

# WAHGA NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2011

EDITOR: DAVID HICKMAN



Welcome to the Autumn edition. So far we've had a dry and warm season with some amazing Autumn colours. I hope this newsletter will help to inspire you into some great gardening achievements next year. We include features on Graham Talbot's talk on fruit growing and on our first ever Seasonal Supper as well as our usual news items. If you have feedback for me or a suggested contribution for our next issue\* please email [davidhickman@waitrose.com](mailto:davidhickman@waitrose.com)

## IMPORTANT DATES - 2012

2012 may be Olympics year and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee but for WAHGA our highlights are

**AGM at 7.45pm on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January.** Take the opportunity as a member to participate and have your say on the association. Don't forget to bring your membership card if you want to vote on any issues. Please see the enclosed AGM notification for the agenda.

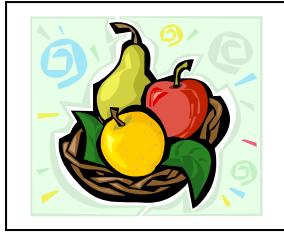
Talk by **Tom Sharples at 7.30pm on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February.** Tom is a Senior Horticulturalist for Suttons Seeds (who now own Dobies) and is an experienced public speaker. This free talk promises to be fascinating so come along and support the event!

Watch out for announcements about this year's **Annual Show** either on the website, notices around the allotment sites, Gardeners Hall or in future newsletters.

All of these events will be at the Gardeners Hall, 213 St Leonards Road, Windsor. Please put them in your 2012 diaries now.

\*If you haven't renewed your membership for 2011-2012 yet, please note that this will be your last copy of the newsletter, so send your subscription to me or renew at a trading shed to continue receiving newsletters, buying from the trading sheds or using the bar.

**Lesley Spence, WAHGA Membership Secretary**



## GRAHAM GETS FRUITY

In October **Graham Talbot**, a lecturer at Berkshire College of Agriculture and a very entertaining speaker, gave a talk on fruit growing to WAHGA members. Here are some of the highlights.

**Should I grow fruit?** Yes but consider first your likes and dislikes and whether the site is suitable. An open sunny site with well drained soil is needed.

**Soft fruit:** raspberries, gooseberries and blackberries are all heavy croppers which don't take up much room. This makes them ideal fruits for limited spaces on allotments or in gardens. Autumn Bliss is probably the best raspberry variety. Blackberries can be rather rampant growers if you leave them: Graham has a Fantasia blackberry on his plot which he describes as a "brute"! However it produces lots of big fruit. As regards the currants, redcurrants and whitecurrants need pruning both in summer (after cropping) and winter, whereas blackcurrants should only be winter pruned.

**Feeding the soil:** Graham is a great fan of scattering blood, fish and bone – he says two or three handfuls per square yard is fine. During the season he always waters using Maxicrop seaweed food - NB other brands of plantfood are available.

**Apples:** Graham is not a fan of traditional varieties like Bramley cookers or Cox's Orange eaters. He points out that the newer varieties are heavy croppers and they are more disease resistant. Varieties of eaters he recommends are Discovery (early), Sunset (like a Cox) and Spartan. As regards cookers he favours the Grenadier and Lord Derby varieties. The dwarf rootstocks (eg. M26, M27, M9) require a pollinator so two or more trees are normally needed.

**Diseases & Pests:** these are too numerous to list. Common problems include codling moth (apples and pears) which can be treated using pheromone traps. Grease bands put on trees in winter can be useful to catch moths. Cherries are attractive to wasps - you can cover the tree with Enviromesh (fine mesh netting) to keep them off.

**Strawberries:** they need good drainage. Raised beds are good for strawberries. It's worth trying some of the alpine varieties which now produce much larger fruit.

**Jostaberries** are worth trying. They're a cross between gooseberries and blackcurrants, they grow very vigorously and the birds don't like them! They crop well and are relatively disease resistant.

**Rhubarb** requires a lot of organic matter. It needs a lot of sun and doesn't like being moved.

Graham illustrated his talk with some excellent photos, many showing his own fruit crops on his allotment.

## **TRADING SHED NEWS**

John Filmer has resigned from the role of Purchasing Officer after many years of valiant service to the Association. Purchasing in bulk enables us to get discounts which we share with members. In general we only stock things which we can bulk-buy in this way. If you don't see something which you need, ask in case it's hidden behind the counter, or to stimulate demand.

We are taking orders for the seed potatoes for delivery in February as usual. Order forms are in the sheds and on the website. Onion sets and shallots will be available at that time too. Please let us know if you would like us to stock onion sets for autumn planting next year.

For the past few years we have been buying vegetable seeds in bulk and repackaging them ourselves for sale in the sheds. These will be available in the Maidenhead Road shed as usual this year, and a list of varieties is on the web site. At Fairground (Gardeners Hall) we are testing the water this year by buying packaged seeds from Dobies who operate a discount scheme for societies such as ours. In addition to a core supply of the traditional seed varieties, we will be able to place orders for less common seeds as we don't need to buy each in bulk. Ask to see a catalogue in the sheds or have a look at the Dobies website to see what's available. Many of the association's luminaries are to be found in the sheds at opening times, so pay us a visit for advice or even to offer help.

Shed Yule – the sheds will be closed on 22<sup>nd</sup> December and reopen again on 8<sup>th</sup> January.

*John Spence, Purchasing Officer*

## **REPORT FROM THE ALLOTMENT SECRETARY**

It has been another busy and productive year on our allotment sites. Many excellent plots were seen when the Best Allotment Competition was judged and I congratulate those who put in so much effort. At the other end of the scale, some plots were neglected and in some cases resulted in plots being given up or tenancies being terminated. The recovery of untended plots falls on a few willing volunteers and I would ask tenants to consider their positions before plots get overgrown. If you have too big a plot or intend to give up, let us know so that something can be done.

Bonfires continue to be the biggest cause of complaint. We have allotment holders at both ends of the spectrum and local residents have been obliged to complain regularly. The committee has discussed the matter on several occasions but have not been able to reach a consensus as to how to proceed. The current rules, i.e. burn only dry matter, short duration, no plastic, rubber etc. and consideration for others is a reasonable system to follow. If we do not heed the warning, the Council may settle the issue for us.

We have experienced a number of problems such as vandalism, theft from sheds and theft of crops from plots. Vigilance is our best hope. If you see people on site who you do not recognise, politely challenge them. If you actually see a crime being committed ring the non emergency number 101 and inform the police. The call will cost 15 pence and may save vastly more in the long run. Finally lock the gates to your site to make things as difficult as possible for those who are up to no good.

*Don Hartridge*

## THANK YOU PEARL



After many years of service on the WAHGA Committee, **Pearl Brooks** finally stood down at the end of last year. As a token of appreciation from the members Pearl was presented with these lovely flowers at this year's AGM. The Editor is pleased to report that, although Pearl is no longer the tenant of the adjoining allotment to his at Fairground, she can still frequently be seen on one of her tours of inspection at the site!

## SEASONAL SUPPER AT GARDENERS HALL



You may have seen the posters and received the emails but what was the Seasonal Supper? The idea came from a conversation in the pub (like lots of good ideas). Every year people have too much of one fruit or vegetable crop, and a few set recipes for using them up. What if we got together

with other allotment holders, everyone bringing a dish and recipe and we all have dinner trying each others' food, swapping recipes and growing tips and meeting new people. The Seasonal Supper was born!

After a lot of preparation and a little stress about whether people would come, would people get it, would there be enough food and a hundred other scenarios the first supper was a success. People came, we ate, swapped recipes had a good time and people seemed keen on running something similar at different times of year with different produce.

There were 13 of us in the end (re-branded as a lucky number for the evening) not a huge number but for a first run it was a good number. As expected courgettes featured pretty heavily with everyone apart from us having a bumper year but we enjoyed mini pies with a cheese, potato and herb filling and tarte tatin and a very creative beetroot chocolate cake. Popular favourites also included some gorgeous onion bhajis which arrived warm and a tomato, olive, caper and feta dish called saganaki which I made sure I took a copy of the recipe for.

A big thank you to everyone who came along and got into the spirit of things, manning the bar and staying to clear up. It was a really fun evening and I'll definitely be better prepared for a glut of courgettes next year. It would be really nice to run other suppers at different times of year with different produce so hopefully it's onwards and upward, watch this space.

**Harriet Riley**

**WAHGA is Windsor Allotments and Home Gardens Association Ltd.**

**Visit our website:**

**[www.wahga.org.uk](http://www.wahga.org.uk)**