

BRIDPORT and DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS SOCIETY

Newsletter

Summer 2016

Bridport's allotments

The Bridport area is reasonably well-provided with allotments, although there is still room for improvement, with up to 100 people on local waiting lists. Some local residents are in effect excluded by the current arrangements. This article summarises the current situation of allotment provision in the Bridport area.

Town and parish councils have a statutory duty to provide a sufficient number of plots, under Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908. There is no legal national minimum provision standard, but councils are expected to audit allotments, set standards of provision, and assess their actual provision against these standards. The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners recommends provision of 20 standard plots (300 sq yds) per 1,000 households – the national average was estimated by a survey in 2006 as 13 per 1,000 households.

The general principle of legislation, while non-specific, is that if there is a demand for allotments in a town or parish, the council has a responsibility to meet that demand. If there is no land spare for allotments, councils can apply for compulsory requisitioning of land. In addition, when assessing demand the council must take into account any written representations on the need for allotments by any six residents on the electoral register or persons liable to pay council tax. The presence of privately-owned allotment sites does not absolve the council of any of its responsibility for allotment provision.

The website of the Campaign for More Allotments (started and run by people on waiting lists for allotments) has more useful information about legislation, at <http://www.allotmoreallotments.org.uk/legislation.htm>.

Bridport Town Council, with approximately 4500 households, lets out 171 plots at various sites in the town - 80 of these are half standard-size plots. The

council has done well in the past ten years or so to increase its provision, opening new sites at West Allington (behind the Medical Centre), Priory Gardens, and the Community Orchard on St Mary's Church Field, in addition to the existing sites at Skilling and Flaxhayes. There are also some twenty plots on the privately-owned Palmers' site off Gundry Lane. There are currently 75 people on the town council's waiting lists for allotments.

The neighbouring parish councils, whose residents pay a lower council tax precept, present a more mixed picture. Burton Bradstock, with c.600 households, has 55 allotment plots, Symondsbury, with c.600 households, has 24 plots on two sites, London Inn and Pine View. Bradpole, with 1150 households, has four allotments, while Allington (340 households) and Bothenhampton and Walditch (1100 households) have none. Bridport Town Council has a number of residents of these parishes on its own waiting list, however precedence in allocation is given to Bridport council tax payers, so residents of the neighbouring parishes are unlikely to be offered a town council allotment.

Anyone wishing to acquire a council allotment should contact Bridport Town Council (01308-456722) or the parish clerk for those parishes which have allotments to let.



Symondsbury parish allotments at Pine View

Next Allotments Society Meeting - Summer Meeting

Thursday 16 June 2016, 7.00 pm, meet on site at the Palmers allotments, at the corner of Gundry Lane/Priory Lane. All members welcome..

Choosing Varieties to Grow

A Talk by Michael Michaud

*At the Society's March meeting members heard a presentation from **Michael Michaud**, of Sea Spring Seeds, West Bexington.*

Sea Spring Seeds do many trials and their descriptions of their seeds are all derived from these trials.

Michael thinks that some vegetables are not worth growing - for instance runner beans.

However just because a variety is either a 'heritage' or a new type does not necessarily make it any good (for example, in Michael's opinion, 'Greyhound' is the best variety for spring greens)

Notes of Michael's talk were taken by Brian Atkinson and are reproduced below and opposite.

Green leaf vegetables

For green vegetables bolt resistance is an important quality. Other qualities, such as the amount of white stem in spinach are also of importance. Perpetual spinach should not be sown too early as this may cause bolting. Cold also causes beetroot to bolt - 'boltardy' is actually good in this respect. Swiss Chard is a good vegetable to grow.

Michael believes that **Oriental Greens** are of great value to the gardener and with a greenhouse or polytunnel may be grown throughout the year for salads, stir-fries and cut-and-come-again.

Michael's 3 best choices:

1. Pak choi var. 'Joi Choi' may be the best all-round choice and can give up to 3 cuts. For repeat cutting ensure that the growing tip is not removed, as this is the region that produces the leaves - but when in a reproductive state (bolting) it produces stem and flowers). This may be cause, according to variety, by high/low temperatures or lack of water.

2. 'Mei Quin' Choi is his 2nd favourite

'Red Giant' - a broad-leafed mustard with blistered leaves highlighted in red has good bolt resistance and is 3rd choice.

Mizuna var. 'Broadleaved' is best picked large for stir-fries and small for salads and has good bolt resistance.

Komatsuna var. 'Torasan' is very large, scrappy and quick growing

Tatsoi var. 'Yukina Savoy' is a good vegetable - but inclined to bolt.

Chinese cabbage is a slug magnet! Much better to grow Pak Choi, Mizuna and Mustards.



For winter use, starting in September seeds are sown in modules and transplanted in October. These will crop in December and January. February is too cold but cropping picks up again in March. Cut high to keep plants cropping. You can also grow baby leeks in containers and cut at 4-8 inches - will grow again.

Lettuce

Growing lettuce under cover in winter is difficult. Mildew and low light cause problems. 'Amaze' is a good variety of variegated little gem lettuce. 'Red Salad bowl' is a leafy lettuce that doesn't heart-up with good bolt resistance. Michael does not rate 'Lollo Rosso' and won't grow it!

Cos lettuce form hearts and 'little gem' can be used as baby leaves, particularly if planted close together and will stand well

Butterhead are yellow green, such as 'Tom Thumb' and 'Freckles' - a good variety but doesn't look too good.

Iceberg attracts slugs and won't stand well.

Peppers

- Need protection.
- There are 2 types: sweet peppers and chillies - the only real difference is the heat factor. Must be sown early. In trials 7.5 litre pots are used as lack of rotation can cause issues.
- 'Jalapeno' are chillies but very sweet and are used in Mexican cooking. 'Joes Long Cayenne' are up to a foot long and relatively mild.
- 'Rooster Spur' is a small, hot and very heavy cropping chilli.
- 'Hungarian Hot Wax' is probably the earliest and hardiest chilli and is good for stir fries. 'Tabasco' is late maturing.
- Ornamental peppers may be grown in 5" pots - fruit are edible. 'Newmex Twilight' is a good example for growing on a window sill.
- 'Dorset Naga' paid the mortgage but ruined gourmet pepper education!

Tomatoes

There are 2 main types:

Determinate: Bushy or shrubby plants whose growth is naturally restricted by self-stopping main stems and side shoots. Consequently, they need no pruning and are grown without support. They are often early maturing and are suitable candidates for growing outdoors and in hanging baskets. There are also semi-determinate varieties that can grow quite large, and these might benefit from some pruning and support to keep them off the ground.

Indeterminate - Tall growing, cordon types whose main stem and the side shoots they produce can grow on almost indefinitely. To keep the plants under control, the side shoots should be regularly pinched out, leaving only the main stem to develop. These in turn need staking or trellising to keep them upright and off the ground. Some authorities even suggest pinching out their growing tips to promote fruit ripening at the end of the season.

'Sungold' a yellow cherry tomato whose taste is not what it once was.

'Apero' and 'Golden Suite' are 2 of the best flavoured tomatoes.

'Honeydrop' is an excellent pear shaped tomato.

'Moneymaker' are "rubbish"!

There are some good eastern European tomatoes: 'Orkado' and also 'Matino' did well in outdoor trials.

Of Beefsteak varieties 'Orange Wellington' is good but the best is 'Ovi's Romanian Giant' which is actually from Romania and can produce tomatoes of over 1Kg. They taste exceptionally good but do suffer from greenback - but this is not a problem.



Ovi's Romanian Giant

'Prudence Purple' is an heirloom American variety and worth growing and also Akron an east European type.

Commercial processing tomatoes have less water content and more dry matter and also mature later.

Micro-tomatoes have a hopeless flavour!

Seeds and type

Most of the best varieties are F1. Heritage types tend to have poor disease resistance, small harvesting window, low yields or poor taste.

Seeds vary in their useful life. To obtain maximal 'shelf life' they should be kept in a Tupperware box in the vegetable drawer of your fridge. A constant temperature is best but exposure to humidity can kill seeds as can excess temperature. Using a sachet of silica gel in the storage box is beneficial.

Tomato blight

Some varieties are more blight resistant than others. In an outdoor trial 'Matina', 'Mountain Magic' and 'Crimson Crush' were found to have good blight resistance, whereas 'Red Alert' although having poor resistance to blight does yield crops very early and thus may in practice avoid it.

The optimum temperature for growing tomatoes at 21°C, is not as high as generally thought.

Table-top growing

Possibly the next innovation will be table top growing. This method is particularly suitable for the elderly or those with bad backs. This is facilitated by placing a growing frame on a table or bench and with an aging population is likely to be an interesting and popular development.

Note (*Brian Atkinson*):

The naming of cultivars is an important aspect of cultivated plant taxonomy, and the correct naming of a cultivar is prescribed by the Rules and Recommendations of the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (the ICNCP, commonly known as the Cultivated Plant Code). A cultivar is given a cultivar name, which consists of the scientific Latin botanical name (*always in italics*) followed by a cultivar epithet. The cultivar epithet is usually in a vernacular language. For example, the full cultivar name of the King Edward potato is *Solanum tuberosum* 'King Edward'. The 'King Edward' part of the name is the cultivar epithet which, according to the Rules of the *Cultivated Plant Code*, is bounded by single quotation marks. (adapted from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultivar>).

Suggestions for talks or subjects members would like to see at future meetings will be welcome—contact the Chairman,

Colin Sparkes

or Secretary, Lynne Atkinson

Grow Your Own stall

The fifth annual Plant Giveaway in Bridport on Saturday 7 May was a great success and we raised £146.22 for Bees for Development.

It was a lovely warm Saturday market-day in Bridport and we generated quite a bit of interest. It was great to see there are enthusiastic growers in Bridport who, like many of us, typically grow too much of one thing and not enough of another.

So, this annual event is perfectly timed to address the balance and it was great to see so many people happily exchanging. And of course those who hadn't yet got round to sowing (and let's face it some things have been slow to germinate in this cool Spring), were able to get a head start with the help of Bridport's growers.

This is an annual event so well worth putting in the diary.

The idea of the stall is to encourage people to grow their own vegetables by having a 'giveaway' of donated plants. And we include flower plants as well – after all we want to feed the bees too!

This year we invited donations towards Bees for Development, a UK-based charity which seeks to promote beekeeping as an accessible, environmentally-friendly way for people in disadvantaged communities to make a living. And they have been delighted to receive the donation and good wishes of support from Bridport's green-fingered population.

A very social morning with lots of exchange of information and ideas, and lots of encouragement for people just starting out.

Sally Beeson



Community Allotment News

The start of the 2016 season has been quite busy for the Community Group as we were fortunate enough to be allocated a third allotment next to our original two. The bad news was that it hadn't been used for a couple of years and was in a pretty poor state. However, a few of us got stuck in to initially clear all the rubbish away and made several trips to the recycling centre. We were then able to see what we were dealing with - not a pretty sight!

About a third of the area had been covered some time ago with carpet so the soil was quite workable though still full of bindweed roots. This was dug over and a section planted with potatoes. The other bit is being worked by our friends from the Memory Cafe.



We have a young member, Mitchell, who is currently doing a permaculture course and he was keen to have a go at the remaining grass and weed covered portion. He started by covering the whole lot with cardboard, which will eventually rot down, held in place with willow pegs. This was then covered with a thick layer of compost which we have sown with a variety of salad crops. There are still quite a few weeds coming through but as time goes on these will get fewer - we hope!

The plot also came with an old and rather wonky shed. Once it had received a bit of TLC and a thorough clean it proved to be most useful as our other one was full to bursting.

We've had well attended Thursday sessions since we recommenced the weekly meetings on 31st March and have welcomed several new members.

After a slow, cold start everything is now racing away well in this lovely warm weather.

Jenn Baker

Bridport and District Allotments Society

Membership of the Bridport & District Allotments Society costs £2 per annum. Our Membership Secretary/Treasurer Mandy Rathbone will be pleased to receive your subscriptions. Please contact Mandy [redacted]

Receiving the newsletter: We now send out the newsletter, meeting agenda and minutes by email — *if any member is unable to receive these by email, please contact the Secretary, Lynne Atkinson, on [redacted]*

Newsletter contributions welcome: if you have any items you would like to see included in future issues of our Newsletter (which comes out quarterly) or if there are subjects you would like us to cover, please contact the Editor, Charles Wild, [redacted]

Contributions to the next edition (articles, news items and/or photographs) are welcome at any time, but by **20 August 2016** please. Many thanks for contributions this time - please keep them coming.