

STAA Newsletter April 2017

Hello all Sheet and Tilmore Allotmenters,

The year is moving on fast and everything is starting to grow. Time to dust off that hoe and get the dibber out.

Early potatoes are well on the way and everything is coming back to life again. Another exciting growing season is upon us.

If you are not a member of STAA (£5) then you won't be benefitting from all the stock available from Abi at the Shed on Mill Lane, Sheet (stock list and opening times are at the end of this newsletter); half price seeds from Kings in November; 10% discount from Southern Fruit Trees; public liability for your plot and other wonderful things. See website for details.

<http://staa.community/>

Every year prizes are awarded for Best Newcomer (entry mandatory), and best kept plots (entry voluntary). Now come on – it's a £50 CASH first prize but you have to be *in it to win it*. So do enter – last year there was only ONE entry from Sheet.. So let's give our Chairman a bit of judging challenge this year – he is getting off far too lightly at the moment.

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|--|------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|--|
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| | Peter Knight | Sheet 36 | | peter.k.knight@btinternet.com |

RHS Sowing and planting advice April/May/June

| APRIL | MAY | JUNE |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal time to plant pot-grown fruit trees and bushes. • Chit and plant out second early potatoes in the first half of the month, main crop potatoes in the second half. • Sow seed outdoors for beetroot, carrots, Swiss chard, summer cauliflower, kohlrabi, lettuce, leeks, radish, turnip, spring and pickling onions, peas and perpetual spinach in well-prepared soil. • Try sowing unusual vegetables such as salsify, Hamburg parsley, or scorzonera. • Sow seed indoors of marrows, courgettes, pumpkins and squash. Also sweet peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, celery, celeriac, salads and globe artichokes. • In very mild areas sow dwarf French beans and sweet corn outside under cloches or fleece at the end of April. In cooler areas wait until May. • Sow a seedbed of brassicas to provide transplants of sprouting broccoli, cauliflowers and cabbages for planting out in June or July. • Transplant broad beans grown in pots. • Plant shallots, onion sets and garlic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant out alpine strawberry seedlings sown in early spring. • Sow French beans, runner beans, squash, cucumbers and pumpkin seeds directly into prepared beds outside. Be alert to late frosts (for which a covering of horticultural fleece should provide sufficient protection). • Sow sweet corn outside in blocks, at least 45cm (18in) spacing, with two seeds per hole. The strongest seedling can be selected later. • Sow cauliflowers and purple sprouting broccoli for harvesting next winter. • Try sowing some unusual vegetables such as kohlrabi (like a large white above-ground turnip), scorzonera and salsify. • Witloof chicory can be sown this month, to have some ready for forcing next winter. Sow in drills directly outside. • After all risk of frost has passed, plant out tomatoes, courgettes and pumpkins that were previously sown under cover. • Other young plants can be planted out once conditions are suitable, and once they've been hardened off (acclimatised to the colder outdoor conditions) for 10 to 14 days. • Brussels sprouts for next winter should now | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transplant outdoor melons under cloches, pinching out the growing point. • Move forced strawberries outdoors. • Continue sowing salad crops, such as beetroot, Chinese cabbage, pak choi and radish. Leafy salad crops may do better when sown in partially shady sites since hot dry weather can lead to bitter tasting leaves. • Sow French, runner and broad beans, peas, squash, sweetcorn, and outdoor cucumbers directly into prepared beds outside. • French beans are best sown in traditional rows, 45cm (18in) apart, at 15-22cm (6-9in) spacing. • Sweet corn works best planted in blocks, at least 45cm (18in) spacing, with two seeds per hole. Any seeds sown earlier under cover can now be planted out into the same block pattern. Sow before mid June and only in southern districts. • Runner beans need well-prepared ground and suitable supports (often a frame or wigwam of bamboo canes tied together with twine) for the shoots to twine around and grow upwards. • Courgettes, marrows and pumpkins can still be sown outdoors in early June in southern districts. • Although most winter brassicas need to be |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers. • Plant asparagus crowns. • Pot up tomato seedlings when they develop true leaves above the more rounded seed leaves. | <p>be ready for transplanting after early or mid-spring sowing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plant out artichokes that were previously sown under cover. • Self-blanching celery can also be planted out towards the end of the month. • Ridge cucumbers can be sown indoors now, for planting out in early June. | <p>sown earlier in the season, calabrese, turnips and kohlrabi can be sown now for an autumn crop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start treating potatoes and tomatoes against blight. • Celeriac and celery can be planted out early this month. A well-prepared site with lots of organic matter dug in is essential. • Outdoor ridge cucumbers can be planted out early this month. They benefit from a site that has been enriched with lots of organic matter to help retain water. • Plant vegetables sown indoors earlier in the season, including winter brassicas and sweet peppers. Peppers can only be planted out when all risk of frost has passed, and ideally beneath cloches. • Gaps between winter brassica plants can be used for quick-maturing catch crops, perhaps radishes or gem lettuces. • Plant out artichokes that were previously sown under cover. They can be grown as perennials (in which case they need 90cm spacing), or as biennials (45cm spacing is sufficient). |
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Editors' Note: In my dreams... Lifted from <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/april> etc.

Volunteers needed for community projects

As a result of showing the film documentary 'Tomorrow' in St Peters Hall 6 weeks ago, groups are joining together to do wonderful things. If you missed the film, you missed a treat. I heard about the film through the Transition Network and decided to book it after watching the trailer and reading the reviews. www.transitionnetwork.org

The film was in 5 'chapters': food, energy, economy, democracy and education https://youtu.be/327Xg6uqO_4

The feedback from the evening clearly shows how inspirational the film was, I now have a list of groups under the themes of food, energy, transport, recycling, economy and education.

Petersfield Community Garden is already doing wonderful things and, hopefully with the help of volunteers, will expand their growing of edibles next to the train station and by the outdoor swimming pool. Inspiration came from the 'food' chapter in the film where the **Incredible Edible** team in Yorkshire demonstrated what can be done in a town when like-minded volunteers come together. Their website is great fun. <http://incredibleediblenetwork.org.uk/>

With regard to saving good food destined for landfill, **Winton House** has an excellent arrangement with **M&S** whereby they distribute the out of date food to various charities, and also display a basket in **The Pop-In Center** for anyone to help themselves to.

Let us be proud to take free food, it is a good thing to do as the alternative is that it goes to landfill and we buy more! Good for business, bad for the planet.

On the energy side of things, a petition was started at the **WI** event in The Square on February 14th asking our MP for more renewable energy generation in Petersfield.

A group which started in November, **Petersfield Community Energy**, is in talks with EHDC and **Hampshire Renewable Energy Cooperative**, hoping to persuade our district council to have a solar PV community cooperative scheme at the Taro Centre and EHDC offices at Penns Place. This would cost the council nothing, would involve members of the community investing money in solar PV with a return on their money, (as much as 5% on recent projects). Whilst the feed in tariff rates continue to fall, large buildings with a high energy usage during daylight hours are still financially viable for solar PV, as they buy the energy from the coop direct from their roof, at a cheaper rate than from their supplier. So EHDC would save a huge amount of **our** money, investors would make hopefully 5% return on their investment, and dependency on fossil fuels is greatly reduced. What's not to like about it?

I have had several requests to show the film again, so may do so late springtime. Watch this space.

If you are interested in being involved in any of the groups mentioned, please do get in touch. petersfieldcommunityenergy@gmail.com

In the meantime, happy gardening. Enjoy your allotments.

Best wishes.

Julie Yardley.

Editors' Note: Fantastic Julie – and wonderful that Winton House would welcome us taking our surplus produce to them to be distributed out to the wider community. As you say . . . Whats Not to Like!

Where has My Manure Gone, Long Time Passing . . .

Now brace yourselves because a most heinous crime was committed at the allotments recently; in fact I woke up with a start in the middle of the night gasping at the sheer horror of it all. Someone recently arrived to find their lovely, enviable and lush pile (I know because I had my hands in it and it was gorgeous stuff) of manure being barrowed away from where it was nestling in the car park, in broad daylight – in fact, the perpetrator was in sight, just trotting happily away down the path – not too quickly - his wheelbarrow was well piled up and extremely heavy. He may have been whistling merrily. I think I would have also sprinted after him and politely (or maybe not) suggested he might like to perhaps scrape it all off his plot and return it to its rightful owner (or words to that effect). Before anyone says it, it's NOT the same as the time when I took 11 barrows of my neighbours manure because *that* was a genuine error, which (from an embarrassment point of view) I am still paying for 2 years later. I thought it was mine. So after shamefully moving it to the rightful owners plot, that was 22 barrows of manure I had shifted before mine had even arrived. My mistake and I paid my dues so quite frankly I think it's time to let the matter drop guys. Concerning this recent manure heist, our cheeky thief claimed he'd been told the manure was up for grabs, and as he is a new allotmentee I have a feeling there may have been some *hazing* going on. I say this as I was also the victim of ~~a couple~~ a few an endless stream of practical jokes when I first allotmenteed – which may explain why people thought I was homeless and living in someone's polytunnel (thanks for all the food parcels); why I dug up someone's rhubarb and replanted it on my own plot; and why I dug up all of someone's potatoes one year in the searing heat – because they had a really, really bad back. I sense we will NEVER know the instigators of this most recent *misunderstanding* and I can only advise you all to be as vigilant as you can.

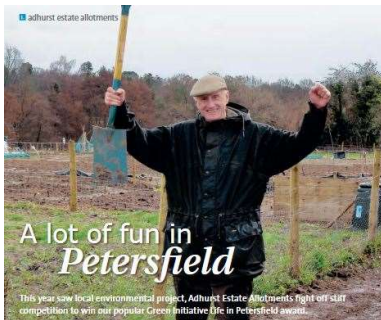
I know, I know – I'm sorry to bring it up yet again but I am totally obsessed with weeds. It's probably the one thing that gives me the most grief. I am so enjoying the last 2 months with slow, almost non-existent weed growth. I am chanting the weed mantra ...

- It's only another type of green manure
- A weed is just something growing in the wrong place
- Shows my soil is good (tricky as we all know a determined weed will grow on a plastic bag)
- Plant as much as you can and crowd the weeds out
- Cover dug soil with black plastic or cardboard – slows weeds, warms soil and makes me look like I have a plan

Personally I don't much like hoeing, not because it isn't a good idea but because I go into a hoe-trance and then its 'ooops, there go all my parsnips'. (Yes, the mystery of why I can never grow parsnips is finally solved).

The number changes on the gates have challenged us all at Tilmore. Problems ranged from the really annoying inconvenience of forgotten reading glasses at dusk to utter locked-in panic leading to a frenzied bid for freedom involving wrenching up the fence and rolling out under it into the muddy lane below. Security.... Don't you just love it!

Adhurst Estate allotments have an orchard area, where anyone can rent a top fruit tree "space" of 4m by 4m for £ 5/pa and plant their own tree there. currently 150 trees have been planted, (must be something to do with the price of fruit!) including apples, pears, quince, cherries, plums, apricots, peaches... so pollination is not a problem, and we have 3-4 bee hives next door! For more information please contact David Petche dpetche@btinternet.com



ADHURST YURTS JOB OPPORTUNITY

Adhurst Yurts are looking for someone who prefers working outdoors for manual cleaning of yurt site. We don't have electricity so the job entails shaking out small rugs, sweeping yurts, stripping beds, clearing wood burners and sometimes doing some journeys back and forth with a wheel barrow. Does this sound like you? It's all done to birdsong and lovely mossy soil underfoot. Mondays and Fridays mainly from 11am to 3pm from now to mid-September. Please phone or email on the details below for more information.

Alison Lubbock 07789954476
alubbock@adhurst.co.uk
www.adhurst.co.uk
[Sign up to our newsletter](#)

Keri, Sheet plot 23. keri.Cairns@goape.co.uk
 I have 4 sheets of corrugated Iron if anyone can use them.

PETERSFIELD PLANTS need our support.

Produce in season, and unusual perennial plants, have been sold in St Peter's Hall alleyway from Spring until Autumn for many years by a group of producers under the title of PETERSFIELD PLANTS on Friday mornings between 07.30 and about 11.00. Since 1999 a percentage of the profits has been shared between various (mostly local) charities. Over the years, £9,600 has been distributed.

The council will now longer allow us to use The Square, neither will Lloyds Bank allow the use of their forecourt, and as St Peter's Hall is not a main shopping road, we see few customers. However, we will be selling perennials and bedding plants in the **Physic Garden** on two Saturday mornings - 13th and 20th May.

This year may well see the closure of PETERSFIELD PLANTS so, before we retire, come and see us on Friday mornings in St Peter's Road, and stock up your gardens with some beautiful perennials.

ADHURST

Also, 13th May is our **Deer to Venison in a Day**. This is open to all and is from 10am with a hands-on chance to learn all about deer butchery, what to do with skins, fat, sinews and antlers - and then all the best outdoor cooking techniques. Led by two instructors the second half of the day is a bit of bushcraft skills followed by fire pit feast of venison and other yummy eats. All food and drink included. If interested please have a look at <http://www.adhurst.co.uk> or if you'd like to book online: https://app.thebookingbutton.com/properties/adhurstyurst?check_in_date=13-05-2017&check_out_date=14-05-2017&number_adults=2

The day is £120 and if you book a yurt for that weekend there is 20% off the price of both yurt and workshop.





Wasps: natural pest controllers

Editors' Note: This is for Isabella – Have we finally found out a use for wasps!! Hurrah!

Apparently, the reason we had so few cabbage white caterpillars last year was because of a friendly little wasp which was gorging itself on the larvae.



MARTIN MALCHINOCK

What good are wasps? You may be surprised. They are pollinators, and efficient pest controllers, feeding innumerable insects such as caterpillars and aphids to their young.

As the weather warms in spring, mated queen social wasps (most wasp species are solitary, see box below) emerge from winter torpor. An early mild spell then a cold snap can be fatal – only perhaps two or three queens from each of the previous year's nests survive. Wasps do not reuse old nests, but establish a new one every year.

Spring is a tough few weeks for queen wasps. They must find a nest site, but also need nectar from early spring blooms. They must also forage for wood fibre to begin their paper-like nest, which can be sited in loft spaces, wall cavities, under or in garden sheds and wood stores, in trees, hedges or holes in the ground.

Each nest, I believe, is a piece of sculpture. Made of masticated timber, it is a thin, papier-mâché globe of hexagonal chambers where the queen lays her first eggs. In spring you may see large queen wasps frantically foraging, rushing prey back to the nest for their larvae.



Wasp facts

- Taxonomy:** worldwide, there are more than 100,000 wasp species.
- Social:** the relatively few social wasp species, including common wasps and hornets, are in the *Vespidae* family.
- Solitary wasps:** non-social wasps are often parasitoids, laying eggs on – or actually inside – other insect species.

Social wasps' life cycle

We all know that wasps can sting – several times each – so it is safest to keep well away from them. But understanding their life cycle can help put things into perspective.

The first worker generation takes on the queen's chores. For the rest of the season, the queen lays eggs; most become infertile females (workers) but, eventually, she lays eggs that develop into males and fertile females (queens).

By late summer, the queen stops laying and wasps are at their most numerous. They then seek sugary foods to feed the new queens, males and remaining larvae. Our food and drinks can be attractive to foraging wasps, hence their pestering of alfresco diners. Wasps occasionally feed on honeybees and can raid colonies, but this is rarely a cause of colony failure.

Virgin queens mate, then seek out safe places to overwinter, and emerge in spring to start the cycle again. Before calling a pest controller to

apply pesticides to a wasp nest, think about the results. If the nest is high and rarely approached, it may not be a hazard: knowing its location and avoiding confrontation is often enough to avoid stings. Live and let live, and you will benefit from the pest control a wasp colony brings. ●

Sheet and Tilmore Allotment Association Shed (Situated in Mill Lane, Sheet)

Allotment supplies at wholesale prices all on your doorstep.
Available to all association members.

Composts, fertilisers, pesticides, soil conditioners, large selection of seed potatoes, bamboo canes.

SUNDAYS from 10.00am to 11.00am



**March 5th, 19th
April 9th, 23rd
May 7th, 21st
June 4th**



Not an Allotment Association Member?
Come to the Shed and join whilst you visit.
Not able to visit in opening hours? Contact abigrute@hotmail.com



Shed Retail Prices

Fertilizers

| | | |
|---------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Magnesium Limestone | £4.65 | Per 7lb |
| Gromore | £2.75 | Per 7lb 22.00 Per bag |
| Blood, Fish & Bone | £2.35 | Per 7lb 18.50 Per bag |
| Sulphate of Potash | £5.90 | Per 7lb |
| Sulphate of Ammonia | £2.60 | Per 7lb |
| Sulphate of Iron | £3.20 | Per 7lb |
| Phostrogen | £1.95 | Per 7lb |
| Tomorite | £2.65 | |

Stock Seed Potatoes

| | | |
|------------------|-------|--------------|
| Lady Christl | £1.80 | All Per 2 Kg |
| Pentland Javelin | £1.80 | All Per 2 Kg |
| Wilja | £1.80 | All Per 2 Kg |
| Charlotte | £1.80 | All Per 2 Kg |
| Vales Sovereign | £1.80 | All Per 2 Kg |

Compost

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| Grobags | £2.80 |
| Compost - Potting | £7.80 |
| Compost - All Purpose | £9.75 |
| Manure | £5.50 |

Miscellaneous

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| Bamboo Canes - 8 foot | £0.65 |
| Bamboo Canes - 5 foot | £0.35 |
| Seed Trays - full size | £0.20 |
| Seed Trays - 1/2 size | £0.15 |

Killers

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Slug Pellets | £2.10 |
| Slug Pellets - Organic | £4.00 |

Editors' Note: Coming soon – 5' chestnut posts from £1.80