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The Allotment Gardener

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



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From Chairman

As the year comes to a close I hope you all have had a successful growing season, and if not better luck next year.

The organisation has continued to grow, gaining members across the country, as more people learn about the benefits of belonging to us.

On the subject of benefits I am pleased to inform you that we have been able to hold the Insurance Premiums again this year, (which in effect is a reduction) except for Public Liability but that is because it now has the addition of Legal Expenses Cover.

Our members will also be able to have ½ hour consultation with a leading firm of solicitors free of charge.

We have maintained the great seed schemes as last year, if you did not take advantage last year take a look and you will be amazed at the savings you can make.

If there is anything you feel we should have that we do not at present, then please feel free to let me know and we will see if it can be achieved.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the AGM which will be held on the 18th. March 2006 at Touchbase The Phoenix Centre Nottingham at 1.00pm.

I wish you all a prosperous New Year.

Reg Knowles

Clifton Miracle

A big hello to all fellow Allotment gardeners...

My name is Gary and I have recently taken on a new plot on the Summerwood Lane site at Clifton. Having spinal problems I thought I would write my thanks to the many that have helped.

The plot had not been touched for a couple of years and was in need of a lot of work. My daughter Heather (12) started to scab off whilst I picked up the grass and weed and a good friend Alan began to dig. If all I get is a row of veg this year I will be happy. To my surprise a neighbour popped round with a tray of Primo cabbage of which I put a net frame together and now they are growing nicely. Another neighbour then offered the use of a rotovator to help me along. I now have half a plot with a variety of veg from runner beans, sweet corn, onions etc. All through the help of many at our site. So now I am getting ready for a big operation I now have neighbours - no friends - that will look after my plot whilst I'm away. I never thought this kindness still existed so I can only say a big thank you to all that have helped and encouraged.

From Gary Frost plot 20 Summerwood Lane
Clifton Nottingham

Allotments & Gardens Council (U.K.)

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Back in May our six-year-old son came out of his classroom carrying a couple of sunflower seedlings, each about two inches high, set in plastic cups. We decided to pot them on in our polytunnel to see if we could make anything of them, and planted many more sunflower seeds to go with them from a packet of seeds designed for children.

Unfortunately all these seeds, plus many pea and nasturtium seeds, were dug up and eaten, probably by a rodent, because we'd set the trays on the ground rather than up on staging. It's a mistake we won't make again. Callum may not always get involved as much as our four-year-old son George, sometimes preferring to sit in the car listening to a tape, but when it came to watering his sunflowers Callum was always happy to carry the can, and when the two original plants were potted on a couple more times and became big enough to put outside I decided to dig two holes for them at the end of our lawn area so that they would stand there almost as goalposts.

The holes were filled with manure, the plants were staked as I'd had experience of the wind battering our sweetcorn in previous years, and over the following weeks they were watered with liquid feed.

I teased the boys that neither plant could grow taller than their dad; that just wasn't possible. They kept insisting that it was possible as the taller one grew taller than George, then taller than Callum and then soon approached and passed mum's height. I'd forgotten, till he reminded me, that Callum had seen a picture of the world-record-breaking sunflower towering over its owner but still insisted, against science, that the taller one would never get past me.

Finally we knew that the plants were about to open because the heads started to swell and they started to strain their necks toward the sun, shortest plant first. We were hoping to take a picture that Callum would be able to take into school but it was just a couple of days after the boys broke up for the summer holidays that the flowers opened up to reveal a large, central, brown disc surrounded by many small, bright yellow petals.

So OK I admit it - I have to stand on tiptoe to be as tall as one of the sunflowers; never mind that, anyone for a game of footy?

Peter Rich



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- 2 Place in a large saucepan and simmer until thickened, and thats it!!

When using fresh use in replacement of tinned toms
When bottling, make sure you use sterile (boiled) jars

Claire Brennan

Judging of the Allotments 05

This year was especially difficult for allotment holders, the beginning of the year the weather conditions fluctuated greatly. The weather became very mild and then a very cold period with late frosts, which knocked back and ruined a lot of early crops. During the summer months the weather has been very hot and humid causing a lot of mildew problems and creating ideal conditions for the weeds to grow faster than your plants. In addition to this, battling with an army of slugs and snails, it is a wonder any plots got to the high standard of many around our Borough.

Judging started on the 4th July and took nearly three weeks, there were 22 allotments that stood out and were judged to be of a Very High Standard. These plots were as usual very difficult to judge. Frank Aston from G M R had the unenviable job of deciding whose plot was going to be the overall Best Plot in the Borough and runner up Best Plot in the Borough. 22 allotment tenants were awarded Highly Commended certificates and over 90 tenants received letters commending them on their efforts.

The Best Site in the Borough. The Grove Allotments, Urmston, Runner up Best Plot, Grove Lane, Timperley. Mr. Charles Green from The Grove Allotments, Urmston won the Best Plot in the Borough, Mr. Alan Clowes from Walton Road Allotments, Sale won Runner up Best Plot in the Borough.

It is a credit to the tenants whose plots were judged in any of the above categories. It is really hard work trying to keep weeds at bay and allotments looking neat and tidy. It is especially rewarding for the site representatives from these sites, they give up a lot of time and energy to keep their sites running smoothly.

On September the 7th we held our annual Gardeners' Evening at G H Carnall Centre, Davyhume. Certificates and Trophies were given to prize winners. Guest Speaker Julie White gave a talk on "Herbs, Legends and Modern Day Terminology" the evening ended with our ever popular Gardeners Question Time.

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Best Plot in the Borough



Judging of the Allotments 05 cont...

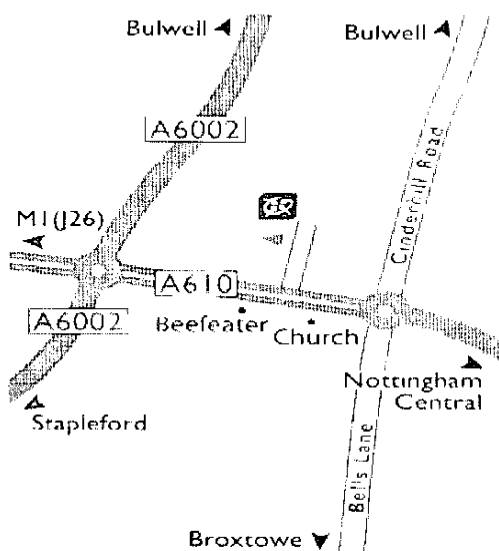
Manchester Harvest - National Allotment Week 9th - 13th August

Manchester Harvest - 'A Home-grown Festival' in St Anne's Square Manchester



The event was organised by AMAS and linked up with a number of other Allotment Groups and Authorities to grow vegetables for the mock allotment that was built in St Anne's Square. The allotment was made up of raised beds with greenhouses and a shed. A wide range of vegetables, flowers and herbs were grown in pots and gave the public the opportunity to see how easy it is to grow even a small range of vegetables in small or large spaces.

Trafford grew a range of salad plants for their section of raised beds. Whilst other groups grew herbs, vegetables, companion planting, tomatoes in pots or in the greenhouses. The plot looked bright and cheerful and attracted a lot of visitors. The event proved a huge success with guest speakers giving talks on a range of subjects, plant stalls and a number of different displays.



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ALLOTMENT COMPETITIONS 2005

Towards the end of June and July, allotments are at their very best, (or should be), all the veg has been planted and is looking good, every spare inch of ground is being used to grow something that will be a joy to eat or admire. It is with these thoughts in mind that makes it a pleasure to be asked to judge allotments. To have the opportunity to look at other people's allotments, and where possible pick up a few ideas yourself to try at some time in the future is very rewarding. The only drawback to this is that you are there to award them points for their efforts, even down to their composting facilities. The allotments first that we judged was in West Bridgford, Nottingham. On the last Sunday morning in June Reg Knowles, Geoff Wheatley and I were taken to five different sites to decide who deserved the trophies and cash prizes on offer. It was whilst we were walking around one of the sites that we saw a miniature biome, a kind of Eden project on an allotment. It is evident that the sites are well managed and all that entered were of a very high standard. It is good to see that as soon as one crop is being harvested another one is waiting to be planted to fill the ground I am thinking of early potatoes being tried and winter veg growing ready to be planted. The strawberries always look very tempting and it has not gone unnoticed that one of the judges has been seen lifting the protective netting to taste one of the succulent fruits.

The following Saturday, Reg and I, with the help of Satellite Navigation went to New Springs Allotments at Aspel in Wigan. A lovely site this is. The plots are not large but the local gardening conditions in some parts make it a very daunting pastime. Several plots are very steep and terracing is something that has had to be done to be able to grow anything. About 40% of another plot is in the shade of a large tree so the plot holders have to be prepared to cope with poor local conditions, but having said that the gardens are all occupied and well cultivated. The competition is good natured and intense and the majority of the plots are competing. The day was very hot and our energy was flagging in the afternoon when it came to judging the last few plots, but thankfully a cup of tea was waiting for us when we had finished. The scores were added up and we can only hope that those who had won and even those who hadn't agreed with the result.

Nottingham City. This year there were nine sites that entered the site competition. These were judged over two days. I went along with John Stirland to do the honours. Four sites were looked at on the first day and the remaining five on the second. The numbers of avenues that are walked on the judging are many and varied and you can see that a tremendous amount of work has been done to bring them up to scratch. Each site has its own story but vandalism seems to be something that everyone has to contend with nowadays. If (and it is a big IF) only someone could find an answer it would be a big relief to all plot holders up and down the country. And so here we all are again looking forward to next year to see if we can improve on our efforts this year.

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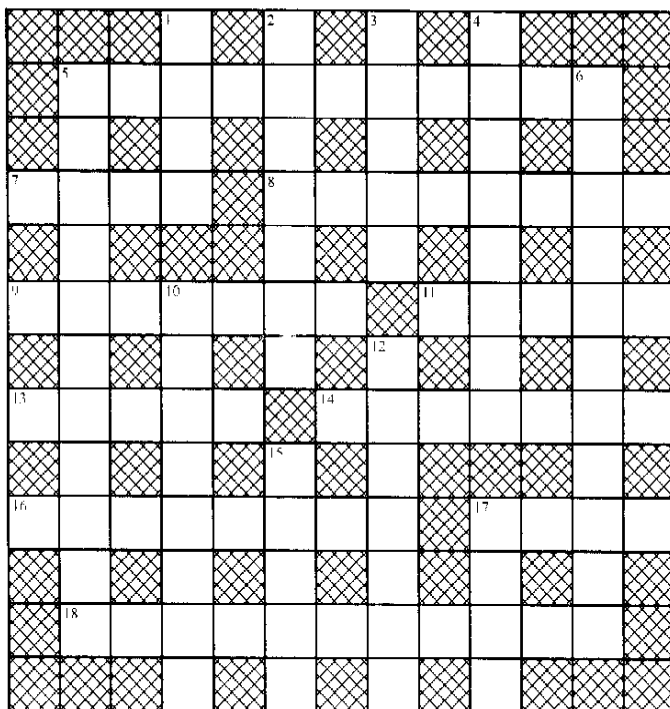


Little Greenfingers

As a follow on to the preceding article about growing sunflowers. I would like to tell you about the extremely precise work that four year George and six year old Callum did when they planted individual Cornflower, Clarkia and Marigold seeds into small plant pots, this they did under Mum and Dad's guidance which they gave alongside taking care of baby Dominic who is only ten months old now. We wish we had another forty or so young parents on our allotments who would teach their children how to grow things and let them enjoy the miracles of nature and appreciate how bountiful it is. This wishful thinking of ours is just an aside to what happened to these painstakingly planted Cornflower, Clarkia and Marigold. When these flowers began to grow in their individual pots, Mum made a present of them to another plothead Daphne (who is mentioned in the article about SMLLCA Show). However, since Daphne grows lots and lots of fruit, flowers and vegetables she was trying to find room on her allotments to plant the flowers which the boys had grown, so they were firstly sitting in their pots in the greenhouse growing very leggy until they had to be moved out to make room for tomato, cucumber, pepper plants etc.

Then because everything on the allotment was growing and spreading these poor Cornflower, Clarkia and Marigold were still sitting in their pots becoming even more leggy, although they did manage to receive a drink of water every so often. Then one day in desperation in order not to let the poor things die Daphne arranged for them to be planted in very large pots but in clumps and so they all had to be removed from their individual pots and put into a much bigger pot in fresh compost and because they were so leggy they were given a haircut and trimmed back and put in a bright place and given enough to drink then lo and behold! They appeared to be very grateful to be given another shot at life and they bushed out and produced many beautiful pink, blue, white and yellow flowers for the best part of the summer showing their full glory. We were so pleased that all the boys hard work had come to fruition. Thank you and well done George and Callum.

Ann Mallanaphy



Across.

- 5 Railway signal men might take offence if called fat this. (11)
 7 & 16 Politician not to be seen working on a roof (4-7)
 8 Sailors in Nelson's Navy ate limes to prevent them becoming this (8)
 9 see 14 across
 11 Prepares for publication (5)
 13 Hear it as something that you want (5)
 14 Not the kind of cover wanted on the flower bed (7-2-5)
 16 See 7 across
 17 West African native name for *Abelmoschus Esculentus* (Lady's Fingers) (4)
 18 In letter writing Dear Sir - Madam - Mr - Mrs or Ms are this (11)

Down.

- 1 You could be green with this (4)
 2 In Arabic, this type of war is called a Jihad (7)
 3 If you are on ----- nine, you are said to be very happy (5)
 4 Some kind of wonder pea (8)
 5 A flock of these small birds is called a charm (11)
 6 Romeo and Juliet were these (11)
 10 Capable of being put up (8)
 12 You might think some of this is needed in the clues to help you solve them (7)
 15 Sloping channel or slide (5)
 17 Double reeded woodwind instrument (4)

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Ants

Being new to allotment gardening I wonder if I might ask a question to which someone reading the magazine may help with their answer?

In my garden I am finding that there are a lot of red ants and I do mean a lot all over my garden. When I weed they are crawling all over my hands and nipping.

- So
1. Will they do any damage to my crops?
 2. If they are considered a pest what course of action should I take?

Any help would be appreciated on this matter.

G. Frost

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Life On The Allotment

Last year we were so busy with family life that we were forced to put our plot on hold for the first year in five. The result of this was that the ground had become so overgrown with weeds that it was always going to be a tough job to resurrect the garden to its former glory.

One whole side of our plot has been covered for months now by a 3x15m, thick, black, polythene sheet to beat back the weeds (we bought this from the builders' section of B&Q because it was much cheaper than anything in the gardening section), but one result of this is that it seems to have provided a convenient cover for ants and mice to build nests - forking over the ground, with the baby mice especially in the way, was not a pleasant experience.

One major success we did have this year, while the outdoors was going wild, was with our second-hand 2x5m polytunnel. It has been erected at the far end of the plot on an area of ground that we were able to reclaim from the previous tenants' dumping area (a bath, kettle and dead chicken in a plastic bag were the most memorable things I dug out). Because of the lack of care this ground had had, the soil was in a terrible condition and so in previous years we've only grown things in pots and bags in the tunnel.

This year we were determined to plant directly in the ground so at the beginning of the season we introduced all our compost, a load of leaf mould and some left-over manure, and spent some worthwhile time getting the doors to operate properly in preparation for a busy season.

Once all our seedlings had been potted on and the staging could be dispensed with we filled the whole tunnel with tomatoes other than 3 cucumber plants. Claire thought that cucumbers were worth trying as our 4-year-old, George, eats loads, but I don't think either of us really expected much from them. It has turned out, however, that with some of the usual care of weeding, watering and training we have had an excess of cucumbers and they just keep coming - we found it's worth wrapping them in cling film to keep them from losing moisture and growing floppy.

The tomatoes we planted are cherry, normal and Italian San Marzano plum, which are recommended for sauces because they contain less water and seeds than other tomato varieties. And the bonus is that our boys have been impressed with the result of Claire skinning, boiling and bottling these toms late at night whenever they get a nice plate of spaghetti Bolognese set in front of them at dinner time.

And now the season is almost over it'll be time to get back out and into the jungle for some slash and burn. Here goes...

Peter Rich

INDIVIDUAL/LIFE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

To The Allotments And Gardens Council (UK)
7 Mattingly Road, Hempshill Vale, Nottingham NG6 7BD.

I _____ (Capitals Please)
the undersigned, hereby apply for INDIVIDUAL/LIFE membership of NDAC.

Signed _____ Date _____

Address _____

I enclose my remittance for:

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The Shows so far

So far this year we have been to five shows at which we have been setting up stands in order for us to promote the Allotments Gardens Council (or as we all know it AGCUK). We have also been promoting the joys of allotment gardening in general.

The first promotion that we did this year was at Zoe's Place at their Summer Fair. Zoe's Place is a children's hospice and is run on a charitable basis depending upon fund raising and donations. Their Summer Fair is a wonderful family day out, since there are many interesting and highly enjoyable things to do and see including a miniature fairground, live music, karaoke, disco, dance troupes displays, lots of stuff to buy including hand made cards and jewellery and new clothing, which had been donated by Matalan and which was sold very reasonably such as a school shirt for 50p etc. with all proceeds going to Zoe's Place.

For our part, we set up a competition whereby we had a locked miniature allotment gate and the challenge was to open the allotment gate and win the £5.00 note which could be seen behind the locked gate, we had a bag of 120 keys (including the opening key) for people to pick from. To our surprise and to the winners' delight the £5.00 was won four times but we still managed to donate £15.00 to Zoe's Place in addition to the £10.00 booking fee. It was a good way of getting people to talk about allotments and AGCUK. Everyone had a really lovely day and the weather was perfect as well.

We were also lucky with the weather when we went to the Knowsley Show, this is another marvellous family day out which is held in Court Hey Park, an excellent venue and Knowsley Council ensure that is superbly presented, operated and advertised, they even supply a programme of events and a map showing how to get there. This show incorporates everything including Horticultural Displays, Arena Entertainment, Falconry, Circus Skills, Plant Society Marquee and Craft Displays, Children's Fun and Infozone Marquees, Composting & Recycling Roadshow, the Allotment Competition plus lots lots more! The renowned Wildflower Centre is incorporated within the Show Ground and this alone is well worth a visit. The produce and flower show display was extremely impressive as was the presentation of prizes to the allotment competition winners. The Right Worshipful Mayor Councillor James Keight graced the show with his presence and gave out the prizes.

We set up our stand on which we were promoting AGCUK and allotments and to add interest and to get people to talk to us we set up a Tombola, we bought lots and lots of garden related items as prizes and we did pick a straw, we rolled up a single draw ticket and put it inside a piece of plastic straw which we embedded into a basketful of sand. The excitement on the faces of people, especially the children when they were trying to get the ticket out of the straw was something to behold and then when they found that they have won something, be it a packet of seed or a ball of string it was astounding you would have thought that they had won a Rolls Royce. By doing this, it made lots of people stop and talk to us about allotments and that was the plan behind our promotion.

The next show which we attended was in Preston, the weather was not so good during the morning, raining and cool but it did not matter so much to us because we were in one of the marquees but there were a couple of stands outside, one of which was a car boot sale, I felt sorry for the two ladies out in the rain, I wanted them to come into our marquee but they persevered outside. Amongst their bric-a-brac they had some tarragon plants for sale which looked nice and healthy, so I bought a couple. Inside our marquee, there were two herbalists advertising their services so when I showed them my tarragon plants they went out and purchased the remainder, eventually the rain stopped so the outsiders were all right then. There were some very interesting stands outside including a thatcher, stone mason, and a cooper providing a great deal to see and learn. The Allotment Societies in Preston had a huge marquee in which they had set up about a dozen produce display stands and they were spectacular, the ingenuity of the displays was astounding and it must have been difficult to pick the winning one. The Right Worshipful Mayor Councillor Bhikhu Patel graced the show with his presence and presented the prizes. In all this was a very good Show and we spoke to lots of interested and interesting people, gave out lots of booklets and leaflets and copies of AGCUK's magazines.

The Preston City Council as do Knowsley Council contribute a great deal of time and effort and dedication to promoting and maintaining their allotments and recognize them as a valuable asset and a very important part of the green lung and also recognize the part that allotments play in the overall well being of their citizens and both Councils are to be highly commended for their forward looking approach in protecting the environment.

The next show which we attended was the St. Michael's and Lark Lane Community Show (SMLLCA) for which we did not need to worry about the weather since the venue is indoors. This show held its 25th anniversary last year and incorporates the Liverpool and District Allotment Council's Produce Display Competition and the presentation of prizes for the Inter City Allotment competition which is sponsored by Liverpool City Council and for which the deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Joan Lang kindly graced the show and presented the prizes. This show is also a very good Show due to the hard work that SMLLCA put in and also the Liverpool and District Allotment Council plus the extremely hard work, intense passion and enthusiasm of the exhibitors.

Daphne, one of our members (who is also mentioned elsewhere in this magazine in the article about Little Greenfingers) won lots of first prizes including some for Top Trays, Top Vases etc. However, unfortunately she missed the award for most points in the show by only one point, this being won by one of our ex-tenants who moved to another allotment field because of family commitments. The reason that Daphne did not obtain an extra couple of points is that she and her partner placed so many exhibits for themselves and others who could not attend and there was some confusion about whose name a heavier truss of tomatoes should have been entered under, after the judging, we realized that it should have been entered in Daphne's name and she would have won most points in the show, but she was more than pleased with all the prizes she had won, because she has to find the room at home to accommodate all of the other cups and trophies. The reason I am mentioning this episode is as another warning to all you exhibitors out there which is, always double check which exhibit that you wish to place your ticket beneath.

The last Show we attended was the Merseyside Big Heart Festival where we promoted allotments as part of a healthy living stratagem. We did this alongside various departments of the Health Service including Broadgreen Hospital Cardiac Centre, different Primary Care Trusts, The Liverpool Dental Health Service, representatives from the Liverpool Leisure and Sports Directorate, and lots of other agencies and departments which are concerned with promoting Healthy Lifestyles. The venue was fabulous and took place in what is known as the LACE centre which is a college connected with Liverpool Archdiocese. Although our surroundings for this festival were luxuriant and every other stand was state of the art including the facilities for the representatives from Liverpool Sports and Leisure Directorate, we felt rather like the poor relations, since we only had our home made stand which looked rather rustic amongst all the state of the art equipment that everyone else was supplied with, someone from another stand described our stand as 'twee' we did not know whether to take it as a compliment or an insult. We enjoyed the day anyway and as always got quite a few 'freebies' such as pens, mugs, mouse mats etc. we do not mind that they are printed with slogans such as Smoking Kills or make Liverpool Smoke Free etc., as the quality of the 'freebies' is very good and very functional, also we enjoyed lots of delicious fruit and vegetable dishes, wonderful apple juice drinks of various recipes were made and distributed from the stand opposite us, also cooked vegetables (stir fried with the tiniest amount of olive e.g. chopped peppers, garlic, carrots, onions etc). We only wish all City Councils would recognize the important contribution that their allotments make to the well being of their citizens and promote them as such, instead of treating them as at best an embarrassment and at worst a capital asset to be disposed of at the very first opportunity. I will shut up moaning now and finish on a brighter note and just say what a joy the children are when they attend these events and how well the staff look after and encourage them to eat healthily and organise great exhibitions of bicycling and sports equipment for them to try out and also face painting (which is done by our allotmenteer Claire - mother of Callum, George and Dominic as mentioned in other articles in this journal).

We gave out lots of booklets and leaflets in our promotion of the allotments and AGCUK.

Ann Mallanaphy

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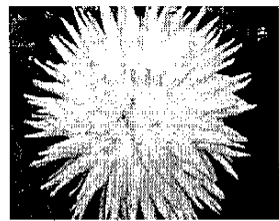
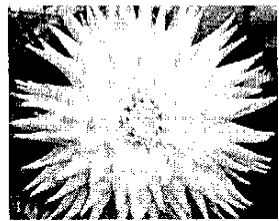
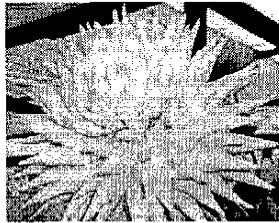
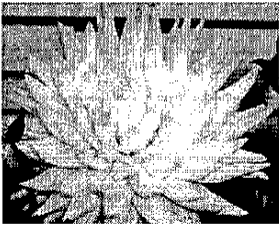
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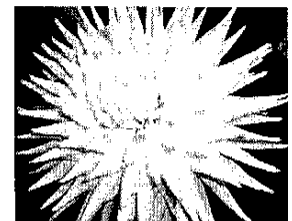
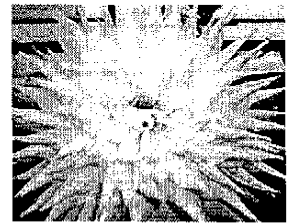
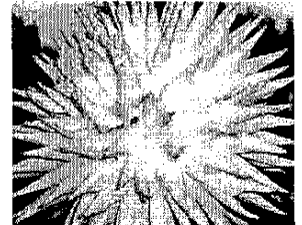
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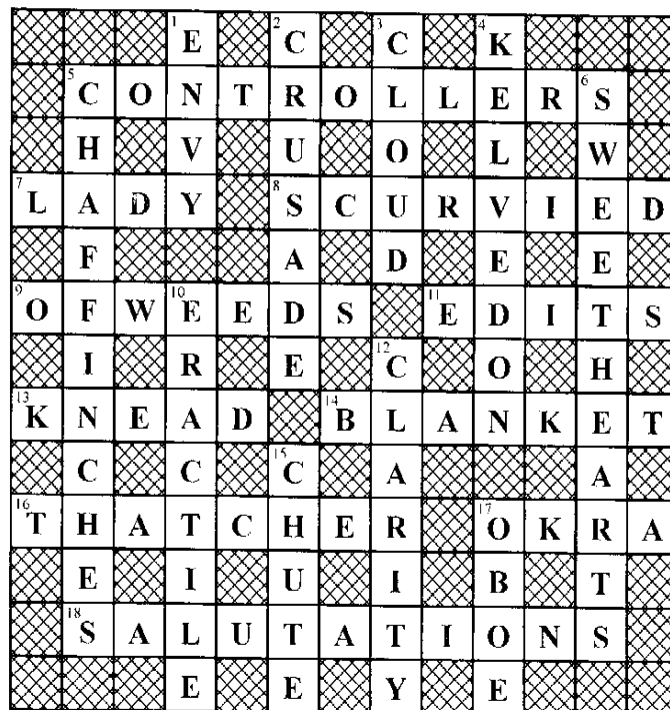


Hello Reg, lady and gentlemen allotmenters, my friend Mr. Paul Gee has been showing dahlias that he has grown on his allotment for the last 2 or 3 years, last year he entered the Harrogate autumn flower show for the very first time in the novice section where he did extremely well, he won his novice section, plus a couple of other sections as well. This year he was in with the big boys the people who have won championships for many years. Paul has been very dedicated to his dahlias and the results just show how dedicated he has been, this year he came 2nd in the small decorative class, 3rd in the medium decorative CHAMPIONSHIP Class, Paul actually WON BEST EXHIBIT Single bloom classes 71 to 77 with a dahlia called White Charlie Two. All of the members on our site are very pleased for Paul. It just goes to show you only get out what you put in. If any member of our great organisation would like advice from Paul or if he can help anyone that grows dahlias he is only too willing to share what knowledge he has gained by listening and visiting some of the very best dahlia growers in the country, I will let the secretary have his phone number so you can give him a call. These photos were taken nearly 6 weeks after the Harrogate Show.



D	G	I	L	O	Q	R	E	W	O	M	N	W	A	L
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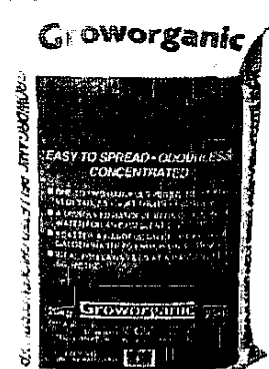


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