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Articles, notices, meetings etc relative to your Branch and DA should be sent to the sub-editors below.

Scottish Branch
Sub-Editor: Jim Williams
details as below

Northern Branch
Sub-Editor: Tony Fotherstone
01462 631110
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Midland Branch
Sub-Editor: David Wall
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Southern Branch
Sub-Editor: David Wall
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Welsh Branch
Sub-Editor: Mrs Ann Griffiths FNVS
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and finally, myself…

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...50 years and still growing

...to whom all articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent.

National Chairman
Medwyn Williams MBE ARHS FNVS
01488 714851
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or medwyn@ffilanor.fen濉ve.co.uk
April is probably as busy a month as you can get in the gardening calendar, there are so many things to do both in the greenhouse and outdoors on the plot. This year the Easter weekend is late with Good Friday falling on April 22nd, the traditional day seemingly to plant your new potatoes. The idea of planting your potatoes on good Friday never used to make much sense to me as the religious Easter weekend can fall in March, also there can be as much as a month variation from one year to the other. When you think about how unsettled the weather can be during this period in early Spring it really doesn’t make much sense.

The Met Office classes the first day of spring as the 1st day of March, but because of the variation in the days on which the equinox and solstice falls, it is more convenient to use whole months. The Met Office therefore classifies the spring months as being March, April and May, not very accurate. However, I believe the first day of Spring this Year is the 20th March so if you consider that Good Friday can fall on this day it makes even less sense. In effect it would be as near as it could be to the end of Winter and you certainly wouldn’t contemplate planting new potatoes outdoors in Winter when the soil temperature is barely above freezing.

My father always planted his potatoes on Good Friday provided the weather was dry, if it rained he wouldn’t be in a very good mood, if it rained again on the Saturday he was a man to keep clear of. The reason was that he wasn’t allowed to do any work on the garden on a Sunday, my string line would be used to leave a wide mark on top of the soil. The string line would be moved to mark the next row and then he would open the trench with the centre of the spade in line with the centre of the wide mark.

This job in turn would be turned over alternately to the left and right and about six inches deep. He would have brought home a trailer full of farm yard manure and spread it out. He then used a winnowing sheet from an old potato sack and my job was to fill the majority of this sheet with the manure. Dad would then gather in the ends and lift on his back and carry it into the opened row where it would be spread along the bottom. A scattering ofGrosmore on top and I would pass the potatoes to him, one at a time, while he laid them out a foot apart before covering them over with the soil to form a ridge.

An operation I’m sure that will be carried out this Easter by many NVS members across the Country and if you have any children or grandchildren, let them help you if you can get the children interested at a young age, just like I was, then there is every chance that they will come back at a later date to enjoy many years of this wonderful hobby, just like I have.

Enjoy your gardening and a happy Easter to you all. Medwyn January 2011

"The idea of planting your potatoes on Good Friday never used to make much sense to me as the religious Easter weekend can fall in March..."
None of us are getting any younger. Unfortunately, Dick Griffiths, Welsh Branch Secretary, has not been well, so we understand he is now on the mend. Additionally, our National Secretary, David Thornton has recently undergone a hip replacement operation, and is also back home, giving his wife all hell. We wish them both a speedy recovery to full health and believe his crutches make good bore hole tools for his long carrot beds!

I have included elsewhere in the magazine details of some of the major shows around the country for 2011. I have been asked by the Welsh Branch to point out to you that the venue for their Championships on 20th and 21st August has changed from Grove Junior School, to Pembroke Comprehensive School.

Pembroke. Please note a note of this as some documents have already been printed with the incorrect venue for the show. Apparently, both venues are close to each other, so should be no problems.

You should receive a number of inserts with this magazine, depending on which branch you are a member of. All branch members will receive a schedule of the Championships relative to your branch, and all members will receive a National Championships Schedule.

Our esteemed Chairman Medwyn, has received a request via the NWS website from Richard Smyth BSc (Hons) MSc RS, of Pen-Y-Bryn, Pembroke.

“I am currently in the process of starting up a new business, which will involve assessing soil quality within domestic gardens. The primary aim of the business will be to make available to the public their own fruit and vegetables with confidence that their garden soil does not contain elevated levels of contamination, and is therefore suitable for the cultivation of home grown products.”

He is a qualified environmental geologist and has been working as an environmental consultant in the UK for the past 10 years. Most of his work over this period has been focussed on contaminated land and brownfield regeneration. As a result of his profession, he has become aware that soils in domestic gardens contain elevated concentrations of contaminants, and as such, may be unsuitable for the cultivation of home grown fruit and vegetables.

At the moment he is keen to undertake some market research and would like our help. He would be very grateful if members could participate in a very short on-line questionnaire, which can be accessed at the following link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T8033T5S

If you have any queries or require further information concerning anything, please do not hesitate to contact him at: RennyT25@hotmail.com

**simply vegetables**

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As you can see, the NWS are celebrating a limited edition rose from FOCUS DIY LTD., are introducing a limited edition rose, called “Catherine”, in honour of Kate Middleton, to stores nationwide, has a moderately strong scent and is used for, i.e. mixing it with other products, i.e. composted leaf mould, as the pictures below show.

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None of these events and giveaways elsewhere in this issue. I hope to have a full report in the next issue, and;

b) The Editable Garden Show Westland have announced the last issue, with a competition of 5 pairs of tickets to be won, on 18th to 20th March, where again we will have an advice stand. I hope to release space in this issue for a report if I can get it to the publishers in time. Focus DIY, one of our major sponsors, hope to be holding a “grow your own week-end” at all their stores over the same week-end, sometime in May/June, date to be decided, and have invited the NWS to participate by manning an advice desk in store, at as many stores as we can man, where we will have the opportunity of promoting the NWS, and recruiting new members.

For those of you who are not aware, we currently have an arrangement with FOCUS, whereby we allow them to put the NWS logo on their vegetable punnet plant labels, in return for a royalty payment for each punnet of vegetable plants sold.

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A couple of news items I read of recently gives cause for concern;

1) DEFRA, (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) have had to acknowledge defeat and put back their target date for manufacturers of growing composites to be entirely peat free, to 2020.

Whether this can be achieved is another matter, as currently there seems to be no encouragement from Government to persuade manufacturers to undertake research into alternative composites, which can be produced at a reasonable cost, and of a quality as good as or better than peat based products. The RHS tell us that at their gardens, peat accounts for less than 1% of ‘growing’ media used, and that they aim to reduce that further. They do not tell us what they use instead! Until I can find a product that is as good as peat based composites, and at a sensible price, I will continue to use peat, although, depending on what it is used for, I do mix it with other products, i.e. composted leaf mould, sterilised soil etc., supplemented with organic fertilizers, fish blood & bone etc. With low awareness of other products, and even lower demand, I suspect, as long as peat is available, it will be an uphill struggle to effect a change. What do you think? Does any member use peat free products with any degree of success? Please let me know and we can share in your successes.

2) The RHS magazine “The Garden” advised in their March 2011 issue that a recently arrived onion pest is likely to spread. Allium leaf miner (Alliomyia gymnoscelis) is spreading in Britain as advised to them by NSALG in the West Midlands area. Allium leaf miner attacks leeks, onions, garlic, chives and shallots, plus some ornamental species of allium. All gardens should be on the lookout for signs of this pest, as at present no effective insecticides are available to amateur gardeners to control the pest. Evidence of the pest problem is characterised by white lines of puncture marks in the leaves of feeding adult females, and stems and bulb damage by burrowing larvae. Currently control is by covering the crop with protective sheets to prevent entry of the adult laying its eggs, and practise crop rotation, asparagus can overwinter in the soil. RHS principal entomologist is concerned and suggests that it is going to spread and there is every possibility that it will occur throughout the country within 20 years. Yet another challenge for us to overcome, makes me wonder why I didn't take up stamp collecting instead of growing veg, far less stressful.

Garden organic, formerly The Henry Doubleday Research Association, the UK’s leading organic gardening charity, believe that there is a growing appetite (garden pun?) for “green” gardening and an opportunity, to build a nation of organic and sustainable gardeners, (but they would say that) and have therefore arranged their first “Garden Organic Gardening Conference” at their gardens at Ryton on Sat 14th May. For more info call 02476-390120, or go to their website, www.gardenorganic.org.uk

I like spring, it is the start of another growing season, and fall of all anticipation of another successful year. Particularly for me, as I earn my living as a jobbing gardener, looking after customers gardens, (posh name - garden maintenance and design, but that tells no-one) and having endured a cold, frosty, wet, snowy winter, I have not earned a penny since November, so the cupboard is a bit bare, and with my energy supply company telling me that my electricity will cost £3.00 per month more from this month, it is tempting to turn off the electric heaters, grow lights, soil warming cables in the greenhouse, so spring can’t come quick enough for me. Might just save me.

But without artificial heat and lights, I could not enjoy starting off seeds, taking cuttings, pricking out etc., as the pictures below show.

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Photo taken; 22nd Feb., and 1st March, what a difference a week makes. At this AGM at Llangattock at the end of August, and as advised in the January edition of “Simply Veg”, we will be appointing/electing a new National Chairman and/or President.

In view of the importance that these positions carry, it was suggested that we print a short CV’s for consideration by the membership, to be printed in Simply Veg.

To date I have not received any CV’s to publish, so I can only assume that the National Secretary has not received any formal applications/nominations for either position, so it would appear that potential candidates are keeping their powder dry until they see how the land lies. Hopefully, I will be in a position to publish details in the July edition; if they are not to be ready by 4/5 weeks before the AGM, so the details will be fresh in people’s minds. Under our current constitution elections are by a simple show of hands at the AGM, and we do not have the ability to arrange postal votes, so if you wish to use your vote, you will need to attend the AGM in person, or send a proxy. The strategic planning committee are looking at a number of possible changes to the constitution, and this could be one of them, so watch this space.

Eoin Redahan, the RHS’s Science and Outreach PR Manager, advises that running alongside their “Grow your own” week-ends, see elsewhere in this issue for more info., they are running a Great Vegetable Challenge and are challenging vegetable growers to grow beetroot (Beta vulgaris), tomatoes (Lycopersicum), chillies (Capsicum) and pumpkins (Cucurbita) and to exhibit them at either their gardens or on their website.

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At this time of year, i.e. the end of a hard winter, there cannot be much fresh veg left on the plot, there’s only so much parsnips, leeks, sprouts and winter broccoli a man can eat. Its amazing how plants start to burst into leaf almost overnight and the suns intensity gets stronger. By the time this issue is taken one week apart, show how hothubs, grown outside in 30 ltr pots, is waking up to spring. Should be pulling the first sticks by mid March. Variety, Stolichnyi Arakto, do not name the stump collecting instead of growing veg, far less stressful.

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None of us are getting any younger. Unfortunately, Dick Griffiths, Welsh Branch Secretary, has not been well, so we understand he is now on the mend. Additionally, our National Secretary, David Thornton has recently undergone a hip replacement operation, and is also back home, giving his wife all hell. We wish them both a speedy recovery to full health and believe his crutches make good bore hole tools for his long carrot beds!

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simply vegetables
New NSALG Website Launched

www.nsalg.org.uk  01536 266576 natsoc@nsalg.org.uk

National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners are proud to launch our brand new website! This website includes useful information for both non-members and members regarding the society, latest news, funding opportunities, useful diary dates plus much more. In addition to this, we now have an area dedicated to our members that can be accessed via a unique password. This area contains exclusive downloads including this magazine. Visit your dedicated area regularly to keep up to date with NSALG members information. Contact your Association Secretary to obtain your log in details.

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Tel: 01382 580384 Email: jgrant.cathro@sky.com

Branches: Midlands & Southern please complete and return to:
Mr Neil Hope FNVS, 82 Hare Hill, Ashcliffe, Sunny, KT15 1DN
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Payment can be made via the NVS website www.nvsuk.org.uk under the ‘join the NVS’ section, where there is a renewal form for existing members as well.

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Name of Charity: THE NATIONAL VEGETABLE SOCIETY
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For further details and schedules please contact
Part of Malvern Autumn Show, Worcs...
Further details and schedules from Jim Williams FNVS,
Tel; 01875 320644, or Grant Cathro on 01382-580384.

Other notable show dates including RHS shows for 2011;
April 17th to 18th Rotherham Spring Show
April 21st to 24th Haywards Heath Summer Show
May 1st to 8th Malvern Spring Gardening Show
May 24th to 26th Birmingham Gardening Show
June 17th to 19th BBC Gardening World Live, NEC, Birmingham.
July 5th to 10th RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show
July 7th to 10th Chatsworth Flower Show
July 20th to 24th RHS Show Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire.
August 3rd & 4th Bakewell Show, Derbyshire
August 12th & 13th Harrogate Autumn Flower Show
August 18th to 21st Southport Flower Show
September 9th to 11th RHS Wisley Flower Show, Sury, RHS London Autumn Show, RHS Halls, Westminster.
October 4th & 5th RHS Chelsea Flower Show
November 4th & 5th RHS Late Autumn Fruit & Vegetable Show

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27th, 28th & 29th September 2011
The Royal Pavilion, Brighton
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tel; 01978-385453, or Mary Thomas on 01697-780420.

NVS Southern Branch Championships
26th, 27th and 28th July 2011
Part of Hampshire and New Forest Show, New Park, Brockenhurst, Hampshire.
For further details and schedules contact the Show Manager,
Chris Need FNVS, Tel: 01425 629694. Copies can also be obtained from the show office direct. Tel 01590 622400.

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Penrice Comprehensive School, Pembroke.
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NVS Northern Branch Championships
16th, 17th & 18th September 2011
Part of the Harrogate Autumn Flower Show, Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.
Further details and schedules from John Croft FNVS,
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• my annual subscription
• the enclosed donation of £......................
• all donations I have made since 22nd October 2001, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise.
as Gift Aid donations.
Signed: ........................................................................
Date: .................................................................

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October 4th & 5th RHS Late Autumn Fruit & Vegetable Show,
Wisley

Dates and details correct at time of going to print. Please check before travelling.
**Rhubarb and Custard Muffins**

**Makes 10**

- 175g S R flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 175g caster sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- 2 eggs
- 110ml milk
- 125g butter

- Preheat the need to bake at a temperature of 180°C on a baking sheet. (Turn the eggs into sizable sized pieces, about 1/4 cup 1 cup is needed.)

- Place the rhubarb into small pieces, about 1/4 cup 1/4 cup is needed. Do not allow to go dry.

- If you are using a small oven, pour in the mixture and let the batter to sit for about 10 minutes.

- Bake for about 20 minutes until lightly browned and firmy to the touch.

- Because these contain essential fruit, they are best eaten fresh and store in the fridge for no longer than 3-4 days.

---

**Nut Balls**

- 6 ozs ground mixed nuts and seeds (Walnuts, hazelnuts pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds etc) When grinding walnuts with other ingredients or nuts and grind in short bursts, otherwise they become more like a paste

- 3 ozs cheddar cheese grated

- 1 med onion grated or finely chopped

- 1 red pepper, plucked to blacken the flax, and finely chopped

- 1 cup of tomato sauce or ketchup (to give an orange color)

- 2 tablespoons chives

1. Mix nuts, breadcrumbs, cheese, onion, celery and curry in a bowl.

2. Add salt and pepper, add parsley and red pepper.

3. Add tomato sauce mix well.

4. Form mixture into balls, arrange on a cookie sheet.

5. Bake at 180°C for about 20 minutes.

Serve with a warm tomato sauce or Tarator (see below) or other vegetable sauce.

---

**Rhubarb Meringue**

Early pick rhubarb gives the most attractive result here, but any will do.

- 1/2 lb rhubarb
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 dessertspoon flour

For the meringue:

- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup caster sugar
- Few flaked almonds to decorate

To crisp the rhubarb:

- Place the rhubarb and sugar in a pan. Bring to the boil, then stir in the flour.

To make the meringue:

- Whisk the egg whites until stiff and forming peaks, then gradually add the sugar, 1 tablespoon at a time.

To assemble:

- Place the rhubarb in a bowl. Add the meringue and spread evenly.

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**Rhubarb Vodka**

Cut the rhubarb into very small pieces and put in a large jar. Sprinkle with a couple of glass (pickled jam) that will hold the 2 bottles of vodka, or divide between two smaller jars. Add sugar, put lids on and leave for about 2 – 3 days. Great the zest of the lemons very finely, and add. Add chives, cumin and a little salt. Stir, put back on and leave in a cool dark place for a month, shaking regularly to mix the ingredients.

Serve with cream or crème fraîche.

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**Rhubarb and Custard Muffins**

**Makes 10**

- 175g S R flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 175g caster sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla essence
- 2 eggs
- 110ml milk
- 125g butter

Preheat the need to bake at a temperature of 180°C on a baking sheet. (Turn the eggs into sizable sized pieces, about 1/4 cup 1/4 cup is needed. Do not allow to go dry.

If you are using a small oven, pour in the mixture and let the batter to sit for about 10 minutes.

Bake for about 20 minutes until lightly browned and firmy to the touch.

Because these contain essential fruit, they are best eaten fresh and store in the fridge for no longer than 3-4 days.

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**Tarator**

2 cloves garlic
2 tablespoons grated lemon rind and crystallized ginger

To serve, put an upturned dish in the dish/tin. Pour the syrup over the fruit.

Garnish with chopped parsley to serve. (optional)

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**GREAT FREE OFFER FROM**

Free Bio-Cultivator* for every order placed on www.sporkgardentools.com

(*Total order value must be over £50 excluding vat & delivery)

The ‘Spork’ family of tools. A unique collection of multi-tasking tools designed by Robert Todd from Oxford and manufactured exclusively by DeWit.

DeWit is the trusted brand name in quality from a family run company that has been making the finest garden tools that gardeners really want since 1898. The Blacksmiths who make them are keen gardeners who for every day needs great passion and feel, have created individual tools for almost any soil condition and task you're ever likely to encounter.

Lightweight, strong and made from Boron steel, you can be assured you will have a really lasting friend in hand, indispensable for digging, feeding and much, much more!

DeWit produces an extensive selection of FSC wooden handled tools of varying forms and lengths, realising the importance of the users comfort, when manufacturing some of the most environmentally friendly tools on the market.

So, whether working in the garden or the allotment, ‘think not a bit and buy a DeWit’

For a limited period we are able to offer readers a FREE Bio-Cultivator for every order placed on www.sporkgardentools.com

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**From the Kitchen**

By Mary Thomas and Linda Hargrave

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**Nut Balls**

- 6 ozs ground mixed nuts and seeds (Walnuts, hazelnuts pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds etc) When grinding walnuts with other ingredients or nuts and grind in short bursts, otherwise they become more like a paste

- 3 ozs cheddar cheese grated

- 1 med onion grated or finely chopped

- 1 red pepper, plucked to blacken the flax, and finely chopped

- 1 cup of tomato sauce or ketchup (to give an orange color)

- 2 tablespoons chives

1. Mix nuts, breadcrumbs, cheese, onion, celery and curry in a bowl.

2. Add salt and pepper, add parsley and red pepper.

3. Add tomato sauce mix well.

4. Form mixture into balls, arrange on a cookie sheet.

5. Bake at 180°C for about 20 minutes.

Serve with a warm tomato sauce or Tarator (see below) or other vegetable sauce.

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**Tarator**

2 cloves garlic
2 tablespoons grated lemon rind and crystallized ginger

To serve, put an upturned dish in the dish/tin. Pour the syrup over the fruit.

Garnish with chopped parsley to serve. (optional)
More on Sweet Potatoes

I was most interested to read your article on Kumara. I have been growing them successfully on my allotment for the past five years. My plot is in Hythe in Kent on a sunny site half a mile from the sea. I don't regard them as 'difficult' as the roots keep so well and the winter is the following May and then obligingly provide the basis for the next crop. I was given the slips to start me off by a fellow plot holder who does not know the variety. They are red skinned with white flesh and crop very well.

I have kept the roots on top of the kitchen units in past years but this year for some reason they have already started to shoot (late January)! So I have moved the ones I want for slips to a cooler spot. The slip tubers are started in a pot of compost on the kitchen window sill and potted slips kept in the same place - it gives another couple of weeks growing time. I don't keep the slips in pots long for fear that the roots will curl and I will get misshapen tubers - but I have no evidence that this will happen! Last year I kept a large root for propagation and after getting all the slips I didn't get the roots I needed since I ate the root.

I grow them in a cold frame with the top off and also in half potting compost bags filled with soil - the former gives heavier roots but the bags give a useful crop. Both methods help to keep the growing vines off the ground.

I note your advice on giving maximum growing time and not being too hasty to harvest - it really does affect yield. They have soft skins when first cut off the ground and I believe it is important to cure the skin. Exposure to hot sun is not really an option by the time of harvest so I either put them in a hot airing cupboard for a few hours (with permitting) or in a low oven.

You also say plant on a firm base of subsoil and later that on light soils a layer of cardboard might be needed to stop the roots going too deep and not thickening up. I have always tried to give deep soil. I seem to get all sizes of root and not much waste but I have no refinements mainly due to an excellent letter which was received from John Lewis of Kent who has been growing these successfully (probably with a circle of others locally) for seven years. The letter is printed alongside. My advice to John was to forget the shallow soil approach as he is obviously doing all the right things already.

David Wall
Brokali Hybrid – Apollo Tender stem F1 A world’s first.

You may recall that I mentioned in the January edition that I would endeavour to obtain more information on the cultivation and culinary properties of the new Vegetable ‘Brokali-Apollo’, a free packet of which was included in the magazine for every member, as a result of the kind generosity of Marshalls Seeds.

This new vegetable is a cross between calabrese and kale, and is similar to sprouting broccoli, but with green florets like calabrese. It is a “cut ‘n’ come again” vegetable. By the time you receive the magazine, it will be time to sow the seeds, so the following advice from Marshalls may be of help.

Often termed “Tenderstem” in supermarkets, this is the posh variety of Broccoli, presented as supermarkets’ ‘best and finest’ tender stemmed Broccoli, noted for its tenderness (hence the name) and superior flavour. It also commands a premium price!

Brokali is a prolific, fast growing new variety which means you could be cutting the first tender stems followed by many side shoots over a long period. With a taste more akin to asparagus, this versatile vegetable can provide a succession crop, with new stems followed by many side shoots over a long period.

Like Broccoli it needs rich, fertile soil, and if you put down a layer of mulch such as straw, leaves etc, or a layer of compost mulch under the seedbed and 18in/45cm apart. Water the planting hole before firmly transplanting to their permanent position, 1in/2-5cm deeper than in the seedbed.

The seed can be sown at any time in modules, March to June and for best results sow in modules, March to June and transplant into the field after 6-8 weeks. Seedlings are ready to transplant when they are about 6in/15cm to 8in/20cm tall. Water the planting hole before firming the seedling and 18in/45cm apart. Like Broccoli it needs rich, fertile soil, and if you put down a layer of mulch such as straw, leaves etc, or a couple of inches (5cm) of compost, this will help keep the soil cool and moist which it prefers.

Brokali, like Broccoli and Calabrese, has more vitamin C than an orange and as much calcium as a glass of milk, and an average serving offers three times more fibre than a slice of wheat bran bread. It is also a very rich source of vitamin A in the produce section and had anti-carcinogenic properties! So there you have it, the pictures will give you an idea of what it looks like growing and harvested.

As it should mature from June to September, I would welcome any feed-back from members on its cropping ability, and cooking/tasting qualities, to go in the Summer/Autumn editions, and the acid test being whether you would grow it again. Let me know what you think of it.

Competition winners

The Edible Garden Show (18th -20th March 2011)
Simply Vegetables Volume 17, Part 1
The following winners each received a pair of tickets to the event:
Hayley Samuels, Romford
Nigel Scott, Alton
Sue Roswright, Bloke on Trent
Fiona Keam, Somerset
Miss E Morgan, Cirencester

Agriframes
Simply Vegetables Volume 17, Part 1
The following winner received a Galvanised Agriframes tunnel: Mrs Jacqueline Pearson, Buck's.

AnySharp Edge
Simply Vegetables Volume 1, Part 4
The following winners received an AnySharp Edge Garden Tool:
Mr G W Axon, Suffolk
Mrs C Stubbs, Macclesfield
John Evans, Gwent
Mr Andrew Stephen, Isle of Arran
Mr R J Dickens, Harrow
Mrs J Lovell, Suffolk
Rob Dixon, Shopshire
Paul Blake, Jersey

Free Seeds for Grow Your Owners

To celebrate the launch of the Royal Horticultural Society’s (RHS) 2011 ‘Grow Your Own Campaign’ the charity is giving away 80,000 packets of Sutton vegetable seeds.

Ten thousand packs of four packets of seeds will be available from the four RHS Gardens for those who want to try their hand at growing beetroot, tomatoes, chilli and pumpkins. Further packages will be sent out to the first 10,000 gardeners registering their intent to grow on the RHS website (www.rhs.org.uk/growyourown).

The charity is providing even more help and encouragement this year. It has updated its very popular GYO iPhone app which has had over a quarter of a million downloads to date. This year’s free version includes 20 fruit and vegetable profiles, including full information on pests and diseases with images and ‘my garden’ functionality. The app also sends ‘alerts’ to user’s phones once a month suggesting what they should be doing in their gardens. Users can add content to the app by buying additional content bundles of vegetables, fruit and herbs.

There are also open days at all four RHS Gardens. These are taking place on the 28th and 29th March and RHS gardeners will be available to chat about the best techniques and answer any questions on fruit and vegetables people may have.

This year the RHS is challenging all growers, experienced and beginners, to enter their harvested vegetables to be judged either by bringing their vegetables to one of the four RHS gardens or to enter online. Prizes include Sutton vouchers, books and other goodies. There are three categories – individuals, groups and children. The charity is running a separate challenge for gardening media who will be asked to exhibit their vegetables at the RHS London Autumn Harvest Show.

There is so much interest in our ‘Grow Your Own’ campaign,” says Lara Burns, the RHS ‘Grow Your Own’ co-ordinator. “Every year more and more people want to try growing vegetables or fruit for the first time. The RHS aims to support and inspire novices and experienced growers with our advice and horticultural expertise. Most of all we just want people to have a go and get growing!”

She went on to say “We expect lots of people to contact us for these seeds freebies. However, based on last year’s response, the sooner gardeners apply the more likely they will be successful.”

For more information contact: eoinredahan@rhs.org.uk or 020 7821 3044

Further information on the RHS ‘Grow Your Own’ campaign is available at – www.rhs.org.uk/growyourown.

About the RHS

The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK’s foremost gardening charity, helping and inspiring millions of people to grow. We do this at our gardens and through our scientific research, publications, libraries and our education and community programmes. We are entirely funded by our members, visitors and supporters.

RHS membership is for anyone with an interest in gardening. Support the RHS and secure a healthy future for gardening.

For more information call: 0845 130 4646, or visit www.rhs.org.uk

RHS Registered Charity No. 222679/SC038262

The Moreton Park Lodge is now full, but the following B & B’s will be happy to assist:

The Squirrels – Lil And Peter on 01978 869041
Sue Plowright, Stoke on Trent

Pias Hafod – Margaret on 01978 869225

Prices will be from £60 – £70 approx and are all within easy walking distance of the showground. To book, telephone with your card number and mention Mary’s booking for the show. Please do not delay as Llangollen is a very popular tourist town, especially being Bank Holiday weekend.

Further details in the schedule enclosed with this magazine.

Alternatively if you wish more luxurious accommodation in the town itself, Llangollen group hotels can be contacted on 01978 869328. This is one of a group of three within 2 miles radius of the town. There are also numerous B&B’s around the town.

If you need any further information, please ring me on 01691 780420 or e-mail maryfron2005@yahoo.co.uk
Hi. My name is Mick Walton. I am a full time seaweed harvester on the west coast of Ireland. I am also the Chairman of the NVSI and a keen grower of seaweed, using a Land Rover Defender 130 and a large trailer; the seaweed we harvest are all members of the alginic family, namely fucus serratus or serrated trailer; the seaweed we harvest are all members of the alginate family, namely fucals serratus or serrated trailer; the seaweed we harvest are all members of the alginate family, namely fucals serratus or serrated trailer.

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Meet Your New Planter Specialists

Fat Leaf Ltd design and manufacture their own range of Planters, Garden benches, and Grow your own containers in their West Dorset Workshop. The company has grown steadily since its inception in 2009 and has been responsible for planter arrangements all over the country, including major installations with Exeter University, a host of schools from Dorset to Doncaster, and in kitchen gardens throughout the South West.

Jim and Ross, the Fat Leaf Directors, had become very fed up with the quality and short life of the many planters that they had purchased over the years. They set about designing their own range of planters, which they resolved would be built to the highest possible standards, which could reasonably be expected to last great, and remain reliable, for over ten years, yet still have great prices.

This ambition has earned them an excellent reputation nationally, mainly because they don’t cut any corners; their building practices focus on quality over quantity. With prices for large vegetable planters starting at below £100, made to measure planters starting at £215, and superb heavyweight benches starting at just £160 the company is confident that its prices won’t be beaten, even with delivery to anywhere in the country. Fat Leaf have teamed up with Fedex UK and all of its products can be shipped to anywhere in Britain within 3 days of order at the latest prices. Fat Leaf products are perfect for allotments. Society members can see the whole range online (www.fatleaf.co.uk) or request a brochure online (or by telephone: 01308 459582) but the range of BENCHES and the GROW YOUR OWN planters are particularly appropriate for allotments and allotment associations.

In recognition of the superb work done in Allotments all over the UK, Fat Leaf are offering an exclusive 10% Cash back on all orders from a Society member.

One of the great joys of an allotment is the opportunity to sit down and chat with like minded growers at the end of the day, or to have that cup of tea whilst looking at the fruits of all your hard work. Whether the association provides a communal seating area, or whether you want a small but attractive seat on a single allotment Fat Leaf has the answer.

Fat Leaf’s Grow your own range includes deep vegetable planters, shallower salad planters, raised beds, specialist herb planters and wonderful spiral planters which offer multiple planting areas and vary depths of soil- perfect for maximising crop choice in a small space! Made to measure options on all products means the product choice is in fact unlimited, and Fat Leaf offer their whole range in unlimited, and Fat Leaf offer their whole range in untreated locally grown Larch, Chestnut and Oak as well as Red Cedar.

GROWING your own may be the only way to have crops of purple sprouting broccoli this year, experts at Thompson & Morgan have warned. With the announcement from the National Farmers Union in February this year that crops across the country have been devastated by severe winter weather, the seed company is gearing up for a surge in sales – and made things even easier for gardeners by slashing prices!

Severe weather throughout much of winter has decimated crops of purple sprouting broccoli, with growers and farmers predicting major shortages in the coming year.

The National Farmers Union has said some crops have been completely devastated by the cold weather, and warned that consumers will struggle to find the vegetable and will have to face rising costs for it this year.

Such is the popularity of purple sprouting broccoli thanks to its incredible nutritional qualities, fans are expected to get back to basics and start growing their own.

Purple sprouting broccoli is such a superfood that many people will be sorely disappointed at the news of this shortage,” said Thompson & Morgan’s Paul Hansord. “But savvy shoppers will use this to their advantage and have a go at growing their own – ensuring their families don’t have to go without, and saving an enormous amount of money at the same time. Broccoli is an easy vegetable to grow and by choosing the right varieties you can ensure you have crops all year round.

We are expecting an increase in seed sales over the coming weeks and will be gearing up to ensure we have plenty of stocks to keep customers happy. “What’s more we are offering our most popular varieties at half price – making it even easier and cheaper for customers to beat the rising costs of buying fresh vegetables.”

Since it won a reputation as a superfood, purple sprouting broccoli has become a staple of many shopping lists thanks to its high levels of iron, follic acid, calcium, fibre and vitamins A and C. But with prices set to rocket as supermarkets struggle to secure stocks, fans of growing their own vegetables can be happily tucking in for just a fraction of the cost.

Lovers of broccoli could be enjoying a home grown crop this summer, thanks to the Summer Purple variety, which has been specially bred for the British climate. It also produces huge crops of the tasty spears, meaning shoppers could save a fortune on their food bills by avoiding costly imports at the supermarket.

Firm favourites amongst Thompson & Morgan customers are Broccoli Redhead - a vigorous variety that produces delicious crops for over two months and Late Purple Sprouting which is a very hardy and reliable variety.

To help customers save money and beat the shortage, Thompson & Morgan is currently offering its three top selling purple sprouting broccoli varieties at half price!

Buy a collection with a packet each of Broccoli Redhead, Late Purple Sprouting and Summer Purple for just £12.88!

All these varieties are also on sale individually at half price too, making each packet less than a single pack of sprouting broccoli from the supermarket.

Add to that the reduced carbon footprint by avoiding costly imports and the increased nutritional value in freshly picked vegetables and the home grown option really is a winner!

Thompson & Morgan’s Vegetable Product Manager Colin Randell offers the following tips on how to grow great broccoli at home:

- For virtually all year round production, sow Summer Purple from early March in modules or small pots of seed compost on the window sill, and then sow every three weeks until early May and harvest from June to November. For winter and spring overwintered crops, sow Redhead, Early Purple Sprouting or Choice Mix from mid May to late June and harvest from December to May.

- Seedlings take 5 – 6 weeks to produce study plants to transplant to the garden in free-draining soil.

- Protect early sowings from overnight frosts until late May

- In windy areas, stake plants or earth up the stems to prevent wind rock.

- Give plants a boost with a high nitrogen feed, such as Chempak Formula No 2, from late February.

- Protect from aphids, butterflies and pigeons with fine mesh.

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- A complete range of vegetable seeds, including broccoli, can be found at www.thompson-morgan.com

- Summer cropping broccoli sown this spring will be ready for picking this summer.

Helen Johns.

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Green Pest Controls

Buzz Organics® was established primarily to supply biological pest controls to hobby and allotment gardeners and has continued to develop and expand ever since. The business now operates as a specialist all year round supplier of horticultural products and supplies to a much wider customer base.

The business has a well established reputation for efficient service as well as a wide range of products. Many customers are customers through recommendation. Quality, good service, and value for money are the watchwords behind our continuing success. And, if you don't see a product that you need in our catalogue we have the expertise to find it for you.

Our main objective is still to bring to the leisure and allotment gardener all the "green pest controls" that are currently available to commercial growers but at a cost that will be attractive. You will see from our Product List that we offer a wide range of biological pest solutions e.g. natural predators, parasites and fungi, each specifically targeting a particular horticultural pest. Our strength is that we can provide specific information/data for any of the problems identified (and we may also be able to assist in the identification of any particular pest should this be necessary) and, therefore, provide the appropriate solution.

So, if you have any particular garden pest issue please feel free to contact us and we will forward you a specific data sheet to cover the identified problem.

Visit www.buzzorganics.co.uk

Conference to debate opportunities for creating a Nation of green gardeners

A leading charity believes a growing appetite for green gardening presents opportunities for building a nation of organic and sustainable gardening by consumers for its subject of its first annual conference.

Research shows that 82% of UK households have a garden or outside space, that almost 10% rise in people who want to participate in gardening compared to a decade ago, and that the average time spent gardening in the main season has risen, since 2005, to 3.9 hours per week. Couple this with predictions that the grow you own boom is likely to migrate to wider Green It Yourself activities and combined with a new demand for ‘green’ pest and disease products, we are beginning to see there are real opportunities for making organic gardening part of the mainstream.

The conference - a day to promote lively discussion about what it would take to turn the nation’s gardens organic will be led by a panel of export gardeners, including, GMG Environmental Journalist of the Year 2010, John Walker, Author, Pauline Pears, best selling author, Caroline Foley and BBC Radio 4 Gardeners’ Question Time panelist, Matthew Biggs.


“With last year’s surge of grow your own enthusiasts spending £54 million on self sufficiency activities, research that highlights an increasing concern by consumers for waste or excess of any kind, combined with a new demand for ‘green’ pest and disease products, we are beginning to see there are real opportunities for making organic gardening part of the mainstream.”

Peter Cranfield – National Assistant Secretary

- sPONSORSd BY grow2eat.com
At any time of year you should be able to step out of the garden and pick some sort of leafy vegetable. In the depths of winter it may be a hardy savoy cabbage, a dish of tasty curly kale or some delicious Brussels sprouts.

Better Brassicas
John Trim FNVS Southern Branch.

At this time of year “April” we are enjoying eating fresh young spring greens. The seed for these was sown directly in the soil last Autumn and very close together, about 4” apart, then they were grown on through the winter under a strong 30g fleece.

For the best result it is best to choose a variety of spring cabbage that makes leaf and little heart. Look out for ‘Early Market’ or try a good one from Marshalls called ‘Greensleeves’.

Another way to produce a crop of spring greens is to cut a cross in the stalk of a harvested winter cabbage, new leaf growth will appear which can be cut as required.

Most gardeners can grow a cabbage, though not always to perfection. Many gardeners struggle when it comes to cauliflowers and many fail to produce decent sprouts.

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Coping with Carrot Fly

David Thornton FNVS, National Secretary

As a keen consumer and exhibitor of both long and stump rooted carrots I have carried out quite a lot of research into this widespread and difficult to control insect. Here are a few notes gathered on the way, which hopefully dispel some of the myths sometimes associated with this pest:

Name of pest
Carrot root fly (Chamaepis rosae, syn. Psila rosae). Sometimes called carrot rust fly in the USA.

Host range
Carrot fly is a major pest of all types of carrots, but parsnip, celery, and parley may also be attacked. Umbelliferous herbs such as tansy, dill and angelica may harbour infection.

Occurrence and importance
Psila rosae is the most damaging of all pests of carrots and it can attack young plants, which can stunt their growth; attacks later in the season can allow secondary rots to develop, which cause the carrot to die and the soil or during storage. The yellowish-white larvae of this fly tunnel into roots creating mechanical damage resulting in an entry for root pathogen. Any damage renders roots useless for exhibition.

Symptoms of attack
The maggots make tunnels just below the surface of the carrot root causing a rusty-brown discoloration and giving the carrot an unpleasant taste. Young plants may die. More often the plants are temporarily stunted and the carrots become bulbous, cocked and misshapen. Wilted and discoloured (‘rusted’) foliage, especially in dry weather; this probably results from serious interference with water transport following damage to the root system. Less severely damaged plants appear stunted. In addition, fung and bacteria may invade the damaged tissue and cause rotten at the crown of the plant. On parsnips and celery larvae are more commonly found nearer the crown, and may burrow into the base of leaf stalks.

Description of the pest ad damage
Adults are small, shiny black or brown flies with yellow legs and iridescent wings. They are 5-8mm long with a wing span of about 13mm. New generations arise as a result of the dispersal of adult carrot flies. Carrot flies are relatively weak flies and it is estimated that they move about 100m per day. They are usually most numerous at the edges of gardens, particularly where there is shelter. Most wild members of the carrot family (Umbelliferae) are less susceptible to carrot fly than cultivated plants and would support fewer carrot flies per plant. It is not known what contribution carrot fly populations living on wild hosts make to carrot fly numbers in any location, although it is thought that crops are still the main sources of the pest. Natural enemies of carrot fly include invertebrate predators, hymenopterous parasitoids and fungal disease.

The eggs are white, minute, 0.5mm long, sausage-shaped, and longitudinally grooved. They are laid singly or in clusters near carrots or other host plants, usually in cracks in the soil or just below the soil surface. The leg-less larvae are initially colourless, but become creamy white as they develop through three instars (growth stages) to about 8mm long. They are tapetast toward the fore end, without a distinct head. They feed on the taproot or side roots of the host plant with their touping mouth-parts (typical of fly larvae). When mature they leave the root and pupate nearby in the soil. The pupa develops inside the yellowish brown, barrel shaped puparium (hardened larval skin), which is 4-5mm long.

Life cycle
There are 2-4 generations of the maggots during the summer and autumn with damage occurring from June to July and from August to October. Female adults lay their eggs in the soil near the base of the plant. The fly emerges from over-wintering as a pupa in mid-May, but it is temperature dependent. It lays eggs in the soil close to the plant late in May, and the young maggots work their way downward along the root and begin feeding at the tip of the root. Older larvae tunnel in the lower third of the main root. The burrows are rustily brown in colour, which explains the American name. Exhibitors often wonder why root damage occurs very low down the length of long carrots and I think this can be explained as a result of the sand being turned over at the start of each new season harusting the previous season’s pupae. Few disinfectants will penetrate and kill the over-wintering pupae.

Control

The following measures are recommended for control of the pest:

• It is essential to practice crop rotation, otherwise adult carrot flies may emerge within the protected crops from over-wintered pupae in the soil.
• The removal of culls and infected plants from the plot helps to avoid future infestations.
• Choose carrot cultivars that are less susceptible to carrot fly, if possible.
• Slowly and effectively avoid thinning the seedlings as females are attracted by the carrot smell released as plants are removed. Late sown carrots avoid the first generation of this pest.
• When sowing use seed treated with insecticide, this will protect the plants for about six to eight weeks.
• Cultural control used in conjunction with chemicals is important in minimising the effects of carrot rust fly. Clean cultivation can reduce attacks, and alternative umbrella hosts should be removed.
• Peak flights of the various generations of adults occur at certain times, for example most commonly between 4:00–7:00pm on warm days. These times should be avoided when thinning young crops to provide minimum disturbance of the soil for ovipositing females.
• In addition to these measures, the use of insecticides is usually necessary to produce exhibition crops in areas where the pest is prevalent.

The following procedures might also help to reduce damage from the larval of the carrot fly:
• The use of crop cover (renee), which helps speed up germination and growth of early sown carrots and also serves to protect carrots from the first generation of fly. Early harvest can be practised to avoid damage from the second generation. The time from oviposition to larval attack on the main carrot root has been shown to be around 500ºD (day degrees, +7ºC as base temperature).
• Yellow sticky traps are used to show when oviposition takes place and the daily accumulation of day degrees is shown on the internet for the different carrot growing regions. This information guides growers for the timing of harvest in order to avoid larval attacks. Pesticides are available for the control of carrot fly.
• The capture of flies on yellow sticky traps determines the need and timing of insecticide treatments.
• For example, an estimated threshold value of 0.2 flies/trap/day is used for the commencement of dimethoate treatment.

Some growers believe adult females only fly at 30–60cm above ground level and by erecting a low fence round the carrot patch this will prevent problems. Regrettably this is simply not true! Companion planting using members of the allium family planted next to carrots has also been suggested on the basis the smell of the allium (containing alicin) deters the carrot fly – also not true I am afraid. Finally, please don’t give up trying to grow carrots even if this pest is making a nuisance of itself. The reward of lovely fresh and highly nutritious carrots is well worth the extra effort made trying to control it.

Flavour and good quality harvests...
Growing your own vegetables has never been more popular with waiting lists for allotments reaching an all time high but you don’t need lots of space to enjoy vitamin rich, nutritious veg of your own. All you need is a garden border, raised bed or almost any appropriate container in your garden.

Over years of plant growth most soils become tired and depleted of the natural minerals and trace elements that are essential to healthy plant growth and few gardeners limit their produce by replacing these important but minority constituents. Cobalt, Copper, Magnesium, Manganese, Calcium, Boron and Selenium are just some of the minerals needed to improve photosynthesis, comiostics and strength, cell walls within the plant structure, all of which are critical if plants are to develop the nutrients and vitamin contents that we expect from our vegetables.

Soil Magic, from The Magic Ingredient, is one garden product that provides these minerals and trace elements in one treatment, as well as being a good source of the more familiar Lime, Potash and Phosphate. Simon Baugh of The Magic Ingredient comments, “If you are after flavour and good quality harvests with high vitamin content then your soil needs to contain the necessary building blocks. Trace elements and minerals are just some of these vital ingredients, you also need a healthy soil that encourages microscopic micro-dialers.”

Explaining the importance of these often microscopic helpers Simon continues, “The microscopic micro dialis provide help to convert the goodness in the soil into nutrients that plants can absorb. These become the basic requirements for vitamins and protein compounds. Soil Magic helps to nitrate the soil allowing spaces for minerals to exist and as it is long lasting, one treatment can last for between 12 and 18 months depending on the acidity of your soil.”

The same principles of remineralisation are also effective on flowering crops and provide an easy way to condition compost.

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Growing fruit organically

Gerry Edwards,
Southern Branch

It is interesting to note that the 21st Century has seen more and more gardeners growing their plants organically and this is being reflected commercially with a considerable number of growers doing likewise. But why is this happening? Is it just a modern fad or are the public generally becoming more concerned about the number of chemicals that are being used in the food they are going to eat? I contend that the latter is the case and I also believe that there will be an increasing interest in growing this way.

Unfortunately the very term “organic growing” is enough to prompt a vigorous debate in the horticultural world and the purpose of this article is not to enliven this debate but to offer some practical advice on the merits of growing fruit in the allotment and garden organically and ways and means of doing it. Whilst, of course, I am writing about growing fruit organically all of the points discussed apply equally to everything else growing in the garden.

I cannot pretend that growing organically is easy or will produce instant results but I can assure you that you can harvest your crops at any time and feel safe to eat them without ingesting any chemical residue at the same time. Incidentally providing that you grow fruit which is known not to be disease prone there is absolutely no point in growing varieties which are susceptible to disease as these are often hard to grow even with a major drenching of chemicals! Fortunately recent fruit breeding has produced a number of reliable and disease resistant plants and trees which has meant that the days of apple trees like Cox’s Orange Pippin which spend most of their time covered with mildew, scab and goodness knows what no longer need to be grown. There are plenty of modern apples (even Cox like apples) such as Fiesta which grow easily and are relatively disease free. There are modern varieties of gooseberry which are mildew resistant and easy to grow. A list of these varieties appears at the end.

So how is it done? I believe that this can be considered in four stages – good preparation of the ground in which fruit is to be planted, a careful selection of the varieties to grow, keeping the fruit healthy and an early identification of any pest or disease problems.

The ground in which fruit is to be planted must be build up in the soil and this can cause very poor or minimal growth. The selection of suitable varieties to grow is critical to growing organically – there is absolutely no point in growing varieties which are absolutely disease prone. The removal of weeds is important as they can starve the plants of nutrients and water and harbour pests and diseases. Remove all weeds in early spring and as soon as the soil begins to warm in May apply a mulch which can be of straw, chipped bark which will have the added benefit of conserving moisture.

Having decided which varieties to grow the next step is buying your fruit. The only way to ensure that you plant good disease free fruit plants or trees (particularly with soft fruit such as raspberries and strawberries) is to buy them from a reputable nursery. This is absolutely critical because if you plant a diseased or poor plant or tree it will probably never recover and not last very long let alone give you a good crop of fruit. Do not be tempted to buy a cheap offering from a car boot sale or your local greengrocer as economy of this nature will rarely pay dividends.

Perhaps the most important factor in growing fruit organically is the ability to keep it growing well and in a healthy condition. The removal of weeds is important as they can starve the plants of nutrients and water and harbour pests and diseases. Remove all weeds in early spring and as soon as the soil begins to warm in May apply a mulch which can be of newspaper, plastic sheet, straw or chipped bark which I grow all of my fruit organically yet can stage a collection in the Westminster Halls and receive a Gold Medal! In any case I have a young son who enjoys being in the garden and I want to be absolutely certain that everything in the garden is free from chemicals.

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end. As a matter of interest ignore those pundits who suggest that it is the best flavoured fruits that cannot be grown organically – many of the fruits that the gardener can grow well organically are of the very highest quality.

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Ensure that your fruit is kept well watered in dry weather; although established trees will need plenty of water to grow. Many ‘experts’ consider that plants and trees planted in well prepared soil should carry on growing well and producing good crops and to this end I apply a feed of blood, fish and bone at the start of each growing season. Incidentally, never overwater your fruit because this can in itself cause the plants to succumb to disease.

One of the most important assets that gardeners have to help them look after their plants and trees is nature itself but this will only be possible if it is left undamaged and allowed to reach a balance. There are many beneficial insects, such as ground beetles, lacewings, hoverflies and ladybirds that can keep pests under control but this will not be possible if they have been destroyed by winter washes and chemical sprays. Grow plants such as buddleia and catenularis which will attract hoverflies and lacewings into the garden and provide winter accommodation for Heliothis lacewings in the form of straw-filled boxes with openings in the front. Try and encourage birds, like tits in particular, to eat overwintering pests by hanging bird feeders amongst the fruit trees. Amazingly, earwigs, which are despised by most gardeners – possibly for their fearome look – can be very useful in that they will eat aphids, cooling moth eggs and the red spider mite. It is unlikely that these pests will cause little more than minimal damage, if any, and this seems a bargain when compared to the use of harmful chemicals.

As mentioned earlier growing organically is not easy and it is perhaps in the control of pests and diseases that this becomes most apparent. Nevertheless, the best form of control is easy – and that is to dissuade pests and prevent diseases by looking after your fruit and conditions that encourage them must be avoided. Garden hygiene is absolutely critical and it can really make the difference in helping to win the organic battle. Good garden hygiene is therefore a prerequisite as you will not change everything overnight. Do not be disheartened if your fruit suffers a little in your first growing season as it will take a year or two for the natural balance to occur; you will have to expect the odd blister on your fruit but this will not be harmful. Just remember that you fruit will contain no applied chemicals and the environment of your garden contains a healthy insect population and surely that will make the sacrifice well worthwhile.

This is the fifth in a series of articles that Gerry has agreed to write for our magazine on fruit growing and exhibiting, thank you. He has written for Garden News, The Garden magazine (RHS monthly publication for members) and Kitchen Garden magazine, amongst others. Gerry is Chairman of the RHS Fruit Group Committee, a member of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee, and a member of the RHS Fruit Trials Panel. He is currently designing a website for his garden landscaping business, a man of many talents.

### Diseases

Diseases often only affect parts of a fruit tree or bush and the spread of this disease can, in many cases, be controlled by cutting or removing out the affected parts. Dieback can affect many plants, particularly currants, gooseberries and plums which can cause whole branches to die. Cut back to healthy wood as soon as the disease is noticed and destroy the diseased wood. Shoots and branches can become damaged by weather, weight of fruit or birds sitting on them! As soon as the damage is noticed the shoot or branch should be cut back to undamaged wood to ensure that disease cannot enter – this is particularly important on the stone fruits.

Midew in apples and gooseberries usually affects blossom and young shoots – cut off the affected shoots and blossoms and destroy as soon as possible. Modest fruits and rotten fruits affect all fruit plants and trees and should be removed as soon as possible or the disease will quickly spread. Peach leaf curl can be prevented by covering the trunk with a layer of grease applied directly to the trunk itself. Some fruit pests can be controlled by the use of predators. The two spotted spider mite can be a troublesome pest of strawberries, raspberries and peaches can be controlled by the predatory mummicous persimilis and more may become available in the future to control other troublesome pests.

### Varieties Suitable for Organic Growing

In my experience the following are quality fruits that show a good resistance to diseases:

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Sowing Seeds for the future

Haworth Primary School Gardening Club. West Yorkshire
Steve Thorpe Northern Branch.

I started the gardening club at Haworth Primary School seven years ago because of all the damage that was being done in the village. Everyday when I went to work there were pots smashed outside peoples houses and plants thrown all over the park from the flower beds. People used to moan and complain but I thought this was no good we need to do something about it. I thought that if we educate the children at a young age how to grow plants, care for them and plant them in their own community they will not want to damage things when they become teenagers. This plan has worked far beyond our wildest dreams and we became the example for schools throughout the country to follow.

The magical thing about my work in developing the gardening club at Haworth Primary School that I did not realise at the time was that I was giving the children ownership of the project from the word go by for example getting the children actually making the wooden raised beds that they were going to plant the vegetables in. It was bringing life skills back into the curriculum like using a saw, hammering in nails, things that have been missing for so many years. I was introducing new projects every year which was not over facing the children but keeping them stimulated and interested. It got to the stage where I could not sleep because of the numbers of new ideas that were coming into my head. I was up half of the night writing them down. I was introducing new projects every year which was not over facing the children but keeping them stimulated and interested. It got to the stage where I could not sleep because of the numbers of new ideas that were coming into my head. I was up half of the night writing them down.

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It was also targeting so many children with behavioral problems and changing their whole outlook to school. It was giving them ownership of something and giving them something to focus on besides their school work. People with disabilities or special needs were getting exercise gardening. At the time the council was putting so much into their Be Active programme, not realizing that there were other alternatives besides sport. Gardening was giving them exercise and eating the vegetables was keeping them healthy.

We took our work out into the local community planting the fire station, railway station, police contact point and mangers at the cenotaph, twice a year. This gives the children pride in their community and teaches them respect for people who might one day risk their lives to save ours and in the case of the cenotaph, did. They take boxes of tomatoes and vegetables across to the medical practitioners for the doctors and staff with a note in thanking them for keeping us well. The children now know what a good feeling you get doing things for others without expecting things in return. They support the local flower and vegetable show by entering their produce and then distribute them to the OAP’s in the village. They lead the church in their harvest thanksgivings and the vicar then takes the produce to people who are housebound.

The whole project that we were carrying out at Haworth Primary School covered all five categories of the “every child matters” agenda that the government gives so much importance to.

The project that probably got the school on the map nationally was when we started taking our own grown produce into the school kitchen, getting the children to help the cook to prepare them and then eating them as part of school meals. I always believed that this was the missing link in Jamie Oliver’s brilliant work. It is alright trying to get the children to eat all these vegetables, but if they have actually grown them they are eager to see what they taste like.

This year I organized a flower and vegetable show for all schools in the Bradford area. The event was a great success and BBC, Look North’s Christa Ackroyd presented all the prizes to the winning schools. Haworth school now has a purpose built cooking room where every child does cooking as part of their curriculum work.

They have their own school here and take the eggs into the cooking room to use in their recipes. This work led to the school becoming a flagship school for the Food for Life partnership and myself being named National School Food Hero.

I work with such a wide range and age group of people. I have six year old children mixing concrete and then go to nursing homes where the residents have wooden raised beds to grow their own vegetables. This is the magical thing, it doesn’t matter how young, old, rich or poor you are you can still have just as much fun gardening and that’s what it is all about with me – having fun. Working safe, but not taking things too seriously. Once I stop having fun doing what I am doing and the children stop smiling and enjoying it I know it will be the time to walk away.

Christa Ackroyd, BBC News Presenter on Look North, came along to the Bradford Schools Flower and Vegetable Show at Haworth Primary School that was organised and sponsored by myself. We set up and developed the Look North vegetable garden at Christa’s house and the children helped her to maintain and develop it. Because of the friendship we have built up with her she presented all the trophies and awards at our show and then invited the 3 children to present Look North’s article on the Harrogate Flower and Vegetable Show at the Bradford Schools Flower and Vegetable Show at Haworth Primary School that was held the week after.

Steve.
The North of England Horticultural Society is a leading gardening charity supporting horticulture in the north and organisers of the Harrogate Flower Shows at the Great Yorkshire Showground. The society was inaugurated in the Lord Mayor’s Rooms in Leeds on 6th January 1911 and the NEHS celebrated this very special occasion with a ceremony at the Civic Hall, Leeds on the 6th January 2011, in the presence of the Deputy Lord Mayor of Leeds.

The celebration will exactly mark 100 years of the society, which supports over 50 horticultural charities and organisations and will be attended by members of the society, council and committee.

How it all began…

The North of England Horticultural Society was inaugurated in the Lord Mayor’s Rooms, in Leeds on the 6th January 1911. The purpose of the society was to organise horticulture in the north of England and to arrange first class shows where northern exhibits could be judged by standards suitable for the colder climates in the northern areas of the country. From 1927 onwards the Society concentrated its efforts on staging one main show each year, based in Harrogate. The shows were visited frequently by the Princess Royal who was its patron from 1948 – 1965.

Today the society is going from strength to strength, organising the nationally renowned Harrogate Spring and Autumn Flower Shows and promoting horticulture in the north. All profits from the shows are returned to the charity and its work.

The North of England Horticultural Society is very proud to have HRH The Prince of Wales as their patron and many of the features of the 2011 centenary shows will reflect his interest in the society and his other charitable work.

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Celebrating 100 years of the North of England Horticultural Society 1911 – 2011

The North of England Horticultural Society is a leading gardening charity supporting horticulture in the north and organisers of the Harrogate Flower Shows at the Great Yorkshire Showground. The society was inaugurated in the Lord Mayor’s Rooms in Leeds on 6th January 1911 and the NEHS celebrated this very special occasion with a ceremony at the Civic Hall, Leeds on the 6th January 2011, in the presence of the Deputy Lord Mayor of Leeds.

The celebration will exactly mark 100 years of the society, which supports over 50 horticultural charities and organisations and will be attended by members of the society, council and committee.

How it all began…

The North of England Horticultural Society was inaugurated in the Lord Mayor’s Rooms, in Leeds on the 6th January 1911. The purpose of the society was to organise horticulture in the north of England and to arrange first class shows where northern exhibits could be judged by standards suitable for the colder climates in the northern areas of the country. From 1927 onwards the Society concentrated its efforts on staging one main show each year, based in Harrogate. The shows were visited frequently by the Princess Royal who was its patron from 1948 – 1965.

Today the society is going from strength to strength, organising the nationally renowned Harrogate Spring and Autumn Flower Shows and promoting horticulture in the north. All profits from the shows are returned to the charity and its work.

The North of England Horticultural Society is very proud to have HRH The Prince of Wales as their patron and many of the features of the 2011 centenary shows will reflect his interest in the society and his other charitable work.

For all sponsorship and advertising enquiries contact Daniella at Crest Publications Ltd
Tel: 01604 670820 or email: daniella@crestpublications.com
Raised Bed and No Dig Gardening

Michael Poultney, Midland Branch.

Following on from my previous article on composting, I felt your readers might be interested in my methods for raised beds & no dig cultivation. This is also through trial & error over the past 20 odd years. On my plot now I’m all raised beds, and since I’ve been on there, people have seen that I get better produce with my methods, and from that, three quarters of the plots on our site now have raised beds!

Making raised beds; when I made mine 20 odd years ago I used any timber I could get hold of, now it’s easier in the sense that reclaimed scaffolding planks are available at a reasonable price, (health & safety if a scaffolding plank has slight damage in any way, its thrown out! One of the only good things I can think of to come out of health & safety, for us gardeners). These will last a good few years, especially if covered in black & white plastic, I have had plastic on my beds now for over 15 years with no deterioration.

My own beds are 26 ft long (width of my plot) by 4 ft wide. My depths vary from 12” to 18” because my plot now for over 15 years with no deterioration.

Gardening and food lovers turned out in their thousands at the weekend for the UK’s first ever national event for grow your own fruit and vegetables, The Edible Garden Show. Crowds were queuing to get in before the doors opened on Saturday and following the launch day described as an “amazing success” by Jim Place MP, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food.

Celebrity gardeners and chefs added their praise for the show that has taken gardening world by storm. TV gardening expert Charlie Dimmock said he had a “fabulous day” and added “The show was thronged with visitors and it was brilliant browsing around the stands at everything the budding fruit and vegetable gardener could possibly require.”

TV presenter James Wong, the host of BBC’s Grow Your Own Drugs, declared: “Finally, a dedicated event just for grow your own. So exciting to see everything you could ever need under one roof including specialist independent stores too! The only down side I think I’ve maxed my credit cards already!”

Rachel Green, award-winning TV chef who hosted the show’s cookery stage supported by the WI, said: “I am absolutely bowled over by the amount of people here. I can’t believe how busy it is! I want us to have an event like this a big exhibition half a couple of weeks ago but The Edible Garden Show has really attracted masses of people who really are interested in food and gardening, watching us people watching my food demonstrations who are avid foodies and gardeners. I’ve been getting really good feedback!”

The chef, who has cooked for Prince Charles and hosted us for tea in the grounds, added: “I think the diversity of the stands is incredibly. The show is crammed full of imaginative ideas, for everyone.”

Mike Price, who officially opened the event at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, on Friday, March 16, with colourful Easter eggs and flowers, was highly impressed by the wide range of educational grow your own projects targeted at children through to adults, saying: “I don’t necessarily need a garden to grow fruit and vegetables. He said: “I’ve seen lots of clever stuff on how to grow your own in rainwater gutters, window boxes and plant pots – all very clever ways of growing fruit and vegetables”.

The show also attracted the hugely popular BBC Radio 4 programme Gardening Questions from Radio 4’s Gardening Programme, Garden Time which was recorded from Stoneleigh on the opening day with Eric Rothwell and the GO7 panel - more on that on the larger post compared to the main event. The show was broadcast on Monday, Tuesday and Saturday, March 27.

The Edible Garden Show makes a groundbreaking change in the public’s perception of food production and eating habits. Its arrival has been welcomed by experienced growers, budding kitchen gardeners and families keen to join the sustainable grow your own movement sweeping the country.

Many of the people attending the inaugural show and spokesman for the organiser Paul Smith, Managing Director of public relations agency Paul Smith Associates who was responsible for developing the concept for the show that has been delighted by the response from the public to our first show. Exhibitors have been reporting a steady trade since and over the last three days. Many of them had to send out for fresh stock at the end of the opening day.

“We have managed to bring together a remarkable mixture of celebrity gardeners, chefs, experts and innovative exhibitors to satisfy the enormous appetite for home-grown produce and healthy eating.

“One of the most encouraging aspects was the wide diversity of our audience and the sheer volume of visitors we attracted to our opening show. Stoneleigh Park has told us it was one of the most successful launch shows for years with over 10,000 paying customers and an overall attendance of nearly 11,000 people. Our visitors ranged from toddlers to teenagers and young families to senior citizens. The Edible Garden Show is a fun-packed family event ideal for all those who are interested in food and gardening.

The National Vegetable Society took a stand 3m x 2m, and was manned over the weekend by David Allison, David Thornton, Simon Smith, Barry Newman, Adrian Read, Michael Poultney and Pippa Greenwood.

As members will know we ran a competition in the January edition of Simply Vegetables. There were two winners. Winners names elsewhere in this issue. I hope the competition was successful. We had a good and enjoyable week-end, recruited 16 new members to the NVS, answered a bucket load of questions on growing vegetables, and hopefully, raised the profile of the NVS.

The organisation was delighted with the response, and have already booked the venue for next years event to be held on 18th to 20th March 2012. A number of exhibitors have booked space for next years event.

Whilst some of the exhibitors stand, seems like a bit “ twee”, and some of the products a bit “gimmicky”, there was plenty to see, and what impressed me was that the entire NVS were fully prepared to give all day, every day, without fail.

For more information pictures of the event log onto; simplyvegetables.co.uk
Stump Carrots for Exhibition

Ian Simpson, Scottish Branch.

Up until three seasons ago, I had always grown my stump carrots in raised beds outside. Although the results using this set up were good enough to win at local shows, I was a long way off challenging any of the top growers exhibiting at Branch or National level. In 2008 I therefore decided to grow stump carrots in the Polytunnel alongside my long carrots and parsnips. I set out in early January to make a new raised bed using treated recycled wood. The completed structure measured 91” long x 34” wide x 26” high and was finished off by lining the inside of the raised bed with a damp proof course material to help prolong the lifespan of the wood. The raised bed was then filled with the contents of my old parsnip barrels that I had used for the last 6 years giving good quality parsnips. The majority of the content of these barrels was concreting sand mixed with my parsnip growing mix accumulated over 6 years.

Bed Sterilising

At the end of January I sterilise the bed using Jeyes Fluid at a ratio of 1 tablespoonful to 2 gallons of water. A bed of this size will need approximately 12 gallons of this solution to sterilise the bed satisfactorily. After sterilisation has been completed leave for 2 to 3 weeks during which time the sand in the bed will have settled down a bit. To produce the boreholes, I use a 2¾” diameter x 24” long plastic drainpipe with a piece of copper pipe running through one end to act as a handle. This plastic collar not only assists in the watering of the plants with white fleece suspended over the bed to keep them growing steadily in an undisturbed environment.

Borehole Preparation

In my raised bed, I space out the borehole positions 7” x 7” each way resulting in a 5 x 12 matrix of boreholes i.e. 60 positions. To fill the empty borehole without any concerting sand falling in, I insert a funnel to guide the growing medium, I gently firm down the surface with a plastic handle touches the surface of the sand. By grabbing the copper pipe, carefully withdraw the plastic drainpipe from the sand, leaving a clean borehole. To fill the borehole, I use a 2¾” diameter x 24” long plastic drainpipe with a piece of copper pipe running through one end to act as a handle. Once the borehole has been filled with the growing medium into the borehole. Once the borehole has been filled with the growing medium, I gently firm down the surface with a plastic lid and then move on to the next borehole. I then place a 4” diameter x 3” tall plastic collar around each borehole and gently push in by approximately 1”. This plastic collar not only assists in the watering of the carrot once it grows but also helps if you have to add more peat if the carrot raises & exposes its shoulders during the growing season.

When sowing the stump carrot seed, I make a ½” diameter x ½” deep indentation in the middle of the borehole, place 3 seeds into this and cover over with the same growing medium. After sowing the seed, I then place a 4” diameter x 3” tall plastic collar around each borehole and gently push in by approximately 1”. When seed sowing has been completed, I then give the bed a light watering of tepid water using a fine rose sufficient enough to moisten the top surface of the bed, but not too wet. I’ll then cover the bed over with white fleece to assist germination which should take approximately 14 days. During the period between sowing and germination, always ensure that the top of the bed is kept moist otherwise germination may not be successful and you could lose precious time (remember the 20 to 22 weeks timeframe). For this years National Championships in Wales (27th, 28th, 29th August) I will sow my Sweet Candle on the 26th March

Thinning

After approximately 5 weeks after sowing, the young plants will be ready for thinning out. In order to handle the plants as little as possible I try to do only 1 thinning. I always thin by selecting the strongest plant and gently remove the weaker 2 plants using my index finger and thumb. Once I have thinned out, I immediately spray all the remaining plants with Garlic Barrier to deter the Carrot Fly. After thinning out & spraying, I cover over the young plants with white fleece suspended over the bed to keep them growing steadily in an undisturbed environment.

Seed Sowing

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Growing On

During the next few weeks, keep a close eye on the plant’s development, watering as and when required to keep the top surface of the bed moist. After about 9 weeks from sowing, the plants foliage will be approximately 16” high and strong enough to withstand any slight breeze that may come through the Polytunnel. At this stage, the fleece is removed and the plants are given another spray of Garlic Bacter. Regularly monitor the plant’s progress remembering to keep the top of the bed moist at all times.

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Growing On

During the next few weeks, keep a close eye on the plant’s development, watering as and when required to keep the top surface of the bed moist. After about 9 weeks from sowing, the plants foliage will be approximately 16” high and strong enough to withstand any slight breeze that may come through the Polytunnel. At this stage, the fleece is removed and the plants are given another spray of Garlic Bacter. Regularly monitor the plant’s progress remembering to keep the top of the bed moist at all times. Also
keep an eye out for Aprilish attack and if detected, give the plants a spray of Bug Clear at the stated dose. All 4 sides of the raised bed and its “top” are enclosed with wire mesh set up on a frame on top of the raised bed. In addition to keeping peoples hands off my plants (as I grow in a Polytunnel open to the public), the mesh also acts as a support for the plants foliage as it grows and helps prevent the foliage from drooping after watering.

Lifting/Selection
After 20 to 22 weeks from sow date, the foliage will have reached as high as 30” and will be ready for lifting.

Select the carrots you are going to lift by gently pulling back the growing medium from the shoulders of the carrot and match up the shoulders that are of similar size. Once selected, cut the foliage to approximately 6” high and using both hands, grab the foliage and gently pull until the carrot is lifted clear of the borehole.

Immediately after lifting, wash the carrot with a very soft sponge in a barrel of water inside the Polytunnel. Once washed, place each carrot on a damp towel, placed on a bench and cover over with another damp towel. Repeat this process until you have the correct amount of carrots required for the class you are entering plus a couple of spares.

After I return home from the Polytunnel I lay the carrots on a black cloth on the Kitchen table, make my final selection and then remove all the fine root hairs that may still be attached.

After removing the fine root hairs, I wrap each carrot in damp kitchen towel tissue, then some bubble wrap and transport them in a cardboard box to the show venue.

When staging at the show, trim the foliage to 3”, place the Carrots carefully on the bench and cover with very damp kitchen towel tissue to keep them fresh for judging time.

During the last 3 seasons I have used the above growing technique with very favourable results (2 x 1st and a 3rd at the National Championships).

Hopefully, if you follow these simple steps, you will end up with a set of carrots to be proud of with every chance of winning at the highest level.

Good growing to you all and I’ll look forward to seeing you in Langollen.

Ian Simpson.

Tough Winter in the Vegetable Garden
John Murrell, Southern Branch

I must apologise to anyone living north of the Watford Gap for using the word tough because in Sussex we have had things relatively easy. However, our crop was closed twice for a few days in December, and the temperature was well into negative region for several nights; we are not accustomed to such things.

The usual winter standbys suffered not at all: leeks and parsnips, rut the fine “eccentrics” that I grow for fun. Other root vegetables such as beetroot, celeriac and winter radishes I cannot grow main crop carrots because of the root fly) were taken up in November to store in the shed.

Brussel sprouts suffered only minor frost damage and look as though they will even produce a few “tops” in early spring. Most of the winter cabbages gave a poor crop because they failed to heart up in the dry autumn, and some were badly frosted at the lowest temperatures and rotted when the snow came; the exception were the red cabbages that lost some outer leaves, but retained decent hearts.

All the vegetables that should over winter for a spring or early summer crop have survived, its little realised. The leek crops do not look very healthy at the time of writing (January); about a third has disappeared and the remainder have not moved at all since they were planted out in October. This spring broccoli look in good condition, both sprouting and hearting. A surprise to me was a short row of Kohlrabi which was sown in early September for an autumn crop. They failed to mature then but look as though they will produce an early spring crop; did I not expect them to be so frost hardy. All the cabbage family on my plot have to be netted otherwise the pigeons will destroy them, although pigeons do not seem to be so much trouble this year because our local farmer has planted a lot of oil-seed rape which is a good food source.

Over-wintered broad beans are in exceptional condition. I sowed these at the beginning of November and they are now sturdy and upright. The usual trouble with this crop is that they get too leggy if the weather is warm and then suffer wind damage. This year although they were buried twice under six inches of snow they look marvellous. My over-wintered onions (from sets planted in October) are also looking good with very few missing. I will give these a bit of Growmore when they start to move forward.

Lastly I am surprised by some of my winter salad crops. The lettuce that will mature in early spring (mainly Arctic King) are standing well although crops have certainly had a few. I grow Winter Density in a cold frame and they produce a few leaves right through the winter. My main winter salads are endives and chicories. The former suffered frost damage even though I gave them a bit of fleece protection, but the radicchio chicory stood well, and even if the outer leaves suffered, rotted a bit the inner hearts were in excellent condition. The hardest winter salad is teteletto lettuce (com salat), which can survive any low temperature. I plant this broadcast from August to October and you will always have some green leaves until it runs to seed in early April.

Last year apple and plum crop was bough breaking and I hope for the same this year as the buds develop very well in cold weather. The strawberries also look in excellent shape.

John Murrell

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GROWING GIANT VEGETABLES

**Peter Glazebrook, Midland Branch.**

**GROWING HEAVY ONIONS (or at least trying to)**

**Introduction**

My interest started in the late 80’s and with varying success has continued until the present day. During this time the trimmed (specification for the World Record) onion weight has increased from 6lb 14.5oz in 1985 to 16lb 8oz in 2005, (almost 10lb in 20 years) if we are able to continue at this rate a 20lb onion is not far away?

**Brief History**

My first real improvement came about after being able to visit Vin Throup’s garden in June 1990. It was clear that I needed larger plants earlier in the season (easier said than done). However won Harrogate in 1991 with 10lb 9.5oz. I was able to keep in touch with winners and current world record until Mel Ednie shattered this in 1995 lifting the record almost 25%. I think he was helped by his friend Bill Rodger who is well known for large onions. Being able to visit his garden soon afterwards it was clear that his growing was quite sophisticated using heating, lighting, forced ventilation etc. He felt that further benefit was obtained by the longer days being further North in Scotland and cooler coastal climate.

Billy Lamb growing greenhouse

No one came anywhere near this record for many years and I struggled to grow more than 11lb+ Billy Lamb emerged as the grower to beat particularly at Ashington which was for an ‘as grown’ onion, he was able to keep a heavy green top fresh until this late show, again perhaps due to cooler NE coastal location.

I was fortunate to visit Billy’s allotment garden on three occasions during this period usually in July and was amazed at how large healthy and fresh his onions were, without any apparent heating or lighting once planted out in his home made, polythene covered, growing greenhouse.

He had clearly been continually selecting/improving and saving his own seed and finally made it available to others for the 2005 season. Sadly Billy has since died. John Sifford from near Birmingham shot to the top in this year setting the current world record of 16lb 8oz. I had seen at the Midland Pot Leek show for years and knew John as a good onion grower and competitor, but had not been able to visit his garden until a week before Harrogate and the new W/R. Like Mel, John’s growing methods were quite sophisticated using lighting, heating, forced ventilation in his greenhouse and growing area, which were raised beds inside a high homestead, large plastic/polythene covered structure, with almost fully removable sides.

In one area his own strain onions and in the other larger ones of the Lamb strain. What appeared to be the easiest was growing through black&white polythene in existing soil enriched, so I was told by dried bagged moss from a garden centre and a product called ‘Rootblast’. (2.1 granular slow release) was forked into the planting hole.

Anyway it worked, although the foliage of the onions had almost given up.

John died the following spring so we will never know if he could have repeated these weights.

Every one including myself expected him to win Ashington, but this was not to be, instead it was won by Albert Atwell with a fresh topped bulb weighing 16lb 8.5oz as grown.

Albert lives in the East Midlands in the next county to me, so again I was fortunate to be able to visit the week after. Lighting/heating in his greenhouse at home but onions grown in large tunnel on his allotment. Raised bed with fresh imported topsoil, made into a high Innes type mix. Planting early with heating provided by propane gas.

Albert is still keen to grow a larger onion but has been set back by vandals setting fire to his tunnel and destroying his plants during a recent summer. Now established on a more secure site, so it will be interesting to see the results.

There was a common factor in their success, independently they had both obtained from the NE, Lamb early sow (estimated early Oct) plants in Nov. with three true leaves.

**My Growing Method**

The World Record now being held in the Midlands proved that location was not the restricting factor I had supposed, so it gave me fresh heart to try again seriously, eventually in 2008, 2009 and 2010 I was able to win Harrogate – but still well below the W/R.

**Propagation**

Wanting 30 onions to plant out I will sow at least 100 seeds in small seed trays of F2S, placed in a propagator Oct/Nov. Once they shoot to appear all moved under a bank of fluorescent lights which are on 24hrs every day. These are set in a homemade growth cabinet in the garage. Removed from propagator and potted as necessary they will stay there for 5.5 – 6wks. By which time the best will be in 5” pots of Lovington M3 compost with 5 leaves supported upright by split canes and clips.

**Greenhouse**

They are now moved into a heated greenhouse under high pressure sodium supplementary light, running for 8hrs during the day. Trying to maintain space heating at 8-10°C not easy with the severe frosts last winter. Standing on a heat mat so have to be careful that base roots are not drying out.

Potting on now into M3 John Inness No3 compost, by mid Jan, into 9ltr with more JI3 compost. Only the best are potted on, weaker plants discarded.

While in the greenhouse the light has been extended 15mins every 2wks. to make the plants think they are growing on into spring.

I gave the onions increased CO2 levels last year by I gave the onions increased CO2 levels last year by running a propane heater at the recommended levels of 1000-1500ppm during the day. Later in the winter on sunny days air changes occur and this level is not maintained, so no point in running the gas. Space heating is by electric fan heater.

**Growing Area**

I have been growing in two 10ft x 1.9ft tunnels each with 10 homemade bottomless barrels. The compost in these was emptied outside in Oct. to allow winter rains to flush it through. I then took in Late Feb and fort. added as recommended before refilling barrels.

Last year I erected a third small tunnel inside an existing larger redundant tunnel. This allowed me to prepare for planting earlier in what had been the coldest winter weather for years. The new tunnel has a solid paving slab floor and large 155ltr. Black pots used in lieu of my barrels.

The aim was to provide a clinically clean uncontaminated environment. None of these pots were filled with my own J3 mix using new共产党员 soil and one as a benchmark filled with 6/25ltr bags of commercial John’s Space heating and forced ventilation by electric. All my tunnels have extra double doors back and front for manual ventilation in the late spring and the new one was fitted with automatic roof opening doors. I form a special tunnel frame inside an outward opening doors. I form a special tunnel frame inside an outward opening doors.

**Planting out and growing on**

Planted mid Feb into pots, lightly watering in and covering soil surface with black and white polythene. Moved intervals. Normal levels are 300ppm and plants benefit with levels of 1000-1500ppm during the day.
Early in the Summer Icored soil samples out of four of my pots filled with my own J3 mix and sent them away for a standard analysis, to my surprise they came back with a pH of 7.8, I had a retest done but this was still 7.4 – far to high 6.5 – 7.0 is the aim.  

Little I could do about it except learn the lesson of having a soil test done of any new soil before starting.

Directing
By mid August many of the onions had suffered from the heat and were finishing, however one near the door, which had been more shaded perhaps, was clearly the freshest and still growing.

Problems
Started using predator’s end of April for Thrip & Spider into my main insect problems) they worked o.k. until the end of the hot spell when I found some onions being attacked by Spitter mites, had to revert to spraying!

Lost one bulb with Botrytis from my other little bulbing and this starts around the end of March, be fully vented. Day length initiates bulbing until May.

Onions must not be overwatered.
Watering each pot weekly with 3-5ltr.
Tremendous growth by early June, watering each pot weekly with 3ltrs.

Supported foliage throughout the growing season.

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“I took time to decide which Tunnel to buy & I’m sure I’ve got the best!” Cindy Carlton, Bicester, Haygrove Customer

Haygrove Customers Comments

“Commercial technology has reached the ordinary gardener, well done it’s a great product!”
Anthony Day, Faversham

“Efficient, hard working and friendly, can’t fault the staff or the product!”
Abbey Hay Allotments

“Completed with minimum hassle, very pleased with end result”
C Mc Andrew, Scottish Highlands

“My Haygrove Tunnel has regularly had 8ins of snow on it over the winter with no detrimental effect”
Caroline Munro, Malpas

Many polytunnel owners seem to be starting on a pre-season clean. It’s always a good idea at this time of year to hose off your tunnel cover and clean with a mild detergent if needed to maximise light penetration. Haygrove tunnels reduce pest activity (as the venting system retains a pest free growing environment). However, for those of you who are looking to kill pests do consider the effect of fumigants on your polytunnel cover. Sulphur based ‘bombs’ for example are not advisable inside plastic tunnels as the sulphur can easily attack the UV light diffusing properties of covers. It seems that many growers are busy digging in compost and well rotted farm yard manure into seed beds this month. For those considering raised beds this year there are a number of different layouts which we know are working well for Haygrove Customers.

Smaller Polytunnels
With the Haygrove steep sided design, a raised bed along the back wall works well whilst still leaving plenty of space for access and a potting table. Layout shown in our show tunnel from last year’s Malvern Show. Medium Sized (3m or 10’ wide) Polytunnels
Most growers lay a path down the middle of our 3m wide tunnels allowing at least 1m wide raised beds to fit in either side. Again, the Haygrove tall sided design there is still plenty of height at the tunnel sides for taller crops such as beans.

Larger Tunnels
Many growers who have our larger tunnel width (4m / 13’ wide) are putting a raised bed in the centre; if you think of a U shape, the raised bed fills the centre of the U. There is still plenty of room to work around the bed without stooping over.
For regular hints, tips and customer feedback take a look at our blog Polytunneltalk.co.uk

To find out more about Haygrove Garden Tunnels please call our local rate number, click on our web site or complete the coupon opposite and post to us at the address below.

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w w w . g a r d e n t u n n e l s . c o . u k

NVS Spring 2011
“...most of the ‘regulars’ were present, but there was a large number of new faces all keen to improve their gardening expertise.”

After an excellent dinner, (the Royal Victoria Hotel look a long time coming) the first speaker of the evening was James Claxton from Tozers seed company.

James has worked with Tozer for thirteen years, he normally attend this weekend, it is always amazing to see the variety of vegetables on display.

After an interesting question and answer session it was off to the bar for a relaxing pint, and a chance to “question” one or two of the top exhibitors who normally attend this weekend, it is always amazing to see the variety of vegetables on display.

The next speaker of the evening was Barry Newman, on the topic of the modern kitchen garden. Barry is a well-reputed magazine-ed, and also the part they have played in the emergence of chloroplasts.

Our next speaker after morning coffee was Dr. Peter Tozer for thirteen years, he normally attend this weekend, it is always amazing to see the variety of vegetables on display.

He was formally trained in horticulture at Pershore, especially Lucrezia (1480–1519) reputedly hosted wild parties and with a hollow ring of chalk and limestone, the common oleander, aconite, the scopolamine present in bracken and kale, and the resulting coloured leaves will emerge.

He also showed some great slides of his technique on staking cucurbita, his favourite varieties being Venus and Ambassador.

Tozer’s are the first company to produce the male parent material, the dangers of high voltage, high temperature and residual voltage.

B政权 autumn was really effective, and the butterflies are added. 2oz. Lime, 2oz. Calculated seaweed, 1 oz. phosphate, and 1 oz. of potash. The bed is watered regularly during the season, an occasional spray with bug-clear to kill aphids etc., no feeding is carried out at all during the season.

When it comes to lifting, Ian matches up the shoulders for uniformity, they are pulled dry, washed in water with a soft sponge and transported to the show in damp clothes, secured in a sturdy box. An excellent clear account of his techniques, all beautifully illustrated with Fiona’s expertise in power-point. (Please see a superb more detailed article on Ian’s method for growing sump carrots can be found here in this magazine-ed).

He emphasised that permanent paths are a great hiding place for slugs, he much preferred using woodchip or bark on flexible paths.

Mixed planting throughout the beds, with flowers and vegetables is very popular and provides a colourful spectacle.

Barry is very keen on raised beds, and of course he had an excellent article on concrete beds in an earlier magazine.

He also showed some great slides of his technique on staking cucurbita, his favourite varieties being Venus and Ambassador.

Our next speaker after morning coffee was Dr. Peter Cannon, he is a retired consultant physician, specialising in acute general medicine, but has a lifelong interest in the contribution that plants have to medicine, and is the first to have played in the darker role in man’s history.

Crippen, (1862–1910) who poisoned his wife Cora with cyanide, and was the first to be captured thanks to the introduction of wireless communication. I have been informed that it was recorded that one of the first strikes (by pyramid builders) occurred. Seemingly they were deprived of garlic and downed tools !

The technique for pulling the root, was to tie your dog on a leash like a dog, and as your dog tried to chase you it pulled up the root and suffered the screaming curse !

Peter gave us a very interesting account of Harvey Crippen, (1882–1910) who poisoned his wife Cora with heroin and was the first criminal to be captured thanks to the introduction of wireless communication. I have been informed that it was recorded that one of the first strikes (by pyramid builders) occurred. Seemingly they were deprived of garlic and downed tools !

Crippen, (1862–1910) who poisoned his wife Cora with cyanide, and was the first to be captured thanks to the introduction of wireless communication. I have been informed that it was recorded that one of the first strikes (by pyramid builders) occurred. Seemingly they were deprived of garlic and downed tools !

Andrew started his talk, emphasising the safety aspects of introducing lighting into a greenhouse, the dangers of high voltage, high temperature and residual voltage.

TV’s and computers. He has been growing for the show bench for over thirty years with excellent success at all levels of showings, including national wins with stump carrots.

Ian’s best carrots come from a raised bed situated inside his polytunnel, the bed is filled with concrete sand, and during January the bed is sterilised with diluted jeyes fluid (1 Tablespoon per 2 gallon water).

Towards the end of March, the holes are made with a 2.4” pipe (6.77” diam.). The pipe is pushed in the full length, and the holes are made at 7” centres.

The mixture is made up as follows, 4gal. Peat, 1gal. Soil, 1gal. Blower sand, and 1gal. of fine grade vermiculite. All the ingredients go through a fine riddle, and the hortitex are added. 2oz. Lime, 2oz. Calculated seaweed, 1 oz. phosphate, and 1 oz. of potash. The bed is watered regularly during the season, an occasional spray with bug-clear to kill aphids etc., no feeding is carried out at all during the season.

When it comes to lifting, Ian matches up the shoulders for uniformity, they are pulled dry, washed in water with a soft sponge and transported to the show in damp clothes, secured in a sturdy box. An excellent clear account of his techniques, all beautifully illustrated with Fiona’s expertise in power-point. (Please see a superb more detailed article on Ian’s method for growing sump carrots can be found here in this magazine-ed).

He also mentioned the cost aspect, he reckoned that 1 amp will cost 25p (25 cents) per kilowatt hour. (to work out amps divide watts by volts).

Medwyns Vegetable Masterclass 2010

Jim Williams FNVS Chairman Scottish Branch.

Mid November(12th) and its time for my annual visit to Llangurig in North Wales. Surprisingly this is Medwyns fourteenth vegetable masterclass weekend. I have managed to attend most of these hunts, whether I was a member of the audience or speaker, it is a great way to keep up to date with growing techniques, new innovations, new varieties, and of course it is a super social weekend (as organiser of the Scottish branch seminar, it is also a great way of assessing and contacting new speakers!) This year I was very fortunate that Ian Simpson and Fiona were guest speakers, and they very kindly gave me a lift down with Fiona doing all the driving. We arrived just before dinner on the Friday evening, and as usual Medwyn had a full house, most of the “regulars” were present, but there was a large number of new faces all keen to learn a little about vegetables.
He explained the wavelength principle of light (650 nm red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, with the wavelength measuring about 450 at the blue end and 750 at the red end.

Essentially plants need two types of light, red, light for inducing flowering and blue light for overall growth, and most plants respond well to a mixture of colours (e sun light).

He pointed out that plants do need a period of darkness in order to give off oxygen, and even though many growers give 24 hour light he thought that 16 hours was probably the optimum.

LUMENS is measured in the amount of light emitted by a source, and obviously the more lumens the better. A normal fluorescent tube emits about 1500 lumens, the t5 system (4 tubes) has about 5000, high pressure sodium, mercury and metal halide lamps have the highest lumens approx. 95000 lumens. These latter systems have a slight disadvantage, in that they require ballast and relay boxes which add considerably to the cost, and they also produce a great deal of heat.

One other important aspect to consider is, ROOT CANDLES, this is a measure of the amount of light striking a surface, and is very relevant to the height of your light source above your plants. Fluorescent tubes can be positioned directly above boxes etc. without any risk of scorching, whereas mercury lamps would have to be positioned well above the foliage.

The type of shade used with each type of lamp is also important, with dimpled metal shades being the best, as they disperse the light most efficiently and evenly.

Andrew had lots of questions at the end of his talk, "highlighting" the tremendous interest in this subject. I have invested in a T5 system, and perhaps I can give a report at the end of the season.

Future lighting systems include sulphur plasma (sunshine tubes) and LED. I know Gareth Cameron in Cumbria is trying out LED, and again we may have an assessment of this new system.

The two remaining talks of the weekend were by John Bebbington, and Peter Glazebrook, but I am afraid I have run out of space and time and I will cover them in a later edition.

John Williams Chairman Scottish Branch.

"I have invested in a T5 system, and perhaps I can give a report at the end of the season"
The Walk-In Wonderwall®

**Netted Brassica / vegetable Tunnel**

The Walk-In Wonderwall provides a wall against the elements and garden pests. While, at the same time allowing rain and sunlight to enter. The Walk-in Wonderwall is designed for the garden / allotment growers budget and is ideal for the organic grower. After fighting a losing battle year after year against pigeons, cabbage white butterfly and other garden pests, we realised that we needed something that could both eradicate these problems and also be affordable and hard wearing.

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**Scottish Branch Newsletter**

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT APRIL 2011**

Since my last report, the major events that have occurred are the judge’s exam, our seminar, and two trips to Preston for N.E.C. meetings.

As only the Southern Branch conducted an exam this year the marking was relatively easy, and not as time consuming as usual.

Ivor Mace will probably be very busy at this moment preparing this years theory paper, how is a great believer in using the dark winter days and nights for paper work as he finds that once the growing season begins he is fully occupied.

The N.E.C. meetings are very time consuming, lots of preparation and homework before hand, one or possibly two days travelling, and I can assure you that there is even more work to conduct after the meeting.

At the October session we decided to omit the January meeting (cost saving) and try to conduct all business by e-mail, after the first month I found that I was answering e-mails every day (sometimes twice a day), I decided not to check my incoming mail until the evening, as I was wasting too much time in the morning when I should have been busy in the greenhouse) and eventually our national secretary had to draw the line and call a meeting in January.

The N.E.C. is always open to criticism but I can assure all our members that the people representing you at Preston are hard working, very conscientious, they give up their own time freely, without payment, and some of the posts such as editor or membership registrar are almost full time jobs.

Our seminar (held last November) is proving to grow in popularity, with just over one hundred members attending. The facilities at the Penland Science Park are first class, with lovely seating areas, canteen and purpose built lecture theatre.

Apart from Scottish branch members from all over Scotland it was very good to see Gardeneer, Alphonson and Ron Jackson from Cumbria, and also Simon Smith from Leicester.

It is obviously very important to have expert speakers to attract members, and on this occasion we had three of the best.

Sheena Plumbs travelled all the way from Essex, and gave a marvellous and very informative talk on show potatoes. On the Friday night she also washed 14 plates of potatoes (left over), which would have won at any show to show us the difference between varieties.

Richard Cameron from Omex, gave a very good insight into all the various products produced by his company. These ranged from biorex soil fertility improvers, biopests such as kelpmeal, health promoters green cross, vigga, and foliar supreme, green pesticides like feromone, granulax and slugo, and a very interesting adjuvant called SW7 which greatly improved the use of most insecticides.

Ian Simpson after missing his talk on stump carrots last year ( Fiona ably deputising) was called on again, this time to explain how to grow exhibition peas. Ian has a tremendous record in winning pea classes at branch and national level, and after seeing all the work and detail he puts into it, I am not surprised.

Thanks to Arthur Provan over 55 members received their orders of canes, polythene, polydacs and other useful garden products, we also had a very busy table selling leaf leek plants, seed potatoes, home saved seed of peas, beans, onions, carrots and parsley. Other active members are selling raffle tickets and this proves to be a very good day for branch fund raising.

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**GARDEN VISIT – SUNDAY 3rd JULY 2011**

This year’s visit, is to the Beechgrove Garden in Aberdeen (73 Crown street, AB11 6DX). We will meet at the garden at 11.00hrs, and Jim McVie has very kindly given us a visit. We will have lunch at the Four Mile House restaurant, Old Skene Road, Kingswells, AB51 0QG, for 12:30hrs.

Lunch has been booked at the Four Mile House restaurant, Old Skene Road, Kingswells, AB51 0QG, for 12:30hrs. Later in the afternoon, Alastair Gray has kindly agreed to a visit to his own garden at 24 North Lochs Road, Brechin, DD9 6LL.

If you intend joining us, please contact Jim Williams to arrange numbers for catering.

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**D.A. REPORT**

The Dundee & East of Scotland D.A. held its AGM in Old Craigie Road Allotment Society Hall on Thursday 1st February 2011. At 19.30hrs.

Fifteen members were present, with three apologies. The chairman welcomed the members and opened the meeting by saying tribute to Willie Eddie who sadly passed away two days earlier, he had been ill for some months. Willie was a well known grower and also an NVS judge, and served on the Scottish Branch Committee, and until his health deteriorated he seldom missed a meeting.

The office bearers for the 2011 to 2012 session were duly elected as follows:

Chairman – Leslie Crab RNVS
Vice Chairman – Len Jasson RNVS
Secretary – Mrs. Elizabeth Chambers
Treasurer – Mrs. Hettie Jamieson
The treasurer gave a very comprehensive report on the finances of the association, and showed that the bank balance is quite healthy.

The chairman thanked all the members for the hard work that was put in during the last year and made the National Championships held in Dundee 2010 such a success.

The chairman also thanked Mrs. Vanda Wheats who had given up the position of secretary due to ill health.

The meeting closed at 20.15 with a vote of thanks to the chair.

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**Scottish Branch**

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**Obituary**

**WILLIAM ANDREW EDDIE 1936 – 2011**

Sadly I have to report the death of Willie Eddie from Brechin, Willie had been suffering from an inoperable brain tumour since last October and passed away at the end of January.

Willie was born and raised in the Brechin area, and there was a very large turnout for his funeral. He was also a well known face in the vegetable growing scene, and he was a real character in the Scottish Branch committee, on which he had served for many years.

He was an excellent grower who took great pride in his garden and many’s the time Willie and Mary hosted visits from the Branch annual garden visit.

Willie had a tool for every job in the garden, and his shed was filled with all the wonderful “home made” machinery, especially his motorised mule which he used for riding past and folk.

He will be sadly missed by all his many friends and pals in the National Vegetable Society, and we send our thoughts and messages of sympathy to Willie’s wife Mary, and his son Mark.
Mr. D. Matthewman
simply
Trevor Last F.N.V.S.
Graham
The use of fertilisers
John Bebbington F.N.V.S.
Growing Dahlias
Visit to
Mr. Graham Wagstaffe F.N.V.S.
specimens! Looking at the numbers of entrants in the larger shows,
desire to spend the time required in nurturing the prize winning
standard of my vegetable growing tremendously. I admire their skill,
class show people, and by adapting their methods improved the
the only, or main, part. I've been fortunate to listen to many of the top
SPREADING THE WORD
VEGETABLE SHOWING
I've always seen showing as a part of the N.V.S.'s activities, but not
the only, or main, part. I've been fortunate to listen to many of the top
class show people, and by adapting their methods improved the
standard of my vegetable growing tremendously. I admire their skill,
class show people, and by adapting their methods improved the
the only, or main, part. I've been fortunate to listen to many of the top
so how can more members be persuaded to take up showing, and
progress to the more prestigious shows? At present if you are a
beginner you enter the novice section. Success here and you have to
move up to the open section, and compete with the top class
growers.
This is too big a step for most exhibitors. So what about an
intermediate, or a league section?
How would a league system work? I would suggest the following:
a) Premier league for established show people, usually amongst the
prices.
b) First division for the grower, who has won in the novice section, is
a regular exhibitor, but not quite up to premier league standard.
c) Second division for the beginner, or novice.
How to decide which league you are in?
Obviously the second division is for people who have not won previously. When you have
won in this division, you move into first division. I would suggest that
you stay in this division until you are a regular winner, say a minimum of two years.
The present trophies and prize money awarded to premier league
would stay the same. Reduced prize money could be awarded in the
first and second leagues. If it proves a success, trophies could be added.
The starting point could be the D.A. Show, Branch Championship,
or the larger local shows if agreed by the members.
Before you say "What a load of rubbish" at least think, and discuss
it with other exhibitors. Would any D.A. be prepared to give it a try this year?
Contact me with your thoughts!

HARROGATE AUTUMN FLOWER SHOW
This event is held in September, and as well as the Branch Championships and
Giant Vegetable Classes, there will be a Master Gardener Class.
This will consist of a collection of Flowers, Fruit and Vegetables
A tomato collection of large, medium and small varieties.
Other classes in this new section are : Pot plant of Chilli Peppers, Sweet Peppers,
Red Onion, Salad Potatoes, Garlic, Swede, Cauliflower – other than white, Sweet
corn, Courgettes, Aubergines, Calabrese, Kohl Rabi, Lettuce, Mixed Herbs, Pointed
Cabbages, Kohlrabi, Pars – sugar snap, mange tout or purple podded, turnips, small
fruit tomatoes, Trug of Vegetables and collection of vegetables 16 points and
under.
Schedules will be sent to all who entered Harrogate last year, but anyone who
requires a schedule should contact
R. Orme, 508, West Dyke Road, Redcar, North Yorkshire, TS10 4QL, Tel. 01642
478900 Email raymondorme@live.co.uk.
To me, as a less than serious showman, it sounds a great idea. Most of the above
only get on the showbench in “Any other vegetable” Will we see “new” faces, or will
the serious show person dominate? If so, time to give my league system a try!

Monthley Draw
The monthly draw for December took place at Harrogate, and the winners
were as follows:
£50, number 22, G. H. Wilford of Boroughbridge
£25, number 42, J. Robinson of Endmore
The next draw will take place at the Annual General Meeting, in March, at
Nelson.
Unfortunately this will be the last draw of this competition. Due to falling
number of members taking part, it was decided at the last Branch meeting, that
it was no longer a viable activity.

SPREADING THE WORD
As vegetable growing becomes more and more popular, how do we
make the public aware of the National Vegetable Society?
Crews and Nantwich D.A. took the opportunity at an event named
“Greeenscape” in the borough of Crewe and Nantwich to draw
attention to what the N.V.S. has to offer.
In spite of having to harvest vegetables in sub zero temperatures, the D.A. put on an impressive display. Interest in the stand was shown by many people eager to ask questions of the harvest. Furthermore the D.A. donated vegetables to be cooked, by students, for a buffet at the event.
Events such as this certainly raise the profile of the N.V.S., and often
many new members are signed up. The problem – highlighted in the
last edition of Simply Vegetables – is how to keep them!
This, in my opinion, is down to the District Associations. Regular
meetings, held in comfortable venues, with interesting speakers, are
essential. The Northern Branch has the most D.A. ’s, but is it there
enough? My own D.A. in East Yorkshire covers a vast area, and our
nearest neighbouring D.A. is over 50 miles away. With petrol at its
present price, the cost of travel to a meeting is prohibitive! The cost of
maintaining a D.A. in a good venue, paying speakers expenses,
organising a local show, is an upward spiral. Would it not help if
part of members subscription was returned for use by the D.A.? I
would be interested, with a view to publication, on your thoughts re
this matter.

NEWS FROM THE DISTRICT ASSOCIATIONS
As I stated previously, the weather curtailed many
events towards the end of last year. However, the same
as planning ahead in your garden, so D.A.’s must plan
ahead to produce their programme for the year.
South West DA Report

Here I am once again with my crystal ball, mid January and wondering what you should be reading in mid April 2011. We’ve not yet had our AGM so I don’t know if I will still be responsible for this report by the time you read it. (Dear Ed: 3 months is a hell of a long leadtime.)

Our DA Panel of Ken Pearce, Gill Hazell, Ray Davie, Dave Tucker and me, are still talking the same education area with our version of Gardener’s Vegetable Question Time. We must be doing something right because we’ve been invited back for a second and third bite of the cherry by some Gardening Clubs and Allotment Associations.

Recent visits include evening sessions at Yatton, Wotton, Winterbourne and North Chesterton which in these cases descended(!) into an informal competition between members of the Panel producing their show specimen vegetables and claming who had got the biggest(!!), much to the amusement of the audiences.

Still to come but gone by the time you read this are visits to Aylesbury, Buckingham, Wanborough, Banbury, Witney and Oxford. I still have meetings with the new members of our panel, I still have a small stock of my 967 5820. 

The evening ended with a Christmas raffle and refreshments.

Terry Hazell
Chairman
North Midlands DA

Following the AGM for the D.A. in December, the committee is as follows:

Chairman: Mr T Hale, FNVS 178 Cheolsey Road, Boney Hay, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 0RH Tel 01242 577406

Vice Chairman: Bernard Brown, FNVS, 18 Newport Grove, Chesterton, Warwickshire CV3 4TG Tel 01608 653995

Treasurer: Mr R Price, FNVS, 28 Marlebrook Way, Chesterton, Warwickshire CV3 3TS Tel 01608 662395

Secretary: Mrs E Brown, FNVS, 232 Beaconsfield Lane, Newcastle, Staffs. ST5 7DL Tel 01782 566395

And Mrs J Finn, FNVS, 212 Cheltenham Road, Northfield, Staffs. ST5 5LS Tel 01782 618626

Committee: Mrs and Dr McDowall, Price Carol, Sandra and Mark Hall, Sheila Atkinson, Colin Higgs.

Details from Colin Higgs are 207 Chetwynd Close, Walsall, West Midlands. e-mail chetwyndcol88@btinternet.com

Philips Memorial Hall (Bar opens 7.00 pm)

Meeting dates: 7th February, 4th April, 6th June, 7th November, 7th December, all these meetings are open and are held at Breaston Sports and Social Centre, Armitage Lane, Bretton.

I will notify you of speakers when they confirm availability. Shows where we will be present are: 

1st January, 11th and D.A. Show at Stafford 11th and 12th September.

Pat Brown, FNVS
Secretary

North Midlands DA Report

Following the DA show our next meeting on 4th October was quiz night held at Bredon Sports and Social Club. The quiz was compiled by Mark and Sandra Hall, who tested our knowledge on pests, diseases, plants identification, and general knowledge. Thanks to Mark and Sandra for running the quiz.

The winners were the “Champignons” Bernard Brown, Roy & Dorothy (Birfield)

A really good night. If you didn’t come this time, make a note in your diary for this year’s quiz.

The next meeting with the AGM held on 6th December. After the election of officers and committee, we welcomed Colin Higgs as a new committee member and Roy Price who will be taking the position of Treasurer.

Congratulations to Roy and Carol Price on attaining their Fellowships.

Trevor Allcoat is standing down from the Treasurer’s job, due to ill health. We all thank Trevor for the good work he has done as Treasurer over the years and wish him a speedy recovery.

Charles Massey gave us a talk on growing tomatoes for exhibition, followed by a short talk on growing cucumbers, an excellent talk which was very much appreciated by the members.

The evening ended with a Christmas raffle and refreshments.

Terry Hazell
Chairman
North Midlands DA

MRS M D KING, FNVS

OBITUARY

Mrs M D King passed away on 18th October 2010, in hospital, just a few days from her 91st birthday. Her daughter was by her side.

Dora, as she wished to be known by all her friends in the NVS, was a born organiser and was never happy if she had nothing to do.

She joined the NVS with her husband, Chris, at the early stages of the Society and set about the task of enrolling new members. She never went anywhere without membership forms and information on the Society. Her very first task was to form the Midlands Branch and was appointed its secretary. This gave her the opportunity to start arranging events, firstly getting to know people and then the chance to have social events.

She was invited to take part in the open day at Clacks Farm, the home of the late Arthur Billitt, who was at the time presenter of the BBC2 Gardeners’ programme and Dora arranged for a few members to take some fresh veg and do an arrangement for the public to see, together with a book stand and an information table.

The first Inter-branch Competition was filmed that year. Having passed her judgery exam, Dora now travelled many miles with Chris to judge and give advice.

The following day there was Open Days at her home on the beautiful estate where Chris was the Head Gardener and, with kind permission of the Rt Hon Philip Smith, she organised quizzes, competitions and refreshments for the many visitors.

Dora was awarded a Fellowship and a Society Silver Medal for her hard work and the many happy hours she had given to members.

When Chris retired they decided to move to Yorkshire to be near their daughter, Sally, but stayed on the Midlands’ books until her illness. Sadly has kept us informed and, on behalf of the Society, offers our deepest condolences.

Brenda and Bill Thornton (FNVS)

Midland Branch

Chairman’s Report

December was the coldest on record we are told and it caught many of us by surprise. My Christmas celery was frozen solid and my stock leeks in an unheated greenhouse ended up just the same and they now look really pale.

The magazine “Simply Vegetables” continues to be a real hit. Every time I go out to do a talk on behalf of the NVS, it is the best advertisement that comes out of my box, even better than a big leek or onion.

There is a need to create more District Associations in the Midlands and it continues to be the big issue for the branch’s committee. Hopefully 2011 will be the year when we succeed in starting new DAs. If you would like a DA near you, please contact any committee member.

The idea of a DA is quite simple – it creates a focal point in your area for talks, garden visits, exchange of ideas, plants and knowledge of all things about growing vegetables. When I look at the number of friends I have accumulated in the last forty years of vegetable growing, it shows what a friendly hobby it is.

Good growing in the coming Season.

John Branhon, FNVS
Chairman

Important Notice for Bucks DA Members:-

If you have an e-mail address (or a nearly relative) that you have not already advised us of please send it immediately to David G Killick at davidgkillick@talktalk.net. In the subject heading state “NVS member”. It will be retained on a secure file. This will enable us to e-mail you to test cost-effectively. Postage costs prohibit us using Royal Mail.

David G Killick
Bucks DA Committee member

Bucks District Association Forthcoming Events

Your Chairman, Moritimer, welcomes members to the following forthcoming events:-

Tuesday, 12th April at 7.30 pm
Pitstone Memorial Hall (Bar opens 7.00 pm)
Talk by Mr B J一位及"The Importance of the Honeybees to the Gardener").
After the talk the bar will remain open so that you can enjoy a drink with your friends.

Tuesday, 21st June 6.00 p.m onwards
Social Evening
John and Jill Branhon again welcome us to their garden in Wingrave. It is an ideal opportunity to meet other members, swap stories, ask advice or have a cup of tea and a biscuit, admire the view and stroll around the garden.

Tuesday, 12th July at 7.00 pm
An extensive, restored Victorian Garden.
Telephone David G Killick on 01442 843883 for details and ticket availability.

Thursday, 6th October at 6.30 pm
At Frost’s Garden Centre, Woburn, a unique joint NVS and Frost’s Garden Club event to Watch, Listen and Learn all there is to know about vegetable growing from that renowned and amusing duo, John Branhon and Jim Thompson. Not to be missed !

Full details of the above, and other Bucks DA events can be obtained from David G Killick at e-mail davidgkillick@talktalk.net or Tel 01442 843883.

SPONSORED PLAQUES for 2011 have been awarded to:-

South West of England District Association.
Shepton Mallet 2nd, 3rd and 4th September 2011. To be awarded for the best dish of ‘Under 250g Onions’
Details from Mr T. Tucker, - 52, Manor Road, Trowbridge, Wilts. BA14 9HS Tel 01225 766937.

North Midlands District Association.
Annual Show - Stafford, 10th & 11th September 2011. To be awarded for the best dish of ‘French Beans’
Details from Mrs P Brown, 18, Newport Grove, Chesterton, Warwick, Staffs. ST5 7CL. Tel 01782 566395

Bucks District Association.
Bucks DA 1st September, 2nd and 3rd September 2011. To be awarded for the best dish of ‘French Beans’
Details from Mr D Tucker, 52 Manor Road, Trowbridge, Wils, BA14 9HS. Tel 01225 766937.

Pat Brown, FNVS
Secretary

Mrs M D King was very impressed with this and arranged for his film crew to take some pictures which were later shown on the programme. Lots of new members were signed through this.

The first Inter-branch Competition was filmed then too. Having passed her judgery exam, Dora now travelled many miles with Chris to judge and give advice.

The following day there was Open Days at her home on the beautiful estate where Chris was the Head Gardener and, with kind permission of the Rt Hon Philip Smith, she organised quizzes, competitions and refreshments for the many visitors.

Dora was awarded a Fellowship and a Society Silver Medal for her hard work and the many happy hours she had given to members.

When Chris retired they decided to move to Yorkshire to be near their daughter, Sally, but stayed on the Midlands’ books until her illness. Sadly has kept us informed and, on behalf of the Society, offers our deepest condolences.

Brenda and Bill Thornton (FNVS).
Newent Onion Fayre, Gloucestershire

On the second Saturday in September every year, the streets of Newent are transformed into a one-day street festival of food, drink and merriment, to which 15,000 visitors are attracted. At the heart of the festival is the Newent Onion Show which is unique in its status in the UK, on the day which has become recognised as the first day of harvest at the end of the summer. By the end of the 13th century, Newent was well established as a thriving market town where Welsh drovers, passing through on their way to Gloucester, would purchase local onions at the newly established market in Newent.

Newent was originally the site of a manor belonging to the Abbey of Cormeilles in Normandy, but quickly grew into a sizeable community when King Henry III to the Abbey of Cormeilles in Normandy, but quickly grew into a sizeable community when King Henry III to Frosts Garden centre and Mary Thomas for providing our top prizes.

Midland Branch continued...

Potatoes for the Table

Despite the appalling weather 50 members and friends visited Princes Risborough Sports Hall to hear Mary Thomas and her husband talk about their Welsh garden and its produce for the kitchen. Mr Thomas opened the talk with an insight into growing over 100 varieties of potatoes for the kitchen and, if he is lucky enough, for the Show bench.

To prove the point Mary had prepared a dish of mashed potato in a very unusual shade of purple. It tasted, well, like Potato! She went on to explain the benefits of getting vegetables quickly from the plot to the table.

Mary attributed much of her success to keeping recipes simple, and illustrated this with many colourful photographs and leaflets giving some of her favourite recipes.

The evening was rounded off with the drawing of the raffle, winning a big ‘thank you’ to Frost Garden Centre and Mary Thomas for providing our top prizes.

David Elkins

Bucks DA Committee member.

Potatoes on show at the talk and was taken by David G Kickel.

Moving on with the NVS

Are you having success at your local shows? Thinking about the larger shows, such as the NVS Branch Championships and possibly the NVS National Championships? Many of our top exhibitors started showing their veg at local shows, some were winning red cards from the start, others gradually improved the quality of their veg over several years, until they came to win the local trophies every year.

Eventually a greater challenge is sought and it is time to move up a level, maybe to a NVS Branch District Association Show such as the one held by the North Midlands Association in conjunction with the Stafford Show, or even jump feet first into a NVS Branch Championship, the Midland Branch Championships held at Malvern as part of the Malvern Autumn Show in late September.

Fast feet into the deep sea and or for, but not for all.

Some growers may feel that they wouldn’t know anyone or that they feel that they are out of their depth. From my own experience this is not the case and I would say that if you have an interest in growing vegetables, exhibitor or not, then the NVS is for you. Visit us at one of the many stands at most major shows and you will be made very welcome.

Advice and information is freely given, be you a member or not. Of course, if you are not a member we will try our best to sign you up. Bringing with you your own veg will be of great help to anyone who may not expect you are asked to exhibit your produce. If you are taking veg with like minded people then you will be directed towards the information and advice sections of our many stands at most major shows.

Meet other members and help solve some of the many problems that are brought to us by members of the public from keen to improve their veg growing skills.

After judging, many exhibitors and judges are available to discuss the merits of the exhibits, information such as varieties, sowing dates and other tips on cultivation are freely given.

So don’t have to jump in feet first, just stick a toe in the water and visit us on any NVS stand and see where it takes you.

Highest Roy Price, North-West Branch.

Welsh Branch Newsletter

I am writing this article on behalf of Dick, our secretary, my husband, and myself.

It is 5 years ago now that you know that Dick has been very ill and spent the whole of January in hospital. By the time you read this, he will be out of hospital and on the road to recovery. We would like to thank everyone who sent us messages and got well cards and visits to the hospital during Dick’s stay. It was very much appreciated and a great support to you all.

I would like to express our deep sympathy to Bob Ball and his family in Port Talbot upon the death of his wife Grace, Bob Grace, a long-time member of our society and was then the chairman of the Championships in Wales, helping out on our stand. Even though her health deteriorated over the years, she was still there with her bubbly charging around. We shall all miss her smiling face.

Another year has begun and already January has gone by. By the time this article comes into print it will be April, a 1/4 of the year gone. Most of you will be well into the growing season, with the shows a few months away.

What a winter we have had! Snow, frost, wind, rain and temperature well below zero. This has been going on since November and, by the time you read this, even the seeds will be coming up.

Reports have been coming in of gardeners losing plants and seeds and having to restock and replace.

We have been lucky in some way with Dick being ill, no planting was done on Christmas day.

Good luck to everyone for 2011

Ann Griffith

Welsh Branch.

Welsh Branch Championships

The Welsh Branch Championship 2011 will be held on Saturday 10th September.

The Welsh Branch Championship 2011 will be held on Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st of August at Pembroke Horticultural Show. Members wanting to exhibit in the Welsh Championship for the first time, to ring Mary Thomas, Assistant Secretary on 01691 782340, for schedule, or email maryfor2005@yahoo.co.uk, along with your NVS up to date membership number.

Members who would like to enter in the Pembroke Horticultural Show, contact Ron McFadlan on 01646 685284 for Schedule.

On behalf of the Welsh Branch Committee, I would like to thank Ron for his involvement in organising the venue and the social evening in Pembroke Rugby Club.

The National Championships 2011 will be held in The Royal Pavilion Llangollen on August Bank Holiday weekend, Saturday 27th, Sunday 28th and Monday 29th.

The AGM meeting will be held on Saturday 27th at 4pm. Members wanting to attend the AGM will be held at The National Pavilion, Llangollen on August Bank Holiday weekend, Saturday 27th, Sunday 28th and Monday 29th.

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Southern Branch Introduction Notes

Well here we are again and the season and many of us will be well into our preparation in growing for this year. For those of us, probably mainly growing for the kitchen, we should at least be into the frantic “lets get everything in now before its really too late” period.

Of course we should have done (and I’m sure that you all did), but regrettably as I was expecting to move house, I didn’t! was to plan things out properly, thoroughly, and just as importantly, be flexible, but keep to the plan.

Most of us know what adapting a new place to our needs is like and I can’t help reminding people of our own growing situations with those of our various DAs. I have recently been put firmly in my place by our branch secretary, who wondered whether or not in the last edition I was advocating some form of rivalry or competition between our DAs. His point is that all our DAs are different. Some much smaller than others and some seem to be able to call on a lot of support while others struggle. But we do all do what we can, isn’t it?

Well, of course what I was trying to get across was that the use of this magazine for all DAs to promote their various meetings is in my view essential. I, many, many use the national website for this, but I believe that it is of interest to all other members to see what may be happening in other places and we should not miss out on the opportunity this magazine now gives us. After all, many of our number don’t know what a website is and could be in a difficult or isolated area so will rely on this magazine to tell them what is going on. Our meetings are open to all NVS members and that can do will publicise their whole programme for the year in a most attractive floral setting next to the Chairman’s garden. The meeting was well attended with nine new NVS members and several others who were interested in growing vegetables for the kitchen.

I felt that the needed advice from our branch committee on this matter and to use it on a unified forward vision through this magazine was also due. The matter was therefore discussed fully at our last branch committee meeting in February. It was felt that some of our DA contributions have perhaps dwelling a bit too much on our past and not enough on the future. So what we have is of interest to all other members to see what may be available for sale over the three days of the show. New Forest Show schedules are available to download from www.newforestshow.co.uk

Southern Branch

THE NEW FOREST SHOW 26TH to 28TH JULY 2011

The Showground New Park Brockenhurst Hampshire

Preparations for the 2011 show are now well under way, the judges have booked and the stewards are still coming in. For those of you who have not attended the Southern Branch Championships before, our championships are held as part of the New Forest Show 26th to 28th of July and are held over three days in Brockenhurst Hampshire in the heart of the beautiful New Forest.

The New Forest Show is a large annual agricultural show attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors over the three days and is a fine display of all descriptions plus displays, competitions and stalls selling everything you can think of, there really is something for everyone. So you need two days to see it all. The vegetable section is situated in the Flower show marquee where we hold the NVS Southern Branch Championships (open to NVS members only) we also run an open show for non members or members of other clubs who do not wish to enter the Branch Championships this also includes the South of England Potato Championships. Thanks to all the hard work of my predecessor John Trim FNVS, our show has become one of the best of its kind, attracting exhibitors from all over the country, many of whom are National Champions, so you can imagine how busy our show will be. We are also holding a very highly thought of garden sections open to all. The Branch Championships over previous years will be organised by Di and Brian Cooke who have done a fantastic job over the years picking up numerous Gold and Large Gold medals for their efforts. The Hants DA and Southern Branch will have their usual information and sales tables to answer questions from the general public and hopefully sign up some new NVS members, NVS merchandise will also be available for sale over the three days of the show. Show schedules are available to download from www.newforestshow.co.uk

Southern Branch members will receive their show schedules with their April edition of Simply Vegetables magazine.

For more information contact c.need101@btinternet.com or Tel 01425 629994 I look forward to seeing you all there.

To add interest and a feeling of the History of his growing and showing over 50 years.

To be held in the Pavilion starting at 1pm.

Committee Meeting 4th October, RHAS London, Ramblers starting @ 2.30 pm

Jury Seminar & Exam 24th September & 1st October. Venue to be arranged. Members wishing to take the exam should try to attend with an experienced NVS judge, but make sure that it is OK with the show secretary to go along with the judge.

Sponsored Plaques 2010 Congratulations to Mr Brian Constable of Hole Gardens on winning the NVS Radar Gift to H. Tiznatas.

Branch Meetings 2011

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Committee Meeting 14th June, Wimley Gardens, To be held in the Pavilion starting at 1pm.

Committee Meeting 4th October, RHAS London, Ramblers starting @ 2.30 pm

Jury Seminar & Exam 24th September & 1st October. Venue to be arranged. Members wishing to take the exam should try to attend with an experienced NVS judge, but make sure that it is OK with the show secretary to go along with the judge.

Committee Meeting 1st November, at 10.00am. So if you don’t have the facilities to grow your own come along and have a look at the exhibitors of the show and enjoy some of the displays and talks. The Devon District Association held their annual general meeting on February 8th with 17 people present. All officers were re-elected. A tribute was given to Mr Harold Griffiths of Totnes, who had recently died aged 91 after a long illness. An NVS member since 1980 he was a keen exhibitor and a NVS judge.

I have been asked by the Southern Branch Secretary, Gordon, to remind all show organizers to delete Mr Griffith’s name from the list of judges in the directory, to hopefully prevent anyone making enquiries of his family for his services as a judge in the future.

The secretariat was pleased to inform the meeting that nine new members had joined in the local area, mainly through promotion at local shows by the DA chairman and secretary.

Chairman: Ron Dodge, Treasurer: Alan Terry, Secretary: Dan Harvey.

The November meeting featured Dan Harvey, who gave a potted history of his growing and showing over 50 years.

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Tuesday 26th – Thursday 28th July 2011

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New Forest and Hampshire Show Society, The Showground, New Park, Brockenhurst, Hampshire, SO42 7QH
Tel: 01590 622400
Email: Newforestshow.co.uk

Stewards also needed please
Free admission tickets and a pass available for stewards.

For further information please contact the Show Secretary:
Chris Neel, FNVSS, email: c.neel001@btinternet.com
Tel: 01425 629694

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available from the New Forest Show Office 01590 622400. Also on line at the New Forest Show Website.
Our Burley Vice Chairman is also on the NVSS website or contact the Secretary, John Trim 02380 844521 or email: john.trim747@btinternet.com for more details.

Chris Neel

Kent District Association

We have moved our meeting to a new venue at Bridge Village Hall, this is a short distance past Canterbury on the A2. Meetings start at 8pm on the second Wednesday of the Month.

We have already had successes this year the first being our AGM and the second with a talk from the National Chairman Medchyn Williams, MBE, A.R.H.S., F.N.V.S.

Diary Dates:
15th/16th May & 10th/11th September, DA Stand Detling
15th June, DA Show & Stand @ Tunbridge Wells
14th September, Len Stebbings “A Judge’s Decision”
12th October, Gordon Francis, National show Slides.
9th November, Social Evening.
Details about the DA meetings and other activities can be obtained from the Secretary G.J. Francis, F.N.V.S, 01622 710486 or email; gordonfrancis@btinternet.com or from the F.N.V.S. website.

Sally Coleman

Specialist Societies Open Day at RHS Wisley, Friday 4th March 2011.
The Surrey DA participated in the first Specialist Society Open Day, held on the 4th March at RHS Wisley.
In total 17 Specialist Societies attended, all in one location, the Hillside Events Centre, so there were a wide range of groups for the Public to visit and enquire re the benefits of the various Societies. We were of course the only Society present whose displays could actually be eaten!

There was good interest from the public, and we were also able to meet up with some of our recent new members, to reinforce the importance of the Benevolent Fund.

Our full programme is also on the NVSS website or contact the DA Secretary Sally Coleman on 0208 999 8803.

Sally Coleman

Surrey District Association

Our last meeting of 2010 was in November, when we enjoyed a beautifully illustrated and expansive talk by Paul Patton on ‘Controlling Pests and Diseases including natural and cultural controls.’ Our first meeting of 2011 was the Surrey DA AGM on February 9th. The following members were appointed to the committee – our Burley Vice Chairman: Neil Hope, Secretary: Sally Coleman, Treasurer: Patricia Barrett, Publicity: Derek Leaune, other committee members: Norman Ingolds and Len Stebbings. The AGM was followed by lunch in the Barley Mow at West Horsley.

Diary Dates: For enjoyable and informative evenings, complemented by delicious home made cake, our remaining dates for 2011 are:
Thursday May 12th: Vegetables Through the Year, John Brannam
Thursday September 22nd: An Evening of Tomatoes, Sally Coleman
Thursday November 17th: Choosing your Cultivars, Richard White
Meetings are held in the Lovelace Room, East Horsley Village Hall, Kingston Avenue, East Horsley, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT19 8AY and commence at 8pm, and all N.V.S members are welcome to attend, together with members belonging to our Affiliated Societies in the area.

For further information on Surrey District Association matters and activities, please contact the DA Secretary Sally Coleman on 0208 999 8803.

Sally Coleman

Southern Branch Championships

Car park and a map of the showground will be sent to exhibitors. Stewards also needed please.

For further information on Southern Branch Championships please contact the Show Secretary: Chris Neel, FNVS, email: c.neel001@btinternet.com
Tel: 01425 629694

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- 40 module raised plants  Code 61845  £6.95
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**SAVE £2!**

**BONUS!**

**BUY ANY TWO Items & claim our Brussels Sprout Plant Collection (5 each of Bronte F1, Dominator F1 & Cascade F1) for FREE!**

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Leek Megaton F1

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What a cabbage! Large densely hearted ball-head with a lovely texture and flavour and club root resistant!

- 20 plants  (5 each of variety)  Code 62112  £6.90
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**FREE Seed Labels**

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