



# A NATIONWIDE SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS AND GARDENERS

[www.swcaa.co.uk](http://www.swcaa.co.uk)

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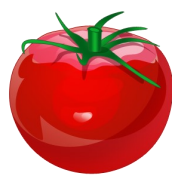
# NEWSLETTER

**Welcome to our Autumn/Winter newsletter.** I'd like to say goodbye to summer but I can hear you all shouting 'what summer'!! Not a particularly great year for growing with many plot holders struggling with failing crops and the germination of seeds. I bought most of my vegetable plants as small plants from the garden centre this year in the hope it would give them a fighting chance. I did have great success with beetroot that I transplanted from small seedlings and runner beans although the bean production ended a lot sooner than normal, usually I would still be harvesting them now. Courgettes, normal and climbing varieties were a complete waste of time with hardly any fruits forming and those that did rotted off. My tomatoes struggled to get going but I'm still harvesting those now. The best tomatoes were off plants that had seeded themselves from my homemade compost. There also seems to be a distinct lack of pollinators around too. I've certainly noticed the lack of bees and butterflies compared to last year, this is something that people have been saying right across the UK, should we be worried? I think so...Like many of you I have been growing my own for many years and yes, there have been good and bad years but with the weather so unpredictable it's not just us that are suffering, plants and nature of all types seem to be confused too, our growing season just isn't long enough. On a positive note, it's a time for harvesting, clearing away and putting our plots to bed for the winter. I have a freezer full of runner beans and lovely tomato sauces to enjoy throughout the winter months and I look forward to the darker evenings, candles and cosy nights by the log burner.

**Ayesha Hooper, Director/CEO.**



**What to do with your empty plots after the harvest** When Autumn time comes around and you have harvested most of your crops the allotment starts to look bare. One of the best things you can do with the bare soil is add a mulch or grow a green manure. A mulch is simply a layer of organic material which when placed on the surface of the soil prevents weeds from growing and can greatly improve the condition. There are various different types of mulch available, you can use natural materials such as chipped bark, cocoa shells, grass cuttings and straw. Simply spread a good thick layer over the soil and let the worms and weather do the work for you. There are many benefits to growing green manure, they cover bare ground and stop valuable nutrients being washed away and some have a fibrous root system which can help to improve the structure of the soil. One of the best for this time of year is Hungarian grazing rye, this should be slow growing throughout the winter, and come spring time will have produced a mass of roots and foliage which will in turn provide lots of humus and beneficial bacteria for your soil. This can be sown up until November.



**Ripen green tomatoes** Most of us always end up with a few green tomatoes at the end of the summer, they will ripen in time but if you want to speed things up bring them in doors and put them on a sunny windowsill or try keeping them in a box with a bunch of ripe bananas. The ethylene released by the bananas helps them to ripen.

**Sowing Autumn Garlic Successful** Autumn sown garlic largely depends on the variety you grow, good varieties to try are Christo, Early Purple and Music. Before you plant work some homemade compost or some slow release pellets into the soil and make sure it's weed free as garlic like most crops hate competing with weeds.



Plant your cloves about 5cm deep and allow about 18-20cm apart. Garlic like most of the onion family is prone to attack by the allium leaf miner, this horrible pest can reduce plants to a mush in just a couple of days. The best protection would be to cover with fleece straight away. In order for garlic to produce nice big fat cloves it needs at least 30 nights below 10°C. If you plant too early in the spring it will just form one fat bulb. You can get both spring and autumn varieties as well as a few that can be started from October to February.

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**Beetroot** As the Autumn evenings start to draw in one crop that is still going strong on the allotment is beetroot. Easy to grow and with its edible roots and leaves it's packed with multi vitamins it is a must have on the allotment plot.

Why not try making one of the tasty recipes below.

**Beetroot dip**

You will need 250g cooked beetroot, 1-2 cloves of garlic crushed, 1 small bunch of coriander and parsley, 50g of shelled walnuts, 3tsp red wine vinegar, salt and freshly ground pepper.

**Method**

Roughly chop the beetroot and herbs and put into a food processor with the walnuts and garlic, blitz until you have a course paste. Add oil and vinegar and season well. Taste to check seasoning as you may need to add a little more vinegar depending on the sweetness of the beetroot. Cover and refrigerate to let the flavours mingle. Great served with toasted pitta bread pieces.

**Beetroot soup**

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1kg fresh beetroot, peeled and diced
- 1 ½L vegetable stock

**Croutons**

- ½ small loaf sourdough bread, diced into large croutons
- 100g feta, crumbled

**Method**

In large saucepan heat 1 tbsp of the olive oil over a medium heat. Add the chopped onion and fry for 5 minutes until slightly softened. Stir in the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add the beetroot and cook for 15 minutes. Add the vegetable stock and bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer uncovered for 30 minutes until the beetroot is tender. Season well and leave to cool a little before blending until smooth. Whilst your soup is cooling make the croutons. Heat the oven to 200. Toss the sourdough croutons in the remaining oil and lightly season. Place on a baking tray and toast until lightly golden. Warm the soup in the pan and serve with the croutons and crumbled feta.

This soup is lovely chilled, leave to cool completely and refrigerate for a couple of hours before serving.



**YOUR ASSOCIATION HAS THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD.**

A local authority that fails to discuss matters with your association is also failing to abide by the Compact.



**What is it?**

The Compact is an agreement between the government and voluntary societies. You can use it to challenge council decisions when, for example, they end funding without notice, fail to provide you with reasons for or feedback on their decisions, or fail to consult you, especially where funding is involved (such as rent increases or grants). Every area in England now has its own statement of the Compact backed up by five codes of practice; and there is a Monitoring Officer normally in each district or unitary council to check on the application of compact.

**Why use it?**

Unlike the Ombudsman, the Compact applies to Town and Parish Councils as well.

**The Compact states:-**

- A council needs to show publicly it has done the following
1. Made sure all those affected by a decision have been heard. While it may not be possible to reach absolutely everyone, there should be an active attempt to reach a wide range of people, with a published record of what has been attempted.
  2. Looked at the effect on different groups separately as well as collectively. Active understanding of the impact on different groups and their viewpoints should be sought.
  3. Ensured questions are answered well enough for people to make informed decisions.
  4. Provided information on what is still open to change, and what has already been decided.
  5. Explained how and where feedback will be provided on the result of the consultation.
  6. Provided different methods for people to feed into the consultation, ensuring that they are accessible. Examples include websites, events, stalls, focus groups and targeted dissemination.
  7. Held meetings and events at times and places that allow as many people to take part as possible.

**How to get help and advice**

For help contact Compact Advocacy: They provide free and detailed advice to voluntary and community organisations when you have a dispute involving a public body's decisions and failures.

The advice line 0207 5203161 is open Monday to Friday 10 am to 4pm or email [evsAdvice@ncvo-vol.org.uk](mailto:evsAdvice@ncvo-vol.org.uk)



**Allotment holders** can probably expect the first frosts in October and this month is also all about tidying the allotment and preparing it for next year. It is a great opportunity to clear and weed those beds and to add a good layer of compost or manure, spread a 5cm layer of well-rotted manure on top of the soil and the worms will work it into the soil over the winter. Also add lime where it is needed. It is also a great time for planning your crop rotations and allocating beds for next year. Below are crops you can plant this month and into November.

#### Crops to sow

Plant rhubarb in good moist yet not waterlogged soil.

Start asparagus, the Autumn-planted works best on light soils in well prepared trenches.

Plant spring cabbage, there is still time to buy them in modules to fill the gap next spring.

Start garlic and onion sets, Autumn sowing tend to yield better bulbs than those planted in the spring.

Try a green manure, Sow bare patches of the plot with field beans, vetches or red clover to cut down and dig in.

Broad Beans the most popular of winter sown crops try a hardy variety like a green long pod or Aquadulce Claudia late October into November. Carrots and peas can still be sown in cold frames, but only in mild areas.

Plant cranberries and lingonberries.

#### Jobs to do

Brussels sprouts heavy with crops can be blown over in heavy winds so stake them now to prevent this.

Take cuttings of blueberries, currants and gooseberries.

Cut the tops of Jerusalem artichokes back to ground level.

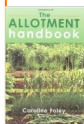
Regularly remove plant debris from the plot to reduce the spread of pests and diseases

Check stored apples regularly for rotting fruit and remove.

Now is a good time to get ahead and prepare new asparagus beds for planting up in the spring.

Cut off the tops from spent pea and bean plants for the compost heap, and dig the roots into the soil. They will return valuable nitrogen to the soil and act as a natural fertiliser.

**A good winter read** If you're missing your allotment and looking for something to read during the winter months here are three books to keep you going.



The Allotment Handbook by Caroline Foley, A comprehensive guide to all things allotments, from preparing the soil to harvesting and storing - an informative read



My Life on a Hillside Allotment by Terry Walton. Terry Walton has kept an allotment for over 50 years - man and boy - in the Rhondda valley in South Wales.



The Allotment Keepers Handbook by Jane Perrone. A no-nonsense guide to managing your own organic vegetable patch. Jane Perrone steers a carefree course through the gardener's year. Featuring harvesting, a history of allotments, an exhaustive section on crop rotation, unusual vegetables, fun monthly projects and a glossary to cut through garden jargon, this book is all you will need to get growing.

**Renewing your Membership.** A note to associations. As you know as an association when your membership is due for renewal we will email you with your renewal list as an excel spreadsheet a month before the renewal is due. Our admin system is set up to work along side these spreadsheets which makes the renewal process an easy one from our end. The lists are in alphabetical order by first name and the cancel membership column is there so we know at a glance who needs to be removed. We understand that some associations like to send us their own lists and in the past that wasn't a problem but now we have so many members, using the spreadsheet we send you helps save us a lot of time.

Please, especially to our larger groups can you use and edit the spreadsheet we send you and where at all possible pay the fees via bank transfer. Banks are now charging non profit organisations like ourselves fees for paying in cheques. We do of course understand that this is not possible for everyone.

Please could you make sure that all your members are forwarded copies or made aware of our newsletter, terms and conditions of the insurance and the discounted seed schemes we offer via Suttons and Kings seeds.

**When adding new members, please make sure you include their full name and address as we will not be able to process any new additions or renewals without these details.**

**New law regarding chickens Starting October 1, 2024.** All bird keepers in the UK must register their birds with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA): The law applies to all birdkeepers, whether it's a large commercial farm or someone with a single bird. Previous registration was only required for keepers of more than 50 birds but the new measures announced by Defra has reduced this to anyone with just one bird.

Defra consulted on the changes in March last year and has announced that the government, along with the devolved administrations, has agreed to make the following changes in England, Wales and Scotland:

The threshold for mandatory registration will be reduced from 50 birds to 1, which means all poultry and captive bird keepers will be legally required to register their birds.

Poultry keepers will be required to review their poultry register entry annually to ensure their details are up to date.

Bird keepers will need to provide information, including their contact details, the location where birds are kept and details of the birds (species, number and what they are kept for).

The government said the changes would help manage potential disease outbreaks, such as avian influenza, and limit any spread.

The information on the register will also be used to identify all bird keepers in disease control zones, allowing for more effective surveillance, so that zones can be lifted at the earliest possible opportunity. There have been more than 360 cases of avian influenza across Great Britain since October 2021, including a significant number of backyard flocks.

For further information go to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-as-a-keeper-of-less-than-50-poultry-or-other-captive-birds>



**Preparing chickens for winter** The two main enemies of chicken wellbeing in winter are drafts and moisture. The ideal coop should be warm, secure and draft proof, cold drafts can affect your chickens combs, wattles and feet. Check your coops for holes and gaps, whilst it's important not to have any large holes in the coop, it's also just as important not to make your coop air tight as this can cause serious problems such as ammonia build up. Make sure any vents are placed where the cold air will not flow directly onto the birds, towards the roof is preferable. During the wintertime increase the amount of bedding in the coop, some extra straw/bedding will help to keep the temperature up. The important thing to remember during winter is that if the bedding gets damp it will start to go

mouldy and cause respiratory issues. It's best to replace the bedding at least twice a week during the wintertime because a lot of rain makes for damp bedding.

#### Heating Your Coop

Do not use brooder/heat lamps to heat up the coop. The number of fires that destroy coops and chickens over winter is frighteningly high. A brooder lamp produces a great deal of heat and is really not designed to be used with adult chickens. It takes less than two minutes for a dislodged heat lamp to start bedding smouldering, and less than five minutes for a fire to start. Heat lamps can give off toxic fumes. A simple 40w light bulb will produce sufficient heat to raise the temperature by a few degrees. Ensure that it cannot be dislodged, fall, be flown into or pecked at, as this, too, can start a fire. Do not dress your chickens in Jumpers! The jumper confines their feathers and seriously impedes their ability to 'fluff out' and remain warm. It may look cool, but they are seriously detrimental to your birds' winter well-being.

Chickens will naturally stop laying eggs during the winter as their body needs to rest and because of the lack of daylight. If you wish your chickens to lay throughout the winter you will need to maintain their daylight exposure by introducing an artificial light source. Make sure you don't fit this near any flammable sources. If you are using an artificial light in the coop, make sure your hens are occupied during the early hours with feed and water.



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