

# SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 101 – JANUARY 2012

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

SE Essex Organic Gardeners

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43705483846/>

Southend Food Growers (and producers)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43705483846/#!/groups/Southendfoodgrowersandproducers/>



Soil Association

SEEOG 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 £8.00 per annum, £12.00 family.

Is your local school a member of SEEOG? If not, we offer free membership on receipt of application form!

The January meeting will start very promptly at 8.00pm. Our speaker has a London train to catch at 9.30pm!

## Venue

Cheryl Centre, Growing Together Community Gardens, 47 Fairfax Drive, Southend-on-Sea SS0 9AG (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase)

Please park in Prittlewell Chase and use Fairfax Drive entrance.

Refreshments are available at all meetings.

Talks are open to the public.

Please let us know if you have difficulty with transport and we will try to help.

The next committee meeting will be on Wednesday 11 January at 60 Sandleigh Road, Leigh-on-Sea, at 7.30pm.

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.

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## SE Essex Seed Potato Day      *Bookmark now!!!*      *Spuds We Like!*

In association with Leigh-on-Sea Allotment & Leisure Garden Association and SEEOG - please make a date in your shiny new 2012 diaries and help us to promote this Spud-tastic event in February. You can Chip In, Mash it up and spread the word by Facebook, Tweeting or simply telling people and/or displaying our poster, which you can now download from our website.

Look out for Alan Romans' "Guide to Seed Potato Varieties" and for some of Simon's excellent suggestions: a library cookery book stall, a favourite potato recipe swap, a poll/count for the most popular spud sold on the day, etc. We also like his idea of different communities contributing with flavoursome fillings (eg. curry, chilli sauce etc?) and look forward to some swift feedback on all these!

Of course, we now want some volunteers to help the day along as we know that putting up gazebos and setting out stock in the pouring rain takes time and oomph! Even the clear-up will be heavy work! Please let us know **ASAP** as we shall be meeting very soon to discuss arrangements!

**NFU Mutual** in Chelmsford is proud to be working with  
South East Essex Organic Gardeners.

Call our friendly team for an insurance quotation on **01245 898425**

Agent of The National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society Limited.



NFU Mutual

**Date and time:** Saturday 25 February, 10am - 2pm

**Details of event:** Over 40 varieties of potato (one third organic) sold individually at 14p per tuber.

**Venue:** Cheryl Centre, Growing Together Community Gardens, 47 Fairfax Drive, Southend-on-Sea SSO 9AG (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase)

Please park in Prittlewell Chase and use Fairfax Drive entrance.

**Admission price:** £1.00 - refreshments available

These are the varieties that we have ordered for 2012. However, we cannot guarantee that all we have ordered will be available on delivery.

**First Early,** Annabelle, Bonnie Dundee, Epicure, Foremost, Home Guard, Lady Christi, Rocket, Swift, Ulster Classic, Vanessa, Winston

**Second Early,** Anya, Bonnie, Carlingford, Celine, Gladstone, Kestrel, Marfona, Sherine (NVS), Shetland Black, Stroma, Wilja, Yukon Gold

**Early Main,** Amour (NVS), Blue Belle, King Edward, Majestic, Maris Piper, Pentland Dell, Picasso, Rooster, Stemster

**Late Main,** Kerr's Pink, Ryecroft Purple

**Organic:**

**First Early:** Colleen, Pentland Javelin, Red Duke of York, Sharpe's Express

**Second Early,** Charlotte

**Early Main,** Desiree, Orla, Salad Blue

**Late Main,** Arran Victory, Cara, Golden Wonder, Pink Fir Apple, Sarpo Mira, Valor

## **SEEOG Group Nights/Events/News**

First of all, we wish everyone, especially our new members, a very good Growing Year!

This year, we would like to feature profiles of members' growing areas – how you grow your fruit and vegetables, including the odd photo for our website, but nothing too up close and personal, of course!

This is Ron's report from the Food for Life Partnership's Bronze Award Ceremony on 1 December at a very interesting venue, High House Farm, next to a Royal Opera House outpost in Purfleet. 'It was a celebration of work going on in education in Havering, Thurrock and Essex schools. Children and staff from 15 schools across the region attended the ceremony and were presented with a Bronze Award by Charles Curtis, Mayor of Thurrock. Thirteen of the schools are catered for by Thurrock and Havering Catering Services, which has achieved the Food for Life Silver Catering Mark for its meals served to more than 90 schools in Thurrock and Havering.

Our lunch was prepared by these young representatives from their schools - most excellent and well balanced. They gave out garlics to be planted and other goodies to encourage students and staff from the junior and senior schools.

The schools presented with an award at the ceremony were East Tilbury Infants & Junior Schools; Mead Primary School, Harold Hill; Nelmes Primary School, Hornchurch; Ormiston Park Academy, Aveley; Ormiston Rivers Academy, Burnham-on-Crouch; Orsett Primary School, Grays; Parklands Junior School, Romford; St Mary's RC Primary School, Tilbury; St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Romford; Temple Sutton Primary School, Southend-on-Sea; Towers Infant School, Hornchurch; Upminster Infant School; Woodside Primary School, Grays and Wyburns Primary School, Rayleigh.

They also gave away trees for planting in gardens – a very good and interesting day. I hadn't realised how insular schools had become; the idea that Food for Life schools might have a local contact group, local events, etc. information exchange, seemed very elementary!

On 23 November the Food for Life Partnership was awarded the prestigious BBC Radio 4 Derek Cooper Award. The award recognises "unsung heroes, whose work has increased our access to, and knowledge and appreciation of, good food" - good for the Partnership of the Soil Association, Garden Organic, Health Education Council and Focus on Food.

It just illustrates how very relevant is the Peckham Experiment!'

## **Monday 16 January – starting at 8.00pm promptly!**

### **Still pioneering: food, farming and the Peckham Experiment**

In 1926, two Doctors in south London set up the Pioneer Health Centre, a unique health centre which placed good nutrition, organic food, social interaction and self-direction at its heart. Recognising that good health rested on much more than simply an absence of disease, the Peckham Experiment – as the Centre soon became known – remains a highly relevant and compelling example of the benefits of linking food, farming and health care provision. This talk by Kate McGeevor, Trustee and Secretary of the Pioneer Health Foundation, will discuss the unique approach employed by the Pioneer Health Centre and what we can still learn from its findings over 80 years later.

Kate will give an overview of the Pioneer Health Centre and then talk more specifically about the food/farming aspect and the relevance to the present day.

[www.thephf.org](http://www.thephf.org)

## **Monday 19 March**

Guest speaker from Stop GM - genetically modified plants have never been commercially grown in Britain. Public resistance to their arrival in 1997 forced GM ingredients out of supermarkets. Lobbying and direct action stopped GM crops being tested on a large scale here. But in North America, the experiment has been continuing for over a decade.

The UK government has declared its intention to be "the most pro GM this country has ever seen". Without action now, commercial growing could begin as soon as 2014. The good news is that with the right resistance, we know we can win.

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

## **Monday 21 May**

### **From gardener to grower - the business of growing salad**

Essex-born author Piper Terrett and her husband Douglas Smith began growing vegetables and keeping chickens in their back garden in Billericay in 2005. Doug had always been green-fingered and Piper became interested in home-grown food while writing the popular Frugal Life blog for MSN.co.uk and publishing her book *The Frugal Life: How to spend less and live more*. After Doug won first prize in Billericay in Bloom in 2010 for his vegetable patch, and attended a course run by salad guru Charles Dowding, he was inspired to take things further. Now based in Hertford, he is setting up his own small-scale loose-leaf salad business, grown along organic lines and locally sold. In this talk, Piper explains their journey from gardeners to small-scale commercial growers.

It's still early stage at the moment. Douglas has found a plot at a local farm, is about to do the soil samples and starting the planting plan. Luckily, Charles Dowding has agreed to give him some mentoring and help him with the planting plan, which is great news. All of this is on top of a day job in IT - so interesting!

## **Monday 16 July inc. AGM**

Andrew Henderson, Organic Crop Specialist, Rijk Zwaan UK Ltd.

The presentation will be called "From selection to consumption, a seeds story"

Andrew will include a bit about RZ/Tuckers Seeds, breeding, species available, sowing and seed storage.

<http://www.rijkszwaan.co.uk/wps/wcm/connect/RZ+UK/Rijk+Zwaan/home>

## **Monday 17 September**

Nurturing Health Project led by Milton Community Partnership – promoting the growing of fresh fruit and vegetables in the community, growing productive trees in community spaces in urban Southend-on-Sea, applying permaculture in practice - presented by Matt King, Chair of Milton Community Partnership.

Growing Together is doing a £3 per week vegetable bag scheme - organically grown vegetables and fruit grown on site by their members (with mental health problems & learning disabilities). Just go to the site (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase) to order your weekly bag. Open Mon - Fri 9 am - 4 pm.

## **Monday 19 November**

Dan Fisk, Soil Association apprentice at Audley End – to be confirmed pending his future work placement at the end of his apprenticeship.

## Allotment waiting lists in Southend-on-Sea at 31/10/11

Vincent Crescent 20; Lifstan Way 16; Sandringham Road 21; Delaware Crescent 14; Herbert Road 29; St Andrews Road 32; Bridgewater Drive 17; Edwards Hall 34; Norwich Avenue 15

Some of the people on the above waiting lists are on two, three and even four waiting lists. We have not included the waiting lists of the five Society sites because they administer their own lists. However, with the exception of the Springfield Drive site, the waiting lists for the Society sites are smaller than the waiting lists for the smaller council run sites, as their sites are much bigger with a higher turnover of plot holders.

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council reports that their waiting list has gone down, because a local farmer is now renting allotment space to residents and some have given up waiting and bought a plot for a year or so. There are still around 54 on it and the plots change hands at a rate of one or two every two to three years. They have no vacant plots.

## Crapes Fruit Farm

Sub soil is very dry and older trees will benefit from harder pruning as roots will be dying. Shallow rooted dwarf trees are ok as rain reaches them.

Andrew Tann [andrew.tann1@virgin.net](mailto:andrew.tann1@virgin.net)

## Farmers' Markets 2012

- **Leigh-on-Sea** at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road: Friday 17 February, Saturday 17 March, Friday 13 April, Saturday 26 May, Friday 29 June, Friday 20 July, Friday 24 August, Saturday 22 September, Friday 26 October, Saturday 17 November and Saturday 22 December, 09:00 – 12:00
- **Rochford** in the WI Hall, Market Square on (Saturday) 4 February, 3 March, 7 April, 5 May, 2 June, 7 July, 4 August, 1 September, 6 October, 3 November and 1 December, 09:30 – 12:30

## Finding Ancient Orchards: novel sources

'A potentially useful resource for groups looking at the history of local orchards is the forthcoming publication from the British Association for Local History. The second edition of its *Directory of Internet Sites for Local Historians* is due for release this month. Although the intended audience is those interested in local history, it also carries details of sites of with a national scope (eg Garden History, Abandoned Communities) and gives advice on assessing whether a particular site is reliable and trustworthy. The first edition of this directory sold out in a matter of weeks. The updated version (covering over 500 sites) is only available from the British Association for Local History (£4.99, inc p&p – email Dr Gill Draper on [development.balh@btinternet.com](mailto:development.balh@btinternet.com)).

Another possible source of information on orchard history is the collection of aerial photographs taken of (mainly southern and eastern) England by German Luftwaffe pilots in August and September 1940. Oliver Rackham says 'these magnificent photographs, which record almost every tree, hedge, bush, pingo, and pond in several counties, were captured by the Americans and are now in the National Archives in Washington. The fortunes of war have preserved a convincing record of what was still, in many places, a medieval landscape, much of it since damaged or defaced. (O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*, J.M. Dent Ltd, 1993 p.22) I have made a brief attempt at searching the maze which is the online US National Archives, but have not managed to find these photographs. Others who are more persistent may have more success.' Courtesy of Fruit Forum, 10 December 2011

## Food for Life Partnership/Garden Organic

The Lottery has agreed that they can use their underspend to fund the project until Easter 2012, then it looks highly likely that they may be given an additional 12 months' funding from Big in order to try to secure further funding at regional levels, hopefully through PCTs and/or Public Health. Emma Noble, FFLP Director, [enoble@soilassociation.org](mailto:enoble@soilassociation.org) and James Cleeton, Delivery Manager, [jcleeton@soilassociation.org](mailto:jcleeton@soilassociation.org) will be continuing way into 2012.

In the meantime, the good news is that Garden Organic as part of the Food for Life Partnership has produced a wealth of resources for schools, including the Food Growing Manual. These are all available to download at [www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools)

There is also a great deal of other information available including the popular 'What to do in the garden this month' pages at [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

You can continue to subscribe to the monthly Garden Organic e-newsletter that contains news, updates and links to new resources and training opportunities for schools. Additionally, Ryton Gardens hosts educational visits from schools and runs a range of courses, details of which can be found on the website.

For information about the courses and training Garden Organic can run in schools please see [http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/organicgardening/schools\\_courses\\_program,me.php](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/organicgardening/schools_courses_program,me.php)

If you have any queries regarding growing, please email [fflp@gardenorganic.org](mailto:fflp@gardenorganic.org)

Takely Primary School was awarded Gold last month, making them the only Gold school in the East of England! GOLD schools are hubs of good food culture in their community, actively involving parents and community groups in cooking and growing activity. School meals are at least 75% unprocessed, 50% local and 30% organic, and more than 70% of pupils are choosing to eat school meals. Every pupil learns to cook and has the opportunity to grow food, and groups of pupils are actively involved in the life of a local farm.

Ashlyns Catering in Essex have been awarded the prestigious silver Food for Life Catering Mark from the Soil Association, for serving fresh, healthy meals to Braintree Community Hospital and St Margarets Hospital in Epping. [www: foodforlife.org.uk](http://www.foodforlife.org.uk)

### **Friends of Yalding Organic Gardens - Update**

Just a quick note to thank those of you who are 'doing your bit' to publicise FOYOG; every 'sign-up' helps - please keep-up the good work! One more 'resource' to use and publicise please - our video 'visual celebration' at [www.foyog.org/videos/](http://www.foyog.org/videos/) - now with a musical soundtrack, added with the kind permission of England's finest acoustic roots duo, Show of Hands, plus the usual links:

Website: [foyog.org](http://foyog.org) FOYOG Sign-up: [foyog.org](http://foyog.org) Twitter: [twitter.com/FOYOG](https://twitter.com/FOYOG) Facebook: [facebook.com](https://facebook.com)

Many thanks for your continuing support. Please contact us via the website contact page if you have any questions, observations, or suggestions - John & Mag Tate

### **GM Watch – a plea from Claire and Jonathan**

Please support GMWatch in its battle to counter the massive deceptive propaganda campaign of the biotech industry. In 2008, its website suffered a series of orchestrated attacks, the last of which brought down its data bank, the heart of its activities, with the intention of making it impossible to go on with its work. With a lot of hard work, courage and determination, and the help of supporters and sympathizers, it stood up again and is now once more in full activity.

According to John Stauber, the founder of PR Watch, "The genetic engineering industry spends hundreds of millions of dollars on global PR, marketing, lobbying and buying-off of politicians. Sustaining the work of GMWatch is essential to countering this corporate political power and propaganda."

We're not asking for hundreds of millions of dollars! But we do need your support to maintain and expand our campaigning news and research service. Please give what you can to help GMWatch keep punching above its weight!

It's easy to donate: <http://www.gmwatch.org/donations> and every new donation will help us make a difference in 2012!

Claire Robinson and Jonathan Matthews [www.gmwatch.org](http://www.gmwatch.org)

### **Highscapes**

Highscapes Composting is a successful social (and local) enterprise which mixes environmental aims with business rationality. They are committed to offering an affordable, local solution for green waste recycling for local businesses, as well as individuals and communities. They offer a wide range of services which are constantly changing to suit the environment and their clients. Services include Community Composting Clubs, Raised Beds, Compost Bay, 'Bulky' Garden Waste Clearance and the 'Giant Sack' Collection Service. Composting green waste saves as much CO<sub>2</sub> as energy recovery. *'Recycling green waste as compost could match the environmental benefits of converting it into renewable energy, in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> savings, according to new German research'*. 14.04.2010 Waste Management Magazine

If you would like to place an order for any of the above services please email Daniel at [composting@highscapes.co.uk](mailto:composting@highscapes.co.uk) with your details and which service you want, or call him on 07793 225481

## Huntington's Disease Association Southend Branch

Pat Nelson needs all your Christmas stamps, which you can either take/send to 137 Rochford Garden Way, Rochford SS4 1QL. [terrynelson123@btinternet.com](mailto:terrynelson123@btinternet.com)  
Anything that you have and don't want, please ask either Pat 01702 544606 or David 01702 304698.  
<http://www.hda-southend.org.uk/>

## Manchester Drive Allotment Project

For those of you who are not yet aware, back in September I proposed our community allotment, the **DigIn**, as one of the charities at my local (Leigh) Waitrose which has their Community Matters green tokens scheme. I received a call last week to say we had been chosen to be one of the three charities in January. This means that we will get a percentage of £1,000. It will depend on how many tokens our charity gets so, if you have friends or family who live in Leigh-on-Sea, please ask them to shop at Waitrose as frequently as possible in January and put a token in for the Manchester Drive Allotment Project each time they visit Waitrose. Pauline (Spong)

## 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 have another provider of free manure, chemical free, in Barling, near Wakering.

Tel. 01702 219835

3. Our third provider is Julie Davis who has a large, well rotted manure pile in Great Wakering, ready to be taken away and put to good use, with good vehicle access. You can help yourself to a bagful, a car load or a lorry load if you want it, but please contact her first to arrange a time as her yard is kept locked for security reasons. Julie says she can't say it's organic, but she has run her land along organic guidelines, so there have been no sprays, medicines, etc. used and all their livestock were fed on organic feed, with no growth promoters or hexane, so it is completely safe for organic vegetables, etc. Tel: 07742107855

## Membership Benefits – The Soil Association

*'Of course you can (use my article) - I'm very keen on the various organic groups talking to each other and sharing ideas, articles and experiences – Peter Robinson, Membership Secretary, Norfolk Organic Group.*

Following on from November's article on Garden Organic, this month's spotlight falls on **The Soil Association**.

## Brief History

Believe it or not, The Soil Association's website is not very detailed in the origins of the Association but Peter has pieced together the following from other references:

Although the first meeting of what became The Soil Association took place in June 1945, the underlying interests which brought 60 prominent persons together for this first meeting dated back to the 1926 publication of Sir Robert McCarrison's works on his research into the relationship between food and health. Lady Eve Balfour took an interest in this work in the immediate pre-war years and, with her friend Alice Debenham, set about forming a trust in which land at their respective farms would be used for research into the part soil has to play in the nutrition of plants and animals. During the war years Eve Balfour published her initial thoughts under the title 'The Living Soil' and the summary results of the research work carried out on the research farmlands was later published as 'The Haughley Experiment' (as both farms were located in Haughley Green, Suffolk). 'The Living Soil' is available from Audrey in our library and our own copy of this book includes the (rather dry but important) The Haughley Experiment.

(References are in the Living Soil - Eve Balfour - p162-72 approx. The scientific comparative experiment was started before the war preparing the 200+ site into 2 areas to compare organic with chemical growing. Circumstances intervened to stop this true science-based analysis which was probably undertaken later by Elm Farm research - Ron)

Sir Robert McCarrison's work led to parallel research into 'whole community health' in what became known as The Peckham Experiment (1926-1950). If you are interested in this, go to [www.thepfhf.org](http://www.thepfhf.org) – fascinating reading, especially as Kate McGeevor, a Trustee, is visiting us on 16 January!

Throughout its life The Soil Association suffered from a lack of money and there was an almost continual change in land ownership and Trust arrangements at Haughley, culminating in a move to a new head office premises in Bristol in 1985 when the last of a line of benefactors, a Mr. Pye, died. The land at

Haughley lost its new organic status under the new owner and in 1987 the research farmlands were sold off.

Although that was the end of 'The Experiment', the Soil Association had, by that time, encouraged an interest in the links between 'the soil, food and the health of the people and the plant' such that offshoot organisations had been set up in various counties in Britain and in many countries all over the World. It had drawn up the first Organic Standards in 1967 and today it advises and supports organic growing and farming throughout Britain and acts as a pressure group for the acceptance of organic food. It currently provides certification for 80% of the organic food produced in the UK through their sister company, Soil Association Certification Limited. Who amongst us cannot instantly recognise their unmistakable 'underpants' symbol?

## Current Aims

The Soil Association are about 'planet friendly food and farming' and their stated objective is 'to lobby for the UK to be 100% organic by 2050'. And we are sure that all members of SEEEOG support that objective.

Current campaigning centres on:

1. Promoting the benefits of organic food and farming – enough said!
2. Food security – by lobbying for a rapid transition from our current oil and chemical-based food and farming methods to more resilient, local and organic production.
3. Food for Life – working with other organisations (including Garden Organic) to promote children's interest in food and the provision of healthy school meals.
4. GM, antibiotics and pesticides – SA lobbies against the use of GMs and the misuse of antibiotics.

The Soil Association organises an annual Organic Fortnight with events arranged to promote organic appreciation. They hold a register of organic farms throughout the UK, which run farm visits, open days and other activities. They organise training events for farmers and growers and support new entrants to organic farming through their Organic Apprenticeship Scheme.

The above represents just a few of the ways in which the Soil Association promotes organic food appreciation and production. Interested souls can wile away an afternoon or evening quite happily reading all about the organisation on their website at [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)

## Their strategy

The Soil Association launched their new strategy last year: *'The Road to 2020 - Towards healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use'*. Building on their past successes, and putting a strong emphasis on innovation and on reaching out to a wider audience, the strategy is based around two major themes: '**facing the future**' and '**good food for all**', underpinned by an ongoing commitment to '**enabling change**'. You can read it here if you've not already had a look: <http://www.soilassociation.org/Portals/0/The%20road%20to%202020.pdf>

## Member Benefits

The Soil Association is not really an organisation which gives out benefits to its members. It is more about its members supporting the aims of the Association – this is how the organisation started and this is how it proceeds today. They do not run any gardens or farms themselves so there is nothing to gain free entry to, but they do publish a quarterly magazine, 'Living Earth', which reports on current matters of concern, bursts a few incorrect media statements (like organic food is no better for you than conventional food – remember that one) and advertises 'Green' events and products. Copies of 'Living Earth' are available for consultation at SEEEOG meetings (ask Audrey or Brian).

There is no Members' Area on their website although there is '**Grow organic**', downloadable by all, on 'What to do this month in the vegetable garden' which is quite useful  
<http://www.soilassociation.org/groworganic>

## SEEEOG Involvement

We have been a 'local group' of the Soil Association for a few years now and had the great pleasure of visiting Lord Melchett's farm in July 2006. Since 2008, SEEEOG has always encouraged all Essex schools to register with the Food for Life Partnership after meeting Karen Brenchley and Diane Fisher at Fairways Primary School. Ron attended the Bronze Award Ceremony last month in Purfleet. In January, we will start to gather sign-ups to their free Supporter E-news. On average, they send 2-3 emails per month and they are a great way to stay informed about their events, campaigns and important issues.

## Readers' Suggestions

Try some of these great recipes, available from Southend-on-Sea libraries, which were contributed by refugees taking part in the Refugee Council's Sowing Seeds allotment in West London.

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/Resources/Refugee%20Council/downloads/support\\_us/RC\\_Recipe-Booklet.pdf](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/Resources/Refugee%20Council/downloads/support_us/RC_Recipe-Booklet.pdf)

Easy Beesy, a new title from the Teach Yourself series, "Get Started in Beekeeping", is an excellent guide to for the new or potential beekeeper. Authors Adrian and Claire Waring have over 70 years' beekeeping experience between them and share their knowledge and expertise in this practical guide. Helpful colour photos compliment a handy month-by-month bee calendar. "Plan Bee" by Susan Brackney (Hay House) tells you everything you ever wanted to know about the humble, hardworking unsung heroines of the food chain. This is an enjoyable guided tour around the world of bees. The book also contains practical tips on attracting bees to your garden or allotment and making your own bumble bee nest box.

## SEEOG Talks

From time to time we're asked to give talks to local organisations and 2012 will be no exception. Details are here, for interest, and just in case you wish to chip in with a helping hand!

Monday 20 February, 1.15pm: Hadleigh Afternoon WI, Methodist Church Hall, Chapel Lane, Hadleigh, opposite Morrisons

Wednesday 15 August, 8.00pm: The Royal Naval Association, British Legion Hall, London Hill, Rayleigh

## SEEOG Trips

First of all, Barnards Farm in West Horndon ('Home of the National Malus Collection and many other surprises') <http://www.barnardsfarm.eu/index.htm>; later on, if we can arrange a Saturday, a visit to Thorpe Hall Garden, Thorpe-le-Soken <http://www.essexgardenstrust.org.uk/> and The Beth Chatto Gardens in Elmstead Market, near Colchester.

Any other suggestions- a visit to Copped Hall to 'catch up?' (I think we can leave going over the Thames to another year!)

## S E Essex Women's Environmental Network

WEN has various activities planned, such as the Earth Day celebration for Saturday 21 April, and always welcomes new members. Whether you have a lot of time to give, or just want to be kept on our mailing list and come along to a meeting now and then, please contact Sharon Chan on 079 47655947 (after 6.00pm)

They were chatting over a cuppa the other day (as you do!) about whether it's true that green potatoes are poisonous, so Eileen decided (as you do!) to Google the question.

These are some of the replies she found:

Potatoes are specialized stems of the potato plant, and when exposed to light, will naturally turn green. The green is nothing more than chlorophyll, a harmless compound found in all green plants. However, when potato tubers turn green there is usually an increase in a glycoalkaloid compound called solanine. Tubers with a high concentration of solanine will taste bitter and can be harmful if eaten in large quantities. To be safe, it is best to not eat green potatoes. Consequently, it is important to store potatoes in the dark to prevent greening.

The green in the potato signals the presence of solanine, a substance which in high amounts may cause drowsiness, itching, diarrhea and vomiting, but it is safe because the chances of a single potato having levels even close to those needed to cause symptoms is very small. But solanine has an adverse effect on flavour so I would throw it away if I were you.

Potatoes naturally contain some amount of the toxin solanine and are members of the nightshade family. When exposed to sunlight, potatoes turn green under the skin and the levels of solanine are increased. Most health professionals recommend that any potatoes which have turned green be thrown away. It is probably safe if you just remove the green bits and the eyes or sprouts as they also contain high levels of solanine. Reactions to ingestion to solanine can range from mild nausea to convulsive vomiting and diarrhea. High levels cause more severe and life-threatening reactions.

## SEEOG Website

John has just added some 'Share this' facebook/twitter, etc. buttons to the site - that will show under each post - as in our 'Manchester Drive...' post, which gives a nice easy way for the post to be facebooked/tweeted, etc. There's also a link to Garden Organic at <http://seeog.org.uk/resources-information/garden-organic-membership-benefits/>

He has also added a stats function on the site dashboard, which will be interesting to see once it gathers some data.

Please let us know if you wish to be included in the Website Weekly Statistics – btw, who are the folks who visit us from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates and the US?

You can also now download our posters from <http://goo.gl/wM6PY>

## Soil Association

Abi Edgar | Membership Coordinator | Soil Association | Direct line: 0117 314 5181

The Soil Association looks forward to continuing their work in 2012, putting their new strategy into action and campaigning for healthy, humane and resilient food, farming and land use.

They enter 2012 awaiting a decision from Derbyshire County Council to find out if plans for a mega pig farm at Foston, Derbyshire will go ahead or not. With this in mind, we have accepted their free offer of a copy of Pig Business on DVD. Pig Business is a documentary that investigates the rise of factory pig farming and serves as a great introduction to the mega farms debate.

We have also offered to help with collecting the names and email addresses of people who would like to receive their Supporter E-news by passing a sign up sheet around our group - or by having a sign-up sheet on stalls at events.

And remember, if you don't receive the Supporter E-news already sign up now to make sure you're kept up to date with all their work. You can sign up by emailing her at [AEdgar@soilassociation.org](mailto:AEdgar@soilassociation.org)

## Treasurer still wanted!

We are still looking for a Treasurer as Brian will sadly be vacating his position this year. The position involves a simple book based income and expense account. It is vital to SEEOG that a replacement is found for this important and rewarding position. A smooth handover can be assured. Please contact SEEOG secretary, Carole Shorney, if you are interested. She will be glad to hear from you!

## Useful Websites

1. Gardening against the Odds awards 2011: Our winner  
Our winner, Sherborne (Gardens) allotments, is a plot that fills Francine Raymond with admiration.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardenprojects/8858173/Gardening-Against-the-Odds-awards-2011-Our-winner.html>
2. Southend in Bloom have a new website (please visit them). They are also now on Facebook (do "like" them) and on Twitter (go on, "follow" them!) Please JOIN them and, by taking part in 2012, you can help to make Southend a better place for everyone (not just us) to work, live and visit  
[www.southendinbloom.org.uk](http://www.southendinbloom.org.uk)
3. Some images and interviews from the latest Fantastic Food Exchange event held at Chalkwell Park  
<http://metalculture.com/latest-news/food-swap-30-october.html>
4. If you can't keep bees, grow flowers for them instead....  
<http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/ethicsinaction/takeaction/planbee/>
5. Food Stories at <http://www.bl.uk/learning/resources/foodstories/index.html>
6. Want to get involved with Love Food Hate Waste? Visit [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/partners](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/partners) for a wealth of free resources such as artwork templates, editorial, their campaign calendar, community toolkits and further inspiration.
7. Gardeners exposed to 2012 Olympics construction radiation hazard at <http://www.lifeisland.org/>

## Waste Busters

We are currently looking to recruit new Waste Busters - would any of your members be interested? Or if you knew of any other community groups that I could ask?

The initial training session was in December in Colchester, but there will be further events in 2012 also.

Please contact me at [waste.busters@essex.gov.uk](mailto:waste.busters@essex.gov.uk) - Louise

## SEEOG Committee

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