

Chichester Organic Gardening Society

Newsletter 52
January 2010



NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

January 2010

Phew! What a lot of rain we've had after the most beautiful October. The delightful and unexpected warmth of that month allowed many crops that extra time to ripen, which was a wonderful bonus.

However, writing this at the beginning of December, after torrential rain and high winds, one can only wonder what else is in store. Let's hope that by the time you receive this newsletter we haven't had even more rain followed by a big freeze – definitely not good for plants.

In these sorts of conditions can we spare a thought for the Gardener's friends – the birds? (no, not the pigeons!) After such a wet, warm autumn we will definitely need their help to control the pests this Spring: so please if you do begin to feed them, it is really important to continue as they come to rely on a food source and can suffer badly if it suddenly stops. Also if you supply fat balls as a food source please remove that horrible green netting that covers them or the bird's little, fragile legs can become caught.

At the AGM the committee said goodbye to Liz Campling who has been our very reliable and hard working Treasurer for more than 4 years. We'd like to say a big 'thank you Liz' for all you have done for COGS and look forward to seeing you at the meetings as a relaxed member! As we say goodbye to Liz we say hello to Rachel Ritchie who has gallantly stepped in as Treasurer. Welcome Rachel and thank you for volunteering.

One final thing: we are hoping to compile a list of local groups which would be compatible with COGS, if you know of any that you think have similar values and aims to us, please send details to or talk to one of the committee at the next meeting. Thank you.

A Very Happy and Productive Gardening New Year to all.

The Committee

COGS NOTICES

Lady Diana Mary Thomas

It is with great sadness that the committee has learnt of the death of Diana Thomas. Our thoughts go out to Jeremy, her husband, and her family and friends.

Peter Guilfoyle

We are very sorry to report the sad loss of another COGS member. Peter Guilfoyle died suddenly a short while before Christmas. We all send our deepest sympathy to Nina and her family.

COGS MEMBERSHIP

COGS continues to sustain its membership at around 100.

Throughout the year we lose a few members and we gain a few. It would be lovely if we could increase our number to a stable 110/120 members during the coming year, so let's have an active campaign to spread the word.

Thank you to those 17 members who have elected to receive the Newsletter electronically, it certainly saves on paper and costs. If you haven't signed up to this yet then you can at any time there isn't a time limit on it. Just email me at nina@nrlearning.co.uk and I'll add you to the list.

6 members have chosen to set up standing orders and if you haven't yet renewed then perhaps you would consider doing so via a standing order? The amount is completely under your control and is really just one less thing to have to deal with! You can do this on line or at your bank. The details you will need are:

Lloyds TSB

No: 1914064

Sort code: 30 91 97

In the name of Chichester Organic Gardening Society.

£5 subscription

Even if you have renewed you could set one up ready for October 2010!

For those of you who have antipathy to all things electronic, please ignore!

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 Pat Alderton if you can help.

RHS Concession Card



We now have just one RHS concession card, 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. It also entitles us to one free group visit of up to 55 people per year to an RHS

Garden. Liz Campling holds this card, so if you would like to borrow it, please contact her.

We have to pay a small fee for this card and it is only valid for a year, so if there is little interest from members, we will not renew next year.

STANSTED SHOW - Friday - Sunday 11 – 13 JUNE 2010

After several years of successful plant sales at Stansted I hope the new decade will be the start of more triumphs. I hope you will be able to grow some more marvellous plants for us to sell - we had a wonderful collection in 2009. We need tomatoes, lettuce, pepper, lettuces, aubergine, cucumbers, courgettes or any other vegetable plants – all were popular last year and herbs and flowers with their coloured petals sold well too.

Unusual plants were also an attraction. I hope you'll be inspired to provide the COGS stand with some more of your wonderful produce.

Also if you are available to help on the stand please let me have your name and what time you are available.

Many thanks

Vee

Tel 01243 780518 or email varianneec@yahoo.com

A COGS MINI-FLOWER & VEGETABLE SHOW?

Last July, six members of COGS nobly took on the task of being judges at a local Flower and Produce show, at the request of the Allotment Association in Waterlooville. They found it an enjoyable and interesting experience.



Some of us wondered whether COGS might some time hold a mini-show of our own? It could be non-competitive, an opportunity to bring some of our best (or strangest, or most interesting) veges or flowers or plants, to compare and discuss methods and varieties. We could invite an outside 'expert' to evaluate, offer suggestions, perhaps say why they consider one example in a particular class better than the rest.

A mini-show could be in place of one of our summer visits.

This is just a suggestion at present, and would need organising and some definite plans and guidelines.

At this stage we would like to know what YOU think – would you like it? – attend? – bring your own 'exhibits'? Any ideas welcome and if so please contact any of

The Committee

Another comment on Artificials – from an early pioneer

In 2006 the Soil Association reprinted a book first published in 1945 by Sir Albert Howard, who had spent many years in India, and had learnt at first hand that natural methods of agriculture brought good results. In the Preface he speaks of a failure to understand that 'the problems of the farm and garden are biological rather than chemical.' From this he concluded that there were no sound foundations for the 'artificial manure and poison spray industries', and warned that the 'war in the soil' was spreading to many countries. An early warning, still valid perhaps?

300+ chemicals are approved in the UK to kill weeds, insects and other pests on farms

Chichester Conservation Volunteers



Chichester Conservation Volunteers meet most Sundays to carry out practical countryside tasks improving wildlife habitats at a variety of sites around Chichester from the downs to the harbour. Winter woodland work is currently underway, coppicing and hedge laying - an excellent

opportunity to collect your own garden stakes, bean poles and pea sticks for next summer. We get to visit some little known areas of Sussex and learn about the flora and fauna and ecology of heathlands, chalk downland, woodlands and wetlands. There are jobs for all abilities, it's no harder than active gardening and you can work for as long or short a time as you like. Supervised children are welcome and young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards, there is plenty of time for tea and chat, all tools and instruction are provided and lifts can be arranged. We don't have a subscription but members receive a quarterly programme of tasks and social events, so if you're not busy on your allotment at the moment please come and join us – I've been doing it for 26 years and it's very sociable! For a free programme or further details contact Claire Wilton 01243 788833 wiltonclaire@yahoo.co.uk.

Tim and Maddy Harland's permaculture garden

Look out for a BBC programme about Tim and Maddy Harland's permaculture garden sometime in New Year. It is being featured in a new BBC2 Gardeners' World spin off series with Alys Fowler going out between Jan and March.



25% less energy is used growing organic crops compared to non-organic

The Incomplete Organic Gardener

Part Four – February to April

Writing this piece on a cold, dark December day requires a leap of faith to accept that it really will be warm and light in the near future. But working out a seed list is a way of making that faith tangible – so of course is all the tidying up that needs to be done, even if that means actually going outside. Shed tidying is worth doing – avoid wasting



time later by searching through a messy shed looking for the roll of twine you remember putting on the bench just the other day. If you've got a greenhouse, wash down the glass (on both sides!) and search out those snails that are lurking in the most unlikely places. If you don't they'll eat your seedlings (unless the mice have already eaten the seeds). Repairs are a good idea, as is washing out all those pots and trays. You'll be really grateful to yourself come March and April.

This year my seed order depends on a combination of my rotation plan (perfect work for a long winter evening) and my memory of last year's successes and failures. Last January I wrote that I've never had much success with sowing parsnips early, but I would try again. The result confirmed my past experience. Three sowings, and only the last one worked! The one certainty is that this year the parsnips will go in late! For this year's potatoes I've decided on Maris Bard, Sunrise and Picasso – first early, second and early main respectively – and they will be going in where last season saw beans, peas, sweet corn and beetroot. Hopefully they will be harvested before there is any sign of blight. Experience also has shown me that peas and carrots can benefit from an early sowing (initially under glass for the peas) as they can then be harvested before the pea moth and carrot fly respectively are active. Late sowings of carrots also worked, but late peas not so well. For brassicas (replacing carrots, parsnips and beetroots in the rotation) I've chosen brussels *Millenium*, for cabbage *Red Jewell* and *Tundra* then *Red Arrow* broccoli and *Boris* cauliflower. And I've decided that all of these will be plug plants rather than seeds! I know it will cost a little more, and the eventual plants won't be all my own work.

However, I'll get only as many as I want and there will be a saving in time. Whether it was worth it I'll tell you next year! As far as the rest of the seed order is concerned, carrots, parsnips and beetroot will be following on last year's beans peas and leeks beds, and peas and beans (including the Italian borlotto *firetongue* and butter(or spagna), beans will follow turnips and swedes. The borlotto beans were a first for me this year, and I thought that they were a bit of a risk considering that the St Paul's allotment is hardly known for its Tuscan weather.

However, they cropped well, and I was impressed by the fact that they can be picked either as a sort of Italian french bean, or left to mature into a very attractive red and cream bean which also dries very well. The onions I've already bought, and I actually planted the garlic in early November. I must remember to use lime before planting the brassicas, followed by a general purpose fertiliser two weeks before planting them out. The potatoes and roots will just need a general fertiliser too before planting. Manure I reserve for the peas, beans, squash and courgettes. That just leaves me with the problem of finding room for the sweet corn, leeks and lettuce crops! Hopefully the sweet corn will be more successful this year.

My second attempt at companion planting of sweet corn, squash and climbing beans was another failure – none of them did well – so the sweet corn will now have no competition in their bed. My leeks were hit by the newly arrived (for me anyway) leek moth, so I'll probably cover them with fleece this year. Most annoying, as leeks have always been the allotment toughies who shrugged off any insect attacks. Still, most of them grew through the attack and now seem fine. At least this year I can harvest brussels, cabbages, leeks, carrots and parsnips for Christmas dinner – one up on the previous year.

If you've got young apple and pear trees, now is a good time for a winter pruning, and putting on grease bands to discourage winter moths. Raspberry canes need to be thinned, or, if Autumn croppers, taken right down. If your rhubarb is getting on a bit maybe some new planting is called for. If not a good top dressing of manure will do no harm. Good gardening and a productive new year.

Rob Campling 17th December 2009

ORGANIC FOOD EXAMINED

Research published a few months ago claimed organic food was no healthier and no better than ‘conventionally’ produced. But what did this prove and how?



In the latest issue of *Living Earth*, the Soil Association magazine, Guy Watson, founder of Riverford, gives his opinion:

‘Contrary to most of the press coverage, the Food Standards Agency report published in the summer did not prove that organic food was no better for you than non-organic. It merely showed that there was no conclusive evidence either way, on the grounds of a limited review of existing research into a limited range of nutrients taken in isolation. Even the very limited area of its study is at odds with the preliminary findings of a much larger pan-European study involving 30 universities and research institutes. So I find myself questioning why £120,000 of our money has been spent regurgitating old research by a government quango that is supposed to ensure food safety, to undermine a form of farming that is patently safer for farmers, the environment and consumers. What is it about organic that the food industry finds so threatening?’

We and our customers are a pretty harmless bunch. The worst that could happen is that history proves us misguided. Since I left agricultural college 25 years ago, history seems to repeatedly show that it is the excessively hasty and blinkered commercial application of narrow science to food and farming that is proving misguided. It is incredibly difficult to design a human study to remove all other variables and conclude conclusively that any complex food (all natural foods are complex) is good or bad for us; science is just not up to the job. It took 30 years to prove smoking kills and that is a relatively simple case. Unsurprisingly then, many of us will continue to follow common sense and intuitive judgement that a diet grown with a little respect for nature is liable to be better for us and for the planet.’

With acknowledgements to Living Earth, issue 238, Winter 2009.

31 million kilograms of pesticide were applied to UK crops in 2005

FOOD AND FARMING AWARDS 2009

BBC
RADIO



Radio 4 recently celebrated the 10th year of the BBC Food and Farming Awards in a programme hosted by Sheila Dillon and attended by the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall; the chair of judges was Raymond Blanc.

The **Best Food Market** was awarded to the Good Shed, Canterbury, and **Best Local Food Retailer** to A Ryan & Son (Paddy and Sue Ryan) of Much Wenlock. This butcher's shop makes its own pies, and beat two runners-up: a fish supplier from Dungeness and a vegetable & grocery supplier from Durham.

Farmer of the Year was Andrew Dennis, of Woodlands Farm, Boston, Lincolnshire. He has an organic mixed farm, which encourages school visits, and had earlier been interviewed on the weekend Farming programme.

The **Best Retail Initiative** was awarded to Gro-Fair in Cornwall, collaborating with small farmers and thus encouraging diversity. Runners-up were the Co-Op, the largest agricultural producers in the country, and the Rare Tea Company.

The **Derek Cooper Award**, named after the original presenter of the Food Programme, went to Julian Temperley (a runner-up for Best Food Producer) for his cider brandy distillery and the work he has done to preserve the landscape of the West Country.

BBC Food Personality was awarded to Nigel Slater, food writer. The same week there was a review of his new book *Tender: Volume I* (Fourth Estate, £30). He is described as 'our finest food writer', and the book 'billed as the definitive guide to cooking with vegetables, though there is plenty of meat here, too .. a book so beautiful ... and readable.'

It is encouraging to hear of the respect given to those who work to produce good food, and in particular the organic farmer. Local, sustainable, was definitely one of the main criteria for the judges.

Events

National Potato Day

Sunday 31st January 2010

Garden Organic, Ryton

10am to 5pm

Join the fun on National Potato Day and choose from dozens of varieties of seed potatoes.

To be opened by Raymond Blanc

Garden Organic strives to get more people growing and eating organically and there's no better time than during our National

Potato Day to get people excited about the food growing process. The day kicks off the start of the growing year, highlighting the variety of great veg that is available to grow while inspiring more people to give home growing a try; we all love to eat potatoes, so why not make them home-grown and organic too?

This year we are promising a weekend packed full of growing tips, information, entertainment, cooking ideas, stalls, food, and of course a selection of around 100 different potato varieties to buy by the tuber.

As well as promoting home growing and making available a vast range of seed potatoes Garden Organic's Heritage Seed Library will also hold a seed swap during the day and people are invited to bring along their seeds, bought or saved, to swap for other varieties.



Seedy Sunday



7 February 2010

Hove Centre, Norton Road, Hove

10am-4pm

£1.50 on the door.

www.seedysunday.org

Seedy Sunday is the UK's biggest community seed swap. It takes place every February in Brighton and Hove, in southern England. In return for a donation or in exchange for seed

they have saved, growers can choose seeds from dozens of traditional varieties of garden vegetables, to take home and grow.

These open-pollinated, 'heritage' varieties are often no longer commercially available, but are naturally well adapted to local growing conditions - as well as being tasty and colourful. At the seed swap, experienced local growers are on hand to advise on the practicalities of seed saving and growing from seed, and there are films, displays and talks to inspire you to go home and get growing.

Selsey Open Gardens 2010

Selsey's best-kept secret is about to be unearthed – seventeen stunning gardens will be opening for the first time on Sunday 30th May 2010!

From cottage and organic gardens creating havens for wildlife to those enjoying stunning sea views – there's something of interest for everyone. Teas and plants will be on sale.

Fundraising for Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group and St Wilfrid's Hospice. Tickets and programmes, £5.00 per adult, under 12s free (must be accompanied by an adult) will be on sale from 2nd April 2010 at Clarksons; The Fudge Shop; Selsey Cards & Gifts; The Selsey Florist; The Fruit Basket, East Beach; Manor Nurseries, Pagham Rd, Runcton; Russells Garden Centre, Main Road, Birdham, Wyevale Garden Centre, Bognor Road, Merston.

For more information contact the Fundraising Team on 01243 606899, 01243 602982 or 07763 209039

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by Wednesday 10 February please.

(Collect Tuesday 16 February)

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

COGS DIARY DATES

Monday January 25 A Farm for the Future DVD (Shown on BBC2 Feb 2009)

A chance to see the film that shows how modern farming methods have to change. Presenter and co-producer Rebecca Hosking explores the importance of oil in farming and the potential impact of peak oil. The film has a passionate narrative centered on Rebecca's small family farm in South West England and how it can manage the transition away from a fossil fuel economy. Present methods cannot go on feeding the UK and this film concentrates on the necessity to find a new way to feed the nation.

(We will have a short discussion after the DVD)

Monday February 22 Dynamic, Rigid and Dying – the coastal areas of West Sussex

Andrew Lawrence

Andrew Lawrence is the National Trust coastal warden for West Sussex and he will tell us about the different environments of East Head, Bosham and Climping. He will talk about what plants grow on shingle, sand dunes and salt marsh and muddy conditions. He will give us an up date on the changing climate in our area.

Monday March 29 Using the non-dig method on a smallholding Maggie Haynes

Maggie Haynes from Tuppenny Farm will come and talk to us about the latest developments on her smallholding. She reverted to using a non dig method of cultivating her fruit and vegetables many months ago and will talk about its efficacy. Several COGS members had a fascinating visit to Maggie's Farm in 2008 and it will be interesting to hear what has been happening since then.

Monday April 26 Vegetable growing – tips from a head gardener Mark Saunders

Mark has been head gardener at Fittleworth House for many years. He will give us helpful tips on how to grow vegetables including growing them in pots and containers, and the new varieties of vegetables available now. He will talk about flowers too, and will answer questions. Mark has a website - www.gardenlifephotos.com where you can read his blog and follow what is happening in his garden. He is a keen photographer and will be showing photos during the evening.

All 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

Free to COGS members. £2 for non-members.

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 – Rachel Ritchie. rcritchie@hotmail.com

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

Organisers:

Publicity - Gina Carrington (01243 778689) ginacarrington@btinternet.com

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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