



It's that time of Year

We've experienced extremes of weather over recent months and, so far, everything seems to be growing more slowly and later than usual. Now we're halfway through the year and things are finally catching up during these longer, warmer (and often wetter!) days. It's our last chance to plant some crops, and an opportunity to harvest the first fruit and vegetables of the year.

There are a couple of cruel challenges for the gardener during summer. The first is weeds – just when conditions are perfect for growing crops they are just as good for weed growth. The second is water – plants need this more than ever to support growth just as we move into the driest part of the year.



It's a good time to share. If you have excess seedlings or an abundance of produce, then why not offer them to neighbouring plot-holders or put them in sharing boxes?

LAA Update

Annual General Meeting – the 44th AGM of the association was held on 15 March after being delayed a week by heavy snowfall. The chairman reported on the success of the web-site, the new email account for the association, and the barbecue which will be held again this September. The practice of maintaining beehives at the Digswell site (which has resulted in healthy bees with an unusual immunity to varroa mites) is planned to be replicated at Broadwater later this year. It was also reported that an association health and safety policy was in development.

Jobs

June: Pinch out growing tomatoes and broad beans. Inspect plants regularly - water and remove pests whenever necessary. Thin out directly seeded beds.

July: Feed tomatoes and other fruiting vegetables. Thin out hard fruit if there are exceptional numbers of budding fruits

Plant

June/July: Sow salad vegetables, beetroot, carrots, cucumbers, peas, pumpkins and squashes, fruiting plants (peppers, tomatoes, aubergines). Plant out sweetcorn, brassicas and courgette seedlings

July: Plant out cabbages, cauliflowers and other brassicas for harvesting during autumn/winter..

Harvest

June: Chard, French beans, garlic and onions (if leaves are turning pale), early potatoes.

July: Courgettes, onions, salad vegetables, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, currants and gooseberries



LAA Update (continued)

Broadwater – We've been experiencing some problem with the gate over recent months – the supporting post has failed. The Council have repaired it once but the problem has recently returned. Bear with us and we will get this resolved as soon as possible.



Digswell – Work Parties are scheduled for Saturday 30 June and Saturday 1 September – please help out if you can. Also, members are reminded that the central composting heap should not be used and that members are responsible for either composting on their plots or removing waste from site.

Summer Barbecue – this will be held again in early September following its successes over recent years. The date is yet to be confirmed so watch this space



Down at the Shed

The Shed is open from 11:00-12:30 on Sundays throughout the summer – the place for seeds, canes, netting, value fertilisers, manures, composts and light gardening equipment.

All goods are top quality and are excellent value compared with local garden centres and DIY stores.

The National Allotment Society

Something that you may not be aware of is that by being a member of the Longcroft Allotment Association you are also a member of the National Allotment Society.

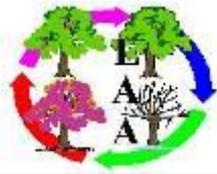
The National Allotment Society is the national organisation which upholds the interests and rights of the allotment community across the UK. It works with government at national and local levels and other organisations to provide, promote and preserve allotments and offers support, guidance and advice to its members (and others with an interest in allotment gardening).

Members of our Association are entitled to free insurance and access to discounted seeds (from the Kings catalogue) through its membership the Society. The Society provides many other benefits, and its web-site contains advice on planning an allotment, crops, monthly jobs and tips on: managing water during droughts, producing your own compost, and pest control.

Its web-site also describes some traditional gardening methods, some of which are still commonly upheld, whilst others seem to have fallen by the wayside. For example, 'planting by the moon' is based on an ancient belief that above-ground crops should be planted during the Waxing Moon, while root crops should be planted during the Waning Moon. Surely that's worth a try?!

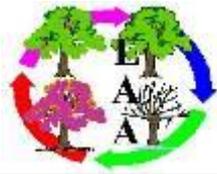
For more information see www.nsalg.org.uk

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Crop Planner

	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
key:							
Broad Bean	harvest	harvest	harvest		sow	sow	
Runner Bean	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Pea	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Potatoes	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Leek			harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest
Onion / Shallot		harvest	harvest	harvest			
Garlic	harvest	harvest	harvest		plant	plant	plant
Beetroot	sow	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Carrot	sow	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Swede / Turnip	sow			harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest
Courgette		harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Pumpkin / Winter Squash			harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Tomatoes		harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Chilli / Aubergine		harvest	harvest	harvest			
Chard/Leaf Beet	sow	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Cabbage	sow	sow	sow	sow		harvest	harvest
Kale	sow				harvest	harvest	harvest
Black/Redcurrants	harvest	harvest	harvest		plant	plant	plant
Raspberries	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	plant	plant
Strawberries		harvest	harvest		plant		
Fruit Trees			harvest	harvest	harvest	plant	plant



Broad Beans

Broad beans are one of the oldest cultivated crops. They are thought to have been grown in Mediterranean regions between 5,000 and 10,000 years ago and introduced to Britain by the Romans.

Broad beans are hardy plants. The Aquadulce varieties can overwinter. So, along with garlic and very few other vegetables, they provide plot-holders with that comforting feeling of knowing that something is growing out there during those dark, cold winter days. The Windsor varieties are generally considered to have more flavour and are planted in early spring and crop slightly later than over-wintered plants. Whichever variety you grow, broad beans provide us with one of the first crops of the year.



The plants also fix nitrogen in the soil – the combination of bean plants and Rhizobium bacteria in their roots is able to extract nitrogen from the surrounding air and deposit it in the soil. Brassicas like a nitrogen-rich soil, which is why they often follow legumes in the crop rotation cycle.

But their most important attribute is their eating. Traditionally in the UK they are removed from their pods and then steamed or boiled. In other countries they are pureed and seasoned for use cold as a dip or to complement a salad. Personally, I think they are best fried and salted as a crispy snack crunchy snack (the Spanish ‘habas fritas’) – this is a perfect way to use the larger, tougher beans at the end of the harvest.

Summer Pests

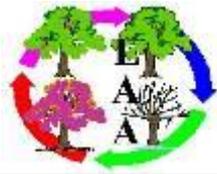
Blackfly – these can develop on runner beans, broad beans, artichokes, and beetroot. Insecticidal soap sprays smothers the insects and inhibits their breathing, or they can be sprayed with bifenthrin or derris. Introduce or encourage ladybirds – e.g. by providing an ‘insect hotel’, and lacewings predate on blackly.

Cabbage White Caterpillars – eggs and small caterpillars may appear on the underside of cabbage leaves and will tunnel into cabbage heads as they grow. Use fleece or fine netting to prevent butterflies reaching plants but, if they do, pick off eggs and caterpillars and squash by hand.

Carrot Fly – the maggots of the fly burrow into the carrot flesh. Apply fleece to prevent the flies from laying their eggs. Planting onions or garlic amongst carrot plants is thought to deter carrot fly.

Pea moths – lay their eggs during June and July and can be avoided to some extent by planting early or late pea varieties Fleece covers will protect your plants. Alternatively the moths can be caught in pheromone traps or spray with bifenthrin after flowering.





Polite reminder

Please

- Return your signed consent form if you wish to receive general information from the Association (see email from 18 May). New data protection regulations mean that we need your positive permission to receive such information.
- Remember to adjust the mower height so that there is no risk of the blades hitting the ground or stones – generally this is the mid position. The Association has provided our mowers to maintain the paths around our plots and should not be used to prepare plots for cultivation.



Summer Recipes

Summer Pudding

Use blackcurrants, redcurrants and an assortment of other summer fruits to make this summer favourite. Serve with fresh cream or crème fraiche.

Medium slices of white bread (crust removed) – enough to line a 1 litre bowl and make a lid.
750g (1½lb) of currants and other soft fruits (raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, blueberries, blackberries)
100g (4oz) white sugar



Line the base and sides of a 1 litre bowl.

Gently simmer the fruit with the sugar –until the sugar has completely dissolved and then a few further minutes so juice starts to run from the fruit mixture.

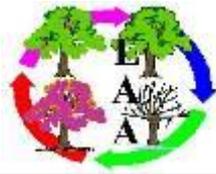
Reserve 1-2 table spoons of the juice. Poor the fruit and juice mixture into the lined bowl and make a lid out of the bread slices so that the pudding fills the bowl to just below its top. Cover with cling film, place a saucer on the top and put a weight on top so that the lid is slowly and gently squashed into the fruit mixture. Place in the fridge and leave overnight.

Turn the pudding out and pour the remaining juice over the top.

Broad Bean Hummus

Perfect with crackers, pitta bread or toasted sour dough bread.

450g (1lb) of broad beans
1 tsp spices (from cumin seeds, coriander seeds, black pepper, paprika, chilli seeds)
2 crushed garlic cloves
Sea salt to taste
3 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil
Water
Parsley or coriander leave



Boil the shelled beans in salt water for five minutes, cool under running water, and remove from their skins. Bake the seeds gently in a medium oven. Grind to powder in a mortar and pestle with the salt while still warm. Place the beans, spice mix, garlic, olive oil, and a small amount of water in a blender and blend to a smooth puree. Add more water if the mixture is too thick, and more salt if needed. Sprinkle with a small garnish of chopped parsley or coriander.

Comments and feedback

If you have any news, tips, features, recipes or photographs that you would like to submit for future issues of the Newsletter please send them to...

Newsletter Editor: email@longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk.

Visit the Longcroft Allotment Association website: www.longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk

