

Chichester Organic Gardening Society



Newsletter 54
September 2010



NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

September 2010

The recent summer has been an unusual one (although for this marvellous country of ours, who knows what is usual!) We had great heat and no rain for most of June and all of July, following a wet spring. The lack of rain however was more than compensated for in late August and water butts are now overflowing. We hope you have all had good harvests and hopefully no blight. The unfavourable Spring meant that the plants for our Stansted stall were down in number, but many thanks to all who donated plants for us to sell there and who helped set up and man the stall. The late rainfall, though has given boost to the harvest and we on the committee are already looking forward to the Harvest Supper in October – is there anything better than sharing tasty homemade dishes made with homegrown food?

So now the Harvest is in full swing and the question is: what to do with all those surpluses? Well we've given you two recipes later on, which we hope might help with that little problem. The rhubarb and ginger jam recipe that was included in our April newsletter has been tried and tested by at least one member of the committee and she has pronounced it to be excellent. So let's keep the recipes coming. If you do have surplus produce please do feel free to bring it along to the meetings where it can be exchanged for other produce or for a donation.

By the time you read this, the Totally Tomato Show 2010 will be a memory . It really is a lovely event in which to take part: the venue of West Dean Gardens is beautiful and the atmosphere one of relaxed bustle, a chance to interact with the public of all ages, passing on tips and information about organic gardening. Keen tomato enthusiasts came from all over – we spoke to people from Dorset, the New Forest and even Northampton (sadly no new members to be had from these folks!) You can read more about this later. Again, a big thank you to all those who helped.

Last year, COGS made two small donations to charities which were felt to reflect our values: we want to do the same this year

again and so would like you to start thinking about which charities you would like to suggest.

So as another growing season draws to a close, we hope to see many of you at the meetings and hear of your successes.
The Committee

COGS NOTICES

COGS MEMBERSHIP

Speakers and Meetings

We are always looking for suggestions for speakers. If you have any idea for speakers or visits, please let Vee 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. Nina Guilfoyle 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.



Why COGS members should be encouraged to use the RHS membership card

I just wanted to encourage COGS members to use the RHS card. I have used it twice this year, once at Wisley, which I always love going to, the lilies on the pond are magnificent and the wild garden was a wonderful blaze of colour. I am able to hire a mobility scooter to get me round this wonderful garden so I am free to roam to my hearts content. I always love going into

the hot house to see the magnificent waterfall and all the flowers growing in there, then I come out and sit by the lake hoping to see a dragon fly.

In September I was in Devon on holiday and was able to visit Rosemoor gardens, another wonderful RHS garden, one area was filled with reds, yellows and orange flowers which all went so well together, I just stood and stared at the wonderful mix of colours, the hedges were immaculately cut, they have a wonderful fruit and vegetable garden, which we spent a long time looking at how they grow their gourds, squashes and pumpkins, they all hang from fences and rose arches, it made us very envious of all their produce, but we at least got to taste some of it at lunch time.

I am very grateful to COGS for being able to use this pass, please use it more as I would hate it to be discontinued, go and admire these wonderful gardens.

Ann Heron

STANSTED SHOW

Many thanks to all the helpers and plant growers for making a successful COGS stand this year. We made a profit of £70 (£214 less stand rental of £134) which was very good considering the weather on some of the days.

There was a wonderful selection of plants, many vegetables, herbs and flowers which all sold well. We had a lot of interest from visitors about

organic gardening and several queries about plants and vegetables we had not provided this. I will be letting you know about some new ideas for next year and very much hope you will be help again.

A specially big thanks to Penelope Johnstone for all her help in organising the plants and to Tom, Lucy, Nina and others for their help in creating a wonderful stand this year.

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TOTALLY TOMATO 2010



Following the period of frenzied activity putting together the roster for the two-day event and cadging and collecting tomatoes from members for display, the actual event seems (almost) relaxing and always pleasant and convivial.

We set up the stall on Friday afternoon – this year a team of three members. The atmosphere is optimistic (even the year it poured with rain) with regular stallholders greeting each other and exchanging news, and Jim and Sarah rushing about making sure everything is in place, but never too busy for a quick word and a joke.

The actual event seems to go by in a flash. A team of three is essential if, as this year, we are running tasting sessions. It also allows a chance to check out the walled garden with its stunning greenhouses. On the whole it has been an excellent tomato year and we had a wonderful display, augmented by some West Dean tomatoes, kindly donated. We hear yarns of triumphs and disasters from long-time growers, and questions from first-timers; how to save seed crops up frequently. The children are always interesting, very astute with their tasting. This year we did have to ban the junior mafia though – five smalls, in the doubtful charge of a harassed Dad, who kept reappearing, and would have cleaned us out if allowed to continue!

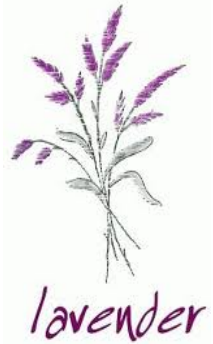
Then, suddenly, it is all over; the last O'Hagan's Sausage has been barbecued, the last Costa Coffee drunk, and it's time to pack up; goodbye – see you next year!

Gina Carrington

Editorial note: Gina is taking a break from organizing this event and a new organizer will be needed for 2011. Gina recommends a team of 2 or 3 to reduce the pressure of the pre-show activity. Could it be You? Let us know if you are interested.

Suggestions on cuttings

Don't forget to take cuttings of your favourite plants. If we get another winter like the last one, you may find that cuttings are the best way to keep a plant. Some easy plants for propagation are penstemon, fuchsia, lavender, pelargonium, salvia, verbena, and of course many herbs. Non-flowering shoots are best, but if you can't find one just remove the flower or bud. Take a cutting about four inches long, remove the lower leaves, leaving just the top two along with the shoot. Make a clean cut just below the leaf joint, and push the cuttings into a multi-purpose compost. Most cuttings benefit from being covered with a polythene bag to retain humidity. However, pelargoniums prefer not to be covered, or they will rot. Stand pots in a cold greenhouse or an east-west facing window. Cuttings should root in six to eight weeks. Remove the polythene bag and pot on in the spring.



Visit to Monica Lucas's garden

Following Monica's talk to COGS last September we had a visit to her wonderful garden in Sidlesham in July. It was a pleasant early summer evening when a good number of us met outside her house, chatting while we waited for it to be time to go in and watching a line of Guinea Fowl scuttling across the front of the gardens and through the hedge into their field. Monica came out to meet us and led us into the drive. There she told us that she and her partner, had moved to Sidlesham 7 years ago and had created the garden pretty much from scratch.

With a breath-taking casualness she described how she and a few friends had taken out several huge Leylandii in under a week! We moved on and goggled in awe at the enormous pond /lake that had just been dug again with the help of a gang of friends. Monica led us round the beautiful garden, describing how she and Ann had planted and developed the beds; what had worked, what hadn't. The west-facing garden was screened from the wind with a variety of interesting

trees and hedging. A spectacular Liquidamber was planted in such a position that it will glow in the Autumn light.

The whole garden is sectioned into different areas – there was the front garden which contained the pond, the main garden which was planted up with michaelmas daisies (which of course were not in flower) eryngium, phlox, iris, verbena, Echinacea, foxgloves and bamboo to name but a few. The orchard is a good size with apple, plum, pear trees. She also has a vegetable plot, chickens, bee hives and 2 pigs! When the health of the bees was questioned, Monica told us that she had had a very good year with an increase in hive numbers from 3 to 6. Very good news amidst all the worry about the decline in the number of bees. We ended the evening by buying up her stock of honey, eggs and jams!

Visit to Chidmere gardens



A group of 12 COGS members made their way on 25 August down to the bottom of the Chidmere peninsula, and in pouring rain gathered under the large gatehouse to these gardens. The estate belongs to a private family and is seldom open to the public, and we were not able to see anything of the

house, which has been extended in recent years. The rain eased off as Rob and Janet, the two gardeners, showed us round the extensive grounds which include a 5-acre pond, largely covered with waterlilies and surrounded by plants and shrubs. The lawns had been mown just before our visit and showed off the slightly overgrown, but very lovely, mixed borders near the house, with masses of Rosemary, Japanese anemones, and various Salvias. We wandered through about an acre of mixed deciduous woodland next to a large paddock, and at the end nearer the house is a small rose garden. The highlight for us was probably the central lawn within enclosing walls, with a great profusion of tall flowers including Verbena

bonariensis and pink Cosmos, the Tansy giving a startling point of bright yellow, and large low Clerodendron shrubs at the far end.

Across the road from the gatehouse is Chidmere Farm, where the orchard was just coming into fruit – Discovery and Bramley apples were on sale at a small stall.

The rain started up again as we left, but had not spoilt our enjoyment of this very lovely garden.

Marrow with hazelnut stuffing (from a Rose Elliott book)

1 medium marrow weighing about 1 kg/2¼lbs

2 large onions, peeled and chopped

50g/2oz butter

100g/4oz hazelnuts, roasted, skinned and grated

100g/4oz fresh wholewheat breadcrumbs

2-3 tablespoons chopped fresh sage

salt and round black pepper

a little extra butter for greasing

1 quantity of apple sauce



Pre heat oven to 200c/400f/Gas Mark 6

Cut the stalk off the marrow, then peel the marrow, keeping it whole.

Cut a slice off one end, and using a spoon scoop out the seeds, to leave a cavity for stuffing.

Fry the onions in the butter for 10 minutes, until soft, then add the hazelnuts, breadcrumbs sage and salt and pepper to taste, then replace the sliced off end.

Grease a large piece of greaseproof paper with butter and wrap the marrow completely in this.

Place in a baking tin

Bake for about one hour, until the marrow is tender when pressed with a skewer

Remove the greaseproof paper and serve cut into slices with apple sauce.

Vegetarian Gravy to accompany the marrow

1 onion peeled and chopped
2 tbs oil
2 tbs plain flour
1 garlic clove crushed
150mls/15 fl oz dark vegetable stock or water
1 tsp yeast extract
1-2 tbs of soy sauce
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Fry onions in the oil in a medium pan for 5 mins, then add the flour and cook for a further 5-10 mins, until the flour and the onions are nut-brown and the onions is soft and slightly pulpy.

Add the garlic, cook for 1-2 mins then gradually stir in the stock, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 mins. Strain the gravy into a clean saucepan and add the yeast, soy sauce and salt and pepper to taste, stir well to mix.

SERVE WITH ROAST POTATOES

Courgette Chutney

Ingredients

1 kg courgette peeled and roughly chopped
1 cooking apple, peeled and chopped
1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped
1 green pepper finely chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
250g dark brown sugar
250ml white wine vinegar
1 tbsp grated fresh ginger
1 tbsp English mustard powder
¼ - ½ tsp crushed red chilli flakes
salt

Method

Put all ingredients into saucepan and bring to the boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 45 mins until thick. Stir often. Cool and put into sterilized jars. Label and cover. Keep in fridge.

Good with everything!



Transition Chichester - Grow Your Own group

A year ago, two of us in Transition Chichester decided to initiate a Grow Your Own Group. As the vision of the Transition Movement is very centred on building community resilience: what could be more important than food ? When energy resources dwindle, will we still continue our present crazy importing of 95% of UK fruit and veg needs.?

No, we will be growing our own again, healthier, fitter and happier, exchanging gardening tips, seeds and produce with friends and neighbours. Rather than wait for a crisis to push us to action, our GYO group is doing it NOW. We meet at different members' homes. We have had two summer visits to our allotments and even staged a BBQ at one with the naming of a new scarecrow, Happy Harry, for the occasion.

All bring food, home cooked and using home produce if poss. The evening is social; it is informative; it is for beginners or for gardening wizards who know all the tricks! We mix laughter with wisdom: perhaps Grow Your Own is really sowing the seeds of community. That is the magic for people not only for our plots. Do look at the Transition website if you would enjoy taking part. GYO meets on the first Thursday of the month.

Next gathering is Oct 7th, venue to be advised.

www.transitionchichester.org



Beside the seaside

What an amazing summer it has been – not perhaps always easy for growing, but probably some people have been spending extra time by the sea.

We all use natural ingredients in our compost, which later goes onto our soil, but how many of us use a local free resource, seaweed? A recent Saturday paper calls it 'Neptune's gift', which was formerly widely used: spread on Thanet farmers' fields, and trucked to as far away as Wales. It contains iodine, but it is the potash and nitrates that are appreciated by farmers. Two centuries ago, seaweed was used by the Scots as a substitute for peat. Kelp ash was a valuable ingredient for soap and glass. More recently, research has gone into the use of

seaweed as a biomass; or for producing methane by anaerobic digestion.

Apparently nowadays allotment owners are the only people using this valuable product.

So why is it not used on a larger scale? The writer points out that for once it is not the EU to blame, but those other villains, the supermarkets. 'They dictate what farmers can and cannot use on their land – quite possibly they sell it to them too.' As seaweed is not an 'approved' substance, farmers lose their contracts if they use this rich source, so much cheaper, and less damaging, than artificial fertilisers.

Finally the writer mentions the use in spas of seaweed baths: which he would 'strongly recommend ... for our friends at Sainsbury and Tesco'.

The Soil Association mentions a 'sustainable feed solution' for plants needing a tonic: compost first, then 'an additional feed. A common option is seaweed (available either in granules or as a liquid – but avoid calcified seaweed as it is usually dredge-harvested, a practice which destroys fragile marine environments). This is great for giving young, struggling plants a rapid boost.'

Birds in danger!



The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has recently been made aware of a reduction in numbers of, in particular, greenfinches and chaffinches. The culprit is a parasite which can be passed from bird to bird, and causes lesions in the throat which impede swallowing, leading to debility and eventual starvation. If we see any birds obviously infected we are asked to inform BTO. Can we do anything? BTO tell us that the parasite can be contracted through infected bird tables or water bowls. They urge us therefore to be especially careful to keep these clean and change water regularly. We already know that infected peanuts can spread disease. We owe so much to our birds that it is only a small effort to take these precautions to help protect them.

Events

On Friday, 8th October, from 9.30am – 3.30pm, Lifestyle Focus is hosting a unique gardening event at the Leconfield Hall, Petworth celebrating some of the most fascinating aspects of this all encompassing hobby – whether behind the scenes at the Chelsea Flower show, that most British of institutions with Alan Sargent, veteran of 37 Chelseas, or how the wonderful work done by the charity Thrive enabling disabled people to take part and the amazing success stories they have encountered as a result of their support. Catherine Horwood, author of the best selling book 'Gardening Women' tells us about the inspirational work undertaken by female gardeners from the 17th century through to today. The day concludes with the television (Gardener's World) and radio presenter (Gardener's Question Time) Pippa Greenwood, known also for her writing in the Mirror, and the BBC Gardener's World magazine. Her latest book is '1001 Lifestyle Focus Ways to be a better Gardener' She is also available for book signing. She will be encouraging the benefits of vegetable growing for everyone. She will explain the best methods of growing through her various packages of support. You are encouraged to bring your own lunch. This costs £35 per delegate, or £30 if bringing a friend.

To book please:

Go to www.lifestylefocus.org

or email marilynmountford@yahoo.co.uk

or phone 07771 456 955

COGS DIARY DATES

September 27 Chris Howkins "In partnership with nature?"

Chris Howkins is a well known Ethnobotanist, Writer, Publisher and Illustrator and has researched information on the use of plants in Britain for over forty years, so his database is now reckoned to be the third largest on the subject in the country. It includes material on both practical and ritual usages: from the sacred plants of ancient religions through to the Ivy and Mistletoe at Christmas and for the practical uses, everything from food and medicine, furniture and dozens of everyday commodities.

Chris will talk to us about our EARLY SAXON ancestors' relationship with the land of West Sussex and how the intervening years have changed our perception and relationship with crops and gardening practices...

October 25 AGM and Harvest Supper

Bring a seasonal dish to share plus your own plates, glasses, etc. No charge for the evening. Do bring good plants to exchange and seeds to share.

And do bring your subscription for next year please!

November 29 Peter Johnson (Headmaster of Birdham Primary School) “Sustainability and how it effects the school”

Over the last decade the school grounds have been developed as an outdoor classroom containing 5 learning Zones.

Birdham Primary School has won several awards and was a 2009 finalist in the National Teaching Awards in the South East of England. Many other schools visit to glean information and ideas.

January 31 Satish Kumar “Earth Pilgrim” DVD

Satish Kumar takes us on a journey through the seasons of Dartmoor and explores our deep and profound relationship with the natural world. It is an Eastern view of the West, seen through the eyes of Satish Kumar who is a world-renowned conservationist. It portrays an engrossing account of Satish Kumar's philosophy and reverence for the living Earth.

All COGS Events are held at:

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

Start at 7.30pm, doors open at 7.15pm

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

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by Wednesday 1 December please.

(Collect Tuesday 7 December)

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

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

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Speaker Secretary – Vee Cowan (01243 780518) varianneec@yahoo.com

Bookshop/Librarian - Barbara MacGregor (01243 781849)

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www.chicogs.org.uk

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