

# The Bushy Times

## Newsletter of the Bushy Park Allotment Association

[www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk](http://www.bushyparkallotments.org.uk)

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### NEWS UPDATE

We will hold the AGM on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March this year, hoping for fine, if cold, weather! We held the last AGM on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The Autumn Open Day was cancelled. An internal social event was held on 14<sup>th</sup> October. It remembered long-term tenants John Whitby and Ted Leppard who passed away earlier in the year.

Tenants have generally observed the rules for woody waste facility. Some plastic waste and pallets/wood were however deposited. The Council have partially cleared the material.

One tenant was seen bringing woody waste from outside, he has a landscaping business, this is not permitted. The Council have noted that non-allotment material has been put in the facility, this may jeopardise the use of this facility in the future.

The water will be turned back on when no frosts are forecast.

Please lock the gate on entry and exit, the vehicle gate has often been left unlocked!

Lidl are a good source of cheap seeds! I have used these for several years, good germination and sensible quantities of seed in each packet, a mix of heritage and new varieties.

### CROP ROTATION etc

An interesting article by Charles Dowding in the December Which Gardening magazine caught my attention. Charles is a proponent of 'no-dig' cultivation and has 40 years of veg growing experience. He questions the widely circulated theory of crop rotation. He points out that this concept started in the agricultural revolution of the 1730's when Charles 'Turnip' Townshend added a year to the medieval three-year crop rotation of the 3-field system. His crop cycle was wheat, turnips, barley and clover which allowed stock to feed on the turnips.

Whilst appropriate on a farm, Charles questions the claimed benefits of reduction in disease, pests and weeds combined with nutrient uptake being evened out across crops. His research failed to find any technical support for these assertions, particularly in the context of his own cultivation experience and practices. Allowing the soil to develop its full natural microbial, invertebrate and mycelium domain relatively undisturbed mimics the natural world. Natural plant environments such as hedgerows do not receive or require artificial nutrient inputs and yet achieve excellent growth and productivity.

He makes the following observations from his own practical growing experience: -

- He aims to have two crops each year from his veg plots. He does not do an annual dig-over, soil disturbance is kept to the minimum required to plant and harvest veg.
- He maintains soil fertility solely with an annual mulch of his own compost, he reckons that 2-3 cm depth, about an inch does the trick. This is considerably less than the Monty Dons of this world seem to have available for smothering their TV gardens!!!
- He has double cropped beds without rotation and notes steady and even improving productivity and good plant health. He has grown potatoes followed by leeks and broad beans followed by hearting cabbage in the same beds for eight years with excellent results. The potatoes gave their highest yield in the eight year.
- He plants opportunistically, a space created by harvesting can be used for the next crop.

Soil health is paramount for Charles and is the basis for reduced pests and disease. He does cover crops as appropriate to exclude insects/pigeons and provide weather protection.

I can add from my own experience of partial no dig beds, I only loosen the soil with a fork as it gets compacted to aid sowing but do not turn it over. They have produced good crops, so this year I am laying a compost mulch about 1 to 2 inches thick and then plant through this. So far just the garlic but shallots, beetroot and brassicas will follow. I will do my usual V-trench, opened with a spade and then filled with recycled bag compost, prior to sowing carrots to give them an unobstructed root zone.

## ***SEED CATALOGUES***

You have probably spent time recently looking through the seed and plant catalogues that are issued by Suttons, Kings, Organic Gardening and the like. A bit of history on these documents comes from the Oregon State University website:-

*British printed plant catalogues were rare before the mid-eighteenth century. Before that time, seed and plant merchants conducted most business locally and many people saved or exchanged their own seeds and plants. Seeds and plants were also often sold as a side business by estate gardeners or by merchants who also sold other wares. Documentary evidence shows the existence of nurserymen and seedsmen around London from the early sixteenth century; however, the oldest surviving copies of English seed and nursery trade catalogues date from the second half of the seventeenth century. Robert Furber of the Kensington Nursery published the oldest surviving printed catalogue in pamphlet form in 1727. Nurserymen, seedsmen and botanists from the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries also published gardening books, pamphlets, and gardeners' calendars that listed seeds or plants for sale. Publishing instructional literature saved the seedsman or nurseryman the trouble of writing directions for individual customers. It also provided good publicity, and helped protect his reputation, since customers might blame him if they were unsuccessful with the plants and seeds they sold.*

*As canal networks expanded and more landowners planted trees and landscaped pleasure grounds, more seed and nursery firms were established both inside and outside London. The oldest surviving fully priced printed catalogue came from York in 1775. Printed catalogues became more common over the course of the eighteenth century as competition between nurseries increased.*

*The oldest illustrated English flower catalogue is Twelve Months of Flowers. It was a series of engraved plates, sold by subscription in 1730 by Robert Furber to his royal and aristocratic clients. Instead of presenting plant species individually, the pictures display flowers in lavish bouquets in the style of Flemish flower paintings; indeed, Henry Fletcher engraved the plates after paintings by the artist Pieter Casteels, from Antwerp. Customers*

were offered the option of buying uncoloured or painted sets. Furber issued the equally extravagant *Twelve Months of Fruit* in 1732. Although few catalogues survive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the nursery trade grew during this period and there were approximately 200 seed and nursery firms by 1800 in England and Wales. Most catalogues before 1800 were unillustrated lists in broadsheet or booklet form; however, some provided additional information such as botanical nomenclature and cultivation instructions, and there were several firms that issued catalogues containing a small number of illustrations.

My current favourite is the “Kings Seeds – Grow-your-own 2024” catalogue. Soft cover, 160 pp, A4 landscape format, with full colour illustrations throughout. It is lavish, 90 pages are devoted to vegetables, herbs and fruit, listing around 700 vegetable varieties with competitive prices, unusual varieties and enough of the old favourites to satisfy my interest. Flowers and gardening sundries occupy the remaining pages.



Alneer Brothers catalogue page, promoting their nine newest vegetables for 1897, courtesy the Smithsonian collection, USA

## ALLOTMENT T&C UPDATE – Section 4

In March 2023 the Council revised the Terms and Conditions. Sections 4, copied in below, covers general management issues.

### Water supply, hoses, bonfires, barbecues, carpets and rubbish

4.1 - You must not make any connections or alterations to any aspect of the water supply unless express permission has been given by the Council. Water supplies will be turned off during the winter and on again in spring. Water points/taps are for the use of all plot holders no matter which plot they are on or adjacent to.

4.2 - You may only use hand held hoses when they are being actively supervised to ensure that water is not wasted. You must turn off and disconnect your hose from the standpipe once you have finished watering and store your hose pipe on your plot (not leaving it lying on the path where it may be a trip hazard). You must not use a hose when a hosepipe ban is in force. Sprinklers or irrigation systems are not permitted.

4.3 - Bonfires and the use of personal incinerators are banned. Any plot holder contravening these conditions will be dealt with via the termination policy.

4.4 - You can only have a barbecue or gathering on your plot if no nuisance is caused to nearby plot holders and residents. You must never leave a barbecue unattended.

4.5 - You must not use carpets or underlay to cover your plot.

4.6 - You must store any maturing composting materials in properly constructed containers or in well-maintained heaps. You should dispose of any non-compostable materials or woody waste by taking it home or to Townmead Road Reuse and Recycling Centre.

If you have woody waste that cannot be composted you should discuss this with your Site Committee/Site Representative. The Council may provide a woody waste collection in spring and/or autumn.

4.7 - You must not bring rubbish and household waste onto your plot or any part of the site. You must remove all rubbish you create on site, ideally at least once per year and at the end of your tenancy.

If your plot is untidy and you are storing rubbish there (especially household goods and toys) this is a breach of the Terms and Conditions and may result in a warning letter and/or Notice of Termination if your plot is not tidied within a set timescale.

Where provision is made for rubbish collection you must adhere to the council or site guidelines. Failure to do so may result in termination of your tenancy.

## BEETROOT MASSAMAN

A good use for the beetroot harvested during the winter, which have lost their fresh beetroot flavour but still retain the 'earthy' element. They benefit from a long slow cook, ideal for blending the flavours together in this recipe. Massaman curries are quite mild by Thai-origin dish standards.

400ml tin of coconut milk, use a full-fat version, not the 'light' type which is full of additives. *I don't use the whole tin, if it's good quality the coconut cream on top is excellent on breakfast food!*

1 tbsp vegetable oil

2 garlic cloves, sliced

100g of massaman curry paste – readily available in supermarkets, make sure it includes galangal!

500g of beetroot, cut into medium cubes (about 2 cm)

1 lemon, juiced and zest

2 tsp demerara or soft brown sugar

5 tbsp of fish sauce

500ml of vegetable stock, *a cube/instant ideal, or a bottle of beer!*

300g of potatoes, peeled and cut to match the beetroot *or small spuds from your harvest!*

4 tbsp of roasted peanuts, *salted packet variety OK*

small onions, peeled so that the base is intact and cut into segments that will hold together  
coriander leaves to garnish

Fry the garlic until golden. Add the curry paste and cook for a minute. Add the coconut cream from the top of the tin and cook briskly. It will separate, allow to bubble for 2 minutes.

Add the beetroot and ensure that it is well coated. Add the lemon juice, sugar, fish sauce, stock and the remaining coconut milk. Simmer for 25 minutes, stirring every now and then, check if the beetroot is softening, it may need more time. Add the peanuts, potatoes and onions and simmer for another 20 minutes. Check the beetroot and potatoes are tender. Serve with coriander leaves on top and some boiled rice or flatbreads on the side.

### Phil Iddison

[Plot 308/309]

On behalf of Bushy  
Park Allotments  
Association

Please contact the Council via their website

[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/allotments](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/allotments)  
**for any matters relating to your tenancy or the T&Cs. Please also  
report thefts, gate issues & water leaks directly to the Council,  
quoting your plot number if this is relevant to the issue.**

Contact me - [phil.iddison@arcadis.com](mailto:phil.iddison@arcadis.com) about the newsletter.