



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS



Soil Association

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS NEWSLETTER NO: 156 – MARCH 2021

<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!

Venue, notes etc.

For those of you who have not attended one of our Zoom meetings before, it is very easy to take part. All you will need is a PC, laptop, tablet or mobile smartphone device that is connected to the internet. You may join the meeting by simply just clicking on the highlighted web link given in the invitation below next to where it says 'Join Zoom Meeting'. This will automatically take you to the Zoom website where you can follow the directions which will take you to the meeting.

You may join the meeting at any time, but we suggest that you try to access the meeting a few minutes before it is due to officially start at 20:00 to give yourself time to login and become familiar with Zoom. If you try to join the meeting before it is due to start you will be held in a waiting area and will be let in once we are ready to start.

If you have any questions about this meeting, or how to use Zoom, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We hope that you will be able to make it and look forward to seeing you there.

For future reference, our newsletter copy 'deadlines' for 2021 are as follows:

May	-	Sunday 25 April
July	-	Sunday 20 June
September	-	Sunday 22 August
November	-	Sunday 24 October

SEEORG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS

Any suggestions as to speakers/subjects for 2022 would be extremely welcome!

To be arranged: either an OGQT or quiz – watch this space!

Monday 15 March: Group Night

'Clippings: Topiary & Pruning Techniques', a 'Zoom' presentation by Darren Lerigo, a gardener who specialises in topiary and pruning. Darren started Modern Mint in 2014 as a place to meet clients who share his fascination with gardens, pruning and wildlife. His topiary work has been seen in the Guardian, Country Living Magazine and on Channel 4. He works for keen gardeners all over the UK. His work can be seen in The Guardian; he's discussed the best secateurs to use in The Telegraph; he shares pruning skills at Topiary workshops in Kent and regularly teaches at The European Boxwood & Topiary Society and The English Gardening School in Chelsea. And he's a well-known and popular visitor at SEEEOG meetings during normal times!

Monday 17 May: Group Night

Chris Collins, Garden Organic

Monday 19 July: Group Night

'Water conservation, how to best use and save water within allotments, water management and how to prevent water contamination' is presented by our own Ray How, Regional Representative of the National Allotment Society.

Monday 20 September: Group Night

The British Sea Buckthorn Company, presented by Ben Eagle (Director, Sales and Marketing). The company grows sea buckthorn berries on the Essex coast and works with partners from across the world to bring you products that will help you to stay healthy for longer. Ben was on Countryfile recently.

<https://www.britishseabuckthorn.com/>

Monday 15 November: Group Night

Matthew Oliver, Horticulturist, Fruit & Veg RHS Garden Hyde Hall

NEWS

Allotment news

The next Environment Committee will be on Monday 1 March 2021 at 19.30. There will be public speaking time should any resident wish to speak on items on the agenda. To join the meeting, please contact the Clerk at clerk@hockley-essex.gov.uk or phone 01702 207707 before 12:00 on the day of the meeting and a link and password will be sent to you.

Chairman's (and Treasurer's) notes

1. Catherine Dawson -Melcourt and Sylvagrow - zoom presentation 18th January 2020

Catherine gave us the development journey for PEAT FREE composts as developed over 30 years: the research, trialling and production of RHS approved and FCS forestry waste plus other sustainable constituents. This is within the context of Dobbies stopping selling bagged peat, the Irish Peat Board stopping harvesting peat 2020. There will be the launch of the Responsible Sourcing scheme (socially and environmentally), all audited for energy, water use, social compliance, habitat biodiversity, pollution, renewability and resource use efficiency. Giving a bench mark for growing media, with NGO involvement, transparency, a logo listing ingredients to 5%.

Peat has been cheap as the sellers have bought the peat areas as was; therefore low cost but destructive of environment, breaking the upland sequestering of carbon and water that now is a major cause of flooding lower down.

From the regenerative work growing sphagnum moss by micro propagation has given a novel addition to be scaled up as a part of the growing medium that has a natural resistance pathogen, giving protection and as suppressor. Overall the Sylva fibre composted wood fibre with very controlled particle, air/water balance is now renewable, consistent, available, preferably UK sourced, low pH and low in nutrients. From the 1980s, a conference in 1989, the early peat free was poorly developed but now peat-free will be coming onto the horticultural industry fully after years of industry resistance. We get there after 50 years of campaigning for peat-free and peat's importance to be left and regenerated.

2. Pauline Pears - a Norfolk Organic Group zoom meeting

Pauline highlighted her Heritage Seed Library varieties that she particularly likes growing. Growing veg and compost. Chard for its antioxidants and vitamins; Haricot beans for storable protein; Leeks, magnesium and Vitamin A; Potato, Vitamin C; Pumpkin, nutritious zinc; Pumpkins and haricots for the hungry gap. All good reasons to save Heritage varieties, subscribe to its work and be able to source varieties that are not commercially available and maybe become a seed saver. Check it out.
<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/hsl>

Crapes Fruit Farm news: A glimmer of optimism

In spite of some penetratingly cold winds, here in Essex mid-month, February draws to a close not just with arrays of Snowdrops locally, but also clear evidence of buds bursting on our Quince trees. Some respite from seemingly incessant rains earlier in the winter has enabled the water table to lower from being worryingly visible amongst the trees late in January to quietening ditch flows. The tree roots will be responding to the increases in temperature now. It is heartening to see that our earthworm population now considers it suitable to come up for air leaving abundant evidence of their burrowing, everywhere, in turn allowing the ingress of oxygen into the soil. Root systems need fresh air just as we do! Next we will see molehills erupting.

Some efforts have been made to maximise the drainage of cold air during blossom time, especially. The lowering of a length of hedge along the roadside to our north, illustrated the range of small birds residing in and around the orchard as evidenced by the remains of pre-loved nests of various construction. This is the third time in over thirty years that it has been reduced to a base of 2m. A sheltered orchard at blossom time, particularly, helps to create a micro climate raising the temperature to encourage insect activity and the speedier pollen tube growth within flowers. Too dense a hedge or boundary interferes with air movements. In our situation here, two plantations of trees established on former neighbouring arable land twenty years ago are now, just that, dense enough to create barriers to the original natural air flows the orchard used to benefit from.

A local passer-by also informs me of a pair of Barn Owls regularly hunting up and down the rows visible from her window - at dusk. Being grass, there are many mice and voles. They had some relief during the recent week of snow cover.

We look forward to continuing as usual with our range of apples available by courier delivery from August. Our mailing list is open to newcomers! Our Friday deliveries of produce around Colchester will soon be up and running again, to existing customers only to begin with, as we build up volumes of early vegetables and leaf. Generally the way forward is more optimistic now, provided that we focus on the science of COMMON SENSE!
<https://crapes.wordpress.com/>

Friends of Ryton Organic Gardens

To refresh, back in September 2019 the Friends of Ryton Organic Gardens issued the following press statement: "We are glad that Coventry University has taken on the site with its Asset of Community Value protection. A garden open to the public offers a respite from the busy world outside the gardens - a place where people can relax and reflect in peaceful surroundings. At Ryton people can also learn about the value of Organic Gardening in this time of climate change and uncertainty. Gardens are vital in protecting the diversity of our wildlife as well as providing food for human beings. We are planning to meet with GO, and hopefully with a University representative, to work out what the sale means in

practice and to find out how Friends of Ryton Organic Gardens can continue to support a garden which, as well as having great educational value, also houses the ashes of peoples' loved ones."

Now we have Judy Steele's very welcome update:

For obvious reasons everything has stalled and there has been nothing to communicate. However, Five Acre Farm, the Community Supported Agriculture scheme on the field at Ryton Organic Gardens, is on the point of signing a lease which includes the plum and pear orchards and the soft fruit circle and is bringing them back into production. The areas have not been maintained for years.

A recent walk round these areas was entirely reminiscent of the Secret Garden. The brambles that had taken over the soft fruit circle and the orchards looked as if they had smothered everything on the ground. Now they have been cleared by volunteers, and beneath the trees daffodils have multiplied and will soon be flowering. The bramble roots are being dug out from among the pear and plum trees – in some places their shoots had reached the tops of the trained pears. The interpretation boards for the pear and plum areas have survived, but not those for the soft fruit circle. The centre of the soft fruit circle will be rotavated and put down to green manure as it cannot be cleared in time to plant soft fruit this year. In the meantime, the rest of the gardens are being managed organically by a dedicated Coventry University team.

Five Acre Farm would welcome volunteers to help with the fruit circle. Although I know that many of you live a long way from Ryton, some are local. If you are interested, please contact Five Acre Farm via its website.

<http://www.fiveacrefarm.org.uk>

Judy Steele on behalf of FROG

Garden Organic news:

With spring just around the corner, they're delighted to share their online webinars to help you get ready for the growing season ahead. Choose from a selection of topics, from 'Successful composting every time' to 'Planning your growing plot' plus much more!

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

GM news: Tell George Eustice he's got it wrong on gene editing

George Eustice, UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, wants to change the definition of a genetically modified organism so that risky new genetic engineering techniques (known as gene editing) are no longer subject to risk assessments, monitoring or GM labels. Please tell Eustice that you want to keep protecting our food and our farms with robust regulation of ALL forms of genetic engineering. You can have your say on the consultation website -

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/agri-food-chain-directorate/the-regulation-of-genetic-technologies/>

or by email to consultationreply@defra.gov.uk.

Many supporters have already done this, which is fantastic, but they really do need everyone to take part - this is the biggest threat to GM safeguards for many years. The consultation isn't entirely straightforward so do use their guidance to help with ideas for what you might want to say. Once you have submitted your consultation response, it's really helpful if you can share your concerns with your MP.

<https://www.gmfreeze.org/current-actions/ask-your-mp-to-speak-up-against-plans-to-remove-gene-editing-safeguards/>

MPs are elected to represent us but most of them haven't had to think about GM before as all the big decisions were taken in Brussels. Please send your MP a link to their political briefing and ask them to sign Early Day Motion 1547 - *Regulation of genetic technologies in food and farming*.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/58166>

Kent gardening for gardens & allotments

For people in the Kent area, our friend Richard Coleman has just restarted the Kent organic & wildlife FB group. He is hoping to make this a local group supported by Garden Organic. If interested, please look at Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/1028443963878792/ or email Richard at racoleman@cix.co.uk

Members' contributions

1. Composting is easy and fun, it saves you money and helps you grow lovely plants. More importantly, it is good for the environment, as it massively reduces the amount of noxious methane gas generated from burying food waste in landfill. It's great for the soil and a great way to learn about nature. This book shows you how to go about composting. If you want to learn more, please click here:

<https://www.greenbooks.co.uk/how-to-make-and-use-compost-content>

2. Launch of 'How to Make and Use Compost - The practical guide for home, schools and communities' - you can watch it here at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi3VGT71c4g&feature=youtu.be>

3. Well, here we are in February, itching to get started on the allotment and garden but as ever, dictated by the weather. It has been so wet during the past months that it will probably be a rush to get things ready for planting this year.

January did see the commencement of the pruning of our apple trees in the garden and on the allotment. It has been a bad year for obtaining potato varieties I would normally grow. I like to buy the organic seed potatoes where possible as I do not like them being sprayed with chemicals. I have had to hedge my bets and obtain them from where I can, some non- organic, and still with the uncertainty of whether my orders will be fulfilled.

We all really need to buy non peat products which will have an impact on global warming and the devastating effect upon the environment. I have been using peat-free compost for three years now and find it a lot better than the product I bought some years ago. I have had a lot of success with it and have found that it is fairly comparable to the peat alternatives I used to buy. Price wise, it is not that much more.

Finally, there are tempting signs of spring with foliage of some tulips tentatively popping their heads through the soil and the advent of cyclamen, snowdrops and our first daffodils all in flower.

4. A number of people in Castle Point have come together to set up the Castle Point Climate Action Group and are currently preparing for projects which can take off once the Covid restrictions are a thing of the past. Not everyone is prepared to take to the streets in protest, possibly risking arrest, or live for days in a tunnel under a square in London, but many people are beginning to think about climate change and what we can all do to bring about the changes the world so urgently needs. In many parts of the country groups are coming together to grow food on community allotments so, if there is anyone in Castle Point who would like to help move this forward locally, please do get in touch. Details are on the CPCA group website - <https://www.castlepointclimateactiongroup.org/>

5. Morley's stock Sylvagrow Organic Planter 45l and Melcourt general purpose 50 litres - it's not called Sylvagrow but essentially the same. Ron kindly phoned them.

<https://www.morleyonline.co.uk/?SID=easc3l9tsntr27fogejda1p80>

6. 'Grow your own veg' by Michael Bullen

Described as 'A great new group to follow if you're looking to start growing your own veg and don't know how to go about it. This is run by an Essex based gardener who will be teaming up with Eco Essex to share step by step instructions and videos'. Personally VERY excited about this!!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/431306274690260>

7. Sheila Dillon, who presents Radio 4's The Food Programme, makes the Radio 4 Appeal on behalf of Feedback, our wonderful Gleaning Network. Feedback is a campaign group working to regenerate nature by transforming our food system. To do this they challenge power, catalyse action and empower people to achieve positive change.

<https://feedbackglobal.org/about-us/>

8. National Allotments Week 2021: 9 August till 15 August. Its theme in 2021 is Plotting for the Future; They will be celebrating the contribution that allotments make to a sustainable future. Look out for more news in the next magazine and on the website.

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news-events-campaigns/national-allotments-week/>

9. The My Harvest research project is ongoing this year and the team would love to hear from new gardeners who would like to take part and measure their 2021 harvest. The evidence collected will be key to providing the vital evidence base to support the use of land for growing spaces within our cities and towns, at a time when people are becoming increasingly interested in growing their own fruit and vegetables.

<https://myharvest.org.uk/>

10. The NSA sun protection campaign returns in 2021 and they are looking to create some resources and advice specifically for allotment holders. Do you have a story to tell? A member contacted them recently about an allotment acquired wound on his head that did not heal and turned out to be skin cancer - caused by twenty five years of too much sun and too little hair. He was keen that they reinforce the need for sun protection whilst gardening and curious to know about protective headwear members could suggest - he has resorted to a reinforced baseball cap! Contact diane@nsalg.org.uk <https://watchyourback.co.uk/> A Tilley hat?

11. The National Open Garden Scheme : The NGS in the Eastern region have been in touch and are keen for more allotment sites to open up for the scheme. Click on the logo to take a look at some sites who open under the Grow your Own category. Contact Ray How for more information if your site might be interested in taking part in 2022.

<https://ngs.org.uk/grow-your-own-gardens/>

12. Leigh-on-Sea Seed Sharing: Sharing leftover or saved seeds in Leigh-on-Sea. Post if you have seeds to share, or post if there are seeds you are looking for! Tips on seed saving more than encouraged. Seeds must be offered for FREE. No money to change hands.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/721724415211523/>

13. It looks like there's been some good things going on at OrganicLea, a workers' cooperative growing food on London's edge in the Lea Valley. Their two years of Bee Wild, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, started in autumn 2018 and ran until late 2020. Through BeeWild, they set out with the intention to maintain wildflower meadows, grow nectar-rich planting, create a 'green corridor', conserve ponds, engage in sustainable bee keeping and survey pollinator species. They also wanted to raise local residents' awareness about pollinators through open days, workshops and information stalls to learn about pollinators and partake in conservation activities. And they wanted to distribute a pollinator ID resource to local households, nectar rich planting to households and create a guided pollinator trail at Hawkwood for visitors. You can read more at <https://www.organiclea.org.uk/2021/02/our-bee-wild-report/>

14. A general question that has been bothering Richard Coleman for some time about string trimmers; with all the fuss over plastic fragments getting into the food chain, why do people use these? The whole point of them is to use plastic string to do the cutting, thus users intentionally produce these fragments. I have stopped using mine. I contacted a few people like Bosch & Black and Decker to ask if they were going to use an ecological alternative, but I got either no answer or a negative. I'm interested in doing a petition to ask when this will be replaced. Is anyone interested in helping with this & spreading the word? Please email Richard with your thoughts at racoleman@cix.co.uk

15. What is breaking through as the food system breaks down? Friday, 5 March, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
The COVID pandemic has shown us the fragility of our food systems, and has also revealed the scale of food inequality in the UK. The many movements represented at the What Next Summit work towards a new model for how the UK feeds itself, in a way that is more sustainable, just, fair and equal. But how far are we along that path? Where can we see the shoots of a new food system and what needs to happen to hugely scale it up? We will be joined by **Professor Tim Lang**, one of the UK's foremost writers and researchers on the UK's food system; **Julie Brown** of the pioneering Growing Communities, working to build a new food system in Hackney, London; **Deidre 'Dee' Woods**, award-winning cook, community food educator, urban agriculturalist, broadcaster and researcher; and **Pam Warhurst**, founder of Incredible Edible and plotter of large scale food revolutions. Our aim is to celebrate a new food culture that is emerging, and to inspire you with what it tells us about what will follow the industrial food system.

<https://nudj.app/event/633>

16. 'The Dirty Truth About Your Rubbish'

For those interested in, or campaigning on, waste issues, on Monday 8 March, from 20:00, Channel 4's Dispatches will air a programme about some of the harm caused by waste incineration. Please use your social media accounts and email contacts to help promote 'The Dirty Truth About Your Rubbish', which Channel 4 describes as: "A look at how millions of tonnes of household recycling end up incinerated, hiking carbon emissions, with councils locked into long and expensive waste contracts". See programme listing:

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/dirty-truth-about-your-rubbish-dispatches>

With grateful thanks to Mike, Eileen, Ron and Sharon for your contributions....

Organic Research Centre: ORC February E-Bulletin: Podcasts, Research Digests and more!

For forty years the ORC has been pushing the boundaries of research and development of practical and sustainable organic farming methods in the UK. Last month they announced a dedicated 40th anniversary page had been launched on their website where you can access their exciting programme of activity throughout 2021. As well as detailed factsheets and research digests being released each month via social media and their anniversary page, they also have an exciting new podcast series on the history of the ORC, current & future research, knowledge exchange and policy activity, as well as interviews with ORC staff and industry leaders. This month's podcast and previous episodes in the 40th anniversary series can be accessed at <https://www.organicresearchcentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Will-Ambro-podcast-v2.mp3>

Pesticide Action Network UK

You can read their latest newsletter by downloading it at https://issuu.com/pan-uk/docs/pesticide_news_124_-_february_2021?fr=sZGY4MjExOTMxNQ

Pesticide Action Network International

A 3-year study in each season for playgrounds and public areas used by children who for body weight take in more air and eat and drink more whilst still developing. They found that 96% of sites had at least one pesticide residue and 79% more than one. Most were fungicides used in this apple and wine producing area in the Tyrol. They are all stated as having low volatility (not beyond a few metres from application site). It implies that this is not so. This study 2017 – 19, done seasonally, and found more intense residue during summer and autumn.

<http://www.panna.org/blog/year-round-pesticides-italys-playgrounds>

Pesticide Action Network North America:

They are lobbying the EPA to ban these known toxic products: Aldicarb, Atrazine, Glyphosate, Dicamba, Isoxaflutol, Paraquat, and Sulfoxaflor - from Bayer, Syngenta, BASF, Corteva. You can read more on their website.

<http://www.panna.org/blog/changes-ahead-if-we-make-it-happen>

Pesticide Free Southend on Sea

We set up this page on Facebook as a result of Pesticide Action Network UK's Pesticide-Free Towns Campaign. People up and down the country are calling for an end to the use of hazardous chemicals in their towns and cities. From Edinburgh to Derry, to Glastonbury and London, towns and cities across the UK are significantly reducing their pesticide use, or phasing it out altogether. Should be an update on this soon, we hope.

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

SEEOG membership

You can also pay by bank transfer. The details are as follows:

Bank Account: 65198805

The Co-operative Bank

Sort code: 08 92 99

SEEOG mentors

Our mentors, so far, include Ron Bates (Leigh-on-Sea) 01702 477681; Carole and Vic Shorney (Hockley), 01702 20914; and Ray How (Rochford), 01702 544632. We could put a package together of Top of The Crops and Square Foot Gardening, if applicable. Maybe survey their plot and make seasonal suggestions for really easy crops to grow, to avoid disappointment? Our members might like to be involved with suggestions?

SEEOG website

Our website is all up-to-date, thanks to the indomitable work done by our webmaster, John Tate. How about contributing to our new feature 'How does your garden grow?' with a few photos?

Soil Association: Organic-PLUS

Coordinated by Coventry University's Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, the Organic-PLUS project involves 10 universities and 15 research institutions and NGOs across nine EU and three non-EU countries and runs from May 2018 to April 2022. Minimising--and eventually phasing out--contentious inputs from certified organic agriculture. By phasing out contentious inputs, organic food systems can be more true to the IFOAM organic principle of 'ecology'. This principle is now shared by the EU bio-economy agenda, focusing on renewable biological resources from land and sea. You can read this item in full at

<https://www.soilassociation.org/farmers-growers/supporting-you/the-future-of-organic/organic-plus/>

SEEOG committee

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