



Charity No 1108144

'Growing Concerns'

The Newsletter for members of Harrow in Leaf

Summer 2009

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**HARROW IN LEAF
SHOW**
**SUNDAY 30TH AND
MONDAY 31ST AUGUST**
12 noon–6 pm

This will be our fifth Show, and the second to be held at the Headstone Manor site, in association with Harrow Museum and Heritage Centre. As with our successful and enjoyable show last year, there will be horticultural and beekeepers' marquees plus plenty of stalls and entertainment for all the family. There will be a Bouncy Castle, Face Painting, and Archery, and a band and the Harrow Morris to listen to and watch. The Barn and other stalls will provide refreshment, and there will be stalls selling cakes, plants, jewellery, crafts, and lots more. Harrow in LEAF will of course have their own stalls with information on horticultural matters, allotments, and local associations.

We welcome members to help us make the Show a success—in the marquees, on the gate, on our stall, or with traffic control and parking. If you are able to help us for a couple of hours, please e-mail or phone 0750 2300956.

It is not too late to enter the Horticultural Show. Schedules are available on the website, or phone the Show Manager on 020 8907 0508.

Sunday 19th July was 'The Big Lunch' and to celebrate their 'grow your own' philosophy and community spirit, the plot holders at Melbourne Ave held a lunchtime barbecue. Stir fry and salad – the vegetables were out of the ground and onto the plate in a matter of minutes, and clocking up yards, not miles. A leisurely afternoon of eating, drinking and chatting refreshed everyone's spirits, and Harrow in LEAF gained a few new members!



This wonderful **greenhouse** has been built by the pupils of Vaughan School on the plot at West Harrow Allotment site. They collected 1500 empty plastic bottles, cut out the bottoms, threaded them onto canes, and attached the canes to frames for the sides, gables and roof. They then attached the frames to the corner posts to complete the structure. At the moment they are using it to grow tomatoes, but hope to widen their range to exotic vegetables from around the world. If you would like to build a similar structure, try this link: <http://www.reapscotland.org.uk/reports/greenhouse%20v1.pdf>. What a great way to reuse plastic bottles and build a low-cost greenhouse!



MAINTENANCE WORK ON ALLOTMENT SITES

The work done this year by the Council on most allotment sites in Harrow has been much appreciated by plot holders, who now at last have seen fences repaired or renewed, leaking taps mended, rubbish cleared etc. The Council have said they will clear overgrown plots, and we hope the money doesn't run out before they are able to complete the works. Sites are being surveyed to establish where plots and paths should be, and Eddie Slavin, the new Council Allotment Officer, is visiting sites to get their records of uncultivated plots up to date (complementing the work done by LEAF Site Reps over recent years), with a view to giving their tenants notice to quit and reletting plots. Perhaps at long last we will have an accurate record of vacant plots and waiting lists, so that potential tenants can find a plot more easily. Site reps now have meetings with the council every few months. At the last one we considered what changes need to be made to the Allotment Rules, and talked about their enforcement, eg in relation to sheds.



An **Insect House** was built at the Earth Project for overwintering beneficial insects—an idea to copy in your garden or allotment. It is similar to one at the Chelsea Flower Show

The **latest advice on Harlequin ladybirds** from the RHS and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology is not to try to destroy them. This will make no difference to the overall population and people may accidentally kill native species, especially those uncommon ones that are less easily recognised. Scientists have been discussing other ways of tackling the problem.



An allotment won a gold Medal and the Best Show Garden award at the Hampton Court Flower show this year. The Growing Tastes Allotment Garden (Winchester Growers) was a traditional allotment with all the family involved. It featured a scarecrow, and mulches for water conservation. Fleece and mesh were used to keep pests away.

It has been revealed that the Prime Minister's children have started a vegetable plot at 10 Downing Street, much to Dad's approval. He is said to be a fan of grow-your-own. The Obama family has also started growing vegetables at the White House.

MANURE MATTERS

Contaminated farmyard manure can cause damage to vegetable crops in gardens and allotments. The weedkiller aminopyralid was used on grass that was then eaten by animals. This weedkiller is not broken down in the animals' gut and remains active in manure but is released as the manure breaks down, affecting plants, especially potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, roses, phlox and delphiniums, causing cupped leaves, distorted shoots and stunted growth. Aminopyralid is slowly broken down by soil bacteria. To speed this up, rotovate or dig over the soil several times, preferably between summer and autumn when the soil is at its warmest; affected ground is safe to replant by the following spring. Scrape off mulches and put these plus any damaged crops in your Harrow GREEN not brown bin. Perennial plants should survive; feed them and they should grow well next spring. Any unused manure can be stacked for several years or returned to the supplier. The chemical has been withdrawn from use. More information is available from the RHS. I don't know if anyone in our area has had a problem—let us know if you have.

EVENTS

Harrow in Leaf Barbecue, 8th August, from 6.30 pm at Leaf HQ. Tickets (£7.50; children under 12 £3, under 3s free) from Terry Cheshire 07793 563609. Veggie option available.

Bring your friends and family, as it promises to be an enjoyable evening.

Dates for your diary from Member Societies

Belmont Horticultural Society 60th Show, 5th Sept, 3 pm, St Anselm's Church Hall, Uppingham Avenue
Harrow Fuchsia Society Show, 1st August, 2.30 pm, St Andrews Church Hall, Malvern Ave, S. Harrow
HRUA 'Shades of Blue' Jazz, 2nd Aug, 2.30–4.30 pm; Fun Day (Harrow Concert Band, races, tug-o-war, etc, 6th Sept, 2.30–5 pm. Free, at Harrow Recreation Ground

Newton Park Horticultural Society Show, 5th September, 2.30 pm, Tithe Farm Sports Club, Rayners Lane

West Harrow Allotments and Gardens Association Show, 2nd Sept, 3 pm, Vaughan School, The Gardens, W Harrow

Check out your local **allotment society trading hut**. Even if you don't have a plot, they welcome new members, and most prices are much lower than at garden centres.

Allotments for health

Phil Hope the Care Services Minister has recently announced a 'New Horizons' campaign, to mark a new approach to mental illness. One possibility is that the over-50s could be offered allotments to help them maintain good mental health.

LEAF PLANT SALE

Our Plant Sale in May was a great success this year. The weather was perfect, there were plenty of tables selling plants, and the Leaf stall was full to overflowing with donated plants. In spite of selling most of our plants for as little as 50p per pot, we made a record profit, which will help to fund activities this year, including the Show. Put it in your diary for next year and grab some bargains.

Our HQ was full to capacity for the April Quiz Evening and fish and chip supper. Our general (and not-so-general) knowledge was tested by our excellent Quizmaster.

A few quick and easy recipes for seasonal gluts

Blackberry ice cream for 4–6

500 g/1 lb blackberries 75 g/6 tbsps caster sugar
30 ml/2 tbsps water 300 ml/1/2 pt whipping cream

Put fruit in a pan with water & sugar. Cover & simmer for 5 minutes. Tip into a sieve over a bowl and push through with a wooden spoon. Chill. Whip the cream until thick but still soft. Add the fruit purée, mix well, put into plastic box so that it is about 4" deep, & freeze for 2 hours. Mash with a fork or process it; return to freezer. Repeat mashing after 2 more hours.

Melting marrow

1 lb marrow, peeled, deseeded, chopped into 1" cubes
2 Tbs vegetable oil 2 oz butter
1/2 teasp ground coriander 1/2 teasp ground cumin
1/2 teasp dried sage (or use fresh)

Cook gently together for 15 min, stirring occasionally until the marrow is softened. Stir in 6 oz grated cheddar and garnish with parsley.

Try cooking sliced **courgettes** very slowly in a lidded pan with a tiny amount of butter or oil but lots of fresh herbs—whatever you have—until soft. Much less fat than frying them, and tastier than steamed.

Tomato sauce

2 lb/1 kg well-flavoured tomatoes, halved (leave cherry ones whole)
1 large onion, coarsely chopped
Up to 6 garlic cloves, unpeeled
2 Tbsp olive oil
Fresh thyme
Splash of balsamic vinegar
1 teasp sugar
Salt and pepper

Arrange tomatoes, onion, garlic and thyme on baking tray and toss in the oil. Roast at Mk6/200C for about an hour, until the tomatoes are slightly black at the edges. Allow to cool a little then squeeze garlic from its skin and discard the skin. You can remove the tomato skins at this stage if you want. Add vinegar, sugar, and seasoning. Now either whizz in processor or break it down a bit with a spoon for a coarser sauce. Serve with pasta or as a basis for casseroles. It freezes well.

Gardener's salad is perfect for whatever vegetables you have on your plot, and the proportions can be varied accordingly. All should be cooked until only just tender. Very small courgettes can be left uncooked.

6 oz/150 g French beans, 1 lb/500 g courgettes (not too large),
6oz/150 g peas, 12 oz/350 g waxy potatoes.

Either add chopped mint and toss in a good mustardy dressing, or omit the potato and mix with tomato sauce (see above) and serve hot with pasta.