



FOR ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENS NATIONWIDE

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NEWSLETTER

South West
Counties
Allotment
Association

From farmland to allotment

Over 30 councillors, farmers and landowners in Cornwall recently attended a workshop aimed at exploring the pros and cons of diversification in agriculture, specifically the use of farmland as a potential source of allotment land. The event was organised by Groundwork (a national community-oriented foundation whose projects include healthy eating and access to locally grown produce) and the Rural Business School at Cornwall's Duchy College.

The meeting was addressed by Peter Hunkin - SWCAA's Cornwall representative, treasurer of a self-managing scheme and allotment holder for over 28 years - and Kay Hicks, a smallholder who runs the very successful private Chyenhall Allotments situated between Penryn and Truro. Amongst the topics covered were: legalities; management; road access and parking; sheds, structures and toilets; tenancy agreements; rules, responsibilities and procedures; insurance; access paths; communication; water; pesticides and chemicals; livestock; and sustainability of the site/scheme.

SWCAA is keen to support and assist efforts to set up allotments. If you are involved in an allotment project please do not hesitate to contact our office and take full advantage of our advisory resources.

Positive feedback from the audience has prompted Groundwork and Duchy College to offer a repeat of the event elsewhere in the West Country.

About SWCAA

As a well established, not-for-profit Community Interest Company offering a range of advice and services, our main aims are to **promote allotments and the benefits of growing your own** as well as to help **set up new allotment sites** and **protect those under threat**.

We offer...

- Membership of SWCAA from just £3 per individual per year – includes FREE Public Liability Insurance *Discounts available for groups of 60 or more*
- The chance to become part of a nationally recognised organisation
- An allotment administration service
- Employers liability insurance for £10 per year
- Discounted seed scheme with DT Brown's
- Help /advice for local authorities plus affiliation and collaboration scheme

We can assist you with...

- Setting up a new site from scratch
- Starting an association
- Help and support with legal issues
- Fighting the closure of a site
- Constitutions and tenancy agreements
- Working alongside your local council to improve your allotment site

Included in this issue:

- Seasonal growing tips
- Dealing with uncultivated plots

For a regularly updated treasure trove of practical information and advice on all aspects of allotment gardening, go to:

www.swcaa.co.uk

Beekeeping on allotments

With the increasing interest and enthusiasm for beekeeping nationwide, many allotment holders are considering beekeeping on their allotments. Whilst there is no allotment legislation, even on statutory sites, to allow this "as of right" it is always worth approaching your landlord.

The British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) offers excellent practical advice to allotment managers in the form of a straightforward pamphlet outlining what is involved.

Anyone considering taking up beekeeping – on an allotment, in the garden or in an out-apiary – would be well advised to enrol on one of the many "Beekeeping for Beginners" courses that are run all over the country during the winter. These courses provide all the information needed to help you decide if beekeeping is for you and the commitment and responsibilities involved.

Further information can be found on the SWCAA website or contact the BBKA on 02476 696 679 or visit their website at www.bbka.org.uk

Contact us

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Phone: **01271 379997** or **01271 327087**

Post: Address all postal correspondence to the SWCAA registered office (below).

Skype: **swcaa-cic**

Office: **Monday to Thursday, 9.30am till 3pm**
– at the Castle Centre, Barnstaple

If you wish to contact us outside these hours please leave a message on our answering service and we will always call you back.

Help us to help you

Please consider making a donation to SWCAA to help us continue to provide this valuable service. Donations can be made online via the link on our homepage at www.swcaa.co.uk or by sending a cheque made payable to SWCAA.

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Seasonal tips for winter on the allotment

1. If you are a "digger" try to get all digging completed before the ground gets too wet or frozen.
2. If you are a "non-digger" try to prevent nutrients washing out of the soil by covering it in some way. You may have done this already by planting green manure or spreading compost or dung. Alternatively, you could cover the ground with membrane of some kind.
3. Complete any pruning of trees and bushes.
4. Collect leaves to make leaf mould
5. Check the security of fences, sheds, polytunnels, greenhouses, frames, etc. before the winter gales really begin.
6. Carry out any repairs to deep beds, paths and structures. Don't leave it until the spring – you'll be too busy planting.
7. What's done well and what's not succeeded this year? Use this information when planting next year's crops.
8. Order seeds, seed potatoes, onion sets and shallots – or at least admire all the catalogues to decide what you'd like to try next season.
9. Add allotment items to your Christmas list!!



What to do and sow now

- Pull up runner bean plants and put them on the compost heap. Store the poles in a dry place for next year.
- Avola or Meteor Pea can be sown now for the earliest crops. These varieties are hardy and reliable. Expect some losses so sow extra seed to compensate. If you have clay soil it may pay to sow the seed into a length of guttering filled with good compost. Line the bottom with newspaper and you should find that the young plants and compost slide out into a shallow trench.
- Winter salads can be soon under cloches or in the polytunnel; these include winter purslane, lambs lettuce, land cress, giant red mustard, chicory, endive and mizua.
- Sow mustard & cress for a nutritious salad or garnish. Grow them on a window sill in damp kitchen roll lined trays or punnets. Sow thickly but sow the mustard 2 days later. Cover the seeds with paper until the seeds are 25mm [1"] high then remove the covering. Keep moist by regular watering. This is a good way to get young children interested in gardening and produces quick results – and tastes delicious too!
- Aquadulce broad beans can be sown now. Autumn sowing will produce the earliest crop and helps avoid attack from black fly.
- Plant garlic and Japanese onion sets and sow overwinter green manures.

Warming autumn recipe

Pumpkin Muffins - makes 12

3 tbsps vegetable oil, 5 tbsps brown sugar;
2 tbsps maple syrup, 165g pumpkin (cooked & puréed), 1 egg,
110ml condensed milk (unsweetened),
½ teaspoon vanilla extract;



½ teaspoon nutmeg, 2½ teaspoons baking powder,
½ teaspoon cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon salt, 155g plain flour,
4 tablespoons chopped nuts.

Preparation: **20 mins** | Cooking: **20 mins**

1. Beat oil and brown sugar together
2. Add and beat syrup, pumpkin, egg, condensed milk and vanilla
3. Fold in baking powder, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, flour and nuts
4. Spoon into muffin cases, cook at 190°C / Gas 5 for 20 minutes and cool on a rack in cases

Fairness when evicting for 'plot uncultivated'

Legally a plot is worked if 51% is dug over. In practice up to a third left fallow is in a sense cultivated too. So perhaps the vital rule for fair eviction is *cutting weeds to prevent seeding*, rather than just area dug.

A weed is a plant in the wrong place, and not all "weeds" need removing! Dandelions are good in salads: their roots draw up minerals and can also be cooked. Chickweed is fine for hens and for salad (but avoid poisonous scarlet pimpernels). Nettles make an early spring spinach and encourage hoverflies which eat aphids. With companion planting there are many other examples.

Sound cultivation is a question of balance. Plans for a wild garden sown from prepared seed are best kept to a patch used for conservation (corn cockles, orchids, field pansies) and for wild life, not on a plot. Some plants are grown for culinary seed now, not just the leaves; and fat hen is cooked as a vegetable in natural food restaurants as well grown for poultry use.

So before trying to get someone thrown off, it is worth checking that it is deliberate neglect and a real uncut weed threat - not untidiness, unusual crop practices, illness or family crisis.

SWCAA allotment site register



Please register your allotment site and association with us and we will add you to our National register.

We hope to build a comprehensive guide to all the allotment sites across the country.

Full details can be found on our website (below).