

The Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

Autumn 2023

The road not taken by Robert Frost

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,*



Autumn has finally arrived, after a record-setting, almost too hot, September. We keep beating temperature records – something we shall have to get used to, as climate change leaves us no doubt about the direction of travel. How can we, as plot holders, adapt to the new growing conditions: weather extremes, either too hot, or too dry, or too wet, sudden changes in temperature, the appearance of new plant diseases, the rapid spread of new worrying pests, and a similarly rapid shrinking and disappearance of native insects and birds, the broken equilibrium we have been relying on as growers for generations? In this issue of the Grapevine, we discuss the importance of the need to be vigilant about bringing plants from abroad into the UK, consider the ways to identify and report the Asian Hornet, remind our plot holders of the value of composting as well document allotment events, past, present and future. As always in the Grapevine we attempt to find answers to the questions that are on everyone's mind: what are the best methods to apply, are there new techniques we can learn and can we resuscitate old, forgotten but valuable wisdoms that can teach us a thing or two about living in harmony with nature. Happy reading!

Harvesting seeds from your garden and allotments

Gardening is not just about tilling the soil and nurturing plants; it's a beautiful cycle of growth, from seed to harvest and back to seed again. The act of gathering seeds from your garden or allotment is not only a sustainable and cost-effective way to grow your favourite vegetables, flowers, and herbs, but also a source of profound satisfaction. In this article, we explore the art of seed-saving, focusing on a diverse range of plants, and the benefits of joining special seed schemes like the Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) offering.

The Thrill of Saving Seeds

As we cherish the fruits of our gardening labour, it's easy to overlook the potential locked within each plant. When we collect seeds from our gardens and allotments, we embrace a sustainable and eco-friendly approach to gardening. Seed-saving not only conserves the genetic diversity of plants but also reduces the need for purchasing seeds every season. It's a testament to the cyclical nature of plant life.

Easy-to-Save Vegetable Seeds:

Many vegetables in our allotments can yield seeds for the next growing season. Here's a selection of easy-to-save seeds, suitable for both beginners and seasoned gardeners:

1. Aubergines: Wait until the fruit is overripe, scoop out the seeds, and dry them on a paper towel.
2. Basil: When the plant bolts and flowers, collect the seeds from the dried flower heads.
3. Chillies: Leave some peppers on the plant until they turn red, then collect the seeds.
4. Coriander: Allow the seeds to turn brown on the plant, then gather and store them.
5. Dill: Harvest the seed heads when they have turned brown but before they shatter.
6. French Beans: Wait until the pods are fully dry, then shell the beans and store them.
7. Lettuce: Let some of your lettuce plants bolt and form seed heads, then collect the seeds.
8. Peas: Allow a few pods to fully mature on the plant, then shell the peas for seeds.
9. Sweet Peppers: Extract the seeds from ripe peppers, wash and dry them.
10. Tomatoes: Scoop out seeds from ripe, overripe, or rotten tomatoes, and then dry them.



Avoiding F1 Hybrids: Preserving Seed Purity

While seed-saving can be a rewarding practice, it's essential to be mindful of the types of plants you're growing. Some modern hybrids, often labeled as F1 hybrids, are specially bred to possess specific traits. These hybrids, however, have a tendency to cross-pollinate easily with other plants, leading to unpredictable results in the next generation of seeds. To maintain seed purity and the characteristics you love in your vegetables and flowers, it's advisable to focus on open-pollinated or heirloom varieties. These plants tend to produce offspring that resemble the parent plants, allowing you to save seeds with greater consistency and success.

Annual Flowers, Perennials, and Biennials:

Here are some flowering plants, both annual and perennial, from which you can harvest seeds:

Annual Flowers:

1. **Calendula (Marigold):** Allow the flower heads to dry on the plant, then collect and store the seeds.
2. **Cosmos:** Collect seeds from the dried flower heads once they have matured.
3. **Helianthus (Sunflower):** Harvest sunflower seeds when the flower head has dried and the seeds are easy to remove.
4. **Nigella (Love-in-a-Mist):** Allow the seed pods to turn brown and dry on the plant, then collect the seeds.
5. **Papaver (Poppy):** Wait until the poppy heads have dried, and the seeds can be shaken out easily.
6. **Tagetes (Marigold):** Collect dried flower heads, and carefully extract the seeds.

Perennials and Biennials:

1. **Digitalis (Foxglove):** Collect seeds when the seed pods turn brown and release seeds easily.
2. **Helenium (Sneezeweed):** Harvest seeds when they are mature and brown.
3. **Lupinus (Lupine):** Wait until the seed pods have dried on the plant, then collect and store the seeds.
4. **Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan):** Collect seeds from the dried flower heads when they are fully mature.
5. **Verbena:** Harvest seeds from dried flower heads once they are ready.

When and How to Collect and Store Seeds

Timing is crucial when gathering seeds. Ensure that the seeds are fully mature on the plant. For most plants, this typically means allowing seed heads or pods to ripen beyond the flowering or fruiting stage. After collecting the seeds, dry them thoroughly to prevent mould. Place them on a paper towel in a dry and well-ventilated area for a few days or until they snap when folded. Store the seeds in a cool, dry, and airtight container, ensuring it is properly labeled with the seed type and the date of collection. When stored properly, seeds can remain viable for several years.

The RHS Seed Scheme: A Gardener's Delight

If you're looking to expand your collection of seeds, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in the UK offers an exciting opportunity. The RHS Seed Scheme opens from November 1st to December 31st each year, allowing members to purchase 15 packets of seeds for just £10. This diverse collection includes both common and rare seeds, making it a fantastic way to discover new varieties and support the work of the RHS.

For more details and to explore the offerings, visit the RHS Seed Scheme at rhs.org.uk/seedlist

AUTUMN SOWN PEAS AND BEANS

as recommended by the RHS

You can get a head start on next year's crops by sowing some of reliable broad bean and pea cultivars now. Autumn-sown broad beans and peas will germinate early while the weather is still mild; their growth will slow down during winter, but they will be ready to get growing again as soon as temperatures start to rise, and days lengthen. This will give you an earlier harvest than a spring sowing.

Broad beans

Sow broad beans directly in the ground or choose a sunny sheltered site with rich, free-draining soil; alternatively, you can sow them in small pots or modules using multi-purpose peat-free compost. Insert one seed per pot or module 5 cms deep. Water and keep them in a sheltered spot outside or in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame. Plant them out when the roots have filled the pots and plants are around 10 cm tall. Space plants at roughly 20 centimetres apart, in double rows, with 45 centimetres between them.

Recommended cultivars: Aquadulce Claudia, The Sutton, De Monica.

Peas

Peas are less hardy than broad beans, so you would need to choose a sheltered spot outdoors and protect with cloches, or sow in pots or module trays in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame before planting out in March. Remember to acclimatise young plants to the cold by putting them out during the day and bringing them in at night for a week before planting. Space plants about 8 cm apart, using double rows. Provide support in the form of twiggy sticks or netting in spring.

Recommended cultivars: Douce Provence, Meteor.



Christine's surprise birthday lunch and a call for new plant sale organisers



A surprise birthday lunch for Christine Williams was organised by Catherine Schmitt, Rowena and Young Mi on 8 October. They had been working for weeks keeping it in secret from Christine - and advertising it to the rest of the plot holders as an improvised 'autumn gathering and lunch'. The turnout for the 'autumn gathering and lunch' was excellent, as was the variety of different dishes brought by the plot holders. As always, Rowena and Yung Mi had excelled in preparing a mouth-watering spread. The weather was sunny and hot and the atmosphere wonderful.

Catherine in her capacity as the FHS President made a small speech thanking Christine for years of dedication and hard work as the 'heart and soul' of the Plant Sale, who has been looking after the Plant Sale for many years (first with Claudine and more recently on her own) doing an amazing job and raising thousands of pounds for the Society.

Christine has decided that it is now time for her to step down.

We need a volunteer (or a small group of people) to take over the organisation of the Plant Sale. There will be lots of support and help from our team of growers and from Christine too.

If you are interested, please contact the General Committee. Any help you can offer would be hugely appreciated.



Composting Workshop 2

Following popular demand, on 17 September Eric Hess ran a repeat of the composting workshop he gave last October. Once again, the workshop was well attended, with lively participation from other plot holders.

Here are some of Eric's observations that could serve as a useful reminder why we need to compost. For a more detailed description of the history of composting, the rationale for composting and different composting techniques please see the Composting Workshop Article in the Autumn Grapevine Issue 2022, available on our website.



I have recently purchased *The Complete Compost Gardening Guide* by two American authors, Barbara Pleasant, and Deborah Martin. It's packed with useful information about composting, while also providing a historical perspective.

Early hunter-gatherers realised that they had to do something about their refuse that was attracting flies and vermin. They gathered their scattered refuse into piles of vegetables, and then they discovered that plants growing close to these piles were faring better than other plants.

Sadly, some representatives of the human race have since regressed to throwing away vital resources. This is a huge mistake, and I'd like to run through just some of the benefits of composting.

Composting helps:

1. To capture and store carbon dioxide in the soil to help reduce global climate change.
2. To stop soil erosion.
3. To enrich the soil.
4. To retain moisture.
5. To suppress plant diseases.
6. To create a humus (not to confuse with hummus you eat in your pitta bread!) – a product of the breakdown of beneficial bacteria and fungi.

I assume that most of us, plot holders, want to find ways to deal with excess greens in keeping with environmental considerations and to put them to good use, in order to enrich the soil. Rich soil is crucial for growing vegetables. We can't expect good crops without enriching the soil. So how do we do it?

There is a myriad of composting methods. **I have tried the following:**

1. Hot composting, when you stir the heap regularly. I mix green matter with brown material such as cardboard and chippings and then wet the lot. This is something I'm currently experimenting with.
2. Cold compost piles. This method takes longer. You can use potato haulms, clean of potato tubers, put them in a separate pile and then soak them. It's important to avoid any potatoes with blight.
3. The Pit Method, when you bury compostable matter in a trench. Jason referred to it as his preferred method, that allows for the weather to break the compostables down.
4. Composting weeds. I am wary about mixing weeds with my compost. I have buried some in two holes on my plots having put some in black bags to encourage them to die. When I did put my hand into the bag of weeds, I was surprised at the amount of heat generated by the newly collected weeds. Once the weeds die, I will add them to the compost heap.
5. Walking heaps. In this method you regularly turn the heap, moving towards the area you want to spread the compost when it's ready. I have not tried the method yet, but the concept of walking heaps intrigues me.
6. Dalek bins behind the raised beds.
7. Composting leaves to produce leaf mould. This is another type of compost, but it takes a long time to break down.



What can you put into your compost?

- Ground coffee
- Tea leaves
- Grass clippings
- Avocado
- Veg food scraps
- Fruit
- Banana skins, and potato peel and potato haulms that are not infected by blight
- Paper - without print on, in case of chemicals
- Cardboard - helps to aerate compost
- Wood shavings
- Horse manure, rabbit, or hamster droppings

During the workshop we also discussed the value of coffee grounds as a slug deterrent and activator for compost.

Whichever method we follow, we should all compost - we should all do our little bit towards saving our endangered planet.

Growing purple vegetables and a seasonal pumpkin recipe

by *Shoko Higashitsuji*

There are a lot of vegetable varieties that are purple in colour. Benefits of growing purple vegetables:

- They are rich in anthocyanins and vitamins and have positive effects on inflammatory conditions as well as significant benefits on overall health, compared to the regular green vegetables.
- The anthocyanins in purple varieties make them more tolerant to cold weather.

Some examples of purple vegetables that are easy to grow in our climate:

- **Purple potatoes**
Can be cooked in the same way as regular potatoes. Tend to be smaller than regular potatoes and a little drier.
- **Purple sprouting broccoli**
Long harvesting period, from early winter to early spring, depending on when it is sowed. Can tolerate cold weather up to -12°C.
- **Purple French and runner beans**
Long harvesting period, from July to October.



The pumpkin season is upon us and many of the plots are sporting a variety of gorgeous pumpkins of all shapes and colours. Here is a seasonal recipe to try out.

Creamy pumpkin salad

Around 200g Pumpkin (can include skin)

1/4 onion

Mayonnaise 4 tsp

Season with salt and pepper

*Optional: Raisins, cream cheese

Method:

1. Cut the pumpkin into cubes, wet it a little, cover with cling film and microwave for 4 minutes at 500W/600W. If the pumpkin is too hard to cut, it can be put in the microwave uncut, and cut up later. It may need to be flipped over and put into the microwave for a few more minutes. Wetting the pumpkin and covering it with cling film gives it a steaming effect.
2. Slice the onions and soak in water to soften the flavour. Dry the onions when soaked enough.
3. Mash the pumpkin with a fork.
4. Add the sliced onions, mayonnaise, season with salt and pepper and mix.
5. Add raisin and/or cream cheese (optional)



Emerging plant diseases and pests in the UK

Plant health in the UK is facing escalating threats due to various factors, including climate change and human activities that disrupt ecosystems and reduce biodiversity, creating new habitats for emerging pests and diseases. Additionally, the expansion of international travel and trade has significantly increased the risk of introducing new and potentially devastating plant diseases and pests, posing a significant threat to fruit and vegetable crops. As gardeners and allotment holders, we often seek to diversify our fruit and vegetable varieties, but new regulations now restrict the import of most plants and plant products in personal baggage to mitigate these emerging risks. Compliance with plant health regulations is crucial to safeguard fruit and vegetable crops, as well as native ecosystems.

How to Import Fruit and Vegetable Material from the EU and Beyond

Individuals wishing to import fruit and vegetable plants for personal use from the EU and other countries can register as importers via the government's PEACH system. The import process requires obtaining a phytosanitary certificate for the imported material. Additionally, all high-priority fruit and vegetable plants from the EU and other countries must undergo pre-notification, document checks, and a physical health check at an inland place of destination. Importers can register a private home address as a place of destination or make arrangements with a local garden centre or nursery to act as a place of destination. Costs associated with the importation process apply.

Pest and Disease Threats: *Xylella fastidiosa*

Xylella fastidiosa is a bacterium causing severe diseases in various plant species, currently spreading in Europe and worldwide. Strict regulations govern the import of some *Xylella* hosts from the EU and third countries. They include coffee, lavender, oleander, olive, myrtle-leaf milkwort and almond trees. Importing many plant hosts of *Xylella fastidiosa* is prohibited unless there is an official statement from the exporting country's plant health authority confirming the absence of *Xylella fastidiosa* or that the plants were grown in a disease-free area. Specific growing, inspection, and testing requirements must also be detailed in the official statement, which should accompany the plants upon arrival in the UK.



Other Recent Plant Diseases of Concern

In addition to *Xylella fastidiosa*, there are several other recent plant diseases of concern that pose a serious threat to the UK's plant health. These include:

1. **Ash Dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*):** This disease has caused widespread damage to ash trees in the UK, and its impact on woodlands and ecosystems is of significant concern.
2. **Phytophthora Ramorum and Phytophthora kernoviae:** These pathogens affect a range of trees and plants, including rhododendrons and Japanese larch, and have been found in the UK.
3. **Oak Processionary Moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea*):** This invasive insect pest poses a threat to oak trees and can have health implications for humans due to its irritating hairs. A dedicated article on the processionary moth caterpillar can be found in our Summer 22 issue of the Grapevine.
4. **Sweet Chestnut Blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*):** This fungal disease affects sweet chestnut trees and can lead to tree dieback.

Emerging Threats for Fruit and Vegetable Crops

Recent years have seen the emergence of new pests and diseases that pose a significant threat to fruit and vegetable crops in the UK. Here are some of them:

1. **Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*):** This invasive insect pest, though not yet established in the UK, has the potential to damage various fruit trees and grapevines.
2. **Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (*Halyomorpha halys*):** This pest can affect a wide range of fruit and vegetable crops, causing economic losses and quality issues.
3. **Phytophthora kernoviae:** A pathogen affecting a variety of plants, including rhododendrons and some fruit trees, with ongoing concerns about its impact in the UK.
4. **Xanthomonad Bacterial Diseases:** Emerging bacterial diseases in the Xanthomonad family can affect diverse crops, including vegetables, causing yield reductions and quality issues.

In the future issues of the Grapevine we shall be taking a closer look at individual pests and diseases as they emerge and more is known about them.



THE ASIAN HORNET

URGENT APPEAL

By Louis Zweig

The Asian Hornet has finally got a foothold here, especially in the Southeast. So far 51 nests have been found and destroyed by the NBU (National Bee Unit), and many more sightings have been reported. The NBU are trying to raise the public's awareness of what these hornets look like in contrast to the European Hornets, so please take time to look at these pictures. The Asian Hornet is slightly smaller than the European Hornet and has a dark brown abdomen with just one orangey-brown stripe. An obvious difference are their yellow legs.

We need everyone's eyes and if possible, for some people to make bait traps rather than kill them, to help identify them, photograph, and note their flight direction. This will allow you to locate their nests so that the NBU could come and take over the destruction of the nest.

We have a small window before the arrival of first frosts to find and destroy their nests. Two nests were discovered and destroyed earlier this year: one in Hackney and another in Southeast London, and later nine more nests were identified, but not yet destroyed. The number of nests found in the past was negligible.

If you are willing to make and monitor a bait trap, I shall be doing a follow-up on how, where, and when to make and what to do. So please let me know and I will arrange a meeting. The traps should be placed in your garden or allotment and checked daily.

ASIAN HORNET

This is an invasive species
a threat to our wildlife
REPORT ANY SUSPECTED SIGHTING

Not to be confused with native species:

Asian
Hornet

European
Hornet

Wasp



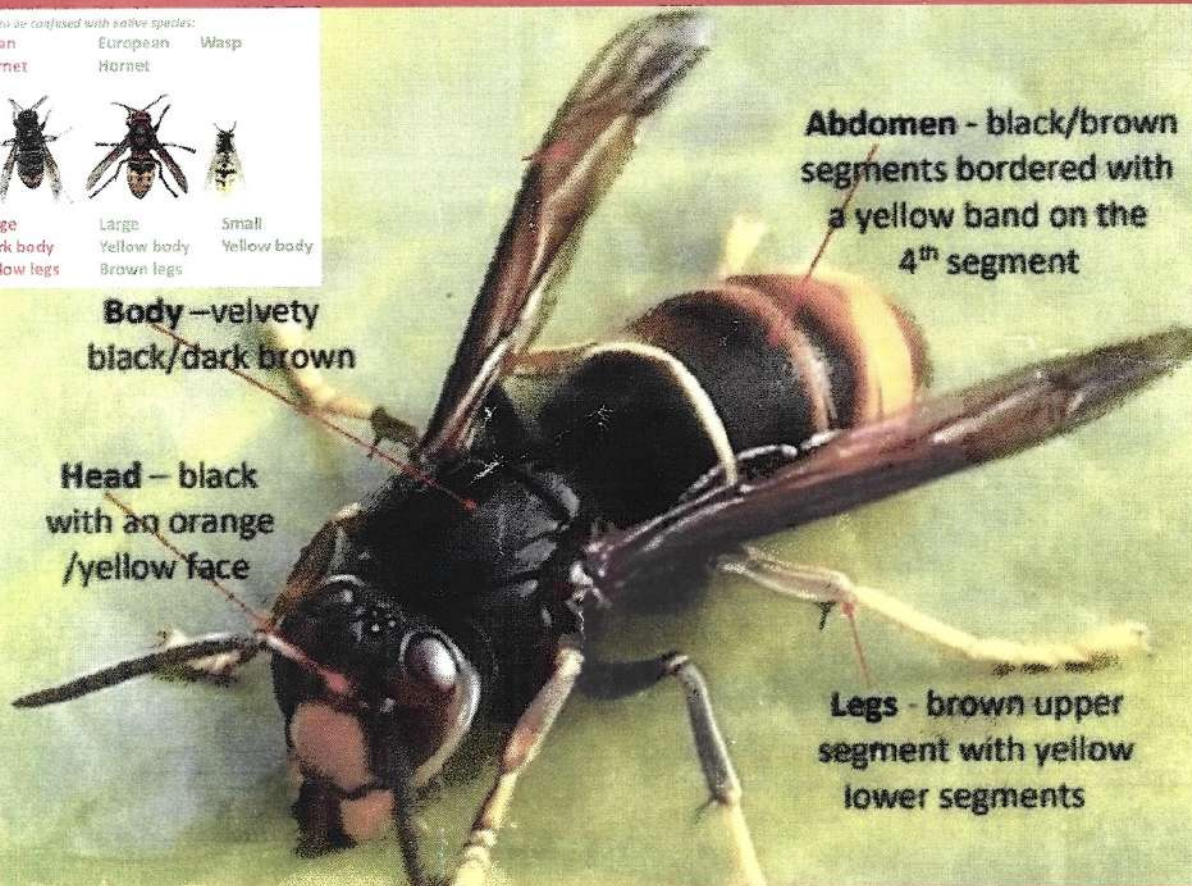
Large
Dark body
Yellow legs



Large
Yellow body
Brown legs



Small
Yellow body



Abdomen - black/brown
segments bordered with
a yellow band on the
4th segment

Body - velvety
black/dark brown

Head - black
with an orange
/yellow face

Legs - brown upper
segment with yellow
lower segments

For further info & to report sightings
Search your App store or use the QR code for
bit.ly/asianhornetreport



ASIAN HORNET WATCH



www.lbka.org.uk

THANK YOU!

Designed by @mielucie

Notices

THE FOOD BANK

A huge thank you to everyone for their contributions of fresh produce to the food bank over the last few months. It has been much appreciated by the organisers and for those people who need to use the food bank. According to the Trussel Trust, the cost-of-living crisis has meant that more than 750,000 people have had to use food banks for the first time.

A massive special thanks must go to Jason and Rowena, not only for the amazing amount of produce they have grown especially for the food bank but also for arranging to take it over to East Finchley. We couldn't have done it without you.

With the end of the harvest in sight, the collection for the Food Bank have now been stopped. Hopefully we will be able to continue next year.

WORK PARTY AND PUMPKIN SOUP SOCIAL

We are holding our last working party of the year at 2.30pm on Sunday 5 November. We encourage all plot holders to help maintain the communal areas of their site, and this is the last opportunity of the year to do so. We shall be clearing the area around the Piggery and the Log Cabin and also planting some daffodils. We expect to be finished by 5pm and hope you can stay on to enjoy Tony's legendary pumpkin soup. We shall be delighted to see you for the Social even you are unable to help with the clearing work.

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

Gordon Road Allotments are keen to host our FHS Christmas Lunch again this year as a way for us all to get together. We invite everyone to gather at the Piggery at 1pm on Sunday 17 December. Please bring a dish or something to drink as a contribution to the lunch. It would be helpful if you could let us know if you are coming so that we have an idea of numbers - please just reply to: finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com.

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Member of the Barnet Federation of Allotment and
Horticultural Societies Affiliated to the
Royal Horticultural Society

Events Diary

Book 2021 Flower Show tickets this autumn:

RHS Garden Harlow Carr
Autumn Garden Weekend
talks, garden tours, live music, food and drink
(21-22 October)

Spooktacular Half-Term Fun
28 October-5 November

RHS Garden Hyde Hall
Spooktacular Half-Term Fun
(21-29 October)

RHS Garden Rosemoor
Pumpkin Week
(21-29 October)

Witch Hazel's Halloween Disco
(28 October)

RHS Garden Wisley
Spooktacular Half-Term Fun
(21-29 October)

Christmas Craft and Design Fair
(8-12 November)

For more information visit rhs.org.uk/shows



Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter
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finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com
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