The Grapevine

FINCHLEY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
EST 1940

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

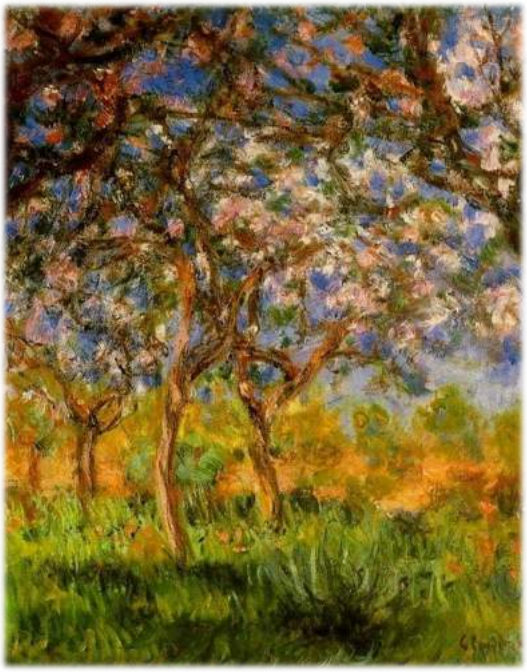
SPRING 2024

The Trees by Philip Larkin

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too.
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.



Spring is all around us, the sun is shining and although cold winds and plenty of rain keep us in check, we are out in numbers, getting ready to sow, plant, weed and - dig... Or maybe not! As wildlife-friendly and low-impact gardening methods gain in popularity in the UK, we try to keep an eye on the major gardening trends to inspire our plot holders. Following the recent AGM and its annual Garden Lecture, which this year was dedicated to the No-dig Method, in this issue we revisit this fascinating subject, first mentioned in our Spring 2021 Issue of the Grapevine. We also look at peat-free composts, suggest how you can help pollinators, discuss your feedback re what should be stocked in our Trading Hut, and of course, pay tribute to the people who have been working hard in the run-up to the annual Plant Sale. Happy reading!

No-Dig Gardening

By Jo Cuttell

After the business of the AGM was completed, we held our Garden Lecture and this year it was about the idea of No-Dig gardening. It's a concept that is beginning to take off and one of its chief proponents is Charles Dowding, a market gardener in Somerset. I gave a brief introduction about the suggested benefits and then showed a couple of video clips from Charles Dowding explaining the technique. After this we discussed the pros and cons of the concept before enjoying refreshments provided by Elain and Colin Wright courtesy of the Finchley Lawn Tennis Club.

Why is no-dig best?

Digging damages soil structure by destroying natural drainage channels made by worms, disturbing fungal networks, and damaging the micro-organisms that help provide nutrients. Cultivation also releases the carbon that's locked in the soil, and this can exacerbate the climate emergency. Reducing soil cultivation through no-dig gardening preserves and improves the soil structure, greatly improving its overall health.
In the past it was thought necessary to dig soil, particularly to prepare new beds for growing ornamental plants, fruit, and vegetables. Now, scientific evidence shows us that cultivation damages soil structure and disrupts the natural processes that occur within it. This makes no-dig a better choice for soil health by minimising disturbance.

- No-dig gardening using compost produced in your own garden is an environmentally sustainable way to care for your soil and this method can be used for both edible and ornamental beds and borders.

- Any garden soil will be improved by adding organic matter and reducing cultivation (digging). Plants access nutrients through the action of soil-dwelling organisms, meaning little or no fertilisers are required.

What are the benefits of no-dig?

In the video clip Charles Dowding mentioned the benefits of no-dig gardening.
Digging can be hard work. Spreading a mulch is faster and less work. You'll see a reduction in weeds, particularly annual weeds. A mulch helps to retain moisture in dry weather so there is less need to water. Crops come out cleaner when you harvest them as there is less soil sticking to them.

Benefits for the soil seem to be increased availability of nutrients and minerals for plants and improved drainage due to increased worm activity. The preservation of beneficial fungal networks can help plants to access water and nutrients symbiotically. It seems that the increased activity of soil fauna aids the breakdown of organic matter.

There are environmental benefits too although Charles Dowding didn't mention these in the video we showed. Soil stores carbon well when you don't dig, helping you to garden in a climate-positive way. Synthetic fertilisers, which have an environmental cost, are not required, since plants are supplied with nutrients via the organic matter. There is no need of weedkillers (herbicides) since weeds are repressed or easily removed manually.

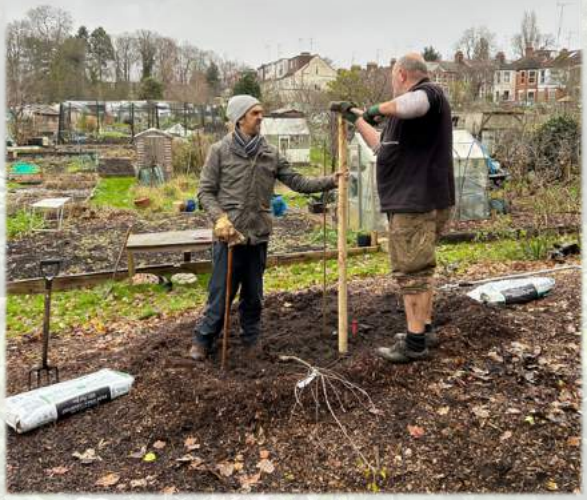
Charles Dowding showed us how to set up a no dig bed from scratch

It takes a bit of time to do this but if you have a bed of weeds and grass Charles says to cover it with a layer of cardboard and weight it down, usually with wood chip. After a season most weeds will have died, or they can easily be picked out of the ground. More pernicious weeds will need to be pulled out regularly after this. Then you put a good layer of compost - about 5 centimetres on the bed and you are ready to start planting.

This is something we tried on the Gordon Road site when creating our little orchard.
The area had been an old dumping ground, and the weeds, nettles, brambles and bindweed in particular were rampant, covering the ground to a height of about a metre. We covered the area with black plastic initially for about a year and then took the plastic off revealing a dry but still weedy patch of ground. Then we covered the ground with a layer of cardboard and put a thick layer of wood chip on the top. We left this for another year or so. The wood chip has remained an effective mulch and the cardboard has completely disappeared. The pictures show the ground into which we planted the 6 fruit trees. So, we have some evidence that this method works so far.

How to plant potatoes using this method

We also showed a clip from a Charles Dowding's video where he demonstrates how to plant potatoes using this method. Obviously, you do not need to dig a trench! He made a little slit in the compost covering the bed with a trowel, about 10 centimetres deep, and put the seed potato in the hole he made. I have tried this and although it's not as easy as he makes it look, I was able to do it even though I disturbed the soil more than he did. I got better with practice. Charles says the seed potatoes sit happily under the compost and that the roots and tubers will penetrate the soil below. The potatoes he dug up were clean and plentiful.



Jason and Edo planting an apple tree

Discussion

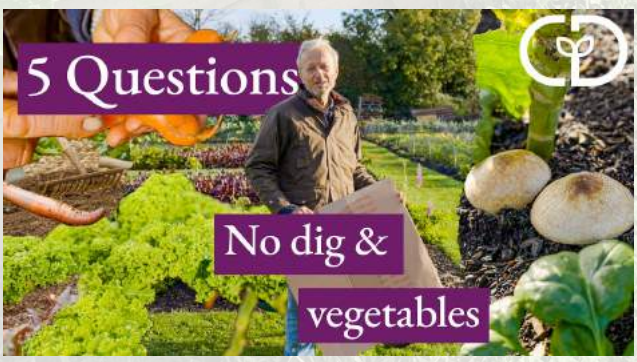
There was a good discussion afterwards about what members thought of the videos.
Most were receptive to at least a partial implementation of no-dig. One comment was that you would need a lot of compost for this approach and that plot holders don't generate enough to make this a viable option. Others said that generating compost was difficult and the work was too heavy for them. Some plot holders thought that our clay soil would not respond well to this approach though Charles Dowding told us that he works with a clay soil. There was also a comment that the bindweed that Charles Dowding was picking out of his patch was a different variety from the pernicious weed on our sites.

There was some discussion of the difference between a mulch and a compost in this context. As long as woodchip is used as a surface mulch and not dug in there is little risk of nitrogen depletion of the soil. In Dowding's experience wood chip takes at least 5 years to decompose into compost, so you would need to be very patient if you are using it as a compost substrate!

So, the idea of no-dig provided food for thought and got us talking.

Some websites that deal with this idea.
https://www.rhs.org.uk/soil-composts-mulches/no-dig-gardening

These are the two videos we watched clips from at the AGM



No-dig and dandelions, a happy couple?

by Felicity Nock

2024 is the year Finchley Horticultural Society became officially interested in 'No-dig' cultivation. At the AGM in March our Chair, Jo Cuttell introduced a video presentation of Charles Dowding's experiences in using No-dig for his market garden over twenty years.
https://www.youtube.com/@CharlesDowding1nodig

To anyone who likes to dig for fitness and just enjoys the mental/physical act of preparing soil, it's a challenging yet intriguing approach to allotment gardening.

Here are some points for No-dig:

- First, a manageable area of uncultivated ground is prepared by 'blinding it off' with sheets of cardboard soaked with water to get a good contact with the ground. This smothers weeds (aka 'plants growing in the wrong place').
- This is topped off with layers of mulch - these could consist of composted garden waste and even uncooked vegetable waste, or rotted wood chip in varying textures. Depth 4"/10cm. The point is to build up an establishing layer in contact with the ground without destroying microorganisms and then top it with a deep compostable mix.
- This is gardening to go up in a heap, not down, digging into the soil.
- Dowding expects the layers to supress thuggish perennial weeds such as bindweed, dock, field thistles, nettles etc. But he emphasises that pernicious weeds will resurface over a few seasons, and these must be gently dug out to reduce their vigour. In the video he is working on a retired pasture/arable field so whether he's dealing with field bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis) or the deep rooted, world dominating 'convolvulus' (Calystegia sepium) that likes to twine our Gordon Road hedges and plots is difficult to say. Certainly, we have had difficulty suppressing these over three years attention to create an orchard area.
- Once the bed is made it starts to develop a unique biomass of worms, insects, bacteria, fungi etc that break down the mulch and aerate it to create an ideal naturally formed planting medium. Crops can be planted simply by making a slit to ease the roots into, causing the least disturbance and the best contact root to soil. Cultivation is minimal but in the Dowding method regular weeding is essential to reduce competition.
- Over the season the mulch will be broken down and depleted as nutrients are taken up. At the start of the next season the bed must be topped up with a fresh layer(s) of mulch.

There are No-dig experiments being made at Gordon Road and it will be interesting to see how effective the method is on open plots and raised beds. One of the elements we have difficulty sourcing in quantity is good cost-effective compost for mulching.

New to some areas of Britain is an allotment rental organisation www.rootsallotments.com whose business specialises in providing plots based on Dowding's No-dig methods. Should a tenant fall behind with upkeep, staff on site provides a backup maintenance service that can be paid for. This will be an interesting enterprise to follow.

Imagine the interest then when a neighbouring plot holder explained that they were practising No-dig. To an uninitiated eye the plot looked thick with weeds, in particular, close ranks of bright yellow native dandelion with delightfully fluffy clocks full of seeds. Were they allowing the dandelions to seed? Oh yes, the plant is highly prized in Japan and an integral part of the No-dig method there. The dandelion's deep roots tap into water, nutrients and bring good bacteria to the surface.

A method with no additional mulching and a thick weed base, this just had to be investigated! Head for the internet!

The dandelion – 'tanpopo'

In southern Japan a white dandelion Taraxacum albidum is "held in high esteem" and "not considered an aggressive or weedy variety". www.rareseeds.com.

There is also Taraxacum japonicum (kanto tanpopo), currently being studied because Taraxacum officinale (seiyo tanpopo) an invader from the west is outstripping the native species (think grey squirrel v. red squirrel or Spanish bluebell v. native bluebell etc.). Research by www.pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov Kandori et al 2009 suggests that the incomers outcompete by attracting more pollinator visits. The invader is described as having distinctive down-turned bracts under the composite flower heads

During 'Sakura', the cherry blossom season, dandelions flower prolifically and are associated with courage because they can grow virtually anywhere www.vivskoreanadventures.wordpress.com. This author writes that they are thought of as a weed despite being very nutritious and really admirable in their perseverance. "All parts of the dandelion are edible (flower, stem, leaf and root) and are used as food, to make some drinks, and as a remedy (usually a form of tea) as they can reduce stress on the liver, can help hair growth and are said to boost the immune system as they are high in vitamin C." Sold in farmer's markets, they can be used in soups and salads, the flowers fried in tempura, or made into the special recipes of 'Ohitashi' and 'Kinpira'.

In England there is (or was) a wide traditional knowledge attached to dandelions. Yet we have forgotten it and feed it to our guineapigs. We are lazily underusing our weeds!

So, that's a new perspective on the dandelion, what about No-dig in Japan? For the outsider this is not easy to research however Australian Helen Tuton in www.sgaonline.org.au documents the pioneer of the No-dig gardening concept as one Masanobu Fukuoka (b.1914) writing 'The One-Straw Revolution' 1953/1975. Fukuoka was trained as a microbiologist and soil scientist but fell out of love with new scientific methods being introduced to Japan. Returning to his family home he set out to farm using methods more in tune with nature. "Through 30 years of refinement he was able to develop a 'do-nothing' method of farming. Without soil cultivation such as ploughing or tilling, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, weeding, pruning, machinery or compost, Fukuoka was able to produce high quality fruit, vegetables, and grains with yields equal to or greater than those of any neighbouring farm."

There's an interesting story to be told and to learn from behind this introduction. Is there information to link dandelions to good No-dig cultivation? Grapevine would like to hear more from any members who know more!

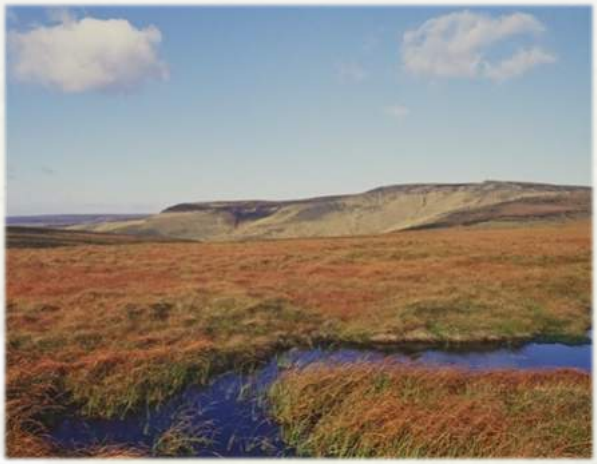
Peat-Free Compost

by Shoko Higashitsuji

Peat-free compost is made of a combination of various organic media such as grit, bark, organic green waste and coir.

Why should we use peat-free?

- To protect plant and wildlife habitats in the peatlands (pictured right).
- Healthy peatlands are an important ecosystem which stores carbon.
- To reduce carbon emissions – huge amounts of carbon are emitted when peatlands are drained for horticultural use.
- Peatlands reduce flood risk by storing and slowing the flow of water.
- Peat-free compost is made from sustainable and organic materials.



Benefits of using peat-free compost

- It is rich in microbes that improve the soil and help to protect plants from pathogens.
- It is high in nutrients.
- We help support sustainability by reducing demand for peat.

Tips for using peat-free compost

- It can be bulky, which is not suitable for sowing smaller seeds. This can be solved by mixing it with vermiculite or perlite.
- When potting, make sure to use a container that drains well.
- Feed with fertilizer more regularly because nutrients will leach out with water. It is recommended to use liquid fertilisers.
- For better results mix with homemade compost such as leaf mould.

Tips for watering

- It is best watered regularly but in small amounts and at a slow pace.
- It can appear dry on the top but remain moist inside, so it is very important to check it by using your finger or lifting the pot, to prevent overwatering that could cause roots to rot.
- Peat-free compost containing bark needs to be watered less frequently. It will not dry out as quickly, because bark is moisture retentive.

Fertile soil and other conditions for good outcomes from our labour of love

by Erika Mansnerus

A new season of growth and cultivation is starting. Allotments are waking up from the winter quiet, and new and old plot-holders are being offered plenty of ideas on tackling weeds, digging – or not, and fertilising the beds to be ready for new growth.

As a new grower, I'm keen to understand the types of composts and fertilisers needed to achieve good outcomes for the labour of love with my plot. Eric Hess has given good composting advice in the Autumn 2022 and 2023 issues of the Grapevine. (http://www.finchleyhs.org/newsletters/).

For a new grower, however, it may take time to create good-quality compost of one's own. The following composts and soil improvers are part of our new range of peat-free composts available in the Trading Hut. We've chosen the Melcourt range based on the good reviews it has received as peat-free grow media.

To improve the soil, the **Farmyard** helps add nutrients and improve its fertility. It also improves soil structure and increases its water-holding capacity.

SylvaGrow with added John Innes can double as a grow bag. It has nutrients for the early growth and can be used as potting-on and planting out compost.

Multipurpose is a good all-rounder. Last year, I succeeded with seed sowing and potting on with it. It also added good nutrients to my raised bed. If you're interested in organic growing, the SylvaGrow Organic compost can be used as a grow bag alongside the Planter.

Fertilisers will become helpful later into the growing season, as most composts feed 4-6 weeks of new growth. Catherine Schmitt has offered a good summary of the uses of different fertilisers for the Trading Hut, that I am going to summarise here. Further instructions for use are to be found on the Trading Hut's notice board.

Bone Meal is a slow-release organic fertiliser ideal for bulbs, herbaceous plants, shrubs, roses, fruit trees, and strawberries.

Epsom Salts cures magnesium deficiency, which causes yellowing between the veins of older leaves.

Fish, Blood and Bone is a general fertiliser that encourages growth and rich green foliage (nitrogen), vigorous root development (phosphite) and improves flower colour and fruit ripening (potash).

Sulphate of Potash is for fruit and flowers and helps improve plant resistance to pests and diseases.

Sulphate of Ammonia encourages leafy growth and neutralises alkaline soils. Beneficial for brassicas, lettuce, spinach, rhubarb, leeks and onions.

Sulphate of Iron is for acid-loving (ericaceous) plants, such as blueberries, raspberries, and gooseberries.

Q4 fertiliser is an all-purpose fertiliser with excellent results on fruit, vegetables, and flowers. It helps with fruit growth, flowering, and ripening.

To keep pests and plant diseases away, slug repellents (chemical as well as good old oyster shells), fungus fighters, and bug clear sprays for edible flowers, fruit, and vegetables can offer the help needed.

So, there's plenty for us to think about when working on our plots and raised beds in the new season, including how to keep the soil fertile and find the right support for our labour of love.

POLLINATORS NEED OUR HELP

1. **The UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme** operates from April 1st to September 30th, welcoming participation from anyone interested. Spend 10 minutes observing and counting the total number of insects on a single flower, then record your observations at ukpoms.org.uk.

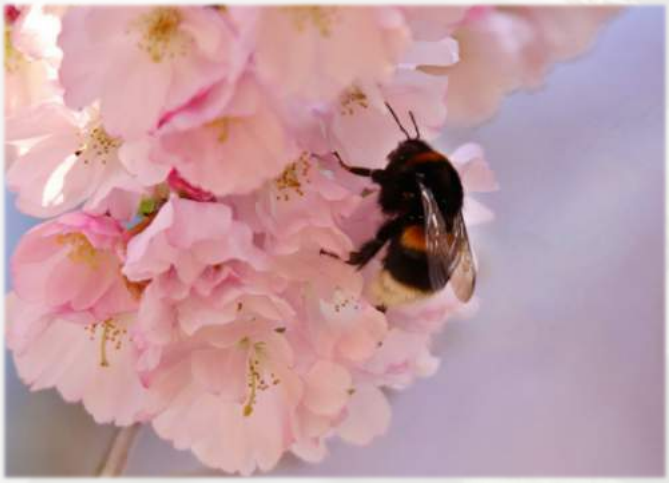
2. **Bumbles on Blooms**: RHS, in collaboration with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, has launched a nationwide initiative known as Bumbles on Blooms, urging people to participate. The project's objective is to identify the flowers most frequently visited by bumblebees during spring, aiming to support these crucial pollinators. Running until May 31st, the scheme encourages individuals to observe and photograph bumblebees on flowers in gardens and parks throughout the UK, documenting their observations online or via a designated app.

Bumblebees play a vital role in pollinating various plants like apples, tomatoes, and peas, yet they confront dual challenges of habitat loss and climate change. The presence of flowers and blossoms in spring is pivotal for aiding them in establishing successful colonies at the season's onset.

The data collected from this project will inform gardeners about the most suitable plants to cultivate to support bumblebees during spring. RHS wildlife experts will analyse the findings, potentially uncovering insights into other factors, such as flower colour, that influence bumblebee plant preferences.

<u>To participate:</u>

- photograph bumblebees on flowers.
- verify the species' identity on rhs.org/uk/bumblesonblooms.
- submit your observation to the Bumbles on Blooms project via app iNaturalist.



3. Solitary Bee Hotels

While honeybees and bumblebees often dominate discussions about bees in the UK, it's essential to recognise the remarkable diversity within the bee population. Britain hosts approximately 275 bee species, with solitary bees comprising the majority. These solitary bees play a crucial role in pollination networks, underscoring the importance of conserving and protecting these vital species.

You can enhance pollinator activity in your area by constructing a straightforward solitary bee hotel. You would need materials including hollow canes (bamboo or dried stems from various plants like sunflowers, teasel, fennel, brambles, raspberries, and elder), a plant pot or tin can, stones, and secateurs.

Measure and cut the canes to the desired length, ensuring a clean opening at one end. Fill the pot with tightly packed long lengths of canes, using shorter pieces to fill any gaps. Position the pot in a sheltered, sunny spot on a stone base, slightly tilted to facilitate rainwater drainage.

Since solitary bees primarily forage near their nesting sites (within 300 meters), ensure suitable flowers are available nearby. Early nesting mason bees favour trees with spring blossom such as apple and cherry trees, along with other plants like dog roses, honeysuckles, knapweeds, thistles, and birds-foot trefoil.

Tube ends in your plant hotel plugged with mud, leaves, resin, or plant hairs indicate occupancy by bees. Different bee species use various materials for nesting, and multiple types may utilise the hotel concurrently. During summer, you might even witness leafcutter bees transporting large leaf fragments to the hotel!

The placement of your bee hotel significantly influences its occupancy. Position it in a sunny location for rapid morning warming, ideally sheltered from heavy rain but not obscured by vegetation. A southeast orientation offers a balance of sun exposure and rain shelter.

If your bee hotel remains unused, try relocating it and consider adding more of the flowers that solitary bees prefer.

News from the Trading Hut

Membership Survey

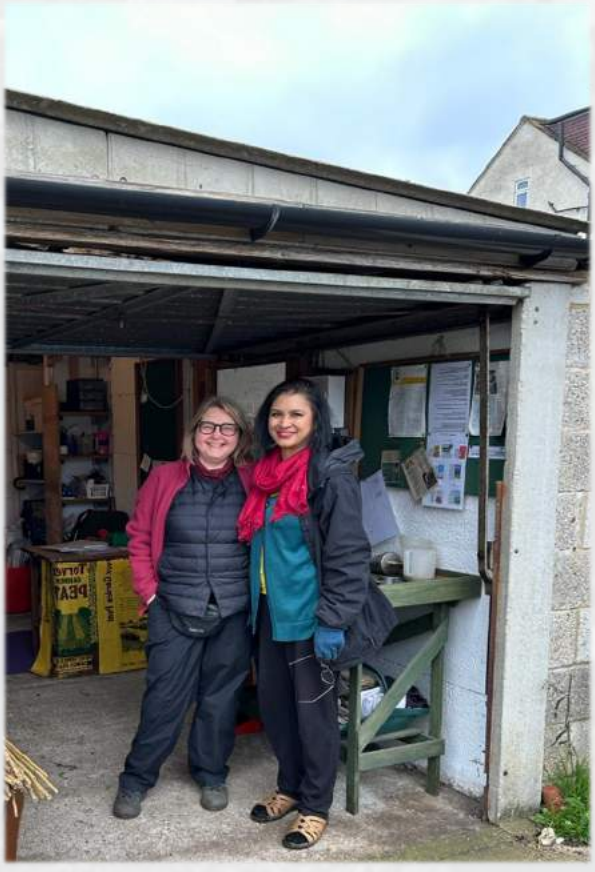
by Erika Mansnerus and Julie Datta

The Trading Hut opened for the new season on Easter Sunday. We have stocked new compost that has been praised by Which? Best Buy reviews and is recommended by committee members with extensive horticultural expertise. We have also had a good response to the membership survey and can share some findings here.

We asked about opening times, and some plot holders indicated that they would like to see the Hut open from August until October. Our reaction to that is simple: we can only keep the Hut open with help from volunteers. So, please reach out to us for volunteering!

We welcome two kinds of volunteering: helping with the Trading Hut and offering one-off delivery unloading. Now we have a new supplier, we shall be ordering more regularly to ensure fresh stock throughout the season.

We also asked about the kinds of compost that we should stock. Based on the feedback, we bought peat-free seed and potting compost, multipurpose compost, organic compost, and grow-bags.



Fertilisers: we will stock up on fresh bulk fertilisers in May. Your wish-list of chicken pellets, bone meal, fish-blood and bone, Maxigen seaweed and Maxitom tomato fertiliser are on our list. We also have a new product: Q4 Plant Food.

Pest control: we have bought some new pest control products and will add oyster shells and usual slug repellents in May.

Thank you for engaging with the survey!

Please get in touch with us on volunteering or giving feedback on products: fhstradinghut@gmail.com

Sow's you Know

by Felicity Nock

It's not too late to sow seeds for this season. In fact germinated plants are tumbling from the preparation polytunnel into the holding greenhouses. The Plant Sale is revving up! If you feel inspired to help or to sow more yourself, here are some tips from Christine's Sowing Masterclass – but don't forget to keep small plants watered and potted up later.

You will need:

- An open potting tray that can be used to mix compost
- A seed tray, half standard size is often most manageable. Alternatives like a plastic superstore fruit/veg tray, egg boxes etc are flimsier but fine
- A water reservoir tray with absorbent matting is helpful.
- A seed tamper – flat implement
- A small dibber or pencil
- Old flour sieve
- A water mister
- Plastic or glass sheet to cover
- Labels
- Seed compost, this is low in nutrients because seeds contain all the nutrients they need for germination. Today peat-free compost is the norm. While a government ban on peat sales will not be implemented till 2030 garden centres are phasing peat products out for home gardeners from 2024. Learning to use peat-free is necessary but variable, even professional growers experiment with different products. Share your experiences with fellow gardeners.

The seeds Christine and Elena sowed are broccoli, small to mid size seeds in comparison with Foxglove or Petunia (tricky, like dust) and Courgette, huge, at the other end of the scale. All seeds are different and the time/conditions they need for sowing and germination are usually written on the seed packet.

a. Prepare compost in the open potting tray, using your hands to break clumps and open the fibres to let air in.Some gardeners like to add vermiculite to help open the soil structure. This can be expensive.

b. Fill a seed tray with compost level at 1cm below the top. Shake the tray, continue to break up any lumps and make sure the corners are filled.

c. Smooth the surface and tamp down gently with a flat implement (tamper) or the flat of your knuckles

d. Cut the seed packet open and keep the named picture for later identification.

e. Prepare a plastic label for each seed tray/pot. Label, label, label. Everyone forgets!

f. Open the inner packet. Tip approximately half the seeds into your left hand and (if right-handed) use the right hand to pinch a few seeds at a time to scatter evenly over the surface of the compost. For larger seeds a pencil can be used to make a hole for each seed.

g. Using an old flour sieve, finely cover the surface with compost. Vermiculite is used for seeds requiring light to germinate.

h. Place the prepared tray in a water reservoir to absorb water from below. The surface should be damp to touch, avoid soggy compost. A mister can be used to finely water the surface

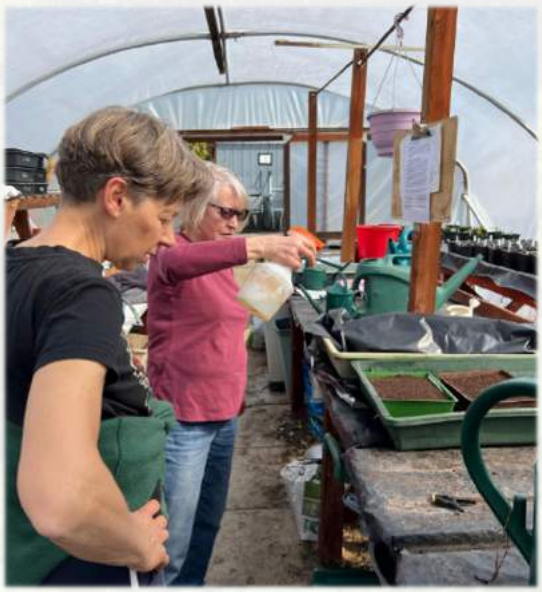
When the compost has absorbed water the seed tray can be covered with a glass or plastic sheet to germinate. Unless the seeds germinate in the dark, put in a sheltered position to catch light. For seeds that need heat to germinate specialist heat mats and thermostats may be required. Your seed packet should provide details on these options.

Continue to watch and keep the soil moist. Christine has noticed that peat-free can appear to dry out on the surface but when a tray/pot is lifted it still feels heavy so will contain water below.

The seedlings develop a pair of oval cotyledon leaves first then, as the plants continue to grow, recognisable 'true' leaves appear. At this point they are ready to 'prick out' and 'pot on' into compost with greater nutrient value.

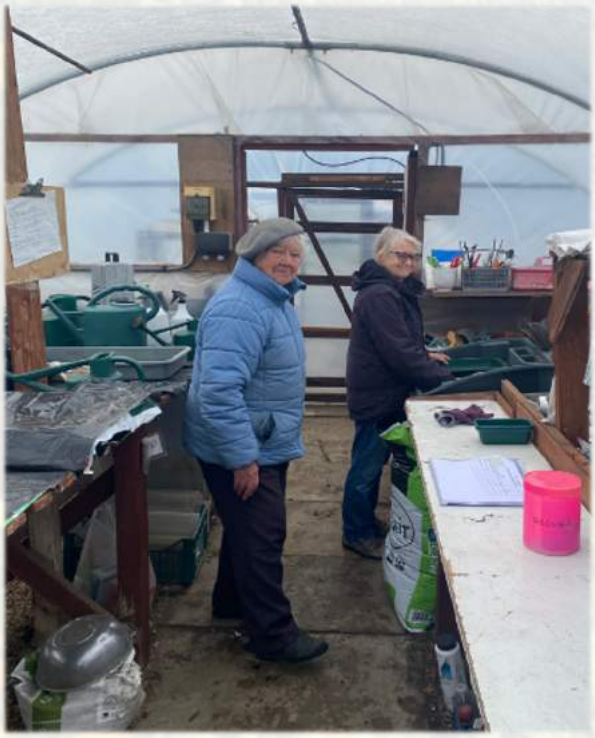
Christine's tutor, as she recalls, taught her that Multi-purpose compost is "good for everything and good for nothing". Chance it or choose a John Innes soil based Nº 2 potting-on compost.

Pricking out and potting on is another story, join Christine in the polytunnels to find out more or follow web information but always remember to handle young plants by their cotyledon leaves, never their stems.

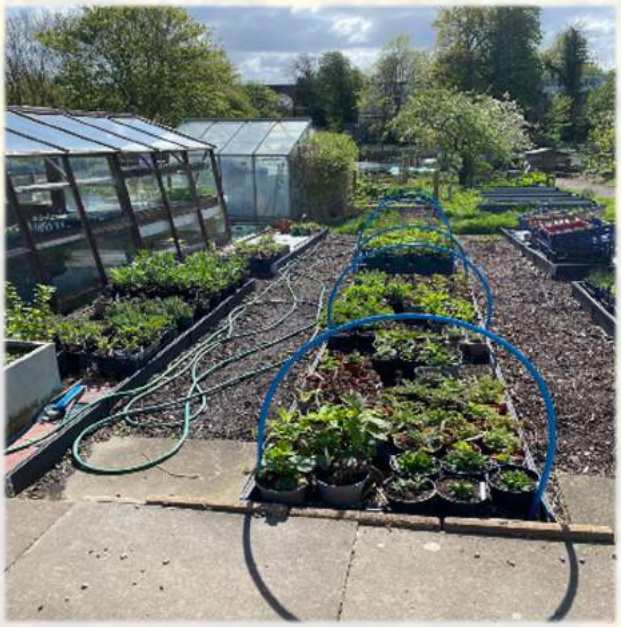


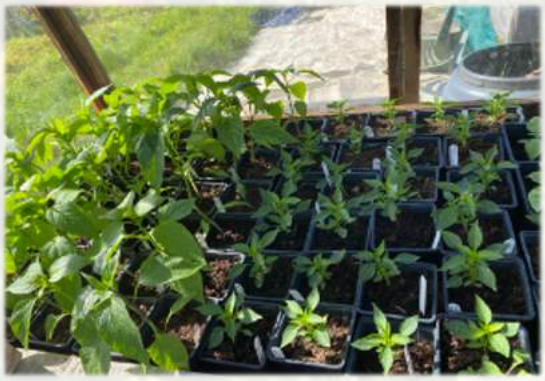
Plant Sale Preparation

As we are approaching our grand finale, the annual Plant Sale, which generates a lot of interest and a good income for our allotments, it is important to pay tribute to the people who make it possible, year after year. Despite other pressing commitments Catherine Schmitt and Christine Williams, our Plant Sale gurus, have been there every week, to sow, pot up, divide, repot, clean, move, lift - and supervise an eager troupe of volunteers: Felicity, Fumiko, Jodi and her children, Jo, Judy, Julie, Tomoko, Elain, Elena, Sheila, Shoko, Yvonne and more, taking turns to help them in their mammoth task.



The results are there for everyone to see – a growing army of young seedlings of annual vegetables and flowers, and rows of healthy-looking perennials. So next time you pop in a sturdy seedling that you have purchased in the Plant Sale into your prepared bed or pot, think of all the care and love, and a huge amount of work that goes into making it happen. A big thank you to our green-fingered goddesses!





THE FRIENDS OF DOLLIS BROOK

The Friends of Dollis Brook – going under the name of Dollis Brookers, is a group of local volunteers founded in 2021 which is keen to keep our Dollis Brook and the surrounding area clean of litter, dog fouling and water pollution.

Every month/six weeks we choose a section of the stream to clean. The cleaning, or litter pick, as we call it, alternates between Saturdays and Sundays. The size of the group varies, with many people unable to commit to every litter pick, or having last minute obligations but we nevertheless manage to maintain a regular pattern, with 5-7 people turning up every time. Each session lasts approximately 1.5 hours.

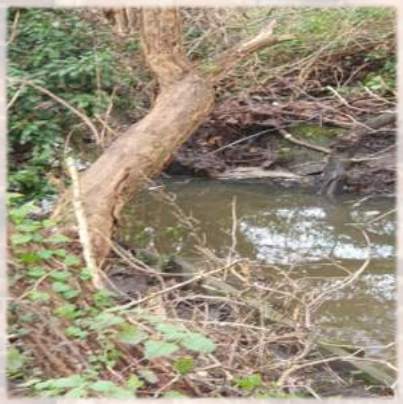
The group has also joined forces with Friends of Windsor Open Space and Darlands Conservation Trust, as well as other environmental charities.

We get a lot of encouragement and nods from passers-by: runners, dog walkers, families on bicycles, which is great, but we need more people to join in, in deeds, not just words! If you love the brook as much as we do, please join our group online (Search Facebook for Dollis Brookers or contact Elena Cook on yelenacook@hotmail.com) and come along. Children are always welcome.

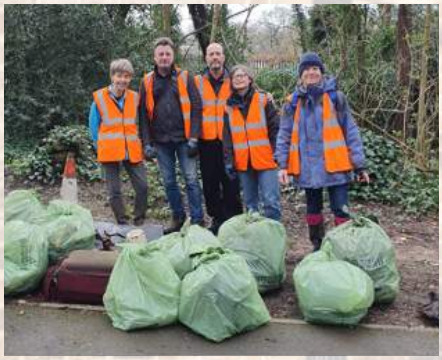
Each volunteer gets an orange vest, a hoop for attaching a litter bag, a litter picker and a pair of sturdy gloves. But what you really get out of it is a lot of satisfaction by doing your bit for the environment and our children's future.

It's absolutely beautiful at the Brook! Let's keep it that way!

Before...



...and after



Announcements

GRAND PLANT SALE 2024

Our annual Plant Sale will take place at Gordon Road Allotments N3 1EL, on Sunday 19 May, from 1-4 pm. Free entry.

Come and stock up on annual bedding plants, vegetable plants, house plants and perennials.

Refreshments: tea, coffee, soft drinks, homemade cakes. Bring own carriers, please! Cash only. The Trading Hut will be open.

WATERPERRY GARDENS VISIT

Members of FHS, family and friends are invited to join us on a coach trip to these beautiful gardens on **Friday 21st June.**

Made famous by Beatrix Havergal who established her School of Horticulture for Ladies from 1932 to 1971, it is now home to 20 acres of beautifully landscaped ornamental gardens, a quality plant centre and garden shop, gallery, gift shop, museum and tea shop.

Details and a booking form can be found on the website http://www.finchleyhs.org/category/blog/

Only a few places remaining. To secure a place please email Judy Wollett asap at finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com

PLANT HERITAGE FAIR

The London Plant Heritage Spring Plant Fair will be held on **Saturday 27 April from 9.30am - 2pm** at the usual venue: St Michael's C of E primary school, North Road, Highgate N6 4BG. The Fair will be open from 9.30am - 2pm. Everyone welcome.

The Finchley Horticultural Society 34 Elm Park Road, Finchley, N3 1EB
finchleyhs.org.uk
twitter.com/finchleyhort
www.facebook.com/FinchleyHS

For all Finchley gardeners and for plot holders at Gordon Road, Nethercourt Avenue and Brent Way

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

Events Diary

RHS Spring Events:

Celebrate the best of the season at the RHS Gardens and shows

Wisley: *Exhibition: Danger and Desire – The Seductive Power of Orchids*
Until 1 May

Hyde Hall: *Spring Plant Fair*
20-21 April, 10 am-4 pm

Harlow Carr: *RHS Tulip, Daffodil and Rhododentron Competition*
4-5 May

Urban Show
Depot Mayfield, Manchester
18-21 April

Malvern Spring Festival
9-12 May

Chelsea Flower Show
21-25 May

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

RHS

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.

This issue of the Grapevine has been generously sponsored by Winkworth Estate Agents