

The Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

AUTUMN 2021

*Autumn moonlight--
a worm digs silently
into the chestnut.*



by Matsuo Basho

Autumn has arrived in the allotments. This 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' is a time to harvest, take stock, order seeds, clear beds, plant winter crops, prepare garlic and onion sets for planting – in other words, there are plenty of jobs to get on with before the days grow shorter, and the nights turn cold.

The soil is still warm enough to put in some vegetables that will keep us stocked with harvestable crops until the early spring. Autumn plants available at garden centres and nurseries include a variety of salad leaves (rocket, mustard leaves, winter lettuces, land cress), pak choi, spring greens and spring onions, kale, chard and spinach, as well as winter broccoli.

At the same time, one needs to finish harvesting courgettes, runner and French beans, beetroot, kohlrabi, peppers and chilies, tomatoes, winter squashes and pumpkins before the arrival of frosts. While cabbages, cauliflowers, Brussels sprouts, leeks, celeriac, carrots, parsnips, broccoli, kale and other veg planted in autumn are happy to stay in the ground.

Autumn is an excellent time to sow green manure. Green manure is used primarily to add organic matter to the soil to improve its structure and fertility, prevent nutrients from being washed out during winter rains, while also offering the benefit of weed suppression. Green manure crops can be part of a garden crop rotation or used as catch crops, or filler crops, that grow in a vacant spot before or after a main crop. There are many green manures to choose from: Winter Tares, Buckwheat, Forage and Italian Rye, Phacelia, White, Red and Sweet Clover, Winter Mix, Yellow Trefoil, Forage Pea, Winter Radish, Mustard, Fenugreek and Lupins. The winter green manures should be sown at least six weeks ahead of the first frosts. Winter Tares and Forage Rye are both hardy, good for clay soil and will grow throughout winter before being incorporated in spring. The soil needs to be dug over before sowing and be free from weeds. Once sown the seedbed needs to be kept moist until the crop germinates and becomes established. Green manure should be cut down before flowering when the stems are still soft and dug into the top 15cm of soil or left on top of the soil as mulch.

An introduction to what goes on in a bee colony

By Louis Zweig

The Queen begins to lay eggs around the end of January, building up in numbers as the year progresses. There are around 3000 workers who will have survived the winter and will be ready to feed and raise the next generation of worker bees.

The Queen will lay mostly worker bees, who will take 21 days to hatch, 3 days as eggs and 5/6 days as larva when they will be fed 'bee bread' by the workers, finally as pupa before emerging at day 21. She will also lay a small proportion of drones [males]. Once emerged, her daughters, the worker bees, will begin by cleaning the empty cells for up to 4 days while still being fed by the older bees. Once they have matured and can feed themselves, they will feed the other larvae, produce wax in order to cap the pupa, fan the water to reduce the water content of the nectar and receive nectar, propolis, pollen and water from the foraging bees. Then after 2 weeks they will become foragers themselves. They will survive about 30 days as foragers before dying. At the height of the season the Queen will lay approximately 3000 eggs a day, and the colony can build up to 80,000 bees.



It is the worker bees who usually decide to swarm in order to start a new colony, but they will leave behind some new Queen cells. one of which will survive to head the old colony. This usually happens from April to July, and it is the only time the Queen will fly other than when she is a virgin on her maiden flight.

By the middle of August, a strong colony will usually have a surplus of honey, which is stored in the extra smaller boxes above the main brood rearing area, which the beekeeper can harvest but only if there is enough honey for the colony to survive the winter [they will need around 80 lbs of honey]. By the end of August, the workers will have ejected all the drones, who have been fed by the workers all summer and now will be too expensive to keep alive during the crucial winter months. The winter bees will be reared by feeding them extra pollen [high protein] to build up fat bodies to survive the winter. They will live for approximately 6 months doing very little but keeping the Queen warm and fed. There will be little brood to take care of and no foraging in the sunshine unlike their summer sisters who live for around 6 weeks.

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW 2021

Earlier this year, the RHS decided to postpone the 2021 Chelsea Flower Show until autumn, because of the restrictions related to COVID-19. For the first time in its 108-year history, RHS Chelsea took place at the end of September rather than May. My husband Guy and I had tickets to the show, a birthday present from our daughter, so we travelled to the show on its last day, Sunday 26 September.

It was a lovely autumnal morning, and we spent an enjoyable three hours, wandering around, admiring the Show Gardens and picking up fresh ideas for planting schemes.

As expected, the Show's move from the usual spring slot to early autumn brought to the fore a completely different range of plants – the familiar fresh green foliage and stunning bright colours of spring bulbs gave way to the more subdued and restful autumn palette of dusky colours. There was a greater reliance on grasses, sedges and prairie plants that look good in the autumn, such as Echinaceas, Rudbeckias and Heleniums, in a range of colours and shapes, as well as the familiar autumn stalwarts such as Dahlias, Salvias and Asters. Shrubs and trees had been chosen for their shape and bark, rather than flowers, and good autumn leaf colour and/or fruit. An even greater than usual use of water (streams, waterfalls and pools) and stones (granite blocks, boulders, large pebbles) added a lovely texture and cooler tones to the overall autumn landscape. Another appealing feature of this year's Chelsea was the incorporation of fruit and veg (very dear to allotment enthusiasts) into the designs, to bring both added shape and colour and a feeling of nature's bounty.



Chelsea always abounds with small space gardening ideas that can be used and adapted for compact areas. This year provided even greater inspiration with the new **Balcony, Container Garden** and **Houseplant Studio** categories. In general, this year's designers relied much more on containers (for practical reasons and to fit in with the pervading idea of sustainability).

Sustainability and **wellbeing** were two overriding themes at this year's Chelsea, with a special emphasis on the positive impact of plants on our health and wellbeing, to embody the experience of millions of people who have found solace in the garden over the past two years of confinement and isolation. This was reflected in the new category called '**Sanctuary Gardens**' - bigger than the **Artisan Gardens**, but smaller than the familiar **Show Gardens**.

I found **Sanctuary Gardens** particularly appealing – they were more compact, relied less on expensive and fancy wooden/metal structures that require architectural input, and felt very natural – a snapshot of landscape, rather than a manmade space.





Below are the gardens and categories as seen at this year's Chelsea.

Show Gardens

- The M&G Garden designed by Hugo Bugg & Charlotte Harris
 - The Florence Nightingale Garden – A Celebration of Modern Day Nursing designed by Robert Myers
 - Guangzhou China: Guangzhou Garden designed by Peter Chmiel & Chin-Jung Chen
 - The Yeo Valley Organic Garden designed by Tom Massey supported by Sarah Mead
 - Bodmin Jail 60° East: A Garden Between Continents designed by Carly Kershaw &
- Trailfinders' 50th Anniversary Garden designed by Jonathan Snow

Sanctuary Gardens

- Bible Society: The Psalm 23 Garden designed by Sarah Eberle
- The Swiss Sanctuary Garden designed by Lilly Gomm
- Finding Our Way: An NHS Tribute Garden by Naomi Ferrett-Cohen
- Finnish Soul Garden – A Nordic Heritage Seaside Garden designed by Taina Suonio
- The Calm of Bangkok designed by Tawatchai Sakdikul and Ploytabtim Suksang
- Potential new garden for 2021: The Boodles Secret Garden by Thomas Hoblyn

Artisan Gardens

- Guide Dogs for the Blind 90th Anniversary Garden designed by Woolcott and Smith Garden Design
- The Blue Diamond Blacksmiths Garden designed by The Blue Diamond Group
- The Parsley Box Garden by Jamie Butterworth

Balcony Gardens ****New Category****

- Arcadia by Martha Krempel
- Balcony of Blooms by Alexandra Noble
- The Landform Balcony Garden by Nicola Hale
- Green Sky Pocket Garden by James Smith
- Sky Sanctuary by Michael Coley



Container Gardens ****New Category****

- The Hot Tin Roof Garden by Ellie Edkins
- Pop Street Garden by John McPherson
- The IBC Pocket Forest by Sara Edwards
- A Tranquil Space in the City by Mika Misawa
- The Stolen Soul Garden by Anna Dabrowska-Jaudi





One of my favourite **Show Gardens** was ‘**Bodmin Jail 60° East: A Garden Between Continents**’ designed by Carly Kershaw & my compatriot, Ekaterina Zasukhina from the city of Yekaterinburg in the Urals. It was unexpected and rather nice to see a Russian entry in this year’s line-up.

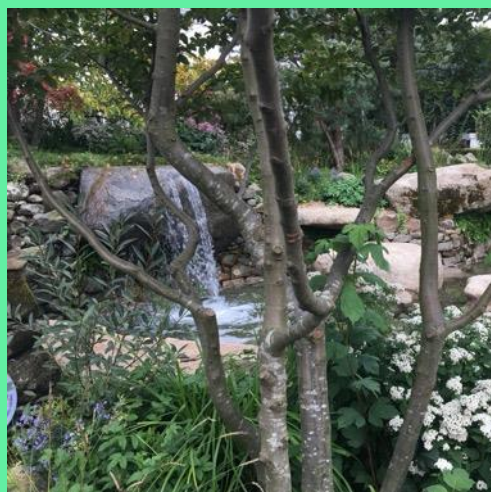
The two gardens that took my fancy among the **Sanctuary Gardens** were Dartmoor-inspired ‘**Bible Society: The Psalm 23 Garden**’ and ‘**Finnish Soul Garden – A Nordic Heritage Seaside**’. They had a very natural feel about them and appeared to be part of

the surrounding landscape/real life rather than anything specially designed for a garden show.

The Psalm 23 ‘The Lord is my Shepherd’ Garden (a gold medal winner) was all about native planting – ferns, hawthorn, guelder rose, and wonderful waterfalls and granite boulders, with some real rabbit droppings, for the natural touch, while the **Finnish Soul Garden** was particularly inviting with its lovely rustic table laid down for dining al fresco next to a gnarled apple tree, laden with apples, and an inviting Finnish sauna by a plunge pool; it reflected traditional seaside life in harmony with nature, which I found most appealing, as a typical city dweller. Both gardens focused on the 5 R’s: restoration and re-engagement with nature (or relaxation, recuperation and recreation in the case of the Finnish garden) and attempted to create a sense of mental, physical and spiritual recovery after the long weeks of the pandemic.

Most gardens in the Show highlighted the importance of sustainability, including the aptly named RHS COP26 Garden, inspired by the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties hosted by the UK in Glasgow in November 2021. “Guests were invited on a journey through four distinct, themed quarters; Decline, Adaptation, Mitigation and Balance, all centred around the Universal Window Box.” While the design of the garden seemed to lack focus, trying to incorporate many messages and failing to have one coherent shape as a result, it certainly sent a very strong and important signal about the way in which the climate crisis is affecting our gardens, while also illustrating helpful actions easily replicated by gardeners.

Autumn is the season of action, the season of planting: spring bulbs, trees and shrubs and, of course, winter crops. This is why this year’s Chelsea was an invitation to gardeners to get inspired, go back to their gardens and/or allotments and get planting!



Charity VeggieBox

Charity VeggieBox collects from 7 allotment sites across Barnet and Enfield and every year your allotment site gifts the largest volume of fruit and veggies 🏆 Great growing, team!!

Today's delivery was amazing, what an incredible variety of fruit and veg donated. Thank you to everyone for your efforts. We had 19 full crates which is brilliant given the challenges of the season.

It has been a terrible year for tomatoes but what a wonderful one for beans. This week's 'heart-warmer' was a lovely little pot of blueberries, how kind someone gifted such a special crop.



We take all your surplus produce to The Felix Project in Enfield who do amazing work delivering fresh surplus produce to the capital's schools and community kitchens. Your tasty crops are cooked up and eaten by London's children and adults in need: how wonderful is that!

Now a 'fingers-crossed' moment: the Felix Project opened their first kitchen in Bow this year and an idea is for them to create a special meal using only our allotment fruit and veg!! It's at concept stage but if they go ahead, we will really need to promote the collections for the event.

Thank you, Gordon Road growers,
for all your incredible donations this season! ❤️
Rachael and the VeggieBox team 🧠📦



News from the Wildlife Plot

by Helen Skelton

On Sunday 25th July Ekta and Helen did some more work on the wildlife plot ponds and then they had a pond dipping session.

These are some of the creatures they found, and they had a go at identifying them (happy to be corrected if anyone else has more knowledge!):

Swimming Mayfly Nymphs

- Immature mayflies are aquatic. In contrast to their short lives as adults, they may live for several years in the water

Mosquito Larvae

- Larvae breathe through spiracles located on their eighth abdominal segments, or through a siphon, so must come to the surface frequently. The larvae spend most of their time feeding on algae, bacteria, and other microbes in the surface microlayer.

Fly Larvae or Hairworms

- (Horse)hair worms can be discovered in damp areas, such as watering troughs, swimming pools, streams, puddles, and cisterns. The adult worms are free-living, but the larvae are parasitic on arthropods, such as beetles, cockroaches, mantids, orthopterans, and crustaceans

Many of the above will grow up to be food for other creatures such as birds.



Community gardens

During the pandemic people all across the UK got to appreciate their gardens, allotments and other food growing spaces. In a National Garden Scheme survey, 88% of respondents agreed that access to their garden or other outdoor space during lockdown helped to relieve stress and anxiety, thus contributing to their mental wellbeing. Moreover, 69% found that such access helped to keep them fit, contributing positively to their physical health.

This has led to a soaring demand for allotment plots, that made the usual wait of over 6-7 years to get one in London, even longer. There is, however, another way to get involved in growing - community gardens. There are over 1, 000 community gardens of different types in the UK. As the country went into COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, many of them stepped up as emergency food providers, highlighting the flexible, community-centred approach to, as well as the mental and physical health benefits of gardening.

In order to learn more about community gardens I spoke to Livia Barreca, a 21-year old geography student in her third year at Oxford University who is writing a dissertation on community gardens in urban settings. A Barnet resident herself, Livia has chosen to focus on London and Oxford to examine whether taking part in community garden schemes, has an impact on people's consumption choices and what role community gardens can play in making the food system more sustainable. In other words, whether people involved in community gardens tend to choose more locally produced foods, more organic food, less meat and reduce their waste.

We began our conversation with trying to understand the difference between a community garden and an allotment. Livia suggested that an allotment is your own space that you choose what to do with it, while in a community garden no-one owns anything. You simply put in your time - as much as you want to contribute - to the bigger project. Each community garden has its own aim. It could be to grow food or to serve as an educational space to teach children about where their food comes from. Or it could be to bring people from different cultures together. Unlike allotments, where plot holders pay the rent, participation in community gardens is free.

In other words, a community garden is a space where anyone is welcome and you come and grow food or flowers, or just go to meet other people.

The Wikipedia defines a community garden as:

a single piece of land gardened collectively by a group of people. Community gardens utilise either individual or shared plots on private or public land while producing fruit, vegetables, and/or plants grown for their attractive appearance. Around the world, community gardens can fulfil a variety of



purposes such as aesthetic and community improvement, physical or mental well-being, or land conservation.

According to Livia, community gardens as we know them have their origins in Detroit, in the US. Urban agriculture has a rich history in Detroit including Hazen Pingree's pioneering potato patch plan of the 1890s and victory gardens during World War II. But it was the Farm-A-Lot programme initiated in the 1970s, after the car manufacturing collapsed and industries left the area, leading to mass unemployment and poverty as a result, that became the prototype of modern community gardens.

Departure of industry left behind the so-called 'food deserts', as supermarket chains also moved out and people didn't have access to food. The remaining, mostly black, communities had the idea of using the now available land that stood empty to grow their own food as a way of empowering themselves. Later the idea spread to other countries, including Italy, Spain and the UK where it is a relatively new movement that has been growing the past ten to fifteen years.

These community spaces often have cafes attached to them where people come and drink coffee or have a piece of cake. The three examples Livia is looking at are **Clitterhouse Farm Project**, a community scheme in North London, **the Grow** at Totteridge Academy and **OxGrow** in Oxford. The idea of the Clitterhouse Farm Project in Barnet was to protect historic Victorian farm outbuildings from demolition and to secure their future, so the entire site could be transformed into a vibrant, creative and sustainable hub that supports local community and small businesses. They are starting to open up a whole building that was going to be demolished in order to convert it into a space where people can come and do workshops, art courses etc. The scheme run a café, that uses food donated by supermarkets or restaurants that would otherwise have thrown that food away. It is a good example of recycling food and cutting down of food waste. The Café visitors who buy the food can choose to pay as much as they want. The profits go to the community garden and community space. Although the project enjoys some funding from the government, their aim is to become self-sufficient.



Livia has also volunteered at the community farming initiative Grow at Totteridge Academy and OxGrow in Oxford. Grow, established by George Lamb, is a life skills education programme that gives children the opportunity to interact with nature, teach them about nutrition and provide a sustainable source of food for schools and the local community. They are in fact an educational space, but also a commercial farm. Every Thursday, they sell vegetables to whoever wants to go and buy them directly from there and through a veg box scheme as well.

OxGrow is Oxford's Edible Community Garden that has transformed waste land in the heart of Oxford into a thriving food garden. "OxGrow is open to everyone – it's for kids and adults of all ages to learn how to grow food together. It's an exciting, creative edible laboratory where we're experimenting with organic, climate-friendly growing techniques, and harnessing local knowledge to dabble with produce you'll never find in the shops."

So, what are the main conclusions, I asked Livia, she has come to in terms of people's consumption habits? According to her, it does seem that people who grow their own food become more aware of sustainability issues. That doesn't always translate into changing their consumption habits, because there are so many different issues that lead someone to buy certain products, including sometimes habit that it's really hard to break, even after they've grown their own food.



One of the main consequences for those who start growing their own food, is the realisation that it's not possible for food they buy in supermarkets to be that cheap. "Most people say: "I've grown my own food and I've suddenly realised that wow, it takes so much effort and so much time. How is it possible that when you go to the supermarket, you can just buy it so cheaply?" - says Livia. But then, when you ask them about organic food, they say: "Well, organic food is a lot more expensive, so I can't afford it." And sometimes they say that, but they also say: "Yeah, actually, maybe what we should do is completely scrap the prices of the ones that aren't organic because they're just not realistic prices. And we should just offer the organic price so that then people wouldn't have this whole dilemma of "which one do I choose?"

Another point to take into account, says Livia, is that compared with 1950s we really don't spend as much money on food, as a proportion of what we earn; "In the 1950s, the British spent between 30 and 50 per cent of their income on [food], today we spend just 9 per cent (the least in Europe" (Steel 2020). It is clearly not just economic reasons that affect why we buy certain products.



In short, although the link between growing your own food and people's consumption habits is quite complex and there is no immediate correlation between involvement in community gardens and better habits, Livia sees a big impact of such involvement on other aspects of people's lives. During the COVID pandemic community gardens provided safe outdoor spaces 'to mix with other people, to exchange ideas, to feel that there's a group of people who can support you if something goes wrong'. The nice thing about community gardens, she insists, is that they really bring people together and can, in that way, make everyone more resilient. "I guess the point of growing your own food is that it is a very empowering act, - says Livia. - Plus, a lot of children come. They don't really do much, but it's really wonderful to see them get excited about a worm or a slug. It is important for them to learn where their food comes from".

June Brookes' Retirement Celebration

June stepped down from her role as Allotment Secretary in April 2020, at the height of the pandemic, which meant that we were unable to get our members together to give her our thanks. We finally managed to put that right on Sunday 17 October. It was a lovely golden autumn afternoon, quite in keeping with the occasion, and the tables at the Piggery sported wonderful Dahlia displays and a cornucopia of delicious international dishes – from Philippine noodles to Korean spicy chicken and wild garlic pancakes, a variety of egg, tuna and salmon sandwiches, puff pastry vegetable patties, and many sumptuous cakes and tarts, washed down by Prosecco and cups of tea!

June has been part of Gordon Road Allotments for over 25 years. She was instrumental in setting up the FHS as a self-managing society in 2013. It is impossible to list all the things she has done for the Finchley Horticultural Society over the years, especially as Allotment Secretary. June organised the socials, supported the Plant Sale and managed the Trading Hut for many years.

June's special gift was that, as Allotment Secretary, she knew all the members on the site and has always been welcoming and friendly to everyone. As she herself put it at her Retirement Celebration, "I just love talking to people". Responding to the words of gratitude June wished us all "to be kind to each other!"

Thank you, June, we shall!



Notices

PLANT SALE 2022

We very much hope that our annual Plant Sale will take place in May 2022. At the moment the Committee expects it to go ahead face to face, as normal, in the second week of May. The slightly earlier date has been proposed by our Plant Sale growers who feel that the plants are at their best earlier than the usual end of May date.

Catherine and Christine still need volunteer help to raise plants for the Sale. Please come along to help or enlist the support of your friends and family (see a full-scale article on the Plant Sale in the Summer 2021 issue of the Grapevine).

SEEDS ORDERS

If you would like to order seeds from the Kings catalogue, there are copies in the Green Room. Munira Grainger will be placing the orders on Monday 1st of November.

OUTSTANDING ORDERS FOR THE TRADING SHOP

The Trading shop is now closed, if you have any outstanding payments to be made for shop goods, honey or plants you can pay online. We need to know what the payments are for, so please send us an email with the details. There will usually be someone at Gordon Road on Sunday mornings, if you wish to pay by cash.

PUMPKIN SOUP NIGHT

Get cosy with Tony's world class pumpkin soup, mulled wine and Jacket potatoes! Sunday 7th November from 4.30-6.30pm

NOTICE ON BONFIRES

Bonfires are being phased out due to their detrimental environmental impact. The Committees have been discussing a range of options and shall be coming with some proposals shortly. In the meantime, plot holders are strongly encouraged to have a compost bin, to take weeds and other green matter back to their green bins, and to store large items, such as tree branches, on their plots pending the new arrangement for disposing of them.

CORRUGATED IRON NEEDED

Does anyone have any corrugated iron, especially a type known as Onduline, to donate to the wildlife plot? Size required is a minimum of 1m by 1m. This will provide shelter and will retain heat that our slow worms will love! If you have some please leave it on the wildlife plot or contact me (details below),

Helen Skelton
07981 655902

EVIDENCE WEEK IN WESTMINSTER

Sense about Science, a UK charity that champions the public interest in sound science and ensures evidence is recognised in public life and policy making is asking National Allotment Society members to get involved in Evidence Week in Westminster 2021. They are inviting different communities from across the UK to ask how well-equipped the government and parliament are to understand and use scientific information. Brand new for 2021 is our Ask an MP discussion board, providing us with the chance to ask an MP about whether they're using evidence to inform decisions on issues that matter to the allotment movement, such as rights of allotment holders, land contamination and land disputes, for example

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Affiliated to the
Royal Horticultural Society

Events Diary

RHS autumn events:

Celebrate the best of the season

Highlights include:

Wisley – Taste of Autumn Event
(13-17 October)

Bridgewater – Exhibition exploring the
wonderful world of apples
(Oct-Jan)

Autumn Carnival half term events at the
RHS Gardens, rhs.org.uk/gardens
(23-31 October)

Look out for on-sale dates in the members' e-
newsletter or visit rhs.org.uk/shows



Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter
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finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com
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