

# HUNTLEY & PALMER'S ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

## newsletter



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### Chairman's Chatter

As I write this it is raining for the second day on the go, after weeks of dry weather and of allotment holders and gardeners praying for rain. Like farmers perhaps, us gardeners are never happy with the weather - ideally we would like it to rain overnight for a few hours and be dry all day when we want to get on the plot or in the garden.

Don't assume - a lesson I keep learning...

When I was at work one of the things I kept learning the hard way was to not assume that everyone thinks and acts like me - because they certainly don't. For example, I assume that everyone knows about and makes their own compost because:

1. It takes a waste product that you otherwise have to take to the recycling centre (tip as we all used to know it)
2. Makes it into something valuable that saves you money, and you know it is peat free
3. Its probably one of the very earliest forms of recycling - my Granny used to do it on her allotment and thought it the most natural thing in the world.

But it seems I am wrong. Research from the Royal Horticultural Society ( <https://www.rhs.org.uk/press/releases/Less-than-a-third-of-gardeners-compost-with-young?type=0&tag=>) found, surprisingly to me at least that:

- Two thirds of gardeners (67%) do not compost on their plot or in their garden
- Younger gardeners are more inclined than older age groups to start composting if they don't already
- Gardeners over 55 composted more than any other age group, however those that didn't were also far less likely to be inspired to start

So it seems I am learning that lesson again, we have three compost bins - why would others not?

The good news is that the survey found that among all ages, a third (36%) of those who don't currently compost, said subsidised or free compost bins from local councils would get them composting.

If you live in the Wokingham Borough Council area you can have access to their not free (sadly) but subsidised composting bins at <https://getcomposting.com/en-gb/composters/>. They offer over a dozen different compost bins from £22 including simple dalek style, wooden squares and even hot boxes and tumblers. If you don't currently compost, why not give it a go?

Richard Tredgett

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## Down on the Farm

What I really want this year is to enjoy a productive allotment - and overcome my prejudice against carrots and cauliflower. Hopefully - due to a Christmas present - I'll also need to find out about recreational use of Luffas.

At the moment I'm focussing on succession planning to extend the season for sweetcorn and beans in particular, which I'm doing by sowing different varieties at different times, hoping to be able to eat them for longer through the season as I find these two difficult to preserve. I suppose the one exception for me is dwarf French beans that we freeze and use in curries. It can be a bit chaotic with the succession planting finding somewhere to put the seedlings, but as the follow on crops are smaller they need less space.

Another area that I am concentrating on at the moment is Med Veg. For me this means toms, courgettes aubergines and sweet peppers. I am a convert to blight resistant tomatoes and have Crimson Crush and Lizzano planted out, with Crimson Blush in the greenhouse. The aubergines are also in the greenhouse, and the peppers (Diablo and California Wonder) will be joining them next week. If there is any excess produce we make Ratatouille which has the advantage of being freezable.

This brings me on to another passion, which is "*Plot to Plate*". By this I mean how to preserve produce so that it's not wasted - for us that means freezing, canning (jarring), pickling, and drying. I'm not an expert by any means but this is what we do:

- \* *Freezing* means firstly we go through the freezer about this time of year to make sure that the freezer only has edible stuff in it (even though some of it may have been of historical interest to archaeologists). Then it's researching what would work for a potential surplus that we may have. So we freeze strawberries, raspberries and chilis but we also use Med Veg as mentioned above, Bigos (Polish dish that uses a lot of cabbage) and Courgette mince (add finely chopped courgettes to the same weight of minced lamb, pork or beef plus a couple of OXO cubes).
- \* *Canning* is reasonably straightforward and we use this for tomatoes, ratatouille, peppers, jam (raspberries, strawberries and tayberries) and chutney (green tomato). We re-use the jars each year, although some of the lids may need to be replaced.
- \* *Pickling* we use for jalapeno peppers and gherkins. Jalapenos are great on pizza, and both on burgers.
- \* *Drying* we use for tomatoes and chilis and have used for fruit in the past.

John Laws

## Cookery Corner

### Lemony roasted asparagus, new potato and pea salad

A warm spring salad that's both versatile and easy to assemble. Serve this lemony asparagus salad with boiled eggs on top as a starter, side dish or for a light lunch.

#### Ingredients

- 400-500g asparagus spears, any woody root ends trimmed
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Finely grated zest and juice 1 small lemon
- 200g peas (fresh or frozen)
- 600-700g small new potatoes, well washed
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 70-80g baby spinach, lamb's lettuce or shredded wild garlic leaves
- Some parsley, chervil, tarragon (or a mix), finely chopped - be generous
- 4 'soft' hard-boiled free-range eggs, halved

#### Method

1. Heat the oven to 200°C fan/gas 7. Scatter the asparagus in a roasting tin, trickle over 2 tbsp olive oil, add the lemon zest and half the juice, then season well with salt and pepper. Give everything a rattle around so the asparagus is well coated. Roast for about 15 minutes - a little less if the asparagus is very thin, a bit more if it's thick - you want it to be tender with a little char on it. Add the frozen peas 2-3 minutes before the end of cooking, then give everything a stir and cook until done.
2. While the asparagus is roasting, cook the potatoes in lightly salted boiling water until tender (about 12-16 minutes depending on their size). Drain and, when they're just warm enough to handle, halve them (unless they're really tiny). Then, in a large bowl, toss them with the remaining lemon juice, the mustard and the remaining 1 tbsp olive oil.
3. When the asparagus and peas are cooked, toss them gently and thoroughly with the potatoes. Add whatever green leaves you're using, plus the chopped herbs, whatever they might be. Season with a bit more salt and pepper if it needs it, divide it among the plates and put the halved boiled eggs on top.



## Allotment Jobs - month by month

Here are just some of the jobs you should be thinking about for the next 2 months.

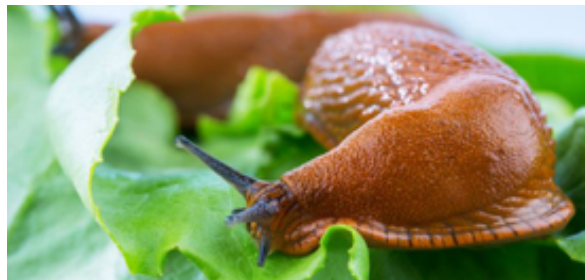
The main theme is weeding and watering. If you are going to be away, you may find your friendly allotment neighbour will do some watering for you. However, finding someone willing to tackle your weeds as well as their own may prove more difficult!



### June

- \* Sow turnips and swedes, Savoy cabbage, broccoli purple sprouting, and summer salad crops into prepared seedbeds. Also herb seeds such as sweet basil and coriander.
- \* Plant out courgettes, sweetcorn, pumpkin and squashes if you haven't already.
- \* Cover brassicas to fend off hungry cabbage white butterflies and pinch the tops off your broad beans.
- \* Check your climbing beans and tie in to help them along. Also consider supporting Brussel Sprouts as they get taller.
- \* Keep pinching out the side shoots of tomatoes and start to feed when the first fruit truss sets.
- \* Protect your soft fruit with netting and water soft fruit and trees regularly.
- \* First early potatoes should be ready to harvest as well as peas and broad beans.
- \* Overwintered onions and garlic should be ready and lots of lovely salad crops too.
- \* Keep an eye on the courgettes. They soon turn into marrows if you don't pick them regularly.

- \* Sow sunflowers, cornflowers, nasturtiums and poppies directly into your allotment bed to add colour and attract our welcome pollinators.
- \* **KEEP WEEDING AND WATERING!**  
And watch out for slugs and snails.



## July

- \* Sow broccoli and cauliflowers for harvest next Spring.
- \* Sow swede seeds and maybe sow an autumn variety of carrots (e.g. Autumn King 2) which can be stored in the ground and harvested until Christmas.
- \* Cut out flowers spikes from onions and protect your asparagus foliage from the wind by staking it up.
- \* Peg strawberry runners into small pots or into the ground for new plants, cutting them free when roots develop.
- \* Water blueberries well preferably with rainwater.
- \* Thin out overcrowded bunches of apples and pears to allow for larger fruit.



Lots to harvest this month including broad beans, peas, summer cabbage, salad leaves and greenhouse tomatoes. And hopefully lots of currants if the birds haven't already had a feast.

**AND STILL KEEP WATERING!**