



Chairman's Chatter

Inside this issue:

Chairman's Chatter	1/2
Manure	2
Town Meal	3
Seasonal Tips	3
The Power of Pee..	4
Cookery Corner	5
Dates & Reminders	5
Christmas Meal	5

Autumnal greetings from the allotments. By now most of the "summer" crops are safely harvested and freezers and store cupboards are bursting with the fruits (and vegetables) of your hard work. I know this year we had a bumper crop of butternut squash and as a result many lunches will be BNS soup and some homemade bread.

Everyone seems to have had a great year for tomatoes – the outdoor varieties do seem to work well without the use of a greenhouse or cold frame

Fox

We have a young fox living on the plots again.



It is particularly active in the evening and like most teenagers is curious and looking to explore your plot for food and fun things to play with. This picture taken at dusk shows the cub exploring the middle of the allotment area but we can be sure it will range across most of them.

The good news is that generally

foxes are scared of humans and given the opportunity will run away. However a fox may bite to defend itself if cornered. As there are not many corners on our plots it is unlikely that anyone will be hurt by the fox.

The bad news is that foxes can do damage either digging or just exploring your plot. Useful tips include:

- Tidy away all toys, tools, gloves and shoes, anything that smells different is interesting to a fox cub and they usually take them away and hide them.
- Keep your plot tidy - Foxes are attracted to overgrown plots as these provide a safe sheltered environment for them to rear their cubs.
- Avoid using bonemeal or blood, fish and bone fertiliser when the foxes are about - they will dig away to find the body they think is buried near!

Probably all common sense and what most of us do but it does no harm to restate it.

If you think that foxes are becoming more common it could be down to people feeding them, maybe encouraged by TV programmes like springwatch. It is a popularly held view that a person feeding a fox will reduce the area a fox needs to search for its food to 10% of what it would previously have been.

Chairman's Chatter.... cont'd

This means that if lots of feeding is being done, the space that use to provide a territory for a single fox will now support ten! Great for the foxes, not so good for allotment holders!

Annual Barbecue

Many thanks to all those who defied the weather forecast and came to the BBQ on 3rd September.

The forecast was wrong and apart from a brief shower at the start it stayed dry for the celebration of 75 years of the allotments.

This year's overall winner from the friendly competitions was Chris from plot 68. Our picture shows Chris with her partner Pete proudly holding the cup generously loaned to us by John from the Trading Shed.



I look forward to seeing you at the AGM on Wednesday 26th October 2016 which is held at the Parish rooms in Radstock Lane in Earley, starting at 19:30.

Richard

Tredgett@gmail.com

Plot 46

Manure

Several plot holders have bought manure from Charlie at the university's Sonning farm this season. The manure is from beef cattle and delivered to site – the load is so large that most people have chosen to share a load between a couple of plots.

Whilst most people have been happy with the manure a couple of folk have asked if we were sure of its quality as they had suffered disappointing crops after using the manure. Roger on plot 59 was one and at the committee meeting agreed to call Charlie and ask him about his manure. Roger's report on the conversation was as follows:

- I Have spoken with Charlie at Sonning Farm about the manure.
- He assures me that his animals do not eat grass only maize, wheat and barley straw. No weed killers are involved and he offered to put us in touch with the university agronomist for confirmation. I declined the offer and said we would reassure our members via the newsletter that all is well.
- He also said that if this was about potatoes, then nationwide we had a cold spring and unsuitable weather since so most potato growers are suffering small spuds this year and poor yields. Don't blame the manure.
- We parted on friendly terms. I am quite ok with his answer. As he said to me why don't people believe he knows what he feeds his animals? I assured him I did believe him!
- When discussing this with a fellow plot holder last month we talked about the frustration that can be growing crops on an allotment. Last year you planted a crop and all went brilliantly – see this year's glut of tomatoes as an example. You plant the same seed or varieties the following year do all the same things and the crop is disappointing. Why?
- Obviously, like all humans we look for something else to blame for the poor crop: weather, manure or almost anything except our decisions and actions. Thanks to Roger for having the conversation with Charlie and reporting back.

Town Meal

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the collection for the town meal which was held on Saturday 1st October.

As you can see from the picture we contributed a great collection of rhubarb, apples, marrows, squash and even a fine bundle of herbs.

The food was cooked by students from Reading College who learnt lots from the effort of cooking for several hundred people.

This learning included the fact that sometimes food has mud on it – apparently it is grown in the ground rather than a plastic bag from the shops!



Seasonal Tips - October & November

Personally, I love this time of year. The end of the crazy summer season of watering, weeding and harvesting, it's nice to enter this calmer period of 'putting to bed' as I like to refer to it. If I spoke to my plot (which I do), I'd say "you've had a great season, you've done well, now take a rest".

Now is all about tidying up, feeding and preparing for the spring

- Sow green manure crops for overwintering
- Dig in green manure sown in late summer
- Turn the soil with spade or fork and dig in as much compost or manure as you can which will also empty your bin ready for this seasons spent plant material
- Take down canes and supports
- Remove any yellow or diseased leaves from cabbages and Brussels sprouts and earth them up
- Plant out Garlic for next year
- Divide rhubarb crowns and plant new sets
- Sow broad beans
- Sow peas under frames or cloches

- Onion sets
- Propagating New Fruit
- Gooseberries and currants can be propagated by hardwood cuttings
- Cut off strong, straight shoots produced this year, and trim off the thin tips to leave sturdy 30cm (12in) cuttings – identify the top by leaving a sloping cut at this end
- Push the shoots half way into clean soil, about 15cm (6in) apart, and tread firm.
- Leave undisturbed for 12 months before moving to their final position

These won't take up much space and are free! (I have red currant bushes so if anyone would like to take a cutting, give me a shout)

The Power of Pee (..or Urine!)

In most western cultures when you mention using human urine as a natural fertiliser the most common reaction is shock. This is a shame, as we can make great use of the power of Pee.

We can learn a lot about just how effective urine can be for gardens from growing and gardening practices in under developed countries where the gardeners know how to get the most from this precious resource.

Even NASA Use This Method

N.A.S.A have used urine as an effective fertiliser and have carried out extensive experiments – and have successfully grown tomatoes and dwarf French beans hydroponically (using water but not soil) in a solution urine and water. Obviously NASA's interest is in providing vital fresh vegetables on long duration space flights or on the space station – and pee is in plentiful supply from the astronauts and would otherwise just be ejected into space.

Why is Urine a Good Fertilizer?

Chemical analysis shows that urine produced by a healthy adult has a high amounts of nitrogen (N) and valuable amounts of potassium (P) and phosphate (K) and also many trace elements including ones that can help prevent Blossom end rot in tomato's so urine duplicates the chemical composition found the liquid fertiliser that can you buy at your local garden centre.



Not only is urine environmentally friendly, but research shows that the average European adult produces enough urine-based fertiliser to grow at least half of the fresh vegetables or fruit that they eat in a year – so there is a compelling argument for using urine from the perspective of recycling and caring for the environment.

How Can You Save Urine to Use in your Garden?

Unfortunately, it's not quite as simple as having a 'fertilizer bucket' to hand somewhere convenient that you can keep topping up as required. If you are going to use urine as a liquid fertilizer, the best method of storing it involves keeping that urine in a sealed container to help prevent nutrient loss in the form of ammonia due to evaporation. Obviously this is easier for male gardeners!

How to Use Urine in Your Garden

There are two ways to use urine as a fertilizer.

Firstly, you can dilute it with water – three parts water to 1 part urine – and use to fertilize the soil around soft fruits and all leafy crops that you will cook in some way (e.g. by steaming or boiling). Do not use to fertilize salad crops that you will eat raw

Comfrey (Bocking 14) works especially well with this 3 parts water/1 part urine liquid fertilizer, and so does green manures. If you've already planted crops, using this liquid fertilizer will maximise the effect you can have on the soil fertility, especially with comfrey. Urine and water acts as a bio accumulator and the extra nutrients make it very effective.

The second way to use urine in your garden is to use urine as an organic compost activator. You just sprinkle clean and undiluted urine onto your compost or into your compost bin – and the available nitrogen allows the bacteria and soil organisms to work more effectively. The compost will also heat up more quickly which helps produce better compost.

A Tip On Composting

The thing to remember with any composting is the green /brown ratio, or the nitrogen/ carbon ratio but when we add urine we get quicker breakdown of carbon based materials like shredded paper cardboard and especially sawdust – so urine works really well at turning these materials into compost. It will also help leaves to a lesser extent.

This Is A Great Potential Resource For Gardeners

The use of urine in gardening is not new – some of the most productive nursery areas on the outskirts of our major cities were fertilised using night soil collected by Gong farmers from peoples 'Guzunder's' in Victorian times, and before indoor toilets. This fertilized created an amazingly productive soil.

Even if you don't fancy the task of collecting and bottling your urine, you can always simply tap into it by peeing on your compost heap. Of course, always make sure there are no neighbours in the vicinity when you do.

Remember..

It's free,

it's easily transportable

it's great for the environment

..and NASA use it

Article found by
Liz Atkinson - Plot 35



Cookery Corner - Tomato Sauce

Jamie Oliver's Tomato sauce recipe



With the great tomato crop this year there is a limit to how many tomato salads you can eat. With limited space in the freezer we have made this Jamie Oliver recipe and then potted it up in jam jars. Like jam if you pot it and lid it as it cools it creates a seal that will hopefully keep it fresh. Serve with pasta, jacket potato or as a base for a home made pizza?

Ingredients

- 1 bunch of fresh basil
- 1 medium onion

- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1 kg ripe tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 1/2 tablespoon red wine or balsamic vinegar

Method

1. Pick the basil leaves onto a chopping board (reserving a few baby leaves to garnish), then roughly chop the remaining leaves and finely chop the stalks.
2. Peel and finely slice the onion and garlic. If using fresh, cut the tomatoes in half, then roughly chop them or carefully open the tins of tomatoes.
3. Put a saucepan on a medium heat and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and the onion, then cook for around 7 minutes, or until soft and lightly golden.
4. Stir in the garlic and basil stalks for a few minutes, then add the fresh or tinned tomatoes and the vinegar.
5. Season with a tiny pinch of salt and pepper, then continue cooking for around 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Stir in the chopped basil leaves, then reduce to low and leave to tick away.

Dates, Reminders & other

- * **The AGM** will be held on **26th October** where the Best Plot and Most Improved Plot winners will be announced. We will communicate that to you all separately after the event.
- * Remember - if you find anything interesting on your plot please do let me know..
- * **Groundsheet** available - A large heavy duty groundsheet is available to the first person to claim it. It is about three metres by six metres and heavy as in a previous life it was an illuminated advert! See Richard or Julia on plot 46 – claimant collects – yes it is fairly heavy but will suppress weeds all winter.
- * Brian Hackett on Plot 70 has asked if anyone is interested helping out with **EAS, 'Earley Adopt-a Street Initiative'** see leaflet attached.
- * Earley Allotment Association **Christmas Meal** - Wednesday **7th December** - The Roebuck - see details and attachment menu

Wednesday 7th December

The Roebuck, Auckland Road, Earley, RG6 1NY.

Two courses £12.99

Three courses £14.99.

Coffee & Mince pies £2.99.

If you would like to come along, please confirm payment and your choices by Sunday 27th November.

Electronic payment: Sort: 08-92-99 A/c: 65525245. Please use ref: EAAXMAS when making payment. (Alternatively, pop a cheque through our door at 1 Selsey Way, Lower Earley, RG6 4DL)

We had a very good time last year and I'd like to welcome any new members, as well as old, to come along and enjoy a meal with your fellow plot holders.

Julia Secretary - juliatredgett@gmail.com

Plot 46