



# A NATIONALLY RECOGNISED SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENERS

[www.swcaa.co.uk](http://www.swcaa.co.uk)

Issue 38  
Autumn/Winter  
2021/22

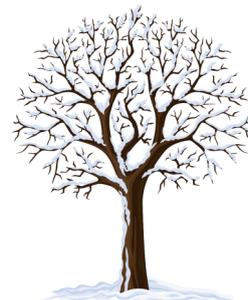
# NEWSLETTER



## Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of our newsletter.

Where did summer go? I hear you ask, well that is a very good question, did we really have one? Most of us were expecting bumper crops this year, especially those new to growing your own. After an unsettled spring and storms and heavy rainfall this summer many of us are not reaping what we sow! The RHS have said that tomato yields are the worst for many years, the torrential rain in the southeast and southwest of the country has led to a rise in plant diseases such as the dreaded blight. I had a lovely bumper crop of huge tomatoes, I checked them one morning only to find they had been struck with blight and I had to destroy the lot, I was hoping that I would have more protection now I'm growing in my garden but sadly it wasn't to be. My beetroot and carrots haven't really amounted to anything either but on the other hand I have had fabulous runner beans and salad crops which are still producing. I have been nurturing some kale for the winter and will plant that out when the threat of butterflies has gone. With autumn now upon us its time to tidy the SWCAA micro allotment and think about what to grow next year, I already know I'm not going to have enough space for everything so I'm going to try and do more in containers to free up space. If any of you are growing in a small space like me please email us with any pictures and we will feature them in future newsletters and on our website.

**Ayesha Hooper Director/CEO**



One of the things SWCAA are contacted most about is eviction and sadly we are seeing a huge rise again in these cases. Whether it be down to non cultivation, alleged rule breaking or in some cases not even being given a reason, you should always have the right to appeal. All council and association run sites should have a proper appeals process in place to give everyone a chance at a fair hearing. Unfortunately this is not the case especially on some sites that are association run. The policy regarding the appeals process should be included within the tenancy agreement if possible or given to the plot holder when they acquire their plot and be made available to view on the councils allotment section of their website or the associations website if they have one. SWCAA feels strongly that all these organisations should have a system which deals with, and supports, their allotment tenants in these situations. After all, none of us know when we might sustain an injury, become ill or have a family or personal situation whereby we are prevented from cultivating our allotment for a period of time. A plot holder may appeal (in writing) against termination within 14 days of the receipt of the termination letter. The appeal should detail the reasons for the lack of improvement and the reasons why the termination letter should be withdrawn. The Plot holder will retain ownership of the plot whilst the appeal is being considered. If you feel you are facing unfair eviction we can provide you with information to guide you through the process of appealing. Please email us at [swcaa.cic@outlook.com](mailto:swcaa.cic@outlook.com)



## Pest watch - Asparagus Beetle

These pretty but a highly destructive beetles are most active in the summer months but you may well spot them around October time as they are settling down to overwinter in the stems of spent asparagus. They are a red/brown with yellow patches in colour so pretty easy to spot.

You may notice the asparagus fronds dying back in the summer as the beetles eat away at the stems and weakening the plant. Your spears can also be invested with tiny black/grey grubs. Getting rid of the beetles' overwintering sites will help keep their numbers down. Clear away and compost or burn the old fern tops at the end of the year. Remove plant rubbish, stones, and any other cover that beetles could use to hide. In most situations, organic treatment for asparagus beetles is recommended, unless populations are enormous or asparagus plants are in serious danger. As soon as you notice asparagus beetles, begin hand picking them daily, tossing them into a bucket of soapy water. If you see any brown eggs on spears, make sure to scrape those as well.



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**Veggie cauliflower and squash korma** - Something comforting for those winter evenings. Takes 30 mins, serves 4.

1tbsp veg oil, 1 onion, peeled and chopped 150g korma paste 500g butternut squash, peeled and chopped 500ml hot vegetable stock 200g cauliflower florets 1 red pepper, deseeded and diced 200g mixed frozen soya beans and sweetcorn 150g plain yoghurt 3tbsp flaked almonds, toasted (optional) coriander leaves to garnish.

- 1 Heat the vegetable oil in a large pan, add the onion and cook gently for 5-6 mins until it starts to soften.
- 2 Add the curry paste and cook for 2 mins. Add the squash and stock. Bring to the boil and then turn down the heat and simmer for 15 mins.
- 3 Add the cauliflower, pepper, soya beans and sweetcorn and season well. Bring back to the boil and cook for a further 10 mins.
- 4 Remove from the heat and stir through the yoghurt. Top with toasted almonds if using and coriander leaves Enjoy!

**Sow hardy broad beans** - Broad beans are normally sown in the spring, from February to April. However some varieties are particularly hardy and can be sown in autumn from October to November (provided that the soil is still reasonably warm). The aim of sowing in in Autumn is to persuade them to germinate and get a good head start before the very cold weather arrives. Space the seeds about 15-20cm (6-8in) apart in a zigzag fashion, and cover them over with soil. Space additional double rows about 80cm (32in) apart. Broad Bean 'Aquadulce Claudia' is a favourite variety and one of the best for autumn sowing.



**Compost Activators and soil conditioners**

Even the best planned compost heaps need a bit of a kick start, so here are a few ways to do it. All these things will help speed up the process.

To Wee or not to Wee?

**URINE** euch! sounds horrible but if you don't mind weeing in a bucket then this is one of the best starters you can get. Urine is nitrogen based, just don't add too much as it will become too full of nitrogen and rather pongy too!

**CHICKEN DROPPINGS** or rabbit/guniea pig droppings, allotment holders in the north also swear by pigeon poo! All full of nitrogen and should not be used in too large a quantity.

**COMFREY**

Comfrey is excellent for your compost heap and grows easily in the garden or on the allotment. When the plant is large and bushy cut it back quite hard and add to your compost heap. It also has many other uses one being as a good plant feed but beware as it is a deep rooted plant and can be very invasive.

**NETTLES**

Nettles compost really well and are a valuable addition to any compost heap and the best thing is they are easy to find.

If you don't fancy any of the above you can always buy compost starters at you garden centre, but it's definitely worth experimenting to see which works best for you.

**OTHER GOOD THINGS YOU CAN ADD TO YOUR HEAP OR SOIL**

**Mushroom compost**

Makes a good soil conditioner and mulch. This can be purchased from commercial growers or bought in bags from your garden centre.

**Seaweed**

Seaweed has an alginate content which helps bind the soil and improve its structure. It is rich in nitrogen and potassium and can be used fresh (don't let it dry out as it becomes too salty). Never take the seaweed straight from the rocks, collect it from the tideline, also makes a good feed.

**Manure**

Always try to have a muck heap if you can. Don't use fresh manure as it scorches the plants, the best manure is soft, dark and full of worms and should not be smelly. Beware of contaminated manure.

**Other Organic Mulches to try**

**Leaf-mould**, shredded pruning's, bark products, hay and straw.

**Blanket Mulches**

**Polythene sheets**, carpet (not foam backed), newspapers and cardboard.



**Netting on the allotment- what type is best?**

Allotment netting can prove to be one of the best investments you make on your plot. Without it, all the time and effort that you have spent growing fruit and vegetables may result in incredibly happy insects and birds. There are many types of allotment netting each with their own purpose, such as bird netting, butterfly netting, and insect netting.



**Insect Mesh** - Mesh approximately 1mm by 1mm.

Insect netting is a very fine mesh that protects against insects and butterflies and is suitable for crops in the brassica family like sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, and cabbage. Insect netting has UV protection that helps extend its life. It provides some protection against plant damage from wind and has an insulating effect against cold weather. To work well the insect netting needs to be used as soon as the plants are planted. The net needs to be secure around the edges, either by securely weighing down the netting, or by burying it in the soil. Bricks work well to weigh down the net, this will also give you easy access for weeding.

The netting is lightweight and can be suspended on a structure of garden canes or hoops. If using canes, it is worth protecting the caps that touch the net to ensure that these do not damage the mesh.

**Butterfly Netting** - Mesh approximately 7mm by 7mm.

Butterfly netting provides protection for crops often eaten by caterpillars again mostly the brassica family. The mesh is too small for butterflies to enter and lay their eggs on the crops but be careful not to plant your crops too close to the edge of the mesh as butterflies can still land and lay eggs through it. When the caterpillars emerge, they can devastate a crop. Butterfly netting is also relatively expensive compared to bird netting, especially if you intend to purchase a net both wide and long. The cheapest butterfly nets are of the dimension to cover a row or two of your chosen crop and it may be worth pre-planning the size and length of your rows to the size of the cheapest net. Whatever structure is used to support butterfly netting, it is important to securely peg or weigh down the bottom of the net to ensure that there are no gaps.

**Mesh** approximately 20mm by 20mm.

This is the most common type of netting sold in garden centres and DIY shops, its popularity is reflected in the price with many good deals available. The cheapest types of bird netting tend to be in smaller sizes and need to be stretched to reach their full size. There are many stronger and more durable types of bird netting available, which also have the advantage of being easier to use.

Net sizes that are 4m by 6m do tend to give the greatest flexibility when re-using the net around the allotment.

**Pea & Bean Netting** - Mesh approximately 125mm by 125mm.

The cheapest netting to buy owing to its wide gauge. The netting acts both as a climbing support for the plants and as protection against bird attack – especially from larger birds like pigeons. It is best to erect the net at the same time as planting seeds to give the seedlings (and seeds) protection right from the start.

**Protecting wildlife**

Netting can be a serious hazard for birds and other wildlife on the allotment. Always make sure any netting is properly secured as they will find away in. Brick, heavy stones and tent pegs all work well. It is also especially important to check your netting often so you can release any trapped wildlife before it comes to harm.



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