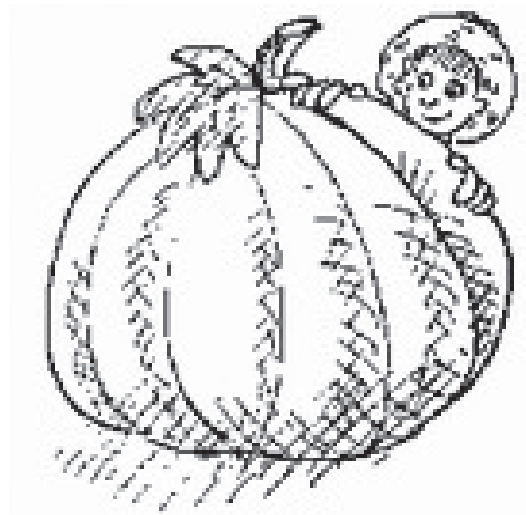


# Chichester Organic Gardening Society



**Newsletter 63  
September 2013**



## **Notes from the Committee**

This year has been a magnificent one with real summer weather, following a rather cold and cheerless spring; late crops mostly seem to have caught up. A better record than the 'summer' of 2012. Let's hope everyone has harvested bumper crops, and had time just to sit and enjoy the sunshine.

COGS has had another busy year as you will see from the summary for the AGM, enclosed. Please do come, there will be an excellent Harvest Supper after the business has been dealt with.

On this point, we appeal again for replacements for Rachel our Treasurer and for Vee who for seven years has arranged an outstanding programme of speakers and visits. Without people to carry out the business side, which is not onerous, COGS cannot survive.

We have also held two stalls, at Parham and Weald & Downland, and by the time we go to press we will have taken part in the Transition Green Fair. With a few exceptions, to whom we are very grateful, the work of setting up and managing these stalls generally falls to the Committee.

Not all of us can help actively, and everyone is equally appreciated and welcomed whatever their participation, - but if you feel you can help, with any of our functions, or importantly as Treasurer or Speaker secretary, do get in touch. COGS belongs to us all and there is as much need as ever for us to support Organic principles, which really do encompass most of life's activities. To paraphrase a famous speech, 'what can you do for your Society' – and thus for the wider community? COGS is 21 years old this year, and so is the enterprise Duchy Organics, which supports organic principles.

Do come to the AGM, vote, and enjoy the company of other members, and some delicious homegrown food.

*The Committee*

## **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

COGS has maintained a small subscription of £5 for a good few years now, which is I hope you'll agree, good value.

We currently have 73 members which is good news after last year when it seemed that membership was dropping at an alarming rate. It is still down on previous years but seems to be stabilising.

We are coming up to renewal time again however and would very much appreciate your co-operation in returning your subscriptions as soon as you can. It really does cast the Committee into gloom and despondency if we think we are losing our members!!

Standing order details are as follows:

Lloyds TSB

No: 01914064

Sort Code: 30 91 97

Chichester Organic Gardening Society.

If you do set up a Standing Order, please email me:

[nina@nrlearning.co.uk](mailto:nina@nrlearning.co.uk) and let me know. Same email address applies if you would like to switch to receiving your newsletter via email or have changed your email address recently.

## **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 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!

## ***A call for contributors***

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](mailto:penelopejohnstone@yahoo.co.uk) or you can discuss at one of the meetings.

## **Weald and Downland Open Air Museum**

**Countryside Show: Saturday and Sunday, 12th and 13th October.**

We are invited again to have a stall, and any items (vegetables especially unusual ones, plants, etc.) will be welcome. And as it takes place over two days, **we should particularly welcome helpers** for short and easy shifts.

We did well last year, and several members won certificates for their competition entries. Also, anyone entering for one or more classes (fruit, vegetables, flowers, baking) receives free entry to the Show. So this would be very useful, even if you do not win anything.

Do put the dates in your diary, and the Show is well worth a visit anyway.

## **Parham House ‘Grow Your Own Festival’**

On Sunday 11 August Parham House was once more the venue for a ‘Grow Your Own Festival’ – a gathering of local Horticultural Societies, food producers and small holders. For the second year committee members loaded a camper van at dawn with all the paraphernalia and essential items needed to erect, stock and decorate a stall inviting enough to attract visitors and maybe increase our membership. The stall also needed to be educational and advertise the purpose of our society. The committee had brought along produce from their own gardens or plots, together with preserves, jam and even strawberries in gin.

There was a steady flow of people interested in what we had to offer, especially the leaflets on companion planting and garden weeds which prove popular at all the shows COGS attends.

The weather was ideal, sunny but not too hot and from time to time helpers were able to slip away to view the other exhibits. There were stalls selling produce and vegetables to plant out, others with herbs and essential oils, a display of bee keeping, honey for sale, and some livestock.

The gardens were open, as was the house, both well worth a visit and very lovely, full of historical interest. The head gardener, Tom Brown, had given us a talk earlier in the year and we were able to investigate the progress of the various projects he had described. In spite of the hard work involved the shows we attend as a society are always worthwhile and fun.

With especial thanks to John and Anne Bennett for allowing us the use of their camper van, pergola and other equipment, and of course to the Committee members for all their consistent effort in master minding the logistics, not to mention the artistic, beautiful stalls they devise.

## **COGS talk on 29 April 2013: Paul Patton on Achieving the Best Plant Growth**

*(A summary of his talk; a full account is on our website)*

Paul is a freelance consultant, writer and broadcaster who has spent forty years in the growing industry, farming, horticulture and as a plant pathologist. His talk focussed on plant nutrition to obtain the best growth possible. Need vitality in a plant - dark leaves and thick stems. Plants need light, air, water, nutrients.

### **Nutrients**

Plants need nitrogen for leaves, phosphorus for roots and potassium for healthy fruit and flowers. Also the trace elements or minerals such as iron, copper, manganese and many others.

### **Mineral deficiencies in soil**

If a plant has yellow leaves in the spring it means it is deficient in manganese and magnesium. It needs 'miracle grow' or any commercial equivalent, and organic matter put into the soil. Any discoloration indicates a mineral deficiency of some sort eg black spots mean a copper deficiency.

### **Nitrogen fixing bacteria**

Microbes have a nitrogen fixing symbiotic relationship with root hairs. Because this is so important we must ensure that the soil is in good condition with a good population of nitrogen fixing microbes ie organic material in the form of manure or compost is essential . Legumes produce own microbes for the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen so the roots of legumes should be left in the soil after harvesting.

**Biochar** is a volcanic mineral which boosts levels of nutrition and stimulates the growth of nitrogen fixing microbes. This is a new material that has begun to be added to compost. Paul showed us pictures of large scale composting on a commercial scale.

**Mulch** Mulch will conserve water, suppress weeds, act like a soil duvet, rots, and worms can drag it into the soil below. Earthworms break down organic matter and aerate the soil. A wormery is useful.

### **Paul's Tips**

When the lawn starts to grow then the soil temperature is correct for planting out. Vigilance is essential for pest control.

Comfrey and nettles can be soaked in water to produce liquid plant feed, needs diluting before use.

A cold frame extends the gardening season.

Multipurpose planting such as a cordon screen of fruit trees are more productive if branches are trained horizontally.

Plan vegetable garden carefully and be experimental.

See what is new in the brochures eg Thompson and Morgan have over 200 different types of potatoes. Try Shetland Black potato.

Feed Robins in the winter as they will help you by eating grubs later.

Root systems have been developed to have different size fruit trees, Malus and crab apples can be planted to help wild life. They have a small root system and are attractive at all times.

### **Visit to Tuppenny Barn**

On July 22 about 20 members of COGS paid an afternoon visit to Tuppenny Barn where Becca gave us a tour of the garden and we were able to see for ourselves the work and projects that Maggie had described to us in her March talk. The whole site is most impressive, especially the round barn, built of sustainable materials, where we were given an excellent home made cream tea. The educational and social facilities when finished will be invaluable to the wider community and schools who use it. On our website you can read a fuller version of Maggie's talk. Her projects are very innovative especially the green house made from plastic bottles and the living dome. It was also good to learn that slugs have not been such a problem this year!!

### **Visit to Graylingwell Community Garden**

On the evening of Monday 19 August members of COGS met with the leader of the Graylingwell Community Garden, Tim Lawrance-Owen at the Community Garden in Graylingwell Park in Chichester, where he gave us a short talk on their work and aims, before he introduced us to other members of the association.

The garden is situated next to the chapel and has been leased to Chichester Community Development Trust by Linden Homes and the

Homes and Communities Agency. It is supported by Affinity Sutton's initiative Cultiv8 and by Lottery Funding to develop the infrastructure of the garden and complete the build phase.

The community have already received a certificate from South East in bloom for establishing an 'in your neighbourhood' area; plus a first and second prize from the Weald and Downland Show.

The garden is open to all residents to share, learn gardening and to grow their own produce. In future years a number of allotments are to be endowed to the Trust but for the time being a piece of land is temporarily leased to Chichester CDT to develop as a community garden. The residents turn up to work when they have time and are free to take any produce, although many are shy about doing this. Working party days are arranged to build shelters or raised beds when, sometimes, specialists are on site to support the volunteers.

There are also social events where the residents meet in the garden for a glass of wine, a beer and sausage taster evening or to taste their own samples of apple juice and cider.

During the school holidays this year an horticulturist and a wild life officer ran a kids club offering fun activities promoting gardening, composting and vegetable growing, along with making a bug hotel. Two garden sheds had been donated, one of which was for the children's garden. They had been colourfully decorated by volunteers.

Their most ambitious conservation project is the development of a new orchard. The old one had got overgrown but contained many heritage apple trees. A specialist came and pruned the trees to rejuvenate them. Tim is now propagating the trees in order to have new specimens ready to plant out when they have been allocated the land for the new orchard.

As an added bonus we were invited to look at the Graylingwell Chapel. It was much larger than we expected and decorated with coloured streamers – there had been 2 weddings recently. The Chapel is used for secular community activities as well as for Church services



in spite of the absence of heating until the general refurbishment takes place.

The Community Members who came along to our visit were very informative, kind and welcoming. Our heartfelt thanks to them for giving us such a delightful evening out.

## **In Praise of Beetroot**

Many people, including the gardening guru, Alan Titchmarsh, who, in his book 'The Kitchen Garden' classifies beetroot as being difficult to grow, do not seem to find them easy to cultivate. However, even though my swedes never even germinate and my parsnips are pathetic year on year, my beetroot are a consolation, being consistently magnificent, germinating easily and many growing to about 14-15 cm in diameter. I never even soak the seeds before sowing anymore, they go straight into a tray of sowing compost and are placed in an unheated greenhouse in early spring. On germination I cannot bring myself to thin them out but painstakingly separate the frail seedlings and plant each one out in a raised bed containing 'Earthcycle' compost and composted manure, beefed up with well rotted horse manure. They are covered with a netted tunnel cloche and, apart from some watering, left to get on with it.

Beetroot is such a versatile vegetable. In the spring the small leaves are good in salads, the baby beets mouth wateringly tender but what is really phenomenal is that the giant ones that have stood until October are never fibrous but are tender too, once boiled or roasted. Admittedly the roasted ones emerge from the oven looking like charred cannon balls but are very tasty once peeled and sliced.

The crop has been so prolific this year that I have been forced to be innovative in its use, including it in smoothies along with soft fruit, or in beetroot and curly kale smoothies (only for the intrepid but very nutritious). I have learnt to make beetroot and green tomato chutney, and researched recipes for beetroot tart, beetroot rostis and curried beetroot and coconut relish. Our favourite, and that of our guests, has been a beetroot salad adapted from a recipe found in the Saturday Times Magazine.

## **Beetroot, Feta and Walnut Salad**

4 beetroots

2 handfuls of summer vegetables such as broad beans, runner beans or peas

150g feta, crumbled

2 handfuls walnuts, or any nuts

1 handful chopped tarragon, or chives or parsley

60 ml good quality extra virgin olive oil

20 ml white wine vinegar

Cook beetroot, either boiling or baking in foil. When cool, peel and cut into chunks.

Boil or steam vegetables, cool, refresh in cold water, drain.

Place beetroot, vegetables, feta, and herbs in serving dish. Season, dress with oil and vinegar and serve.

Footnote: On checking my packet of seeds which are Suttons Boltardy variety I found that they were a year past their sow by date and neither should they have been planted in recently manured soil! Just goes to show....

Also the packet gave the information that beetroot contains vitamin C, potassium and strengthens the immune system. Probably then it is best to bake or roast them as prolonged boiling destroys vitamin C. For the same reason there is usually more vitamin C in chips than boiled potatoes but I never tell my grandchildren that.

Susan Sinnett-Jones

### **Seed Saving**

This is the time of year when we save seeds, and this year should be much easier because of the hot dry weather. Saving our own is not only good value, but helps preserve biodiversity.

*(In connection with this, we reprint the following extract)*

#### **Is the pesticide threat far worse than we thought?**

This is the heading of an article by Geoffrey Lean in the *Telegraph* of 15th June 2013. He reports that ‘A new study of the effects of neonicotinoid pesticides – some banned for two years by the EC last month under suspicion of devastating populations of bees –

suggests that they may have much wider effects than so far thought.’ Neonicotinoids are widely used as seed dressings; but ‘more than 90 per cent of the chemicals end up in the soil, where they accumulate for years, washing out into streams and ditches.’ He quotes from a paper by Prof Dave Goulson of the University of Stirling, that “any pesticide that can persist for many years, build up in soil, and leach into waterways is likely to have effects far beyond the insect pests it intends to target.” Thus ‘he believes the collateral damage goes far beyond bees to take in soil organisms, aquatic insects and even birds. Just five maize seeds treated with the chemicals would be enough to kill half the partridges that consumed them.’

‘At any rate’ Lean concludes ‘the way that the pesticides accumulate in soil suggests that the two-year ban will be far too short to have any great effect – or even to show if it is working.’

### **Gardening wins! Some news which is more positive**

In a poll conducted by Age UK of some 1,500 people, 38% put Gardening as their favourite pursuit. Next was Walking. Whereas many of us are not within the 65+ group, we all hope to reach it; and it is encouraging to know that such a large number continue to be interested in growing their own and thus keeping fit.

### **Update on Community Orchard**

12 volunteers help with the weekly checklist: each takes a month and on a weekly basis checks the orchard on that month, which includes looking for pests and diseases, checking the tree pits are weed-free, the trees are safely secured – to making sure there’s no litter around the orchard and noting down any wildlife they’ve seen.

There was a pruning day on Saturday 3 August – with instruction from Richard Wooden from Hampshire, who demonstrated the process on one of the plum trees. On 7 September a small group of volunteers worked at removing some of the wild carrot which has been threatening to overtake the rest of the wild flowers; another session is set to be planned before the meadow is strimmed at the end

of October.

**A Local Dance Group** *(an invitation from two of our members)*  
Chichester Folk Dance Group meets on the first, third and fifth Thursdays of the month from 8 to 10 pm, at the Fishbourne Centre, Blackboy Lane, Fishbourne. We are only a small group of mainly older dancers, but we always have a pleasant and entertaining evening dancing a range of traditional dances, some dating back to the 17th century. We always welcome new dancers and you don't need any experience or a partner. The charge is £3.50 per evening for which you get exercise and friendly company. For more details phone Stephanie Carn 01243 533393, or email [stephcarn@gmail.com](mailto:stephcarn@gmail.com).

### **INFINITY FOODS**

Next orders to Pat by Mon **11 November** please.

(cheques to be with Pat by that date)

Delivery on Thursday **19 November** 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](mailto:pat_adams@btopenworld.com) or 01243 602713

The catalogue can be downloaded at [http://  
infinityfoodswholesale.co.uk/catalogue/](http://infinityfoodswholesale.co.uk/catalogue/)

# **AUTUMN & WINTER MEETINGS**

## **October 28**

### **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, but please remember to take them with you if they don't find a new owner. i

And do bring your subscription for next year please!

## **November 25**

### **COGS Question Time**

**Panel 1) Susan Maguire - Founder of Cogs and Biodynamic Gardener**

**2) Tim Lawrance-Owen.** Works for a local wholesale nursery. . Keen to pass on enthusiasm for plants and growing and the set up and running of Graylingwell Park Community Garden, which has just been awarded 'Level 4 Thriving' award by Britain in Bloom.'

**3) David Donovan** - professional horticulturist (retd) who worked with hardy shrubs and trees. He has a long term interest in wild flowers, has an allotment and works in a school garden.

**Questions to be written down at the beginning of the evening.**

## **January 2014**

### **January 27: DVD on a Permaculture-related theme**

Details to be announced.

Do bring seeds to share if you have any.

Unless otherwise stated, Monday meetings take place at

Bassil Shippam Centre, Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester PO19 7LG

Meetings start at 7.30pm, doors open at 7.15pm

**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 Weald and Downland Open Air Museum
- 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 – until October - Rachel Ritchie [rcritchie@hotmail.com](mailto:rcritchie@hotmail.com)

Membership Secretary – Nina Guilfoyle (01243 776063) [nina@nrglearning.co.uk](mailto:nina@nrglearning.co.uk)

### **Organisers:**

Speaker Secretary – until October -Vee Cowan (01243 780518)  
[varianne@yahoo.com](mailto:varianne@yahoo.com)

Bookshop/Librarian - Barbara MacGregor (01243 781849)

Infinity Orders – Pat (01243 602713) [pat\\_adams@btopenworld.com](mailto:pat_adams@btopenworld.com)

Publicity - Susan Sinnett-Jones (02392 341813) [a3ssj@mac.com](mailto:a3ssj@mac.com)

Website – Tom Broughton (01243 530019) [tom@chicogs.org.uk](mailto:tom@chicogs.org.uk)

### **Committee Members:**

Pat Alderton (01243 822615)

Rachel Ritchie

Nina Guilfoyle

Vee Cowan

Penelope Johnstone

John Bennett (01243 781289)

Susan Sinnett-Jones

[www.chicogs.org.uk](http://www.chicogs.org.uk)

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