

It's that time of Year

We've had a long summer - one of the warmest and driest on record and this seems to be continuing into early autumn. Tomatoes and other crops are still available to harvest and there have not been any frosts since early this year but temperatures are falling and the days are getting shorter.



It's been a productive and relatively pest-free year, but the growing season is reaching an end and the variety and volume of crops to harvest is falling. It's time to prepare our plots for the year ahead: perhaps planting green manures or covering the soil to prevent weed growth and keep in some warmth.

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 combine some organic matter as you then the worms will improve soil condition. Also, after digging applying mulch to the soil around fruit bushes, fruit trees, and other established plants will moderate the absorption and release of rainwater and help plant growth in the New Year.

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. And maybe the time to extend your growing season by investing in a greenhouse, hot frame or polytunnel.

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 you 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.

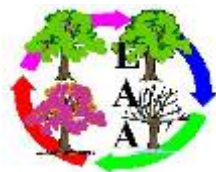
November/December: Fruit trees, fruit bushes and rhubarb. Garlic sets, shallots, hardy peas and broad beans (Aquadulce varieties), winter salad leaves.

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.



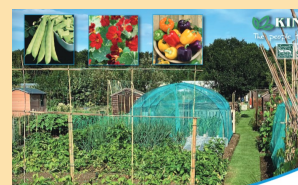
Update from the Committee



Summer Barbecue – The 2025 Summer BBQ took place On Sunday 7th September from 12:30 at our Digswell site. Despite the forecasts, the weather was (once again) excellent and the event was well attended.

The Association would like to express its thanks to Carrie and Marc for organising supplies and managing the grill and the day, and the range of food options which included seasoned chicken thighs, Jerk chicken thighs and Thai pork belly, in addition to the usual burgers and veggie-burgers.

Seed Catalogue – the deadline for ordering from the latest Kings Seed catalogue is Saturday 25 October. All members should have received an email containing the catalogue, and order form and instructions. An online brochure available from the following link: <https://nsalg.kingsseeds.com/nsalg-catalogue>.



Broadwater – Recent deliveries of woodchip to site have been well received, and tenants appear to be able to make use of more if available.

The work party on 6th September helped to create a seating area, tidy the edges to the car park/boundary fence, and remove unwanted plant growth around the pond.

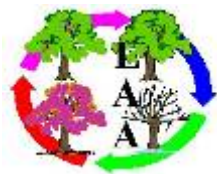
Digswell - The work party, also on 6th September, opened up the compost heap and shored up the partitions, and made some early preparations for the annual barbecue which was held on the following day.

Health & Safety H&S inspections - these were undertaken at both sites in early September with no major issues identified.

New Plot Markers – These have fabricated, painted and installed at both sites. Although more expensive than the traditional wooden posts, these are a much more durable (and attractive) long-term solution.

New Members – Since the last newsletter was issued, we have been joined by Nicole (B41), Marcia and Peter (D116), Kathy and Mark (D123A), James and Emma (D154), and Crispin and Anna (D108), whilst Busra (D175) has rejoined us after a short break. Welcome (and welcome back) 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 more this year from 09.30 to 12.00 on Saturday October 25th.

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.

All payments are now contactless.

End of Season Jobs

Autumn is the time to...

- Harvest tomatoes, autumn fruits and other perishable crops before the first frosts.
- Lift up any remaining potatoes and other root crops – they are more vulnerable to attack from pests if left in the ground.
- Collect beans to dry as ingredients to add to winter soups and stews over the coming months (and to plant as seeds for next year's crops.
- Cure pumpkins and squashes – drying them in the sun will help them to ripen/sweeten and will toughen their skins, helping to preserve them for longer storage.



- Clear old vegetation and, if there are no signs of disease, add them to composts heaps. Shred/chop any thick or woody stems.
- Take down bean poles, pea sticks, etc. and store under cover throughout winter
- Plant and dig in green manures to restrict weed growth and enrich the soil for the coming season.
- Cover beds to suppress weed growth and to help warm the soil before the new growing season arrives.
- Paint/treat sheds and other structures to prevent rot/decay and protect contents from the weather.
- Clean garden tools and inspect to see if any require repair or replacement before the next season.
- Place your order for next year's seeds.





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

Versatile Tomato Sauce

A rich sauce which freezes well. Can be used as a sauce for pasta or diluted with stock to make a hearty soup.

- 50g (2oz.) butter
- 150g (6oz.) onions
- 1kg (2lb) tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 150ml (¼ pint) dry sherry
- 1-2 teaspoons sugar
- Generous bunch of basil
- Salt/pepper to taste



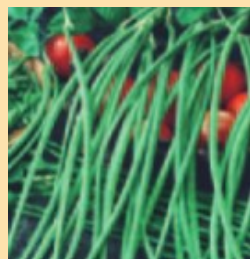
Finely chop the onions and gently fry in the butter in a large saucepan for five minutes. Add the garlic and cook for a further five minutes. Coarsely chop the tomatoes and add to the pan with the sherry and sugar. Continue cooking for an hour, stirring occasionally, adding the basil for the last five minutes or so.

Blend/liquidise the mixture (which should now be quite thick) and season with salt and pepper.

The sauce can be used hot (with pasta, chicken or fish) or cold (for pasta salads or as an alternative to ketchup) or diluted to make a soup (one part sauce to two parts stock)

Seeds for Unusual Crops

The deadline for ordering seeds through the Kings Scheme is the 25th October so there is still time to consider growing some crops that you don't often see in the shops:



Cucamelon – grape-sized cucumbers with the taste of watermelon

Yin Yang (Orca Bean) – A dual purpose bean: can be cooked young in their pods, or left to mature and shelled

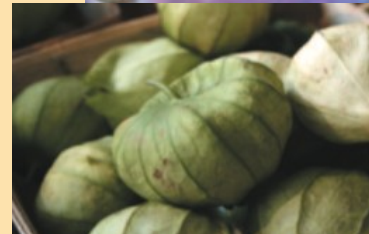
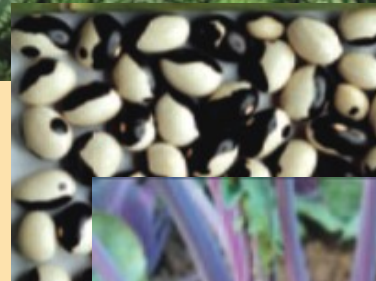
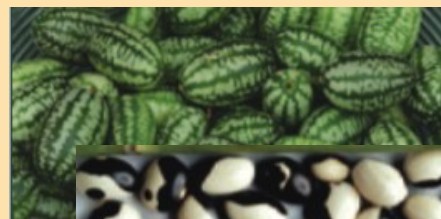
Kohl Rabi – a mild flavoured turnip-like crop with edible leaves

Yard Long – an oriental bean with 45cm pods

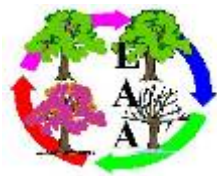
Purple Podded – a variety of pea best eaten young

Claytonia (Winter Purslane) – a hardy winter salad vegetable

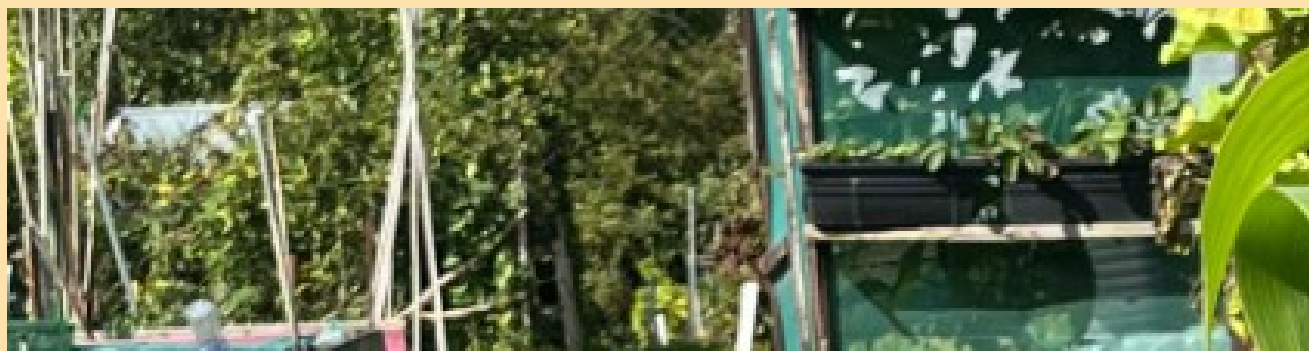
Tomatillo – a savoury version of the Cape Gooseberry used in saladas and salsas



For the full catalogue visit the NAS website, www.thenas.org.uk using the Association's login and password.



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...

Newsletter Editor: email@longcroftallotmentassociation.org.uk.

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

