

Chichester Organic Gardening Society



Newsletter 51
September 2009



NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

September 2009

Once again, it's been a mixed bag of a summer. In spite of the moans, it has been rather warm here in the South with a reasonable amount of sunshine. Together with the rain that fell earlier, Mother Nature has come up trumps and most crops, especially soft fruits and salads, flourished.

The downside has been the high humidity and another summer of the dread blight. As organic gardeners, we have to accept the downs as part of the complex living web we try to work with but that doesn't mean not doing everything we can within our principles to nurture and protect our crops. If you cannot get round problems by using chemicals, then sensible crop hygiene is a 'must', especially in communal spaces. On at least one Chichester allotment, this has been noticeably absent, with blighted tomatoes being pulled up without bagging and casually thrown on compost heaps or even open ground. It would be a good idea to ask the Chichester City Property Manager, who is in charge of allotments, to make advice on good allotment hygiene a priority in the next newsletter.

COGS itself continues to be vibrant. Our monthly meetings have been well-attended. This is thanks to the interesting range of speakers recruited by Vee Cowan, who also arranged the programme of summer visits to Fittleworth Gardens, the Sustainability Garden at East Meon and St James' Allotments, which are reported on elsewhere in this newsletter. We had a much wider range of vegetable and herb plants on our stall at Stansted this year and were busy most of the time. Thank you to everyone who helped in all sorts of ways to make it a successful year.

There is a growing public interest in sustainable gardening and we are in danger of becoming almost trendy. By working where possible in co-operation with other sympathetic local organisations like

Transition Chichester, we can hope to spread the message of sustainable growing more widely.

We have acquired seven new members during the year, although we still struggle to make up the numbers as old members fade away. The Committee and Tom, the newsletter editor, are working on ideas to make more people aware of Cogs. One of the first results of this is the new website – www.chicogs.org.uk. Please get in the habit of visiting this regularly if you can and telling your friends about it.

Talking of members who fade away – this year saw the sad loss of Peter Maguire. Without Susan and Peter, there would have been no COGS, and they have been stalwarts of the Society since the beginning. He will be missed.

Good harvesting



The Committee

Peter Maguire

It is with great sadness that we have to report that Peter died in July. He was a founding member of COGS, having encouraged Susan to start the society soon after they moved to Church Norton. He was a constant support, being a committee member for ten years and an indefatigable salesman for the group at all the events. Few who spoke to Peter left our stand without becoming a member of COGS!

His wisdom, humour and sound advice meant that the group was created on a solid footing and continued to grow. He had many new ideas, ranging from initiating the group's Constitution to setting up the Infinity Foods bulk purchase scheme.

Susan thanks you all for the cards, letters and messages of support and would like you to know that £600 was raised for the Stroke Association.

Pat Adams

Gill Crossley

COGS member, Gill Crossley died early this month. Gill had severe heart problems all her life, having been born with a hole in the heart and then suffered rheumatic fever as a child. She had several life-saving operations. In spite of this - a keen gardener, musician and member of her local Church - she lived a busy and productive life. Very few outside of her immediate family knew of her problems and her death from multiple organ failure came as a great shock to many. Our thoughts go out to Richard, her husband, and her family and friends

Liz Campling

COGS NOTICES

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.

We also need volunteers to help at meetings. Please contact Liz Campling 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. Liz Campling 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.

REMINDER about Subscriptions:

You will find a separate Renewal form with this Newsletter. Please return it as soon as possible, by post or if more convenient to Nina at the September or October meeting; and the subscription has, as voted last year, gone up to **£5 per household**. Meetings are free but **non-members pay £2 for attendance**.

WE'D LIKE TO CUT OUR COSTS!

In an effort to keep our postal and printing costs down we'd like to offer those members who would prefer it, the opportunity to receive the Newsletter via email. If you would be happy to do so then all you need to do is email nina@nrglearning.co.uk with NEWSLETTER in the subject heading – that's it! We'll put your name on a mailing list and you'll receive your next newsletter via email. Couldn't be simpler!

This makes very good economic sense and does, of course cut down on paper usage, so we do hope you will consider it.

Thank you.

Some of you have expressed a preference for being able to pay your subs by Standing Order. If you wish to do so you will need to set up a Standing Order at your bank. You will need the following information:

Lloyds TSB

No: 1914064

Sort code: 30 91 97

In name of: Chichester Organic Gardening Society. Please remember that a year's subscription is now £5.00.

New Treasurer Sought

Liz has been Treasurer for 4 years and feels it might be time for a change. The job isn't difficult or time-consuming. You don't have to be financial wizard. It just requires commonsense and a modicum of good organisation. If anyone would like to volunteer, please let the Committee know. There can be as long a handover period as you need and Liz will obviously lend all the help she can during the changeover.

PRODUCE AND SEEDS

At this time of year some of us have a real glut of good things from the garden, and might want to share this. It seems a good idea to return to an earlier custom of members bringing any extra produce, plants, etc., to meetings for anyone who might like them. No payment as such, but donations can be left in the box provided. If you have a really large item you'd like to find a home for, bring a description. But if no-one wants your enormous marrow please take it home again!

Stansted Show

Many thanks to all the helpers and plant growers for making a successful COGS stand this year. Takings were up on last year and we made a profit of £107.43 (£256.93 less stand rental of £149.50) with a lot of interest from visitors about organic gardening. There was a wonderful selection of plants, many more vegetables and herbs + some flowers which were all snapped up by the public. All the membership forms were taken and we have some new members and hope more will join soon.



A specially big thanks to Penelope Johnstone for all her help in organising the plants and to Hazel for setting up the stand. *Varianne*

Visit to Tim and Maddy Harland's Permaculture Garden

On a rather chilly overcast July evening a group of us met at this wonderful garden and spent the next two hours being inspired, educated and generally entertained by this delightful couple.

Tim and Maddy bought a plot of farmland behind their house in the early 1990's and then set about creating a garden based on permaculture principles which is modelled on and works with,

nature. They have planted a 'canopy' layer of tall trees and shrubs which consists of over 60 fruit and nut trees. Included in that number is Kentish cobs, a medlar, pear and apple trees – and especially interesting, was an old Hampshire variety of apple whose fruit can store for up to 2 years! In the next layer they have all sorts of common bush fruits (currants and berries) and have just planted a hardy self-fertilising Kiwi plant purchased from the Agro Forestry Trust

www.agroforestry.co.uk . At first glance the garden looks like an edge of woodland with a few cultivated areas. It's not a garden for those who like neat edges and straight lines, but in terms of sustainability and wildlife-friendly sites it's inspirational!

Nina Guilfoyle



COGS Allotment Visit

On Monday 10 August a group of about twelve members gathered at the padlocked gate of the St James Allotments, for one of our summer visits. The drizzle held off for an hour and a half, while we wandered around the site, looking at and occasionally commenting on a variety of allotments, ranging from the original to traditional, well tended to slightly overstocked (with weeds). The site was, apparently, a tip in Victorian times, and allotmenters are constantly turning up pieces of glass and china, and occasionally such items as a complete small beer bottle from 'East Street Brewery'. The main enemy is bindweed. Sheds come in all sizes and styles.

A particular feature here is the St James Allotment Association, started about two years ago by Richard, who unfortunately could not be there. Also absent was Tim who had done most of the work in erecting the new Shed. Although finished and secured, it still awaits shelving. There is already a collection of items for borrowing, some surplus for taking away, and the storage space will by next year be in use for holding members' seeds for collection. These can be bulk ordered through the Association, giving members convenience of access and a considerable saving on price.

Next year we hope one of our summer visits will be to a different allotment – perhaps Little Breach – since each site has its own character (and characters), and every single allotment can provide the visitor with ideas.

Penelope Johnstone



Visit To Fittleworth Gardens on 15 June

About a dozen of us made the trip to Fittleworth on one of the longest days of the year and were rewarded with a – relatively – warm evening and a guided tour by Head Gardener, Mark Saunders.

The gardens surround a large Georgian house and are a fascinating mixture of the formal and informal. The formal part includes a fountain garden, a rose garden and a work-in-progress redesigning the terracing immediately outside the house. The informal includes meadow and wildlife areas and mixed borders full of annuals and perennials. Star of the show has to be an ancient cedar tree to the side of the house. How old it is exactly members with better memories may be able to recall.

Maintaining the gardens is a never-ending labour of love. Mark does the work with the help of only one other fulltime assistant and part-time student and volunteers. COGS members who had been on the previous visit a few years ago were astonished at how much has been achieved since last time. Mark was concerned to tell us that he was not fully organic, as he sometimes purchases non-organic seed, but his methods are mostly traditional and non-invasive. No artificial chemical is used on the gardens.

The highlight of the tour, though, had to be the walled vegetable garden, where it seemed that every conceivable vegetable and herb cultivatable in our climate was grown by traditional methods sympathetic to climate and soil. All the culinary needs of the house are supplied from here, although he admitted that he sometimes gets a ‘not runner beans again’ complaint at the height of the season.

The evening was rounded off by a visit to Mark’s own cottage garden around his house, where we were given a display of climbing and acrobatics by his cat!!

Liz Campling

Totally Tomato 2009

This year we were fortunate with the weather; over the weekend of the 5th and 6th September it was dry, warm and sunny, and the crowds flocked to West Dean Gardens for the event. There were one or two changes for us this year. Because the Heritage Tomato people were not running their usual tasting sessions Sarah and Jim decided to run their own – from our stall – so we were located in a larger ‘shed’ next to Jim’s office. It was much easier to set up and dismantle and we hope it will be repeated in 2010. We had a full compliment of members on the roster and we ran the tasting virtually without help, although Shirley from West Dean was great at preparing the tomatoes and making sure they were clean! We couldn’t have managed without tomatoes from West Dean, but A VERY BIG THANK YOU to those kind people who brought their own along to share, and who helped over the weekend.

Gina Carrington

Organic ‘mainstream agriculture in waiting’

24 June 2009

(<http://www.soilassociation.org>)

The Soil Association welcomes a new independent report by the University of Reading, funded by the Soil Association and an independent trust, which shows that organic farming has "much to offer" and "is, perhaps, mainstream agriculture in waiting."



Peter Melchett, Soil Association policy director, comments:

"Organic farming does not have all the answers to the challenges of climate change and diet related ill-health, and there is still a lot of work to do to improve organic systems, but the report, 'England and Wales under organic agriculture: how much food could be produced?' shows the positive impact that organic farming could have.

"In the face of the rising prices and scarcity of key fossil fuel and mineral inputs, and the need to cut greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050, food and farming systems will have to go through revolutionary changes in the next few decades. The rapidly escalating diet related health crisis means that our diets are also going to have to change dramatically. This independent report shows that organic farming could provide us with a far healthier and much more climate friendly diet."

Key findings:

- * Cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and water pollution.

- * Energy intensive inputs to farming would fall, with fertilizer inputs cut by 95% and sprays by 98%.

- * More wildlife supported.

- * Jobs in the countryside would increase, including a 73% increase in farm employment.

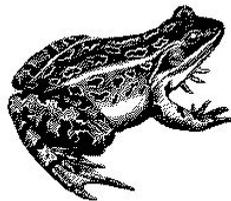
- * As organic fruit and vegetable yields compare favourably with conventional agriculture, organic farming could, with some adjustment, supply similar volumes as at present, or even increase output if necessary.

- * Due to the need to abolish intensive pig and poultry systems in organic agriculture, chicken, egg and pig meat production would fall to roughly a quarter of current levels, making large quantities of grain available for human consumption.

- * Dairy production would fall by around 30%-40%, unless herds were to be re-established and dairies were to re-open in parts of the country which have lost them.

- * While the amount of wheat and barley produced would drop by around 30% due to lower yields, because far less grain would be fed to animals there could be as much wheat and barley available for human consumption under an organic system as there is at present.

- * A wholly organic agriculture could actually produce more beef and lamb than at present, with beef production rising by 68% and lamb by 55%.



The Incomplete Organic Gardener

Part Three - September to January

An apparent problem at this time of year is what can be sown or planted out as late as October and November. Actually there's quite a lot, even without using a cold greenhouse for the lettuce. Corn salad can be sown outside, perhaps some oriental vegetables and rocket. If you've got them, spring cabbage, early onions and late leeks can be planted out. Broad beans can go in in October – though in my case that seems to mean giving the mice a nice winter food bonus – as can garlic, though November might be better. With the changing seasons, more may be possible and it's always worth experimenting.

Now is the time, however, to start planning what you want for next year, and where it can be planted. Rotation is necessary, so as to prevent the build up of pests and diseases. But the problem with crop rotation is that it never quite works out in practice. The theory is easy – a four course rotation of roots, brassicas, potatoes and miscellaneous or the familiar three course rotation of roots (including potatoes), brassicas and miscellaneous. However, the harvesting and sowing/planting of the next crop rarely (in my experience anyway) fits neatly end on, and not everyone has the amount of space needed for a classic rotation. Perhaps what is most workable is just trying to avoid repeat cropping for as long as you can. There are families of plants, and as a general rule it's best to avoid planting members of the same family one after the other. Just choose a different family from the list below for the next planting. However, some members of each family can be placed in different rotation categories. Strangely, that can actually make rotation planning easier, even if apparently a bit confusing at first glance! As you can see from the table below, there are some big families, such as the brassicas (a dozen plus members) and some small ones such as beet (about three).

The Families of Vegetables (*M for miscellaneous, R for roots*)

Alliums: Chives, garlic, leek, onion, shallots, spring onion. (*All M*)

Beet: Beetroot (*R*), chard (*M*), spinach (*M*),

Brassicas: Cabbages, calabrese/broccoli, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, oriental cabbages, radish, rocket, sprouts, swede, turnip.

Cucurbitae: Cucumber, courgette, marrow, squash, pumpkin, gourd (*All M*)

Legumes: Beans (Butter, broad, French, runner), peas (*All M*)

Umbellifers: Carrot (*R*), celeriac (*M*), celery (*M*), parsley, parsnip (*R*).

Solanaceae: Potato (*R*) and tomato (*M*).

Other: Chicory (*R*), endive, lettuce, sweet corn (*All M*)

These family relations, as with people, are not always obvious, but we soon get to know which ones live happily together, and which ones shouldn't follow on! It does mean that we can plant up beds with a variety of brassicas, and interplant with salad crops such as radish rocket – they seem to get on together quite well. This year I also planted lettuce amongst my savoys and cauliflowers with some success. However, potatoes were, for the first time in 10 years, a bit of a failure. They just stopped growing in early August. Nothing wrong with the tubers, but the yield was down by about three quarters. Unless anyone has a better idea, I suspect a lack of water at a critical time. What it did allow, however, was for an unexpected chance of an experiment in planting beans in the ex-potato beds. This seems to have worked – lots of climbing French beans, as well as spagna or butter beans and borlotto beans (both from *Seeds of Italy*). However, time will tell whether they crop well in what could be a cool autumn.



The interplanting of carrots and onions recommended in the last article seem to have deterred the carrot fly, but at the expense of only getting small onions. Can't win them all! The tomatoes were once again well protected by the tagetes so no whitefly. However, the arrival of blight (always a problem on an allotment) has put paid to that crop rather early. Climbing nasturtiums looked lovely amongst the cabbages, and may have done some good at the same time. In preparing for the New Year, the most useful thing to do for the land in October and November, apart from clearing up the debris of the last growing season, is to spread compost or manure

on the beds. I no longer dig it in. Last year I simply spread manure on one bed, and on another forked it in. I could see no difference between the two beds by the next February.

If you have fruit bushes, pruning gooseberries and red, white and black currants can be done now as can apple and pear trees and raspberry canes. Remember that black currants need different treatment to the red and whites! All of them can use some bone meal and compost. By December it's seed catalogue time, and further wrestling with planning your crop rotations. Good gardening for 2010!

Rob Campling



COGS DIARY DATES

Monday September 28 Monica Lucas - "The Beekeepers Gardens"

Monica Lucas, a local beekeeper, will talk about the plants that we can grow in our gardens to attract the honey bees without which the human race will not survive. She will also tell us about diseases that the honeybees are at present suffering from. Monica will also bring plants for us to buy.

Monday Oct 26 Harvest Supper

November 30 Rosemary Moon - Ready Steady Cook

How creative can you be with garden produce at the end of November? Bring along a small amount of your own fruit or veg, or something seasonal and local, and Chichester-based cookery writer Rosemary Moon will create some delicious recipes on the spot. There will also be ideas for simple seasonings to bring life and vigour to cold months cookery. An evening of great tasting fun.

Monday January 25 A Farm for the Future DVD (Shown on BBC2 Feb 2009)

A chance to see the film that shows how modern farming methods have to change. Presenter and co-producer Rebecca Hosking explores the importance of oil in farming and the potential impact of peak oil. The film has a passionate narrative centered on Rebecca's small family farm in South West England and how it can manage the transition away from a fossil fuel economy.

Colin Campbell and Richard Heinberg contribute, permaculture, biofuels, biodiversity, forest gardens, gardening vs farming, industrial farming and no-till farming are all covered. Present methods cannot go on feeding the UK and this film concentrates on the necessity to find a new way to feed the nation

All the above meetings take place at:

Bassil Shippam Centre, Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester PO19 4LG
Meetings start at 7.30pm, doors open at 7.15pm

INFINITY FOODS

Next orders to Pat by Wednesday 25th November please.

(Collect Tuesday 1st 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 – Liz Campling (01243 532910) lizcamplinguk@hotmail.com

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

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Bookshop/Librarian - Barbara MacGregor (01243 781849)

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www.chicogs.org.uk

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