

# Nottingham Organic Gardeners

## Winter 2014



## Diaries to the ready... a busy 2014 ahead

It's been a bit of a rude awakening into 2014. One minute I was engaged in a serene New Year's Day streak around a rather isolated island cottage, the next minute it's AGM and Potato Day preparations, a house full of plumbers, Grandma's 93<sup>rd</sup>, and Barrie praising the punctuality of the Newsletter, which means that I really can't be late with this one, otherwise I'll have to edit his kind words!

What is really noticeable, editing this Newsletter in particular, is how much I'm trying to squeeze into it. The perennial complaint of the newsletter editor, be it for a parish magazine or indeed a University department (yes, truly everyone does a newsletter nowadays) is supposedly that there isn't enough material to fill it. Well, I hope I'm not jinxing things for the future by saying that this has not been a problem so far, and it's especially not a problem in this January issue, which is a reflection of all the activity going on and all the information we need to communicate to members. The January issue is not always lyrical, exactly, and I worry sometimes that it's in danger of being on the dry side, so I was hugely cheered to receive some photos of our excellent winter walk – thanks, Terry, and congratulations to Barrie on arranging such an enjoyable walk in glorious winter weather. And when Bethan casually mentioned at our Committee meeting that she'd sent me an article for the Newsletter, my optimism truly returned, and not without cause. I was delighted to find an inspirational piece on growing exotic edibles, which is straight from the heart of our demonstration allotment, proving its value yet again. Where Bethan blazes a trail, the rest of us may well follow, benefitting from the knowledge she has gained. I hope you enjoy this piece and are inspired to come and look at the 'exotics' on display in the allotment (and I don't mean Barrie in shorts!).

Exotics aside, it's the most important newsletter of the year, for a more prosaic reason – this Newsletter, as usual in January, contains the accounts. I'm not a natural when it comes to numbers, but I'm trying to improve, and successive treasurers have done a good job in explaining the accounts to people like me. We want our members to have a good look and get a sense of what's happening with the money – this is crucial to the health of the group. And if that were not enough excitement, in addition to the accounts, there's another lovely list in the January Newsletter which brings joy to my geeky heart – a preview (albeit incomplete) of the varieties we'll have at Potato Day. Like unwrapping your presents! There's more to come, though; we'll let you know the complete list when we have it. And finally, there's news of all sorts of enticing events and visits to note down in your diary. We're thrilled to have booked Charles Dowding for Saturday 3 May. We don't have a title or venue yet, but do reserve the date if you can. He is a very important writer on the importance of looking after the soil, and a 'no-dig' guru. If you don't know his books, courses or website forum already, ask Ros about him. She attended one of his courses and absolutely loved it. Then, hot on the heels of this event, we've got a coach booked for the Malvern Spring Show on Sunday 11 May. In June we're visiting the Weleda biodynamic garden in Ilkeston, and in July we're planning a visit to Lewis Winter's biodynamic farm in Cossall after his fascinating talk in October. And, in case anyone is worried that I haven't mentioned James Wong, we still have our eye on him, as it were, and are trying to fix up an autumn talk. We hope you'll enjoy all we've got planned. It's going to be a busy year. Stay in touch – and tell your friends!

*Cover image: An unforgettable sunset at the end of our winter walk. Photo by Terry Hanstock*

## THE THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN BARRIE WARD: 2013 IN REVIEW

Lots of intrepid gardeners slipped, slid, or otherwise reached Potato Day at the snowy beginning of the year. We sold loads, but understandably not quite as many as the year before. No matter, because thanks to a bit of innovation we made sure that all had gone to good homes before the spring. One 'innovation' I remember involved standing behind a potato stall on a deserted Sneinton market on surely the coldest day of the year, only escaping frostbite by taking frequent refuge in the reception area of the Victoria Baths. As you know, Potato Day is highly successful and enjoyable and another one is coming up on 25 January, so don't miss it.

Over the year we have had a series of excellent meetings, monthly at Hotel Deux. They are invariably entertaining and informative, not least of course because they have an inquisitive, sometimes irreverent, and always engaged audience. I thought there was a very high level of engagement with those delicious organic wines Vinceremos brought for us to sample at our last meeting of the year. There were, of course, many highlights and I think especially of the talk we so much enjoyed by Lewis Winter who farms biodynamically at Awworth whose Trinity Farm we plan to visit in the summer.



*A glorious NOGs winter walk & good weather again! Thanks to Terry Hanstock for the photo.*

Acorn Coaches took us once again, this time at around mid-summer, to the Oxford University Botanic Garden. We had visited its counterpart in Cambridge the previous year and this one was smaller but no less interesting and of course in a lovely setting close to the centre of Oxford. The price of admission included a visit to the Harcourt Arboretum some six miles south of Oxford which was aglow with rhododendrons among magnificent trees, and some of us found it an ideal picnicking spot. We obviously like these expeditions and the next one, to the Malvern Spring Show is one to look forward to.

We wound up the year with our now traditional winter walk (I hope it wasn't too long!). This time we walked from Tithe Green via the Iron Age camp above Windmill Lane to the Olde Bridge Inn at Oxtun for lunch. Think what you missed, if you did, standing on the top of Robin Hood Hill munching mince pies and looking far out towards Derbyshire.

So all in all, a good year, a year in which we continued to develop our demonstration allotment at Whitemoor, our links with other community gardening organizations, entertained a wide variety of speakers (and entertained ourselves when one speaker couldn't make it) and of course enjoyed growing and talking about growing. There was even quite a bit of sunshine and lots of enthusiasm. Speaking of which, your committee was never short of enthusiasm and inspirational to work with. Do you know, I think we actually look forward to committee meetings – and you can't say that about many organizations, can you? So there you are, there's an inducement for you: come and join us if you can, you will be very welcome.

Without mentioning anyone by name (that wouldn't do, would it?) I would just like to say how truly grateful we are for having our finances in such firm hands, for the high quality of our Newsletter, which keeps on coming out and on time too! For the superb and very tactful leadership of our allotment work parties and for someone else who very deftly and with a soft tread sorts us out, reminds us of those meetings, thinks of and arranges speakers, and prevents us from falling into the less obvious potholes. Also of course for providing us with the services of her spouse! To all the committee, thank you; and a special thank you to Maddie Wells who has to leave the committee to her and our regret.

Happy New Year!



*Enjoying the view on the winter walk. Recognize anyone? Photo: Terry Hanstock*

### **News flash:**

**Charles Dowding, Saturday 3 May 2014**

We are delighted to announce that we have booked Charles Dowding to talk to us on Saturday 3 May. This will most likely be a late afternoon/early evening talk. We can't give any more details at this point – venue, topic, ticketing arrangements are all to be confirmed. But please try to reserve the date in your diary. Charles is a hugely important writer and teacher on organic gardening, author of the classic *Organic Gardening: The Natural No-dig Way*, and inspirational expert on looking after the soil!

**Potato Day 2014: Saturday 25 January, 10.00-1.30**  
**Sherwood United Reformed Church, Edwards Lane**

This year's Potato Day will be in the same venue as last year, and we will have teas and an information stand as well as tubers, onion and shallot sets for sale. The price per tuber is unfortunately going up to 18p per tuber this year. This is the only increase in price since our first Potato Day in 2008 and it reflects the higher costs of seed potatoes. We hope you'll be understanding about this – our price is still cheaper than Ryton Gardens potato day has been in recent years. We are retaining the £1 entry charge for non-members – refundable for anyone who joins on the day.

**Contributions of cakes and blue 'mushroom' trays for tubers are most welcome.** We are always very grateful for the delicious home-baked cakes which are essential to make the day go with a swing! After all that pushing and shoving to get hold of their favourite variety, our visitors will need a piece of lovely cake. Ring Kate or one of the committee if you want to drop off cakes or trays, or to help on the day.

As always, though we offer a good number of varieties (which is, after all, the point of the event) we can't order them all in equally large quantities. This is why there are disparities in stock levels, and why we advise you to **come early if you are looking for specific varieties**. We have ordered three sacks of Charlotte, which is ever-popular and grows well locally. However we may well still sell out – we will help you find a good alternative if that happens.

We have as usual responded to feedback/sales and have tried to improve the selection in terms of the particular varieties and types of varieties you are looking for. We have dropped some, either because we had bad experiences with them ourselves or because you had sent in negative feedback. A bit of a theme from the feedback was the positive response to 'tried and tested' varieties like Charlotte, Cara, Desiree and Pink Fir Apple. Some of the newer varieties were judged 'novelty value only' (e.g. Purple Majesty, which we have not re-ordered). There was also a **marked preference for waxier varieties**, with the very floury varieties rather unpopular. We try to give information on the cooking qualities of different varieties – it's best not to attempt to boil the very floury varieties; steaming produces better results. Or bake, or roast them, which is where they come into their own. In response to your preferences we have **increased the numbers of first and second earlies**, and have tried to ensure that there are some good waxy varieties for boiling, salads and so on.

The tables in these pages are a list of varieties already ordered. Nearer the time, we will also visit another supplier to try to source a number of extras. The most popular 'newcomer' to our list last year was Sunrise which a number of members commented on. We have not been able to order any in advance, but will look out for this variety in our foraging trip for additional varieties. In addition to Sunrise we will be looking out for Anya, Apache, Aura, Belle de Fontenay, Ratte, Rooster, and Yukon Gold. We will do our best to get some of these, and will keep you updated on the website. However, quantities are not likely to be large, so if you're keen on these, check the website in advance of the day, and don't be too late. If they've sold out, or we've not managed to get them, we will of course help you to find a good substitute. If there is anything you are desperately keen on that is not in our list, let us know. No promises, but if you don't ask, you don't get. In particular I note that we've wanted to offer Ratte every year since

we started organizing the event, and we've never managed to get hold of any! Perhaps this will be the year ... but don't hold your breath.

Descriptions are generally based on data from the Potato Council website, the European Cultivated Potato Database or Alan Roman's 'Guide to Seed Potato Varieties' available from NOGs (£1.50).

**Recommended for salads:** Charlotte, International Kidney, Nicola, Pink Fir Apple

**Good all-rounders:** Desiree, Kestrel, Lady Balfour, Picasso, Robinta, Wilja

**Tasty bakers:** Desiree, Estima, Marfona, Majestic, Winston

**Delicious & floury for roasts, mash, and chips:** King Edwards, Maris Piper, Red Duke of York

**Growing for disease resistance?** Charlotte, Lady Balfour, Lady Christl, Sante, Sarpo Mira

**Entering your local show?** Catriona, Estima, Kestrel, Winston

1<sup>st</sup> Early ready June to July; 2<sup>nd</sup> Early - ready June to August; Early Maincrop ready August; Late Maincrop ready September onwards.

**1<sup>st</sup> earlies** (\* denotes Soil Association organic standard)      PCN = eelworm

Variety	Cooking qualities	Notes	Resistance to	Susceptible to
Colleen*	Good boiled, also fries well.	White skin, light yellow flesh. Performed well on NOGs allotment. Good yields, uniform tuber size.	Blight, scab	Blight on foliage (tubers quite resistant)
Foremost	Popular as new potato. Good flavour, slightly waxy, boils well.	White flesh. RHS AGM variety. Popular garden variety. Not high enough yields to succeed as commercial variety.	Scab	Blight (but 1 <sup>st</sup> early), leafroll virus, virus Y.
Lady Christl	Excellent cooking qualities. Waxy and should boil well.	High yielding variety of numerous uniform attractive tubers. Good general disease resistance.	Scab, leaf roll, PCN globodera rostochiensis	Blight on foliage, PCN globodera pallida
Maris Bard*	Retains its colour and shape when boiled. Also mash, steam, sauté.	High yielding, good size and appearance	Leaf roll, Y virus, gangrene, drought.	PCN
Red Duke of York	Lovely roasts. Fairly floury. Tasty mash and bakers.	Beautiful ruby skins, yellow flesh. 1942 heritage variety.	Dry rot	Leaf roll, blight (but a 1 <sup>st</sup> early)
Rocket	Waxy-ish. Boils well but bland flavour?	Produces extremely early yield of firm, waxy tubers. Big tubers if left. Reliable & good yields.	PCN (esp. g. rostochiensis)	Blight, but 1 <sup>st</sup> early.
Sharpe's Express*	Good flavour, lift early as new potatoes, or left to mature good chips.	1901 variety. Early maturing. Long, oval tubers, white skins, pale yellow flesh.	Scab	Leaf roll, dry rot, blight (but 1 <sup>st</sup> early)

Swift	Delicate early potato flavour. Good all-rounder.	Very early, large tubers if left. Short foliage - good for containers. Good disease resistance.	Virus Y, blackleg, scab, PCN	Blight, but 1 <sup>st</sup> early
Winston	Creamy, moist flesh with excellent flavour.	Good yields of large tubers. Show bench variety? RHS AGM.	Drought, virus Y, PCN g. rostochiensis	PCN g. pallida

**2<sup>nd</sup> earlies** \* denotes organic PCN = eelworm

Variety	Cooking qualities	Notes	Resistance to	susceptible to
Catriona	Pleasing flavour. Floury, roasts well. 'A taste of the past' (GO website)	Oval tubers, white skin & purple eyes, floury pale yellow flesh. Good exhibition variety. From 1920.	Some viruses – leaf roll, Y, A	PCN, blight
Charlotte*	Waxy salad potato. Very good flavour.	Long yellow tubers. Reliable and stores well. High yields. Our most popular variety by a country mile!	Blight, slugs	PCN
Estima	Good flavour. Hold their shape when boiled. Good mash, bakers, wedges and Dauphinoise.	Widely sold in supermarkets. Cream-coloured skin and yellow flesh. High yields and uniform tubers.	Common scab, drought	PCN, leafroll virus, powdery scab
International Kidney	Excellent boiled or as a salad potato. Famous for its flavour.	'Jersey Royal' variety. Kidney shaped & pale yellow Waxy when young. Can be grown as early main.	Leaf roll	Late blight
Kestrel	Decent all-rounder. Semi-waxy, good roasts and chips, 'old-fashioned' taste.	Kestrel gives good yields of very attractive, long oval, partly coloured tubers. Good show potato.	Blackleg, dry rot, gangrene, leaf roll	Blight, moderately susceptible to scab
Marfona	Popular early baker with 'buttery' flavour. Can also be boiled.	Can also be grown as a maincrop. Good yields. From Netherlands (1975).	Dry rot, blight, drought	PCN
Maris Peer*	Waxy well flavoured potato suitable for boiling, but also good roasts.	White skin & cream flesh produces small uniform tubers.	Blight, scab	Leafroll virus, virus Y, PCN & slug damage
Nadine	Wedges, roasts, boil, mash. Firm, waxy texture. Tasty all-rounder.	Nadine is one of the most successful varieties introduced by Jack Dunnett. High yielding.	Blight, eelworm, scab, slugs	Dry rot, virus A
Nicola	Not quite as waxy as Charlotte, but still waxy. Popular taste – sweet & nutty.	Good sub for Charlotte. High yield, uniform tubers, stores quite well. Popular at Whitemoor.	Scab, leaf roll, drought, PCN g. rostochiensis	PCN globodera pallida
Wilja	Robust earthy flavour, slightly rough skin. Boil, chip, mash, roast, bake.	Long oval yellow tubers with light yellow flesh. In-between waxy and floury. Consistent yields. 1967.	Scab – common and powdery, leaf roll	PCN

**Maincrop varieties** \* denotes organic

PCN = Eelworm

Variety	Cooking qualities	Notes	Resistance to	Susceptible to
Cara* (late main)	Mild flavoured creamy flesh, good baked or roasted. Soft waxy texture.	Attractive white tubers with red eyes. Stores well. Good general disease resistance.	PCN g. rostochiensis, blight, drought, slugs	PCN globodera pallida
Desiree* (early main)	Popular 'nutty' flavour. Excellent roasted, boiled or baked. Delia recommends!	Pink skin, yellow flesh, great flavour. Between waxy and floury. 1962. Decent yields even in dry conds.	'Medium' resistance to most diseases.	PCN
Harmony (main)	Waxy, good for boiling but some dislike the texture when baked or mashed.	High yields of bold bright tubers. Excellent storage. Good for exhibition. Daughter of Nadine.	Gangrene, black dot, silver scurf, otherwise 'moderate'	Powdery scab
King Edward (late main)	Iconic for roasts & mash. Excellent flavour. Floury, so boil with care.	Introduced in UK in 1902. Good cooking quality, flavour and frying colour. Lovely traditional taste.	Scab, spraing, slugs, bruising.	Blight, PCN
Lady Balfour* (early main)	Good general purpose, strong earthy flavour. Mash, boil, bake, roast.	Named after Soil Assoc. founder. Oval, pink splashed tubers. Huge yields, even in poorer soils. Stores well.	Blight, PCN	Variable tuber size
Linda* (main)	Good for gratins and oven bakes. V good flavour. Waxy becoming floury on storage.	Vigorous campaign saved this variety from legal extinction. Yellow flesh. Grew well on Whitemoor.	Lack of data but said to do well in organic systems	Blight, PCN, viruses (not specified which)
Majestic (early main)	Floury with a rich, aromatic flavour. Good baked.	Introduced 1911. Related to British Queen?! High yields. Stores well. Rave review from blogger Sally Nex.	Drought, blight (tubers)	Blight (foliage), PCN
Maris Piper (early main)	Heston Blumenthal's favourite for chips! Pleasant floury texture, good flavour.	Maincrop maturity with high yields and many tubers per plant. Stores well.	PCN, gangrene, bruising	Slugs, scab, virus Y
Picasso (early main)	Good all-rounder – great mash, roasts, bakers. Good flavour, can be boiled too.	Pretty oval white tubers, pink eyes and cream to light yellow flesh. Cara is a parent. Popular on allotments.	Scab, medium blight r., general virus resistance	Slugs
Pink Fir Apple (late main)	Very waxy, will not disintegrate. Delicious nutty flavour. Salads! Curries!	Knobbly pink long tubers, yellow flesh. Good yield if given long enough. Waxy firm texture. Storage v good.	Scab	PCN, blight, viruses leaf roll, A, B, C, X
Remarka* (early main)	Large tubers, good bakers. Floury-ish but general purpose. Good, mild flavour.	Stores well - long dormancy. Good all round disease resistance including some blight resistance.	Scab, dry rot, blackleg, PCN g. rostochiensis, med. blight	PCN g. pallida
Robinta* (early main)	Good flavour & good all-rounder. A success on Karen's plot!	Smooth red skin & cream flesh. High level of disease resistance. Tubers retain shape when boiled	Blight, scab, general virus resistance	PCN



Romano (main)	Good all-rounder, midway between waxy and floury.	Short oval, red tubers with cream flesh. High yields and stores well. bred as resistant Desiree type.	Blight (tubers), spraing, skin spot, slugs	PCN, some blight on foliage
Sante (main)	Chips, roast, mash. Can be boiled, but on the floury side. Pleasant flavour.	Very commonly grown organic variety, prized for adaptability to range of soils & all-round resistance.	Powdery scab, viruses, incl leaf roll, PCN, med. blight	Blackleg
Sarpo Mira* (main)	Floury but all-rounder. Boil with care. Some say tasty, some say bland.	Very resistant to blight. Good yields. Harvest August to stop them becoming too floury/starchy.	Bruising, blackleg, blight, viruses, slugs	PCN

**Not ordered – no guarantees we will find any of these, but we will be looking!**

Variety	Cooking qualities	Notes	Resistance to	Susceptible to
Anya	Nutty tasting, good for salads, quite waxy.	Cross Desiree & Pink Fir Apple. Knobbly but smoother than PFA.	Scab	PCN, external damage, greening
Apache (early main)	Slight buttery/chestnut flavour. Scrub and roast whole.	Small and round in shape. Red skin with white patches. Added to UK list in 2010.	Bruising, splitting, dry rot, blackleg	PCN, late blight on tubers, leaf roll
Aura (second early)	French salad variety renowned for great flavour	French variety c. 1950. Pale yellow flesh/skin. Was a favourite of Heritage Seed Library members.	Scab, some rot	Blight, PCN, virus Y
Belle de Fontenay (early main)	Very good flavour, improves on storage. Good for salads. Waxy	Classic French salad variety – c. 1885. Also said to make great leek and potato soup!	Scab	PCN
Isle of Jura (early main)	Well liked on NOGs allotment. Decent flavour, all-rounder. Boils well.	High yielding general purpose. Reliable grower. It has medium dry matter. Recent variety.	Powdery scab, blackleg, gangrene, virus, spraing	PCN g. pallida
Ratte, aka Asparagus (second early)	Very well regarded salad potato. Waxy with a nutty flavour. Try Pink Fir Apple if these are unavailable.	Victorian variety. We've never managed to get hold of any, so don't hold your breath! We keep trying, though.	Scab	Blight (very susceptible), leaf roll, PCN
Red Emmalie (early main)	Not much data – supplier suggests boil, mash or wedges. Happy tasting!	Red skin and red flesh. Variety added to UK list in 2012, bred Karsten Ellenberg (involved in campaign to save 'Linda') .	Dry rot, blackleg, leaf roll, scab	Blight, PCN
Rooster (main)	Versatile – boil, steam, chips, mash. Fairly waxy and valued for a good flavour.	Good yields. TV advertised and the no. 1 variety in Ireland. Very popular Albert Bartlett variety.	Leaf roll, some resistance to blight on tubers	PCN
Sunrise (2 <sup>nd</sup> early)	Waxy when young. Old-fashioned taste. Bake, mash, roasts and chips.	New variety. Pink and white tubers, and yellow flesh. Stores well in winter.	Scab, dry rot	Blackleg

Ulster Prince (first early)	Waxy potato, tasty though mild flavour. Boils well.	Very white flesh, smooth skinned. 1947 variety. Good boiled straight after harvest.	Scab, drought.	Blight, but 1 <sup>st</sup> early.
Yukon Gold (second early)	Bake or mash, said to have buttery taste. Can also be boiled, fried.	Golden flesh, popular in US and Canada. Stores well. Cross Norgleam & yellow Peruvian var.	Dry rot, blackleg, virus Y	Slug damage, PCN

*Sign up now!*

### **Nottingham Organic Gardeners Coach Trip RHS Malvern Show, Sunday 11 May 2014**

We've booked a coach for the RHS Spring Gardening Show at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern, leaving at 8.30 and arriving back at around 7pm (times to be confirmed). The cost will be £28 per person, which includes a show ticket at group rate and coach travel. The journey will take approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes.

If you'd like to go, please send a deposit for £14, or (even better) for the full amount of £28. Cheques should be made payable to Nottingham Organic Gardeners and posted to 55 Grange Road, Woodthorpe, Nottingham NG5 4FU. **Remember to include your name and a contact number.** Or hand your payment to Kate Newton.

Malvern prides itself on being *the* show for real gardeners. As well as show gardens, talks by celebrity gardeners, plant pavilions, and the floral marquee, there are also live demonstrations and an area devoted to allotments and smallholdings.

## The NOGs Allotment: Winter 2013-14

### **Time for reflection on our contributions**

The wild weather over the Christmas period has barely impacted on me but many people have been affected by floods and the strong winds have compounded high tides to makes the Christmas period far from cheery for many. My own garden has been affected by the strong winds requiring me to stake kale and purple sprouting broccoli to stop them being rocked in the ground. I realize that to avoid having to do this in the future I should look at the planting and try to plant a wind break to slow the wind down so that the effects of it cause less damage. I don't think this will make any difference to the coastal winds... but we should all be looking for ways to make our environment less damaging and more conducive to successful food production.

The allotment is called a demonstration allotment and I was thinking about what it demonstrates; different ways to garden organically, different ways to catch the rain, different ways to feed ourselves, different ways to attract wildlife (plants, insects, birds and animals), how to work together and how to make the most of sustainable resources available locally.

Last Saturday we were mulching with leafmould made from leaves collected by the council, delivered to the allotment site and stored by us for a year to make lovely

crumbly leafmould which will feed the soil life and so enhance the vitality of the soil. In doing this we will be ensuring that soil creatures, bacteria and fungi are benefitting and so enhancing the unseen biodiversity.

Most of the beds in the polytunnel and outside have been generously mulched with well-rotted manure. Not only has this increased the soil biodiversity but also raised the nutrient level and increased humus levels enable the soil to absorb and hold on to the rain much better than it used to. All this means that the soil is primed to feed the roots of the vegetables which we grow. The standard of our vegetables has definitely improved, although we did see some poor results from the bed nearest to the Tree of Heaven. This was, we think, due to the overhanging branches depriving the bed of moisture. In fact the brassicas have improved so much that we are going to give Brussels sprouts a go this year – this is a vegetable I have yet to get a reasonable harvest from.

Retaining water has been a recurring theme this year, the water harvesting from the polytunnel and cabin roofs, the automatic watering system in the polytunnel and the increased water holding capacity of the soil all mean that we are making good use of all the rain we get. In fact for much of last summer the only tap water we used was for drinks and cooking for us – and we probably had enough saved water for this but it isn't safe drinking water. When we save or hold onto water in the soil, we are making use of it before it slowly filters through the land to join the rivers and so flow out to sea. It's much better that we use it first in this way so it doesn't all arrive in the rivers at the same time, which can cause the kind of flooding suffered by many this winter. I think the New Year resolution for the allotment should be to hold onto as much water as possible and that way we can be proud to be making a small contribution to minimising flooding in the future.

Would you like to become involved in developing the allotment as a demonstration site? If so, we would love to see you at one (or more) of our work parties, the dates of which are on the back of this newsletter. They are all 10am – 2ish and finish with a sociable lunch – but you don't have to stay for the whole time! All are welcome.

Ros Pither

### Subscriptions – please contact Irena Paxton

<p>Post a cheque payable to Nottingham Organic Gardeners:</p> <p>Irena Paxton, 54 Lamcote Grove, The Meadows NG2 2GY</p> <p>07710 195733</p>	<p>The subscription rates are:</p> <p>Waged Individual        £10.00 Family            £15.00</p> <p>Concessions Individual        £7.00 Family            £12.00</p>
<p>Or contact Irena for details of how to set up a standing order/online payment: <b>irenapaxton@hotmail.co.uk</b></p>	<p>Of course you can also pay in person at one of the monthly meetings. Thanks for your support!</p>

## Treasurer's Report and Accounts for year ending 30 November 2013

It gives me great pleasure to present the treasurer's report and audited accounts for the year ending 30 November 2013. I hope the accounts are reasonably clear but I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

You will have noticed from the accounts, that here is a small deficit for the financial year. I had hoped that in my first year as Treasurer, there would have been a surplus but it was not to be. The January weather had a part to play in this as there was snow and ice on Potato Day and many members were unable to attend. Despite braving Arctic conditions at Sneinton Market in February and valiant attempts to sell surplus tubers elsewhere, the net income from Potato Day and after sales was down £514 on the previous year.

At the end of the year, membership stood at 109. This was slightly down on the previous year when the membership stood at 120. The figure included nine members who paid their 2013 subscriptions in 2012. The subscription rates remain unchanged for a fifth year in succession. We have moved our bank account from Lloyds to the Co-operative Bank. If you would like to pay by standing order or online please email me for the relevant details. You can of course pay at one of the monthly meeting or at an allotment work party.

The Allotment expenses are down slightly on last year. We have spent some money on a mower and wheelbarrows. The only major expenditure has been on an irrigation project for the polytunnel which has cost £342 to date.

I would like to thank all the members of the Committee for all the time and effort they have put in to make the year the success it has been. I would also like to thank our auditor Sarah Baker for her help and guidance. My first year as Treasurer has been made very much easier by the help I received from Pete Newton, who managed to persuade me that Excel was not the most complicated thing under the sun. I am very grateful to him for his help and support.

I will end by saying a last thank you and that is to Barrie, our Chair, who motivates us all.

### NOTTINGHAM ORGANIC GARDENERS

### Accounts 2013

#### Core Income

Subscriptions	£771.00
Visitor Fees	£68.00
Bank Interest	£1.37
Leaflet Sales	£3.00
Seed & Plant Swap	£63.70
Donations	£35.00
	<b>£937.41</b>

#### Core Expenditure

Speaker Fees	£350.00
Stationery	£16.66

Postage	£19.20	
Newsletters	£69.18	
G O Affiliation	£100.00	
G O Donations	£0.00	
Heritage Seed Library	£0.00	
S O Affiliation	£0.00	
RHS Membership	£62.10	
Pub. Liability Ins.	£121.90	
City Farms Assoc.	£0.00	
Room Heating - Hotel Deux	£50.00	
Seed & Plant Swap	£4.80	
Drinks for Speaker	£37.48	
	<b>£876.32</b>	
<b>Core income less expenditure</b>	<b>£61.09</b>	Surplus

### Promotional Income

Raffle	£169.80
Potato Day	£1,554.61
After sales	£322.05
Allotment Open day	£0.00
Coach Trip	£596.00
Compost	£496.00
Allotment	£10.00
	<b>£3,148.46</b>

### Promotional Expenditure

Allotment Expenditure	£1,041.98
Potatoes etc.	£1,076.15
Raffle Prizes & Tickets	£85.39
Coach Trip expenses	£495.00
Compost	£509.04
Meet Up	£42.00
	<b>£3,249.56</b>

<b>Promo. Inc. less expenditure</b>	<b>-£101.10</b>	Deficit
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<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£4,085.87</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b><u>£4,125.88</u></b>
<b>Deficit for year</b>	<b>-£40.01</b>

### RECONCILIATION

Opening Bank	£2,034.91
Opening cash	£207.70
Deficit	<u>-£40.01</u>
Total	£2,202.60
Closing Bank	£2,104.13
Closing cash	<u>£98.47</u>
Total	£2,202.60

### POTATO DAY 2013

#### Income

Potato Sales	£1,281.61
Entrance	£142.00
Refreshments	£128.00
Leaflets	£3.00
	<b>£1,554.61</b>

After Sales £322.05

**Total £1,876.66**

Profit £800.51

#### Expenditure

	*
Room Hire	£0.00
Refreshments	£14.70
Advertising	£0.00
Stationery	£21.30
Sundries	£15.00
Phoenix Seed	£354.00
Codnor Seed	£154.30
Skea Seed	£367.00
Whitemoor Seed	£72.00
Others	£77.85

**Total £1,076.15**

\*paid November 2012

### ALLOTMENT 2013

#### Income

Donation FOE £10.00

**Total £10.00**

#### Expenditure

Rent	£101.00
Equipment new	£185.06
Equipment repairs	£14.00
Irrigation project	£342.17
Oil	£3.25
Materials	£40.59
Seeds & Tubers	£72.26
Manure	£80.00
Paint	£17.99
Straw	£8.25
Food	£112.94
Calor Gas	£64.47

**£1,041.98**

Deficit £1,031.98

Cash at start of year £50.00

Cash at end of year £50.00

## Tales from the Exotic Border Nottingham Organic Gardeners Allotment 2013

BETHAN MCILROY

Growing exotic plants in our garden plot are important to show the diversity of crops available to us even in our British climate. Our reliance on imported fruit and vegetables over the years has increased and the different varieties of crops as gardeners that we grow should also increase. In Victorian Britain, gardeners would grow exotics all over the country ranging from pineapples and kumquats to Chinese artichokes. Now there are numerous books, famous TV gardeners and nurseries that specialize in supplying us with exotic seeds, trees and tubers to try with varying degrees of success. It's time to experiment!

At the allotment garden we have two exotic areas, one in the polytunnel and one sunny outside border. The damp, cold spring hampered some efforts at the beginning of the season but the plants soon grew as our summer got warmer. The aim is to trial different crops for taste and production quality, so we can then share the best with you.

We trialled different colours of Oca planted underneath Giant Mexican Sweetcorn. Oca provides great ground cover so can be grown around tomatoes or beans. It's a great addition to the garden as a winter tuber and is harvested after the frosts when the sugars in the plant return to the tubers. No need to peel the tubers, just lightly wash then cook like a new potato. It is not affected by pests and didn't require any watering so was lovely and easy.

Carl Legge from the Llyn peninsula in Wales sent us some Mashua tubers to try and these really were a surprising delight. They grew very well up bean supports and the unusual red and yellow trumpet flowers looked lovely in late summer. Native to Colombia, Ecuador Peru and Boliva, Mashua is a perennial vine growing to 2–4 m in height. It soon grew up the supports and onto the hedge. It is related to garden nasturtiums, and is also widely cultivated as an ornamental for its brightly coloured tubular flowers. We've grown it to eat the tubers, but haven't harvested any yet – we'll let you know what they're like. They're supposed to have a peppery taste when raw which disappears when they're cooked. We will have extra slips to share for those who are interested.

Sadly we did not get a crop of Sichuan pepper as the plant was slightly swamped by the Mashua that grew rather too well! Sichuan pepper, *Zanthoxylum simulans* is a flowering plant native to Eastern China. Despite the name it is not related to black pepper or chilli pepper. The genus belongs in the citrus family. The husk or hull (pericarp) around the seeds may be used whole, especially in Szechuan cuisine and the finely ground powder is one of the blended ingredients for five spice powder (so one day we can make our own!). The husk is the part that is most often used, but the leaves are also edible and smell fantastic in the garden. My favourite summer meal involves lightly frying the Sichuan peppercorn in oil, adding chopped cucumber (de-seeded), chilli and finishing off with a splash of rice vinegar.

I also particularly like Achocha. We received the seeds from the Heritage seed library and they worryingly looked like bark but they grew very well, producing a good crop of little cucumber gourd style fruits. This is another crop with South American origins. It is

known by many names around the world, for example caigua, achojch, slipper gourd, stuffing cucumber etc. I can only describe them as a green pepper/cucumber mix. They are nice stir fried, stuffed with spicy rice or used as filler in traditional piccalilli. You only need two plants outside and they throw fruit at you.

Rat tailed radishes were quite successful planted around the Yacon. Instead of eating the radish, you leave them go to seed and eat the seed pods. They can be spicy depending on the recent weather and are a nice addition to a salad. When in flower they were popular with bees and hoverflies.

Tomatillos are another favourite of mine, the tomato-like fruit covered with a papery husk ripened in late September, prolonging my salsa-making season.

There have been some lessons to be learnt for next year. A few of the crops that were sown direct in early spring were sown too soon and struggled. The Quinoa never emerged, the coriander soon bolted and the cape gooseberries from James Wong collection took too long to grow, took up too much space in the polytunnel and didn't taste very good! But we've had some real success too, as you can see on the plot.

If you would like to try growing something different this year there are many excellent suppliers out there to get seeds/plants from.

Try:

<http://www.realseeds.co.uk>

<http://jungleseeds.co.uk>

<http://www.edulis.co.uk>

<http://gardenorganic.org.uk/hsl/>

## **October Meeting: Lewis Winter of Trinity Farm**

'In 1990 I drove past a large field in Cossall, I saw this chap on the land and said, any chance I could rent an acre? He said I've been trying to get rid for eighteen years, you can have the keys – we can sort it out later.'

That's how Lewis and his wife and three children realized a dream, sold their home in Mapperley and moved into a caravan on the land at Cossall.

The land had 150 allotments on it from 1868-1968. Then it was sold to a private owner whose plans to build on it were frustrated by the planners and it had been derelict for some years. There were no less than thirteen wells on the site which had been filled with rubble and a lot of concrete had been churned into the soil. For the first decade the biggest job was cleaning it up. 'We put a plough through and all the blades were shattered! Two summers ago, one of our volunteers was digging a bed over when he got what at first he thought was a rock stuck in the tines of his fork, only it wasn't, it was a hand grenade!'

At first, they kept a herd of goats, thereby making cheese, but 'twenty years ago it wasn't easy to sell, here people just wanted milk for their puppies'. Then they put up their first glasshouse, and moved onto growing food for the higher end of the market, hanging baskets and the like, all the while cleaning up the land.



It was around that time that Lewis was introduced by a friend to biodynamics. He went to a conference where among others he met an Australian who farmed 120 acres there biodynamically and by the time he returned to Cossall, it felt as if a whole new world was opening up. He realized that biodynamics is a wonderful and broad subject. He read Rudolf Steiner's book on agriculture, 'a book I try to read repeatedly, it's pregnant with ideas: Steiner could see that messing with nature is very dangerous although he was a scientist, not a farmer. He founded the Biodynamic Association which has been going for ninety years.'

Lewis needed to define biodynamics: briefly it's a 'spiritual, ethical and ecological approach to agriculture, food production and nutrition' based upon the spiritual insights and practical suggestions of Rudolf Steiner. Further, 'biodynamic farms strive to create a diversified balanced farm ecosystem that generates health and fertility as much as possible from the farm itself'.

Lewis decided to give it a go and for years was running parallel trials, but more and more employing biodynamic methods. He soon felt that he wanted to manage his whole farm biodynamically. He had got his full organic symbol after five years. None of it had been easy: after he had been on the land for 15 months he kept 250 weaners 'but pigs love to go walkabout, and one day I got a phone call from the local vicar who said three of my sows were digging up bodies in the graveyard. One veered off and went into the pub, and they were big girls, over 50 stone in weight!' Then foot and mouth came; 'not one organic farm got foot and mouth, despite which, organic farms were treated exactly the same as all others'. He carried on feeding their stock at great cost, was unable to get a licence to move them and on-farm killing was banned. By the end he had lost the entire herd he had spent years building up.

In 2003 Lewis had secured his first ever contract to supply organic vegetables to a major supermarket. That was a learning experience – and a near fatal one. He satisfied their strict (cosmetic) requirements, and grew 24,000 courgettes and beetroot in the first year, and was well on the way to doing the same in the second, when out of the blue they suddenly changed the terms resulting in a drastic cut in returns 'which nearly destroyed us that year'.

But monoculture was never his intention and today Trinity Farm is anything but. There is much community involvement, a thriving organic vegetable box scheme and twenty-four allotments on site. And yes, cows are due to make a reappearance.

*NB We are off to visit Trinity Farm in July – look out for the date once we have fixed it up with Lewis!*

## Committee Report

### **14 November 2013**

We discussed the **finances of the group** in response to Irena's accounts information, and noted that we need to cover the 'core' expenses of the group with 'core' income; so that if our costs rise significantly in future (if we had to pay more for a meeting room, for example), we will have to increase the subs.

Organization for **Potato Day** was discussed. The main orders have been placed and we will be able to cut down on delivery costs from Gro-well at Codnor by arranging to collect that consignment – Whitemoor's delivery will be after Potato Day so we won't be able to piggy-back on their larger delivery. Karen will be able to do an information stall on the day and we will ask Eric if he can help with moving potatoes on his trailer.

We discussed the **programme for 2014** – Barrie had been in contact with James Wong's agent and was waiting to hear back. Other meetings were all arranged with the exception of April. A meeting of the programme group would sort out the remaining details.

The committee **thanked Mike Poyzer** for doing the Gardeners' Question Time event on behalf of the group at the book festival in **Lowdham**. Mike had also been able to make cheaper copies of the Newsletter which is good news. Rachel reported that we might be able to link up with Roots Wholefoods to offer promotions on books to members – we agreed to discuss the details with Ken Dyke at Roots. It was also agreed that we would offer Ken membership again as he has been so helpful and supportive of NOGs. Finally, we decided to order **three pallets of peat-free compost** to sell at cost price, rather than last year's two, as we felt there was enough demand from members to justify this.

#### **8 January 2014**

The committee started by looking at the **accounts**, which had been approved by our auditor, Sarah Baker. We thanked Irena for all her hard work in preparing them. While we noted the small deficit of c. £40, we felt that this was not a serious problem. We want to be financially sustainable as a group, but are not interested in amassing funds for the sake of it. We noted that last year's Potato Day profits, while still good at £800, were well down on the previous year. Accordingly, we had spent a little less on the allotment. The balance of core income and core expenditure was good, however. We agreed to email the accounts to members in advance of the AGM so that they could prepare any questions.

We discussed the **agenda for the AGM**, and were pleased that Karen Fry had agreed to stand for the committee. She will be nominated at the meeting. We are very sorry to lose Madeleine Wells who is standing down, and hope that her commitments might allow her to be more involved again in the future at some point. There is one vacancy on the committee or two if Ros attends meetings ex officio as the Allotment Coordinator. We discussed the possibility of more members wanting to stand for the committee than our constitution currently permits. However, we felt that since more than three new members wanting to stand would be unprecedented, we could safely leave the constitutional question for another year.

We decided that the new committee should in its first meeting seek to appoint a **communications officer** who would tackle things like contacting the press when we need to publicize events, promoting the group to potential new members and so on.

Turning to the **programme**, Barrie reported that **James Wong** had suggested that spring would not be a good time for him to come to us, as he is already booked to give a talk at the university. We thus discussed booking him for a possible **October date**. Ros reported that **Charles Dowding** would be able to come and speak on **3 May**. We agreed to book him for that date.

A distribution of jobs for **Potato Day** was discussed. Bethan and Karen will collect potatoes from Codnor on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> so that they can be dropped off at the hall. Rachel will liaise with suppliers and arrange Phoenix and Skea delivery to Ros. Sheldon and Rachel will collect further varieties from Anstey. Eric is available to help move spuds in his trailer on Friday 24<sup>th</sup>. Kate will sort out new signs with Karen and will contact the members to ask for cakes. We will ask Richard if he could sort out a new ready reckoner to reflect the new price per tuber. Karen will do an information queue in the hall and she, Barrie and Bethan will make sure people in the queue are informed. Malcolm will take entry money on the door. Rachel will do a list of varieties, and Irena will sign up members. We need a few more volunteers and will ask the members if anyone wants to help. Bethan has friends who will help with teas.

In small items of AOB, Mike Spalton had received a cheque for membership, and wondered if the old website was still 'out there' with his details on it. Karen agreed to check on this and try to make the necessary amendments. Finally, Ros suggested that we arrange delivery of our peat-free compost for after Potato Day. We have ordered three pallets as agreed at the last meeting.

### **Contacts, Communications and NOGs online**

We have an email contacts list which we use to remind members of NOGs events. We're also online if you'd like to see what we're doing and how we're spreading the word about gardening organically: <http://www.nottinghamorganicgardeners.com>  
We're also on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/NottinghamOrganicGardeners>

We've been linking online with other Groups like Ecoworks, Arkright Meadows and Stonebridge City farms. We share photos and tell each other about up coming events. Nottingham in Bloom have also been very supportive of our Facebook page and have liked our photos and gardening tips!

Meetup.com

<http://www.meetup.com/Nottingham-Organic-Gardeners/>

Meetup has been great to reach out to local people and get them involved with NOGs. Meetup is less intrusive than Facebook and helps groups of people (like NOGs) with shared interests plan meetings and form offline clubs in local communities around the world. Our calendar is published online there and any other local events are also published, you can choose to RSVP and see who else might be going along. After the event, people can then put up any photos that were taken to share with the group. We have lots of members on Meetup and it's great to see some new faces at the meetings!

And finally, rest assured that while we are keen to spread the word about organic gardening widely, we are also committed to older forms of communication and do not want to lose touch with those of you who do not engage with social networking sites. We will continue to print the Newsletter, and you are welcome to phone for information – there are numbers for committee members on the back page. Or come along to a meeting and talk to us!



## Forthcoming meetings and visits

### Meetings, Visits and Events – Spring/Summer 2014

Spring meetings are held at Hotel Deux, Clumber Ave, 7.30pm

Tues 14 Jan	AGM and Quiz
Tues 11 Feb	Sally Smith on Growing in Greenhouse or Polytunnel
Tues 11 Mar	Peak Organics on Growing Salads All Year Round
Tues 8 Apr	Speaker to be confirmed
Tues 13 May	Plant and seed swap (venue to be confirmed)
Tues 10 June	Visit to Weleda Biodynamic Gardens at Ilkeston

### Events and visits

Sat 25 Jan	Potato Day Sherwood United Reformed Church, 10.00-1.30
Sat 3 May	Charles Dowding (details tbc)
Sun 11 May	Coach trip to Malvern Spring Show

### NOGs Allotment Work Parties, 10am-2pm Plot no. 6, Whitemoor (entrance on Wilkinson St)

Sat 18 Jan	Mon 24 Feb	Mon 24 Mar	Mon 21 April
Sat 1 Feb	Sat 1 Mar	Sat 29 Mar	Sat 26 April
Mon 10 Feb	Mon 10 Mar	Mon 7 Apr	Mon 5 May
Sat 15 Feb	Sat 15 Mar	Sat 12 Apr	

You don't have to come along for the whole session – you are most welcome for whatever time you can spare. NB – The work party on Mon 27 Jan is cancelled. Instead we will take part in the annual RSPB birdwatch from 10.00 – 11.00 at the allotment.

### Next Newsletter

Please pass all your letters, articles, questions and so on to me by (or before!) 30 April for inclusion in the summer newsletter. Handwritten or word-processed is fine. Give me a call if you need my address. Many thanks.

Rachel Palfreyman      rachel.palfreyman@nottingham.ac.uk

### Committee Members

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Kate Newton (Secretary)	8598340
Peter Newton	8598340
Rachel Palfreyman	9621016
Irena Paxton (Treasurer)	irenapaxton@hotmail.co.uk
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Mike Poyzer	9663884
Richard Stockwell	richard.stockwell@which.net
Barrie Ward (Chair)	9602324

**New website address:** <http://www.nottinghamorganicgardeners.com>