

# Allotments Newsletter

## May Madness



Brentwood  
Horticultural  
Society

Well if the end of April is anything to go by we are looking forward to some interesting weather swings in May we have had temperatures up around 28C and down to 5C, wind, rain and sunshine.

My start to the gardening year has been interrupted, not by the weather so much as by a squatter in my shed! I opened the door to my shed to retrieve some tools only to have a small (unidentified) bird fly at me and out of the door.

On inspection there on the shelf next to the door was a perfect nest with five small light brown eggs. Good news in the end all five eggs hatched and I now have access to my shed!

(I have photos of the eggs if anyone can identify them for me.)



*"Be like a flower and turn your face to the sun."  
- Kablil Gibran .*

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### Special points of interest:

- Chairman's message about Council cultivation regulations
- Plot holder Recipes
- Shows and Meetings
- Jobs For May
- Site Rep reports

### Plot Cultivation

Under the terms and conditions of your allotment Agreement you are required to ensure that your plot is 75% cultivated by June of each year.

In similar fashion, we, Brentwood Horticultural Society, are required under the terms and conditions of our Management Agreement with Brentwood Council to ensure that all sites are managed correctly in accordance with their requirements which specifies that all plots should be 75% cultivated by June of each year.

It has been a very difficult start to the year with some appalling weather and I am sure that this has had an effect on your ability to "work your plot(s)" but the demand from the Council remains and it has to be said that at the moment

too many plots remain uncultivated. This situation puts the Society in a very difficult situation with the Council especially now when we are negotiating the long-term future for allotments in Brentwood.

I would therefore ask all plot holders to be realistic about their plot(s). If your plot (or plots) fall into this "uncultivated" category, please be realistic about your abilities and give immediate and very serious thought about what you can achieve.

Maybe you should consider you have too many plots? Or that even the single plot is becoming too much? The option of course is up to the individual; however, it might be the perfect time to relinquish a plot, down-size to a smaller plot or reduce the number of plots

that you have to maintain. This would be the perfect time to reassess your requirements and allow the Society to satisfy another gardener on the waiting list.

There will always be exceptional circumstances and we have no desire to be unreasonable, but we are very aware the Council is being very active in its inspection regime and that we must fully conform to the Council's Management Agreement's terms and conditions.

Vernon Thomas  
Chairman

## Clearing a Plot



Attacking an overgrown plot in one massive effort can be overwhelming and off putting for a beginner. Reclaiming an overgrown plot is best carried out in small stages even if it takes a couple of seasons.

If you are starting in spring I would suggest clearing an area for a nursery bed to enable you to get some early crops underway while you continue preparing more ground, that way you will reap the benefit of your efforts.

An early task should be to identify an area for a compost heap as you will be clearing a LOT of green waste including old crop residues like sprout and sweetcorn stems and fibrous material like grasses and

woody herbs. You can cut down the top growth with shears and add this to the top and in between layers in the heap. Keep trimming weed growth for the heap while you prepare the first patch of clean soil.

Forking out all the weeds for composting is a thorough method if you are not in a hurry; digging them in is faster but you will need to control perennial weeds.

Sheet mulching with layers of cardboard topped with a mulch of manure or garden compost is a simple and non-invasive method or you could cover with plastic sheeting or horticultural matting perforated with planting holes. Grow



potatoes or brassicas as a pioneer crop, the potatoes will help break up the soil.

Lush weed growth suggests adequate fertility levels for most vegetables, where sparse growth try undemanding veg that survive on meagre rations such as beans carrots and onions.

Feed these with a complete fertiliser as they grow, and mulch if possible with any available organic materials even grass clippings.

**Share your clearance tips**  
**Please pass your tips on to:**

[stevenmshepherd@gmx.com](mailto:stevenmshepherd@gmx.com)

## Event Calendar

### Plant Fair at Hyde Hall, RHS Garden

5th May Chrysanthemum Society Show

6 May Wildlife Awakens— a walk through the estate with wildlife experts

### Shenfield Garden Soc.

#### Meetings

May 12th Plant Sale

May 15th Willows in the landscape Debbie Hart

### Wildlife Trust

Greening the City for people and wildlife 17th May 8PM

A talk by Peter Beckett from the City of London Corporation - Green Roofs and Pocket Parks

Shenfield Parish Hall 60 Hutton Road

### Plant Sale

May 5th-7th 09:00-17:00

Thorndon Countryside Center

### Hutton Trading Shed Open Day & Mini Plant Sale

12th May 10:00-12:00

Bring Your Membership Card!

### Hutton Horticultural Society

Flower Group

17th May 20:00

St. Peter's Church Hall, Claughton Way

### Wine Circle May 16th - 8.00

Wine tasting by 6 members with home made bread and cheese

All meetings are on the 3rd Wednesday of each month and are held at

St. Peter's Church Hall,  
Claughton Way,

### Lawn Bowling

Open Days—5th&6th May 10:00-14:00

Try Lawn Bowling FREE just bring along some flat soled shoes or slippers all equipment provided.

Every Tuesday throughout the summer you can play for £1 starts at 09:30 and includes refreshments

King Georges Playing Fields Ingrave Road CM13 2AQ



## May

The clouds "have wept their fill" the whole night long,  
And what a change is wrought! But yesterday,  
We look'd around, and scarce could deem that May,  
The poet's theme,—the month of flowers and song,—  
Could do her own sweet lineaments such wrong  
As to frown on us like a very shrew:  
To-day, we feel what poets sing is true;  
Like them, we hail her reign, and wish it long.

See, how each budding spray,  
each floweret fair  
Retains the liquid treasure! how  
the trees,  
Lest summer should o'ertake  
them unaware,  
Haste to unfold their leaflets to  
the breeze;  
While in the orchard every  
moss-grown stem,  
And sapling shoot, a thousand  
blossoms gem!

Charlotte Wardle & Nikolai Ager



## Photographic Project—Reminder

**Gary Atkinson** is Park Road plot holder and a keen photographer. In last weeks Newsletter Gary asked for volunteers for a photographic project he is working on, he has had a few people contact him to find out more and volunteer but would like a few more. For those of you how may have missed it here are the details of this exciting project again:

Gary doing a private photographic project this year focusing on positive portraits of allotment holders in the Brentwood area and generally promoting the Allotment Community

Gary is looking for a minimum of 20 volunteers to feature in his project. The volunteers should be from all ages and backgrounds. he would need them to

be happy to potentially have photographs of them exhibited.

His aim is to raise the profile of allotment holders and their character in a small exhibition, perhaps starting off at the local libraries. He will probably need to visit each volunteer at their plot at least 3 times throughout the year. Each participant will receive a complimentary print.

**Contact Details**  
If you are interested in this worthwhile project please contact Gary on 01277 217720 or [1garyatkinson@gmail.com](mailto:1garyatkinson@gmail.com)

## Park Road Site Rep Report

### Water Supply Replacement

Almost there!

We had couple of working parties to continue the trench to enable the incoming water supply to be connected to the water supply around the rest of the Park Road site and next week the water board finally connect to the main supply!

On the day of the connection we need some volunteers to check for leaks as the system fills up so

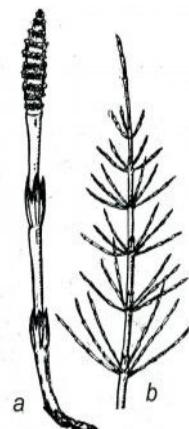
if you are available it would be good to see you there.

**General:** There is still some standing water on some of the plots but most are now workable and its good to see that plot holders are gradually getting things under control and back on track.  
**Weeds:** We have a few plots that are infested with the Mares Tail also known as Horse tail weed which despite plot holders best effort keeps returning.

The weed is deep rooted { I am told down to 1.5 Metres} and perennial and spreads very quickly. When the shoots first appear the cones at the tip of the plant produce millions of spores. They also have a waxy coat which makes them resistant to glycophosphates. If anyone has a solution to get rid of this weed please let us know as before you know it it will be everywhere.

Horsetail Mares Tail (Equisetum arvense)

- a) The stalk with spore body appears in spring
- b) The leafy fronds appear later to feed the roots



## Hartswood Site Reps Report Ian Palmer

This year I tried the using coir plugs as a means to kick off seeds. It is the first time I have tried using this medium.

For those who know, we do like sunflowers on our plot. We keep trying to find different types.

This year we are attempting *Tithonia rotundifolia* Torch or Mexican sunflower. The picture opposite shows a tray

full of plugs each plug with a pair of sunflower seeds.

After a week in the incubator covered in black plastic the

black sunflowers are the first to be ready for potting on with the rest showing good signs of germination. .



## Jobs For May

**The man who has planted a garden feels that he has done something for the good of the world.**  
— Vita Sackville-West

May is always looked forward to as the first month of summer but it marks the end of the spring. It is a month when we can get caught out by mini droughts and heat waves. The biggest threat is to any young plants that have that have recently been transplanted into the open ground and any freshly emerging seedlings. Be sure to keep all of them well watered and if the young transplants look as if they are flagging give them some shade protection from the heat of the sun or drying winds. On the other hand May can be a complete disaster month bringing damaging frosts, cold winds with heavy rain or hail, so be prepared to take steps to protect plants if it is necessary.

### Harvest.

Sprouting broccoli, cabbage, spinach, rhubarb, spring onions, early sown lettuce, beetroot, radish and peas.



Cut asparagus regularly to maintain the supply. Start to remove the side shoots on tomatoes. Use up of the last leeks. Clear away any old or finished crops and dig over the soil and prepare the site ready for the next crop.

### Plant and Sow

Plant in pots or trays under glass, Dwarf and climbing French beans, runner beans, sweet corn, outdoor cucumbers, courgettes, pumpkins, squashes, all which can be planted out next month.

Savoy cabbage, winter cabbage, endive, kale and sprouting broccoli can all be sown in the open ground now, ready to be planted

out next month.

Continue making direct successional sowings in the soil of lettuce, radish, spinach, turnips (switch to kohlrabi when the weather becomes hot) beetroot for summer use and also main-crop beetroot to put into store at the end of summer. While the leeks, Brussels sprouts and French beans sown last month under glass, can now be planted out.

This is also your last opportunity to sow peas and parsnips this year

### General

Thin out whilst still very small, the seedlings of beetroot, carrots, lettuce, onions, parsnips, turnips and always water along the row to settle the disturbed seedlings back in, once the job is completed.

Look out for blackfly on broad beans, greenfly on peas, lettuce, cabbage root fly, carrot fly, thrip damage on brassicas especially when the plants are small.

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY CONTACT**

**Membership Secretary, PO Box 12582 Brentwood CM14 9QR**  
**Email: membershipsec.brentwoodhs@gmail.com**

# Get Digging!

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

*If you are enjoying your allotment why not let others know about the benefits?*

*Brentwood Horticultural Society manages eight allotment sites within Brentwood on behalf of Brentwood Council.*

*The sites are Hartswood, Park Road, Ongar Road,*

*Bishops Hall, Honeypot Lane, River Road, Middle Road, and Crescent Road.*

*During the year a few allotments become available. So, if you know someone who would enjoy outdoor exercise, fresh produce and good company give them the details of our membership secretary, as the waiting list is growing rapidly.*

## Ongar Road Site Rep Report

These two lovely pictures taken by Adam Staples, from the Ongar Road Site really sum up the crazy

weather we have been having over the last 6 months!

The beautiful sunset was taken on 21 December and the winter wonderland 28 February when we were all busy chitting our first early potatoes and pacing the floor waiting for it to be dry enough, and warm enough to get out and start preparing for the busy year ahead! Just so

you are aware Ongar Road does specialise in stunning sunsets as we are surrounded on three sides by woodland and farmland with uninterrupted views. We have resident buzzards in the field next door which often distract us by their keening and flying displays especially when they have young!

We also get the occasional visitors from South Weald including earlier this year a pair of ducks who decided to nest in a tree!



## Recipe No.3

### Italian Style Green Beans



This delicious recipe was sent in by **Rita Robson**, a Park Road Plot holder.

Here's a quick recipe which I like when we have a glut of green/climbing/French beans.

A tasty lunch with crusty bread to soak it up. Also, it uses up three ingredients from the allotment:

Makes enough for two for lunch/dinner; or four as a side dish

An Italian grandma would give you this recipe by saying something like, "Sauté a little garlic in oil with tomatoes and green beans." And really, while the directions

below are more specific, her basic instructions aren't bad.

The thing to remember with recipes like this one is that they're less about precision and more about a general idea, which, for the record, is exactly what makes recipes like this one easy to like.

#### Ingredients:

1/4 cup olive oil  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
12 ounces (1 1/2 cups) chopped fresh, boxed or canned tomatoes or tomato sauce ; you want something that can get saucy with the green beans and cover everything)  
24 ounces (1 1/2 pounds) fresh or frozen green beans  
LOTS of salt, but to taste  
Pepper, to taste

#### Directions:

Set a large, deep sauté pan or pot on the stove, and use it to warm the olive oil and garlic over medium-low heat, cooking until the garlic starts to brown.

Add the tomatoes and cook down for five minutes or so, just enough time to let the tomatoes get infused with the garlic oil flavour.

Add green beans and stir to coat them with the tomato mixture. Simmer this mixture for 20 to 35 minutes, covered, until the beans are soft and wilted.

Then, add salt—a couple hefty dashes—and taste; add more salt and taste until it's the flavouring you like. Pepper to taste as well. Enjoy!

## Recipe No. 4 Blackcurrants Or Gooseberry Vodka



Here is a simple recipe but treat with caution!

#### From the Allotment:

10oz Fresh Blackcurrants or Gooseberries

#### Other Ingredients:

Vodka (cheap supermarket will do)

5oz Granulated Sugar

#### Method:

To make this you will need a clean Sterilized Kilner jar. Depending on the size of the jar adjust the measures to suit. The aim is to have the fruit mixture filling up a third of the jar

Wash the berries and put them in the jar, cover with the sugar and fill the jar with Vodka. Give the jar a good

shake after this shake the jar once per week.

Wait for 2 or 3 months to allow the flavours to mature then strain the juice into a clean bottle.

Once the juice is strained the remaining fruit can be added to puddings and sponges or used to make a boozy fruit salad.

## Recipe No.5

### Traditional Pasta Sauce (Ragu)



Continuing the Italian Theme, We have two for the price of one here from Ann Mathews from the Ongar Road Site..

Fingers crossed for a glut of tomatoes!

Yes, I love tomatoes in all shapes and sizes and if the dreaded blight visits my plot I am quite literally heart-broken! But more than anything I like cooking Italian food using fresh tomatoes so here are a couple of recipes given to me by Italian friend Sara who we visit every year in her beautiful home in Sorrento!

#### Ingredients

One large carrot – finely chopped

One large onion – finely chopped

One stick of celery – finely chopped

8 tablespoons of olive oil

1kg tomatoes chopped int quarters (no need to peel unless you want too)

2 tablespoons concentrated tomato puree

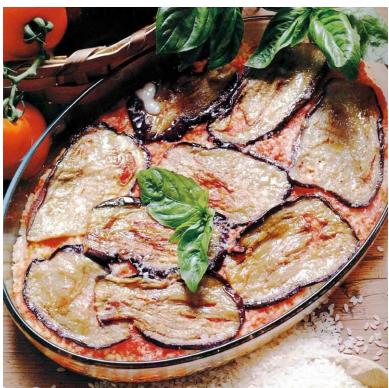
Salt and pepper to season

#### Method

Heat oil in a large pan over a medium heat then add carrot, onion and celery and cook until soft but don't allow the vegetables to colour – usually about five

minutes. Add the chopped tomatoes and puree and stir. Bring up the heat until the juices run out of the tomatoes then turn down to the lowest heat you can and leave to cook for up to an hour stirring occasionally. Take off the heat and season to taste – if you like your sauce a bit sweeter add a teaspoon of sugar. You can either sieve the sauce or place it in a liquidiser to create a beautiful smooth sauce to use with pasta, or to give a boost to stews and casseroles or other dishes. The sauce freezes well or can be bottled using the hot water bath method.

## Recipe No. 6 Parmigiana



In August I use the sauce to make probably my favourite dish of all!

#### Parmigiana

One large aubergine two if they are small slice 1cm thick

One ball of mozzarella (slice 1cm thick)

Ragu sauce

Parmesan

Chopped Basil

Olive Oil

#### Method

Place olive oil in a frying pan, enough to cover the whole base of the pan, and gently heat. Fry the aubergine slices on both sides until golden in colour and place on kitchen roll to absorb excess oil. Place about a tablespoon of ragu in the bottom of a small dish, cover with a single layer of aubergine, then a layer of mozzarella and then a layer of ragu and repeat until the dish is full ending on a mozzarella layer. Sprinkle the top with parmesan and chopped basil and place in a warm oven at gas mark 6, 180c or 170c fan oven for about 20 – 30 minutes. Serve either as an accompaniment to chicken or pork or on its own with crusty bread to mop up the Juices.

Buon appetito!