

Chichester Organic Gardening Society



**Newsletter 57
September 2011**



NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

September 2011

Once again as autumn approaches we review the season and perhaps wonder: what is happening to our weather? Very hot and dry in April, then heavy rain just when we expected sunshine. Fortunately the natural world seems to take all this as given – nature having a rather longer perspective – and plants survive. Many of us have had bumper crops of early soft fruit. Some are finding courgettes a bit slow to get going, while others have a glut. Fortunately there are recipes; one for courgette and chocolate cake, given in last year's Newsletter, is excellent, there is another for courgettes this time, and soups are easy and tasty.

Plums are plentiful, and apples doing well; for those without their own trees there are friends with a surplus, or one of the PYO farms on the outskirts of Chichester.

COGS has had a busy year, as is recalled in our Report for the AGM, and we have some possible changes in the future (see separate articles). We will be taking part this autumn in the Horticultural Show at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum – an opportunity for COGS to be represented in a popular local spot, and one where we had our very first stall, several years ago.

We like to take part in local events, and have been invited to have a stall at the Transition 'Changing Times Green Fair' on 29th October. Transition share many aims with us, so we hope that plenty of members will attend this as well as the WDOAM Autumn Countryside Show (which includes the Horticultural Show) on 8-9th October. The autumn is going to be busy.

2012 marks Twenty Years of COGS since it was started by Susan and Peter Maguire, and carried on by them and the first members. Susan has memories and photos of the early years, and we plan to celebrate our Twentieth as appropriate; as always, ideas and practical suggestions are welcome.

Does anyone else have reminiscences of early meetings and visits?

Rachel is happy to stand again as Treasurer for this year (until

autumn 2012) but not for the following years. Would anyone like to be considered to replace her? If so, do please come forward as soon as possible, to enable a longer and easy handover. Rachel assures us the task is not difficult. We are also short of one or two committee members; there are three meetings a year, when we plan activities and the Newsletter. Please do speak to one of the committee, if you would be interested in either position.

With this Newsletter you will find the AGM Agenda, Minutes for the last AGM (October 2010) and Report for the past year. We hope to see many of you at meetings, particularly for the AGM and the Harvest Supper. For the coming year there is a good programme of meetings, and we always welcome suggestions and offers of help for any of our activities.

We hope for a good gardening year for everyone.

The Committee

COGS NOTICES

COGS Publicity

After holding this post for some years I would like to retire at the AGM, and hand over to someone else with fresh ideas for ways of promoting our excellent and thriving Society. Ideally the Publicity Officer should be a member of the Committee, but this is not essential provided close contact is maintained, especially with the Secretary and Meetings Organiser. The job is not difficult or complicated. I have a template of the Poster, and a list of contacts, and will be very happy to advise and support until you settle in. It is the perfect opportunity to become a bit pro-active in helping our hard-working Committee without being too time-consuming. If you are interested please let the Secretary or any member of the Committee know.

Gina Scott (ex Carrington)

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 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@nrglearning.co.uk and I'll add you to the list.

Perhaps you could consider renewing your membership 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

You can do this for your renewal for the year 2011-2012.

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.

Speakers and Meetings

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

Raffles

A reminder that these are held at every meeting except May and October. Any good items, especially bottles, good plants, and 'gifts' are welcome.

Also at meetings:

Surplus, Gluts, whether plants or produce or no-longer-needed useful garden things, are also welcome. People can help themselves (for a small donation) – but please take home if no-one wants them!

VISIT TO EAST MEON

Sixteen of us presented ourselves for an early evening visit to the Sustainability Centre, East Meon, on 25th July. We were welcomed by Penny, formerly an editor of Permaculture Magazine (one of a number of 'Green' ventures based on the site) but now one of the Centre's resident environmental educational facilitators. For nearly two hours she conducted us round some of the highlights of the 55 acre site, explaining the philosophy and functions of the Centre and its component parts, and answering our many questions with patience, clarity and enthusiasm. We covered a lot of ground, literally and theoretically - far too much to include in a short report - but here are some of the highlights of the highlights (and if you couldn't come on the night, do visit another time, it 's well worth the journey!)



- the mini forest garden, with edible plants, herbs, fruit trees, modeled on natural communities of plants and animals
- the main/reception building (originally the medical block of HMS Mercury) with its photovoltaic panels, offices, bookshop and cafe
- the herb garden with its herb spiral and impressive thatched bug hotel constructed by local youngsters
- the living willow den, planted in the snow last winter and now home base of the weekly local parent and toddler group

- the compost bins - HUGE!
- the Rural Skills Centre, another Partnership enterprise, managed by Elizabeth Fitzroy Support, where 'marginalised' groups learn workskills and sell plants
- the incredible Roundwood Timber framed woodland classroom, designed and built by an architect who's also a Trustee, and the famous Ben Law
- the water treatment/sewage system (reedbed type) completely odour free and quite beautiful really, surrounded as it is with wildflowers, willow and shrubs
- the Natural Burial site, a peaceful and tranquil area, full of wildlife and maturing trees and shrubs
- the campsite, complete with teepees, yurts and tents, with a solar heated shower block and composting toilet
- the hen house, high-rise for safety
- the Wetherdown Hostel which offers B & B for residential courses, hikers and bikers, and is insulated with sheep's wool
- the Eco Boiler which runs on wood chips and heats all the main buildings
- oh, and the Seed cafe, closed on Mondays, but apparently not to be missed otherwise

It was amazing to see what has been achieved over the past 10 or so years, much of it by volunteers, and also to see the principles of social inclusivity and local involvement being given as high a priority as environmental and economic issues. We went home inspired and informed, thanks to Penny and the Earthworks Trust.

Angie Tinkler

VISIT TO LITTLE BREACH ALLOTMENTS, Monday July 4th



We had a lovely visit to Little Breach Allotments which has a wonderful view over the city towards the Cathedral from the top of the site. Terry guided the party of about 20 to a magical bower and pond in a corner where a non-

COGs allotmenteer had merged plot and back garden - it was a haven of beauty and peacefulness.

We were impressed how productive Rob's allotment proved to be - how many different sorts of flowers, vegetables, fruit he has growing and he was able to give us tips on how he achieved this. He had a large fruit cage and large greenhouse and several raised beds and he explained in useful detail his strips system (don't be silly now, that's plot layout not disrobement,) It was marvelous to see Rob's plot after reading his words of advice and suggestions in the newsletter. I realized how much time and thought had gone into achieving such a productive plot and thought I must spend more time on my allotment too!! We enjoyed looking at Terry's plot "his own semi-demi paradise" who passed on further tips for us all plus his "accidental wildlife area". People commented on the variety of each allotment which was different in layout, in plants, and in structures, especially the little african style hut; being inspired to grow squashes on the compost heap; liking the huge oak tree still standing and other places offering natural habitat; enjoying the ramshackle sheds which showed the individuality of each allotmenteer.

After our visit we were delighted to be invited back to the Timblicks. Liz's scrumptious scones and jam, and Christine's hospitable cuppas at her nearby house, brought the evening, a touch ad hoc, to a happy, chatty conclusion.

Vi Cowan with contributions from Pat E, Terry T and Nina G

VISIT TO SLINDON 'RAISED BEACH'

A very small group of us faced the rain (which eased off later) at Slindon House on 22nd August. Andrew Lawrence, National Trust - Coastal Warden for E Head and Climping Gap, who came to talk to us in February 2010, met us here to take us on a walk along the 'raised beach' marking the ancient shoreline. The property contains the large old house, stables, courtyard, some buildings now transformed



into National Trust 'basecamp' for volunteers and NT offices. But having observed the view across to Bognor, we plunged into woods, with huge oak trees, and came upon the shingle carriage drive once used by people living at the big house, and

a deer bank to stop deer from escaping from the 19 sq mile property. There are beech trees of 250 to 300 years old – regarded by Andrew, a palaeontologist by training, technically as ‘weeds’ on the beach – but once forming one of our oldest and largest beech woods.

But the shoreline and the ancient beach were once here, 14 miles from the current coast at Selsey, some half million years ago when Boxgrove Man lived in the area between what are now Portsmouth and Brighton. He could communicate with his fellows, said Andrew, and was somewhat like us, but with much larger hands: the start of early humans. There were wild animals: wolves, hyenas, lions, elk, grizzly bear, and badgers. The rest moved off south as the climate got colder, but humans and badgers returned. The last Ice Age was 10,000 years ago. As we moved downhill through the woodland, Andrew showed us sand, and further down, shingle – large and small pieces of flint – and at the end of our walk we came to the boundary of the estate and a steep cliff, proving again that this was once the shoreline. There are more raised beaches between Slindon and Selsey, formed as the sea receded. As we returned to the house, we passed through pine plantations as well as natural woodland, and noticed how some huge trees had been uprooted by gales, leaving an enormous root plate. Altogether a fascinating walk through varied vegetation and showing us another aspect of our local region.

Stansted Show



Many thanks to all the helpers and plant growers for making a tremendously successful COGS stand this year. We made a profit of £161.25 (even though the show closed 2½ hours early on Sunday afternoon and we had to pay £15 for extra wristbands). I think our success was partly due to several of our growers producing plants we could sell for £5 or over. There was a wonderful selection of plants,

many vegetables, herbs and flowers which all sold well. Interestingly, gourmet tomatoes were not in demand probably due to the hot spring weather we had and many people started growing their own tomatoes.

A specially big thanks to Penelope Johnstone for all her help in organising and looking after the plants. Many thanks to Hazel for creating a wonderful stand this year.

Vi

A possible recurrence of aminopyralid?

Some of us were unfortunate in unwittingly introducing a rather nasty product onto our allotments a couple of years ago; and we thought that the danger was past.

Maybe it is, but vigilance is always a good thing.

A recent article by George Monbiot, published on the Guardian website on 15 June 2011, warns that aminopyralid may still be around.

He tells us that it was first detected when plants began to shrivel and grow in strange shapes. ‘..gradually the syndrome was linked to residues of a new, hormone-mimicking pesticide ... first approved in this country in 2005. It’s called aminopyralid.’ It is used to kill broad-leaved weeds growing in fields of grass, and does this by locking onto the cellulose in the plants. Unfortunately it retains its strength even after passing through animal guts. It is ‘not believed to present a risk to human health’. It is persistent, which means that damage may not occur only in the first year it is found. So what do we do? Perhaps we can only try to ensure that any animal manure we use for our allotment comes from a reputable source.

Meanwhile, Garden Organic in its Summer 2011 issue of *The Organic Way* under the heading ‘No ban for clopyralid’ warns of a similar chemical:

‘Garden Organic is outraged at the failure to ban the weedkiller clopyralid from amateur products. Clopyralid and the closely related aminopyralid are so persistent that they can still damage plants even after treated grass has been through a compost heap or a cow’s gut. The Government’s response to the call

to ban these products has been merely to insist on a revised wording on the product label, which has to be in place by 2014! The wording includes the statement “Do not dispose of grass clippings [from a treated lawn] via council compost schemes.” ... but as Margi Lennartson comments, ‘Who is going to compost these mowings at home when large-scale composting schemes are not considered capable of dealing with them safely? A ban would have been so much simpler!’

Courgettes again



Garden Organic also give some recipes in Summer 2011, and for those of you who have a glut, here is one which is said to be easily frozen, from a reader in Italy.

Ingredients:

Courgettes (or marrow)

Chopped garlic cloves

Olive oil

Vinegar of your choice

Salt and Pepper

Method:

1. Cut courgettes into rough slices; for marrows remove skin and seeds and cut into 1.5cm cubes.
2. Put 2-3 tbsp olive oil into a large pan; add veg and garlic. Cook very slowly, stirring occasionally, until mushy and can be squashed into a thick pulp.
3. Add about a tablespoonful of vinegar – preferable balsamic – to taste and season. Serve hot or freeze.

Otherwise of course there is the standard: **soup**, made with onion, garlic, one potato, lots of courgette, seasoning, and stock.

The basic recipe is simply to fry garlic and onion, add courgettes, spice to taste (e.g Allspice and a soupcon of Marmite!) potato peeled and chopped small, add stock, and simmer until very soft, then put through blender.

Events

Weald and Downland Autumn Countryside Show

This will take place on **Saturday and Sunday**

8-9th October, and includes a Horticultural Show. WDOAM have kindly offered COGS a space, with a table and under cover, at no charge. The theme of the Show will be harvest and autumn, and they are 'encouraging the use of home or locally grown produce'. A



chance for COGS to make contacts – and to return to the place where we first had a stall, a number of years ago, when we were quite a young organisation.

Some members have already volunteered to help look after the stall, but we should be grateful for a few more people, for short and easy shifts. Please contact Penelope (771881) if you can help. We should have free entry passes to share among helpers. It promises to be a very enjoyable event, so do come.

Transition Chichester Green Fair



We have accepted an offer from Transition Chichester to have a stall at their forthcoming 'Changing Times Green Fair' on **Saturday 29th October** at the Assembly Rooms, from 11am to 4pm. It promises to be a lively event, with nine TC groups (including Grow Your

Own and Gardenshare) and fifteen other organisations invited; a FairTrade café, book stall, mini cinema with short environmental films.

This event is centrally located, indoors, and warm! Would anyone like to help for an hour or so on our stall? Please contact Penelope (771881).

Whether or not you can help, do visit and see the various activities and interests, many of which are relevant to COGS.

WEST DEAN would like help:

Some COGS members are already volunteers at West Dean, and can thoroughly recommend the place. Sarah Wain has just issued an appeal for more, specifically to assist with the very beautiful grounds, so we reproduce here the email we were sent:

Calling New Volunteers!

At West Dean Gardens we are planning to develop a team of new volunteers to assist the gardener responsible for the main gardens and grounds around West Dean House. As part of this team you will be working in the fresh air, see all the gardens develop through the seasons, learn as you go and develop new gardening skills. If you are active, healthy and enjoy maintenance gardening we would welcome your assistance.

If you are interested please contact Sarah Wain, Garden Supervisor, West Dean Gardens- 07789 367251

FUNGI WALK

Anyone fond of mushrooms and assorted funghi might like to know about Funghi Walks on 16th and 23rd October, 11am to 1pm. Cost probably £3, for further information, National Trust, 01243 814554.

COGS DIARY DATES

September 26

John Negus

Borders of Distinction: Displaying herbaceous perennials to best effect.

Trained at Wisley Gardens and Merrist Wood Horticultural colleges, photo-journalist John Negus (Dip. Hort. Wisley) enjoys sharing his passion for gardening and other outdoor pursuits. He will tell us how to choose plants and varieties to extend the season from early spring to late autumn +tips on planting, cultivating and associating colours and sculptural forms. There will be a fun quiz with give away seeds

October 31

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 28

Martin Llewellyn , Earth Cycle Products

Sales & Marketing Manager

Martin Llewellyn from the Woodhorn Group in Oving, a family run business since 1882 involved with waste management and organic farming, will come and talk to us about their work and their Earth Cycle Soil Conditioning products

January 30 2011

Talk by Susan Maguire and COGS Seed Exchange

Susan has kindly said she will come and talk to us about **companion planting, awareness and adaptability to change.**

Inspired by Fran's talk about Seedy Sunday we are holding our own evening of exchanging seeds. Please bring seeds you would like to give/share with others. If an unusual variety it would be useful to have a photo of the mature plant.

All COGS indoor events are held at:

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

Start at 7.30 p.m, doors open at 7.15 p.m.

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

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by Monday 28 November please
(cheques to be with Pat by 28 November)

Delivery Tuesday 6 December, collect asap from that evening

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, Transition, and the 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:

Speaker Secretary – Vee 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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