

It's that time of Year

We've had the hottest, driest summer since records began but, now, temperatures are falling and the days are rapidly getting shorter.



Fewer crops need planting and harvesting - it's time to harvest the last of your tomatoes, peppers and courgettes, and frosts become more regular. But it is also a time to welcome the next season by starting to prepare the soil for the year ahead. And there are opportunities to plant some hardy crops: broad beans and peas, shallots and garlic can get off to an excellent start if they avoid waterlogged soil.

Now is the time to start your winter digging – the frosts and rain will help to further break down the soil so that ready for planting in the spring. If you cover the ground with some organic matter then the worms will aerate and condition the soil. Mulch the soil around plants above warm, wet, weed-free soil to allow the ground to retain moisture and the worms will draw nutrients into the ground.

It's the perfect time of year to tidy up the plot, compost the remains of the year's harvest and plant/prune fruit trees and bushes.

You may want to consider extended your growing season by investing in a greenhouse, hot frame or polytunnel.

For ideas on how to cook and preserve your crops see our [Seasonal Recipes](#).

Jobs

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

November: Order seeds for the coming year. Prepare your plot by winter digging. Considering covering for winter.

December: Prune hard fruit trees (apples, pears) and currants, gooseberries and autumn raspberries. Remove faded leaves from winter brassicas. Clean pots, store produce, and plan for the year ahead. Cover beds.

Plant

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

November/December: Fruit trees, fruit bushes and rhubarb. Garlic sets, shallots, hardy peas and broad beans (Aquadulce varieties), winter salad leaves.

Harvest

October: The very last tomatoes, apples and other hard fruits, leeks, beetroot, beans sweetcorn, squash (they should sound hollow when you tap them), kale and chard.

November: Brassicas (cabbage, kale, Brussels sprouts), late salad crops.

December: Leeks, root vegetables, brassicas (cabbage, kale, Brussels sprouts), late salad crops.



Update from the Committee

Annual BBQ - The LAA's Summer BBQ took place on Sunday 13th September at the Digswell site. Once again this was well attended and (despite a chance of light showers) the weather stayed fair.

The Association would like to express its thanks to Marc and Carrie for shopping for, preparing, and cooking on the "braai" (barbecue!). We are sure that everyone greatly enjoyed the chicken wings, BBQ ribs, burgers and veggie-burgers.

Membership Subscriptions – Invoices for the next allotment year (01.11.2026 – 31.10.2027) will be issued in early October. If any of the following apply to you then please let us know at the following email address: email@longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk

- You have, or will, reach state pension age this year (i.e. between 01.11.2025 and 31.10.2026) and wish to take advantage of the 50% rent discount
- You would like to add a joint tenant – please provide their name if they will help out on your plot, on average, once a month or more.
- You would like to give up your plot at the end of the current term (31.10.2026)

Emergency Contact Details – details of emergency contacts are now on display at both sites: outside the shop and Digswell and on the mower shed at Broadwater.

Kings Seeds Scheme – This year we have moved to on-line ordering, and all members should have received an email containing instructions on how to order seeds from the National Allotment Society/ Kings Seeds scheme.

We encourage our plot-holders (as members of the National Allotment Association) to take a look at the wide selection available at discounted prices.

On-line orders must be placed by Saturday, 31st October.



The LAA Shop



The LAA shop at Digswell will open once more this year from 09.30 to 12.00 on Saturday October 24th.

This could be your last chance to stock up with compost, garden equipment, fleece, weed suppressant fabric, compost and other items before it re-opens in the spring.

If you have any requests for what else the shop might stock, or if you know of any potential suppliers of compost, manure, etc., then please let us know.



Getting Muddy

Getting muddy is part of being a plot-holder. Whilst dirty hands do not sound appealing, gardening without gloves, or simply touching plants, can bring surprising health benefits that you may not be aware of.

Direct contact between your skin and soil (and some plants, particularly mosses) significantly enhances human health by boosting the immune system, adding to the wealth of helpful microbes that live in and on our bodies, and improving mood.

A teaspoon of healthy soil contains billions of microorganisms and thousands of species. These include fungi, bacteria, viruses, and nematodes, which transfer to our skin as we work the soil.

Contact with these organisms trains our immune systems to regulate inflammation and fight disease. Regular skin contact with healthy soil also indirectly supports boost the range of healthy bacteria within our gut, although eating soil is unsafe.

When there is a rich mix of microbes living alongside each other on our skin and within our gut, they restrict each other's growth and defend us against more harmful bacteria.

One of the organisms in healthy soil is 'microbacterium vaccae,' a harmless type of soil bacteria. When in contact with skin, this activates neurons in the brain that release serotonin - sometimes called the "happy hormone" – which reduces stress and beneficially affects our mood.

Harvests Around the World

October is harvest time in the UK, with church festivals involving decorating altars with fresh fruits and vegetables and the donation of surplus produce to local food banks and charities. Here's how (and when) harvests are celebrated elsewhere around the world.

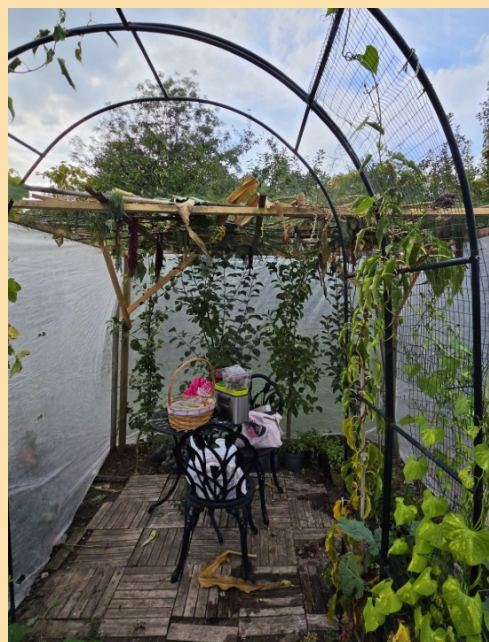
Mid-Autumn Festival (East Asia): Celebrated in China and other Asian countries during the autumn full moon, featuring family gatherings, moon worship, and lanterns.

New Yam Festival (West Africa): Celebrated in Nigeria and Ghana around August to mark the end of the rainy season, featuring colourful masquerades, traditional folk dances, drumming, and sharing yam dishes.

Sukkot (Jewish Tradition): An ancient autumn harvest celebration where people construct temporary outdoor huts (*sukkah*) to eat, sit and even sit in, in celebration of the gathering of crops.

Pongal (India): A mid-January festival thanking nature and the sun for the rice, spice, and sugarcane harvests, highlighted by boiling a special pot of rice, milk, and raw sugar over an open fire.

Thanksgiving (North America): Celebrated in Canada and the United States, on the fourth Thursday in November, with large family roast dinners to give thanks for the year's food and harvest bounty.





Crop Planner

key: sow
 plant
 harvest

	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Broad Bean	harvest	harvest	harvest		sow	sow	
Runner Bean	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Pea	sow	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	harvest	plant



Autumn Recipes

Warm Borlotti Salad

The red-flecked Borlotti bean pods complement other autumn colours at this time of year and provide contents for a hearty seasonal salad.

Ingredients:

- 450g (1 lb) Borlotti (and or other)/beans
- 150g (6oz.) onions, chopped
- 150g (6oz.) fresh tomatoes
- 1-2 tablespoons of virgin olive oil
- Sprig of fresh parsley, chopped
- Salt/pepper to taste

Finely chop the onions and tomatoes. Combine with the parsley, olive oil and seasoning in a large bowl.

Simmer the beans in salted water until tender - typically around twenty minutes or so. Drain, and toss them into the bowl with the other ingredients and eat while still warm.

Fresh, crusty bread perfectly complements the creamy consistency of the cooked beans.

This could be a healthy lunch or, with the addition of cold meats or hot sausages, a filling supper.



Nhopi (Zimbabwean pumpkin and peanut porridge)

A comforting snack, warm breakfast or as a side dish for lunch or dinner.

Ingredients:

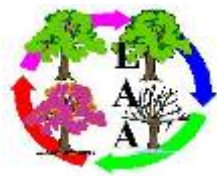
- 1kg pumpkin (or butternut squash), peeled and cubed
- Water (to cover the pumpkin when cooking)
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons smooth peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine (optional)
- 60 ml fresh milk or reserved cooking water



Place the cubed pumpkin or butternut in a pot with water to cover. Add a pinch of salt and boil for about 20 minutes until tender. Drain the water (reserving some of water if not using milk).

Mash the soft pumpkin until there are no lumps and the consistency is smooth. Stir in the sugar and peanut butter. Mix well, adding the milk/saved cooking water a bit at a time until the mixture has a creamy consistency.

Gently simmer on low heat for 3-5 minutes to warm through.



Comments and Feedback



With thanks to Rena and Elwyn for the (day and night) photographs of their sukkah.

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

