

The Grapevine



Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

AUTUMN 2022

*Like crunchy cornflakes
Gold leaves rustle
underfoot
Beauty in decay.*

- *Paul Holmes*



We are having a wonderful autumn. After the hot and very dry summer its colder mistier days are most welcome. Leaves are turning beautiful shades of gold, red and purple; roses are still blooming, dahlias and chrysanthemums are at their best, sunflowers still raise their shiny yellow faces. Hedgerows are full of amber rosehips and scarlet hawthorn berries; apple and pear trees are laden with fruit.

In fact, according to the National Trust this year will see a bumper crop of apples in British orchards, thanks to the settled spring weather resulting in a prolonged blossom season and an increase in the number of pollinators getting the fruit off to a good start.

Autumn is the time to enjoy these well-deserved fruits of our labour and it is also the time for clearing up and preparing beds for winter, and for planting autumn crops to grow over the next few months. This issue of the Grapevine contains useful reminders of the jobs to do now, as well as some inspiring material on two related subjects – bees and chickens. Enjoy the read!

Veggie Box Scheme and the Food Bank Aid

This year our members have continued to donate their surplus produce (and there has been a lot of it) to the Veggie Box Scheme. Every week boxes of wonderful veg and fruit made their way to the FOOD BANK AID.

FOOD BANK AID

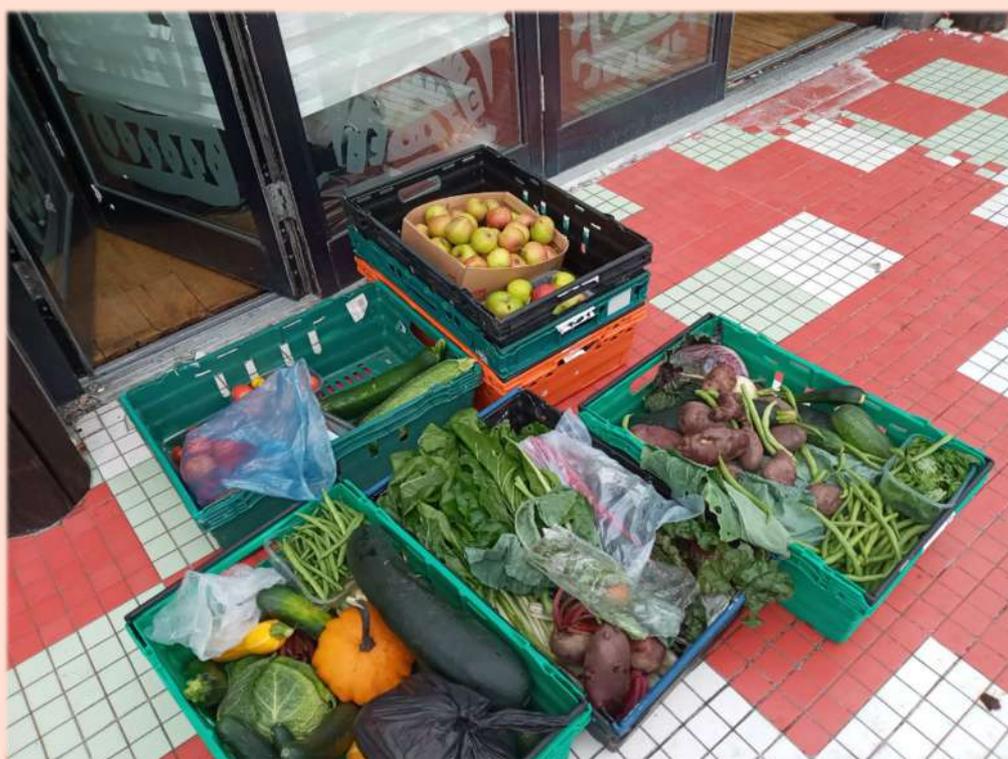
by Naomi Russell

FOUNDER AND TRUSTEE of FOOD BANK AID

www.foodbankaid.org.uk

[www.Facebook.com/foodbankaid](https://www.facebook.com/foodbankaid) and Instagram

Food Bank Aid Charity Registration No. 1194314



Allotments are so important to Food Bank Aid, especially during this harvest season and we are thrilled when we can give more fruit and vegetables with the help of donations from so many dedicated growers. Providing fresh fruit and vegetables is fundamental for Food Bank Aid as we want to encourage people to cook and enjoy their own food, and with your wonderful contributions, we know they are getting excellent nutrition.

It's just over a year since Food Bank Aid moved to our larger premises in Finchley. However, I'm not celebrating this as I had hoped numbers would have dropped as Covid-19 receded. Tragically, the opposite is true. I don't think there is anyone in the country now who is not fearful of the months to come and who feels that the country is at sea. Such troubling times!

Our largest food bank has grown from 700 families to over 1200 in recent weeks and continues to escalate. In Finchley's recent survey 29% of the bank's guests are working people. Those of you with teenage children will know the challenge of keeping the fridge full and what happens when the mood turns because they are hungry. Not pretty. One food bank reported that they have seen a fast increase in domestic violence with hungry, frustrated and angry families. The long waiting times in the NHS means that people are unable to work for longer periods, driving down family income and leading to food poverty. Escalating food and utility prices have created a perfect storm!



Every day I am hugely moved by the self-sacrificing commitment of our volunteers and donors and awed by their generosity of self and pocket. I celebrate our local communities who give of themselves and their time.

There is no end to what we can achieve through imagination and good will. We are hugely appreciative of everyone who has given to Food Bank Aid. Thank you.

This Year in My Apiary

By Louis Zweig

The year began well as four of my colonies survived the winter and I only lost one small colony. The season got off to a good start with no frosts and the weather continued warm, with no cold snaps. The bees built up very quickly with the Queens covering the Brood chambers with thousands of eggs daily.

Only one colony swarmed, however much we tried to stop them. They continued to swarm again and again, till they had nothing left except one badly mated Queen who only produced male drones, which don't do any work, just lay about being fed honey all day by the workers. However, we managed to replace her with some difficulty with a new well-mated Queen from a beekeeping friend and now they are building up very well, but it is too late for them to produce any honey. The other three colonies produced a spring harvest at the end of May and that was the first time in 12 years that I have taken off honey so early. Then the long dry spell began but there was still nectar and pollen from trees such as Horse Chestnut and Lime, with their deep roots that can still find water, and in July there was a bumper harvest from the other 3 colonies.

Taking off the honey can be quite traumatic as the bees become [naturally] very defensive, and unfortunately, my neighbour John got stung this year. Gratefully, I have help from Ellen, a previous plot holder, with whom I began Beekeeping at the Barnet Beekeepers Association.

We were also helped by Judy, another plot holder who was trying to make a film about beekeeping but instead got pressed into a bee suit and helped us with the heavy work of lifting off the honey supers [boxes] whilst we attempted to keep the bees out of their honeycombs. The three of us managed to remove the super boxes, which can weigh up to 30 lbs each, and struggled up to the car, loaded them [with a few bees in attendance] and drove home where Edo helped to take them into the house. Then it was a case of deep cleaning the kitchen before borrowing the Association's extractor, erecting it properly [which I failed to do the first time, putting the frame holder in upside down so that we had to disassemble it and reconfigure it].



As you can imagine, there was a lot of swearing. Finally, I began to uncap each side of the frames of its wax coating [there are 12 frames to a box, and 8 boxes], filled the extractor with each frame dripping with honey into the 9 slots and turned it on. Mercifully, we now have an electric extractor. In the past we had to do the turning by hand. The whole process to extract the 9 frames takes about 1 hour, so it took me several days to complete it. The mess is another story: spilt honey, wax that seems to get everywhere and then cleaning the extractor and all the accessories. Once the honey is safely stored in 30 lbs buckets, we can give the wet frames back to the bees to clean [they contain a residue of honey]. This involves loading them back into the car again and unloading them into wheelbarrows back to the apiary and onto the hives. A week later they would be dry, and we can take them home again, to freeze the frames in order to kill wax moth larvae, clean off the excess wax from the boxes and blow torch the wood to remove the wax moth larvae that burrow into the wood and destroy the wax combs.

At the end of August there was another flow of nectar and pollen and another harvest. Resulting in the third extraction with all that it entailed. Three extractions in one year are unprecedented in my experience.

Now the honey is off it is time to check for the Varroa Destructor mite which live in the brood chambers and on the bees. The 3 colonies that had built up strongly over the summer meant I had a heavy infestation. To treat them I use a Thymol based veterinary approved medicine for 4 weeks. This Varroa mite sucks the bees' blood by piercing the exposed parts of their exoskeleton. This allows viruses to infect the bees which if left untreated weakens them until they often dwindle and die.

We also had a visit from the Bee Inspector from DEFRA as there was an outbreak of European Foul Brood within the 3-mile radius of our apiaries. However, it was a relief after his inspection to hear that all the hives on the allotment were clear.

Now the season is over, we can relax a little, but only a little: cleaning all the equipment over the winter is essential to prevent transferring various unpleasant pests and diseases, plus checking that the bees have enough stores to overwinter. They will need 40 lbs of honey to survive. So we regularly weigh the hives to check and if necessary we may have to feed them either with their honey or sugar syrup, and when it's too cold, Bakers fondant.

If I have enough energy and time, I can render the wax into slabs to either sell or make candles etc. I like to exchange my rendered wax for clean foundation wax sheets for the new frames I have to make up for next spring as the old frames get dirty and need to be replaced every two to three years.

As you can see, we have been as busy as bees ourselves but what a fantastic year it has been!

Gardening with chickens

by Sylvia Berente



My late grandmother (pictured with me, c. 1986) was my main inspiration and mentor for growing fruit and vegetables and then preserving the crops for winter, planting and caring for a cottage garden-style flower garden and keeping chickens. I fondly remember my childhood surrounded by lush plants and the livestock of my grandparents' smallholding, including a continuous chicken population of at least 15–20 hens and usually one or two cockerels.

Today as a keen gardener myself and the proud keeper of two Speckledy Marans (Bob&Irene, pictured below), I often wonder how my grandparents managed to let their small army of chickens free range for hours on end each day and still maintain an intact lawn with patches of wildflowers, and a substantial vegetable patch, encircled only by a metre-tall chicken wire fence. For those not familiar with the wonderful world of keeping chickens, I can firmly state that chickens and a well-manicured lawn with an opulently planted border don't mix! However, I do believe that our gardens can double up as great chicken habitats and chickens can be savvy gardening assistants as long as there is a variety of plant species and layers of planting that allow them to hide and explore. They can wreak havoc in any garden with only a few plants and no special areas they can freely use for dustbathing, mainly due to hunger or boredom. My two chickens have a designated out of use flowerbed that functions as their private dustbathing area with a sunny spot on the patio where they can enjoy the fleeting autumn and winter rays of sunshine.

Garden Helpers

As with gardening in general, trial and error is an ever-present element of having chickens as part of the back garden ecosystem. Chickens are notorious diggers, so letting them roam free in weed-ridden areas can save hours of painstaking work. I let mine dig along the perimeter fence, making way for a lovely new border with chicken-resistant planting. Not only do they dig up unwanted weeds, but they also aerate the soil while scratching for food. Some common garden weeds, like dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) or chickweed (*Stellaria media*) are firm favourites as a daytime snack.

As long as they have different areas in the garden where they can keep busy doing their very important chicken activities, the lawn stands a good chance of not being dug up but kept neat and tidy by these 'intelligent lawn-mowers'.

Chickens are omnivores and they gladly gobble up destructive garden pests, such as slugs, all sorts of insects, including ticks; my lovely girls have even been caught eating small mice who had set up residence in the compost area adjacent to their run.



As a bonus, their manure works as a rich soil nutrient. I use straw in their coop and nesting boxes as bedding and a thick layer of wood chips in their run. The daily clean up provides me with a mixture of their manure, straw and slowly decomposing wood chips - brilliant organic material that can help improve soil structure.

Plants for chicken gardens

Trees, fruit trees and shrubs are the fool proof choice to grow when keeping chickens. Young or newly planted trees and shrubs need protection and extra care until they establish. Ornamental grasses and some hardy perennials can

work well too. These plants also provide shade and shelter for chickens and the other wildlife. Thorny plants, such as brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*), are safe from destruction of avian anarchy, and at the same time provide shelter from predators and berries for pecking.

Tender annuals, such as one of my all-time favourites, Cosmos, in hues of pink, magenta and white, are best kept for the front garden or pots and hanging baskets as they will be undoubtedly destroyed if planted freely around the garden. I tend to plant bulbs and tubers (such as tulips and anemones) in the front garden as well, mainly due to squirrels and rats digging them up to feast on them. As a rule of thumb, the taller the plant the safer it is from foraging chickens. Certain herbs and edible flowers are beneficial to the health of these feathery creatures. I grow a range of herbs at the allotment and after drying I divide them between the pantry and the coop. The mixture of dried herbs sprinkled in the nesting box and around the run can repel mites, lice and even rodents, with the added extra of antiseptic and calming properties, with a lovely fresh scent. The herbs I use are: lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), lovage (*Levisticum officinale*), mint (*Mentha spicata*), marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*), thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*), dill (*Anethum graveolens*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), to name just a few. Rose petals are a rare treat when I want to pamper them a bit more than usual.



In the cold months I quickly boil root vegetable peels and garlic to give extra nourishment to my chickens and to protect them from internal parasites. Winter greens, like cabbages and chard, grown throughout the year in the greenhouse, are a firm favourite when greenery is otherwise scarce in the garden.

My top tip to ward off urban foxes using plant power, is to sprinkle dried chilli flakes around the coop or run and replenish it after heavy rainfall. I used my husband's prized *Capiscum chinense* 'Carolina Reaper' and the foxes ran off screaming in the night with a burning nose

undoubtedly. Chillies are harmless if ingested by chickens as they can't taste capsaicin; on the contrary, chillies can aid their immune system, respiratory system and eliminate internal parasites.

A few growing seasons down the line, with a medley of instant failures but small triumphs as well, here is my tried and tested list of plants that proved to be chicken-friendly (or better yet, chicken-proof):

NB: Many plants on the below list were grown by my grandparents and I always use this list as the foundation of most of my planting plans

- Trees and shrubs:

- Japanese maple tree cultivars (Acer palmatum)
- Barberry (Berberis darwinii)
- Camellia japonica
- False cypress tree (Chamaecyparis lawsoniana)
- Cabbage tree (Cordyline australis)
- Dogwoods (Cornus alba 'Sibirica'; Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire', Cornus sericea 'Flaviramea')
- Smoke bush (Cotinus coggygria 'Royal Purple')
- Elaeagnus pungens 'Maculata'
- Fatsia japonica
- Ivy (Hedera helix)
- Hibiscus syriacus
- Hydrangea macrophylla
- Bay Laurel (Laurus nobilis)
- Lavender (Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote')
- Phormium
- Cherry tree (Prunus)
- Firethorn (Pyracantha)

- Rose (Rosa rugosa)
- Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis)
- Elder (Sambucus)
- Lilac (Syringa vulgaris)
- Viburnum opulus 'Compactum'

- Perennials

- Lady's Mantle (Alchemilla mollis)
- Amaranthus caudatus
- Aquilegia alpina
- Goatsbeard (Aruncus dioicus)
- some hardier Aster varieties
- Astilbe chinensis
- Brunnera macrophylla
- Chrysanthemum
- Crocosmia 'Lucifer'
- Foxglove (Digitalis purpurea)
- Sea Holly (Eryngium alpinum)
- Geranium himalayense

-Hosta

-Sedums (Hylotelephium
telephium)

-Buttercup (Ranunculus)

[Chickens instinctively would avoid going near them and my grandmother always asked us not to add buttercups to any wildflower bunches we picked in the meadows. In Sekler folklore, buttercups were believed to be lethal, if just as much as placed near newly hatched chicks. Broody mother hens were put in a darkened nesting box cushioned with old rags and hay in the entryway of the house, so all fresh spring flower bunches had to be kept outside on the veranda during this time.]

-Scabiosa

-Comfrey (Symphytum
caucasicum)

-Iris foetidissima



-Lupinus

-Paeonia lactiflora

-Chinese Lantern Plant
(Physalis alkekengi)

-Balloon Flower (Platycodon
grandiflorus)

-Potentilla megalantha

- Grasses

-Briza maxima

-Calamagrostis x acutiflora

-Carex pendula

-Cortaderia selloana

-Festuca glau

-Lagurus ovatus

-Miscanthus

-Molina caerulea

-Pennisetum

-Stipa gigantea



As a final thought, there are many hens waiting to be rehomed into loving families and I can highly recommend the Fowlers':

'At Fowlers Boarding Hens, we offer a free rehoming and rescue service for any unwanted or found hens - No questions asked! We have a great group of regular boarders and their extended family that are keen to support our rehoming service, and have had some great success over the last few years. If you are interested in rehoming some chickens or have some that need to find a good new home, please feel free to get in touch.'

They also offer hen and duck boarding and my two chickens have spent many lovely holidays at the Fowlers'. I can always sit back and relax knowing that my chickens are safe and being looked after well. They always come home plump and happy.

Contact info:

- address: 8 St Giles Avenue, South Mimms, Herts, EN6 3PZ
- opening hours: Monday to Friday 9 am to 6 pm
- web: boardinghens.co.uk
- email: info@boardinghens.co.uk
- phone: 01707 64 90 90

Bed clearing and autumn planting

(advice from Rocket Gardens)

Most summer plants will be coming to an end now and can be pulled up to make way for autumn crops. Alternatively, you may want to mulch empty, covering them with black polythene, cardboard, or similar material for the next few months until you plant again in spring.

- Cut beans and peas down once they've finished fruiting – the roots that are rich in nitrogen can be left in the ground to break down in the soil.
- After you've harvested sweetcorn, pull up the plants. If you want to compost them, it's better to chop them up or shred them before adding to the pile.
- In the greenhouse: as temperatures start to cool, tomatoes will slow down their ripening process. You can pick them and ripen indoors or make green tomato chutney. Chillies and Peppers will keep going a little longer, so can be left to grow unless you need the space for autumn crops.
- Check spring planted kale – if they have been badly hit with mildew, it's best to pull them up, but if they are still looking healthy, they can be kept growing over winter.
- Harvest beetroot and carrots before the first frosts.
- Courgettes, summer squash and cucumbers can be pulled up as soon as they stop producing fruit.
- Take down bean supports, trellises etc and put away in a shed or under a tarpaulin.
- If you're covering empty beds, be sure to pull up any weeds. It is a good idea to mulch them before covering them as the mulch will benefit the soil ready for next spring.



You can leave the following to grow:

- Celeriac & Parsnips – best harvested in a few months.
Swede & Turnips – can be left in the ground until you want to use them.
- Leeks - will stand in the ground over autumn and winter, so harvest them as and when you want to use them.
- Cabbages – will also stand well in the ground, so you can harvest them when they reach a good size.
- Cauliflowers – best harvested as soon as the heads reach full maturity, and before any hard frosts.
- Winter Squash & Pumpkins – harvest once their stalks turn brown/dry and once the skins are tough (you shouldn't be able to pierce the skin with a thumbnail) – usually towards late October, but before frosts.
- Wild Rocket – fine to leave in the ground if not flowering.
- Sprouts – will probably need another month or two, or a little more if you planted out in summer. Protect well from slugs as they love them!
- Purple Sprouting Broccoli – if it isn't yet producing a crop, it may take a pause from growing now before swinging into action again in very early spring.
- Spinach, Chard, Kale – if these are doing well and looking healthy, you can leave them in the ground to grow on.

Prepare to do some autumn planting:

- Order & plant your autumn/winter crops as soon as you can to make the most of the mild temperatures.
- Make sure greenhouse/polytunnel windows are cleaned down so that any autumn plants that you grow undercover get plenty of sunlight.
- Add plenty of compost when planting to enrich the soil, and mulch to protect soil from harsh weather that normally starts to come in towards the end of October.
- Choose beds that are not in the shade during the winter months when the sun is lower in the sky.
- Weed the beds before planting.
- The more light and warmth you can give your autumn plants, the better – you could make a mini polytunnel, or use cloches or horticultural fleece to keep them warm.

Other jobs to do now

- Start a compost bin
- Start gathering leaves for leaf mould
- Mulch fruit plants
- Bring frost vulnerable plants under cover if they are in pots
- Build new beds for next year before the weather gets too miserable over winter!*

*HERE IS AN ORIGINAL IDEA OF HOW TO MAKE RAISED BEDS WITH RECYCLED WINE BOTTLES:

If you need to revamp or build raised beds this autumn, here is a tip from Rocket Gardens.

It's easy to do – you just need to loosen up the soil around the edges a little, and then use your bodyweight to push empty wine bottles into place, neck first. They usually go into the ground quite well to their shoulder, and their bottom end stands above the soil and provides about 20cm height above ground. Throw in a few bags of compost and you've got a instant raised bed and lovely soil to plant in!



Spring flowering bulbs

by Shoko Higashitsushi

October-November is the best time to plant bulbs for spring flowers. The chart below shows the recommended positioning of the bulbs when grown in the ground.

Anemone (Windflower)



Flowers March to April

Crocus

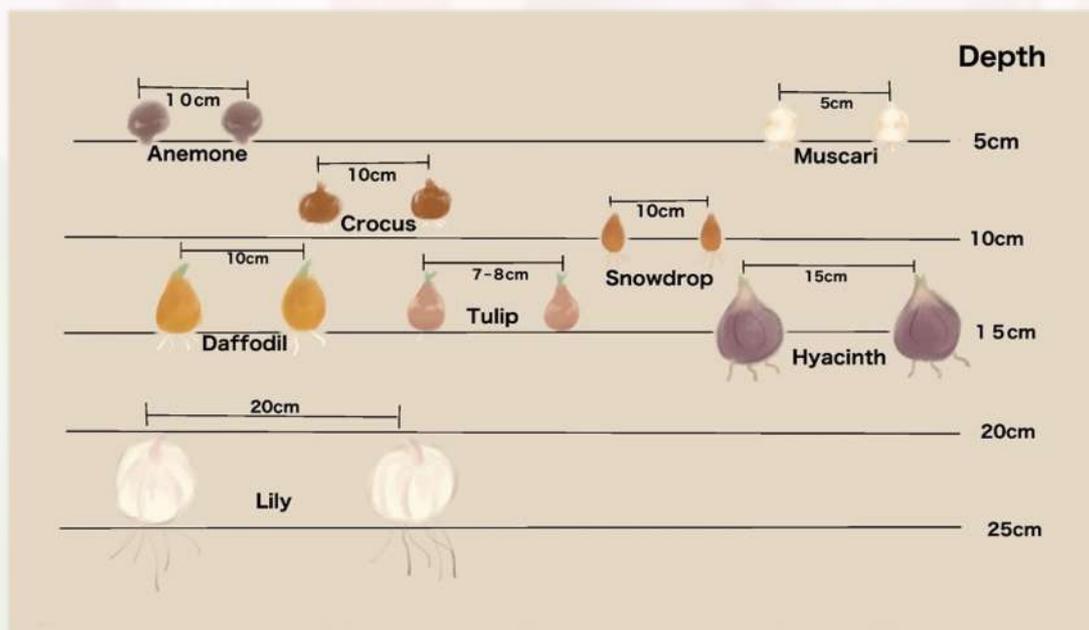


Flowers February to April
Dig up periodically, every 4-5 years

Muscari (Grape hyacinth), 'A Touch of Snow' variety



Flowers March to May



Snowdrop (Galanthus)



Flowers January to March

Bulbs should be grown in well-drained soil. If watered too much, they will die from lack of oxygen so water at a moderate rate, when the soil looks dry.

Hyacinth



Flowers March to April.
Resistant to cold weather;
able to withstand snow

Colour arrangements:

- Planting multiple colours, or together with other flowers, think about colour combinations. Taller flowers, like Tulips and Hyacinth, look great with shorter flowers.
- When growing a colourful arrangement of the same flower, make sure you plant the same variety, otherwise plants won't flower at the same time.
- If you want to enjoy flowers for longer, multiple varieties can be grown to extend flowering time.



Tulip + Grape Hyacinth (Muscari)

Colour combination ideas:

Similar colours:

- Red + orange + yellow
- Pink + red
- Blue + purple + pink
- Different shades of the same colour

Other combinations:

- White + yellow + green
- Yellow/orange + blue/purple
- Blue/pink/purple + white
- Add black to accentuate colour

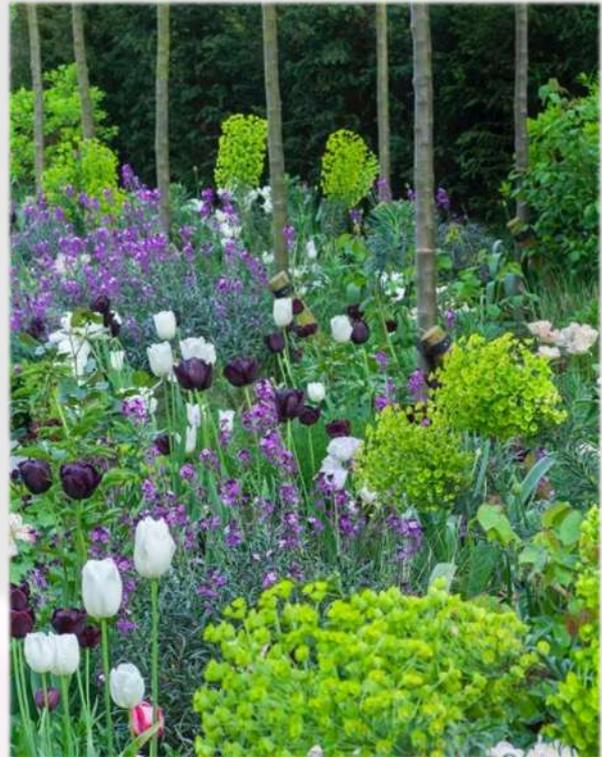


Tulip + Pansies (Viola)





Tulips + Forget-me-nots



Tulips + Euphorbias and Erysimums

Digging up bulbs:

- If you want to use bulbs again the following year it is important to cut off the flowers when they have finished blooming and have shriveled up, before they set seeds. Otherwise, the nutrients will go to the seeds instead of the bulb.
- Leaves should not be cut, as they are important for delivering nutrients to the bulb.
- Adding fertiliser to the soil at this stage will encourage bulbs to become plumper, which will lead to good flowering the following year.
- Bulbs can be dug up before winter, and stored in a dry place.
- Although these flowers can also be grown from seed, they tend to be unreliable so it is best to grow them from bulbs.
- Generally it is not necessary to dig up bulbs every year. However if you notice that there are more leaves than flowers, it may be necessary to dig them up. This should be done every 2-3 years.
- Offshoot bulbs should be separated from the primary bulb and re-planted separately.
- It is recommended to dig up some bulbs such as Tulips because they do not tolerate warm weather well (summer).

BUG SAFARI ON THE WILDLIFE PLOT

By Helen Skelton

An intrepid group of children and adults took part in the Bug Safari held at the Wildlife Plot at Gordon Road. We assembled at the Log Cabin and set off with our bug catching pots to see what we could find. An assortment of creatures including beetles, butterflies, wasps, bees, hoverflies and spiders were spotted. Some were caught, including a very lively bee, and taken back to the hut for closer examination with a 10x hand lens and a magnifying glass. Sophie Dave provided a craft activity focussed on bug making for those whose creativity was inspired by the bug hunting.

The safari seems to have gone down well so hopefully we can do it again next year.



COMPOSTING WORKSHOP

On Sunday 16 October Eric ran a composting workshop at Gordon Road allotments site. It was very well attended – around 19 people turned up to participate in the workshop, have a tour of the site and share views and tips regarding best methods of composting green waste. Participants were encouraged to talk about their own experience and suggest what worked well and what did not work.

Eric opened the workshop by quoting from the History of Composting Book: “The plastic compost bin in every back garden is only the most recent development of a very old process, first used by the Chinese over 7,000 years ago, and rediscovered many times and in many different places...” According to the authors, societies rose and fell because of their ability – or inability – to practise composting, with the latter leading to soil erosion and resulting in failed crops.

He ran through the benefits of composting: capturing and storing carbon dioxide in the soil; stopping soil erosion; enriching the soil; retaining moisture; suppressing plant diseases; encouraging beneficial bacteria and fungi; creating humus and, more broadly, helping to mitigate climate change. Eric went on to discuss different composting methods, including the pit method, when you tip your green waste into a pit or trench, or composting in boxes with air access, throwing green material on the surface and letting it break down; and the so-called WW2 method that involves packing green waste tightly into square or oblong shapes. Eric adduced the example



of 'Terry's towering compost box' method when Terry throws everything into the box and relies on weight to compress it. The sliding door at the bottom of the towering box allows the user to remove compost when needed. Eric also mentioned expensive methods such as the Bokashi Hot Box and Rolling Barrel, that produce compost faster. What distinguishes different methods is speed: the faster methods that involve turning the waste regularly take about two months; the slower leave the waste to break down over a longer period and take up to two years.

There was discussion of the materials you can put into your compost: coffee grounds, tea leaves, grass clippings, avocado, veg food scraps, fruit, banana skins and potato peel, potatoes and tomatoes not infected by blight; egg boxes and paper (avoiding print, because of the chemicals); cardboard, wood shavings, straw, horse manure, rabbit or hamster droppings. A number of participants mentioned banana and avocado skins as not suitable unless chopped up finely and peach, plum and apricot stones, that do not decompose.



One controversial issue in composting is the use of weeds: some people throw perennial weeds in the compost while others soak them first or put them in a bag to decompose; or put them in a cold frame to heat them up first. One participant who, in his own words, "gets very vengeful of dandelions" 'kills them twice': first, by roasting them in a metal pan in the sun and then throwing them on the compost heap. It appeared that even pernicious bindweed, the scourge of many plot holders, breaks down eventually, if put in a closed plastic compost bin/or sealed bag, and left alone for three or four years. It is also possible to add commercially bought accelerator to your bin or use another 'secret ingredient', urine.

It was stressed that blighted material, such as tomatoes and potatoes, should be avoided unless the temperature of the compost is very hot. To ensure higher temperature, Eric suggested adding manure, wood chip or wood shavings and shredded paper – or even raw wool - to your compost and turning it regularly. The

process is speeded up if green waste is chopped up before being put on the compost. Another tip is to raise the compost box – not an easy thing to do – so that the air comes in from underneath and helps the process. The two key ingredients are air and soil, because you need bacteria from the soil to activate the decomposing and the air to speed it up. One traditional method that relies heavily on these principles is the German Hugelkultur Method that uses partially rotted branches and logs covered by plant debris to build a mound. These mounds can be 5 to 6 feet high—massive heaps of logs, branches, leaves, straw, cardboard, grass clippings, and manure or compost mounded to be wider at the bottom than at the top. As the wood shrinks and breaks down, a hügelbed sinks; one that is 6 feet high, for example, will ultimately sink to about 2 feet after several years of decomposition and settling. *

One of the participants brought up the issue of rats who seem to love her compost heap. It was suggested that though rats can be a serious problem and are not deterred even by chicken wire, there are certain things rats do not like, though, such as wood shavings or essential oils, particularly, peppermint, and chilli powder, cayenne pepper, pepper spray and cloves.

The general conclusion by participants was that composting – whether in pits and trenches, or boxes and bins, is a very useful and worthwhile way of getting rid of large amounts of green waste, including weeds, and providing your allotment with rich, fertile compost free of charge. For extra fine seedlings compost, it is good to sieve your compost first.

The workshop ended with a tour of the Gordon Road site to see first-hand examples of different methods of composting practised by the plot holders.



Notices

SEEDS ORDERS

- If you would like to order seeds, onion sets or potato tubers from the Kings catalogue, we have copies in the Green Room at Gordon Road. There are two folders:

one labelled 'Kings order forms', the other labelled 'completed order forms'. Munira Grainger will collect completed forms, which must be in by Tuesday 1 November. Please pay by bank transfer if you can. Account number 63253031, sort code 20-95-61.

The gate at the Gordon Road site will be open on Sunday mornings at the normal hours for non-plot holders who wish to order.

- For a 50% discount on your Suttons Seeds orders, which you can place by post, by phone or online, you would need to quote our unique code. Both the catalogues and the code are available from Catherine Schmitt. Last year our members saved over £200!

PUMPKIN SOUP NIGHT

Get cosy with Tony's world class pumpkin soup, mulled wine, and jacket potatoes! Sunday 6 November from 4.30-6.30 pm. Members from Brent Way and Nethercourt Avenue sites as well as non-plot holders - please come along. It will be held outside, at the Piggery, Gordon Road Allotments. If you have spare squash or pumpkins that Tony could use to make the soup, please reply to finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com and leave them in the Tea Hut. Use the same e-mail address to let us know you are coming so that we have some idea of numbers.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Our Christmas Lunch will be held on Sunday 4 December from 1 pm - put the date in your diary.

GREEN WASTE SKIP

The green waste skip that we order several times a year is proving very useful. The one delivered on Friday 14 October was filled to the brim within the first 24 hours. Members should take care not to put very long branches in the skip as it reduces the amount of available space (please cut them into smaller pieces before adding to the skip). Plot holders are also encouraged to compost more of their green waste, following the excellent composting workshop conducted by Eric on 16 October (details in this issue's article).

PLANT SALE 2023

Our Plant Sale is the most popular annual event and many plot holders rely on it to provide young plants for the start of the season. It also generates extra funds for on-site maintenance and facilities and helps to keep plot fees down.

Due to personal reasons, Catherine and Christine can no longer devote as much time and effort to the plant sale. This means changing the way the sale is organised, if we are to have a sale in 2023.

We need helpers, ideally working in pairs, to take on the seeds they have agreed to grow, from sowing right through to plants being ready for sale. They will be shown what to do and given plenty of advice along the way. By way of reward, growers can use the space in the greenhouse or poly tunnel after the sale to grow on their own crops.

This is a trial, and we would like members to consider how they can help. We will have a meeting in the New Year to give more details.

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Affiliated to the
Royal Horticultural Society

Events Diary

RHS SHOW DIARY:

RHS Gardens events to enjoy this autumn:

4, 11, 18 and 25 October
RHS Garden Hyde Hall
Woodland Wellbeing Walks

20-23 October
RHS Garden Harlow Carr
Large Fruit and Vegetable Competition

22-23 October
RHS Garden Harlow Carr
Festival of Flavours

22-30 October
RHS Gardens Hyde Hall, Rosemoor,
Bridgewater, Harlow Carr and Wisley:
*Deadliest Plants and Bugs:
Activities and family garden trail*

Look out for on-sale dates in the members' e-
newsletter or visit rhs.org.uk/shows



Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter
and are now able to receive it by e-mail, please
inform Christine Williams,
finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com
This saves us time and money.

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