



It's that time of Year

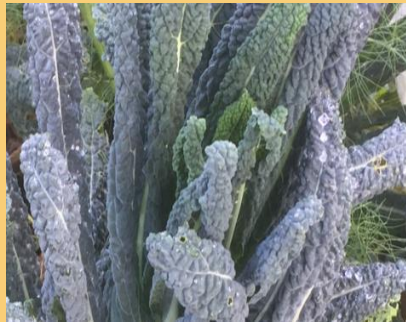


It's a time of change – September is bountiful time of the year, a time to enjoy collecting crops and thinking about which ones we want to grow again next year. Then, at the end of October, it's time to clear the remnants of summer crops and to consider how to fill those gaps for next year. The 2018 Kings Seeds catalogue is available at each site and contains excellent value seeds, onion sets, seed potatoes and more. If the weather turns for the worse then spend an afternoon making plans for next year. It's also time to store equipment for the winter, but don't be too tidy – the odd pile of canes and long grass may provide the ideal habitat for beneficial insects.

There are crops to harvest and preserve/store – 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.

The weather can be extreme – at this time of year there can be prolonged dry spells, and hot or cold weather – so keep a close eye on the forecast and water or protect your plants as necessary.

Autumn is a good time to mulch around plants above warm, wet, weed-free soil. Biodegradable mulches (garden compost, wood chippings, well-rotted manure...) gradually release nutrients and improve the condition of the soil. (Non-biodegradable materials (e.g. shingle or fabric sheets) allow water to reach roots and suppress weed growth. Try not to smother small plants or the base of trees as this can cause them to soften.



Jobs

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

October: Clean pots, apply mulches, cover pot plants with fleece, insulate greenhouses and tidy up to prevent pests from overwintering, take cuttings from currants and berries.

Plant

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

October: Broad beans (Aquadulce varieties are most resistant to cold), rhubarb, peas (under cover) and garlic.

Harvest

September/October:
The very last tomatoes, apples and other hard fruits, cabbages, beetroot, onions, maincrop potatoes, turnips, leeks, beetroot, beans sweetcorn, squash (they should sound hollow when you knock them), kale and chard.



LAA Update

Insurance –the Association's insurance policy will not make payments for claims for personal accidents to members that are over 80 years of age. This effectively means that the Association should not ask members above this age to participate in a work party or to carry out any work on behalf of the Association. Also, the policy does not cover damage to cars, which are brought on to sites at plotholders' risk.



Association Rules –a set of the Association Rules are being sent together with this newsletter for information only. The rules haven't changed but, for some of us, it may be a while since they were last read and some may have been misplaced.

Seed Catalogue – the 2018 Kings Catalogue is available in the shed at both sites – there are a wide range of seeds (and onion sets, seed potatoes, etc.) available at incredible prices. Please return completed order forms/cheques to the distribution shed at Digswell or 6 The Quadrangle, WQC before Sunday 8th October.

Broadwater – There will be a work party on 7th October with a skip available to collect any rubbish that Association members may wish to dispose of.

Digswell – The next work party at Digswell will be on Saturday 28 October – so make a note in your diaries.

New members: Since the last newsletter was sent out we have been joined by Mrs Marcella Brazier, Ms Jenny Syertt, Mr Shatinwai Mataswa, Ms Nina Lenik and Mr Roy Errington. Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



Down at the Shed

The Shed will be closing for the winter on Sunday 2 October, so come along and stock up on any items that you will need over winter. It opens again in the spring – just when we need to secure compost, renew canes, etc.!

Shop opening times: The Shed opening hours are **11:00am to 12:30pm on Sundays** until 1st October.





Greener Fingers - Green Manures

Autumn is the time to plant green manures – seeds are available from Kings. These plants tend to grow quickly and either scavenge nutrients that otherwise might be washed out of the soil or take nitrogen from the atmosphere and transfer it to the soil through their root systems. The roots also improve the structure of the soil, and green manures also prevent weed growth by blocking out light to growing weedlings.

The main types of green manures are listed below:

- Clovers can help to fix nitrogen within the soil - should be planted between April and August.
- Winter Tares (also known as vetches) is a good source of nitrogen and should be planted by September.
- Phacelia (March - September) and Lupins (March - June) produce flowers which support bees and other insects as well as boosting the soil.
- Italian or Hungarian ryes (August - October) are good to smother areas that have become overgrown with weeds and grows well through winter (but can shelter slugs and snails).
- Field beans can be planted as late as November and are good for heavy soils.
- Mustard should be planted by the end of September and should be dug in after up to two months' growth (or left as a mulch if the foliage is frost damaged).
- Mexican marigolds (*Tagetes Minuta*) can be used as a green manure but its greatest benefit is that it suppresses bindweed and is best sown in spring.

Dig green manures into the soil in the spring while they are still soft and they will add nutrients to the soil and enhance the activity of worms and other wildlife below the surface. Leave for at least two weeks before planting out crops.

Welcome Visitors - Bees

You may not be aware that we have some very special bees on our Digswell site. The Welwyn Beekeeping Association have had two hives in a corner of the site for 20 years. They have never been treated for varroa, the mites that attack bees, and have built up an amazing immunity. For several years they have been used to help breed varroa resistant bees in Hertfordshire. Last month we had our regular inspection by the National Bee Unit and they passed with flying colours (as it were!). He was also impressed by the large number of wild bees he saw.



Now we have another hive ready to go on the Broadwater site. It is out of the way and the bees are going to arrive next spring, helping us all to grow bumper crops.

We aren't looking for any more hives on the allotments but if you are interested in keeping bees then the Welwyn Beekeeping Association runs introductory talks and a training programme that you need to go on before keeping bees.



Early Autumn Recipes

Tomato Chutney



Makes 6-7 jars

3kg (6lb) tomatoes (mix varieties and combine ripe/unripe fruit)
500g (1lb) finely chopped onions
300ml (1/2 pint) cider vinegar
25g (1oz.) salt
350g (6oz.) demerara sugar
Paprika/chilli/cayenne to taste

Wash, peel and chop the tomatoes and cook gently with the onions until reduced to a thick pulp. Add the other ingredients and continue cooking until thick. Pour into sterilized jars and store for at least four weeks before

use.

Toasted Pumpkin / Squash Seeds

The fruit is the main food of the pumpkin/squash but the seeds are highly nutritious and delicious if roasted with salt and/or spices.

Raw whole seeds of one large pumpkin/squash
50g (2 oz.) butter or 2 tablespoons sunflower or rape seed oil
Good pinch of salt (or garlic salt)
Ground spices (optional) from; chilli, black pepper, paprika, coriander, cumin

Preheat the oven to 150degC (300degF). Wash the seeds and drain thoroughly. Toss seeds in a bowl with the oil/melted butter and salt/spices. Spread in a single layer on a baking tray (a sheet of parchment paper or foil will make cleaning up a bit easier!) and bake until golden brown (45 minutes to an hour). Allow to cool slightly but enjoyed best when still warm.

Poached Pears

The colour of autumn – perfect with creme fraiche, custard or thick cream.

6 firm pears
1 lemon
Half bottle red wine
4 tablespoons clear honey
Spices: 1-2 star anise (or a few cloves), 1 cinnamon stick



Peel the pears with a potato peeler leaving the stems intact.

Pour the wine into a small saucepan, add the lemon zest, spices and honey to the wine. Place the pears in the pan so that they are covered. Bring to the boil and simmer gently for twenty minutes – turn them occasionally so they colour evenly.

Remove the pears and allow to cool. Reduce the liquor to half its original volume, and pour over the cool pears.



Potato Fruit

This year – much more than in previous years – potatoes have been producing fruit resembling green cherry tomatoes at the top of the plants. This has happened because of the cooler weather at the start of the year (remember how cold it was back in March/April?). Usually the white/pink potato flowers simply fall off the plants and don't fruit. This year the weather allowed the potatoes to grow the fruit, producing seeds which can be planted (although growing from seed is lower and more laborious than using seed potatoes).

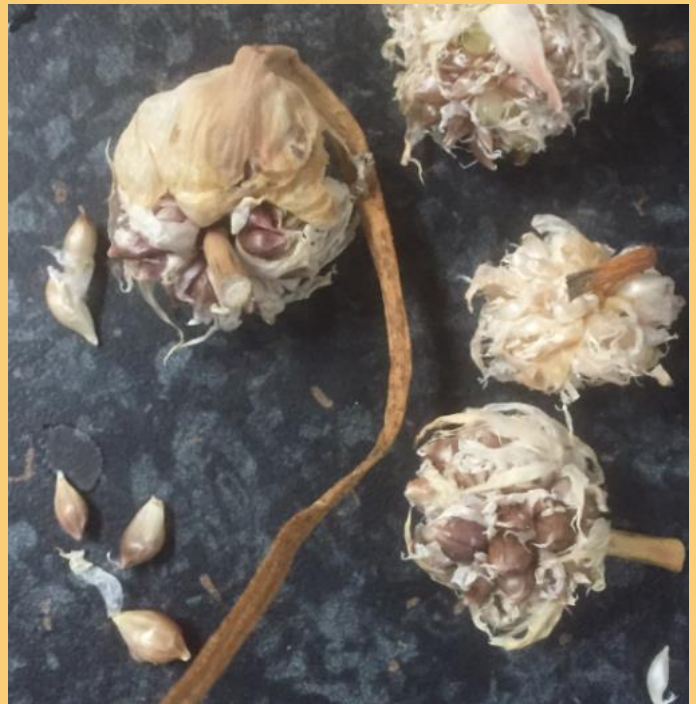
These potato fruit are not edible – in fact they are poisonous. Like tomatoes they are members of the Nightshade family. They contain the chemical solanine which can cause headache, abdominal pain, shock and diarrhoea. Potatoes were treated with suspicion when they were first introduced to our shores (credited to Sir Walter Raleigh) and it took several decades before they were accepted as a staple.

Garlic Scape and Bulbils

It's time to think about planting garlic. We all know (but might not all like!) the flavour provided by their cloves which cluster to form the bulb but what about other parts of the plant?

Garlic bulbils are like tiny cloves: I grew them by accident and found they can be a versatile ingredient and a cheap way of growing future crop.

They grow from the flower ('scape') of the plant. If you chop the flowers off when you dry the garlic it will help the bulbils to develop. If you don't the flower will develop into small bulbs. These taste like garlic and are delicious when added raw to salads (if you don't mind the taste of raw garlic!) or sprinkled over meat are vegetables during frying.

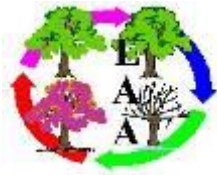


Alternatively, the bulbils can be planted. It takes one year for each bulbil to develop into a full-size garlic clove. This can then be planted and will grow into a bulb the following year. As each scape can produce 100 or more bulbils, it is an economical way of propagating plants, and some believe that garlic grown from scape is hardier than those grown from bulbs.



Crop Planner

	key:					
		sow				
		plant				
		harvest				
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Broad Bean						
Runner Bean						
Pea						
Potatoes					chit	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						



Comments and feedback



Many thanks to Anne Freimanis for details of our bees and Paul Davis for information about potato fruit. 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...

Andrew Thorne, Newsletter Editor: atttrekwgc@hotmail.co.uk

