

May 2021

Issue 15



Chairman's Chatter

Greetings from your allotment association.

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April was unusual – the lowest average minimum temperatures for April in the UK since 1922. This was attributed to clear conditions that gave us the combination of cold frosty nights and bright sunny days. The good news is that the very end of the month brought some rain, just as most plot holders could be heard to say something like “I don't expect to be watering in April.....”

If you are interested in our local weather then can I recommend the website of Reading Universities weather station http://www.met.reading.ac.uk/weatherdata/Reading_AWS_weather_report.html that gives lots of information including real time information

The great peat debate

Peat has been a major ingredient of the compost used in gardening for many years. This peat is dug out of wild places, damaging some of the last remaining peatlands in both the UK and overseas in places such as Eastern Europe.

The harvesting of peat also releases carbon into the atmosphere, accelerating climate change. Sadly, more than 94% of the UK's lowland peat bogs have been destroyed or damaged, and a wealth of wildlife has disappeared along with it. This vital habitat isn't easily replaced. Many gardeners have been peat free for years and many on the TV are vocal in encouraging us to give up peat.

There is however a good reason why many gardeners like peat – it works and has done for a long time. All composts vary, and if you get a group of gardeners debating which is best, it could be long conversation. It may be a surprise that the leading gardening body in the UK – the Royal Horticultural Society is not yet entirely peat free and does not plan to be for another four years.

Our trading shed stocks a range of purely peat, peat based, and completely peat free composts. We also need to look at sourcing peat free growbags and other products to offer our members.

Update: The Government has announced a ban on the sale of compost containing peat from 2024.

HAPAA website reminder

Remember that you can find lots of information about the association on our website <https://hapaa.org.uk/> which also has information about the trading shed such as opening hours, stock and price list and details of the Suttons seeds we have in stock. You can also use the contact us page to email the association – queries, questions and suggestions welcome – especially things you think we should be stocking in the trading shed

Thanks

Richard Tredgett tredgett@gmail.com

Newsletter

After eight years, I think it is time for a fresh approach to the bi monthly newsletter, one that is more inclusive to Culver Lane and Reading Road Allotments.

To this end, John Laws, plot 64, Culver Lane, has volunteered to help and has come up with some useful suggestions for articles.

Besides the usual content, Chairman's Chatterings, Seasonal Tips, Trading Shed and Cookery Corner. We would like to include some more personal experiences of our members with an article each issue titled **"What got me started"** - who and what inspired you to gardening.

A regular **"Moral Maze Question and Answer"** section - what I should or shouldn't do,

A useful **"Three Tips"** section, any topic loosely connected to gardening.

Of course these ideas rely on contributions from all the members, as well as being helpful it would create a greater sense of community.

If you would be interested in contributing an article and want to see your name in print, you can contact me at linda.pelling@ntlworld.com

As a rough idea the newsletter layout is:

500 words	per 1 page	single column
300 words	½ page	2 columns
90 words	¼ page	1 column
160 words	¼ page	2 columns

Pictures complimenting the article are most welcome.

Other ideas for articles in the future could include:

Most unusual vegetables grown on the allotment.

Why can't I grow a vegetable?

Preserving fruit and vegetables, other than freezing them.

Health and Safety on the Plot.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Cookery Corner - Rhubarb Crumble Ice Cream

A yummy alternative to a traditional rhubarb crumble - no need for an ice cream maker

Ingredients

For the ice cream:

- 1 lb (450g) trimmed rhubarb
- 8 oz (225g) sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 15 fl oz (425ml) whipping cream

For the crumble:

- 3 oz (75g) plain white flour
- 2 oz (50g) butter
- 2 oz (50) light brown muscovado sugar
- ½ level teaspoon ground ginger

Method

1. First of all, make the crumble by combining all the ingredients together in a bowl and using your hands to rub the butter into the flour, so that the mixture comes together to form small, pea-sized balls of dough (rather as if someone had made a half-hearted attempt to make breadcrumbs from very fresh bread!).
2. Now sprinkle this evenly into the baking tin and leave on one side. Now cut the rhubarb into ½ inch (1 cm) lengths and place them in a large, shallow baking dish along with the sugar and lemon juice.
3. Place the dish on a lower shelf in the pre-heated oven and put the tin containing the crumble mixture on the shelf above. The crumble needs to be baked for 10 minutes, then removed from the oven and left to cool. The rhubarb may need a further 15-20 minutes' cooking before it is completely tender: when it's cooked, take it out and leave it to cool a little before pouring it into a food processor or blender.
4. Process until you have a smooth purée, then pour it into a measuring jug, cover and transfer to the fridge to chill. Before making the ice cream, use your hands to break up the cooled crumble and restore it to small, pea-sized pieces (if they're too big, the pieces are unwieldy to eat in the ice cream; if they're too small, they disappear).
5. When cooled, freeze the cream and rhubarb mixture (without the crumble) in a plastic box for 3-4 hours, then whisk and return to the freezer. Re-freeze for a further 2 hours, then whisk again and stir in the crumble before the final freezing.

With thanks to <https://www.deliaonline.com/>

Seasonal Tips – May/June

May

Earth up potatoes when shoots are approx. 20cm tall, to prevent tubers turning green.

Support broad beans with string attached to stakes. Watch out for blackfly on broad beans and rub off.

Put out sticks or netting for peas to climb up; cover with netting to protect from bird damage

Keep beds containing onion and shallots free from weeds.

Sow salad crops successionaly, including radishes, spinach and beetroot and herbs such as basil, coriander and parsley, every 2 to 3 weeks for continuous picking.

Sow cauliflowers, sprouting broccoli, Brussels sprouts and leeks for harvesting next winter.

Sow sweet corn, French and runner beans direct into the soil.

Sow carrots. Use insect mesh to protect from carrot fly.

Sow pumpkins, squashes and outdoor cucumbers under cover now or outdoors towards the end of the month..

Plant out tomatoes towards the end of the month watching out for drops in night temperatures below 12 degrees C. Be ready to put protection such as fleece or cloches around plants on cold nights.

Place straw under strawberries to keep fruit clean and deter slug damage. Feed with tomato fertiliser every week.

Harvest stems of established rhubarb when the stalk reaches 20 – 30 cm. by pulling the stalks.

Net blackcurrant and redcurrant bushes and cherry trees to prevent bird damage.

Remove raspberry suckers encroaching between rows.

June

Towards the end of the month early potatoes may be ready for harvesting. Tubers should be ready when plants begin to flower.

Autumn-sown broad beans should be ready for picking. Continue to check for blackfly

Regularly pinch out side-shoots on cordon tomatoes and tie in plants to supports.

Feed tomatoes every 10-14 days with a liquid fertilizer, changing to a high potash fertilizer once the first fruits begin to set.

Plant out sweet corn in blocks to aid wind pollination.

Continue planting out or direct-sow runner and French beans, courgettes, squash and pumpkins

Successionally sow spinach and beetroot

Make a late sowing of peas for an autumn crop.

Put netting over brassicas to prevent bird damage

Sow overwintering carrots such as Autumn King or Chantenay. Cover with insect-proof mesh to prevent carrot root fly.

Transplant pencil-thick leeks now into 15cm deep holes. Cover with insect-proof mesh to prevent leek moth damage.

Tie in new raspberry and blackberry canes.

Check for sawfly larvae on gooseberries. Hand pick off.

Put out pheromone traps on apple tree and plum trees to prevent codling moth and plum moth damage.

On plum trees, after the 'June drop' of excess developing fruits, thin the fruits to prevent over laden branches breaking.

Rehoming young trees

Many of us find that birds and squirrels delight in burying acorns and other tree seeds in our gardens or on our plot – and then forget where they left it. The result is young trees growing where you might not want them, the temptation might be to pull them up and compost them.

Grahame Hawker the Park Ranger at Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve is pleased to rehome any native trees you have to fill gaps at the nature reserve where he will be happy for them to grow to maturity.

Native trees Grahame would welcome include:

Beech	Cherry	Hazel	Oak
Blackthorn	Hawthorn	Holly	Field Maple

If you have not visited Maiden Erlegh Nature Reserve it is a lovely green space in the middle of Earley and can be accessed from either Instow Road or Lakeside.

Launchpad

Richard has received an request from Scott Golding at Reading Road Allotments for some more tools for Launchpad.

Below is a short explanation of what Launchpad is about. And his request for donations.

'The Reading Road allotment committee manage 3 plots and a polytunnel for the homeless charity, Launchpad based in Reading.'

The plots are worked by corporate volunteers and the produce that is produced is delivered on a weekly basis to the Readifood food bank in Bolton Road.

The polytunnel, tools, seeds, plants etc have been donated by local companies and individuals. We are currently looking for more tools,

In particular hoes and rakes. Any donations would be much appreciated.'

If anybody has any spare tools you would like to donate to this worthwhile charity, please bring them to the shed and Richard will take them to Scott.

Trading Shed

New product – straw

A new line in response to members requests is straw – we have a whole bale of it and can sell you some for bedding your strawberries to keep the fruit clean, help suppress weeds by acting as a mulch, and reduce slug damage – the straw is too rough for their delicate undersides.

Stable manure

We have a fresh delivery, so come and stock up to improve your soil by adding humus, the slow release of nutrients and mulching, ready for a long hot summer - £3.90 for a 40 litre sack.

Compost

We have a choice of three different composts, including peat free as well as all four John Innes composts.

Suttons seeds

We have had a top up delivery here so if you have a little space on your plot or in the garden come and see what you might still sow – many of our lines can be still be started in June.

HPAA Picnic

This year the committee has decided that to keep everyone safe, we will be replacing the BBQ by a picnic. This will be held at the Culver Lane site on Saturday 4th September. There will be a marquee for competition entries and another for shelter if the weather is inclement.

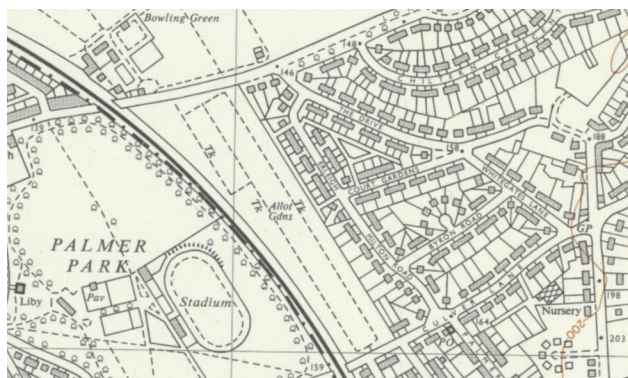
All members of HPAA and plot holders from Culver Lane and Reading Road allotments are welcome to attend.

We would ask everyone attending to bring their own food and drink, plates, cutlery and cups/glasses. Also If you want to cook something, your own BBQ, fuel and tools.

There will be the usual fruit and vegetable competitions, but unfortunately not the plot produce. The judging will be by all attendees, socially distanced if still required.

The timings of this event have yet to be decided, more details to follow.

As this year will be 80 years since Huntley and Palmers Horticultural Association was formed for employees to help 'Dig for Victory', so this will be the theme of the day and this could be an opportunity for wartime fancy dress. Of course this is not obligatory, just a bit of fun.



HPHS Allotments 1949