



## A NATIONAL SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS AND GARDENERS

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

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Autumn/Winter  
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# NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our Autumn/Winter newsletter. As we start to say goodbye to the end of another gardening year its time to gather in the last of the harvests. The weather here in North Devon is giving us chilly mornings but still some very warm weather during the day, not much rain either but I'm sure that's set to change. Hose pipe bans were and still are in force in places only a few miles from us here in Barnstaple. The little SWCAA allotment has kept us going throughout the summer months, we have had beetroot, broad beans fabulous cos lettuce, French beans, sweetcorn, tomatoes, cucumbers and chillies. I have just finished harvesting the last of the runner beans and a pretty impressive 4ft long Italian courgette! I have done my best not to waste anything I've pickled the beetroot, blanched the runner

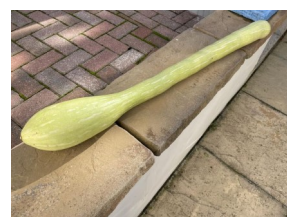
beans and sweetcorn and made some lovely tomato based sauces all for the freezer, its lovely to have the freshness of summer veg with your Sunday roast or Christmas dinner. Like most of us I'm already thinking about what I can do to



improve the patch for next year, I need more space! The soil will definitely need some improvement, although it's a lovely texture it needs more body. We were watering everyday through the very hot spells but it was struggling to retain the moisture. We will be adding plenty of well rotted manure over the winter months and then we will add some of our fabulous homemade compost in the spring.

The new larger composter we have installed is a hive of activity and I've never seen so many worms...This little plot may not be perfect or anywhere near the massive allotments I used to have but the pleasure it has

brought me this year has been immeasurable, to be able to look out of my window and watch it grow everyday always puts a smile on my face and I'm still able to do my bit for the planet. Now to think about what to do with that courgette!! [Ayesha Hooper Director/CEO](#)

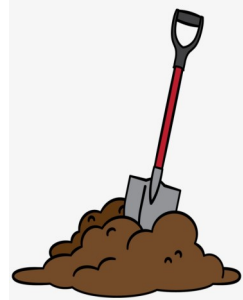


**October tasks on the plot...** Many crops have come to the end of their life this month so now is a good time to have a good tidy up, good plot hygiene is essential for preventing pests a diseases from over wintering. Be sure to avoid putting any diseased foliage into your composting bin.

Give any last tomatoes and chillies a chance to ripen by pulling up the plants and hanging them in a greenhouse or shed.

Pick your pumpkins and squashes before the first frost and store in a cool dry place, these should see you well into the winter months.

It's the last chance to get your onion sets in the ground and garlic bulbs can also be planted now in well drained soil.



Sow broad beans in milder areas of the UK and plant out spring cabbages under netting to protect form pigeons.

Remove yellowing leaves from brassica crops to prevent grey mould developing.

Take cuttings from currant bushes and trim back cranberry plants and cut back the canes of summer fruiting raspberries to leave green canes for next year.

Autumn is also a great time to get some digging done and put down some mulches on unused ground. Turning over the soil allows the rain to penetrate, when this freezes and thaws it breaks up the ground, this is particularly beneficial for clay soils.





**Staying fit and well in the garden** ...The Alexander Technique is a way of becoming more aware of how we use our bodies so we can move more easily without strain. Developed by the Australian actor Frederick Matthias Alexander in the early 20th century, it has long been popular with performers and sports people. As we grow older work and family commitments take up less of our time and many of us look forward to spending more time in the garden or on the allotment. Gardening can be a healthy activity for life if you are sensible with your physical capabilities.

### 5 handy tips for gardeners of any age

- 1 Think before you bend, hinge from the hips and allow your ankles to flex especially when lifting. If you can squatting can be comfortable for long periods and is a great way to maintain lower body flexibility.
- 2 Variety, Digging is hard labour and long periods of this can cause repetitive strain injuries and back pain. Break up the task by choosing lighter jobs that use different muscle groups.
- 3 Be aware of tension in your neck, the Alexander Technique teaches you how to keep your head balanced and poised on top of your spine. A contracted neck and hunched shoulders interfere with natural posture and can also impact balance.
- 4 Organise your shed, replan your storage to reduce any unnecessary twisting, turning or lifting heavy bulky items such as lawnmowers.
- 5 Have a lie down or active rest as the Alexander Technique teaches, this will release any tension that has built up whilst gardening. Lie down for 10 minutes with a firm pillow or cushion under your head, bend your knees and keep your hands in your lap. With your eyes open consciously allow the weight of your body to sink gently into the ground. If you can do this outside all the better as it heightens your awareness of the sounds and smells of your garden. If you struggle bending and crouching down to plant or weed or suffer with back pain then consider raised beds to relieve the strain. Waist high beds eliminate bending altogether and make planting a weeding a pleasure. Vertical gardening can be another solution for gardeners with mobility issues. Cucumbers, runner beans, pumpkins and squashes do well supported by canes or trellis and can give easy access to crops. If you do suffer with any issues raised here it's a good idea to speak to your GP or specialist first to check if the Alexander Technique might be suitable for you. For further information on this visit the NHS website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alexander-technique/>

**Beneficial brassicas.** Watercress and Wasabi have been eaten for centuries and are both members of the brassica family and have been labelled a superfood. Both have that distinctive mustard heat that hits you right in the sinuses and they both grow best in water. One major difference between how these two crops are grown is that watercress is grown in the open air whilst wasabi is grown under black shade netting. Wasabi grown in Japan naturally in mountain streams which are overhung by trees so cannot tolerate high light levels. The other difference is that a watercress crop will be ready in around 6 weeks, whereas wasabi takes around 18 months, this makes it expensive to buy.



**Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*)** Long valued as a health-giving food it contains more calcium than milk and more vitamin C than oranges. It is also rich in iron and other minerals and is easy to grow from seed.

**Wasabi (*wasabia japonica*)** Once just restricted to the plates of Japanese rulers where it was valued for its ability to counteract food poisoning. Wasabi is most commonly used as a paste on sushi or beef or added as a flavouring for peas and nuts. All parts of the plant are edible but the most

prized is the thick stem. Scientists have labelled both watercress and wasabi superfoods because of a high isothiocyanate content. These antioxidants, which may help protect against cancer are broken down during cooking so eating both these raw provide the best benefits.



**Did you know** that comfrey is a member of the Borage and Forget-me-not family and that its leaves contain up to three times more potassium than farmyard manure? Originally imported from Russia in the 19th century by Henry Doubleday a small holder and inventor from Essex who's intention was to turn it into a glue for stamps (this didn't prove to work)



This useful plant is a must on any allotment plot. Its foliage can be harvested and used either as a compost accelerator or made into a potent fertilizer called comfrey tea. Comfrey is easy to grow as it thrives on the poorest of soil, it prefers a good sunny spot where it can be just left to grow as plants can last up to 20 years. It's also a fantastic plant to have on the plot for attracting a wide variety of pollinators.



SWCAA would like to say a big thank you to everyone that voted for us in the Grow Your Own Great British Growing Awards. We didn't win but it was good to be nominated and we were up against the likes of the RHS!

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our individual members and our associations for their loyalty and support, some of you have been with us for many years and our organisation wouldn't be where it is today without you.

#### Broccoli disease -

White blister is a foliar disease caused by fungus-like organisms which are closely related to those causing downy mildew.

On some plants, such as brassicas, white blister and downy mildew can occur together and spread is enhanced by wet weather.

Pale leaf spots form, which eventually develop into blister-like white pustules releasing huge numbers of tiny, powdery spores.

Remove effected shoots, do not add them to your compost heap but instead dispose of them by burning or in the council green waste. As the weather becomes cooler, plants may grow and recover but badly infected plants should be destroyed completely.

Try growing blister resistant varieties such as Green Magic and avoid high levels of manure. Allow wider spacing between your plants to help improve circulation and practice good crop rotation, at least four years between brassica crops is recommended. Keep on top of weeding as species such as shepherd's purse and groundsel are susceptible to white spot so could potentially acts as hosts for the disease.



**How to take hardwood cuttings.** This is a simple easy way to double your plants for free and works well for crops like currants and gooseberries. The best time for taking cuttings is late autumn to mid-winter.

Select strong straight stems, about 30 cm in length from this years growth, avoid anything that looks diseased.

With a sharp pair of secateurs make a slanted, horizontal cut just below a bud. With a sharp knife cleanly trim off some of the buds leaving three or four at the top which will become branches. Lower buds are removed to help improve rooting.

Plant firmly in a pot of compost with added grit to help with drainage and make sure two thirds of the cutting is below the surface for the best root production.

Water in well and place in a cold frame or sheltered position outside.

As the shoots start to grow keep them watered, they will take about a year to grow before being planted out the following autumn.



*Try wild garlic...A delicious plant that grows naturally in the wild, mainly in shady woodland spots. The bulbs, leaves and flowers are all edible. It doesn't have a long growing season but appears around late spring. The best time to plant bulbs is from October through to January. They like to spread so choose a moist, shady spot where you don't mind them taking over.*



#### Top of the crops for overwintering.

**Chard**, provides great colour in the vegetable patch with brightly coloured leaves and stems, bright lights is a popular choice.

Pick regularly to keep it productive use the leaves and stems, steamed, stir fried or in soups and stews.

**Kale**, A winter staple on most allotments, a very hardy crop that requires little

attention throughout the winter months. Lovely with cheesy, creamy, smoked bacon sauce with the Sunday roast or added to a nice chicken stew. Lovely crisped up for a crispy seaweed alternative.

**Leeks**, a very versatile crop with many uses, ready for harvest any time from early autumn to late winter. Bank up the soil around the base and keep weed free for best results.

**Brussel Sprouts**, you either love them or hate them but they make a great crop for the winter allotment. Full of flavour, with many uses.

**Spinach**, full of iron this crops needs little attention over the winter months. Just keep picking over the leaves for a continuous supply until spring.

**Garlic**, an essential crop in our kitchens and the base to many dishes, plant out now as they benefit from a period of cold weather before sprouting to life in the spring. Try halving a whole bulb, brush lightly with olive oil and roast in the oven to soft and slightly golden, this gives the garlic a lovely sweet smoky taste.

**Chinese greens**, try pak choy, Chinese cabbage, mizuna, mibuna and mustard greens, all prefer the cooler weather of the winter months (they tend to bolt in summer). Chinese radish such as daikon also overwinters well.



**Future newsletter content** If there is anybody out there that would like to contribute content for our future newsletters then please get in touch. You could write about your own allotment, your allotment site, any community projects happening on your site or simply about your love of gardening and what you love to grow. If you are interested then please get in touch, we would love to hear from you.



### Warming Pumpkin Chilli

#### Ingredients

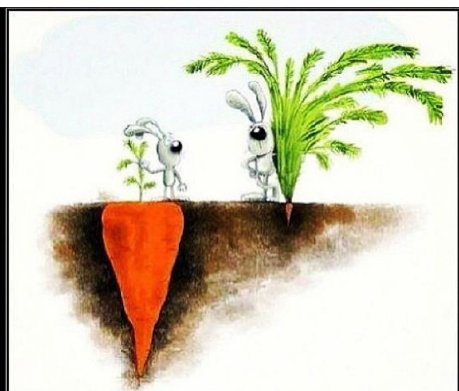
350g Pumpkin or Butternut Squash 1 large onion, 1 red chilli, 3 cloves 1 tsp ground coriander,  
1 tsp ground cumin, 1 tsp dried oregano, ½ tsp sweet paprika  
½ tsp Spicy Paprika,  
225g, passata 75ml water, 1/2 tsp Cocoa Powder,  
1 tin of kidney beans, 1 tbsp Honey, 1 tbsp Cooking Oil, salt and pepper to taste

#### Method

Peel and cut the pumpkin/butternut squash into 2.5cm cubes. Cut the onion into a 5-7mm dice. Slice the chilli into rounds as finely as you can. Finely chop the garlic cloves.

Heat the oil over a medium heat in a medium pan. Add the onion and chilli then cook for 5 minutes. Add in the garlic and cook for a further minute. Add the pumpkin/squash, coriander, paprika, cumin and oregano stir and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Pour in the passata and water followed by the cocoa powder, kidney beans, honey, salt and pepper and stir. Add a lid and cook on a gentle simmer for 55-60 minutes or until the pumpkin/butternut squash is tender. Serve with your choice of rice and a sprinkle of cheese.



**SUCCESS**

it's not always what you see

### 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.

**Help us spread the word** Do you know of a individual, site or association or local council that would benefit from SWCAA's help? Or a council that is looking for insurance for it's plot holders?

If so please pass this newsletter on and help us spread the word about SWCAA and the services that we offer. We have thousands of members across the UK but we are always looking for like-minded individuals and groups to join us.

If you are a group looking to start up a new site or association or are thinking of becoming self managed please contact us, we can provide you with all the information you need to get started.



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