

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS
NEWSLETTER NO: 108 – MARCH 2013
<http://seeog.org.uk/>



Soil Association

<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, etc.

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 Monday 11 March at Ron'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.

February meeting

We've been experimenting with Bob's Voice Recorder but haven't quite 'tweaked' it yet – hopefully, more success this month!

Sue was NO accidental farmer but a NATURAL farmer in her compassionate approach. Her pathway to the degree of farming she now undertakes was. Her story was hilariously told at times; the moves from a few hens for eggs to sales of not only eggs but chickens, then chicken houses. When the chance of 12 acres came up and 2 weaners, it was a herd that came and all the paraphernalia of pork sales. (CHECK OUT BOXES FARM). Her herd of 12 sows and one boar living with no sign or thought of farming intensively, and in practice organic, the lives of these intelligent social animals was related. It was a very interesting, enthusiastically received talk - compassionate farming.

<http://www.boxesfarm.co.uk/>

SE Essex Seed Potato Day

If you missed the day, sorry, you will have to wait until next year. We had 38 potato varieties on offer. The price per tuber was 14p, which was cheaper than you could buy in most garden centres. For this, we have to thank our suppliers of Scottish seed who have had an awful year to grow and harvest their crops. In fact, some of the varieties we would have liked to sell were still in the ground where machinery could not get in and dig them up.

As usual, this was hosted by Growing Together; providing storage for our seed potatoes and gazebos, use of their truck to collect, along with goodwill and deeds to prepare the venue, whilst on the day providing tea and cakes; leek and potato soup, baked potatoes with a raffle, music; a warm venue for

SEEOG's stall and the education worker of the new Essex Wildlife Trust centre in Belfairs Woods. The seed potato hardcore were the LOSALGA and SEEOG folk who organised the ordering, bags, setting out, collecting monies, Ray with a successful trial of onion set sales(90% sold on the day); hoisting gazebos to give a protected entry/exit and payment area. This has by dint of space to be an outdoor event. Despite snow flurries and a cold east wind, 120 people paid entry and the largest % of seed potatoes was sold. The atmosphere of the event was great; people enjoyed the event as a social occasion for the Growing Together folk, working together with South East Essex Seed Potato Day to show that partnership working achieves and does not belong to anyone but all who organise and are part of the event. Thanks to all involved - we need to appreciate everyone's contribution.

We've been advised by more than one person that gardening has taken a knock because of two wet summers and this would be why the East Anglia Potato Day's patronage was down this year. Still, it's probably early days for us to be aware of any trend.

Btw, Simon has kindly updated his Cheap as Chips factsheet oh so slightly for the website at <http://seeog.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Cheap-as-Chips-factsheet-Feb-2013.pdf>

Monday 18 March

One of our two 'keynote' talks.....we are extremely pleased that Dr Francis Rayns, Horticulture Research Manager at Garden Organic, will return after many years to give another talk on green manures. He said 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. Can we have a really good attendance, please?

Monday 20 May

Dr. Keith Tyrell, Director of [Pesticide Action Network UK](http://pan-uk.org), presents 'Bee Declines and the Link with Pesticides' - the link to PAN's factsheet is here at http://bees.pan-uk.org/assets/downloads/Bee_leaflet.pdf

The following link will take you to a series of fact sheets provided by PAN UK on all aspects of bees and pesticides. This is a great resource to get you started looking at the issues. And below that are other suggestions of what you can do to help save our bees and pollinators, which you can access yourself at <http://bees.pan-uk.org/what-can-you-do>

Different routes of pesticide exposure
Sub-lethal and chronic effects of neonicotinoids on bees and other pollinators
Serious shortcomings in assessing risks to pollinators
Different regulatory positions on neonicotinoids across Europe
Can restrictions on systemic insecticides help restore bee health?
What could farmers do to rely less on neonicotinoids?
Opportunities to expand and improve pollinator habitats
Action on neonicotinoid and other bee-toxic pesticides
Bee Declines and the Link with Pesticides

Monday 15 July

We have had to postpone Jim's talk on foraging until next year – so watch this space in case we can encourage someone down from the Women's Farm & Garden Association!

Monday 16 September

A welcome return by Andrew Tann, from Crapes Fruit Farm

Crapes Fruit Farm is located just five miles west of Colchester, Essex, and only one mile north of Marks Tey Railway Station, within easy reach of the A12. From Stansted (M11) – just 30 miles. Their address is Rectory Road, Aldham, Colchester, Essex CO6 3RR. Telephone: 01206 212375.

Their peaceful, family orchard of fifteen acres is rich with a range of birds (skylark, wren and woodpecker, for example), insects (including dragonflies), and plant life. They also see deer, stoats and many rabbits living in the orchards. Some of the insects and bats that inhabit the premises are

predators of aphids and other fruit pests, helping to keep down the population of unwanted, fruit-harming wildlife!

Andrew, the eldest of the third generation of Tanns at the farm, is dedicated to the production of apples – which taste like apples should. Crapes Fruit Farm has a collection of many varieties of apple which was compiled by Andrew's father, John Tann. These include very traditional and lesser-known varieties such as Blenheim Orange and D'arcy Spice.

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

Monday 18 November

Jacqui Apostolides presents an update to Broad Oak Herbs, an organic, biodynamic herb farm in the beautiful Essex countryside. They specialise in bespoke artisan Traditional English Herbal Medicines for professional Herbalists and Practitioners.

All production and quality control at Broad Oak Herbs is carried out, or very closely supervised, by a medical herbalist with much expertise and passion in the art of preparing herbal remedies.

Broad Oak Herbs are committed to quality and environmentally friendly growing and production methods. They constantly strive to increase the range of herbs that they grow in their flourishing herb field in Essex.

<http://www.broadoakherbs.co.uk/>

Monday 16 December

Either Audley End's Walled Kitchen Garden - the walled garden is run on strictly organic lines and, with its glasshouses, bothy and potting shed, is a fascinating example of the workings of a Victorian kitchen garden.....

Or a showing of 'A Farm for the Future' - Wildlife film maker, Rebecca Hosking, investigates how to transform her family's farm in Devon into a low energy farm for the future, and discovers that nature holds the key.

Allotment news

Periodically we ask parish and town councils for details of their waiting lists. Here are the ones that have so far responded:

Ashingdon Parish Council has eight people on their waiting list '...and is currently looking for sites'.

Hockley Parish Council has 35 people on its allotment waiting list. 'There are no allotments in the village currently, but there may be a possibility that land could be available in the future.'

[Leigh-on-Sea Town Council](#) has 14 people on its waiting list at present.

Rochford Parish Council has about ten residents on the waiting list for an allotment.

A campaign called 'Stop the proposed closure of Farm Terrace Allotment in Watford' has recently been launched. The outline planning in 2007 of the Health Campus in Watford excluded the closure of this allotment. A change has taken place and this historic (1896) terraced allotment is now in danger West Watford & Oxhey Garden & Allotment Society

http://38degrees.uservoice.com/forums/78585-campaign-suggestions/suggestions/2982132-stop-the-proposed-closure-of-farm-terrace-allotmen?tracking_code=060c38789a5bd51c683fedc8b95ebcd8

This little film that Graham Burnett created about the campaign to save Springfield Drive allotments back in 2005 is a timely reminder! Photos by Fred Robinson and Keith Baxter, words by Bill Ferrett, performed by Graham Burnett.....

We always enjoy watching this video - Graham Burnett's handywork !!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz6ahuijts4&feature=youtu.be>

And, finally, we've received news from Manchester Drive that they will be holding their Open Day on Sunday 1 September.

Book suggestion: 'Farmers of 40 Centuries: Organic Farming in China, Korea and Japan' by Professor FH King

I can truly recommend this book most highly. It is a scientific study of Asian farming as it was up till 1911. Prof. King travels widely and makes positive comparisons to the American systems and

canalisations as they were then. One can gloss over all the statistics and chemistry, but take on board the fact that not a single item was ever wasted – absolutely everything was either eaten or composted; even the earthen floorings and earthen walls and earthen beds, which after about three years' use became moist but rich in phosphates, were laid back on the fields.

There are pictures of the rainy-weather clothing used whilst working, ie. bamboo mantles and bamboo hats, and the author describes the housing, living conditions and animal care of the farming peasants, along with crop sowing, and harvesting; they even managed to have the three phases of a crop cycle growing simultaneously in the same field (ie. seedlings, flowering and mature).

If our present system of food production should for any reason be annihilated, then these systems described will probably be the ones we shall have to go back to! In those days the farming was a full time profession, summer and winter, employing the whole family.

An anecdote

According to the programme 'Costing the Earth' on Radio 4 last month, Japanese farmers are disappearing, their average age now being 65 (food is imported, and special home-grown tomatoes cost £2 each, and a box of cellophane-pesticide engulfed apples cost £100 now).

'**The Living Soil**' by Lady Eve Balfour, one of the main founders of the Soil Association - this book is really well worth reading. Like Prof. King, the authoress propounds the value of composting and describes various experiments she made over years with different consistencies and different methods. It is indeed a scientific book but written in easy-flowing language, and chemistry and physiology are well described. On page 110, there are pictures of predaceous fungi, capturing and devouring eelworms – it's absolutely fascinating.

Lady Balfour is very interested in the nourishment of the population and proposes the use of FRESH vegetables and fruits and cites the lifestyle of the Hunza tribe living in N. India by the Himalayas, who enjoy very good health and physique.

I found it a most enjoyable book, loaded with good information - MEM

PS: Do check this book out – and there's more information on this subject in our January 2012 newsletter as you can see from this link at http://seeog.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SEEEOG_Newsletter_2012_01.pdf

Crapes Fruit Farm, February update

The New Year is now well with us and yet the land still draws heavily on the feet. The not impossible scenario of a 'February fill dyke' situation must be borne in mind.

The cold has been welcome, though the land being saturated means that it will take longer to cool in itself and then again later in the Spring longer to warm up to any depth. Worm activity has now resumed, they having retreated during the wettest time in December. Our total rainfall here for 2012 amounted to 675mm (bear in mind that most of this fell between 1 April and the end of the year).

Pruning the apple trees highlights to us just how they have reacted to the extremes of the last two seasons. Growth is either spindly, or the more spurring varieties have just extended their network of buds (many of them of low viability). We have adopted a firm approach, guessing that the root systems are compromised by the level of saturation and lack of oxygen deep down. The principle remains the same; that of spacing the fruiting area of the tree to enjoy light at all times and to encourage rapid drying, following rain, to reduce the opportunities for Apple Scab in particular.

We do not use grease bands to prevent caterpillar attack, but rely on our considerable population of small birds foraging within the bark crevices and around, under the tree canopy.

Our old 1963 Ferguson tractor currently is away for an engine rebuild. On its return, a pruning pulveriser will be attached to clear up where we have been so far LAND CONDITIONS PERMITTING!

In our Dutch Light Structure, carrots have been sown ready for June /July bunching. Beetroot will follow shortly. First parsnips are just being sown outside. There are just a few spring greens remaining. Andrew and Benn

Discover Wildlife Prittlewell Priory - Priory Park Sun 5 & Mon 6 May, 11 - 4

We have been invited to this event and have chosen to attend on Monday 6 May. The event will include a number of stalls of various wildlife organisations including Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Essex Bee-keepers, Buglife (hopefully), Badger Protection Group etc. There will be some children's activities, pond-dipping, bug hunts, and possibly tree-trail and birding walks; also 'Snakes Alive' with live reptiles and Roger Payne will be putting some large insects on display.

Eco fair at Christ Church Rayleigh, Crown Hill: Saturday 11 May, 11 - 3

They are holding an 'eco fair' at their church to promote awareness about the environment and sustainable living and as an informative day about solar p.v. which they have just had installed on the roof. Can anyone assist, here, please – ditto the above!

Farmers' Markets 2013

These are the two markets where we have a stall and always appreciate help, produce and plants where available!

- **Leigh-on-Sea** at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road: Friday 15 March, Friday 19 April, Friday 17 May, Friday 21 June, Friday 19 July, Friday 16 August, Friday 20 September, Friday 18 October, Friday 15 November and Saturday 21 December, 09:00 – 12:00
- **Rochford** in the WI Hall, Market Square on (Saturday) 2 March, 6 April, 4 May, 1 June, 6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 5 October, 2 November and 7 December, 09:30 – 12:30.

Friends of Yalding Organic Gardens

To recap and refresh, Yalding Organic Gardens started with the generous gift of 10 acres of land, and a sum of money in trust, from Donald and Pixie Cooper, who owned an organic farm at Yalding; with the intention of setting-up a display garden for the Henry Doubleday Research Association – now Garden Organic.

<http://www.foyog.org/about/>

You can read the February update at

<http://www.foyog.org/2013/02/update-feb-2013/>

Website: [foyog.org](http://www.foyog.org)

FOYOG Sign-up: [foyog.org](http://www.foyog.org)

Twitter: twitter.com/FOYOG Facebook: [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/foyog)

Garden Organic news: Food growing set to be on National Curriculum

Garden Organic is delighted its long campaign for every schoolchild to have a chance to grow their own food looks set to succeed - with "horticulture" due to become part of the National Curriculum. Horticulture has been introduced as a key activity for design and technology in the draft version of the National Curriculum. The final version of the National Curriculum is due to be published in August 2013 and taught in schools from September 2014. This partnership brings together the Soil Association, Garden Organic, Focus on Food and the Health Education Trust to transform food culture in schools and communities across England.

http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news/news_topic.php?id=876

GMWatch news

Jonathan Matthews of GMWatch looks at how the bogus PR packaging of Mark Lynas explored in Part 1 of this article has been used to smuggle in some seriously bad science.

<http://www.spinwatch.org/-articles-by-category-mainmenu-8/46-gm-industry/5563>

<http://www.gmwatch.org>

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

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

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

Growing Together Shoeburyness Project Opens

In April, local charity Trust Links opened the Growing Together Shoeburyness project. This is a new project at the old allotments on Elm Road. The project is transforming the vacant allotments into a Community Garden, which will include vegetable growing, an orchard area, polytunnels and space for training. The project is modelled on Growing Together Westcliff, which is an award winning community garden on Fairfax Drive in Southend that was established thirteen years ago. The Big Lottery has funded the initial development of the project, although Trust Links is still raising money for developments on the site, which is approximately one acre.

Growing Together Shoeburyness works with people experiencing mental health problems and with other support needs to help improve wellbeing and support people to play a successful role in the community. Gardening is a positive and therapeutic activity where people can develop skills. You can also meet other people and access training and other support. The project will also be working with local schools and children and young people. The site requires development from the ground up, and they are keen to hear from anyone who would like to find out more. Everybody has something to offer this project and everybody can also learn something - whether that's gardening skills, other vocational skills or improved confidence in meeting and working with other people.

They are open for people who would like to attend the project and also for volunteers who would like to support others at the project. If you would like to know more about it, Trish McMeekin will be happy to talk to you about the opportunities that are available. Trust Links also runs the Breakthrough project for carers of people with mental health problems - they provide counselling, yoga classes, OCD support group, home visits and trips. For either project please contact Trust Links on 01702 213134 or by emailing office@trustlinks.org.

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

Carole would like everyone to sign and pass on her petition, called 'Safeguard our Soils, Mr. Pickles!' launched after much discussion with the CPRE and the Soil Association.

'Why is it possible for developers to build on our **'Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (BMV)'** - because it's land that will never feed another mouth again.

The answer's in my petition, which I hope you'll sign -- it's called: **Safeguard our Soils, Mr. Pickles!**
Please read more about it, sign here and pass on:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/Safeguard_our_Soils_Mr_Pickles/?launch

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.

No Nettles Required - The reassuring truth about wildlife gardening by Ken Thompson

Eileen recently won a book when she was at the Manchester Drive allotment Christmas bash and made a few notes for us. She said it is a well-written amusing book full of lots of good info and is worth a read. There's no better way to introduce this fascinating book than to quote from the opening paragraph:

'We are all wildlife gardeners now. Like it or not you share your garden with hundreds, if not thousands, of different flies, beetles, spiders, bees, wasps and other creatures, not to mention a few mice and birds ... This huge reservoir of biodiversity presents gardeners with a clear choice: You can assume that these creatures are all out to get you (or at least your cabbages or roses) and work to reduce their numbers ... alternatively you can embrace, encourage and enjoy the wildlife in your garden. With just a little patience, anyone can learn to appreciate the living, breathing ecosystem right outside their back door. In fact I should warn you: wildlife watching can become addictive.'

The book gives lots of hints on how to enjoy and encourage wildlife in the garden and lots more.....

PS: Eileen is trying to increase readers for her blog - <http://www.looksliketheworldsmad.blogspot.co.uk/> - and she's looking for some contributions to help her. She's been writing it for a month now and has only had three comments. Can we all rally round, please, and pop in a few comments of our own?

Norfolk Organic Group

We've just received a note from Peter Robinson, their Chairman, telling us that their next talk on Monday 25 March is by (Professor) Tim O'Riordan, an ex-Soil Association Trustee and an eminent defender of sustainability for the last forty years. He will be speaking on the Role of Organics & Permaculture in a Sustainable Future. I know that it's a long way to Norwich but they would be very pleased to see a little group from SEEEOG there if you can make it. They hold their meetings at the Friends Meeting House in Upper Goat Lane (see Multimap or similar) starting at 7.30 in the evening.

RHS Hyde Hall: Grow Your Own Weekend – 23/24 March

Breaking news, as they say.....we have been asked to attend and maybe give a talk....all to be discussed first at our forthcoming committee meeting on Monday 11 March.

SEEEOG library

Please contact Sue, if you wish to change your books, as she has very kindly become our new Librarian! 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. We'll also try to remember to have the book list on Graham's table in future, to make the library easier to access.

SEEEOG trips (booking forms attached)

1. Writtle College Garden Open Day by coach - Sunday 16 June, 10am – 3pm

Description: 15 acres; informal lawns with naturalised bulbs and wild flowers

Large tree collection, mixed shrubs, herbaceous borders

Landscaped gardens designed and built by students

Development of 13-acre parkland

Orchard meadow started

Landscaped glasshouses and wide range of seasonal bedding

NEW tropical 'HOT' bedding area added to quadrant garden

Herbaceous perennial borders under renovation autumn 2012 in readiness for summer colour 2013

Extended naturalised bulb areas on front campus lawns

Disability information: Some gravel, however majority of areas accessible to all

Further details: Writtle College is one of the leading university sector colleges in the UK, specialising in the land, countryside and amenity industries. Founded in 1893, the College has pioneered education and training in these industries for over a hundred years.

The College grounds and gardens have been opening for the National Gardens Scheme since 1997 allowing visitors to view the many gardens which have been designed and built by students over many years. The grounds and gardens cover an area of 15 acres and consist of informal lawns with naturalised bulbs in spring and wild flowers in summer, large mature tree collection, mixed shrub and herbaceous borders, heathers and alpiners. Landscape theme gardens include a 'Centenary' garden and a Sub-tropical 'Hot 'n' Spicy' garden.

The main purpose of the grounds at Writtle is to serve the educational and research needs of their students from basic practical provision through to degree level studies. The gardens at Writtle function as an 'outdoor classroom' demonstrating many different features, styles and landscape materials.

An extensive, well managed and labelled plant collection of over 10,000 plants and 70,000 bulbs ensures stunning displays throughout the seasons. Other features include 130 landscaped borders, six ponds/water features, wild flower meadows and woodland planting.

A guided tour leaflet is produced for each NGS open day and various events, displays and competitions are organised each day.

Refreshments: Light refreshments in The Garden Room (main campus) and The Lordship tea room (Lordship campus)

With guided tour by Tom Cole (donation required on day)

2. Minibus to Organiclea's growing site, Chingford: Sunday 29 September, 12- 4

A few of us visited with Growing Together last year and we would now like to share our experience with other SEEOG members. Organiclea began in 2001, with the idea that more food can and should be grown locally, in London – and that it's better to work with others than alone. Agreement was given for the project to take on an acre of once-derelict allotment land situated on the edge of Epping Forest in the River Lea's valley.

There is always a group gardening activity to participate in – and learn more about how they grow food at their site. Throughout the day, every month, they try to celebrate a specific preparation of a different seasonal vegetable – their very own 'sagra' calendar. 'Sagra' can be a celebration of a certain dish or product, of a vegetable or fruit, a wine, a type of preparation. In this way, abundance of a certain crop at their growing site is celebrated and shared! They break for lunch between 1.30-2pm, so bring a packed lunch. A site tour takes place at a designated time in the afternoon.

<http://www.organiclea.org.uk/about/>

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

We now have a new section, under Gallery, <http://seeog.org.uk/members-plots/>

We would very much like to add to this little group, as well as taking up Terry's suggestion of seeing more pictures taken from about the same position as the growing season goes on. So, cameras out along with the seeds and hoe?

Send a Cow Quiz Night: Saturday 16 March, 7 for 7.30pm

Cicely recently sent us details of Send a Cow's fundraising Quiz Night to enable them to promote sustainable and life changing food production in East Africa. Please try to arrive at 7.00pm for a 7.30 prompt start at St. Michael's Church Hall, Leigh Road, Leigh-on-Sea.

£5 per person

Bring your own drink and brain food and prepare for fun; also a raffle and sales table. Information and tickets from Cicely Morris at 01702 479031 or cicely.morris@btinternet.com

Soil Association news

On 23 January the Soil Association helped to launch 'Enough Food for Everyone IF', the largest coalition of its kind in the UK since Make Poverty History. They have joined with over 100 other organisations to campaign for action on global hunger. IF enough people like you join us in showing support for ending hunger, world leaders will be forced to act. <http://www.soilassociation.org/IF>

South Essex Natural History Society

Pat's group is presenting a talk on 'Bees' by Roger Payne in Southend Central Museum (Victoria Avenue) on Thursday 14 March at 7.30pm. There is parking next to the Library and admission is free to all, with donations welcomed!

Stour Valley Organic Lavender Company

News from Adrienne and Mark (we visited their farm several years ago) is that they have three further fields on the strength - a couple for wheat - and they will eventually grow more lavender on one of them, along with the damson orchard they planted a couple of years ago. On the other, they will eventually rear more geese. They have their goose rearing still at Copperas Wood Farm, but are pressing on with the holiday cottages; not finished yet, but have done further work on them since, despite the weather! Fingers crossed for this year! Check out the July edition of Essex Life Magazine - there will be an article about them there by Philippa Pearson.

'Trashed'

If you are feeling a bit depressed about the state of the world it might be best to avoid seeing the latest environmental film 'Trashed' which looks at the problem of rubbish, how much we are creating and how it is messing up the environment, getting into the food chain and causing our oceans to turn into a plastic 'soup'. In the US alone, waste is fast approaching half a billion tons annually. The film shows barely believable scenes of environmental degradation:

In Indonesia where people living alongside rivers surrounded by piles of rubbish all along the banks and in the river which have been dumped without regulation,

In the Lebanon where a mountain of rubbish beside the Mediterranean leaches toxins into the sea which reach as far away as Italy

Whales and other sea life cut open to reveal that they died with stomachs full of plastic rubbish

And lots more....

The film reminds us that not everyone is unhappy at the amount of rubbish we create because lots of money can be made from disposing of it with pressure being brought to bear to build huge incinerators usually in the face of massive opposition. Every incinerator needs feeding and so reduces the need to recycle. Every incinerator pours out greenhouse gases. Every incinerator leaves a residue of toxic ash to be disposed of.

The film insists that the way forward is to reduce waste and increase recycling. We need more regulation and we need industry to take responsibility for producing less packaging.

Watch the trailer at www.trashedfilm.com

The icing on the cake for the evening was the introduction by the handsome Jeremy Irons and the contribution from Zac Goldsmith (Conservative back bench MP) who hosted the event at the House of Commons and who was very critical of the government's environmental record, especially their abolition of the Sustainable Development Commission. He also mentioned things like 'the corporations walking the corridors of power' and the fact that the government was 'lent on' by industry when he tried to introduce legislation banning plastic bags. Very encouraging coming as it did from a Conservative MP!

Trust Links Organic Vegetable Course, In conjunction with Southend Adult Community College.....

Grow it Yourself – Organically

Suitable for those wishing to grow their own fruit and vegetables organically

A series of 7 sessions every Thursday at the Growing Together Gardens, 47 Fairfax Drive, Westcliff-on-Sea

Beginning 7th March 2013 from 10am—1pm

(There will be a break for Easter on the 4th April, meaning the course will finish on the 25th April)

The 'hands on' course will cover:

Organic principles

Understanding the soil

Plant nutrition
Propagation from seed
Pest and disease control
Companion planting
Protected crops
And much more!
Course fees: £70 (Benefit: £35)
For more information call: 01702 213134 – Growing Together

Websites and information

1. 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.
2. "Selling allotment produce, is it legal, is it right?" <http://www.organiclea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/sellingallotmentproduce.pdf>
3. Interesting food project <http://www.casseroleclub.com/about>
'Casserole' helps people share extra portions of home-cooked food with others in their area who might not always be able to cook for themselves.
4. What better time to launch a newly energised and revitalised Spiralseed, with a freshly designed website. As well as plenty of articles, videos and information, the new site incorporates Graham Burnett's new 'Spiralshop', making it easier than ever to purchase his publications, tee shirts and DVDs as well as books and course and workshop places online. Over the next few weeks and months he will be adding plenty more content, so check back regularly to keep in the loop with developments. <http://spiralseed.co.uk/>
5. Britain in nutrition recession as food prices rise and incomes shrink
Families filling up on high-fat processed foods as 900,000 fewer in two years manage 'five-a-day' fruit and vegetables.
http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/nov/18/breadline-britain-nutritional-recession-austerity?CMP=twf_fd&utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=dlvr.it
6. Rivers of Flowers - urban meadows project <http://www.riverofflowers.org/>
We attended their meeting in Rayleigh recently and have invited them next March.
7. Eat organic! New study shows the pesticide Roundup (glyphosate) is not properly regulated and appears more often in British bread.
<http://www.soilassociation.org/news/newsstory/articleid/4620>
8. The Horticultural Channel.tv - Gardening programmes for amateur gardeners and allotment ploholders <https://www.facebook.com/#!/thehortchanneltv/info>
9. Alan Roscoe of Writtle College has details of an E-petition to protect brownfield sites of the Thames Gateway, which he implores people to sign at <https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/31569>
10. A bit of fun...
Wordpress.com presents SEEOG's 2012 annual report in blogging!
<http://jetpack.me/annual-report/23911215/2012/>
11. Project Beeswax to use mathematics to help beekeepers improve productivity
http://www.essex.ac.uk/events/event.aspx?e_id=4866
12. Insecticide 'unacceptable' danger to bees, report finds
Campaigners say the conclusion by the European Food Safety Authority is a 'death knell' for neonicotinoid pesticides
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2013/jan/16/insecticide-unacceptable-danger-bees?intcmp=122>
13. An interesting blog from Emily Heath, a librarian and bee keeper
<http://adventuresinbeeland.com/?s=Emily+Heath>

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