



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS NEWSLETTER NO: 143 – JANUARY 2019

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

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

SEEORG 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 SEEORG? If not, we offer free membership on receipt of application form!

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS!

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. **On a practical note, we need some good, gardening related raffle prizes, please!** Please notify Carole if you wish to receive your newsletter by post/email, or change your email address: caroleshorney@hotmail.com

For future reference, our newsletter copy 'deadlines' for 2019 are as follows:

March	-	Sunday 17 February
May	-	Sunday 21 April
July	-	Sunday 23 June
September	-	Sunday 18 August
November	-	Sunday 20 October

Please make a note of all these dates, to avoid disappointment later on. Let us know if you fancy a visit somewhere, and we will try to oblige, subject to interest! We need names ASAP for the visit to Kings Seeds on Saturday 15 June, because it is embarrassing to have to cancel.

SEEORG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2019

Monday 21 January: Group Night 'Bees, Biodynamics and Community Ownership at Lauriston Farm': Spencer Christy's update on the Lauriston Social Farming Initiative at Goldhanger; see www.lauristonfarm.co.uk

Sunday 20 January, 14:00 – 15:30: Wassailing a St Laurence Orchard

The address is Eastwoodbury Lane (at the junction with St. Laurence Way), Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6UY. Join us at St. Laurence Orchard to awaken the trees for the Spring!

Saturday 23 February, 10:00 - 14:00: SE Essex Seed Potato Day

As usual, it will be held at Growing Together Westcliff, 47 Fairfax Drive (corner of Fairfax Drive and Prittlewell Chase), Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 9AG. This event is organised and run entirely by volunteers from both SEEEOG and Trust Links. With the best will in the world, however, your hardworking (and depleted) committee cannot 'do its bit' without volunteers from SEEEOG! 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 have currently ordered 49 varieties of seed potato (some organic), to be sold individually at 20p per tuber (or one free tuber for every five bought). Some onion sets will be on sale as well. Please check our website for updates on the event, including the varieties we have ordered: <http://seeog.org.uk/>

Monday 18 March: Group Night

SEEEOG member Simon Wallace presents an illustrated talk on "Gozo Growing: organic gardening on a Maltese island". He might bring some free "Gozitan" food and drink tasters for people to try - things like olives, capers, dried sheep's cheese, etc.

Saturday 30 March, 10:30: Lauriston Farm Open Day

Come and find out what they do on their Open Days. They start with an introductory talk, followed by a walk around the farm looking at how they plan to expand their work and how our shareholding helps. There will be lots of time to ask questions on the walk and over a cup of tea afterwards. The address is Lauriston Farm, Goldhanger, CM9 8AH. We have confirmed this date with Spencer.

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

Saturday 18 May, 10:00 – 15:00 (tbc), Leigh Road Baptist Plant & Craft Market

Sunday 19 May: Stall at Essex Young Farmers Show, Boyton Hall, Boyton Cross, Roxwell, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 4LT, 09:30

We will be 'joining' the National Allotment Society (Essex group) at this event.

Monday 20 May: Group Night

The title is 'Poverty, Food Waste and the Redistribution of Surplus Food by FareShare'. Natasha Dillow is delighted to be able to talk to us on FareShare's work – FareShare is not a gleaning organisation or part of the gleaning network, but redistributes surplus crops once they have been harvested by gleaners. It's hoped the diagram on our website (up later) will help explain what they do. Have a look at www.fareshare.org.uk

Wednesday 5 June: SEEEOG stall at Essex Schools Food and Farming Day, Writtle College

The Essex Schools Food and Farming Day is a yearly event organised by the Essex Agricultural Society giving 3,000 Essex school children aged 8 to 11 the opportunity to visit Writtle University College and find out how their food is produced, the role played by farmers in Essex and the many related jobs within the industry. This is financially supported by Essex County Council who kindly supplies the bulk of the funding needed to facilitate the event.

<http://www.essexag.co.uk/education-page-1/>

Sunday 10 June: LEAF Open Farm Sunday

Perhaps we can choose a farm from <https://farmsunday.org/> in due course?

Saturday 15 June, 10:00: SEEOG visit (car-share) to Kings Seeds (Sweet Pea tour)

The address is Monks Farm, Coggeshall Road, Kelvedon, Colchester, CO5 9PG.
<https://www.kingsseeds.com/>

Toilet facilities are available in both the office block and the warehouse. Kings charge £2 per head, CASH payable on the day. Discounted seed packets will be available if you wish to purchase. There is no charge for parking (plenty of spaces!). Bookings are for 15 or more people only. Any smaller groups that wish to visit will be joined together with another group, which we have requested. Do please contact Carole ASAP via caroleshorney@hotmail.com
PLEASE NOTE, tours take approximately two hours and, although not a lot of walking is required, the majority of the time you will be on your feet. Refreshments are not available.

Sunday 7 July: SEEOG visit (car-share) to Hilldrop, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, SS17 8QB, 14:00 - 19:00

Light refreshments. Tea and coffee, Pimms, cakes and vegetarian savoury snacks.
Admission: Adult: £5.00; children are free. Since building their turf roof house in 1995, they have trialled waste materials in their 4-acre garden to mimic brownfield habitat, one of the most undervalued places for wildlife. These are now their most beautiful and diverse habitats for plants and insects; several green roofs and lots of ideas to create biodiverse habitats, especially for solitary bees; views across the Thames Estuary to Kent. The garden features a self-build timber house with green roof, 6 other green roofs, 3 ponds, brownfield habitat - which gives ideas for difficult areas - green roof shipping container garden room and wildlife friendly hedges, including laid hedges - 2 wild flower meadows and ephemeral wetland.
https://www.ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/garden/34797/?fbclid=IwAR13y-AZN_d_K6ruM79ugd_zpotQwpK313ZT6xlcOOdSopwOwiuVBBiHUw

Saturday 13 July, 10:00: Return visit to 'Riffhams' (car-share) kindly arranged by SEEOG member, Philip 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>

A few years ago Phil 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 he started; it had been kept weed-free, the soil was left bare, so soil conditions were very poor. He started to improve it by digging in humus and green manure plants. Part of the garden he has planted with wild flowers and made a bee garden with three bee hives. He's also planted a fruit garden and the rest is formal vegetables.

Monday 15 July: Group Night

'Traditional fruit growing in a changing environment' with Andrew Tann - this will be a long evening, he expects! He will also be talking about growing fruit trees on Saturday 9 February at Christ Church URC, 164 New London Rd, Chelmsford CM2 0AW, starting at 10.30, hosted by the National Allotment Society (Essex group).

<https://crapes.wordpress.com/>
<https://www.christchurchchelmsfordurc.org.uk/>

Monday 16 September: Group Night

Darren Lerigo presents 'A Very British Garden'. Do you take a no dig approach to your allotment? If you want to know more, take a look at the no dig information in Garden Organic's Growing Advice pages at <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/organic-allotment-growing>

Saturday or Sunday 21-22 September: SEEOG visit (car-share) to Clayhill Vineyard, Lower Burnham Road, Latchingdon (tbc)

We met the folks from the vineyard last year at Bradfields Farm Dairy on Open Farm Sunday.
<https://www.facebook.com/ClayhillVineyard/>

Saturday 5 October: Apple Day at St Laurence Orchard, 11:00 – 14:00

Monday 18 November: Group Night

SEEOG member Kamil Pachalko presents an update on Southend in Transition Community Allotment – see <https://sitcommunityallotment.wordpress.com/>

OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 4 May: May Fayre at Growing Together Westcliff, 11:00 – 14:00

Saturday 18 May: Worldcup on Sea charity football match at Roots Hall Stadium, all day

Wednesday 3 July: Summer Fayre at Growing Together Shoeburyness, 15:15 – 18:00

Saturday 21 September: Walking Together Sponsored Walk

Saturday 5 October: Apple Day at St Laurence Orchard, 11:00 – 14:00

Saturday 30 November: Christmas Fayre at Growing Together Westcliff, 11:00 – 14:00

NEWS

Allotment news

1) **The Eastern Region Panel AGM and Quarterly Meeting** will be held on Saturday 19 January at the Y.M.C.A., Queen Anne House, Gonville Place, Cambridge. The meeting commences at 11:00 but members are welcome from 10:30 to chat, and usually finishes around 13:00, with refreshments being served between the two meetings. These meetings are open to any members of the National Allotment Society. Please confirm to Sheila Pullin, Hon. Secretary Eastern Region Panel (sheilascottage@talktalk.net) that you will be attending.

2) **Folly Grove Allotments, Hockley** – a few from the fledgling ‘Hockley Allotment Society’ are meeting up with the new Parish Clerk this month to discuss progress; so, if you know someone who is keen to pursue the opportunity of an allotment in Hockley, please contact Hockley Parish Council to register your name with full contact details to:

Clerk to the Parish Council

Hockley Parish Council, The Old Fire Station, 58 Southend Road, Hockley, Essex SS5 4QH
01702 207707

clerk@hockley-essex.gov.uk

Crapes Fruit Farm: ‘Winter’, for how long?

How do we measure winter in our minds? The sight of all clad in lovely white snow, hoar frost adorning the trees and hedges, a raw nagging Easterly from the Urals or a couple of straight weeks with a good bone in the ground day and night? The latter two need to be endured but are certainly the more beneficial in shutting down perennial beings like fruit trees. Usually the first signs of spring not being so far off, here, are the Vranja Quince buds just beginning to break, preferably during the first week of March, hopefully not before. I am surprised to see the brilliant white blossoms just appearing on some white violets before the end of December. To date, not so many Fieldfares have been sighted.

We have accepted some really useful rainfall during December, stashed away underfoot for future use. 2018 has presented some challenges from which we have learned of new dodges for future consideration. Unfortunately, some disappointments too, as our range of apple varieties, overall volume and length of season all fell short of the norm. However the winter turns out during the next two months, the growing calendar develops day on day. For us here, at Crapes, we will be quite happy to keep our two pullovers on until the middle of April. The need to cast clouts at the beginning of March for a few days, like last spring, sets everything out of balance for months to come.

Those of you reading this from Poland, France, Germany, Michigan and elsewhere, it is always good to see your national flag pop up on screen. Best wishes for 2019 - hope that you are enjoying your 'Winter'!

tannandrew@gmail.com - <https://crapes.wordpress.com/>

Farmers' Markets 2019

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 15 February, Friday 15 March, Friday 12 April, Friday 17 May, Friday 21 June, Friday 19 July, Friday 16 August, Friday 20 September, Friday 18 October, Friday 15 November and Friday 21 December.

<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 2 February and Saturday 2 March

https://www.facebook.com/rochfordfarmersmarket/?ref=br_rs

Food and Farming Policy update

It's good news from PANNA (see below) with their Farm Bill and we now need to encourage people to do similar with the UK Agriculture Bill with personalised emails to MPs. We have a chance of a fairer, better food policy – and Sustain needs your help. This is an once-in-a-lifetime chance to change the way we support farming for the better with a new Agriculture Act. For too long, farm policy has failed properly to support farmers well to protect the environment and wildlife, enhance animal welfare and earn a decent living as part of a strong rural economy. And there has been too little control of unfair supply chains.

Our MPs really need to hear that you/we want the new Agriculture Bill – going through parliament now - to support more action on nature and climate change, fewer chemicals, more healthy food, decent work conditions and a fair deal for farmers and farm workers. Sustain is calling for improvements, described in the draft letter at the link below. You can easily amend this as personalising letters to MPs does help them take note. They expect the Report Stage of the Bill to be after the MP's 'meaningful vote' in mid-January so you have time to engage with MPs. We can also share with you a useful link to materials on a Brexit 'no deal' scenario from members and partners Sustainable Food Cities and the Food Research Collaboration, which could be handy given the circumstances.

Ron found a couple of Government stats recently: in 2017, the EU was UK's largest agricultural export market - 60% food, feed and drink exports. 63% people want to keep EU regulations on pesticides; 16% to relax them.

<https://sustainweb.eaction.org.uk/lobby/agriculturebill>

https://www.sustainweb.org/news/jul18_coming_to_terms_brexit_deal_or_no_deal/

<http://sustainablefoodcities.org/newsevents/news/articleid/1050/councils-advised-to-set-up-food-resilience-teams-to-prepare-for-brexit>

Friends of Ryton Organic Gardens

At last there has been a ruling on the Asset of Community Value challenge at Ryton Organic Gardens, as you may have seen on Facebook. The Asset stands, but there can be an appeal. So still not a given, but it is encouraging that the council recognises the value of the site. Below is the text sent to Ross Taylor of Heart of England Organic Group (HEOG), who listed the asset on behalf of HEOG:

"Further to my email, it has been confirmed to me that following the review procedure it has been decided that there is no reason to remove the above property from the List of Assets of Community Value. However, under the terms of the Localism Act the owner has a right to appeal against the Council's decision to the General Regulatory Chamber of the First-Tier Tribunal within 28 days. I will write to you again if I receive notification that the owner has appealed."

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsofRytonOrganicGardens/about/>

Garden Organic news

1) **Why are some seedlings more commonly eaten by slugs and snails?** It is often thought to be down to taste. But new research from the University of Plymouth suggests it may be the smells produced by young seedlings that attract the molluscs.

The research looked specifically at the eating habits of snails in grasslands - where it is known that some plants survive a mollusc attack better than others. Garden Organic members with long memories will remember the research led by Lawrence Hills on Perfume Against Pests in the 1960s, as well as the Members' Experiment in 1971 of using garlic oil as a natural resistance to slugs and snails.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news/do-plant-smells-repel-snails>

2) **New proposals for pesticide authorisation** - Following the controversy about the renewal of glyphosate last year, the European Parliament set up a Special committee on the authorisation procedure for pesticides. It was clear the process lacked transparency. The first recommendations to address the issue have now been made.

First and foremost, is the proposal that the public should be granted access to the research submitted in order to authorise a pesticide? Currently the data and information provided by the chemical companies (such as Bayer and Syngenta) is cloaked in secrecy and seen only by the authorisation body. We welcome this move to towards transparency - it gives scientists and other specialists in the field a chance to analyse the data provided by manufacturers.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news/new-proposals-pesticide-authorisation>

Gene Drives, the latest on GM and Brexit plus more

As reported in the latest issue of *Thin Ice*, GM Freeze has joined the growing number of voices calling for a moratorium on the use of gene drives - a form of super-charged GM that overrides natural laws of inheritance to ensure that a particular characteristic is passed on to all offspring. Last month, as *Thin Ice* was being printed, a key meeting of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity agreed to call on Governments to put in place a number of safeguards before considering the release of any gene drive organism. These safeguards include case by case risk assessments, risk management measures and, significantly, the consent of indigenous peoples and local communities that may be affected by the release. This is short of the moratorium that GM Freeze supported but is a significant step in the right direction. The Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC) explains more at <http://www.etcgroup.org/content/united-nations-hits-brakes-gene-drives>

GM news: Experts: Dicamba will come for trees, specialty crops in 2019

Dicamba, the controversial herbicide used on soybeans and cotton, is responsible for thousands of acres of damaged crops in recent years. Experts say that, despite new federal rules that go into effect in 2019, the drift will continue but the victims will be different. Kevin Bradley, a professor of plant science at the University of Missouri, predicted that there will be fewer problems with dicamba damaging crops due to soybean farmers using more dicamba-resistant seeds. "But the drift will still happen," he said, taking aim at specialty crops like fruits, vegetables, and nuts, as well as trees and grasses. You can read more of this ever depressing story at <https://www.gmwatch.org/en/news/latest-news/18671-experts-dicamba-will-come-for-trees-specialty-crops-in-2019>

Graham Oster-Ritter, our late Membership Secretary

Graham was one of our founder members, probably as a result of one of the newspaper clippings in the local press ('anyone interested in starting an organic gardening club?') or our inaugural meeting in Southend Library in March 1994! He was our Membership Secretary for a very long time and we shall all miss him.

Lauriston Farm news

As the interest in their biodynamic vegetables grows, they are being asked to attend more local markets. They currently attend the Wivenhoe Artisan Market, which is on the third Saturday of the month; and from February, the Colchester Farmers Market which is the first Friday of the month.

Their share offer has had a good start with seven new members and five existing members increasing their community shares. In total, they have received pledges for £6,650 worth of shares and have received useful links to other grants. Last month, they submitted an application to LEADER for 80% funding on the new large atrium-style meeting room which looks like it will cost a total of around £27,000 to build. They still have a long way to go but it is beginning to take shape.

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

Members' contributions

1. **While it is well known that bees produce honey**, many other food sources also rely on bees. Conservative figures show that bees pollinate at least ONE mouthful in every THREE that we eat! Bees around the world, including in Australia, are in serious trouble. Overuse of pesticides and herbicides make bees more vulnerable to disease and pests. Modern agricultural practices and urbanisation are greatly reducing bee habitat and food sources. Scientists are seeing a large decline in bee populations worldwide. This poses a threat, not only for our food production but our environment as a whole, as flowering plants rely on pollinators to survive. The good news is we can all do things to help ensure the survival of bees!

The Australian Curriculum aligned "Love Food? Love Bees!" Year 5 & 6 integrated unit explores the importance of bees and enables students to take real and bee-friendly action in their community.

<https://actforbees.org/>

2. **Blight used to be thought of as a fungus**. James Wong heads to the fungarium at Kew Gardens to explore the largest collection of fungi in the world.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00014zq>

3. **Galactic Magic Seeds Announce Their Top Tomato Varieties for 2019**

Long Tall Sally really does live up to its name. The wispy leaved, medium chartreuse plants gracefully climb tremendous heights. All the while, they pump out plenty of large, meaty pink striped hearts - The flavours are incredibly sweet and well balanced. To purchase this Long Tall Sally, please click the link.

<https://galacticmagicseeds.com/product/long-tall-sally/>

Xanadu Green Goddess - rarely do bee crosses happen in my garden, but this one did. Anthocyanin was unexpectedly put into a Surpriz Beefstake, and was then found the following year by Tricia Rosamilia in her garden. There are a few Xanadu selections that show some other colours and exceptionally perfect flavours. To purchase this "perfect 10" of a tomato, please click the link.

<https://galacticmagicseeds.com/product/xanadu-green-goddess/>

Rebel Starfighter Prime is the first segregate from my cross of Xanadu Picasso x RHK GWR Heart will be released this fall. This plant should be heart shaped with deep red/maroon flesh. It should have Antho Shoulders with Antho and various other colour stripes from stem to blossom end. Flavour should be deep and rich with long lasting "umami". To purchase this "once in a lifetime" cross, please click the link.

<https://galacticmagicseeds.com/pro.../rebel-starfighter-prime/>

4. **Save our Essex libraries**

We the undersigned call on Essex County Council to abandon its plans to close 25 libraries and possibly 19 more. They are a vital community resource.

<https://essexlibdems.org.uk/en/petition/save-our-essex-libraries>

5. **Scientist unveils blueprint to save bees and enrich farmers**

Urgent planting of wildflowers will attract pollinators and boost farmers' food crops, expert to tell UN. The collapse in bee populations can be reversed if countries adopt a new farmer-friendly strategy, the architect of a new masterplan for pollinators will tell the UN biodiversity conference (this week). Stefanie Christmann of the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas will present the results of a new study that shows substantial gains in income and biodiversity from devoting a quarter of cropland to flowering economic crops such as spices, oil seeds, medicinal and forage plants. The UN conference is already debating new guidelines on pollinators that will recommend reducing and gradually phasing out the use of existing pesticides, but Christmann's research suggests this can be done without financial pain or a loss of production.

Excerpt from The Guardian, Friday 23 November 2018

6. **Organic farmers protecting Italy's rich food tradition**

Limoncella, Etna, Gravenstein — these are just some of the heirloom apples and other crop varieties that Italian organic farmers are growing in a bid to save the country's vibrant food heritage. This item was extracted from <https://www.dw.com/en/top-stories/global-ideas/s-30654>

7. **We don't have enough organic farms. Why not?**

Organic food sales in the U.S. doubled over the last decade, but organic farming hasn't kept pace. That may change as farmers partner with brands. In this photo, Mexican and Guatemalan workers harvest organically grown squash at Lady Moon Farms in Punta Gorda, Florida.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/future-of-food/organic-farming-crops-consumers/>

8. **Plant Trees every time you search the internet.** This came to our attention about a year ago, but we've only just realised we hadn't told enough people about it! How amazing is that? Helping the planet green up each and every time you search for something. We think it is just as good as Google for most things you need to search for (please don't send me your search items it couldn't find. Your private searches are your own). Another search engine that does that is called DuckDuckGo. They are also very good and using them means you are 'sticking it to the man'.

<https://modernmint.co.uk/plant-trees-ecosa/>

9. **Orchards East** is running a pruning workshop at St Laurence Orchard in February, details as follows: Saturday 16 February – Community Orchard Pruning, St Laurence Orchard, Eastwoodbury Lane (opposite St Laurence Park), Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6UY 1000-1530. Tutor: Dr Anna Baldwin

A one-day workshop aimed at those who care for community orchards, which are newly or recently planted, and those which contain more mature trees. The day will include formative pruning and care of young trees and restorative pruning of veteran trees. While pruning will mainly take place on apple trees, the skills learned can also be applied to pear trees. No previous pruning experience is required. The workshop will take place outdoors, tools and PPE are provided. Free to attend. To book a place, please email Howard.jones@uea.ac.uk, including your name, phone number and email address, clearly indicating which course you would like to attend

10) Since 2014, **Global Justice Now** has been campaigning to challenge the role of the UK government in the aid scheme, New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. The scheme claims that it will lift 50 million people in Africa out of poverty by 2022 but its key beneficiaries are global corporations. Launched in 2012, the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition provides aid money from rich countries like the US and the UK, and helps big business invest in the African agricultural sector. But in return, African countries are required to change their land, seed and trade rules in favour of big business.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/building-better-food-system>

11) **How to Grow a Jelly Garden** - Many ornamental and wild fruits are overly tart and seedy when eaten fresh, but become sweet and mellow when made into jelly. Here are five berry-producing plants that are easy to grow in the low-maintenance permaculture garden, and a few ideas for making and using a mixed-fruit jelly.
<https://www.tenthacrefarm.com>

12) **Unlike a Globalized Food System, Local Food Won't Destroy the Environment**
If you're seeking some good news during these troubled times, look at the ecologically sound ways of producing food that have percolated up from the grassroots in recent years. Small farmers, environmentalists, academic researchers and food and farming activists have given us agroecology, holistic resource management, permaculture, regenerative agriculture and other methods that can alleviate or perhaps even eliminate the global food system's worst impacts: biodiversity loss, energy depletion, toxic pollution, food insecurity and massive carbon emissions.
<https://truthout.org/articles/unlike-a-globalized-food-system-local-food-wont-destroy-the-environment/#>

13) **Maltese Islands Weather** - We launched Gozo Weather Page as a mere 'hobby' on 3rd September 2012. Little did we know that this would become one of the leading weather service providers in the Maltese Island. The hard work put into Gozo Weather Page was recognized by the community several times.
<https://www.malteseislandsweather.com/>

14) **Win a FREE Cooking Workshop by Friends of the Earth Malta**
Pledge to support sustainable farming
Are you passionate about supporting sustainable farming practices? Do you think food should be good for our health, safeguard our environment, and support the farmers producing it? Take the pledge to support Sustainable Food and be in the running to win a prize!
<https://foemalta.org/fab/food/sustainable-farming-pledge/>

15) **An amazing photo of a nematode** that lives 1 km below the earth's surface showing the depth/extent of our living soil that sustains a living earth. On re-reading Andrea Wulf's 'The Invention of Nature' - about Humboldt who first showed that deforestation affects climate locally - this and cattle impoverishes land and both affect water. Though written 1804-ish, we see Nature's Web continues to be broken strand by strand.

16) **So has the Poland agreement for climate action done enough and will nations implement?**
Again, we need to sign up to put on pressure - Antarctic glaciers melt and pharmas continue applying their destructive potions with encaptured farmers. However, there's work to be done if US senate and Congress can break the White House, that reflects the changes and pressure we exert, holding ground to improve for the future. The Sustain notes for the Agriculture Bill are good and the London Food Link highlighting the Peri-urbafarms (areas that are on the perimeter of cities (what some refer to as peri-urban) - Forty Hall, Sutton Community Farm, Dagenham Farm and Organiclea - as well as the community growing projects that are part of the London Food Strategy.

17) **In Italy**, a government programme to turn confiscated Mafia land over to organic farmers is bearing fruit -- and very fine wine. Way back in 2001, the Cooperativa Placido Rizzotto set up shop in Sicily, right in the heart of Cosa Nostra country (the village of Corleone was a few short miles away). The cooperative began selling food under the label Libera Terra, or "free land." It was the first beneficiary of an Italian law that provided former Mafia land to farmers. Naturally, farmers were leery to hop on board. Free land was enticing, but what payback would they face? "When we first started, nobody from the towns nearby wanted to come and thresh our wheat," the cooperative's vice chairwoman told the Global Post. "Cultivating seized land was something unprecedented, and people didn't want to be seen as working for us."
<https://modernfarmer.com/2014/02/giving-mafia-land-farmers/>

18) **Louis is a local farmer working in Mellieħa.** He has been farming organically for quite a number of years, cultivating over 10,000m² on his own & working pretty much seven days a week. Over the last year, he has found help and support from Samwel, a young anthropology student who wanted to learn about organic farming in Malta. Through Louis, Samwel has learnt to appreciate rural life.

<https://www.facebook.com/foemalta/videos/2251045018472038/>

With grateful thanks to Simon, Darren, Martyn and Ron

Pesticide Action Network UK

Croydon Council has given its citizens an early Christmas present by committing to end the use of the controversial weed killer glyphosate in all of its public parks and green spaces. At a full council meeting on Tuesday 3rd December, in answer to a question from Councillor Nina Degrad, Councillor Stuart Collins announced that they will use the opportunity of taking the grounds maintenance contract back in-house to end the use of glyphosate as of February 2019. He also stated that they plan to train staff in new techniques and explore feasible non-chemical options. In perhaps the most heartening part of his statement, he said that this is something that Croydon Council is committed to delivering regardless of the cost.

This fantastic result has come as part of their ongoing Pesticide-Free London campaign which saw more than 400 candidates take the 'Pesticide-Free London pledge' in the run up to city-wide local elections in May. The councillors in Croydon who took the pledge have lived up to their promise and helped to deliver this outcome.

<http://www.pan-uk.org/croydon-ends-glyphosate/>

Pesticide Action Network North America: On pesticides, food democracy & hope

They felt unexpectedly hopeful as 2018 wound down. Though the national political landscape remains tumultuous, they're seeing some powerful, energizing trends in the world of food and farming. First, momentum is building in support of farming models that are regenerative instead of extractive, that build healthy soil, crop diversity — and thriving communities. Second, the public and political appetite to challenge the corporate stranglehold on their food and farming system is getting stronger. Last, and perhaps most importantly, people are engaging more deeply in food and farming issues. As this year's Midwest dicamba drift crisis shows, pesticide reliance not only puts their health at risk, it's also destroying farms and communities. The fact is, the pesticide treadmill (fuelled by weed and insect resistance) has now kicked into hyperdrive, and weed scientists will openly tell you the system is failing.

You can read this item in full at <http://www.panna.org/blog/pesticides-food-democracy-hope>

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

1) A tribute to Peter Melchett

Peter Melchett was Policy Director at the Soil Association for 18 years and was such an important, charismatic figure in the environment and organic movements throughout his lifetime. Alongside his Soil Association role, he ran his family's 890-acre organic farm in Norfolk, with cattle, sheep and arable crops, which we visited about ten years ago. He was an extraordinary man with incredible knowledge across a wide range of subjects, ranging from beef farming to sustainable cosmetics. He will be greatly missed by all his Soil Association colleagues.

<https://www.soilassociation.org/certification/trade-news/2018/a-tribute-to-peter-melchett/>

2) Edible Horticulture Roundtable

Their Head of Horticulture, Ben Raskin, reported back from the Edible Horticulture Roundtable on 27 November. Although George Eustice, Defra Minister for Farming, was present at the official Fruit and Vegetable Alliance launch dinner back in July, this was the first time he joined the Roundtable meeting. Fortunately, they now have a minister with a horticultural background who understands the issues facing the sector. This meant they could spend their limited time with him getting right to the nub of the challenges they face.

The Roundtable is led by the Fruit and Veg Alliance, a diverse group of large and small growers and public health campaigners who are unified by a desire to get the nation growing and eating more fruit and veg. Each area of the sector has different challenges and opportunities, though many are areas of commonality.

<https://www.soilassociation.org/farmers-growers/farming-news/2018/december/07/edible-horticulture-roundtable/>

Sustain Brexit news update, January 2019

The New Year kicks off with Sustain running several sessions as part of the Brexit Room at the Oxford Real Farming Conference (3rd and 4th of January 2019), where Defra Secretary of State Michael Gove will also be on stage, to be grilled by Kerry McCarthy MP on the future for UK food and farming. Sustain is also contributing to sessions with the RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, and the People's Food Policy.

<http://orfc.org.uk/orfc-programme-2019/#rdv-calendar>

To get a taste of what 2019 holds, take a look at these blogs:

https://www.sustainweb.org/blogs/dec18_farming_the_year_ahead/

https://www.sustainweb.org/blogs/dec18_sustain_agm_we_have_so_much_to_win/

<http://sustainweb.eaction.org.uk/lobby/agriculturebill>

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