

Moorside Allotments Association

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the winter issue of our Moorside Newsletter...

Happy New Year to all our Moorside plotholders!

With the Summer issue of our newsletter being published well into the end of that glorious season, we are combining our autumn news with lots of things to do over winter in this edition. As always, we welcome your support as well as your valuable editorial contributions, which benefit both new plotholders and our many seasoned gardeners.

In this edition, our resident experts offer suggestions on what you should be doing on your allotment now and in the weeks ahead as the lighter nights edge ever closer to the clocks going forward at the end of March. There are also easy to follow articles on gardening tips and 'how to do' features, which we hope will prove interesting as well as useful.

As we go to press, we have just taken delivery of our seed potato order to the Moorside Shop, so prepare those egg boxes to get chitting, folks! See our Trading Hut News in this issue for all the details. The Trading Hut section of the website will carry a full list, together with prices. Visit www.moorsideallotments.co.uk for details.

Happy Gardening!
Susan Pownall/Sue Johnson
 Consultant Editors.

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DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The 2015 allotments calendar is starting to take shape and we have some advance information on interesting events for your diary.

25th February: 6-7.30pm. The Greening Wingrove Project presents a session on feeding your plants and wormeries at the Nunsmoor Park Pavilion. For more information, contact the project team on Tel: 0191 212 6119. Email: hello@greeningwingrove.org.uk

6th March: 10am to 12.30pm. Vertical Veg Street – Seed Swap project event organised by the WEA Greening Wingrove Project team at the Nunsmoor Park Pavilion. Contact details as above.

6th September: The City Allotments Show. Setting up for exhibitors will take place on the Saturday, 5th September, with the one-day Show taking place on the Sunday. More information, including venue, in our next newsletter.

12th September: Moorside Allotments Association Annual Show. More information to be announced but in the meantime, the Show Committee would like to hear from anyone able to help on the previous day and the day of the show itself. E.g. putting up marquees, tables, setting up stands etc.

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Trading Hut News

By Susan Pownall

Our Moorside Shop sales change emphasis during the winter months, with high demand for our premium paraffin at £1 a litre; our top quality manure; and our wide variety of bird food helping to keep our feathered friends happy and healthy.

We are desperate for your help if you have access to 5 litre plastic containers which we can use to dispense paraffin in our usual 4-litre quantities. Unfortunately we are running out of containers as purchasers omit to return them once empty. We need clean and dry containers, please - with secure caps. If you can't drop them off during shop hours, please leave them outside the shop store on the paved area and we can pick them up. Many thanks in advance.

Our 2015 seed potato order is being despatched from our wholesalers as we go to print. We have ordered a variety across First Earlies, Second Earlies and Maincrop at very reasonable prices. As we did last year, the spuds will come in 2.5 kg nets but we can split them for you, should you not require that quantity of a certain type. Come along to the shop to see what we have on offer but don't wait too long. Our highly competitive prices result in our selling extremely quickly.

Compost of all types is also due for delivery and we are already being asked particularly for our premium Humax Original seed compost with silver sand, so popular with you all. We have also ordered another new product



requested by some of our gardeners - cartons of the Chempak supplements 2, 3, 4 and 8, which will also be in stock by the time you read this.

Remember too, we have an arrangement with Thompson & Morgan, the Suffolk seed specialists who give us 50% discount on seeds (free p&p) and 20% discount off plants, shrubs etc. (small charge for p&p). The Moorside Shop co-ordinates all orders and 2015 catalogues and order forms are available from the shop between 10 am and 12 noon on Saturdays and Sundays. Return forms and money to the shop staff and we'll do the rest.

A novel use for a sideboard!

Our now well-established area for the less able gardener in full use by Age UK, including waist high planters and a great potting shed. The group has now added a piece of artwork to the plot in the form of a very trendy 1960s sideboard, decorated in cleverly applied and colourful mosaics and with the top and the drawers planted up with equally colourful seasonal plants. We love the legs, suitably housed in psychedelic wellies!





How to make a easy & effective Leaf Mould

by Andrew Moat

If you want to make leaf mould for your garden here is an easy way of doing it.

Get a very large black plastic bag; fill it up with as many leaves as possible, then stab it with your garden fork to make holes for the worms to get into it. Then drench the leaves with water. If you have some Comfrey tea, measure out a full jam jar of this tea and pour it into your watering can and water the leaves. To help the leaves to rot down, aerate them with a garden fork when you are doing the watering.

Leave the black sack for a month in a corner of your garden and repeat the procedure every four weeks. Keep doing this throughout the winter months, even on a cold grey winter day. You will reap the rewards in the summer! The leaves will rot down to a third in volume and by July or August your leaf mould will be ready for use. I have been doing this for some years now and have been able to make nice crumbly leaf mould in about 10 months.

Most leaves, if kept damp will rot down within a year. Some leaves such as oak, and horse chestnut are quite slow to rot down. Do not collect holly and other evergreen leaves, as these will take years to decompose. It is best to do it in your back garden where you will have water nearby. If you are thinking of doing this down at the Allotment, be aware that the water is switched off sometime in November and it does not come back on till March.

If you have the space you might like to make a leaf bin using wire mesh, four wooden posts driven into the ground and the wire mesh, one metre square, pinned to the posts. Fill the cage with leaves and water them as described, then place a piece of old carpet on top with a heavy stone so that they are not blown away!

In making leaf mould you are doing your bit for conservation and it is a natural form of recycling and it is free!



Comfrey Tea Production

Collect some comfrey leaves and put them into a bucket. You can either use your gloved hands to roughly cut them up or you can use hedge cutters. Fill the bucket with water. Cover the bucket with a piece of wood to keep the flies away and leave for about a month. Next, pour the solution into some plastic bottles or other screwed containers and it will be ready for use. You will have to dilute it - a jam jar of this Comfrey Tea to one watering can of water. Comfrey Tea will help to improve the leaf growth on your plants such as Tomato and Pepper plants. Comfrey Tea is full of Nitrogen and Potassium. The comfrey leaf remains can go into your compost bin.

Comfrey Tea Concentrate

To make comfrey tea concentrate, cut the comfrey leaves as before. Place them into a dry bucket and fill it to the top with dry leaves. Place a heavy stone on top of the leaves and again cover the bucket to keep the rain and flies off. Leave for about six weeks and then gently decant the dark brown liquid into a dry screwed plastic bottle. Again dilute 1 part tea concentrate to 15 parts water.

Nettle Tea Production

To make Nettle Tea, it is the same method as for Comfrey Tea production. Wearing your gardening gloves place the nettles into a bucket, then using a pair of hedge trimmers cut up the nettles, and then add water. Leave for a month then decant. Nettle Tea will improve your fruit and vegetables. It also contains a lot of Phosphate plus Nitrogen, Iron, Magnesium and Sulphur. When making Nettle tea, leave the bucket in the far corner of your garden as it gives off a bad smell. Dilute the Nettle Tea to 1 part tea to 10 parts water. The remains of the Nettles are a good activator for your compost bin.



What to do Next!

by Sue Johnson

January and February

Seed catalogues, delivered by email and snail-mail, have been out for several weeks now, and special offers keep coming. If you haven't made your orders already do them now. When the seed packets arrive, commandeer the dining table, lay them all out with a sketch of your garden or raised beds and plan. It's better than Christmas and you have an excuse for a drink of what you fancy and a chocolate or two: after all planning is as tiring as doing!

Potatoes will be delivered from January onwards so get them out of the bags immediately on receipt and stand in egg boxes (labelled!) to chit, "eyes" uppermost.

Early seed sowing of onions can begin now, some growers starting exhibition types on Boxing Day. (Did it become traditional because it was a Holiday? Or did it start with workaholic Victorian gardeners?)

If you are winter-hardy and the ground is not frozen you can dig over beds and manure as necessary. Keep a plan of crop rotation with you or put in markers so you don't manure areas destined for carrots or parsnips. These areas are good sites for any spent seed compost you kept in bags from last spring and summer but didn't get round to using. Opened bags of commercial compost can be used in this way as the nutrient value in them is too low for another year.

Stack fresh manure and cover for later distribution on the beds.

Try forcing a crown of rhubarb for an early crop. Force by placing a large pot or bin over it, put a brick or bricks on top to cover any holes and weight it down. Pack around with straw if you can get it, or bubble wrap secured with string. The crop, kept in the dark, will be tender as well as earlier than that left in the open. After March, leave it in the open to grow on and feed it well.

Prepare a trench for beans now or in March. Tradition says (probably Victorians again), double dig. (Take out a spit of soil and barrow it away. Fork over the bottom of the trench, add manure or garden compost, and infill with the removed soil. A spit is approximately the depth of a spade.) With raised beds simply make a trench about a foot deep, put in manure, garden compost or vegetable waste that would otherwise go into the compost bin and backfill with the soil. Either way will leave a mound which will sink as the material decomposes.

You may decide to do repairs to the greenhouse or shed before winter weather finds the odd gap and destroys the lot. Replacement glass can be obtained locally from Blacketts on Studley Terrace.

If you use a paraffin heater in the greenhouse buy some new wicks and start the year cleanly.

Repair or replace bird boxes. Some birds will be nesting soon so if you put out peanuts pop them into a strong plastic bag and pulverize them with a rolling pin. Nuts can choke hatchlings and fledglings. Have facilities to make a hot drink or have a flask with you.

March

It all starts to happen now. You can continue prepare ground but indoor seed sowing starts in earnest. If you don't have an electric propagator put it on a wish list for next year.

With some heat you can get going with tomatoes. Light levels are high enough now to bring them on in the greenhouse.

If you didn't clean out the greenhouse do it now before it is filled with seedlings. Some professionals no longer wash the whole thing out but you do need to sort out pots and anything else lying around. Pull up any weeds which found their way through gaps and sweep. Check for



winter damage.

Buy in bagged compost and stack in the greenhouse, shed or garage away from what will still be very cold wet weather, and bring some into warmth a few days before seed sowing. Seeds do not respond well to cold compost.

Add fertiliser to beds ready for sowing and planting, and feed overwintering crops.

Keep watching the Moorside website and noticeboards for plants coming up for sale.

These notions are in addition to the excellent reminders on the Moorside Website.

Click on the tab **What To Do Now - March**.



A to Z of Plotting

by Sue Johnson

Humble Earthworms are often taken for granted but are essential for a fertile soil and do this in several ways.

When burrowing they create tunnels which allow air to circulate and water to drain, except when there is flooding of the land.

Their digestion reduces the size of mineral particles making them easier for plant roots to take up.

Waste products ("casts") are not only superb fertilisers but have a granular texture which encourage plant root growth. Huge amounts of casts can be produced so the more worms the better! Encourage worms by using a mulch of grass clippings, manure either animal or plant ("green"), home made compost and liming acid soil every four years or so. Lime feeds the worms, keeps soil "sweet" and is part of vegetable cultivation.

Large numbers are killed by digging too often or using rotary cultivators both of which also destroy their tunnels.

Without worms there would be few birds. On a practical level birds consume volumes of insects which are pests for the gardener and on an aesthetic level give us so much pleasure.

An F1 Hybrid is the result of crossing two specific plants selected for particular characteristics, and is short for **First Filial generation**. It is therefore necessary to repeat this cross every time under controlled conditions and is one of the reasons for the cost of the seeds being higher than random crosses.

The resultant plants are more uniform than random crosses and, for vegetables, tend to be ready for cropping at the same time. The process was originally researched and made available for farming so that harvesting the whole crop could be made. Uniformity can be useful for gardeners but it is sometimes more practical to have vegetables cropping over a period of time using non F1's.

Green Manure is living plant material, which is dug into the ground to add nutrients which the plant has manufactured. Do not let the plants produce flowers



which use up nutrients and therefore not available for the soil. Sow thickly before the first frosts to produce bulky material. Leave the ground for a couple of weeks before sowing crops as in many cases seeds will not germinate when newly dug plant material is present.

Rather than leaving bare ground over autumn and winter, or covering with a permeable fabric, try sowing one or two plant varieties from those mentioned here or by browsing a seed catalogue. Some plants, such as Hungarian ryegrass, can be tough to dig in. Some of the easiest to handle are shown below.

Winter hardy beans and field beans are very useful as they provide nitrogen manufactured in nodules on the roots. Pull up the plants in spring before flower heads are formed, leaving the roots in the soil. The tough stems can be put into the compost bin.

Phacelia and *Limnanthes douglasii* (Poached Egg Plant) are easy to dig into the ground: dig in the whole plants or chop off the foliage before digging in. Both of these plants in flower are good for bees so it is reasonable to leave some in areas which fit in with crops. They are pretty blue and white with a yellow centre respectively.

Mustard is a brassica and rotated as such. Dig in when still seedlings.

Winter tares (a native vetch) is also a legume as are peas and beans and therefore produces nitrogen. Sow from spring to autumn on temporary spare ground.



The Comfrey Project is looking for trustees

As most people know, the Comfrey Project gardens on two allotments at Moorside. Usually groups of participants and volunteers gather at the plot on Tuesdays to garden and share lunch. Some unusual vegetables are grown, and the willow bower is a lovely feature. They're always at the shows and always winning prizes!



The Comfrey Project is a registered charity which works with refugees and asylum seekers on allotment sites in Newcastle (Moorside and Walkergate) and Gateshead (Felling) with the aim of improving their general wellbeing and providing a place where they can relax, socialise and forget their problems. Most of us would recognise that gardening at Moorside does that for us! Comfrey Project participants really value these opportunities. Currently there are about 80 participants.

At the moment, The Comfrey Project is looking for trustees to be on the committee and help run the organization, two trustees having left this year after long service. Trustees meet monthly with the Project Manager to oversee the running of the Project. They have ultimate responsibility for making sure the charity is well run, is doing what it was set up to do, and is solvent. They also run regular meetings (6-12 monthly) with all the staff to think about the development of the Project and strategy.

That might sound daunting, but it's also fun, and there are lots of benefits, like meeting great people, and going to Comfrey Project events, where there is always delicious food! I joined as a trustee 5 years ago, and have had lots of fun, and learnt a lot.

We're ideally looking for someone with some experience of or interest in gardening, and/or refugees and asylum seekers, and/or running a

charity, and ideally someone under 50, but this shouldn't put off people who haven't got that kind of experience or are over 50; interest in the Project and commitment are the most important things. There's lots of background stuff on our website, and this page says something about what trustees do.

<http://thecomfreyproject.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/>

If you might be interested or would like to find out more, please do contact me by email (gailyoung@btinternet.com) or phone (07812033610).

Gail Young, Plot 49b, Comfrey Project Trustee.





Beginners page

by Sue Johnson



It all starts here!

You recently became the proud tenant of a plot. You have never grown fruit or veg, or you have done so in a small way. Having bought every type of seed possible from the gorgeously illustrated catalogues and scoured garden centres you are wondering where to put everything and how exactly you start.

First, think about whether you want to have a Victorian style plot, large flat beds which are dug over every year or many small beds separated by paths of grass, gravel, wood chip or bounded by wooden planks. Often referred to as raised beds they are more strictly termed fixed beds. The ground is dug deeply once and thereafter less so but with animal or green manure added and worked into the top few inches most years. We know from medieval manuscripts that what we think of as modern goes back a long way.

Secondly, there is not enough space for everything, especially if you have a half plot. If you haven't yet finished buying seeds and plants then take time to consider a) the amount of space you have and b) what you actually like to eat.

POTATOES take up a lot of space for a long time but a compromise would be to grow only first earlies or waxy salad potatoes as a treat or put two or three in a large pot or large compost bag turned inside out. Make holes with the tines of a fork or knife in the lower part and bottom of the bag for drainage. Fill about a third of the bag with compost, put in the potatoes and cover with another third of compost. When the shoots have come through top up with more compost until the bag is almost full. Plant up in pots in the same way. Top dress (that is, gently trowel in fertiliser in the top few inches and water in with a can) or use soluble feed diluted according to instructions during the season. The crop may not be as big as from the open ground. Watering is more difficult in containers so make sure that the plants are neither dry at the roots nor waterlogged. However, the plus side is that you can put containers alongside your boundary edge and keep the open ground for other things.

First early? As the name implies it is the first type to mature to eating size, followed by second early and maincrop.



Whole heads of **LETTUCE** also take a lot of space but if you like single heads you can grow those bred to be small such as Little Gem or Tom Thumb. Alternatively, or in addition, grow "cut and come again" leaves which also come as mixtures such as coloured varieties, Italian types or spicy types. These can be sown or planted in odd spaces as well as in traditional rows, as can other saladings such as radishes and spring onions. Salad leaves should be sown at intervals rather than once. Harvest by cutting a handful or more near the base of the growth and leave to grow again. As soon as you cut some, sow some more to have a continual turnover (successional sowing).



BROAD BEANS can still be sown or planted from February, although some gardeners now plant during the autumn using a winter hardy variety. Most are hardy but if there is a very bad weather forecast before the end of May just wrap some fleece around them until the worst is over. Most varieties grow to 4 feet or so and need supporting with canes and strong string.

FRENCH BEANS AND RUNNER BEANS are now bred as dwarfs as well as climbers but although climbers may seem to take up a lot of space the very fact that they climb 6 feet or more means more beans per plant than from dwarfs. These plants were originally from South America and therefore tender in our climate. Plant out at the end of May or after the last frosts. If cold or windy weather is forecast use a temporary shield of fleece wound around the canes and held in place with pegs until the cold or wind recedes.

They need strong supports and a wigwam is the simplest. Use 8 foot canes, one per plant. Push the canes into the ground to a foot depth, in a circle and at an angle pointing inwards so that the tops meet and cross over sufficiently to bind with strong twine. It is also now possible to buy specific plastic cane holders with anything from 6 to 12 holes punched in a circle. The tops of the canes can easily be pushed through and this keeps a strong hold at the top of the structure although they are a bit fiddly to set up. Make the circle a generous diameter at the base, for instance a minimum of 3 feet, as a generous diameter gives better stability than a little one. Trying to weed inside the circle is difficult so cut a circle of dark landscape fabric or black plastic and peg it down inside the circle before pushing in the final canes.

Put one plant per cane on the outside of the cane and close to it at an angle so that it can be tied in with twine. If you want only a few plants but would like some scented flowers to take home, plant a couple of sweet peas instead of a bean at a few of the canes. This is also believed to help pollination of the beans by attracting bees to the sweet peas. Continue to tie in as the plants grow. Flexible plastic coated wire or plastic coated metal rings can be used instead of string but it is a good idea to use string for the first couple of attachments as a better hold can be achieved.





Beginners page continued



STRAWBERRIES are versatile and can be planted in open ground or in large containers. Have a look around and you will see that some people plant them up on trestle tables raised above soil level. The ground below, providing it is not shady, can be used for other crops. If you leave the ground bare, cover with landscape fabric to avoid having to weed. Once the fruit has formed and before it turns red cover the whole bed or container with netting to prevent bird and slug damage. Insect netting, being close woven and strong, is ideal.



Thanks to dwarf rootstocks it is possible to grow **APPLES** in fairly small spaces, especially if trained and held in place with posts and wires.

Keep a **NOTEBOOK** to jot down what you sowed and planted and what happened to them. Keep a note of where you grew them so that you don't plant them in the same place next year (see Crop Rotation below).

Some **TERMINOLOGY** you will come across immediately as you begin:

Crop Rotation – crops fall into different categories, roots such as carrots and potatoes, brassicas such as cabbages and turnips, and “others” which include peas and beans. Broadly, the categories have different nutritional requirements and suffer from specific pests and diseases. Moving the categories of crop every three or four years to a different area or bed helps to maintain a balance of nutrients in the ground and reduce the risk of serious pests and diseases. It is not really possible in our small spaces to maintain a rigid system but rotating the categories year on year should help. There will be more on this in later editions. For now, plant an area or several beds with the following in mind. The diagrams given in books usually assume a no-bed system. In a way having separate beds is easier because, for instance, if you like peas you could have more than one bed of them. On open ground you will have one area.

Green Manure - plants grown en masse for the purpose of digging into the soil to provide nutrients. There are particular recommendations for different seasons. Usually used instead of animal manure. (see also this issue A-Z of plotting)

Look out for the next Newsletter for more ideas.





Top Tips

By Neils Souter



From his vast repertoire of gardening snippets, in this issue Neils includes several hints on the use of common household items which appear to have a very effective use in the garden too.

Aluminium kitchen foil is a useful gardening aid. Use it to speed growth and protect against insects. Stretch the foil between the rows of plants, using stones or soil to anchor it down. The light the foil reflects can increase the yields of crops too, especially in cloudy or shaded areas. It can speed the ripening of outdoor tomatoes or the blooming of a rose bush by a full two weeks. The foil also keeps thrips and aphids away.

How to deter Ants

Ants hate aromatic plants such as mint, lavender, chives and garlic. Spot plant these around you garden in clumps or pots.

A Rhubarb Insecticide

Soak 3 lbs of rhubarb leaves in four quarts (a gallon) of water for 24 hours. Then bring the water to the boil and simmer for 30 minutes. Add 1 oz of laundry soap flakes and allow to cool. Drain and spray on plants where required.

Keep Your Tools Clean

Fill a bucket with soil and add some engine oil. Mix together and insert tools. This mixture is good for cleaning spades, forks etc.

Roses

At the first sign of blackspot, mix 2 teaspoonfuls of baking soda and a few drops of liquid soap with a gallon of water. Spray the whole bush. Re-apply every 4-5 days until the spots disappear.

Rough Measuring Guide

One pace measures between 26-29 inches.
Arms outstretched measures 5 feet.
Outstretched fingers measure 8 inches.

Slug Deterrent

Copper pan scrubbers are an excellent way of deterring slugs and snails. Untangle the wire, cut to size and place around your plants.

Egg Shells

The calcium in eggshells aids growth at leaf tips and bloom ends. They also help to prevent bloom end rot. Save your eggshells. Once every seven/fourteen days, crush some shells in a blender. Quantity six shells to one quart of water. Water plants accordingly.

Leggy Tomato Plants

When planting leggy tomato plants, plant them at an angle in the growbag up to the first set of leaves.

Identifying Lupins

When purchasing plants with no flower, you can tell the colour of the flower by the following means: If the stem is light, the flower will be a corresponding light colour. If the stem is dark, the plant will produce darker coloured flowers.

Rose Cuttings – Late Summer/Early Autumn

Take 12" cuttings the thickness of a pencil. Dig a V trench. Remove the spikes from the base of the cutting. Draw soil round the plant and water well. The success rate is approximately 50% as a guide. The plants will be ready to transplant the following autumn.



Greening Wingrove progress

by David Rochester

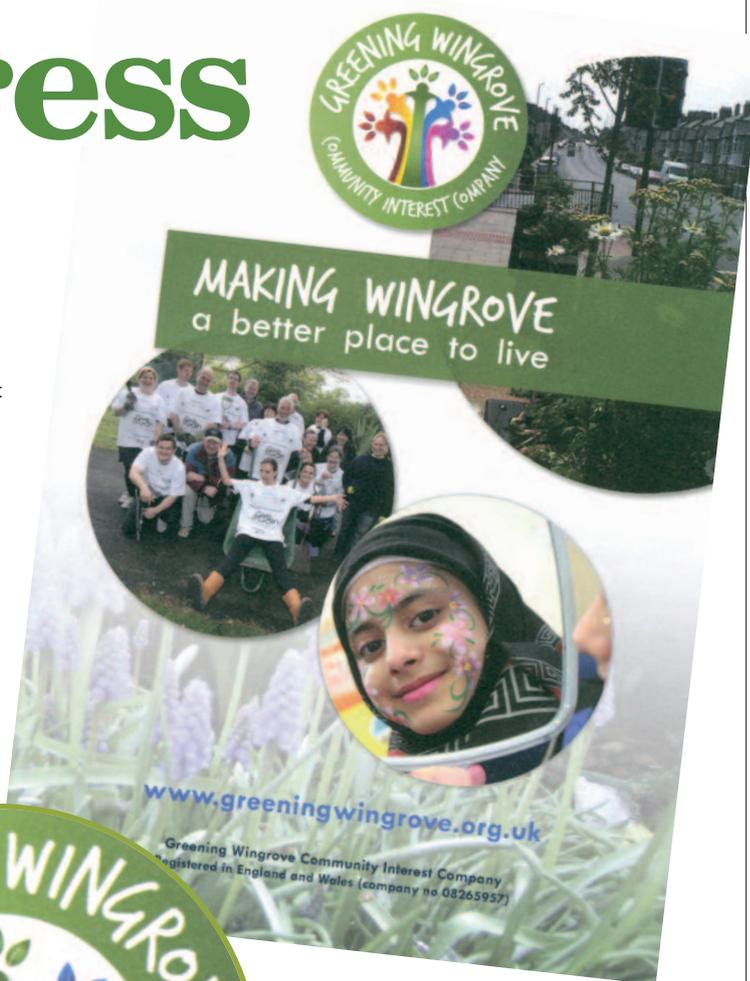
Greening Wingrove is a Community Interest Company (CIC), not to be confused with the Lottery funded project of the same name. The CIC has three broad strands of interest: greening our physical environment by planting trees, flowers, and edible crops; litter reduction; energy savings. The broad aim is expressed in our mission to 'Make Wingrove a Better Place To Live' and this is an update on the first of our aims.

We have been able to facilitate work of direct interest to Moorside Allotments by providing over £600 of fruit trees free of charge to members via the shop last March.

We have secured funding from The Big Tree Plant fund to plant over 1,400 trees (including the above fruit trees) before the end of February 2015. The first 600 or so were planted in March last year.

We secured funding from the Local Environmental Action Fund (LEAF) to make an orchard in Nuns Moor Park and also, potentially, a community garden

Plans for the enhancement of the Nuns Moor Recreation Area (the big grass space east of Brighton Grove down to the BBC and towards the centre of town) have been drawn up by a landscape architect and agreed with the council and the freemen. Stage one of this was a 120 metre long border of poppies along Barrack Road. This was a poppy / caryopsis mix and the caryopsis has just finished flowering. Stage two was the planting of 3,000 bluebells along Brighton Grove from the park entrance towards the BBC and we completed this last autumn with help from



the 'Eco Warriors' from Wingrove Primary School. Stage three will involve planting more trees and fruit trees around the perimeter.

For the future we would like to have a long term strategy (and funding) to replenish the many thousands of trees around our roads, all planted in the late Victorian times and now well into their later life.

With the withdrawal of council services from looking after most city parks, residents' organisations such as Greening Wingrove will have a greater role to play. We have already taken a Lease in advance of an asset transfer, on the old bowling pavilion in Nuns Moor Park and our partners, SUSTRANS, are developing this as a cycle hub, and this



opened on 28 October. The building will also be used by a variety of local community groups including the orchard group. Some of you may have noticed the work being done on this in recent weeks.

Early in December we consulted with residents about the future of Nuns Moor Park and moving from that to a strategy and then to implement a plan. The aim is to bring more life and activity to the park and from this, decide if the park needs to be physically remodelled for its new functions. There will have to be a sharing of responsibilities with interested organisations, including the council, which is very likely to remain the landowner. We also need some funds to make plans happen!

The Community Interest Company is a membership cooperative and we are always looking for new members. Membership costs nothing and members are kept up to date with news, activities and volunteering opportunities. Even if you are not a resident of the Wingrove Ward you can become a friend of. The allotment association is a corporate member. We are hosting Radio 4 Gardeners Question Time in March and tickets are reserved for members only

There is a supply of information / membership leaflets in the two Moorside Allotments Notices cases and I will be happy to give any more information you may need -

David Rochester 0191 2730308



Krys Gaffney (forefront left) with the Annfield Plains & Snods Edge Gardening Clubs

Moorside Entertains

Our Moorside Association Secretary Krys Gaffney hosted a group of keen gardeners who had asked if they could come along to see our award-winning allotments site during the summer. About a dozen members of the Annfield Plains Gardening Club and Snods Edge Gardening Club arrived on a sunny day at the end of August and thoroughly enjoyed their tour, which

culminated with time to relax and ask questions in the courtyard adjacent to the Bee Garden. Tea, coffee and Krys's home-made cakes were enjoyed by all, followed by a browse round the Moorside Shop. Moorside was complimented profusely by the visitors, who went away with lots of ideas and shop purchases, having enjoyed a rewarding experience.

Wildlife Sightings

Parakeets

For three or four years, we have witnessed the unusual sight of a pair of bright green parakeets flying round Moorside and which love the large willow tree on the east lane in particular. However, we were amazed to see

recently a whole flock of them with their characteristic squawk flying above the trading hut. They now number about fourteen, apparently. If anyone manages to get a picture of them, please send it in to your newsletter team. We have not been able to get them to sit still long enough!

Parakeets



Hedgehogs

The mild autumn and even December nights have seen hedgehogs out in some numbers when normally we expect them to be traditionally hibernating. Our latest sighting was on 2nd January when we followed one as it scuttled across an open piece of grass around midnight. We understand that 'hedgies' under 1 kg will not survive

Susan (co-editor), Betty & Colin at the City Show September 2014



unless they hibernate properly, so we hope our little local one takes a sensible view! Should you see one in a distressed state, you might like to contact the Northumbria Hedgehog Rescue Trust at Longframlington, where Betty and Colin Smith look after a large number. They are on email cs002d8789@blueyonder.co.uk You may have seen their stand at the City Show in September 2014.

Comma Butterfly

We were amazed to see this raggy winged but beautiful butterfly sunning itself on a fence in NE3 this summer. Never having seen one, and thinking it might be a war-torn Tortoiseshell or Peacock, we had to get out our Readers Digest book of Butterflies and Moths to identify it! They don't usually fly this far north and our resident expert has suggested it might have come over via a south-westerly wind from its normal habitat further south. Has anyone else seen this distinctive butterfly locally with its tell-tale white 'comma' markings on the underside of its wings? We'd really like to know. Perhaps this is a positive result of climate change rather than just a one-off.

RecipeCorner

A winter warmer using seasonal root vegetables in a delicious soup provides a filling light lunch at home or a welcome hot snack in between jobs on the allotment. Here are two I make regularly using the vegetables from my plot.

Curried Parsnip Soup *by Susan Pownall Plot 29*

- 75 gms butter
- 100 gms onion, peeled and diced.
- 450 gms parsnips, peeled and sliced.
- 1 tsp (5 ml) curry powder
- 1 litre beef stock (or vegetable if preferred) using a stock cube and water.
- Seasoning.
- Cream for garnish (optional).

Melt the butter in a saucepan. Add the

parsnips and onions. Cover and cook lightly for about 10-15 minutes until soft. Put into a blender with the curry powder, stock and seasoning and blend for a minute. Add a further quantity of water to reach the preferred consistency. Transfer to a saucepan and cook for a further 15 minutes. Season to taste and serve with a swirl of cream and croutons.

Serves 6 - 8 portions.

If you have a soup making machine, this recipe is even simpler as once you have blended it, you just cook it in the mixer for 15 minutes.





Carrot and Leek Soup *by Susan Pownall*

- 100 gms carrots
- 100 gms leeks
- 250 gms potatoes
- 50 gms butter
- A few sprigs of parsley
- 1 chicken or vegetable stock cube.
- ¼ litre milk
- ½ tsp (2.5 ml) marjoram or tarragon
- Seasoning.

Slice the carrots and leeks and peel and dice the potatoes. Melt the butter in a saucepan and sauté the vegetables lightly with the lid on for about 10 minutes until soft. Put the parsley, stock cube, vegetables with butter, milk, seasoning and herbs into a blender and mix for 10 seconds. Add about a litre of water (depending on how thick you want your soup) and blend for a few more seconds. Return to the

saucepan and heat for about 8 minutes or if you have a soup making machine, leave in the mixer bowl and heat for the same time. This soup is delicious either hot or chilled.

Serves 6 – 8 portions.

Mon Petit Chou - a new and delicious take on cabbage *By John Spencer, Plot 49B.*

“It’s no use boiling your cabbage twice”
(Irish proverb)

One of the challenges with cabbage, apart from the fact that in our house nowadays there are only two of us to feed most of the time, is the curious property that cabbage seems to have, namely you can use as much of a cabbage as you like in this or that dish, but when you come back to it there will still be masses left. Does it self-regenerate? Biologists please explain!

Anyway, to meet the challenge I’ve been collecting and trying (and modifying) recipes for cabbage for several years. Below are three that I hope you’ll enjoy.

BCT (bacon, cabbage and tomato) sandwich

A wholesome and crunchy take on the classic bacon, lettuce and tomato (BLT) sandwich. Substitute grilled halloumi for a vegetarian version.

- Bacon rashers (as many as you see fit)
- A ripe tomato, sliced
- Handful of very thinly sliced cabbage
- Mango chutney
- Mayonnaise
- Salt and ground black pepper

Grill your bacon and butter your bread (baguette? stottie? ordinary bread?). Place the bacon on one of the bread pieces, then layer the tomato on top of it, season with pepper and a squidge of mayonnaise. Finally, add the sliced cabbage and top with a dollop of mango chutney. Crunch away!

Spring (or Savoy) cabbage and capers

This makes a nice side dish for 4.

- ½ medium sized cabbage, thinly sliced
- Capers
- Olive oil
- Smoked paprika
- Lemon juice

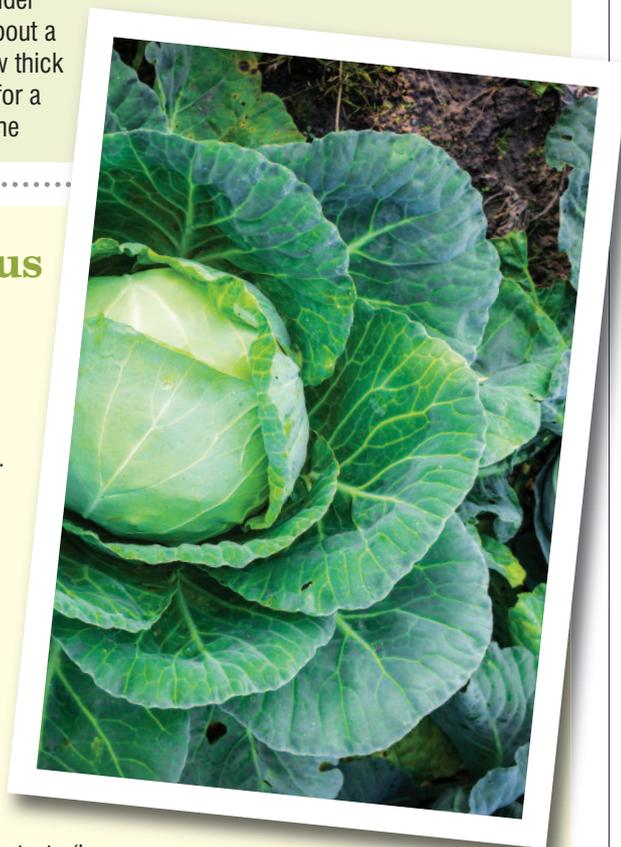
Steam the cabbage strips for 2-3 minutes, then drain. Heat oil in a frying pan and stir-fry the cabbage until it starts to brown and becomes crisp. Add capers to taste (I love the tartness and flavour of them so am inclined to add half a jar!), season with paprika, then a squirt of lemon juice.

An interesting alternative for the capers, rather than adding them straight from the jar, is to heat some oil in a frying pan, until very hot, then add the capers, which will sizzle and pop, and fry for a few minutes until the flower buds open out, brown and become crisp. Remove, rest on kitchen towel, then add to the cabbage as above.

Cabbage, onion and bread

Based on one of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s ‘Three Good Things’ recipes. Simple but very tasty and nutritious.

- 3 small onions, sliced
- 2 leeks, sliced
- Garlic (as much or as little as you want), crushed



- Cabbage cut into thin strips
- ½ loaf of sourdough bread, cubed
- Grated cheese as topping
- 300 ml vegetable stock
- Olive oil

Heat oven to 180 deg C/350 deg F/Gas mark 4. Sauté the onion, leek and garlic until soft. Steam the cabbage for 2-3 minutes until al dente. In a roasting dish or tin, layer the onion and leek mix, the cabbage and the cubes of bread, pour over the stock, cover with foil and bung in the oven for about 30-40 minutes. To finish, remove foil, sprinkle grated cheese on top of the mix and grill until bubbling and brown. Serve with baked potatoes and pickled beetroot. I’ve also tried it with small pieces of chorizo in the mix as well.

Bon Appetit!



COMPETITION PAGE

Test your expertise on Bulbs and Rhizomes by finding the names in our

Winter Wordsearch!

from Anne Noble



C G L O X I N I A A V S S H R
 B A R U M P M M M U P A U Y A
 A Q M P D U T A U O E L R A N
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WORD LIST

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| ALLIUM | GARLIC |
| AMARYLLIS | GLOXINIA |
| ANEMONE | HIPPEASTRUM |
| ARUM | HYACINTH |
| BLUEBELL | IRIS |
| CAMASSIA | LILY |
| CHIONODOXA | MUSCARI |
| CHIVE | NARCISSUS |
| COLCHICUM | ONION |
| CROCUS | RANUNCULUS |
| CYCLAMEN | SHALLOT |
| DAFFODIL | SNOWDROPS |
| EREMURUS | TULIP |
| FREESIA | |

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