

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 117 – SEPTEMBER 2014

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

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

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

Twitter @seeorganic

<https://twitter.com/seeorganic>



Soil Association

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!

"It is astonishing we have learned so little. After Silent Spring revealed the unfortunate side-effects of those chemicals, there was a big backlash. But we seem to have gone back to exactly what we were doing in the 1950s. It is just history repeating itself. The pervasive nature of these chemicals means they are found everywhere now.

Professor David Goulson, Professor of Biology (Evolution, Behaviour and Environment), Sussex University, who led the study into the effects of pesticides on bees,

http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2459001/neonicotinoids_are_poisoning_entire_farm_and_ecosystems.html

Venue

The Cheryl Centre, Growing Together Community Gardens, 47 Fairfax Drive, Southend-on-Sea SS0 9AG (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase) - please let us know if you have difficulty with transport and we will try to help.

Housekeeping notes: unless stated otherwise, our speakers start at 8.00pm, but Growing Together is open from 7.00pm to allow members to change their books, etc.

The next committee meeting is on Thursday 11 September, 7.30pm at Jane's.

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

For future reference, our November newsletter copy 'deadline' is Friday 31 October.

SEEEOG Group Nights/Events

You'll see that we have arranged a couple of extra (and very local) visits to the new Southend in Transition Community Allotment later this month and to Growing Together Shoeburyness in October. Please do go and enjoy yourselves!

For those who like to support allotment events, the Westcliff Land Cultivation Society's Summer Show at Springfield Drive Allotments, Westcliff-on-Sea, is on Sunday 7 September, from 2.00pm. The site is located between Fairfax Drive and Southend General Hospital, beside the Prittle Brook path. The main entrance is in Springfield Drive, (opposite Ramuz Drive), off Fairfax Drive. Springfield Drive is a one way street, so you cannot access the Springfield Drive entrance from Prittlewell Chase by car.

Sunday 14 September: Visit to Southend in Transition Community Allotment, 11-2

Address: Southend East Allotments, Hamstel Road, Southchurch Village, Southend-on-Sea – there's a map at <http://goo.gl/JrW0qd>

They have very kindly agreed that this date would be a convenient day for our visit. Kamil suggests it would be a good idea to have a kind of brainstorming session and get everyone to come up with some ideas to help improve the plot. So, if everyone will bring along their thinking caps..... Please can you bear in mind they are 'work in progress' so everyone visits at their own risk. Please wear decent shoes/boots. They will supply tea/coffee if everyone can bring along something to share for lunch. They're looking forward to welcoming everyone!

Monday 15 September

Spencer Christy presents 'Why Natural Beekeeping?' In response to the critical situation of the honeybee and the natural world as a whole, growing numbers of people, beekeepers and others concerned for the welfare of the honeybee are questioning the modalities of forms of honeybee husbandry, which rely - not unlike modern agriculture - on chemical solutions to man-made problems. Natural Beekeeping aims to allow the honey bee to fully express itself and to rekindle the relationship between this vital component of the web of nature and the human being.

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

Saturday 11 October: Apple Day at St. Laurence Orchard, 11-3

The orchard is in Eastwoodbury Lane, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6RH. Lots of apples for sale, pressing, cakes, plants, BBQ, storytelling, children's activities, music, specialist stallholders (and SEEOG!) and more... <http://trustlinks.webs.com/whatson.htm>

Saturday 25 October: Visit to Growing Together Shoeburyness, 1.30 – 3pm

In 2013 Trust Links received £300,000 from the Big Lottery Fund to develop a site in Shoeburyness. Matt King, their Chief Executive said: "We are very excited about setting up the Growing Together project in Shoeburyness, building on the success of our Growing Together project in Westcliff over the last 12 years. When we spoke to members of the community and local partner organisations in Shoeburyness, they were keen to help develop the project with us and felt that this was something that local people with mental health problems would benefit from. This Big Lottery Fund grant will give us a fantastic start and help lead to the development of a sustainable project in Shoeburyness that will benefit people for years to come."

The address is Elm Road (next to The Woodlands), Shoeburyness, SS3 9RZ. This is one of their scheduled Community Dig Days, so you are welcome to help there, too!!

Monday 17 November

Danielle Perkins, Chairman, East Essex Smallholders Group. Formally constituted in July 2011, they are a group of micro farmers who operate different size "smallholdings"; some of them have a few backyard chickens, maybe some grow a few fruit or vegetables, while others may have a pig, small herds/flocks of sheep or even a cow (named Tilly!)

Monday 15 December

An oasis in Benfleet and the last of its kind: Mo Perkins and Hilltop "Pick Your Own" Fruit Farm. Her land is not easy to farm because of the steep slopes, but a visit to her hidden valley is a refreshing and rewarding experience.

2015 dates

Monday 19 January

Sarah Green's Organics, Tillingham-grown seasonal organic vegetables
www.sarahgreensorganics.co.uk

Saturday 21 February: SE Essex Seed Potato Day

Out of interest, the Sarvari Research Trust's will be held on Friday 5 September at Henfaes Research Centre. You can use the link on the attachment to book a place or phone 01248 364260. If Friday is not a good day for you, they have a limited number of places left for their Open Day on Thursday 4 September; phone for details. <http://sarvari-trust.org/open-days.html>

Monday 16 March

A return visit from Dr. Richard Wiltshire to talk about allotments in Japan

Monday 18 May

Monika Currie, Modern Herbalist: Early summer herbs? How to make the best use of them?

Monday 20 July

We are delighted to welcome Helen Lowther from the Copped Hall Trust, who will talk about the restoration of the garden – more on this at http://www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=27
<http://www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk/>

Monday 21 September

SEEOG member Darren Lerigo presents 'What do I do with this space?' - starting a garden from scratch...

Monday 16 November and **Monday 21 December:** Speakers to be confirmed

Allotments

Simon has brought this book to our attention, called 'Of Cabbages and Kings: the History of Allotments', by [Caroline Foley](#). This colourful and lively history book tells the story of allotments from their origin in the 17th century protests against enclosures to the present day. It covers the Enclosure movement, famine, Black Death, popular uprising and today's allotment revival and Grow Your Own movement. He said this is a new book out (due on 4 September), though curiously he looked at a copy in Hyde Hall very recently. It looks a good read and is well illustrated.

<http://www.guardianbookshop.co.uk/BerteShopWeb/viewProduct.do?ISBN=9780711234093>

Crapes Fruit Farm – Andrew's August update

Our Discovery apples are responding to recent rains and cooler nights and beginning to colour, so not long before we have some, probably 18th August onwards. If you prefer them to be sweetest, then wait another week. They need to ripen to the core, not just on the cheek, to be at their best. Victoria plums likewise are colouring and taking their time to be at their sweetest and juiciest - looks like we will have them throughout August.

The runner beans, courgettes, beetroot and tomatoes all continue. Sweetcorn is just turning yellow and a first few cobs are ready if we can keep pigeons off them! A few summer cabbage around now. Apple Juice – There will now be a pause in availability before the next pressing in September.

You can read more at <http://crapes.wordpress.com/author/crapes/>

Ben's Diploma site is at: <http://dreadbensdiploma.weebly.com/index.html> - just hover over Projects at the top of the screen to view each of one.

Farmers' Markets 2014

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

Leigh-on-Sea, in Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road: Friday 19 September, Friday 17 October, Friday 14 November and Saturday 20 December from 9:00 – 12:00

Rochford in the WI Hall, Market Square on (Saturday) 6 September, 4 October, 1 November and 6 December from 09:30 – 12:00

Friends of Cherry Orchard Park's Apple Day: Sunday 28 September, 11 - 4

This is the first time we have been invited to this all-day event, which is why we are now appealing early for items to sell and folks on hand to help sell them! We are all looking forward to the day and keeping our fingers crossed for good weather. We plan to have a very good time whatever happens! Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park is in Cherry Orchard Way (B1013) – the nearest postcode for sat-nav is SS4 1GP (Toomey's).

The day starts at 11:00 am and we have to be on site, no further vehicle movement, by 10:30 am at the latest. The gates will be open and there will be people on site and help available from 9:15 am.

The site will be marked and we will be directed to our pitch, which is No. 16. Tea and coffee will be available early.

<http://www.friendsofcherryorchardpark.org/the-orchard.html>

Garden Organic news

In order to understand how Garden Organic can support local groups, they are holding a series of meetings to talk to their existing and previous group members. The first of these meetings – and the one SEEOG is considering - is on Tuesday 30 September at Sheepdrove Organic Farm, Hungerford, Berkshire. The schedule for the meeting at Sheepdrove will be:

1.30 – 2.30pm – Optional garden tour

2.30 – 2.45pm – Refreshments

2.45 – 4.45pm – Meeting

The (free) tour of their very inspirational gardens is optional, as previously mentioned. Please let us know if you wish to go as soon as possible.

The **GROWING ORGANIC FRUIT** app is a useful, quick-reference guide, providing all the information you need to start growing your own fruit. The app is for all levels of gardener – from beginner to expert. Organic gardeners focus their energy into increasing the natural health of their soil, choosing appropriate plant varieties, and working with nature to produce a healthy and productive garden. It's written by Bob Sherman, FI Hort, the now retired Chief Horticultural Officer at Garden Organic. http://theotherhat.biz/garden-organic/?dm_i=4UO%2C2MMRX%2CJCIKA%2C9LP86%2C1

GM Watch News

GeneWatch UK called on supermarkets (27 August) to wake up to the environmental harm caused by genetically modified (GM) animal feed, imported from North and South America. Blanket spraying of Monsanto's RoundUp Ready GM crops with the weedkiller RoundUp has destroyed the habitat of the Monarch butterfly in the United States to such an extent that a petition has been filed seeking endangered species protection for the butterfly, which has declined more than 90 percent in under 20 years. You can read more at:

[http://www.genewatch.org/article.shtml?alsf_cid\]=574133&alsf_itemid\]=575178](http://www.genewatch.org/article.shtml?alsf_cid]=574133&alsf_itemid]=575178)

And there's a video to watch and share, called "Farmer's Daughter" performed by Ben and Ellen Harper

<http://gmwatch.org/index.php/videos/songs-videos/15533-farmer-s-daughter-performed-by-ben-and-ellen-harper>

Manure, Ashington

Mandy Chaplin's free rotten manure is a mixture of horse, donkey, goat and pig. Her animals are fed an organic diet. You can help yourself to as much or as little as you want. Please ring Debbie on 07449 314 914.

Members' contributions

We had a very good day at the Manchester Drive Open Day. The weather was excellent and we had plenty of locally picked blackberries to sell, all thanks to Vic! Carole

Jane was stung by a bee on her hand recently. She was sitting on the grass, lent on it and had to pull the poor thing off (bee swiftly put out of its misery!) She held her hand under cold water for a moment while wondering how to treat the sting. She decided to rub honey (Growing Together Westcliff variety) on it. After five minutes, the pain went completely! The area pulsed for a little while, almost like it was digesting the honey.

Next morning, there was no pain and the only evidence of the sting was a vague fleshy dot. She thinks she must have heard of this treatment before and is glad that she was able to recall it.

As a follow-up to the River of Flowers talk, this link takes you to a nursery owner who Darren spoke to about bee-valuable plants: <http://modernmint.co.uk/rosy-bee-interview/> Rosi is doing fantastic work and such interesting research into the plants that bees like the most.

Pat noticed the Compost Tea Brewer on the Organic Gardening Catalogue website – see http://www.organiccatalogue.com/p3642/COMPOST-TEA-BREWER/product_info.html?CHASE=J731783008164064323151522267

Would anyone like to take her up on her suggestion? She writes: 'This is an expensive item, almost £60. I tried reviews and it comes up 'Write one'. On what scientific evidence does Organic Gardening support this? I think it is worth a "review" in SEEEOG's newsletter. The pack only contains enough "good bacteria" for three goes. How much per pack henceforward? Garden Organic may get a hand-out for the advert, but value for clients?'

Members' feedback

We would like to ask SEEEOG members if they have any comments or suggestions regarding the club. Please give or email to Carole. Are there any topics for talks or speakers that you would like to suggest, as we are now preparing our calendar of talks for next year? We've hardly heard of any yet! Are there any activities you would like to promote within the group? If we started a member's spot in the newsletter with questions, observations and tips, would you be interested in reading and contributing to it? (This could also include offers and wants) Is there anything else? Would a visit to the Chelsea Physic Garden next year be well supported?

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 SEEOG'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 in order to keep down costs.

SEEOG library

Please contact Sue if you wish to change your books. Any book may be borrowed by members at a cost of 20p per book for each 2-month period. As from September onwards, we will bring out some of the books from the cupboard, to make the library more accessible. We have now added the following titles:

A Year in Christine's Garden, by Christine Walkden
The New Organic Grower, by Eliot Coleman
Kombucha Tea, by Alick and Mari Bartholomew
The Pasta Cookbook
Prewett's Cookbook
Knave of Spades, by Alan Titchmarsh
Greek Cookery & Wines
Floyd Uncorked
The Glut Book, presented by Musselburgh Allotments Association
RHS Encyclopaedia of Gardening
Magazine - Allotment And Leisure Gardener, Issue 1, 2000
The Gardens of Audley End,
Genetic Roulette, by Jeffrey M. Smith
Plus we have ordered via the GO website 'What will I do with all those courgettes?'

SEEOG website

John Tate has very kindly put up the following posts and illustrations for us: Living on the Home Front, Trees for Bees and Southend in Transition Community Allotment – Serious Business, all at <http://seeog.org.uk/>

Soil Association news

If you want to go and debate some of the biggest issues of the day facing our food and farming systems, their 2014 annual conference takes place on 8-9 October. Chaired by Farming Today's Charlotte Smith, the conference will cover the politics of pollinators; a good life for our farmed animals; our broken food system and what politicians intend to do about it in the run up to the election; the Deputy Chief Medical Officer on the worldwide antibiotics crisis; and excitingly the first chance to hear and quiz Professor Carlo Leifert on the recent organic nutritional research. Find out more and book your tickets here in order to take advantage (as soon as possible!) of their Early Bird rate.

<http://www.soilassociation.org/conferences/2014conference>

New findings – organic crops, such as fruit, vegetables and cereals, and crop-based foods are up to 60% higher in a number of key antioxidants than non-organic crops. The findings shatter the myth that how we farm does not affect the quality of the food we eat. A landmark paper, published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* in July, concluded there are significant differences in the nutritional content of organic and non-organic crops. The study, the largest of its kind carried out by an international team of experts, led by Newcastle University is the most extensive analysis of the nutrient content in organic versus non-organically produced foods ever undertaken. You can read on at <http://www.soilassociation.org/organicisdifferent>

South Essex Natural History Society

Their next indoor meeting is on Thursday 25th September. Plants: Records from Belton Hills 2013; plant taxonomy etc. (by *members*)
<http://www.essexinfo.net/senhswildlife/2014-indoor-meetings/>

The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm: Saturday 27 September, 2.00pm

We have the great opportunity to join them for their Guided Farm Tour, which is Suffolk's First Community Supported Agriculture Farm. The address is Playford Lane, Rushmere-St-Andrew, East Ipswich. To join the tour costs a minimum donation (to their not for profit, social enterprise, farm) of £5 per adult – please bring cash on the day. Wood fired tea or coffee (and biscuits) included. They expect to have finished by 4pm at the latest.

<http://www.the-oak-tree.co.uk/tour-of-the-oak-tree-low-carbon-farm/>

Tips and Hints

Anyone on the mailing list of kitchengardens@yahoogroups.com knows there has been some recent discussion on polytunnels. One correspondent bought one three years ago (15'x10') from <http://www.firsttunnels.co.uk/> and was delighted with it, mentioning 'Great service from the company'. There are a host of videos on their website re construction (each stage is covered) plus growing tips. He managed to assemble it himself though he had some help when it was time to fit the plastic. He opted for sliding doors at both ends, which is great for ventilation. Premier Polytunnels - <http://www.premierpolytunnels.co.uk/> - seem to get good reviews as well and his advice, in the knowledge that you get what you pay for, is to buy the best quality one you can afford.

Darren says that the best recipe for making your own seed sowing compost is from the brilliant nurserywoman Marina Christopher, who seeks an open but heavy texture in her compost:

"I mix equal parts of a sterilised peat-based seed compost with a soil-based John Innes formula (it really doesn't matter if it is grade 1, 2 or 3) and a 1-3mm washed grit. This is all passed through a large mesh sieve (approx 1 sq cm) to remove the largest particles. Mix it all up in a large clean wheelbarrow and you get a heavy, gritty, open compost which will be free draining but moisture retentive." You can find three more interesting recipes, as well as thoughts on the need for a sterile compost or not, here on the Modern Mint blog - <http://modernmint.co.uk/seed-sowing-compost/>

Ron says he uses 50/50 sharp sand and peat, which looks pretty good – but bear in mind that the peat he uses is collected as a result of natural erosion and not dug from living bogs, which he buys from The Organic Gardening Catalogue at http://www.organiccatalogue.com/Making-Compost-Compost-Ingredients/c312_287/p494/MOORLAND-GOLD-40-Litre/product_info.html

Websites and information

1. For the benefit of our new members, 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. You can read more of Yalding's background history at <http://www.foygog.org/>

2. The push to produce more food risks bringing about an ecological boom and bust situation, according to four of the country's leading experts. Ecologists, who have written for the No Dominion Over Nature paper for Friends of the Earth, argue the current 'dominant thinking' on food security 'treats nature like a machine, demanding ever-increasing productivity, which damages the long term health of ecosystems'. As a result, the vital services ecosystems provide, including food production, pollination, climate regulation and flood protection, are vulnerable to collapse. <http://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/no-dominion-over-nature-why-treating-ecosystems-machines-will-lead-boom-bust.pdf>

3. The widespread use of neonicotinoid insecticides is causing a neurotoxic overload afflicting entire farm ecosystems from earthworms to bees, other pollinators and birds, writes Damian Carrington. A collapse in food production may inevitably follow. http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2459001/neonicotinoids_are_poisoning_entire_farm_and_ecosystems.html

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