



Allotments Newsletter

Theme for '19



Brentwood
Horticultural
Society



Remember that children,
Marriages and gardens re-
flect the kind of care they
receive.

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Water Butts - Less than 3 percent of the annual water consumption of an average user is estimated to be for garden use, but at peak demand as much as 70 percent of water supplied may be used in gardens and allotments. This surge in demand can lead to water companies being forced to deplete groundwater and streams, which can cause serious environmental damage as well as raising the cost of water for consumers. Gardeners should therefore use mains water as sparingly as they can.

This wet season is the time to seriously consider getting a water butt on your plot to collect rain water, if you can more than one is better in order to collect as much free water as possible. Here's what you need to know...

1. Buying a water butt to collect rainwater can be a cost-effective, and more environmentally friendly, way to look after your plants year-round.

2. Rainwater is generally better for your plants than the stuff we get out of the tap, as it contains all the nutrients, they need with none of the added chlorine. Although plants can tolerate tap water, it isn't as good for them.

3. If we get a really hot 'BBQ' summer' (here's hoping), having a water butt can be a real lifeline to keep your plot looking good without the society having to pay for extra mains water.

4. When considering which water butt to get, think about how much water you want to save and where

in the plot it will go, so you know which capacity to go for. Slim-line ones are great for small gardens and you can even get ones that double up as planters, so they blend in but for the allotment the bigger the better.

5. Water butts are fed from any roof area that you have a shed or greenhouse even a polytunnel, which in turn is connected to some guttering, so you may have to install or move a downpipe to make room for your water butt.

6. You'll need your water butt to be raised off the ground, so you can access the tap, so think about positioning on a sturdy stand – a full water butt is heavy!

7. You can link multiple water butts together using a cheap kit from one of the big DIY stores.

8. Your water butt should come with a lid, which should be kept on to keep debris and animals out. However, if your water does get contaminated, you can add a few drops of water treatment so it's safe to use again.

9. To make sure your water butt is safe, the RHS recommend emptying it and scrubbing it out once a year. It also suggests insulating them to "reduce temperatures increasing in warm weather or paint them with a light colour to reflect the heat".

10. Water butts can be a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other biters so keep the lid on !

Special points of interest:

- Water Conservation
- Jobs to do
- Election of Chairman

Events

“**Warley Place (Essex Wildlife Trust)** is holding its usual **spring Open Weekends** from now until Easter to show off the beautiful display of snowdrops and then daffodils and other bulbs

There are guided walks on Saturday mornings and volunteers available to answer questions about this special Brentwood nature reserve.

Entry by suggested donation of £3. Entrance gate is adjacent to the Thatchers Arms in Great Warley’.

Volunteers Required at Essex Wildlife Trust Warley Place.

If you would be interested in helping maintain Warley Place, volunteers meet at the car park on a **Monday morning at 9.00 am.**

Our morning finishes at 1.00 pm. No experience is required. The only requirement is sturdy footwear.

For further information please contact Kevin Win on 07508771761

Green Island Gardens is 20 acres of private gardens, open for the public to visit in Ardleigh near Colchester, Essex. Professionally designed by its owner Fiona Edmond, the land is laid out as a series of structured gardens displaying a huge range of unusual trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs - **January 10th - Nov 30th**
10am - 5pm
(Tuesday - Friday, Saturday & Sunday
and Bank Holiday Mondays (Saturday June 1st open 10.00-15.00)

Shenfield Garden Society, which meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.45 at the Parish Hall. Contact is Pauline on 01277 226209. Next meeting 19th March.

Shenfield Floral Art Club which meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month, from 7.45, £5 per visit or annual membership. Flower arranging demonstrations. Contact is Edna on 07985319187.

To Come

We are on the look-out for societies and groups that arrange trips, visits and shows, we will let you know the details as we get the information in.

Election of Chairman

As you should already know our new Chairman is **Ian Palmer**.

Many of you may have already met him. In the last year he has spent time at all sites reviewing their condition with representatives from Brentwood Council, and then beginning the work that will improve them and ensure that the facilities meet statutory requirements.

In future newsletters he will keep members updated on work done, progress on the various agreements with Brentwood Council and proposed improvements to site facilities.

I am sure you will all support him in making our sites places to be proud of."

Gardening Tools

FOR SALE

WOLSELEY MERRY TILLER PETROL ROTAVATOR with a BRIGGS & STRATTON ENGINE - £150 ono

The engine is a Briggs & Stratton 750 series 163cc. DOM Dec 2013 (added to frame approx 5 years ago)

Has been used as a tractor (and not as a rotovator) at Essex Wildlife Trust Warley Place. Has had very little use.

For further information please call :-

Kevin Win on 07508771761

FREE

I have a spade and fork in good condition free to anyone in need of either or both them.

Contact Steve Shepherd on 07990 593906



Late March—Edward Hirsch

Saturday morning in late March. I was alone and took a long walk, though I also carried a book of the Alone, which companioned me.

The day was clear, unnaturally clear, like a freshly wiped pane of glass, a window over the water, and blue, preternaturally blue, like the sky in a Magritte painting, and cold, vividly cold, so that you could clap your hands and remember winter, which had left a few moments ago—if you strained you could almost see it disappearing over the hills in a black parka. Spring was coming but hadn't arrived yet. I walked on the edge of the park. The wind whispered a secret to the trees, which held their breath and scarcely moved. On the other side of the street, the skyscrapers stood on tiptoe. I walked down to the pier to watch

the launching of a passenger ship. Ice had broken up on the river and the water rippled smoothly in blue light.

The moon was a faint smudge in the clouds, a brushstroke, an after-thought in the vacant mind of the sky. Seagulls materialized out of vapor amidst the masts and flags. *Don't let our voices die on land*, they cawed, swooping down for fish and then soaring back upwards.

The kiosks were opening and couples moved slowly past them, arm in arm, festive. Children darted in and out of walk-ways, which sprouted with vendors. Voices greeted the air. Kites and balloons. Handmade signs. Voyages to unknown places. The whole day had the drama of an expectation.

Down at the water, the queenly ship started moving away from the pier. Banners fluttered. The passengers clustered at the rails on

deck.

I stood with the people on shore and waved goodbye to the travellers. Some were jubilant; others were broken-hearted. I have always been both.

Suddenly, a great cry went up. The ship set sail for the horizon and rumbled into the future but the cry persisted and cut the air like an iron bell ringing



March Tips

Chitting Potatoes – Seaweed Spray

When chitting potatoes, give them a light mist-spray of foliar seaweed feed every couple of weeks. Don't over-do it, you don't want liquid dripping off the tubers, just slightly damp.

I'm not sure how it does it but it seems to help keep the tubers developing strong shoots which improves the eventual results with fewer failures on planting out.

Make Your Own Hormone Rooting Compound

Make your own hormone rooting solution. Take a young willow branch, cut into small pieces (about 1" or 2.5cm long).

Place in a bowl and pour boiling water over to cover. Leave for 24 hours and then strain off into a bottle where it will keep for up to a month.

Water on to the compost when propagating from cuttings.

Free Tomato Plants from Side-shoots

As your tomato plants grow, allow some of the side-shoots to develop until they're between 15 and 30 cm long. Rip them off the plant and pot deeply into very moist, almost wet compost.

Use a plastic bag over the shoot tied to the pot to stop them drying out and they should root in a matter of days, giving you more free tomato plants

Handle Seedlings Correctly

When transplanting always handle seedlings by the leaves, not the stem.

A damaged leaf or even a missing seed leaf isn't a problem but a damaged stem means the plant is doomed.

Move Tomatoes on Promptly

When growing tomatoes from seed move into separate pots from the seed tray within 6 days of germination. It's been shown in experiments that the eventual plants do better than plants from seedlings left crowded beyond 6 days.

Transplanting Tomatoes,

When transplanting tomatoes, dib the hole so that about half the stem under the first leaves is in the compost. Planting deeply like this encourages the little 'hairs' to grow into roots. The more roots, the more nutrients the plant can take up to make you more fruit per plant. This deep planting also works for cabbages, cauliflowers etc.

Add Lime to Compost for Brassicas

If sowing or transplanting brassicas using multi-purpose compost, add a little extra garden lime to the compost.

Just put a 7.5cm layer of compost in my potting tray and dust with enough lime to whiten it, like dusting a cake,

prior to mixing it. Wear gloves as lime stings in little cuts.

Brassicas like a high pH (low acidity) and the lime will increase the pH of the compost.

Broad beans

These are a welcome crop in early summer and can be sown outdoors in March.

Watch out for blackfly as the plants grow – pinch out the growing tip, where they congregate.

Beetroot

Will germinate in low temperatures, so can be sown direct outdoors in March.

Harvest when the beets have reached golf ball size.

Swiss chard

is a beautiful crop for a sunny or partially shaded spot. Sow direct outside from March onwards.

Start sowing salads

from March onwards, and you'll be enjoying tasty leaves for months to come. In March, they are best sown indoors.

Peas

can be planted outside if you started them off in pots in a cold frame.

Shallot sets

Can be planted this month

Site Security

We do unfortunately have occasional reports of sheds being broken in to and petrol tools stolen, although not a frequent event it is of concern. And something we should be trying to reduce or eliminate where possible.



Our deputy chairman has been in contact with the Essex Police, together with them, he has agreed that we will set up some form of incident reporting cascade system for use in times of problems once finalised we will advise you of the process.

As a first step, he met up with the police to collect a number of **Buzzard Watch** notices for putting on allotment gates, these will be put in place shortly if they haven't been put up already on your site.

[Operation Buzzard](#) is an initiative to coordinate all rural crime-related operations in Essex. These operations will make best use of all the specialist teams and partners. They have to ensure they are in the best position to tackle a range of rural crime offences.

There is much we can do to help prevent the theft of tools, are your gardening tools marked?

Tools and machinery, visibly marked with your postcode and house name or number make them more difficult to sell on, therefore less likely to be stolen.

Don't leave petrol tools in the shed if you can.

Keep other tools out of sight

A weak spot is always the entrance to the site. Always lock the gates when entering and leaving the site.

Get to know your fellow plot holder so you know who should and shouldn't be on site.

If you must lock your shed use non return screws on all hinges, coach bolts or strong pad-bars and close shackle padlocks. BUT bear in mind that, in the case of a wooden shed, the thief can just saw a hole or smash a window

Keep a note of serial numbers of power tools and photograph valuable items.

Do observe anyone that looks like they might be about to commit a crime. Do not approach an intruder if you feel that it might put you at unnecessary risk but observe from a safe distance and record it, so that you are able to report this to the police if needed.

If you do decide to approach an intruder, stay calm and reasonable.

Never fall back on empty threats of violence or discipline. The use of violence is a criminal offence, except for the use of reasonable force under immediate threat of violence. •

Trespass itself is not usually an offence that can be prosecuted in the criminal courts.

Tell the intruder instead that you will report them to the police.



Brentwood Horticultural Society

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY CONTACT

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

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.

/ www.brentwoodhorticulturalsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER CONTACT

If you have any information you would like published or any gardening tips you would like to share or would like to ask any questions about allotments or gardening please contact me by email or mobile phone on:

Mobile: 07990 593906

Email: stevenmshepherd@gmx.com

Don't be shy! I look forward to hearing from you.

Get Digging!

Email Addresses

The majority of allotment communications is carried out by email, it is important that if you change your email that you let the Pat Griffiths, membership secretary know about the change. Her details are:

membershipsec.brentwoodhs@gmail.com

This will ensure that you still continue receiving allotment news and information

Recipe No. 21

Miso Soup with fresh greens



This is a fresh tasting vegetarian quick soup.

Serves 4

Ingredients

950 ml water
 32 g chopped green chard or other sturdy green
 50 g chopped green onion
 62 g firm tofu (cubed)
 45-60 g white miso paste (fermented soy bean paste)
 Optional with or without bonito (fish flavour, though bonito makes it non vegan-vegetarian-friendly)
 1 sheet nori (dried seaweed // *optional* // cut into large rectangles // 1 sheet yields 1/4 cup)

Instructions

Place water in a medium sauce pan and bring to a low simmer.

Add nori and simmer for 5-7 minutes.

In the meantime, place miso into a small bowl, add a little hot water and whisk until smooth. This will ensure it doesn't clump. Set aside.

Add green chard, green onion, and tofu to the pot and cook for 5 minutes. Then remove from heat, add miso mixture, and stir to combine.

Taste and add more miso or a pinch of sea salt if desired. Serve warm. Best when fresh.

Recipe No. 22

Quick Minestrone Soup



Serves 4

Ingredients

4 tbsp olive oil
 2 large carrots, diced
 1 large onion, roughly chopped
 2 celery sticks, roughly chopped
 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 pinch dried red chilli flakes
 200g/7oz tinned white beans, such as haricot (drained weight or Dried and prepared 500ml/18fl oz vegetable or chicken stock)
ciabatta bread, cut into slices, to serve
 100g/3½oz Parmesan (or alternative vegetarian hard cheese), finely grated, to serve
 250g/9oz kale, stalks removed, roughly chopped
 handful fresh flatleaf parsley, roughly chopped

Method

Heat a dash of oil in a frying pan over a medium heat.

When hot, add the carrots, onion, celery, garlic and chilli flakes.

Fry until softened, then tip in the beans and stock. Stir, bring to a simmer and cook for 5-8 minutes, or until cooked through.

Stir the kale and parsley into the soup just before serving. Serve the soup in warm bowls with the Parmesan toasts.

Preheat the grill until hot. Toast both sides of the ciabatta slices. Sprinkle with the Parmesan and toast until melted.