



SUNNYSIDE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk
email: info@sunnysideallotments.org.uk

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There seems to be a lot about weeds in this issue. I can see why: weeds don't need passports. They move freely around and between allotments; whereas my own chickweed is all very well, my neighbours' thistles are not welcome. (I speak generally here and not about my own situation, you understand.)

Chris Locke

From our chairman:

This is the time of the gardening year when the weeds seem to be growing faster than the intended plants - so good luck with the battle. After all the hard work there should be plenty of crops to harvest.

Trees: Now is a good time to remove any non-fruit tree saplings and if you have fruit trees please keep them well managed - which includes keeping them less than four metres high and not over-hanging other plots.

The open day is on August 10th so please impress our visitors. Good gardening

John Eaton

Keeping your plot under control

Weeds thrive on fertile soil, and compete with crops for the nutrients in the soil. Control weeds by scraping the surface of the soil with the hoe, to cut off their roots, or pulling by hand - removing them when small, while their roots are shallow and before they set seed. Hoe when it's dry, so that weeds wilt and die quickly. Annual weeds can be put on the compost heap. Keep empty patches mulched. Perennial weeds need to be dug out, ensuring their roots are removed, and burned or added to the council green bin, not to the compost heap, where they might live to fight another day.

Compost/manure/leaf mould

Garden compost is invaluable on an allotment. It recycles organic matter, retains moisture and holds the soil open, while also containing some nutrients to feed plants. Manure is high in nutrients and contains the fibrous remains from the diet of farm animals, and is good for maintaining an open structure in heavy soil as well as helping to bind together light, sandy soil. Both compost and manure also help with drainage: bacteria, fungi, insects and worms feed on the organic matter, breaking it down, aerating the soil and allowing roots to develop.

Green manure is a leafy crop grown in the soil and then dug in to provide organic matter and some nutrients. It can be planted on bare soil to keep down weeds and improve soil structure and fertility. You can also prepare leaf mould by storing leaves in a hessian sack or compost bin for a year, to allow them to break down and provide a fine organic soil improver. (See www.gardenorganic.org.uk)



Composting horse manure

Crop rotation involves growing specific groups of crops in different parts of the plot each year. All crops have individual nutrient and soil requirements, so group together those with similar needs. Crop rotation helps to prevent the build-up of soil-borne pests and diseases specific to particular plants and cuts down on nutrient deficiencies, to maximise your harvest.

Bed 1: Dig in manure for potatoes, which require plenty of nutrients, at a good depth, and which will open the soil for next year's root crops.

Bed 2: Plant root crops and onions, which need a fertile, open, free-draining soil. Dig over, remove large stones, and add sand if the soil is heavy, or grit for onions, before raking over to a fine tilth. They benefit from compost or manure dug in last year, but not fresh manure.

Bed 3: Dig in manure or compost for peas and beans, which need a rich, moist soil to thrive. Their roots will provide nitrogen for next year's brassicas, if cut off at ground level and left in.

Bed 4: Fork over and tread down the soil to provide a firm base to keep brassicas upright and help them to form good strong hearts, then rake the soil flat.

Brassicas require a rich soil provided by last year's manure or compost and beans. They do best on alkaline soil; add a little lime to increase the pH.

Soil Secrets

To maintain healthy, balanced growth, plants need a well structure soil, and a combination of the three major plant nutrients, each of which has a different role.

Nitrogen (N) promotes the development of leaves and shoots. It is essential for the synthesis of chlorophyll through photosynthesis. A lack of nitrogen can lead to the yellowing of foliage and slow growth.

Phosphorus (P) supports root growth by helping them take up other nutrients and transporting them around the plant, and is also used in the leaves and stems to release the energy made during photosynthesis. Insufficient phosphorus can result in small leaves, a purplish coloration to the foliage and fruit that is slow to mature.

Potassium (K) helps flowers and fruit to form and encourages their development. It balances the effects of nitrogen by toughening cells walls, making the plant less prone to extremes of heat and cold, pests and diseases. A lack of potassium leads to poor flowers and fruit.

These nutrients are present in all fertilisers and manures, whether organic or otherwise. However, manure provides additional benefits in terms of structure and water retention. Nutrient values of manures can vary greatly, depending on the diet and age of the animals, and the nature and quantity of bedding in the mix.

How common manures compare in nutrients

Manure	Chicken	Cow	Horse	Sheep	Pig
N-P-K	1.1 0.8 0.5	0.25 0.15 0.25	0.7 0.3 0.6	0.7 0.3 0.9	0.8 0.7 0.5

Chicken manure

Poultry manure (chicken in particular) is the richest animal manure in N-P-K. Chicken manure is considered "hot" and must be composted before adding it to the garden. Otherwise, it will burn any plants it comes in contact with.

Farmyard (cow) manure

Farmyard manure may be the single most useful soil-builder around; it can be used as a top-dressing and for soil improvement. Though cow manure has low nutrient levels, that's what makes it safe to use in unlimited quantities.

Horse manure

Horse manure is about half as rich as chicken manure, but richer in nitrogen than cow manure. And, like chicken droppings, it's considered "hot" and must be stored for at least 6 months. Horse manure often contains a lot of weed seeds, so it's a good idea to compost it using a hot composting method.

Lin Phillips

Two more unusual fertilisers

We all know that cow, pig and composted horse manure are pretty well balanced ways of providing the nutrition our intensive vegetable and fruit growing requires, and also assist the soil structure, producing a good friable humus in the long term.

It is however time consuming and heavy work digging it in properly, as is also properly composting horse manure so it actually retains some nitrogen.

For an easier life chicken pellets (nitrogen & minerals), fish blood & bone (general balanced) and bonemeal (root growth) can be distributed plot-wide or local to fruit or veg, but without conveying soil structure & drainage benefits.

Two improving fertilisers perhaps you haven't heard of are **rock dust** and **fibrophos**. The first being very finely ground rock dust from ancient Caledonian granite which contains a broad spectrum of trace elements. It's often promoted as a compost accelerator/improver but organic vegetable growers are keen advocates, some liberally dusting the ground & salad veg as one, being so fine it's absorbed like a colloid. Maybe not a fertiliser in the conventional sense, but is said to stimulate growth.

Originally championed by Seer in Scotland, it's advertised in our NSALG magazine. The cheapest way to buy it is by the pallet load., but it is now stocked by B&Q in the Verve range in 10kg bags.

The following link gives you the full story: <http://organicconnectmag.com/seer-centre-scotlands-remineralized-oasis/#.U8U0oLG9a1w>

Fibrophos has been around for about a decade being a by-product of green electricity generation. It's incinerated chicken litter & thus Organic Status Applied for. Fibrophos returns the nutrients back to the soil in the balance removed by the crops, making it an ideal environmentally friendly, natural fertiliser.

It is therefore a renewable nutrient source and does not use up scarce resources such as mineral Phosphates. The N-P-K ratio of the standard product is 0-12-12 and it contains many other minerals and trace elements.

Thus it won't stimulate excessive green growth and suits root crops & cereals.

Read more here: <http://www.fibrophos.co.uk/>

Make your own liquid plant feed - courtesy of Monty Don

We have plenty of nettles & comfrey plants on the allotments so make use of them to give you a free feed for your plants. Simply stuff a bucket with leaves & fill with water. Leave for at least a month to decay, putting it somewhere out of the way as it gets very smelly! To use, dilute with water at a rate of 20 parts to 1.

The nettle feed is high in nitrogen so use early in the year to encourage strong leafy growth, & on leafy crops such as spinach, chard & salad leaves.

The comfrey feed is high in potassium so it can be used later in the season to encourage the development of flowers and fruit.

To make a more concentrated form of comfrey feed see the following web-site: <http://gardening.about.com/od/fertilizer/a/Comfrey-Plants-Make-Great-Free-Fertilizer.htm>





Sunnyside Allotment Society

OPEN DAY SUNDAY 10th AUGUST 2014

Our Open Day takes place on Sunday 10th August from 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., to enable local residents to visit and enjoy the allotments. There will be refreshments, sales of produce and preserves, and depending on the weather there will be a guided walk through the allotments at 12 noon.

Please try to cut your paths so that they are tidy, bramble free and accessible to the public. The contractors will be cutting the main roadways during the week before Open Day; to enable them to do a full width cut, please ensure the end of your plot bordering the roadway is cut back as far as possible. We want to make the sites look attractive, and it would be nice if you could spend some time on your plot during that day to give visitors a warm welcome and talk about your garden. We are also looking for people to meet and greet on the day.

PRE-OPEN DAY JOBS

There are a number of jobs which need doing before the day: cleaning furniture, displaying signs, mowing and strimming of paths and general tidying up of communal areas & entrances.

ON THE DAY JOBS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

On the day we will need volunteers to help setting up, clearing up, pricing goods, manning the produce stall, refreshments and the raffle.

Volunteers are needed. Even if you can only help for an hour or two: this is a good opportunity for meet fellow allotmenters. The more people who get involved the better.

Please return the completed form to Angela Wheeldon (10 Chapel St or B15) or email to: angela@sunnysideallotments.org.uk. We can then draw up a rota to share the jobs out. Could you also let us know if you are able to provide any contributions (see form below). Plants and preserves need to be delivered to B15 on **Friday or Saturday** and fresh veg/cakes **before 10.00 a.m.** on **Sunday**.

Name: _____ Plot No: _____ Tel: _____

Email: _____ Mobile: _____

Pre Open Day help:

I can help with: _____ Please let us know when: _____

I can help at the following time(s) on Open Day (please tick the box):

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9.00-11.00 a.m. (setting up) | <input type="checkbox"/> 11.00-12 noon | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 noon - 1.00 p.m. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1.00- 2.00 p.m. | <input type="checkbox"/> 2.00-3.00 p.m. | <input type="checkbox"/> 3.00- 4.00 p.m. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4.00- 5.00 p.m. | <input type="checkbox"/> 5.00-6.00 p.m. (clearing up) | <input type="checkbox"/> anytime |

I will provide:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cakes/biscuits for the refreshments | <input type="checkbox"/> produce/preserves to sell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> plants/flowers to sell | <input type="checkbox"/> other |

Please return this form by **Friday 1st August** to Angela Wheeldon (10 Chapel St or B15) or email to: angela@sunnysideallotments.org.uk. Thank you.

Your Current Committee Members

Chairman: John Eaton 865307
Vice Chairman & Minutes Secretary: Lin Phillips 862882
Secretary: Jenny Sippings 865890
Treasurer: John Powell 878640

Newsletter Editor: Chris Locke 877326

Other members: Wendy Calder 767289
Cynthia Fuls 879410
Andy James 865061
Adrian Scarborough 384974
Angela Wheeldon 874440

Tenancy changes

Welcome to:

A28A Philippa Jones
A41B Teresa Gogol
B27C David Hencke
B28 James Moore
N7A Adam Stout
N31B Kitran Eastman

Goodbye to:

A1B Helen Pope
A28A Simon Howell
A41B Lesley McDonald
B27C Bridget Wilkins
B28 Tabatha Gravener

Seed order

If you are a paid-up member of the Sunnyside Allotment Society you will receive the Kings seed catalogue in September. This will give you the opportunity to order seeds at a preferential price, as well as raise money for the society.



Swarm of bees on Sunnyside Old May 2014



Organic horse manure for sale

From a supplier in Burford, It's largely horse, but has added (Highland) cattle manure. It is a "blend of horse manure & organic additives, composted, heat treated and matured for a year to provide feeding/mulching material", also good for adding to tubs. Supplier grows his own organic straw so contains no amenopyralids.

Available from Tea Hut at £4,75 per bag.

Message from John Driver:

Sunnyside Church will be holding their annual Harvest Festival Songs of Praise Service on Monday October 6th at 2pm, followed by afternoon tea in the church hall, all are welcome.

We would appreciate any donations of surplus produce, which are distributed after the service to the elderly in need in our Parish and to the Dacorum Emergency Night Shelter for the homeless. Produce donations can brought along to the service or collected in the week prior to the service or brought down to the church office: contact is Sally tel; **875025**

Netting

It looks as though there is going to be a good fruit harvest this year, and many people are understandably protecting their crops with netting. But we have already had to rescue several birds which have got tangled up in the netting. So please make sure birds can't get under the netting (easier said than done!) and check your netting regularly.

Please Note: To offset rising printing costs, an electronic version of future editions of the newsletter will be sent to all those people that supply an email address to Jenny Sippings – (jenny.sippings@ntlworld.com).