

Chichester Organic Gardening Society

Newsletter 83 April 2021

Notes from the Committee

Spring is here. Despite bouts of uninspiring weather, the signs are all around us. Daylight hours are longer; there is real warmth in the sun when it shines; spring flowers are out in profusion; and the birds are busy and noisy all around us. They have already started pecking at the string holding up our sweet peas for nest material. Last year we were forced eventually to resort to some ugly plastic stuff to keep our plants upright. I am sure, we are all busy with our seedlings and watching the weather forecasts for the right time to plant everything outside where it belongs. Here's hoping for a bumper harvest and verdant gardens in 2021.

We managed to resume our monthly meetings in February and March on Zoom. Reports are below. We are hoping, if relaxation of the rules goes plan, to have a real face to face meeting at the Bassil Shippam Centre in May.

22nd February – Nick Mole and Emma Pavans de Ceccatty from the **Pesticide Action Network (PAN)** gave a presentation on pesticide-free towns. It was good to hear how many towns and cities including Bristol, Brighton, Lewes and some London boroughs have phased out chemical pesticides and herbicides especially **glyphosate** in their maintenance of green spaces and roadside verges. Particularly inspiring is what happened when Lambeth Council stopped spraying weeds in the paving on some housing estates and many species of native wildflowers sprung up in the gaps. Eventually local residents became so enthusiastic that they started planting their own flower seeds in the gaps as well, leading to a more varied and attractive environment. As a result of this talk, the Cogs Committee decided to send a letter to all the candidates standing for the Chichester area in the County Council elections in May asking them, if elected, to lobby for the Highways Authority (part of WSCC) to abandon spraying roadside and verges with glyphosate. These will go out once the candidate list is published on 9th April and a copy will appear on the website. For further information on the work of Pan, visit their website at www.pan-uk.org.

29th March – **Sarah Hughes** has been Wildlife Officer with Chichester District Council for over 20 years during which she has dedicated much of her time to minimising the damaging effects of development and transport on local wildlife. She drew our attention to a German report that insect life in Europe has declined by around 75% since the 1970s. In our own backyard, dormice, water voles and several species of bat – once common inhabitants of the Southern English countryside – are now endangered species. With the pressure on West Sussex south of the Downs to provide big increases in housing, she is working on securing a network of **wildlife corridors** to preserve the habitats of endangered species and the network of local chalk streams, particularly important as 85% of the world's chalk streams are in England, mainly in the South and South-east. Her passion for wildlife conservation is truly inspiring. We desperately need more affordable housing, especially for our young people, and it is on the shoulders of dedicated people like Sarah that the responsibility to achieve this without irreparable destruction of habitats will rest.

Future Meetings

26th April – Zoom talk: Paula Chatfield and Jenny Cole will be speaking on April 26th. 'What do the Tree Wardens do for Chichester?' They will talk about the new tree planting initiative for Winter 21/22 as well those that have already happened.

They'll also let folk know about the new position in District Council for 'Trees outside Woods Officer' Sophie Hamnett, who was appointed at the end of December 20 for three years. And they will show some beautiful pictures!

24th May – Spring Fling. Subject to regulations, we are hoping to hold this face to face in the Bassil Shippam Centre. The customary 'bring and share' supper will probably not be possible but we hope to have a plant swop, quiz and a good get-together after all this time.

27th September – Presentation by **Paul Gallivan, head gardener at Woolbeding.** At the Bassil Shippam Centre. Stephanie will keep members up to date if this changes

25th October – **AGM** at Bassil Shippam Centre. Whether it will be possible to hold our traditional harvest supper remains to be seen.

29th November – to be decided

Summer Visits

If the situation continues to improve, we hope to organise some but nothing has been decided yet. Watch the space!

*Unless otherwise stated, Monday meetings take place at the Bassil Shippam Centre, Tozer Way, St Pancras, Chichester, PO19 7LG.
Meetings start at 7.30pm; doors open at 7.15pm*

Your Cogs Organisers are:

Treasurer – Liz Campling (01243 532910; lizcamplinguk@hotmail.com)

Secretary – Penelope Johnstone (01243 771881; penelopejohnstone@yahoo.co.uk)

Membership Secretary – Stephanie Carn (01243 533393; stephcarn@gmail.com)

Website – Tom Broughton (01243 790026; tom@chicogs.org.uk)

Committee Members – Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary, plus:

Pat Alderton (01243 822615) Vee Cowan (07789 013472)

Diana Morgan (01243 786386)

www.chicogs.org.uk