

## WAHGA NEWSLETTER SPRING 2013



**Welcome** to Spring- it really seems to have arrived at last after a long, long winter and what better way to celebrate than to catch up on the latest news and information from your association. This edition includes details of the last talk by **Graham Talbot** (and his next one!), reports from some of our officers and news about the Show and Fete, and the forthcoming visit to RHS Wisley gardens. I am always looking for contributions as they don't grow on trees (!) so please contact me with any suggestions for the next issue. **David Hickman, Editor, email [davidhickman@waitrose.com](mailto:davidhickman@waitrose.com)**

The annual **Show and Fete** is being held at **2pm on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August** in Gardeners Hall. A Show Schedule can be picked up from the Trading Sheds or via the WAHGA website. In addition to classes for vegetables, fruit and flowers, there are also classes for experienced and novice flower arrangers; handicrafts; preserves and baking; and photography. The children's classes are free to enter and parents and grandparents may like to bear in mind, getting the kids to draw, paint or produce models is a good and cheap way to keep them entertained over the summer holidays. We are looking forward to a great Show this year and hope that people who may not have entered the Show in the past will be tempted to do so and have a go! Some of our members have said that one of the reasons why they do not enter the Show is because they do not know how to prepare and stage their vegetables and flowers for the Show. We are not allowing this to be an excuse any longer though! This year, **Graham Talbot** has kindly agreed to come along and pass on his tips about the last minute preparations you can take to ensure that your vegetables and flowers are in tip-top form for show and also importantly how to stage the exhibits to best advantage in the

Show. Those who have attended Graham's talks on growing vegetables, fruit and flowers will know that he is a very keen exhibitor at many local, regional and national shows, as well as being an experienced judge. Graham's next visit to **Gardeners Hall** will be at **7:30pm on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> July**, one month before the Show, ideally timed for the last minute preparation for the Show. Entrance to the talk will be free of charge.

***Pamela Bailey, Show Secretary***

### **GROW WITH GRAHAM**

A packed Gardener's Hall crowd enjoyed another entertaining and informative talk from **Graham Talbot** on 8<sup>th</sup> March. One of Graham's main themes was that the quality of your soil is the most important thing for any gardener- and the more organic matter you put in, the lighter and more fertile it gets. To demonstrate this, Graham handed round a sample of his own allotment soil which looked and felt like best quality compost! We also saw photos of his allotment whose soil is about a foot higher than those of his neighbours thanks to all the added organic material.

Here are some of Graham's recommendations:

**Feltham First peas** – his favourite variety. Bring them on in the greenhouse to protect them from mice, then transfer the peas into the cold frame. Plant them out densely into the soil, virtually touching, then they support each other. You can try sowing them into a section of guttering which gives a solid wall of peas.

**Shallots** are quick-growing, they can be picked when small for salads or left to grow to full size when they are great for pickling. As with onions, shallots can be brought on early in the year in the greenhouse in pots. You plant them out when they reach a decent size and then you only take up space on your plot with successful plants.

**Carrots and Parsnips** – if you're showing them then use deep containers as they can grow straighter and longer. Parsnips are difficult to germinate – try chitting them on damp kitchen towel.

**Beans**- Graham prefers to sow them in small batches at different times to avoid a glut of produce. They can be sown as late as June as they'll crop into September. As regards dwarf French beans Ferrari is a recommended variety.

**Brassicas**- again, Graham suggests you bring them on in small batches to spread the benefit over the Winter period.

**Leeks**- when they're ready to plant out, make a hole with a dowel and insert a toilet roll around the young plants which gives them room to fatten up and to have the white blanched look that leeks should have. Feed them with Maxicrop liquid seaweed.

**Tomatoes-** given all the problems with blight, especially on allotment sites, do not attempt to grow them outside. It's very distressing to grow good tomato plants only to have them destroyed by blight.

**Fruit bushes and fruit trees-** need to be dressed and fed with blood fish and bone. Plum and cherry trees should be pruned but only after they have started growing in the Spring to avoid silverleaf.

***David Hickman***

### **NEWS FROM THE TRADING SHEDS**

After the prolonged winter, now is the time to come to the trading sheds to purchase all your requirements for the growing season.

It's not too late to plant seed potatoes, everyone else will be late this year.

Most of the vegetable seed varieties are still in stock. Dobies seeds are in both trading sheds at about two-thirds the price listed in the catalogue. We also have peas and beans purchased in bulk and packaged by our own fair hands. Particularly worthy of mention is the climbing bean variety Moonlight. This is a cross between a runner bean and a French bean which offers a degree of self-pollination, pollination often being tricky with runners; what's more the pods look and taste like a runner bean and remain stringless for a long time. Jack's Mum would have been delighted.

The price of potting composts has risen this year, reportedly because of the poor peat harvest last year, peat still being an important component of the best composts. We have actually reduced our mark-up to keep prices down.

The trading sheds exist to provide a service to our members, and although we might not stock everything, we can often obtain items for you from our suppliers at advantageous prices, since there is no added carriage. We don't normally stock peat, but it is available in 225 litre packs at a week's notice, a few customers have recently taken advantage of this. We also test the market with new products. For instance, we currently have small packs of Roundup Gel and "Organic" (animal safe) slug killer which we will stock if they prove popular.

Finally, don't forget to have a look at the materials available on rolls on our new display stands, fleece, ground cover materials, hanging basket liner, fruit cage netting and insect mesh. Happy planting.

***John Spence***

## ALLOTMENT SECRETARY'S REPORT

Recent months have been very difficult for gardeners as it seems to have been constantly raining or snowing and the ground has been very wet or even waterlogged. Consequently, many of us got well behind with our autumn digging and faced a late start to the season. For the future, make an early start and put plenty of manure into the soil.

Last year, a resolution was passed at our Annual General meeting restricting bonfires during the months of June, July and August. The general consensus was that it was a resounding success. This view was supported by the fact that the number of complaints I received fell dramatically. Accordingly, a further resolution was tabled at this year's Annual General Meeting to make this situation permanent. The resolution was passed unanimously and therefore there will be no bonfires during the three months mentioned unless sanctioned by a committee member due to exceptional circumstances. This situation can only be changed by a varying resolution in the future.

Now that the weather is improving I wish you good luck with catching up on your allotments and in your gardens.

***Don Hartridge***

### WISLEY VISIT

The trip to Wisley will take place on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> September**. This coincides with the RHS Wisley Flower Show so, in addition to enjoying the usual pleasures of an RHS garden, you will be able to browse plant and garden stalls of well-known nurseries and suppliers. For the flower arrangers among you there will be a display of the entries to the NAFAS Floral Art competition.

Tickets are £10.00 to include the cost of the coach and garden entry. The coach will leave Gardeners Hall at 9.30am and depart Wisley at 4.00pm. For more information and/or instructions of where to send your payment, please contact Lesley Spence (01753 831863; [membership@wahga.org.uk](mailto:membership@wahga.org.uk)).

I'm expecting great interest in this outing so book your tickets early.

***Lesley Spence***

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