

ROEHAMPTON GARDEN SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1873

MONTHLY BULLETIN

March 2021

www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

Chair's Report



It is with a certain feeling of relief that our members who are over 70 and some younger have been vaccinated. However, we can't totally relax and be comfortable with this horrible unpredictable virus in our midst. We

are so fortunate that our activity is gardening that we can continue in spite of Covid and have some social contact at a distance on the allotment sites. And spring is on its way!

By now you should have received your invoice for rent and or membership. Almost all were sent via email so if you haven't received your invoice please do check your junk or spam folder. The invoice is attached to a 'do not reply' email so your computer may have thought it was junk or your email provider may have disallowed it. If having checked and it definitely has not arrived please email to rgs.sw15@gmail.com or message me at 07736 422 373. Many members have paid already - many thanks to you for your prompt payment. When making a payment the bank now checks not only the account number and sort code but also the name of the recipient. Generally, 'RGS' has been working but a few members have found they have to type in the full name 'Roehampton Garden Society' or as much as the bank system will allow of the full name. This year we decided not to accept cheques as well as cash. Apart from cross contamination risk, cheques often are incorrectly written and I am sure you can imagine that getting cheques corrected is another task we can all do without. Also, there is a risk that cheques, being little pieces of paper, go

astray. Having money transferred directly by the bank is far less error prone and gives a clear audit trail for both sides of the transaction.

The communal areas on both allotment sites are progressing. We still have a bit of finishing off to do and expect to have power on site 3 by the end of March. Hopefully we will be able to enjoy a cup of tea in the sunshine soon.

Although we have not opened the store properly yet the 'Click and Collect' system has been much appreciated by members and is working very well indeed. We owe a huge 'thank you' to the team led by Jackie Savage making this happen. Opening of the store and the toilets are under review but we have no definite plans as yet.

Not long now until the new season gets going and we will be enjoying the sunshine as will our lovely plants. Roll on spring!

Helen Finch, RGS Chair



A snowy site 2 on 24th January

Store Report

We had a delivery in early January which I am pleased to say delivered almost everything that I ordered. Given my experience in 2020 that was not expected!

The popular Growing Success Advanced Slug Killer and the Organic Slug Stop Barrier Pellets, both of which were unavailable last year, are now in stock. We also have a choice of green or red 10 litre watering cans.



We also have a couple of new products. Citrox Greenhouse and Garden Cleaner is a natural disinfectant which contains extracts of citrus fruit and is ideal for cleaning

greenhouses, disinfecting bird feeders, plant pots and trays. It can also be added to water butts (25ml per 100 litres). It is safe for children, pets and pondlife and is £6.00 for a 500 ml bottle. Each bottle dilutes to make 10 litres of disinfectant.



I have been looking for some time for a bug killer that was not harmful to birds and bees. We now have Provanto Ultimate

Bug Killer which is a contact insecticide which can protect from pests for up to 2 weeks. It used to contain Thiacloprid, a neonicotinoid harmful to bees. It now contains Deltamethrin which was found to be harmful to bees in laboratory conditions, but was not toxic to bees in field studies or to birds. Like all pesticides, it should be used with care.

Seed composts are proving very popular this year as more people grow their own. We have recently had a delivery of both Gro-Sure Seed and Cutting, John Innes Seed and SylvaGrow composts as we try and keep up with demand.

We have had to increase some of our prices. The cost of Country Natural increased from 1st January, the first time for several years and is now £3.75. Our main supplier increased its prices from 1st February. The Gro-Sure Seed and Cutting Compost is now £3.75 and the John Innes Seed Compost £4.50. Other price increases will follow as we get new stock in.

As I write this, we are not sure when we will feel it is safe to reopen the Store. However, we hope to be able to continue with 'Click and Collect' which has been a great way of offering potatoes, garlic and shallots this time of year and, of course, Country Natural. We must thank all the volunteers who have made this happen. It is no mean feat!

Gill Tamsett – Trading Secretary

Click and collect in Lockdown 3

Once we realised that we would not be able to open our stores after Christmas, and we had received the delivery of seed potatoes, spring sowing garlic, onions and shallots, we decided to put together a team to offer a limited selection of goods to sell as well as the perishables.

Jean designed the user-friendly order form for the website and we are sending it out each Monday. Your response has been amazing. The orders were bagged on a Friday and then Greg made sure the bulky items were over in site 3 stores ready for

him to put them on plots on the Sunday. Time slots were emailed and 2 volunteers served in the store on Sundays. It is organised so that there is minimal contact and handling.

Country Natural has been extremely popular – I think that this is because, not only is it an excellent product, but also because we have, despite all efforts, been able to source any fresh manure this year. Greg has kept up the supplies of Country Natural and we have placed orders for replacement general stock with our main horticultural supplier and Kings Seeds. However, once the potatoes etc are sold out they will not be replaced.

Once we feel it is safe to re-open the store we will do so, but it will be with restrictions of course. Let's hope this is at Easter, or maybe earlier? But in the meantime, we have had fun organising the click and collect and thank you for your response in supporting the store through difficult times.

The RGS store team: Gill, Greg, Helen, Georgina, Vivien, Carol, Jean, Ali, Emma and Jackie.

Orders ready for collection from the store.



See the RGS website for jobs to do this month

<http://www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk/growing-things/plot-jobs-month-by-month/>

Clifford Pope – A Man for all Reasons



Clifford Pope (known as Cliff) was a gifted and highly respected electrical engineer and electronics enthusiast. Noted for the development of an innovative utility maintenance system, from 1982 Cliff acted as chief electrician and utility controller of the sixteen-floor corporate block incorporating the Museum of London at London Wall. Receiving over one million visitors a year, the museum houses the largest urban history collection in the world, documenting the history of our capital city from prehistoric to modern times with more than six million objects. Until his retirement in 1993, Cliff supervised the seamless operation of the utility system at this august establishment.

Following his retirement, Cliff modestly embraced the simple pleasures of a quiet, unhurried, outdoor life. Once a week, he would navigate his 36-foot sailing boat to many of his favourite haunts including the Channel Islands, France, Holland, the Scilly Isles and the East Coast. Daring to ignore the old adage which warns that a name change will bring misfortune, Cliff

emblazoned his vessel with a brand-new moniker. Shortly thereafter, while moored at Gosport Cruising Club, the boat sank. The demise of his vessel marked the sad end of Cliff's seafaring days. The reason for her sinking, however, remains a mystery to this day.

Switching sea legs for walking boots, Cliff and his wife, Jill, could be found meandering through the hills at Polesdon Lacey or venturing intrepidly to the top of Box Hill or gathering factual and/or anecdotal data on the history of Wimbledon Common on guided walks with one of the Commons Rangers. When they were not walking, Cliff and Jill settled happily into gardening on their Site 3 plot. For a time, Cliff acted as head of security for the RGS. Collaborating with locksmiths, he devised a new, more effective security system for the gates. This was achieved through the provision of keys that could not be duplicated without the production of a license. This system is still in use today. In addition, for those with long memories of the days of 'bucket and chuck it', Cliff built properly insulated lavatories on Site 2 and Site 3. They remain standing today as testimony to Cliff's considerable construction skills and to the very great relief of all of the tenants on both sites.

Fond of recycling, Cliff re-built the greenhouse cum potting shed on his and Jill's plot using salvaged windows and timbers. He then installed a solar panel operated irrigation system for ease of maintenance of their greenhouse plants. A significant feature of this system is a regular and loud ticking, eerily reminiscent of a time bomb and which, one might suspect, could act as a deterrent against unwelcome visitors.

The division of labour and teamwork on Cliff and Jill's plot was undisputed. Jill cultivated the plot while Cliff concentrated on construction matters. Thanks to Jill's considerable endeavours, fruit trees were

planted including an extremely fecund apricot tree. In addition to vegetables, she filled the plot with a dizzying array of pollinating plants including lavender, forget-me-nots, cosmos, geums, foxgloves, bluebells and penstemons. Meanwhile, Cliff was busy building climbing structures for Jill's clematis, honeysuckle and wisteria as well as an elaborate beehive for his first swarm of bees. With a few stings along the way, he and Jill were rewarded each year with a generous supply of very palatable honey. Unfortunately, in 2016, Cliff was diagnosed with lymphoma. The bees, sadly, did not survive that winter while Cliff no longer had the energy to cope with managing another swarm.

Cliff liked nothing better than to sit and enjoy gourmet food and lively conversation with Jill and/or friends in convivial surroundings. To be able to enjoy these outings or simply relax in one or other of his favourite European cities was the icing on his cake, especially following his treatment for lymphoma. Having survived eighteen months of chemotherapy and assured by his oncologist that he would not die of lymphoma but would die with it, contracting Covid-19 was a cruel blow. The struggle to survive it was an altogether different battle.

Just two days before he died and still in the hospital double room which he was sharing with his beloved Jill, Cliff promised "When we get out of here, we'll go to Florence." Finally deciding to discontinue the aggressive Covid treatment and turning to Jill he said "I can't fight this anymore." That unwelcome and most unforgiving beast from which Cliff and Jill had isolated so valiantly during each lockdown, on this occasion, showed no mercy. It claimed Cliff's life on the 25th January 2021. He will be remembered as a neighbour in a million who would always go the extra mile for a fellow allotmentee in need while his strength allowed.

During a conversation on their plot last autumn, Cliff commented on the necessity to settle his affairs should the worst happen to which Jill responded "I am not planning on becoming a widow any day soon!" In this current Covid climate, her remark serves as a chilling reminder of the arbitrary nature of life and death.

Catherine Maunsell-Bower

Visit to the Garden Museum

I went to the museum between lock downs – well worth a visit. (ed)



This took me back to my Saturday job in Woolies. They used to be the biggest sellers of seeds and tools in the UK.



A beautiful cloche



A bit drastic, I wonder if it did what it says on the tin!



Seeds for some varieties we don't see so much anymore.

Welcome to new plot holders

Site 2

Helen Dunn
David & Zoe Poulton
Rosie Reames Kangis
Henrietta Evans & Matthew Jones

Site 3

Rosalind & Jake Holmes
Cristiano Kegler
Vincent Francois

Wild life spotting

I discovered this chap about 2" deep while sharpening a path edge with a spade. It was nearly two toads!

Georgina, Site 2



Let's all look out for Hedgehogs

They are on the endangered species list but we can all do small things to help them survive.

HELPING HEDGEHOGS - POST HIBERNATION

Hedgehogs typically hibernate through winter when food is scarce, emerging between March and May depending on many factors including environment, gender and health. We hope our hedgehogs are sleeping through the icy chills of February however with milder days on the horizon some may be roused only to find the ground is still hard and insects few and far between. When hedgehogs wake from their long sleep, they are depleted of essential body fats, requiring urgent hydration and nourishment. Starving hedgehogs are forced to eat slugs and snails which can contain lungworm and when left untreated, will result in painful death. Thankfully we can help by giving cat/dog wet food and/or dry cat biscuits and putting out shallow dishes of fresh water. Contrary to popular myth hedgehogs should not have milk as they are lactose intolerant and bread, sunflower seeds, raisins, mealworms and peanuts should also be avoided as they can cause various health problems. Food should be given at dusk/night preferably under a waterproof shelter such as a plastic box turned upside down with a 13cm x 13cm hole cut in one side - this is called a Feeding Station. Bowls should be cleaned daily and with food such as supermarket own brand kitten biscuits for 99p a box, there should be something suitable for most pockets.

Hedgehogs need good shelter to protect against inclement weather and predation. Permitting an area of your garden to become a little overgrown with long grasses, shrubs, brambles and logs gives hedgehogs space to rest and make nests. You may wish to provide a hedgehog house which should be situated in a quiet space with its back to the north wind however, please do think twice before using igloo hedgehog houses, there are reports of hedgehogs injured on the wire structures. Of course, hedgehogs cannot find refuge in your garden if they cannot get into it so please ensure you have access for hedgehogs to find

their way in - a hole in your garden fence, a tunnel under walls or netting or perhaps raising your garden gate a few more inches; these access points are known as Hedgehog Highways. Encouraging your neighbours to create hedgehog highways is an excellent way to help, the more hedgehog highways the better chances of hedgehogs surviving. We must also be mindful that hedgehogs do not have the instinct of fight or flight but instead, will use their spines as protection. When danger is detected a hedgehog will roll into a prickly, tight ball and waits until it is safe to move on. Tragically this does nothing to protect against strimmers, lawn mowers, bonfires, cars and the many other human activities that we do so please take care when driving and gardening, check before cutting the grass, check bonfires before lighting - then check and check again. Garden ponds which are wonderful for wildlife including hedgehogs, can become very dangerous without an escape route, bearing in mind hoggies will be snuffling around in the dark, nose close to the ground and not particularly looking where they are going, another reason to keep on with those litter picks! Remember it is unlikely a hedgehog will run for safety when threatened and every year we see increased numbers of hedgehogs killed or maimed from gardening, cars, ponds, litter and bonfire incidents.



Hedgehogs are greatly impacted by humans - lack of food, water and suitable habitat, use of pesticides and fragmentation of land have seen their rapid demise and now after 15 million years living here in the UK, hedgehogs are declared vulnerable to extinction. We are extremely lucky to have a hedgehog population in Dover House Road and parts of SW15 and this is largely due to those who have created hedgehog highways, provide shelter, food and water and understand that we each have a responsibility to share our environment. SW15 Hedgehogs are here for hedgehogs and to offer advice and practical help to as many local people as we can so please do get in touch if you need a hand or if you see a sick or injured hedgehog.

Jackie and Nigel, SW15 Hedgehogs

If you see a distressed hedgehog let Jackie know on saveourhedgehogs@gmail.com or call 07748 903660

Recipe

Leek and potato soup

This is a good time to make soup with any maincrop potatoes you have left, plus leeks which are still around. It is chunky, not pureed. (Sarah Raven)

Ingredients, serves 4

5 leeks
2 medium potatoes, cut into small chunks
4 stems of celery (including leaves)
500 ml vegetable or chicken stock
300 ml milk
Salt and pepper
1 clove garlic
2 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp crème fraiche
Small bunch of lovage or celery leaf as substitute
1 large sprig of thyme, remove leaves
1 bay leaf

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the leeks, celery, lovage, garlic, bay leaf and thyme. Cook for 3 minutes whilst stirring.

Pour in the stock and bring to the boil. Turn down and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the potato and milk, stir and simmer for 10 minutes or until the potato is tender.

Stir in the crème fraiche, taste and season with salt and pepper.

Remove the bay leaf and serve with a swirl of crème fraiche in each bowl.

6 Week Organic Food Growing Course 24th April

Starts again for 2021 on Saturday 24th April at Carshalton Community Allotment and runs over 6 consecutive Saturdays for. From beginners to the more knowledgeable gardener, you'll have the chance to learn eco-friendly gardening methods, including crop rotation, no-dig methods and organic planting techniques.

Teaching is a mixture of theory and practice, allowing students to try out the skills they learn, understanding how to plan, so they can make the most of their veg patch at home or their allotment.

Our course is Covid-safe, with theory taught live via Zoom and students learning the practical elements outdoors, with social distancing observed on the Community Allotment.

" I had only just got an allotment so the 6 lessons were exactly in line with what I needed."

The course is organised by EcoLocal, a Carshalton based charity.

For further information and to book visit: www.ecolocal.org.uk/highlight/organic-food-growing-course/ or facebook.com/ecolocal

Enquiries email: food@ecolocal.org.uk
or telephone 020 8404 1522
Cost £80 per person

The RGS Committee 2020/21	
Committee member	Office/role
<i>Helen Finch</i>	<i>Chair</i>
<i>Jackie Savage</i>	<i>Vice Chair, Store Seeds, Waiting List Secretary and RGS email account</i>
<i>Dorcas Johnson</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>
<i>Catherine Maunsell-Bower</i>	<i>Site 2 Secretary and Legal</i>
<i>Alison Linton</i>	<i>Site 3 Secretary (plots 101 to 127))</i>
<i>Vivien Fowler</i>	<i>Site 3 Secretary (plots 50 to 100)</i>
<i>Carol Martinez</i>	<i>Bulletin Editor and Show Chair</i>
<i>Gill Tamsett</i>	<i>Trading Secretary</i>
<i>Patrick Crawford</i>	<i>Buildings, Facilities and Lease Negotiator</i>
<i>Greg Wilcox</i>	<i>Store Manager</i>
<i>Brenna Lattimore</i>	<i>Events</i>
<i>Emma Blackwell</i>	
<i>Mike Cooper</i>	<i>Security Manager</i>
Non-Voting officers:	
<i>Jean Crawford</i>	<i>Website manager</i>
<i>Robert Linton</i>	<i>Membership secretary</i>
<i>Charles Gillbe</i>	<i>Site Manager appointed by Enable [WBC])</i>

RGS CONTACTS

Committee Chair: Helen Finch.

Site 2 Allotment Secretary: Catherine Maunsell-Bower.

Site 3 Joint Allotment Secretaries:
Vivian Fowler & Alison Linton

Site Manager: Charles Gilbe
Comments or questions for Chair and/or Committee via website:
rgs.sw15@gmail.com

All policies and procedures are on our website.

www.roehamptonallotments.co.uk

RGS ADDRESS AND POST BOX
(Fixed to the right of the gate at site 2)
Roehampton Garden Society
The Pleasance Allotments
The Pleasance, London SW15 5HF

BASIC RULES FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL COHESION ON OUR ALLOTMENT SITES

- Respect the rights and belongings of other plot- holders.
- No dogs without leads.
- No unsupervised children.
- Lock the gate behind you.
- Dispose of your own rubbish.
- No structures to be erected or trees to be planted without permission of your Site Secretary.

If you think someone is breaking the rules contact a committee member or me, Helen Finch, rather than confront another plot holder. Helen.finch2@btinternet.com 07736 422373

SECURITY

If you see someone trespassing or causing damage on the Sites, or in an emergency phone 999 or text phone 18000.

NEXT BULLETIN

April 2021. Editor Carol Martinez.
Email stories and photos to carolmartinez@hotmail.co.uk by 12th April 2021. Recipe suggestions always welcome.