

Allotment News



A regular newsletter for allotment holders in Welwyn Hatfield

Autumn 2014

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Nick Hamilton Speaks to Allotment Holders

At one of our free evening talks in April this year, we had the pleasure of listening to Nick Hamilton, horticultural writer and co-owner of Barnsdale Gardens.

He had many of us guessing as to how many vegetables were available to harvest each month. In January he explained that we can apparently harvest up to 27 different crops, however, in May and early June there is next to nothing to harvest, the so-called "hungry gap".

Nick explained how to extend the productive season by propagation methods, using horticultural fleece, heated greenhouses as well as the importance of catch crops, hot beds, trenches and multiple sowings. Following the talk tenants had the opportunity to purchase plants which Nick had brought down from Barnsdale Gardens, which were created by his father Geoff for BBC Gardeners World.

We will be arranging more talks for next year - one in March 2015 and one in September 2015. The talks will be free to all Council allotment tenants and invitations will go out in the New Year.



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Allotment News



Green Waste, Compost and Bonfires

Many tenants utilize green waste easily as well as creating compost in the process - steadily improving the condition of the soil on their plots. If you are not one of them, read on!

If you are struggling to get rid of green waste then you can consider composting it. Many tenants make their own, or they can be purchased directly from **WasteAware**.



Made from recycled plastic the Compost Converters are available in two sizes, the Compact 220 litre for £19.19 and the Giant 330 litre for £22.98. Delivery is £5.99 per order. **WasteAware** also sell subsidized water butts of various sizes and kitchen caddies. Call **0844 571 4444** or visit <http://www.hertsgetcomposting.com> to place an order.

In addition, **WasteAware** sell kitchen caddies which are very useful if you are recycling your food waste. They are also free to collect



from Council offices and at the following outlets: Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council, 7 Maynards Place, Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4JA; Jim McDonald Centre, Hilltop Hatfield Housing Office, Town Centre, Parish Council Offices (Mon, Wed, Fri, 9am -1pm). Alternatively the Council can send you a caddy for £5.10 (to cover postage and packing). Orders can be placed via our Contact Centre by calling **01707 357000**.

To make compost, layer grass cuttings, leaves, uncooked food waste (such as vegetable and fruit peelings) wrapped in newspaper, and add shredded cardboard. Ensure that you turn the compost regularly and check that it is making enough heat to decompose

all the matter. After a year the compost that you have made can be added to the soil, which improves the soil structure, adds nutrients as well as helping to retain moisture.

If you are not composting on your plot then green waste ought to be taken home and put in the brown bin for the Council to collect or taken to one of the Hertfordshire Waste & Recycling Centres.

Do not be tempted to fly tip by leaving waste in or outside the allotment site. This is a serious offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

If you have a plot that has hedges and trees to be maintained, then you can have a bonfire to get rid of the green waste. However, as outlined in the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, the Council must be informed before you have a bonfire, so that we can inform you of our guidelines on domestic bonfires and also check that it is appropriate, depending on whether your site is close to residential properties.



Entertaining Evening with Geoff

In mid March, many of you came to our first evening allotment talk at the Civic Centre in Welwyn to hear Geoff Hodge's practical presentation on "Growing Your Own".

With regards to sowing seeds, Geoff entertainingly showed us through his practical demonstration, how we might be tempted to sow three rows on top of each other, in fear that the 100 seeds that we had probably already sown would not germinate!



Geoff explained the importance of knowing the required final spacings needed for each plant and also knowing how much crop a plant produces.

Pricking out the seedlings or thinning them (and even replanting them), often weakens the plants as the



soil is disturbed. It is better to sow the seeds in their final growing places. He reassured us that most seeds nowadays have a 94-98% germination rate, so we really can sow sparingly and specifically.

Geoff also explained the importance of knowing how much crop a plant produces. For example it might not be necessary to sow a full row of lettuce.

The benefits of sowing just half a row in this instance are that we could save space and avoid "gluts and famines". We would still have enough produce for our seeds, particularly if we

sow a half row every 3 weeks or so to ensure a continual and steady crop.

There was something for everyone, including those who have had an allotment for a while. Following the presentation, there was a question and answer session. Geoff then held an unexpected quiz and surprised us by giving away prizes for each right answer, including a border spade and trowel.

We had great feedback about the evening and hope to have Geoff back to speak to us on pests and diseases in 2015, details of which will go out in the New Year.

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Now and Then - St Audrey's Green Allotment

In less than a year, Roy has transformed his plot at St Audreys Green Allotment Garden. Roy explains:

"I took on plot 10 at the site on 23rd September 2013



and as you can see from the photo it was totally overgrown and full of weeds.

With grit and determination (and help from my wife) I set about clearing all the weeds and rubbish (with plenty of trips to the dump) at the beginning of October 2013.

All was going well until we had the bad weather in January and February 2014.

However, in March I was able to carry on and as you can see from the photo taken on the 1st June 2014. I now have a fully planted plot."



Roy's Plot, transformed in just 8 months.

Sources of Manure

Manure is a great way of improving the condition of the soil on your plot. Are you wanting to do this, but don't know where to get it?

You can get large deliveries to share with other tenants or can often collect small bag loads or tub loads yourself. Currently we are aware of the following sources of manure:

Raybrook Bluebridge Brookmans Park, AL9 7SX. Geoff Clarke on Tel: 07716 878 894. They

Riding, Road, Welwyn, Herts, AL6 9SZ. Tel: 01438 815491 or

supply various age manure already bagged for collection. Usually there is also a "heap" which may be excavated. **Please telephone before you arrive to check on availability as sometimes it all goes at once.** There are plenty of parking spaces for cars and trailers. There is no charge, but donations to Horse Rescue are welcome.

Welwyn Equestrian Centre, Arnolds Farm, Pottersheath Road, Welwyn, Herts, AL6 9SZ. Tel: 01438 815491 or

07747 694 215. They have two manure heaps at the yard which can be excavated. Collection only and supply your own bags. Please call the centre to notify them you are coming.

Riding for the Disabled, Rectory Road, Welwyn Garden City, almost opposite The Red Lion pub on the B197. Collect it yourself and make donation.

You can also buy manure from **Ian on 01707 888548** who will deliver a trailer load for around £30-45.

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Pretty Good Pumpkins

Alan at Moneyhole Lane Allotment Garden has grown some superb pumpkins this year.

Alan sowed a couple of varieties of pumpkin and puts his success down to all of the manure that he has added to his plot over the last decade or so.

have fun carving them for Halloween. As they are all



Traditionally in years past Alan gave the pumpkins to children on his street, to

grown up now, he will be giving them away to friends and other allotment

tenants, particularly those with children.

Alan said he is going to go "all out" for next year and plans to nurture just one pumpkin per plant. This way he hopes to create a monster-sized pumpkin!

(During October Half Term there are Pumpkin Carving sessions at Mill Green Museum, see details in the below article).

What's On at Mill Green Museum

As well as ongoing exhibitions at Mill Green Museum, there are plenty of events and activities over the coming seasons

Pumpkin Carving

Carve a pumpkin ready for Halloween. Session times 10.00am, 11.15am 1.15pm and 2.30pm on **Thursday 30th October**. £3 per child.

Family Halloween Event

Story telling in the spooky Mill, bring a torch for the Spooky Trail, make a wand, portions shop, bob for apples, costume parade and overflowing cauldrons

With treats to buy. **Friday October 31st**. 6pm-8pm. Adults free, £4 per child – 3 years and over.

Christmas Workshop

This fun workshop is aimed at floristry beginners and taught by Helen Pardoe. Make a door wreath and learn techniques that can be applied to other creations. Materials supplied. **Saturday 6th December**. 10am-1pm. £42 per person.

Victorian Christmas Fair

There will be Victorian street sellers, commercial

stalls, children's fun activities, storytelling, games and a Grotto. Hot Victorian street food will be available as well as Mulled Wine. Carols around the Christmas Tree at 4pm. **Sunday 1st December** 2pm-5pm. £2.50 Adults, £2 per child over 2 years. Grotto entry £3 per child.

For further information and enquiries about current events and exhibitions contact: **Mill Green Museum & Mill, Mill Green, Hatfield, Herts. AL9 5PD. Tel: 01707 357850. Email: museum@welhat.gov.uk**



Sow Now for Over-Winter Veg

Many tenants say they can't sow anything in autumn or winter, yet there are many crops and varieties that can be sown or planted either now or right up until Spring.

Garlic is the easiest crop to

grow. You will get a bigger and better crop if planted in the Autumn but it can be planted up until April. You can buy the bulbs from the garden centre.

There are also onions, spring onions and shallots. Lettuce, such as Winter

Gem, available from T&M, can be sown in a cold frame or under fleece up until January.

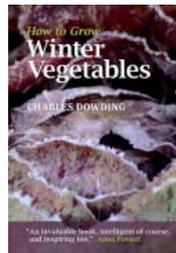
Lambs lettuce and spinach are also easy to grow there are varieties that can be sown up until the end of October

Book Review *How to Grow Winter Vegetables* By C. Dowding

If you missed Nick Hamilton's talk earlier in the year, then this book could be for you.

How to Grow Winter Vegetables by Charles Dowding (2011) shows that we can enjoy a range of vegetables throughout the cold months, whether

stored or ready for harvesting from our plots. It also covers the "hungry gap" from April to early June. It is all about planning, so the main part of the book is a thorough month-by-month



sowing, planting and growing calendar.

Further sections in the book cover harvesting, storing produce and frost-hardy salad plants.

Similar books on allotment growing are available from your local library.

Plot Wildlife - Hedgehogs

If you are having a bonfire this autumn or winter, don't forget check it for hedgehogs before you light it.

Hedgehogs sleep in the day and forage for food at night, covering one to two miles a night. Feeding on a variety of food, including slugs – they are natural pest controller and a plot holder's friend! They hibernate in November or



December if they have put on enough weight (if not they stay awake until spring, or risk not waking up following hibernation). In recent years, the

population of Britain's only spiny mammal is down by 25%. Part of their decline could be due to an increase in Badgers. Help them by checking leaf litter before putting your fork in, keeping a tidy plot and ensuring that no plastic bags or empty bottles are left around. You can get involved with The British Hedgehog Preservation Society.

www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk



Thank You

We wanted to take the opportunity to thank all of those tenants who have gone the extra mile and helped to improve or maintain the site that they are on this year.

Many of you regularly mow the pathways, not just around your own plot but others too, including entrance pathways. Some of you have kindly helped improve access paths by sowing grass seed or cutting back overhanging branches that hinder access into the allotment.

Many of you have informed us of problems on sites such as fly tipping and neglected plots so that we can respond more quickly. Those of you who have



informed us in advance of extenuating circumstances that might affect the condition of your plot have saved us time. Lots of you also help new tenants or each other with advice and sharing produce or plants.

We also want to thank those of you who have kept your

plots in good condition throughout the year and followed the rules that are contained within the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, which has saved the Council time in enforcement notices and also contributed to the overall standard and condition of our sites.

Welcome All New Tenants

Each year over 60 plots become available to rent. The previous tenants have either surrendered due to moving out of the borough, illness, lack of time, and difficult plots, or they have been served a notice and their tenancy terminated.

Many of our new tenants have waited anything from a year to

7 years to rent a plot, depending on the ward that they live in. So a big welcome to our new tenants for 2014:

Aiden, Alicia, Andrew, Angela, Anna, Ashleigh, Ashley, Barry, Berenice, Carl, Carla, Catherine, Chris, Cleveland, Clive, Deidre, Elizabeth, Helen, Iain, Ian, Ineta, Jacek, Jennifer, Karen, Kayley,

Keeley, Kelly, Kerry, Kevin, Lena, Liz, Malcolm, Martin, Mary, Michael, Morna, Nigel, Patricia, Paul, Paula, Rollande, Robert, Rowena, Sarah, Simon, Sharon, Stanford, Stephen, Steve, Stuart, Sue, Susan, Tony, Tristan, Victoria and Zaneta.

We wish you all the best with your new plots!



Top Tip



Start sowing your overwinter veg now up until the end of October and get some horticultural fleece from your local garden centre to extend the growing season. If you are unsure, just ask the vender which varieties will be suitable. Also, don't forget to check for hedgehogs before lighting a bonfire on your plot (or contacting the Council first for permission!)

Contact

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Please contact us if you would like to contribute to the next edition of Allotment News.

Recipe - Lime Courgette Cake

Simple to make, this is a great cake to make with children, getting them involved in bringing "plot to plate". If you don't have any lime, just add lemon instead.



Ingredients

- vegetable oil, for greasing
- 50g/2oz soft brown sugar
- 50g/2oz soft butter
- 1 egg
- 60g/2oz courgette
- 90g/3¼oz self-raising flour
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- half a lime, juice only

Method

- Pre-heat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7. Grease a small (500g) loaf tin with a little vegetable oil
- Place the sugar and butter into a mixing bowl and mix together.
- Break the egg into a cup and whisk with a fork. Add the egg to the sugar and butter and stir.
- Grate the courgette and add this to the mixture with the flour, mixed spice and lime juice and stir using a wooden spoon.
- Put the mixture into the prepared loaf tin and place in the oven for 20–25 minutes until golden-brown on the top. Serve in slices with some fresh fruit.

(Source: *BBC Good Food*)

Putting people first.

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