

# HUNTLEY & PALMER'S ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

## newsletter



### Inside this issue

Chairman's Chatter	p1
Down on the Farm	p2
Earley Town Council	p4
Allotment Jobs	p4
Cookery Corner	p6

### Chairman's Chatter

Many a wise gardener will tell you that as another growing season comes to a conclusion, now is the start of the gardening year. How you prepare each area of your garden or allotment or "put them to bed", be that covering them, using green manures or letting the weeds run wild, determines where you start from next spring when you want to be sowing and planting.

### Something different?

So thoughts turn to what we might do differently next year. Before you plan more of the same next year, with little change apart from the need to rotate crops to avoid nutrient depletion and pest build up (see <https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/crop-rotation> if this is not making sense to you).

If you have visited the Harris Garden at the University, you will have seen their banana trees that have been there a number of years. More recently in the news there have been stories of people growing crops you might not expect:

- Avocado trees have been spotted fruiting in London
- Watermelons have been grown in East Anglia

- Hardy bananas and ginger growing near Harrogate in Yorkshire

Also, many crops that used to need the protection of a greenhouse now thrive outside - my grandfather never grew tomatoes as he did not have a greenhouse. New varieties and climate change make outdoor tomatoes a common sight these days in gardens and on allotments.

Perhaps time to sit down with a catalogue (or website) and browse through the possibilities with a mind open to trying something new next year.

### New plant research centre

NIAB (National Institute of Agricultural Botany, no wonder they abbreviate it) is a one hundred year old not-for-profit organisation with independent charitable status. They undertake research into seeds, fruit and vegetables to try and find improved varieties to keep up with evolving pests as well as the impact of climate change.

NIAB has opened a new research facility in Kent with almost 2,000 square metres (79 poles in allotment speak) of greenhouse and a similar area of poly tunnel.

An example of their latest release is the "Malling Ace" strawberry plant that they believe has greater resilience to the stress of extreme summer temperatures - like we had this year.

Hopefully they will help us all adapt to changes in both pests and climates that seem to happen at an accelerating rate.

Richard Tredgett

[tredgett@gmail.com](mailto:tredgett@gmail.com)

\* \* \* \* \*

## *Down on the Farm - in late September*

As we slip into the Autumn's "mists and mellow fruitfulness" I always take stock of what worked and what didn't on the plot. We had such a strange season with the drought that had an effect on all our crops but it wasn't just the lack of rain, it was the high temperatures too. This was how we got on this summer.

**Runner Beans** - were badly affected and most people seem to have had very little - I'm one of them, even though I had a mix of varieties. Next year I'm going to add one from a hotter climate as insurance. However, we were saved by the Dwarf French beans, I succession planted 4 varieties over 4 sowing periods about 4 weeks apart and we are still having great beans. The best variety was Kenya with good length - tender, tasty and prolific.

**Tomatoes** - have been good too. Lizzano came first, a cascade of cherry tomatoes followed by Crimson Crush (normal size tomatoes) both grown outside. But then came the Crimson Blush from the greenhouse which were fantastic and are still producing. We now have lots of toms in the freezer and 51 jars in the garage.

**Peppers** - have been good too. We have had a huge crop of Diablo, a pointy sweet pepper from the greenhouse and have been able to mix these with tomatoes to make a sweet sauce to go with pasta.

**Chillis** - have also done well this year but I had a problem with the Pimientos de Padron. These are a Spanish variety and about 1 in 10 is supposed to be reasonably hot. A bit like culinary Russian roulette. The problem was that each of these was VERY hot so they are being eked out by adding half a Padron Pepper to whatever we can. Also I have just picked a box of Jalapenos which will be put in jars tomorrow to last us until next summer and have started picking the normal chillis to dry out on strings at home.

**Aubergines** - growing in the greenhouse and we have been eating them for a few weeks now with plenty of scope left. They always come late and several times I've almost given up but, in the end, they come through. Best crop yet.

#### **Roundup of the rest**

Beetroot - good crop. Wife doesn't like it!

Spuds - earlies were good though main crop a bit small.

Broccoli - had our first a few days ago, delicious.

Squash - OK, now drying out for storage

Cabbage - hopeless. Great bonus for the slug population.

Sweetcorn - fabulous to start with but then we went on holiday and they weren't fabulous when we arrived back. Two weeks can make such a difference with corn.

Raspberries - OK, have enough jam for the year.

Grapes - not sure yet, may try wine again later.

Courgettes - ok, now overwhelmed this year.

And that's about it so far. Onward and upward to the Leeks, Spring Cabbage, Broccoli, Garlic Onions. The wheel turns, the seasons change, la luta continua .....

John Laws

\* \* \* \* \*

## Earley Town Council

I've recently taken on the responsibility of liaising with ETC on behalf of all plot holders. I accompany the two council officers when they have their regular tour of all the plots during Spring, Summer and early autumn.

Very occasionally, because a plot looks like it's not being tended very well, Diana, one of the officers, will typically send out one of three types of formal letters.

What I realised recently was that she will often not just send a standard letter, she will often personalise it to focus on a specific issue that's causing a concern on a plot.

One of her frustrations is that sometimes, when she has sent out a letter, she hears nothing back. This then means we can only guess what is happening for the plot holder.

So a simple request from me is that in the rare case of you receiving a letter, can you get back in touch to keep her informed?

Also, if you are having any type of difficulty with the upkeep of your plot, can you contact me in the first instance?

My email is [pbalchemy@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pbalchemy@yahoo.co.uk), my phone number is 0787 7049 793 or come and have a chat. TIA

Peter Burton (Plot 68)

\* \* \* \* \*



### Allotment Jobs - month by month

Well, the one thing we don't need to worry about at the moment is watering! All water butts are full to bursting and the soil is nice and damp making weeding easier.

As there will not be a newsletter in December, I will make this a 3-month guide.

#### October

- \* Plant out over-wintering broad beans from the middle of the month. Also plant out Japanese onion sets and maybe protect them as the pigeons love nothing better than pulling them up for you.

- \* Check your brussels sprouts and earth up if they are feeling a bit wobbly, or maybe stake them?
- \* Dig over your plot and spread manure or compost over the surface - the worms will do the rest.
- \* Give your currant bushes a good prune and cut back raspberries and blackberries, tying in if necessary. It's also a good time to plant new stock - maybe using a good handful of bonemeal to the base of the planting hole. (This can be bought at the shed).
- \* In the greenhouse, once your crops finish give it a good clean and insulate with bubblewrap if you are over-wintering plants.

## November

- \* Plant out garlic, maybe filling the hole above the clove with compost to give it a good start. Don't forget your broad beans - there's still time to plant them too.
- \* Carry on digging over the plot as you harvest your produce.
- \* You could start your runner bean trench, filling it with kitchen waste and a little soil over the months.
- \* Try making leaf mould, even if you just collect fallen leaves in a plastic bin bag.
- \* Prune apple and pear trees and give them a good mulch around the base with compost.

## December

- \* Now's the time to avoid all that Christmas shopping and finding a quiet spot to browse your seed catalogues.
- \* There's still time to plant garlic.
- \* On nice days you could turn your hand at turning your compost heap, making sure you keep it covered to prevent excess rain leaching the nutrients and keep some heat in.
- \* Take hardwood cuttings from soft fruit such as currants and gooseberries.
- \* It's a good time to split rhubarb crowns, leaving them on the surface so they get frosted before planting out in early Spring.
- \* Keep your greenhouse ventilated on warmer days to prevent mould getting established.



Oh, and have a Merry Christmas tucking in to your allotment grown brussels sprouts, leeks, potatoes and other delights that you may have frozen or preserved.

Julie (Plot 17)

## Cookery Corner

### Berkshire Apple Cake

More typically known as hailing from Dorset, there seemed little point in keeping that name when the apples we use are from our own plot!

You may have tasted a slice at the picnic earlier in September. We have always had success with it and sincerely hope you do too. Enjoy!

#### Ingredients

- 225g self-raising flour
- 115g butter/margarine
- 115g light brown sugar
- 2 tps cinnamon (I also add ground all spice, ground ginger and ground cloves)
- 1 large egg
- 6-8 tbs milk
- Approx 200g chopped cooking apples
- 70 -100g sultanas (how much depends on your taste)

#### Method

- Turn oven on to 180°C (170°C fan)/gas mark 4
- Grease & line an 8" (20cm) cake tin
- Combine flour, spices, butter/marge and rub together as if making a crumble
- Stir in sugar
- Add the beaten egg and enough milk to get a dropping consistency
- Add & stir in the chopped apples & sultanas
- Pour into the cake tin and bake for 30 - 40 mins (I always check after 30 with the tried and tested skewer method)
- Leave in the tin for a few minutes then turn out
- We eat this warm as a dessert with custard, cream or ice cream (or all three!!) but it's just as nice once cooled with a cup of your favourite brew - if you're really patient! (We're not - life's too short!)

Pete & Chris (Plot 68)