

Chichester Organic Gardening Society



Newsletter 50
April 2009



NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

April 2009

‘Winter is over’ – or so we hope, and perhaps it has been a hard enough one to kill off some of those pests and get the ground into a good state for the start of planting and sowing. Our English weather, and the prevailing strong winds in Chichester, remind us not to risk anything outdoors until hardened off. Daffodils and cherry blossom, blackthorn in the hedges, the dawn chorus – and the clocks go forward, giving us lighter evenings. A time of hope and planning.

Every cloud has its silver lining: the ‘recession’ is making many people more careful with resources, and even thinking about food miles. Professor Tim Lang recently warned that we may need a form of rationing again – the production of milk, and especially meat, causes a huge ‘water footprint’.

Recent reports tell us that UK production of vegetables is declining, leading to the need for imports, and ‘food miles’. According to one farmer interviewed on Farming Today, there is a heavy responsibility on supermarkets which ‘give the grower 36p for a cauliflower and sell it for £1.18’.

All the more reason for us to grow our own, and to encourage friends and neighbours to do the same. We know it makes sense, as well as being a healthy and enjoyable occupation, as more and more people are discovering for themselves. Some would like to grow vegetables but don’t know how to start – is there anyone whom we can encourage and help? There are plans afoot, though perhaps some way ahead yet, for Transition Chichester to acquire land for a community garden.

There are two sessions still to come before our summer break, a talk on Diversity and of course the Spring Fling. We hope to see a good gathering for that, with plants to swop and luscious homemade food to share.

We are looking for a volunteer to take over as Treasurer from the AGM in October. If you feel that you could do better than the country's bankers (ie anyone with a modicum of common sense and honesty), please let Penelope or Liz know. Liz will also be stepping down from the Committee, so we will have a vacancy there.

Good gardening, and let's hope for good weather.

The Committee

COGS NOTICES

Speakers and Meetings

We are always looking for suggestions for speakers. If you have any idea for speakers or visits, please let Vi Cowan, our Speakers' Secretary, know.

We also need volunteers to help at meetings. Please contact Liz Campling if you can help.

RHS Concession Cards

We now have 3 RHS concession cards, each of which gives the holder and a guest one third off the price of entry to the RHS Gardens at Wisley (except Sundays), Rosemoor in Devon, Harlow Carr in Yorkshire, Hyde Hall in Essex and Trebah in Cornwall. And also entitles us to one free group visit of up to 55 people per year to an RHS Garden. Liz Campling currently holds 2 of these cards and the other is with Nina Guilfoyle, so if you would like to borrow one, please contact them.

We have to pay a small fee for these cards and they are only valid for a year, so if there is little interest from members, we will not renew next year.

BEES

We have a small orchard at our house at Church Norton. If any bee keepers are looking for a home for a hive whilst the blossom is out they are very welcome here. Contact Pat on 01243 602713 or

pat_adams@btopenworld.com

Seed Swop

Following the suggestion of a member, Derek Henderson, we are thinking of using the newsletter as a clearing house for seed swops. Members who have spare seeds or who are looking for seeds can send the



details and their phone number for publication in the newsletter. It will then be up to interested members to arrange the actual swapping among themselves. Within the month before publication, please let Penelope know **your name and phone number and the seeds you have spare or want.**

(Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library has a similar scheme).

Note You are welcome to bring plants to meetings – but they go home with you if no-one else wants them.

STANSTED SHOW - Friday 5- Sunday 7 June 2009

Thank you to all the people who have offered to help on our stand at Stansted – There are still some spaces to fill on the volunteers rota, so do give me a ring if you can help.

Penelope Johnstone is organising the plants and she would like any of the following: tomatoes, lettuce, pepper, aubergine, courgettes, cucumber or any other vegetable plants. Herbs are also very popular and flowers which are in flower sell, too.



Penelope for plants you can grow for us
01243 771881

penelopejohnstone@yahoo.co.uk

Vee Cowan to help on the stand Tel 01243
780518 or email varianneec@yahoo.com

Do give me a ring if you have any queries.

Many thanks

Vee Cowan

Totally Tomato Show



This will be at West Dean, Saturday and Sunday 5th and 6th September.

Gina has again kindly offered to organise COGS stall at this very enjoyable event. There are two main shifts during each day, and setting-up on the Friday afternoon. It is still some way ahead, but if you think you can help on one of those days, Gina will be delighted to

have names in advance. Please contact her by email, ginacarrington@homecall.co.uk or mobile 07926 253 374.

Request For Show Judges

We have had a request from the Waterlooville Allotments society for six judges for their Flower Show, on Sat 22nd August, at Purbrook. They would like ideally three men and three women, a pair for each group of: flowers, vegetables, cakes & photographs, and together to decide on 'Best in Show'.

No great qualifications needed, but they follow RHS rules. It would be very informal, you would be needed around 11 a.m. on the day – and could leave before the entrants find out who has won what It should be interesting and enjoyable, and the society would be very grateful for this help.

If you are interested, please let Penelope know (01243 771881) as soon as possible.

Results From Cogs Discussion Evening On Transition Towns

On 23 February, COGS had a discussion evening to discuss ways we can bring about better community living. COGS can play a role in helping people discover about organic gardening. Following are notes from the evening organised into the subjects discussed:

Subject: Land Use: how to match people with redundant land with those needing land

- Make use of Freecycle
- Put Cards in Shop Windows
- Fliers in Community Centres, Health Centres, Dr's Surgeries, etc.
- Through COGS

- Chichester Observer – feature
- Circulate people waiting for allotments.

Subject: Excess Produce

- Invite public to pyo in return for donations.
- Schools; day centres etc.
- Make contact with local growers to facilitate
- Warning: how to avoid people dumping poor or diseased crops

Subject: How Can Local Food be celebrated by the Community?



- Stall in Farmer's Market for anyone to use
- ACORA organisation: local outlets
- Get churches involved.
- Odd years have a food (local) event in the Cathedral. Maybe tied in with the Harvest Festival.
- Education – children and adults.
- Get the local press involved.
- WI Link
- ½ price membership of the Co-op
- Free entry for guests (to COGS?) x 2

Subject: Passing on Skills

- Growing Buddies to cross-pollinate experience (ie. new allotments at Graylingwell)
- Group from COGS to be present at the allotment sites to assist
- Seedlings/seed swapping events, gifts
- COGS website
- New holders to be educated on behaviour, discipline etc.
- Street groups
- Lending/sharing
- Southern Counties Radio – a programme on gardening already exists
- Spirit FM
- Local Press
- Information Stall at Farmer's Market
- Produce information leaflets for suitable stalls at FMs

Subjects suggested but not covered:

- Seed and Plant Bank – how could it be run?
- Young People – how can they be encouraged to get involved?
- Tools Bank: can a tools maintenance/ exchange centre be organised?

The Incomplete Organic Gardener

Part Two - May to September

From May through to July there is so much to sow, either directly in the ground or in pots and trays. At the bottom there is a list of all the crops that can be started off during this period. It's almost daunting! There are some notes next to some of the recommended crops which reflect my own experience and prejudices.

Choose to grow what you enjoy eating. It's really not a good idea to grow crops just because they are traditional or easy if you and your family don't enjoy eating them! Next time you visit an allotment just look at some of the food crops that seem to go straight from the ground to a compost heap with no eating in between the two actions! Many crops can be sown directly into the ground, but I also find root trainers very useful to give plants a really good start. Of course, any containers will do, from the ubiquitous plastic pots through to old yoghurt tubs. Usually the seed packet instructions are good enough – but make sure you keep the packets if you intend to save seeds for next season. That probably doesn't apply to parsnips – they are difficult to germinate under any circumstances, and I find fresh seed every year is a necessity.



Put in lots of companion plants and bee, butterfly and hover fly attracting flowers. Many listed in the Organic Gardening Catalogue. They work and look marvellous mixed in with the vegetables.

The most important implement for an organic gardener in this season is probably the hoe. It does two things. The obvious one is that the hoe cuts off weeds at an early stage. Make sure the hoe is sharp, otherwise the weed is just pulled out of the soil and it stands a good chance of re-rooting! The less obvious use of the hoe is that regular use makes it easier for water to penetrate the soil, and slows down the evaporation of water that is already there.

Water use is always a contentious issue. However, if you are lucky enough to have your water supplied by the Portsmouth Water Company it is very unlikely that you will suffer any shortage this year. That doesn't mean that it isn't a good idea to use water sensibly. Always try to store rainwater, which is better for plants than mains

water anyway, and make sure that you direct water at the roots of plants rather than showering it all over the place. But if you are using water to keep your vegetables going, don't feel guilty – it's a better use of water than washing windows or the car! Watering is certainly necessary once the soil has dried out to about 3 to 4 inches below the surface.

For broad beans, and any affected crop, wash black fly and aphids off with a water jet. Companion planting can be useful, so consider nasturtiums as a sacrificial crop as they attract black fly to the benefit of your food crops.

It's a good idea to put up impermeable barriers, about 12" high, around your carrots to ward off carrot fly. It isn't perfect but it works fairly well. Interplanting with onions also tends to confuse the carrot fly (and the onion fly for that matter). Actually onions are quite a versatile companion plant, and this year I'm putting some bulbs in with my strawberries to see if my experience matches what I've read. For brassicas of all sorts, netting is essential. A fine netting is useful to keep off the cabbage white, but if that prospect is a bit daunting (and expensive) just make a habit of checking the undersides of the leaves, and rub off the yellow and white eggs that you might find there. However, netting to keep off pigeons is essential. What works for me is not a top cover, but side netting of 2 foot high chicken wire. For some reasons pigeons find this much more of a problem than top netting, and consequently leave my cabbages alone. It also means that insect eating birds aren't excluded.

In the greenhouse, plant out aubergine, peppers, cucumber and tomatoes. Interspersing the plants with companions such as tagetes will keep the whitefly down. I've been lucky so far, and my companion plants have kept my greenhouse free of whitefly for three years.

From June onwards it is increasingly necessary to protect fruit and strawberries from the birds and to water as the fruit swells. In the greenhouse pinch out tomato side shoots and feed regularly. Never allow the soil to dry out.



If you have some fruit trees, after the “June drop” thin out plums and apples. I’ve recently bought some minarettes, and they seem to crop very well whilst taking up little space.

From August plant out Savoy cabbages and kale and pinch out runner beans to encourage pod production (as if that was necessary!), From September planting can start of winter lettuce, spring onions, spring cabbage and garlic

Green manure crops can begin after harvesting the potatoes. Mustard is good, but surprisingly so are French beans – can you have too many French beans? By September Hungarian grazing rye is a very useful crop for overwintering. It prevents the leaching of nutrients over the winter, and can be dug or forked in during the following year.

A selection of crops for sowing or planting out through to September:

French beans - try the climbing varieties (easier to pick)	Turnips and swedes. Swedes taste better, but for some reason I find them more difficult to grow
Runner beans (maybe not too many as they are so prolific) Try intermingling with sweet peas and sunflowers – encourages wildlife and looks good	Carrots
Beetroot – try interspersing with onion	Salad crops and radishes
Broccoli and calabrese	From pots - Sweetcorn (by all means start off in containers, but try to avoid root disturbance – they don’t like it!
Cabbage and cauliflowers	From pots - Courgettes (and you get marrows if you want!)
Kale – a staple that the pigeons (sometimes) leave alone	From pots – Pumpkins and squashes. For really good results, plant a few on the compost heap

Kohl rabi – not that I’ve ever grown it	From pots - Brussels sprouts. Well, I’ve tried everything else, so what have I got to lose!
Peas (anyone got a cure for pea maggot – apart from only planting early peas?)	From pots - Summer cabbage
Celery - Keep them close together and keep well watered	From pots- Leeks. Modern thinking is not to trim the roots or the leaves. Don’t forget to water in rather than firm the soil around the leek

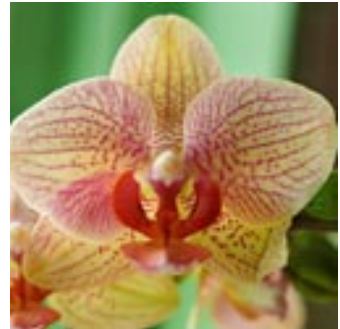
A tip for Stronger Tomatoes:

In a 1991 short book on Organic Gardening by Bob Sherman of HDRA, there is a recommendation for producing sturdy tomato plants. When transplanting seedlings, plant into the soil up to the first set of leaves, then the young plants make extra roots. Does anyone else know this method? It sounds worth trying, as young tomatoes can be spindly and awkward.

FLOWER ESSENCES

(In this article Sally Petch tells us about how the energy within a plant can be extracted to help with a variety of ailments).

I am passionate about flowers and am never happier than when I am sitting in a cottage garden, in the summer, marvelling at the diversity of plants, their scent and their contribution to the well being of the human race.



One of the ways we can benefit from the healing properties of flowers is by taking flower essences. Essences are a type of vibrational medicine, in the form of diluted healing tinctures, containing the energy imprint of the plant. They work at a deep soul level and transmute our negative emotional states into positive ones, enabling us to heal and to move on. If you are aware of a negative

emotion you are holding right now, be it fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, a feeling of being stuck, then be assured that there is an essence which will help you overcome this. Essences can be taken safely by just about everyone, and will not interfere with conventional medication. Just be aware if there are issues with alcohol that they are brandy based, although some essence makers make a range using a vinegar base.

Equally if an animal seems locked into a negative pattern then a flower essence may be just the answer. I have treated many animals with an appropriate essence and the response is extraordinary. Plants can benefit too. Treating a distressed plant with Bach Rescue Remedy, for example can make a real difference in its recovery.

There are now essence makers worldwide, attuning to the healing properties of the flora in their locations, just as Dr Bach did, here, in England, over 70 years ago.

I thought we would look at feelings of Cheerlessness for the first essence profile and I have chosen the Light Heart essence, Celandine made by Rose Titchiner. This seemed doubly appropriate as the faces of Lesser Celandine are brightening our woodlands as I write.

I love this essence because it is used for when one is having an “Eeyore” day!

Think of that wonderful character, from Winnie the Pooh, with his gloominess, negativity and pessimism. I know I get those days, even down to the body posture! Celandine is the essence I reach for to



bring back a sense of joy, and of optimism. The problem which was vexing me may still be there, but it is much easier to deal with without the gloom! For a full profile of this essence visit www.lightheartessences.co.uk. Alternatively one could try Chiming bells (*Mertensia Paniculata*) from the Alaskan range. This is also for those times when one is feeling sad, or despondent, worn out and joy less. Or Mustard from the Bach Flowers, which is for deep descending gloom for no known cause.

COGS DIARY DATES

Monday 27 April Nick Robinson - Diversity in the Organic Garden

Nick Robinson worked at Yalding Gardens in Kent for 10 years, starting as a student and ending up as head gardener. He now works in conservation in the High Weald.

Nick will talk about natural pest and disease control, propagation and seed saving plus pass on some valuable tips.

Monday May 18 Spring Fling, Plant swop, and Quiz

We hope for a good number for this popular evening: an opportunity to acquire, or pass on, some plants, or seeds (also labelled), and exchange news.

As usual, please bring your own plates, glasses, cutlery; and a dish or two to share. Local food where possible. There will be a plant-based **Quiz**, with a prize for the winning team.

Both the above meetings take place at

Bassil Shippam Centre, Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester PO19 4LG

Meetings start at 7.30pm, doors open at 7.15pm

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by Wednesday 13th May please.

(Collect Tuesday 19th May)

Any member is welcome to order and there is no minimum order. If anyone new is interested please contact:

pat_adams@btopenworld.com or 01243 602713

Summer Visits

Monday June 15 (arrive 6.45 for 7.00)

Visit to Fittleworth a mature 3 acre garden near Petworth. Magnificent cedar, rose garden, lawns and mixed border, fountain. There are several new features: a wildlife pond, rose bed, rose garden and a new orchard. We will be shown round the gardens and there will be a demonstration of what to do in the vegetable garden. £3 entrance.

Meet in car park at 6.45 (please can we take as few cars as possible.)

Thursday July 9th (Arrive 6.30 for 6.45 start.)
Visit to Tim and Maddy Harland's Permaculture Garden. East Meon

Set in a plot of half an acre, the permaculture garden was planted in the early 1990s. It includes over 60 fruit and nut trees, a raised bed area with annual veg, a developing forest garden area with ground cover, fruit and nut bushes and a mixture of top fruit, a native layered hedgerow, wildlife ponds and wildflower meadows. The house itself is an eco-renovated 19 century flint house with passive solar design, thermal mass and evacuated solar heating tubes for water. Tim will give us a garden tour with explanations of why the elements are designed in various ways, what worked and what didn't plus an opportunity for questions.

Cost £5 to include cup of tea.

Please ring Vee Cowan 01243 780518 to book a place + directions

Monday August 10 (Meet at 6.30 for 6.45 start)
Visit to St James Allotment, St James Road, Chichester

An opportunity to look at allotments and talk to some of the owners and see a variety of methods of growing vegetables and flowers. If time we may go to another allotment site.

Meet at St James allotments main gate (opposite small Tesco) at 6.30.

Please ring Vee to book a place 01243 780518

Other Events of note

Friday May 8 7:30pm Transition Chichester Workshop:
Education for the future

Visioning the future of education in one-planet living

Education for the future, what the challenges are and how Transition Towns can underpin a shift to education for sustainable living

A lecture by Isabel Carlisle and discussion

Friends meeting house. Priory Road, Chichester

Hampshire Green Fair 2009
At The Sustainability Centre 10 May 10.00 - 4.00

Stalls, demonstrations, green woodwork, kids craft, live music, local beer, organic food.

For more details please call 01730 823166 or visit www.sustainability-centre.org and click on Hampshire Green Fair which has all the details for the day – it sounds fun.

Chichester Organic Gardening Society was formed in 1992 as a local group of both the Henry Doubleday Research Association and the Soil Association.

Aims of the Society

To encourage the growing of healthy produce and beautiful gardens by sustainable and environmentally kind gardening methods.

To provide a focus for local gardeners and growers to meet those sharing their interest in gardening *with* nature, both for social activities and to discuss gardening and related issues.

COGS activities in support of our Aims

- A programme of regular meetings (indoors September to April, outdoors May to August) with speakers on gardening and related topics.
- Occasional visits to places of gardening interest.
- Promotion of organic methods at COGS special events and appropriate local shows such as those at West Dean (Totally Tomato Show) and Stansted Show.
- Shared purchase and bulk purchase scheme for whole food cooking supplies to obtain discounts.
- Books available for purchase or on loan from our small library.

Membership costs £5.00 per household. The membership year runs from October to September. To join contact Nina Guilfoyle on 01243 776063.

Your COGS organisers are:

Officers:

Secretary – Penelope Johnstone (01243 771881)

Treasurer – Liz Campling (01243 532910) lizcamplinguk@hotmail.com

Membership Secretary - Nina Guilfoyle (01243 776063) nina@nrglearning.co.uk

Organisers:

Publicity - Gina Carrington (01243 641390) ginacarrington@homecall.co.uk

Speaker Secretary – Vi Cowan (01243 780518) varianec@yahoo.com

Bookshop/Librarian - Barbara MacGregor (01243 781849)

Infinity Orders – Pat (01243 602713) pat_adams@btopenworld.com

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