

Chichester Organic Gardening Society



Newsletter 65
April 2014



Notes from the Committee

Not a brilliant winter, but we escaped the worst flooding – our sympathy is with the West Country farmers and growers who have battled with floods and their aftermath. But we have all been affected by the heavy rain, with warm weather – watch out for slugs and snails, later in the year.

However, as always, we hope for a great summer. Spring has started well, with occasional cold spells, and everything should grow well. A chance to try something new as well as old favourites?

If you have anything really outstanding, do bring to the Spring Fling – just to show off, if you do not wish to swap it! We again plan for a good array of plants and seedlings, a Quiz and the usual mouth-watering meal.

As you will see, we have arranged meetings for the rest of the year, and two summer visits. Since Vee stood down, this has been done jointly by committee members. **But we do need someone to co-ordinate**; if you think you would like to, please contact one of the Committee. You will have plenty of support and ideas and contacts.

You will see that membership subscription has had to rise (only by £1 p.a.) and that we shall have to charge members £1 for meetings; this is to cover the costs which rise all the time, as you know.

Also, there is a real need to keep up numbers. If you still have not renewed, please do so as soon as possible! Would it be easier by Standing Order?

The Committee

Reminder: dates: because of difficulties booking the Bassil Shippam Centre, the Plant Swap & Spring Fling has been moved forward to **Monday 9 June 2014**.

Visits: Petworth on Thursday 17 July, Tree Walk on Thursday 14 August. See details below.

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. As you will see below, from next year it will go up to £6 p.a. for all, with £6 for new members starting now.

Many thanks to those members who have already renewed their subscription. We would still like to welcome new members, so please do encourage friends to come to meetings, and if they are interested, to join.

Also, currently there are a few members who have yet to renew. We really do hope that it is just an over-sight; hope to hear from you very soon.

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 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.

COGS FUNDING - REMINDER

Those of you who were at the AGM will know that we have had to make some small but vital adjustments to our funding.

In short: **Subscriptions** for new members, and for all from next year, will be **£6** per year.

Talks: Members will give £1 per meeting, **Visitors** (as at present) £2. These are probably the smallest charges of any local Society!

Speakers and Meetings

We are always looking for suggestions for speakers. If you have any idea for speakers or visits, please let one of the Committee 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 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.

BEES IN YOUR GARDEN

A talk by James Norfolk of Chichester Beekeepers
on Monday 24 February 2014

James Norfolk gave us a talk on bees that was incredibly fascinating and interesting, so involving his audience that members were asking him questions until well after COGS normal finishing time.

He began by giving us factual information on the fluctuating bee population and the reasons for that; seasonal variations, predators, pesticides and farming practices for example. There are feral bees, individual bees such as bumble bees and honey bees that are kept domestically and in farms. The worst predator currently is the Asian hornet which preys on bees by hovering outside the entrance to their nests. If spotted it should be reported to DEFRA.

This was followed by a description of their life cycle, nectar collecting and other habits such as swarming and how swarming was dealt with by the designated members of bee keeping associations. He also gave advice on what to do if a swarm appears on your property.

We were able to see and handle natural honeycombs and the ones on frames that are placed into hives. A good hive can produce up to 30lbs of honey in a season.

Most significant to gardeners of course was the information on which plants produce lots of nectar for bees in order that pollination of fruits and vegetables can be facilitated. There are lists of these plants on the RHS website and it is necessary to bear in mind that one needs to provide different bee friendly plants for spring, summer and autumn . It is better to plant a clump of the same flower species rather than single specimens of different plants as bees prefer a ‘production line’ system of work.

Bees really love the fields of oil seed rape planted by farmers but this has two disadvantages. One is that once the rape has flowered there is nothing else in the fields for the bees and they will be short of food, the second is that the honey produced on this diet is very hard and difficult for the bees to feed from in the winter.

To conclude James showed a video made by the University of Sussex on their experimental work with bees. This video also gave information on the best bee friendly plants for domestic gardens, lavender, open flowered dahlias, borage and everlasting wall flowers being among the best.

For further information about bees and beekeeping courses in our area please visit the BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION’S website: <http://www.bbka.org.uk>

Mary Iden of Transition Chichester is trying to set up a group of people to promote the planting/sowing of bee friendly flowers so anyone interested in that should contact her through the Transition website.

Susan Sinnett-Jones

The Potato: Past, Present, and Future

Steve Millam provided us with an entertaining and informative evening on the potato at the March meeting. In Europe in the 16th century the parsnip was the staple diet and the potato was considered 'weird, poisonous, and downright evil'. The potato became popular in the 17th century and by 1845 it occupied a third of Irish arable land. Unfortunately it was because of lack of genetic diversity that terrible

blight occurred in that year. Today blight is monitored rigorously in this country by the Potato Council. There are blight resistant varieties, Sarpo varieties, but generally it was agreed by members who had grown them that the taste was not good.

Steve's expertise on the potato was revealed by his 20 years of research at Dundee University. He presented us with some amazing facts:

The average person spends more on crisps than soap and 94 kgs of potatoes are eaten per person in 1 year. Finally, Steve brought us up-to-date with the other uses of potatoes such as for packaging, disposable plates, and medication.

Pat Alderton

Oving Scarecrow Festival – Saturday 17th May

A new initiative! Transition Chichester are taking part, and have asked COGS to share on the Seeds stall. This seems an excellent opportunity for another appearance in a local show.

We can be under the ‘umbrella’ (actually Gazebo) of TC, with a small display of seeds and how to save, sow, and nurture them. We can also have seeds and seedlings for people to take for a donation, as at other shows.

We should be glad of your help, and especially of any seedlings.

Please contact any of the Committee, or email or phone Penelope: 01243 771881, or penelopejohnstone@yahoo.co.uk

Weald and Downland Countryside Show

This year the very popular show will be held on Saturday and Sunday, 11-12th October. We have not yet been officially invited but if we are we would like to take part again, as it has proved very interesting and enjoyable, and useful for COGS, in the past couple of years. We shall therefore be very grateful again for any help on those days.

Anyone helping gets a free entry, and time to walk around and sample the various exhibits and events of the show.

This year, the Transition Green Fair unfortunately clashes with the first day of WDOAM. As COGS do support TC, we would like to have a small stall at the Green Fair as well.

This means we shall be particularly looking for members to help at one or the other. **THIS IS URGENT!**

As a number of COGS members support TC on a personal basis, we are hoping that one or two of these will be able to 'man' COGS stall at the Green Fair. It will not be large, and will not involve a lot of work! You could combine helping COGS and one of the interest groups.

Summer Visits

Two are organised for this summer:

Petworth Community Garden Thursday 17 July, 1.30-3.30.

A follow-up to Kate's talk in April. Car share.

The Community Garden is just before the town, opposite the Fire Station. Turn in left to Martlet Road, and the garden is on the corner of Meadow Way, next to 40 Martlet Road. Postcode is GU28 0EZ.

As we need to know numbers, please phone Penelope (01243 771881) if you would like to come; and say whether you could offer a lift or would like one.

Chichester Tree Walk Thursday 14 August, 2.30 – meet outside the Museum and Library. This has been kindly arranged by the Chichester official guides, and will concentrate on the many interesting and historic trees of the city. Cost £4.50 per person.

Again it would be helpful to know numbers in advance.

Up-date on the Yacon

When I harvested my Yacon I was delighted to discover that it had several large, middle-sized and small tubers. They stored well, without much effort on my part. I was away for the whole of January and I left them in the kitchen (heating down to about 15c), covered with a black bin liner. Not ideal I know, but I didn't know quite what else to do with them! They were fine and on my return I took off the tubers and planted up the growing buds into soil. I now have 3 very healthy looking plants waiting to be put out when it gets much

warmer. I've transferred one plant to the greenhouse to see how it fares.

Eating

The tubers can be sliced and eaten raw. They have a very fresh, somewhat bland taste, but are extremely crunchy. As such they add textural interest to a salad. I also sliced some up and put them into a stir fry. Again they have a delicious crunch, but not much in the way of flavour. The peeled tubers have an unfortunate habit of turning brown (due to the inulin I presume) but it is not exactly enticing!

This year I am hoping to grow enough to be able to juice the tubers and then reduce it to a sweet syrup. As it can be used in cooking as a calorie free sweetener, it might well have some benefit. Also I understand that the leaves can be cooked as a vegetable.

So the assessment of this plant continues. At the moment I am not convinced of its benefits. My feeling is that if the juice is not worth the effort, I will be reducing the number of plants I grow. Watch this space!

Nina Guilfoyle

Potatoes

Following on from the really interesting talk about potatoes in March I thought people might be interested in the Hampshire Potato Day. This takes place over a weekend at the end of January in Whitechurch at the Testbourne Community Centre (signposted from the A34 going north from Southampton to Newbury). There is a huge variety of potatoes, about a hundred, which can be bought loose or in packs. You can also buy pea and bean seeds by the half pint! I have been going for three years and love buying a few potatoes of a variety which are unknown to me to try each year. Red Robin was my favourite new one last year. I do have their catalogue if anyone wants to have a look at it but there is also a link to varieties on the website. You can find more information about the weekend which took place this year by going to www.potatoday.org

Pauline Cobbold

Allotment in Spring

The tiny balls of ice
are bouncing, silvery, on the dark clods.
Where I have left the door ajar
I can see them, gathering
in the earthy hollows.
In the palm of my hand
a silver ball transforms
into a grey puddle.

I am shivering
but contented,
sitting on the plastic stool
and sipping tea.

The weeds also seem happy enough.
Nettles and grass and bindweed
staking their claim to the soil.
When the hail eases
I go and attack them,
though I know it's hopeless.

Then another shower starts
And I wend my way
At home my boots leave a muddy trail
on the pale tiles. In the courtyard
beyond the kitchen, primrose, anemone,
forget-me-not and fritillary
shine brightly. And then the sun too
starts to shine.

Jenny Webb
27.3.14

Goodwood Home Farm wins again!

A local free paper announced on 21 March ‘Goodwood Home Farm wins Sussex Food Producer of the Year award’. This was awarded at the annual Food and Drink ceremony held at Brighton’s Amex Stadium. Goodwood Home Farm, they report, is one of the largest lowland organic farms in the UK.. ‘The judges were impressed that all Goodwood products are reared or created on the farm... They also commended Goodwood for its self-sustaining ethos.’ This success follows on from their winning in the 2013 Great Taste Awards for their Southdown Shoulder of Lamb and their Molecome Blue Cheese; also prizes at the Southdown Sheep Society Premier Breed Society Show and Sale in Maidstone, at the end of July 2013.

Goodwood Farm Shop no longer have a stall at the fortnightly Farmers Market in Chichester, but their produce is available at Home Farm shop.

Ten Years Ago

The Newsletter of April 2004 was fairly short, and a good deal concerned events and projects which are no longer here. Visits were arranged and both Stansted and West Dean Tomato Show organisers were asking for help. Susan Maguire’s gardening tips recommended ‘As the ground warms up, carrots and beetroot can be sown outdoors, salad too. Start off peas in gutters to avoid mouse damage. The peas can be slid into prepared sites when hardened off. May is full steam ahead.’

One article was taken from the Soil Association, and with GM rearing its head again it may be interesting to see what was said ten years ago.

Government GM decision is muddled fudge says Soil Association

‘In response to Margaret Beckett’s recent announcement on GM crops, Patrick Holden, Director of the SA, said: “The Government had an opportunity to set out their vision for the future of UK farming and food. Instead we have a muddled fudge.’

‘The limited introduction of GM crops involves saying no to two out of three crops and saying that the third might be grown – but for one year only.

‘The Government wants the biotechnology industry to pay for the damage caused by their crops, and will consult on this in the summer. But the biotechnology companies are threatening not to let their crops be grown in the UK if they have to foot the bill.

The Government has avoided for now the key question of protecting consumers’ right to choose organic food free of GM contamination. It is a question they can’t dodge for much longer. The Soil Association is determined to protect that right, and to protect all organic food from GM contamination.”

From April 2004

In our last Newsletter we pointed to a recent booklet from Peter Melchett, Policy Director of the Soil Association, which shows that the threat has not gone away. To be opposed to GM crops does not mean any anti-science bias! We need good science, well researched and tested.

Transition Chichester continue their film evenings at the Basil Shippam Centre, 7.30 p.m. cost £5.

Monday 5 May: ‘**More than Honey**: One in three mouthfuls of the food we eat depends on pollination. The latest greatest film on the subject.’

Monday 2 June: ‘**Grow your Own**: A home grown comedy with a lot of heart when local folk find asylum seekers sharing their allotments, the unexpected results, and a miracle or two!’

Chichester Cathedral Festival of Flowers

Once every two years the Cathedral holds a Flower Festival, on a theme – this year The Music Makers. Dates are from Thursday 29th to Saturday 31st May, and we are invited to come and enjoy ‘A stunning array of creative, imaginative and beautiful flower designs, interpreting twelve centuries of music from pop to plainsong, classics to Jazz, Sacred to secular.’

Although the tickets are a bit pricey, this is the one time that the Cathedral charges visitors, and the funds go to the upkeep of this historic and beautiful cathedral.

Weald and Downland

Are again holding a **Historic Gardens weekend**, from 4-6 July. Last year some members joined with the Bognor gardeners for a visit; we are not organising the same this time, but the Museum is well worth a visit especially with a special theme such as this.

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by Mon **5 May** please.

(cheques or internet transfer to be with Pat by that date)

Delivery on Tuesday **13 May** 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

The catalogue can be downloaded at

<http://infinityfoodswholesale.co.uk/catalogue/>

* * * * *

COGS MEETINGS 2014

April 28 Kate Brickell of Petworth Community Garden

How the Community Garden began, and how it functions today

* * * * *

We are giving you here the dates and subjects for the rest of 2014.
There will be more details in the next Newsletter.

June 9 (note change of date) Plant Swap, Quiz, Spring Fling

Bring plants to swap or show, food (!) and your own cutlery, glasses.

September 29 Wildwood – Jo and Alan Waters from Halnaker will talk about their work with coppicing, with examples of their products.

October 27 AGM and Harvest Supper

November 24 Prof Gerald Blunden Emeritus Professor Portsmouth University

“The search for new drugs and other useful products from plants”

SUMMER VISITS

July 17th Petworth Community Garden

August 14th Chichester Tree and Walls Walk

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 May, outdoors June 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 £6.00 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 – David Scott (01243 778689) d4davidscott@btinternet.com

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

Organisers:

Speaker Secretary – vacant; temporarily filled by Committee

Bookshop/Librarian - Barbara MacGregor (01243 781849)

Infinity Orders – Pat (01243 602713) pat_adams@btopenworld.com

Publicity - Susan Sinnett-Jones (02392 341813) a3ssi@mac.com

Website – Tom Broughton (01243 530019) tom@chicogs.org.uk

Committee Members:

Pat Alderton (01243 822615)

Nina Guilfoyle

Penelope Johnstone

Susan Sinnett-Jones

David Scott

John Bennett (01243 781289)

www.chicogs.org.uk

This newsletter is printed on paper from managed forests