

Chairman's Report

Welcome to our summer newsletter. We English do like to talk about the weather and what a strange start it has been to the year. The warm weather at the end of April started everything of growing well, only to be hit by that sharp frost in early May, which looks to have killed off at least one of my newly planted pear trees and blackened many young leaves & buds on other plants. Things are just starting to recover now in early June but it is still not exactly warm? Well as they say in my native Yorkshire -- 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out'

Our Rob Lane sales hut has again been very busy during the first half of the year. For many who are regular visitors you may have noticed that Fred Dickinson is not around as often as he used to be in previous years, although still remains heavily involved. Looking to the future we would like to introduce someone new to the management activities for the hut. This maybe with one person taking on the role as Hut Manager which is a heavy commitment for one person or more likely if there are two or three people trained up we could establish some type of rota system or split responsibilities. So if you have some free time on a Saturday/Sunday morning and feel you could help please do come along and have a chat.

Last year the giant pumpkin and marrows one of our committee members Malcolm Greenhalgh grew and were on display at the September show became quite a talking point. As the plot at the side of the hut is no longer maintained by us, this year we are going to try and grow another at Kenyon Hall Farm. They were planted out in first week of June so if you do visit Kenyon Hall keep an eye open to see how they are developing. Hopefully we will have another specimen for a guess the weight competition in September.

GROW-YOUR-OWN -- PEA-SHOOTS and WATERCRESS

Go to any posh restaurant and, on top of your starter or main course, you will almost certainly see little pea-shoots. I use them as part of a salad along with watercress and the usual lettuce and salad leaves. They are very easy to grow and are a useful way to finish off that packet of pea seeds left over after you have sown a row or two. Any pea seeds can be used (garden, mangetout/sugar-snap, even dry peas bought from the supermarket). Don't grow too many at once as, once they reach about 2-3" tall they get tough. Take a shallow plant pot or half-tray, put in compost and place the seeds so that they are almost touching. Cover with compost and water. Harvest with scissors when no more than 1½" tall.

Watercress is a doddle, buy a bag from the supermarket (try to get English). Take some of the longer shoots and put them in a jar of water, eat the rest. The cuttings will root quickly in the water and plant them 6" apart (I plant them in an old fish-box). Water well (they don't need to be in water!) and keep in a sunny spot. Within a month there will be a mass of watercress shoots; enjoy in a salad or make watercress soup. Take cuttings when they are getting a bit weary, for your next box and a box started in October will give you fresh watercress for Christmas.

Malcolm Greenhalgh

Top tip for keeping Cabbage White butterflies off cabbage and Carrot Fly from carrots. Simply drop 3 or 4 small cloves of garlic into a 50 gallon water butt and leave to float for a couple of days, use the garlic water to spray the vegetables. You could also try growing some Nasturtiums near cabbages because the butterflies love the flowers and they will avoid your cabbages

RECIPE

Chocolate and Guinness cake

125g butter	100ml Guinness	40g cocoa powder
200g light brown sugar	100ml whole milk	2 large eggs
175g plain flour	¾ tsp bicarbonate of soda	dark chocolate to decorate

For the cream cheese frosting 100g soft butter 200g icing sugar
100g full fat cream cheese, (don't be tempted to use light cream cheese) 1 tsp vanilla extract

Method

- 1) Preheat the oven to 180c, fan 160c or gas 4. Lightly grease a 900g loaf tin that measures about 20cm x 9cm x 8cm deep, line with a strip of baking paper, so that the excess will hang over the sides of the tin.
 - 2) Put the butter into a pan and place over a medium heat until melted. Remove from heat and add the Guinness and the cocoa powder, whisking together until smooth. Whisk the sugar, milk and eggs into the Guinness mixture.
 - 3) In a bowl, mix together the flour, bicarbonate of soda and the ¼ teaspoon of salt. Add the Guinness mixture and whisk briefly until smooth and combined. Pour the mixture into the prepared tin and bake in the oven for 40-45 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean. Allow the cake to cool in the tin for 15 minutes before carefully lifting out. Cool on a wire rack.
 - 4) To make the frosting, put the butter into a medium bowl and, using an electric mixer, beat until smooth and creamy. Add the icing sugar in 3 stages, mixing until combined. Once all the icing sugar has been added, beat it on high speed until it's light and fluffy. Add the cream cheese and vanilla and beat until just fully combined. Don't beat for too long or else the frosting will become too loose.
 - 5) To decorate, spread the frosting over the top of the cooled cake and finish with some chocolate shavings. Make these by running a flat-bladed vegetable peeler along the chocolate bar.
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Go wild with garlic

If you have ever grown or seen wild garlic in the woods, don't be afraid to use it. The leaves taste of onion and the flowers are edible too. You can add the flowers to salads or use them as a garnish. It's also good to use the leaves, sliced, in risottos or scrambled eggs, or you could try this tip -- take sliced wild garlic leaves and seasoning, mixed into softened butter, and then roll it in baking paper to form a sausage and chill it. It is magical on grilled chops.

This is very sexist but so funny.

This is my top tip for summer digging

- Slip on some old clothes,
 - Slap on an old and large hat
 - Slap on plenty of sun cream
 - Hold a trowel in one hand and a long cold drink in the other
 - Tell the man where to dig
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THE HUT COMING SOON

Please keep an eye open for e-mails from Silvana requesting that you choose which winter onion and garlic varieties you will need for autumn planting and let Fred know the quantities, please.

The same thing applies with the potato, summer onion and shallot varieties -- don't get caught out !!

Send your orders to Fred, please (by e-mail to indewoods@talktalk.net) pre-ordering helps avoid disappointment.

POEM -- My Garden

I love to work in my garden, although sometimes I find it a chore
I'm able to see the time coming, when I can't do the work any more.

In winter the garden seems silent, with sparse colour and not much on show,
But then spring awakens, buds open and so many plants start to grow.

The garden is lovely in springtime, when snowdrops and daffodils glow,
Yet it's lovelier still in summer when baskets and tubs are on show.

When autumn arrives, it's cooler, but trees are a sight to behold,
Leaves yellow or orange all falling, some changing from green to gold.

I hope that I'll still dig my garden, and pray that I'm able to tend,
Please God, keep me mobile and active, so I still find it easy to bend.

Some information about birds nesting sites

Did you know that Robins and Wrens often nest in strange places? Greenhouses, sheds, hanging baskets, a Wrens nest has even been seen in the pocket of a cardigan left on a washing line.

Privacy is important to Robins – they will desert the nest if they are disturbed during the nest building or egg-laying process.

Robins are good parents, but they don't limit this to their own brood. There have been reports of this special bird feeding the chicks or fledgling of other species.

Hard-working Blue Tits and Great Tits deliver more than 10,000 caterpillars to their babies when young.

The prize for most faithful partner goes to the Blackbird. They tend to separate for winter, but when the breeding season arrives, they often return to their previous partner.

Blackbirds also like a familiar nest – they rear 2-3 broods a year, nesting well into August and often use the same nest year after year.

Sparrows collect dry grass or straw for their nests, lining the nesting chamber with feathers, hairs, string or paper. These cheeky little birds sometimes pluck feathers from live pigeons.

TRIPS

We went to the Harrogate Spring Show in April and found it to be a great show. We took a full coach and the weather was very kind to us initially, but later on in the day it went rather cold, so it was time to head on back to the coach. Everyone said what a lovely day they had.

In May, along with the retired police officers, we went on a 5 day break to Normandy. We visited Monet's Garden at Giverny, it was a great experience, so much to see. It was just a pity that it was a Bank Holiday in France, so it was rather full of people. His house is fantastic and a joy to wander around the rooms. The next day saw us at Bayeux to see the tapestry and other attractions around the town; we called in at a Calvados producing farm on the way home, just for a taste. The other 2 days we spent going to the Normandy Beach Landing area and the museum at Arromanche and visited the Pegasus Bridge. It was truly a moving experience and an eye-opener in the fact that the cliffs on the coast are so high, it makes you wonder how on earth they got up them loaded down with equipment and under fire. All in all, a very memorable holiday was had by all.

Here's to the next one, which is a trip to Keukenhoff bulb fields in Holland and the city of Brugge, if you would like to join us please ring or E-mail me for further details.

HERBS

I grow lots of Basil in pots in my polytunnel. It is so easy, well it must be if I can do it successfully. Use a good compost, fill a 5inch pot with it and sprinkle yours seeds on top, then cover with a little compost, water well and leave until ready to use. Bring into your kitchen when ready to use and just leave it on your window sill.

Other herbs to try:-

Rosemary is an evergreen and good for putting with roast meats and vegetables.

Thyme is a very easy to grow evergreen herbs and is good for any sort of savoury dish.

Marjoram This is a great herb for the insects and can be divided at the end of each year.

Mint - Applemint makes great mint sauce and is so easy to make, just add vinegar and sugar.

Sage Easy to grow from seed, and is useful for attracting insects to their bright blue flowers.

Bay - This is great for stews and casseroles and a simple cutting grows quite quickly into a bush.

Chives - This is great on salads and the flowers can also be used in your fresh salad - cut back hard after flowering to encourage new growth.

Herbs are great sown in pots by your back door , so no matter what the weather, when you need herbs. just open the back door, scissors in hand - and snip away. Great.

FLOWER AND VEGETABLE SHOW 2015

Hello all. I hope that you are already looking forward to the show, and are planning what you are going to enter! Hopefully the weather will warm up a little before the day!

Our show is at **Penkford School** again (Wharf Road, Newton-le-Willows) and is back to our usual earlier date of **Saturday 12 September**, doors open to the public at **2pm**. We would be delighted to see you there as an exhibitor or visitor – it's a lovely afternoon out!

As well as flowers and vegetables, other very popular classes are:

PHOTOGRAPHY – Transport, Garden(s), Stile

COOKERY – Jam, fruit jelly, chutney, mincemeat and marzipan tea-bread, lemon butterfly cakes

ART – Mountains and/or moorland

CHILDREN'S CLASSES –fruit/vegetable animal, arranged flowers, cookery – peanut butter biscuits

Don't forget that we have classes especially for novices!

The show schedule is ready, and can be downloaded from the website, or pick one up from the hut.

You can also sponsor a class to help make sure that our show continues in the future.

From just £6 it's a great gift for a keen gardener, a way to show support for our club, or a lovely way to remember someone.

If you don't want to sponsor a specific class we would welcome any donation. Just call into the hut or text or call me on 07415 942418.

You can now follow us on Twitter at:

@showsec_nlwga

Happy gardening,

Chantelle Seaborn, Show Secretary