



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: 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.



LAA Update

Update from the Committee:

Summer Barbecue - The 2019 Summer BBQ will take place on Sunday 8th September from 12:30. Please join us at the Digswell site for our summer event.

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

The cost is £5.00 per adult, £2.50 for a child, or £16.00 for a family of two adults and up to 4 children

Please RSVP with payment to any Committee member* or at the Digswell Shop on Sunday mornings by Friday 30th August.

**Digswell – Andrew Hepher, Helen McLean, Christine Smith, Annette Bloor, Mick Pestle, Ian Cocksedge, Broadwater – Sam Hayton, Simon Chard, Andrew Thorne*



Kings Seed Catalogue – The Kings Seed catalogues for 2019/20 Broadwater Shed, the Digswell kitchen and also from the Shop on Sunday mornings. All the information you need to complete your order is provided in the inside front cover of the Catalogue. Completed order forms should be completed by 27 October 2019 and returned either to Barbara Wilton at her Quadrangle address, or to the Shop at the Digswell site. These are then sent in as a bulk order, thereby giving us a better discount.

Meeting with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council - Andrew Hepher (Chair of the LAA) met with representatives of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council during August. The main points that came out of the meeting were:

- It was agreed to trim back the trees at Digswell on the eastern boundary (adjacent to the golf course) and to selectively prune the oak trees affecting plots to the east of the gate
- The trees over-reaching the shop/kitchen roof will be cut back
- The council will investigate the tree/wind damage to the fence at Broadwater and determine any action required

Broadwater – There is still some woodchip available at the corner of the car park – all potholders are welcome to help themselves.

Digswell – The next Work Parties is scheduled for Saturday 7 September starting at 9:30– please help out if you can so the site is at its best for the barbecue.

Rabbits have been seen on site and the boundaries will be inspected to see if there are any gaps in the fencing that require repair.

New Members: Since the last newsletter was sent out we have been joined by Steve Brown. Welcome to the Association and let's hope you have many enjoyable and productive years with us.



The Kings Seed Catalogue

The Longcroft Allotment Association runs an annual scheme for discounted seeds, seed potatoes, onion sets and shallots, enabling our members to purchase these at a very competitive price.

This year, once again, we are using Kings Seeds as our preferred supplier and catalogues are available to all at both our sites, together with instructions for placing orders which must be placed by 27 October.

Last year our members ordered hundreds of seeds with a breakdown shown in the chart to the right.

Alliums – mainly onions and garlic, but also with some leeks and shallots – proved most popular, but salad vegetables, legumes, roots (mostly carrots) and potatoes weren't far behind,

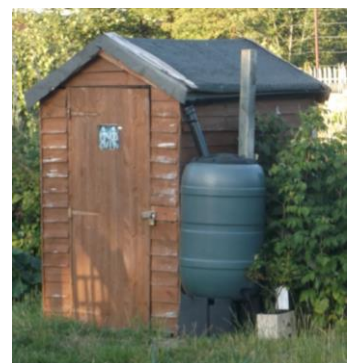
And, in case you're wondering what 'exotics' are available, these include cucamelons and tomatillos. Find out about them in the catalogue!



Down at the Shed

The Shed is now open until the end of September. Opening hours are 11:00-12:30 on Sundays throughout the summer – ***the*** place for canes, netting, value fertilisers, manures, composts and light gardening equipment.

All goods are top quality and excellent value compared with local garden centres and DIY stores.





Crop Planner

		sow				
		plant				
		harvest				
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Broad Bean	harvest	harvest		sow	sow	
Runner Bean	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Pea	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Potatoes	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Leek		harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest
Onion / Shallot	harvest	harvest	harvest			
Garlic	harvest	harvest		plant	plant	plant
Beetroot	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Carrot	sow	harvest	harvest	harvest		
Swede / Turnip			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	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	
Cabbage	sow	sow	sow		harvest	harvest
Kale				harvest	harvest	harvest
Black/Redcurrants	harvest	harvest		plant	plant	plant
Raspberries	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	plant	plant
Strawberries	harvest	harvest		plant		
Fruit Trees		harvest	harvest	harvest	plant	plant



Drying Fruit

Drying fruit is an excellent way of enjoying excess crops throughout the year. You can slow dry them in an oven or use an electric dehydrator. Most fruit is suitable and so are tomatoes and chilies.

Use fresh fruit in good condition remove all stones and any blemishes. Sliced fruit should be soaked in a 50:50 mixture of lemon juice and water. Hard fruit will need soaking for thirty minutes to an hour, plums and berries will need about half as long.

The time it takes to dry fruit depends on the size and their moisture content. Apples, pears and plums can take 8 to 10 hours at 50°C-70°C. Berries will take slightly less time at a lower temperature of 40°C-50°C. The fruit is ready to store in sealed jars when there is some 'give' and no moisture is released when squeezed.

The fruit is perfect for snacking and can be rehydrated and stewed to make pie fillings and mincemeat.



When to Start an Allotment

There is never a good time to start an allotment!

If you start in spring, the weeds get away from you faster than you can get to them, and each time you visit less of your plot is visible under the mounds of bind weed, carpets, of couch grass and thickets of bramble...

In the autumn, on the other hand, you'll find that every visit reveals a new grim truth that the growth of summer had hidden. The cute brick path turns out to be slippery and even death trap when it rains. The shed roof leaks...

If you get your plot in the summer it will allow you into a full sense of security, so that instead of tearing almost everything out or down, as you'd intended, you lounge around harvesting perennial fruits planted by a previous incumbent...

And in winter... well, taking on an allotment in the dead months is a bit like being in a zombie movie - the whole place is dead, there seems to be nobody about to advise you and there are few suspicious looking twigs on an otherwise bare plot that could be plants, or weeds, or the gnarled fingers of a spectacularly gothic but poorly buried corpse...

(from "Minding my Peas and Cucumbers", a book about allotment life by Kay Sexton)





Early Autumn Recipes

Runner Beans with Garlic

A variation on traditionally boiled runner beans which abound at this time of year.

- 2 tbsps olive oil
- 4-6 sliced garlic cloves
- 500-600g (1-1½lb) runner beans, trimmed and sliced
- Sliced chilli or red pepper flakes (optional)
- Sea salt
- Coarsely ground black pepper
- Juice of one lemon



Heat the oil in a shallow pan and add the garlic and cook for a few minutes until soft and starting to brown. Add the (raw) beans and chilli red pepper flakes; and mix well. Cover and turn the heat to low until the beans are tender (10-15 minutes), turning occasionally. Season and stir in the lemon juice before serving.

(for more recipes visit <https://longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk/and-cooking-them>)



Polite Reminder

Site Security

In order to avoid unwanted visitors please scramble the combinations on the padlocks whenever you arrive or live the allotment sites. Also, please don't keep power tools or items of value on site. The Association has had an unfortunate history of break-ins, vandalism, fly tipping and theft.

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 the Newsletter Editor at email@longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk.

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

