



Bishop's Waltham Gardening Club



BWGC

Registered Charity No.
1169353

Newsletter Autumn 2018

Welcome to the Gardening Club's Outstanding Autumn Edition.

Winter can be a bore, once the Festive Season is over but, meanwhile, there is still plenty of time (so you think!) to get most jobs completed.

Well, Autumn is the time for digging, either to clear a plot after harvesting, or breaking up a new bed. Digging in compost really helps, and the manure at the 'Shop at the Shed' is good stuff to improve your soil. It improves the soil structure, brings billions of extra helpers into the soil, it helps hold water in dry spells but, as it bulks up the soil, allows excess water to drain through.

Clay can be good - but be patient.

(Courtesy of Garden Organic)

Add organic matter. This helps improve drainage and lighten heavy soil. It also provides nutrients for beneficial soil microorganisms which will, in turn, also help improve the soil. Before planting in spring, add compost and aged manure. A 2- to 3-inch layer worked into the soil to shovel depth is a good amount. Throughout the growing season, mulch with organic materials like grass clippings, shredded leaves, or additional compost. Since soil microorganisms literally "eat" organic matter, make a habit of continually adding it to your soil.

Build raised beds. Because clay soils hold water, creating raised beds can help improve drainage by encouraging water to run off.

Mulch beds over the winter. Driving rain can really pack down bare soil, so keep beds mulched with organic matter both during the growing season and over the winter.

Plant a cover crop. A cover crop is like a living mulch. Different cover crops suit different regions.

Tip. Improving soil takes time, so don't expect overnight results

Do YOU know the answer? Even the experts don't!
Who knows what weed killer really kills, apart from

weeds. Could worms and useful bacteria survive? Do bees and beneficial insects that land on it get away scot-free? You can't use the next few months mowing for compost, either.

With 'Sugar Tax' now in force, did our European ancestors think ahead? Using Parsnips, they would sweeten cakes.

Don't trifle with Truffles..... Especially Black ones. In Monmouthshire they have grown Black Truffles. Specialists in Mycorrhizal Systems from University of Cambridge went all the way across the country, east to west, to see the result of a 'Holm Oak' which was 'inoculated' to promote the growth. A trained dog found it but it must have been a very boring task, as the Oak was planted nine years ago!! They say patience is a virtue. Those weird little wrinkly black things do have a value, however..... about £1700 per kg.

Garlic is now so popular (though I still wouldn't want to be confined on a train with users!!) that around November you need to be planting. It's easy to grow and it has definite health benefits. Buy from an approved source and only those produced for cultivation. Using supermarket varieties risks importing disease, and they may be a variety unsuited - e.g. not hardy - to our climate. A couple of months below 10c degrees and it will develop good sized bulbs. Don't forget to split the garlic bulb into 'cloves' before planting in a soil that contains good organic matter placed earlier in the year.

(Ed. Soon to be available at our Shop at the Shed)

Rhubarb, too, likes to be well frosted in the winter - make sure its crown is exposed or it may rot away. Rhubarb thrives in a northern climate such as Norway, and is one of the few fruits, except berries, that can be successfully grown this far north.



CARBON

Reduce your carbon footprint.

Many fertilisers are heavy in nitrogen which, although essential for plant growth, is already present in soils with plenty of organic matter. Horse manure, garden compost and peat-free potting composts all boost the nitrogen level without increasing carbon emissions. Where is the link? Well, producing nitrogen on an industrial scale from inert sources uses much fossil fuel. Seaweed -if you can get it- is good and so is fish, blood and bone fertiliser. The latter is also ideal as it breaks down more slowly and thus gives a 'little-and-often' boost to crops.

Protect your tender plants over the Winter.

See 'overwintering tender plants' at rhs.org.uk for professional advice.

Are you too tidy to help wildlife in Winter?

Whilst you can purchase 'insect hotels, bee homes and various homes for hedgehogs or frogs and toads, many invertebrates hide in leaf litter and dead plant stems. Log piles -placed in a shady part of the garden- are ideal for a wide range starting with insects and going up the food chain to frogs, toads, snakes, newts etc. Even a loose pile of large stones may help.

Bonfires, especially the 'Guy Fawkes' types need checking BEFORE lighting, as many animals small and large, hide there. They didn't know you were going to torch their homes, so please move the pile to an adjacent place before lighting. It doesn't take long, and you could save a little creature's life.

Suttons Super Offer.

Many of you will know that, as a respected Gardening Club, we are able to offer our members a 'Group Order Scheme' from Suttons. All the discount comes to you, the Club does not take a percentage. You will get 50% off all seeds, and 15% of all other items (excl. P+P and Special Offers already discounted). Last year, members placed orders worth £1806.80 (gross) but only paid £1065.18 (net). If you do NOT already receive brochures from Suttons and would like to take advantage of the Member's Scheme, please let me know at robinbreach@btconnect.com and I will arrange for Suttons to send you one. Also, the code to obtain your discount will be emailed and also displayed at The Shed. If ordering online, just quote the code, and the discount should be automatically deducted. If ordering by post you must quote the code and then work out the discount yourself. The discount holds for the whole brochure 'year', but P+P is due on each separate order. Buy seeds now for

hardy veg next year, or even the year after. (Ed. *BEFORE you order, do remember that the Shop at the Shed will stock some items (please see Tim Gover's report) and you are able to buy exactly the quantity you require, whether it be one potato or four shallots, rather than paying for a set quantity.*)

Make mine a mint, but I couldn't eat a 'hole' one!

There is quite a variety of Mint, so try them and see what suits you. Listed below are some of the more commonly grown varieties of mint for the garden: Peppermint. Spearmint. Pineapple mint. Apple mint. Pennyroyal. Ginger mint. Catmint. (Nepeta) Red Raripila mint. And you could try Polo, the mint with the less fattening centre!!
(*Peppermint and Apple Mint are great with Mojitos.*)

From little acorns, mighty oaks may grow - courtesy of a bird!

If that's the case it may well be due to that attractive bird, the Jay. Not often seen until the autumn because it mostly inhabits woodland areas. It competes with squirrels to lay up a store for the winter, and both can be seen searching for, and burying, as many acorns as they can. The Jay can stash away about 2000 in various places, but its memory isn't good enough to remember where, so it's pretty well pot luck when it retrieves them during the cold weather. The squirrel seems to have the better memory but, perhaps with a little more brain power, it would let the Jay do all the hard work!

Bee happy, bee thankful...

The world's most widely used insecticides will be banned from all fields within six months, to protect both wild and honeybees that are vital to crop pollination. The European Union will ban those insecticides from all fields due to the serious danger they pose to bees. The ban on neonicotinoids, approved by member nations recently, is expected to come into force by the end of 2018 and will mean they can only be used in closed greenhouses. **Please be patient for new rules applicable to organic products due on 1 January 2021.** It is expected that the UK will acknowledge the new rules after Brexit. For a comparison of weed killer methods (thermal, hot water and Glyphosate) see - <http://www.regional.org.au/au/asa/1998/6/31shewitt.htm>

Organic weed killers. These contain pelargonic acid (a fatty acid). They only kill top growth, usually the roots are not affected.

A Blast from the Past from Peter Burkett.

Just wanted to say thank you again to the trustees for awarding me the Best Kept Allotment 2017, it is

always nice to receive something like this as a reward for one's labours.

I was re-reading the minutes of last year's AGM and spotted a note saying that the current allotments date from 1972. I was one of the first tenants of the allotments and I have checked back in my diaries and see that I was notified by the Parish Clerk, George Newberry, on the 7th May 1973 that I had been allocated an allotment and I started working on it that same day. I can only assume the 1972 date reflects when the Parish Council took ownership of the field. In advance of allocating the plots the Council got a local farmer to plough the whole field (weeds and all) before marking out the first set of 10-rod plots nearest the roadway, which is where my plot is. There were no pathways between the plots, these were developed by the plot-holders themselves over the years. I do not have a record of the initial rental but by 1978 it was the princely sum of £2 for the 10-rod plot.

Many thanks, Peter, but you are showing your age!! Perhaps it was a children's plot, though??

This year's winner is.....WAIT FOR IT.....Attend our A.G.M in January and find out!!

Did Peter make a 'rash' decision.?

Incidentally, Peter had a nasty argument with some Parsnips. I didn't know they could put one in hospital. Apparently, whilst the roots are no problem, the leaves, in sunlight, are quite dangerous. People who grow parsnips often leave them in the ground and harvest them as required. This may mean that, in the spring, unharvested plants run to seed and are of no use. When, after clearing his allotment of some mature plants on a sunny day, he suffered blistering to his arms and a change in pigmentation, together with large blisters. With less sunlight in winter, the danger might be less, but it makes sense always to wear protective gloves when handling Parsnips.

(Ed. and many other plants, too. Check online.)

Are you a Social Media fan?

As already mentioned in a recent email circular, we are looking for someone (that could be plural) to set up and manage our proposed Facebook, Twitter etc accounts. We realise the impact that social media has in the modern world, and hope to recruit someone who is 'au fait' with it all. As mentioned, you would not have to be a Committee member -although you would be very welcome to do so – you would just need to keep the Trustees up-to-date with events and proposals. So, if you are keen, contact us via our website www.bwgc.org.uk and let's talk!

The changing seasons at our Albany Road allotments; from one of the coldest days, to a cheery welcome on one of the hottest.



From the allotments

There are now only one or two vacant plots available, so if you know of anyone who is interested in having an allotment, please tell them to contact me sooner rather than later. Our recent work party was disappointing – once again it was trustees plus the same people who volunteer each time. Thanks to all the people who do help out – in particular Brian and Sandy for all their help, especially in maintaining the mowers, John Hayes who mows the driveways, Jeremy, Frances and her children, John Dixie and Jean who turned up for the work party once again., it was unfortunately extremely hot and not the ideal weather for working outside.

We must now look at how the allotments are maintained. Currently it is all done by volunteers but if there are not enough people prepared to help, then paying contractors to do the work may be the next option. This may result in an increase in your allotment fees. Any positive suggestions/ideas on how to resolve this would be welcome, also any offers of help. Please get involved in your allotment community – the more people who help, the less work there is for us all to do.

LARRY AND ANTHEA

Membership forms are included in your Newsletter as we hope you will renew at the reasonable fee of just £6, £10 for two living at the same address. As always, children under the age of 16 are welcome to join for free! If you could send in (or deliver to our 'Shop at the Shed' with your payment it would be much appreciated.

The Shop at the Shed – Autumn 2018

We have taken the decision not to sell Spring Bulbs in the Shed this year because, quite frankly, we have struggled in recent years to sell the few which we have purchased and have ended up digging a big hole at the allotments to get rid of them. I am sure the reason has been price as we cannot compete with the local garden centres who seem to hand out paper bags as you walk in and invite you to fill them for a quid or not much more. We shall, however, be stocking our usual range of onion sets, shallots, garlic and broad beans for Autumn sowing. I cannot over emphasise the importance of getting some of these going before winter sets in because it gives you an

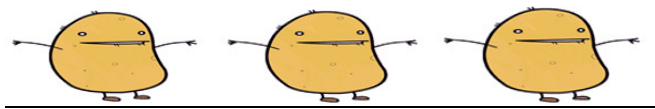
early start to harvesting next summer. Given a normal Winter and Spring you should be picking beans in May, just when other green vegetables are in short supply. The shallots planted early generally turn out much bigger than the ones planted in March or April and they keep for a long time. I normally plant onions in Autumn and Spring to give me a supply well into next winter.

We shall close the shop at the end of October and re-open on the first Saturday in February when you should have the opportunity to purchase your seed potatoes. Before then I hope to secure a good supply of manure which we shall still be selling at just a pound a barrow.

Meanwhile I would like to thank those loyal helpers who man the till on Saturday and Sunday mornings. If you have never used our shop I would urge you to pay us a visit so that you can see the range of items we supply. By supporting us we can make a reasonable profit which in turn helps to keep allotment rents and membership fees as low as they are.

TIM GOVER

BWGC 62nd Annual Show Report & Winners 2018; please see the special "Show Extra"



The BWGC Annual Great Single Spud-tastic Competition.

Thanks to Anthea and Larry (who also arranged the BBQ) this seems to be a perennial, with ever more members and allotmentees joining in. For just 50p, you can enter and endeavour to grow the biggest crop from just one potato.

This maybe a fun competition, but there is always plenty of fiendly rivalry, and that came out at the 'weigh-in and BBQ when the proceeds were weighed. Brian Hutching's potatoes came in at 3.275kgs, second was Matilda Bennett with 2.325kgs and third was Elizabeth Bennett with 2.010kgs. Well done and thanks to all who took part, especially those who stood on the podium to receive their Gold, Silver and Bronze medals! A thoroughly enjoyable event!



There is a Drawing Group that has been meeting at The Allotment Shedon Thursday Mornings from 9.30 – 12.30pm Bookings are now being taken

Beginners and experienced artists welcome!
Each session is £20. Please contact if you are interested.

If you'd like to know more, please contact
07530532637 or ivydene.irwin@gmail.com
website www.irwinferreystudios.com

You never know....! A healthy idea that could save lives.

A former trustee, David Williamson, has worked tirelessly to help provide our locality with First Responders - one of the busiest and best groups in the Country - together with giving excellent 'teach-ins' for the public. He continues his efforts to show us what to do in an emergency by providing, under the banner of 'HEART-START, free sessions as follows: -
Kings Church 20 Sep 2018 7:00pm. High Street, Bishop's Waltham, SO32 1AA
Stables Parish Centre 25 Oct 2018 7:00 PM
Maypole Green, Free Street, Bishop's Waltham, SO32 1PW
Greens Close Day Room 26 Nov 2018 6:00 PM
Bishop's Waltham SO32 1JT

Our allotments are not that close to houses, so instant attention to someone really CAN save a life. It could even be yours.....!

Snippets!



- Want to buy a Garden Centre? All Wyevalle sites are up for sale
- Defra has a 'Don't Risk It' campaign to stop holidaymakers from bringing back plants in their luggage. Dangerous pests and diseases are easily introduced in this way. See rhs.org.uk/holidayrisk
- A 'Cherry' Tomato bears fruit that is 3.5cm. or less in diameter
- A humble house plant, a Periwinkle from Madagascar, may provide a new anti-cancer drug.
- Roses are considered a symbol of secrecy hence they are found in carvings on Church Confessionals.
- An ant colony can grow to support up to 20 million Ants.
- A Honey Bee visits up to 750,000 flowers for 1 kg. of honey.
- Butterflies evolved before flowering plants.
- Almost 200,000 Badgers were culled last Autumn as part of the Government scheme to reduce bovine TB.
- "Pansy" comes from the French word "pensee," meaning thought.

Happy Gardening
www.bwgc.org.uk