

MORE PHOTOS FROM OUR PARTY IN AUGUST....



KINGS ROAD ALLOTMENT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3 SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER 2016

Welcome to the latest issue of the KRAA newsletter! At the time of writing the sun is shining and the allotment is in full production mode. As per usual, at this time of year, it can be hard to keep up with the excess of fruit and vegetables being produced, so why not think about freezing it for later in the year. See this issues article on blanching beans

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who turned up to our summer party on Sunday 21st August. A great time was had by all, with over 33 people attending. See the following page for a write up.

Finally, I would like to thank Committee member John Bold (and his wife Margaret!) for all their hard work as part of the Association Committee. They will be vacating their plot at the end of the summer and therefore will also be leaving the Committee. John has kindly offered to continue to support the Association, lending a hand, when needed, with regard to maintenance issues. Obviously, this leaves the position of Association Chairman open, so we would like any plot holders who maybe interested in this position to speak to a Committee member.

Amanda

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KINGS ROAD ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

DUNCAN ANDERSON- Secretary
PAUL CHIPPERFIELD- Treasurer
CHRIS COLE-POWNEY - Member
JOHN HAWES- Member
GINA MORRIS- Member
PAUL PIKESLEY- Site secretary

ASSOCIATION NEWS AND EVENTS

SUMMER PARTY- Once again the sun shone on our recent summer party. Despite a number of plot holders being on holiday, over 33 people attended what proved to be a fun filled event. Plot holders contributed towards a sumptuous repast and many a glass (Well, ok, plastic cup) was raised.



SCARECROW COMPETITION-

Initially it looked as if there might not be enough scarecrows to go ahead, but a sudden flurry of last minute entries gave us plenty to choose from. I am happy to report that our "Buxom Bathing Beauty" was awarded first place, but, seeing as I had bought the prize, it was then decided to offer it to second place, Paul Chipperfield's "super hero". However, not wanting to be seen to be Committee member biased, the decision was taken to offer the prize to Joan's highly commended Brazialian footballer. Many thanks to everyone who took the time and effort to create their entries. For further pictures please see the newsletters last page.

TALLEST SUNFLOWER COMPETITION- This proved to be a popular competition, with numerous entries, some of which were more successful than others! Ultimately the tallest sunflower was grown by Alf who has yet to divulge the secret to his success! Special mention also goes to Chris Cole-Powney who grew the biggest "sun plant", so called, as like Mary Queen of Scots it appeared to have lost it's head! Not quite sure what was going on there!!!!

The next event is likely to be a bonfire night celebration in November. Date, time etc. will be posted on the noticeboards once details have been agreed.

COMMITTEE MEMBER NEEDED!- As mentioned briefly at the start of this Newsletter, KRAA committee member, John Bold has vacated his plot and therefore his position as Chairman on the Association Committee. If anyone is interested in putting themselves forward for this position, please speak to any of the Committee members, indicating your interest. Once

MAGIC MOUNTAIN UPDATE

As promised in the previous newsletter, here is my update on the new "totally blight free" tomato variety, "Magic Mountain"

When I first saw this new variety I was very sceptical and also wondered whether taste or productivity would be sacrificed in order to create a blight free tomato. Also, at £3 a packet for a few seeds I wondered whether it was worth the investment!!!! As you can see from the accompanying photo, the plants



have all cropped well. Granted my other tomatoes have had minimal blight, but the Magic Mountain plants have showed no signs of disease, with vigorous growth and high productivity. They produced medium sized fruits with firm flesh and the taste, as Paul Pikesley and Joan will agree, is good. As with all my tomato plants, they received a lot of T.L.C. and I think this is integral to achieving a good crop. With my tomatoes generally, I feel one of the most important factors is that I always plant them so that they are not crowded together, allowing them plenty of free flowing air. I also start taking leaves off at the bottom, quite early on (not too many though!), again to prevent "stagnant" air . As the season progresses, I remove any bits of foliage that appear to have blight, as soon as I see them. Obviously, with regard to Magic Mountain, these are the results from only one growing season and as we know, taste and productivity can vary depending on the weather. I will however be investing in this variety again next year and hope for a crop that matches or exceeds this years.

If you have tried an unusual, or new variety of vegetable this year, why not send me a brief write up on it? It always makes life more "interesting" by sharing our discoveries! If you have something you would like to share speak to me when you see me over the allotment, or let one of the other committee member know and I will be in touch.

Recently there have been a few incidents of garden furniture being stolen from outside the front of residential properties. These include hanging baskets, planters and anything of value that hasn't been chained or cemented down. If you have such items on your allotment and they are of value, please secure them to avoid them being stolen.

TRIED AND TESTED RECIPES..... STUFFED COURGETTES

As no "favourite recipes" have been forthcoming from plot holders (Gentle prod there!!!), I have decided to detail a recipe that I created to use some of the glut of large courgettes that I seem to end up with at this time of year. Whilst this recipe uses large, oversized courgettes you can use two smaller sized courgettes, but remember that cooking times will probably need to be reduced.

INGREDIENTS

1 large oversized courgette (About 30cm in length and roughly 7-8cm in diameter)
4 sundried tomatoes, diced
2 roasted peppers, chopped (I used a bought variety, or you can roast your own but make sure you remove the chargrilled skins)
50g feta cheese
1 slice stale bread, blitzed into breadcrumbs
50g cheddar cheese
1 medium onion, diced
1 desert spoon rapeseed oil (or your own choice of oil for frying)
Salt and pepper to season

METHOD:

Scoop out the soft fluffy inner of the courgette, leaving the more solid flesh.

Rub the skins with a little oil.

Fry the diced onion until soft.

Whilst the onion is frying crumble the feta into a bowl, together with the diced peppers, breadcrumbs, sundried tomatoes, seasoning and onions, once cooked. Mix together and then fill the cavities of the courgettes with the mix.

Sprinkle the cheddar over the top of the courgettes.

Place on a large sheet of foil and wrap the sides so that they are contained and cannot collapse when cooking. Leave the top open, so that they can brown when cooking.

Cook at gas 5, 190 deg C until a knife passes easily through the flesh and the tops are browned. This will vary time wise, depending on size, but should take roughly 30- 40 minutes.

again, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank John who instigated the setting up of the KRAA, for all his time and effort given over to Committee issues.

COMMUNITY AREA- Although currently in the planning stage, we have acquired half of the plot near the bunker as a community area. We are hoping to make this area into a permanent social area for relaxing and socialising. To date, suggestions have included a permanent BBQ, patio area and wildlife pond. If any plot holders have any further suggestions, speak to one of the Committee members. Please do remember however, that there is no funding for this project and it will rely on the goodwill of plot holders in offering both their time and any materials that are "going spare" to make it a success. Again, if you can help with either materials or an hour of your time to make Kings Road Allotments an enjoyable place to spend some time, please speak to any of the Committee members.

TOP TIPS

So often at this time of year you end up with more vegetables than you can possibly eat and if you are anything like us, end up giving a lot of it away. Whilst it feels good to give ("Yes, Mrs Smith, you absolutely must take another courgette!!!!"), why not try blanching and freezing some of your vegetables.

I have previously detailed a great way of how to freeze tomatoes and now, after speaking to Chris Fox, detail below, the best way to deal with beans. Personally, my previous attempts at freezing runner beans have not been successful..... the word "Yuk" comes to mind! However, Chris assures me that the following method is very successful, so I may just give it a go.

BLANCHING

It is possible to freeze many types of vegetable, but most need to be blanched before freezing. This is important as it helps to retain their texture, colour, flavour and nutritional value.

To ensure success, blanch in batches of no more than 500g (1lb)

- Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil (adding a little salt if you desire). Place the vegetables into a wire basket or muslin bag and plunge into the pan, ensuring that the water takes no longer than a minute to return to the boil. Blanching time will vary for different

vegetables (**See the following website for details**), but ensure you do not exceed the recommended time as this will affect both texture and taste.

- Take out as soon as blanching time is up and place immediately into cold water.
- Drain and then dry on kitchen roll or clean tea towels.
- Place in freezer bags, trying to exclude as much air as possible. (I find the best way to do this is to squeeze the top of the bag around a straw and suck the air out!) Alternatively place into lidded plastic containers. Label with product and date frozen.

Most frozen vegetables will keep for about 10-12 months.

Cooking once frozen..... If boiling, place in boiling water, bring back to boiling until vegetables are cooked. For steaming or baking, defrost until they can be separated.

PREPARING FRENCH BEANS

Wash beans then top and tail them. Blanch for 2-3 minutes. Cool then dry. Cut any larger beans I half and then pack into bags, excluding air.

PREPARING RUNNER BEANS

Top, tail and de-string beans. Cut into lengths of about 2-3cm. Blanch for 2 minutes, cool, dry and place in plastic bags, excluding air.

PEST CORNER – ALLIUM LEAF MINER

I first discovered this pest about 5 years ago after cutting into a leek and discovering orange coloured “lines” running through the leek. After consulting my allotment guru (Yes, that’s you Chris Cole-Powney!), we were still none the wiser, but after a little research online, I determined that I was the “lucky” recipient of an infestation of the allium leaf miner.

According to the RHS, this pest was first discovered in 2002 and since then has spread across central and southern England. As its name would suggest, it affects all alliums; leeks, shallots, garlic and chives. So far, although I may be tempting fate here, it has only affected my leeks.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Lines of white dots where the adult fly punctured the leaves to feed on the sap.
- Brownish red lines along the length of and between the leaves.
- Small brown pupae, imbedded in stems and bulbs.

- Distorted leaves that do not grow vertically and some may lie on the ground.

LIFE CYCLE:

This pest has two lifecycles a year, initially in March April and then again in late September to November, the latter which some sites state is the most devastating of the two periods. Having been attracted by the scent of the alliums, the female fly lays her eggs in the leaves and near the base of young alliums in March and April. These then hatch into larvae that feed on the leaves, bulbs and stems of the plants. After a month, they then pupate and may be seen as small brown pupae between the layers of the alliums. Emerging as new flies in late September to early November, these then begin the second generation.

TREATMENT: Sadly, much to my disgust, there appears to be no chemical control for this pest. The only solution is to be proactive and prevent the problem in the first place, by covering the crops with insect proof mesh or fleece, that prevents the adult fly from getting to the crop in the first place. Another site suggests planting onion sets after the first danger period has passed. (*We accidentally did this due to time constraints and our onions and shallots were fine when harvested, although the former were slightly smaller.*) This especially works with faster maturing onion varieties which can be harvested before the second danger period occurs in September / October.

Hopefully you have been lucky enough to avoid this pest, but with it becoming increasingly more prevalent, it may not only be your cabbages and carrots that require covering in the near future!

A NOTE FROM PC BRAND.....

I am pleased to report that there have been no reported shed burglaries across the Chingford Green and Endlebury wards over the last two months. Recently, a couple of prolific shed burglars received custodial sentences, so this has obviously helped towards keeping shed burglary figures down. An additional important factor is also the crime prevention measures put in place by shed owners, so please continue to be both proactive and vigilant!

If you have not done so already, reinforce you allotment (and home) sheds with whatever materials and locks you can. Every little helps! Install curtains at the windows of your shed, so that a potential thief cannot see in and remember to chain items together, to make life more difficult for anyone intent on walking away with your property.