



Longcroft Allotment Association

Newsletter – July/August 2016

It's that time of Year

Days are long and warm and we're into one of the most rewarding parts of the year as we start to harvest our produce almost every day.

Weeding, watering and mulching are the main jobs over early summer:



Regular watering is perhaps the most important job – most crops need a steady supply of water. It's usually better to give a few plants a thorough soaking than to give them all a small amount. Those most in need include young seedlings, fruit and fruiting vegetables and plants in containers. Keep an eye on the weather and ask neighbouring allotment holders to help over holiday periods.



Spreading mulch will help to conserve any water that gets into the soil and will also slow down the spread of weeds. Earth up brassicas and potatoes.

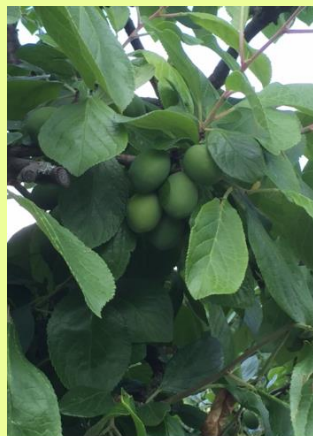
It's not too late to plant winter squashes, brassicas, leeks and salad crops.

Keep an eye on pests – black fly, slugs/snails and butterflies are the main culprits, but pigeons can attack peas,

brassicas and strawberries. Spraying a mixture of equal parts milk and water can help with black fly.

After they have cropped, there is an opportunity for pruning currants, berries and cherry trees at the end of summer.

Fruit and vegetable production hits a peak at the height of summer so you could find yourself with a glut, so it's a good time to make preserves, pickles and sauces: savoury versions for pastas and stews; sweet compotes to pour over yoghurts and ice-creams. See recipes below.



Jobs

July: weed regularly. Feed tomatoes and other fruiting plants. Thin out fruit crops if it looks like they are producing a large crop. Pinch out legumes and tomato plants.

August: Dry onions and garlic. Tie up beans and fruiting vegetables as they grow.

Plant

July: cabbages and cauliflowers, winter brassicas. Dib in leeks. Plant out the last of your runner beans and winter squashes.

August: Spring cabbage. Also the last chance this year to plant carrots and turnips.

Harvest

July: beans, peas, courgettes, carrots, beetroot, salad crops, onions, garlic (for drying), cherries, berries and currants.

August: sweetcorn, fruiting vegetables (peppers, aubergine tomatoes), beans, peas, plums and gages, blackberries, early hard fruits.



Summer BBQ, Sunday 14 August

The summer barbecue will be at the Digswell site, with food being served around 1pm. £5 per person in advance.

Meat (sausages, burgers), vege-burgers and buns will be provided together with tea/coffee. Please bring your own salads, desserts and wine/beer (and perhaps a little to share). Also, crockery, cutlery and glasses as necessary and wine/beer.

LAA Update

Update from the Committee:

New purchases - We now have four new lawnmowers - two at each site. We will be holding a training session at each site so that all users will get a chance to understand the dos and don'ts about their use.

Social - all members will be invited to a picnic barbecue on August 14th. Keep an eye out for your invitation which will contain more detail and please make every effort to come along.

Digswell Site - The Council have said the height of the redwood trees at the southern end of the site trees can be reduced, and we have had some helpful discussions with the Nursery.

Broadwater Site - no more crossed legs! A planning application has been submitted for a waterless toilet (with solar powered lighting) on the site called a "WooWoo". This will be located at the northern end of the plot, furthest from the gate to minimise the risk of vandalism. Details of the facility are available from the manufacturer's web-site <http://www.waterlesstoilets.co.uk>.

Work Parties - There was a working party at the Digswell site on 2 July at the Digswell site. One will soon be held at Broadwater with plans to hire a skip - so if you have been hoarding any rubbish that you want to get rid of keep an eye on the noticeboard and your inbox.

New members - Since April we have been joined by Mr. Barry Syrett, Miss Helen Anderson, Mrs. Maddie Gray, Mrs. Susan Beck, Miss Isabel Gorur, Mrs. Kirke Raava, Mrs. Laura Page, Mrs. Lesley Zorlakeri and Mrs. Annette Bloor - welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.

And finally... earlier this year Kim Haynes stepped down as Secretary and gave up her plot over Easter. Many thanks to Kim for her help over the years and we'll certainly miss you at the Broadwater site.

Down at the Shed

The Shed is open throughout summer so stock up on compost, fertiliser, pest control, pots/planters, netting, canes and any extra seeds that you can still plant this year. We now stock organic, peat-free compost and organic slug pellets which kills the slugs but not creatures that predate on them (hedgehogs, thrushes etc.).

Shop opening times: The Shed opening hours are **11:00am to 12:30pm on Sundays** from the end of February to the end of September.

And if you'd like to help your association we need more volunteers to help with the rota. Please contact Helen (longcroftallotmentassociation@gmail.com) if you can help out.





Greener Fingers - Organic Gardening

Organic gardening uses techniques which occur naturally – the word 'organic' describes living organisms.

Some people think that organically grown food tastes better but the proven benefits are safer growing (by using fewer potentially toxic pesticides and fertilisers) and protecting/encouraging wildlife. It can also reduce waste where compost is used by recycling kitchen and/or gardening waste.

Organic gardening includes the following:

- Using natural mulches to restrict weed growth and retain soil moisture
- Use organic manures and peat-free compost
- Capturing and storing rainwater
- Cultivation processes with reduced or no digging
- Plant to encourage beneficial predators: birds, insects (ladybirds, wasps, lacewings...) and reptiles (frogs, toads and slow worms)
- Companion planting – plants which benefit each other (e.g. the onion family can be grown with carrots to deter carrot fly)
- Use green manure over winter to keep the soil warm and retain moisture



It is not easy to be wholly organic but applying some of the principles will help to establish a natural balance on your plot.

For more information see www.gardenorganic.org.uk.

Well, fancy that!

I usually dig my beds over to the depth of my spade head (one spit) and occasionally double dig – going down twice as far (but taking more than twice as much effort!). I'd always assumed that this was deep enough for most plant roots. So I was surprised recently to read how deep the roots of some crops grow it is typically several feet (possibly deeper even than dandelions!).



Onion: 20-30cm (8-12")

Potato: 45-60cm (18-24")

Beets: 45-90cm (18-36")

Leek: 45-90cm (18-36")

Beans: 600-90cm (24-36")

Tomato: 45-130cm (18-48")

Peas: 90-130cm (36-48")

Armed with the above, how long the world's longest carrot was (for the answer, see the end of the newsletter).



August Recipes

Mediterranean Sauce

Serves four as a starter, two as a main meal.

- 450g (1 lb) courgettes
- 1 green (or red) pepper
- 1 aubergine
- 2 medium sized onions
- 6 large tomatoes (skinned, de-seeded and roughly chopped)
- 75ml (1/8 pint) olive oil
- 1 glass dry white wine
- 1 dessert spoon of sugar
- Salt/pepper to taste
- Pinch of oregano (optional)

Fry the onions in the oil until soft. Coarsely slice the courgettes, pepper and aubergine and add to the pan and stir until they soften. Add the tomatoes and wine and cook over a gentle heat until the ingredients are thoroughly combined.

Stir occasionally to prevent sticking or burning.

After approximately 30 minutes add the sugar and seasoning.

Serve with fresh, crusty bread.

Strawberry (or any soft fruit!) ice-cream

To make 2 litres of ice-cream (a typical supermarket tub) use

- 250g (8oz) strawberries (or a mixture of soft fruit: strawberries, raspberries, currants),
- 250g (8oz) double cream and
- 125g (5oz) white castor sugar



(If you store your sugar with vanilla pods the ice-cream will taste even better!)

Puree the strawberries then mix in the cream and sugar. Put them in an ice-cream maker. If you don't have an ice-cream maker (then add it to your Christmas list and) put the mixture in a 2 litre tub and put it in the freezer, give it a stir every hour or so to keep the mixture smooth before it sets.

If you keep the ice-cream in a freezer, it will set harder than shop-bought ice-cream so remember to take it out and allow to de-frost for 15-30 minutes before serving.

Lavender shortbread

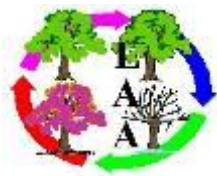


Makes 10-15 (perfect with strawberry ice-cream!)

- 100g (4oz) butter
- 50g (2oz) castor sugar
- EITHER 50g (2oz) rice flour plus 100g (4oz) plain flour OR
- 150g (6oz) plain flour
- 125g (5oz) white castor sugar
- 1-2 teaspoons lavender flowers

Cream the butter and sugar together then stir in the other ingredients. Roll out on a floured surface until about 5mm (1/4") thick. Cut into shape and bake for 20 minutes at 150°C (300°F).

Sprinkle with castor sugar and cool on a wire rack.



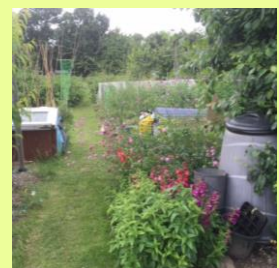
Crop Planner

Key:
 sow
 plant
 harvest

	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
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
Onion / Shallot		harvest	harvest	harvest		
Garlic	harvest	harvest	harvest		plant	plant
Beetroot	sow	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Carrot	sow	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Swede / Turnip	sow			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	harvest	sow		harvest
Kale	sow				harvest	harvest
Black/Redcurrants	harvest	harvest	harvest		plant	plant
Raspberries	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	plant
Strawberries		harvest	harvest		plant	
Fruit Trees			harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest

Polite reminders

Mowers - Please remember to adjust the throttle setting when using our mowers. Only use the 'start' position when starting the mower, otherwise coke deposits can form on the spark plugs which inhibit starting for other users. Also, never tip the mower on its side if you need to inspect the blades - mowers should be carefully tipped backwards if they require inspection.





Comments and feedback

Well fancy that! - The world's longest carrot was 5.841 metres (19' 2"), grown in Somerset, 2 September 2007.



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: longcroftallotmentassociation@gmail.com

