



Chairman's Chatter

Inside this issue:

<i>Chairman's Chatter</i>	1
<i>Seasonal Tips</i>	2
<i>Cookery Corner</i>	2
<i>Blight Resistant Tomatoes</i>	3
<i>From Kitchen to plot!</i>	3
<i>Trading Shed</i>	4
<i>Trading Shed (cont.)</i>	5
<i>No Dig Allotment</i>	6
<i>Local Wildlife Calendar</i>	6
<i>HAPAA Website</i>	6

As I write this the rain is coming down in stair rods and am pleased to think there is less to do on our plot or in the garden at this time of year except harvest a few vegetables. Time to settle down with a seed catalogue, this newsletter and perhaps a couple of text books and plan for 2022 which is only a couple of months away (I can't believe I am writing that)! There is a good reason that a certain TV gardener recently gave his view that autumn is actually the start of the growing year.

Inside you will find details of the seed potatoes that we will stock in January – more varieties than ever and all at our great value prices. As ever we have your favourites and a couple of new to us varieties to try out in your new season plans – take a look inside your newsletter to see what we will be selling.

Crop rotation

If you want a hearty debate with other vegetable growing friends, raise the subject of crop rotation. This is the idea that to reduce a build-up of crop-specific pest and disease problems and also organise groups of crops according to their cultivation needs, crops "rotate" around your ground. So far so simple, but if you read books, magazines or websites things get more complex. You can find people who use a three, four, five or even a six year crop rotation.

This means that both the things you grow, and the ground you manage are subdivided three, four, five or six ways. All of this makes the assumption that you will grow similar things year to year, and for some the real fun comes from growing something new each year. Fortunately, there are, thankfully some crops like courgettes, beans and sweetcorn that can fit anywhere in your rotation.

As one long standing plot holder summarised when I discussed rotations with him – all this can be overcomplicated, just avoid planting any of your annual crops in the same place next year, that you did this .

Good luck with planning for what you want to grow in 2022 – and where you will put it.

Winter closure of the shed

A reminder that the Trading shed closes after usual trading on Sunday 28th November. December is a relatively quiet time and our volunteers will be having a well-deserved break.

We will re-open in January once the seed potatoes are received. We don't have a delivery date yet and at this time of year, lifting the spuds in Scotland, transport to our wholesaler and delivery to us are all weather dependant.

We will let you know as soon as the spuds are safely in the shed and we can reopen and welcome you back.

Thanks

Richard Tredgett tredgett@gmail.com

Seasonal Tips November/December

November

Make sure you get your allotment ready for the Winter. Dig in plenty of manure and compost to areas where it is needed, to enrich the soil. Cover beds with black plastic to suppress weeds and help to warm your soil ready for early crops next year.

Harvest the last of the carrots, turnips, kohlrabi, and any remaining beetroot. They can be stored if necessary. Celeriac and parsnips can stay in the ground if there's no risk of their being "frozen in", though a mulch of straw or bracken will help protect them.

Keep kale, winter cabbages and other brassicas covered with netting to protect them from hungry pigeons. Remove any yellowed leaves, so that fungal diseases such as grey mould and downy mildew don't take hold.

Leeks should be about ready now, just lift when needed, you can lift a few and heel into a trench filled with loose compost so they will be easier to lift in severe weather. Lift parsnips once the first frost has sweetened them.

Garlic needs a good spell of cold weather to form fat bulbs, plant cloves now to spend winter in the ground. Onion sets and shallots are best left until the New Year.

Stake and earth up Brussels sprout stems if they have become unsteady.

December

December is the winter month in which we can expect the first serious frosts.

Parsnips are ready to be lifted when the leaves die off. However, they can be left in situ, which is useful as the frosts sweeten the root.

Harvest Brussels sprouts when they are around one inch in diameter, before they 'blow open'. Pick them from the base of the plant up, twisting them away from the plant.

Make Leafmold - but you have to be patient.

Gather the leaves and stack in chicken wire cages or put in refuse sacks, stabbed with a fork for ventilation and leave for at least a year.

Make a Runner Bean trench

Bean trenches act like a mini bin in the soil under our plants.

Dig your trench any shape you want, but it should be more than 6" deep. Line with newspaper then fill with garden waste – anything you would put into your compost heap.

If you're filling it gradually, do a layer at a time and cover with cardboard or layers of soil to keep out vermin. Heap it up higher than the trench, as it settles as it rots, then cover up with topsoil to plant straight into next spring.

Cookery Corner—Veggie Toad in the Hole

This veggie toad in the hole using carrots instead of sausages is filling and less than £1 per serving. Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 180g plain flour
- 3 large free range eggs
- 280ml whole milk
- 2tbsp wholegrain mustard

For the filling:

- 300g baby heritage carrots
- 2 red onions, peeled and cut into wedges
- 2 re chilli, deseeded, finely sliced
- 1 tsp paprika
- 4tbsp olive oil

Method:

1. Heat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas 6.
2. Sift the flour into a large bowl with a good pinch of salt.
3. Make well in the centre, crack in the eggs and whisk to combine. Add milk and mix to a smooth batter. Stir in the mustard, season well, then set aside to rest.
4. Toss the carrots and onions with the chilli, paprika and oil in a 20cm x 30cm roasting tin.
5. Roast for 15 minutes, then increase temperature to 220°C/200 fan/gas 7 and pour the batter over.
6. Bake for 20 minutes until golden brown and risen.
7. Cut into four and serve with onion gravy.

Blight Resistant Tomatoes

This year has shown more than most that blight is a huge issue on allotments. A sure case of blight back better. If the conditions are right, in a few days, tomato plants can go from having a delicious future to being literally rooted out and taken to the tip, it's that harsh and that sudden. But now there is hope.

The good news is that resistance is not futile, earthlings. Science helps. A few years ago after many years of research and development, blight resistant tomatoes were introduced. These have been bred to include the genes necessary to fight off the blight fungal infection. (Blight resistant genes – Ph2 and Ph3, making the fruit totally protected). I hate the disappointment that blight brings and love tomatoes so I was an early adopter and for many years now I have been growing three of the most popular blight resistant tomatoes, Crimson Blush (beefsteak), Crimson Crush (normal) and Lizzano (cherry). Each year the seed price seems to drop and more suppliers stock them. Currently they are range from about £2.50 to £3.50 for 10 seeds. (Blight resistant tomato seeds are also available from the Trading Shed.)

This year I planted the usual suspects, Blush in the glasshouse, and both Crush and Lizzano outside in reasonable sun. I would say here that I am not an expert (my old boss used to say an ex is a has-been and a spurt is a drip under pressure) and am not methodical but I still seem to get away with decent toms since my enlightenment. The 6 Lizzano plants produced first, giving lots of sweet cherry tomatoes from mid-June onwards. Before they are finished the 8 Crush start, full and rounded with a rich and powerful taste that you can only get from an allotment tomato with its feet in manured soil. And then there are the 10 Blush, these are large, not as red as the others, more a pink-red colour but wow, what a taste and what a size. Just amazing.

Practically though, why am I a convert to blight resistant?

First example: this year I grew 12 of what became known in our house as "Montys Cherry". Actually these were Red Cherry and seeds were free with Gardeners World (April) magazine with Monty smiling on the opposite page. They were looking great and climbed to about 7 feet up a wigwam at the front of the plot with lots of green immature little plum tomato fruit, then over one weekend, WHACK. Blight struck.

Second example: there were a load of feral tomato seedlings that germinated in the bottom of the glasshouse from last year's fruit that I must have missed. I planted about 30 of them out in beds and they grew well, some even produced one or two red fruit until WHACK. Blight struck.

So I won't do it again. From now on for me, blight resistant is the only show in town.

I said I "got away" with growing decent toms. This has been a very productive year in spite of me ridiculously overcrowding the greenhouse with too many tomato plants, not taking out enough side-shoots and using canes and string that were too weak to hold large plants. Next year I will do better and be more sensible and methodical. Yes, Groundhog Day again. In the meantime though, the freezer is full and I have been canning the tomatoes using Hobbycraft jam jars.

But there's nothing quite like slicing into a fat September tomato with the juice bursting out and a sprinkling of salt. Love at first bite!

John Laws



From kitchen to plot!

Organic Fertiliser

Use leftover eggshells as part of an organic fertiliser made using kitchen scraps.

Add banana skins, coffee grounds and eggshells into a blender together with a few cups of water. Whizz it all up into a grainy soup then use the mixture fresh, diluted with more water.

This kitchen-created fertiliser is full of nutrients – ideal for use around hungry feeders such as squashes, tomatoes and climbing beans.

Liquid fertilizer

This will be a concentrate that you will need to mix with water before using,

- 1 gallon of water
- 1 tbsp Epsom salt
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp of Household ammonia

Mix all the ingredients together and use once a month on your plants by mixing 1/8- 1/4 cup of the concentrate with 4 cups of water in a watering can.

Trading Shed – Potatoes, Onions, Garlic, Peas & Beans

These potatoes, onions, shallots, garlic, peas and beans will be available, weather permitting, when the shed reopens in January 2022 with **Click & Collect** on the first weekend.

The annual membership of the Huntley & Palmers Allotment Association is only £1.50. Please renew your membership when next in the shed if you have not already done so.

1kg - £1.00 3kg - £2.30		
Type	Variety	Characteristics
1st Earlies	Red Duke of York	Deep red and more vigorous than Duke of York. Wonderful flavour. Good for chipping, baking, roasting and mashing.
	Foremost	Russet skin colour. Good scab resistance. Boil well. Bake well.
	Swift	Very early. Short stems and good in pots. Good disease resistance.
	Homeguard	Very early with good flavour and scab resistance. Boils well.
	Casablanca	Oval shape with white skin and flesh.
2nd Earlies	Kestrel	Blue eyes. Good disease resistance. Roasts and fries well.
Main Crop	Desiree	Red skin colour. Fairly waxy. High Yield. Drought resistant. Good for boiling, baking, roasting, chipping and mashing.
	King Edward	Part red skin colouration. Good flavour. Boils, bakes, roasts and mashes well. Good for chipping.
	Maris Piper	Uniform in shape and size. Good yield. Good flavour. Boils well. Good chipper. Bakes, roasts and mashes well.
	Picasso	Stunning red eyes. Massive yields. Mild taste. Stores well. Some resistance to blight. Boils, bakes and roasts well.
	Sarpo Mira	High resistance to blight. Good boiler. Bakes and mashes well. Good in salads.
	Cara	Can be grown as a first early or main crop. Disease resistant with high yields
	Rooster	An Albert Bartlett potato. A classic all-rounder with a rich flavour and an award winner. £4.25 for 3kg or £1.50 for 1kg
	Salad	Charlotte

Onion Sets: 250g - £1.00		
Type	Variety	Characteristics
	Stuttgarter Giant	A flat shaped yellow skinned set with good yield and keeping properties. Plant in February. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
	Turbo Spring	A globe shaped golden yellow skin set with good yield and keeping properties. Slow to bolt and strong grower.
	Rumba	Better shape than Sturon with good storability and vigour. Produces fewer doubles
	Red Baron	A red skinned flat-round onion. Good in salads. Plant later. RHS Award of Garden Merit.

Potatoes, Onions, Garlic, Peas & Beans, (cont.)

Shallots: 500g - £1.75		
	Biztro	Very consistent round red shallots. Has a spicy tang and good allrounder.
	Golden Gourmet	Yellow with a mild flavour. Good for pickling and can be planted from February onward. RHS Award of Garden Merit.
	Topper	Excellent for pickling. Resistant to bolting. Mild favour and excellent skin quality. High yielding and stores well. Can be planted out earlier.
	Red Sun	Perfect for salads with good storage characteristics.

Garlic: Price TBA		
	Cledor	Soft-neck. An improvement on an old French variety 'Rose du Var'. Produces round white bulbs with strong skin and great flavour. Harvest late Jun- Aug
	Flavor	Hard-neck. An Italian pink type, produced in France, that matures late July. Store well once opened.
	Picardy Wight	Traditionally smoked in France due to its longevity. It will keep to May the following year.
Garlic: Price TBA		
	Elephant	Elephant Garlic cloves produces big bulbs and big fat cloves. You grow it just like you would any regular garlic. Each clove at planting turns to around 4 cloves at harvesting.

Beans: 125g - £0.80		
	Variety	Characteristics
	Enorma Runner	Short-jointed plants producing an enormous crop of very long, smooth, slender beans of excellent shape and colour. RHS Award of Garden Merit winner.
	Masterpiece Long Pod Broad Bean	Excellent length of pod and table quality. A fine green seeded broad bean and excellent for deep freezing. RHS Award of Garden Merit winner.
	Aqua Dulce Broad Bean	A long podded, white-seeded tasty board bean that's early to mature. Recommended for autumn and winter sowings throughout the UK for the earliest crops the following spring and summer.

Peas: 125g - £0.60		
	Kelvedon Wonder	Thin-shelled pointed, narrow pods in pairs. Heavy yielding and of fine flavour. It is also resistant to mildew and suitable for March-July sowing. RHS Award of Garden Merit winner. Early variety

No dig allotment

Pros

You don't need to water as frequently as soil retains moisture more easily.

There are fewer weeds to contend with & keeping on top of them is far more manageable.

You'll have fewer problems with slugs.

Less time is needed working in the garden.

Likely to have more success with some harder-to-grow crops. As a general rule, veg plants have looked a little more healthy, with greener leaves.

Fewer afternoons spent with a sore back from digging!

Cons

It requires a fair amount of compost and it's not always easy to get enough good quality compost for the whole plot whilst on a budget, especially in the first season when you need a bit more than usual.

Quite a lot of compost shovelling/wheelbarrowing is required from time to time.

You don't get the satisfaction of spending a day digging in the garden!

Sometimes it feels like cheating.

Looking to get started? Follow these simple steps:

Select a suitable place to create your no dig garden bed. You can build yours over existing soil, lawn, concrete or paved surfaces. Plus, you can also add temporary sides (such as old fence posts) to help keep compost-filled beds in shape.

Mow down your lawn and remove any weeds if you need.

Add a thick layer of organic matter (compost) to the area you want to create the garden, at around four inches (10cm) deep.

You can always lay down a sheet of cardboard first before the organic matter to help keep weeds away. Make sure you wet the cardboard to help it break down.

Next, layer manure on top. Water with a watering can to keep it secure. Some people choose to use straw, but because of the UK climate, this can cause slugs to eat your plants. Charles suggests not using mulches of undecomposed organic matter.

Then, use your hands to create holes in the compost and insert your plants.

For more information on no dig gardening visit:

<https://charlesdowding.co.uk>

Local Wildlife Calendar for 2022 now available in the Trading Shed for £5

Over recent months, local photographers have been submitting their photos for inclusion in the Earley Environmental Group's 2022 'Nature in Earley' calendar. Many beautiful photos have been received, making the new edition the best yet!

Pages show scenes of the local woods and lake, as well as wildflowers, birds, fungi, animals and insects found in Earley. The format will be the same as in 2021; A4 when folded, opening out to A3 at full size.

A perfect stocking filler Christmas Present – for a loved one, or yourself.

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, any queries, questions and suggestions always welcome – especially things you think we should be stocking in the trading shed.



Happy Christmas to all our members