



Bath & North East Somerset ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Independent association supporting allotment tenants
www.banes-allotments.org.uk

Welcome To Our Winter Newsletter 2021



What To Do in on Your Plot In....

December

- Harvest parsnips, leeks and winter cabbages. They can be left in the ground until you need them. Sprouts need to be harvested when they are 1" in diameter.
- Prune your fruit trees and fruit bushes.
- Net your brassicas to protect from pigeons. All sorts of netting are available at the trading hut.
- Divide your rhubarb bushes.
- A good time to cover any bare ground, turn your compost heaps and clean your tools and shed.

January

- Sow onions and leeks under cover
- Sow sweet peas in pots but make sure they are protected.
- Start to force rhubarb
- Finish pruning any fruit bushes or trees.
- If it is a mild start then buds might emerge on gooseberries, plums etc. and these may need to be protected against frost

February

- Harvest kale and cavalo nero.
- Prepare beds for sowing
- Plant rhubarb
- Prune Autumn raspberries
- Sow your broad beans in modules and place in a frost-free location.
- Sow winter lettuce seeds in a frost-free location.

TRADING HUT: The trading hut is now closed for winter but will be open when the seeds and potatoes come in next year.

Growing Loofah Sponges. By Anne Love



I thought it would be fun to have a go at growing loofah sponges after seeing a viewer's film on Gardeners World. I may have got started a bit late this year as loofahs need a long hot season to grow and mature.

There were 8 seeds in the packet and six germinated and rapidly grew, I planted 2 in a straw bale in my greenhouse. I hoped the warmth from the rotting bale would aid the growth. I planted them on the south side and the leafy growth acted as natural shading keeping the greenhouse cooler over the summer for other crops.

The loofah vines are like cucumbers and readily climbed up bamboo poles. They produced attractive yellow flowers; initially only male flowers were produced but as the vines grew female flowers were produced with embryonic fruits attached. One loofah fruit developed by itself, but I used a small paintbrush to pollinate the rest. It is recommended that 2 to 3 fruits only are allowed to develop.

The 4 fruits each grew to 30cm long like giant cucumbers, at first, they were firm and heavy but as they matured, they turned yellow and became lighter and lighter.

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In October I cut down and peeled the ripest yellow fruit, inside the loofah was full of mostly black seeds. Loofahs must be rinsed repeatedly to remove the starch but despite rinsing it repeatedly the structure remained pale green, I assume this was because it was slightly immature. I will try and start earlier next year, or perhaps a better summer will help.

I plan to use the loofah as an environmentally friendly scouring pad for myself and give some away as presents.

Not as white and big as I hoped, I am leaving the rest to mature for as long as possible.



Combe Down Allotments and Crop Drop: In Partnership to Share our Surplus with Three Ways School

We are privileged to have our historic allotments in Combe Down and we work hard to grow our crops, but we often find we produce more than we need. Why let it go to waste, feed the proliferating deer or fatten up the slugs and snails? We've found a way to make sure that during the summer months of maximum productivity, none of our lovely fruit and veg end up on the compost heap if it can be helped!

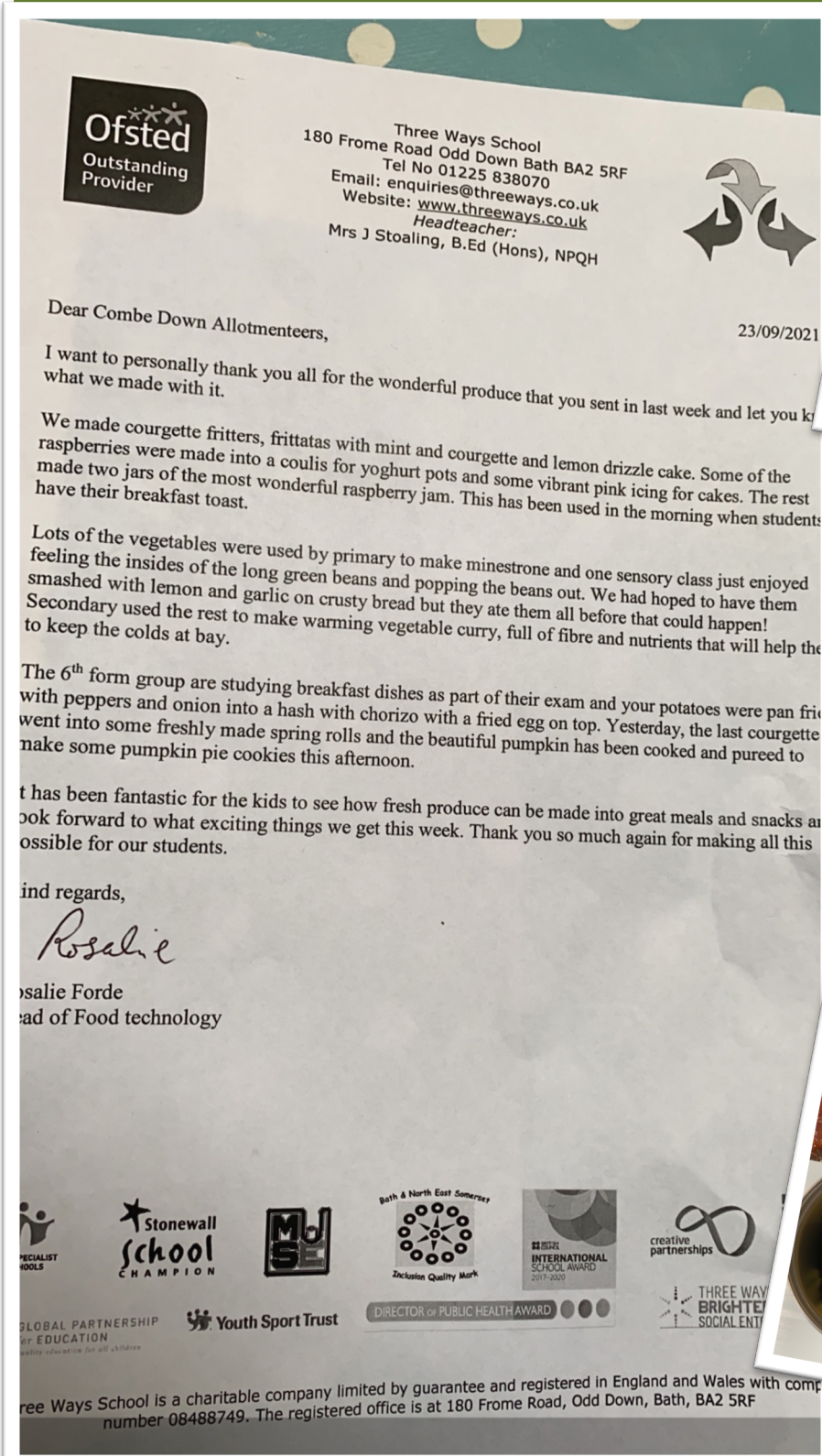
With the support of CropDrop, the hard-working diggers and gardeners of Combe Down Allotments have enjoyed sharing their surplus crops each week with Three Ways School, a Community Special School on Frome Road, Odd Down which provides for 220 children aged from 3 to 19 with a wide range of Special Educational Needs. It's a Specialist School for Physical and Sensory education and also for Creativity, all aspects which have been wonderfully supported by the weekly surprise box full of fruit, vegetables, herbs and a few special gifts delivered by a rota of volunteer allotment holders. In return, the allotmentees have been thrilled to receive long letters from Rosalie Forde, Design Technology Subject Leader, who has sent us photographs and descriptions of the amazing things that she and the children have done with the produce each week: making an array of tasty dishes from raspberry jam to plum crumble to veggie lasagnes, or just helping the children learn how to peel, slice and chop, and even what their food looks like before it is processed.

In return, we have been invited to visit the school and see the children at work, and we hope to organise an outing for the children to our beautiful allotments so that they can see where everything in the box is grown. As autumn makes way for winter, we are running out of crops to share, but while the apples are still on the trees, the grapes are ripening on the walls and the squashes and root veggies are still being harvested, we hope to continue to bring fun and joy to the children at Three Ways.

Jacqueline Burrows (Plot 8A2)



Rosalie Fordes letters and photos



To find out more about Cropdrop and how you can help

<https://www.cropdrop.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/CropDropBanes/>

Recipes

This is my favourite recipe for using up my butternut or Crown prince. Delicious with roast chicken and a winter salad. I sometimes add a scattering of pine nuts after the Parmesan for the last 10 mins in the oven.

From Tamsin Egan Lower Common East

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

medium butternut squash, peeled
1 heaped tsp coriander seeds, smashed
1-2 dried red chillies, crumbled
6 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves picked
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
olive oil
250 ml single cream
1/2 a nutmeg, grated
wineglass of Chardonnay
2 handfuls of freshly grated parmesan cheese



Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas mark 6. Cut the butternut squash in half lengthways, remove the seeds, then cut into 1-inch slices and toss in a bowl with the smashed coriander seeds, chilli, thyme leaves, salt and pepper and a good glug of olive oil to coat everything. Mix around then place the squash slices tightly in a roasting tray or earthenware dish, standing up on their sides. Take a piece of greaseproof paper slightly larger than the roasting tray, dampen it under the tap and scrunch it up then drape it over the squash, tucking in at the sides. Place the tray in the oven for about 30 minutes or until the squash starts to soften. While the squash is cooking mix together the grated nutmeg, cream, wine, half the parmesan, salt and pepper. Take the butternut squash out of the oven, remove the greaseproof paper, pour over the creamy sauce and sprinkle with the rest of the parmesan. Place with the squash back in the oven for another 10 minutes until golden, bubbling and delicious.

Pumpkin Recipe Courtesy of Meera Sodha :Book East

I made this the other week with a crown prince- it was delicious- although I only used 1 can of coconut milk

Ingredients

1.2kg Pumpkin such as delica
Rapeseed oil
Salt
2 large red onions- finely chopped
2 cm ginger peeled and finely rated
5 cloves garlic crushed
200ml passata
2tsp gorund cumin
1 ¾ tsp Kashmiri chilli powder
1 1.2 tsp garam masala
600ml coconut milk
1 lime cut into wedges
Opt tasted flaked almonds and fresh coriander to serve



Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C/400°F/gas 6 and line two baking trays with baking paper or foil.

Without peeling, cut the pumpkin in half, scoop out and discard the seeds, and cut the flesh into thin crescents, no more than 2cm wide. Drizzle with oil, sprinkle with a big pinch of salt, then pop them on the trays in one layer. Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, turning the pumpkin halfway through, until tender and blackening at the edges.

Heat 4 tablespoons of oil in a deep frying pan over a medium flame and, when hot, add the onions. Cook for 15 minutes until really soft, then add the ginger and garlic. Cook for 3 to 4 minutes, then add the tomato and cook for a further 6 minutes, until rich and paste-like.

Add 1½ teaspoons of salt, the spices and the teaspoon of sugar, stir to mix, then add the coconut milk. Mix well and heat through until it's thick and bubbling. Taste, squeeze in a little lime and taste again, adjusting the salt, sugar or lime juice as you wish.

To serve, pour the sauce on to each plate, and top with a few wedges of pumpkin. Sprinkle over some toasted almonds or fresh coriander if you like, and serve with naan bread or rice.

The Art of Composting. Observations on our Own at Lower East Common. By Tony Marchant

Dear fellow Allotment Holders,
To get black rich compost soil from your composting - so that no purchases are required from elsewhere. Some careful practises need to be adopted and three necessary ingredients need to be applied. One is of course all of your waste cuttings and prunings, waste veg tops and roughage, indeed all that is at hand, serves for the bulk of your compost bin. But dear allotment holders this is by no means enough if you want your 'compost' to really break down and rot 'to ferment' you have to add to this one ingredient of - let's call it 'roughage'-the top cuttings of your allotment - the more positive and 'active' ingredient of waste vegetable matter. Like what you collect in your kitchen for example, and plenty of it, in order to counterbalance the much larger quantities of all the roughage we get. Only the two combined will create the rich compost we want and to add them as best we can in layers, vegetable waist, roughage, vegetable matter, rough tops and cuttings.

This may to you all present one little problem here in our allotments. We don't get the necessary amounts of kitchen household wastes out here, do we?

But hey! Look around, we are in the right time of year too, we have all this fallen fruit just rotting away, so heed the time and put them all into our bins. That will help a lot actually.

Roughage will rot down of course given time but will never form the consistently to mature into 'compost'. The third item in the mix to get good compost going is worms, but they only thrive when the other two are going well, they will of course come naturally given time.

But in effect it's always best to start them off by introducing a small quantity a 'starter pack' if you like. They are the familiar little red worms or brandlings as fishermen may call them.

I have plenty in my two compost bins at home or they can be attained from some fishing shops.

To accelerate composting it is helpful at times to aerate the compost by sometimes turning with a fork too.

Best Wishes it's all very simple really. That's all.



By John Ingham- Claremont Allotments

As I write this COP26 is drawing to a close and we still don't know what the outcome will be. It is noticeable however that agriculture has hardly been mentioned. The huge carbon carrying capacity of agricultural land is being ignored. So is the fact that this same land is being degraded on a huge scale and its ability to hold carbon greatly reduced. So, I'm wondering what allotmenters can do in our modest way to address this. At the same time Bath's first ecological farm is being established (<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/ecological-farm-for-bath>) and we could feel that our efforts were part of a local revival in ecological land management.

After the war there was great pressure to increase agricultural productivity and at the same time a reduced interest in allotments. Gardeners, like farmers, were encouraged to dig or till their soils almost yearly, or at least to turn them over, and to apply large amounts of fertilisers and insecticides. One result was degraded soils which hold little carbon or life and erode quickly. Thankfully most gardeners and small-scale growers now resist this approach and think about the harm done to the natural world. But few think about what has been done to life in the soil by frequent digging and by leaving bare soil to leach minerals. Soil science can now help us to see how to correct all this.

We now know that the roots of almost all plants develop relationships with soil fungi that benefit both plant and fungus. What has only fairly recently been discovered is that the fungi leave in the soil glomalin (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glomalin>) a complex chemical which helps the soil form a sponge like structure. We can recognise its effects when we pick up a handful of healthy soil. This spongy structure helps the soil hold carbon and nutrients, and the carbon helps the soil retain moisture. Soil scientists have a saying that water follows carbon in the soil. Frequent digging tends to destroy this structure and to leave soil carbon to oxidise to carbon dioxide. So, we can help to draw down carbon and retain nutrients and moisture by keeping digging to a minimum and by applying carbon to the surface of the soil by mulching with leaves and compost. We finish up with a soil which is more nutrient rich and at the same time we help in the global effort to reduce carbon dioxide in the air.

John Ingham – Claremont Allotments



South of Bath Flower & Produce Show 2021



This year we were extremely grateful to the Allotment Association for supporting our show and it was great to see more allotment holders entering this year. We are a fun society and encourage anyone to come and enter. Just have a go, we're not about perfection but all about a fun gathering of people who like to grow, make and bake!

The show is run by Claverton & District Hort Soc and welcomes many growers from Bathwick, Combe Down, Lyncombe, Moorlands, Widcombe and BearFlat allotment sites.

This year was our 77th Show and every year it takes place on the first Saturday of September in a marquee at the top of Widcombe Hill. We also hold a popular growers plant sale in May in the same place.

Next years dates are:

Plant Sale: Sat 21st May 2022

Show: Sat 3rd Sept 2022

We'd love to see you there. You can join and be on our mailing list for just £5 a year or visit our website for more info.

Info@clavertonhortsoc.org

www.clavertonhortsoc.org



Step up to become an Association Site Rep.

The Association is a democratic campaigning organisation, with the needs of its members at the heart of its activities. The Site Reps are the eyes and ears of the Association and play a vital role in promoting the improved efficiency of Council run allotment sites in Bath.

8 out of our 24 sites don't have a rep. These are: Avon Park, Brookfield Park, Eastfield Avenue, Fairfield Park, Foxhill, High Common, Larkhall and Lower Common West.

The principal role of the Site Rep is to be the first point of contact with the Association member plot-holders on the site and to represent their views to the Association and to the Council. The Site Reps have access to the names and addresses of the members on the site.

Site reps are encouraged to welcome new plot-holders to the site and to promote the Association's resources and activities. They are encouraged to promote the benefits of composting, efficient water use, sound and preferably organic cultivation methods and wildlife conservation. Some sites have joined community projects such as Cropdrop, under the leadership of the Site Reps.

Site Reps are also invited to attend various meetings with the Association and the Council and to contribute to the gathering of information about the sites. An example would be the Repairs and Infrastructure Lists, which the Association uses to discuss how and where the Council's budgets are spent.

The Association has put up notice boards at most sites and the site reps are responsible for maintaining and putting up the Association notices. The contact for any problems with a notice board is Andrew Baker.

If there is a dispute between Association members or a member and a non-member, the Site Rep should have reference the Association's Code of Conduct, which is on the website. If amicable resolution cannot be obtained, the matter should be referred to the Association Committee. Clearly, in serious cases the matter should be reported immediately to the Council, keeping the Association Committee informed.

The Site Rep is not responsible for monitoring plots but is encouraged to keep an eye out for vacant or under-used plots and to liaise with Council and Association. The Site Rep is invited to meet with the Council officers when they are carrying out plot inspections and the Council will keep Site Reps informed of evictions and warning notices. The Council will also support Site Reps for the enforcement of the Tenancy Agreements.

