

# HW&DAA NEWSLETTER

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**HWDAAs web site: [www.hwdaa.co.uk](http://www.hwdaa.co.uk)**

## Chairman's Comments

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Store, Alderman Moore's Site, on Thursday the 15th January 2009, commencing at 7.30 pm sharp.

### AGENDA

1. To Approve the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17th January 2008 (proposers and seconders from those attending that meeting)
2. Matters Arising
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report and Accounts for the year ending 30th September 2008.
5. To vote on Audit of September 2008 accounts.
6. To approve the September 2008 Accounts
7. Notice of Increase in Plot Rents with effect 1st October 2009, and commencing 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 (both notified in the September 2008 newsletter)
8. Election of Officers
  - (a) President
  - (b) Committee
9. Any Other Business

Please send any nominations for the Committee, or any matter to be raised under 'Any Other Business' to the Secretary, in writing, by not later than the 7th January 2009.

### GATE KEYS

Members will be aware of difficulties in using the gate locks (keys that cannot be removed, locks that appear not to function or even fail to accept keys in the first place). The matter has been carefully examined by the locksmiths and the conclusion is that the trouble is caused by the use of keys that have been 'cloned' from official keys (those cut from the master pattern held by our locksmith). These copies are indistinguishable from the proper ones and have therefore unfortunately been recycled to new tenants or to provide additional keys to others. Although appearing the same as originals, they are not as accurately cut and even the smallest variation

becomes yet further corrupted as copies are made from copies. The wear on the lock barrels abrades the brass levers inside and causes the troubles.

Whilst it would be too costly to change all the existing keys, the Committee has decided to gradually remove old keys from circulation. With immediate effect, only silver-coloured keys stamped with "Bowdens" (the locksmith's details) will be issued to new tenants and as additional keys. Older type keys will be accepted for refund (one only) to those leaving the Association; but those keys will be destroyed. NB Bowdens will not provide new keys direct. They must be purchased through the Association stores. **Please do not have copies made elsewhere!**

### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

It is vital that you inform the Plots Secretary if you move. Failure to do so has resulted in correspondence being sent to the wrong address and even in members having their tenancies terminated through failure to pay their annual rent within the contractual 40 days.

Please remember to tell us of any new name [marriage?], telephone number and e-mail address as well as postal address and postcode. Don't forget to mention your Site and Plot number!

### ABANDONED TOOLS AUCTION

The annual auction of tools and machines left in sheds will be held at the Alderman Moore's Store on **Sunday 1st February '09 at 12 noon**. There will be hand mowers, forks, spades, a scythe, a mattock, shears, watering cans, hoes, rakes, weeders and an assortment of garden implements.

### RUBBISH COLLECTIONS

Literally tons of rubbish has been collected at great cost to the Association over the years - and bizarre items such as domestic gas stoves, bed frames and other things with no connection to gardening have been presented for collection. The Committee is no longer prepared to waste Association funds (i.e. plot rents) disposing of

items that the culprits should have taken to the tip themselves. Therefore, with effect from 1st February 2009, no further free rubbish collections will be made, except from newly let plots.

If you are spring-cleaning your plot and want to take advantage of the final free rubbish collection, put it out at the front of your plot near the haulingway well before the end of January.

After 1<sup>st</sup> February 2009, please make sure you dispose of non-combustible or compostable rubbish at the tip yourself or you will be required to pay for removal - currently £55 a trailer load, payable to the collector. NB. Plots abandoned with significant debris will not be refunded the key deposit to help defray the cost of clearance.

At next year's Site Inspections, the inspectors will be particularly vigilant regarding rubbish on a plot or behind a shed. So - if it cannot be used for gardening get rid of it, or have it collected free before the 1st February '09!

### **BONFIRE SMOKE**

When the weather allows, there will be a temptation to burn some items that do not lend themselves to composting. Remember that you must not adversely affect neighbouring ploholders or the public (neighbouring road-users, people with asthma and soiled washing!) with your smoke. Fines of up to £1,000 are possible and you could lose your tenancy. Winds are capricious: what is safe now can be decidedly otherwise in a matter of minutes.

Under no circumstances must you leave a fire (whether in a heap or in an incinerator) unattended. Ensure it is **absolutely OUT** before leaving the site. Best to compost it or bury in a trench.

### **'INCA' TUBERS – YACON and OCA**

By way of an experiment earlier this year, I acquired some rare tubers originally cultivated by South American Incas. All were brought on in pots in the unheated greenhouse and planted out in the Spring. I am pleased to report that the tubers have been a success, in particular because they were unaffected by the slugs, eel-worms, wire-worms and blight which ravaged nearby potatoes (because they come from quite different families).

**Yacon** grows to about 3 ft with large leaves which are reputed to have medicinal value. One plant can yield up to 20 tubers.

The plants need deep free-draining loam/compost and to be spaced about 2 ½ ft apart (it's truly amazing how large one finger-sized root grows). After the first frost the foliage collapses and the tubers can be harvested - although one may clear some soil and snap individual ones off throughout the season without digging up the whole plant. Off-white and the size and shape of a small rugby ball, they darken to a red/brown colour after a few days and become sweeter to the taste, which is a cross between a pear and a melon. They are very firm and, after peeling, can be eaten raw or cooked. We have tried boiling pieces (30 mins +) and steaming. After cooling the pieces darken. At all times they are crisp and do not lose their structure on cooking. Best eaten like the South Americans - raw in fruit salad. The tubers are said to be good for diabetics

**Oca** (*Oxalis tuberosa*) produce succulent pink-flecked cream tubers, not unlike small versions of pink fir apple potatoes. They are grown and used like new potatoes, and provide ground cover that denies space for weeds. Plant a foot apart. They grow to 12 inches high, needs similar soil to the yacon but not so deep (a foot). Harvest as for the yacon.. They too can be eaten raw and taste of lemons; which flavour is retained when they are cooked. Unlike the yacon they soon disintegrate if steamed for too long (a few minutes will suffice) or they can be baked. Delicious and different. I would think wonderful in a salad!

*(Further information on Read Seed Catalogue website – Ed)*

May I wish everyone a happy Christmas and a fruitful New Year

**Bob Franks**

### **HELP WANTED – Bower Ashton**

#### **Roundabout**

Bower Ashton Residents Association have obtained a grant from the Greater Bedminster Partnership to revitalise the roundabout as you come into Bower Ashton. We are keen to work on this with groups involved in the Bower Ashton area (like allotment holders), as well as residents. So, if you have any ideas / landscape design skills / plants to offer, etc., please let me know.

Lyndsay Newman 0117 9668745

## **CHRYSANTHEMUMS**

By Effie Romain

I really have a weakness for chrysanthemums. Over the next year if there is space in the newsletter I am going to report on what is happening to my chrysanthemums, and the jobs I expect to do over the following 3 months or so – and by sharing plants and cuttings hope that some of you might want to grow them as well.

When I was a teenager I worked weekends and school holidays in the greenhouses of the Lea Valley. Between September and November my fingers and thumbs were permanently black from disbudding the growing plants. (I think the teachers suspected I had a bad nicotine habit) As the air got danker and colder, the picking began outside, then the support frames were gradually raised, and by mid-November we could begin to see how accurate our labelling had been as the first colours started to show.

As Christmas approached, the picking began. Mr Jeffries, who somehow scraped a living from this ramshackle nursery, would select the most perfect blooms and the girls would make up the boxes. (3ft x 1ft containing 6 perfect blooms - coral, salmon, peach, bronze, gold, pure white, pale pink, dark crimson - placed head to tail with each end laid on tissue paper). Every night a van would take them to be sold next morning in Covent Garden. I wish I could remember how much they cost in the shops. I know it was a tremendous amount of money compared to our 1/9d an hour.

These of course were greenhouse varieties - huge reflex blooms mostly. But on the allotment I have been trying to grow outdoor varieties (I bought a good collection from Halls of Heddon-on-the-Wall) and, in spite of the weather, we have had some lovely flowers. These flowers delight everybody to whom they are given and outlast any shop bought flower in the house. So my plan is to grow more!

They are not completely hardy - they got a bit damaged by the cold snap in early November - so, soon after, I lifted them, cut down the stems to 6 inches above the crown, labelled them, put them in a box, covered them with bought multi purpose compost and put them in the shed. Normally I wouldn't need to do this till the end of November. Life being what it is, the more delicate colours seem to be more tender. They can stay there

without attention till next April. Then, as the days lengthen, these plants should gradually be watered and exposed to light. As they throw up shoots these can be separated and potted up in a soil/compost/grit mixture or in John Innes potting mix and will make new plants. More on this next newsletter

If you would like some of these cuttings please let me know. Or if you would like some bronze plants - ready to be moved now - I have a few to spare. Contact me: Effie Romain on Md 5, or email [effie\\_romain@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:effie_romain@blueyonder.co.uk) or phone 973 9312

### **From your Editor**

#### **RHS MEMBERSHIP**

The Association is joining the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) and their excellent magazine 'The Garden' will be available for people to read in the Alderman Moore's Store when it is open.

#### **STORES NEWS**

Did you know that the Alderman Moore's store sells miscellaneous useful items – string, gloves, green wellies, tools, shed preservative paint and brushes - as well as seeds, composts and soil improvers, fertilizers and pesticides, plastic and fleece on rolls, etc. All at unbeatable prices... You can also get a cup of tea or coffee there! See the full stores stock list on the association website.

Bower Ashton Store has a selection of interesting relevant magazines (eg The Kitchen Garden) for people to borrow and return

#### **SEEDS**

A full selection of seeds for next year has come into the Stores at Alderman Moore's and Bower Ashton. If you want a particular seed which is not in stock, we will endeavour to get it for you within a few weeks. Seed potatoes are due in direct from Scotland in February – see below. The AM Store is open every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday morning (1030 to 1200). The Bower Ashton store is open on Wednesday afternoons only 12.30 to 2 pm. (all through the winter).

#### **SEED POTATOES – Varieties**

We are ordering the following varieties for the stores (arriving towards the end of February). They will be significantly cheaper than seed

potatoes bought in garden centres or ordered from seed merchants, as we are placing an order direct with the Scottish growers. Last year, some people were disappointed because the varieties they wanted had sold out – it has to be first come first served, so get to the stores without delay at end February / beginning March.

**Earlies:** Foremost, Pentland Javelin

**Second Early:** Kestrel

**Maincrop:** Desiree, King Edward, Picasso

**Salad/Maincrop:** Pink Fir, Charlotte

#### **Foremost**

Gardener's favourite because of its flavour and excellent cooking characteristics – white

#### **Pentland Javelin**

Showbench-quality early with good flavour, tuber number and disease resistance - white. Takes a bit longer to develop than other earlies.

#### **Kestrel**

Good disease resistance including partial double eelworm and slug resistance. White with unusual blue markings round the eyes

#### **Desiree**

A vigorous fairly waxy potato with a strong flavour (admired by Delia Smith), drought resistant - red

#### **King Edward**

Very popular due to its great eating and cooking qualities. White with striking blotchy red colouration

#### **Picasso**

Modern eelworm-resistant variety, massive yield and the tubers store well, mild flavour, waxy firm boiling potatoes – white with red eyes

#### **Pink Fir Apple**

Knobbly tubers best cooked whole, firm, and delightful hot or cold. They fry surprisingly well.

#### **Charlotte**

Reliable, high-yielding, waxy salad type - yellow. Such a good flavour it is used as a standard reference variety in taste tests.

These brief descriptions come from 'legendary potato man Alan Romans'. I highly recommend his idiosyncratic book 'The Potato Book' (pub Frances Lincoln) for its sections on the history of

potato growing, categories of seed potatoes, planting maintenance and harvesting, microplants, potato diseases and a detailed guide to 150 potato varieties (8 categories to assess tuber qualities, and 7 categories of resistance to various potato ills)

#### **NEW – TALKS AT A.M. STORES**

Our secretary Angie Tonge has arranged some excellent people for talks / practical sessions at the new stores. The door charge is an extremely reasonable £2 a head (+ £3 a rootstock for the grafting workshop).

For more details contact Angie on 0117-902 0948 or e-mail <angietonge@hotmail.com>.

#### **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009 7.30 pm**

##### **Nick Wray - Microclimatology**

We are very lucky that the top man at Bristol University Botanic Gardens, curator Nick Wray, has agreed to come and talk to us on a practical subject which can make the difference between having standard good crops, and being the envy of neighbouring plots. Every garden or allotment has small variations on the local climate called 'microclimates'. These might be a sunny way, a sheltered slope or a moist hollow. Learning how to identify these and exploit them to get the most from your garden or allotment is key to growing a diverse and early range of plants successfully.

#### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2 – 4 pm**

##### **Tim Foster - Practical Grafting Workshop**

Everyone who has been to one of Tim's talks or workshops says how clear, inspiring and patient he is. And now you have a chance to learn from him how to graft your own fruit tree – ie the almost magical skill of joining one type of fruit tree to a suitable (dwarfing) rootstock – in such a way that they will knit together and produce fruit with the qualities you want on the size tree you want.

NB This workshop will have to be limited to the first 20, so please book your place in advance by buying a ticket from the stores for £5 (door charge + cost of 1 rootstock). Further rootstocks available on the day for extra £3 each. All plant materials supplied, though bring your own (very sharp, clean) knife if you have one.

#### **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 7.30 – 9.70 pm**

##### **Gardeners Question Time**

A Panel from the National Vegetable Society District Association will be on hand to answer all

your questions. An invaluable opportunity to pick the experts' brains - start scribbling your queries down now so you don't forget!

## **NECTAR BAR**

This trendy phrase refers to an area of plants with nectar-rich flowers that encourage useful insects (pollinators and predators) to the allotment or garden.

One of the most important and busy pollinators in the allotment is the bumble bee, without whom early flowering crops such as broad beans, gooseberries, currants, pears, plums, apples would fail to set seed or crop. They have a unique central-heating system. While most other insects have to bask in warm sunshine or waste valuable energy revving-up to warm their flight muscles, bumble bees can generate their own body-heat chemically to 37 C. This allows them to fly in low temperatures, particularly on cool mornings and late at night, for most months of the year. It also makes them far more productive than the honey bee, which can only emerge when it's warm. You see bumble bees working in temperatures as low as 10° C and in rain. So it's worth planating some nectar-rich early flowering plants eg. crocus, pulmonaria, to help the queens get established and work early flowering crops.

'Predator' insects feed on pests that damage our crops. Encouraging natural enemies by growing attractant plants for the key beneficial insects (ladybirds, hoverflies, lacewings, parasitic wasps), is said to be a highly effective method of pest control in organic systems. Actually it's the larvae of these insects who are the great pest munchers, but flowers attract the adults who then lay eggs nearby (and pollinate other nearby flowers). You want these insects to be around when pests like greenfly are active, ie over the main growing season, and though you will have flowers on your crops, they are particularly attracted to umbelliferous flowers (eg fennel, dill, angelica), compositae flowers (eg marigold) and aromatic herbs (eg borage, sage, lavender, hyssop)

There are a few general points.

1. native species and our native insects evolved together in a symbiotic relationship, so native plants are likely to be more attractive
2. hybrids and double-flowered varieties tend to be lower in nectar, so less attractive

3. grow a range of plants that flower at different times so there is always a supply of nectar available, (but especially at the start of the season).

### **Early spring flowering**

Pulmonaria, Crocus tomasinianus, winter flowering heathers, oriental hellebore (Lenten Rose), red dead-nettle (Lamium purpureum), sweet violet, primrose, cowslip

### **late Spring, early summer flowering**

Aubretia, honesty, rosemary, bluebell, foxglove, hardy geranium,

### **Summer flowering**

cornflower, valerian (Centranthus rubra), sweet rocket (Hesperis matronalis), sweet cicely (Myrrhis odorata), lesser scabious (Scabiosa columbaria), thrift, campanula, sages, thyme, teasel, eryngium, phacelia, fennel, coriander, corn marigold (chrysanthemum segetum), pot marigold (Calendula officinalis), lavender, marjoram, mallow (Malva moschata), sweet peas, hollyhock, candytuft (Iberis umbellata), nepeta, baby blue eyes (Nemophila menziesii), poached egg plant (Limnanthes douglasii)

### **Autumn flowering**

michaelmas daisy, Sedum spectabile (ice plant), Nicotiana glauca (tobacco plant), helenium, Verbena bonariensis, Cosmos, late salvias, perennial helianthus (eg 'Lemon Queen'), golden rod, single dahlias, japanese anemones.

## **COUCH GRASS**

Do you get fed up digging out the couch grass that spreads onto the plot from the path, and wonder whether it has any role in improving this world? Now I can reveal that it's quite in demand among herbalists. Its demulcent properties soothe irritation and inflammation, it's a tonic diuretic, and its rhizomes are used to treat urinary infections such as cystitis, urethritis and prostatitis. Give it more respect!

## **STORING GARDEN PRODUCE**

Having thoroughly prepared your soil, carefully planted your seeds, lovingly nurtured your plants, greedily harvested, cooked and eaten ... till you're bored to death of the pesky vegetables, what do you do with the surplus? The key to self-sufficiency is storing your produce.

There are four main enemies in keeping food fresh for any length of time: enzymes, bacteria, yeasts and fungi. Storage and preservation techniques

fight these enemies mainly by using heat, cold or acid, by removing moisture, or simply by creating conditions where spoilage is less likely.

The main methods are

- leaving things to nature e.g. leeks in the ground,
- basic storage, e.g. potatoes in paper, hessian or cotton sacks in low humidity; apples on shelves or in boxes in a cool dark slight humid atmosphere; hanging onions and squashes in a dry cool airy place; storing carrots, parsnips, beetroots in sand or sawdust in containers in a dry frost-free place
- clamping root vegetables outside – see below
- freezing (including vacuum packing – see the suggestions in September 2007 newsletter)
- bottling
- various preserves: chutneys, pickles, relishes, ketchups, sauces, jams, jellies, fruit butters and cheeses
- fermenting
- drying

How many of these have you tried? Over the winter when you want an indoor job, give **drying** a go. Here's the method for dried apple rings.

1. Core the fruit (and peel as well if preferred). Cut into rings 5mm thick.
2. Place for a few minutes in a mixture of 300ml / 10 fl oz water plus 150 ml / 5 fl oz lemon juice and a teaspoon of sugar (this stops the rings discolouring).
3. Drain the rings before drying them on a rack in a very low oven (45 - 55°C / 110 - 130 °F), or drying box, or bought food dehydrator. This can take a few hours to a day before the fruit feels dry and squeezing produces no juice. Store in tightly sealed jars.

You can make a **drying box** quite simply out of a large wooden or strong cardboard box. Perforate the top and bottom of the sides to allow air to come in the bottom, heat up and rise, and then leave through the holes at the top taking moisture with it. Put an electric lamp with a 60 watt bulb in the bottom and a mesh above this. The produce to be dried can be hung above the mesh or laid on racks before closing the box.

**Clamping** is a simple method for storing a large quantity of root vegetables outside, useful where indoor storage space is limited (basically a pile of roots with straw and earth on top).

1. Choose a site on a piece of ground unlikely to become waterlogged

2. Harvest your root crops and allow them to dry on the surface of the soil for a couple of hours.
3. To build the clamp, start with a good layer of straw or bracken, and on top of this pile up your roots in a pyramid shape
4. Cover the pile with a layer of straw or bracken and leave to sweat for a day or two (to allow excess moisture to evaporate)
5. Then cover the straw with a layer of fairly dry earth about 6 inches thick – making sure there are a few small tunnels of straw sticking through the earth along the bottom, and chimneys along the top, to allow for air circulation. Pat the earth flat with a spade to form a smooth, steep-sided pyramid that rain will easily run off.

## SEASONAL RECIPE

Many thanks to Liz Tully for these 2 chutney recipes – they'll be much in demand for dealing with your beetroot and apple gluts

### Beetroot Chutney

- 900g (2 lbs) raw beetroot shredded or grated
- 450g (1 lb) onions skinned + chopped
- 700g (1 ½ lb) apples peeled + chopped
- 450g (1 lb) seedless raisins
- 1 litre (1¾ pt) malt vinegar
- 900g (2 lbs) sugar
- 30 ml (2 level tbsps) ground ginger

Place all ingredients in a preserving pan (or very large saucepan) and bring to the boil. Simmer over a moderate heat until soft and pulpy – about 1 hour. Pot and cover in the usual way. Makes about 3 kg (6 ½ lbs)

### Apple Chutney

- 1.4 kg (3 lbs) cooking apples, peeled + diced
- 1.4 kg (3 lbs) onions, skinned + chopped
- 450g (1 lb) sultanas or seedless raisins
- 2 lemons
- 700g (1½ lbs) Demerara sugar
- 600 ml (1 pt) malt vinegar

Put apples, onions and sultanas in a pan. Juice the lemon, grate the rind, and add both to the pan, with the sugar and vinegar. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer until the mixture is of a thick consistency, with no excess liquid. Pot and cover in the usual way. Makes about 1.8 kg (4 lbs)

This is a light chutney, fruity but not spiced, good with pork and poultry.