

PRICE 50p



The Allotment Gardener

The Journal Of The Allotments & Gardens Council (U.K.)



Winter
2006

The First South Rise Flower Show September 2006



Lady Georgina opened the show in her ensemble sponsored by Oxfam. She was ably supported by Judges Margaret Gilbert and Ray Cork.



Congratulations to Ann Shaw, the overall winner.



Thanks to the hard work of the team of Stewards, the Flower show was a great success.



There were 64 entries giving rise to a number of judgely huddles. The excitement of the assembled crowd reached a climax as Big Col licked the point of his pencil and announced the winners. Two lady plotters of South Rise came 1st and 2nd with Associate Member Peter Adams a very creditable 3rd. Well done everybody, and plans for next year are already under way.



Allotments & Gardens Council (U.K.)

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Chairman	Mr. R. B. Knowles 7 Mattingly Road, Hempshill Vale, Nottingham, NG6 7BD. Tel/Fax: 0115 9276860 Email: rknowles@ndac.freeserve.co.uk
Vice-Chairman (editor)	Mr. G. Mallanaphy 18 Ashdale Road, Walton, Liverpool, L9 2AB. Tel: 01515 213886
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Mr. D. Campbell Burgess Wales	60 South Rise, Llanishen, Cardiff, CF14 0RG. Tel/Fax: 02920 751321 Email: campbellburgess@btinternet.com
Mr. T. Cooper West Midlands	74 Barbridge Road, Bulkington, Bedworth, Warks. CV12 9PD. Tel: 02476 318220
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Mr. J. Agar North East	8 Newton Street, Whitby, North Yorks. YO21 1QX. Tel: 01947 820600 Email: johnedwinagar@aol.com
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RHS Cardiff Spring Show 2006

South Rise Show garden “Fork Handles and some Hoes”

Preparations for the show began last August brainstorming for a theme. We discovered the answer on our allotment. A shrinking violet hiding her light under as many bushels as she could muster alias Sandra Hibbs. She foolishly let slip that she had been involved with show gardens before and the planning began.

By December the RHS had approved the design and all we had left to do was grow the plants and be ready for opening day on Easter Saturday. Our fundraising efforts were helped enormously with a contribution of £500 from the Lisvane Community Association.

Then the extended winter happened. It was wet, it was windy and it was cold.



St David's Day 2006

The plants were not very keen to come out of their cosy greenhouses to be “hardened off”.

Our potato grower, Fred Davies was at his wits end. The potatoes in grow bags just refused to show. Inside his greenhouse more heaters were applied, they were more likely to come out ready roasted.

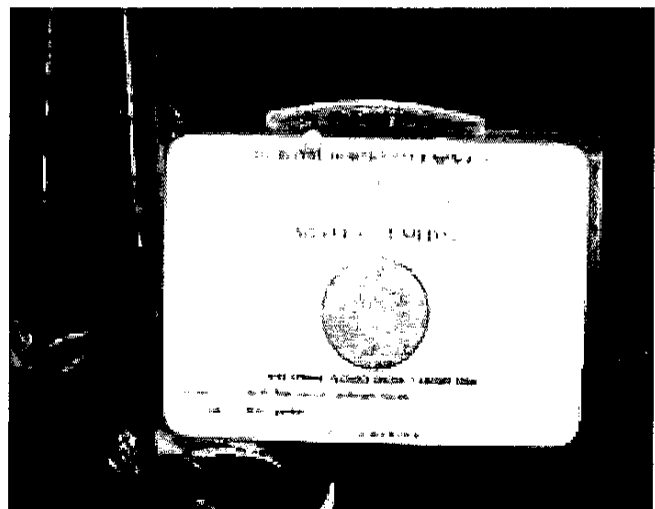
One week to go. The show team swung into action like Pattons army. The lorries swung into Bute Park with our log cabin, followed by the paving bricks and a delivery of chrysanthemums donated by specialist grower Cleangro Ltd.

Saturday morning was bright and sunny. By the appointed hour of 7o'clock we had policed the site, all the last minute titivating completed and ready for the judges.



8 a.m. no judges – 8.30 no judges. Oh dear, what if they had been extra early before we had tidied up? Despair, desolation, all that effort wasted.

At 9.05 there appeared from the Floral Marquee No.2 a venerable collection of elderly gentlemen shepherded by the RHS Head Show manager.



The Silver Gilt award

THE COMMITTEE WILL NOT PUBLISH LETTERS OR REPORTS OF AN INFLAMMATORY NATURE THAT MAY CAUSE ANY OFFENCE TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE NOTTINGHAM & DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS COUNCIL

The South Rise Leisure Gardeners' Society

Wales in Bloom 2006 - Award of Merit



After being judged the best Cardiff allotment again for the 7th year in succession, the Wales in Bloom judges have given us the Award of Merit this year.

The judges were very impressed that their comments of last year concerning the lack of a community building on the site, had been addressed so soon. The log cabin, which was financed with the help of a grant from Lisvane Community Association, newly painted and adorned with hanging baskets and flower troughs certainly adds a new dimension to the sites' appearance and activities such as the Flower Show.

The South Rise August Barbecue



Eighty six people came to the Barbecue and the last survivors were barrowed out at 11 p.m. We think they enjoyed themselves!

STOP PRESS: The owner of **RAFFLE TICKET No.114** had left the scene when the raffle was drawn. There's a tin of Confit de Canard waiting to be claimed. If you have it please make contact.

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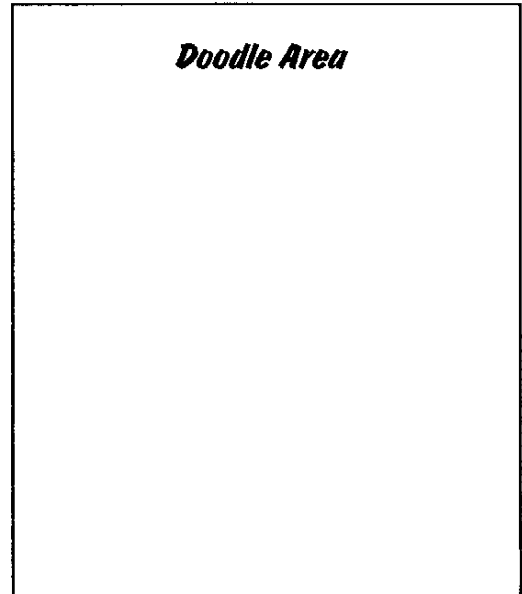
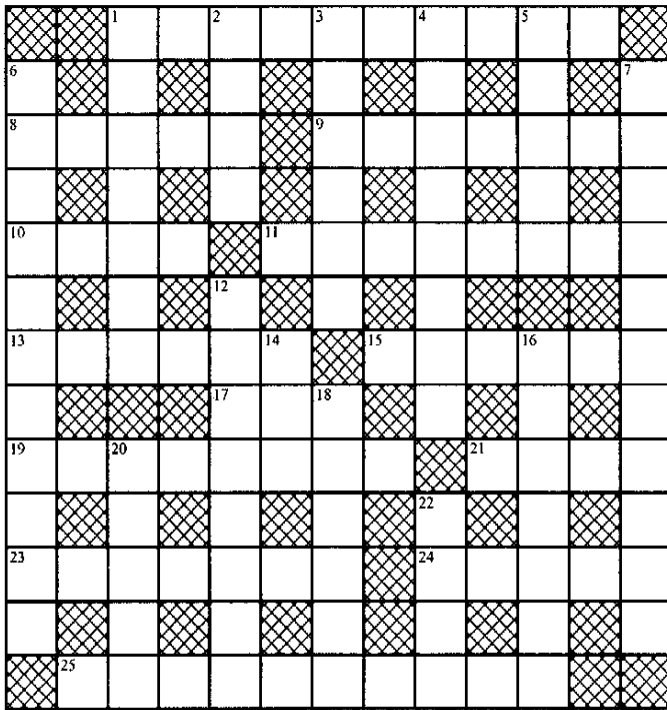
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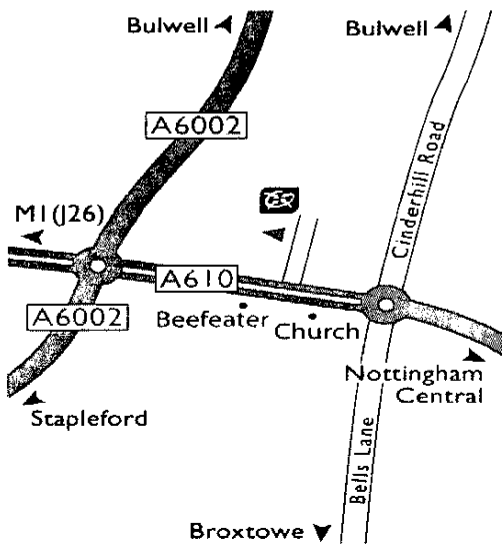
Answers on Page: 14

Across.

- 1 Vulgar sycophant almost useful in the garden? (6-4)
- 8 Put the timer in reverse. (5)
- 9 Ornamental bird? (7)
- 10 Loud plaintive cry? (4)
- 11 Volatile inflammable liquid used as a solvent? (8)
- 13 The Alps, Andes and Himalayas are all mountain _____? (6)
- 15 Latin phrase meaning 'in its place'? (2-4)
- 17 Go by jet? (3)
- 19 Innocently trusting? (8)
- 21 Musical disc or medal? (4)
- 23 Makes evident? (7)
- 24 Love affair? (5)
- 25 Region in the North-West where this crossword is compiled? (11)

Down.

- 1 See 20 down. (7)
- 2 The biblical widow had one, small arachnid of the order *Acari*....(4)
- 3 Large bird of prey which feeds on fish. (6)
- 4 What you would be doing standing in front of
- 5 Add beauty to? (5)
- 6 Useful for crossing over the moat in castles of old? (11)
- 7 Unscrupulous behaviour - trickery? (11)
6 down was also part of a castles
- 12 _____? (8)
- 14 Cunning? (3)
- 16 Chemical element? (7)
- 18 'Yea' said the pig, 'there's no taste in this sty'? (6)
- 20 & 1 *Silene Alba*? (5-7)
- 22 Car for hire? (4)



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AUTUMN 2006

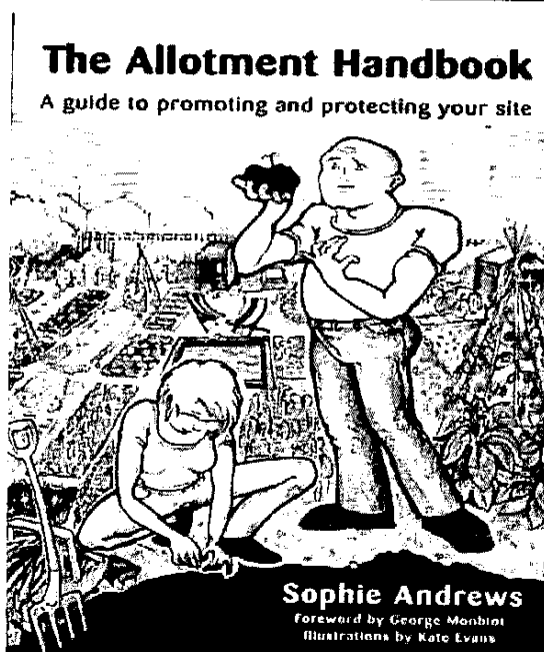
After all the boasting that I did at the beginning of the season about being able to achieve full coverage of our plot, it turned out not to be the case. Family holidays got in the way and while people on our campsite were happy to take advantage of the scorching heat I sat there and contemplated the fate of the tomato plants that had been abandoned in the polytunnel. Even before we got back to assess the damage I knew that we had lost an amount of momentum that was going to be fatal. We still produced enough to cover the ground but the watering regime was becoming irksome, the weeds, as usual, were uncontrollable and there were the rabbits to protect against.

Despite all the usual problems we still had a lot of fun and success. There were still enough tomato plants to be able to have some spare to take round to a garden centre with George and sell. A few others we placed outside our home with a note saying 40p each, to be posted through the letterbox; we got one sale.

And when my sister, mother and 3 nieces visited for a couple of days we took them up to the garden and had a fantastic afternoon that involved all the children picking raspberries to eat on the spot; tomatoes; blackberries and apples that that evening were put into a crumble; and they also dug up a couple of rows of potatoes before we had a walk and a look round our allotment site that is fortunate in being able to keep some livestock.

On the growing front melons and aubergines were our greatest successes. The aubergines were put under a plastic cloche and seemed to thrive on nothing but water and a bit of weeding. In the end we had them coming at a rate greater than that at which we could cook them but who do you give an aubergine to? The melons, grown in the polytunnel, all seemed small and too firm but our taste tester Dominic (18 months) gave them the thumbs up. They were left to run wild but I think they could have benefited from some pinching and they are definitely on the list for next year.

And if getting all the ground covered becomes an obsession then I have the perfect solution: instead of placing rows of plants at say 12 or 18 inches apart I'm going to place them much further apart to make weeding and cropping a pleasure not a pain.



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Quick and Easy Salad Leaves

Most of us will be familiar with packs of ready to use salads that line the supermarket shelves in ever increasing variety and no doubt we've all shuddered at the cost and also the lurid stories in the press of the chemicals allegedly used to clean the tiny leaves!

Of course as gardeners we all much prefer to do our own thing and at Dobies we've been having great fun this year trying out the many and varied leafy salad crops. The plant breeders have been hard at it in recent years to produce varieties that will satisfy the demand for fast growing tender leaves and a wide range is now available.

Dobies already offer a number of leaf salad 'designer' blends most of which can be grown almost anywhere – from a strip on the allotment to a pot by the back door! These are a great place to start and succession sowings have filled our salad bowls from early May right through to the autumn. Hand weeding is essential at times but the occasional piece of chickweed that slips through has just added to the variety!

For the more adventurous it's great fun to grow a number of single varieties and make you own mix depending on what you feel like or what food you are planning to eat that day. For a sweet mild salad pick young lettuce leaves – there are at least six distinct kinds to choose from in varying hues and textures – with perhaps a leafy herb such as basil or chervil.

If you fancy more robust flavours add rocket or one of the spicy leaf mustards and look out for Greek Cress which bring a real 'zing' to any mix!

You can experiment even further by adding the youngest leaves of cabbage, spinach, beetroot, celery and don't forget tender pea shoots or interesting Texsel Greens which can also be left to mature a little and used as spring greens.

In summer most sowings of lettuce can be picked in 3 to 4 weeks and cooling autumn days favour leaves with a more oriental taste such as pak choi which are very fast growing meaning you never need to be short of pickings.

A number of very interesting new varieties of leaf crops have originated from the Far East and are vegetables that can be stir fried when a little larger. We've tasted literally hundreds in the past year or so with fascinating names such as Tai Ping Pong and Hairless Bae Cheong Chae. Some really impressed for flavour and speed of growth so watch out for exotic newcomers in the years to come.

Like us you're probably already busy growing your own 'baby leaves' and hopefully this will give a few ideas. If you've not yet tried them give it a go as leafy salads are perhaps the quickest and easiest crops to grow outdoors!



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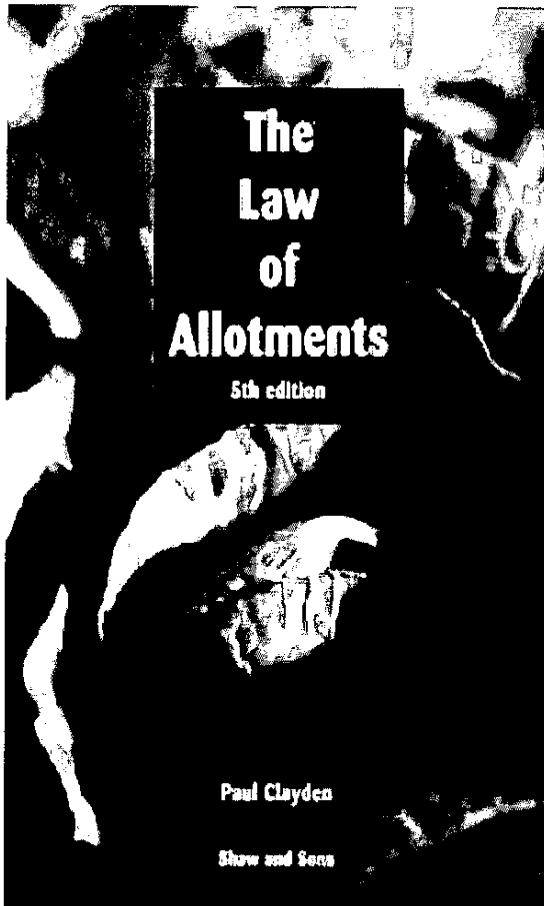
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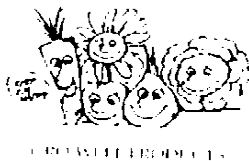
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G.Y.O. JAN Crunch Time

What could be more rewarding than plucking a row of golden carrots from the soil? Keep the thrill alive with *Grow Your Own* expert Mick Lavelle's guide to a year-round crop

If you're serious about vegetables, there's no excuse for not having a crop of carrots – second only to potatoes in terms of popularity – on the go. Home-grown carrots are much sweeter and fuller-flavoured than the limited selection you'll find in supermarkets. And they're surprisingly easy to grow – with a little forward planning you'll have a stash that lasts all year. Long, conical, orange carrots are still the norm but it's easy to impress your friends by picking from hundreds of varieties of different size, shape and colour.

Growing it

If your soil is light and crumbly you'll have no problem with carrots – the roots will be able to penetrate deeply, absorb nutrients from the ground and swell to a decent size. If you've got heavy clay or stony soil you'll probably struggle with longer rooted carrots; they'll have difficulty making their way through the ground and distort, twist and fork as a result. That's when round or stumpy rooted varieties such as 'Paris Market', 'Rondo' and 'Parmex' come into their own.

A mulch of leaf mould in autumn is the best way to kick-start your crop, and a sprinkling of potassium a week or two before sowing will give them an extra boost. Wood ash is an excellent source of potassium which reaches the plant quickly, encouraging solid, sweet carrots to form. Apart from that, carrots don't need much in the way of feeding, especially if the ground has been deeply dug and manured for a previous crop of peas or beans (which will have left a loose, nutrient-rich soil). Avoid freshly manured soil as this will encourage sappy growth and cause the roots to fork.

Early carrots (sown in early spring) appreciate a sheltered position but maincrops (late spring) need an open sunny site. As with most veg, carrots should be rotated around the garden to stop diseases building up in the soil. Be prepared for earlies to look a little different to maincrops, even if they're the same variety. Lower temperatures give more yellowish roots, often with a reduced size and shape compared to those sown later in the year.

Carrots also do well in containers as long as the pots are at least 30cm (12in) deep with sufficient drainage. They aren't too fussy about the potting compost, but a loam-based type is your best bet. Keep them permanently moist (but never waterlogged) and stick to small varieties such as Paris Market. Short carrots also mature faster, shaving at least two weeks off the time it takes to get them to the table.

Sowing it

Carrots are normally sown straight into the ground and then gradually thinned until they're the correct distance apart. If the seedbed has been prepared properly and is weed free they should germinate without much trouble. Try to space the seeds about 1cm (½in) apart – they're tiny so it's a fiddly job but it will make it much easier to thin them later without disturbing the remaining plants. Try mixing the seeds with sand to make sowing a little easier; it dilutes the seed so you can spread it more thinly, and it's easier to see where you have sown as the sand shows up on the soil surface.

Carrots grow well regardless of temperature but root growth is fastest at 15–18 °C (59–64°F) so it's worth digging your soil thermometer out. For an early summer crop, pre-warm the ground with cloches, ideally for a month or more. Sow seed under them in February and March in trenches 12–20mm (½–¾in) deep, 15cm (6in) apart. Clear away any weeds that have germinated under the cloches before sowing. Thin out the plants to 10cm (4in) apart to minimise competition and allow the carrots to swell to full size.

The best varieties for early crops are Amsterdam Forcing types 'Sweetheart' and 'Nantes Express.' In mild weather, they can also be sown outdoors in March and April for harvesting from July onwards. Cover outdoor sowings with garden fleece to bolster the temperature (which speeds up germination) and protect against carrot fly.

Your main autumn crop should be sown in the open during April and May. They will give the highest yield of the year when they're ready to be picked in October or November, and are (usually) dead certs for storage over winter. 'Chantenay' is a reliable maincrop variety – sow thinly, 12–20mm (½–¾in) deep, thinning the seedlings out to 4cm (1½in) apart when they're large enough to handle.

A final maincrop can be sown in July and will be ready for harvesting from December onwards. Try 'Autumn King' or a Nantes variety for large, long-keeping roots. Sow them as you would other maincrops but make sure you thin them on a cool, overcast day and avoid bruising the leaves while you do, as the smell will attract carrot fly. Cover them with mesh afterwards and bury the rejected seedlings deep in the compost heap to mask the smell. If a hard frost threatens as winter sets in, play it safe and cover the plants with a heavy mulch of straw or mushroom compost. You'll also get an extra crop of young (baby) carrots in November and December by sowing early varieties outdoors in August and September and covering them with cloches from mid-October onwards.

Make successive plantings every two to three weeks for each of the crops above, temporarily shading the seedbed in the hottest part of summer. It's worth giving them a light mulch of straw to help retain moisture and make it easier to water without disturbing the seeds.

Caring for it

On the whole carrots don't need much attention, but if you want a bumper crop proper watering can make a real difference in dry spells. Ideally they should have 2.5cm (1in) of water each week during growth to ensure the roots develop properly. They are not especially heavy feeders and you should steer clear of nitrogen-heavy fertilisers, such as pelleted chicken manure or blood meal, as it can cause the quality of the crop to dip significantly.

You'll have to give them a bit of TLC for the first few weeks after sowing, as the seedlings grow slowly and can't compete with weeds. Once you've thinned them, top dress with well-rotted compost or leaf mould and carefully hand weed around them. Make sure the seedlings are at least 5cm (2in) tall before making a final thinning and mulching them with clean straw and compost to keep weeds at bay. Mulching also helps retain moisture and prevent a condition called 'green shoulder,' which is caused by exposing the crowns of the carrots to the sun and can make the carrots bitter.

The most common pest you're likely to face – and the only one really worth worrying about – is carrot fly. The larvae tunnel into carrot roots, disfiguring them and causing mould to develop. It can be very difficult to tell if carrots have been affected until you lift the crop, although severe infestations will give the leaves an orange, rusty colour before they eventually turn yellow. The affected root may be black or darkened at the end but even seemingly unaffected carrots can be riddled with small holes. If you suspect trouble put your freshly gathered carrots in a bucket of water – all the badly affected ones will come to the surface.

The flies locate carrots by scent, so planting them with a strong-smelling crop like onions is thought to confuse them, although this method works far better on paper than in practise. Covering your crop with a fine mesh is a much more sensible first step and a mulch of grass cuttings will make it harder for female flies to find a suitable egg laying site. A number of beneficial insects will also set up camp under the mulch, some of which, such as ground beetles and centipedes, will happily chow down on carrot fly. Crushing the foliage makes them easier to find, so weed your crop on a dull, dry evening with no wind; the scent of the bruised foliage won't spread so far and carrot flies generally take flight earlier in the day and in bright sunlight. Harvest them on dull days for the same reason.

Harvesting it

Most carrots can be picked less than three months after sowing, and are usually in their prime when about 25mm (1in) wide at the crown. Leaving them in the ground beyond that point can turn the root tough and woody. Drench the bed with water a couple of hours before harvesting to make them easier to lift. Grasp the greens at the crown and gently pull and twist. If the greens snap off carefully lift the roots with a small fork. Use damaged roots right away and store unblemished ones – remove the leaves as soon as possible as they will keep growing, sucking moisture and nourishment from the root.

If you want to lift and store the veg in a garage or shed, lay them on about 1cm (1/3in) of sand or shredded newspaper in the bottom of a wooden box. Make sure they don't touch each other to limit the chances of rot spreading. Cover to a depth of 1cm (1/3in) and repeat until the box is full.

Alternatively leave them in the ground through winter and dig them up when needed. Let the tops die down (usually late November) and cover the carrots with several sheets of polythene or old carpet. There's a slight risk of them sprouting in mild winters which will render them inedible; if that's the case, cover them with a straw mulch instead.

Continued over...



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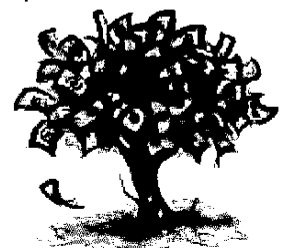
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CARROTS: TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Symptoms	Likely Cause	Solutions
Carrot twist around each other	Plants too close together	Thin carrots to 5cm (2in) apart when they are small.
Carrots rot or have large white 'eyes' on the main root	Overwatering	Water less frequently. Don't plant in heavy soil.
White growth on leaves	Powdery mildew	Ensure good air circulation by planting in an open site
Thin spindly growth	Competition from weeds	Remove all weeds prior to planting
Roots with surface tunnels filled with rusty mush. Stiff white maggots below surface but nothing obvious above ground	Carrot root fly - it lays its eggs in the crown of carrots	Harvest carrots as soon as possible - don't store them in the ground over winter. Protect crop with mesh to prevent future attacks
Hairy, forked or misshaped roots	Roots in contact with fertiliser or fresh manure. Planted on overly heavy or stony soil	Rotate crops, don't plant in freshly manured ground
Seedlings fail to emerge	Soil crusting, wrong soil temperature, seedling pests	Maintain regular soil temperature with cloches until seedlings appear. Cover drills with sand and sifted leaf mould
Yellowed, curled leaves. Stunted plants.	Leafhoppers or aphids	Apply insecticidal soap
Green root tops	Roots exposed to sunlight	Cover exposed roots with soil or mulch of straw or mushroom compost
All top, no roots	Planted too close together. Excessive nitrogen.	Thin out plants early. Avoid nitrogen-rich fertiliser such as blood meal or chicken manure

Companion planting

Carrots do well alongside most plants, especially chives, rosemary and sage, all of which are said to deter carrot fly. Onions have the same benefit when they are 'in leaf'. Alternatively try mixing carrot seed with a packet of mixed salad before sowing. Avoid dill and coriander as they can harbour diseases that also affect carrots.

Cultivation: A quick guide

Carrots are a relatively easy crop to grow and, with successional sowing, wily growers can harvest them all year round. Even if you prefer to store them in winter (rather than cover and lift as needed) you should never go short.	
Sowing time	February to September
Sowing distance	Thinly, 1cm (½in) apart
Sowing depth	12-20mm (½-¾ in) deep
Distance between rows	15cm (6in) early and late crops, 30cm (12in) maincrops
Thinning distance	4cm (1½in) apart for first thinning, 10cm (4in) apart for second thinning
Harvesting	Usually within three months, up to eight months if left in the ground over winter

Varieties to Try

Amsterdam Forcing 2–Sweetheart – A sweet-tasting variety with excellent colour and shape, blunt ended with little core. Ideal for forcing or early crops, either outside or indoors.

Autumn King – One of the largest of the commonly grown varieties and the last to mature. A heavy-yielding variety but not suitable for heavy soil or very cold areas.

Paris Market – A quick grower, ready to harvest in 60 days in ideal conditions. The small, round roots (usually 5–7cm, 2–3in) make it a sensible choice for heavy or wet ground.

GYO TIPS: YEAR-ROUND CARROTS

Mid winter: – Lift main crop varieties left in the ground as needed. Protect with a covering of straw in really cold or wet conditions.

Late winter: – Sow seed in February under cloches or cold frames for a forced early crop.

Early spring: – Sow your next crop outside, protected by garden fleece.

Mid spring: – Crops sown in March/April will be well on the way to maturity as your first crop finishes.

Summer: – Harvest forced types in June/July and sow late main crops in lighter soil.

Late summer: – Harvest early unprotected crops in August/September.

Autumn: – Lift and store main crop types in October/November. Sow forcing varieties and protect under a cloche over winter.

Award-winning author Mick Lavelle lectures in horticulture at Writtle College. This article originally appeared in *Grow Your Own* magazine. Subscribe now and you'll save 12 percent off the normal price and receive a free binder worth £7.25 into the bargain. Call 01778 392 497 or visit www.growfruitandveg.co.uk

S	T	R	O	M	P	E	R	W	I	L	J	S	A	C
M	A	C	A	R	L	I	N	A	F	O	D	A	N	R
R	L	D	R	O	F	G	N	I	L	R	A	C	S	E
T	S	E	K	A	L	O	I	N	O	M	I	T	S	E
V	A	L	O	S	I	T	C	S	O	M	A	R	I	P
C	A	T	L	R	I	N	O	F	T	N	O	X	A	S
M	A	R	T	S	R	O	L	A	V	R	T	R	O	I
K	E	A	F	R	A	S	A	W	I	L	O	C	M	R
N	C	S	O	N	O	X	T	K	E	S	T	M	L	A
A	I	T	N	A	E	M	R	A	N	O	F	R	A	M
D	R	C	O	L	S	T	A	J	O	A	X	L	S	A
E	I	K	E	S	T	R	E	L	M	T	D	N	I	X
L	D	N	S	T	I	O	M	I	A	R	O	I	G	O
C	A	T	E	R	M	J	I	W	R	E	J	C	N	N
I	N	G	R	I	A	N	A	V	A	L	A	O	F	E

DIG YOURSELF SOME POTATOES.

CARLINGFORD
MARIS PEER
SAXON
CATRIONA
MARFONA
STROMA
ESTIMA
NADINE
VALOR
KESTREL
NICOLA
WILJA

Answers on Page: 14

S	T	R	O	M	P	E	R	W	I	L	J	S	A	C
M	A	C	A	R	L	I	N	A	F	O	D	A	N	R
R	E	D	R	O	F	G	N	I	L	R	A	C	S	E
T	S	E	K	A	L	O	I	N	O	M	I	T	S	E
V	A	L	O	S	I	T	C	S	O	M	A	R	I	P
C	A	T	L	R	I	N	O	F	T	N	O	X	A	S
M	A	R	T	S	R	O	L	A	V	R	T	R	O	P
K	E	A	F	R	A	S	A	W	I	L	O	C	M	R
N	C	S	O	N	O	X	T	K	E	S	T	M	L	A
A	I	T	N	A	E	M	R	A	N	O	F	R	A	M
D	R	C	O	L	S	T	A	J	O	A	X	L	S	A
E	I	K	E	S	T	R	E	L	M	T	D	N	I	X
L	D	N	S	T	I	O	M	I	A	R	O	I	G	O
C	A	T	E	R	M	J	I	W	R	E	J	C	N	N
I	N	G	R	I	A	N	A	V	A	L	A	O	F	E



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ACROSS:

(1) Common-Toad. (8) Remit. (9) Peacock. (10) Wail. (11) Methanol. (13) Ranges. (15) In Situ. (17) Fly. (19) Dewyeyed. (21) Gong. (23) Evinces. (24) Amour. (25) Merseyside.

DOWN:

(2) Mite. (3) Osprey. (4) Teaching. (5) Adorn. (6) Drawbidges. (7) Skulduggery. (12) Defences. (14) Sly. (16) Isotopes. (18) Yeasty. (20 & 1) White Champion. (22) Taxi.

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We provide a full range of legal services to businesses and individuals and are now providing a legal advice helpline to members of The Allotments & Gardens Council (UK).

If you have any legal issues in relation to your allotment that you would like to discuss, please contact Reg Knowles in the first instance on:

0115 927 6860

or alternatively, you can email your enquiry to:
rknowles@ndac.freemove.co.uk

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For further information, you should write or telephone:-

REG KNOWLES - (0115) 9276860

7 Mattingly Road, Hempshill Vale, Nottingham, NG6 7BD

The Allotments & Gardens Council (U.K.) is the trading name of The Nottingham & District Allotments Council.

AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

To The Allotments And Gardens Council (U.K.)

7 Mattingly Road, Hempshill Vale, Nottingham NG6 7BD

We the undersigned, hereby apply to be an affiliated member of A.G.C. (U.K.)

Name of Society _____

Name and Address of Secretary _____

The affiliated membership fee being £1 per member (minimum £12)

We enclose cheque for £ _____ Number of members _____ Made payable to A.G.C.(U.K.)

Culinary Culture and Agriculture

I suppose that lots of other allotmenters will have been thinking the same thing that I have been thinking which is that this has been a rather peculiar sort of year for growing our produce. In this I feel that because of the strange weather patterns that we have been experiencing it has been a rather start, stop, start, stop growing season. We just seemed to be getting into our stride with our growing, when the mixed up weather conditions and erratic temperature changes suddenly and drastically altered the whole pattern of our growing. It also seems as though we were just settling into our later summer months of August and early September when as quickly as we can say Harvest time it is winter and horrible dark evenings are upon us once again. Apart from our continual and habitual gripes about the unpredictability of what Mother Nature throws at us weather wise, we have found that notwithstanding the bizarre weather, we still had plenty to thank and praise Mother Nature for. Such as her bounteous provision of the glorious crops that we gathered this season, amongst which were pounds and pounds of Victoria plums which were distributed far and wide in order for as many people as possible to have a taste of them. The Bramley apple tree was also extremely productive and was the cause of the midnight oil having to be burnt in order to produce some delicious pies and crumbles which were relished by all who participated in the devouring of them.

The Desiree potatoes must have been grateful for the abundant horse manure that was dug into their trenches as this crop also proved abundant. The Mammoth leeks have just been lifted and added to "pea-wack" soup, a great favourite of us Scousers. This is made by boiling a ham shank along with whatever root vegetables that are available together with leeks, celery, onions, split peas, lentils some mixed herbs, this "pea-wack" soup needs to be simmered long enough to become really thick. I am told that in order for it to become a proper "pea-wack" it has to be so thick that it needs to be eaten with a knife and fork. It gives a lovely glowing feeling after having eaten it on a cold wet day and because of this it was a favourite dish of sailors and Liverpool dockers, especially in the days before containerisation, when all the cargo from off a ship had to be hand-balled off and this during freezing cold winter days when this "pea-wack" would be greatly appreciated by these men after working in such bleak conditions.

Another great warming dish is "Scouse" which we will use some of our Desiree potatoes in. "Scouse" is really an Irish stew in which the potatoes are boiled until they disintegrate and thus make the stew become thickened. After eating Scouse the same warm, glowing feeling is produced as "pea-wack." Scousers argue about the correct way to make scouse. The latest recipe I heard was on the radio when someone from the Food Programme visited a restaurant in Liverpool as part of the research into the food culture of Liverpool and with a view to looking towards the Capital of Culture 2008. I will try and remember the recipe it ran something like this. 1) The meat used is diced lamb and ground lamb, the vegetables are carrots, onions, potatoes, he also said that he added leeks and I think that he said celery as well (probably any available root vegetable will do i.e. parsnips, swede etc.) This particular chef added some black treacle to give it a slightly sweet piquancy and probably a nicer colour too, herbs and seasoning I think were traditional ones associated with a stew, some mixed herbs would probably do. 2) Method, which I didn't really catch but is probably seal the meat in some hot oil, add peeled whole onions, season with sea salt and black pepper, cover with water and boil (I always use a pressure cooker). Whilst the pressure cooker is coming up to full pressure prepare the remainder of the vegetables by peeling and chopping them into cubes, except the potatoes which can be cut into quarters. Keep the pressure cooker on the lower pressure for about 15 minutes then remove it from the heat and allow it to cool enough to open it. Then add the remainder of the prepared vegetables. The more potatoes that go into it then obviously the thicker that the Scouse will be. Apparently to become a proper Scouse the potatoes have to become so soft that they assimilate into the stew and it should become very thick, so just keep cooking until this happens (this happens very quickly in a pressure cooker) then thicken and colour with gravy browning according to taste. Serve with some home grown cooked beetroot.

I hope that I have given you some 'food for thought' with the above. We would like you to let us have your favourite recipes of your local dishes and if possible some history or stories connected with your local culture and the recipes using the crops that you have grown. All articles will be gladly received since we need as much variety as possible to create interest and learn new things. So please do let us have your contribution.

Ann Mallanaphy. New Area Allotments.

Brimington Gardeners Association Allotments 22.09.06

This is just a short story to show other allotment holders what can be achieved with a little help and in this case a grant to turn a poor piece of land into something we believe to be quite impressive. If we can do it so can you. M. Mullins.

For several years we had on our allotments what could only be described as an eyesore.

Between the top and middle fields which contain 92 of our 116 plots was a corner overgrown with brambles, blackthorn, nettles, weeds and unfortunately debris deposited by allotment holders, comprising empty bottles, tin cans, old buckets etc.

Then one day in January last year the committee decided something must be done to clean up this messy corner and one suggestion was a small parking space for members, however this was rejected in favour of providing a wildlife pond.

It was left to me and another member young Andrew Strong to manage this project.

We first had to clear the site of all vegetation and debris which was no mean feat because broken glass was buried deep into the soil.

After clearing the site in February, we then excavated a kidney shaped hole approx 18 feet by 13 feet with a 3 foot deep centre and margins of around 1 feet in depth.

At this point we had to decide how to finance the necessary pond liner and pond plants.

Fortunately we were eligible for a sustainability grant from our local council which covered these items.

We applied for this grant in March and was successful.

Purchased a pond liner in august and fitted it during the winter months.

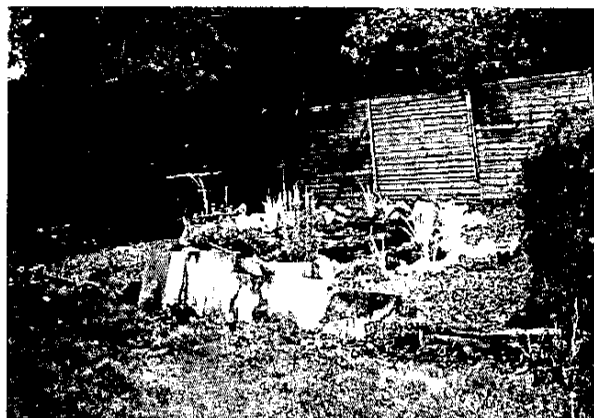
Filling the pond with water was relatively easy as one of our members lived adjacent to the pond area and supplied same by way of the kitchen tap.

The pond plants were ordered in January this year and which arrived in May.

We placed them in and around the pond purposefully, and can report that to date they have matured into sturdy plants.

We finished the area surrounding the pond with wood chippings, put a fence at the back to camouflage the hedge and placed a rustic bench for passers by to take a rest and view the pond.

Below are photographs of the pond area in its infancy and of the finished pond. Unfortunately I cannot find the original photo showing the area as an eyesore.



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