

HUNTLEY & PALMER'S ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Newsletter



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Chairman's Chatter

It is the time of year when many of us are sowing seeds and then eagerly looking for signs of germination in pots and seed trays. What if we could improve our chances of success?

Research by Brad Binder, Professor of Biochemistry & Cellular and Molecular Biology at the University of Tennessee has found a way of making this happen - and the approach might already be familiar to you, although perhaps at the other end of the growing season.

Many of us have tried using bananas to ripen tomatoes and other crops at the end of the season, after all, for most of us there are limits to how much green tomato chutney we want in the store cupboard, red tomatoes are a little more versatile. Bananas can help with ripening because they give off ethylene gas and this can have the effect of encouraging ripening.

Professor Binder's research found that exposure to ethylene of newly-sown seeds could result in:

- Growth stimulation - larger and stronger plants than those not exposed to ethylene.
- Ethylene treatment also increased tolerance to various stresses such as salt, high temperature and low oxygen conditions.

These both sound attractive as we look for signs of germination and growth in our seed trays.

Why does this work you might be wondering? The scientists believe that for plants exposed to bananas there is a large increase in carbon fixation, which means the plants are taking in much more CO₂ from the atmosphere.

With thanks to the Conversation website who shared the research, their article also contains a link to the fuller academic paper. <https://theconversation.com/>

Huntley & Palmers Allotment Association AGM

Like many organisations we have an AGM each year so that those who run your association can:

- 1 Meet you in person rather than just in the shed or in passing.
- 2 Share how the last year has gone, including the way we have managed your money.
- 3 Seek your ideas on what we might do better or just differently.

This year's AGM is to be held at
19:30 on Wednesday 17th April 2024

in the David Fuller room at
Radstock Community Centre,
Radstock Lane, Earley RG6 5UZ

Please do come along and listen and tell us what you want from your association. It will be great to see you there.



Trading Shed news

Wednesday evening opening

On Wednesday evenings in April and May we will be open between 17:00 and 18:30 (nine evenings in total) as well as Saturday and Sunday mornings between 10:00 and 12:30.

With the clocks changed the evenings are so much lighter; a midweek visit to the plot might be just the thing to get ahead of the weeds and the gardening game more generally.

Pop in and see us - avoid the weekend rush.

Something new! – Loose seeds for sale in the Trading Shed

Coriander - Aroma Slow Bolt, 10g for 20p, 25g for 40p



Vigorous and fast-growing plants with large stems and thick leaves. Multi-cut with a very good heat tolerance and slow to bolt. Performance is excellent during a hot summer. Strong flavour.

Fenugreek - 10g for 30p, 25g for 55p



Fenugreek is an annual plant in the family *Fabaceae*, with leaves consisting of three small obovate to oblong leaflets. It is cultivated worldwide as a semi-arid crop. Its seeds and leaves are common ingredients in dishes from the Indian subcontinent, and have been used as a culinary ingredient since ancient times.

Jobs for April

Things to do this month as the soil warms, the day gets longer and you can venture out without multiple layers of clothes (perhaps).

- **Plant your seed potatoes**

Aim to get all your potatoes planted by the end of the month - plant out chitted second-early potatoes in the first two weeks of the month and main-crop potatoes in second two weeks.

- **Sow seeds under cover if you haven't already**

This is the last chance to sow aubergines, chillies and tomatoes, which need a long growing season to do well. Sow them under cover.

● Sow a wildflower meadow

You can sow a wildflower patch in mid-spring (April) and the good news is that minimal soil preparation is required. Most wildflowers, particularly cornfield annuals, need a sunny spot – but there are mixes available for light shade. There will be lots of colour and the wildlife, including bees, will be very grateful.

Recipe corner

Rhubarb cordial

Rhubarb crumble coming out of your ears, or just looking for a refreshing drink? Try this rhubarb cordial recipe. *With thanks to BBC Good Food website.*

Preparation time: 10 mins, Cooking time: 10 -12 mins

Ingredients

300 g golden caster sugar

Zest and juice 1 orange

Zest and juice 1 lemon

450 g rhubarb, chopped

1 slice fresh root ginger, peeled

Method

- 1 Put the sugar in a large saucepan with 300 ml water. Bring to a simmer then add the zest and juice of both the orange and lemon along with the rhubarb and the ginger.
- 2 Cook the mixture over a medium heat until the rhubarb is falling apart.
- 3 Pour the mixture through a sieve lined with muslin into a clean heat-proof jug then transfer to sterilised bottles. Keeps in the fridge for up to 1 month.
- 4 Serve approx. 25 ml of cordial per 100 ml sparkling water, or to taste.

A big thank-you

Many thanks to Julie Smith and Alan Winter who edited several years of your newsletter. They have now retired from this role and their place has kindly been taken by Rob Hine. My thanks to all three of these volunteers.

Richard Tredgett