



A NATIONALLY RECOGNISED SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENERS

www.swcaa.co.uk

ISSUE 29

Winter 2018

NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the winter edition of our newsletter. What a fantastic season we have had, amazing weather and on the SWCAA allotment we've had bumper crops all round. I think the best thing we noticed on the allotment was the lack of bugs and slugs resulting in beautiful clean damage free produce, definitely a bonus of plenty of hot sunshine. The only downside was the heat in the polytunnel, despite our best efforts to keep it cool it was just too much for the cucumbers and even some of the tomato plants which really struggled to get going, but it's a small price to pay if we could have that weather every summer. We are lucky on our site that we have water but quite a few of our members have said they have really struggled this year on sites that don't or who have had hose pipe bans in place. If we start to see these much warmer summers then we are all going to have to think carefully about conserving and storing as much as we can during the wetter months. Autumn is here and the crops are harvested time to cosy down and relax by the fire..



SWCAA Insurance—some changes and new additions. We have always prided ourselves on an efficient service and being able to offer our members value for money, so with this in mind and working with our brokers BGI UK we have made some changes to the employers liability insurance and because of demand added some extra cover which associations/groups may find of interest.

Strange as it may sound in some cases allotment associations/groups may find themselves regarded in law as employers of voluntary labour and therefore will require insurance against claims by injured workers when they are acting as if they are an employer, even if the work is voluntary and unpaid. Available to SWCAA association members only at this very competitive price the employers liability insurance costs just £20 for the year and now

covers the whole of your allotment site. You can also add buildings, contents, machinery, trustees and accident cover if you wish.

To renew your employers liability or take out any additional cover you will need to go to the members area on our website <http://www.swcaa.co.uk/user> and login in using your e-mail address and membership number (you must have registered your email with us to gain access to this) You will still get your normal reminder a month before your membership is due for renewal so you can do it all at the same time.

Simply fill out your details, choose the cover you want and the date you want it to start, read carefully through the terms and conditions, sign and submit the form. This will go direct to our broker who will then contact you to arrange the chosen cover and take your payment. All certificates will come direct from them.

These changes do not affect your membership or the free public liability insurance which comes with it. Prices remain the same for 2018/19 at £10 for individuals, groups 6-50 members £5 per person and 51 plus members £3.50 per person.

We really hope that you find these changes/additions beneficial and would really welcome your feedback on the renewal/purchase of the extra cover on offer via our website. If you have any problems accessing the members area or filling out the online form, then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sowing and growing over the winter months—Look forward to next years harvest by sowing some tasty vegetables now.



For an early crop of tasty peas, sow overwintering varieties in a sheltered spot. Keep an eye out for mice and use cloches to provide extra protection. Salad leaves and lettuce are one of easiest crops to grow. When sown in autumn, they quickly grow to provide you with delicious fresh leaves. Ideal for pots, containers or on the windowsill but if grown outside, protect them with a sturdy cloche. Early cropping summer cauliflower can be sown now under cloches ready to be planted out when spring arrives.

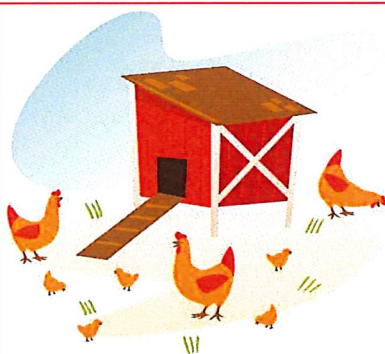


In milder areas of the UK broad beans can be sown now in the ground or in pots. Hardier varieties of spring onion, such as 'Performer', can be sown now for winter and spring harvests. Sowing in pots makes protecting young plants easier, keep in the greenhouse or cover with a cloche. Why not try sowing some chillies at home on the windowsill, these can be sown at any time of the year. Place in a bright warm spot for best results.



Most of us are hibernating at this time of year but for those of you that want to get going there are a few things that can still be planted at this time of year. A few varieties of onions, such as 'Setton', can be sown under glass in January/February, to provide harvests from late summer. However, you can sow in December to give them a head start, resulting in bigger bulbs. Plant young bulbs outdoors this is done traditionally on the shortest day of the year, usually 21st December. Certain salad leaves/ lettuce such as Winter Gem, Mustard greens and lambs lettuce/salad corn have been specially bred to grow at low temperatures. Sow in an unheated greenhouse or a cold frame or on a windowsill throughout the winter months, great for adding interest to stir fry's or salads.

Asparagus—This is the time of year to put your asparagus to bed. Cut down any dead foliage leaving small stumps above the surface and burn or destroy the debris to get rid of any overwintering asparagus beetles as both the beetle and their larvae will attack stems, foliage and shoots. Make sure your beds are completely weed free and mulch with a good layer of well rotted manure, this will ensure there is plenty of goodness in the soil when new growth starts in spring.



Preparing chickens for winter—The two main enemies of chicken wellbeing in winter are drafts and moisture. The ideal coop should be warm, secure and draft proof, cold drafts can affect your chickens combs, wattles and feet. Check your coops for holes and gaps, whilst it's important not to have any large holes in the coop, it's also just as important not to make your coop air tight as this can cause serious problems such as ammonia build up. Make sure any vents are placed where the cold air will not flow directly onto the birds, towards the roof is preferable. During the wintertime increase the amount of bedding in the coop, some extra straw/bedding will help to keep the temperature up. The important thing to remember during winter is that if the bedding gets damp it will start to go mouldy and cause respiratory issues. It's best to replace the bedding at least twice a week during the

wintertime because a lot of rain makes for damp bedding.

Heating Your Coop

Do not use brooder/heat lamps to heat up the coop. The number of fires that destroy coops and chickens over winter is frighteningly high. A brooder lamp produces a great deal of heat and is really not designed to be used with adult chickens. It takes less than two minutes for a dislodged heat lamp to start bedding smouldering, and less than five minutes for a fire to start. Heat lamps can give off toxic fumes.

A simple 40w light bulb will produce sufficient heat to raise the temperature by a few degrees. Ensure that it cannot be dislodged, fall, be flown into or pecked at, as this, too, can start a fire.

Do not dress your chickens in Jumpers! The jumper confines their feathers and seriously impedes their ability to 'fluff out' and remain warm. It may look cool, but they are seriously detrimental to your birds' winter well-being.

Chickens will naturally stop laying eggs during the winter as their body needs to rest and because of the lack of daylight. If you wish your chickens to lay throughout the winter you will need to maintain their daylight exposure by introducing an artificial light source. Make sure you don't fit this near any flammable sources.

If you are using an artificial light in the coop, make sure your hens are occupied during the early hours with feed and water.

Member feature—Growing leeks and recycling, by Tim Twist from Matlock Derbyshire

Years ago if you wanted to blanch leeks the old gardeners use to put earthenware land drain pipes over the plants. These are becoming quite scarce nowadays and, if you can get your hands on some, expensive.

It has been recommended by some to use the cores from toilet rolls, carpet rolls etc. but cardboard based tubes get wet and fall apart in short order.

I have used plastic downpipe but when this is slid over the leek it forms an earth collar when pushed into the ground which produces a narrowing of the leek plant at that point.

Nowadays I use the hard plastic cores from plastic baling film used by farmers.

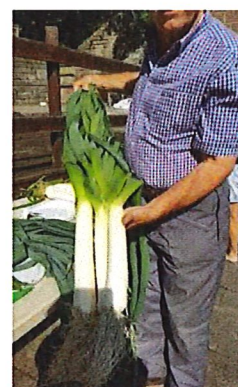
Modern big bale silage/haylage is wrapped in plastic film – we've all seen the black (and white, pink and mauve) round bales in the fields - which is dispensed from a plastic tube on the baler. These plastic tubes are 77cm long and have an internal diameter of 8cm and are an ideal modern replacement for the old clay land drains. Farmers just throw them out as scrap so you are helping with their recycling.

If you have a connection with anyone in the farming community – perhaps you get your manure from one or one delivers to your allotments - they are more than pleased to give them away.

At two and a half feet long they are too big for your leeks and need to be cut in half and then again lengthways. It helps if you have a band saw or circular saw as an ordinary hand saw takes a long time!

After sawing wrap a length of duct tape round both ends. This helps to remove the leek when it is to be lifted without damaging it as the duct tape can be cut and the tube removed.

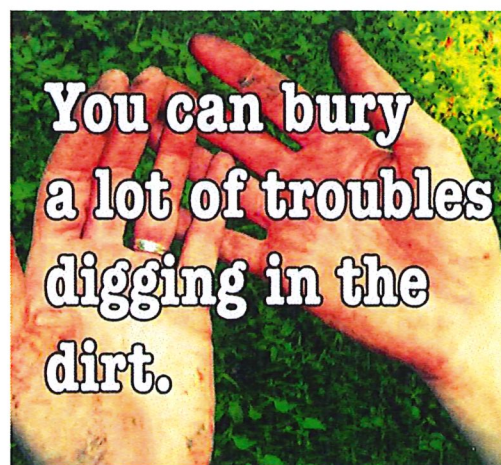
The results are well worthwhile!



Protecting against winter moths—The caterpillars of the winter moth can be very destructive and are responsible for eating holes into the leaves, blossom and fruitlets of fruit trees such as apples, plums and pears as well as the leaves of deciduous trees.

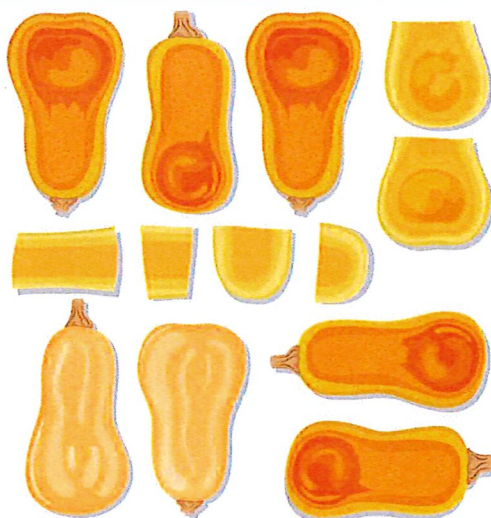


Severe attacks can weaken plants and can affect the yield and strength of the plant. Although you probably won't notice the damage until early spring you should start protecting them in autumn as the wingless female winter moths emerge from pupae in the soil during November and crawl up trunks to lay eggs on the branches. Egg laying can be reduced by placing a sticky grease band on the tree trunks. Continue with this until April to get the best protection from these pests.



Please send any pictures of your site or produce, hints, tips, articles or anything else you think may be of interest to our members to swcaa@btconnect.com

Make a bean trench— Runner beans love a deep trench with plenty of well rotted garden compost or manure dug into the bottom, this produces the richest of soil and helps with moisture retention and feeds the plants as they grow. The bean trench was standard practice back in Victorian times, a winter job that produced the best crops later in the season. Decide where you are going to grow your beans next season (beans love a sunny, well-drained spot) dig a trench about 50cm deep and the same in width. To help retain the moisture line the trench with newspaper and then gradually fill it with all the goodies you would normally add to your compost bin i.e. kitchen waste, grass cuttings bits of torn up cardboard as well as farm manure. Build up the layers just as you would with a compost bin and keep filling it until it reaches soil level (it will naturally drop as it rots down). About a month before you are ready to plant cover the trench with a layer of topsoil and plant directly into that, as soon as their roots hit all that lovely goodness they will be up and 'running' and will provide you with a fantastic crop of beans.



Super Sweet Butternut Squash—If you've not tried roasted butternut squash then you haven't lived. This wonderfully versatile autumnal vegetable comes to life when roasted in the oven or added to soups, stews and even salads. Its easy to cook and superbly satisfying.

Recipe - Stuffed Butternut Squash with Feta

Ingredients

1 butternut squash (2 lb), cut lengthwise in half, seeded,
Olive Oil,
1 onion, chopped,
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped,
4 fresh tomatoes, chopped
1 small courgette, chopped,
half an aubergine chopped (optional)
Crumbled Feta cheese, to your liking
Fresh parsley, chopped

Method

Heat oven to 200°C.

Place squash halves, cut sides up, in a baking dish, brush with a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

Bake for approx. 50 min. to 1 hour or until squash is tender and golden.

Meanwhile, add a little olive oil to a pre heated frying pan and add the onions and garlic and cook on a medium heat for 5 min. Add the rest of the chopped vegetables and cook until soft. Remove from heat.

Spoon the mixture into the squash halves and return to the oven for about 10 mins, sprinkle with the Feta cheese and bake until melty and golden. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with chopped parsley.

You can also add in chopped left over chicken to the veg mix and use different cheeses as a topping.. Pumpkins are just as good roasted in this way too..Yum!



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