



It's that time of Year

No-one will need reminding that it's been one of the driest summers in recent years. For those plants that have survived the freezing spring and scorching summer, August and September will be months of plenty – a time to enjoy collecting crops and preserving any surplus.



When it comes to preserving: freeze beans and herbs, store squashes and convert other produce into chutneys and pickles. And, when you've used all you can from your crops, any plant waste can be added to your compost heap to rot down over the winter, so it may be time to construct (or reconstruct) your compost heaps/bins.



Picking at this time of year requires almost daily trips to collect vegetables and fruit: peas, beans, carrots, beetroot, sweetcorn, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, potatoes, onions, berries, and early hard fruit. But it's also the time when most of us go on holiday so there's often a need to make arrangements with fellow allotment holders to take care of watering and harvesting while we are away.

Jobs

August: Feed growing plants (tomatoes, squash), dry onions/ garlic/ shallots, weed and water beds, apply mulch/ plant green manures in any empty seed beds.

September: Prune soft fruits, pick off any rotting fruit, and plant out strawberry runners.

Plant

August: Carrots, turnips, spring cabbages, cauliflower, chard, strawberry plants.

September: Spinach, spring onions, spring cabbage, garlic, herbs and salad crops.

Harvest

August: Sweetcorn, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, beans, courgettes, carrots, beetroot, salad crops, plums, berries

September: Hard fruit, cabbages, beetroot, onions, maincrop potatoes, French and runner beans, sweet corn, tomatoes, chard, turnips.



LAA Update

Update from the Committee:

Annual Barbecue – Traditionally, the Association's barbecues have been held on days with fine weather. This year's barbecue will be held at the Digswell site on Sunday 2nd September at 1pm. It's excellent value at £5 per adult and £2.50 per child to include burgers, sausages, buns and relishes. Please bring sufficient salad, dessert and drink for yourselves

Help with the Shop – we are seeking volunteers to help man our shop – The Shed – for a few hours at weekends. It's a good chance to support your association, meet other plotheholders, and plan your purchases for the coming year.

Digswell – The next Work Parties is scheduled for Saturday 1 September – please help out if you can.

Broadwater – Was a crime scene on 7 August. Two young males were arrested for attempting to cycles outside the old shredded wheat site. They ran off down the railway tracks and a police dog tracked them to a shed on the allotment site

New Members: Since the last newsletter was sent out we have been joined by Dr Thusu, Mrs Trinder, Mrs Morton, Mrs Palacio and Mr Markatopolous. Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.

Lifting Maincrop Potatoes

Most potatoes, if not all, should be dug up by the end of September. They will continue to grow if left in the ground, but there is a greater chance of them rotting or suffering from pest damage.

- As the potato stems and leaves die down cut the stems back to approximately 5cm (2")
- Lift the potatoes on a dry – this will make it easier to lift the potatoes and they will be drier when they are ready to store
- Ensure that all of the potatoes have been remove (it is not possible to know how many potatoes there will be or how big they are from the size of their stems or foliage)



Remove any damaged tubers and store in a cool dark place.

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.





Crop Planner

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



Preserving Vegetables and Fruit

Preserving is a simple way of using fruit and vegetables, and it's homely and satisfying to have jars of jams, chutneys, pickles and relishes in our cupboards. It is the perfect way of using surplus produce when there is a glut. And, by making them ourselves, we have control over their ingredients and can avoid the use of unnecessary colourings, flavourings and preservatives. They also make ideal gifts.

Jams, jellies, marmalades and conserves are a mixture of fruits and sugar to which other flavours (e.g. spices) can be added

Curds contain eggs and are cooked slowly at lower temperatures than jam (and, although they keep well when unopened, need to be refrigerated once opened)

Chutneys and relishes are made using an assortment of vegetables and spices with additional fruit, sugar and vinegars used as a preservative

Pickles preserve fruit or vegetables by fermenting them or immersing them in either vinegar or brine

The nutritional value of all food deteriorates after it is picked. Preserving fruit and vegetables this is further reduced by washing, cooking, leaching and degradation. Many of these are unavoidable but can be limited by, preserving in oil rather than a sweet sauce, by pickling large chunks rather than grated vegetables, and by storing in cool dark spaces. And, although there is some loss of nutrients, preserved vegetables have historically helped to combat starvation and prevent scurvy throughout northern European winters. But the main reason for preserving fruit is to extend the shelf life of our produce, and, perhaps far more importantly, the taste!

Preserving doesn't need any specialist equipment (although items such as preserving pans, jam funnels, and sugar thermometers are an advantage) and they require ingredients that are commonly available in any supermarket.



Late Summer Recipe

Beetroot Tarte Tatin - A savoury alternative to the famous French dessert, serve with a crumbly cheese or crème fraîche...

250g (½lb) flaky pastry
1 tablespoon of cooking oil
1 tablespoon of butter
375g (12oz) beetroot

2 teaspoons brown sugar
2 teaspoons balsamic or flavoured (e.g. raspberry or cider) vinegar
Salt and pepper

Melt the butter in the oil in a large, oven-proof frying pan and add the sugar, vinegar and seasoning. Slice the beetroot and add to the pan and cover with foil. Cook in the oven for 30-40 minutes. Take the pan from the oven and press the beetroot into the pan so it covers the base evenly. Cover with the puff pastry and return to the oven until the pastry is golden brown.

Allow to cool and then transfer to a plate by inverting the dish so that all juices are poured over the beetroot.



Apple Chutney - Makes 4kg (8lb) of chutney

3kg (6lb) cooking apples	2 tablespoons cinnamon
1kg (2lb) finely chopped onions	1 litre (2 pints) vinegar
300ml (1/2 pint) water	1kg (2 lb) brown or white sugar)
25g (1oz.) salt	550 g (1lb) golden syrup
40g (1 1/2oz.) ground or grated ginger	1/4 teaspoon Paprika/chilli/cayenne

Simmer the peeled and chopped apples and onions in the water for twenty minutes. Add the salt, spices and half the vinegar and cook until soft. Add the remaining ingredients until the mixture is smooth and thick. Transfer to warmed jars and store in a cool dark place.

Plum Butter

Butters are an alternative to jam (but with more reduction of fruit) which was a popular element of Victorian and Edwardian afternoon teas. They can be stored for three months or more, stretching the taste of summer to around Christmas. Despite their name they do not contain any butter.

1.5kg (3lb) whole ripe plums
600ml (1 pint) water
1kg sugar
Juice and zest of 2-3 oranges
Cinnamon and/or cloves to taste

Remove stones and place the plums in a large saucepan with the water. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for up to an hour until the plums have collapsed.



Allow to cool and strain. Return to the pan and add the spice, orange juice and zest and heat for ten minutes. Add the sugar and boil gently until the mixture has thickened.

Place in warmed sterilised jars and store in a cool dark space. Use within three months.

'Dirty' Jokes

I went to my allotment last week and some soil was missing. I went there a few days later and some more of it had gone. I think I'm losing the plot!

I went back to my allotment a few weeks later and there was more of it there. The plot had thickened!

Q: What do you call it when worms take over the world?

A: Global Worming.

A new member of the Longcroft Allotment Association took over a run-down, weed-ridden plot. Just as he started to work the plot the vicar stopped by and blessed the plot - "may God work with you to transform this piece of land". Six months later, the plot was indeed transformed. The vicar noticed the rich and abundant plot and said "see what you have achieved with the help of God". "Yes," replied the member, "but can you remember what it was like when God was looking after it on his own?".

If a plant is sad do other plants photosympathise with it?



Greener Fingers - Protecting Fruit

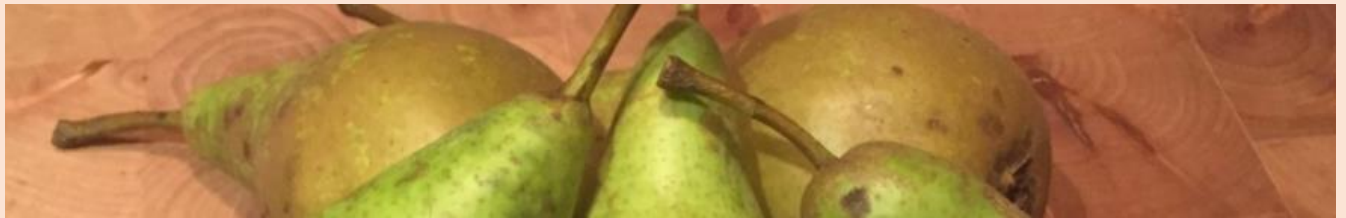
There is precious little tree fruit this year after frost damaged blossom was followed by the dry summer which caused some fruit to fall prematurely. So, the last thing we want is for the birds to get to what little is left before we do.

Fruit cages are a traditional form of protection for fruit trees and tall soft fruit plants such as blackcurrants, gooseberries and raspberries. A basic structure with removable netting is ideal because it makes it easier to harvest the fruit and allows birds to feed on pests when fruits are not in season.

Low lying fruit, such as strawberries, can be protected by arcs of chicken wire supported by hoops. For large area, netting or chicken wire can be suspended slightly above the ground on a series of stakes.

Alternatively, birds can be deterred by scarecrows or similar devices. Birds are naturally afraid of birds of prey, and hawk-shaped objects can be suspended from masts. Pigeons are wary of reflective items such as CDs or metal tape can be tied to branches or canes, but these will need to be reconfigured periodically as the birds become familiar with them over time and lose their fear.

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...

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

