

Chichester Organic Gardening Society



Newsletter 59
April 2012



NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

Well, our last set of notes to you in January started with the sentence: 'it is getting commonplace now to comment on 'what strange weather' ... and so it continues. But as this is being written, we are at last seeing a welcome return of rain. So perhaps the weather will now return to a 'normal' pattern (if there is such a thing anymore). Let's hope so!

Very soon now, in an effort to raise our profile with a younger age group and to get more members, we will be launching a Chichester Organic Society Facebook page. We thought it was time to join a Social Networking group, as this can be a very powerful and effective way of letting more people know about us and what could be better than to do so in our 20th Anniversary year? As we are going to need a picture to go on the page we wondered if any of you are talented photographers? If so, please do let us have a copy of a vegetable or plant related photo. Send them to our Membership Secretary, Nina (email: nina@nrglearning.co.uk) and the Committee will choose one - who knows, it could be yours!

We will be having stands at two shows this year: Parham House, where there will be a 'Grow your own Festival' on 12th August and the Weald and Downland in October which is on the 13th and 14th. We had a stand at the Weald and Downland last year and it is a lovely show in a beautiful venue. If you didn't get there then we can thoroughly recommend it. Parham House will be a new venture and so we will have to wait and see what that is like. So when you are sowing seeds, taking cuttings or splitting perennials, please pot up a few extra so that we can put on a good show at both of these venues. Sadly we have had a very poor response to renewals and currently our membership numbers are at an all time low of 80. If you know that any of your friends haven't yet renewed, please do encourage them to do so; there is still time before the next Newsletter is sent out. Previously we have been able to give members the benefit of 3 reminders and the April Newsletter, but with the rise in printing and soon postage costs, we have

decided that the cut off date will be the January Newsletter from now on.

So now that Spring is here, let the gardening commence in earnest and we wish you all a productive and pest-free season.
The Committee.

COGS NOTICES

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

A call for contributors

No, not for funds! But this is *our* Newsletter, and we would welcome interesting and relevant pieces by other members, which we can print. Do you have some special 'tips' or advice gleaned from your own experience, which you would like to share? If so do send, in first instance to penelopejohnstone@yahoo.co.uk or you can discuss at one of the meetings.

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 idea for speakers or visits, please let Vi 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 yours home if no-one wants them!

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by 11th June 2012 please.

(cheques to be with Pat by that date)

Delivery on Tuesday 19th June please collect asap

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

A reminder that COGS is now 20 years old, and Susan Maguire tells us something about the beginnings:

COGS HISTORY – PART I

In 1992, when my late husband Peter and I opened our garden for the first HDRA (now Garden Organic) Organic Garden weekend, a seed was sown which has now borne fruit.



With support from Chichester District Council, who provided a free meeting room and portable display boards, COGS went public on January 23rd 1993 at East Pallant House. In May of the same year we had our first visit to Wayside Organics at Oving. They had provided a glorious box of Soil Association vegetables and fruit to auction at our first meeting in January.

In July we were at the Rare Breeds Show at Singleton in a borrowed scout tent, and held our first Harvest Supper in October. This was later combined with the AGM and has proved to be very successful. The official business is dealt with very quickly!

Other early highlights include: Potato Fest in September 1995; Nearly Extinct Vegetable Show in September 1996; Celebration of the Tomato in September 1998. All included tastings and were recorded in our Green Book along with many other events.

Enthusiastic members helped out in so many ways – it was a great team of people, and fun too. There will be a display of material used to promote our events, plus other memorabilia, at the AGM in October – and more history in the next Newsletter.
Susan Maguire, Founder – COGS

January talk: Susan Maguire

On 30th January 2012, our talk by Susan Maguire was followed by a seed exchange.

Susan gave us a very interesting talk on her gardening experience, covering many different aspects including

companion planting. Some of her tips were: growing different vegetables together, e.g. onions and carrots; Climbing Beans with sweet peas at the ends of rows, with lettuces and radishes underneath; growing vegetables in clumps. Soil must be in good heart (feed the soil), and we can mulch to retain moisture (so very essential in this hot weather). Fresh shreadings round strawberries deter slugs. Marjoram is good for insects. Very little watering; and no watering once a plant is established. Keep soil covered preferably by compost. Stand back and see what is needed to be done. Be adaptable and make changes. Susan uses the biodynamic calendar.

We ended the evening with the first COGS seed exchange. Several members brought seeds to swap and next January I hope more people will have saved some extra seeds over this growing season and will be able to share some. It is a chance to share one's favourite vegetables and plants and I think this can be a good way of keeping the heritage seeds flourishing and being passed on to future generations.
(A reminder: do save seeds this year)

Vee Cowan

February Talk: Steve Lawrence, Pruning without worry

At our February meeting Steve Lawrence gave us a most interesting, entertaining and informative talk on the pruning of all types of fruit trees and bushes.

Illustrated with very clear diagrams and photographs, Steve began by explaining how to identify the different types of shoots and buds to be found on apple trees and how to know whether your tree is spur or tip bearing – which is important because if it is tip bearing and you shorten all the shoots you will never get any apples! He told us when to prune (in winter for shoot growth) and how to make a good cut – just above the bud and facing away from it. When pruning out whole branches be sure to cut as close to the trunk as possible to enable the wound to form a callus which will keep out disease. He showed us diagrams illustrating how to prune a neglected tree – which can

be done over several seasons. Examples of the best types of tools were shown.

Steve illustrated the different possibilities for trained fruit such as espalier and cordons and also spoke about using plants like chive and garlic against scab, powdery mildew and as insect repellent (on the tree, not on the gardener!) Nettles can also be used as a mulch to add goodness to the tree.

With his extensive knowledge Steve was also able to cover many other types of fruit such as pears, cherries, currants, berries and figs.

At the end of his talk we were all ready to go out with our secateurs, loppers and pruning saws to rejuvenate our neglected trees and can't wait for the beginning of the fruit season to start harvesting!

March Talk: Barry Chambers, The Garden as Sanctuary

On 26th March Barry came to tell us about his gardening projects, not, as he said, precisely on 'sanctuary' but various aspects of gardens. He has been designing and building gardens since 1996 with his own business

Changing Scenes, and showed us pictures of some of the smaller ones, with his use of



planting and – an interesting feature – the use of horizontal roof battens instead of fencing or trellis as boundaries.

In particular we were impressed by his winning Gold and 'Best in Show' at Malvern in 2010, and the highlight of the evening was his abstract seascape, 'On the Sea' based on a Keats poem, which won him a Silver Gilt at Hampton Court in 2011. He took us through the stages of building the huge white cliff which formed the entrance to his garden, and the choice and placing of the appropriate plants. He sees 'nature ... at the heart of this garden'.

Steve Lawrence, who gave us our February talk, has contributed the following article on a different subject:

Windbreaks and Gardens by the Coast



Windbreaks are put in place in the garden not to stop the wind but to filter it through, without it causing damage; as they say, they break the wind.

The height of the windbreak has a bearing on the area sheltered. A 4' windbreak provides good shelter to 32' on the lee side.

There are plenty of shrubs that make a good windbreak and one of my favourites is *Arundinaria*

japonica – the Bamboo. 8' tall, filters well, easily propagated and reduces sound so is also good in a town garden.

Aucuba japonica has lovely leathery leaves and red berries, grows male and female, and like the bamboo is also good in towns.

Eleagnus pungens x ebbingei is a tall evergreen with glossy leaves and sweetly scented tiny white flowers in the autumn. When the sun shines the scent lifts the spirit.

The plant that everyone knows is the Tamarisk, which is planted on beach fronts everywhere; the August pink flowers are pretty. Prune hard every spring.

There are plenty more to choose from and a trip to a good nursery will provide much pleasure and choice.

Double green artificial plastic netting – like hessian – makes for an effective screen and windbreak supported against solid posts. Then there are hazel wattle fences which look rustic, or you could invest in a willow fedge – fence + hedge – as a permanent and attractive windbreak.

If you want an attractive, permanent and classy windbreak, then lath fencing looks the part and produces the results, especially when painted white. The laths should be of 1" wide timber set 1" apart with cross-members, bracing, and strong upright posts. Use galvanised nails and tanalith timber for a long-lasting beautiful windbreak.

Steve Lawrence

COMING EVENTS

Parham House “Grow Your Own Festival” – Sunday 12th August 2012

This new event celebrates the increasingly popular movement of growing your own vegetables, fruit and cut flowers as well as celebrating local food, bee keeping and small holding.



COGS is taking a stand at this festival and I hope we will be able to show examples

of all the wonderful produce we grow in our gardens and allotments and create an inspirational display of fruit, vegetables and cut flowers.

There will be a number of guest speakers coming to the event including Pippa Greenwood the TV gardener and broadcaster.

This will be an opportunity to promote COGS and tell people about growing organically and hopefully encourage new members. The exhibits will be judged based on the level of inspiration and quality of the produce for the Parham Cup, an award presented by Lady Emma Barnard to her favourite display. Is there anyone who would like to help create a wonderful stand and /or provide produce. Please contact Vee on 01243 780518

Chichester Cathedral Festival of Flowers

This is held every two years, has a different theme each time, fills the Cathedral space with the most fantastic display, and attracts visitors from all around the country. Whatever one's reservations about masses of flowers being grown and imported from far away, used as decoration – there is no doubt that this event is something special. The entry charges raise 'vital funds for the Chichester Cathedral Restoration & Development Trust', and the Cathedral is one of the outstanding buildings in our historic city. The theme this year is 'Every Book Tells a Story'; a friend of mine is sharing the space for designing 'Wind in the Willows'. If you have been before, you will know what it is like – if not, it is worth spending a couple of hours, and there are associated stalls and tents around the building. The Festival runs from **Thursday 7th to Saturday 9th June**, and further information is on the website

<http://www.chichestercathedral.org.uk/> or 01243 782595.

Weald and Downland Countryside Fair

COGS had a very successful stall there last year, and this year the WDOAM is again going to offer us a stall – full details not yet available but the dates are **13th and 14th October**. We hope for good weather and a good turnout, and once again shall be grateful for help on the days and perhaps for plants.

PESTICIDES AGAIN!

In a previous issue of the Newsletter there was a note about the Soil Association's call for neonicotinoid pesticides to be banned. Now further information has come to light, and the front page of the *Independent* on Friday 30 March warned in headlines: 'New pesticides linked to bee population collapse' and 'Two studies confirm dangers of "nerve agents" used on one-third of all British cropland.' Not so new perhaps as the *Independent* reminds us that in January 2011 it also warned about these chemicals. In the current issue, it devotes large areas of pages 1-3 to the problem. So just some extracts:

'The British study, carried out by scientists at the University of Stirling, concludes that "there is an urgent need to develop alternatives ... wherever possible".

...The compounds, which attack insects' central nervous systems, have been increasingly implicated in the widespread declines of honey bees and wild bees over the last decade, which have culminated in the mysterious Colony Collapse Disorder in the US Many beekeepers have become convinced that the new pesticides are behind the declines, and in France, Italy and other countries they have been banned. But in Britain and the US their use continues....

The value of bees' pollination services has been estimated at £200 m per year just in Britain....' And they quote Matt Shardlow, director of Buglife, 'Our government must take the precautionary step of banning their use.'

But will this happen? Comment by Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor, points out the danger: ... 'there is so much money at stake that those with a vested interest in these products will fight tooth and nail to continue their use, despite

the rapidly growing evidence that they are causing massive harm to pollinating insects, whose value to us is beyond price.' His headline is 'Refusal to heed scientists' warnings is indefensible' – yes indeed.

We can only hope that the latest publicity will have some effect. And could we perhaps write to our MP? West Sussex is an agricultural county and we depend on crops being pollinated, as well as on the health of our countryside.

Penelope Johnstone

With acknowledgement to the Independent.

Smashed Rosemary Scones.

200g SR flour
200g Cooked mashed squash or pumpkin
2 tps B. Powder, pinch of salt and black pepper
1 Egg beaten
50g of soft Butter
1-2 tsp of Rosemary (dried) heaped
1 tsp of dried English mustard, salt and pepper to taste
milk to mix.



Pre heat oven to 220C/ 425F/ Gas 7

Sieve flour, baking powder, mustard powder and salt.

Rub butter into the flour mix till it resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Add the mashed squash and beaten egg, mixing till a soft dough forms adding milk if necessary.

Turn out onto a floured surface and roll out or press down to a 1.5cm thickness and cut into squares.

Place on a greased baking sheet and brush with milk
you can put on optional toppings such as grated cheese or sesame seeds on top, whatever takes your fancy!

Bake 10-15mins depending on size, cool on a rack, spread with butter and enjoy!

John and Anne Bennett

Transition Chichester Films and Talks

These are held at the Bassil Shippam Centre, usually on the first Friday of the month, at 7.30 p.m. and these are the last two sessions of the season:

May 4: Community schemes: Presentations on Tangmere Community Garden, the Community Car Club and a community shop (tbc).

June 8 (note date): In Transition: a chance to see the new film, followed by our summer party.

For more details on everything: www.transitionchichester.org

WORLD EARTH DAY

Transition Chichester are inviting everyone to celebrate Earth Day, Sunday 22nd April, at the Bassil Shippam Centre, 7-9.30 p.m. To find out more, go to Transition website, or to www.earthday.org

COGS DIARY DATES

May 28th SPRING FLING AND PLANT SWAP

Do bring any good spare plants to swap, but please take it home afterwards if it doesn't find a new owner.

Please bring a dish of food to share with a label including ingredients + a serving spoon. Please remember to bring your own plates, cutlery and glasses.

June 25th Visit to Chris and Julie Goddard's garden, Barnham.

Family run garden since 1980 organic gardening using the moon cycles and permaculture principles including a newly planted mini forest garden.

Tea and biscuits available. 6.00-7.30 pm

Donation to Garden Organic in memory of John Brattle (Julie's father who started the garden)

Numbers limited please contact Vee Cowan 01243 780518

Monday July 23rd, 6.30pm

Visit to Tangmere Community Garden, The Old Airfield, Tangmere.

Enter by the Military Aviation Museum at the south end of the village, on the corner.

The barrier is currently broken so you can just drive in, turn to the left (mind the potholes) and drive 200m or so towards the hangars. There is a gap in the hedge and you will see our polytunnel. There's plenty of parking. If the barrier is working again in July we will have someone there to let you in.

The community garden is in its third growing season. We all garden together and crop share. Monday evening is a regular work evening so there should be several people at the Garden to tell you about how it works and what it means to them. This is a growing community project.

Tea and biscuits provided. Donations to funds please.

Tuesday Aug 21st

Visit to Leythorne Farm, Runcton

The Farm has many rare breeds of animals including 500 goats. It is run on traditional farming methods. (This visit will be confirmed in Aug and depends on the situation of current sheep disease). If you are interested please contact Vee

September 24th

SPECIAL SPEAKER TO CELEBRATE COGS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

(To be confirmed)

COGS – CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Monday October 29th 2012

AGM AND SPECIAL HARVEST SUPPER

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.

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:

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Bookshop/Librarian - Barbara MacGregor (01243 781849)

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www.chicogs.org.uk

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