



CALENDAR 2007





Buncefield plume from Sunnyside New





January 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6 Working Party	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

LEEKS, ONIONS & SHALLOTS (Allium family)

Varieties to consider:

Leeks: King Richard/Jolant for that early crop with mild flavour maturing from Aug to Nov.Musselburgh for Winter Crop, very hardy, will tolerate wide range of growing conditions, can be harvested from December onwards. Blue Solaise for something a little different, a traditional French variety with deep Blue-purple leaves.

Onions & Shallots: Stuttgart Giant is a bolt resistant onion and that produces large globe shaped onions of excellent quality. Centurian is a superior globe onion of uniform shape and has extra long storage qualities. Red Baron onion sets are an easy and economical way to grow your red salad onions. Sante is an outstanding variety of shallot that produces large light brown bulbs of good even shape, ideal for pickling.

Soil Conditions: The Allium family of plants are relatively shallow rooted, dislike nitrogen-rich soil and grow best in firm loamy soil that has been manured from a previous crop. Leeks are one of the easiest vegetables to grow and are tolerant to a wide range of soil conditions.

Growing Garlic: Garlic was introduced by the Romans as part of the Army's Materia Medica. Remember to divide the bulb into cloves before planting, Plant on the shortest day (21st Dec) and harvest on the longest day (21st June).

Alliums in the kitchen: Leeks, shallots and onions are extremely versatile and a key ingredient of many mainstream stews and soups. All three of these vegetables are good roasted, and can also be lightly cooked in oil or butter to make an onion puree as a staple ingredient for most soup dishes. Shallots are excellent for pickling. Some very popular dishes are liver & onions, sausages in onion gravy and leek and potato soup. Garlic is a great all rounder, added to many dishes for extra flavour.







Allotment Working Party





February 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1	2	3 Working Party	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

CARROTS & PARSNIPS (Umbelliferae family)

Carrots, of which there are over 180 known varieties, are recorded as being widely grown in Europe since the 17th century onwards and together with parsnips were grown for their health and curative properties among which were listed, relief of colds, ulcers and fluxes of the head (an early hangover cure?), wind and vexing of the belly! There is also a grain of truth in the advice that eating carrots enables you to see in the dark, as modern research has shown that they contain Vitamin A which strengthens eyesight. Prior to the introduction of potatoes in the late 16th century, parsnips were the staple root vegetable grown since Roman times, throughout medieval Europe.

Varieties to consider:

Carrot varieties are grouped according to the length of their roots. **Autumn King**, extra hardy, very large, long main crop variety which are good for storing or can be left in the ground over winter. Has some resistance to drought and carrot fly. **Sugars-nax (F1)**, very sweet, early maturing cylindrical variety, high in beta-carotene with good disease tolerance. **Early Nantes**₂ long stump rooted variety with superb shape and flavour.

Parsnips: Imperial Hollow Crown, long symmetrical roots of solid white flesh, a good cropper on deep soil. Exhibition Long, clean smooth roots with fine flavour of good cooking and eating quality.Avonresister, short, early maturing variety, with better resistance to canker disease than most other varieties

Soil and Growing Conditions:

Carrots and parsnips grow best in a site that gets plenty of sunlight (no shading), in deep warm crumbly/sandy soil which is well drained, free of stones, and deeply dug in the previous autumn before sowing. Sow seeds in shallow drills ½ inch deep, 6 inches apart, in early spring as soon as the soil is dry enough and the weather is not too severe. Thin seedlings when they are 1 inch tall. Thin parsnips to 6 inches apart and thin carrots 2 to 4 inches apart. Hoe regularly to keep weeds down taking care not to damage the crowns of the plants. The main pests are canker in parsnips and for carrots, carrot root fly, rabbits and mice!



Blackthorn





March 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1	2	3 Working	4
					Party	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

KALE & BORECOLE (Brassica family)

The Brassica family includes cauliflower, cabbages, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, kale and less obvious examples such as swede and turnips. Kale is often regarded as the 'poor relation' of the brassica family, which is a pity because it has a number of strong points in its favour. Kale is ultra hardy, often surviving periods of prolonged frost which improves the flavour. It is also a valuable winter vegetable, providing greens from mid winter to mid spring, when other green vegetables are scarce.

Varieties to consider:

Red Russian, large deep purple leaves which are very tender and full of flavour, very hardy and stands for a long time cropping over a long period. Winterbor - (F1 Hybrid) is very Winter hardy and produces masses of dark blue-green curly leaves, for cropping November to February. Pentland Brig, tall variety which is also very hardy, leaves can be harvested from November onwards and the leafy side shoots produced in early spring can be used like sprouting broccoli. Dwarf Green Curled - excellent quality, exceptionally hardy, compact tightly curled dark green leaves.

Soil Conditions:

The late Kenneth Williams had a radio character called 'Arthur Fallowfield' who answered every question on Gardening with "The answer lies in the Soil"! Remember when choosing your site, that kale will occupy its planting position for quite a long time. Kale tolerates poor soil but grows best in well-drained or heavy soil, which is high in nitrogen and has been manured from a previous crop. The ground should be prepared by thorough digging and applying a lime dressing to make sure the soil is alkaline. Two weeks before planting, dress the soil with 50gm/sq mtr of a general fertiliser.









Spring views





April 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

PEAS

Peas have been grown and eaten for thousands of years – the earliest archaeological records are from about 7000BC. A jar of dried peas was found in Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt (rumour has it that some of these peas found their way back to England and a friend of Lord Carnarvon's where they were grown for some time – occasionally you see these offered for sale as **Prew's Special**). The Romans supposedly brought peas to Britain, along with so many other plants..

Of course, all these ancient varieties were grown for drying and, in this country at least, would be made into pottage, pease pudding, or added to bread to add more protein. Italian gardeners in the sixteenth century developed varieties which were tender enough to eat when fresh, and after some time, this way of eating them was picked up by the rich and fashionable in Europe. In Louis IX's time they became the obsession of the court, with feasts of green peas being held in season.

Asparagus peas are a different species altogether, which has pretty red flowers but needs to be eaten very small or it tastes like dishcloth.

Chick peas are a relative worth a try in this country. Sow in pots and plant out when the soil has warmed up a little. The mice ate most of mine, but what I did get were extremely tasty. The plants are very attractive, with ferny foliage and little pink flowers. Yields are not high, so sow a lot! Seeds of Italy sell packets. Alternatively try culinary seed - they may be from tropical varieties, so it is a bit of a gamble, but consider global warming....

Unusual Varieties to look out for :

Purple-podded – of various names. They look beautiful but I find they are best eaten as mangetout as they are bit tough when mature Golden mange-tout – from the Real Seed company (www.realseeds.co.uk) Carlin – a very old pea for drying, traditionally eaten in the north-east



Pear blossom





May 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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BEETROOT & LEAFBEET/CHARD (beta vulgaris)

The beet family includes beetroot, spinach and chard all of which produce broad leaf foliage and therefore like plenty of nitrogen. Beetroot is a biennial root vegetable, which does not need much space and is grown as an annual which is hardy except in the severest of Winters when some covering should be given with straw or cloches. Chard and leaf beets are very easy to grow, succeeding in ordinary soils, and refraining from bolting in dry weather. Other benefits from a spring sowing include cropping from July right through to the following June. Furthermore the leaves of chard are attractive enough for it to be grown in the flower bed and versatile enough for it to be used as a dual-purpose vegetable.

Varieties to consider:

Globe beetroot varieties include **Boltardy**, a fine textured, smooth-skinned variety with deep red flesh; resistant to bolting and can be sown early. **Detroit Globe**, a standard main crop globe variety, sweet and crisp flesh which stores well over winter and **Golden**, yellow/golden flesh which does not bleed when cut, excellent flavour and leaves can be cooked as 'greens'. **Mammoth Long**, a long smooth high quality root with very dark red flesh and sweet flavour.

Chard is easier to grow than spinach which is prone to bolting in dry conditions. **Swiss Chard**, (also called seakale), is an attractive plant 18 inches tall with distinctive green crumpled foliage and white veins. **Rainbow Chard**, a lovely mixture of various coloured stems and leaves that can be used for salads when young and cooked when fully grown. **Spinach Beet**, (also called perpetual Spinach), crops over many months with large dark green fleshy leaves.

Soil and Growing Conditions:







Summerhouse Project

















June 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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25	26	27	28	29	30 Barbecue	

TOMATOES

Tomatoes arrived in Europe in the sixteenth century and were treated with great suspicion for a long time (a similar story to the related potato), only really gaining popularity in Britain in this century, although Italy took to them much earlier. Nowadays nearly everybody grows them and there are literally hundreds of varieties. Many come from the tomato heartlands of America and Italy, but there are many more from Russia, Germany and other cooler climates, giving a tomato for most situations. The big tomato news of recent times has been the arrival of blight-resistant 'Ferline', although some of the older varieties seem to show some resistance

Some varieties will do better in a greenhouse than outside. Most beefsteak varieties need that extra warmth, but Marmande is fine outside. Plum varieties seem to crop particularly well outside, and most cherry varieties (including the foolproof Gardeners' Delight) will grow practically anywhere. I'd like to put in a special word for 'Broad Ripple Yellow Currant', a small yellow cherry which produces vast numbers of fruit over a long period and can cope with long periods of neglect, and has self-seeded on my plot for two years – fantastic!

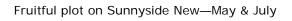
Some companies which have a good range of tomato seeds :

Real Seed company (www.realseeds.co.uk)
Plants of Distinction (www.plantsofdistinction.co.uk)
Association Kokopelli

(www.organicseedsonline.com). You need to join to get the full list, but they have a huge range of vegetable seeds, many of 'heritage' varieties. Garden Organic (was HDRA). If you join their seed library, you can obtain seed of all sorts of old and unusual varieties. Broad Ripple Yellow Currant of sainted memory came from here originally, but word of its virtues has spread.

Simpsons Seeds (www.simpsonsseeds.co.uk Thomas Etty (www.thomasetty.co.uk Seeds of Italy (www.seedsofitaly.co.uk). Packets with gorgeous photos, of interesting Italian tomato varieties (and chick peas, French beans and baby black-eyed beans).









July 2007

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30	31					
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LETTUCES & SALAD LEAVES

Lettuces do well on our sunny south-facing slope. They contain beta-carotene and vitamin A, especially the darker green leaves. Successional sowing every few weeks will keep you supplied, but sow just a few seeds of several different varieties each time. Plants are susceptible to slugs but red or coloured varieties seem less prone. If the soil is dry when you plant out, puddle them in but draw dry soil around the seedlings to deter slugs. Water in the morning – slugs come out at night and are drawn to damp soil. Apply water to the roots – don't spray over the leaves. In hot weather lettuce leaves can be scorched. Green netting fixed above the lettuce bed provided effective shade last summer.

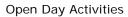
Favourite varieties are **Red Fire**, **Catalogna**, **Valmaine**, **Cocarde** and **Fristina** but there is now a wide array to choose from. There are some lettuce varieties which will overwinter out of doors with fleece protection from an autumn sowing, But they are susceptible to slug attack and they do tend to sit looking small and sad until the weather begins to warm up. **Parella Red** and **Parella Green** are varieties to try.

Other salad leaves: Rocket adds bite and flavour to a salad. It can be sown in spring for use over the summer, but it needs moisture to prevent it bolting. It can also be sown in August and September for use later in the year. It won't go to seed but it will need protecting with fleece in frosty weather. If you have suffered from plants bolting, allow some to flower and drop their seed. They seem to do better when allowed to grow naturally in situ. Wild Rocket has smaller leaves but a more intense flavour.

American Land Cress is a slightly coarser version of watercress and grows well at Sunnyside. To prevent bolting it prefers a well manured soil in partial shade. Cultivation as for rocket. Corn Salad or Lamb's Lettuce can be picked outdoors from November to January when other homegrown salad is in short supply. Sow in August/September. Pick the whole rosette rather than individual leaves. Allow some plants to flower; they self seed easily in spring.























August 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 Open Day
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

CLIMBING BEANS

Runner beans require deeply dug well manured soil for best results. After digging, traditional gardeners still open up a trench into which they put all their green waste over the winter. Add your used teabags to this to help moisture retention in a hot summer. Seeds can be sown in pots in the greenhouse in late April or sown direct into the ground in mid May after all danger of frost is passed. It has been estimated that a 10ft double row could yield up to 50lbs of beans. Runner beans need to be pollinated by bees or other insects. This can be assisted by planting sweet peas or phacelia at the ends of the rows. In very hot weather, the quantity of beans set can be reduced and flowers fall off. Misting the flowers morning and evening is a traditional remedy. A thick mulch will also help. It is important to pick every other day to prevent pods reaching maturity which will trigger the flowerproducing mechanism to shut down. Red Rum crops early and sets well while **Polestar** yields bunches of long stringless beans over a long season. Desiree is a white flowered runner with slender stringless pods and Painted Lady has highly decorative red and white flowers.

Climbing French Beans on the other hand are self-fertile and produced a good crop last summer in spite of the heat. Like runner beans they do best in soil incorporating moisture-retaining compost and well rotted manure. To avoid slug damage and frost, sow seeds in the greenhouse and plant out towards the end of May. Apply a thick mulch round the plants when the ground is damp. Because they grow up supports like runners, they take up less space on the plot and they are a lot easier on the back when picking! The beans should be picked regularly when they are young and tender and cooked whole. If beans are left to mature on the plant, they can be shelled, dried and used as haricot beans in the winter. Barlotto Lingua di **Fuoco** can be used for this. The green pods have distinctive red marking as do the beans themselves. **Cobra** is an example of the pencil variety of green French beans with delicious tender pods and violet flowers while Algarve and Hunter produce quantities of flat green stringless pods. For a purple variety try Cosse Violette which produces long round purple pods which remain tender even when guite large. The colour is lost in cooking.













Squashes





September 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
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CHILLIES & PEPPERS

Like tomatoes, chillies were introduced to the Old World from the Americas, where they grew wild. They are high in vitamin C and A, and in capsicum, the source of their heat.

Chillies come in a bewildering range of shapes, colours and degrees of heat. Internationally the heat is measured from 1 to 10 from the Habanero and the Scotch Bonnet, which are rated 10, the Jalapeno rated 5 and the mild sweet cherry chilli 1.

Chillies and peppers grow rapidly from seed and require little maintenance through their growing period. They do, however need about seven months to reach their full potential and I always plant seed in February in a heated propagator until germination.

When they are about 2 inches tall they are transferred to 3½" pots and put into the unheated greenhouse. Final re-potting will be into 9 inch pots or into the ground in May/June. A weekly feed with tomato fertiliser and a hot summer will see each plant producing anything from 3 fruits (sweet peppers) to 50 fruits for chillies.

There are many different types of chilli and sweet pepper and I have found that drying the seed from shop bought fruit provides reasonable germination success.

Commercial seeds are available from this website: http://www.chileseeds.co.uk/
http://www.ch

A good selection of sweet pepper seeds is available from: http://www.nickys-nursery.co.uk/seeds/pages/veg-pepper.htm, including Italian Pepperoncini, Pimiento and Yankee Bell Pepper.

Sweet peppers can be stored in oil and chillies can be air dried on fishing line suspended in an airing cupboard - just be careful not to put the bath towels





Social Event on Sunnyside New











October 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

SQUASH

Pumpkins are not generally thought of as part of our day-to-day diet in Britain. Elsewhere, countless varieties are found in markets the world over, being an essential ingredient in traditional soups as well as being baked, roasted, boiled or steamed. With their high nutritional value, unique texture and natural sweetness, grow some of these hard squash to cook through the colder months.

Valued highly throughout the far East and the Antipodes, we first started with Hokkaido (green skin) and Uchiki Kuri (orange skin) Japanese varieties, with Kabocha being another. The Queensland 'blue' and NZ 'Crown Prince', with smooth grey/ blue skin and fudgy dark orange flesh are highly valued squash from the Antipodes. Butternut is popular amongst allotment gardeners, being a large pear shape with a golden brown skin and a buttery taste. Acorn is another, having a distinctive nutty flavour.

They can be roughly classified by their shape, typical size, skin colour and texture, fluting/ridging, and whether they have a cupola base (**Turk's Cap**, **Marina di Chioggia**). The flesh of hard squash is always orange, a clue to high Vitamin A content. The 'ideal' sizes to grow are 2 to 5 kg for kitchen quality, whilst some vines trail many small fruit often baked whole e.g. **Little Gem**.

Start in pots during April/May, plant out after last frost into holes filled with compost and tend until the main vine starts 'running'. Being adapted to a fairly hot, dry climate, they need little watering once established. These are trailing plants that need space; plant together at 1m spacing so they create their own micro-climate with total ground cover, then they are supreme collectors of every drop of dew and rain

Until global warming really takes off, aim for just one good fruit off each vine, nipping off any others and the lead shoot when about 3 metres long. Around Sept/Oct, if the fruit sounds hollow when rapped then cut it free a metre either side of the stem. Store in a dry place not touching any others and inspect regularly for mould spots. Use before or immediately signs show – by this means the best will survive into the Spring for that last warming





October 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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November 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

ARTICHOKES

Globe Artichokes: These plants grow up to 4ft and take up a lot of room – perhaps a good reason to grow them on your allotment. They like a sunny sheltered position. They can be grown from seed sown in pots in April. **Green Globe** is the variety most widely available in seed catalogues, but look out for Violetta di Chioggia, a good purple variety to grow from seed. Plants or offsets can sometimes be found in garden centres. Vert de Laon and Camus de Bretagne are varieties to seek. They can also be propagated from existing plants in spring. These need to be potted up till they have formed good roots and then planted out. Plants require good soil, well manured to retain moisture. In autumn cut down stems and protect the crowns with bracken or straw. Remove in April. Remove heads produced in 1st summer and crop in the season after planting. Cut the main terminal bud first, when large and swollen but unopened. This will allow secondary heads to develop. Apply liquid feed. The usual way to enjoy this delicacy in the UK is to boil for 30-40 mins in salted water, then dip the base of each scale in vinaigrette and eat. Remove hairy centre (choke) and discard. Dip the fleshy heart in vinaigrette and enjoy. But Spiros on SSNew is the acknowledged master of both growing and cooking artichokes and will no doubt give you some Greek ideas for enjoying them.

Jerusalem Artichokes: These are relatives of the sunflower, hence their original Italian name 'girasole', follower of the sun. They are not fussy as to soil type. The most common variety is very knobbly and difficult to peel. Choose Fuseau which produces smooth white tubers. Plants will grow tall (8-10ft) so need careful positioning. But they can provide a useful windbrake for tender crops, or shade in hotter summers. Dig in manure in autumn and plant tubers in a 6" trench in early spring. Earth up when plants are about 1ft high. They may need water in very hot weather to produce big tubers. Once the leaves have turned brown in autumn, cut the stems to about 1ft. Lift tubers as required from late October to early spring. In harsh winters, cover stems with a mulch. These roots make a delicious warming winter soup. For extra flavour fry bacon lardons and add to the soup before blending. They can also be included with roast vegetables or made into rissoles. Boil then mash the artichokes and form into rissoles with egg for binding. Add crispy bacon and parsley or coriander leaves and fry.







December 2007

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 Christmas Drinks
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

POTATOES

Potatoes are an ideal crop for the allotment. They take up a lot of space, they clean the ground and the soil gets well worked – you dig it in preparation for planting the potatoes and you dig it again when you are lifting the crop. The choice of varieties is very subjective but there are some which do well at Sunnyside and others which seem not to. The most commonly grown commercial potato in this area is main crop **Desiree** because it does well in the local soil. It is a versatile potato with red skin, good for boiling, roasting and baking and has a good flavour. To chit or not to chit is a vexed question! Seed potatoes can be placed in boxes or egg trays in a light frost free place in order to induce small shoots to develop before planting. It would seem logical to chit first earlies so that they get away more guickly once they are planted.

If you only have room for a few potatoes, first earlies are the ones to go for. New potatoes are expensive and there is nothing like digging and eating your own with mint and butter straight from the plot. Depending on the soil, earlies can be planted as early as late February, but the newly emerging leaves must be protected from frost. Vanessa is a first early with pink skin which has done well, as have Duke of York and Red Duke of York. **Epicure** is an old variety with a good flavour and **Ulster Chieftain** is also grown successfully. Of the second earlies Maxine is an attractive red, and Nadine and Nicola are both commercially grown and taste good. Why not try Edzell Blue, an old variety with blue skin (before cooking) and a good flavour?

There is a similarly wide choice of **main crop** potatoes on offer. **King Edward** is still a favourite for roasting or baking, but the yield can be disappointing. **Maris Piper** is a good variety for chips or sauté potatoes, while **Picasso** has a good flavour and produces big tubers with red eyes. A similarly good late cropper is **Valor** which produces large potatoes in October. These last two keep well.

Salad potatoes are noted for their firm waxy texture and fine flavour. Charlotte is very reliable and Ratte is full of flavour. For the finest flavour though, Pink Fir Apple is difficult to beat. It is an old variety and is not ready for digging until October but keeps its new potato flavour until the New Year.



This year's calendar focuses attention on crops which do well at Sunnyside, including some more unusual varieties. The items have been written by different tenants; we would like to thank them and also those who have provided photographs which we have used in this calendar.

We are planning to hold a photographic competition next year. There will be no strict rules other than the pictures should be taken at any time of year somewhere on the allotment sites. So please start thinking about this now; next year's calendar will feature some of the photographic entries.

If you feel tempted to take on an allotment, tenancy forms are available from the Chairman of Sunnyside Allotment Society, or from the tea hut on B15. Alternatively phone Berkhamsted Town Council on 01442 228945.











Winning entries in the 2006 Scarecrow Competition

To find out more about Sunnyside Allotment Society, visit our website: www.sunnysideallotments.org.uk