

# SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 89 - NOVEMBER 2009

<http://www.seeog.org.uk/>



The group was formed in 1994, to promote the principles of organic gardening by:

- *Composting organic waste;*
- *Protecting wildlife;*
- *Reducing pollution;*
- *Encouraging species diversity.*

*Membership is currently £7.00 per annum, £10.00 family.*



**Soil Association**

## SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/NEWS

Our venue is St. David's Church Hall, 400 Rayleigh Road, Eastwood (off The Rodings) at 8.15pm.

Did anyone hear The Great Mineral Heist on BBC Radio 4 recently? Alice Roberts investigated the loss of vitamins and minerals from our staple foods.

## MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER

Nick and Lesley, sadly now departed for Dorset, asked earlier if we could invite Alan Wilson back for a return visit.

There have been good attendances all year, but September dropped to just sixteen!

With Alan coming from Hampshire, please let us welcome

'Potatoes and their Varieties' – Alan Wilson, author of The Story of the Potato and potato technical advisor to a leading supermarket'

With the same passion as his own passion for potatoes!

As this is also our last meeting for this year, we always welcome a few festive goodies from our members for the tea break!

## MONDAY 18 JANUARY

If you have a small garden, very little time, no gardening skills, a reduced housekeeping budget and a wish to eat more healthily, come along and meet Cicely Morris.

Cicely is the South Essex Ambassador for Send a Cow, a charity that is successfully solving poverty in Africa by practical gardening methods, upheld by teaching and support. Cicely's talk will include how to construct and maintain both keyhole kitchen gardens and sack gardens, showing how easily and sustainable these methods are, and how small spaces can be used effectively.

## MONDAY 15 MARCH

William Tyler presents *Dig for Victory*

It was all hands to the spade and fork as Britain faced a war on The Home Front in 1940 to provide as much of its own food as possible. We shall take a look at who grew the food, where they grew it and what they grew. The message for us today is a clear one - Get Digging!

## MONDAY 17 MAY

Assistant Head Teacher/Vocational Co-ordinator Simon Cox, Sweyne Park School presents '*Food for Life*'

Sweyne Park is a very successful and oversubscribed 11-16 community comprehensive school in Rayleigh. They are committed to very strong partnerships between home, school and community

members and believe that the whole community can contribute to motivating and supporting pupils' progress. This commitment can also be seen in their recent successful bid to become a flagship school for the Food for Life Partnership as they believe that nutrition plays a huge part in young people's lives. As a school, they will strive to ensure that all their pupils are fully informed of their nutritional needs and the food choices that are in their wider community.

### **MONDAY 19 JULY**

'Sustainable Farming and Climate Change' – speaker to be confirmed

### **MONDAY 20 SEPTEMBER**

Damien Errington has just embarked on his third season as Horticulture tutor at Hadleigh Training Centre. During the previous twelve months the department has taken delivery of a new polytunnel that, with height and ventilated sides, will be an excellent addition to the variety of plant production and hopefully in turn improve sales revenue to the social enterprise element of the project.

### **MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER**

John Williams tells us about Landshare, where the landowner, grower or helper

1. Posts a listing, telling others where you are and what you are offering or looking for;
2. Hopefully, you get responses using their mail system to receive and send messages;
3. Then you have a chat and see what happens...

<http://landshare.channel4.com/how-it-works>

### **ALLOTMENTS**

Karen Kenny is the Eastern Region NSALG representative. Her mobile number is 07712 766916 and her email address is [karen.kenny@homecall.co.uk](mailto:karen.kenny@homecall.co.uk)

Darren Fazackerley is the Essex representative of the NSALG and his email address is [darren.fazackerley@harlow.gov.uk](mailto:darren.fazackerley@harlow.gov.uk). His home number is 01245 490700. Please don't hesitate to contact them if you want help.

The Allotments Regeneration Initiative's Mentor for the East of England is Frank Owens.

Tel: 0845 313 8461

[fowens.ari@googlemail.com](mailto:fowens.ari@googlemail.com)

### **APPLE DAY CEILIDH**

There was a great deal to do when we arrived at the hall at 5pm on Friday evening: putting up tables and wiping them, together with chairs; setting up the tables with the cloths, cutlery, juice and flowers, whilst Maureen and her ladies in the kitchen prepared the Ploughman's Supper; setting out the raffle prizes and apples; arranging the display boards; welcoming the band and ensuring that everything in the hall was ready by 7pm.

We catered for 71 adults, eight children, 4 band and 12 volunteers.

Just three or so weeks beforehand, three of us went to Great Brays Fruit Farm and picked apples for two or three hours. Ron then went home with a boot-ful of apples (250lb when he'd weighed them all) and single-handedly conveyed them to Hill Holme Juice in Great Totham for pressing and bottling the next day. He went up again in a week's time to collect the bottles for us.

So we first need to say a huge *Thank You* to both Ron and Maureen and to everyone who volunteered both before, on or afterwards.

Jim Murphy (Garlic Spread) said they play usually two or three tunes per dance, one of which is usually the dance's namesake. The dances were: Oxo Reel (reel), Aunt Hessie's White Horse (reel), Caerphilly March (march), Barleylands (waltz), Monterey Detour (reel), La Russe (reel), Clopton Bridge (hornpipe), Circle Waltz (waltz), Anne's Reel (reel) and White Cascade (jig). The fantastic last dance was the Stoke Golding Country Dance (slip jig) with three tunes, 'Drops of Brandy', 'Peacock Follows the Hen' and 'Foxhunters'.

### **ASHLYNS ORGANIC FARM**

An incredibly settled, dry September has enabled them to kick on with the cultivations for their autumn sown crops. At the same time, it's not done a lot to help them grow. So far, they have held off drilling

(sowing) a lot of crops until they get rain, the danger being that if you sow a crop in dry knobbly conditions the seed will sprout and then die leading to crop failure. Apparently they have all been doing their rain dances! If you would like participate, they said, please feel free! Once it does start raining, however, it would be good if it remembers to stop!

Ashlyns' address is The Courtyard, High Laver Hall, High Laver, Essex CM5 0DU; Telephone: 01277 890821, Email [gary@ashlyns.co.uk](mailto:gary@ashlyns.co.uk), Website: <http://www.ashlyns.co.uk/>

## **EAST ANGLIA POTATO DAY: SATURDAY 13 FEBRUARY**

**We are booking a minibus – please register your interest now!**

## **FARMERS' MARKETS**

- **Leigh-on-Sea**: In Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road, Saturday 21 November and Saturday 19 December, 9.00am – 12.00 noon.
- **Rochford**: In the WI Hall, Market Square, on (Saturday) on 7 November, 9.30am – 12.30pm. We have stalls only at Leigh-on-Sea and Rochford.
- **Hadleigh**: At the Salvation Army, Home Farm, Castle Lane, held on every second Wednesday of the month from 12.00 onwards.
- **Southend-on-Sea**: High Street, every second and fourth Saturday of every month, 8.30am - 4.00pm.
- **Rayleigh**: (Wednesday) 25 November and 23 December at Rayleigh Market Place opposite Rayleigh Church from 9am to 2pm on the last Wednesday monthly.
  
- **Hockley**: Saturday 14 November, 9.30am – 12.00pm. It is intended to be an ongoing event, subject to support by traders, and will normally begin about 8.00am, with other dates yet to be fixed but hopefully on a monthly basis.

## **FOOD FOR LIFE PARTNERSHIP**

Liz Davies is employed by Garden Organic and works in primary and secondary schools as part of the Food for Life Partnership, a project to transform food culture across schools. She has just started working on an exciting new project, Fruit-full Schools, which will set up heritage apple orchards in 50 secondary schools ([fruitfullschools@ttl.org.uk](mailto:fruitfullschools@ttl.org.uk)). This is her current report:

'I recently enjoyed a lovely day at Audley End where I ran a workshop on Organic Gardening in Schools for 14 teachers from schools enrolled on the Food for Life Partnership. The sun shone for us and we had a very informative tour of the kitchen garden led by Mike Thurlow, the head gardener, who talked us through their crop rotation system and how this could be adapted for schools.

Also during the day we looked at the new Food Growing Manual, including activities based around growing (<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growyourown/activities.php>), and the Food Growing Instruction cards ([http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growyourown/growing\\_cards.php](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growyourown/growing_cards.php)), both produced by Garden Organic and available free to schools enrolled on the Food for Life Partnership. As one of the group who is already making use of them pointed out, these are a fantastic resource for schools.

It is fantastic to see so many schools growing produce and I am hopeful that this generation of pupils will have a better understanding of where their food comes from and the need for more local sustainable sourcing. However, I find it even more rewarding when I see schools using their outside space to teach geography, history, art etc. I was thrilled that one of the group commented to me that she thought that the whole of the curriculum could be taught outside - now that's one lesson plan I'd like to see.

Liz Davies'

Liz is the Garden Education Officer for the East of England Food for Life Partnership. Her contact details are:

E: [ldavies@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:ldavies@gardenorganic.org.uk)

M: 07554 450650

W: [www.foodforlife.org.uk](http://www.foodforlife.org.uk)

Garden Organic, Wolston Lane, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry, CV8 3LG

Ian Nutt is the Food for Life Partnership coordinator for the East of England. His contact details are:  
Email: [inutt@soilassociation.org](mailto:inutt@soilassociation.org)  
Phone: 07917 671416

## **GARDEN ORGANIC**

**Despite protests, Ministers have approved the lifting of the suspension of Aminopyralid approvals.** The approval of the Dow AgroSciences herbicide, Aminopyralid, has been reinstated by ministers on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. The move lifts a voluntary suspension of approval for sales and use which the company sought in July 2007 after widespread contamination of sensitive crops on allotments and gardens affected by manure containing traces of the herbicide.

Aminopyralid is a weedkiller used by farmers to control pernicious and poisonous weeds such as ragwort, thistles and docks in pasture. Dow AgroSciences, however, has always insisted that it would not seek to reintroduce Aminopyralid before ways were found that minimised the risk of any repeat of the unfortunate incidents of the past two seasons.

The active ingredient will be re-introduced with new recommendations and a stringent stewardship programme devised to prevent inadvertent movement of manure from farms. Key to this is the requirement that products containing Aminopyralid are only applied to land that will be grazed by cattle or sheep; not land where forage will be conserved. This requirement aims to ensure manure generated from treated grassland remains on the pasture. Problems have arisen when conserved forage from treated pasture was fed to housed livestock and manure created in large quantities.

Supporting these new recommendations is an enhanced stewardship package which will require anyone supplying or advising on the use of Aminopyralid to be re-trained in the details of product use. Those applying, or using, products containing Aminopyralid are required to confirm in writing that they have been instructed on product use and manure management issues. These records form part of a user traceability system.

Dow believe these will mitigate against manure leaving farms where Aminopyralid has been used and so help to safeguard against repeats of sensitive crops being affected.

The changes to how Aminopyralid products will be used and the associated stewardship plan Dow say should allay concerns amongst gardeners and allotment holders over using manure. However, they say it remains good practice to know the provenance of any manure as other materials can contaminate manure.

There are many that believe that this will not be enough to stop contaminated manure damaging growers' and gardeners' crops. Despite letters to the Ministers concerned, and a petition which was signed by nearly 2500 people against the re-instatement, the Government appears to have bowed to the interests of agri-business.

GO website – Any comments?

## **GARDEN ORGANIC FOR SCHOOLS**

As mentioned above, the national charity Learning through Landscapes (LTL) has developed an exciting new national project enabling thousands of children to establish heritage fruit orchards within their school grounds and in partnership with their local communities. Their project, *Fruit-full Schools*, has recently been awarded a National Lottery Local Food grant and is due to start in January 2010.

Their 10 Regional Coordinators will link with community orchard groups in their area and draw upon existing relationships to encourage schools to apply. If you are interesting in taking part in *Fruit-full Schools* **and are based within an 80 mile radius of Durham, Kendal, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, Northampton, Peterborough, Shepton Mallet, Farnham** or are in Greater or Central London, please contact [fruitfullschools@ltl.org.uk](mailto:fruitfullschools@ltl.org.uk) or speak to Helen Robinson on 0208 8503112 (#210).

Alternatively, please first ask Carole for the original document from Learning through Landscapes.

We have a supply of the 2010 Chase Gardening Catalogue, together with details of their Group Discount Terms in case someone would like to do this for SEEOG.

## **GM WATCH**

The website comprises sections devoted to all areas of the subject, including detailed reports on GM myths, the people behind the myths and the GM companies peddling them and reaping the benefits, as well as frequent news updates on global developments and a guide to how the media are manipulated by misleading claims.

Visit the new site at [www.gmwatch.org](http://www.gmwatch.org)

## **GROWING ORGANIC: OUR VERY OWN SEMINARS INTRODUCING THE CONCEPTS OF ORGANIC GARDENING!**

As you know, we've been running a series of organic gardening seminars, which are being led by one of our members, Robert Wiseman.

Everybody is welcome at these seminars, for which there will be a nominal charge of £5.00. However, there is a wide range of concessions available. Children under the age of 16 are also free if they are with their parents. Seminars will be for up to 50 delegates per seminar, depending on venue. Please book early to avoid disappointment.

Please pass the word around for us – and there will be leaflets available soon if you want a few to give to your neighbours and friends.

Details are as follows:

Saturday 20 February:	Great Wakering Community Centre, SS3 0EJ, 9.30am
Saturday 20 March :	Rettendon Memorial Hall, CM3 8DP, 9.30am
Saturday 1 May :	Hall 3, The Paddocks, Canvey Island, SS8 0JA, 9.30am
Saturday 5 June :	Crowstone Christian Centre, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 8LH, 9.30am
Saturday 3 July :	Rochford, venue to be confirmed
October :	Leigh Community Centre, SS9 1SP, 10.00am
Saturday 6 November:	South Woodham Ferrers Village Hall, CM3 5PL, 9.30am

### **EVENT CONTACT DETAILS**

Carole Shorney, 01702 201914, [caroleshorney@hotmail.com](mailto:caroleshorney@hotmail.com)  
Robert Wiseman, 0794 107 8135, [robert.wiseman@talk21.com](mailto:robert.wiseman@talk21.com)

## **IRON - A MINERAL INDISPENSABLE FOR PLANTS**

Maike did some quick research on a mineral that has been on her mind for some time: Iron

Experts from the Bayerischen Gartenakademie in Veitshöchheim are often consulted on the question why plants develop yellow leaves. The causes can be manifold, but frequently there is a lack of Iron. Roses with natural habits can show symptoms of Iron deficiencies on Calcium-rich soils, also young shoots on apple trees (...)

The article goes on comparing Iron deficiencies in human beings and in plants, describing some parallels between the two. Apart from the roses above, it mentions Rhododendron, Magnolia, and Hydrangea, as well as apples, quince, bramble, raspberry, strawberry, citrus, petunias, cucumber, peppers and tomato.

The reason for this, according to the article is often a lack of available iron in certain soils. Maike has been wondering for some time why her pale grey clay is not as fertile as the red loam in the Welsh Borders.

Another reason is that the Iron may be there in the soil but cannot be taken up by plants, due to lack of water or ph-level. Another reason is the cross-effects from other nutrients. Oversupply of nitrates and phosphates can block, according to the article. Compacted soils and waterlogging can also contribute to Iron deficiencies.

As to relieving Iron deficiencies, the article mentions loosening compacted soils, water management, nutrient-rich fertilisers or special Iron fertilisers. There are also suppositions that a plant can create some iron itself. Iron fertilisers seem to work even on leaves (too great a dose can lead to burning). Iron

sulphites work on lawns. Does anybody know anything about their toxicity?

Now my question for organic gardeners: When we make compost, does the green from the leaves reintroduce iron back into the soil???

Source: <http://www.lwg.bayern.de/gartentipps/2008/29151/index.php>

## **MANURE**

1. Pam Mitchell, The Grange, Murrells Lane, Hockley (Tel. 01702 207491) has a very good, old supply of manure. If you ring her first, giving a couple of days' notice, she will arrange for a load to be brought to the gate to ease bagging up.

2. We now have another provider of free manure - chemical free - in Barling, near Wakering. Tel. 01702 219835

## **MEMBERS' NEWS**

A couple of weeks ago Simon Wallace stopped off at Orchard House, which is on the Paglesham Road as you come from either Rochford or Ashingdon, and bought some fantastic local apples. It can be reached by bike. Look out for the yellow signs on the right-hand side of the road as you go towards Paglesham.

The owners have a large orchard and, up until recently, used to sell their produce in London. They have stopped doing this now, but sell direct to anyone who is passing! It's all very simple - you choose, weigh and pay by leaving cash in a tin!

There are four varieties of eaters - Lord Lambourne, Russet, Spartan and Elstar and one cooking variety. They cost between 40-60p per pound for the best quality, but the marked apples are as little as 5p per pound and which are still good for use in puddings, cakes or cooking etc. There are quite a few windfalls which people can take to make homemade cider.

The flavour for all four eaters is fantastic- so if you know any apple fans it's worth the short journey!

Terry Smallbone reports that, after decades of gardening (mostly fruit and vegetable growing), he has his new and shiny green but, most importantly, first full size, 8 x 6 foot greenhouse up and ready to go!

Having read umpteen articles, he's turning to the SEEOG membership to ask, 'what can he grow in it over the winter period?'

It is south facing and has an automatic vent and he has two of the two tier metal benches in it so far, along with a few large pots on the concrete ground base.

He has started off some Kale seeds for salad type leaves as well as some Christmas Day potatoes in buckets which he started in August, both of which are doing really well.

He is also over wintering his sweet and chilli pepper plants, as he's had them for two years so far and both are still fruiting, as well as trying to get the fruit on his brown Turkey figs to finish ripening.

Some broad beans and soya beans have germinated in pots and he is going to start some salad leaves, baby carrots, beetroots, turnips and spring onions as that's what all the info he's read seem to recommend.

He is going to try various things out, even though most seed packets recommend sowing the majority of seeds from February onwards. So is there anything members would suggest trying, that has maybe done well for them?

He's all for trying things out and going against the grain and likes to try new and unusual varieties.

Oh, and he has no borders as the greenhouse is on a concrete base so everything will have to be grown in trays or pots.

So, any suggestions or general tips about (mainly winter) greenhouse growing please?

## **MINIBUS VISIT TO CRAPES FRUIT FARM: SATURDAY 14 NOVEMBER**

Few members have booked so far, so this trip may have to be cancelled. Please let Carole know as quickly as possible if you wish to book a seat, especially if you are contemplating buying some of Andrew's superb range of apples for Christmas gifts. We cannot afford to leave it any later.

There are many commercial orchards in Essex, where they enjoy a warmer and drier climate. Andrew Tann's enterprise is different in many respects in that he grows over 150 varieties of apples in his 15-acre orchard, most of which are sold direct by mail order.

Different mixes of apple varieties are available throughout the season, from August to January, from 7lbs to 20 lbs, including Apple Day Gift Boxes. Cherries, plums, quince, medlar and apples are available from the farm shop, which is open Monday-Saturday 8.00am – 5.00pm.

Andrew is an authority on top fruit, and is a great enthusiast. He is in great demand to identify mystery apples people bring from their gardens to Apple Days.

We plan to arrive by 11.00am, followed by a quick visit to the local plant nursery (Christmas shopping?) and a pub lunch afterwards, returning home at around 2.30pm.

Stops include Folly Lane, at 8.30am, followed by  
Hockley Library  
Rectory Road  
Sapwood's  
Mayfield Avenue  
Southend, Queensway, Sainsbury  
The Elms  
Thames Drive bus stop  
Hadleigh Church (last one)

**Another booking form is attached.**

## **PLANT LABELS**

Have you tried Graham Oster-Ritter's used aluminium litho plates yet for your plant labels? We've found them very useful when we've run out of juice or margarine cartons! They can be cut with scissors quite easily and make sturdier labels than our cartons! If you're interested, please either ring him on 01702 558871 or email [grahamoster@aol.com](mailto:grahamoster@aol.com) - he can bring some aluminium to Group Night. There will be no charge for the above but a small donation to SEEOG would be appreciated.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

In recognition of another Apple Day, eco-logic books have a special offer on the lovely *Harvest of Apples*, a paperback by Ruth Ward that combines recipes with apple law and all sorts of 'appleyness' - only a fiver, an absolute bargain. Go to the Orchards, Apples and Cider section and bag yourself a copy at <http://www.eco-logicbooks.com> or contact eco-logic books, Mulberry House, 19 Maple Grove, Bath BA2 3AF.  
Tel: 01225 484472

Mark Waterfield from Moss Green Children's Books rang us recently re his links to these colouring in pages, which can be downloaded for free, from <http://www.mossgreenchildrensbooks.co.uk/free-colouring-page/>

He hopes that these pages will encourage children to plant their own vegetables, learn where they are grown, when to plant and when to pick them.

Mark says he is more than happy for school websites to create a link on their site so that it is easy for parents and teachers to download the illustrations. He knows one school that has created a link from the page on the school gardening club.

He is thinking of creating a very small series of colouring pages which illustrate how organic growers control pests in the garden. Unfortunately, he does not have this knowledge himself, but he is now in correspondence with Phil Turvil, the Knowledge Development Officer at Garden Organic, who has given him some very good ideas of what is needed in the colouring pages on how to control pests without using pesticides. As soon as he has developed some of these illustrations Mark will forward them to us.

He'll also be very interested in obtaining feedback from the different schools.

Mark Waterfield, Moss Green Children's Books, Greenacres, Great Wigborough, Colchester. CO5 7RH  
Tel: 0207 373 0945  
Mob: 077111 50192  
Mark.waterfield@mossgreenchildrensbooks.co.uk

## **ST. LAURENCE ORCHARD**

Spiralseed have recently published a beautiful map of St. Laurence Orchard in Eastwoodbury Lane. The map was created by our Webmaster, Graham Burnett, in conjunction with orchard project manager Ron Bates and attendees of the Avro/Viking Resource Centre, who are regular users of the orchard site.

The orchard map was created following several months of work during which time the site was surveyed and mapped using traditional techniques such as pacing to measure its boundaries, triangulation to mark the position of the trees and documented with photographs, paintings and drawings. The mapping project was thorough: when checked against Southend Borough Council's 'official' map of the site as produced by the Parks and Leisure Department, it was noticed that there was quite a variance between the shape and size of the southerly 'rectangle' of the orchard and their calculations. They re-measured it, but still the discrepancy remained. They then checked the shape and size of the orchard on Google Earth and discovered that their measurements and drawings were correct whilst the council surveyors' had been in error!

Taking a lead from the work of Common Ground, they decided to produce a map in order to celebrate this small jewel in the urban Essex landscape. It is intended as both a commemoration of this fragment from a time not so very long ago when the whole of the area was a patchwork of orchards and smallholdings providing food for the area, as well as an inspiration for the coming era of re-localisation. After some discussions they decided that, rather than produce a literal map, they would create a collage from the many photographs they had taken throughout the year, capturing the spirit of the various orchard seasons as well as the character of these venerable fruit trees that were planted early in the 20th century.

The map is available as a high quality, full colour A1 (59 X 84cm) sized print suitable for framing for only £20 (including postage costs) from Spiralseed by visiting <http://www.scrumpin.org.uk/apples.html> or by ringing Ron Bates on 01702 477681.

(NB. Part of the proceeds from any sales will go to the Growing Together project in order to help to fund further restoration or tree planting at St Laurence Orchard)

## **SEEOG TALKS**

We need some assistance with the daytime events – heavy bags and plants on the bus are not good!

1. Wednesday 18 November, 2.00pm: The Friendly Group, Bramerton Road Community Church, Hockley
2. Vange Village 'M' Townswomen's Guild, Youth Hall, Trinity Methodist Church, Clayhill Road, Basildon - Ron
3. Thursday 25 March, 7.30pm: Alzheimer's Society, Southend & District Branch, The Harland Centre, Balmoral Road, Westcliff-on-Sea - Ron
4. Monday 12 April 2010, 8.00pm: Southend & District Wine & Gardening Club, St. Augustine's Church Hall, Thorpe Bay
5. Thursday 15 April 2010, 7.30pm: Ladies' Club, Belfairs Methodist Church, Eastwood Road North, Leigh-on-Sea
6. Tuesday 7 September 2010, 2.00pm: Bournemouth Park Ladies Club, United Reform Church Hall, junction of Bournemouth Park Road/Central Avenue

## **SOIL ASSOCIATION NEWS**

### **Save the honeybee campaign**

The Soil Association's petition to ban neonicotinoid sprays, which have been implicated in the collapse of bee colonies, is still live and now has over 15,000 signatures. As a result of their campaign, Soil Association Policy Director Peter Melchett and Policy Manager Emma Hockridge were invited to a roundtable meeting at Number 10 Downing Street to discuss the plight of the bee on 9 September 2009. The Soil Association also helped to launch a major new film '*The Vanishing of the bee*' on 1 October. The film is being shown nationwide, but sadly not yet in Essex.



However, you can sign their petition here at <http://www.soilassociation.org/Takeaction/Savethehoneybee/tabid/434/Default.aspx>

## **TIPS AND HINTS**

- Water your garden in the cool of the early morning or evening. This will reduce the amount of water lost to evaporation.
- If you water plants and shrubs too often their roots will remain shallow, weakening the plant. Leave them alone until they show signs of wilting.
- Collect rainwater in water-butts and use a watering can instead of a hose. If you prefer to use a hosepipe, fit a trigger nozzle to control the flow.
- Regularly weed and hoe your garden, to ensure that watering helps plants and not weeds.
- Plant flowers and shrubs that thrive in hot and dry conditions such as thyme, evening primrose, rock rose, Californian poppy, pinks, lavender, buddleia and hebes.
- Mulches such as wood chips, bark and gravel help to prevent water evaporation and also suppress weed growth, saving you both water and time spent weeding.
- Lawns can survive long periods of dry weather if the grass is not cut too short. Even if the grass turns brown, it will quickly recover after a few days of rain.
- Garden sprinklers can use as much water in an hour as a family of four uses in a day. If you use a sprinkler, many water companies require you to have a water meter fitted.

You may find the advice on water conservation in gardening from Direct.gov useful – follow this link: [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerhomeandgarden/Greenergarden/DG\\_064410](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerhomeandgarden/Greenergarden/DG_064410)

## **USEFUL WEBSITES**

- Graham Burnett has at last found the time to put something about the orchard map on the scrumpin website <http://www.scrumpin.org.uk/apples.html> as well as the Southend in Transition website <http://westclifftransition.wordpress.com/2009/10/07/your-chance-to-own-a-copy-of-the-st-laurence-orchard-map/>
- The Agroforestry Research Trust is a non-profit making charity, registered in England, which researches into temperate agroforestry and into all aspects of plant cropping and uses, with a focus on tree, shrub and perennial crops. <http://www.agroforestry.co.uk/>
- Vegswap is a website that enables gardeners to swap their surplus home grown or homemade produce with other local users. The website is free and simple to use. Unlike other forum style sites [www.vegswap.co.uk](http://www.vegswap.co.uk) allows you to search for specific produce you may want in a specific location making the whole process quick and easy. Alternatively, you can post a list your glut list and wait for someone to make you an offer. Please take a look If you have any questions or comments, or contact Susan Mortimer, 3 Long Rydon, Stoke Gabriel, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6QH; Tel: 08456 800782; Email [susan@vegswap.co.uk](mailto:susan@vegswap.co.uk)
- Apparently you can win a 'fabulous' picnic bench by logging onto [www.livingorchards.com](http://www.livingorchards.com) and naming a tree in their virtual orchard.

## **WHAT A WAY TO GO, LIFE AT THE END OF EMPIRE**

Climate change is already affecting millions of people. **But what can we do about it?** Join us for a screening of *'What a way to go, Life at the end of Empire'* at 7.00pm on Friday 27 November at the YMCA Shop, next to 'Slug & Lettuce', Southchurch Road, Southend-on-Sea – free admission.

This event is a collaboration between Southend in Transition, Spiralseed, Healthy Life Essex, Time's Up, Women's Environmental Network, South East Essex FoE, South East Essex Greenpeace and SEEEOG.

**One thing is certain: life in the future will be very different.**

## **WORM COMPOSTING EVENT**

Join the RSPB in the Children's Library on Saturday 7 November between 2pm – 4pm in Southend Central Library and worm your way towards a world of earthy fun!

## SEEOG COMMITTEE

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Please post/phone/email your contributions for the January newsletter to Carole by the end of December at the very latest.

The next committee meeting will be on Wednesday 25 November at 7.30pm courtesy of Graham and Penny.

Finally, please notify Graham Oster-Ritter on [grahamoster@aol.com](mailto:grahamoster@aol.com) if you wish to receive your newsletter by post/email, or to change your email address,

## **Shed-Time Reading - Allotment Booklist**

**Interested in getting an allotment or simply enjoy gardening?**

### **Plotted history**

"The allotment- its landscape and culture" by David Crouch and Colin Ward was written almost twenty years ago and has become a standard text on the history of the allotment movement. Available for the first time in paperback from Five Leaves publications, it remains an interesting read. Sadly the chapter on the future risks to sites still ring true today.

### **Squash it!**

A slim, cheap and highly informative recipe book "Pumpkin and Squash Surprises" contains sweet and savoury dishes for this much under-used vegetable. Suffolk Herbs also stock a wide range of organic vegetable, herb and flower seeds. For a free copy of their latest catalogue telephone 01376 572465 or visit [www.suffolkherbs.com](http://www.suffolkherbs.com)

### **Good Stuff**

Edited by Scheherazade Goldsmith, "A Slice of Organic Life" includes 80 simple eco-projects from baking bread and making your own wormery to keeping chickens and preserving your own harvest. Published by Dorling Kindersley, the projects are well illustrated and easy to follow.

### **Surfing the Plot**

"The Allotment Keeper's Handbook" by Jane Perrine (Atlantic Book) is another title in the growing range of guides to allotmenting. This one also includes ideas on how to set up your own "plot BLOG" online.

### **Contain yourself**

If you don't have enough space to grow your own fruit, herbs or vegetables then solve the problem by using containers. Pots of all sizes can be ornamental; produce edible treats and it is easy...once you know how. The RHS have a useful section on their website, which neatly explains how to get the most from your containers. Visit [www.rhs.org.uk/](http://www.rhs.org.uk/)

### **Olympic Dreams?**

Written by Sam and Sam Clark, Moro East is a beautiful and highly original cookery book, which combines exotic Mediterranean cuisine with a year in the lives of the authors spent on an allotment community in London's East End.

Many of the ideas for the 150 mouth-watering recipes combine fresh, seasonal produce taken from their plot. The irony is the allotment was lost as part of the preparations for the 2012 Olympics, and so it was the final growing season for this particular site. Like the games, this book isn't cheap (£25)... a case of Sheds versus Medals?

### **One for All**

As more and more people turn to growing their own, it can prove difficult to find enough space in a smaller garden or decide between flowers over food. Why not combine them all and discover new ways to grow vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers in the same plot. Graham Rice's new book "All-in-one garden" is a good starting point.

### **Dig This**

Published by Michael O' Mara Books "Eating for Victory" is a nostalgic collection of facsimile leaflets from the Ministry of Food, showing how millions of people in Britain made do with Home Front cooking on rations during the Second World War.

Pre-Jamie Oliver, this fascinating little book is packed with hints and tips for healthy eating; much of the advice is still relevant today as it was sixty years ago. So go on - rustle yourself up Anzac Biscuits, Nettle Soup, a Welsh Wonder or Brussels Sprouts a L'Italianne and eat for victory! Also available in this new series is "Make Do and Mend".

"The Garden Organic" by Allan Shepherd (Collins) aims to act as a starting point for ethical living and is packed with information, suppliers and useful websites. It looks at the wider issues of gardening for a healthy planet and suggests ways in which the "ordinary" gardener can integrate green thinking into good practice.

### **Adventures in the "Rhubarb Triangle"**

It's hard to believe that this humble crop once commanded prices three times that of Opium in 17th century England. (The dried powdered root was used for medicinal properties rather than the sticks we cook today). Unfortunately many people's recent rhubarb memories are those of a slimy, sour green fruit served either with a stodgy crumble or lumpy school custard!

But rhubarb is making a comeback and for a plant native to Siberia, it is very easy to grow and harvest requiring only cold weather, water and nitrogen to thrive. By selecting two different varieties such as Timperely Early and Victoria you can have a nutritious crop throughout Spring and the Summer; freezing any surplus is also very easy, which means you can have rhubarb 365, should you desire.

Tastes change and West End celebrity chefs now rave over "forced" (NOT blanched) Yorkshire rhubarb, grown by candlelight in long, low, heated forcing sheds in the legendary "Rhubarb Triangle", an area between Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield, situated in the shadows of the Pennines and a natural frost pocket.

It is still not grown in the quantities it once was - so much was cultivated in the inter-war period that trains known locally as the "Rhubarb Express" would ship the cream of the new season's crop down the line for use in London's best restaurants and top notch eateries.

To discover more, about this fascinating crop, why not go on a tour run by the remaining specialist growers - typically these are held in February each year. Janet Oldroyd, the so-called "High Priestess of Rhubarb", leads one such "Triangle Experience". For more details visit [www.yorkshirerhubarb.co.uk](http://www.yorkshirerhubarb.co.uk) where you will find a selection of recipes, cultivation details and can order a range of varieties.

### **Rhubarb Betty (adapted from a Good Housekeeping recipe)**

This is an simple, easy and cheap recipe...if there's any left over, it tastes even better on the second day! Grease a 2.5 pint ovenproof dish. Cut 1.5lb of wiped, trimmed rhubarb into short lengths. Mix together 4oz fresh white breadcrumbs, 3oz Demerara sugar, 3oz shredded vegetarian suet and the grated rind of one lemon. To this mix add 1 level teaspoon of ground ginger to taste.

Put half the fruit in the dish & cover with half the crumb mixture. Add the remaining fruit and top with the rest of the crumble mix. Dot with a few knobs of butter; bake in the oven at 180oC / 350oF (mark 4) for about 45mins, or until the fruit is soft & the topping crisp.

Simon Wallace, Southend Libraries, August 2009



# CEILIDH 2009



Raffle Prizes



Penny enjoying her supper



Dancers with Bibby



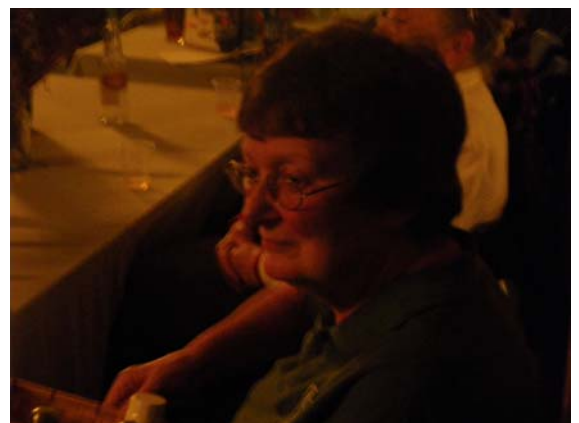
Garlic Spread



Dancers at speed



Some of the helpers



Near the end of a long day