

Earley Allotment Association Newsletter

Chairman's Chatter

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Firstly many thanks to everyone who attended the BBQ at the beginning of September and helped make it such a great success. We had the largest turnout ever and some great entries in the competitions – I especially enjoyed tasting the produce, some real treats.

On a slightly larger scale, Julia and I recently attended the Great Malvern autumn show and spent the day looking at all sorts of interesting things. There was an allotment section and they had all sorts of unusual plants and seeds to admire. Watch out next season for the climbing spinach experiment on our plot – a plant that takes less space than the more traditional variety.

We also acquired a Yacon plant that was introduced in an entertaining talk by Joe Swift off the TV.

The Yacon is related to the Jerusalem artichoke much beloved by my father in law and also the sunflower. No surprise then that it grows quite tall.



Yacon tubers

The Yacon is a bit like the Jerusalem artichoke in that the tubers are harvested at the end of the growing season.

The tubers with growing points are planted in a well-dug bed in early spring, near the time of the last expected frost.

While usable-sized tubers develop fairly early in the season, they taste much sweeter after they have matured and have been exposed to some frost.

There is research into using the tubers as a healthier alternative sweetener commercially. This is possible because the tubers contain fructooligosaccharide, an indigestible polysaccharide made up of fructose. Fructooligosaccharides taste sweet, but pass through the human digestive tract un-metabolised, hence have very little caloric value. In smaller words: it tastes sweet but is much less fattening than sugar.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed Veg, fruit or salad to the Reading town meal. Our contribution went to help feed the many 100's of people who ate together in Forbury Park on Saturday 3rd October. The event that happens every other year takes food donated by people and is cooked up in the kitchens at Reading college and then fed to the many people who turn up.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM at 19:30 on Wednesday 28th October 2015 at the Parish rooms in Radstock Lane in Lower Earley.

Richard

redgett@gmail.com

Plot 46



It's that time again!!!

Seasonal Tips

Things are slowing down now so October is a good time for digging over vacant areas of the vegetable plot, as the approaching cold weather may help to improve the soil structure by breaking down large clumps into crumbly particles.

If you don't want to dig, spreading a thick layer of manure or compost over the soil now will give the worms plenty of time to dig it in for you.

Remove any yellowing leaves from Brussels sprouts and stake the plants if necessary.

Protect squashes from rotting by placing a board or tile underneath to keep it off the soil. Expose the fruits to the sun for maximum ripening by removing the leaves shading them. Watch out for early frosts, this will damage the fruit.

Check leeks weekly for leek moth and allium leaf miner. Both these pests have increased in recent years, protect using enviro-mesh or horticultural fleece. Thankfully, by early to mid- November, the threat is over and the mesh can come off allowing the plants to benefit from a little extra light during the shorter days.

Clean up strawberry beds now, cut down the foliage with shears. Remove any weeds and old runners.

Cut back asparagus foliage, weed the bed and apply a layer of manure or compost.

Cut back the dying tops of Jerusalem artichokes to ground level.

Cut off the flowers of globe Artichokes so that the energy goes into the plant, protect the crowns with some straw as they can be tender.

Cut back mint, chives and lemon balm now to tidy them up and if the weather holds you may get a few leaves to pick over winter.

Finish clearing the spent crops from the greenhouse like peppers, cucumbers and tomato plants. If you've had a pest problem, consider using an appropriate disinfectant or sulphur candle.

October and November is when planting takes place for Autumn varieties of garlic. Don't leave it longer than 24 hours between braking the gloves apart to planting, the fresher they are planted the better.

There is still time to plant your spring cabbage and spring greens now. It is best to cover them with a cloche or fleece, if not the pigeons will get them.

Remember that the clocks go back an hour at the end of this month so grab every minute of daylight on the allotment that you can before the dark days of winter are upon us.

Cookery Corner - Pumpkin and Tomato Gratin

Recipe from Elizabeth David's book 'Elizabeth David on Vegetables'

Ingredients:

1kg (2lb) piece of pumpkin

500g (1lb) tomatoes

2 sticks of celery or the tops of a whole small head

45g (1½ oz) of butter

Salt, garlic if you like, parsley

About 4 tablespoons coarse breadcrumbs

Method:

1. Peel the pumpkin, discard the seeds and the cottony centre core; cut into small chunks.

2. Skin and chop the tomatoes. Wash and chop the celery.

3. In a large, heavy frying pan heat 30g (1oz) of the butter, put in the celery, the pumpkin, and 1 scant tablespoon of salt.

4. Cook gently, uncovered, until the pumpkin is soft and just beginning to look slightly jammy. Transfer it to a shallow gratin dish.

5. In the same pan cook the tomatoes, with the garlic if are using it, a little more salt and some chopped parsley.

6. When most of the moisture has evaporated and the tomatoes are almost in a

purée, mix with the pumpkin, smooth down the top (the dish should be quite full),

7. over with the breadcrumbs and the remaining butter cut into tiny knobs, stand the dish on a baking sheet and cook near the top of a fairly hot oven, 180°C (gas mark 4), for 35-40 minutes, until the top surface is golden and crisp.

Serves 4



AGM 2015

This year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 28th October at 7.30pm in the Parish Room, Radstock Lane Earley.

The nomination forms for committee members have been sent out. The existing committee members, with the exception of myself are willing to stand again, but new members would be welcome.

Eight would be the ideal number of members, this would allow for holidays and other commitments. The bi monthly committee meetings are held in the Roebuck pub where they serve good reasonably priced food, perfect for a meal before the meeting.

If you would like a resolution to be discussed at the meeting, please add this to the form and send via e mail to redgett@gmail.com

Linda Chambers, Chair of the Amenities and Leisure Committee at Earley Town Council, will announce the winners of the Best Allotment Award and the Most Improved Allotment and will be happy to take any questions from plot holders.

This will be followed by a flower and vegetable quiz and refreshments.

Christmas Meal

Sorry to mention it, but Christmas is creeping up on us.

The meal will be held at the Roebuck, Auckland Avenue, Earley (off St Peter's Road) on Tuesday 8th December, 7.30 for 8.00pm. Below is the menu and a copy will also be on the notice boards.

2 COURSES	£10.49	3 COURSES	£12.49
STARTERS			
TOMATO & THYME SOUP ① ② With thick sliced bread and butter. Non-gluten based available.		CRISPY PRAWN COCKTAIL ① A classic with a twist: crispy prawns served on a bed of seasonal salad leaves with a lemon wedge and cocktail sauce.	
CHICKEN STRIPS Strips of battered chicken breasts with a cranberry & BBQ sauce dip.			
MAINS			
TRADITIONAL TURKEY With roast potatoes, carrots, honey-roast parsnips, Brussels sprouts, peas, cauliflower cheese, pig in blanket, sage & onion stuffing, gravy and a Yorkshire pudding. Feeling hungry? Upgrade to our GIANT plate for £1.99 extra		CHRISTMAS CRACKER BEEF BURGER Beef burger topped with smoked streaky bacon, Cheddar cheese and onion rings served with chips and a cranberry & BBQ dip. Double up: add an extra beef burger for £1.00	
8" RUMP STEAK SERVED WITH PEPPERCORN SAUCE With seasoned chips, onion rings, peas and half a grilled tomato.		ROAST BUTTERNUT SQUASH BAKE ① With roast potatoes, carrots, honey-roast parsnips, Brussels sprouts, peas, cauliflower cheese, vegetarian gravy and a Yorkshire pudding.	
DESSERTS			
CHRISTMAS PUDDING ① Christmas pudding served with custard.		WINTER ETON MESS ① ② Meringue, cream and mulled fruit compote.	
HINT MATCHMAKERS™ TOPPED CHEESECAKE ① Vanilla cheesecake topped with Hint Matchmakers™ and a mint chocolate sauce.		MILLIONAIRES BROWNIE ① Belgian chocolate brownie topped with chocolate sauce served warm with vanilla ice cream.	
TO FINISH			
COFFEE & MINCE PIE ① Americano served with a mince pie. Add this extra course for only £1.49			

If you would like to go e-mail Julia with your menu choices and she will collect the payment in November.

juliatredgett@googlemail.com

BBQ

The annual BBQ was very successful, 24+ members and Dougie enjoyed good food and swapped tips during the afternoon.

There was a record number of entries in each category, with flowers outnumbering the vegetables in the best vegetable category. Next year maybe a separate flower category should be considered.

The prize for the best vegetables was won by Sally Herson with a beautifully arranged plate of Italian tomatoes.

The prize for best box/basket of vegetables was again won by Sally with a colourful basket of peppers.

The prize for best plot produce was a three way tie between Dougie's (Plot 26) cherry plum jam, Julie's (Plot 38) pickled baby beets and Liz's plot 38a piccalilli, after a show of hands Liz Debonnaire was declared the winner.

The tallest sunflower prize went to Tim Alexander (plot 3) he thinks that the plants on his plot were self seeded from the adjacent plot, nevertheless they were the tallest.

Well done to the winners and thanks to all entrants.

