

August 2005

ISSUE 15

# THE GROWER

*Information for Chesham Town Council Allotment Holders*

*Inside this issue:*

- 1** Allotments Open Day
  - Dumping of rubbish
  - Visiting other allotments
  - Date for your diary: Annual General Meeting
- 2** Your group representatives
  - Best kept allotment
  - Conservation conversation
  - Recipe: Stuffed cabbage
- 3** Tomatoes anyone?
  - New allotment charges
  - Plot numbering
- 4** Information panel
  - Feedback
  - Self-sufficiency guide

## ALLOTMENTS OPEN DAY

THE second allotments 'Open Day' will be held on Saturday 13th August, 2005, commencing at 10.30 am. The venue is the hut on the Cameron Road site. It will be opened by the Town Mayor, Councillor Chris Spruytenburg. There will be lots of fun for the children including a demonstration of how to make a scarecrow. We also intend to conduct guided tours and would welcome a few volunteers to assist.

We wish to exhibit some of the produce that is grown on the allotments and would be grateful to receive some contributions. We will be at the Cameron Road site from 9.30 am on the morning of the show to collect any contributions you may wish to offer. Please invite your friends to come along and we look forward to your support.

Refreshments will be available at a very reasonable price.

## Dumping of Rubbish

SOME allotment holders are still dumping rubbish on the Cameron Road site. The latest is a large quantity of broad bean stalks on the site previously cleared by the Council. Please consider the environment and be good neighbours. Anyone caught dumping rubbish will be reported to the Council who may consider what appropriate action is necessary.

## Visiting Other Allotments

We are all interested to know what each other is growing and many tenants would welcome showing you around their plots. However we must ask you not to visit other allotments during the tenants' absence. A number of petty thefts have been reported which have caused distress.

### A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

## Annual General Meeting

THE Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 29th September, 2005, at the Town Hall, commencing at 7.00 pm.

We hope it will be convenient for you to attend. At this meeting members will be elected to represent you on the Allotments Group for 2006.

## Your Group Representatives

**Vince Crompton** (Chairman)  
Plots 36a, 36b, 36c and 36d  
Cameron Road

**Jim Abbott**  
Plots 31 and 32  
Cameron Road

**James Bole**  
Plots 9a and 9b  
Bellington Road

### Co-opted Members:

**Kate Folly**  
Plots 218 and 219  
Cameron Road

**Mick Walker**  
Plots 100a and 100b  
Cameron Road

### Council Representatives:

**Councillor Elaine Bamford,**  
**Councillor Alison Pirouet**  
and **Councillor Chris Spruytenburg**

## Best kept Allotment

THE second judging was held on Monday 8th August, 2005.

## Conservation Conversation

by Tadcaster

AN unusually dry winter has left many parts of the country short of water. The land is dry and as gardeners we need to raise the moisture content of the soil. Most of us rely on piped mains water, but in a dry year there's the ever present threat of a hose pipe ban and we need to look to other sources. Most gardeners feel an empathy with the land and accept the need to conserve water for environmental purposes, so why not take steps to conserve water on your allotment plots for long term use now.

### Water Tanks

Allotment holders can create their own mini reservoir in the form of on site water tanks. If you have a greenhouse or shed, you can collect roof run off water. If you don't, you'll still collect more water than you think if you leave the tank lid off during the winter. The wider the top the more water you'll collect. It's even worth considering making a roof just to collect rainwater. An open sided shelter's a nice place to sit on a sunny day. You can have a cup of tea, admire your crops, and put the world to rights. The best part of gardening is sitting and looking. And if you don't want to do that, remember you're not allowed to use a hose pipe on site, but you can use a hose to fill the tank on your plot. It beats carrying a heavy watering can backwards and forwards

Second user tanks are relatively cheap and come in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Ex-fruit juice tanks are a favourite and they're generally available with or without lids and taps. Plastic is long lasting and costs about £10 for a 55 gallon drum. Metal is more stable and a 45 gallon drum will cost you £78, and when metal does finally develop a leak it can be used as a sizeable incinerator for non-compostable weeds and other waste materials. Compare that with a small galvanised incinerator costing £20 that will only last a couple of years! Fruit juice to water butt, water butt to incinerator. You've saved water. And your aching back. That's real conservation.

If you do order a water tank remember that carriage costs can be significant (usually about £25). Spread the cost by ordering with a neighbour or a group. You might even want to share a tank. A 330 gallon plastic drum can be had for £65. If that springs a leak you can cut a door in the side use it as a shed!

### Sharing

If you do decide to share, make sure that you agree on the usage first. If half of the water's yours make sure you get the lower half, the top section's usually empty!

New and second hand tanks and drums can be had from:

Atlantic Superstore Tel. 01986 892496.  
E-mail sales@atlanticonline.uk.com. They have a range of catalogues, you'll need 'Gates, Fencing & Gardening'.

Please share your catalogue with a friend. It helps to save a tree somewhere.

## Stuffed Cabbage

CABBAGE leaves are carefully removed and put into very hot water for a while to soften them. The stuffing used here is minced beef mixed together with grated onion, seasoned with salt and pepper, garlic and the herb of your choice. Uncooked rice is then added and bound together with an egg. Each leaf is given a dollop of meat and rice and packed into neat parcels with the corners folded in firmly then they are arranged in an oven dish so that they are really packed tight. Some concentrated chicken or beef stock is poured over the top before covering and placing in the oven.

Here is the recipe:

6 large cabbage leaves	Salt and pepper
450g minced beef	Garlic and herbs
2 onions	1 egg
80g uncooked rice	Chicken stock

Soak the leaves in hot water till pliable. Mix beef, onions, seasoning and uncooked rice, bind with egg and put a small dessertspoonful on each leaf. Parcel firmly, pack tightly in oven dish. Add chicken stock, and bake covered at Regulo 3/4, 165C/175C, 325F/350F for 1½-2 hours, until tender.

You can alternate the stuffings for the cabbage leaves. Try the following alternatives:

Breadcrumbs, minced ham and sage.	Minced lamb, pearl barley, bouquet garni.
Minced liver, oatmeal, mixed herbs.	Minced lamb, lentils and split peas, bay leaf.

## Tomatoes Anyone?

A SUMMER salad without tomatoes isn't worth having. They're the staple ingredient. Fat and juicy, plump and pulpy. And what about cheese and tomato sandwiches? A nice slice of mature cheddar and a thick slice of tomato, topped with a leaf of fresh crisp lettuce. And it's a poor breakfast fryup that doesn't have a succulent tomato mush to dip a slice of fresh baked bread into. Home grown, fresh from the vine, and full of vitamins.

Anyone can grow tomatoes. A greenhouse or sunny conservatory is fine, but not essential. And you won't be buying tomatoes wrapped in cling film and polystyrene from the supermarket. You won't be paying extra because they've been left of the vine to give them a more wholesome look. The tomatoes you grow yourself will be a few minutes fresh, and full of flavour.

But what if you don't have a greenhouse or a sunny section in your garden? What if you have to buy your tomatoes from the supermarket? They're just as good aren't they? They're just as red. Just as tasty.

No. As a matter of fact they're not. They're several days old, and they've lost some of their vitamins and a lot of their flavour. And some of them didn't have much flavour to begin with. Supermarket tomatoes are chosen as much for their keeping ability as their taste. A lot of don't even have a variety name attached. They're just tomatoes. And they're all red.

Well tomatoes are red aren't they?

Yes, some of them are. But what about the other colours? What about the orange, yellows, and greens. They're not unripened, they're just a different colour. You don't just eat red apples do you? Why are you only eating red tomatoes then? Why don't you try something different?

But they're odd aren't they. They're not round.

Yes, some are plum shaped, some of them are large, some of them are small, some of them are ribbed. Some of them are sweeter than you thought possible. Some of them are sharp and tangy. Some of them are even stripped. Inside and out.

A bowl of mixed size, shape, and colour tomatoes gladden the eye and brighten the gardener's soul. They're the products of years of hybridisation. You won't find them on the supermarket shelves. They're for gardeners only. The only people that eat these are the people that grow them. Offer them to a chef and he'll snatch your arm off and double the price of his salads. They know a good thing when they see one.

So if you want to try something different here's a list of some of the more interesting varieties. Most of them can be grown outdoors in reasonably sheltered conditions. They'll crop later than if they were under glass, but they're still well worthwhile. The bush types spread are generally unsuitable for growing under glass, but they're hardier and set fruit in colder conditions. Cordons and largest fruit first:

Burpees Delicious	Cordon – A good fleshy red. Holder of the record for the world's largest tomato at 7lb. Make sure you secure the vine, the weight of the fruit will collapse it to the ground if you don't.
Coustralee	Cordon – Old French. Ribbed fruit full of flavour.
Pineapple	Cordon – French with large patterned yellow and red fruit. Orange flesh, splashed with red. Tangy.
White Beauty	Cordon – Large creamy green fruit. Sweeter than most beefsteak types.
Brandywine	Cordon – Traditional Amish. Large ribbed fruit. Potato leaved.
Red Debarro	Cordon – Russian. Large plum shaped fruit. Fat and productive. Best indoors.
Jack Hawkins	Cordon – 8oz fruit. Good flavour. Fruit sometimes available from Waitrose.
Green Zebra	Cordon – Green striped fruit. Best inside, but I've grown it successfully outside.
Lemon Boy	Cordon – Medium sized yellow fruit with a tangy flavour.
Sweet Miracle.	Cordon – Medium sized evenly skinned fruit. Sweet.
Rudolph	Cordon – Small red plum tomato.
Gardeners Delight	Cordon – The old favourite. Sweet and reliable. The best cherry tomato by far.
Sungold	Cordon – Orange. Similar to Gardeners Delight and similarly sweet.
Sun Belle	Small yellow plum.
Oregon Spring	Bush – Very hardy. Good flavoured red fruit to 4oz.
Caro Rich	Bush – Large orange beefsteak. Has a high beta carotene content.
First in the Field	Bush – Old early red variety. Good outside. Prolific and tasty.
Roma & Golden Roma	Bush – Fleshy plum shaped fruit. Not as hardy as the other bush types listed.

For seeds and plants of the above and many others : Simpsons Seeds 01985 845004.

Please share your catalogue with others.

## New Allotment Charges

FROM October 1, 2005 rental charges for Council allotments will be as follows:

	per pole
Amersham Road	£3.00
Asheridge Road/ Deansway	£3.00
Cameron Road	£2.00

## Plot Numbering

THE Parks team has begun the numbering of plots at the Cameron Road site but have already found some discrepancies with tenants' own numbers. It would therefore be most helpful if tenants could put a temporary number on their plot/shed etc., checked first against the Tenancy Agreement, which can be replaced by the Council with a permanent number.

Happy Gardening  
Tadcaster

## Information for Chesham Town Council Allotment Holders

Chesham Town  
Council  
Town Hall  
Chesham  
HP5 1DS

Phone:  
**01494 774842**

Fax:  
**01494 582908**

Email:  
**admin@chesham.gov.uk**

Web:  
**www.chesham.gov.uk**

## FEEDBACK

WE hope you have enjoyed reading this issue of *The Grower*.

Now we would like to hear your views.

Please write in with your suggestions, comments or tips for allotment holders to:

Chesham Town Council  
Town Hall  
Chesham HP5 1DS.

If you would like a reply please supply your name and address.

We will, of course, still consider all comments or suggestions made anonymously.

## Self-sufficiency guide

This summarises how much to grow to feed a family of two adults and three children. Each of the rows is 4.5m (15ft) Long. Also included is advice on how much to harvest for each meal. Remember that it is always better to pick your crops fresh for each meal and eat them as soon as possible after harvesting. Leaf vegetables, in particular, begin to lose some of their nutritional value immediately they are harvested. If you have a surplus of a particular crop, don't allow it to get old and tough: gather it and freeze it while it is still young and tender or give it to friends.

### Beans

**Broad:** Three rows (plus one for the freezer, if needed), 45 cm apart, seeds 30cm (1ft) apart. Pick 340g (¾lb) of pods when young for each adult, 226g (½lb) for each child. When pods have filled out, pick 226g (½lb) for each person.

**French:** Five rows, 30cm (1ft) apart, seeds 25cm (10in) apart. This should also give you a surplus for freezing. Allow 170-226g (6oz) per person.

**Runner:** One double row, 60cm (2ft) apart, when grown up a support. On the flat, four single rows, 60cm (2ft) apart. Seeds 30cm (1ft) apart. Pick 226g (½lb) per person.

### Beetroot

1 row for summer salads gives 30-40 small beet; two rows, 30cm (1ft) apart, for autumn and winter use.

### Broccoli, Purple Sprouting

One row of six plants. Pick without any large leaves, allowing 170g (6oz) per person.

### Brussels Sprouts

Six rows, 45cm (18in) apart, plants about 60cm (2ft) apart, but distance varies according to variety. Aim for 20 early, 20 mid-season and 20 late maturing plants. Pick 26g (½lb) per person.

### Cabbages

**Spring:** Three rows, 45cm (18in) apart each way, some to eat as spring greens, allowing others to heart up. Allow 226g (½lb) per person of greens.

**Summer, autumn:** Two to three rows giving 20-25 heads, depending upon size, 45cm (18in) apart each way on average. For the family of five you will need a cabbage trimmed of coarse outer leaves weighing 1.10-1.36kg (2.5-3lb).

**Winter:** Three rows, plants 45cm (18in) apart each way to give about 30 heads, Each with a finished weight of 1.36-1.8kg (3-4lb).

### Carrots

**Early:** Two rows, 15cm (6in) apart, do not thin. Pull 6-9 carrots per person for earliest feeds, 4-5 when larger.

**Maincrop:** Two rows, 20cm (8in) apart. Allow 170g (6oz) per person.

### Cauliflowers

**Spring and summer:** 15 heads. **Autumn:** 12 heads. **Winter:** 12 heads.

Winter 75cm (2.5ft) apart each way, others 60cm (2ft) apart each way, except for minicaulis. A 1kg (2lb) head with leaves trimmed will serve five people.

### Celery

One row, 1m (3ft) wide with about 25 plants staggered and 15-22cm (6-9in) apart. For braising you will need 3 heads for six people.

### Courgettes

Six plants, 1m (3ft) apart each way. Allow 226g (½lb) per person.

### Kale

Three rows, 60cm (2ft) apart each way. Pick while young allowing 171g (6oz) per person.

### Leeks

Three rows, 30cm (1ft) apart, 25cm (10in) between plants. Allow one well grown leek per person.

### Lettuce

Cos or cabbage types, two rows 30cm (1ft) apart, sown half a row at a time for succession, thinned 15-22cm (6-9in) apart. Depending upon variety. Pick as required for salad or sandwich use.

### Marrows

Four plants of bush type, 1m (3ft) apart. A 1.3kg (3lb) marrow is sufficient for the family.

### Onions

**Spring:** One row, sown a third at a time for succession.

**Maincrop:** 450g (1lb) of onion sets consists of about 100 bulbs. Place 10cm (4in) apart in rows 30cm (1ft) apart to give a finished crop totalling 22.7-36.3kg (50-80lb) which will see you through the winter and spring.

### Parsnips

Two rows, 20cm (8in) apart 7.5cm (3in) between plants. Allow about 340g (¾lb) of untrimmed roots per person when used as a main vegetable.

### Peas

Six rows, (3 early, 3 maincrop), 1m (3ft) between rows, 7.5cm (3in) between seeds. This should give a decent surplus for freezing. For early varieties picked young allow 450g (1lb) of pods per adult. For maincrop, picked with full pods, allow 280g (10oz) per person.

### Potatoes

3kg (6.6lb) of seed potatoes for every three rows produces 22.7-31.7kg (50-70lb) of earlies and up to 45kg (100lb) of second early and maincrop varieties, but a lot depends upon the variety and the season. Allow 170g (6oz) of earlies, and 226g (½lb) maincrop (unpeeled) per person.

### Radishes

Two rows, sown thinly, half a row at a time for succession, 15cm (6in) between rows.

### Shallots

**Pickling:** One row, bulbs 30cm (1ft) apart.

**Cooking:** Two rows, bulbs 30cm (1ft) apart each way.

### Spinach

**Summer:** Three rows, 30cm (1ft) between plants, 37.5cm (15in) between rows.

**Winter:** Two rows, spacing as for summer. Allow about 141g (5oz) of leaves picked young with a minimum of stalk.

### Swedes

Two rows, seeds 15cm (6in) apart, 45cm (18in) between rows. Allow 280g (10oz) of untrimmed roots per person when used as a main vegetable.

### Tomatoes

Outdoor bush type, 6 plants, 1m (3ft) apart each way. Outdoor standard type, 6 plants, 45cm (18in) apart in row.

### Turnips

**Summer:** Two rows, 25cm (10in) apart, seedlings thinned to 10cm (4in) apart.

**Winter:** Two rows, 30cm (1ft) apart, seedlings thinned to 15cm (6in) apart. Allow 226-280g (8-10oz) of untrimmed root per person.