



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS



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NEWSLETTER NO: 161 – JANUARY 2022

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

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

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!

Greetings for the New Year ! But please take care and stay safe!

Unless otherwise stated, all our 2022 meetings will be at Growing Together Rochford, 34 Rocheway, Rochford SS4 1DQ. Do please let us know whether you need a lift and we will try our very best to assist. Parking is available in Rocheway and East Street, Rochford. Nearest bus stop is East Street, Rochford.

<https://www.trustlinks.org/about-us/>

<https://www.trustlinks.org/growing-together/rochford/>

For future reference, our newsletter copy 'deadline' for March 2022 is Sunday 20 February.

Editor's rant

May we hope for a safer and healthier start to the New Year, especially for those of us who have been patiently - and now not at all patiently! - waiting for Hockley Parish Council's first (but hopefully not the first!) allotment site in Folly Lane! As we wait (again!) for the next meeting of the Environment Committee - yes, Monday 10 January at 19:30 - what can we reasonably expect? Further delays and obfuscation? PS: All Parish meetings now postponed until February!

We know that the badger survey was done after the Council resolution. Adrian Eves, who has done so much to push along the allotment site, said back in November that the whole Council is now pushing for completion of the project, which includes any necessary workaround needed because of the badgers. We are also aware that someone (HPC? Developer?) has additionally requested a further survey with cameras, to start sometime in the spring. Does this mean that the allotment site may have to be moved? As Adrian said above: ".....any necessary workaround needed because of the badgers." Which we all knew about from the very beginning! So are these deliberate delaying tactics? You tell us! It would not surprise me to learn that the developers offered and the council accepted land the developers would never be able to build on.....

The Parish has since joined the National Allotment Society (NAS) and is now entitled to ask their local (in Rochford) Mentor, Ray How, for advice on the current situation. To date, the Parish has not been in contact with Ray. If you still want that allotment site in Hockley please contact the Clerk at Hockley Parish Council and ask for an explanation for the delays, and not another Council-led obfuscation: clerk@hockley-essex.gov.uk

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS

Group Night dates for 2022 : FOR YOUR DIARIES

Monday 17 January: “The Peoples’ Landscape” presented by Shaun Badham (via Zoom)

Since we chatted a while ago, Shaun has started a new project called *The Peoples’ Landscape*, which explores the social, cultural and historical connections between current day society-run allotments in the Borough of Southend and historical alternative uses of land such as the Plotlanders. (Plotlands refer to small pieces of land laid out in regular plots on which a number of self-built settlements were established in the south-east of England from the late 1800s and up to the Second World War). The Plotlanders could be described as both a community, a movement and a way of life which - although no longer exists in the same way - could be seen to live on through today’s allotment societies; particularly through a DIY sensibility, growing your own and community care via working the land.

This new body of work includes a series of map drawings of five society-run allotments developed through an ongoing collaborative process with the community who work the land. Through these conversations a series of oral histories will be captured and made available as a digital podcast, exploring the thematical links between the communities and time periods. Once complete, each drawing will be re-printed and gifted back to the allotment societies as a record.

You can see some images of Shaun's work here: <https://shauncbadham.com/The-People-s-Landscape>

Saturday 12 February, 11:00 – 14:00! Seed Potato Day in partnership with Trust Links at Growing Together Rochford, 34 Rocheway, Rochford SS4 1DQ

Map/directions at

<https://www.trustlinks.org/growing-together/rochford/>

Seed Potato Day will be run in accordance with COVID national and local restrictions that are in force at the time. As the situation changes, we will modify our website to give the best information that we can. Please continue to review our site to check the latest situation. Parking is available in Rocheway and East Street, Rochford. There is a map on our website. Nearest bus stop is East Street, Rochford.

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

We have ordered over 20 varieties of seed potato (some organic), to be sold individually at 20p per tuber – free admission. We have already forwarded our Potato Order Form, which please do use!

Onion sets:

Sturon:	£1 per half pound
Stuttgarter:	Giant £1 per half pound
Red Baron:	£1.50 per 200 gram bags

Organic Potato Fertiliser: £3.50 per 1 KG box

Organic Chicken Pellets: £2 per 2 Kilo bag

Monday 21 March: “Medicinal Herbs and Self-Sufficiency” presented by Monika Curry, Herbalist from Chelmsford

Monday 11 April (via Zoom): Gene editing (via Zoom)

Please note this additional date! We shall be welcoming Lawrence Woodward OBE on Monday 11 April 2022. Lawrence is a director of Beyond GM and Whole Health Agriculture and works with the IFOAM EU Group, the Gaia Foundation and The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm (ORC). Content to be announced later. <http://www.wholeorganicplus.com/about/>

Sunday 15 May : Stall at Essex Young Farmers’ Country Show

Monday 16 May: Chris Collins (content to be confirmed)

A return visit by former BBC Blue Peter Gardener and Head Gardener at Westminster Abbey, Chris joined Garden Organic as Head of Organic Horticulture in 2016. He took over a completely overgrown space three years ago and he's got it up and running using only organic principles.

Monday 18 July: "Growing the Goods" presented by Ian Warder from Peach and Pippin, near Manningtree – all about the new Environmental Land Management Scheme trials (ELMS) post-Brexit. It could be interesting for an organic growers group (domestic gardeners rather than professional growers) to hear about how ELMS is being developed and hear about the experience of participating in an ELMS trial. Our members may not be professional growers, but they are still tax payers with an interest in organic farming, so likely to be interested in the process of developing ELMS.

Monday 19 September: "An overview of the Audley End Landscape and history with a focus on the Kitchen Garden and how you manage it organically today" presented by Kelly Fowler and Gemma Sturges.

Monday 21 November: Composting with Ray How (content to be confirmed)

Chairperson's notes on our November meeting

Matthew Oliver, (an Essex man, trained at Writtle, and has worked at Hyde Hall ever since), gave us an interesting talk about the Global Growth Vegetable Garden at Hyde Hall.

Designed in 2015, by Lady Xa Tollemache, garden designer (inc. Chelsea Flower Show, Helmingham Hall, Wilton Cloisters), sponsored by Witan Investment Trust, Hyde Hall Garden Curator Robert Brett (Cambridge University Garden & Eden Project), led the in-house work team.

Partly inspired by the Olympic Park gardens at Stratford, influenced by gardeners such as James Wong and others promoting 'Edimentals' - edible ornamentals. It was to educate and inspire people about edible plants from around the world, and how we can make use of them too.

I assumed the RHS team at Hyde Hall designed this garden, but that was before I understood the financial practicalities that organisations, such as the RHS, are constrained by. The RHS is the leading gardening charity in the UK, and has many overheads due to its expansion into multiple sites across the UK. Any new project has a price tag, so sponsorship and/or grants, are essential. And, I guess, sometimes the money is easier to get when a well-known or influential designer is involved.

It was established on a 'brownfield' site – an old nursery at Hyde Hall. The work began in 2016. Expensive Italian porphyry paving sets were used to pave and define the shape of the garden. Although expensive, and having a large carbon-footprint, it is low maintenance and very resilient to high usage. (But I think SEEEOG would have preferred a more local alternative).

We have given here just a 'taster' of Jane's splendid and most detailed article on Matthew Oliver's talk in November. We now have to ask you to go to our website to read her article in full, which you will love!

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

Ron's talk for the Leigh on Sea Horticultural Society on 13/11/21

A warm and genuine welcome from the committee and members. Ron set out three tables around him and covered them in books, leaflets, newsletters, posters and cuttings of information all relating to organic growing. A legacy of his constant research and passion for the subject.

Ron began by explaining why SEEEOG was created - in response to the discoveries and observations of:- Lawrence D. Hills (and his wife Cherry – important research into diet and grain intolerance), particularly the comfrey trials (Braintree), the creation of The Henry Doubleday Research Association, Heritage Seed Library (now at Ryton), and Citizen Science experiments (ongoing); Rachel Carson's book Silent Spring; Henk Gerritsen Essay on Gardening (Waltham Place garden design/creation).

Ron emphasised Essex has a long and important agriculture/horticulture/gardening history.

Most important, for organic growing, the creation of HDRA by Lawrence D. Hills at Braintree. (Named after Henry Doubleday, an Essex-based Quaker smallholder who had a particular interest in the properties of comfrey. The organisation was first based at Bocking near Braintree in Essex, hence the name of Bocking 14, a variety of comfrey bred by Hills for its excellent fertilising properties, and superb health benefits for horses).

Lauriston Farm in Goldhanger, a biodynamic farm owned by Spencer Christie (run as a Charitable Community Benefit Society). Biodynamics – holistic and ethical growing organically, including working by the phases of the moon and planets. Biodynamic calendar, by Maria Thun; each day of the year is organised as a leaf, root, flower or fruit day, and these indicate which work should be undertaken.

Sea buckthorn – flooded areas? Sea buckthorn thrives in this. Learn to adapt by changing plants, rather than the hard work of trying to hold back the inevitable (by trying to change the land).

Ron then listed the organisations that SEEOG has been inspired by and support/collaborate with – Organising annual Potato Days (ten years); Orchard days; Apple Day; Farmers Markets (Sarah Green's organic farm); Food for Life (Soil Association); Pesticide Action Network (PAN); Pesticide Free Essex; Postcode Flora (native plant species database at the Natural History Museum); biodynamic and organic Seed Co-operative (Ron has shares in this); problems with plant/seed passports; Lauriston Farm – biodynamic, organic meat and organic veg boxes, has salt-marsh grazing North Ronaldsay Sheep.

The case for organic gardening, and vegan – growing green network, pilot for vegan organic standards, including compost, hot compost, no animal ingredients. Ron contested the 'hot compost' standard, explaining that 'cold compost' should be allowed as a vegan organic standard, as it works – takes longer, but works and becomes a natural habitat for invertebrates, and thus of even greater value. 27 types of British worms, ('The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms, with Observations on their Habits', sometimes shortened to 'Worms', is an 1881 book by Charles Darwin).

Ron made connections to the importance of soil and the people, groups and organisations who have been instrumental in the research and proving of organic principles and practices being best for the health of soils (and plants, wildlife, environmental issues and us) – British Soil Science Society talks at Birkbeck that Ron used to attend. The discovery, at microscopic level, of the vital action of soil microbes and mycorrhizal fungi in plant and soil health - book 'Teaming With Microbes' (by Jeff Lowenfels and Wayne Lewis). Forest and woodland soils – create and need fungi; other soil types make and rely more on microbes, but both are needed, in various proportions, by all plant types. Merlin Sheldrake 'Entangled Life – How Fungi Make Our Worlds'.

Eat seasonally/slow food movement – using the soil naturally.

When Rachel Carson wrote Silent Spring in 1963, DDT as an agricultural pesticide and 'Flit' as a domestic one, were 'normal'. The fossil fuel industry, and smoking/tobacco industry, climate-change deniers, re-ran research, but all had vested interests in not admitting problems.

Jenny Hall & Iain Tolhurst from the Vegan Organic Network, led massive research into many issues which still hold true. (They now specialise with Sustainable Future).

Green manures are a great way to cover bare earth in winter or between crops. Nature never leaves soil bare. But, allotment holders were told that green manures were 'untidy' and winter sites should be left bare of plants! A lot of research by Russians on plant and tree roots, they were accurately measured and drawn to show their true proportions. Shows that roots go deeper and wider than thought. Roots bring up moisture, minerals and nutrients from lower levels. Roots break up and aerate the soil.

Self-fertilising gardens, humus, mycorrhizal fungi. Fertilisers kill soils, do not burn soils any more. Ron said he's 'not much of a mulcher' as this encourages slugs. He allows growth of plants instead, keeping a 'living soil', and opens up the soil when he needs to plant something.

Permaculture – Three main ethics: people care: earth care: fare share. Make time zones, for example, Zone 0 = yourself, Zone 1 Allotment in summer, Zone 2 allotment in winter, scything and pruning. These zones are priorities for your time and effort, (to care for yourself and still achieve, without chaos or burning yourself out). Permaculture - how you live. Graham Burnett, local man, permaculture expert, teaches, inspires.

Forest gardens take into account local climate, wind; is there a cold blip on a certain side? Make natural windbreak with a dead-hedge, good for gardening and an invertebrate world, which will encourage other creatures too, a natural world. Sorghum (cereal grass) windbreak to protect growing area in windy places in hot countries.

Insect apocalypse! Beetles, flies as well as bees. Pollinators. Important to create habitats for them, for good food crops for us. Looking after nature = looking after ourselves.

Trust Links – use of their sites – Rocheway Centre, passive building. Organic gardening for training and mental health.

Rounding off and answering questions/comments

Interesting to see La Palma lava flow, life starts to redevelop very quickly.

Organic food and coffee – protect soil, environment, habitat.

Von Humboldt – natural demand; different climates = different animals & plants, each dependent on each other – ecology. 'The Invention of Nature' book by Andrea Wulf, about Humboldt.

'The Gardens of The British Working Class' by Margaret Willes

SEEOG membership

Please check with our Treasurer, Ane Bates, if you're unsure of your membership status at the moment (details at the end of this newsletter). As well as paying by cheque, or PayPal, 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 website

Please do use our new SEEOG Web Forum! There are various headings – Community, Gardening & Growing and Green Living, with sub-headings. The Forum is linked on the main menu and can also be found on the link below. Do please think of going to the website to check on meetings, Potato Day updates, etc.

<https://seeog.org.uk/forum/>

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

NEWS

Castle Point Community Allotment

An exciting project to create a community plot where Castle Point residents can come occasionally or regularly to learn new growing skills, interact with each other and nature, save some money by taking some organic produce home. Lockdown and the pandemic have been tough for everyone; statistics show that being outdoors with nature and the environment improves your mental health and well-being.

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

Garden Organic news: The 2022 Heritage Seed Library Seed List is now open!

Not yet a member? Your Editor has recently re-joined after many years. To find out how to join the Heritage Seed Library to access their rare, unique heritage and heirloom vegetable varieties email membership@gardenorganic.org.uk or call 024 7630 8210.

GM Freeze: Thin Ice

The latest issue of their regular newsletter Thin Ice is out now and ready to read on their website. Inside, they explain the Government's shocking response to its own consultation on the future of GM safeguards. There's also news of yet more problems with new GM techniques, quick reports from around the world. Member organisations and supporters who make a financial contribution to GM

Freeze (like SEEORG) are able to receive a printed copy of *Thin Ice* in the post, which we can forward on request.

<https://www.gmfreeze.org/>

Leigh-on-Sea Farmers' Market 2022, 09:00 – 13:00

Leigh Community Centre (71-73 Elm Road, Leigh-on-Sea SS9 1SP) on the third Friday of the month. Friday 21 January (pending cancellation); Friday 18 February; Saturday 5 March (Spring market); Friday 18 March; *NO APRIL MARKET*; Friday 20 May; Saturday 4 June (Summer market); Friday 17 June; Friday 15 July; *NO AUGUST MARKET*; Friday 16 September; Saturday 1 October (Autumn market); Friday 21 October; Friday 18 November; Saturday 17 December (Winter Market / Christmas Market).

Leigh Town Council are keeping their regular Friday market on the third Friday of every month and have reduced the monthly Saturday market they were trialling to a seasonal market. They are currently considering renaming to an artisan market.

Members' contributions, including schools

1. Wassailing is back! Join us for our annual Wassailing event at St Laurence Orchard on Sunday 23rd January 2 – 3pm. Celebrate nature and community, sing songs and awaken the trees ready for spring at our historic St Laurence Orchard.

<https://www.trustlinks.org/wassailing/>

2. Gene Editing – Blurring the Lines Between Nature and Technology

In addition to their wonderful speakers the facilitators, A Bigger Conversation, had a very diverse and engaged audience comprising conventional, organic and biotech breeders, policymakers, farmers and growers, professors, students, businesspeople, members of civil society and members of the public. So it really was a big conversation! There were lots of great questions and many asked for a link to the video, as well as to the chat and Q&A so that we could share and/or watch again.

The video link is: <https://youtu.be/BKWzHhTZXVk>

They have also combined the chat and Q&A into a single document which can be accessed at <https://abiggerconversation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Blurring-the-lines-Further-Reading.pdf>

3. Orchards East Forum

We include some information about a fantastic new book which has recently been published, by Jonathan Spain, about the history of the Cam Valley Orchards – a wonderful piece of research, engagingly written and packed with interesting information. A 'must' for all those interested in the orchards of eastern England! For a more detailed summary see Tom's blog entry at jonathanspain.wordpress.com - to order a copy, please email jrspain1@hotmail.com

For those that missed them, two other books you might be interested in: Monica Askay's Orchard Recipes from Eastern England:

<https://bitternbooks.co.uk/product/orchard-recipes-from-eastern-england/>

And, summarising the historical research of the 'Orchards East' project, The Orchards of Eastern England: History, Ecology, Place:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/uhipress/books-content/the-orchards-of-eastern-england>

4. The issue over food standards and trade has re-surfaced after the farming minister told MPs that the Government would not take up a recommendation made in the National Food Strategy to set 'minimum standards' on animal welfare and environmental protection. The author of the Government's National Food Strategy, Henry Dimbleby, has accused the Government of rejecting his advice. The farming minister Victoria Prentis told MPs on the International Trade Committee that although some standards are already set in law not everything can be covered by legislation. But she suggested other options - including food labelling - could be used to protect standards. Dumbing down again and consistently?

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-54506185>

5. Earthworms are one key barometer of soil health. As part of our week-long focus on cultivation, we head out into the fields with a worm expert, to find out how they're impacted by different cultivation methods. And the UK has led 45 countries around the world to sign up to more sustainable farming methods. They made the pledge at COP26, the International Climate Change summit in Glasgow. The measures include commitments to stop de-forestation, cut methane emissions, and invest in climate-resilient crops and new techniques for regenerating soil. The UK will also launch a £65 million "Just Rural Transition" programme to help developing countries move towards more sustainable methods of agriculture and food production.

Farming Today, 10 November 2021

6. Unlike the US, Europe is setting ambitious targets for producing more organic food

Organic looks different across the UK. In England/Wales, organic plans are not where they are in the EU. Currently there isn't an organic farming plan but the Soil Association is working to ensure that it, along with systems like agroecology, is supported through Environmental Land Management. In Scotland, funding for organic conversion and maintenance has been continued under the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme up to 2024. These legacy EU schemes are being phased out in England after 2023 and there is no plan as yet to replace them. Also, the SNP/Green Scottish Government has committed to doubling the amount of land farmed organically in Scotland and to producing an Organic Food and Farming Action Plan.

7. Wellbeing orchard in Garon Park, Southend-on-Sea....

Liam King (Conservation Officer and Volunteer Coordinator) said they are planning to plant around 40 fruit trees within the grounds of the Wellbeing vitality park at Garon Park; this is planted by the community, for the community. The trees themselves have been carefully selected to suit the local conditions and purchased from a local (ish) supplier in Kent. They have mainly apple fruit trees mixed in with some pear and plum, as well as nitrogen fixing shrubs and fruit bushes (broom and sea buckthorn). They are following a permaculture style of planting known as the NAP technique: Nitrogen fixer, Apple, Plum/Pear; this technique reduces disease and supports healthy soil. If you would like to get involved in this project, they are intending to make plaques for each of the trees showing who planted them and you will have the opportunity to make your mark at the park.

liam.king@garonparkcic.com

He's going to keep us posted about the orchard planting when they have secured a date of delivery from their supplier.

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

8. A date for the diaries!! The Pollinator Partnership

Pollinator Week 2022 will take place from June 20th - 26th, 2022! At first glance, these fast flying moths can sometimes be mistaken for hummingbirds because of their lightning fast wings and quick flight behaviour. White-lined sphinx moths have incredible flying abilities and are capable of hovering over flowers while extending their long proboscis to feed on nectar. Moths are often underappreciated in comparison to other insects, but are so important with many species being key pollinators of native plants as well as a crucial food source that birds and other animals depend on for survival.

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePollinatorPartnership/posts/10159265364000465>

9. Farmers must start asking questions about reliance on new technology

Farmers are being encouraged to become more and more reliant on technologies of control such as big data, AI and biotech. But is this really a good idea? Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City, University of London, explores.

<https://www.fginsight.com/blogs/blogs/farmers-must-start-asking-questions-about-reliance-on-new-technology-124492>

10. National Garden Scheme

Details of future talks can be found at <https://ngs.org.uk/product-category/online-events/online-talks/?fueid=812222&qid=10824&hqid=71ba0879b7cdb24130a1b98a8bbe8ed5>

11. Wednesday 12 January Zoom talk: Petition - No patents on seeds

30 organisations (including us) are supporting their petition against patents on seeds! The list of supporters can be found here: <https://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/en/petition>

To learn more about the background of the petition, we are invited to an informal zoom talk. Please contact johanna.eckhardt@no-patents-on-seeds.org

12. Invitation to a Special Viewing of Focal Point Gallery's 'Tip of the Iceberg' on Saturday 8 January between 2pm and 4.30pm

As one of the organisations mentioned in Graham Burnett's *Roots and Branches, a Psycho-geographical Mind Map* of Southend, Focal Point Gallery has invited us to a special viewing of Tip of the Iceberg, a group exhibition including local artists and community projects that explores the relationship between art and alternative growing practices, which are increasingly coming together in pursuit of climate action and social justice on Saturday 8th January 2022 between 2.00pm and 4.30pm. There will be a guided tour at 2.30pm and 3.30pm by Focal Point Gallery's Director, Katharine Stout, and refreshments will be provided. Focal Point Gallery is in The Forum, next to Southend Central Station and the High Street. Please RSVP to focalpointgallery@southend.gov.uk

13.. A look around the planet via Pesticide Action Network and more from Ron

PAN Asia Pacific – Llang-Llang Quijano, communications officer based in Manila, Philippines: Concern about the cosy up of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation and CropLife. The latter is the association and lobby group of the worlds biggest pesticide manufacturers! The corporate capture of the UN and international institutions!

<https://www.panna.org/blog/meet-panap-ilang-ilang-quijano>

There was also the Global People's Summit on Food Systems, a counter to the corporate-led UN Food Systems Summit. Llang-Llang further sees a pushback from small farmers and rural peoples across the world (for example, India's small farmers defeating the Modi government's lead to make way for corporate entry/takeover of markets and growing); there are also moves against neo-liberal policies that devastate their lives and livelihoods, and also the wish to give a vision of a healthy and just food and farming approach and what it needs to look like - free from the interests of private capital that sees peasants of the Global South losing land and access to resources.

<https://peoplessummit.foodsof.org/>

Farmers and partners in India further shared that more poison is NOT an option and they need to protect biodiversity and their way of life.

FAO must immediately stop its partnership with CropLife International. PAN Asia Pacific staff in Malaysia and Philippines urge FAO to give Agroecology a chance and stop the Toxic Alliance. Farmers of the Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women in the Philippines made themselves heard, a critically important voice as women may be more susceptible to the harm of pesticide exposure during hormonal based processes such as pregnancy, lactation and menopause.

<https://amihanwomen.org/>

Back in the USA- PANNA has been successful with its campaign to achieve a national ban on the brain-harming chlorpyrifos; they have strengthened and increased their team; launched a fully revamped pesticide database and hosted a series of global webinars highlighting Agroecology.

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

In Hawaii PANNA has been working on tracking pesticide releases into waterways used by fisherfolk; petitioning the UN's FAO not to partner with CropLife International, and working with the Centre for Food Safety to sue the EPA for failing to regulate pesticide-coated seeds.

<https://www.panna.org/blog/nearly-200k-strong-against-fao-toxicalliance>

The American Chestnut Foundation (includes Mead WestVaco, Georgia Pacific, American Electric and Power, Dupont, Exxon Mobil and Duke Energy) is trying to advance the public acceptance of genetic engineering of trees and biotech - SUNNY-ESF - a front funded by Monsanto (Bayer), Duke Energy and ArborGen. They are test casing biotech as a way to forest health.

<https://acf.org/>

<https://saveourroots.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/biotechnology-for-forest-health-test-case-american-chestnut-report-WEB-1.pdf>

Gucci - This approach is being contested by the Foundation of Indigenous Peoples Culture - Forest trees are embedded in ecosystems which are highly complex and as yet generally poorly understood.

Their mycorrhizal fungal symbiosis is coming to light (Merlin Sheldrake - Entangled). They exchange water and nutrients, give protection from droughts and pathogens, their filaments are mediums of communication - the wood wide web. FSC excludes GMOs and are prohibited under the precautionary principle but there is a built-in bias within forestry favouring interventions using genetic techniques. This impacts Indigenous Peoples' territorial sovereignty along with the evolutionary potential of tree species to respond to emerging diseases and cannot be underestimated.

Reflections from Kristin at PANNA that the pesticide industry is cosy with decision making power, intimidating activists pressing for change and throwing money (lots of it) at controlling the story while regularly consolidating and rebranding their way out of trouble too. Target “moms, media and activists” with their Safe Fruit and Veggies website by the Alliance for Food and Farming funded by the Western Growers Association!
<https://www.safefruitsandveggies.com/>

As the late Dave Chatfield said “..... You can’t have a sustainable agriculture system without having sustainable labor, decent health conditions, etc. and an organization can’t be effective without having leadership from the communities directly impacted.”
<https://www.panna.org/blog/remembering-david-chatfield>

Back Home - Human Hotel – the COP26 Homestay Network via solidarity, friendship and collective action enabled many more voices/people to attend to state their cases for urgency and support who would otherwise have been unable to be there to state the present impacts of the climate crisis.
<https://www.humanhotel.com/cop26/>

The work of Practical Action, Global Greengrants Fund UK, Climate Justice and CLIMA Fund all invest in small climate projects across the Global South e.g. Comundich in Eastern Guatemala has focused on land ownership - since its foundation in 2004. ten Comundich leaders have been murdered and 30 spent time in prison. In 2020 alone the Unit for the Protection of Guatemalan Human Rights Defenders documented 15 targeted murders of rights defenders, 1000 assaults and 300+ cases of criminalisation. Comundich is very effective due to low overheads, its commitment to long-term planning and women’s leadership and it has built up enormous trust with communities by involving them in decision making.
<https://practicalaction.org/>

Inspiration, sacrifice, ways of doing things and learning from good practice in the long haul for a better earth.

14. This very interesting article, which takes a historical look at the development of technology, came to me (Eileen) via the Local Futures website and is, I reckon, well worth reading, especially if you are interested in the hidden agenda behind genetic modification. A couple of titbits to whet your appetite ... The author says ‘The development of genetically engineered varieties of staple agricultural crops reflects the social matrix and distinct corporate agendas from which the technology emerged.’ AND ‘For 25 years, Monsanto and other companies have promised a host of agronomic and nutritional benefits tied to further GMO research, but none have come to pass.’
<https://www.localfutures.org/on-technologys-past-and-future/>

15. Just seen on Gardeners’ World Winter Specials! Wondering whether our favourite Topiary specialist Darren has visited Levens Hall in Cumbria? <https://www.levenshall.co.uk/>

16. A new orchard initiative that has been established in Europe - Blossom Day 29th April annually – the National Trust is opting for 24th April but the 29th coincides with May Day weekend so would lend itself to a weekend of visiting a number of local orchards to build a network, especially for community orchards that often need help with maintaining them for community appreciation of their intrinsic beauty, wildlife, productive potential, along with a place for well-being; also with reference to Essex Orchard Group. The aim would be to have a local network to coordinate orchard events and share them
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/blossom-watch>

17. Let’s Talk Tatties! Event by Nottingham Organic Gardeners

Tuesday, January 11, 2022
7:15 for 7:30PM - 9:30PM-ish
FREE TALK via ZOOM

GET READY FOR POTATO DAY at the end of January! Suitable for experienced or novice potato-growers, this talk will feature four speakers covering choice of potatoes, growing in and out of containers, and how Potato Day will work in 2022.

REGISTER in advance for the meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/zoom-join?from=addon&addon=register/tZApcO6qpzsqHtfPb9kVJpdLOiXH5UpocCLf>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. You'll be able to join from 7:15 that evening.

From Simon, in Gozo.....

A Bee Home like a Tree Cave, this looks interesting.....It all started with a thesis in the Industrial Design studies. At first we just wanted to design a more ergonomic beehive. During the first design studies we accompanied several beekeepers during their work. The first time we saw the treatment against the Varroa Mite, it was an shocking experience. The chemical treatment had a direct effect on the bees' behaviour. We found that there is a more serious problem to be solved than the ergonomics in beekeeping. Therefore we have asked scientists for advice; they repeatedly pointed out the problem with the wrong microclimate in conventional bee-boxes. Philip Potthast and Fabian Wischmann got to know each other in the Startup Centre of the University of Applied Sciences in Berlin. With Fabian, Philip quickly found an ardent supporter for his idea. Fabian brings a background in Startups and Business Administration to team HIIVE and Philip brings years of experience in Design. Since the beginning of 2020, they have been working together to drive development forward.
<https://www.hiive.eu/>

With very many thanks for all your contributions.....

Pesticide Free Essex

There'll be a lot of activity in the New Year! ****What is glyphosate and why is it dangerous?****
'Pesticide Free Essex' has been set up to raise awareness about the dangers of pesticides used on our streets and roads. Watch their video which explains why they want to support councils and other land managers (including home owners) to stop using chemical weed killers, including glyphosate. We're hoping 2022 will be the year we get the ban!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/212723544249011/permalink/287062016815163>

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

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