



It's that time of Year

September is the month of harvest, a time to enjoy collecting crops and thinking about which ones we want to grow again next year. Then, by the end of October, it's time to clear the remnants of summer crops, prepare overwintering crops and make plans for the next growing season.



The latest Kings Seeds catalogue is available at each site and contains excellent value seeds, onion sets seed potatoes and more.

It's time to start storing equipment for the winter and think about tools that might have come in useful over the year and that you can add to your Christmas lists.

There are crops to harvest, preserve and store – a good time freeze beans and make chutneys, jellies and pickles. When you've used all that you can from your crops, any plant waste can be added to your compost heap to rot down over the winter. You can also take advantage of hedgerow crops to take advantage of – see the recipe for sloe syrup which can be poured over ice creams and other desserts or added to a glass of gin (for a result that's very much like sloe gin).

There can still be hot, cold, wet, or dry spells so keep an eye on the weather forecast and water or protect your plants as necessary.

Autumn is a good time to improve the water resilience of our plots by applying mulches around the base of plants when the soil is relatively wet and warm, Biodegradable mulches (garden compost, wood chippings, well-rotted manure, etc.) 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.

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

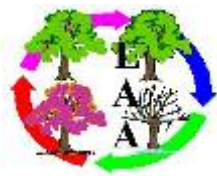
September: Spinach, spring onions, spring cabbage, garlic, herbs and salad crops.

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

Harvest

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

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



Update from the Committee

Summer Barbecue – The 2024 Summer BBQ will take place On Sunday 8th September from 12:30. Please make try and come along to enjoy the food and drink and meet fellow plot-holders.

Burgers, sausages, vege-burgers and tea/coffee/soft drinks will be provided but, as usual, please bring salad, fruit/dessert, cake, wine etc. to share with others, as well as crockery and cutlery for your own use.

The cost still remains £6.00 per adult, £3 for a child, or £20.00 for a family of two adults and up to 4 children. Please reply to emails from the LAA account if you wish to attend or, alternatively, speak to any Committee member



Seed Catalogue – The latest Kings Seed catalogue is available to all members of the Association. This enables you to purchase your seeds, onion sets, seed potatoes etc. from Kings Seeds at a discount, plus provides a modest income for the Association.



Hard copies of the catalogue and order form are available from the shed at Broadwater and the kitchen at Digswell and members can also access these by logging on to the NAS website, www.thenas.org.uk using the login and passwords that have been issued by email, along with details of how to make payment (by bank transfer). If you haven't received these details please contact a Committee member.

Please note that the deadline for placing your order is **Friday 25th October**.

Work Parties - The next work parties will take place from 09:30-12:00 on Saturday 7 September at both our Digswell and Broadwater sites.

Beehives at Broadwater – Having prepared a site for the hives at a work party earlier this year the first bees were delivered in mid-July. Keith is the bee-keeper - please say hello if you see him on the site (but be duly cautious of any bees that may be nearby).

New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued we have been joined by Barbara and Marcin Pytka (D120), Louis, Mel, Paul and Eleanor Griffiths (D157), and Barry Wilkinson (B42). Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



The LAA Shop

The LAA shop at Digswell will open once a month from 09.30 to 12.00 on the following Saturdays:

Jun 22nd, Jul 20th, Aug 24th, Sep 21st, Oct 26th

Members should have received a price list by email - if you haven't received one, or have suggestions regarding what else the shop might also stock, please let us know.



Water Harvesting at Broadwater

Those of you on who use the Broadwater site will have seen that over the last few weeks I have added an "extension" to the replacement shed I recently put up, and I have been asked to write a few words about what I have done and why.

Having read that rainwater is more suitable for plants than the tap water that supplies the troughs on site, and knowing that I would be replacing an old shed, my initial intention was reposition at a location that would allow me to collect some from its roof of the shed for use on my own plot. I was then given a large water butt for free.



That was the plan. However, at the AGM I watched the presentation on rainwater collection by Louise Humphreys from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and the presentation on water resilience by Sam and Kate from the LAA Committee, it sparked further ideas. Their PowerPoint presentations included several examples of free-standing pent roofs being used as an extra area to collect more rain water. They also referenced one allotment holder who uses a minimal amount of water, but still produced good crops. So, I thought I would try and do the same. Also, not liking to throw anything away (I call it recycling - my wife calls it hoarding!), I thought I would see if I could use parts of the old shed that I had replaced to help me create something similar. So, I changed my original plan.

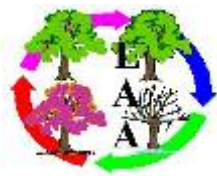


I would need some supports to hold up a roof to catch extra water. The result, four posts and two bags of Postcrete later, was a structure onto which I could attach the old shed roof complete with its felt. Not wanting to waste the space beneath. I used the side and back of the old shed walls and back to create a surround for a compost bin and storage space for the plastic piping that I used as support for netting over vulnerable plants, and other bulky items. Over time the thought is to maybe use this other space for a second compost area. Let's see how thing work out.

There was a cost to all this, the aforementioned posts and cement, but the parts that I found I had to shell out the most for was the guttering and pipe work to direct the water into the butt. If you want to do the same I understand that not everyone will have a dilapidated shed to reuse but, after the event, I have seen lots of materials that I could have used for free, including guttering on Facebook market place. So, if you want to something similar can I suggest you learn from my experience and look there first.

At the AGM, Louise from WHBC also mentioned that water bills are their largest single expense for allotments is for water supplies, and that the budget is regularly exceeded. Installations such as mine will help to reduce these costs, and reduce the risk that these costs may be passed onto plot-holders in future

Michael Flint (B28)



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	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	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Carrot	harvest	harvest	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	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Cabbage	sow	harvest	harvest	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



Sloe Syrup

This River Cottage recipe is a good way to use sloes and the syrup can be poured over ice cream, yoghurt or pancakes for a dessert/breakfast, or added to cold drinks such as orange juice or gin and tonic to add a bit of sharpness.

- 1kg (2lb) sloes – washed, dried and pricked
- 750 ml (1¼ pints) water
- Juice of one lemon –
- 800g (1lb 12 oz.) white sugar

Put the sloes in a saucepan with the lemon juice and water (it should just cover the fruit). Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for about ten minutes until the skins have burst and the liqueur has turned purple. Allow the juices to drip through a muslin cloth for an hour or more (do not squeeze the fruit as this may release tannin from the skins).

Measure the liquid and add 100g of sugar for each 100ml of juice. Stir over a low heat until the sugar is dissolved and then boil hard for three minutes (remove any pink scum that forms as best you can and the rest should disperse as the syrup cooks).

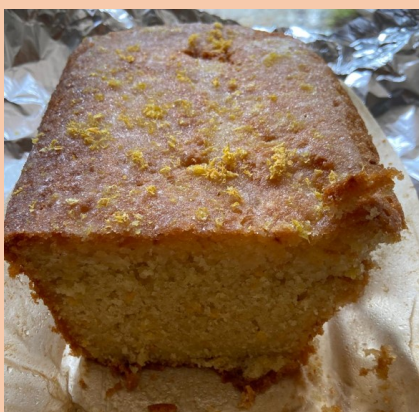
Transfer to sterilised containers and seal straight away. The syrup will last for up to six months and should be refrigerated once opened.



Lemon Courgette Loaf

A delicious way to use courgettes from the Mary Berry vaults.

- 150 ml vegetable oil
 - 200g (8 oz.) caster sugar
 - 3 medium eggs
 - 3 Finely grated zest of 2 lemons and juice of 1 lemon
 - 1 large courgette, around 200g (8 oz.), coarsely grated
 - 1 large courgette, around 200g, coarsely grated
 - 250 g self-raising flour
 - ½ tsp. bicarbonate of soda
- For the drizzle
- Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
 - 75g (3 oz.) white sugar



Preheat the oven to 180°C/(160°C fan/gas mark 4. Grease and 900g (2lb) loaf tin with baking paper.

Combine the oil, caster sugar, and eggs with a wooden spoon. Stir in the grated courgette and the zest and juice of the lemon. Sift in the flour and baking soda, then gently stir until smooth. Bake until golden and a skewer is clear when withdrawn from the centre (approximately one hour).

Remove from the oven and skewer the surface of the cake to allow the drizzle to penetrate.

Mix the drizzle ingredients and pour the cake while still hot and allow to cool before serving.



Comments and Feedback



With thanks to Michael for the article and images of rainwater harvesting at Broadwater, to Sara for the cover picture and the courgette/lemon loaf, and to Tan for this rainbow at Digswell.

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.

