

travelled happily by special postal delivery. I installed it at my back door, with a fanfare to my long-suffering neighbours and a notice inviting them to contribute into a special NEW bin alongside. There would be regular newsletters posted on the lid as to their progress but an initial 'Please don't examine them until they're settled down!' The teenage daughters of my immediate neighbour looked horrified when I offered them a peek, and I realized that of course, to them, it's a specialized fascination reserved for oldies without enough excitement in their lives.

I had set them up really well with all sorts of specially saved treats and carefully torn up bits of tissue and deliciously well-rotted mouldy bits. Of course, one mustn't overdo it at any one time. They take their time to munch through the yucky bits. I did wonder about a smell developing and when the hot weather came, sure enough I had to move it further down into the garden, and started worrying about shade. I draped a big piece of horticultural fleece over the bin, and that flapped in any breeze, but I hoped it would serve to deflect excessive heat. Not enough, I fear... We had a heat wave. I went away and temporarily neglected them. Indeed, I suppose I forgot about them!

I'm not sure what happened to them. I assume they burrow deep down into the muck that's there. I couldn't see any evidence of worms when I examined the surface of dryish, more or less composted material. I grieved a little, and felt a little ashamed. I should have done more to ensure their well-being instead of gallivanting off to festivals. But come a change of season, I imported a few from the BOG compost bins and another burst of well-meaning effort ensured they had food treats. And behold, after yet another hot dry spell, enough of them seem to have survived [and bred?] More cardboard, and judicious chopped veg, old humous and soup ends to ensure a writhing, scurrying, feasting population of healthy-looking invertebrates. And quite a bit of liquid from the base to feed my begonias –the only flowers to have survived to this end of the season...

Now I just have to ensure I get my Wiggly friends through the winter.

Verona Bass



BOG Newsletter October 2006

Affiliated to
Garden Organic (formerly HDRA),
Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry CV8 3LG
and

The Soil Association, Bristol House, 40-56 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6BY

A word from your temporary, part-time, overweight, acting chair

A lot has happened since the last newsletter and a lot was supposed to have happened and fortunately doesn't seem to have. Starting with what is not going to happen – it seems our petitions and pleas did not fall on deaf ears and plans for a new footpath across the allotments have been shelved. In exchange we have had an influx of slow worms that have been trapped on the Western Riverside site and relocated to Lower Common – hopefully Sheila will get them to pay their membership or they won't be able to vote at the AGM.

A very large 'thank you' goes to Tim Baines. As you will notice he is not so evident on the demonstration garden, he has decided to cut down on his BOGgery and is no longer on the committee. We will sadly miss him; the amount he has done for the group is immeasurable. But of course, being Tim, he is up to all sorts of other organic stuff and very much in evidence, thank goodness.

My last and most pleasant duty is to remind you that Bath Organic Group AGM is to be held on 10th December 2006 from 1 pm to 3.30 pm at the Widcombe Studios, Comfortable Place.

This year we will try and make it more a celebration of things organic and good friends rather than a celebration of bureaucracy and officialdomness. So, turn up at 1 o'clock with something really nice to eat and drink – preferably with an organic or home grown element and we will have a special shared meal until 2.15 pm followed by a small but perfectly formed AGM. Partners and friends very much welcome and they can stay on if they want to for the formal bit of the afternoon or take a spin round the delightful Organic Demonstration Garden. Sadly we can't let them vote at the AGM but then maybe, like the slow worms, they don't want to.

As usual it falls to me to remind you, dear members, that the success of BOG is heavily reliant on volunteers standing on the committee or putting their name forward to help person events. Please don't say you are too busy – it does imply that the rest of us stand about with nothing else to do in our lives but write newsletters, turn up at the market, show schoolkids round the site etc. If you value the organic movement in Bath give us a couple of hours a month – who cares if Ed Grundy's ferret has had a sex change and run off with Ruth Archer – you really don't want to know and we need you. Let me know, at the usual number, if you will help.

Look forward to seeing you all at the AGM with plates brimming with Bath's finest produce.

Peter Andrews 01225 319117 [email : peter@eco-logicbooks.com]

and monster squashes, potatoes galore and a desperate search for things to do with mangolds. Digging for next year is in sight and the heap of manure should be well rotted by now and easy to work in.

So what have I learnt from my first year of my own plot?

- * it's very quiet on the allotments on a frosty December morning
- * digging is very good exercise
- * plant short rows regularly or run the risk of having too much of a good thing
- * allotment holders seem to be quite territorial, if you don't have neighbours it can be difficult to meet people (might just be me though)
- * no 2 plots are alike
- * get an allotment, get a job for life!

Dan Smith

Another Saga.

This time it's about a wormery. Peter Andrews did tell us it was A GOOD THING to have a wormery in the spring newsletter! At Envolve I had experience of one that was circular and in layers. That's what I pictured when I replied to an ad. in the paper selling one for a mere £20. My environmental conscience leads me a merry dance sometimes, so I drove out to Batheaston to collect the said object. It looked like a mini-refuse bin B&NES style. But I went along with the seller's cheerful suggestion that I just needed to send away for a few bits from the Wiggly Wigglers catalogue. £20 left my purse, and caution was also thrown to the winds. [www.wigglywiggles.co.uk] The die was cast.

I sent away for the 'Restart' package when things have gone wrong... and that entailed a liner bag, a special jute covering mat, a set of round pebbles for drainage like the little balls you use to bake pastry blind, and some dry bits that look like animal feed pellets, and of course a starter kit of worms! Reader, I trouble you not with the amount I spent. I'm too embarrassed. It was more than the whole lot would have cost in the first place!

But a day later it all arrived and amazingly, a set of wriggles had

My First Year on my own Allotment

Aug 26th - At last I've got my own plot after a 12 month wait. 204 Lower Common East - now to find it. It's not on the plans of the site and a quick call to the allotments officer reveals it's a bit of ground that hasn't been used for a while, coming back into production.

First of all I need to mark my territory so a quick trip to the DIY store to get some house numbers and fix them to a post on the corner of my plot. So bright one September morn I borrow a fork from the BOG garden and start digging the (rock hard) ground and give up after turning over 4 square yards. A few days later I get a call saying I've been digging the wrong plot (205) so I shift my marker and prepare to start again. Sadly, my plot doesn't have any immediate neighbours (other than cherry trees on one side and unused ground on all other

Two trailer loads of manure are delivered and a load of green-waste compost also arrives. September, October & November descend into pattern of double digging, stone removal and digging in of manure during which I break a brand new fork and build up some good digging calluses. I undertake my first planting efforts - raspberries, fruit bushes and strawberries and I mulch with some geo-textile stuff. By the end of December I've dug over two thirds of the plot and built a couple of raised beds from recycled plastic boards.

In January I erect a little polycarbonate glazed greenhouse and install a water butt. By the end of February all the plot is dug over (apart from the bit under the dung heap) and planting begins: garlic, parsnips and early peas (under fleece). By the end of March planting is in full sway with potatoes, radishes, onions and more roots (carrots, hamburg parsley, sal-sify, scorzonera & mangolds) in the ground and tender stuff being started on window sills and in a propagator at home. April sees the first crop - fresh radishes - and yet more planting - brassicas, peas, celery, celeriac, tomatoes, peppers (hot & sweet) and aubergines in the greenhouse. May passes and pretty much everything else has been planted out - beans, sweetcorn, cucumbers, gherkins, squashes. Harvesting begins in earnest with early spuds, peas and saladings. An automatic watering system is installed in the greenhouse and run off a water butt. June descends into a frenzy of watering and produce removal, followed by July and August with gluts of tomatoes, beans and courgettes.

Looking ahead as I write this, September is going to be full of sweetcorn

Nominations for the committee would be very welcome - if you feel you would like to join the committee please phone Sylvia Hudnott, 01761 470847.

We do need someone to come forward as Chair. Peter Andrews has been Acting Chair for more than three years. If anyone is interested in this position, please speak to Peter Andrews for more information

Since the Organic Community was established in 1990 Tim Baines has coordinated activities almost every Saturday. He asked that now members be responsible for the Saturday programme. So far, experienced Boggers have done this but we would like more members to join us. Why not come down to the Garden and find out? A typical morning will include hoeing, weeding, planting, watering, Harvesting. It's not all work though - there's a lengthy tea break to catch up on all the gossip. And then the best bit - you take a share of the harvest home. So... when will we see you? Sheila



Training Day: Monday 25th Sept

BOG played host to a group of people who had elected to come on a training day arranged by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. Tim Baines and Pauline Markovits from Bristol arranged the programme. It was held on . and attended by about 10 people. The Schoolhouse over the road at Widcombe studios was a convenient venue for the introductory session, discussions and lunch. However the delegates were conducted round the community garden, and later given a composting workshop. The garden looked great on a sunny day, what with apples dropping off the trees, asking to be eaten, and evidence of the season's hard work in the vegetable beds.

The group considered all sorts of aspects of setting up and maintaining a community venture similar to this one, including how to work with volunteers, how to cope with vandalism and how to publicise itself.

A group of BOG volunteers had agreed to be in the garden, to provide lunch and press some apple juice for the visitors. At the end during the feedback period it was unanimously agreed that the lunch had been marvellous. It was the first thing they commented on! (Good food always works wonders!) Tim said that as much produce from the garden as possible had been used.

I was impressed. The visitors were impressed. Every time I see how much has been achieved in 16 years I marvel.
Report by Verona Bass

Cook your way out of a pest problem

The drought means it has not been a good year for *Oniscus asellus* and *Porcellio scaber*, apparently, but the crop in this area seems as good as ever.

So what's the best way to cook them?

Or would they be better as pets?

Take away the Latin and you may be more familiar with them as tiggys, parsons-pigs, sow-bugs, grammer sows, gramphers or just plain woodlice.

Gardeners in other parts of the country seem to be pretty untroubled by clumsy crustaceans: Throw a question about them to a visiting expert and they usually declare them totally harmless, before flinching under a torrent of denial from locals who know better.

The RHS view is don't worry. Grow Organic doesn't even mention them on its website.

Clearing out a neglected potting shed recently gave an indication of just how large the population can be, given the right conditions. Apart from the scurrying masses every time a new corner was disturbed, there were drifts of ex-woodlice and a nasty musty smell – and that wasn't damp.

Which led to a quick Google for more information, the woodlice home page, pet advice, and eventually to recipes for dishes like woodlice fritters and scones. Yummee.

Remember to keep them on clean paper and feed with potato for a number of days before the feast, by the way.

'Apparently they smell of fish as they cook and add a crunchy texture and a slight fishy taste to the food' says Greg (o surname) on his New Zealand site, admitting that he hasn't tried them himself but got them from a survival recipe book. What kind of survivor with all the ingredients

No mention of lentils is complete without a recipe for 'fakes' – pronounced fackéz - a Greek soup that makes ambrosia taste like a creamed rice. This recipe was taught to me by my extraordinarily parsimonious landlady when I lived in Smalltown, Northern Greece. Cheap and tasty, even the poorest organic gardener should be able to afford a bowl or two.

Take an onion or two and a couple of cloves of garlic. Chop finely. Put a generous amount of vegetable oil in the bottom of a large pan and cook the onions gently until translucent. Add a cup of brown lentils and 2 litres of stock, or even water, if you are stockless. If you are feeling particularly flush throw in a bay leaf or two. Cover and boil until the lentils are very tender and the soup looks like soup. Season and serve – and here's the bit that really counts – into each bowl

of soup mix a spoonful of wine or cider vinegar and a spoonful of the best oil you have in your hovel. I always leave a bowl out for the fairies at the bottom of my garden because they just love it.

Peter Andrews
Eco-logic books mail order organic gardening and other practical environmental books
www.eco-logicbooks.com



**Believe it or not this is
the yellow lentil**



THANK YOU

... to all those who have contributed articles to this newsletter. Please keep them coming! Deadline for next newsletter Feb 10th. Please email your contributions to gill@hypnotherapy-bath.co.uk, or post to Gill Ruffles, 8 Bloomfield Ave, Bath BA2 3AB

Organic Way Issue 185 (or is it 186?)

I had never heard of lentils until the late 60s. I was walking down Erdington High Street, looking rather natty in my new college scarf, when an uncouth fellow shouted words to the effect that all students should return from whence they came. Also, as far as he was concerned, I was a 'lentil eating fairy'. I knew what a fairy was as we had them at the bottom of our garden, but a lentil, now what was that?

Of course, times have changed and the lentil has become common currency, the culinary mainstay of many families. I even heard J. Oliver mention them on his TV programme.

The lentil plant *Lens Culinaris* is a low growing member of the pea family cultivated for the seeds which are formed in small pods. It is named after its shape which is like the lens in your eye. It was one of the first plants us humans cultivated, lentil remains have been found in a 10,000 year old bijou cave dwelling in Greece. It was grown here in Britain until relatively recently.

In fact, I have even grown them in my garden, with mixed success. Apparently they will grow anywhere but prefer sandy soil in a warm sheltered climate. The real problem is that growing enough of them in your garden to make a decent meal is a real performance. This is probably why they are now produced in places where labour is cheap – like India or where fields are vast and machinery sophisticated, like Canada.

We generally interface with 3 kinds of lentil: the brown – big, beefy and wholesome; the red – smaller and slightly sweeter, it very easily cooks down to a mush and the green; often called 'Puy' the Rolls Royce of lentils, delightful in salads. There is a less common fourth, the beautiful, black 'Beluga' which glistens when cooked and when skinned and split becomes the 'White'.

for plain scones craves a fishy crunch, 'like whitebait'?

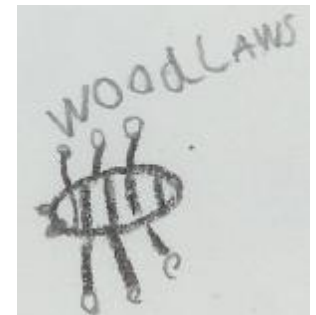
Closer to home Julie Curl on the woodlice home page gets quite dewy eyed about her woodlice pets who have become used to her observing every facet of their life, including a detailed account of their foreplay rituals (a bit of antenna waving and tapping. This could just as well be interpreted as 'where the devil are you?' considering that it all happens in pitch darkness. Thanks also to Dr Gruner of Berlin for providing the woodlouse equivalent of the Khama Sutra. A slim volume.

Predators? Well that's the good news because as well as having greedier woodlice, apparently, than any other part of the country, we also have an extra predator in *Dysdera crocata*, that slow-moving brick red spider with an outsize abdomen that occurs only in the south and particularly the south-west. Its strong jaws enable it to pierce the carapace of the woodlouse and inject a poison that kills it in seconds. It gives a nasty nip to a human too. Ouch.

Woodlice also form a large part of the diet for common shrews, hedgehogs, toads, frogs, newts and lizards. They can be a snack for little owls and foxes.

And of course there is an upside. Though it is difficult to think positively when a row of seedlings has been destroyed by a squad of bumbling woodlice they do come into their own in the autumn when they devour damp leaf litter as fast as any worms.

Back to Julie Curl, the unofficial publicity officer for woodlice. She says: 'Woodlice belong to a group of animals known as decomposers, they chew dead wood and plants and deposit these as faecal pellets which decompose rapidly, speeding up the decomposition process and quickly adding essential nutrients to the earth. They are a useful addition to any garden, helping to recycle waste and improve your garden soil.'



But not as good as worms.

Not many people know...

...that woodlice show a positive thigmokinesis. This means they are less active when more of their body surface is in contact with other objects (including other woodlice). They will move around so that the maximum amount of their body is in contact with other objects.

That's why they form clumps and congregate in cracks and crevices. Now, the next time you spot a crowd you can casually observe: 'how about that for positive thigmokinesis?'

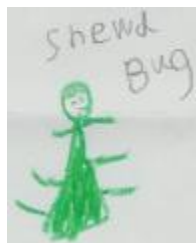
Geoff Andrews

[http://pages.britishlibrary.net/woodlice/
www.geocities.com/~gregmck/wlice.htm](http://pages.britishlibrary.net/woodlice/www.geocities.com/~gregmck/wlice.htm)



Does anyone have a copy of a new magazine called Organic Life? I appeared in the first issue [JULY] in an article about WWOOF but missed it.

Call 01225-840072 or e-mail verona_bass@yahoo.co.uk



Date for your Diary

Next years Seed Swap and Cakefest will be held on Sunday February 11th 2007 from 2 - 4pm at Widcombe Studios, Comfortable Place. Bring seeds to swap and cake to share. BOG members £1; non members £2

School Visit - May 2006

On a showery May day, our old friends from Oldfield Park Infant School revisited the garden.

We gave them pond-dipping with Kate, mini beasts with Heather, card making using petals and seeds with Margaret, beetroot-sowing with Sheila and seed-planting with Marjorie.

Here are some of their comments – best read aloud!

"To the howl lot of you I wont to say I hav not got a favrut activte they are all verey nis with love Jasmine"

"Fac yo for let mey cum for pondippin from Harry"

"thank you I liked dowing the plants sting on the card from Radika"

"we loved looking at the compost tolut from James"

"Thank you for the activtes the ware reley fun from Barney"

"Dear Heffer (Heather) Fak you for letting us do mine besde from Daisy + Mia"

As this was so successful, it was followed by a visit from the reception classes who toured the orchard, wild garden and vegetable plots.

We are delighted when schools ask for a visit. If you know of a local school that may be interested, please contact Tim or Sheila

As we use a lot of small yoghurt pots for the seed sowing, please could you save yours for us?

Sheila Blethyn

(Thank you to Oldfield pupils Nial, Amy and James whose pictures I have used to illustrate the newsletter—Ed)