



Bath & North East Somerset

ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Independent association supporting allotment tenants

www.banes-allotments.org.uk

Spring/Summer Newsletter 2022

What to do in:

JUNE :

- Beetroot, broad beans, cabbage, cauliflower, early peas, lettuce, rhubarb, spring onions, radish, spinach can all start to be harvested now.
- Lift the earliest potatoes towards the end of the month and continue earthing up the rows of your other varieties.
- Successional sowing of beetroot, lettuce and cabbages
- Brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflowers, celeriac, courgettes, outdoor cucumbers, French and runner beans, leeks, pumpkins, squashes, sweet corn, outdoor tomatoes can all be planted out into their final position now. As with all young plants water in carefully and protect from birds with netting.

July

- Harvest garlic , onions and Shallots when the tops go yellow- leave to dry in the sun
- Harvest main crop strawberries
- Sow main crop carrot to avoid carrot fly
- Sow oriental greens such as mizuna, pakchoi, choi sum and mustard greens
- Time to plant potatoes for xmas
- Now is the best time to sew fennelas it is much less likely to bolt
- Pinch out side shoots of tomatoes

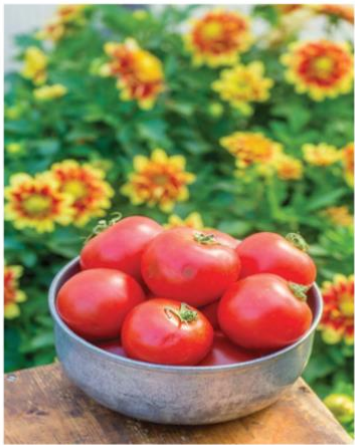
August

- Winter lettuce varieties such as winter marvel , jack ice or reines de glaces
- Rocket , cress and salad radishes
- Spring cabbages in late august and get fresh cabbage in early spring
- Sow overwintering crops of kale, cabbage, spinach and beet.
- Cut back summer fruiting raspberries

Growing Tomatoes Successfully Outdoors- Anne Love

Every year allotment holders grow outdoor tomatoes. They grow well and are covered in fruit when disaster strikes in the form of tomato blight, usually in August.

Some people have given up growing outdoor tomatoes entirely but there is a solution 'blight resistant' tomatoes.



There's quite a selection of blight resistant tomatoes but the only reliable ones I have found are Cocktail Crush or Crimson Crush. They are supposed to be different but they both produce pleasant tasting medium size fruit about the size of a small orange. The other successful type is Magic Mountain, this produces a really heavy crop of fleshy large tomatoes, the flavour is not particularly wonderful, but the fleshy tomatoes make great tomato sauce.

Every year I try another different supposedly blight resistant tomato and some years, if the conditions are right, they do well. Ferline was excellent one-year, a good crop of very tasty tomatoes. Vesper was also amazing, loads of tasty tomatoes on just 2 plants, which cropped until October one year. But the next by July they were a shrivelled mess. Similarly, Losetto, but there are many more to try.



If you have had success with blight resistant tomatoes

do let the editor Nikki Ruck newsletter@banes-allotments.org.uk know, so we can pool our knowledge.

SMALL PROJECT GRANTS AVAILABLE

Did you know that the Allotment Association has small pots of funds available to assist with improvements to their sites.? Larkhall allotment site has used this to build a seating area in the community orchard.

A Community Orchard at Larkhall Allotments 2022



In 2020 a group of volunteers from Larkhall Allotments banded together to plant an Orchard on an unused problematic site.

Last year Allotmenteer Joanna Wright gained permission to extend the site added & added another nine trees so 31 in all. They are being cared for by volunteers and all are doing well.

Enthusiasm to develop the site further was rewarded with a small grant from the Allotment Association & some great teamwork from the allotmentees to create a communal seating area. We used treated timber for the seats and our table is a reclaimed cable drum from Bristol Wood Recycling Project. Thanks to all the strimmers, weeders, painters, makers, movers & shakers but mostly to Ray Buchan who had the skill and generosity to bring the idea to fruition.



More details about funding for small projects
banes-allotments.org.uk/about/funding-for-small-projects/

Monksdale Allotments update

Walking through Monksdale the other week it occurred to me how much this patch of land supports aside from the 138 plots! A COMMUNITY Orchard, chickens, the [Greenlinks support Group](#), innovation & experimentation and soon we will welcome bees!! I hope you find the following articles an interesting insight.

Maria & Andrew - site reps

Keeping the water in and the weeds down

Using surface laid, woven weed control fabric is a really good way of achieving this – but how to grow the plants?

Those on the Monksdale site may have already spotted my weed control fabric with the neat circular holes at just the right spacing but this was not bought like that.

When cutting the plastic weed control fabric use a hot knife as this neatly seals the edge of the fabric, stops it fraying and reduces the strands that just blow across the plots or get caught in strimmers etc. Making the holes is relatively easy but you do need a bit of space to work in. My 'specially crafted' tools are a camping stove and a tin can with a wooden handle screwed on. I have two tin sizes – tuna, for the larger holes for plants like brassicas or potatoes; and mushy pea (sides cut down to same height as tuna tin) for the alliums. Spacing is important; I use 20cm for the alliums, 60cm for the potatoes and overwintering brassicas and 40cm for the summer brassicas. When planting, the fabric is stretched out and securely pinned down and the plants inserted into the middle of the hole. For the potatoes I use a bulb planter to get a neat hole deep enough and then just cover them. The potatoes are directly beneath the holes and so, apart from a few errant shoots, they come up through the hole. No need to earth up and the haulm completely fills the cutout hole so that the weeds can't get through.

If you are passing take a look on the Monksdale site (plot 6A). I am usually experimenting with crops or growing techniques and quite happy to discuss my successes/failures with them.

Dave



Monksdale Allotments Community Orchard News!

We started the year by wassailing our fruit trees with songs and mulled cider and apple juice! It looks like our efforts are working so far as we have plenty of blossom.

We have sown a small patch of wildflower meadow in the orchard and are very excited to see how it turns out. We will also be leaving the grass on the orchard un-mown for “no mow May” and we are hoping that our orchid will reappear!

We have successfully applied to the Woodland Trust for a community hedge tree pack, so we will have 30 new hedge trees arriving in November. These should fill the gaps in our otherwise thriving “edible hedge”.

Alice



Bees

This month saw the arrival of 3 beehives at the Monksdale site.

They are the Property of University of Bristol and are being used as part of research into the effects of colony health and viability in different environments.

The research will involve fortnightly visits by researchers to the hives for 30 mins – 1hr at a time, for collection of data. The hives will be in situ May to mid-end of October in an unused area of the Monksdale site.

In addition to supporting the research the bees are a welcome addition to useful pollinators on the allotment site.

Maria



Combe Down allotments and the annual rent supper 1852-1875

By Jacqueline Burrows

It has always been a tradition across the UK that allotment rents fall due on 1 October each year. In Combe Down, these payments were originally made at an annual rent supper: a tradition which continues in many parts of the country today.

In 1851, Revd Newnham developed the allotment system “*for the benefit of the labourers of Combe Down*”. In 1852 the village’s first annual rent supper was held in the schoolroom, at which tenants paid the sixpence they owed for the year. Amidst much excitement, they were waited on at supper by the Vicar and his (second) wife Catherine, together with the schoolmaster and some of the local gentry. This happy event – a polite echo of the ancient custom of the Lord of Misrule - can be traced over the next twenty-five years, until reports cease shortly before Revd Newnham retired in 1877.

At the annual meeting on 4 October 1855, before a “lively supper” in the schoolroom, “the rents were paid up, the report of the committee was read, and some very fine vegetables were shown”. Allotmenting soon spread down the hill to Monkton Combe and in October 1857, gardeners from both villages joined the annual meeting in the schoolroom. After rents had been paid and the Committee’s report had been read, a “comfortable hot supper” was served to the 44 tenants who were again waited on by Revd and Mrs Newnham and some of the local gentlemen. A “small exhibition of large vegetables” took place.

In October 1860, the coldest and wettest year on record, most of the 39 tenants in Combe Down made it to the annual event in the new schoolroom on the corner of Belmont Road/Church Road, although only half of the 17 Monkton Combe tenants ventured up the steep hill in the dark. The meal was – as always - beef, with allotment vegetables and coffee to follow, and some “fine samples” of produce were shown. After paying their sixpences, tenants were each given a penny halfpenny back to make up for the failure of the important potato harvest. Then, as now, everyone went home hoping for better returns next year, when the tenth anniversary supper took place.

It didn’t take long for the event to include a prize competition. In 1863, rents were “for the most part, punctually and cheerfully paid” and a prize fund collection raised £8. Half was awarded to growers whose vegetables “would have done credit to Sydney Gardens”. Everyone voted that the balance be spent on providing half-price steel forks for all, then went home at 9pm in “happy harmony”. Sadly, 1863 was to be the last joint supper: Monkton Combe’s allotment land was required for a grand new vicarage (now *Westfield*).

In 1865, the show was expanded to include entries from private gardens in the village. *‘It is hoped that this wholesome rivalry in honest labour and skill may tend to raise the character of the labourers, while the prizes offered by their richer neighbours proves their interest in the work.’* The supper was a grander affair too, with waiters being sent across from the Vicarage. The Revd Newnham didn’t come: his wife Catherine had died a few months earlier giving birth to their sixteenth child. He missed the 1866 supper too: that October he was away in Weston super Mare getting married for the third time.

Annual Rent suppers continued

By 1868, the simple supper with its show of vegetables had entirely changed. The produce show was held in the daytime and included entries from across the Down, including wildflowers from local schoolchildren, and the rent supper had become a separate evening affair. October 1875 saw the last published report of a Combe Down allotment rent supper at which the meal was “presided over” by Revd Newnham, now approaching his seventies. In 1877 he retired to Corsham. By 1895, responsibility for the Combe Down allotments had been taken over by Monkton Combe Parish Council and the annual rent collection had become an administrative task, allotted to a council member and carried out without ceremony. Perhaps the allotment supper on Combe Down (with or without a small show of “fine vegetables”) is a tradition that should be resurrected!

Jacqueline Burrows

Plot 8A2, Combe Down

Insect decline – we can make a difference – *Anne Love*

As a child in the early 60's I can remember the car being completely splattered with insects on a drive to Cornwall. When I make the same journey today and there is hardly one. This is borne out by a recent shocking report, that the Insect population in the U.K. has declined 60% from 2004 to 2021. It's not the case in France, Spain and Portugal where you still see every roadside, sparkling with wildflowers. UK agriculture is highly efficient and while food production has increased it is at the expense of diverse wildflowers and the insects.



So, what can we do? The answer is a great deal. For once, every one of us who has an allotment can do 3 things, today, now!



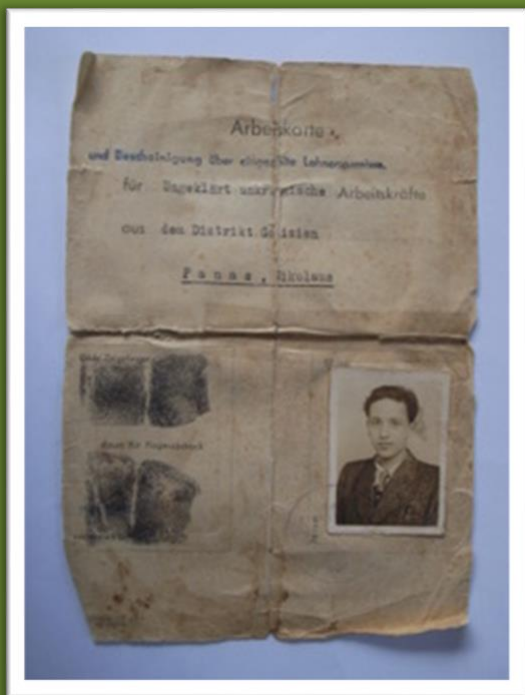
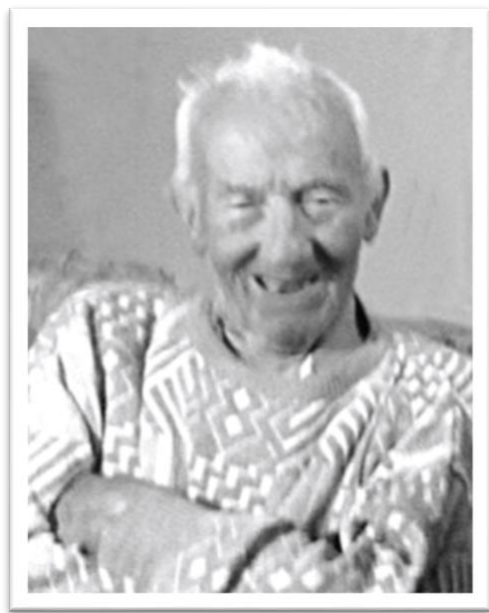
1. Build a wood pile, logs, leaves and loose bark. Site it in a shady place if possible and keep it moist in summer.
2. Cut the grass round your allotment less, leave the grass long and let multiple species, including what we consider weeds, to flourish.
3. Put one bed aside and deliberately grow insect friendly plants. There are lots of lists available on the web about what to grow but quite a number are already on our allotments, basically let them be. Have a look at this list from the RHS [rhs.org.uk/plantsforpollinators](https://www.rhs.org.uk/plantsforpollinators)

Let's do this and wash the cars more often!

One sunny day recently, we had a lovely lunch with friends outside on a terrace shaded by an ancient Judas tree. John had specifically invited us over to taste his Ukrainian sorrel soup, which he admitted was born of necessity in his case, as sorrel was the only thing he had growing in his garden.

John is Ukrainian, second generation, and he told us the fascinating story of his Ukrainian parents, who fled across Europe during the second world war. It's a sobering thought that fleeing invaders is nothing new for Ukrainians. However, in John's dad's case, it wasn't so much fleeing but being forced to go to Germany as captive civilian labour. In 1941 the Germans advanced into Ukraine, conscripting civilians into forced labour as they went. John's dad was just 18 at the time and the family had a small farm. He ended up in a coal mine in East Germany, which was dangerous and backbreaking. After escaping from the mine with a friend, he set off for the western side

of Germany, where he had a sister. Undaunted by his lack of the German language, they travelled day after day on foot, through forests, jumping onto trains without passports, dodging soldiers inspecting tickets. Sadly he found that his sister was no longer there. He was recaptured and forced into working on a farm and then he was sent with German military convoy heading for the frontline – his job was tending to the horses. Realising the dangers ahead, he escaped again and survived using his wits. At the end of the war, he, like thousands of others, found himself in a displaced persons camp, where he met John's mother. They chose England as their new home. Upon arrival at Southampton, they were given 2/6d for the train fare to a job in the north of England. He recently died aged 94.



What has this got to do with allotmenting you say? Well - it's about that sorrel – a much undervalued plant. I have two patches of it and it just grows, and grows and grows. There's not much of a tradition of its culinary use in this country, but it is truly loved in France and Europe, and as you will see from the recipe below – especially in Eastern Europe. It's dead easy to grow and if it bolts (which it is doing right now with vengeance) I just chop it all down and add it to the compost or use it as a mulch. This soup was delicious and so simple and you cannot fail to like it. Just use vegetable stock if you are a vegetarian

Green Borsch (Ukrainian Sorrel Soup)

Serves 5-6

Ingredients:

2 Tablespoons butter
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 carrot diced
2 medium potatoes, diced i
1.5 Litres stock
1 bay leaf
2 cups sorrel, sliced into 1/2
Salt, pepper to taste



Garnish:

parsley, dill, chervil, chives or mix of whatever is available
½ of a hard-boiled egg per serving
Sour cream

Method:

Melt butter in a pot and add onions and carrots. Sauté till the onions become transparent about 5 minutes, don't brown.

Add stock and bring to the boil, skim the foam

Add potatoes and bay leaf. Cook on medium heat till the potatoes are tender, about 15-20 minutes.

Add salt to taste.

Add sorrel and it will turn from bright green to khaki. Add more salt if needed as well as freshly ground black pepper.

When sorrel is soft, about 7 minutes, add minced herbs and turn off the heat.

Serve the green borsch garnished with more herbs, hard-boiled egg (halved or diced) and sour cream with a slice of buttered rye bread.

* Variations: when sorrel is out of season, green borsch is made with spinach or other leafy greens like chard. Follow the recipe as written below, but add greens 10-15 minutes earlier, since they take longer to cook than sorrel. Just before turning off the heat, stir in 3 tablespoons of lemon juice (or to taste) for a tart accent.

An extra flavour flourish is to sauté greens in butter before stirring them into the soup.

More on the possible health benefits of sorrel can be read on

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/sorrel-benefits>

Jacky Wilkinson, with the help of John Panas.



CropDrop is a community organisation that has, since the summer of 2020, connected growers with community food projects to share abundant produce. In 2021, the project helped share 156 individual drops generously donated from 18 different sources (allotments, private gardens, market gardens, small-holdings and farms) across B&NES to 27 recipient projects. The recipient projects use the donated produce to extend and enhance their community services. These projects are also members of the B&NES council's Affordable Food Network which plays a role in delivering the Council's Food Poverty Action Plan.

Such projects take the form of:

- Foodbanks
- Schools
- Food Clubs & Pantries
- Community projects
- Community cafes
-

At the end of last year we asked these projects to describe the impact your donations had on their services:

Mercy in Action, Fiona Wakely

“The families are benefitting hugely from the produce and I think having a variety of vegetables has meant that people are willing to try new things that they wouldn't be able to afford to buy in the supermarket... We currently have 100 families who use the Pantry regularly and lots of them ask for the allotment produce because they want more nutritious food to provide for their children.”

Family Action FOOD club, Simon Green

“Our members thoroughly enjoy the produce that you have harvested, collected and donated and it brings an extra special local and personal touch to families who are at risk of food insecurity. Your efforts help to provide up to £30,000 worth of food costs per year at every club, they have provided inspiration for exciting recipes and brought joy to the young children who have also benefited.”



Three Ways School in Combe Down cooking up a colourful banquet!



A vivid vegetable bouquet from Monksdale allotments

The 2021 growing season saw a grand green tide of vegetables in our weekly drops. Courgettes appeared 77 times, beans 47 times and spinach 32 times across our 156 drops! You can find out more about the impact of your contributions in our 2021 report:

<https://www.cropdrop.org.uk/end-of-year/2021>

If you want to support the cause or find out more, contact your site rep, or, me at sam.cropdrop@gmail.com to help you find a recipient partner project for your site.

AND FINALLY

B&NES Allotments Association

SUMMER AFTERNOON TEA AND GET TOGETHER WITH THE COMMITTEE AND REPS.

Alice Park Community Gardens Barn, Gloucester Road, BA1 7BL.

Saturday afternoon from 15.00 (3 o'clock) 25 June 2022.

Tours of the lovely community garden too, courtesy of the Alice Park Growers.

All members, family and friends are warmly invited to an afternoon gathering under the barn (sheltered if it rains) at the Alice Park community gardens, Alice Park, Larkhall.

Bring a chair, and a plate of nibbles/cakes to share. Tea, coffee, cordials will be available, but bring your own cups/glasses in order to save the planet from plastic and us washing up!

There is a lovely café which sells food in the park if needed.

The Trading Hut will be having an 'away day' at this event with a selection of items to buy, plus some 'sale' items. If you have any requests for the Trading Hut to stock this is also a great opportunity to talk to us in a casual setting.

Getting there: by bus No 3 (and some other buses too) along the London Road – the stop is opposite the Rugby Training ground with a very short walk up the Gloucester Road to the park café, with the community garden oak barn just a bit further along. By car – there's a small free carpark and on-street is unrestricted. Please note in can get busy at weekends. Access is reasonably level. Toilets are nearby.

An RSVP would be appreciated,

B&NES ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

