

SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

A Local Group of...



Supporting and Working With...



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NEWSLETTER NO: 187 / MAY 2026

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

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.

We also have a Facebook group for SE Essex Organic Gardeners, for members and supporters at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/43705483846/> Why not check it out?

Housekeeping, etc.

To avoid disappointment, do please make a careful note now of ALL EVENTS IN OUR CALENDAR. Our meetings start at 20:00 sharp, unless stated otherwise.

Membership

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

If you're paying by 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.

If you wish to set up a standing order, you can pick up a form, fill it in and let your bank know what you want to do. This is an easy way to remember and it just gets done automatically.

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

Newsletter copy

Spring-themed? And pictures for our website! Any knowledge or insight you want to share? **If you watched the 18:00 news on BBC1 last night, we're in for another drought.** Can we share advice? We're receiving final submissions for the **July newsletter by Sunday 28 June.** Suggestions for trips out? The odd article on other areas of organic thought would also be most welcome. Please include a link to each item, if possible, for fact-checking purposes, names, etc. This does save a lot of time!

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/845713901271300>

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2025

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/>

Monday 18 May: 'Niche No Dig' presented by John Pollard and Jong Longhurst. It's a kind of deviation from the all-or-nothing approach and is based on their own rookie experience, reading, etc. It reaches to limited-space growing. Please don't miss this!

Wednesday, 3 June, a SEEOG arranged visit to Birch Airfield Composting Services, Blind Lane, Birch, Colchester, CO5 9XE (car share), time tbc

Birch Composting have been recycling green waste with care since 2002 and supply a wide range of quality composting products. The Strathern Family set it up in 2002 in response to a requirement to recycle garden waste collected by Essex County Council. Over the years they've gradually grown into a thriving business capable of recycling in the region of 40-50,000 tonnes of organic waste every year. The family began farming in Essex in 1930 when Jim Strathern's parents moved from Ayrshire, Scotland, to Birch. The family now farms approximately 1500 acres, which is in arable rotation. You can read more about the company here: <https://www.birchcomposting.com/>

Friday 19th June, 6.30pm at Trust Links Rochford: People's Emergency Briefing film

SEEOG, in partnership with Trust Links, are organising a screening of the People's Emergency Briefing film on Friday 19 June. We are delighted that Bayo Alaba MP and David Burton-Sampson MP will be joining us. We'll be sending out invitations to a broad range of groups from across the local constituency very soon. The film features footage from last November's National Emergency Briefing, which brought together leading UK experts in climate science, food security, health, economics, national security and nature.

The initiative is explicitly non-partisan and is supported by a wide range of organisations including the National Trust, Church of England, Exeter University, the Royal Meteorological Society, WWF, National Education Union and many more. Full details will be announced as soon as practicable. You can learn more about the film at <https://www.nebriefing.org/> but please check our website

<https://seeog.org.uk/2026/04/peoples-emergency-briefing-in-partnership-with-trust-links/> for updates.

We will definitely need volunteers for this event!

Tuesday 23 June / 08:15 for 09:00: Essex Schools Food & Farming Day, ARU Writtle

(event not for the public): SEEOG's interactive stall, 'The Benefits of Organic Food, Organic Growing, Healthy Soil & Composting-with demonstrations & advice.' This interactive event has been running since 2008. Hosting 3,000 pupils aged 8-11 (years 4, 5 & 6) from Essex Primary schools, it is an extremely popular event and they are always oversubscribed. They will have the same six zones again this year, including Crops, Food, Livestock, Machinery, Countryside & Environment and Rural Safety & STEM. Volunteers gratefully received! Here's what we did last year!

<https://seeog.org.uk/?s=Writtle+2025>

Update on Writtle meeting & banner painting: Wednesday 13 May, 10:00. Please let us know if you want to join us, even if you're not volunteering at Writtle. Some attendees seemed keen to help with the banner when Jane mentioned this at the beginning of our last meeting. Car sharing can be arranged. Please get in touch asap if anyone wants to help at Writtle and/or painting the SEEOG banner,

The address is Lower Bell Fields allotment, Main Road, Rettendon:

- Come up from the Rettendon Turnpike, drive through the village, past the school and village hall.
- Go past Taz Restaurant and Beechwood Equestrian Centre on the right, then shortly after you come to some houses on the left and the car wash.
- Prepare to turn soon after the car wash (CM3 8DZ) - the allotment entrance is half way between the Rettendon sign and the Keep Left signs in the middle of the road.
- Sandie will put a cone on the roadside to mark the entrance.
- If you pass The Bell pub you have gone too far.
- Sandie's number in case anyone needs to call her: 07941539994.
- If anyone uses what3words this will bring you close to the turning:
<https://w3w.co/forensic.unloaded.delved>

Refreshments

- Bring a dish to share for lunch? Sandie has cutlery and plates and will arrange hot and cold drinks.
- They do not have a toilet on site and, as we may be there for a few hours, Sandie will take her camping toilet and tent.
- We are aware that people have different dietary requirements and preferences, so please say if you think it is better for everyone to take their own.

Monday 20 July: "How to use what's in season and your harvest" presented by Fiona Clapperton. Given how climate change is affecting us, it's very hard to judge.

Monday 21 September: "Japanese Gardens-a brief history, reflections on the 2025 Japanese Garden Intensive Seminar" presented by Damien Errington

Monday 16 November: "Gardening the World", presented by a speaker from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

World Soil Day: December: Guest speaker: Spencer Christy, Farm Director Lauriston Farm Limited

NEWS

"A genuine and generous soul. A lovely lady, knowledgeable and dedicated to the causes of nature and healthy living. Friendly and welcoming, a real asset to our meetings when she was there." This was SEEOG member Pat Wortley, who died last month. We will miss her wise advice and cheery words.

Allotment news:

Is your allotment really protected? Even plots used for decades aren't automatically safe. Our latest guide shows how to uncover your site's history, check its legal status, and take steps to protect it for years to come. Read the full guide here: <https://thenas.org.uk/Allotment-legal-status>

Members' contributions

1. Potato House experiments have started! One of the questions we're asked again and again is: "What's the best way to grow potatoes?" There are dozens of opinions, tips, traditions and "guaranteed methods" floating around the gardening world. Some say chit them, some say don't bother. Some say plant deep, others swear by shallow planting. So instead of arguing about it... we're going to test it. Nothing complicated. Just real growers, real gardens, and real results.
<https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/product/gatsby/>

2. A brand new website: Grow more food. Secure our future. The UK has been experiencing food shortages and high food prices. And it's going to get worse. The dangers we're facing are enormous. We are not ready. We take false reassurance from our past when we enjoyed guaranteed food supplies from anywhere in the world. The current plan is to rely on market forces – and that supermarkets will save the day – but it's one that's short-sighted and unsustainable. Together, we can do something about it. Taking action offers a big opportunity for many, particularly our farmers. Building food security must be led by regions and cities, with national government providing laws, policies and devolved powers that local agencies need to act decisively. Created by the charity, Our Food Trust, this website is based on the report Just in Case: narrowing the UK civil food resilience gap, written by Professor Tim Lang for the National Preparedness Commission. <https://foodsecurityaction.org/>

3. Six Inches of Soil-The Podcast: Unruly: Soil Secrets for Gardeners & Green Keepers, Wednesday, March 11. In this episode, our guests question all we think about weeds, bugs, soil life and the commonly used garden chemicals. You may start to look at your garden or public spaces in a very different way. They offer top tips on how to nurture our soils and plants, the show notes are full of vital links.
<https://shows.acast.com/six-inches-of-soil-the-podcast/episodes/69b08bdb738d6fbbf22d731f>

4. Date: Saturday 6th June: Soil to Feast - an all ages celebration of Soil, Food and Farming
1:30- 7:30 at Shimpling Park Farm, Shimpling, Bury Saint Edmunds, IP29.
<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/shimplingparkfarm/2134175>

5. England's first Land Use Framework is long-awaited and welcome

The Government's first land use framework for England has been welcomed by a broad range of organisations. DEFRA claimed the framework, which is due to be updated every five years, set out "how we can use our land more effectively to increase the resilience of our homes, communities, infrastructure, and food systems, while speeding up development and restoring nature". Organisations generally welcomed the focus on 'multifunctional' land use, with the NFU describing the framework as "a step in the right direction". <https://www.southeastfarmer.net/news/first-land-use-framework/>

6. Food insecurity is still on the rise and will continue to worsen as our green belt is eroded. UK fruit and vegetable output has fallen 16% since 2015, and at least half of the fruit and vegetables the UK imports come from regions already facing extreme water scarcity, an effect of climate change. The food foundation findings further show that for many households already struggling to afford food, the choices are becoming more brutal. 53% of food insecure households have cut back on fruit and 40% on vegetables in the last month alone. Among households not experiencing food insecurity, these figures are at 10% and 5.1% respectively — exposing a widening divide in access to healthy food.
<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/food-insecurity-rises-again>.

7. Are the food shocks we're exposed to simply a result of conflict elsewhere in the world? Or are they symptoms of a short-termist system, ill-built to cope with change asks David Burrows.
<https://wickedleeks.riverford.co.uk/features/the-pernicious-problems-fuelling-the-rise-in-food-prices/?uc701=7513312836>

8. The Landworkers' Alliance had a great afternoon hosting the Minister of State for Food Security and Rural Affairs, Dame Angle Eagle, and other DEFEA officials, at Dagenham Farm in London last week 🌱 Together with our partner organisations at the UK Fruit and Vegetable Coalition, we made the case for a 'Market Garden Support Fund' in England which would provide organic agroecological market gardens with capital needed to establish and scale-up their enterprises and support the valuable public engagement activities that many market gardens offer. You can read it here:
<https://landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FINAL-MGSF-POLICY-BRIEF.pdf>

9. Professor Paul Behrens of the University of Oxford has warned that changes to planning that would make it easier to approve intensive livestock units will make food less secure due to the farming method's dependence on feed imports
<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/new-planning-rule-proposals-risk-undermining-food-security-expert-warns/716121.article>

10. How Difficult is it to Recycle Your Old Underwear? In 2022, as part of our work to improve the circularity of everything we produce, we launched our take back scheme - offering customers a place to bring their no longer usable underwear, tights, and socks from any brand to recycle them.
https://www.youunderwear.com/?srsltid=AfmBOopil9tq_3JtecMsZQwylLUTWaG26uDBSNp-Gy1l_qyCLUsrkf7W

11. Our Postcode Gardener projects: See what's happening near you!
<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/our-postcode-gardener-projects-see-whats-happening-near-you>

12. Green Angels is the Land Trust's award-winning, free environmental training programme, offered at various sites nationwide. This hands-on opportunity helps you gain new skills, meet people, and make a difference in your community. Our introductory courses cover topics like wildlife conservation, landscaping, wildlife identification, wild wellbeing, and horticulture. Training ranges from one-day workshops to multi-week sessions, blending theory with practical experience.
<https://thelandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/green-angels/>

13. A new exhibition at The Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL) celebrates its remarkable 100 year history and pivotal role in shaping and protecting England's countryside. The exhibition highlights major achievements like the creation of England's National Parks and Green Belts, campaigns to limit light pollution and litter, regulation of housing development and advocacy for local food production.
<https://www.cpre.org.uk/rhs-chelsea-2026/>

14. Wicked Leeks meets: Ellen Fay – bringing everyone together for the sake of our soil
Nick Easen meets the co-founder of the Sustainable Soil Alliance, who wants us all to give the ground beneath our feet the attention it deserves.
<https://wickedleeks.riverford.co.uk/features/wl-meets/wl-meets-ellen-fay-whos-sending-out-an-sos-for-our-soils/?uc701=7513312836>

15. Certain themes are becoming more prominent at these troubled times. Certainly the place of food in National Security considerations at a time when the global food system is in jeopardy. Big Ag- Big Oil- Big Money.

Soil Association's spring Living Earth articles: Making healthy food accessible for all, the Whole Truth campaign exposing "ultra processed food"(UPF). They are working in partnership with Wildlife and Countryside Link, Obesity Health Alliance, Sustain, Eating Better and Plant-Based Food Alliance. There is action in Scotland and in Wales. The BMA places UPF reduction at the centre to improve UK's food environment, while Food For Life and Sustainable Food Places programmes continue to provide a blueprint for change.

Greenpeace's "Unearthed" showed the lobby group CropLife stating that pesticides banned in the EU are essential to British farming! They are carcinogenic, toxic to reproduction or endocrine disruptors that interfere with hormones. Brendan Costello of the Soil Association states "It's shocking that chemicals which pose risks to everything from unborn babies to birds are still permitted in the UK and it is in the public interest to ban them."

The Sustainable Nitrogen Alliance is partnering the Soil Association with WWF, Plantlife, Woodland Trust, RSPB and health organisations to tackle harmful impacts of nitrogen fertiliser overuse on nature, rivers, air quality and the climate.

Future of Food at the Science Museum examines our food system against a backdrop of the climate and nature emergencies. "The concept at the heart of the exhibition is that we need a new future for food. Our current system is not sustainable."

"No Drought About It" article concludes "Agroecology offers an alternative, nature friendly solution while organic farming demonstrates a tried and tested model for delivery." The centre piece shows their 80 years of pioneering nature friendly farming.

"A life well lived" is about the late Mehr Fardoonji one of the original licensees at her Oakcroft Gardens in Malpas, Cheshire for her box scheme and her introduction of the mobile greenhouse for protected cropping; she also practised yoga. Oakcroft was pledged to the Soil Association Land Trust.

The above are all articles found in the Spring edition.

Farming Today Radio 4 on 23/4/26: Professor Tim Lang was commenting upon the growing of grains etc. For feedstuff and with fertiliser for animals to eat, often in intensive systems, is "not for National Security, public health nor food dependency upon imports" and can be rectified by organic/biologic ways of growing and diet reform.

Farming Today Radio 4 on 24/4/26: Depicting gene edited barley field trials as merely safe, gene editing not GM, therefore okay, they are hoping we do not align with the EU who have banned this; the question of patenting and labelling not mentioned! We are bound to align with EU standards and it seems inevitable as we move closer to the EU.

Pesticide Action for Agroecology (PANNA). "Rather than curbing our use of climate harming fossil fuel derived plastics, synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, our agricultural food systems use more and more each year exacerbating the problem and further locking us into a Fragile Food System.

BUT Food systems grounded in agroecology are ones which:

1. All people have access to healthy, safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food
2. Farmers and agricultural workers work with the land to protect, restore and sustain natural resources and ecosystems
3. Agriculture that utilises ecological management practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improving adaptation and resilience to climate change
4. Synthetic chemical inputs are reduced or eliminated
5. The production, sharing, commerce and consumption of food is built on an economy which prioritises thriving communities, resilient local markets and workers' rights
6. Diverse cultures, identities and knowledge systems are embraced along with equitable forms of social organisation
7. Power in food and farming systems is redistributed: shifting away from transnational corporations so that the rights of food producers, farm workers and agricultural communities are central. These are not far fetched but as WE know and Advocate are being practised successfully around the world ALREADY. Healthiest ecosystems are diverse ecosystems and tend to take care of themselves. Resist the temptation that is all about highest crop yield and monetary return FOR THIS SEASON - SOIL HEALTH is long term. Mother Earth is a supremely complex place and Agroecology recognises and embraces her complexity.

16. Sustainable Food Trust Podcast: Food security, food sovereignty and self-sufficiency in times of conflict: What's really going on in food and farming? Two farmers – Patrick Holden, founder of the Sustainable Food Trust, and Stuart Oates, founder of the Fossil Free Farm project – get behind the headlines to unpack the biggest stories shaping what we eat, how we farm and the future of the planet. Expect lively debate, real-world experience and unique insights from some of food and farming's top voices. In this episode of the SFT Podcast we're talking about food security – as the war in Iran shows no sign of easing, with thousands of casualties and many people displaced from their homes, we discuss the impact of the conflict in terms of food security in the Middle East, as well as how agriculture is often weaponised in times of conflict. We also reflect on how the conflict has impacted food security in the UK and what steps could be taken to ensure the country is more food secure and our farming sector is more resilient in the face of local and global shocks.
https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/podcast/sft-podcast-food-security-food-sovereignty-and-self-sufficiency-in-times-of-conflict/?mc_cid=77786e803d

17. Did anyone else sign up to the 'Revival of the Carlin Pea' experiment back in January. This is Garden Organic's second year of trialling Carlin peas. The aim is to see how well they perform in a range of locations around the UK and how acceptable they are to eat, as a possible home-grown alternative to chick peas. In due course I received a set of instructions and a pack of Minerva Carlin peas. I sowed these large cells and followed the instructions. Vic planted them out on Monday 27 April. I can enter my results as I go along or manually.

18. Tips on how to "How to build and grow a School Garden" from Chris Collins last year:

It has to be quick and relevant and cheap. Hands on and need to garden with children and prepare to get muddy. Give them responsibility for aspects of the garden project. Ideas for the garden: hanging herbs; vertical gardening in small spaces; a hoverfly lagoon; hedge growing (live or dead); bog garden; rot holes; bug hotels; observation of the soil and compost; leaf mould and grass cuttings; containers-use their imaginations; sensory paths and lawns; windowsill growing; perennials; trees and fruit; and a propagator he considered essential. Beyond this, join Children's Gardening Week, Seed to Plate, The Edible Garden and look at Food Growing Schools London for deeper ideas. Entrepreneur ventures, too. There is a mass of curriculum ready resources available on the Garden Organic website.

19. Active substance renewal: glyphosate: The public will have the opportunity to comment on HSE's draft conclusion. These comments will be taken into account before any renewal decision is made. They will issue an eBulletin to notify stakeholders of the start of the public consultation period. To receive this notification and further updates, sign up to receive the HSE pesticides eBulletin if you have not already done so. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/>

20. The National Garden Scheme gives visitors unique access to 65 of the best private gardens in Essex. Browse their garden map to view all the gardens opening in Essex in the next 28 days. You can change the date range or location to help you find what you are looking for. <https://ngs.org.uk/gardens/near/essex/>

21. National Flower Show: Friday 15-Sun 17 May 2, Hylands House, Bank Holiday Giveaway!

Everyone who books tickets online before midnight on Monday 4 May will be automatically entered into their prize draw to win £100. <https://aztec.yourticketbooking.com/p/NFS/?REFID=NFSEmail30thApril>

22. Dee Gordon on Wednesday 27 May at 3.30 in the Beecroft Gallery Lecture Theatre, Victoria Avenue, Southend. Talk: SOUTHEND WOMEN IN WORLD WAR ONE. FREE ENTRY. DONATIONS TO SOUTHEND MENCAP WELCOME.

23. Community-owned farm marks 20-year milestone: Check out Fordhall Farm's recent mention in Farmers Weekly. <https://www.fwi.co.uk/farm-life/community-owned-farm-marks-20-year-milestone>

24. A new two-acre garden in memory of Queen Elizabeth II has opened to the public, providing a refuge for the city's flora and fauna in Regent's Park. From a wildflower meadow to swift boxes in a water tower, the space has been designed as an oasis of biodiversity. The Guardian on Facebook

25. Analysis of official government data – launched today by PAN UK – reveals that the amount of glyphosate being applied to UK crops has risen from 200 metric tonnes per year in 1990 to more than 2,200 tonnes in 2024.....These huge increases will be put under the microscope later this year, as the UK government must decide whether to reapprove glyphosate by mid-December. If they choose to grant the maximum 15-year license, there is unlikely to be an opportunity to review the decision until 2041. <https://www.pan-uk.org/glyphosate-rise-in-the-uk/>

26. CropLife undermines UK plans to boost economy by aligning with EU pesticide standards by Nick Mole, Policy Manager, PAN UK

Earlier this year, CropLife, the trade body that represents the UK pesticide industry, published a report that exposed their goals to protect profits and resist regulations that might impact their sales. As proposed under the new UK-EU SPS agreement, the UK's farmers, food businesses, citizens and our environment all stand to benefit when we once again align with Europe's higher pesticide standards. However, in their recent report, CropLife claim that crop yields will suffer and farmers will be put at a disadvantage should this deal go ahead. But the report isn't really about that at all. In fact, this is a very typical pesticide industry response to potential restrictions on the sale and use of active substances. Part of their lobbying playbook is to delay decisions that might adversely impact their income. It has nothing to do with supporting farmers—it is purely about protecting profits.
<https://www.pan-uk.org/croplife-undermines-uk-plans-to-boost-economy-by-aligning-with-eu-pesticide-standards/>

News from Simon and Mary Wallace, SEE OG members (Gozo branch!)

1. Ġnien: Agriculture and the Ecosystem: An interesting short video looking at different aspects of agriculture on Gozo -filmed by Victor Paul Borg in Maltese but with English subtitles.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjjmq6mMUjo>

2. Her students had nowhere to grow crops. Then she saw a rundown piece of land. Ramona Mercieca won one of this year's Pride of Gozo awards for her initiative. Her seed has grown into a vibrant community hub where her students and 13 families grow their own organic vegetables.
Times of Malta

3. Welcome to Ġnien, a three-part short film series designed to capture the relationship between the natural environment and the local farmers. In this film, we spotlight the work of Rose and her son David who are part-time organic farmers in San Blas. Through filmed conversations and storytelling in their own words, these narratives bring to life the deep connection between agriculture, biodiversity, and cultural identity on Gozo.
Enjoy at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ds7shZ1VRRc>

4. An interesting short video looking at different aspects of agriculture on Gozo
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jjjmq6mMUjo>

Thanks for all your contributions, and keep them coming!

SEE OG committee

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