

WAHGA NEWSLETTER SPRING 2011

Editor: David Hickman



Welcome to the Spring edition - we hope reading this will inspire you to great works "out on the plot"!

DATES FOR THE DIARY	Back by popular demand
<p data-bbox="316 913 624 943">WAHGA Show & Fete</p> <p data-bbox="236 949 785 1234">This is our big flagship event each year. The horticultural produce show takes place inside the Hall and the Fete is outside with music, children's activities and entertainment for all. This will be on Saturday 20 August 2011. Please put it in your diary and do come along with family and friends on the day.</p> <p data-bbox="408 1272 614 1301">Show Schedule</p> <p data-bbox="236 1308 785 1480">The new Show Schedule for the 2011 Show will be available in the Trading Depots by the end of March. It will also be on the WAHGA website: www.wahga.org.uk</p> <p data-bbox="236 1487 785 1733">If you're a regular entrant in the Show, don't make the mistake of thinking you know the Schedule! A number of changes have been made including reducing the numbers of vegetables in some classes. Please get hold of a copy and find out for yourself.</p> <p data-bbox="236 1740 657 1769">Pamela Bailey, Show Secretary</p> <p data-bbox="236 1809 785 1877">Any feedback on this publication or contributions to the next edition?</p> <p data-bbox="236 1883 746 1912">Email: davidhickman@waitrose.com</p> <p data-bbox="236 1919 520 1948">Phone: 07768 254686</p>	<p data-bbox="807 920 1356 1312">Graham Talbot, who gave an informative and humorous presentation last year about growing vegetables and flowers, has agreed to come back again this year to give an illustrated talk to WAHGA members in the Gardeners Hall. Graham is a lecturer in horticulture at Berkshire College of Agriculture and in between this and tending his own allotment and garden, he also shows vegetables and flowers at regional and national level.</p> <p data-bbox="807 1319 1356 1565">He has a wealth of knowledge to impart and will give tips about how to successfully sow and grow many types of vegetables and flowers. He'll also include in his talk information about ground preparation prior to planting, feeding crops and potential pests and diseases.</p> <p data-bbox="807 1572 1356 1744">The talk has been arranged for the start of the growing season this year, so that members can get the best advice and a head start to working on their own allotments or gardens.</p> <p data-bbox="807 1785 1356 1852">The talk will be at 7:30pm on Friday 8 April at Gardeners Hall.</p> <p data-bbox="807 1859 1273 1888">We look forward to seeing you there!</p>

SEASONAL TIPS FOR SPRING



Shallots in pots

Rather than planting your shallots directly into the soil which may still be rather damp and cold, get ahead by bringing them on in your greenhouse or cold frame. Plant them in potting compost and then out into seed trays or plugs.

Pruning Apple Trees

You shouldn't do this every year but do it regularly- every two or three years. You need to prune any bits which are dead, diseased or rubbing on other branches. This should have the effect of leaving gaps which would be big enough to allow a bird to fly through! When cutting branches you should saw underneath first and then from above as this avoids tearing.

Forcing Rhubarb

If your plants haven't grown too much you may be in time to put a forcer over them. Make sure they are fully covered for several weeks. It's a great way of producing tasty rhubarb.

Early Salad leaves

These can be planted now in an unheated polytunnel or greenhouse.

Pruning soft fruit

A lot of readers enjoy growing blackcurrants, redcurrants and gooseberries. But often (like me) people neglect fruit bushes and wonder why the yield goes down. Prune away the middle first - to combat sawfly and mould. Both of these problems are best dealt with by giving good ventilation to create an open plant. Remove any shoots that are crossing or look dead or diseased. After pruning give the bushes a top dressing with a potash-based fertiliser or wood ash is also good.

Sowing Sweet Peas

These very English flowers look equally good in a garden or on an allotment but best of all they are wonderful as cut flowers. Healthy plants will produce flowers for months on end right into September. The best way to get sweet peas going is to pot them out in loose compost - include a bit of vermiculite - and plant three or four per pot. Bring them on in a cold frame then take them outside to harden them off. Don't plant them in the ground until early May. Sweet peas look great climbing up a wigwam.

David Hickman

What is a Volunteer Worth?

In the autumn of last year RBWM, in conjunction with Windsor and Maidenhead Voluntary Action (WMVA), sent out a questionnaire to organisations, charities and churches in the Borough, in order to assess the total number of volunteers and the economic value of their contribution 'in kind'. Since my other voluntary job is with WMVA and one of my projects involved helping compile the mailing list for this survey, I felt honour bound to complete the form on behalf of WAHGA!

It was a daunting exercise since time didn't allow me to speak to everyone individually, and even in my own case I couldn't put an exact figure as none of us keep time sheets! So for each person I made an estimate of the average number of hours each contributed. My feeling is that I under- rather than over-estimated.

Recently I received feedback from RBWM: it is estimated that the 28 WAHGA volunteers, who either give from 4 to 20 plus hours a week or just a few hours occasionally throughout the year, have a virtual economic value of **£87,000 pa.**

The skills required by our volunteers are wide-ranging: from book-keeping to presenting annual accounts to the FSA; from managing the hall lettings to serving in the trading sheds; from ordering supplies to weighing out seeds and fertilizers; from secretarial work to keeping records of all our members and their plots, sending invoices and collecting rents; from editing the newsletters to running the annual Show and Fete, and other social events, etc...

So thank you to everyone who helps to keep the Association running smoothly for a "virtual" £8.30 per hour, with no expenses claims for use of telephones, transport costs or office rents and certainly none for gardening!

Lesley Spence, Membership Secretary

News from the Trading Sheds

Thank you all for collecting your potatoes: there are still a few not collected. We have some more available of most cultivars. Why not plant another couple of rows? Most seeds are now on the shelves. Let us know if any of your favourites are missing and we will try to fill any gaps.

John's Top Tip: A teaspoon of Jeyes fluid** to a gallon of water has a multitude of uses for instance, to sterilise the soil, and is particularly useful for late sterilising for club root.

Happy gardening to you all

John Filmer, Purchasing Officer

**** Editor's Note:** some of you, who prefer organic methods, may be interested in the advice of the late Geoff Hamilton who said that there was no known cure for club root but suggested the following:

1. Make sure the land is well limed.
2. Start brassicas off in pots using good clean and new compost. Grow them on to transplanting size, when they should fill a 4 inch (10 cm) pot.

Our Trading Sheds are at 213 St Leonards Road, Windsor (next to the Gardeners Hall) and at the Maidenhead Road allotment site. Opening Hours: Fairground Thursdays 2.30 to 3.30pm, Sundays 10.15-12.15; Maidenhead Road Thursdays 8am-11am, Sundays 8am-12 noon.

Report on Allotment Sites

As we look forward to Spring on the allotments bonfires remain our most contentious issue! Please can all allotment holders have regard to the need to avoid causing a nuisance with fires. Never burn wet or damp items. Please can you also keep a look out for strangers on our allotment sites and unfamiliar vehicles especially traveller's trucks. The police community support officer, PC Ollie Woodland (Call 0845 8505505 –Police Enquiry Centre- and give "Shoulder No. 9221) is particularly keen to hear of flat-bed trucks driving around the area. I wish

you all happy Spring gardening and let's hope the mild sunny weather continues over Easter. One final matter: we have a lot of problems with rats on our sites. Here are a few things you should do to minimise the risks:

- Turn your compost bins over regularly to deter rats who might live in them
- Never put meat, bones, dairy or cooked foods into compost as this will attract vermin
- Thoroughly wash any produce you harvest and watch out for teeth marks - throw out any vegetables which have been part-eaten by rats
- We suggest you do not use rat poison on your allotment - this could harm other animals and birds - but report major rat problems to a member of the WAHGA Committee

Don Hartridge, Allotment Secretary

COACH TRIP TO HIDCOTE MANOR GARDENS

Hidcote Manor Gardens are famous around the world and their design has influenced that of many other gardens. It was here that the term "garden rooms" was first coined. The garden, which is known for its flowers, rare shrubs and trees and unusual plant species from all over the world, is in a beautiful part of the country - the Vale of Evesham in the Cotswolds, near Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire. It is now run by the National Trust.

We have booked a visit to Hidcote for **WEDNESDAY 6 JULY**, a time of the year when there will be much of interest for us to see in the garden. We have arranged a short talk especially for our party about the history and design of the garden, prior to going into the grounds. If you don't want to attend the talk, then you can go straight into the gardens and start looking around. For those who wish, there is also the opportunity to visit a private garden, Kiftsgate Court, which is five minutes walk from Hidcote. (The entry fee to Kiftsgate is £7). Hidcote Manor has a restaurant, but you can take a packed lunch with you if you wish.

The coach will leave Gardeners Hall at 9.00am on Wednesday 6 July and will return at approximately 5pm (traffic depending). We anticipate having approximately 4 hours at Hidcote. The cost for the coach is £12 per person. The cost of entry to the garden is £8.50, but is free for National Trust members). If you would like to join us on this visit, please complete and return the form below by **Wednesday 1 June 2011**. Please note that the visit will only go ahead if enough places are booked, so please write your full contact details on the booking form.

BOOKING FORM FOR VISIT TO HIDCOTE MANOR GARDENS WED 6 JULY 2011

Please reserve _____ places on the coach at £12 each. I enclose a cheque for £_____ made payable to WAHGA Ltd. Entry Ticket to Hidcote Manor Gardens – payable on coach. **(National Trust members have free admission providing they have a current membership card with them).**

Contact Name(s):

Address:

Contact telephone number:Email address:

Please return this form together with a cheque made payable to WAHGA Ltd to:
Pamela Bailey, 52 Queens Road, Windsor, SL4 3BH.

NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WAHGA?

Please visit our Website: www.wahga.org.uk