

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 131 – JANUARY 2017

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

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



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!

Venue, notes etc.

As usual, we are at 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). As you know, our speakers start at 20.00 sharp, but Growing Together is open from 19.00 to prepare the room, etc.

Can anyone offer a lift to Pat?

The next committee meeting is on Thursday 12 January at Graham's, starting at 19:30.

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 newsletter copy 'deadlines' for 2017 are as follows:

March	-	Friday 24 February
May	-	Friday 21 April
July	-	Friday 23 June
September	-	Friday 25 August
November	-	Friday 27 October
January	-	Friday 22 December

November's talk

Darren located us in the dry SE Essex terrain; then took us through some cutting edge water based designs from historic to contemporary. He introduced us to the ABC of water use: Agriculture Business Cooling power plants (72%); domestic ecosystems services; fluvial gardening. We must consider that our land mass has been denuded of trees (we are not planting sufficient to replace those cut down at the moment in the UK!), so water flow with flooding occurs. But there are strategies to tackle this and climate changes.

Rain gardens that collect, store and filter water to be used later; lower a bed or path to permit percolation or transpiration; swales and berms retain and moderate flows; bio-retention planters to stop water going into sewers; rainwater harvesting; green roofs; filtration strips to stop pollutants; permeable pavements; ponds; wetlands.

To work with nature, hard defences are not a solution but realising our uplands need re-trees to slow flow and also retain water by moderating it. Beavers can slow down flow and give natural meanders and filters. With alley cropping, drying winds are alleviated; mulching where possible; reducing your lawn; local flowers have lower water footprints; grey water usage (straw filters); all contribute to water conservation. Rain and water are precious resources - we use potable water to flush human waste. Things are beginning to change. We are it?

Darren wanted his fee to go to a project that used these approaches. One we chose was the Practical Action project Refreshing Rain - swales and rainwater runoff prevention. Check on their website at <https://presents.practicalaction.org/rainfall>

Monday 16 January

"Your meal travels about 1500 miles to get from farm to plate. It is about time to change that!" Urban Farmers' first working project is an urban mushroom farm located in the heart of Southend-on-Sea. They've recently re-purposed a 3100sqft industrial unit that has been dormant for 20 years and turned it

into an urban mushroom farm producing gourmet oyster mushrooms, grown on spent coffee grounds collected from local cafés.

The unit has been selected due to its micro-climatic conditions that are appropriate for mushroom cultivation and for its proximity to the local market in order to minimize transportation of the fresh produce.

Using an awarded business model, Urban Farmers collect the spent coffee grounds from local cafés and restaurants and mix it with mushroom spawn in order to produce gourmet oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*). No pesticides or fertilizers are used and the mushrooms grow suspended in food grade bags away from polluted soil.

www.urbanfarmers.co.uk

Saturday 25 February: SE Essex Seed Potato Day 10:00 - 14:00, Growing Together Westcliff

This event is organised and run entirely by volunteers from both SEEOG and Trust Links. With the best will in the world, however, your hard-working (and depleted) committee cannot 'do its bit' without volunteers from SEEOG! There are gazebos to collect and put up, potatoes and onions to be set out, etc. etc., not to mention going to Growing Together the day before to assist with the tidying and setting out the tables in the polytunnel. Please do volunteer whatever help you can and help to publicise the event by way of our Potato Day poster, etc.

We will have approximately just over 40 varieties of seed potato (some organic) sold individually at 15p per tuber!

POTATO LIST (correct at 7/10/2016)

First Early

Accent, Colleen (organic), Epicure, Foremost, Home Guard, Lady Christl, Orla (organic), Red Duke of York, Rocket, Ulster Prince, Ulster Sceptre, Winston

Second Early

Anya, Bonnie, British Queen (organic), Charlotte (organic), Kestrel, Marfona, Maris Peer (organic), Nicola, Salad Blue (organic), Wilja

Early Maincrop

Ambo (organic), Amour, Apache, Bambino (organic), Blue Belle, Desiree (organic), Highland Burgundy Red (organic), International Kidney, Maris Piper, Milva, Mozart, Pentland Dell, Picasso, Rooster

Late Maincrop

Arran Victory (organic), Cara (organic), Golden Wonder (organic), Kerr's Pink, Linda (organic), Pink Fir Apple (organic), Sarpo Axona, Sarpo Mira (organic), Valor (organic)

- Onion sets: Stuttgart Giant and Red Baron!
- Garlic: Vigour White and Germidour Pink!
- Organic fertiliser!

+ Jeff Barber, the Eastern Region representative for The National Allotment Society

+ Soil Association stall

+ Pesticide Action Network and Dalefoot Composts, Remin Volcanic Rock Dust and Twool Garden Twine (not yet confirmed)

Please check website for updates - <http://seeog.org.uk/>

Monday 20 March

Dermott Sales, Leader, Slow Food Anglia

Slow Food began in Italy with the founding of its forerunner organisation, Arcigola, in 1986 to resist the opening of a McDonald's near the Spanish Steps in Rome. In 1989, the founding manifesto of the international Slow Food movement was signed in Paris by delegates from 15 countries. At its heart is the aim to promote local foods and traditional gastronomy and food production. Conversely this means an opposition to fast food, industrial food production and globalisation.

<http://www.slowfood.com/sloueuropa/en/>

Monday 15 May

Jeff Barber is currently the Representative covering the Eastern Region of The National Allotment Society. 'Renting an allotment has always been part of my life – the family in its various generational guises has never been without one - four different East London sites over the decades but good fresh vegetables and fruit appropriate to the seasons and always in genuine and increasingly diverse communities. As Eastern Regional Representative I will endeavour to bring practices and processes appropriate to the needs for all levels of the allotment movement.'

Wednesday 7 June: Essex Schools Food & Farming Day

Saturday 24 June, 10:00

Visit to Kings Seeds, Kelvedon, including their famed sweet pea display and seed production area.
Provisional bookings now, please, as at the moment we have only allowed for 12.

Monday 17 July

Colin Turner, Seekay Horticultural Supplies, a family run business based in Shoeburyness. They supply quality flower/vegetable seeds and garden sundries.

Colin told us earlier this year (as you probably already know) that the organic licensing bodies are having a tough time at present with the possibility of new legislation etc. coming into effect in the next few years.

This could have a very dramatic effect on the UK's organic produce and the ability to purchase sustainable amounts of seed at realistic prices. It would seem that farming was somewhat forgotten when the vote to leave the EU was taken.

As a business, they are looking to move forward with the organic side of their business but, as you can imagine, the future is very uncertain. Several of their usual UK suppliers have started to reduce their ranges and some have even pulled out of organics totally. They think the problem is not just caused by the Brexit vote but also by the cost of licensing such endeavours.

Colin would be more than happy to talk about any part of the organic business, from advice to what the future may hold. If you have any ideas as to what you would like to discuss/participate in, he can get a better view on what he would be able to bring to the discussion.

<http://seekay.co.uk/>

Monday 18 September

Tracy Mackness, The Giggly Pig Company

As Tracy Mackness describes in her website, she is an Essex bad girl turned good. She is now the owner of the successful "farm to fork" Giggly Pig Company, with its distinctive pink and black vans and its slogan "No fat or crap in our sausages!" She is passionate about pigs, farming and the challenges of running a small business. She has also written a book about her past called 'Jail Bird: The Life and Crimes of an Essex Bad Girl'.

<http://www.gigglypig.co.uk/index.html>

Monday 20 November

John Little, Green Roof Shelters

Green Roof Shelters Ltd brings together some of the foremost experts in green roofs planted for biodiversity, designing habitat creation and low maintenance native planting, alongside designers experienced in producing buildings, structures, and retrofit products that enhance our environment. These include John Little, Dusty Gedge, Dan Monck, Duncan Kramer.

<http://greenroofshelters.co.uk/>

Allotment Bird Survey 2016

More at <http://seeog.org.uk/2016/01/seeog-allotment-birdtrack-2016/>

For more information, please email ga.adamson@gmail.com

Allotment news

We are most grateful to Cllr Eves for keeping in touch with Persimmon and discussing the current situation regarding the proposed allotment site at Pond Chase Nursery, Hockley. As there seems to be no knowledge in the sales office (and, from what he's seen, there is no indication on the site plans as to where the allotments are to be sited), he's questioned Persimmon on their plans for progressing the

allotment site. Suffice to say, the response was somewhat vague. There is still stated intent from Persimmon to carry out the installation of the allotments in the dialogue but, with the foundations now going in on site, he is concerned that there is still a lot of heresay surrounding the issue. He has asked for a response from the Rochford District Council's Planning Department, which we look forward to receiving. <https://www.facebook.com/hockley.allotment.society/>

In the meantime (to keep up the numbers!), if you are keen to pursue the opportunity of an allotment to grow your vegetables and flowers, please contact Hockley Parish Council to register your name with full contact details to:

Michael Letch

Clerk to the Council, 58 Southend Road, Hockley, SS5 4QH 01702 207707
clerk@hockley-essex.gov.uk – and please ask for an acknowledgment.

Crapes Fruit Farm: Towards the close of 2016

Just a few days before the shortest of the year and yet the current mildness is sufficient for grass to be growing actively in sheltered spots. Our earthworms have reappeared and have much work ahead as with the few frosts last month most leaves have now fallen.

Our Medlars have virtually all left the farm now. Some have travelled the length and breadth of the UK, to Stirlingshire and County Down being the furthest of destinations. Interestingly, they have bletted in the usual way and at the usual time unlike the exceptionally early season for them in 2015.

There will be fruit available to dispatch during January depending on the varieties and sizes we have remaining. Our best Sturmer Pippin have already been spoken for. For direct guidance as to availability of anything, please email tannandrew@gmail.com

There is plenty of pruning ahead and construction of habitats for earwigs to encourage them to stay within the tree for caterpillar munching next season.

Enjoy your Medlar jelly on toast and grated apple on your cereal!

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 2017

These are the two markets where we have a stall and always appreciate help, produce and plants where available! We would like to put a request in now for seasonal produce/products/gifts to sell at the December markets – even bird boxes, planters, etc?

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council's Farmers' Market at Leigh Community Centre, 71-73 Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea, 09:00 to 12:00, apart from December (08:30)

Friday on 17 February, 17 March, 21 April, 19 May, 16 June, 21 July, 18 August, 15 September, 20 October, 17 November and Saturday 23 December

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1818935024986153/>

Rochford at the WI Hall, West Street, 09:30 to 12:00

Saturdays on 4 February, 4 March, 1 April, 6 May, 3 June and 1 July (further dates to be announced)

<https://www.facebook.com/rochfordfarmersmarket>

Garden Organic are asking for help to protect our priceless genetic diversity

In our lifetimes we have lost many hundreds of local fruit and vegetable varieties, grown for generations by families and in communities; in fact, over the last 100 years, 90% of crop varieties have disappeared from farmers' fields.

That's an alarming statistic and has serious implications for the future of our national environmental heritage. Without seed diversity we lose tolerance to the different pests, diseases and environmental conditions that threaten growers. And the less tolerance our seed has, the more growers will rely on pesticides such as neonicotinoids - proven to cause irreversible damage to pollinating insects.

This isn't a new concern. Lawrence Hills, founder of Garden Organic, could see this unfolding and thankfully had the foresight to set up the Heritage Seed Library, which protects 'at risk' seed varieties for perpetuity.

The Heritage Seed Library shares these varieties with members and with showcase gardens in England, Scotland and Wales – creating a living library accessible to all. This has been greeted with enthusiasm by members, garden visitors and experts alike.

Maintaining and growing the Heritage Seed Library collection is vital but, inevitably, costly work. The charity need to continue to protect and share an increasing number of varieties, and want to continue to protect them by using organic methods - even though they know that incurs greater financial costs.

They are now asking for donations to help to invest in the library. They are keen to expand the number of varieties within the collection and improve their resources, so they can continue to conserve as many at risk. To find out more, or make a donation, visit www.gardenorganic.org.uk/hslappeal

GMWatch news

We visit GMWatch's website regularly, as well as receiving regular updates from them. Since 1998, they've been tracking the GMO industry and its allies and helping keep everyone abreast of developments in this fast-changing field.

They've helped to expose deception and to present the most useful and compelling information in a clear and straightforward fashion. Recently they did that at the Monsanto Tribunal in The Hague – but year in, year out, their website and mailing lists reach more and more people.

Their site now regularly serves up between 1 and 2 million pages per month to visitors from across the world, while on Twitter they have over 30,000 followers, including many journalists, campaigners and academics. Dedicated volunteers maintain their Facebook site and translate some of their material into German and Spanish.

But they couldn't continue to do their work without our support. If you like what they do and want them to continue, please donate here:
<http://gmwatch.org/donations>

GM wheat trial - GM Freeze has submitted a multi-agency objection

Thirty organisations (including SEEORG) signed on to the objection to the open-air GM wheat application. At least ten GM Freeze supporters have also submitted their own personal objections, so altogether they've made a really good response to this. You can download the document (for you to share with your own networks and mention in your social media) at <http://www.gmfreeze.org/publications/consultation-responses/195/>.

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) The bitter-sweet taste of marmalade, orange and tangerine jams is a perfect spread on toast on those chilly mornings, especially when it brings to mind the sun-blessed Gozitan orchards from where these fruits are harvested.

<https://www.facebook.com/VisitGozo/>

2) 'Jardins de la rambla de sants' is an elevated 20,000 square metre park that opened last year in Barcelona. Rather than similar designs in New York or Paris, Barcelona's elevated 'rambla' does not take the place of the rail line, but instead hides it with an extruded box that contains over 160 trees and 85,000 plants and shrubs organized into different gardens.

<http://www.designboom.com/architecture/jardins-de-la-rambla-de-sants-elevated-park-above-railway-lines-barcelona-11-23-2016/>

3) Back To Eden Organic Gardening Film | How to Grow a Vegetable Garden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiGof48XVCQ>

4) US Organic Farmland Hits Record 4.1 Million Acres in 2016

California still reigns supreme when it comes to organic farmland, but several other states are catching up.
<http://civileats.com/2016/11/09/u-s-organic-farmland-hits-record-4-1-million-acres-in-2016/>

5) Organic food to become standard in French canteens

The French government has accepted a proposal made by Brigitte Allain of Europe Écologie Les Verts (Europe Ecology – The Greens) to impose a minimum amount of organic and seasonal produce into school canteens, public sector catering and social services. The amendment to the law means that at least 40% of such food must be seasonal and locally-grown, and 20% must be certified as organic.

<http://www.slowfood.com/organic-food-become-standard-french-canteens/>

6) Great British Bee Count - the results: From the Scillies to Shetland, see where bees were spotted near you.

<https://www.foe.co.uk/page/great-british-bee-count-map>

7) New research from the University of Bristol has found that embracing organic farming methods can bring gains in social sustainability and benefits for farmers and workers.

<http://phys.org/news/2016-10-workers-farmers-social-sustainability-gains.html#jCp>

8) A free cook book for families and people on budgets. Or just people!

'Eat Delicious. The revolutionary 28-day mealplan & cookbook'

Eat Delicious is a beautiful cookbook dedicated to those living on a low income and facing food poverty, but can be used by everybody.

<http://www.tinybudgetcooking.com/live>

9) Dapple House is a three bedroom self-build with studio in Essex.

<http://dapplehouse.co.uk/>

10) We may have failed to save Save Terrace allotment in Watford from developers, but the battle to protect community spaces across the country will go on.

https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/gardening-blog/2016/nov/02/this-ruling-puts-all-uk-allotments-under-threat?CMP=share_btn_fb

11) Pesticides responsible for a health scandal 'bigger than asbestos'

Last week, the Greens-European Free Alliance, a political group in the European Parliament with MEPs from parties including the SNP and Plaid Cymru, held an event to call for revisions to EU pesticides directives. Farmers Guardian, 19 December

<https://www.fginsight.com/news>

12) Major differences found between GMO and non-GMO corn

A new peer-reviewed study, led by Dr Michael Antoniou at King's College London, describes the effects of the process of genetic engineering on the composition of a genetically modified Roundup-resistant GMO corn variety, NK603. In-depth analysis of types of proteins ("proteomics") and small biochemical molecules ("metabolomics") revealed major compositional differences between NK603 and its non-GMO parent. The results obtained show not only disturbances in energy utilisation and oxidative stress (damage to cells and tissues by reactive oxygen), but worryingly large increases in certain substances, most notably polyamines.

<http://sustainablefoodtrust.org/articles/molecular-profiles-reveal-major-differences-in-composition-between-a-gmo-corn-and-its-non-gmo-parent/>

With thanks to Simon and Kamil for providing many of these references.....

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 UK

To celebrate the International Day of No Pesticide Use on 3 December, PAN UK launched the latest in its 'Bee Fact Sheet' series, highlighting issues around pesticide use and bees. This latest edition examines the persistence of neonicotinoids in the environment and its publication coincides with the three-year anniversary of the temporary ban on their use in the EU. <http://www.pan-uk.org/>

That week also saw the launch of the new British Bee Coalition website and a letter sent to the UK Government by 18 leading conservation organisations calling on them to maintain and extend the current EU ban on the use of bee toxic neonicotinoids.

Pesticide Action Network North America

As we head into 2017, PAN North America's work building an equitable, thriving food system is more critical than ever. The incoming President's cabinet picks have clearly signalled that he plans to prioritize corporate interests over public well-being. At PAN North America, they plan to continue fighting for healthy communities, just food and clean air, water and soil.

The industrial farming system, which produces the majority of our food, relies on chemicals that harm our health and contribute to pollinator die-offs. As you know well, scientists confirm that the most widely used insecticides are closely linked to the alarming bee declines we've seen in recent years.

Thanks to pressure from tens of thousands of PAN supporters, federal action to protect pollinators is finally in motion. But that will likely halt entirely under Scott Pruitt, the Trump nominee to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In the coming year, their work together to protect those most directly harmed by pesticides will be more important than ever. They'll be working hard to block Pruitt's dangerous nomination in the coming weeks. And in key agricultural states, they'll be focused on continuing to create meaningful policy change.

In California, they'll push to expand the first-ever pesticide-free buffer zone around schools. They'll also continue working with farmers in Iowa to address the problem of pesticide drift, its impact on their crops, livelihoods and families. In Minnesota, they'll hold the Governor to his promise to protect bees and other vital pollinators. Around the country, they'll continue to press for policies that support farmers and prioritize resilient, agroecological practices.

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

SEEOG library

Any book may be borrowed by members at a cost of 20p per book for each 2-month period. We would very much like to hear from anyone who could take out a few of the books from the cupboard and set them out on Group Night. Our Library needs to be used more!

SEEOG newsletter/website

We're sure that you, our members, will want to hear what their fellows are doing in their gardens/allotments; what they have found to work for them; what hasn't worked and what they are planning to do in the future. Please don't be shy or worried that what you have to say is not important. Fifty words giving a simple tip in the garden will be just as gratefully received as two pages from any latent novel writers lurking out there! For your information, a page is about 350 words.

You can send your words to Carole by post or by email. Please join in; SEEOG is a group of link-minded people! Don't worry unduly about the subject matter. Tell us about your herb garden or how you look after the hedgehogs/slow worms/frogs in your garden. Plus any news on which of our talks so far you have found the most interesting. **Plus photos!!**

Are you helping out with the allotment bird survey (using Birdtrack)? Updates, please, plus suggestions for speakers and trips out for next year will be much appreciated. The odd article on other areas of organic thought would also be most welcome. The important thing is to do it!

Soil Association news: A-maize-ing Victory For UK Soils

Peter Melchett, Soil Association policy director, has written with some great news. Following the Soil Association's exclusive investigation last year into the destructive impact of maize grown for Anaerobic Digesters, the UK Government have heeded their advice and acted to reduce the subsidy for biogas maize by fifty per cent. This is a big victory – it will help to save soils, reduce flooding and protect the environment.

In a world plagued by greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, we're sure you'll agree that producing biogas from waste is a sensible, if not essential, part of the solution. Unfortunately in the UK, maize is being grown specifically for biogas production because it is easier to use than waste, but many maize crops are destroying soil, harming the environment and exacerbating floods. The Government's actions so far have been nothing short of a national scandal; they have subsidised soil destruction and given little consideration to the overall environmental impact of maize cultivation.

Last year, an exclusive investigation by the Soil Association revealed for the first time the double subsidies being paid for maize grown for anaerobic digestion (AD), to both farmers and AD operators, and the terrible damage that many maize crops were causing to our soils and rivers. With support from the Angling Trust, they raised this in Parliament, leading to the first ever parliamentary debate on soil health, and

urged the Government to cut the subsidies for crops grown for AD not food. They therefore welcome this decision to halve subsidies, which they see as a major step forward in restricting the uncontrolled, doubly subsidised rush to grow maize and other crops for AD.

You can read the full report at <https://www.soilassociation.org/>

Trust Links

Wassailing at St Laurence Orchard awakens the trees and hoping for a good harvest in 2017! It's held at St Laurence Orchard (Eastwoodbury Lane, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6RH) on Sunday 5th February at 1.30pm. <http://www.trustlinks.org/st-laurence-orchard>

Yardarm Folk Orchestra

We often meet up with the Yardarm Folk Orchestra at the Leigh Farmers' Market. They're holding a major charity concert at Benfleet Methodist Church on the evening of Saturday 11th March 2017. They'll have an orchestra of 35/40 members with supporting performances from David Stanley and Jenny Hitchcock of the Mencap Music Man Project and some of the student ambassadors from the Project. This promises to be an outstanding evening, with great performers.

Tickets will be £5, and they really want to fill the venue to the brim for this one, so please reserve the date now! The website of the charity they will be supporting is www.sizanani.org
Malcolm Reid, Music Director
yardarmfolkorchestra@outlook.com

STOP PRESS ITEMS!

What's in a seed? Community seed banks are an effective platform to maintain traditional crop varieties and improved seed management

Dec 29, 2016- Back in December 2013, hundreds of farmers from Bhaktapur took to the streets to protest against the government's lukewarm response in delivering adequate compensation for the hybrid seed failure in their farms. Read the full story at

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2016-12-29/whats-in-a-seed.html>

Yalding: 'The Gardens, formerly known as Yalding Organic Gardens, have been lovingly restored and reopened as a stunning, exclusive venue in April 2016'.

The Gardens will be open to the public on Sunday 26th March 2017.

All areas of the much loved gardens will be open and available to enjoy.

<http://www.thegardensyalding.co.uk/open-days.html>

SEEOG Committee

Ron Bates	Chair	01702 477681	anebates@hotmail.co.uk
Ray How	Vice-Chair	01702 544632	ray.how@btopenworld.com
Ane Bates	Treasurer	01702 477681	anebates@hotmail.co.uk
Graham Oster-Ritter	Membership	01702 558871	grahamoster@btinternet.com
Carole Shorney	Secretary	01702 201914	caroleshorney@hotmail.com
Vic Shorney	Committee	01702 201914	caroleshorney@hotmail.com
Jane Ponton	Committee	01268 565776	JaneAPonton@hotmail.com