### STAA Newsletter July 2017

Hello all Sheet and Tilmore Allotmenteers,

The weather has been, and continues to be a challenge. Not long ago it was too hot to be at the allotments, now its too wet and windy. It's just a race against the weeds and to get everything picked. There were some good comments about the list of jobs to do each month from the RHS, so that has been included again, A fascinating article about efficient & effective watering, storing garlic, quite a few courgette recipes, and the best ever table for companion planting. A big thanks to everyone who made contributions.

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, 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://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/

The Allotment Competition had quite a few entrants this year and the standard was extremely high – thanks to everyone who was brave enough to enter and big congratulations to the winners – and to all who entered. It was a close run thing.

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# RHS Sowing and planting advice Aug/Sept/Oct

Aug	Sept	Oct
<ul> <li>Water well during dry spells. Irregular watering can lead to problems with blossom end rot in tomatoes, splitting of root vegetables</li> <li>Plant out rooted strawberry runners.</li> <li>In the south of England you can still sow quick maturing salad crops such as summer lettuce, radish, rocket, sorrel, chicory and fennel.</li> <li>Continue to sow spring cabbage, turnips, Oriental vegetables and overwintering onions, in the south of England.</li> <li>Sow green manures such as crimson clover and Italian ryegrass to act as a soil improver and to cover bare areas. When dug in, they conserve nutrients and improve soil texture.</li> <li>Check plants regularly for aphids and deal with them as soon as you see them.</li> <li>Look out for tomato and potato blight and deal with it as soon as you spot it.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Continue planting new strawberry beds.</li> <li>Continue to sow vegetables for overwintering, to mature next spring, including: turnip, spinach, winter lettuce, Oriental vegetables.</li> <li>Plant overwintering onion sets.</li> <li>Spring cabbages sown last month are probably ready for planting out. Cover with fleece or netting to stop the pigeons</li> <li>Sow green manures such as crimson clover and Italian ryegrass to act as a soil improver and to cover bare areas.</li> <li>Cut back old canes of blackberries and hybrid berries after fruiting and tie in the new canes.</li> <li>Prune blackcurrants.</li> <li>Watch tomatoes for blossom</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>October is a good time for digging over vacant areas of the vegetable plot, as the approaching cold weather may help to improve the soil structure by breaking down large clumps into crumbly particles.</li> <li>Plant cranberries and lingonberries.</li> <li>Take cuttings of blueberries, currants and gooseberries and dig up rooted layers of black- and hybrid berries.</li> <li>In mild areas you can sow overwintering broad beans in situ. Cover broad beans with fleece or cloches to provide insulation in colder areas, and pigeon protection.</li> <li>Carrots and peas can still be sown in cold frames, but only in mild areas.</li> <li>Plant out spring cabbages if not already done. Remember to net them for protection from pigeons.</li> <li>Finish planting autumn onion sets for a crop in early to mid-summer next year.</li> <li>Plant garlic cloves.</li> <li>green manures can still be sown until the middle of the month.</li> <li>Cut back the dying tops of Jerusalem artichokes to ground</li> </ul>
• Watch tomatoes for blossom end rot, and other ripening problems.	end rot, and other ripening problems.	level.
<ul> <li>Look out for fungal spots on bean and</li> </ul>	clear debris when lifting	Cut back asparagus foliage if not already done last month.
<ul><li>pea pods and leaves.</li><li>Remove any sweetcorn cobs affected</li></ul>	potatoes, and take care not to damage the tubers.	<ul> <li>Check stored apples regularly for rotting fruit and remove.</li> <li>Brussels sprouts - remove yellowing leaves to prevent</li> </ul>

by smut.

- Carrot fly is still about.
- Check stored onions for softness and the grey or black mould of neck rot.
- Deal with brown rot on tree fruit.
- Protect grapes from wasps.
- Deal with powdery mildew on grapes and melons.
- Weeds can also compete with vegetables for water, and act as hosts for pests and diseases, so remove regularly by hoeing.
- Marrows should be raised off the ground slightly, to prevent them discolouring from contact with the soil.
- Continue earthing up celery, putting a layer of paper between the stems and the soil.
- Take care when thinning out any latesown carrot seedlings to prevent the scent released attracting carrot fly females.

- Protect grapes from wasps.
- When asparagus foliage turns brown, it is time to cut it down. Take care of the spines, and give the plants a good mulch afterwards.
- Irregular watering can lead to blossom end rot in tomatoes, splitting of root vegetables and flower drop in runner beans.
   Water well during dry spells.
- Keep up with watering winter squash and pumpkins to prevent their growth from being checked. Use stored rainwater wherever possible.
- Celery can be earthed-up for the final time this month, leaving just a tuft of foliage sticking out of the trench or collar in order to blanch the stems.

grey mould

- Remove all plant debris from the vegetable patch or allotment, to reduce the spread and the overwintering of disease and pests.
- Place mouse controls near your stored vegetables.
- Flea beetle can still be a problem until the end of October.
- Control winter moth with grease bands.
- Remove damaged stems from stone fruits and paint the wounds.
- Take cuttings of blueberries, currants and gooseberries and dig up rooted layers of black- and hybrid berries.
- Dig up outdoor tomato plants and hang them upside-down in the greenhouse to allow the fruits to ripen. Any that don't ripen can be used green in chutneys.
- Now is a good time to get ahead and prepare new asparagus beds for planting up in the spring.
- When clearing old pea and bean plants, simply cut off the tops for the compost heap, and dig the roots into the soil.
   They return valuable nitrogen to the earth, acting as a natural fertiliser.

Editors' Note: October is looking busy. . . Lifted from https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/inmonth/july etc.

### Deer, deer, deer Part II

### Disclaimer – no deer were harmed prior to the writing of this newsletter

Well I've been expecting a bang on the door in the small hours and an armed raid on my freezer since the saga of the deer at Tilmore reached even the ears of the authorities, who seemed to be under the impression Elva and I had dispatched the unfortunate beast in some sort of frenzied ralgex fuelled ritualistic sacrifice. Presumably using her hoe, my dibber (the big one . . . obviously) and a length of hose. Yes, there was much banter concerning venison burgers, shotgun licences and friendly butchers – but there was also a 5am posse of concerned volunteers, patiently meeting day after day until eventually managing to gently herd poor Bambi out through a gate.

Incredulous as it may seem, the gate is still being left open. There have been suggestions we should strap a deer's head to it to serve as a reminder. The one I had in my freezer I had to get rid of and in rather a hurry one night (see above and thanks for the tip-off) but if anyone else has one then please contact me on just kidding@seriously?.com.

Once again we have been completely out manoeuvred by the weather. Yet another massive reminder we may think we can tame nature but she always has the last laugh. This year's chuckle was the April drought, the late frost in May followed by high winds. At least this time my netted brassica frame wasn't rolled onto my neighbours plot but all my stuff is well behind, all my gooseberries dropped after the frost and broad beans flattened (though not actually broken). I did manage to tie my sweet peas and poppies up safely – yes! Got my priorities right. And damn those pigeons! At one point I thought the only way I was ever going to get any of my brassicas was to have a pigeon pie. (Don't call the RSPB - it was them who sent me the recipe.)

I purchased all my cucurbits (ooooh get me!) this year, or obtained the plants from reliable sources as every seed I planted last year – courgette, squash, whatever – ended up as a striped marrow. I still marvel at how a 2 foot marrow can just appear overnight – people run when you approach them with a marrow like that. In fact, we are already seeing people scatter as we approach with a plastic bag in fear of yet another courgette being pressed onto them. Don't forget you can drop your excess into Winton House for distribution out to people who actually do choose to have them. For those who have a glut and are determined to use them, I put the ask out and some lovely people have given you their favourite courgette recipes - see later in the newsletter.

The BBQ was well supported – best turn out ever we think and we were very lucky with the weather though the venison burgers were an unfortunate coincidence. I feel there is something I need to bring up and I am really sorry but I just thought the dancing round the fire and the chanting of "kill the beast" not only went on far too long but was in extremely bad taste - though I couldn't fault the choreography – top marks guys. "Maybe there is a beast… maybe it's only us." ref 1

Of late, it has become apparent that when it comes to growing stuff, some people seem to think I know what I am doing. I need to stress, I have only been doing this allotment stuff for 4 years and I seriously do not have a clue. I just watch what the wise-ones do, ask lots of questions, pester people and if they put their autumn onions in then so do I . . . if someone gives me a good tip then I will happily pass it on, but please don't ever think it was my idea!

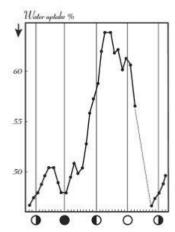
In previous years I have made much of most of my chard shrieking and going to seed at the slightest whiff of a coolish breeze. This year I thought I'd get round it by putting in about twice, if not three times as many

plants. Yes! You guessed it, only one went to seed and now its chard-a-go-go on my plots - chard and spinach everywhere. Mind you, you can't beat the sight of the evening autumn light filtering through the chard leaves so I'm not complaining from an aesthetic point of view; it's just that in a culinary sense I have discovered you can go right off chard. Now given this year's weather the whole scenario defies logic – there seems to me to be only one explanation that makes sense. For about two weeks (because I truly am that disorganised and very easily diverted), I seem to recall putting my weeny chard plants out with the intention of planting them that day – failing miserably and putting them back into the greenhouse in the evening (or not – quite often just leaving them out overnight). I suspect I may have inadvertently hardened them off – ok, so there is a good reason for doing that! Although by next year I will have probably forgotten.

I don't even want to think about the French and runner beans this year - they've swapped roles and I can hear them sniggering at us all. When have runners ever been harder to grow than French beans - though the frenchies did eventually get eaten by slugs - reassuringly *situation normal*. And the onions . . . I am going to have an awful lot of jars of pickled onions — enough said — shameful. I have absolutely no idea why that is because people flaunting large proud onions claim they didn't water them at all during the April drought. All else being equal — we are back to the fundamentals of the quality of the soil I guess. Though I did manage to force a clue from one person — apparently they had used unicorn dung and the tears from a winged pig. Must Google that.

I must mention something I noticed – I have no idea if this has any basis in reality at all – but I may do more tests soon. I decided to soak some of my French beans, get them to germinate quicker – and of course ended up leaving them in the water until they were well swollen, sprouting and quite frankly, starting to smell a bit (a lot). I threw them into a seed tray with some soil, alongside some I hadn't soaked, forgot about them, and left the whole lot on the ground. The non-soaked ones were all instantly taken by mice, my smelly (rotting) soaked ones were left alone and all germinated. Mmmmm, perhaps mice don't take them as they can't store them. Just a thought.

I would like to draw your attention to this graph, dated 1973 (many years of research – lab. conditions



Water uptake by bean seeds (after Brown and Chow, 1973)

stuff), concerning water uptake by beans relating to lunar cycles – moon phases. There's a similar one to do with yields. Its nice to know that those crazy/traditional methods have been shown to have a basis in proper, real science and I reckon those of you who have developed a planting spider-sense will be doing this without realising. NB: This lunar stuff only works if you are organic.

Not sure quite what happened with my onions though. I suspect the lunar advantage was cancelled out when I got muddled and danced clockwise round my plot on solstice rather than anticlockwise — duh! Obvious I know - although I had hoped to counteract the schoolboy error with the Tibetan singing bowl — but

it was too little too late. The rumour that I dance naked is utterly ridiculous and needs to be stopped right now – of course I don't, how daft would that be – everyone knows that in December I was wearing a

woolly hat. Happy Allotmenting!

Ref.1 "Lord of the Rings" – though I could be wrong (one for you literary geeks!)

### **Adhurst Estate allotments**

Adhurst Estate Allotments still have a few spaces for fruit trees in their orchard, for planting this Autumn. Contact David Petche on 01730 269905 or email <a href="mailto:dpetche@btinternet.com">dpetche@btinternet.com</a>

### Winning Caption!



The spa needed some minor adjustments.

# Transition Network.org

### **Transition Petersfield**

Petersfield is now, officially a Transition Town, joining a growing UK group of nearly 2000. With the onset of global warming, resources running out, including water and food, and

there being far too many people sharing the earth, the world is changing. We all have to start thinking about the future — hopefully Transition Towns are the way forward. Its about community projects; recycling; using local produce; support within each community. Being sustainable. The Transition Petersfield website is in the process of being built and will give details of what is going on around us and links to local groups.

There are many good articles online about all of this.

A movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world

https://transitionnetwork.org/

## Waxy breakdown of stored garlic

http://www.science.oregonstate.edu/bpp/Plant\_Clinic/Garlic/waxy\_breakdown.htm

#### Cause

Waxy breakdown is a physiological condition, not one due to infection by micro-organisms.

#### **Occurrence**

No one knows what causes this. The appearance of garlic cloves with this problem was thought to be similar to translucent scale of onions, which prompted some to suggest the same high temperatures during growth and/or after harvest. However, this has not been confirmed. Some researchers have said waxv breakdown may be associated with poor ventilation and low oxygen levels during storage.

### **Symptoms**

The symptoms are not apparent until the skin surrounding the cloves are removed.

Affected cloves are often on the outside of the head, and initially show slightly sunken yellow areas.

The entire clove eventually turns

amber coloured, but remains firm, if

## Management

slightly shrunken.

Good ventilation during storage may help prevent this problem, but that isn't certain.

Thanks to David Mogg for this

### A Final Word of Advice from our Chairman - PERENNIAL RUNNER BEANS

Instead of sowing runner beans each year, why not cut them down at soil level when they have finished cropping? Then the following year the roots will sprout again when the weather warms up. I have found that this happened this year, when I accidentally left some roots in the ground.

### **Better Watering**

Well, with the rain pouring down outside and hoping for another warm if not hot summer next year, here are some tips to make better use of both water and your time.

#### Firstly: Don't water the leaves

X fungal infections are more likelyX evaporation means a lot of the water is lost



X much of the water never gets to the roots

X it is a waste of your time!

# For squashes, courgettes, brassicas, sweet corn and any other 'single' vegetables

Dig out a shallow depression at least 8" (20cms) deep by about 12" (30cms) across and fork in well-rotted compost or manure with a small handful of your favourite fertiliser. The top should be about 2" (5cms) under the normal soil level; the dug-out earth can go round the depression to form a dam. Put a large, up-turned plastic bottle with its base cut off next to where the plant is and water into the bottle so the water goes straight to the roots. Any excess water stays in the depression and doesn't run off.

For squashes, put a stick in to show where the plant is, because once the leaves all grow, you will have trouble finding where to water.

Sweet corn can also be grown in bottomless plastic pots, about 12" (30cms) deep, with most of the pot above the soil level and filled with well-rotted compost or manure with a small handful of your favourite fertiliser. This not only makes watering easier but also fools the mice because they can't get at your cobs! You may be able to get large plastic pots for free from florists.

# The maths of watering for the techie people out there (I think the calculations are correct)

- 1 gallon (5 litres) in a 12" (30cm) diameter depression is the same as 2½" (7cms) of rain and of course it is concentrated where the roots are.
- 8 gallons (40 litres) along a 30' (10 metre) trench, 4" (10cms) wide is the same as 1½" (4cms) of rain and again it is concentrated where the roots are.



Also don't water a little at a time but remember that in hot weather, seedlings will need almost a daily water. Using the tips below you only need, at most, a couple of

really good soakings each week. Then, once established, plant roots go down and don't stay at the surface where they are more prone to drought. If in doubt, dig a hole a few inches deep and if it is moist, don't water.

# So ... Put the water where it is needed. For potatoes



Earth—up as normal but end up with a 'shallow M' shaped row. You can then direct water into the trough exactly where the tubers are growing

# For plants grown in rows such as onions, garlic, leeks, peas, beans, beetroot etc ...

Prepare a trench up to say 4" (10cms) wide by at least 8" (20cms) deep and (NOT for carrots), fork in well-rotted compost or manure with a small handful of your favourite fertiliser. The top should be about 2" (5cms) under the normal soil level; the dug-out earth can go along the sides of the trench to form a dam. Seeds need low nutrient soil to germinate well, so top up the trench to about 1" under normal soil level with old potting or hanging basket compost (as long as it doesn't have any pests in it). Water well and sow your seeds and covering with a little of the compost. When they grow, watering along the trench concentrates the water to where the plants are.

#### Some final thoughts

- A hose may deliver anything between 1 and 5 litres a minute, depends on how many other hoses are being used, so a watering can is a better option to keep track of how much water you are putting on your plants.
- Also you can add feed more easily to a watering can and know that you are not wasting it.
- Remember never leave a hose running unattended on the soil; it will always move and start watering the weeds!
- And, of course, sprinklers are not allowed.

# Thanks again to David Mogg for this detailed account

### DELIAHS' MARINATED COURGETTES WITH A HERB VINAIGRETTE (ROBIN

**WARMAN)** - a superb way to serve courgettes as a salad with cold cuts.

1 lb (450 g) courgettes

### For the herb vinaigrette:

1 teaspoon snipped fresh chives freshly milled black pepper

- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh tarragon
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves, bruised and finely chopped

Maldon sea salt

1 level teaspoon Maldon sea salt

- 1 rounded teaspoon wholegrain mustard
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, peeled

To prepare the courgettes, trim off the stalky ends and, if they are small, simply slice them in half lengthways; if they are larger, cut them in 4 lengthways.

Then place them in the steamer, pour in some boiling water, sprinkle the courgettes with a little salt and let them cook, covered, for 10-14 minutes, depending on their size – they need to be firm but tender. Meanwhile, prepare the dressing by pounding the garlic with the salt in a pestle and mortar until it becomes a creamy paste. Now work in the mustard, then the vinegar and a generous amount of black pepper.

Next add the oil and give everything a good whisk, then add the herbs. When the courgettes are ready, remove them to a shallow serving dish, then pour the dressing over them. Allow them to get cold, then cover with clingfilm and leave in a cool place or the fridge for several hours, turning them over in the marinade once or twice. These still taste good after 3 days, so you can make them in advance if you prefer.

### Some favourites from Ros Smith

**Courgette fritters** Chop some courgettes into small pieces & soften slightly in oil or butter in a frying pan over a medium heat.

Transfer the courgette pieces to a plate or dish & allow to cool.

Make a batter using 1 egg + 1 tablespoon of plain flour for each person.

Mix together until free of lumps, then add the cooked courgettes & season with salt & pepper.

Grate the courgettes then soften slowly in a frying pan over a medium heat in some melted butter. (This allows a lot of the water to evaporate.) Season with salt & pepper to taste – then just eat!

You could vary the batter by adding chilli flakes or soy sauce or finely chopped herbs or onion.

Heat a frying pan, add some oil or butter, then fry approximately one tablespoon of the mix to make one fritter. Fry for 2 to 3 minutes each side until cooked.

You can probably cook 3 or 4 at a time. Nice with ketchup or sweet chilli sauce & salad.

## Vanessa Harvey Courgette Summer Stew

A tasty, quick and easy way to use up the never ending summer harvest of courgettes.

8oz courgettes cut in half lengthways and chopped Large onion chopped

- 1lb of tomatoes chopped or a can
- 2 red peppers deseeded and chopped
- 1 can of chickpeas drained and rinsed
- 6 tablespoons of oil, I prefer olive oil but any will do

Prepare in advance and have to hand all ingredients.

Best to use a large casserole pan.

- Heat the oil.
- Add the onions and cook gently for a couple of minutes then add the dried herbs and stir around. Cook for about another 5 minutes until onions are soft then add the courgettes and cook for another 10 minutes.
- Add the tomatoes and bring to a simmer then stir

Generous handful of mixed dried herbs Tablespoon of mixed grain mustard Salt and pepper to taste in the mustard and then add the chickpeas. Again bring to a simmer.

Taste and season

Either eat warm or cold. Whichever way add red peppers at the end to give an extra crunch to the mixture.

### **Courgette Tortilla**

About 8oz courgettes
8oz cooked potatoes, cooled and sliced then dried
on kitchen paper. (Instead you can use ready
cooked tinned potatoes - I know - which are good
because they do not leach liquid into the recipe.)
Five large eggs
200g grated parmesan
Seasoning to taste
Sliced tomatoes and extra parmesan to top

Using the cucumber slicer on a grater, cut the courgettes into rounds.

Layer the courgettes and potatoes in an oven-proof dish.

Beat the eggs, parmesan and seasoning then pour over the courgettes and potatoes, shaking the dish a little to encourage the egg to filter down.

Cover with sliced tomatoes and extra parmesan.

Bake for about 40 minutes at gas 5, check after 30 minutes and reduce to gas 4 if over-browning.

### **Courgette and Prawns on toast**

### **David Mogg**

### Ingredients

As much or as little of each depending on your tastes and how hungry you are!

### Method

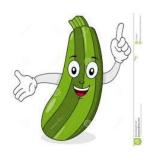
- 1. In olive oil or butter, fry chopped onions or shallots and when starting to soften, add sliced courgette.
- 2. Fry till courgette is to your liking, adding, if you like, garlic towards the end taking care that it does not char.

- 3. Add loads of lemon juice and prawns, seasoning to taste.
- 4.  $\tau_{ry}$  adding herbs or cayenne or garam masala, all go well.
- 5. Continue to cook until prawns are hot and cooked; avoid over cooking the prawns as they go rubbery!
- 6. Pour onto toast and enjoy!

### Julie Yardley's Courgetti

Use a spiralizer to turn your courgettes into lots and lots of long spaghetti like strands

Steam and cover with your favourite pasta sauce and your family will never realise they are eating vegetables!



Thanks to everyone involved for letting us share their favourite courgette recipes.

# COMPANION PLANTING

IN NATURAL EGOSYSTEMS, PLANTS PERFORM FUNCTIONS THAT CAN EITHER HELP OR PREVENT OTHER PLANTS TO GROW. THE SAME IS TRUE IN OUR GARDENS. THIS CHART WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND WHICH PLANTS GROW WELL TOGETHER AND WHICH TO PLANT FAR APART!

