

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS



NEWSLETTER NO: 123 – SEPTEMBER 2015

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

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

<https://twitter.com/seeorganic>



Soil Association

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

- Composting organic waste
- Protecting wildlife
- Reducing pollution
- Encouraging species diversity

Membership is currently £8.00 per annum, £12.00 family.

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

Venue, notes etc.

The Cheryl Centre, Growing Together Westcliff: please use the entrance in Prittlewell Chase, Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 9AG (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase).

We want to know if you have difficulty with transport as we can then try to coordinate a lift for you.

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

The next committee meeting is on Thursday 17 September, 7.30pm.

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

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

Membership renewals

We have received 29 renewals to date, which unfortunately leaves 49 renewals still in abeyance. We very much hope that everyone will want to renew as soon as possible. Those not renewed will receive a final reminder with this newsletter.

Weather news

Has anyone been measuring the rainfall recently? Sally Green wrote to say she was stunned by the variable amount of rain that fell on 24 August. In Tilingham village, they had 40 mm. Sarah, half a mile away across the fields towards the sea, had 30 mm. Their neighbouring farmer was working on his fields in the morning, on the marshes, for a couple of hours in the dry!

Sunday 6 September: Open Day at Manchester Drive Allotment Society

Their delightful Open Day starts at 11am until 3pm. The site is in Manchester Drive (opposite Cricketfield Grove), Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3EZ. Please do come along and meet everyone, listen to the music and enjoy all the activities!

Monday 21 September

SEEOG member Darren Lerigo presents 'What do I do with this space, starting a garden from scratch'. The most important question you can ask when looking at your garden, 'What Do I Do with this Space?' takes in ideas from around the world, including Scandinavia, South America, East Africa and Japan, in trying to discover the best ways to treat the land you have the pleasure to garden on. Filled with facts, tips, techniques and ideas, Darren hopes this talk will provide you with lots of inspiration to view your garden in a new light!

Saturday 10 October: Southend Apple Day, 11am – 3pm, St. Laurence Orchard, Eastwoodbury Lane, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6UY

Please do come along and enjoy yourselves! It was a fantastic day last year (no-one seemed anxious to leave!) There'll be the usual apple tasting, sales and harvesting; apple pressing; cakes; BBQ; raffle;

music; storytelling and children's activities; refreshments; local groups; plants and vegetables for sale. Have a look at their website later one, or ring 01702 213134. <http://trustlinks.org>

Monday 16 November

Philip Fawcett, member of Garden Organic and the East Essex Smallholders, will be talking about growing fruit – more to follow in due course.

2016

Monday 18 January: Friends of Shopland Churchyard

Monday 21 March: Henry Webber, Mistletoe Trees

Monday 16 May: Pesticide Action Network UK

Monday 18 July: James Campbell, Chief Executive of Garden Organic, will talk about the work of the charity

Monday 19 September: Ben Lambert, Crapes Fruit Farm

Monday 21 November: to be confirmed

Allotment news

1. Has Charlie Dimmock lost the plot over allotment sizes? The gardener may have dug herself into a hole by suggesting they should be cut into more manageable plots, but she could have a point. What do you think? <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2015/aug/18/allotments-big-charlie-dimmock-quartered-plots>

2. The adventures of Ade and Sophie, two urban allotmenters who love growing, foraging, cooking and eating from their little veg patch on the outskirts of London. Over the past year he's been studying at Capel Manor College, Regent's Park for his RHS Level 2 certificates in horticulture. With the courses now finished, he's nervously waiting to hear whether he's qualified or not. However, much to his delight, he was commissioned to write an article for the September issue of The Garden magazine, discussing the challenges of going back to college, juggling work and study, and his experiences of the course itself. You can read the rest of his delightful article by visiting their blog at this link: <http://agentsoffield.com/2015/08/26/the-garden-magazine/>

3. *Permaculture* magazine has teamed up with Permaculture People to produce nine short films exploring successful permaculture projects across a range of topics, such as large-scale, regenerative agriculture, forest gardening, urban permaculture and natural building. <http://www.permaculture.co.uk/videos/living-land-part-8-transformation-through-learning>

4. The Declaration for Soil will be an experiment in people-led policy development. It will set a precedent for other cities to follow and be brought to the World Soil Forum in Glasgow in 2022. This is an important opportunity for the people and organisations of Bristol to make their mark on the future of the soils on which we depend and create a real, lasting legacy for Bristol's Green Capital Year. The draft will be on the Blue Finger Alliance website soon: <http://www.bluefingeralliance.org.uk/>

5. We had wind of another desperate allotment petition late last month, initiated by a James Meakin who is petitioning the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark MP; his local MP for South Leicestershire Alberto Costa; and the Harborough MP, Sir Edward Garnier, to save the DeVerdon Road allotments, and others across the country, from being flogged off to developers. Please sign the petition and Dig for Victory! https://www.change.org/p/rt-hon-greg-clark-mp-alberto-costa-mp-sir-edward-garnier-mp-save-britain-s-allotments?recruiter=1492212&utm_campaign=signature_receipt&utm_medium=email&utm_source=share_petition

6. And SEEOG member Graham Adamson has very kindly emailed this contribution to the newsletter, 'between the solid lines':

'One frequently gets asked to support petitions to save such and such allotment site and the signatories often comment on allotments as environmental and community resources. The root problem being the allotment's entrustment for management, to a Local Authority who treat them as operational assets - like office buildings, equipment and vehicles - that the LA can sell-off to shore-up its operational finances. It's a tricky view to get across sometimes, because LAs have, on one hand, the "agency" role to manage and finance services for the Public, and also the "custodianship" role to administer the Public's assets that were vested in their care.

This view that holds that allotment sites - and any public land for that matter - shouldn't be in the LA's operational budget.

But enough of the revolution, this is about Organic Growing. Many comments on these petitions emphasise the wildlife-haven and community benefits of allotments, which now have a greater profile, than in the "U-boat peril" days of WW1 and WW2; then "provision of allotments to grow food" WAS a public service.

I often see members of local environmental and wildlife interest groups tending their allotments: perhaps it is time to persuade these groups to "buy-in" to the allotment movement. Not for the Allotment Management side but by providing their "Nature Reserve Management" expertise, "buying-in" by providing advice and mentoring, with a return of more and improved local urban wildlife sites.

The operation of "Urban, Nature and Recreational Reserve Areas" might be a goal but keep-it-simple and start-small, so producing a formal template for a program of "conserving and encouraging wildlife alongside allotment food production" might be a good kick-off. The Program Template might consist of: an initial wildlife assessment, suggested potential improvement measures, progress and monitoring, an end-of-project assessment (and perhaps – a "gong").

It is a goal because allotment sites having an acknowledged and quantifiable wildlife presence might present a better case for being a greater value to the urban environment than modern close packed housing estates.

Worth some thought maybe?'

Especially when Graham came across this RSPB South West Staffs news:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/southweststaffs/news/2014/2/> - which is very encouraging. And this RSPB farmland bird survey where the RSPB works with farmers to increase bird populations:

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/forprofessionals/farming/advice/farmlandbirdssurvey.aspx>

Crapes Fruit Farm: Andrew Tann's July - September updates

I have been waiting for our Discovery to become edible before updating. Almost there now, with the recent cooler nights and hopefully with some intervals of friendly rain to come this week, the proper start to our apple season will be here, albeit some 10 days behind our average.

It seems that plums this side of Colchester are either 2.5m in the air or non-existent.

Onions, beetroot, tomatoes, various squash are on stream. Courgettes and beans are frustratingly slow - a change in this weather could help. It looks fairly certain that the rest of the apple season will continue later than usual for all varieties - better for the fruit than being early!

Bumble bees: much in the national news this week (11 July) and from what I gather mainly based on work done in the USA.

Around here amongst all my rubbish and unkempt premises thrive many Bumble bee nests or several types. I observe that Bumble bees are like cats - they know where it is warmest during winter and where it is coolest during summer! If the winter habitats are all cleared up then there is no shelter. This coming winter could be a problem as there are not the mice and voles around this year for the BBs to overwinter in the old nests. Bumble bees fly at first light at this time of year - they are known to work crops at lower temperatures than hive bees and dew dampness does not deter them. They are particularly fond of broad bean and raspberry flowers. Both these crops provide shade lower in the canopy - let us grow more crops of this growing and flowering habit.

Maize - being grown in our village for biofuel. The fuel used to prepare, sow, not to mention the harvesting must balance out much of the end product, particularly if the fuel used for heavy ploughing equipment to clear up all the ruts and pulverise down to a seed bed for the next crop is considered. Maize robs the soil of nutrients and if all is taken from the field little organic matter is returned.

We have been sharply reminded of the imminent autumn before us with cooler nights, cloudier days and the, not particularly, welcome rain at the end of August. Cooler nights are probably the most acceptable as this will influence the colour of the later fruit. Lack of sun during the, now shorter, daytime is of concern especially as the season is already so behind the norm.

Packs from season B, expected all over the country, are delayed just now. Worcester Pearmain are still 'woody' rather than 'crunchy', although well coloured. The St Edmund's Russet have a lovely golden skin

finish, but inside they are still harsh on the pores of one's tongue. Here we decide if an apple is ready to eat by tasting it in the field first. (Occasionally it may be ejected!) From the fruit grower's point of view - all a bit frustrating!

Fortunately the onions were safely inside before the onset of the cool and the damp.

One positive development since last time is that now the mail order packs are no longer host to bubble film. Instead we are using corrugated paper, as I remember using inside wooden boxes, for Covent Garden Market during the early 1960s. The apples must be dry first!

You can read Andrew's full report at <https://crapec.wordpress.com/author/crapec/>

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 2015

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

Leigh-on-Sea: Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road, 09:00 – 12:00 on Friday 18 September, Friday 16 October, Friday 20 November and Saturday 19 December.

Rochford: WI Hall, Market Square, 09:30 – 12:00 on (Saturday) 5 September, 3 October, 7 November and 5 December. Very many thanks go to Jane and Maureen who very kindly took over the August market whilst Carole and Vic were at Hyde Hall. Jane said she had a lovely morning at the market with Maureen, who was great company, and met some very friendly people there.

Garden Organic news

This year, to help raise funds, they are selling a 2016 calendar. They launched the 'My Organic Garden' photography competition and asked (us) their supporters to send in photos of their organic gardens, allotments, community spaces and schools. The judges had a tough task whittling down more than 100 entries to just 12 to feature in the calendar. Garden Organic staff then had the opportunity to choose the overall winner and this was 'Frog on courgette' by life member Christine Chatland. Her frog is the cover star of their calendar. You can read more on Christine's wildlife-friendly garden in the autumn/winter issue of *The Organic Way* magazine, due out this month. If you sent in any photos, we'd love to hear from you – and to see them!

GMWatch news

You can keep up with the latest news (itemised below) and comment on genetically modified foods by visiting their website at <http://www.gmwatch.org/news/latest-news>

Germany joins Scotland in seeking ban on GM seeds

The case of glyphosate: Product promoters masquerading as regulators?

Germany moves to ban GMO crops

Pesticides in paradise: Hawaii's spike in birth defects puts focus on GM crops

More consumers say no to GMOs

The US House of Representatives has passed a hotly debated bill that blocks any mandatory labelling of GM foods. The bill is also called the DARK Act, Denying Americans the Right to Know. The Bill now heads to the Senate, where it may meet stronger opposition.

Halting the Decline of the Honey Bee in the UK: Wednesday 18 November, Central London

Healthy honey bee populations are vital to food and crop production, and the natural environment. In the UK, honey bees are responsible for 80% of pollination.

Yet there is growing concern about declining honey bee populations. The latest **Winter Loss Survey** from the *British Beekeepers Association* showed that 14.5% of honey bee colonies were lost across the UK in 2014/15 alone, twice the level needed to sustain the population.

In November 2014 the **National Pollinator Strategy** was launched to protect the country's 1,500 insect species that fulfil a pollination role in England. Then last month, the **Countryside Stewardship** scheme was

introduced, offering £900 million worth of grants to help improve the environment and countryside over the next five years, including bees and pollinators.

This special symposium provides an invaluable opportunity for local authorities, environmental organisations, beekeepers and beekeeping associations, researchers and scientists, and other key stakeholders to examine the government's latest policy initiatives on halting honey bee decline in the UK and consider future priorities for protecting biodiversity.

There is a **20% early registration discount** off the standard delegate rates for all bookings received by **10th September 2015**. For further details about the symposium, please refer to their registration form: <https://www.publicpolicyexchange.co.uk/book.php?event=FK18-PPE&ss=em&tg=1d>

Liberation Permaculture Weekend: 4/6 September, Dial House, Essex

Dial House is a sixteenth century farm cottage with a one-acre garden nestling deep in the countryside, fringing Epping Forest. There are still LIMITED places available on this weekend but you'll need to book fast. <http://www.emptycagesdesign.org/liberation-permaculture-2/>

Manure/Compost

This information is now on our website, apart from updates, of course, which we trust won't inconvenience too many people.

Members' contributions

1. Glyphosate is what Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council have been using since Essex FoE's pesticide campaign years ago and they showed that three-quarters of the pesticides they were using were banned or severely restricted in other countries. That was when a friend of mine was called a scaremonger in Colchester's full council meeting after she and a colleague gave a detailed report.

Please pass this round to anyone and any Councillors you know. Time we went back to just mowing and strimming the edges of all the council grass, or leaving some as long grass for dandelions and weeds for the butterflies and bees.

<http://althealthworks.com/6119/6119glyphosateepacancerdocuments/> - Carole

2. Kamil has kindly brought this link to our attention: No scientific evidence of GM food safety — INSURGE intelligence — Medium. It is "premature" to declare GM safe due to "incomplete" scientific knowledge, finds report commissioned by Norwegian Environment Agency
<https://medium.com/insurge-intelligence/no-scientific-evidence-of-gm-food-safety-a1c814d0f70c>

3. Darren has suggested a new book for anyone interested in gardening, nature and environmental matters: Digging Deep in the Garden: Book one

A celebrity gardener's 'wobble' over climate chaos... the effect genetically modified crops might have on our gardens and allotments... how adopting a vegan-organic approach can make growing more compassionate... why pesticides must be consigned to the history books. In this diverse, lively and thought-provoking collection of essays about gardening and its relationship with nature, John Walker digs deep into gardening's subsoil to challenge assumptions, raise awareness and encourage us to ponder how what we do on our plots affects our shared living world.

<http://earthfriendlygardener.net/books-gardening-environment-writer-author-john-walker-how-create-an-eco-garden/>

4. Jane has recently found it very difficult to find free range feather pillows and thought others might like to know about this website: <http://www.peachcroft.co.uk/>

5. Carole recently found what she later discovered was the caterpillar of the Privet Hawk moth sitting on the grass in her back garden. Jane kindly sent her a photo of the actual moth from her book. There is, however, a good illustration at this link: <http://www.robertharding.com/preview/860-283214/caterpillar-privet-hawk-moth-branch-france/>

Both Vic's photo and Jane's illustration will be on our website in due course.

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 in order to keep down costs.

Pesticide Action Network North

The news that a prestigious panel of 17 independent experts has deemed glyphosate — the world's most popular herbicide — to be "a probable human carcinogen" prompted the usual scoffing and stalling from Monsanto and others invested in agribusiness. But this time, there might just be enough concern and momentum to stop inundating our fields and rural communities with this problematic chemical.

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

Recipes: blackberry syrup, 'a Natural Cold Remedy'

With, of course, the kind permission of Ade and Sophie, we've reproduced this recipe from their lovely website/blog called 'Agents of Field'. Do please go and have a good read at:

<http://agentsoffield.com/ourname/>

450 g blackberries
280 ml white wine vinegar
225 g sugar
115 g honey

Place the blackberries in a bowl (glass or china preferably, to avoid staining) and pour the vinegar over. Leave to stand for at least 24 hours, stirring and pressing the berries regularly. Strain the mixture through muslin, squeezing out as much juice as you can, into a saucepan. Bring to the boil.

Add the sugar, stirring constantly to ensure it all dissolves, and then add the honey, continuing to stir well. Bring to a hard boil for 5 minutes before leaving to cool.

Store in a bottle or in ice-cube trays in the freezer.

Add one tablespoon to a glass of hot water before bed.

Save the Oak Tree Farm Low Carbon Farm, Ipswich

Joanne Mudhar runs The Oak Tree Low Carbon Farm on the edge of Ipswich in Suffolk, which is a not-for-profit social enterprise. The farm featured in a recent edition of BBC1's Look East. The reporter and cameraman did an excellent job of summarising the issues, which aren't simple! There were some fabulous clips of local wildlife from farm member, Jason, and many hardworking members who joined in really brought the farm to life.

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/save-the-oak-tree/x/11962281#/story>

What a fanciful idea for Hall Road, Rochford, instead of 500 houses??

SEEOG library

Please contact us 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. Ever wanted to grow your own but don't have the time, the space, or even know where to start? Well, we have a new book available – 'Do Grow/Start with 10 simple vegetables' by Alice Holden.

SEEOG talks

Thursday, 24 September 2015: Galleywood Horticultural Society. They meet at Keene Hall (Watchouse Road, Galleywood, Chelmsford CM2 8PT) at 8.00pm once a month and usually have between 50-60 members per meeting.

Monday 1 February 2016: Lavers & District Horticultural Society

Soil Association news

1. Digging deep: Louise Payton, policy officer at the Soil Association, details the problems facing our precious soil and explores the important changes that we need to make if we want to secure fertility for the future of our food.

<http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/blog/2015/07/the-challenge-of-soil/#comments>

2. For a young person searching for a suitable career, why not consider taking up an ethical apprenticeship? The Guardian (27 August) highlights six schemes for apprentices who wish to make a positive impact with their work, including the Soil Association's Future Growers scheme.

<http://www.theguardian.com/careers/gallery/2015/aug/27/ethical-apprenticeship-career-environment-sustainability-work-in-pictures>

<http://www.soilassociation.org/futuregrowers>

South Essex Natural History Society

All talks are held at the Beecroft Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea.

Saturday 19 September: Bumble Bees of Essex – Shril Carder Bee, an update, 2-4pm

Thursday 19 November: AGM and DVD, 7-9pm

Saturday 12 December: The Thames Through Time, 2-4pm

For further details, please contact their Chairman, Pat Wortley – 01702 588115 or email pjwortley@btinternet.com

Trust Links' Sponsored Walk: Saturday 26 September

Trust Links is holding a sponsored walk to link up its three sites: the new Growing Together Community Garden in Thundersley and Growing Together Westcliff and Shoeburyness. The walk is approximately twelve miles long. It will leave Thundersley at 8.30am and will aim to arrive at Shoeburyness at approximately 2pm to join in the Vintage Tea Party being held on the site that day. There will be a pit stop at Growing Together Westcliff. Walkers can sign up for the whole walk, or join or finish at the mid-way point when the walk arrives at Growing Together Westcliff, where Carole hopes to join them. Please register by emailing communications@trustlinks.org or ring 01702 213134. <http://trustlinks.webs.com/>

UK Food Sovereignty Movement: 23-26 October 2015

This notice appeared in a previous newsletter, albeit briefly. Dan currently has 333 people on his list. And there are already over 100 people who are registered for the gathering. But he doesn't want the rest of us to miss out. Registering helps him to get a better idea of numbers and allows the core group to work out things such as: who needs travel subsidies; who can share lifts together; how many people are coming from particular parts of the country and where they need to reach out to; and loads more useful stuff that will help them organise a great gathering.

So please register now if you can. Here is the link: <http://foodsovereignty.org.uk/ukfoodsov/national-gathering-2015/>

Websites and information

1. Meadow in My Garden is a family business based in Devizes, Wiltshire, with a love of wild gardens. Their seed mixes will transform any space, creating a magnificent patchwork of colour throughout the summer: <http://www.meadowinmygarden.co.uk/>
2. Being professional gardeners based down in Devon – and passionate and fussy about the tools they use - Nick and Ange Crowley were very pleased to be able to source lovely hand-made bronze tools and felt it would be helpful to start sharing them, so they've created The Wonderful Tool Company to sell them:
www.thewonderfultoolcompany.co.uk
3. Burning waste in Suffolk's incinerator – or Energy from Waste plant – costs council tax payers 50% more than sending it to a composting plant. However councillors and officials at the county are convinced that if they can convince more people to compost more waste at home the bills can be substantially reduced. http://www.eadt.co.uk/news/composting_cheaper_than_burning_waste_1_4156189
4. Food Tank has compiled a list of indigenous fruits, vegetables, and grains from many regions that are nutritious, delicious, and contribute to sustainable livelihoods in rural communities across the globe. <http://foodtank.com/news/2015/08/indigenous-crops-promoting-health-feeding-world>
5. Zero Waste Week: 7 – 13 September: this year's theme is 'Reuse' - stop wasting money by saving resources. You can read more at <http://www.zerowasteweek.co.uk/>
6. Microbial activity is more important in maintaining soil health and its natural fertility than previously thought and a new technique to visualise soil structure will be one of the presentations at the launch of Agri-Tech East's new Soil Health Special Interest Group at NIAB in Cambridge on Tuesday 8 September. <http://www.farmingfutures.org.uk/blog/exploring-new-ideas-about-soil>

Late Items

1. Following correspondence with SEEOG member Graham Adamson on the benefit of allotments, we would very much like to assist Southend RSPB with an "Allotment Breeding Birds Survey 2016". We therefore need to identify at least one sympathetic allotment site willing to assist them. Would your site be interested in this collaboration? There'll be more information on this in our November newsletter.
2. Application for Prior Approval for the Change of Use of Agricultural Building (North Unit) to Class C1 Apartotel: Ivanhoe Nurseries, Ironwell Lane, Hawkwell
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/when-is-permission-required/what-are-permitted-development-rights/permited-development-rights-for-the-change-of-use-of-agricultural-buildings/>

If you read the above, the Government has decided that Agricultural Buildings may be converted without much formality to Class C1 (hotels). Yes, you read that right!! But under the new Government rules this cannot and will not go to Councillors to decide on whether to Approve or Refuse. The Decision will be made purely and solely by Rochford DC Planning Officers and we are not even sure whether Councillors or residents can even comment. Just put the reference 15/00578/DPDP3 into http://www.rochford.gov.uk/community_and_people/have_your_say or email robert.davis@rochford.gov.uk

SEEOG Committee

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