pots filled with compost to root

Any spare ground? Sow green manure, this will take about six weeks to mature then it can be dug in.

### September

Later crops are coming into harvest now and you should be lifting maincrop potatoes, pulling leeks, picking apples, pears and late-season plums.

To encourage tomatoes to fatten up and ripen remove all lower leaves from the plants and keep picking.

Tall, feathery asparagus foliage will be starting to turn yellow and should be cut down to just 2.5 cm above ground level.

Transplant your spring cabbages this month into the final growing position.

Turn the compost heap regularly with a fork to aerate it and stimulate decomposition. Water it if dry and cover to keep the heat in, this all speeds the compost production up.

## HAPAA Picnic

We usually hold a BBQ but we felt that a picnic would be safer. This will be held at the Culver Lane site on Saturday 4th September, 12.30 to 3pm. There will be 2 marquees erected in the car park, one for competition entries and another for shelter if the weather is inclement.

All members and families are welcome to attend.

We would ask everyone attending to bring their own food and drink, plates, cutlery, cups/glasses. Chairs and tables.

There will be the usual fruit and vegetable competitions, but unfortunately not the plot produce where tasting is involved. Judging will be by all attendees,

The categories are:

- Best fruit or vegetable
- Best box of 6 vegetables
- Best container of flowers

If you wish to enter any category, bring it/them to the marquee after 11.30am until 1pm, register and receive a number for each entry, paper plates will be provided to display fruit/vegetables if required.

From 1pm marking sheets will be available and socially distanced judging will take place.

After judging, the scores will be counted and the winners announced.

As this year will be 80 years since Huntley and Palmers Horticultural Association was formed for employees to help 'Dig for Victory', so this will be the theme of the day.

There will be an exhibition of wartime posters and photographs of what daily lives were like then. If you have any memorabilia, please bring it along. Any written accounts of grandparent/parents wartime memories will be appreciated.

This could be an opportunity for wartime fancy dress. Of course this is not obligatory, just a bit of fun.

## Trading Shed

### Slug pellets – two did you know?

Did you know that slug pellets come in a variety of strengths? Our loose for refill slug pellets have more than twice as much active ingredient as the ones in bottles we have on the shelf.

The [Ferric Phosphate](#) slug pellets we sell increase the chance of slugs and snails retreating underground to meet their end and so there are fewer obvious casualties than the old style (and now not available) metaldehyde based pellets.

We sell two strengths of slug pellets:

**Doff & Snail Killer** - Ferric Phosphate 12.5g/kg - 400g for £2.70

These come in a pre-packed bottle ready to take away

**SluXX HP Slug Bait** - Ferric Phosphate 29.7g/kg - 100g for £0.70 –

We buy these loose to sell to you as a refill of an existing slug pellet bottle.

## Culver Lane Allotments Wildlife Garden

As you are probably aware at the north end of the Culver Lane allotments we have a set of bee hives looked after by James our bee keeper. The colonies are healthy and indeed one of them swarmed not once but twice in the spring making one colony into three.

The bees are kept on plot 37 that is surrounded by trees on two boundaries meaning that a number of plot holders have tried, and failed, to produce successful crops on this plot. It has been unlet for the last few years.

We now have agreement from Earley Town Council to make the rest of the plot into a wildlife garden to support bees and other wildlife.

There has already been a work party to tidy up the site and set it out – ready for planting, all we need is the plants.

Our thanks to the Wednesday volunteers from Earley Environment Group who spent a morning tidying and clearing the site one Wednesday in July.

Below is a list of plants that we are looking to introduce and we would welcome offers to grow seeds on over the winter or in the spring for planting in the wildlife garden.

If anyone has any of the shrubs that are surplus to requirements, we can find them a good home in the Wildlife garden!

Buddleia	Cotoneaster Horizontalis	Lavender	Perovskia Atriplicifolia (Russian Sage)	Verbena
Bugle	Echinacea	Lesser Knapweed	Ribes	Veronica Spicata
Catmint	Escallonia	Lungwort	Rosemary	Viburnum
Centaurea	Hebe (large leaved)	Mahonia	Rudbeckia laciniata	Vipers bugloss
Ceanothus	Hellebore	Marjoram	Salvia (sage)	Weigela
Cherry Laurel	Hollyhock	Monkshood	Scabious	Winter Heather
Chives	Honeysuckle	Myrtus	Sea Holly	
Comfrey	Hyssop	Penstemon	Thyme	

Whilst we are talking wildlife, we are still happy to accept and rehome small trees from your garden or allotment to the Maiden Erleigh nature reserve. If you have some, please pop them in a pot and drop them at the trading shed or contact Richard Tredgett to arrange a handover.