



# A NATIONAL SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS AND GARDENERS

[www.swcaa.co.uk](http://www.swcaa.co.uk)

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# NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our Summer newsletter. Its been a bit of a wet one down here in North Devon, fabulous weather for growing though. With the promise of a spell of hot weather on the way things are looking good for a bumper harvest. At the end of last year I mentioned I was going to try and convince my husband to dig up the front garden and turn it into a mini allotment, well in May this year we finally did it and its safe to say I am back in the game as you will see.

It would seem that there are tough times a head for us all and never has being able to grow your own been more important, with the cost of living rising fast anything you can do to ease the burden has got to be good. Not only that but its been proven time and time again how growing your own, getting out in the fresh air, connecting with nature is good for our mental well being. So whether it be a pot, window box or small patch of soil we should be encouraging people to get some seeds and give it a go. SWCAA are not all about allotments there are so many things we can do to help our planet and encourage nature from sowing wild flowers, planting trees or creating a wildlife pond. Now more than ever our planet needs our help.

**Ayesha Hooper Director/CEO**



**Good News!!** SWCAA have been nominated in the category for best gardening organisation in the Great British Growing Awards which is being run by Grow your Own Magazine. If you would like to support us then please go to [growfruitandveg.co.uk/awards-to-vote](http://growfruitandveg.co.uk/awards-to-vote).



Take herb cuttings....rather than buying new plants the summer months are the ideal time for taking cuttings from woody herbs like sage, rosemary and thyme. Peel of a side shoot about 8cm long and try to leave a little heel on the bottom of the stem, peel off any of the lower leaves then place cuttings around the edge of a pot filled with gritty compost and within a few weeks you should start to see healthy growth as your new plants take root. This will also work with lavender cuttings. If you want to buy new plants then the potted herbs you can get at the supermarket are a much cheaper way of buying them.

## Sow Oriental leaves

When the days are getting shorter and there are empty patches in the veg garden why not try sowing some Oriental salads. These crops are happiest when sown as the days start to get shorter and will help keep the plot productive till the end of the season. One drawback of the oriental leaf is that varieties such as mibuna and mizuna can be quite fiery in taste so try mixing them with a milder leaf like the Chinese cabbage. Its not really a cabbage more like a cos style lettuce. Like lettuce it is fast growing and forms a densely packed head in around 10 weeks from sowing. Unfortunately like all salad crops it is also a favourite of the slug so its is often a good idea to sow the seeds in trays or pots in a cold frame or greenhouse where they will have a good head start before planting out when they are large enough to handle. Space about 30cm apart in a sunny, free draining rich soil and keep them well watered. Chinese cabbage is not just for salads but also tastes lovely added to stir fries.



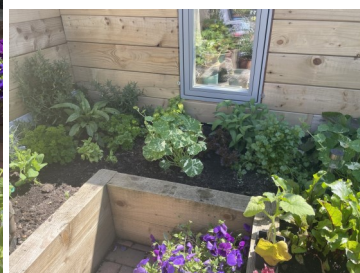
As mentioned in previous newsletters SWCAA like to promote the benefits of growing whatever you can where you can. With this in mind and the fact that far too many seeds were sown this year with nowhere to put them (whoops!) the option of digging up the front lawn became a reality. It's not a massive space and wasn't really used for anything, it benefits from being south facing, it does get very hot out there. There is also the bonus of it being protected from the wind by some high fencing. Having been laid to lawn for a while the soil was quite sandy and dry so we have added lots of well rotted manure and compost and as you will see from the pictures it is thriving.



We have managed to cram quite a lot into this space, there are runner beans, sweet corn, fine French beans, three different types of courgette, squash, broad beans, aubergines, cucumbers, large Italian tomatoes, red cabbages, lettuce, some beautiful sweet peas and also what are looking like to be very large sunflowers. There are also two large planters which have gardeners' delight tomatoes and 3 different types of chillies.



We still also have the micro allotment in the back garden where we grow, beetroot, radishes, lots of different salads and herbs and edible flowers.



Although they were very hard work we have missed having the large allotments, being able to grow all this on a much smaller scale still provides not only delicious crops but a great satisfaction that we are doing our bit for the planet. The plot has been edged with flowering shrubs, like Buddleia, Hebe and Elaeagnus as well as some beautiful English Lavender, all planted to attract as many bees and insects to the plot to help with pollination. The back garden is also a haven for wildlife, full of insect

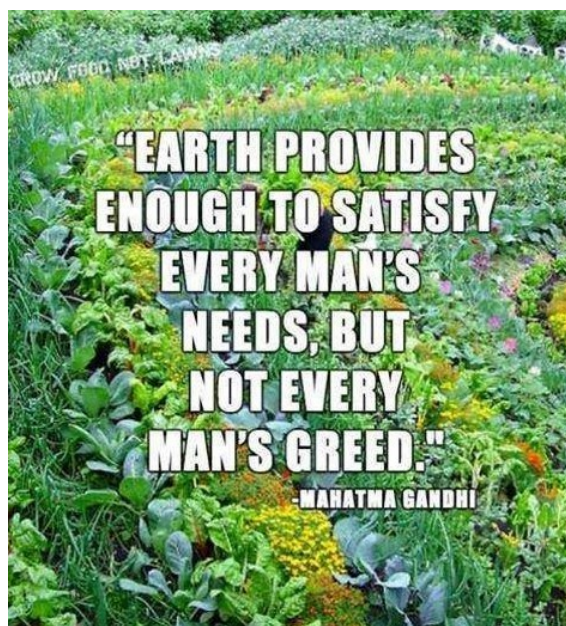
friendly perennials, we have planted trees like rowan, hawthorn and crab apple which the birds love. There is a wildlife pond which has attracted frogs, toads and newts and we also have a thriving colony of slow worms too. It just goes to show if you plant it and build it they will come. We hope you have enjoyed a little insight to our gardening world, we will be adding more pictures to our website and you can also follow our progress on our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/swcaaallotments>

### Water saving tips for the plot.

Water plants in the early morning or evening when it's cool. Watering during the day means it is likely to evaporate before the water gets to the roots.

Water the plants from the bottom to ensure it gets to those thirsty roots, avoid wetting the leaves as this can lead to fungal problems, Rain water is much better for your crops so invest in a water butt.

Mulch and mulch again this keeps moisture in the soil and will also stop weeds from growing. Keep on top of the weeding as weeds compete with your crops for water, space and nutrients.





**A powdery problem...** Powdery mildew is a fungal disease and will cause a white powdery substance to form on the leaves and stems and sometimes the fruits and flowers of plants. It is very important to reduce the chances of this disease spreading by removing and destroying any infected leaves that you see as soon as possible. Keeping plants in a good healthy conditions will help to reduce the chance of infection. Crops commonly affected include, courgettes, marrows, cucumbers and peas.

#### Summer Bruschetta recipe

Cooked chorizo finely diced  
Courgettes, baby ones work best, sliced  
Diced tomato  
Spinach, chopped  
Haloumi sliced  
Parma ham or other cured meat  
Sliced green chilli (optional)  
Fresh parsley chopped  
Olive oil  
Sour dough bread, sliced

Add the chorizo to a frying pan and cook on a medium heat until it starts to turn golden. Add the courgettes, tomatoes, and spinach and cook on a medium heat until nicely softened. Fry the sliced haloumi on both sides until golden and soft.

Place the cured meat then the vegetable topping on to the sour dough and top with the haloumi, sliced chilli and a little drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of parsley. The vegetable mixture is lovely hot or cold and feel free to add whatever veg you like. Leave out the meats for a veggie version. A very simple dish but packed with flavour and filling too.



**Calling Somerset Allotment Holders...** A Somerset village and Community Agent contacted SWCAA regarding a local infant school, which in conjunction with the new vicar, is planning on using part of the vicar's garden to grow fresh fruit and vegetables to supplement families of children in need and on free school meals throughout the school holiday periods. He has contacted the local officer for schools and the councillor for families and children in Somerset to try and get other schools to try something similar where possible as part of a drive to reduce the demand for food parcels (which are not always that healthy) and to encourage more growing of fresh foods locally. He would like to contact allotment groups in Somerset to see if any holders would be willing to either grow excess fruit and vegetables (either by donated seed if he can source enough) and give the food to Headteachers or vicars supporting families in need. Mr Lewis says "This is not a sticky plaster project, it is hoped that it will develop by educating youngsters about where their food comes from, the environmental impact (good for nature, reducing carbon footprint) and benefiting their mental well being. If allotment holders are willing to have families help, the physical exercise would also be good for the children. As a village agent in Somerset I have noticed the increase in requests for food parcels, which mainly consist of tinned products and ambient foods (past & rice etc) with very little fresh food. We have a number of food share and community fridges across the county, supported by our food resilience programme who could help collect and distribute surplus crops, we are just lacking in space and fresh products to donate". If any one is interested or knows anyone that might be willing to help then please contact Mr Dave Lewis on 01823 331222, 07958 415260, or email: davel@somersettrcc.org.uk

*Collect seeds from annual herbs like dill, coriander and fennel. As the season progresses these herbs turn their efforts towards flowering and producing seed. Wait until seed heads turn brown then cover with a paper bag before cutting the stem. Shake the bag to release the seeds and pick out any debris. These can then be re sown or left to dry for a further week and will be perfect for use in cooking.*

**Avoiding runner bean set issues.** Runner beans love a cool reasonably damp British summer but the climate hasn't been kind over the past few years and crops have struggled in places. Soring temperatures caused by very un normal British heatwaves have seen not only the crops but also the insect population suffer too, meaning pollination hasn't been what it should. This has never been a problem in the past with runner beans being one of the most popular and reliable crops to grow on the allotment. Give them a helping hand by giving them a good soak a couple of times a week in hot weather, or adding a mulch too to help retain moisture. Planting nectar rich flowers around them like marigolds, sweet Williams, nasturtiums or alyssum will help encourage more pollinators which in turn will aid the setting of the beans.



**SWCAA association representatives**, please could you make sure that all your members are forwarded copies or made aware of our newsletter, terms and conditions of the insurance and the discounted seed schemes we offer via DT Browns and Kings seeds.

When adding new members, please make sure you include their full name and address as we will not be able to process any new additions or renewals without these details.

Please where possible can you forward fees to us via bank transfer as this helps us avoid costly bank charges.



### Summer Green Manures

As summer progresses gaps begin to appear in the veg plot, even with successional sowing by late summer there is bare soil and an open invitation for weeds to take over. Bare soil will turn hard and crusty which will make it hard to cultivate and it will lose vital nutrients. This is where the summer green manures come in. Sow a nitrogen rich summer annual like phacelia or buckwheat and it will give your soil the protection and food it needs until you need it for growing again.

Sowing the green manure is easy, simply broadcast over damp soil and gently rake it in. Seedlings will appear in a few days and in a month soil will be covered in lush greenery. Wildlife also love green manure, especially bees if you let it go to flower, be careful though as if they set seed you will have problem on your hands. Cut off the top growth as soon as the flowers fade and leaving it on the soil will offer winter protection too.



### Gardening is good for the Soul

Going through a difficult period? Everything seems to be going wrong? Allotment gardening can make you feel more confident and cheerful, and improve your health.

How does this work? Gardening on your allotment means you can work at your own pace, there is no pressure, you can do as much or as little as you like. (Allotment committees should take care to accept this when plot holders are under emotional pressure)

Physical exercise improves your mood, you will find that you may have been stressed out when you got to the allotment, but by the time you leave you will be wondering what all the fuss was about.. Nine out of ten people facing

anxiety or depression find exercise and contact with nature have an overriding beneficial effect on them. Most of all it gives you time and space to think without the pressure. Working with living, growing things gives you a satisfaction and a responsibility which brings order into your life. You don't have to start alone - share a plot to start with. You don't have to start big: window boxes and container gardening are a popular way to enjoy the pleasures of nurturing something; or you can clear a small corner of an overgrown garden. Gardening can be a step in overcoming fear of leaving the house.

Plants don't criticise. You acquire or improve skills which you may use in life, and build your self confidence and discover your own creativity. Gardening can certainly give people a purpose in life. Allotment gardening gives you an opportunity to meet people if you want and join other groups. It can be a way to take part in projects, get involved with associations, or helping schools and horticultural groups.

**Help us spread the word** If you are an allotment holder and individual member of SWCAA already you can help us by passing our information on to other plot holders on your site. Joining SWCAA as group gives you the benefit of cheaper membership. Perhaps you know of a site, association or local council that would benefit from our help, if so please pass this newsletter on or maybe display a copy on your site notice board if you have one.

We are always looking for like minded individual's and groups to join us.

If you haven't done so already please consider registering your allotment site and associations details on our national site register and help us expand this useful resource.

Please fill in the site register form which can be downloaded from our website and either post or e-mail it back to us and remember to fill in the part to give us permission to use your details on our website. New sites and associations are being added all the time so it's a great way to find out what is available in your area.

For those associations out there with their own website please consider adding a link to SWCAA.

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