



STAA Newsletter Dec 2017 – Noel! Noel!

Winter is upon us. Time to trawl through the Kings Seed catalogue and get our amazing bargains for next year – don't forget to get your order to Ros Smith in time - the **closing date is Jan 6th 2018**.

The First Ever potato tuber sale in Steep Village Hall on **Wednesday, 17th January** 4.30pm - 7.30pm. There will be 100 varieties on sale, plus heritage plants, seeds and more. Full details page 3.

Many thanks to Councillor Lesley Farrow for making the AGM a really special and memorable event. Not only presenting all the trophies but staying until the end and giving really good advice. Thank You!

Please do check out the website – it has snow on it! Thanks David Mogg for taking over that task. Also many thanks to Graham for getting it all set up in the first place. The terms of Reference and Roles & Responsibilities are all on the website now – follow this link: <https://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/the-committee.html>

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Lynne Burge - Sheet Allotments.

(Editors note: apologies to Lynne for getting this out 6 weeks later than intended!)

The clocks have changed, the light has altered and now is the time to begin the annual clear up of your allotment. Time to dig over unused patches, reorganise the compost heap(s), sort out the shed and maybe plant some seeds before the winter.

Onions, broad beans, peas (so long as you protect them from the pesky pigeons) can all be planted now before the weather turns too cold. Water them well, there seems to be no rain forecast in the near future.

Still stuck with piles of courgettes and squashes? Here are a couple of recipes.

Courgette soup

1lb courgettes

1 onion

$\frac{3}{4}$ pint stock

1 teaspoon of curry powder

Sweat the onion in the saucepan first until soft, add the cut up courgettes (I recommend removing the green skin as it is tough at this time of the year), pour over the stock and use the curry powder with discretion - it depends how spicy you like your soup.

Bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Liquidize and enjoy!

Butternut squash with butter beans and spinach

1 tbsp oil

1 small onion

1-2 crushed garlic cloves

$\frac{1}{2}$ medium squash, peeled and cut up

14oz tin butter beans washed and rinsed

14oz tin chopped tomatoes

4fl oz vegetable stock

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried thyme

4oz spinach

Heat the oil and cook the onion until soft. Add the garlic, squash, chopped tomatoes, stock, thyme and butter beans. Bring to the boil and then simmer for 20 minutes. Stir in the spinach, cover and leave for 2 minutes.

Serve with jacket potatoes and a green vegetable.

Serves 3/4 people

Have you thought about the local tip as being a good resource? It is worth a trip to the tip to pick up a second hand compost bin or water butt. A cheap way of re-stocking your allotment.

Happy gardening!





The Return of Ratty



Water voles, which were once extinct in the Meon Valley in Hampshire, are now thriving again on the river and its tributaries following a five-year project to reintroduce 2,548 water voles, the animal which inspired the character Ratty in *Wind in the Willows*.

There are clear signs the animals are thriving on early release sites and breeding on all eleven release sites as well as five additional self-colonised sites.

The Meon Valley water vole project is a partnership between the South Downs National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, Natural England, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Hampshire County Council who are all part of the Meon Valley Partnership.
August 11, 2017

Our very own Andy (Plot 4) Smith has been heavily involved with this wonderful project and we wait with baited breath for his personal account of the adventure.

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/ratty-has-returned-to-meon-valley/>



NEW EVENT

Wednesday 17th January 2018
4.30pm - 7.00pm

Petersfield Potato Evening

Steep Village Hall, Church Road, Steep, Petersfield, GU32 2DN

Adhurst Estate Allotment Association

There will be 100 varieties on sale, plus heritage plants, seeds and more.

<https://www.pennardplants.com/index.php>



Caption competition.

Enter and you could win an awful lot of grass clippings.





One Man Went to Mow (Memoirs from a Novice)

This year produced committee shake-ups so harrowing the Chairman actually spoke – leaping into action so effectively we all checked to see if his underpants were over his trousers. It was awesome. While we were all still thinking “what just happened here?”, SuperChairman had organised a frenzy of council meets and sub-committees to pen ‘terms of ref.’ & job descriptions. OK, all this will probably ensure no-one will ever voluntarily join the committee again – who knew we all did such a lot – but everything is now much, much more than even *situation normal* used to be. When asked why he had never spoken at a meeting before, our Chairman (now sitting in the lotus position in a state of silent serenity) indicated telepathically that the committee had not needed him to before.

We all know at Tilmore the council keep the main paths cut and an amazing job they do (smiley face)(thumbs up) but it would appear we also have an allotment path-mowing fairy. When he does it is a mystery, why he does it is a mystery. It has been whispered the Phantom Mower is doomed for all eternity to wander with his mower, cursed by an evil suburban witch for keeping an unkempt front lawn, thus reducing the value of her property. Others say he is stealing their grass for his (presumably absolutely humongous) compost heap. Please feel free to mow round 15A and 2 anytime Phantom Mower, and an edge clip wouldn’t go amiss. Though please, please don’t become a Phantom Strimmer as that’s a really annoyingly discordant sound that needs to be kept to an absolute minimum – rather like Abba songs.

Strange as it may seem, people have been parking their cars in a way that obstructs other vehicles. I’ve done it myself, but only had to be told (shouted at) once. Now I’m not saying perpetrators *will* find a potato wedged up their exhausts and I’m certainly not condoning such vindictiveness but who’s to judge the tortured mindset of someone who can’t go home after a hard days digging. I have to mention a current significant path obstruction – a manure delivery which could not be maneuvered onto the newbie allotmenters plot and ended up completely blocking the path. It’s right down the bottom so anyone taking a car down there this time of year has only themselves to blame if they get wedged in it. They are moving it as fast as they can so be kind and avoid the temptation to stand and point and laugh!

It’s always a shame when a long-termer gives up their allotment, but great if they have a really loud and annoying wind driven hammer-thingy which they take with them – thus saving me the bother of chopping it down and burning it. It’s particularly great if they exit with one last blaze of glory in the form of a final massive stitch-up. Yes! They who convinced me it was ok to dig up someone’s rhubarb and replant it on my plot; who told me ‘if you don’t know what it is then spray it’ (and then accidentally sprayed all their runner beans – you know its true); who said (rather threateningly I thought) their 2 massive plastic containers were full of highly toxic haz.mats. which may leak across my plot etc. etc. These unsung heroes, affectionately known as the Chemical Brothers, have played an absolute blinder of a last parting shot. I realized something was amiss when I found their plot covered in *Do Not Rob Anything From this Plot* notices. Apparently, the new tenants screeched into the car park, abandoning their car with engine running, doors wide open, and sprinted down the path scattering notices as they went (I may be exaggerating a little but you get the idea) – completely oblivious to the bemused person watching with great interest from his now blocked-in vehicle. A tad excessive you may think but it would appear their fears were totally justified as someone had already got wind of the plot vacation and was busily compiling a (very long) list of what they were having off it. So fair play to them.





There's no denying the recent habit of plundering vacated plots. One would like to think it would *never* include essentials such as sheds, water butts, compost bins, paths, established fruit bushes, trees, soil etc. and that it would only ever be initiated by the plot giver-upper. I know there was a rumour put about by person or persons unknown (see above for a clue as to who it was) that I was the worst of the plot-strippers but all I ever did was scavenge for useful bits of wood. Plus, I didn't just sneak over and take that wheelbarrow – I was told by the plotholder to have it for looking after her plot when she wasn't well. So just let that one drop please!

Talking about wheelbarrows, I learnt recently mine is borrowed by someone on a very regular basis – they told me and thanked me. It made me laugh because I had no inkling it had even been moved - and that's what its all about. Sure, borrow someone's barrow but put it back exactly where you found it, cause no damage to anyone's plot and wipe the manure off it. Especially if you've used it to inadvertently rob from someone's golden pile and don't want to be found out – or worse, have someone else fall under suspicion for your heinous crime. It is that time of year again when piles of lush manure start appearing in the car park – they ALWAYS belong to someone, they are NEVER up for grabs. I will be surrounding mine with a pit of venomous snakes or, worse still, a posse of caffeine fueled chuggers from Rams Walk.

David Mogg's amusing banter last newsletter stating sprinklers were obviously not allowed sparked a frenzy of what I can only describe as rather abusive emails. Really no need for that sort of language and I can say on behalf of the entire committee (probably . . . well, possibly) that no, we cannot condone pelting anyone with blighted tomatoes just because their sprinkler was watering the path. ~~Although if there were some footage~~ Council policy is that unless there is a water ban, sprinklers are allowed but only if attended.



Potatoes seem to have done wonderfully this year. The most impressive I saw (grown by one of the wise ones) were blight resistant Sarpo Mira (see pic – with my foot to show their hugeness, and that's the crop from just one plant) which would have benefited from an extended growing season as they still had their unblighted green bit/leaves. I shall certainly be trying them. The early Jazz & main crop Isle of Jura from the Shed both did really well but my King Edwards were disappointing and have gone disgustingly squidgy while stored – I assume that's the blight.

I googled 'bad potato' and am now terrified of accidentally eating or serving one which has been stored too long and developed high toxin levels – I am peeling them all now – just in case I miss a green bit! Good grief – something else my mother told me but I didn't realise they could be quite so dangerous.

I shall be getting my brassicas from Kings Seeds this year. They are doing a special Club Root Resistant Collection which includes the amazing Crispus Brussel sprouts, 3 cabbages, calabrese and cauliflower. My sprouts were awful this year, rather like my shameful garlic which was just all stalk. This years another year!

Have a wonderful Christmas Everyone and **Happy Allotmenting!**





We Love Sprouts

Some bloke called Heston created a Brussel Sprout blowpipe with budgie bonbons served in a lime air – but I think we'll give that a miss and Keep it Sprout.

In the Oven - Intensify those Sprouty Flavours - Abi Grute - Goddess of the Shed

Toss halved sprouts in olive oil seasoned with salt and pepper, and garlic if desired.

Roast on a baking sheet, until outsides are crispy and insides are soft.

Approx 35-40 minutes 200C or Gas mark 6.

Creamy Sprouts - with chestnuts and bacon - Alison Bruce Plot 28/29 Sheet

Serves 6 as a side dish.

250g ready to use chestnuts (they come vacuum packed) - chopped up

500g brussel sprouts

4-6 streaky bacon rashers

Knob of butter

2 tbsp double cream

salt & pepper

Add sprouts to a saucepan of well salted water and cook until tender. Drain well then puree with the butter and double cream (with a stick blender). How much you puree is up to you - you might want a bit of texture rather than creaminess. Cut up bacon and fry until crispy. Add the chestnuts to the sprout mixture, season and put into serving dish. Sprinkle crispy bacon on top and serve immediately.

Brussel sprouts - with chestnuts and bacon - Andy Smith Plot 4 Tilmore

Looks like the previous recipe without the cream but its not – see what you think

200g ready to use chestnuts (they come vacuum packed) - chopped up

1.25kg brussel sprouts

6+ smoked streaky bacon rashers – bite sized pieces

50g butter

salt & pepper

Add sprouts to a saucepan of salted boiling water and cook for 5 mins – cool in cold water.

Fry bacon for 10 mins until crispy – then remove from pan, leaving fat behind. Fry chestnuts in the bacon fat over a high heat for about 5 mins until tinged, then remove from pan. Add sprouts to pan with a splash of water, cover & finish cooking over a medium heat for 5 mins until just tender then uncover, turn up the heat, add most of the butter and sauté 2 mins more. Tip in bacon & chestnuts, season well and serve with the last bit of butter on the top.

David Petche - Brussels need a bit of crunch in them, so boil for 3-4 minutes dependent on size, meanwhile fry up small bits of streaky bacon until crisp, toss the sprouts in the bacon, coating them with the rendered fat to warm them through and serve. Alternatively, for vegans... fry up bits of walnut and do the same.

