

HUNTLEY & PALMER'S ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION



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Chairman's Chatter

An alternative, or supplement, to a compost heap

At this time of year, when we are busy harvesting and doing the end-of-season tidying up, we can produce green waste faster than our compost heap can take it. Even our hot box takes time to process this waste. Fruit and vegetable scraps from the kitchen and green waste can end up in sacks; awaiting their turn in the compost heap.

If you are looking for an alternative; have you considered Bokashi composting? This claims to process all kitchen waste, creating near-soil that can either be dug into the ground or added to a conventional compost heap, where it accelerates decomposition.

Bokashi - How does it work?

Bokashi is a method of pre-composting food waste that uses a combination of bacteria and yeast to ferment food scraps. The process works as follows:

- Preparation

Get an airtight container, such as a bin, and make or buy Bokashi bran, which is a blend of bacteria and yeast that is applied to food waste.

- Add waste

Chop food scraps into 25-50 mm (1-2 in) pieces, then add them to the container with Bokashi bran. It is claimed that all food waste, including meat, can go in the bin - a bit like the claims made for a green cone or hot box composter.

- Fermentation

Compact the mixture to remove air and close the lid. Let it ferment for at least two weeks; longer is better.

- Harvesting

After fermenting, the food waste will be ready to be added to a compost bin or dug into the ground.

- Using the by-products

The liquid produced during the fermentation process, called Bokashi tea, can be diluted and used as a plant food or to unclog drains (an interesting pair of alternative uses).

Bokashi technically isn't a composting method because it anaerobically ferments food rather than decomposing it. Bokashi bran, a mix of bacteria and yeast, breaks down food with very little odour (smells a bit like pickles) and doesn't create harmful emissions. People typically report needing about a kilo of bran a month, which you can either buy or make your own. Most people run a pair of bins; one filling and the other "doing the business".

2024 annual association picnic

Thanks to everyone who came along and joined in with the picnic on 31st August. The weather was kind and there were a host of entries for the various competitions - it was so nice not to be the only entry in the produce competition!

About thirty members came along, bringing a picnic and, in many cases, one or more entries for the competitions.

As ever, there were some awesome vegetables on show - not just large but also less common ones. Hopefully most of us learnt something from the day as well as enjoying ourselves.

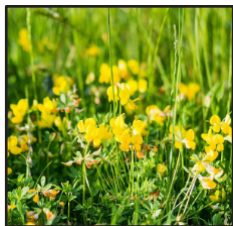


Green manure



Green manure is a crop grown not for consumption but to improve the structure, health and fertility of the soil. In winter, it helps to prevent soil erosion and nutrient depletion from rainfall and in summer it helps to prevent evaporation by shading the soil with leafy growth.

Does it have to fit in with crop rotation?



To avoid a build-up of soil pests and diseases using crop rotation is a good plan. A very simple one is roots (carrots, parsnips), followed by legumes (peas, beans), followed by brassicas (cabbage, kale).

For example Winter Tares is a legume so shouldn't be sown before peas and beans. It can, however, replace a legume in crop rotation adding nitrogen to the soil, benefitting the next crop, in this case brassicas.



There are green manures that can go in anywhere in this rotation such as Buckwheat, Forage Pea, Phacelia and Rye Grasses. These mainly add organic matter but also offer the benefit of weed suppression.

What is the best soil for green manure?

It helps if you know what type of soil you have as some green manures suit specific soils. If you want to get the maximum nitrogen/soil benefit then you need to match the manure with the right soil. For example: Lupins like acid soils, Alfalfa does not but thrives in free-draining ones. Rye grasses will suit most types.

When is the best time of year to grow green manure?

Green manure is often sown in the autumn, to grow through the winter, thus preventing soil erosion from winter rain. This allows roots to grow deeper into the soil, which assists with aeration and breaks up heavy soils such as clay. Spring sown manures, with their leafy foliage act as a defence against the drying effects of sun and wind in the summer but can be beneficial all-year round.

Green manure can be grown in a bed or part of an allotment for a full season but a good strategy is to use it as a catch crop (a filler crop grown in a vacant spot before or after a main crop).

How long you can leave a part of your plot before growing your next crop needs to be taken into account. For example, you may want a quick cover e.g. Fenugreek, which takes less than 10 weeks from sowing to digging in, or cut down and left as a mulch. Sow spring manures as soon as the soil can be worked at the beginning of growing season. These can grow for six to ten weeks before main crops are planted. You can

also sow a long-term crop like white clover for over-wintering. This will suppress most perennial weeds and will reduce pest root populations, feed the soil and can fit in with a four-year crop rotation.

Hardy, over-wintering, green manures can be sown as soon as the summer harvest comes out of the ground. Where possible, sow them at least six weeks ahead of the first killing frost. They can be a legume such as Winter Tares or a grass, for instance, Hungarian Grazing Rye.

Underplanting

Main-season green manures can be used as an under-crop. Wait three to four weeks after sowing your main crop then sow the green manure as an underplant. Yellow Trefoil, for example, stays low and can be sown in between taller crops like tomatoes, potatoes, sweetcorn and especially long-standing brassicas, which overwinter.

A useful plant is White Clover, another low growing variety. It can be inter-sown between soft fruit and left permanently as a living mulch.

One of the more useful features of some manures, such as Caliente Mustard, is they can act as biofumigants producing a group of compounds known as glucosinolates. When these cover crops are chopped with a strimmer or shears it destroys plant cells producing a chemical reaction that converts these glucosinolates into isothiocyanates (ITCs). Wire worm is a potato pest, it lays eggs that form a chrysalis, which eventually opens to produce more worms. The ITC hardens this chrysalis and prevents the worms from hatching thus breaking the cycle.

Another biofumigant is Tagetes (Marigold), which when sown after onions acts a soil cleanser, which helps to reduce the risk of white rot and other fungal problems.

How to sow green manure?

Soil preparation is the same as for any other crop: loosen the soil, by digging or raking, and, having removed weeds, rake to a fine tilth and water well.

For small seeds, sow by broadcasting (i.e. scatter evenly) this ensures a good coverage for weed suppression. Larger seeds, such as Field Beans or Forage Peas, can be sown in rows every 20 cm, 5 cm deep, 10 cm apart. Keep the seedbed moist until the seeds germinate and become established. Protection from pigeons and rodents may be needed.

How to dig in green manure?

It should be cut down before flowering, ideally when the stems are still soft, and then dug it into the top 15 cm of soil. It can be left on top of the soil as a mulch to let the worms drag it down, if you prefer a no-dig approach.

Wait at least 30 days before sowing the next crop. This is especially important with green manures like Forage Rye and Winter Tares as they release a chemical that inhibits the germination of small seeds. This is good at preventing weed-seed germination but not useful when sowing vegetable seeds. However, small plants or seedlings are not affected and can be transplanted within a couple of weeks.

What are the benefits of green manure?

- Organic matter

Lots of leafy vegetation helps to increase the organic matter in the soil.

- Nitrogen

It either adds nitrogen to the soil or lifts nitrogen closer to the surface, which boosts crop growth.

- Leaching

Using it over winter prevents rain from washing the soil's nutrients away.

- Pest control

It provides cover for frogs, beetles and other natural predators that feed on pests such as snails and slugs. It also helps to prevent some crop pests. Using a low-growing green manure can deter carrot fly, for instance.

A table of green manures and their uses appears at the end of this newsletter.

Spring bulbs now in the shed

We now have the following spring bulbs in stock to plant now for some spring colour

Narcissi

- Hillstar, Pueblo, Quail, Tête-à-Tête and Sweetness

Tulips

- Little Beauty - Red with purple base, height 10 cm, flowering time April/May.
- Peacock Mixed - Mixed colours, height 20 cm, flowering time March/April

Crocus

- Ard Schenk - White, height 8 cm, flowering time February/March.
- Cream Beauty - Fragrant, soft cream, height 8 cm, flowering time February/March.
- Goldilocks - Fragrant, golden yellow, height 8 cm, flowering time February/March.

Iris - Dutch Types

- Black Beauty - Almost black with a yellow eye, height 45 cm, flowering time June.
- Dutch Mixed - Assorted colours, height 45 cm, flowering time June.
- Lion King - Bronze/gold, height 50 cm, flowering time June.
- Red Ember - Red with purple and brown tones, height 45 cm, flowering time June.

Autumn Planting - Onions, Shallots and Garlic

Available now...

Onion Sets

- Autumn Champion - Produces early harvests of firm round onions with golden-brown skins and mild flavour.
- Senshyu - Yellow, Japanese variety, globe shaped, mild flavour.
- Winter Sun (Radar) - Improved Japanese variety, resistant to bolting, stores well.

Garlic

- Elephant Garlic - Mild flavour, yields very large bulbs, excellent for roasting or in salads.

Coming soon to your trading shed...

Shallots

- Griselle - Banana shallot, multiplies well to give a good crop of long bulbs with grey skin and purple/pink flesh, strong flavour with spicy taste.

Garlic

- Germidour - Soft-neck, mild flavoured, violet cloves
- Thermidrome - Soft-neck, medium flavour, pure white, early and high yielding
- Topadrome - Soft-neck, white skin with white cloves, early harvesting.

Goods from the K G Loach Catalogue

Want another watering can, fancy a new fork or hankering after a new hoe? The wholesaler who supplies us, also sells tools and other gardening equipment such as:

- Garden tools by Wilkinson Sword, Bulldog and Spear & Jackson
- A range of gardening gloves at very good prices
- Water butts, compost bins and a range of wheelbarrows

K G Loach does not have a website, as yet, so to see what's available you need to ask a volunteer in the shed to see their catalogue. Whilst the prices are very good, please note that those in the catalogue are excluding VAT so this needs to be added.

To order something, please send an email to handptradingshed@gmail.com detailing the page item description and code number. Delivery will be when we next have a wholesaler delivery; usually within a couple of months, although often sooner.

2025 Calendar



The 2025 calendar, produced by the Earley Environmental Group, is now available in the Trading Shed.

If you have not seen it before, this is now the sixth edition of the calendar that features pictures of local wildlife taken by residents and submitted to the Group. The 2024 calendar even featured a picture of fungi taken on the Culver Lane allotment site. The calendar is just £6 and in previous years has proved to be very popular. Last year they sold out so don't be slow in snapping one up from the Trading Shed.

Potatoes for 2025

Whilst some folks are still harvesting their 2024 potato crop, others have been asking what potatoes will be available at the start of 2025 this is what we have ordered:

First Earlies

- Foremost, Swift, Organic Colleen and Red Duke of York

Main Crop

- Cara, Desiree, Java (Improved Sarpo Mira), King Edward, Maris Piper, Picasso and Heidi Red

Salad

- Charlotte

As usual these will be available from mid January; once we have received the delivery from our supplier. Apart from the Heidi Red, which are pre-packaged, all are available to buy either the weight or number of tubers you want - minimum sale one tuber.

Vegan slow-cooker pumpkin stew

This recipe takes advantage of this year's great pumpkin crops to make a hearty stew for those autumn months.

Serves 4. Cooking time six hours (slow cooker). 268 Calories per serving.

Ingredients

2 tsp vegetable oil

1 onion, sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 or 2 red chillies (to taste), deseeded and sliced

2 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp coriander seeds

2.5 cm piece fresh root ginger, peeled and grated

3 tbsp tomato purée

600 g pumpkin, peeled, deseeded and cut into 2.5 cm pieces

400 g tin chopped tomatoes

200 g full-fat coconut milk

1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled

250 g microwaveable pouch of Le Puy lentils

Small handful of fresh coriander, roughly chopped (optional)

Directions

Heat oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Add onion and a large pinch of salt. Fry for ten minutes, until softened. Stir in the garlic and chilli(es), fry for two minutes, until fragrant.

Add cumin, coriander seeds, ginger and tomato purée. Fry for 1 minute. Scrape into the slow cooker bowl. Stir in remaining ingredients except for the lentils and coriander.

Cover and cook on 'low' for six hours, or until the pumpkin is tender. Stir in the lentils, re-cover and cook for five minutes more, until the lentils are piping hot.

Check seasoning. Garnish with fresh coriander, if using. Serve with crusty bread, if you like.

The recipe is easily adaptable for whatever root vegetables you have to hand (or a glut of). We also love using butternut squash and parsnip.

With thanks to [goodhousekeeping.com](https://www.goodhousekeeping.com) recipes.

Alfalfa	Type: Legume • Sow: Apr-Jul • Grows in: 2-3 months	
	Soil: Dry, non-acid	Fixes nitrogen. Draws up minerals, breaks up soil. Almost a complete natural fertiliser.
Birdsfoot Trefoil	Type: Legume • Sow: Mar-Aug • Grows in: 3 months	
	Soil: Light dry, preferably not acid.	Low growth, good for inter-sowing between taller crops. Fixes nitrogen, suppresses weeds.
Buckwheat	Type: Fits anywhere • Sow: May-Aug • Grows in: 2-3 months	
	Soil: Tolerates poor, but not heavy types.	Short term, quick Growth, summer variety. Dense canopy of foliage that smothers competing weeds.
Caliente Mustard	Type: Brassica • Sow: Mar-Aug, March-Mid Oct • Grows in: 2-5 months	
	Soil: Most	Biofumigant, suppresses soil-borne pests and diseases.
Fenugreek	Type: Legume • Sow: Mar-Aug • Grows in: 2-3 months	
	Soil: Well drained, slightly heavy	Quick-Growth, produces lots of organic matter.
Field Beans	Type: Legume • Sow: Sep-Nov • Grows in: Overwinter	
	Soil: Most but especially heavy clay.	Breaks up soil. Fixes nitrogen.
Forage Pea	Type: Legume • Sow: Sep-Nov • Grows in: 3-6 months	
	Soil: Most	Good nitrogen fixer, nutrient leaching prevention overwinter.
Forage Rye	Type: Fits anywhere • Sow: Aug-Nov • Grows in: 3-6 months	
	Soil: Excellent for clay but suits most types	Overwinters and covers soil.
Italian Ryegrass	Type: Fits anywhere • Sow: Mar-Oct • Grows in: 2-24 months	
	Soil: Most	Particularly good at lifting nitrates and releasing them slowly. Easy to dig in after winter.
Lupins	Type: Legume • Sow: Mar-Jul • Grows in: 2-4 months	
	Soil: Light sandy acid	Very long roots help break up soil, excellent nitrogen fixer.
Phacelia	Type: Fits anywhere • Sow: Mar-Sep • Grows in: 1-3 months	
	Soil: Most, but particularly dry ones	Quick-Growth, weed suppressing.
Red Clover	Type: Legume • Sow: Apr-Aug • Grows in: 3-18 months	
	Soil: Loam or sandy	Fast Growth perennial excellent nitrogen fixer. Bulky growth smothers weeds.
White Clover	Type: Legume • Sow: Mar-Aug • Grows in: 6 months, can be left for 2-5 years	
	Soil: Silt loam and clay. Can tolerate poor drainage	Long-term manure, low-growth variety. Can be inter-sown between soft fruit as a living mulch.
Winter Tares	Type: Legume • Sow: Mar-May, Jul-Sep for overwintering • Grows in: 2-3 months	
	Soil: Avoid acid or dry types	Good nitrogen fixer, weed suppression, prevents nutrient leaching over winter.