

Monday, December 11th, 2006
Issue 15

The Plot Thickens...



This month's articles...

- Introduction
- Allotment News
- Chairman's Chatter
- Recipes
- Top Tips
- ...and finally

Don't forget if you have any articles to contribute for the next Newsletter, please leave them in the shop.

Introduction to issue 15

Christmas is nearly upon us and so is the rain! I know we need it but this is ridiculous! Having said that it is nice to spend some time at home writing the Christmas cards and shopping for presents.

We had a good Autumn and were able to get the plot in some sort of order despite the weeds and the grass continuing to grow at a rapid pace due to the weather! The mice have eaten the first

sowing of Broad Beans but the second lot seem to be OK. Also the onions and garlic are coming up a treat. Before we know it, it will be time to plant the main crop onions and runners.

Allotment News

The Christmas Raffle was held last Sunday in the shop and quite a few turned up for a glass of mulled wine and mince pies. The decorative train donated by Dot Seymour was very

popular and was won by Bill and Pat and the bottle of Malt was gratefully received by a lucky winner! Shirley's Christmas Cakes and shortbread proved popular as usual and

everyone enjoyed themselves and had a good chat! I won't comment on the decorative gnome won by John!!



Some of the plot-holders enjoying a glass of wine!

Allotment News continued

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The shop is now closed until Sunday 21st January when all the new seeds will be on sale. Sorry to all those new plotters who wanted to purchase keys but the shop that cuts the keys for us has run out of blanks but we hope to have them in the New Year. Also subs are due by the end of January, still £2.50 which allows you to purchase items in the shop and also to enter the Autumn Show. Half of the subs goes to the National Allotment Society for membership of their Society as it is very beneficial for us to

be members. They have 80,000 men and women members who have the future of allotment gardening at heart. They are united to fight wherever possible for the rights of allotment holders against the property developers and sometimes the local Councils. There is also access to free legal advice to help resolve disputes. It also enables us to belong to their seed scheme which enables Brian to sell the seeds in the shop at a discount to you. A magazine comes out quarterly

which may be borrowed from the shop

Welcome to all the new plot holders - the Council have been clearing plots and quite a few new people have been seen! We wish you well with your new venture, its hard work but well worth it when you pick your very own crops.

We had a good blaze on bonfire night and collected some good potash afterwards. The other bonfire in the car park is still alight and the Council are going to clear it when it goes out!

Chairman's Chatter

Well the Council came up trumps and produced a massive heap of shredded compost, at least half of which has already been wheeled to people's plots. At least with Roger Young back in charge (how long for we don't know) we seem to be getting things done. He has had a JCB clearing plots which is something that has not happened for years. The only down side was that they then tipped all the rubbish on our wood heap. Roger Young then rang me to say were we still OK to have a fire! As I pointed out paving

stones, metal baths etc. don't burn but we will do our best. Once lighted it went well and at the time of writing is still burning. I was told by the contractors "Barhill Plant" that when it finally goes out they will take the rubbish that is left to the tip.

Sunday the 3rd December and Carole and helpers did us proud in the shop with mulled wine and mince pies. Nice to see such a good crowd and what a good draw for the Christmas Raffle. The shop is now closed, earlier than usual, but we have to totally

empty the shop so Council contractors can lay a new floor. It took a bit of persuasion but when I mentioned that if someone falls over the huge cracks it will be the Council not us that is sued! That did it! We hope to have new lino and perhaps some paint so we should look smart when we open in the New Year. If any one has any suggestions where we can purchase some thick lino please contact us as soon as possible.

Well Happy Christmas - keep digging (and weeding!!) Here's to 2007!

On the night of the bonfire someone walked off with my pitch fork. It wasn't left, just placed behind a shed out of the way, so could you please return it to Plot 104 - Thanks

Bubble and Squeak

350g Potatoes
100g Carrots
100g Parsnips
150g Butternut Squash
100g Leeks
75g Spring Greens or Cabbage, shredded and washed
2 Cloves of Garlic, finely chopped
2 tbsp Olive Oil
Freshly ground black pepper.

Pre-heat oven to 425f/220c/gas mark 7 and grease a small roasting tin or ovenproof dish about 25.5 x 35cm.

If the vegetables are uncooked scrub them and peel them if

necessary (though its good to keep the peel

on if you can, as it adds good fibre and other nutrients such as selenium.) If uncooked cut the potatoes, carrots, parsnips, squash and leeks into even sized pieces and steam or boil them until soft but not mushy. Cook the cabbage separately. Drain all the vegetables and dry well. Put all the

vegetables except the cabbage into a large bowl and pound to a mush, using a potato masher. Add the cabbage, garlic, olive oil and pepper. Spread the mix into the prepared roasting tin or dish and cook on the top shelf of the oven for 20-30 minutes until the bubble and squeak is all crispy on top.

You can use leftovers already cooked or its worth cooking some veg for this tasty dish.

This is a traditional French dish much like bread and butter pudding, but without the stodginess of the bread. If you want to you could make this in individual portions for a special dinner party.

Cherry and Almond Clafoutis

75g(3oz) Plain flour
50g(2oz) caster sugar
3 eggs
400ml(14 fl oz) whole milk
1 tsp Vanilla extract
25g(1 oz) butter, plus extra for greasing the dish
1 x 14oz can black cherries drained well
25g(1 oz) toasted flaked almonds

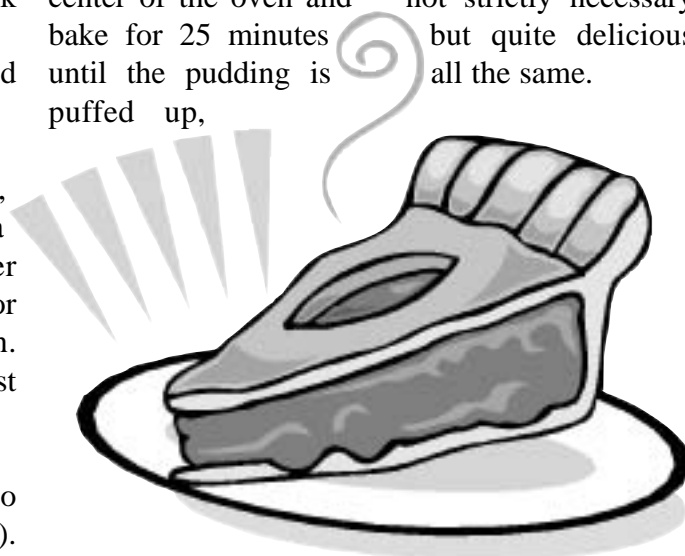
Mix the flour, sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla extract and butter together in a blender or bowl until smooth. Leave to rest for at least 30 minutes.

Pre-heat the oven to 220C (425F, Gas mk 7).

Butter a 1.2 litre/2 pint ovenproof dish and pour in the drained cherries. Mix up the batter again (as it will have settled after resting) and pour over the top of the cherries. Place the dish in the center of the oven and bake for 25 minutes until the pudding is puffed up,

golden around the edges and not wobbling in the middle.

Scatter over the almonds and cook for a further 5 minutes. Serve immediately with a jug of double cream, not strictly necessary but quite delicious all the same.



Top Tips

Further to my paragraph about the goodness of Comfrey - Brian has now got the seeds in the shop so you can grow your own.

If you want to grow some winter salad crops start them off in pots in the greenhouse then plant them out in ground that has been warmed up a few degrees by covering with glass or plastic. Varieties need to be chosen carefully.

Japanese and Chinese Mustards, rocket, sorrel and mizuna are all suitable. They will grow slowly and are unlikely to go to seed. The cut and come again varieties including salad bowl are ideal.

If you have plenty of hot chillies, which should have dried out nicely by now, try making some home made chilli powder. Cut off the stalks but leave in the seeds. Put

the chillies into a blender and cover the top with a damp, not wet cloth, to stop the powder getting into your eyes. Blend until you get the texture you want, place in clean jars and store in a cool dry cupboard. This way you can have a jar on the table and stir it into the food if you like it hot. You can also make different blends with different chillies!

If you have plenty of hot chillies, try making some home made chilli powder.

...and finally

If you are want some fresh air at the allotments but find the ground too wet to work why not try creating a small pond. This will become a haven for frogs and other beneficial creatures. For safety make the pond shallow, an old plastic sand pit or dustbin lid can be set into the soil in a quiet spot. There needs to be easy access for drinking and bathing birds, a large stone is ideal! Place a few logs at the pond edge and grow some native wild flowers to encourage helpful wildlife. If you already have a pond, wheel barrowing leaves or compost for the compost heap soon warms you up, or get

down to the beach and gather some seaweed, all good for the soil! I've said it before and I'll say it again the most important thing in my allotment is my compost heap! If you can't turn the compost because it's too back breaking, poking a stick in to aerate it does the job!

The AGM is being held on Wednesday 31st January 2007 at Milton Community Centre in Bransbury Park at 7.30 pm. Do come along and if you have anything you wish to raise with the Committee or any queries this is the time to do it. Also anyone willing to join the Committee is always

welcome. We meet about 7 or 8 times a year to discuss what is happening on the plot and any matters which need to be raised with the Council.

There are two raffle prizes not claimed: No. 420 with the name Looker on the back (a bottle of red wine) and 256 with the name Evans on the back (a bottle of Mead). If you would like to ring me, (Carole 92817080), I will get them to you!

It only remains to wish you a very happy Christmas and New Year and roll on Spring when we can all get planting again!

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