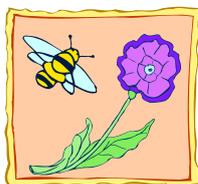


WAHGA NEWSLETTER SPRING 2012

EDITOR: DAVID HICKMAN



Welcome to the Spring Edition. It's been a very odd start to the year weather-wise. A warmish, dry winter, followed by a hot March and a sodden April with May kicking off in chilly form! This raises all sorts of challenges for us gardeners in terms of when to plant out and how to cope with the water shortages. See below for some advice on this and the latest news from your association.

If you visit either of the trading sheds you may like to add a copy of Jeff Ayres' "potted" history of allotments in Windsor to your shopping basket. There is no charge for the booklet, but donations to the Thames HospiceCare charity would be appreciated.

In conjunction with the Annual Show WAHGA usually runs a Fete at Gardeners Hall each year. This year however the Fete will be much smaller. We have been unable to find enough volunteers to organise and man the children's stalls and other games. We will however have some side stalls to the show including Fresh produce stall; Bric-a-brac; Plant stall; Trading shed ; Tea room with goodies; Tombola; and one or two other facilities still to be organised

We still would like some volunteers to help set up beforehand or man stalls on the day. If you can spare some time we would love to hear from you – lots of people offering an hour or so is just as valuable as a few people helping for the whole day. Donations of books, bric á brac, fresh produce, cakes for the tea room and prizes for the tombola will be gratefully received.

The Show will be unchanged and we want to encourage as many entries as possible. Enter and try for a prize for your vegetable, flowers or crafts. The Show schedule is available in the trading sheds and on the website.

To put your name forward contact Lesley Spence at membership@wahga.org.uk or telephone 01753 831863; alternatively pop into a trading shed where you can add your name to the form.

Lesley Spence

HOW TO GROW VEGETABLES IN A DROUGHT

Although the weather has changed in April, as we all know a drought order is in force and we have to think about how to get the best from our plants in dry conditions. When it comes to vegetables I have some suggestions.

Perpetual spinach is a very easy crop to grow. It will survive the winter cold and it needs very little water. **Chard** is similar and also a heavy cropper. Some varieties of **Asparagus** are good at coping without much water. I also suggest you try growing **Jerusalem Artichokes**: the plants which are members of the sunflower family produce tubers (they look a bit like ginger) which make delicious soups and are tasty roasted or in salads. But bear in mind that Jerusalem Artichokes are absolute brutes as plants and need to be carefully controlled or they'll take over your plot!

Marrows and **Rhubarb** are also capable of surviving on very low levels of moisture so they perform pretty well in a drought. **Onions** and **Garlic** will also tolerate low rainfall although drought conditions encourage them to go to seed.

Tips for better moisture retention

- Dig your soil deeply and thoroughly and include as much organic matter (compost/humus) as possible to retain water
- Mulch vegetable areas 3-4 inches/10 cm deep. Try putting mushroom compost on your brassicas. Manure your beans and peas
- Only water in the late evening/night. If you water in the mornings, especially on hot days, most of the water will just evaporate
- Plant your vegetables close together to prevent the soil drying out between them
- Choose crops that produce heavily - for example courgettes, tomatoes and aubergines.

Some of you may be chuckling as you read this, given the recent monsoon conditions! But that may all change - it's already been an incredibly unpredictable year weather-wise.

David Hickman

ALLOTMENT SECRETARY'S REPORT

The gardening year is well under way and we have experienced weather more appropriate to high summer than early spring. The consequences of a dry winter are already apparent as a hosepipe ban is in force from April 5th. Accordingly, there will be no hosepipe use on any allotment site and this includes hosepipe use to transfer water to various water butts on one's plot. If you are caught doing this it is you who will pay the fine not the association although it will give us a bad name. It is expected that the restriction will remain in place throughout the summer period. It is in everyone's interest to preserve water and all are encouraged to use water efficiently. Crops can be over watered.

At the Annual General Meeting a resolution was passed regarding bonfires. This subject has been the cause of most complaints, both from allotment holders and local residents. As the problem is most severe in the summer, it was agreed that bonfires would be banned on allotment sites during June, July and August. All allotment holders are requested to observe the ban and to remind any allotment holders who attempt to have a bonfire during this

period. Special permission may be given by a committee member where site clearance work is being undertaken. We shall endeavour to avoid this period when planning such projects. We shall review the position after one year in the light of our experience.

Questions have been asked about the effect of the Olympic Rowing competitions on access to allotment sites. The sites affected are Maidenhead Road, The Glebe and Clewer Park. At present we know that there will be restricted access onto Maidenhead road between 7.00am and 5.00pm. It will not be possible to enter Maidenhead Road from Gallys Road, Smiths Lane, Vale Road or Parsonage Lane. It seems unlikely that traffic will be allowed to turn right across oncoming traffic on Maidenhead Road. If this is confirmed it would be necessary to approach Clewer Park from Ruddlesway and the Maidenhead Road site from the relief road, both of which will remain open.

Don Hartridge, Allotments Secretary

NEWS FROM THE TRADING SHEDS

The cold weather has deterred many of our customers from venturing on to their allotments, and sales of seed potatoes were down this year. We did have a new early variety this year, *Lady Christl*, and this sold out fairly quickly. Do let us know how it fared so we know whether to order again next year. We have had a few requests for the return of the *Foremost* variety after a 2 year absence, again let us know what you think.

The talk by **Tom Sharples** of Suttons/Dobies seeds was well attended. Tom gave a whistle stop tour of many of the new seed varieties available, and was also keen to point out the benefits of grafted vegetables such as tomatoes and cucumbers which can now be purchased and offer increased vigour and yield. Several of your committee members are trying out the new Runner bean/French bean cross, *Moonlight*. This white-flowered variety is claimed to have the pod setting properties of French beans with the look and taste of a Runner bean. Speaking of runners, we have a small supply of 10ft canes in the Fairground shed, and both sheds have the usual 8ft and shorter canes.

My asparagus poked its head before ground a few weeks ago and promptly shrivelled up in the chill wind. However, it is now coming again. Asparagus is becoming a popular high value crop on allotments. Several growers I have spoken to were unaware of the damage that the Asparagus beetle can do especially later in the season when you need the ferny foliage to replenish the plant's energy. If you look closely you will see the little red/black oval beetles on the foliage and the trick is to catch them before they get chance to produce the larvae which strip the foliage. If you don't like picking them off by hand, then we sell suitable insecticides in the sheds.

John Spence, Purchasing Officer

Two RHS reduced price entry tickets are available from the secretary. Members may take a guest with each ticket and pay 30% less than the full entry price

MAIDENHEAD ROAD TRADING SHED HELP NEEDED!

We are looking for help in running this trading shed. Two of the present helpers are either stopping or cutting back on the time they presently work. The trading shed is open on Thursdays 8am - 11am and Sundays 8am -12 noon. We'd be very grateful if you're willing to help on either or both of those days: please call in on us - the entrance is next to 185 Maidenhead Road, Windsor SL4 5EZ or call our Gardeners Hall trading shed on 01753 620243.

Can I also mention that over the winter period someone has driven into a water tank on the Maidenhead Road site and smashed the connecting water pipe. This was not noticed until the water was switched on. It costs the association money of course, so if you accidentally damage property like this please inform someone in the trading sheds.

Harold Mitchell

RHUBARB FOOL RECIPE

This is what you need:

- 500ml/18fl oz double cream
- 100g/3½oz icing sugar, sieved
- 250ml/9fl oz thick Greek-style yoghurt
- 1 tbsp chopped stem ginger and some of the syrup (to taste/optional)
- 300g/10½oz rhubarb, cut into 2cm/1in pieces
- 300g/10½oz caster sugar
- 1 star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick

1. Make the rhubarb fool by whipping the double cream in a bowl until soft peaks form when the whisk is removed. Whisk in the icing sugar, yoghurt, stem ginger and syrup until well combined.
2. Cook the rhubarb gently over a low heat in a pan with the sugar, the star anise and cinnamon stick, or by baking in the oven on 180C/350F/gas 4, for 5 minutes until the rhubarb is tender.
3. Allow the rhubarb to cool slightly, and then fold into the fool mixture until well combined.
4. Spoon in to glasses.
5. Delicious served with homemade thin ginger biscuits or brandy snaps.

Lesley Spence

Visit our website: www.wahga.org.uk

The Chrysanthemum, Fuchsia, and Pelargonium Society have two forthcoming shows at Gardeners Hall (Doors open at 2pm):

Sunday, 10th June – Pelargonium Show Saturday, 11th August – Fuchsia Show
Admission is free. For more information about the shows and the Chrysanthemum, Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society phone Eric Wiles on 01753 865395.