

The Grower



CHESHAM
ALLOTMENTS
Group

www.cheshamallotments.org.uk
cheshamallotments@gmail.com

FEBRUARY 2019

Welcome to 2019!

"January is the quietest month in the garden. ... but just because it looks quiet doesn't mean that nothing is happening. The soil, open to the sky, absorbs the pure rainfall while micro organisms convert tilled-under fodder into usable nutrients for the next crop of plants. The feasting earthworms tunnel along, aerating the soil and preparing it to welcome the seeds and bare roots to come."

Rosalie Muller Wright, Editor of Sunset Magazine

It just doesn't seem possible that we are into a new year, but the arrival of the Suttons catalogue reminds me that it's true. I visited my plot the other day and rationalised that it was too cold/frozen/water logged* (*choose one) to do any work, although I probably could have used the exercise.

Like Wallace & Gromit, there are some grand days out planned for the coming year and a visit to the new CAG website at cheshamallotments.org.uk will provide a list and dates. First up is the Chesham Horticultural Society's seed potato sale (see page three) where you can buy your spud for our Spud In A Bucket competition (also page three) for which the Allotments Group will be opening the Allotment Café at the Focal Point Hut for the first coffee and cake sessions of 2019. Even in the cold I always look forward to it because I can see friends who have only recently emerged from hibernation wearing their new Christmas jumper.

We have a new Allotment Café coordinator this year. Averil Savage takes the reigns and is assembling the volunteers' list as you read this. Please consider donating a couple hours of your time (and/or a cake) some Saturday morning over the summer. She can be contacted on averil@songsungblue.co.uk Having done this myself many times I can vouch that it's a lot of fun.

Finally, there are 2 CAG committee positions open and if you feel like you'd like to be part of the coolest gang in town write us an email: cheshamallotments@gmail.com

Marshall Hall (Chairman)

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Save the date!

Fish & Chip/Quiz Night
Saturday 18th May

Email cheshamallotments@gmail.com to reserve your places. The booking form will be in the next Grower.

We look forward to seeing you there!

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LOCK THE GATES!

For everyone's security;
please remember to
lock the gates behind
you at all times.

Even if you see other people
working, they may not be
leaving by the same exit.



CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP CALENDAR

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Allotment Café	16th & 23rd Feb and 2nd March then every Saturday from Sat 13th April until 12th October 10am to 12pm.	Focal Point Hut, Cameron Road: except June 22nd and Aug 24th which are at Asheridge Road
Fish & Chip/Quiz Night	Sat 18th May 7pm	Chesham Town Hall

CHESHAM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY DATES

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Potato Sales	16th & 23rd Feb and 2nd March 9am—12pm	Trading Hut at Plot 2, Cameron Road

A Message from Chesham In Bloom - We're Going for Gold

Chesham In Bloom have always been given support from Chesham Allotments Group; with donations, invitations to the CAG Summer Social and by the donation of a Saturday each year for a fundraising coffee morning at the Focal Point. A number of allotment group members also work hard with Chesham in Bloom to prepare the town for the annual inspection by the Royal Horticultural Society judges who visit the Cameron Road Allotments every year.

And this is where we would love you to take part. We need to increase the number of people attending the working parties, which you will have seen around the town, wearing yellow tabards. In Bloom volunteers plant bulbs in the autumn, clear overgrown areas, maintain numerous flower/shrub beds around Chesham and weed pavements, gutters and roundabouts. We also encourage traders to sponsor flower tubs outside their shops. You will have noticed a new raised bed beside the library in St Mary's Way - installed by one of our members, Len Vockins.

Many allotment holders are very knowledgeable about flowers and horticulture in general and would be very welcome to join the ranks of Chesham in Bloom as well. If we could recruit 10 working members who could also attend our regular monthly meetings in the Town Hall, our effectiveness would be improved. Our ability to maintain our Silver Gilt status and to regain our gold standard would be greatly enhanced. Dates and venues will be published in the Spring. If you would like to join us or find out more please contact: Kathryn Graves on 01494 583798 (Mon to Fri 10am—4.30pm) or email policy@chesham.gov.uk or call in at the Town Hall.

Chris Spruytenburg

The Allotment Café in 2019

We are looking forward to another year of great homemade cakes served with coffee and a beautiful view across the allotments and Chesham. Occasionally rainy and inclement but mostly stoically enjoyable, Saturday mornings at the Focal Point are a great way to get to know other allotment-ers, share tips and some times plants and produce. Anyone is welcome, whether they have a plot or not. Why not arrange to meet friends there too?

The bonhomie is only made possible by the hard work of the volunteers. This year our new Allotment Café Coordinator is Averil Savage. Please show your support by volunteering for a morning in the Hut (not onerous, especially now we have a working generator) or by making a cake or two. Please contact her on averil@songsungblue.co.uk if you can help.



Our email — cheshamallotments@gmail.com

Please send us a quick hello with your plot number to be added to our email list for news and occasional reminders of allotment events. Your details will not be shared with anyone else. Our full Privacy Policy is available online.



Chesham
TOWN COUNCIL

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Spud in a Bucket Competition

Have you ever wondered what sort of yield you can get from one potato? Well wonder no more. Enter our Spud in a Bucket competition to find out!

Last year's inaugural competition was a great success with entrants of all ages. Some people had vast containers, some had small buckets, but it didn't seem to affect the number of potatoes. The secret (secret no longer) of last year's winner John Cox was manure and potato fertilizer. Now that the cat's out of the bag we expect John will have some stiff competition this year!

The rules are simple:

1. Plant one potato in a bucket (or container)
2. Nurture your potato plant in any way you see fit, but don't dig down to see how your crop is doing!
3. Bring your bucket along to the coffee morning on Saturday 7th September 2019, where it will be emptied and the potato yield weighed. Competitors are responsible for taking away their bucket, compost and potatoes.
4. Entry fee is £1 per bucket. You can enter as many buckets as you want : perhaps try different varieties?
5. The prize for the heaviest yield will be £20.



CHS Potato and Onion Sales: 16th & 23rd Feb and 2nd March from 9am

What we will be selling this year:

Potatoes: First Earlies - Arran Pilot, Jazze* (NEW for 2019) Pentland Javelin
Second Earlies - Apache*, Charlotte (salad), Elfe*, Kestrel
Early Maincrop - Desiree
Late Maincrop - Cara, Maris Piper, Setanta* (NEW in 2018)
Onions: Sturon, Red Baron
Shallots: Golden Gourmet, Red Sun

Prices kept as 2018.

Potatoes: £4.00 per 7lb; 70p per lb for quantities less than 7lb. * Except Apache, Elfe, Jazze and Setanta which will be £5.00 per 7lb; 90p per lb for quantities less than 7lb. Quantities of these are limited.
Onions: £1.00 per half lb.

Jazze has an RHS Award Of Garden Merit and is a good looking, tasty and strong growing early potato with cream coloured skin that is very thin and needs no peeling when used for salad potatoes. The taste is slightly sweet and creamy; very pleasant. It produces a very large number of evenly sized small potatoes, ideal for salads, but with a high overall yield. It can also be boiled, steamed, crushed or roasted. Some consider it the perfect variety for growing in bags or containers on the patio as it produces lots of delicious small potatoes. Elfe is a recent award winning variety that is described as having: 'a delicious, creamy yellow flesh which has a rich, sweet and buttery taste, ideal for boiling, mashing and baking'. We expect Elfe and Jazze to sell out on the first Saturday, so if you want to try these varieties do try to make it to the first sale day. If you have had problems with Potato Blight in the past, then we would suggest trying Setanta: a new Irish-bred red skinned maincrop potato with good blight and scab resistance and, due to it's thick skins, is little damaged by slugs. Rooster is one of its parents. An excellent tasting floury potato good for roasting, baking, mashing and chipping. It has large yields of oval tubers with creamy yellow flesh and stores well.

The Trading Hut, Cameron Road

Besides the three Potato Sale Saturdays, the Trading Hut will be open every Saturday from 9th March, through to at least 11th May, including Easter Saturday 20th April, 10am to 11.30am. Other times by prior appointment with me on 07718609719.

As in previous years we will also be selling 6X manure [if you haven't tried this then it is an excellent highly concentrated lightweight alternative to traditional bulky farmyard manure being a fibrous chicken manure fertiliser which is oven sterilized to kill off pathogens and weeds. It contains nutrients and all the trace elements that plants require and no manufactured chemicals or lime, with a neutral pH. The fibrous, organic content conditions the soil and adds bulk to stabilize it], Growmore, Fish Blood & Bone, Bonemeal, Sulphate of Ammonia, Sulphate of Potash, Superphosphate, Sharp Sand, Silver Sand, Coarse Grit, fine Potting Grit, Perlite, Vermiculite and Fairtrade String. All at discounted prices, but the 2019 prices for these will not be available until just before the first sale on 16th February.

Adrian Norris

CHS Trading Hut Manager

When the chips are down....

It's very odd to think that potatoes, which are so ingrained in the psyche of the British as to be part of our national dish (nay Chicken Tikka Masala, it's fish and chips), were really such latecomers to our diet. Who can believe now that medieval peasants never chucked a spud into a stew or that Henry VIII never tucked into a roast tatty dripping with lard? Our diets have changed a lot in the last 40 years (children today probably eat a lot more pasta than potatoes) but when I was a child in the 70's I think we ate potatoes for tea six nights out of seven. (When my mother first cooked dried spaghetti for my elder siblings they didn't think it was proper spaghetti because it didn't come out of a tin).

But they only arrived in Britain in the late sixteenth century and were regarded with suspicion throughout Europe. In Prussia, after a famine in 1774, Frederick the Great sent sacks of potatoes to the starving peasants of Kolberg, who despite their hunger turned their noses up at them. Frederick responded by sending along an armed soldier who changed their minds. Less than a century later in Offenburg, the citizens raised money for a statue of Sir Francis Drake holding a potato, so grateful were they for their spuds.

But really we should perhaps have a monument to the Incas who spent thousands of years creating around 2,500 varieties of potatoes to suit all conditions. They even created units of time based on how long different types took to cook. Some tribes today still live on a diet almost entirely of potatoes. A bit like me in the seventies.

Greek Potatoes – slow version

Serves 4. Preheat oven to 210°C/200°Fan/Gas 6/7

Mix together **4 large potatoes**, peeled and cut into 6 wedges, **2 minced cloves of garlic**, **1/4 cup olive oil**, **1/2 cup water**, **1/2 tbspn dried oregano**, **juice of half a lemon**, **salt** and **pepper**. Cook in a roasting tin for 40mins, give a stir (adding more water if needed) then cook for another 40mins. Don't be afraid of overcooking.

Fast version

Prepare potatoes as above then put in a covered dish in the microwave with a drop of water and cook for approx 10mins until just cooked. Put with the other ingredients in a covered heavy frying pan and cook for about 20mins stirring occasionally until they are gently browning.

Pan Haggerty

Slice **2lb peeled potatoes**, **1lb onions** and grate **4oz cheddar cheese**. Layer in a heavy pan beginning and ending with potatoes, **seasoning** each layer. Cover and cook gently until tender. Brown under the grill (or turn over in pan if you are feeling brave).

Scottish Stovies

Peel **new potatoes**, cut into 1 inch pieces, and put in a heavy pan with 2 tablespoons of **water**, a sprinkle of **salt** and a few tiny bits of **butter**. Use foil to tightly jam the lid on. Cook over a VERY low heat for approx 30mins or more until very soft.

French Stoved Potatoes

Add three peeled and halved cloves of **garlic** and replace the butter with **lard** and cook as above until soft but not browned.

Kartoffelpuffer (German Potato Pancakes)

Mix together thoroughly **12oz peeled and grated potatoes**, **2oz grated onion**, **1 egg**, **3oz plain flour** and a pinch of **salt**.

Over a medium heat, heat **1/2cm vegetable oil** or lard in a heavy saucepan and put 4 tablespoons of the mixture in a heap then flatten out to about 12cm/5 inches across. Cook until the edges are turning brown and crispy then turn carefully to brown the other side.

To emulate the citizens of Offenburg; serve with apple sauce.

CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

MARSHALL HALL (Chairman) Plot 47A/47B CR	TIM ANDREW (Vice Chair) Plot 48A CR	RAY WILLIAMS (Treasurer) Plots 215/216 CR	CLAIRE MALAN (Secretary) Plot 235A CR
ANDREW SINCLAIR (Community Liaison) Plot 45B CR	JIM ABBOTT (Historian & Archivist) Plot 31/32 CR	DAVE HALL (Maintenance and Facilities) Plot 12 CR	TONY MUIR (Website) Plot 28 AR
CHRIS MACKAY (Database Manager) Plot 6A AR	KATE HUTCHINSON (Editor—The Grower) Plot 58D/80A CR	CHRIS SPRUYTENBURG (Education and Orientation) Plot 93 CR	SIMON LEE (Representative at Large) Plot 46A CR
JANE MACBEAN Town Council Representative		CR = CAMERON ROAD AR = ASHERIDGE ROAD	cheshamallotments@gmail.com