

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 106 – NOVEMBER 2012



Soil Association



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

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

https://www.facebook.com/?ref=tn_tnmn#!/groups/43705483846/

SEEEOG 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 SEEEOG? If not, we offer free membership on receipt of application form!

Venue

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

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

Unless stated otherwise, our speakers start at 8.00pm, but Growing Together will be open from 7.00pm to allow members to browse our Library, etc.

The next committee meeting is on Wednesday 14 November at Graham's.

Please notify Graham Oster-Ritter on grahamoster@aol.com if you wish to receive your newsletter by post/email, or to change your email address.

SEEEOG Group Nights/Events/News

Firstly, very many thanks to all those who provided contributions to make this a 'bumper edition' – secondly, we were asked at our AGM in July to include additional meetings and we have therefore slotted in another date in December. Please do all you can to support this (entailing, as it does, extra hiring charges), especially by way of our Sales Table; in other words, by buying books and plants! If there's time, we'll have our Organic Chitchat with John and Maureen – bring your gardening updates, questions and comments for discussion, then head over to the Library cupboard to change your books and dig out the magazines that we keep talking about!

Monday 19 November 2012

We have great pleasure in welcoming (Dr) Daniel Hale, Progressio's Head of Campaigns, who led their delegation at Rio+20 (United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development). Progressio is the working name of the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR). Daniel will speak about food and farming in the context of Rio20

<http://www.stakeholderforum.org/fileadmin/files/OUTREACHDIALOGUEDAY3.pdf>

Monday 17 December 2012 with Christmas Social (Please bring something festive)

'Getting the best from potatoes' with SEEEOG member Robert Wiseman, in readiness for our SE Essex Seed Potato Day event in February. So what are first earlies, second earlies, early maincrop and late maincrop? What is 'chitting'?

We already have the following factsheets in our Library:

DC3: Potato Blackleg; DC17: Potato blight; Garden Organic Factsheet GG9: Growing potatoes; GG36: Grow your own potatoes in containers; PC24: Potato pests and diseases

The British Potato Variety Database <http://www.varieties.potato.org.uk/menu.php> is also an excellent source of information.

Monday 21 January

'Sue Cushion, The Accidental Farmer at Boxes Farm, Battlesbridge'
<http://www.boxesfarm.co.uk/>

Monday 18 March

Dr Francis Rayns (Horticulture Research Manager at Garden Organic) will give a talk on green manures. These remain under utilised by organic growers even though they can bring many benefits - helping to reduce the leaching of nutrients, adding nitrogen from the air by fixation, raising levels of soil organic matter and assisting with the management of weeds, pests and diseases. Francis will discuss the particular attributes of some of the wide range of species that can be used and how green manures can best be managed in a garden situation.

Monday 20 May

Dr. Keith Tyrell, Director of [Pesticide Action Network UK](#)
The link to PAN's factsheet is here at http://bees.pan-uk.org/assets/downloads/Bee_leaflet.pdf

We've been passed these additional links on **Bees and pesticide use important information – and why we must all eat and grow organic food!**

1. There is this action related to farming and bees
http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/biodiversity/press_for_change/farming_future_bees_37308.html
2. There's also a piece in the Guardian at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/damian-carrington-blog/2012/sep/21/bees-pesticides-harm-enquiry>
3. We also spotted this blog piece http://www.foe.co.uk/news/powerful_mps_37312.html but it doesn't detail specific timescales
4. Andrew Pendleton's blog piece http://www.foe.co.uk/news/pesticides_bees_37400.html
5. And FoE's latest policy briefing is here: <http://forum.foe.co.uk/campaignhubs/MGalleryItem.php?id=877>

Monday 15 July

'Foraging with Jim Bishop' – Jim is a member of the South Essex Natural History Society.

Monday 16 September

Andrew Tann from Crapes Fruit Farm, from Aldham, near Colchester – we displayed some of Andrew's apples both at St. Laurence Orchard and Growing Together last month.
<http://crapes.wordpress.com/>

Monday 18 November and Monday 16 December

Speakers to be confirmed

Allotments

'Planting the seeds for community grown food, published 22 August 2012

How to find space to grow by thinking outside the allotment patch'

A recent survey revealed that nearly two thirds of adults want to grow their own food. Unfortunately it is increasingly difficult as local authority allotments are significantly oversubscribed - with waiting lists over ten times longer than those in 1996.

This publication gives local people practical advice on new ways to get access to less conventional sources of land and green space to grow their own food as well as suggestions for wider community involvement, helpful tips on how to get funding and examples of projects already in bloom.

http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/2204012?utm_source=Urban+Forum+Network+News+September+2012&utm_campaign=294028f544-Urban_Forum_Network_News_September_201210_4_2012&utm_medium=email

And news that's just come in: the Allotments Regeneration Initiative (ARI), which has helped revive interest in allotments and food growing across the UK over the last decade, has reached its conclusion <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk/news/1018-allotments-regeneration-initiative-concludes>

Bees in Greece – and, yes, we bought the T-Shirt!

On a recent holiday to Rhodes, we took the opportunity to visit the Island's rather fabulous "Bee Museum - in fact it's the only museum like this in the whole of Greece!!

The museum is, to quote their website, "run by Melissokomiki Dodecanesou (Beekeeping Company of the Dodecanese), is the biggest company in the Dodecanese (12 islands) producing and packaging beehive products. It was founded by N. Melissourgos and co, and cooperates with more than 70 beekeepers from all the islands of the nearby area".

The staff was very welcoming and handily for us they could quickly switch between Greek and English to chat about Queen Excluders, hive tools and crown boards and the like, as well as bee farming and Rhodian herbs and flowers. The venue provides a brilliant opportunity for visitors to see bees in transparent observation hives and look at the traditional methods and history of beekeeping on Rhodes.

The museum also has examples of beekeeping from other European countries - including hollowed out log "hives" and thatched skeps from Poland, which were truly amazing!

In the shop, we tried a selection of Rhodian honeys, a honey-based liquor which slipped down very easily (not sure what percentage proof that was!) and we sniffed and tried out some honey hand creams, thyme cosmetics, soaps and the like.

The museum website is well worth a visit (<http://www.mel.gr/en/default.asp>) and we came away with those holiday essentials - a new hive tool, an uncapping knife, some delicious Melekouni bars and the obligatory bright yellow t-shirt...

There was a lovely conclusion to our museum visit when a couple of local beekeepers gave us a free lift back to the nearby village – we then sat in the village taverna in the main square (smelling strongly of honey by this stage) and watched the world go by. Chatting with the backgammon players over strong Greek coffee, we tried some freshly made Baklava before catching the hourly bus back to Rhodes old town.

Simon & Mary Wallace

Blooming in Southend (an alternative light show!!)

On Thursday 4 October, the Mayor of Southend officially switched on the six permanent, neon, flower light sculptures in Chalkwell Park. Commissioned by Metal and made by artist Rob Haselden, in partnership with pupils from Darlinghurst Primary, School the lights have just won an award in this year's Southend in Bloom competition! For film of the official countdown to switch on, go to 5 minutes 19 seconds..10, 9, 8, 7....

For more details visit <http://www.metalculture.com/latest-news/light-sculptures-photos.html>

Crapes Fruit Farm

At last! A wet October and more months now needed like this to rescue the root systems of established trees whether they be apple or any other. It is now apparent just how stressed the apple trees were last spring and they will need nurturing to recover. Just three wet winter months won't do the trick without some human input on top in the form of pruning. A good opportunity to be quite firm with any 'growy' trees: concentrate on thinning out 3 or 4 year old wood and **don't** take a chainsaw to the older thicker branches which we hope will be able to hoard more reserves than last winter if the roots underneath are more active. Grease bands to catch the wingless female Winter moth should be applied now.

Andrew Tann

andrew.tann1@virgin.net

<http://crapes.wordpress.com/>

Farmers' Markets 2012

- **Leigh-on-Sea** at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road: Saturday 17 November and Saturday 22 December, 09:00 – 12:00
- **Rochford** in the WI Hall, Market Square on (Saturday) 3 November and 1 December, 09:30 – 12:30.

Food for Life Partnership

Garden Organic has re-launched its online Food for Life Partnership Bronze, Silver and Gold food growing manuals, a free resource to help enrolled schools achieve their awards. The manual is packed with practical advice and activities on growing organically. It gives information for all ages on how to start and maintain an organic food-growing garden and is now available in easily accessible, individual pdf chapters.

Written for Food for Life Partnership schools, the manual has a wealth of useful ideas and tips for any school wanting to garden and grow its own food. To get started, go to http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/growyourown/resources_for_schools.php

Garden Organic news

We value your interests, take the courses survey now!

The results of the survey will help them plan future programmes from 2013. Your feedback is very important in helping them to cater for your interests. The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. You can start the survey at this link https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/R2TY6C9?dm_i=4UO,10P7I,JCIKA,33YHF,1

Make your garden fruity!

Take a look at their fact sheet 'Planting fruit trees & bushes' (GG26) of top tips to grow your own abundant fruit garden with guidance on soil prep, planting and pruning.

Garden Organic members get online access to all their factsheets and guides – please contact Carole for advice, otherwise.

Online Course: Grow your own Vegetables

What is the course about?

Want to pick your own fresh peas and taste home-grown organic tomatoes? Start from the basics on growing your own vegetables in your own garden or allotment. Learn the important stages and cycles of growing vegetables and acquire new skills for sowing and reaping a harvest of fresh, seasonal, organic veg. You can take the course now from <http://www.lovetolearn.co.uk/grow-veg?aid=GOR01> - some feedback, please, if you decide to take this course!

GMWatch news

In the light of the recently published study by Prof Gilles-Eric Seralini's team showing a Monsanto GM maize, as well as tiny amounts of Roundup, caused massive tumours, premature death, and organ damage when fed to rats over their lifespan, they devoted the whole of the first part of their Monthly Review to considering this study in detail, particularly in the light of the ferocious backlash from the GM lobby and regulatory bodies.

Since the release of the Seralini study the GMWatch site has been coming under aggressive Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attacks, peaking on the day EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) released its rushed preliminary rejection of the study. GMWatch are doing everything they can to counter the attacks and keep their site online. They currently have to operate a simplified home page in order to do this, but the main site content is currently all still available. If the attacks do force their site offline at any time, please remember that you can follow all the latest news and links to sources via Twitter. You can do this even without being on Twitter yourself by going to this site and just scrolling down through the tweets: <https://twitter.com/gmwatch>

Claire Robinson, their Monthly Review editor, says this is an important time to stay in touch!

Website: <http://www.gmwatch.org>

Profiles: <http://bit.ly/12UAI2>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/GMWatch>

Facebook: <http://bit.ly/c6OnaX>

Love Food Hate Waste Campaign

Do you deliver or are involved in courses/workshops or day-to-day work or volunteering that involves food preparation, cookery, food hygiene, nutrition, budgeting, independent living or parenting skills?

Do you want to find out more about

- The [Love Food Hate Waste Campaign?](#)

- How to access free the Love Food Hate Waste resources
- How to enable your learners to maximise food resources and minimise waste
- Saving money with cookery
- The principles and practicalities of waste prevention in Essex
- How to embed principles into your work

You will also have the opportunity to meet the Essex CC Waste Prevention/Love Food Hate Waste team and therefore will be able to find out answers to any other questions you may have.

A free training course is being held on Friday 30 November 2012 at the Adult Community Learning centre, Spinks Lane, Witham. CM8 1EP

Please contact lisa.cross2@essex.gov.uk to find out more about it and book a place.

Lisa Cross

Waste Prevention & Recycling Officer

01245 437793 www.recycleforessex.co.uk <http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>

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. Julie Davis 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

4. Our most recent provider is Hummerstone Farm, a family run farm near Billericay. They raise their own pigs and sheep producing free-range organic meat which they deliver locally every Saturday. They also have free-range chickens to provide fresh eggs. Parts are very well rotted, others partially, with manure from chickens, pigs and horses. They would ideally want it to go all in one lot as it is then easier to deliver within 15 miles of Billericay. Contact them on 07850789000 or on Facebook through their farm page <http://www.facebook.com/groups/Hummerstone.farm/>

Members' news

Jam, Jelly, Honey and Sheds - Thank you

Just a quick line to say thanks to everyone at SEEOG who parted with cash over the last year to buy our homemade preserves and commission shed portraits. Despite the poor weather, we still produced a good range of jelly, including blackcurrant, redcurrant, bramble, tayberry and crab apple jelly along with plum and raspberry jam. This year, over £75 was raised for two charities - SPANA and Southend & District Cats Protection League.

Our two backyard beehives were also very busy and Hive 1 (the "Brightwell Buzzers") and Hive 2 (the "Paglesham Ladies") produced some truly delicious honey. Our thanks go out to Dan from Essex Bees for all his help this season.

Fifty Sketches of Sheds...

Why not immortalise your shed in pen and ink?

"Shed portraits" have proved really popular with fellow allotment holders, keen to have an original portrait of their favourite space. To date, Mary's sketches have helped to raise over £120 for SPANA. Copies can be viewed via a "shed gallery" on the July 2009 section of the "Humble Designs" website <http://www.humbledesigns.co.uk/> (Big thanks to Graham Burnett for hosting these online).

Mary said "I like to sketch for fun and relaxation rather than personal profit, so it has been a brilliant way to combine the two and by exchanging my shed drawings in return for cash donations to SPANA,

everyone wins - it's been a really successful project. We are keen to help the charity further and welcome the chance to draw more shed portraits for local residents if they want to get in touch".

Please email cybershed2007@hotmail.com if you wish to commission a shed portrait or, to ask for more details, call 01702 311643.

With the clocks 'gone back' and Winter 'drawing on', Simon suggests the following 'good reads':

1. "Vintage reads" - book from Persephone Books www.perspephonebooks.co.uk
2. "Good things in England by Florence White "One of the great English cookbooks, full of delightful, delicious recipes that actually work" - Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
3. "Gardeners Nightcap" by Muriel Stuart (1938
4. "Good Food on the Aga" by Ambrose Heath (1933) - with illustrations by Essex-based artist Edward Bawden

And finally a plea about **SPANA** www.spana.org / <https://www.facebook.com/spanacharity> - the Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad), which is the charity for the working animals of the world. Across Africa and the Middle East, SPANA clinics treat hundreds of thousands of donkeys, horses, mules, camels and livestock every year. Their education programme teaches children and owners respect and compassion for animals. During conflict, drought and natural disaster, their emergency programme gets help to animals and the communities who depend on them, whenever and wherever they're needed.

Simon and Mary

New members

When you join SEEEOG, not a lot will happen in the beginning. If you join on Group Night, you can collect a current newsletter from Carole, our Secretary. Alternatively, you can download a newsletter from SEEEOG's website at <http://seeog.org.uk/resources-information/newsletters/> - our website will also give you lots of useful information. In future, you will receive a newsletter bi-monthly either by email or post. We do not issue receipts or membership cards at present on order to keep down costs.

News from S E Essex Women's Environmental Network

As the summer has drawn to a close we've had a busy and fun programme of events starting with an 'Away Day' at a beach hut in Thorpe Bay. The sun shone and we whiled away the day with friends - making plans for the coming year, sharing lunch, having a swim (some of us!) and watching the world go by. Not a bad way to spend a day at all!

Then came our involvement in the Apple Day events when our main input was in organising the Harvest Supper at St Mark's Church Hall in Southend. If you didn't come then I hate to have to tell you: You missed a lovely fun evening! The wonderful spread of food mainly from our allotment included pumpkin soup and marrow dahl and a variety of apple desserts - a rare gastronomic organic feast!

To give you some idea of how successful the evening was we'll give you a little example of the thanks we received after the evening: "I just wanted to say thank you so much for this event - it was such an enjoyable evening. Having a young family we don't get out much in the evenings together because I worry about the children being too tired or noisy or running about and disrupting the evening.... you all were accommodating and we had a really lovely evening, probably the nicest evening out we've had together as a family this year." Now that really makes all the hard work worthwhile!

In recent months we've been working on our programme of 're-skilling' which really started at our Earth Day celebration earlier in the year and which we are continuing at our monthly meetings which are held at Growing Together in Southend on the third Thursday in each month. We've already had crochet lessons from Carol (Ferrett) and plans are afoot to learn about willow weaving and bread making. We are always looking for people to teach us new skills or, if you'd like to be kept updated on what we are doing, please contact Sharon on 079 4765 5947.

News from Trust Links

Trust Links is a local charity that aims to support people and build communities. Growing Together, their founding project, is a garden of approx 1 acre maintained by service users to encourage socialisation, confidence, exercise and education/training. It comprises a growing area which supplies vegetables for sale to the general public, as well as a community area which is open to the general public.

Trust Links have recently been awarded £300,000 from the Big Lottery Fund to transform another community garden from a disused allotment site in Shoeburyness and they will work with members of the local community and local schools to develop the community garden. There's further news at <http://trustlinks.webs.com/> - including their Christmas Open Day on Saturday 8 December 2012 at 11.00am to 2.00pm.

RSPB South Essex Marshes: events in November 2012

Louise has just sent us details of their Nocturnal Nature Night and their Wildlife Garden Plant Sale. If you would you like their events programme each month by email, please send a note to louise.davies@rspb.org.uk

SE Essex Seed Potato Day: Saturday 23 February

In association with Leigh-on-Sea Allotment & Leisure Garden Association and SEEOG - please note the date now! With the 'spirit of volunteering' seen at the Olympics.....well, we do need some volunteers ourselves to help with the preparation early Saturday morning and helping to 'stack and store' after the event. Please do get in touch sooner rather than later, when we're all lamenting the usual lack of help, etc. etc.....

We cannot guarantee that all we have ordered will be available on delivery – so check our website for updates at <http://seeog.org.uk/> - you can order in advance, if you wish, by completing and returning the attached form. And look out for Alan Romans' 'Guide to Seed Potato Varieties!' on the day!

o) After a variety name = organically grown

What are first earlies, second earlies, early maincrop and late maincrop? *Scroll to the bottom for an explanation*

First Earlies

Bonnie Dundee, Colleen (o), Epicure, Foremost, Home Guard, Lady Christl, Red Duke of York (o), Rocket, Sharpe's Express (o), Swift, Ulster Classic, Vanessa, Winston

Second Earlies

Anya, Bonnie, Carlingford, Charlotte (o), Gladstone, Kestrel, Marfona, Shetland Black, Stroma, Wilja

Early Maincrop

Amour (NVS), Blue Belle, Desiree (o), Highland Burgundy Red, International Kidney, King Edward, Majestic, Maris Piper, Nicola, Orla (o), Pentland Dell, Picasso, Rooster, Salad Blue (o), Stemster

Late Maincrop

Arran Victory (o), Cara (o), Golden Wonder (o), Kerr's Pink, Pink Fir Apple (o), Ryecroft Purple, Sarpo Mira (o), Valor (o)

The terms first/second earlies, early maincrop and late maincrop are jargon from many years ago. In reality, it only describes the length of the potato's growing season. They are in order of growing time so, if they are all planted at the same time, the first earlies are the early summer crop, closely followed by second earlies through to some late maincrops that will still grow in October given the chance.

Two generations ago, working class people found the time to plant potatoes at Easter and would earth them up as necessary to keep the frosts from killing the growth. Within each category there is variation in growing season length and local conditions will affect the length, too. It just gives you some idea of how long before you crop. Many people plant potatoes late, sometimes very late to get late "new" potatoes. Your ability to do this is governed by the dormancy of the tuber. If they begin to chit, you have to give them light to stop them growing too long before entering the ground. Chitting with light and water can give a plant a head start before growing in the ground but it does not extend the growing season. It is "prematurely aging" the potato. Clearly it is a "luxury" that commercial growers can never contemplate.

Potato lovers - help save the Sarpo

This information arrived from several sources re a staple of the organic vegetable patch, the Sarpo potato, which may become a thing of the past if we don't come together to support the Sarvari Trust to save our spuds. The Trust breeds non-GM, blight-resistant potatoes that don't need constant spraying. These are known as Sarpo varieties.

They have a promising new seedling (let's call it Crow, short for Crowdfunded for now) to extend their Sarpo range. They need to test Crow's performance against standard varieties in the field/garden and in the kitchen. Then they can send seed of Crow for government testing (very expensive) over two growing seasons. If the regulators agree that Crow would make a useful new variety, they will award it National List status. Then the variety can make a big contribution to really sustainable food production in UK and abroad. They need £5000 to help them do this.

The Trust can't get grant funding for this kind of work because it is thought to be near market research and therefore a private matter. Breeders of GM resistant potatoes do get grant support! So, if you join them by donating funds, time or skills, it can make all the difference.

As a backer, you can participate in their research by testing Crow and sending the Trust your results. <https://www.buzzbnk.org/ProjectDetails.aspx?projectId=84>

And a postscript from Julian Turner, East Anglia Potato Day

'The Sarvari Trust has been squeezed for funds from the outset. Its origins are the cultivars that were developed in Bulgaria to feed its population when the Stalinist era was still in full swing. The operation in Bangor has been inspirational in producing so much with so little support. Its director, David Shaw, was our speaker one year back in the Giffords Hall days. I will just remind folks that, in addition to the Sarpo prefixed varieties, there are also Blue Danube and Kifli. <http://sarvari-trust.org/in-the-pipeline.html> is worth a look.'

SEEOG library

Unfortunately we need a new Librarian as Brian and Audrey have joined the Triple H Community Choir which practices on Monday evenings during term times. They have left the library lending book in immaculate condition, which is in the cupboard with the books. Any book may be borrowed by members at a cost of 20p per book for each 2-month period. There are also back copies of Garden Organic's The Organic Way, the PAN journals, the Soil Association's Living Earth and the Norfolk Organic Group's newsletters. Please do contact us if you can help on Group Night, as things can get a little 'busy' sometimes.....

SEEOG schools

This was in the Guardian recently:

<http://www.facebook.com/l/hAQHwGCY6/www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/sep/21/gardens-schools-rhs-campaign>

How to set up and run a successful school garden

1. Get the head and teachers on side to make sure the garden is part of the school development plan and seen as a key curriculum resource.
2. Develop an annual plan that fits the school year: growing crops that can be harvested before or after holidays and planning maintenance over the long summer break.
3. Ensure school gardening doesn't rely on the enthusiasm of a single person – setting up a small group will ensure continuity.
4. Start with a few simple crops you can harvest quickly to get children and staff excited about growing.
5. Plan for fundraising so the garden becomes self-sustaining.
6. Try to involve families: send produce home with children to be cooked and eaten or ask for help building the garden.
7. Look to the wider community: approach local businesses and groups for help in giving time or providing resources.
8. Make sure the children are involved at all stages, from planning and designing to harvesting and tasting, so they learn new skills and feel the garden is really theirs.

Schools can register free for the campaign at rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening

SEEOG Website - <http://seeog.org.uk/>

1. If you get the chance to look at the website on an iPhone or other Smartphone, please do – John Tate has installed a 'mobile theme' that reformats and simplifies the site for the small screen - but still offers the chance to switch back to the normal format, if required.

Some feedback would really be much appreciated!

2. New posts include <http://seeog.org.uk/2012/09/top-of-the-crops-booklet-now-available>

3. Graham Burnett's 'Apple Fun Day' photos are here at <http://seeog.org.uk/apple-fun-day-2012/>

Soil Association

The Soil Association's Keep Britain Buzzing campaign wants to ban neonicotinoid pesticides and is working to promote bee-friendly organic farming so that everyone can make a difference by simply changing their shopping habits. And, as a thank you, they'll send anyone who donates £5 or more a campaign badge and pack of bee-friendly organic Phacelia seeds.
<http://www.soilassociation.org/supportus/keepbritainbuzzing>

Enduring silences

'Over 50 years after Rachel Carson predicted a silent spring, we face a new and more insidious chemical threat', says Emma Hockridge in the current edition of 'Silent Spring' – 'Exactly 50 years later, we face an almost identical catastrophe'. See current magazine in our library.

Most cotton clothes in shops are GM

Three-quarters of the cotton clothes bought in shops are made from genetically modified crops, according to experts. Sean Ferringo, author of a book about the industry, said that while only 12 countries grow GM crops, they account for most of the world's cotton production. In India, up to 90% of the cotton is now genetically engineered, with the majority of crops in China and the US also GM. The Soil Association is so worried the use of GM cotton has been adopted without full consultation that it has launched the Organic Cotton Initiative, urging consumers to choose organic for environmental reasons. A spokeswoman from the organisation explained that GM cotton production can involve dangerous pesticides and gives farmers little control over their crops.

Have you cottoned on yet?

Have you cottoned on yet? That's the question Peter Melchett, policy director of the Soil Association, asked textile-industry leaders at the Sustainable Textiles Conference in Hong Kong last month. Find the facts and pledge your support for organic cotton at www.cottonedon.org

Southend apple days

Contrasting days, but the same underlying worries about the dearth of apples, 30-50% of last year's crop locally was usual.

Saturday 13th, at St Laurence Traditional Orchard: the weather was fine, which meant we didn't need "gazebos". Just as well, as Growing Together's truck was out of action and we were saved by the kind help of Nick Bali who ferried our things to and fro. Many thanks, Nick. There were a good number of visitors who could enjoy being able to buy various apples, taste before buying and watch the juicing by Rob (assisted by his and other children), taste the vibrant fresh juice, helping to mash and press, too. Andrew Tann provided a fine display of 50 different apples from his orchards despite having only 4% of last year's crop (veg growing alternative to get by – see <http://crapes.wordpress.com/>).

Children could scavenge for hidden creatures, come across the story book area; the display about the local history of this Eastwoodbury area, a map of original trees and the new plantings since 2005, the improvements to the species count by good management, that to some may look like neglect or is it habitat diversity?

There was a raffle, plants to buy, Essex produce for sale, Women's Environmental Network local group with info and soup; there was time to ask about pruning, there was a BBQ and teas and drinks stall and at times Mick was singing and playing his banjo.

Feedback seemed to agree that numbers were more than last year -100+?

Saturday 20th evening was the SEEWEN harvest supper of allotment grown soups and apple themed sweets, a very gentle and social time to talk whilst enjoying good food of this season. Thanks to all who made this event possible, especially Corinne.

Sunday 21st - Apple Day as Common Ground founded it. This was weather-wise very different but equally seasonal with rain - we did need the gazebos. The polytunnel provided dry conditions for the apple display and the apple pressing. Children helped to macerate and press more apples to give juice for people to taste. It may look "disgusting" but the taste changed this person's mind! (Thanks to the preparer who quartered a bucket-full). Again, there were apples for sale, additional apples from Mo at Hilltop Farm, to taste before buying.

Those under the pergola were a little sidelined - architecture and weather - SEEOG and SEEWEN (cold, wet and windy!) Hot drinks and cakes, raffle and children`s activities inside the Cheryl Centre; Essex produce, plants and games were all available. Numbers were good considering the weather; money was taken and apples are still available at Growing Together and SEEOG talk evening in November.

These events happen in the name and cause of widening and deepening people`s understanding of locality, history and diversity of apples, orchard life, taste and a chance to appreciate this and much more with people, whilst enabling them to learn more about the organisations who have come together to run these days, each providing their contribution to these celebration events.

Ron Bates, with thanks to Graham Burnett and John Tate for these photos at <http://seeog.org.uk/apple-fun-day-2012/>

Southend Library Services Review

It has come to our notice that the library service is under review in the current economic climate. Our alarm bells started ringing when hearing that local branches could be closed. Whatever your feelings, could we ask you to spend ten minutes, if you haven't already, by filling in the online questionnaire? www.southend.gov.uk/libraryreview

Southend schools have real "Flower Power"

At the annual school's gardening awards ceremony, which took place at the end of September at Leigh Community Centre, the In Bloom Team recently presented awards to enthusiastic youngsters, staff and members of youth projects from across the town.

The aim of the evening was to celebrate officially the green achievements and creative art work of the Borough's many younger gardeners.

Based on 'Britain in Bloom', Southend in Bloom is a free floral and environmental competition which encourages local residents, community groups, businesses and schools to take part and so help make the town look as attractive as possible.

On the SEEOG website is a gallery of photos taken at schools across the Borough.

<http://seeog.org.uk/2012/10/southend-in-blooms-schools-awards/>

For more about next year's competition visit <http://www.southendinbloom.org.uk/>

Tips and hints

Tips for ensuring your wormery keeps going all through the winter.

- 1: Try and move the wormery somewhere out of the rain - a shed or garage is perfect for over wintering as it will help keep the frost, as well as the rain, off. If this isn't possible keep it as close to a house wall as possible so it gains some heat and is at least a little sheltered from the wind, rain and frost. (A bit of bubble wrap will help too)
- 2: Make sure you have a moisture mat on top of your worms. They keep the worms in the dark (so they work better), dryer and warmer. It's worth noting that the worms will slow down a bit as it gets colder, anyway, so every little helps to keep them active.
- 3: You'll be less inclined to venture out and won't have so much veg to water/feed anyway, but do make sure you keep an eye on your wormery sump. Empty it regularly - you don't want it to fill and potentially drown your worms.
- 4: Whilst your worms will slow down when it gets really cold and in extremes they will congregate in the centre of your bin - they will still eat your waste so feed regularly with your kitchen waste - generally they keep going.

Websites & Information

1. A reminder to keep your eye on the Community Land Advice website for new information, resources and news of events, as a number of events are taking place as part of The Big Dig, with Community Land Advisors running workshop on issues covering areas such as Leases

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

2. The Huntington's Disease Association Southend Branch still needs all your stamps, which you can take/send to Pat (137 Rochford Garden Way, Rochford SS4 1QL); Tel. 01702 544606; email terrynelson123@btinternet.com

<http://www.hda-southend.org.uk/>

3. Blight Warning! Blightwatch.co.uk has been working together with ADAS to develop this management tool which is available to all users free of charge. You can sign on for alerts at www.blightwatch.co.uk.

4. "Selling allotment produce, is it legal, is it right?" <http://www.organiclea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/sellingallotmentproduce.pdf>

5. Welcome to Local Food - Local Food is a £57.5 million programme that distributes lottery grants to a variety of food-related projects to help make locally grown food accessible and affordable to local communities.

<http://www.localfoodgrants.org/>

<http://www.localfoodgrants.org/public/press/morethanjusttheveg.pdf>

6. Eileen was passed this link at the Apple Fun Day at Growing Together -

<http://www.lendwithcare.org/?gclid=CLHEy9zLobMCFcbLtAod9wwAVg>

What she especially likes is that it is supported by the Co-op which, she guesses, cuts down the chance of it being a scam with the money going into the wrong pockets! She's going to ask our contact to come along to one of WEN's meetings to tell them of her experience of lending to the scheme and will let us know if/when that happens in case you'd like to come along.

7. Interesting green community project and a book about sheds (apparently!)

<http://fullfrontal.org.uk/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2212311/Fifty-SHEDS-Grey-Man-erotic-shed-porn-Twitter-account-won-90-000-followers-sees-obsession-turned>

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