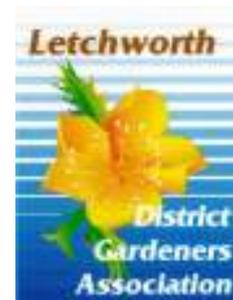


# GLEANINGS FROM THE COMPOST HEAP

SPRING 2017

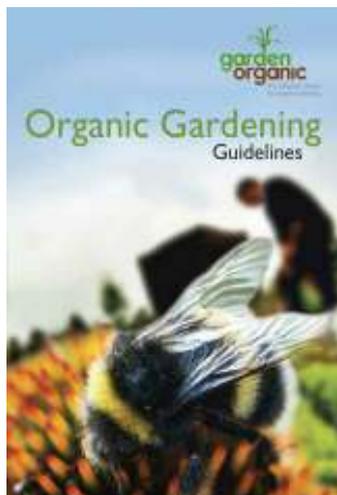


**WELCOME** to the spring edition of the **COMPOST HEAP**.

With the exception of Meena's brief tenure last year there have only been two *Compost Heap* editors in just under 20 years; many of you will remember Jack Collins who gave us 31 editions from 1997 to 2004 then Pam Manfield took over and did 44 editions up to last year. I won't guarantee to be doing that many but all journeys start with the first step, so here we go with this bumper first edition.

## ORGANIC GARDENING

These days we hear a lot about organic gardening; I for one have never really been sure what is meant by organic in this sense. Using as her bible, the '*Organic Gardening Guidelines*' booklet produced by Garden Organic, LDGA member Diane Ketcher gives us her thoughts on the subject.



"Organic gardening means different things to different people and even if you don't consider yourself an organic gardener you will probably find that you do a lot already. To me, organic gardening means working with and alongside nature as much as possible; creating spaces for our wildlife to thrive and not using any products which have a

negative impact on the environment, local or global. That is why I won't use peat or chemical fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides or fungicides. I would rather lower my expectations of crop yields, than use those things."

"My father didn't buy peat; it wasn't available pre-war anyway and he grew great vegetables. He used home-made **compost**. Yes there are problems with weeds, but hoeing out early on keeps them at bay. For sowing seeds I use a mixture of peat-free compost and sieved home-made leaf mould plus a handful of Carbon Gold Biochar. I don't have a problem with growing seedlings or potted plants."



"For **fertilisers** I make my own nettle and comfrey feed and I have a wormery which yields about a litre of nutritious liquid fertiliser every week. When I run out of that I do use a seaweed liquid fertiliser. Maxicrop do a nitrogen-based one and a tomato feed one. I also use well-rotted horse manure when I can get it but it needs to be several years old before use, in order to kill off traces of medicines the horses are given."

“For **pest control** I find that a multi-faceted approach is best. Mixed planting with companion flowers such as marigolds and spring onions helps to confuse pests such as carrot fly. I once left a parsnip to grow flowers; it was very tall and beautiful and attracted all the blackfly which would have otherwise gone onto my runner beans. A garlic and chilli spray works wonders too. It keeps off insects and mammals! As for slugs!! My favourite remedy is the beer trap but you also need to do the night-time torch hunt and spray the plants with garlic and chilli liquid. It’s hard work but better than poisoning the birds and amphibians with traditional slug pellets. The ferrous-based ones on sale now are safer. I do use those under cover”

mentioned is have a pond in your garden, no matter how small it can only be a benefit.



Diane runs a group in Letchworth called *Grow it Yourself: Organic* catering for gardeners who like to do it organically; on 22nd April they are organising an event which brings together a number of local gardening groups and includes a talk on **companion planting** by organic expert Karen Kenny. LDGA will be there, promoting wildlife in the garden and selling items from the Trading Store that are suitable for organic gardeners. We will be joined on our stall by Matt & Joe from *Entomics* who will be showing off their new organic plant enhancer created from waste food using insects. For more details see the ‘Coming Soon’ section on page 3 or visit our website.

“I get such joy out of finding toads in my compost heap, watching the first ladybirds emerge from their winter hiding places and recording the butterflies and birds which share my garden with me. So it depends on your priorities I suppose, as to how much you embrace organic gardening.”

At LDGA we cater for all types of member, including the organically minded. At our Trading Store we have a wide range of products, many suitable for organic gardeners. Check out the Trading List or visit the store to find out more.



Thank you Diane, I think you may be right; I, certainly, am more organic than I thought. One of the best things you can do to encourage wildlife that wasn't

## COMING SOON

### **Wednesday 5th April**

Coffee Morning 10:00am at Tapps.

### **Thursday 20th April**

'An Introduction to Dahlias' by John Cullen

Learn about all aspects of growing and looking after dahlias



### **Saturday 22nd April**

Grow it Yourself: Organic event.

2:00 – 4:30pm at the Free Church Hall, Letchworth. Refreshments, plant sales and a talk on companion planting by organic expert Karen Kenny. Come and say hello to us on the LDGA stall. Entry £1

### **Thursday 18th May**

'NGS Gardens open to view' by E. Robarts

Edwina will talk about the Open Gardens Scheme and 'The Yellow Book' directory.

### **Saturday 3rd June**

Hitchin Market 'Love your Garden Week'

### **Saturday 10th June**

LDGA at the Letchworth Festival

### **Thursday 15th June**

'Chatsworth' by Andrew Sankey

For more information, please contact our Meetings Organiser on 01462 621961 or email [meetings@ldga.org.uk](mailto:meetings@ldga.org.uk)

## COACH OUTINGS

"In September 1961, a party of 58 Association members broke new ground with a day trip into Kent to see the work of a commercial nursery specializing in early flowering chrysanthemums. On the way home they stopped at the Garrick Theatre in London to see the popular new show 'Fings Ain't Wot They Used to Be'" [1] Very true. If you were on that trip or know anyone that was, please let us know.

Meanwhile here is some detail on the 2017 offerings that we mentioned in the last edition.

Capel Manor on **Thursday 8th June**. Leave Letchworth at 9:15am and arrive back at approx. 3:15pm. Members £14, non-members £16. This includes a 1.5hr guided tour. They do have pre-bookable motorised single seater buggies available, if anyone would like one please let us know. There is a restaurant serving hot & cold food or you can picnic in the grounds.



RHS Hyde Hall Flower Show on **Saturday 5th August**. Leave Letchworth at 8:45am and arrive back approx. 4:30pm. Members £12, non-members £14. There will be a wide range of specialist nurseries and trade stands as well as a floral art

marquee, an artists' pavilion, a food village, live music and plenty of shopping!

For more information or to book a seat, please contact Myra on 01462 621961 or email [outings@ldga.org.uk](mailto:outings@ldga.org.uk)

[1] an extract from 'Gardeners' City' by Kenneth Johnson

## COMMITTEE NEWS

Our AGM was held on 16th February and was well attended. The chairman and the respective secretaries gave reports of the past year's activities and also looked forward to the coming year; a copy of the combined reports can be found on our website. All committee members were re-elected with the exception of Thelma Colman who is retiring from committee after many years of service; she was presented with a cut-glass flower vase engraved with Letchworth District Gardeners Association as a thank you for her much-appreciated efforts. Two new members, John Brookbanks & Myra Smith, were elected for the first time.

After the meeting I asked Thelma about her time on committee.

Ed. - How long have you been a member of the association?

TC - Oh a long time, my husband Ron used to be on the committee, he was secretary for a while, we joined when we moved to Letchworth in the late 70s.

Ed. - When did you first become part of the committee?

TC - I started by helping Laurie Cook to arrange lectures and outings and then gradually took over the role by myself, must be getting on for 10 years.

Ed. - Why was this the right time to stand down?

TC - It's been getting more difficult to find new and interesting speakers and being available to go to all the meetings is quite a tie so it's time to let someone else take up the reins.

Ed. - Which speaker did you like the most out of all those that you booked?

TC - Probably, John Branham from the National Veg Society he's given us a couple

of very good talks. Or the one Kathy B. and Catherine A. did entitled 'Sharing a Bath' about how to save water in times of drought.



Ed. - Finally what is your favourite flower?

TC - At the moment it's the Alstroemeria.

Some of you may know them as Peruvian lily or lily of the Incas.

Thelma will continue to come along and help out at meetings whenever possible.

## SAD NEWS

Thelma mentioned taking over from Laurie Cook; it is with great sadness that we have to inform you that Laurie passed away on the 11th March aged 99. Many of you will have fond memories of Laurie during his time with the Association; if you would like to share them with us, we would love to hear from you.

"When I joined in 2000, Laurie was a valued committee member and running the monthly meetings or lectures as he liked to call them. He will also be remembered for the plant sales that he organised to raise money for charity. Let us together, celebrate his life in gardening." Maureen Hersee, LDGA Chairman

"My Memories of Laurie are of a man of many talents; gardening, cooking, and many more skills, if you wanted something done you only had to ask. He was a one off." Thelma Colman, Meetings Secretary (retired)

A celebration of Laurie's life will take place at the Free Church, Letchworth on Wednesday 12th April at 2:45pm.

## SHOWS - SPECIAL CLASSES



**'Fuchsia challenge'.** Hardy fuchsia plants are now available. We would like you to grow them on and show them in class 30 at the Summer Show on 15th July. A £1.00 contribution is required for the plant but entry to the class is free.

**'Mystery Seed Challenge'.** Special vegetable seeds are now available from Tapps Garden Centre, Baldock. We would like you to grow them and show the resulting produce in class 62 of the Autumn Show on 9th September. A £1.00 donation to Tapps' charity is required for the seeds but class entry is free.



**'Chilli challenge'.** Young chilli plants are now available. We would like you to grow them on and show them in class 59 at the Autumn Show. A £1.00 contribution is required for the plant but class entry is free.

If you fancy having a go at any of these challenges or need more information, please contact Paul on 01438 727422 or email [shows@ldga.org.uk](mailto:shows@ldga.org.uk)

## RECIPE - SPICY PARSNIP SOUP

If, like me, you still have parsnips growing on your veg plot, they may be starting to get a bit woody by now. Don't throw them on the compost heap, make some soup instead.

### Ingredients

Cooking oil

1 Medium onion (diced)

750g Parsnip (peeled and chopped into 2.5cm cubes)

750ml Vegetable stock (Bouillion)

250ml Milk

1 level tsp Ground coriander

1 level tsp Ground cumin

1 level tsp Ground turmeric

1 level tsp Ground garam masala

If your spices have been in the store cupboard for a few years they may have lost some of their potency so don't be afraid to add a little extra.

### Method

Cover bottom of a 2ltr saucepan with a little oil, add the onion and sweat off for 8 to 10 mins.

Add the parsnip, stock, milk & spices and bring to the boil, then simmer for 30 mins. Transfer the contents of the saucepan to a blender and whiz up in 2 or 3 batches until smooth.

### Serves

4 hearty portions (3 ladles) or  
6 politer portions (2 ladles)

This soup comes out quite thick which makes it ideal for freezing; you can always water it down a bit during reheating.



## GREEN SHOOTS

For his efforts in establishing and developing the Green Shoots project, Graham Tapp has been awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship by the Rotary Club of Baldock. The Paul Harris Award is a worldwide form of recognition of outstanding service and is generally awarded to Rotarians for their service to and achievements in the Rotary organisation. This award is, however, also granted outside Rotary members to individuals such as Graham, whose efforts and commitment have brought real value and benefit within the community.



Graham has also been given a Community Volunteer Award by NHDC in part for his work on Green Shoots.

The season is just getting under way out on the Green Shoots raised beds; we will let you know how things are going in the next edition.

## MONTHLY UPDATES

For those of you that have given us your email addresses; look out for the new style monthly updates. Always allow the images to be displayed as we are now including a lot more photos to illustrate the news. If you don't get these updates but would like them, please let us know by emailing [membershipsecretary@ldga.org.uk](mailto:membershipsecretary@ldga.org.uk) and we will include you on the distribution list.

## JOBS FOR SPRING

Here are half a dozen jobs you can tackle during the spring (courtesy of the RHS).

### **April**

- Prune fig trees
- Sow hardy annuals, herbs and wild flower seed outdoors

### **May**

- Lift and divide overcrowded clumps of daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs
- Earth up potatoes, and promptly plant any still remaining

### **June**

- Prune many spring-flowering shrubs
- Hoe borders regularly to keep down weeds

## SAUSAGE SIZZLE SOCIAL

Myra Smith's idea for a social event came to fruition on 16th March when around 60 people enjoyed our first ever Sausage Sizzle Social. Sausage and mash was followed by apple crumble and custard. This was followed by an after dinner quiz which was won by Team Davidson.

Myra said "It was great to see everyone really enjoying the evening. It'll be easier next time!" There, you heard it here first.

Thanks to everyone who contributed time, effort and food to the occasion.



## TRADING STORE

Once again this year, we've been doing our price comparisons with local retailers; here are some of our best value items.

Product	Our price	Local price*	Saving
<b>Netting, Shading &amp; Fabric</b>			
o Bird Netting, 2m x 6m	£3.70	£5.99	£2.29
Capillary Matting, 0.53m wide, /m	£2.20	£4.79	£2.59
o Mulching Fabric, 1.5m wide, /m	£0.75	£1.69	£0.94
o Polythene, Black, 2m wide, /m	£0.85	£1.99	£1.14
<b>Weedkillers</b>			
Roundup GC, 540ml	£19.15	£21.00	£1.85
Roundup, ready to use spray, 1l	£4.60	£5.99	£1.39
<b>Pesticides</b>			
Rose Clear Ultra, 200ml	£6.75	£7.50	£0.75
Rose Clear Ultra, ready to use spray, 1l	£4.85	£5.99	£1.14
Vitax greenhouse fumigator, 3.5g	£4.90	£7.99	£3.09
<b>Bamboo Canes</b>			
o 6 ft. long, x10	£2.80	£4.49	£1.69
o 8 ft. long, x10	£4.00	£5.99	£1.99
<b>Fertilisers</b>			
Growmore Granules, 3kg	£2.15	£6.99	£4.84
Chempak 4 or Chempak 8 Plant Feed	£4.55	£5.99	£1.44
o Maxicrop Organic Tomato Feed, 1l	£7.10	£9.49	£2.39
o 6X Chicken Manure, pellets, 8kg	£6.55	£12.99	£6.44
Miracle Grow, 1kg	£4.50	£5.49	£0.99
<b>Compost &amp; Growing Medium</b>			
o Silverperl Perlite, 10l bag	£6.70	£7.99	£1.29
John Innes Seed, 1, 2 & 3 Compost, 25l bag	£2.80	£4.99	£2.19
Grow Bag, 3 Plant	£1.95	£2.99	£1.04
o New Horizon Peat Free Multipurpose, 50l	£4.00	£4.99	£0.99
Jack's Magic All Purpose, 60l	£4.30	£6.99	£2.69
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
Jeyes Fluid, 1l	£12.30	£16.99	£4.69

o = Products suitable for organic gardeners

\* Prices correct at time of printing

## SPRING WORD SEARCH



- AZALEA
- BIRDSONG
- BLOSSOM
- BLUEBELL
- CATKINS
- DAFFODIL
- EASTER
- FORSYTHIA
- LAMBS
- LAWNMOWER
- MAGNOLIA
- PRIMROSE
- TADPOLES
- TULIP
- VERNAL

Find these spring-related words hidden in the grid; they can be backwards, forwards, up, down or diagonal.

## QUIZ TIME

If you missed the Sausage Sizzle Social recently, here are some garden-related anagrams from the after-dinner quiz plus a couple of new ones.

- a) wanting care
- b) warn me low
- c) frank gored
- d) bra where owl
- e) teapot dose
- f) heed groans
- g) tattoos weep
- h) gee hose run
- i) new corset

a) watering can; b) lawnmower; c) garden fork; d) wheelbarrow; e) seed potato; f) garden hose; g) sweet potato; h) greenhouse; i) sweetcorn

## AND FINALLY...

I'll leave you with this extract from 'The Glory of the Garden' by Rudyard Kipling.

*Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made*

*By singing:- " Oh, how beautiful," and sitting in the shade*

*While better men than we go out and start their working lives*

*At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives*

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### **Jo Tofts (Secretary)**

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We are always eager to hear from our readers and Association members. Please write to:

[editor@ldga.org.uk](mailto:editor@ldga.org.uk)

For all LDGA information, including events, store opening times and much more, visit our website:

[www.ldga.org.uk](http://www.ldga.org.uk)

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