



It's that time of Year

October signals the end of the growing season: it's time to harvest the last of your tomatoes, peppers and courgettes; frosts become more regular; and the time has come to focus on preparing for next year's crops.



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

As the days become darker and colder, and there is less growing and fewer crops to harvest (although some are at their peak in December – e.g. leeks and winter brassicas). There are still plenty of jobs to do to prepare for the year ahead.

The frosts and rain will help to break down the soil so that ready for planting in the spring. Regardless of whether you winter dig or prefer the no-dig approach, now is the time to add organic matter to your plot to allow the worms and other organisms to incorporate this and improve the soil below 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, along with a means of heating. Request forms are available on the Association web-site:

<https://longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk/requests-and-forms>

Jobs

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.

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



Update from the Committee

Summer Barbecue – The 2022 Summer BBQ took place on 11 September at the Digswell site. The event took place only three days after the death of Queen Elizabeth whose sad passing was toasted by those present.

More than seventy members of the association attended the event. There was some concern that this would provide logistical challenges with regard to parking and seating. However a combination of lift sharing and members bringing their own folding chairs.

The Association would like to express its thanks to Peter and Sue once again for organising the grill and cooking the selection of sausages, burgers and vege-burgers. We are sure that everyone greatly enjoyed the food and the day.



Pumpkin Competition - Congratulations to Thomas Markatopoulos regained the prize for the largest pumpkin from Christine Smith (he was also commended for growing the second and third largest!).

Kings Seed Catalogue – The latest Kings Seed catalogues have now arrived and are available to collect from the Digswell Kitchen or the Broadwater shed. Please note that the deadline for ordering is 31 October. We have ordered fewer catalogues this year and encourage those with access to the internet to access the online brochure available from the following link: <https://nsalg.kingsseeds.com/nsalg-catalogue>.

If you do take a catalogue, please return it to site once you have completed an order form, so others can use it. An envelope of additional forms can be found next to the catalogues.

Wood Chippings – There have been recent deliveries of wood chippings at Digswell. Whilst we seek to arrange for delivery at the Broadwater site, chippings are available for collection from Digswell by Broadwater members.

Health and Safety – Periodic inspections will shortly be arranged at both our sites over the coming weeks. Please ensure that your plots are free from any broken glass and other potential hazards.

New Members – There have been no new members since our last newsletter.





Crop Planner

	key:	sow				
		plant				
		harvest				
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Broad Bean	sow	sow			sow	sow
Runner Bean	harvest					
Pea	harvest				sow	sow
Potatoes	harvest			chit	chit	plant
Leek	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	sow
Onion / Shallot					sow	sow
Garlic	plant	plant	plant	plant	plant	
Beetroot	harvest					sow
Carrot	harvest				sow	sow
Swede / Turnip	harvest	harvest	harvest			
Courgette	harvest					
Pumpkin / Winter Squash	harvest	harvest				
Tomatoes	harvest				sow	sow
Chilli / Aubergine					sow	sow
Chard/Leaf Beet	harvest	harvest		harvest	harvest	harvest
Cabbage		harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest
Kale	harvest	harvest	harvest	harvest		sow
Black/Redcurrants	plant	plant	plant	plant	plant	plant
Raspberries	harvest	plant	plant	plant	plant	plant
Strawberries	plant					plant
Fruit Trees	harvest	plant	plant	plant	plant	plant



The 2023 Kings Seed Catalogue

The latest Kings Seed catalogue is now available to our members and offers a selection of good value traditional seeds, seed potatoes and onion/garlic sets. The national allotment scheme is joint initiative run by Kings Seeds and the National Allotment Society.

With the warmer weather we have been experiencing our members are having increasing success with unusual crops and the catalogue is also a fantastic source of ideas for more unusual crops such as Fennel, Okra and Scorzonera.



Kings was established in 1888 and is based near Colchester – East Anglia has been the centre of seed production for many centuries and its climate and soil are ideal for producing high quality of seed.

The Kings Seed catalogue has arrived and we are encouraging members to browse on line wherever possible (<https://nsalg.kingsseeds.com/nsalg-catalogue>). Paper copies are available at the Digswell Kitchen or the Broadwater shed for members without internet access.

Please note that the deadline for ordering is 31 October.

Choosing Your Seeds

The range of vegetable, fruit and herbs is enormous so how do we decide which crops to grow? Some crop selections will provide a steady harvest throughout the year, whilst other assortments of varieties will result in occasional large batches for freezing or preserving.



There are a number of practical considerations, such as available space, growing conditions (particular where they will only be productive in a greenhouse or polytunnel), and personal choice. A good way to start selecting seeds is to think about our favourite varieties, and crops which are either expensive or uncommonly available from supermarkets.

Easy varieties of crops to grow include beetroot, broad beans, courgette, kale, lettuce, marrow, and radish.

Crops which produce the greatest yields relative to effort include beetroot, fruit trees and bushes, courgette, lettuce and tomatoes.

Once their packets are opened seeds deteriorate with age so should be kept in airtight tins or jars. To test the viability of old seeds simply sprinkle a sample on moist kitchen roll on a saucer, cover with cling film and store in a warm place. Discard the seeds if less than half seeds produce shoots within 10-14 days.



Purchased seeds are regulated by legal standards for purity and germination so can be planted with confidence.

F1 varieties of seeds are hybrids which adopt desirable performance characteristics of each parent plant in terms of yield, quality of cropping, and disease/pest resistance.

Non-hybrid varieties are usually more variable but can produce exceptional yields or flavour.

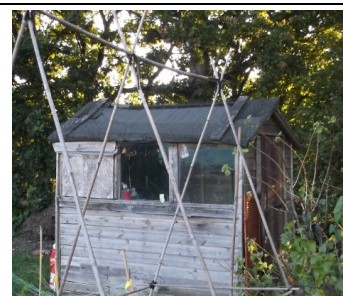
Heritage or heirloom varieties are specialist varieties of non-hybrid seeds which have been chosen because of a unique characteristic.

You can save your own seeds from previous crops but should note that the seeds from F1 hybrid crops are not usually successful. Collect seeds from the most successful plants and allow them to fully ripen before collection. Any debris should be removed from the seeds before they are stored in paper bags in a dry room where they will not be exposed to extremes of temperature.

Down at the Shed

The LAA shop has had a very successful year so far and will open between 09.30 and 12.00 on Saturday Oct 15th, possibly for the last time this year. This could be your last chance to buy organic matter and sheeting to prepare and cover your beds over winter.

Preferred payment is touchless debit/credit card.



Autumn Recipes

Shakshouka

A versatile sauce for surplus tomatoes.



- 3-4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon powdered cumin
- 1 small green chilli
- 500g (1 lb) tomatoes (skinned if you prefer)
- Fresh coriander leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 egg per serving

Finely chop the onion and gently fry in the olive oil until the onions are soft and translucent. Add the garlic and spices and stir until the flavours are absorbed by the oil.

Add the tomatoes and continue cooking gently until they have broken down and the mixture becomes thick. (The mixture can be frozen at this point.)

Finely chop a small bunch of fresh coriander leaves and stir into the mixture. Form slight depressions and crack eggs into these. Continue cooking until they are lightly poached.

Serve with flatbreads.



Fennel Pasta Sauce

- 3-4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1-2 teaspoons fennel seeds
- One onion
- 4-6 cloves garlic
- One fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- One tin chopped tomatoes
- Tomato puree
- Black pepper
- 1-2 teaspoons white sugar
- Salt to taste



Peel and finely chop the onions and gently fry with the fennel seeds nuts until they soften and brown. Peel and crush the garlic and add to the pan with the chopped fennel for a further 10 – 15 minutes.

Add the chopped tomatoes, tomato puree and season pepper/chilli seeds and sugar. Cook slowly for at least 30 minutes (the longer the better) and add salt if needed before serving (if the pan is oven-proof).

Serve with boiled drained pasta and grated parmesan cheese.

Comments and Feedback



With thanks to Mary and Kayleigh for photographs of tomatoes and the fine harvest. 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

