

WAHGA NEWSLETTER SPRING 2014



Welcome to Spring – and what a lovely show of blossom we’ve seen this year, no doubt a result of a very mild winter with very little frost here in the south. Winter wasn’t without its problems, with all that rain and the horrendous floods as a consequence, but we should start the growing season with plenty of water in the soil. Talking of soil, see John’s article about how you can improve your soil by adding nutrients in order to get the best for your crops. This edition also includes news about the Annual Show and Fête, the forthcoming visit to RHS Wisley gardens, seasonal recipes, as well as reports from some of our officers. I am always looking for contributions from Members and Allotment Holders like the one below about how to set up a school garden, so please contact me with any suggestions for the next issue. **Lesley Spence, Membership Secretary, e-mail: membership@wahga.org.uk**

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It was with sadness that we all heard of the death of Ted Bailey. Ted had served the association for a great many years in numerous roles. His presence in the Maidenhead Road Trading Shed, where he would pass on his expert knowledge of gardening about flowers or vegetables, for show presentation or just to get a good crop for the kitchen to all who required it, will be sadly missed.

A few weeks before the Annual General Meeting I was approached by members of the committee, asking if I would be prepared to stand as your next President. I felt very honoured that I should be considered for such a position and after a couple of days agreed to stand.

On the gardening front, after such a wet winter it was nice to get back on the ground and to see others getting out to prepare for the coming season. I was most surprised at how well the land dug over albeit that the green manure had hardened off and even now has not fully rotted away.

I am sure that others will mention this but here goes just the same. We will be running the show again this year, Saturday 16th August is the date. Now this was Ted's pride and joy so how about you all putting in an exhibit this year in his memory. The show schedules will be out soon; there are plenty of categories for you to select and it is honestly not that difficult. Best wishes for a successful growing season.

Harold Mitchell

SHOW AND FÊTE

The annual **Show and Fête** is being held from 2pm to 5pm on Saturday 16th August in Gardeners Hall. A Show Schedule will be available from the Trading Sheds or via the WAHGA website shortly. This Show is intended to be a friendly local show rather than what you would expect at County Shows.

In addition to classes for vegetables, fruit and flowers, there are also classes for flower arrangers, handicrafts, preserves and baking, and photography. In most sections there are classes for novices as well as for the experienced.

The children's classes are free to enter (but still get prizes). Parents and grandparents may like to bear in mind that getting the children to draw, paint or produce models is a good and cheap way to keep them entertained over the summer holidays.

Copies of the RHS Guide will shortly be available in each Trading Shed. This includes some advice for exhibitors on showing flowers, fruit & vegetables. The section on flowers is just over 2 pages, fruit 2½ pages and vegetables 5½ pages, so not too much to read. But if you get them all the same size & colour, without blemishes it's a good start.

The success of the Show depends on your entries, so please give it a whirl (although please avoid sweet corn, as I am aiming to repeat my success of last year).

Graham Ashley, Show Secretary

Once you have marvelled at the produce and other entries in the Show we hope you will enjoy the attractions of the Fête taking place outside around the hall (fingers crossed for a rain-free, sunny August day). There will be the ever-popular produce stall, selling vegetables and fruit grown and donated by members; bric-a-brac; tombola; books; raffle; bouncy castle; beer tent and burgers stand. The Tearoom will be serving a non-stop plethora of cakes and gallons of tea. Last year the willow basket stall proved very popular and we are hoping to have more stalls selling craft and handmade products by local artisans. We are also running a Fancy Dress competition for children as well as other entertainment to amuse you. Any help on the day or in the preceding week, and donations for stalls, raffles, tombola, etc will be gratefully received.

ATTENTION ALL BAKERS

Fran, who runs the Tearoom, will be delighted to receive small, medium or large cakes for the tea room, at the Show and Fete on August 16th .

Locate your inner Mary Berry or Paul Hollywood, enter the competition and donate any practise cakes or scones to the tea room.

RHS TICKETS

Members are reminded that 2 reduced price entry tickets are available for use throughout the year at any of the 4 RHS gardens.

Contact the **Secretary, Fran Hartridge** if you would like to use them: **01753 855754, secretary@wahga.org.uk**

ROUND THE HOOF & HORN (OR BEYOND OUR PKN)

Many of you will remember the spoof gardener Arthur Fallowfield's reply to any question, "Well I think the answer lies in the soil". As far as plant nutrition is concerned that is often the case. Plants are composed of chemicals which in turn are made from chemical elements such as Carbon, Nitrogen, Phosphorus etc. In order to grow, plants need supplies of these elements in digestible form. Carbon comes from carbon dioxide in the air via photosynthesis, but many other elements are taken up from the soil. Especially when growing plants in pots these elements can be depleted in the growing medium and need to be supplemented by using fertilisers of some sort.

The major elements present in general purpose fertilisers are Nitrogen, responsible for leafy growth (think cabbages); Phosphorus, for developing flowers (tomatoes); and Potassium, for encouraging root growth and fruit (carrots, fruit trees). You might see the amounts of these expressed as N, P and K percentages (Kalium is Latin for Potassium). The traditional Growmore fertiliser which we sell contains roughly equal amounts of these (7:7:7). Some people prefer Chicken Pellets as being more natural, although the balance is higher in Nitrogen (4:2:1) and being alkaline it is not suitable for ericaceous plants. Both these are water soluble and give a speedy boost to plants. There are of course soluble fertilisers which target particular crops, e.g. Maxicrop for tomatoes, and the various Chempaks suitable for different stages of growth. Note that too much nitrogen is not good for root crops, hence the advice not to plant them in freshly manured soil.

An alternative is to opt for a slow-release fertiliser which breaks down in the soil over time to release nutrients. Bonemeal will provide Phosphorus; Fish Blood and Bone N, P and K; Hoof & Horn is mainly Nitrogen; Superphosphate contains Phosphorus and Sulphur.

Many other elements are also important. Calcium in the form of lime, nitrochalk or calcified seaweed helps break down clay soil and is good for Brassicas which like alkaline conditions. Epsom Salts provides Magnesium necessary for chlorophyll production as well as Sulphur (think onions and peppers). There is also a general Flower and Veg fertiliser which contains NPK and numerous trace elements, particularly useful when making your own potting compost.

We sell all these products in the trading sheds and I would encourage you to have a look around on your next visit.

John Spence, Purchasing Officer

ALLOTMENT SECRETARY'S REPORT

After a very wet start to the year, the growing season is in full swing. Many of the overwintering and perennial plants seem to be well ahead of schedule. Unfortunately, the same can be said for grasses and weeds which are rapidly spreading where they have not been checked. Now is the time to crack on with your plots to ensure that you reap a good

harvest later in the year. If you find that you are unable to cultivate all your plot at present, black plastic covering the unused area will keep the weeds in check until you are ready to work the ground. Supplies are available in the trading sheds together with a wide variety of fruit netting. If you have not been a regular visitor to the trading sheds, a visit will prove to be rewarding.

Water supplies have been turned on at all sites. On the Fairground and Municipal sites, water supplies were turned on during the winter months by unknown unauthorised persons. This is unacceptable as there is a risk of pipes splitting with expensive consequences. It must not occur in the future. Although we have had a surfeit of water in past months it is important that we do not waste it. Hose pipes are not allowed on allotment sites with self-filling tanks.

Bonfire restrictions will commence in June and remain in place until the end of August. This system has worked successfully and I trust all will ensure that this continues this year so that allotment holders and residents alike can enjoy their plots and gardens.

Our Show and Fete is on Saturday 16th August and it is important that we all give our support. Please make a commitment to put some entries into the show. Without entries there is no show and your committee is determined to arrest the decline in entries to make this year's show one to remember. You can help, please do so. Best of luck with your gardening and may your efforts be rewarded.

Don Hartridge, Allotment Secretary

2 SEASONAL RECIPES USING RHUBARB

Rhubarb Sponge

Try adding about 200grms of softened rhubarb, 2tsp of ground ginger to a simple Victoria sponge mixture made with two eggs and the addition of about 150 ml soured cream and cook in a springform cake tin for about 1-1½ hours at 180°C, gas 4.

Mix 1tsp of ground ginger in 100mls hot water with 100grms of caster sugar.

Pour the warmed syrup over the cooled cake.

Serve with cream as a dessert or eat as cake and enjoy.

Fran Hartridge

Rhubarb and Date Chutney courtesy of "The Best-kept Secrets of the Women's Institute

900 g (2 lb) rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 5 cm (2 inch) chunks

450 g (1 lb) onions chopped roughly

115 g (4 oz) dates, chopped

300 ml (½ pint) each of malt vinegar and water

1 level tablespoon salt

1 level tablespoon ground ginger

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Place all the ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer gently until the chutney has a jam like consistency and there is no excess liquid on the surface. Stir from time to time to prevent sticking.

Allow to cool slightly. Spoon into cooled, sterilised jars and seal with vinegar proof tops. Label and store for 6-8 weeks before use.

Barbara Hovell

SCHOOLS FOR GARDENING OR GARDENING FOR SCHOOLS

Hello, my name is Sally Munn and I was asked by Bernadette (Bernie) if I would like to share an allotment with her and her husband. In a rash moment I said "yes"! Bernie has been an early years teacher for thirty years and we came to know each other through my volunteering at the school where she worked, helping to run the school vegetable garden. I had recently retired after eighteen years running a nature study centre and we got talking one day about the activities I had devised and run to show both children and adults how interesting nature could be. We both agreed that many children of today were totally oblivious of where their food came from, the importance of the environment and how our beautiful countryside was connected to it all!

To rectify this we began to write our book, with the working title, "Can You Dig It?" It is not actually about which vegetables to grow. It is how to set up a school garden, getting the assistance you will most definitely need to keep it going, how to fund raise, recruit volunteers and most importantly, how to link it to the national curriculum.

In our introduction we have said: "Gardening is amazing in that it opens up an extensive web of knowledge, forging links with so many subject areas from geography, ecology and conservation to maths, science and even citizenship. The list is huge and the possibilities endless.

"Through personal experience we have already found out that by gardening, digging and discovering, nature can most definitely nurture. We are hoping to help young gardeners not only to sow the seeds of a flower but in the long term to sow the seeds of discovery learning."

The manuscript needs illustrations and photographs and we are actively looking for a publisher to show an interest. So if anyone can advise, help or contribute, do please get in touch!

WISLEY VISIT

The trip to Wisley will take place on Wednesday 3rd 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. During August and September, Wisley hosts the Surrey Sculpture Trail with exhibits all through the garden.

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 **Hilary Hopper: 01753 855803, e-mail: hilaryhopper@yahoo.com**

Tickets for this outing sold very quickly last year so book your tickets early.

NEWS FROM WINDSOR & SLOUGH CHRYSANTHEMUM, FUCHSIA & PELARGONIUM SOCIETY

When you have a plot, you may wish to go a little further; you may like to display the fruits of your labours and join a “flower and produce club”. Such a club is the Windsor & Slough Chrysanthemum, Fuchsia & Pelargonium Society which is based in Gardeners Hall. The Society organises five shows a year which are open to non-members.

The Spring Show was held in April

The Pelargonium Show:	Sunday, 15 th June at 2pm
The Fuchsia Show:	Saturday, 9 th August at 2pm
The September Evening Show:	Tuesday, 16 th September at 8pm
The Late Show:	Tuesday, 4 th November at 8pm

The September Evening Show is for Dahlias, Chrysanthemums and Vegetables, and the Late Show is mainly Chrysanthemums. All the shows include “Other Classes” eg Sweet Peas, Pinks, Vase of Flowers, Flowering Pot Plants, etc for those with less time on their hands. In addition there are approximately eight “club nights” which, despite the name, are held monthly on THURSDAY AFTERNOONS between 2 and 4pm (visitors 50p). Forthcoming dates for 2014 are 8th May, 5th June, 10th July, 7th August, 4th September (talk by Carol Gabler, past president of BFS), 9th October, 4th December (social afternoon with quiz). Annual membership is £7.00 (couples £10.00). Further information from Ray Birt on 01753 857052.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Keeping in touch is important!

We still have many Allotment Tenants and Home Garden Members who joined the Association before e-mails were a common form of communication, so if you have an e-mail address it would help if we need to contact you. I occasionally send out information by e-mail between newsletters so you may be missing out. Recently we needed to contact the tenants on a particular site about a security issue; only half were on e-mail and of the rest I only had telephone numbers for a few of them.

If you move house please let me know your new address; this is particularly important for when I send out the annual invoices. Last year we had quite a few allotment tenants who didn't pay their rent because their invoices went to an old address; trying to track them down took Don and I many hours of detective work.

Lesley Spence, Membership Secretary; membership@wahga.org.uk

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