



A NATIONWIDE SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS AND GARDENERS

www.swcaa.co.uk

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NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our Autumn/Winter newsletter Here we are once again heading towards the winter and those quieter months on the allotment it's a time for harvesting, clearing away and putting our plots to bed. The weather has been pretty consistent and it was definitely a change to have a sunny August instead of the constant rain we always seem to get here in North Devon. It also seems to have been another excellent summer for fruit and berry crops, this is definitely reflected in nature with the hedgerows full of sloes, damsons, elderberries and blackberries. I love this time of year, there is always plenty to harvest and we can busy ourselves by making jams and chutney's as well as freezing all the lovely produce to use during the winter months. SWCAA are always interested to see what our members are doing on their allotments if you would like to be included in our future newsletters then please send any pictures of your site or produce, hints, tips, articles, recipes or anything else you think may be of interest to our members to swcaa.cic@outlook.com we would love to hear from you. **Ayesha Hooper, Director/CEO.**



Green manures. Also known in farming as cover cropping or a ley crop green manures create a living blanket that helps to stop weed seeds from germinating and offer protection against soil erosion, especially if your plot is on a slope. Instead of covering the plot in ugly black plastic why not give green manure a go. Green manures have been used in horticulture throughout history, Greeks and Romans wrote about them, and there's evidence of ancient use in South America and China. Most green manures grow over winter when the ground is free of crops. Sow in late summer or autumn to help them absorb nutrients and prevent them being washed away by rain. Dig them in the following spring and they will release nutrients back into the soil. Try grazing rye and winter tares, these are hardy green manures that carry on growing all winter. You can use green manures to cover bare patches of soil in between crops, or during intervals between one crop and the next. For example if you sow fast growing mustard before mid September you be can be digging it in by October. Nitrogen is a valuable plant nutrient, manures grown in the summer such as buckwheat and fenugreek form dense foliage that will effectively suppress weeds whilst green manures belonging to the pea and bean family (legumes) have the additional capacity of fixing nitrogen from the air to their root nodules.

Can green manures be used on a no dig plot? The answer is yes, you can grow green manures such as bristle oats in late summer. Cover with cardboard in spring and the foliage will compost in situ. Alternatively cut it back and add it to your compost bin/heap, leaving roots to enhance soil. Crimson clover will not grow again once the foliage is cut down to ground level. Leave any top growth on the soil surface to rot or put it in compost bin. Of course there are pro's and con's with everything. A thick carpet of green makes a perfect environment for slugs and snails, so you may need to use control measures after green manuring. Decaying green manures can suppress plant growth, allow a month between digging it in and planting or sowing. Club root can be a problem with green manures belonging to the cabbage family so these would have to be factored in to your crop rotation.

SWCAA's allotment site register. 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 you can download from our website and either post or e-mail it back to us. Please make sure you fill in the part to give your permission for the information to be used on our website. New sites and associations are being added all the time so it a good way to see what's available in your area. Please remember to keep the contact information on your allotment site up to date by emailing us with any changes.





Allotments and development. There was some concerning news reported by the Telegraph back in August 2025 which stated that the Deputy Prime Minister has granted councils the authority to sell allotments to finance spending. Reports indicated that Angela Rayner, had given councils the authority to sell assets, including sports fields and allotment sites, to finance spending. Angela Rayner has personally already approved the sale of eight allotment sites across England.

The Allotment Act of 1925 states that the sale of allotment sites require permission from Westminster but given the government's objective of constructing 1.5 million homes, would there be significant resistance to such an approval? Despite protests, allotment sites are already being sold, with many others set for closure. According to the article a government spokesperson has

said that these sites should only be sold if "absolutely necessary." Unfortunately it is a sad fact that once these developments go ahead, it will be a challenge to halt or reverse the process.

The importance of green spaces in our communities

We all know that the need for new homes in the UK has increased significantly, but the idea of using our allotments and playing fields for housing developments would be so damaging for the local communities who benefit from them. These are not brownfield sites, they are precious and need to be protected. There are acres of empty warehouses, industrial estates, factory sites and office blocks that continue to be eyesores that surely would be better options to build on as the infrastructure is already in place.

Why are allotments so important?

This really is a no brainer, the answer is obvious! Allotments have a massive role to play, not only do people want to grow better more interesting fruit and vegetables but they have become a place to escape to, a pleasure away from all the hassle's of everyday life. As the demand for allotments continues to increase and more people become concerned about environmental issues such as carbon footprints, chemicals and genetically modified foods, and with food prices increasing on a daily basis, it's never been a better time to grow your own. Nothing beats the satisfaction of growing something from seed, to put food on your table and being able to say, "I grew that"

With so many new developments having little if no garden space at all, having an allotment is a great way of getting your hands on valuable gardening space. It is a great opportunity to meet fellow allotment holders as well as a relaxing, sociable way to garden. There is always something new to learn, not to mention it being a great stress reliever and that in turn contributes to both physical and mental well-being. Allotments foster crucial community engagement, particularly for vulnerable older generations who are increasingly susceptible to loneliness and social isolation. The National Health Service (NHS) has adopted a "green prescribing" so that patients' have access to the positive impact of gardening.

Allotment sites also play a crucial part in the preservation of wildlife and the environment, whether it be from ponds, bird houses, insect hotels and feeding stations to the wide variety wildlife friendly plants, flowers and vegetables grown on these sites by people trying to do their bit to help. It is worth noting, that if development on these green spaces is given the go ahead, a number of these locations would likely fall under the category of "small development sites." If the government's proposed expansion of the number of small exempt sites is implemented, developers would be also be exempt from paying any compensation for the loss of that biodiversity.

A statement from the National Allotment Society, said that "no changes have been made to the statutory protections afforded to allotments in England and Wales". The NAS is a consultee on the disposal of allotment gardens classified as "Statutory" and added that "statutory allotments cannot be sold or disposed of without following strict legal procedures, including consultation with the NAS. We remain a consultee in such matters and are directly involved in any proposed disposal process. "We continue to monitor proposed disposals closely and works with local authorities, plot holders, and communities to ensure that all statutory protections are upheld and that allotment land is not lost without proper scrutiny and mitigation".

Protection for existing allotments comes from the Allotment Act 1925. Section 8 stipulates that where a local authority has purchased or appropriated land for use as allotments, it must not sell, use or dispose of the land for any purpose other than use for allotments without the consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Only statutory allotments benefit from the Section 8 protections. Temporary allotments or privately owned allotment land does not benefit from Section 8 protections.

If you are concerned about your allotment site, SWCAA can help, we can provide you with information on how to fight the closure of your site. Just get in touch.

Jobs to do in October, November and December We can probably expect the first frosts in October and this month is also all about tidying the allotment and preparing it for next year. It is a great opportunity to clear and weed those beds and to add a good layer of compost or manure as well as adding lime where it is needed. It is also a good time for planning your crop rotations and allocating beds for next year. Below are crops you can plant this month and into November/December. There's still time to plant autumn garlic. Plant the bulbs outside in prepared, well-drained, fertile soil containing plenty of well-rotted manure. The ['Autumn Lovers Collection'](#) is a good choice as it contains four varieties suitable for autumn planting. For colder areas try ['Kingsland Wight'](#) this stores well and has a great flavour. Both are available from Sutton seeds (order through the SWCAA seed scheme in our members area for great discounts).



Continue to plant out your overwintering onions and shallots in well drained soil or raised beds. Cover the sets with netting, to stop the birds digging them out. Hardy peas can be sown in October and November for an early crop next spring. Sow direct in well drained soil in a sheltered spot. Protect with fleece or cloches as unprotected peas are unlikely to survive the winter. Protect cabbages, sprouts and broccoli plants with netting to keep the birds off. Try sowing a winter leaf salad in a cold frame for fresh leaves in the coming months. Wicked Winter, or Winter Mix are good varieties, both are low maintenance and easy to grow.

Sow a hardy spring onion like White Lisbon in containers or grow bags in the greenhouse to harvest throughout the winter. October is the month to start sowing cabbage and cauliflower to overwinter under cloches or in a cold frame for extra early crops next year. Sow overwintering broad beans in seed trays or modules in a cold frame for early crops in late spring. October is also the perfect time for moving fruit bushes and trees, and for planting new bare root fruit trees and soft fruit bushes. Their roots benefit from the warmth that remains in the soil before the winter frosts arrive. Avoid planting into frozen or waterlogged soil.

Harvest any remaining potatoes and sort through them before storing for use in autumn and winter. Any that have blemishes or damage should be kept separate and eaten first. Harvest early varieties of leeks as they are less hardy than the winter types.



Make sure to harvest all of your summer crops this will give your onions, shallots and garlic plenty of time to dry before storing.

Late autumn is the ideal time to plant out a new strawberry bed in well drained soil.

In December sow sweet pea seeds on a warm windowsill in a cold greenhouse. Keep them a little on the dry side over winter and pinch out the middles to encourage more growth when they start getting too tall. If you've grown potatoes for Christmas, harvest them as soon as possible unless they're in pots or under cover.

Autumn and winter cabbages, brussels sprouts, leeks, Jerusalem artichokes and swedes should be ready to harvest too. Keep picking kale. Harvest parsnips as you need them, they should be lovely and sweet now.



Oven Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Bacon—serves 4-6

Ingredients 1½ pounds Brussels sprouts, 2 tablespoons olive oil, Salt and freshly ground black pepper 6 bacon slices, cut into 1 inch pieces

Method Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Clean and trim Brussels sprouts and cutting any large sprouts in half through the core. Add the Brussels sprouts to a large bowl and drizzle with olive oil, tossing to evenly coat. Place the Brussels onto a large baking sheet or shallow casserole dish in a single layer. Season with salt and pepper. Then sprinkle the bacon pieces over the Brussels sprouts. Roast in the oven for 20 to 30 minutes, turning halfway through the cooking time, until golden and lightly caramelized. The trick is to roast them in the oven at a high enough temperature so they caramelize and are golden and crispy on the outside, and tender, but not mushy on the inside.

Make a compost pit. Compost pits are a great way to recycle your raw vegetables, scraps and shredded paper and improve your soil. Dig a pit at least 30cm in depth and 60cm width and then line it with shredded paper (not glossy), this helps keep in the moisture. Add your waste to the pit in layers, covering each one with some of the soil that you dug out of the pit in the beginning. Even if you already have a composting system in place having a trench is a great addition to your plot and great for getting rid of that extra waste you might otherwise throw away. Despite best intentions a compost heap can end up dominating a neglected corner of the plot, although it can be moved chances are you'll never get round to it, but once a pit is full you can dig another one where ever you please. A dedicated bean trench can be sited to tie in with your crop rotation system. A pit also means your less likely to attract unwanted pests, as covering it with a blanket of soil should mask the scent enough to keep them away.





Seed Schemes SWCAA are pleased to be able to offer our members access to discounted seeds. These schemes provided by Suttons and Kings seed scan be very beneficial to associations.

The new discount codes for 2025/26 are now available in the members area of our website and the new catalogues are out now and can be ordered direct from the seed suppliers.

The schemes are not run by SWCAA so you need to contact the suppliers directly who will then send you as many catalogues as you need. Order forms are also available to download from our website. Please remember to make sure your discount code or order number is displayed clearly when ordering. You will need to be SWCAA members to use our schemes. The Association/Society representative or individual will need to use their e-mail address (previously registered with us) and membership number to enter our members area for further information on these schemes. If you do not have access to the internet or would prefer to receive the information via post please do not hesitate to contact us.

Renewing your Membership A note to associations. When your membership is due for renewal we will email you with your renewal list as an excel spreadsheet a month before the renewal is due. Our admin system is set up to work along side these spreadsheets which makes the renewal process an easy one from our end. The lists are in alphabetical order by first name and the cancel membership column is there so we know at a glance who needs to be removed. You can add any new members to the bottom of the spreadsheet. Please, especially to our larger groups can you use and edit this spreadsheet. We understand that some associations like to send us their own lists and in the past that wasn't a problem but now we have so many members, using the spreadsheet we send you helps save us a lot of time.

Where possible please pay the fees via bank transfer. Banks are now charging non profit organisations like ourselves fees for paying in cheques. We do of course understand that this is not possible for everyone. 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.

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.

How Deep Do I Plant My Bulbs?



Avoiding onion neck rot Whilst most vegetable disease shows itself whilst the plant is still growing, onion neck rot only becomes obvious after you've dried and stored your crop. It is a form of botrytis and usually appears after around 6 weeks in storage. The rot starts at the neck of the onion and slowly spreads to the whole bulb, turning it grey and inedible.



The disease is present in the soil so good crop rotation should be practiced each year. Try to harvest the bulbs in sunny weather, make sure they are thoroughly dry and stored in a cool dry place.



Did you know that it was the Irish that brought the tradition of carving pumpkins into Jack O'Lanterns to America and that the original Jack O'Lantern was not a pumpkin! Pumpkins did not exist in Ireland. Ancient Celtic cultures carved turnips on All Hallow's Eve, and placed an ember in them, to ward off evil spirits.

Help 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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