

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS NEWSLETTER NO: 137 – JANUARY 2018

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

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



Happy New Year and hope you had a Pleasant Christmas



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!

Maureen Nightingale's funeral took place on 12 December. Her charity is Smile Train: 'Millions of children in developing countries are suffering from untreated clefts. Most cannot eat or speak properly and aren't allowed to attend school or hold a job.' You can donate via <https://my.smiletrain.org.uk/donation/donate/givenowuk> or by sending a cheque to Smile Train UK, York House, Wetherby Road, York YO26 7NH.

Tel: +44 0300 303 9630; Email: ukinfo@smiletrain.org

I came to know Maureen when SEEOG started the series of ceilidhs, providing ploughman suppers for the event; we were part of the kitchen team under Corinne's charge. When Corrine left, Maureen came into her own – she was very organised, very health conscious with the food as one would expect of a dedicated District Nurse. Maureen was involved with the Vineyard project, by helping with lunches, and later with an allotment project. Her personal plot was a showpiece for organic ways of growing; during her last couple of years gardening she was very passionate about the virtues of spent hops that she collected with her partner Ron from the brewery at Wakering. Then she started growing them on her plot. She was dedicated to our cause, compassionate as a person, with empathy for others' situations; a very fine person, fortunate to have known her and to have worked alongside her with SEEOG. Although she was always in a back seat at the meetings, she was not so as a member. We are thankful to have had these memories of a great gardener.

Ron

Venue, notes etc.

Please use the entrance in Prittlewell Chase, Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 9AG (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase). Our speakers start at 20:00 sharp, but Growing Together is open from 19:00 to prepare the room, etc.

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

Our next committee meeting is on Thursday 4 January at 19:30 at Ron's.

For future reference, our newsletter copy 'deadlines' for 2018 are as follows:

March	-	Wednesday 21 February
May	-	Monday 23 April
July	-	Saturday 23 June
September	-	Friday 24 August
November	-	Wednesday 24 October

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2018

Monday 15 January: Group Night with Ian Tinton, Dalefoot Composts -

'Gardening with Wool Compost', peat free and natural and renewable products for all your garden needs, from Fell to Food, these products will "do!"

Friday 9 February: 'Pick-up day' from Stonham for our own Potato Day

Saturday 24 February, 10:00 – 14:00: SE Essex Seed Potato Day

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 committee cannot 'do its bit' without volunteers from SEEOG! There are gazebos to 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 anticipate well over 30 varieties of seed potato (some organic), sold individually at 20p per tuber (or 1 free tuber for every 5 bought). Please check our website link for further updates and list of tubers ordered at: <http://seeog.org.uk/2017/10/se-essex-seed-potato-day-saturday-24-february-2018-1000-to-1400/>

Monday 19 March: Group Night

Roger Payne, President The Essex Field Club, presents 'Honeybees get all the good publicity and hog the headlines'. This talk will be about the host of under-appreciated insect pollinators that beaver away often unnoticed and yet are just as vital to the health of the ecosystem.
<http://www.essexfieldclub.org.uk/>

Saturday 5 May: afternoon visit (car-share) to Crapes Fruit Farm, Aldham

Monday 21 May: Group Night with Hana Malouf, Wastebuster

Wednesday 6 June, 09:30 – 14:30: Essex Schools Food and Farming Day, Writtle College

June, date to be confirmed: return visit to walled garden at Riffhams, Little Baddow

Early July TBC: Visit (car-share) to the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, Tolleshunt Knights

Sunday 1 July, 14:00 – 19:00: Visit (car-share) to Hilldrop, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, SS17 8QB - Open Garden for NGS. This garden is not all about roses! It is a wild flower and wildlife paradise. Since building our turf roof house in 1995, we have trialled waste materials to grow plants and mimic brownfield habitats as well as getting plants and soils onto buildings and urban infrastructure. These parts of the garden are now our most important and diverse habitats. Admission is £5; children free; wine; vegetarian savoury snacks. Telephone: 07967 733720. Open for charity.
<https://www.wherecanwego.com/responsive/eventmap.aspx?id=e1193038>

Monday 16 July: Group Night

Kulvinder Kaur Johal, Assistant Head Teacher/Science Co-ordinator, Northbury Primary School (Barking) is going to talk about her school garden and what a difference it brings to the pupils of their large multicultural school. They have over 900 pupils, speaking over 45 languages between them. Many of them have no garden or green space to call their own. Children share a play space with each other but nothing of their own. Their school garden has been a focal point for them, so much so that they have achieved an RHS level school award. All was almost lost when the school garden suffered an arson attack last year, but they now have their thriving garden back.

Monday 17 September: Group Night with SEEOG member Philip Fawcett

This year is 50 years since Philip left school and started his gardening career He will try to give some insight into how he started, what happened in the last 50 years and what comes next.

Monday 19 November: Group Night with Seed Co-operative, the UK's community owned Seed Company

<https://www.seedcooperative.org.uk/>

OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 28 January, 14:00 – 15:00: Wassailing at St Laurence Orchard, located in Eastwoodbury Lane (at the junction with St. Laurence Way), Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6UY. Come and enjoy traditional stories and music to celebrate your local community orchard.

<http://www.trustlinks.org/events>

Saturday 12 May, 11:00 – 14:00: May Fayre at Growing Together Westcliff

NEWS

Allotment news: Hockley

The Allotments Feasibility Group meeting took place on Tuesday 5 December, attended by Cllr Lesley Vingoe (chair), Cllr Tim Gleadall, the Clerk, Richard Favier and Carole Shorney. We learnt that the site has been re-drawn to a more conventional allotment shape. Discussion followed on 1) The questionnaire on allotment set-up that Cllr Gleadall had sent to five local parishes for completion and return; 2) Size of allotment plots; 3) Fencing; 4) Costs; 4) Grants available. We are now waiting for further planning information from Rochford DC, when presumably everything will be presented to Hockley's Full Council in due course, presumably then with full costings.

<https://www.facebook.com/hockley.allotment.society/>

Crapes Fruit Farm: looking ahead to 2018!

Our apple stocks may be virtually emptied now, but our land is filling nicely with water and December 2017 has been associated with a good spell of dormant inducing weather!

Some winter visitor birds are about but, to date, not the flocks of Fieldfares and Starlings seen during previous cold winters. Recent lying snow reminded us of just how many rabbits have escaped the local foxes. All manner of evidence showed of others who reside at Crapes who we seldom, if ever, set eyes upon.

Pruning ahead now, the author's favourite job - I have been doing it since my early secondary school days! This winter, now the leaves are mostly off the trees, some lengthy one-year extension wood is to be seen. This reflects the vigorous state that the trees were enjoying during June and July when light, heat and water were abundant. It will be a winter of cautious pruning. With the sun damage to the fruit of this past season to bear in mind, I shall deliberately leave some growths for leaf shading.

Our apples may be almost over, but we have a stock of apple juice made from our own apples here. This can be purchased from the farm, delivered on our Colchester Friday delivery route, or indeed, for those further afield, sent by courier.

The next hurdle to watch for is the land drains to be running at the end of March - then we know all is on course!

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 2018

These are the two markets where we have a stall and always appreciate help, produce and plants where available! We'd like to thank Sharon, Jane and Pat for rising to the occasion by producing Christmas cones, willow stars and Hyacinth pots for the Leigh Christmas Market.

Leigh-on-Sea Town Council's Farmers' Market at Leigh Community Centre, 71-73 Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea, 3rd Friday of the month from 09:00 to 13:00, apart from December (08:30)

Friday 16 February; Friday 16 March; Friday 20 April; Friday 18 May; Friday 15 June; Friday 20 July; Friday 17 August; Friday 21 September; Friday 19 October; Friday 16 November; December market – date TBC
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1818935024986153/>

Rochford at the WI Hall, West Street, 1st Saturday of the month from 09:30 to 12:00

Saturday 3 February; Saturday 3 March; Saturday 7 April; Saturday 5 May; Saturday 2 June; Saturday 7 July; Saturday 4 August; Saturday 1 September; Saturday 6 October; Saturday 3 November; Saturday 1 December

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

Garden Organic news:

In readiness for the year ahead, why not take a look at Garden Organic's new courses for 2018? From 'Practical pruning' to 'How to plan your growing space', there's something for everyone.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/our-courses>

GM news: A chance for change – please support GMWatch

Help us continue to speak out in support of GMO-free and pesticide-free food and farming

The evidence that pesticides are linked to large-scale population extinctions of insects has become alarmingly clear in the last year. Insects are critical to the survival of the rest of the living world. That's

why chemical-intensive farming represents even more of an existential threat than climate breakdown. This threat to our very survival comes from the leading GM corporations, who together control nearly 75% of the global pesticide market. And these giant corporations are growing ever bigger, thanks to the megamergers now under way. These include the merger from hell, that of the bee-killing Bayer and the butterfly-slaying Monsanto. This one giant corporation could soon control a third of the world's seeds and pesticides, and through genetic engineering they plan to combine them in ever more toxic combinations. You can donate easily and quickly here:
<http://www.gmwatch.org/en/donations>

Lauriston Farm Limited – Charitable Community Benefit Society

Now in its fourth cycle, Lauriston Farm's Seven Day Introduction to Biodynamics starts in January 2018 and runs for one day a month until June. The full course equips you with all the basics for beginning the biodynamic approach on your own plot - be it a window box or a smallholding.

Each day features theory in the morning and practical application in the afternoon with some artistic activities en route. We use the whole farm for the course and their team have a combined experience in biodynamics of almost eighty years.

This is a unique course and one that has allowed previous participants to go on to further their interest and understanding in biodynamics, find their own individual connection to the subject and start practically to apply the method.

There is further information on their website at <http://www.lauristonfarm.co.uk/>

For all enquiries, please email socialfarming@lauristonfarm.co.uk

Members' contributions

1) **A growing number of young Americans** are leaving desk jobs to farm. Liz Whitehurst dabbled in several careers before she ended up here, crating fistfuls of fresh-cut Arugula (Rocket salad) in the early-November chill. The hours were better at her non-profit jobs. So were the benefits. But two years ago, the 32-year-old Whitehurst - who graduated from a liberal arts college and grew up in the Chicago suburbs - abandoned Washington for this three-acre farm in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. She joined a growing movement of highly educated, ex-urban, first-time farmers who are capitalising on booming consumer demand for local and sustainable foods and who, experts say, could have a broad impact on the food system. For only the second time in the last century, the number of farmers under 35 years old is increasing, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's latest Census of Agriculture. Sixty-nine percent of the surveyed young farmers had college degrees — significantly higher than the general population.

This new generation can't hope to replace the numbers that farming is losing to age. But it is already contributing to the growth of the local food movement and could help preserve the place of midsize farms in the rural landscape.

Credit: The Washington Post, November 23

2) **Free shipping on all orders**, including copper tools, at Modern Mint.

Use code - SEEEOG17 - at checkout, until end of January 2018!

<https://modernmint.co.uk/product-category/copper-gardening-tools/>

3) **A Month with my 1200 Year Old Olive Trees / Daily Diary from Greece**

Pavlos Georgiadis is many things—social innovator, ethnobotanist, business owner, media maker—and he's also an olive farmer. This time of year, he goes home to the family farm and brings in the harvest. Specifically, he turns the olives from the 1200-year old-trees on his land into a much sought after single varietal organic olive oil called Calypso. What's more, his farm will be the hub for one of the first emerging GROW Places—the locations where our citizen science projects begin. Here's the first of our two stories with Pavlos on the farm and in the GROW place.

Credit: GROW Stories, Building Better Soil Through Citizen Science

4) **Pat writes:** 'As an avid observer of SEEEOG and its progress, I am especially interested in how we engage with children. Newsletters are sent to schools who are members of SEEEOG and appropriate help has been given when requested by teachers. SEEEOG has taken part successfully in the Essex Schools Food and Farming Day event at Writtle College. This requires an immense amount of organisation, transport and strenuous handling of materials from Carole, Vic and others to participate in this interesting event.'

Recently, at the commendable invitation of Leigh Town Council, Jane and Sharon have worked very hard and given up their time to create a learning event for children, which proved to be enjoyable for them. This was illustrated in the Echo. Extremely well done and thank you to all those involved! I am sure they would welcome help from others. The plus is that it can be fun, too. Help includes materials as well. Even for other activities like Farmers' Markets, a supply of plants for sale is a continual need.'

5) 'Poor Monsanto just can't catch a break these days'

Just yesterday we noted that Monsanto's RoundUp replacement, Dicamba, was causing outrage in the ag community as state regulators all across the country were suddenly being flooded with reports from farmers saying the product is increasingly becoming airborne and killing crops far away from the fields where they were actually applied. Ironically, farmers don't like their livelihood being wiped out by a neighbour's spray drift...go figure.

Now, Yahoo reports that the company has been forced to put on hold the launch of yet another product, a product that was approved for usage by the EPA mind you, that seems to be responsible for causing a number of farmers to break out in a nasty rash. The product is called NemaStrike and is intended to kill worms that can reduce corn, soybean and cotton yields...oh, and apparently it's also not great for the skin. Credit: <http://www.zerohedge.com/>

6) What's in season – December?

Every month we feature a fruit or vegetable that is in season, along with a fun fact or recipe idea. Next to all the merriment that Christmas brings, it also means the start of the local citrus season! Savour the delicious taste of local oranges, lemons and tangerines and ensure you get a daily dose of vitamin C to boost your immune system.

Although they are now considered to be typically Maltese, citrus trees are not indigenous to our islands. Lemon trees were brought to the Mediterranean in the first century, but orange trees were only introduced later by the Arabs in the 9th and 10th century.

This year, we published the AgroKatina report about the local fruit and vegetable supply chain and the pocket guide highlighting when local fruits & veggies are in season. Find out more on www.foemalta.org/agrokatina, where you can also order a free copy of the pocket guide.

<https://foemalta.org/fab/food/veggies/oranges/>

7) SEE OG Talk by John Little, Monday 20 November

John started young with an interest in wild plants, which he has developed with Green Roof Shelters. They create places that are important to everyone, using green spaces for people and plants as a tool to make them better for people and wildlife. John's use of waste materials is central to his work; he's finding that junk areas of his own six-acre home and work base are the most biodiverse. He quotes the West Canvey brownfield reserve as being one of the most important in Britain.

These created landscape ecologies range from standing dead trees; green roof timber house; shipping container garden roof; rubble planters; crushed rubble planting (low nutrient areas - e.g. for wild flower meadows); sand planters for solitary bees that nest in the ground - goes beyond the drilled holes in timber; traditional dead and layered hedges, ponds, wetlands and green roofing. Everything that does not move - bin and bike sheds to nameplates as habit holders. Within these varying depths, placing logs, rocks and water holders increases the diversity of those micro ecologies and enhances connectivity.

John states that buildings mainly exclude wildlife - it is designed out! His ideas are kind of retro-fitting to enhance our reducing wildlife places. Watch out for the open day for Hilldrop wildlife garden on Sunday 1 July (Stanford-le-Hope). He has with others written a book "Small Green Roofs" that shares this knowledge for people to do it themselves. Truly great approach to gardens for this time; it is extreme creativity that people can use creatively for their own contexts.

With huge thanks to our contributors.....Darren, Simon, Pat, Sharon, Ron

Pesticide Action Network UK

A big thank you to everyone who contacted UK politicians calling for strong pesticide laws post-Brexit. Your voices have been heard and the pressure is working! This year, the government has committed to using agricultural subsidies to reward farmers safeguarding the environment, keeping the ban on bee-toxic neonicotinoids in place and creating a new environmental watchdog to hold government to account.

These are all huge achievements but there is still much to do in 2018 to ensure that we get the 'Green Brexit' the government have promised. Coming up next year is the 25-year environment plan, a new Agriculture Bill and Environmental Protection Act and a consultation on whether to maintain environmental principles (such as the precautionary and polluter pays principles) once we leave the EU.

PAN UK will be in touch to let us know when to take action to ensure that we use these opportunities to better protect both people and environment from the harmful impacts of pesticides.
<http://www.pan-uk.org/uk-policy/>

Pesticide Action Network North America

What an incredible — and challenging — year this has been. On the national stage, they've seen several key issues they work on at PAN move into the spotlight like never before. Thanks to ill-advised federal policy decisions, it is now common knowledge that pesticides harm children's health and that farmland can be devastated by pesticide drift. The corporate capture of their public agencies has been on display for all to see.

Even so, they're celebrating some significant wins with their coalition partners. In California, they saw first-in-the-country pesticide buffer zones around schools, along with legal recognition and resources for farmers of colour. They've seen ground-breaking pollinator protections move forward in Minnesota and new bans on bad-actor pesticides in place through the work of their global network.

This has all occurred in the midst of a tumultuous political climate that makes their efforts as a social justice organisation that works toward systemic change especially important and urgent. For all to see.....you can read the full article at <http://www.panna.org/blog/year-no-other>

Sarah Green's Organic Vegetable Growing Season – 2017

The weather this growing season has been characterised by long dry spells, interspersed by short wet periods. In Tillingham, we had 3.5 inches of rain in mid-May, and 4.25 inches in July and early August. These wet spells saved us from crop failures.

The early dry weather was good for making seedbeds for our early crops of carrots and parsnips. Also for setting summer transplanted crops of cabbage, broccoli, Brussel sprouts and kale. It was also perfect for establishing clover on the fertility building part of the rotation.

In July, the rain came on time for setting autumn and winter crops of cauliflower, sprouting broccoli and kale. The dry periods in between were a great help in controlling weeds which grow through to the end of August.

The autumn weather was mild and mostly dry into October and ideal for ripening sweetcorn, squash and pumpkins, as well as curing onions and harvesting potatoes.

Unfortunately, this mild weather encouraged the worst white fly attacks on the kale, cabbage and sprouts that we have ever seen. Dry weather through the summer discouraged potato blight and we did not have to remove potato tops until 8th August. We then harvested 10 tons of potatoes per acre, double the yield of 2016!

The mild winter of 2016 with hardly any frost allowed good populations of beneficial insects to survive. Ladybirds, Lacewings, Parasitic Wasps and Hoverflies destroyed all blackfly on the broad beans. The aphid and caterpillar population was also reduced on the brassicas thanks to the beneficial insects, so damage has not been a problem.

Organic growing success is dependent on the weather. By encouraging beneficial insects into the area, nature can mitigate the worst effects of pests, without use of chemicals.

With grateful thanks to Steven Green, Sarah Green's Organics

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!

Soil Association news: Relationship between Farming and Health

Peter Melchett, Policy Director at the Soil Association, contends that the era during which public health professionals could happily ignore what happens on farms is well and truly over.

Unhealthy diets continue to cause more disease and deaths in the UK. The NHS cost of diabetes has doubled in a decade, to 10% of the total NHS budget. Back in 2008, the Cabinet Office said that 'children are probably the most vulnerable and at highest risk of significant future diet-related ill health', and despite that clear recognition of the problem, childhood obesity continues to rise, especially among the

poorest families. And the horror stories get worse – recently, children were said to be having hip replacements because of obesity.

So links between food and health are seldom out of the news, and taxes on sugar, salt reduction targets and voluntary bans on a few food additives, are endlessly chewed over by nutrition experts and big food manufacturers and retailers. Those same experts rarely think about how food is produced. They seem to think that food simply arrives at a large factory or retail store, and the only thing that will affect its quality, and its impact on our health, is what is done when it is processed, packaged and sold.

You can read this article in full at <https://www.soilassociation.org/news/2017/december/royal-society-of-medicine-conferences-investigate-the-relationship-between-farming-and-public-health/>

Visit to East Anglian Railway Museum, Chappel & Wakes Colne Station

We enjoyed our visit to Crossing Temple Community Garden and later Crapes Fruit Farm; a really lovely display of apples. However, our day was not finished as we discovered that the railway was not far away. Previously when we have visited it has been by rail, but this time we came by car, Approaching from the village is very different. As you come up the hill to the station you get a great view of the viaduct which you pass over on the train. The station is the usual red brick common in our area. It sits high, so there is a flight of steps up to the booking office. This is the usual cream and green favoured by the era in which it was built.

We purchased our tickets in the reception area. Tickets need to be kept handy as the bar code is needed to gain entry through the gate which is over the railway bridge to the opposite platform. It's not a large area but there is plenty to see. There is a set of level crossing gates and a nice little signal box. There was an engine under steam running up and down. We were in luck as, because it was a Saturday, there was an engine running up and down. It does not happen on weekdays.

The Goods Shed contains a nice collection of railway signs from the local area. This was the location used by BBC Look East for Children in Need last November. The Restoration Shed is always worth a visit. They are restoring a rather sad looking railway carriage at the moment. By the time it is completed it will be in the same state as when it was in use. There are engines in there waiting their turn to be lovingly restored.

The Heritage Centre is a favourite with me as it has the old control board for the Colchester/Clacton/Walton-on-the-Naze line. I have travelled this route many times. There is a resource centre which I imagine is popular with the children. There is also a Miniature Railway, which I gather you can actually drive. There is also a Cafe on the platform and you are served your order in a railway carriage positioned by the platform.

The station of Chappel & Wakes Colne is 12 miles from Marks Tey on the Marks Tey/Sudbury line. It is a branch line and served by an hourly service. At one time, it was possible to travel from Marks Tey to Cambridge, but it suffered from Dr Beeching's axe. The remaining section only survived due to commuter need and planned development of Sudbury. For anyone interested in steam engines, and all that goes with it, the Museum is well worth a visit.

Margaret Clary

Sustain Brexit Forum news (22 December 2017)

The past month has been dominated by the EU Withdrawal Bill (Repeal Bill) and the hearings and reports of several committees in the Houses of Commons and the Lords. They have also heard the early sounds of important processes creaking into action, such as the Agriculture Bill and Fisheries Bill. And the first signals of the possibilities and pitfalls associated with new trading relationships. The coming year already looks set to be an historic period for food, farming and fishing policy – summarised brilliantly as 'four hot potatoes' in this blog by Sustain's Vicki Hird.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/neweconomics/politics-food-look-2018/>

It looks like Sustain will have to move fast in the New Year, if the Command Bill in preparation for the new **Agriculture Bill** comes out in January as Defra's Michael Gove suggested on 20th December when giving oral evidence to the EFRA Committee. Sustain will be consulting with the alliance's Farming Working Party, as well as with other coalitions such as Greener UK and Wildlife & Countryside Link, and will help coordinate responses. January will be an important time to decide our positions, share insights and plan for activities. Contact Vicki Hird to get involved: vicki@sustainweb.org.

You can now read the full report at <http://seeog.org.uk/>

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