



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS NEWSLETTER NO: 162 – MARCH 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!

Unless otherwise stated, all our 2022 meetings will be at Trust Links Rochford, College Gardens, Rocheway, Rochford SS4 1DQ. Do please let us know whether you need a lift and we will try our very best to assist.

For future reference, our newsletter copy 'deadline' for May 2022 is Sunday 24 April. If you're quoting newspaper items, etc. we'd be extremely grateful if you could include a link to each item, if possible, for fact-checking purposes, names, etc.

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS

Group Night dates for 2022 : FOR YOUR DIARIES!

Monday 21 March, **19:30:** "Gardening with Medicinal Herbs (Herbs for Common Ailments - Self-Sufficiency)" presented by Monika Curry **(at Trust Links Rochford, College Gardens, Rocheway, Rochford SS4 1DQ). Please note earlier time.**

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

Please note this additional date! We shall be welcoming Lawrence Woodward OBE! 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/>

Saturday 23 April: Earth Day Festival in Library Gardens

You may or may not have heard about this event being organised by Incredible Edible Leigh-on-Sea. It consists of guided walks, crafts, nature-related activities and talks to raise awareness of the gardens and think more about sustainability and how connecting to nature can help. Jane and Sharon have offered to run a composting activity. Further details will be sent out nearer the time.

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 20 June (provisional): NO PATENTS ON SEEDS webinar presented by Steven Jacobs, Business Development Manager, OF&G (Organic Farmers & Growers)

We want to know more about this project and the circumstances that led up to it. Agricultural companies continue to hold patents on conventionally-bred fruits, vegetables and cereals, such as barley, even though this is not allowed under European patent law. Similar patents have also been filed on animals. Conventionally-bred plants and animals are not an invention! Implement existing prohibitions now to stop the big agricultural companies from taking control of our food!

<https://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/en/petition>

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)

Potato Date update

For those who sadly couldn't make it, we held out Seed Potato Day successfully at a new venue. Rocheway is a Passive House building design, so interesting for people to come, use and share our stalls: Essex Asian Women's Association - who have always provided food for our days - had brought the next generation to serve potato curry and samosas; the Transition Town group's vegan cakes and seed swap; Gina's Fairtrade stall; Growing Together with honey and plants; children's art workshop; SEEEOG with 25 varieties (11 organic), onion sets, old garden books, too. It went very well and we made a reasonable surplus for funding next year. The Potato House connection was perfect with delivery, very approachable and helpful for the first time on our own. There are some photos on our website kindly put up by John Tate.

As always, we have a little spare stock.....

Ron has Ratte; Sarpo Una; Casablanca; Red Duke of York; Charlotte; Desiree; Stuttgarter (3) and Sturon (1)

Contact: anebates@hotmail.co.uk/01702 477681 for order and collection.

Trust Links Westcliff has Charlotte; Casablanca; Ratte; Red Duke of York; Homeguard; Nicola; Pentland Javelin; Stuttgarter (4) and Sturon (2).

Contact: 01702 213134 for purchase.

SEEEOG 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 SEEORG 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

Allotments

Water is a vital ingredient for all plot-holders growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers but it is a precious resource and can be a significant cost for allotment authorities. On sites with a mains water supply it should be used in a sensible and considerate manner by all. Where possible every gardener should have water butts to harvest any rain that does fall. This is vital when the plot has a greenhouse or polytunnel as this increases watering requirements significantly.

https://www.nsalg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/A5_Water_260213_HiRes.pdf

Crapes Fruit Farm: 1922 – A long time ago!

Indeed, the twenty fourth of February this year is of particular note, marking the 100th anniversary of Tanns arriving at Crapes from their former London home. Guy, my grandfather, just short of 22, his sister Lillie and recently widowed mother, Winifred, arrived in Aldham to the prospect of no mains water, no mains drainage and no electricity. In addition to a weather boarded cottage, a similarly clad brick based barn, some sixteen acres of grassland/pasture, with about 100 fruit trees dotted about, included in the acquisition. Andrew Tann is a good friend of ours and has been our guest speaker many times over the years. Perhaps we can arrange a visit one day this year? We're always squeezed for space so please go to Andrew's website to read the whole story at <https://crapes.wordpress.com/>

Garden Organic news

1. With storm Eunice taking hold across the country please take a look at our article in Kitchen Garden Magazine for our top five ways to protect your garden from wind damage. Our Head Gardener Emma O'Neill talks through some of the precautions she has taken with our own demonstration garden.

https://www.kitchengarden.co.uk/five-ways-to-protect-your-garden-from-wind-damage/?fbclid=IwAR0NkiyLc1jE5Ph68_hXoLQgs3UPAZJKSmQVvEbT4xSehYS-2bVXrg09h2Q

2. Peat-free growing - free online webinar on Monday, 7 March, 6:00pm to 7:00pm

The huge environmental impact of extracting peat has been brought to everybody's attention more recently, and most gardeners are aware of the need to stop using it in their gardens. Garden Organic has campaigned against the use of peat for a long time, and we would like to present you with some of the alternatives and how to use them. This webinar will provide practical advice to all those wanting to grow without peat, whether you are just starting or want to refine your growing practices.

<https://gardenorganic.org.uk/events/peat-free-growing-free-online-webinar>

3. Planning Your Plot Webinar on Wednesday, 16 March, 10:00am to 12:30pm

Planning which vegetables to grow, when to grow them, and how to arrange them all often seems like the most bewildering choice both for new growers and even those with more experience.

Successful organic growing, in particular, is all about good planning. In our workshop you will learn how to plan your plot organically, with a focus on crop rotation, preventing pests and diseases, maximising harvests, and planning your plot or growing space for the year ahead. Our workshop will guide you through the steps, giving you a fundamental understanding of the planning process so that you have the confidence to make your own personal growing plan. This webinar will include presentations, interactive exercises, and the opportunity for discussion.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/events/planning-your-plot-webinar>

4. Successful Composting Webinar : Online webinar on Wednesday, 23 March, 10:00am to 12:30pm

Home composting has always been a no-brainer. With each compost bin, you are saving an average of 125 kg of waste from having to be taken away from home, and instead turning it into a great product that will benefit your soil, your garden, and everything you grow. However, there is a bit more to it than just throwing it all on a heap and hoping it will make lovely compost. This webinar will help you to fine-tune that process so that you have a better idea of how it all works. It will give you an understanding of the basic requirements for composting to take place and the various influencing factors giving you a much better degree of control and confidence. This webinar will include presentations, interactive exercises, and the opportunity for discussion.
<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/events/successful-composting-webinar>

GM Freeze: Threat to GM safeguards gathers pace

Liz O'Neill - GM Freeze Director - reports that the UK Government wants to create a GMO free-for-all. Despite strong public opposition, they have drafted a new law that will begin the process of dismantling GM safeguards by:

- Creating a new class of GMO plants that “could have occurred naturally” or through a list of techniques that are legally classed as traditional breeding methods.
- Allowing these GMOs to be released for any purpose other than “marketing” without proper safety checks or containment measures.

The change will only apply in England - for now - but it is just the start. You can read their guide to what's happening and why it matters. A committee of MPs will debate the first step in the UK Government's plan to dismantle GM safeguards on Wednesday 2 March.
<https://www.gmfreeze.org/safeguards/>

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

Pollinator Week 2022 will take place from June 20th - 26th! 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 under-appreciated 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>

2. A new orchard initiative 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>

3a. Dave's tips for the allotment:

For raised beds I use second hand concrete gravel boards. These are usually 300mm (12") and 1800 mm (6ft) long. Fence erectors usually give them away for free or charge a few £'s for them. You can also use them for making paths between the raised beds; laid side by side they are 600mm wide (2 ft), which is an ideal path width for walking between the raised beds or wheel barrowing compost etc. Unlike scaffolding boards, they do not rot.

3b. Buildbase has large substantial red plastic buckets with ribbed sides. They must be manufactured with UV protection as they do not deteriorate and they last a long time. I drill eight small holes in the bottom and a row of eight small holes up the sides 25mm (1") from the bottom. This allows adequate drainage even if some of the holes in the bottom become blocked. I then throw in bits of plastic, plastic bags, bits of string, old labels etc., and other rubbish into them as I am working or weeding around the allotment, for later disposal.

4. BlightSpy is an upgrade on our long-standing Blight Watch website, allowing potato growers and agronomists to monitor weather forecasts for the predicted occurrence of Hutton Criteria.
<https://ahdb.org.uk/blightspy>

5. Can mesh netting reduce potato blight? Potato blight is still one of the most devastating potato diseases in the UK. It is a fungus (*Phytophthora infestans*) that has the potential to destroy crops. It first infects the leaves, then the infection spreads to the tubers where they rot. Potatoes grown on a garden scale are just as susceptible to the disease as commercial crops.
<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/can-mesh-netting-reduce-potato-blight>

6. Read the latest from the Big Compost Experiment

The Big Compost Experiment has just turned 2 years old! So far they've received an impressive 9701 survey responses with 1626 home compost experiments underway or finished. The project is ongoing and continues to gather real life data that will help support policy development and regulation of compostable plastics in the UK.

<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/52618ecf-3090-4ea2-9deb-4180d1c3442d>

Fancy a cuppa?

Spring 2021 saw the launch of their compostable teabag trials to put biodegradable and compostable branded teabags to the test in home compost. So far they've received 127 teabag experiment results with Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips and Twinings being the most popular tested so far. Overall the results show that 47% of all teabags tested still remained visible over different home composting time-frames (3/6/9/12/18/15 months).

<https://www.bigcompostexperiment.org.uk/reports>

Get involved

They need more data about the performance of different teabags in home compost across the UK to get a better idea of how these items and their materials perform. If you have carried out a home compost experiment before, but would like to test teabags, you can login to start a new experiment Alternatively you can help by telling friends, family or colleagues about the project.

<https://www.bigcompostexperiment.org.uk/login>

NEW! Home compost sampling study

If you have carried out a home compost experiment they would like to analyse the microbial life and condition of your compost. They have 50 free home compost sampling kits to share by post with volunteers. The kits contain everything you'll need to post a sample of your compost to them. If you are interested in taking part in the home compost sampling study, and would like further information, please email danielle.purkiss@ucl.ac.uk

7. Farming reform is a big post-Brexit prize we should be careful not to lose

The government's plans for farming in England have taken a kicking. In October, the NFU opposed reductions to the Basic Payments Scheme and called for delay to the roll out of the new Environmental Land Management scheme (ELM). But many environmentalists see the first tranche of this new scheme, the new Sustainable Farming Incentive announced in December, as basic payments reheated. It was condemned by the National Trust, RSPB and Wildlife Trusts for ignoring "the important links between farming, climate and nature".

<https://greenallianceblog.org.uk/2022/01/14/farming-reform-is-a-big-post-brexit-prize-we-should-be-careful-not-to-lose/>

8. From Pesticide-Free Plymouth, teasels attract birds all year round and look great. A natural way to get rid of slugs.

9. From Mike and Gill....

Over the winter I start to think about what plants did well and not so well and the actions I should take to improve my yields. It is fast approaching the time to start sowing seeds ready to plant out for this year. The plants that I first sow are broad beans, early peas and leeks. In autumn last year, I planted a variety of broad beans that overwinter. I grow them under Enviromesh netting to provide some protection from the winter weather. I find those grown overwinter do better, suffer less from black fly than those planted in spring, but just in case I do both.

I will try this year, as suggested by an article I read, to grow my climbing beans under-planting them with a green manure, such as mustard that does not have very deep roots, neither does it compete too much with the beans. The article suggested If planted after the beans had finished the green manure would not do so well. The beans having finished, the green manure can carry on growing, being killed off in winter by the cold weather, leaving the soil ready for planting into, in Spring.

I have been using New Horizon compost for the past few years and have found it okay. I have made leaf mould this year and I am using that mixed with some sharp sand and blood fish and bone to see if it is any good as a partial replacement for the New Horizon. I will still need to buy New Horizon as I will not have enough of my own.

10. From Ron In the world of Nature, fungi have been Internationally recognised. This means we have the 3 F's - FLORA, FAUNA and FUNGA. There's a Radio 4 programme (14/4/22) coming along next month describing the work of an ecologist in Chile. Chile had at that time no named fungi and he set about changing that internally and now internationally. We have the recognition that there can be no future surveys without fungi. They are everywhere. There is fungal intelligence and fungal tips decide a direction. Where to go and who to connect with. All that Merlin Sheldrake and others have studied and written about. It is a given that 95% of fungi are unknown.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/29-how-to-look-at-plants-in-a-new-perspective/id1550859300?i=1000547630675>

11. From Ron back to more immediate matters, a couple of days after Eunice and before Franklin I went to check out St Laurence Orchard. There was nothing down; the veteran standards are upright as are the "bush" pruned Bramleys and all new plantings; snowdrops and daffodils were in flower as were the cherry plums; apple and pear fruit buds swelling along with the brambles.

At the allotment plot, all well; nothing moved and the same flora around. The leeks and garlic safe under mesh cloches along with brassicas and chards to keep the threat of allium fly and birds away. Under the Adam Pearmain, the perennial Babbington leeks are showing good size. In with the globe artichokes, self-seeded Phacelia is doing well whilst the field beans were enjoyed by the mice and voles. The asparagus has seaweed mulch, thankfully now de-salted with rain (having been informed that January was dry for four weeks here). Dark to absorb the warmth now we are a month away from the equinox. Soft fruits budding and rhubarb rising up through the oak leaf mulch cast down from the oak branches above. Compost piled out on a couple of beds and a long bed ready to take the grafted apples from the garden, Leigh Allotments all Essex orchard and the perennial fruiting plot.

In the greenhouse and containers in and around the garden are lettuces - Winter Density, Brune d'Hiver, Cocarde, Red Verona, Fine de Louviers and Palla Rossa. Wild rocket, watercress, chives, spinach and chard all in forageable amounts along with Italian Parsley and mustardy Mizuna and Golden and Purple Frills. So fortunate to have this for us.

12. From Ron Soundscapes of the garden

Gulls just before light are the first sounds to be heard; sometimes the robin can sing all night, but new on the dawn of 22 February was a blackbird singing outside in the ivied elder above the garden shed. Spring beginning? When day fully begins the colony of house sparrows roosting in the wild rose that later is a place of preening are joined by starlings, collared doves and wood pigeon; they all bring their sounds here too. The joyous house sparrow sounds toing and froing seem to have adapted to taking seed from the non-tidied evening primroses and tall daisies, much like the occasional goldfinch visitors. They were also attacking the hazel catkins, like the titmice that also come to glean food from the un-leafed apple trees; the catkins finally blown away by yesterday's winds. Flowers over-wintering were ivy that turn to berries loved by the wood pigeon pair; winter jasmine, calendula in pots sheltered next to the house (pot marigolds) with chickweed that give cover and colour. Now the lesser celandine creeps out of the ground. Small flies, the odd bumble bees, a wasp all on a warmer day have been seen.

Collecting the pheromone traps from St Laurence Orchard showed remains of codling moth (in the southern area) with other victims of the sticky base – harvestmen, a ladybird (7 spot), a small hawk moth, myriad midges and small flies. While taking the bases out in the porch two overwintering beautiful delicate lacewings were put into the greenhouse. I feel that there is a lot of collateral destruction here; it shows life varied but also destroyed. Dilemma!

13. On Saturday 26th February Jane, Ron, our grandson and I went to help with the Darlington Academy allotment site which had been previously cultivated but was now overgrown and had quite a few established ash tree saplings. There were several adult helpers and children so a good amount of clearing was done ready for planting. If anyone has any spare plants over the next few months maybe they would consider donating them.

14. Darlington Academy's work day on Saturday 26 February, from Emma

Their allotment sadly fell into disrepair due to the Covid-19 pandemic so their Eco committee, parents, teachers and some SEEORG volunteers joined them to clear the area in order to make a fresh start. It was such a wonderful community feel! They also planted whips and litter-picked. They totally recommend trying something like this in your school on a Saturday or during the school holidays!

15. Marcus Wareing's Tales from a Kitchen Garden

In the 10-part series, which began on February 28 (6.30pm on BBC Two), Marcus travels the country to meet with farmers who give him key advice on what he could grow and farm, and then back home, he implements the tips, alongside his trusted 'Gardener Anatoli'. Marcus's passion as a chef was as important in deciding what to produce as the lay of the land. "I think it's the fresh flavours you get in a greenhouse: picking a tomato, a bunch of basil, and then an onion out of the ground, a lettuce out of the garden and making up a fantastic salad. Or the beetroot that my wife picks and pickles, or the celeriac that I make into a lovely celeriac soup with some cabbage," he muses, before adding: "The thought process of the garden chain changes the way you think and cook and the way you eat food as well. And I've never had that experience before."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00151dq>

From Simon in Gozo.....

Great stuff at Bishop's Conservatory Secondary School.....today the ekoskola team had a field to fork experience. Students learnt about organic farming, companion planting, permaculture and harvesting. They picked up vegetables which they later cooked and ate together. All this was done under the expert guidance of Alex and her team from Thrive in Nadur. A day well spent in the midst of nature! <https://www.facebook.com/bishopsconservatory>

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

Pesticide Free Essex

1. As far as Southend Borough Council is concerned, we understand there's not much phasing out of spraying or sensitivity about where aggressive herbicide is being used in 2022. The children's playground in Friars Park has recently been heavily sprayed around play equipment and developing evidence of spraying around St. Mary's Green, North Shoebury.

2. Pesticide Free Essex Catch up on Friday 11 March, 10:30am - 11:30am (GMT)

To attend, please email Grace Darke for the link at ecocolchester@en-form.org.uk

SEEOG committee

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