

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

A Local Group of...



Supporting and Working With...



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS NEWSLETTER NO: 176 / JULY 2024

<https://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

We are a local group of Garden Organic; supporting and working with the Soil Association and Pesticide Action Network UK.

Housekeeping, etc.

We hope you'll enjoy reading this newsletter and look forward to meeting up soon. There are two extra events arranged for this year so do please make a careful note.

SEEOG membership fees

Membership fees or renewals are usually due in July unless you joined at the beginning of the year, in which case you don't have to re-join until July of the following year.

You can pay by Bank Transfer, cheque, cash or by post: <https://seeog.org.uk/joi/>

Bank details: Account No: 65198805; Sort Code 08 92 99

If you're sending a cheque, please send it to Ray How, SEEOG Membership Secretary, 5 Dalys Road, Rochford, SS4 1RA. It should be made payable to South East Essex Organic Gardeners.

Alternatively you are welcome to pay in person at one of our meetings.

We would also like to thank those members who pay by Standing Order. It's easy enough to forget a renewal so maybe a few more of you might like to consider this option?

Newsletter copy

If you want to send us any little snippets/news items for our newsletter, our copy 'deadline' for September 2024 is Sunday 25 August.

Tell us about your new no-dig patch or how you look after the hedgehogs/slow worms/frogs in your garden/community garden/allotment, plus any news on which of our talks so far you have found the most interesting. Plus photos for our website, most important!

Plus suggestions for speakers and trips out for this/next year. The odd article on other areas of organic thought would also be most welcome. The important thing is to do it!

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. This does save a lot of time!

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2024

How to get to Trust Links Rochford, Trust Links House, College Gardens, Rochford, SS4 1YL.

Do please let us know whether you need a lift and we will try our very best to assist.

<https://seeog.org.uk/2022/04/how-to-get-to-trustlinks-rochford-update/>

Thursday 11 July: Come and celebrate 30 years of SEEOG with us at TRUST LINKS WESTCLIFF. The address is 47 Fairfax Drive. Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 9AG. Parking is available in Prittlewell Chase. There is a map at this link: <https://www.trustlinks.org/westcliff/>

Meet at 7.00pm and bring your memories to share. Refreshments will be served. RSVP anebates@hotmail.co.uk

Saturday 13 July: Stall at Richmond Avenue Primary School fete (not confirmed)

Monday 15 July: AGM at 19:30; Emma's talk at 20:00

AGENDA

Apologies for absence

Minutes of last AGM

Chairman's Report

Treasurer's Report

Election of Officers

Election of Committee Members

Any other business

"The Southend Inventory" presented by Emma Cannell, Essex Gardens Trust

The Trust's research volunteers prepare Inventories of historic garden and landscaped sites based on district council areas. They completed the Thurrock inventory in 2022 and started on the Southend district in 2023. Emma told us that the Southend Inventory has been a fascinating project. She has lived in the area for almost thirty years and is learning so much! At the moment, her team is writing up their research so she will have lots to share with us. One of her team is researching St Laurence Orchard. <https://www.essexgardenstrust.org.uk/inventories>

Monday 16 September: "Gardening in the Sea", the Essex Seagrass Project, presented by Emma Fox, Essex Marine Survey Lead

Combatting climate change and providing a massive green bonus for all of us, especially as we are a coastal community / <https://www.essexwt.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-wildlife/projects/seagrass>

Monday 18 November: Open pollinated seeds, presented by Andre and Spencer from Lauriston Farm

Lauriston Farm grow a few varieties of open pollinated seeds on the farm and have grown seeds for the Seed Cooperative in the past.

<http://open-pollinated-seeds.org.uk/about-peter-brinch/>

Thursday 5 December , 20:00: 'Soil - Geology With Worms' , a Zoom presentation by Ian Mercer on World Soil Day / Ian Mercer FGA is a retired geologist and gemmologist who worked for the Geological Survey and Museum from 1965 and for the Gemmological Association from 1990.

NEWS

Allotment news

The new website of The National Allotment Society is <https://www.thenas.org.uk/> Their latest newsletter is asking for willing members who agree to soil sampling and surveys of their plots.

Garden Organic news

An interesting free event here on Thursday, 10 October, Organic Basics - Soil Health and Gardeners Q&A

Chris Collins will walk you through the basics of soil health, showing you how to maintain and improve your vegetable beds and borders.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/organic-basics-soil-health-and-gardeners-qa-tickets-796894642327>

GM news

A subset of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) will soon be entering our food and farming systems **unlabelled and untraceable**, unless enough of us act now to stop it. GMFreeze have teamed up with Beyond GM and GM Watch to make this easy for you.

<https://beyondgm.eaction.online/candidates-pbo-labelling>

Members' contributions

1. NATIVES: Saving Scotland's Original Honey Bees - This project that I've been working on for three years, delves into the world of Scotland's native honey bees and highlights the efforts of a dedicated group of conservationists and scientists working to ensure their future survival, both on their reserve on the island of Colonsay and elsewhere in Scotland. Scotland is home to *Apis mellifera mellifera* - a resilient subspecies of honey bee, known for its hardiness and ability to cope with wet and often harsh winters, poor springs and unsettled summer weather typical of the western Atlantic seaboard. However, in recent decades, native bees have faced numerous threats, including mass importations of non-native strains of bees, intensified by the global trade and commercial beekeeping. Importations of honey bees are frequently of unsuitable types more used to other climes and often, when the inevitable cross-matings occur, leads to a deterioration in the behaviour of honey bees locally.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdS-_hfhc-o

2. During the 1970s and '80s, a researcher at the University of Washington started noticing something strange in the college's experimental forest. For years, a blight of caterpillars had been munching the trees to death. Then, suddenly, the caterpillars themselves started dying off. The forest was able to recover. But what had happened to the caterpillars?

The researcher found that the trees in the forest had changed the chemistry of their leaves, to the detriment of the caterpillars. Even more surprising, trees that had been nibbled by caterpillars weren't the only ones that had changed their chemistry. Some were changing their leaves before caterpillars reached them, as if they'd received a warning. A shocking possibility presented itself: the trees were signalling to one another. He presented his findings in a research paper; they were met with disbelief.

In the past 20 years, however, the idea that plants communicate has gained broader acceptance. Research in recent decades has shown garden variety Lima beans protecting themselves by synthesizing and releasing chemicals to summon the predators of the insects that eat them; lab-grown pea shoots navigating mazes and responding to the sound of running water; and a chameleonic vine in the jungles of Chile mimicking the shape and colour of nearby plants by a mechanism that's not yet understood.

It's clear that plants have amazing biological capabilities. But can they be considered intelligent? Read more about the question an increasing number of scientists have begun to ask, and a new book that explores the evolving field of botany: <http://nyer.cm/VTIJTjp>

3. Amidst fears over reduced numbers of earth worms across the UK, one farmer who supplies them to gardeners is increasingly supplying to other farmers.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001znhh>

4. Group Night: Why Organic? With Nick Bali

At our May meeting, Nick spoke to us of his occasionally alarming experiences with pesticides and other chemicals in the agricultural industry. He is certainly damning of the overuse he has witnessed and is now committed to eating pretty well completely organically. We, the audience, were left wondering if we are all at risk through our normal eating practices and what we can do to remedy the situation. Fortunately all the top ten supermarkets do have an organic range although it can be limited and some are more careful about monitoring their chemical residues (the top first place goes to M&S and Waitrose).

Check out Pesticide Action Network for more specific details. SEEOG has always supported PAN who have led extensive campaigning all over the world and done their best to advocate for farmers and workers who can be physically at risk. We are now signing up to their Dirty Dozen leaflet to help us decide what fruit and veg we may want to avoid.
<https://www.pan-uk.org/>

There are also box schemes we can sign up to locally e.g. Able and Cole and Sarah Green, an organic farmer at Tillingham who delivers to Greens Health Food Store in Leigh-on-Sea. Unfortunately organic produce is always more expensive so this is where growing your own can be so beneficial. We personally are so lucky to grow all year round salad leaves and herbs. I have been buying organic on the vine tomatoes from Tesco and they are so much tastier than the conventional ones. In my opinion, they are worth the extra £1 and at the same time I'm not paying out for herbs and leaves. We can only try our best to eat as healthily as possible.

5. "Open Afternoon" on Saturday 20 July from 1400 - 17:00 at the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, The Old Rectory, Tolleshunt Knights, Maldon CM9 8EZ. We last visited in 2018.
<https://seeog.org.uk/2018/07/visit-to-monastery-of-st-john-the-baptist-tolleshunt-knights-near-maldon/>

6. This Allotment brings together thirteen brilliant contemporary writers in a glorious celebration of these entirely unique spaces: plots that mean so much more than the soil upon which they sit. One of the contributors is Sara Venn, founder of Incredible Edible Bristol.
<https://eandtbooks.com/authors/rigby/>

7. Fake Farms & Ugly Truths, We're calling time on the imaginary agriculturalists whose smokescreens can be traced all the way back to the rainforests
https://wickedleeks.riverford.co.uk/news/fake-farms-ugly-truths/?utm_campaign=WL+Digital+Digest+01_31+05+2024&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Wicked+Leeks

8. Join I Dig Trees and be a part of something phenomenal.

Together, we're taking positive action - planting millions of trees for climate, wildlife and communities! But this movement has only just begun and we need YOU to take part. Order your free trees from The Conservation Volunteers today and get planting in your community. Tackle climate change with our carbon-busting trees, plant a pocket forest - create havens for wildlife, and green up your local environment for generations to enjoy.
<https://www.tcv.org.uk/i-dig-trees-free-trees/>

9. Join the Mycelium Composting Network

Inspired by the intelligence of fungi, this is a community for health and earth repair.
<https://www.olddreesoil.org/join-the-mycelium-network>

10. Zerodig! On Your Farm

Robin Markwell takes a closer look at a pilot project to measure the benefits of not digging the soil. He meets Ed Bonn who is conducting this scientific trial on seven acres of land next to the Royal Agricultural University near Cirencester in Gloucestershire.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001zdh8>

11. During and perhaps before the 20th century there were people who have questioned agricultural and horticultural received wisdom; the question of NO DIG being part of deeper thoughts about how to grow. Within the era of the Arts and Crafts movement the vernacular came to the fore. The cottage garden and the herbaceous border questioned the ordered borders of annuals (Robinson and Jekyll). Raymond Poincelot (Organic no dig, no weed gardening, 1986) points to the seeds of agricultural tillage dissent perhaps being first sown over 30 years ago (1950s) by the Japanese farmer Masanobu Fukuoka planting vegetables directly into fields of white clover. (One-straw Revolution 1978).

Ruth Stout (1888-1980) broke the digging habit, writing numerous articles and books about gardening without digging (year round mulch).

Gertrud Franck (Companion Planting 1983). Based on more than 30 years of observation and practical experience copying nature in which no bare, uncolonised soil goes to waste and exists on its own resources. In between individual rows of spinach are places for main crops to be sown or planted during the year.

Lawrence D Hills (Fertility Gardening 1980) considers no dig methods that are being implemented along with green manuring without digging.

Jenny Hall and Iain Tolhurst indicate from key characteristics of soil fertility the place of green manures and undersowing along with comfrey mining deeply for nutrients.

In 1948 F C King questioned "Is Digging Necessary" in gardening without digging from the Good Gardeners Association associated with Shewell-Cooper (1900-82) an organic gardener and pioneer of no dig gardening.

Others to consider are Esther Deans in 1970s Australia who influenced Bill Mollison of Permaculture fame; John Jeavons with Bio-intensive growing; Perrine and Charles Herve-Gruyer.

The ferment of ideas and practices were very much of an era gathering pace post WW2 and seeing a culmination in Charles Dowding's work. We will have the opportunity to hear Charles in Leigh on Tuesday 3 December. It behoves us to understand the movement and movements that bring us to date.

On the plots, no dig was talked about a few years ago and at the moment things on people's minds are shade and creating micro climates to aid our growing in changing times; so welcome to the crowd of adaptive growers.

12. How are your potatoes going? We had a note recently from one of our Seed Potato Day customers to say that she'd dug her first root of Lady Christl potatoes. Sixteen from one tuber! She had them for dinner and they were delicious!

13. Watch out for an email coming soon from the Manchester Drive Allotment Society as we will have the opportunity to hear Charles Dowding in Leigh on **Tuesday 3 December**.

14. There are many important issues in this election and, if you're struggling with the cost of living crisis, ecological concerns are probably way down your list. But the overuse of pesticides is becoming a real problem. Indeed, why is our country so nature depleted? Earthworms have declined by a third and there has been a 60% decline in insects (including bees). How many species are now considered at risk? The group Pesticide Collaboration have laid out what needs to be done but nothing has been forthcoming from the Conservative government. In fact, there are 36 pesticides allowed in the UK that are banned in the EU. Also, remember that the most persistent pollution of rivers comes from agriculture. We need to see a proper plan to reduce pesticide use and control dangerous chemicals so that we can allow nature to flourish. Let's hope the next government is up to the challenge.
Information from The Guardian environment page 15.06.24

15. Six Inches of Soil film! You can watch our 'fully independent' film online - please go to the Six Inches of Soil website now!
<https://sixinchesofsoil.vhx.tv/>

With thanks to everyone for their contributions, which are very gratefully received and appreciated.

Soil Association news

1. In case you missed it... they joined over 60k people in London in a celebration of nature and a call for it to be protected. Amazing to see such numbers and passion. A new Government must prioritise nature - without it, we'll have nothing.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/22/thousands-march-london-urge-leaders-tackle-uk-wildlife-crisis>

2. For organic growers & market gardeners, tickets are now available for their 2024 Organic Growers Gathering 'The annual gathering of growers', a weekend of workshops, farm tours, skill sharing, good food, music and more on Friday 27 - Sunday 29 September at Tolhurst Organic CIC, RG8 7RB.
<https://organicgrowersgathering.org/>

Trust Links news

Join them at Trust Links Shoeburyness for their annual FREE Summer Fayre on Wednesday 24 July. 12:00 – 15:00. The address is Trust Links Shoeburyness, Elm Road, Southend-on-Sea, SS3 9RZ. Access to the site is via the entrance on Elm Road, located between a large playing field and 'The Woodlands' / Water Tower. Buses 1 and 9 stop nearby. Shoeburyness Railway Station is within walking distance. Although on-street parking is available on Elm Road, they are encouraging their guests to use public transport where they can. There's a map at this link:
<https://www.trustlinks.org/summer-fayre-2024/>

SEEOG committee

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