

# **NEWTON-LE-WILLOWS GARDENERS' ASSOCIATION SPRING NEWSLETTER**

## **2012**

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### **CHAIRMANS REPORT**

A Happy New Year to you all and welcome to a new gardening year. 2011 was a busy year for the committee and all the volunteers who I should like to thank for all their hard work and support in their various roles.

As I write this report it is early autumn and it is raining and windy, not gardening weather at all. A week or so ago it was lovely and sunny and it made you want to spend as much time as possible outside.

This year we have made some further improvements to the hut by installing an electric shutter over the doors. The raised beds have been completed and the paths started. We have managed to grow potatoes, beans, lettuce, kale, tomatoes and leeks in the raised beds at the side of the hut.

The commemorative bird bath has been installed and dedicated to the late Richard Jeacock, our past chairman and vice president.

The annual show in September was at our new venue, Penkford School, who gave us a warm welcome. The show was a success although the number of exhibitors was down on the record numbers experienced in 2010. Please note in your diaries that the 2012 show will be on 8<sup>th</sup> September at Penkford School.

I should like to thank Ursula Harrison, who is stepping down as show secretary, for all her hard work over the past years.

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and also during the year at the hut and the talks.

Good gardening in 2012.

Tony Addison

[Knowledge is, knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.](#)

### **Review of 2011 Flower and Vegetable show**

Our annual show had a new venue this year, bringing with it new problems to solve – where were we going to display all the classes, would we have sufficient room, would people come to a new venue?

Well, all the worries were of no avail. I couldn't say the day went without a hitch, but no one seemed to notice and the feedback we received on the venue was excellent, so many thanks to Penkford school for hosting the event and we look forward to being there next year.

We had a good range of flowers, vegetables and fruit - somehow the exhibitors always manage whatever the type of summer. Well done to everyone.

I hope you are all looking to the new growing season and wish you every success.

Ursula Harrison (Show Secretary)

Another year has passed and we're all a little older.  
Last summer felt hotter and winter seems much colder.

I rack my brain for happy thoughts to put down on my pad,  
But lots of things that come to mind just make me kind of sad.

There was a time not long ago when life was quite a blast.  
Now I fully understand about 'Living in the Past'.

We used to go to friends' homes, football games and lunches.  
Now we go to therapy, to hospitals, and after-funeral brunches.

We used to have hangovers, from parties that were gay.  
Now we suffer body aches and sleep the night away.

We used to go out dining, and couldn't get our fill.  
Now we ask for doggie bags, come home and take a pill.

We used to travel often to places near and far.  
Now we get backaches from riding in the car.

That, my friend is how life is, and now my tale is told.  
So, enjoy each day and live it up... Before you're too damn old!!

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### **Talks for 2012 are as follows:-**

26 <sup>th</sup> January	A.G.M At Newton-le-Willows Cricket Club on Crow Lane
23 <sup>rd</sup> February	Derek Williams – Water Gardens and Alpacas
29 <sup>th</sup> March	George Pilkington talking on Composting including worm composting.
26 <sup>th</sup> April	David Tideswell The Blue Tit: raising a family.
24 <sup>th</sup> May	Jacqui Brocklehurst – Eat my garden
28 <sup>th</sup> June	Andy Gosney – Winemaking
8 <sup>th</sup> November	Jacqueline Iddon – Christmas in the garden

### **Hut Opening Dates and Times**

Saturdays	7 <sup>th</sup> January – 27 <sup>th</sup> October 10.30 – 12.00
Sundays	8 <sup>th</sup> January – 28 <sup>th</sup> October 10.30 – 12.00
Wednesdays	4 <sup>th</sup> April – 20 <sup>th</sup> June 7.00 – 8.00

### **Trips for 2012**

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May we are going to Alnwick Gardens.** It will be a 2 day trip, leaving Newton at 8am for Alnwick. An overnight stay at the "Holiday Inn" in Seaton Burn, Newcastle ( including 3 course dinner, bed and breakfast.) We will then call at Beamish and spend the day there before travelling back to Newton.

The cost is £79 for 2 people sharing a double room and £99 for a single room. Plus Alnwick gardens costs around £9 entry and Beamish around £10 for O/60's. All prices to be confirmed early 2012.

A £10 deposit will secure your place, so book early to avoid disappointment.

**16<sup>th</sup> June Gardeners World Live in Birmingham.** The cost for that is around £25 depending on 2012 prices for entry.

**11<sup>th</sup> August Harlow Carr in Harrogate.** This is a free trip except for coach travel which is £9. A £2 optional garden tour has been booked for you if you wish to join in.

## **2011 TRIPS**

The trips we had in 2011 were very well attended and a good time was had by all. Holker Hall was a lovely day out and the weather was perfect.

We also ran a 2 day trip to Hampton Court, which again was a successful trip, even though the weather was not kind to us. The show was fantastic, but covered a lot of ground and lots of people were fast asleep coming home on the coach.

In September we travelled to the Harrogate Autumn Show, again the weather could have been better, but as the day wore on, the weather improved and we had a lovely day out.

My thanks to Hatton's Coaches for all the trips, and for those who come with us, I am sure you will agree that they are reliable, punctual and provide a pleasant journey on the coach.

## **RECIPES**

### **Pumpkin Bread (Makes 2 loaves)**

450g plain flour, 450g dark brown sugar, 125g white sugar, 500g pumpkin (pureed), 250ml vegetable oil, 150g coconut milk, 2 tsp baking powder, 1 tsp salt, pinch nutmeg, pinch cinnamon, 125g walnuts chopped

1. Preheat oven to 180C (350F, Gas 4) and grease two 20cm x 10cm (8x4in) loaf tins.
  2. In a bowl combine the flour, brown sugar, white sugar, pumpkin, oil, coconut milk, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and cinnamon. Mix until all the flour is absorbed. Fold in the nuts. Pour the batter into the prepared tins and bake for 1 hour 15 minutes, a skewer inserted in the top should come out clean. Remove from the oven, turn out onto a cooling rack and allow to cool completely. Serve sliced.
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### **Tomato Sauce** (when you have a glut of tomatoes)

2 tbsp vegetable oil, 1 medium onion, finely chopped, 2 cloves garlic, crushed, 700g ripe tomatoes, finely diced, 2 tbsp tomato puree, 200ml red wine, 2 tsp mixed dried herbs, ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper.

1. Heat the oil in a frying pan, add the onion and garlic, and sauté them gently for 5 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook over a moderate heat for a further 5 minutes. Add the tomato puree, red wine, herbs and pepper to the pan. Let the sauce simmer, uncovered, for another 15 minutes.
2. Freeze the sauce in quantities appropriate to the numbers you cook for, or bottle and heat-seal. It will keep fresh in the fridge for 2-3 days.

This is useful for pasta sauces and can be used for Pizzas, Lasagne or for your own recipes. You can also beef it up a bit by adding chillies, more garlic, herbs or paprika.

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[Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.](#)

**2012 Show, Art** section is "Flower power" and **Photography** is Castles, Water and Wildlife

## You're never too old to learn something stupid.

Even though winter days are short and the nights long, there are plenty of things to do:

1. If you haven't done it already, clean and sterilise the greenhouse. Take every plant out (choose a mild few days), sweep up every bit of dead leaf, compost etc. Then wash the glass inside and out. Finally sterilise with a sulphur candle (available from the Hut) making sure that you do not inhale the sulphur dioxide fumes given off by the candle. This will kill everything (check for hibernating toads if there are nooks and crannies) save for dormant woody plants such as grape vines.
2. If you haven't already, get the winter pruning of fruit trees and bushes, excluding plums, gages and damsons, done pronto and then (unless you are completely organic) give them a winter spray, again available from the Hut. Don't prune roses and Buddleias just yet, as a few mild days may cause buds to burst that may later be scorched by strong frosts. If you prune half of a Buddleia hard in mid February and the other half hard in late March you will get a longer flowering period. Leave roses until March. When pruning any tree, coat the exposed cut with Arbrex (advert! Hut). I didn't when I cut a couple of branches off a Japanese Acer and the result was coral spot, a lethal fungus...the bark becomes covered with red spots.
3. The RHS warns not to try growing 'Busy Lizzies' for the next few years at least. A pathogen called *Plasmopara obovata*, that produces downy mildew and kills the plants, is rampant and resistant to all fungicides. Begonias, lobelias and fuchsias are recommended instead.
4. If you are after some new fruit trees and bushes, get the catalogue of R.V. Roger Ltd, The Nurseries, Pickering, N Yorkshire YO18 7JW (tel 01751 472226). Their list is fantastic, with notes on varieties that will grow well here up North. I have ordered three apples native to Lancashire: Dog's Snout, Golden Spire and Ladies Finger of Lancashire, to go with my other Lancashire specials.
5. If you go to the Hut (get ready, another advert) and speak to Fred nicely, he will show you a compound that will enhance the root growth on just about every plant you put in the ground. It is mostly used on shrubs, bushes and trees, but works well with strawberries and herbaceous perennials. It doesn't do anything for blueberries, rhododendrons and azaleas; but none of us are perfect. It generates micorhiza. These are fungi that live in a symbiotic association with the plants' roots. The fungus exchanges sugars made by the plant in photosynthesis for nutrients the fungus gathers from the soil and pumps into the plant root cells. So the roots get extra nutrients, grow very quickly and then increase the nutrient supply to the rest of the plant. It seems a bit expensive, but you need little per plant.
6. Seed potatoes will be with us in late January-February and most of us will put them on windowsills to chit. Try putting one seed in 10" plant pots half filled with compost. Keep them inside if the weather is frosty and at night (I use the conservatory). Top up the pots when the spud plants are sticking out of the top. Planted the beginning of February, you should have new potatoes by the end of May or early June, a month earlier than those planted outdoors at Easter.
7. If you have a cold greenhouse or frame, in February sow stump-rooted carrots in 8-10" deep boxes. I use fish boxes, but any will do. Just broadcast the seed and cover lightly. Under glass, and early in the year, carrot root fly should be no bother. When the carrots are the size of a little finger, thin out (lovely sweet carrots, when everyone else is chewing on the old coarse ones). One fish box 3' x 1 1/2' keeps The Boss and me in carrots for a couple of months. Also, in February, try sowing lettuce in pots and let them germinate on the window sill. Then transplant the seedlings 3" apart in similar containers. Again, enjoy the thinnings in the first home-grown salads of the year. Yumee!
8. Don't forget that if you want to show huge onions at our Show in September, the seeds should have been sown on Christmas Day (or so our President tells me). Get 'em in as soon as you have read this.

**MALCOLM GREENHALGH (Committee member)**

### Finally

I would like to thank all our volunteers, who turn out, whatever the weather, to help in the hut. Without you we would not be able to manage. I would also like to thank all the volunteers who helped at the Flower Show, it made our job so much easier.

Don't forget the website, [www.nlwgardeners.co.uk](http://www.nlwgardeners.co.uk) David Hemingway does a fantastic job keeping everyone up to date with what's going on and including photos of everything we do on there. So do have a look, I'm sure you will find it very interesting.