

NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2008

A LETTER FROM OUR EDITORS :- (Becky & Margaret)

Firstly we would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a "HAPPY NEW YEAR" and let's hope that the weather is a little better than 2007, a little rain, plenty of sunshine and an abundance of crops from your gardens.

We would like to thank all our members who attended our "Flower and Vegetable show" in September, as an exhibitor or visitor, it was lovely to see you. Those of you who didn't come – you missed an excellent show. The members of the committee work hard all year preparing and organising for the "Show" and maybe some of you don't know that it is for YOU (our members) that we do this. You don't have to be an expert to enter, I'm sure most of you can bake, take photographs or have children/grandchildren who would like to come along and arrange a vase of flowers – so come on members, we do our stuff, please try and do your part to help us to help you this September.

We would also like to say a big "thank you" to everyone who sponsored a class at the show, we are very grateful. We need more of you to sponsor a class this year (maybe in memory of a loved one) and it is easy to do just that by calling in at the hut and putting your name on the list, lots of classes only cost £3.20 to sponsor.

HELP NEEDED !!!!

We are very short of volunteers this year and are looking for someone with a little time on their hands. Just 2 hours on a Saturday or Sunday morning once a month is all that we need from you. Unfortunately the pay is non-existent but the job is very rewarding and we do put on a marvellous party for all our helpers at Christmas time.

COACH TRIPS

Last year we organised 3 trips.

The first to Erddig :- It was a lovely day out and everyone enjoyed the visit to the house and garden. The second was to Haddon Hall near Bakewell - we stopped in Bakewell for an hour and then moved on to the house, but most of you saw all there was to see in no time at all and it was decided to go back to Bakewell for another look round. Lastly the trip to Southport Flower Show - we had a fine day although the weather started out a little uncertain, it brightened up and we had a great day at the show.

This years' outings are as follows :-

Saturday 26 th April	"HARROGATE SPRING SHOW"	cost per person :- £19.50
Saturday 14 th June	"BLISTS HILL AT IRONBRIDGE" A Victorian town with many interesting things to see	cost per person :- £16.75 £16.15 (60 plus)
Saturday 12 th July	"NESS GARDENS & NORTON PRIORY"	cost per person :- £14.70 £13.25 (60 plus)

These prices are subject to change if entrance fees are raised in the new year

MOVING HOME?

Tips on taking your plants with you.

Make sure that any plants in large, heavy containers are not cracked or corroded (if metal), as they may fall apart during the move.

Use cane supports to protect tall plants from snapping.

Outdoor plants - check the soil at your new home to see if it is suitable for plants which you are planning to move.

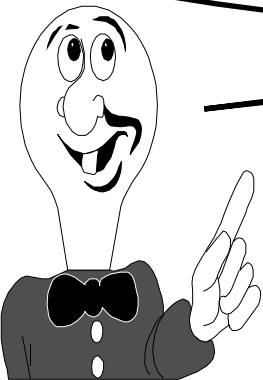
If time allows, dry and store seeds and depending on the season, dig up dormant bulbs and roots.

To avoid moving cuttings in damp, heavy soil use a lightweight potting compost.

Lift large plants and trees a week or two before your move and put into pots, wrap the roots in hessian sacks and tie with string.

At your new home, dig a hole and cover the plant's roots until you are ready to plant properly.

When you finally replant, use a generous quantity of well-rotted compost in the bottom of the planting hole.



DID YOU KNOW THAT STINGING NETTLES CAN ALSO BE USEFUL AS WELL AS A NUISANCE ?

Latin Name :- *Urtica dioica* . Also known as Perennial Nettle, Devil's Plaything and Jinny Nettle
Most people consider nettles to be nothing but a nuisance in the garden, but their leaves have a long history as food, particularly in the north of Europe. They were once raised under glass in Scotland as a vegetable, and they were eaten in Ireland also. In the north of England, nettles were considered purifying after the stodge of winter and spring was heralded by a good mutton broth liberally sprinkled with chopped fresh nettles to get rid of any lingering winter ailments. They are also very good for the blood because they contain numerous chemicals, including iron, histamine and formic acid (the stinging element) which do cleanse the blood, have a generally toning effect on the whole body and can help relieve the symptoms of rheumatism and sciatica.

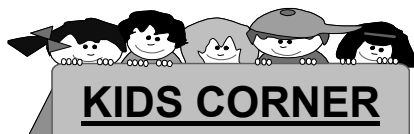
To use nettles in cooking, pick the young shoots – with gloves on – no later than May, thereafter they become tough and bitter. To make a soup first melt 2 oz butter in a saucepan, add 4 oz chopped onion and cook until golden, then add 1 lb of fresh nettle leaves along with 1 pint of water, bring to the boil and simmer for about 15 minutes, until cooked. Liquidise and put through a sieve and serve immediately with some crusty bread.

NETTLES also make a good tea, add 1 oz of dried nettle leaves to 9 fl.oz boiling water and leave to infuse for 10 minutes, then strain through a fine sieve adding honey if you need to sweeten.

CLEANING WINDOWS ??? Always wear protective gloves for this. Put 1 ¾ pints of water into a bucket with a little vinegar, Take a bunch of nettles and dip them into the water, crunch them up and quickly rub the windows with them. Dry the windows with crumpled pieces of newspaper. This works a treat. TRY IT.

LIQUID MANURE This takes a while to make, but it is worth it in the end. You will need 2lb 4oz fresh nettle leaves 2 tbsp. talcum powder (or fullers earth) and 17 ½ pints of water. Chop the nettles and put into a large bucket, then add the talcum powder or fullers earth and pour in the cold water. Leave to infuse, stirring once a day and after 3 days fermentation should begin. The liquid manure will be ready to use after 10 days when the liquid darkens and the solids have settled at the bottom. Pour the liquid through a sieve (making sure the wife doesn't use it any more) and into plastic bottles with caps. When ready to use it dilute the liquid with water (1:10) and pour it onto the soil around your plants. Use it every 2 weeks or more if there has been a lot of rain.

DON'T LEAVE THIS BREWING NEAR THE HOUSE, IT IS RATHER UNPLEASANT. (but very effective)



We would like to have a lot more children interested in what we do and have decided to include a “Kids Corner” in the newsletter.

If any children would like to send us an article for the next newsletter or if there is something you would like to see here, or at the Annual Show, PLEASE TELL US, THAT WOULD BE GREAT.

For children up to and including the age of twelve.
A colouring competition with a bite.

First - colour the drawing of apples.

Then - list ten varieties of apples

(Mum, Dad, Grandma or Granddad may help).

Finally - bring your entry to the Hut with your name, address and telephone number below by 14th March

The entries that have ten correct varieties will then be judged by the editors and the best coloured drawing will win tickets to the cinema for a family of four, (donated by our editors).

The lucky winner will be notified on 21st March

Name

Address

Tel. No.....



A POEM FOR THE OLDER ONES AMONGST US.

THE LETTER

Just a line to say I'm living,
That I'm not among the dead.
Though I'm getting more forgetful
And more mixed up in my head.
For sometimes I can't remember
When I stand at foot of stair,
If I must go up for something
Or I've just come down from there.
And before the fridge so often
My poor mind is filled with doubt,
Have I just put food away – or
Have I come to take it out?
And there's times when it is dark out,
With my nightcap on my head,
I don't know if I'm retiring,
Or just getting out of bed.
So – if it is my turn to write to you
There's no need in getting sore
I may think that I have written
And I don't want to be a bore.
So remember I still love you
And I wish that you were here.
But now that it is nearly mail time
I must just say goodbye dear.
There I stood beside the post-box
With a face so very red
Instead of mailing you my letter
I have opened it instead.

THE ST.PETERS' SCHOOL PROJECT (Fred)

The children of today are the gardeners of the future.
It is some time now since the Association first began encouraging children from St. Peters' School to become interested in gardening. The methods and personalities have changed a little over the years, but the aim has not i.e. to create an active interest in young minds for the marvels of nature and the benefits that can be achieved.
This year for the first time, children from St. Peters have not only produced food that they have been able to eat in school but also exhibit some of their very fine produce in our Annual Show at St. Aelreds' School.
They planted Runner Beans, Broad Beans, French Beans, Marrow, Potatoes and Sweet Corn. In what has been a very poor year for a considerable number of more experienced gardeners, the children achieved a very fair degree of success, though some plants matured late or somewhat poorly. At the beginning of the new school year in September some fourteen kilos of Runner Beans were delivered to the school canteen along with some courgettes and a couple of cucumbers (for fun). According to the school staff, these were all eaten with gusto by the children.
After a hurried meeting with one of the parents, a representative of the class duly appeared at St. Aelreds' School Hall to complete the entry and staging process in good time for the show on behalf of the whole class.
The entries were a marrow, a plate of French Beans and a plate of Runner Beans. Sadly the very creditable entries didn't achieve a prize but it is hoped that this extension from 'growing to showing' will further kindle their interest.
To the children from St. Peters' School our merry band of gardeners would like to say "Well Done !"

GROW YOUR OWN

On Saturday the Friday 21st March we are having an open morning at the hut in Rob Lane, when some of our committee members will demonstrate how to "grow your own" vegetables in pots for those who have limited space in the garden. It is amazing how many potatoes you can get out of 1 container and there's nothing more tasty than eating your own grown vegetables – no preservatives and definitely no colours added. What a bonus! So come along and join us, bring friends and enjoy a hot cuppa with a piece of cake and spend the morning with us. It will be lovely to see you all.

WE ARE OPEN GOOD FRIDAY AT THE HUT 10.30-12.00

IN THE KITCHEN

The recipe from our resident cook is so easy to do and also very healthy.

FRUITY MINCE Serves 2

7 oz butternut squash, cut into small chunks,
2 oz green beans, 1 medium onion, finely chopped,
5 oz pork mince, 200gm can chopped tomatoes,
2 tbsp. tomato puree, 2 tbsp sultanas,
1 teasp mixed herbs. ¼ pint vegetable stock

METHOD :-

Bring a small pan of water to the boil, add the butternut squash and green beans and simmer for 5 minutes, then drain.
Place the onion and mince into a different pan and fry for 4-5 minutes, until the mince is browned.
Add the remaining ingredients, including the butternut squash and beans, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes, season well and serve with rice.
The fruit makes this dish really tasty and a little different. I also added a few chopped, dried apricots which makes a pleasant change.
ENJOY !!!



THE PLANT DOCTOR

(Rob Williams)

Well, wasn't last year very problematical for gardeners but one which has been very successful for the most common garden pests - slugs and snails.

Now is the time to call upon the tried and tested methods of control ready for next season - this has been the most common problem at the hut surgery and the advice I have offered is to use organic methods of control whenever possible.

Here are some suggested methods to help control them organically:-

Slugs and snails dislike certain aromatic plants and will avoid areas of the garden where these are planted - Common Sage (*Salvia Officinalis*) is very effective, as are Scarlet Sage (*Salvia Splendens*), Thyme (*Thymus*) and Hyssop (*Hyssopus Officinalis*) to name but a few.

Other barriers include porridge oats, beer traps and human hair.

Another frequently asked question has been about the control of Aphids including greenfly, blackfly and whitefly (commonly found in the greenhouse).

Planting garlic cloves among your flowers and rose bushes will keep them aphid free or you can make a solution of crushed garlic in water and spray the infested plants - this will repel the pests.

For the greenhouse, a bowl of crushed laurel leaves infused in hot water will act as a barrier to keep these pests at bay - this solution may be used instead of citronella candles when eating in the garden. (Laurels contain a natural glyphosate).

An increasing problem is the grey squirrel which takes delight in raiding pots (eating the spring bulbs) and other areas of the garden where they will eat any fruit that you have grown.

The answer is simple - squirrels hate cats - just sprinkle the contents of the litter tray near to where you don't want the squirrels and this will keep them at bay.

Finally, ant infestation was a huge problem last year.

An excellent solution is to use ordinary baking yeast which is lethal to ants.

Mix a small amount of yeast with a sugar solution and spread the mixture on pieces of bark then place these around the areas to be protected.

I hope you will try these simple, natural methods of control which will benefit our fragile environment.

TALKS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

31st January	AGM	
28th February	Peter Holden	Grow it, Pick it, Cook it, Eat it, Version 1, Rebekah's Veg
27th March	Peter Moth	Bonsai For Beginners
24th April	John Steedman	Rockerries and Ponds
29th May	Paul Hamlyn	The Good, The Bad and The Fungi
26th June	Lois Clarke	Flower Arranging - Ideas for the Show.
30th October	Peter Holden	Christmas Is Coming (Making a holly wreath with historical myths and Christmas traditions from around the world)

SHOWS AND QUESTION TIME

Monday	26th May	Willow Park Rural Craft Display,
Saturday	6th September	Newton-Le-Willows Gardeners' Flower and Vegetable Show
Wednesday	1st October	Womens Institute (Golborne Parkside Sports & Community Club, Rivington Avenue)

We are providing a Question Time Panel together with Don Sutcliffe from Whiston gardening club.

OBITUARIES

Unfortunately 2007 has seen the sad demise of some of our members.

VINNIE BIRCHALL from Ashton in October 2006

ROY HALLIWELL an allotment gardener at Rob Lane in September 2007

SUE LEVER (our coach courier and a volunteer worker in the poly-tunnel) in August 2007.

Sue's husband donated a cup in her memory and it was presented at this year's show to the competitor with the best pot plant. It was won by Stuart Clensy.

Just a reminder that your 2008 fees are due and can be paid at the hut : -

Sundays from 6th January to 9th November between 10.30 and 12.00

Saturdays from 26th January to 27th September between 10.30 and 12.00

Wednesday evenings from 2nd April to 18th June between 19.00 and 20.00

Membership is only £3 (£2 if you are over 60) All cards to be shown when buying from the hut

E-mail address ? - give it to us - it would greatly reduce the cost of sending out information.

Don't forget to visit our Web Site at www.nlwgardeners.com