



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER NO: 188 / JULY 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 Why not check it out? <https://www.facebook.com/groups/43705483846/>

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

Climate or heat-themed? And pictures for our website! Any knowledge or insight you want to share? Can we share advice? We're receiving final submissions for the **September newsletter by Sunday 23 August**. 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!

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2026

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 20 July: AGM at 19:30: Talk at 20:00

AGENDA

Apologies for absence

Minutes of last AGM

Chairman's report

Treasure's report

Election of officers

Election of committee members

Any other business

"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

Monday 7 December: World Soil Day: Spencer Christy, Farm Director Lauriston Farm Limited, will present this year's talk.

NEWS

SEEOG has been incredibly busy with two major events recently: the People's Emergency Briefing film (in partnership with Trust Links) on Friday 19 June; and the Essex Schools Food & Farming Day at ARU Writtle on Tuesday 23 June. The latter, hosting 3,000 pupils aged 8-11 (years 4, 5 & 6) from Essex Primary schools, is an extremely popular event and they are always oversubscribed. They had the same six zones again this year, including Crops, Food, Livestock, Machinery, Countryside & Environment, and Rural Safety & STEM. There are photos of both events on our website.

Preparation for the Screening, along with Matt (CEO Trust Links), Fiona (Environmental Activities Lead) and Jane entailed:

- Deciding on and booking the venue, Trust Links Rochford
- Registering our event on the National Emergency Briefing website
- Registering with TicketTailor to enable registration
- Reading through and absorbing the comprehensive information provided in their "Local groups to invite to a film screening"
- Deciding on two dates to offer to our local MPs
- Emailing masses of organisations (community, environmental, rural, education, youth, trade, health, culture and faith, sport) across the Rochford constituency, along with local Rochford DC councillors and officers
- Inviting Panel members and asking for volunteers to help with front of house, teas, raffle, parking, etc.

On the day itself, TicketTailor showed that we were full and that approximately 70 people had registered. There are two separate posts by Ron and Ane elsewhere in this newsletter. We are advocating for the Emergency to be broadcast across mainstream media, sparking a national conversation on how we address the crisis we are facing. We encourage everyone to watch a Briefing (there are a few in the area) and consider hosting one yourself if you are part of a community group. Engaging with politicians, whether local or national, is crucial in pushing this initiative forward. Huge thanks to everyone....an update/follow-up soon.

The next two Briefings are as follows:

Saturday 4 July, in Shoeburyness

<https://facebook.com/events/s/peoples-emergency-briefing-com/1437295814833150/>

Thursday 16 July, in Hadleigh

<https://facebook.com/events/s/a-special-community-screening-/1509767047561954/>

Preparation for Writtle included:

- Completing booking form back in November
- Deciding that SEEEOG's interactive stall would focus on 'The Benefits of Organic Food, Organic Growing, Healthy Soil & Composting-with demonstrations & advice.'
- Asking for volunteers
- Enjoying a lovely morning at Rettendon (organised by Sandie) planning and painting our two SEEEOG banners (don't they look wonderful?)
- Collating posters and materials over many days and weeks by Sharon
- Rounding up various rotary sieves and large buckets to put them in, five bags of unsieved compost (no worms, too hot; criticised by a child some years ago for doing just this), three stages of compost in display tubs, banners, pots of mint, lemon balm and oregano for feeling and smelling; the herb seed packets to give away; Cosmos, Comfrey, Lavender, Sage, Sorrel and Leef Beet.
- Sorting out tablecloths, some tomato plants that didn't get planted out, a selection of herb, veg and flower plants, crates/stands for displaying and display board for some of the posters; display leaflets; printing off parking permits, preparing packed lunches and water bottles
- And making sure we had everything prepared and packed in the car ready to go for an early arrival at Writtle at 07:00 (Food Zone)..... and leaving at the end of the event when the last school coach had departed.

We made another great team, giving the crowd our best...and didn't they all love the chance to rub the herb leaves and get a good smell! Also giving each other our best, making sure we all had breaks and help.

Members' contributions (very gratefully received.....)

1. Can we change our eating habits, asked Ane? In the film, two of the subheadings were food security and health. An article in the Guardian on June 6th looked into some of the points raised but, from the point of considering the fact that we are now eating six times as much chicken as in 1961 and twice as much pork, global meat supply has risen fourfold.

It seems that people in rich countries, and those in countries where wealth is increasing, are eating more meat and fewer plants than doctors consider healthy. Intensive livestock produces significant pollutants and also requires large amounts of grain and other nutrients that could be feeding people. Agriculture is the second most polluting section of the economy. Its planet heating emissions are due to rise by 7.6% in the next 10 years with livestock being responsible for about 80% of the rise. The advice of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is that people shift from meat heavy to plant rich diets both for their own health and that of the planet. Are we up for the challenge?

2. Organic farming outperforms other assurance schemes, major Defra-backed review finds

Organic farming delivers consistent environmental benefits across key indicators, including biodiversity, soil health and reduced chemical use, according to a new Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)-commissioned review by the Organic Research Centre (ORC).

https://www.organicresearchcentre.com/news-events/news/defra_review_organic_farming/

3. News from Potato House! Our Potato Experiments have really started!

We had aimed to have these all planted a week or so ago-but we had hailstones and frosty nights and delayed planting. Practising what we preach! Always look at the forecast rather than a set day. A month ago, we planted some unchitted potatoes. To add to this, we have planted the following chitted potatoes in growbags:

- Our control-three normal sized potatoes
- One small, one medium and one large potato
- Two tubers of normal size
- Four tubers of normal size
- Large tubers cut up to leave one eye
- One shoot remaining - all other shoots broken away
- Some scabby seed potatoes

We have used Gatsby for all the experiments to eliminate one variable. You could do some experiments - try chitting half of your potatoes for a few weeks and planting the others immediately on arrival - will it make any difference for you? Growing potatoes is a bit like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle. Seed size, soil, weather, watering, spacing, feeding, variety and even simple timing can all influence the final result. There is rarely one single "perfect" method that works for everyone every year. Part of the fun (and frustration) of growing is discovering what works best in your own garden, climate and growing style.

<https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/potato-experiments/>

<https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/product/gatsby/>

4. Farming, food production and rural life (Radio 4, 18 May 2026, 42 mins): What is the future of farming and rural life? Adam Rutherford hosts Radio 4's discussion programme which starts the week, asking about the future of food production and the communities that support it. Minette Batters was the first female president of the National Farmers' Union. Born and raised on the family farm that she took over running, she became a committed advocate for the UK farming industry. UK agriculture has faced challenges from Brexit, Covid as well as international conflict and energy crises. Her new book, *Harvest*, part memoir and manifesto, makes a case for how and why we must rally to support British farming and rural life. Dave Goulson is Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex. Modern, intensive farming systems producing pesticide-laced foods at scale, he says, are bad for us and bad for the planet. He believes that it is time to change the way we produce food today, making the case for sustainable agriculture. In *Eat the Planet Well* he argues that consumers can lead this change, even where governments fail to act.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002whzh>

5. I spent two intense days in the High Court this week, as part of Beyond GM's judicial review demanding the government ensures that GMOs released into the environment and the food system are robustly regulated and traceable. The case has revealed just how far the government is prepared to prioritise profiteering over people & planet. Read more about what we heard and why this case matters. <https://mailchi.mp/beyond-gm/gmos-are-pbos>

6. How are your Dixie Golden Giant going? Lynda said that hers are slightly disappointing so far. Only one came up on 2.4.26. The second came through 16.4.26 and has struggled. It had trouble shedding its seed cap. The other three didn't germinate, sadly.

7. New Scientist Jan 2026 p8- Era of water bankruptcy/water deficits whereby areas use more than they receive. Changes in agriculture whereby better water management is possible. We see 70% of water used in agriculture is for feed growing for beef and dairy. Dietary change for all round planetary health and wellbeing?

8. Check out Client Earth for their 60 second headlines:

Amsterdam begins enforcing a ban on adverts for MEAT and FOSSIL FUELS.

A bill is due as Filipino communities demand Unilever pay for decades of plastic pollution.

Sixty countries agreed to phase out fossil fuels last month at the Colombia Climate talks

The ICJ says states must act to avoid climate catastrophe. UN General Assembly will vote on

Vanuatu's resolution about island nations about to go because of climate impacts not of their doing.

9. Wild Essex Imaginarium 13th June 2026, Rochford WI

The hall was decked with hanging banners of every parish showing their particularity and local distinctiveness. Themes came from the fact that land should be read for its layers of stories as Hoskins told of the Landscape; respect for scrub seen as an eyesore but of immense biodiverse worth rural or urban. Jane Beer (the Flow) talked of water and our origins depended on access to water and the question of access to it as part of the right to roam and that the river Wye has now has legal rights. Ken Walpole talked of the alternative communities in Essex history and the new alms house movement as a social housing for community care, the new hospices of open houses looking to their place in villages and as a model as centres of the community. Peter Hennessey drew on the coming together of Covid times but the need for impetus to social care, social housing, seasonal food into care homes and schools (Bury Council has given contracts for this to 56 schools). Talk again of the 5 acre plots for rural growers giving meaningful work as in care with human interaction as base. Social Care an Alternative Way of Living being an outcome and project. Not private sector for profit outfits! Well done Giles! Keep going!

10. SEEOG talk 18/5/26: John and John-Niche no Dig-small places, strange places. A very interesting talk about the trials and tribulations of adapting on allotments and balconies. Land and containers, the rigours of complying to the restrictive rules for John`s (Longhurst) sea view balcony-you can hang items but no growth must be above the rail, but he has a tropical indoor garden via his patio doors and windows. Both stories of discovery, finding solutions, learning, persisting with good humour and a love of growing came through, great duo performance. Thanks, both of you.

11. 27/6/26 post. Pesticide Action and Agroecology (US) The Supreme Court refused to hold Monsanto (owned by Bayer) accountable and revoked the public`s right to sue and for States to legislate to protect their citizens, ignoring what jury trials and successful lawsuits revealed: EPA science that approved RoundupTM heavily relied upon industry funded studies and ghost-written studies. Further, planting a pesticide coated seed is not considered a pesticide application via a loophole/neonics use this and is a major contributor to the decline in birds and fish. The tariff threat when non alignment to US standards needs resistance within EU and UK.

12. Review of Rebecca Solnit`s book "The Beginning Comes After the End"

"I'm trying to give people back their own history in our own lifetimes, to invite them to recognise the many positive changes around rights for everybody, around a kind of equalisation. I want people to feel, even in the midst of the huge and hideous backlashes that are heart rending that we have changed so much, we have so much power and we do have so many victories." E.g. Watching Native Americans reclaim land rights, language and pride and a major role in public discourses around history of this hemisphere around what kind of relations humans can have to nature and become important leaders, particularly for the climate movement.

13. UK organic land reaches highest level in more than a decade

Rising fertiliser costs, sustainability concerns and growing consumer demand are driving a significant increase in organic farming across the UK. New data from Defra shows that organic land increased by 7.3% in 2025, reaching 540,000 hectares (ha), the highest total recorded in more than a decade. Much of that growth has been driven by Scotland, where land in conversion rose by 115%, increasing from 26,000ha in 2024 to 56,000ha in 2025. Scotland now has an organic land share of 3.3%, up from 1.8% in 2021 and leaving it just 0.3% short of the Scottish Government's target to double organic farmland during the parliamentary term that has recently ended. As the figures published this week cover the 2025 calendar year, the target is likely to have been met or exceeded once early 2026 data becomes available.

https://thedirt.news/uk-organic-land-highest-level-decade/?dm_i=6LRU,1CZOQ,6FGN0R,6DZY2,1,0,0,0

14. National Emergency Briefing 19/6 26 at Trust Links Rochford: Around 60 people attended this briefing film covering climate, CO2 and fossil fuels, tipping points (the Atlantic ocean modulation current), food security, health emergency, National Security, nature as critical infrastructure. Push for the film's broadcast to inform for change.

15. UK produces first extra virgin olive oil as farmers race to adapt to changing climate
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UleFmu28HSo>

16. Protecting the Countryside by Matthew Kelly, a new book

From the beginning, CPRE understood that ordinary countryside matters: the fields beyond the village, the hedgerows along a lane, the footpaths where people walk and cyclists ride. Over the past century, unprecedented economic, social and political changes have transformed the English rural landscape, bringing new housing, towns, roads, infrastructure and enterprise.

https://www.littletoller.co.uk/shop/books/little-toller/protecting-the-countryside-by-matthew-kelly/?mc_cid=c9c3884906

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

1. Interesting project? Energy Garden – Delivering Community Energy in London

<https://share.google/EF8fcV7Hc1xYkelbS>

2. How Greece's Women olive farmers are transforming tradition

<https://greekreporter.com/2026/06/29/how-greece-women-olive-farmers-transforming-tradition/>

New Gardening Citizen Science Research Project-how can we improve seed germination rates given unpredictable weather patterns in the UK?

As you are aware, Spring weather in the UK over the last 2 to 3 years has been somewhat challenging with many gardeners reporting low seed germination rates, (or no germination at all) and having to do repeated sowings alongside slow growth of seedlings.

With this in mind, the Biodynamic Association have recently launched a new Citizen Science Research Project: **"Does sowing seeds three days before full moon or new moon have any effect on germination rates"** and warmly invite Garden Organic and its supporters, local groups, to take part. They aim to gather extensive citizen-generated data to explore whether this could become a valuable, and free tool, empowering gardeners to thrive despite increasingly unpredictable weather conditions. Input from Garden Organic members would have a significant impact.

It's easy to take part - see attached document for how to do the experiment and all the new and full moon dates until the end of year. You just need to count back three days from these dates. Full information can also be found here.

<https://www.biodynamic.org.uk/does-planting-seeds-at-full-moon-or-at-new-moon-have-any-effect-on-germination-rates/>

There is a short video here on taking part in the research:

<https://youtu.be/rnm42Wb-PQU?si=B-fvI0gR6TF83PAX>

To submit your results: They have created an online form here which takes about 1-2 minutes to fill in. <https://tally.so/r/2EeeMe> or email them on office@biodynamic.org.uk

SEEOG committee

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