

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 139 – MAY 2018

<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.

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

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

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

Unfortunately we have had to decline three events due to lack of volunteers; not so good, if we want to 'promote the principles of organic gardening'.

SEEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2018

Please make a note of all these dates to avoid disappointment later on

March: Group Night: Martyn Davis "Honeybees get all the good publicity and hog the headlines"

We see declines in pollinator numbers – honey bees with colony collapse disorder, viral, pesticides and fungal causes of this happening.

Martyn started with an in-depth explanation of pollen as a food source - the grain has an exceedingly hard outer coat, hence its archaeological importance. They have nutrient rich content that grows the pollen tube for fertilisation down the style to ovary. The complex systems for pollen grain recognition sensors, chemical handshakes for acceptance or not, are needed because bees carry lots of different pollens; the nutritional contents of pollen - amino-acids (building blocks of protein), vitamins and minerals. Greenpeace study showed the cocktail of pesticides in bee pollen 17 + 53 chemicals and these synergise. Of concern is Chlorpyrifos - highly toxic to mammals - a neuro inhibitor.

Pollen has many vectors - mammals, snails, rodents, bats, birds, biotic insects, wind and water. Other wild pollinators are more and the most effective pollinators and make a bigger contribution than previously thought.

These are Bees - 270 - 1 honey bee, 27 bumble bees, 250 solitary bees. The seven most common have suffered 50% decline in the past 25 years.

Wasps – 350, mostly solitary

Flies - 7000 known species - bees fly only in clement weather but flies fly in all weathers and in dark, dank places.

Hoverflies - 270 take pollen and nectar; they can spread diseases; there is migration from the continent as climate changes.

Butterflies - 60 daytime nectar feeders, but do move pollen, but suffering declines in 70% of species; they are biodiversity indicators.

Moths – 2500; some are wild flower specific; two-thirds in decline; one-third 50%+ - again, more arrive from Europe.

All are affected by human impacts - light pollution and chemical pollution - so multiple threats.

There is now a pollinator strategy for England, Scotland and Wales so awareness grows. Hedgerows, undisturbed land and being untidy, while grow open-pollinating flowers and vegetables and fruits along with spreading this awareness of their needs as they provide for ours as integral to the ecology of this planet.

Thanks to Martyn for a formidable talk revealing the above - there was much more detail in his work for the talk.

Monday 21 May: Group Night with Tom Willis (self-billed Compost Maniac!)

'All you need to know about Home Composting' by Tom Willis (self-billed Compost Maniac), Essex County Council's Waste Buster volunteer scheme. This doesn't lead to exaggerated expectations and prepares our members for some light-hearted moments.....

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

Saturday 9 June, 10:00: return visit to walled garden at Riffhams, Little Baddow, (kindly arranged by SEEOG member Phil Fawcett)

The address is Graces Lane, Little Baddow, Chelmsford CM3 4AX. There's full information on the estate at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000239>

This is a visit using car share. If you wish to give or receive a lift, please contact Carole.

'A few years ago I was fortunate enough to start working in the walled garden at Riffhams. The house and garden were built in 1815 and designed by Sir Humphry Repton. The walled garden had been left fallow for many years before I started; it had been kept weed-free, the soil was left bare, so soil conditions were very poor. I have started to improve it by digging in humus and green manure plants. Part of the garden I have planted with wild flowers and made a bee garden with three bee hives. I have planted a fruit garden and the rest is formal vegetables.'

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.wherewego.com/responsive/eventmap.aspx?id=e1193038>

Saturday 14 July, 14:00 – 17:00: Visit to the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, The Old Rectory road, Tolleshunt Knights, by Maldon, CM 9 8EZ

This is a visit using car share. If you wish to give or receive a lift, please contact Carole. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjmlvQIn4lg>

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

Wednesday 9 May, 14:00 – 15:30: Community Celebration Event at Growing Together Thundersley, behind White House & Castle Point Borough Council offices, Kiln Road, Thundersley, SS7 1TF

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

NEWS

Act now for healthier, fairer farm policy

Tell Defra and Michael Gove what you want from future farm policy

Defra's landmark farm policy consultation was launched in March 2018. It is a mixed bag - with some big gaps - but could deliver some of the better farming outcomes that Sustain knows are needed for the environment, nature, farmers, animal welfare and rural communities. These early ideas need developing and backing. But they are seriously concerned about the lack of reference to human health and to important sectors like organic, family farming and farm workers.

Please submit your response to the government's farming consultation using either Sustain's simplified online tool, or respond directly using Defra's online version (which will take a bit longer). **The deadline is 8 May 2018.**

For those especially interested in public health, a clear win would be to ask Defra to include "public health" in the list of "public goods" that will be supported by UK agriculture policy, and hopefully UK trade policy.

https://sustainweb.eaction.org.uk/lobby/farm_policy

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/farming/future-of-farming/>

Allotment news

Update on recent Hockley Parish Council's Environmental Committee:

Before the meeting started, we mentioned that the current shape of the site is again very odd. We have not yet seen the area and find it difficult to visualise at present without a site visit.

Cllr Gleadell said he recently chased Rochford DC regarding the application almost every day for two weeks. Nobody came back to him so he went into the Planning Office. He was told the officer given the application is only working part-time and the application has not yet been progressed.

He reported that he is 'working on it' for which we are extremely grateful.

Crapes Fruit Farm: Spring – at last!

Years ago, during my spell as a student at Writtle Agricultural College, our lecture on glasshouse lettuce production began:

'L' 'I' 'G' 'H' 'T'

(C. I. Lambert circa 1977)

Lettuce is particularly sensitive to light intensity and duration, as so are most plants.

March and early April have been not only chilly and wet, but also seriously dull with often several successive days here with no sign of the sun. The middle of April is correcting the balance somewhat and now the soil is warming and drying. Unlike the lack of soil moisture twelve months ago, we are at field capacity here which is excellent for the fruit trees particularly in conjunction with these warm temperatures.

Bearing in mind that full bloom for Cox here is, on average, the 5th May everything is so behind average that even with the current warm spell we are looking at 10th to 12th this year.

Anticyclones (areas of high atmospheric pressure) have a habit of plaguing fruit growers between now and mid-May. Lovely weather by day, and an hour or so before most people are awake, a damaging dip in temperatures silently influences the following months.

The rapid bursting of buds through 'mouse ear' and towards 'green cluster' means that the leaves are soft, not hardened as yet. Hopefully when this weather breaks we are not in for a strong, cold, easterly which the foliage will hate.

The leaves around the flower buds, which will gradually start to show a little pink at 'pink bud', are important for the strength of the flowers and a successful setting of fruit. The healthier these leaves, the greener they are, the more efficient photosynthesis will occur especially if the levels of LIGHT are good!

Our blossom should be on time for (Saturday) 5th May (our SEEOG visit).

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

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 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 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

1) The fruitID.com project has announced that following the success of their schemes in 2016 and 2017, they are offering DNA analysis of Apple, Pear and Cherry fruit trees for 2018 at £26 plus VAT per sample. The world-renowned research organisation NIAB-EMR at East Malling in Kent will provide the DNA analysis through their laboratory, East Malling Services Ltd: the National Fruit Collection will review the results; and Peter Laws of fruitID.com will administer the scheme.

www.fruitid.com

2) Garden Organic last month gave European visitors an insight into its successful social and therapy gardening projects over a week-long visit.

The delegates from Switzerland, Italy, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia all work for charities running similar projects in their own countries. They had a chance to learn from each other through a three-year project called Towards Mutual Understanding with Nature, funded by Erasmus+.

3) To help address some of the common questions around the current review process of the site at Ryton, below is a selection of the questions they have been asked in recent weeks, with our responses.

If you have any queries not covered here, or want to let them know your view, please do continue to send them to questions@gardenorganic.org.uk

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news/ryton-gardens-april-2018>

GM news

These are just a few of the stories that appeared in GMWatch's News Review archive Review 390, which can be read in full at <https://gmwatch.org/en/news/news-reviews/18243-review-390>

1) GM crops that produce industrial products could be grown in Britain for first time. Rothamsted Research wants to plant GM camelina with altered DNA that produces "wax esters" to be used as lubricants for machines.

2) New research shows risks to insects from Rothamsted's GMO "fishy" camelina. An oilseed crop engineered to have an altered fatty acid profile could reduce the learning ability of bees and other insects

3) Global non-GM soybean demand to rise, driven by EU. Demand for organic, certified or non-GM soybeans is expected to rise as consumers want to verify sustainability and traceability.

4) Health impacts of GMOs can be challenged under Aarhus Regulation – court. Here's an informative article about an important EU Court of Justice ruling that's previously reported on GMWatch.

5) Costly medicines and pus in milk: a Brexit trade deal that'll make you sick. The US trade barriers list shows that Liam Fox could let more than just chlorinated chicken into the UK. The public deserve to know the details.

Members' contributions

1) Farmerama Radio is an award-winning monthly podcast sharing the voices of smaller-scale farmers in the UK and beyond. Farmerama is committed to positive ecological futures for the earth and its people and believe that the farmers of the world will determine this. By giving producers a voice, they want to rejuvenate the respect, confidence and vibrancy of smaller-scale farmers and rural communities.
<http://farmerama.co/>

2) Orchards East

Launch of Orchards East survey of Essex Orchards, historic and contemporary. Starting with the 6 inch 1888 Ordnance Survey map that indicates orchards there was a high density in Essex - 4137 orchards - and Southend, Basildon and Castle Point were areas of highest density for the period 1888 - 1920`s; all farmhouses had orchards; the earliest dates from 900 BC at Maiden Castle; by 100 BC we see walnut, pear and apple; written info for grafting 350 BC and 3000 BC in China.

The definition of an orchard is 5 trees of standard size that would provide sufficient for a family and originates from Europe and adopted here. They showed photos of European unpruned standards of mixed fruit of enormous size and age.

The East of England Apple Project has online encyclopaedia, DNA sampling and detailed info down to stalk hairs for ID purposes. There was a session about the D`Arcy Spice that has a very hazy passage to its name; previously being Ribston Pippin, Baddow Pippin, Spring Ribston Pippin - so what`s in a name?

Andrew Tann talked about his experience and his 295 varieties; a visit to his place followed.

What is this all for - what we are losing created a landscape; all info is stored with biological centres and made available after being written up and could influence future plantings.

Leigh U3A gardening group are keen to research historical orchards related to Salvation Army and their legacy surviving. There will be training and materials to work from the tithe maps and besides the historic the recording of orchards later than 1920`s right up to newly planted orchards; so working from maps and on the ground, too.

Check out <https://www.uea.ac.uk/orchards-east/home> for further details. There is an initial meeting proposed for Wednesday 9 May.

3) Nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are probably the best-known wild plant growing in the UK, mainly because of the unpleasant sting that we all learned to avoid as children! Many people dismiss the common nettle as a 'weed', going to great lengths to try to get rid of it from their gardens. Yet it is in fact one of the most useful and multifunctional plants I can think of...

<https://spiralseed.co.uk/2016/06/05/nettles-perfect-permaculture-plant/>

4) Essex Botanical Society (formed February 2015): They record and map the distribution of all the wild and semi-wild plants in Essex. They methodically visit each 1 x 1km square on the Ordnance Survey Map to identify and record every species of plant that they come across, making special note of the abundance and exact location of any rare or local species. They do it for two reasons: 1) They are accumulating records for a new 3rd Flora & Atlas of Essex Plants to succeed that of Jermyn 1974; 2) Their records of the location of Rare and Endangered species are used to alert local authorities, land owners, planners and developers so that conservation measures can be put in place. They also maintain a website, organise wild flower walks and lead up to twenty botanical meetings in association with the Essex Field Club, London NHS and Essex local natural history societies
http://www.kenadams.org.uk/esb/botany_group_meetings.htm

With grateful thanks to Ron and Graham Burnett..

Pesticide Action Network UK

In the run up to the London local elections on 3 May PAN UK are asking local candidates from all parties to pledge to make their borough pesticide-free if elected. They have created an online action so Londoners can simply enter their postcode and contact all their candidates. This is London focussed at the moment. They already have over 60 cross-party pledges from around half of the boroughs in London. The key link to share is: <http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free-london/>

Pesticide Action Network North America

Despite widespread opposition, the US Department of Justice has green-lighted the Bayer-Monsanto merger.

The Bayer-Monsanto merger was approved on the heels of the authorization of the Dow-DuPont and Syngenta-ChemChina mergers. As a result, just three corporations will control 59 percent of the seed market and 64 percent of the pesticide market — globally.

The coupling of the agribusiness giants was approved despite recent poll results indicating farmers across the country believe the merger of Bayer and Monsanto will be bad for farming and farm communities.

Farmers in 48 states, representing all sectors of farming, were asked about the then-pending merger. More than 93% expressed concern, with a top worry being increased pressure to practice chemical-dependent farming and reduced choice for purchasing seeds and other inputs. The herbicide-resistant weed crisis and lack of viable solutions to the accompanying dicamba drift epidemic of last year's growing season were identified by many farmers as a major concern.

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

Save Ryton Organic Gardens

This is ongoing and there is a lot going on – there is now a website at <https://saverytongardens.wordpress.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/146330316031153/>

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 Committee

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Changes to Data Protection Regulations: Being on our mailing list means that we keep a record of your email address and your name. This enables us to keep in touch with you to provide information and updates about our meetings and events. Please note that, if we don't hear from you before 25 May 2018, we must unfortunately remove you from this mailing list and you will no longer receive any communications from us.