



A NATIONALLY RECOGNISED SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENERS

www.swcaa.co.uk

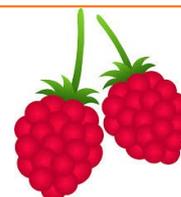
ISSUE 31
Summer 2019

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter.. With summer fast approaching I am definitely missing the SWCAA allotment not a seed sown this year which feels very odd after 13 or so years of growing produce. On the plus side it has given me more time to focus on the garden at home and making it as wildlife friendly as I possibly can. It is now full of insect friendly plants and the pleasant sound of happily buzzing bees. I did notice a little tomato plant that has grown up in the decking where the greenhouse used to be so I will focus on nurturing it and maybe it will reward me with a few lovely tomatoes which along with the runner beans and beetroot I know I'm going to miss.

SWCAA is as busy as ever welcoming new members from across the country and being involved in the creation of some new allotment sites locally and further a field. This is always a good sign and shows that the demand for allotments is still going strong. If you are in the process of setting up a new site or an interesting project and would like it featured in our newsletter and on the website then just drop us a line. Here's hoping for another heatwave this year and happy gardening to you all... **Ayesha Hooper, Director/CEO**

Growing in hanging baskets...If you are short on space, only have a small plot or garden then growing fruit and vegetable in hanging baskets could be the answer. There are quite a few crops that will work well in a basket and they can be placed within easy reach of the kitchen for fresh pickings when you need them. Choose the largest basket possible for the space you have available, ones with holes mean you can plant through the sides as well and gives a fuller look to the finished basket.



There are plants you can buy that are specially bred to be grown in this way but ordinary lettuce, peas, beans, cucumbers and even beetroot work just as well. Place the basket in an area that is not to exposed to very hot sun nor somewhere to shaded, they will need to be fed and watered frequently, especially in very dry weather. Some good plants to start with are Strawberries like **Toscana** which is a good cropper right through the summer, blackberry **black cascade**, a thornless variety that can give you up to 1.3 kg of large, sweet berries from a single hanging basket and raspberry **ruby falls** is a compact summer-fruiting plant with trailing stems, ideal for growing in hanging baskets. An easy to grow and low-maintenance thornless raspberry produces crops that are ready to pick from June onwards, and are delicious when eaten fresh as well as for cooking.



Good tomato varieties include **cherry cascade**, a prolific cherry tomato yielding delicious small sweet fruits, **hundreds and thousands** vigorous tumbler and easy to grow produces hundreds of tiny fruit.

Chillies are great fun to grow and an SWCAA favourite try chilli pepper **basket of fire**, a colourful variety producing lots of small, hot chillies which mature from deep purple through yellow and orange to a bright shade of scarlet red, creating a fabulous display.

This variety shows good tolerance to cool weather and will continue to fruit outside well into the autumn.

You could also try planting up a basket of lovely herbs too, marjoram, parsley, chives and thyme are just a few of the many to try.

Excellent Epsom Salts... Not only are they good for us but good for plants too! A magnesium rich mineral Epsom salts encourage healthy crops and strong leafy growth and also prevent yellowing of the leaves, it's fantastic for your brassicas and other leafy crops as well as tomatoes and fruit trees. Before applying Epsom salt, however, it's a good idea to test your soil to determine whether it's deficient of magnesium. Also be aware that many plants, like beans and leafy vegetables, will happily grow and produce in soils with low levels of magnesium. Plants like roses, tomatoes and peppers, on the other hand, require lots of magnesium, and therefore, are more commonly watered with Epsom salts.



Focus on Fennel.... Originally of Mediterranean origin fennel is easy to grow and low maintenance. It's soft fern like foliage will produce yellow flowers in summer which attract many useful pollinators to the allotment. Fennel can be sown direct or into pots where they will stay because as a member of the carrot family it does not like its roots disturbed. Sow seeds thinly from March to July and cover if the weather is cold, when seedlings are large enough to handle thin to about 12inch apart. Good varieties to try include giant bronze,

this has purple leaves and yellow flower heads and purpleum, a purple fennel which produces fine blue-grey leaves. Harvesting is easy, the leaves can be picked and used fresh or you could let the plant go to seed and once the seed head has turned brown and dried, cut and shake into a brown paper bag with a few tiny ventilation holes. After a week or so once fully dried the fragrant seeds can be stored in an air tight container ready for use in cooking. Florence fennel also belongs to the same carrot family but is different in that it produces large bulbous stems which can be eaten raw, grated into salads, steamed or baked in the oven. Sow in the same way as the herb but earth up around the base as they develop to maintain their flavour. One of the main problems with this type of fennel is its prone to bolting. To help prevent this happening keep plants well watered.

Jobs to do in July, August and September

JULY—With the longest day now passed and the days getting shorter there is still time to sow lettuces, chicory, endives, and other salad leaves as well as peas, French beans, spring onions, beetroot, and carrots.

JOBS FOR JULY— Weed regularly, keep on hoeing as weeds grow just as fast as everything else will be on the plot. Water regularly, this will help prevent your crops from bolting. Certain vegetables have a natural tendency to flower and go to seed. Lettuces, rocket, spinach, cauliflowers, and fennel are particularly prone. Once your harvest is over cut down broad beans to just above the surface of the soil and compost them. The roots of the plants are rich in nitrogen. Dry out garlic, and onions. Choose a dry spell of weather, lift the bulbs and lay them out in the sun, the longer you can leave them to dry out the longer they will keep. Continue pruning side shoots on grape vines and if needed thin out the fruit. Removing some of the foliage will increase sun exposure and speed up ripening.

AUGUST—There are a few crops that you can still sow or plant out now for harvesting this year. Sow salad leaves, spring onions, carrots, Swiss chard and spinach. You should have some vacant space on the plot once broad beans, and onions are finished to plant out overwintering crops such as Brussels sprouts, spring cabbages, and winter cauliflowers.

JOBS FOR AUGUST—Harvest crops regularly. At this time of year, courgettes, runner beans, and French beans grow very quickly. Check them every day and harvest runner beans regularly, before they grow too large and become stringy. Feed pumpkins and winter squashes once a week with high-potash tomato fertilizer. Lift them off the soil on to bricks or planks of wood to stop them rotting. Propagate strawberries. Strawberry runners that have pegged down into pots to root should be ready for transplanting now. Plant in a sunny position, in ground that has had plenty of organic material dug in, and keep them well watered. Plastic sheeting stretched over the bed will also conserve warmth and moisture.

JOBS FOR SEPTEMBER—Now is a good time to plant overwintering autumn onions sets. Prepare the ground first so the sets go in easily, and add an all-purpose fertilizer. Bury the sets about 7-10cm apart with their tips at or just below the surface of the soil. Transplant spring cabbages to their final growing position. Make sure that they go into ground that has been well firmed down. As gaps appear after harvesting now is also a good time for sowing green manures. Phacelia, annual ryegrass and field beans will overwinter well. Earth up Brussel sprouts ready for any strong winter winds. Remove leaves from squashes and pumpkins so the sun can ripen the fruits. Check if your sweetcorn crop is ready to harvest. If the tassels have turned black or brown, peel back the outer leaves and push your nail into the sweetcorn. If the juice is milky then it is ready to eat, if the juice is clear then leave a bit longer.

Selling Allotment Produce

There is increasing interest in locally and naturally grown food. In urban areas especially, the most important sites for actual production of local natural food are allotment sites. By renting an allotment garden, people can get direct access to *food without food miles* by growing it themselves. The key legal restriction is contained in the Allotments Act 1922, whereby there is a general prohibition on any trade or business being conducted on the allotment garden or any part thereof. An allotment garden must, by definition, "be wholly or mainly cultivated for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by the occupier or his family". So allotment gardens can't operate as market gardens, or nurseries. Furthermore, carrying out any form of trade, however small, on the allotment site could also be interpreted as being in breach of this law. There is however, no restriction on the distribution, by sale or otherwise, of a certain proportion of the plot holder's crop. It may depend on the rules of your site. The general rule on sites is that you could sell a percentage deemed to be your surplus crops. Produce for sale is allowed on allotment land with various rulings from 10% to 30% of output. In short there is no reason not to minimise waste and sell your produce from your plot as long as you don't build a commercial empire out of it!

