

# Bath Organic Group

spring 2009

## Before you eat the millipedes

Dear BOGgers

A belated and rather icy welcome to 2009. As I write this we are in the middle of an unusually cold and snowy winter which is both good news and bad news.

Good news in that all the pests in the garden should take a hammering, just as nature intended. I myself have had countless woodlice knocking on the door begging to come in to our centrally heated hovel - but I have just had to be tough and say tootle off.

And the bad news is that the climate is becoming increasingly unpredictable. Organic gardeners and farmers who are, by and large, an adaptable lot, thrive on certainty to produce a good crop of organic edibles. And we are just not having it. So we can moan and rail, or we can do something about it. It really is very easy – just buy less stuff, have fewer children, travel less often and grow more organic food – that should be a good start. I think our members are the most wonderful set of people you could hope to find that have set foot in wellie, but we need more of

them. Membership is our main source of income and influence. I am sure there are 1000s more organic sympathisers out there who are keen to join us and enjoy the benefits of BOG membership. To refresh your memories, should they need

refreshing, a few of them are listed below:

- The BOG demonstration organic and community garden
  - Cheap seed and gardening gear through the Trading Hut
  - Selling your surplus at the Farmers' Market
  - Priceless Advice and Information
  - Fabulous social events
  - Seed and plant swaps
  - A great website [bathorganicgroup.org.uk](http://bathorganicgroup.org.uk)
  - The splendid, Geoff Andrews compiled, information packed, all action BOG news and assorted e-newsletters
  - Loads of other stuff both tangible and intangible.
- So before you open that bottle of home made woodlouse wine and settle down to millipede on toast make a list of all your friends and acquaintances who would benefit from BOG membership. I will be sending you all a leaflet that you can download and use to sign them up. You will be doing them and yourselves a favour – a true win win style situation
- Yours in compost  
Peter Andrews  
Temporary, acting, unreconstructed, icy toed, chair

### ON OTHER PAGES

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How to fight blight

Playing to the plot

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Obituary: Jane

Langley

keep up to date at [www.bathorganicgroup.org.uk](http://www.bathorganicgroup.org.uk)

# No stealing from shed of steel



**Nature abhors an empty shed, and it took no time for this one to fill up. The steel shed is secure and weather-proof**

THE ARRIVAL OF the shed of steel late last summer began a revolution in the organisation of 'stuff' at the community garden that has continued throughout the winter months and now makes it much easier to find things - and to know they are secure from one week to another.

The steel container, complete with steps and a padlock to augment its own locking system, is now painted green, instead of the original violent blue. It is unfortunate that the roof is flat because it could be a valuable rainwater collection source, but if talk is transferred into action it could one

day sport a green roof of sedums, which would also stop it becoming a very hot place in summer.

Inside it is equipped with an excellent tool store, a smart chest of drawers (acquired via Freecycle) and the vital tea-making equipment, and contains anything that might otherwise make its way to a car boot sale.

This has freed up space in the other two wooden sheds which means that they are relegated to storage of stuff that needs to be kept dry rather than secure.

It also means that all three spaces can be kept tidy much more easily.

## Green Victorian remedies

The Victorians used a lot of poison in their gardening, but they still retained a lot of green remedies, many of which have since been lost.

Here are a few of those cures culled from Victorian gardening books (but with no guarantee of their efficacy - and not a lot of guidance on quantities either):

- A solution of boiled Laurel leaf used as a spray deters caterpillars.
- Sour milk and lemon juice does the same if sprayed on cabbage.
- Caterpillars don't like artemesia.
- Sticks of rhubarb stuck in the soil keep club root away.
- So does a mix of soot and lime.
- Water in which eggs have been boiled

provides house plants with a calcium feed (from the shells).

- To activate a compost heap: quarter bottle of beer+ quarter cup ammonia + 1 gallon warm water.
- To get rid of mildew: 1 tablespoon of baking powder + quarter pint milk + 1 teaspoon cooking oil
- Sprays against aphids: boiled garlic leaves or the liquid from boiled potatoes.
- Potato water also cleans paths
- Against all pests:  
6 cloves garlic+ 1 small onion+ 1 tbs cayenne pepper+ 1 tbs liquid soap+ 2 pints of warm water. Leave to sit overnight — then let us spray.



## Why we have changed the newsletter (yet again)

The Autumn newsletter was a bit lavish, what with all that colour and the pictures, which may have put a bit of a strain on some people's email connections. It also meant that it was too large a file to go on our website.

As a result lessons have been learned, and this one is a stripped-down version which should go through your electronic letterbox easily and swiftly.

The change definitely saved money and fuss though. All but about 20 members now get the newsletter online.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to the next edition, which will come out at the end of the summer, send your written work or illustration to Geoff Andrews: [g.andrews@mac.com](mailto:g.andrews@mac.com).

DEADLINE: August 1

# Development group leaps into action

The Garden Development Group was little more than an idea when we announced its formation in the last newsletter, but since then it has made huge strides. Its objectives are to discuss future plans for the garden, list them, and then work out the means of achieving them.

So what are the results?

- the steps to the new steel shed have been built
- one water butt has been fitted alongside the greenhouse
- missing tools have been bought and the tool rack repaired
- all seeds held have been listed before reordering
- a garden plan for 2008 was completed and a new one proposed for 2009
- taking the hint that tools should be washed before putting away, we installed an old zinc bath complete with stiff brush
- Pauline bought a padlock to complete security for the steel shed
- the children's area now has a wood mulch floor and will soon have a transparent plastic roof and water butts.

Projects for 2009 include:

- replacement of the tree bog
- cold frames for hardening off
- reskinning and reslabbing the old polytunnel
- a wildflower area in the orchard
- a willow labyrinth
- a check list for the apple juicer

- notes for new gardeners on growing methods
- more careful spacing and labelling of tomatoes,

Not bad for only three meetings, and some of those 2009 projects have already been accomplished.

Meetings are held the second week of the month alternate Saturdays and Tuesdays. See the diary section.

## Seed swap in more comfortable place

It may have been a rotten year for seed-saving, but it takes more than that to stop the tradition of seed swap Sunday, so although the packets on the tables may have been a little thinner than in some years, the cakes were just as bountiful, and delicious. And they disappeared as fast.

It was held, on a particularly raw February Sunday, in the cosy Widcombe Community Centre, just like the annual meeting, a much better venue for tea and chat after swapping, than the soulless space at Comfortable Place, used for the past few years.

## Some garden websites worth watching

**If you are a gardener this is no time to be sitting indoors looking at a computer screen, but that's not going to stop us from passing on some of the gardening-related websites that have cropped up during the dark days of winter.**

**Who knows when it will rain, sleet, snow or blow so hard you can't get outside?**

**Here, in no particular order, is a selection:**

### **videojug.com/**

It's not brand new, and it isn't only about gardening - in fact it's about almost anything you can think of, but videojug's professionally made short videos are good basic instruction on a wide range of topics.

if you want to take issue with some of the advice you can leave your comments, but you will also get some ideas. Go to the hobbies section for the gardening tips.

### **sciencehack.com**

If you want to get a bit more optimistic about the future of the world try this site. You'll find videos in the green section on the firm that's cutting the cost of solar panels by two thirds, or the scientists who have found a way of

combining carbon dioxide with waste plastic to make a new biodegradable polymer.

### **allotmenttv.co.uk**

If you eat manure you will get sick. If you eat potatoes that have been fertilised with manure you won't. How is that?

It's all explained in one of the many short videos on this website from Harrod, the less than cheap online source of gardening goodies.

### **uktv.co.uk/gardens/**

The website of the Sky Gardening channel, with a useful diary of things to do in the veg garden each month and a load of other sections giving advice.

### **www.wonderhowto.com/ home-garden/**

WonderHowTo says it presents the best free instructional videos from over 1,700 websites. The garden section seems to have about 750 of them, and they seem sensible, if basic.

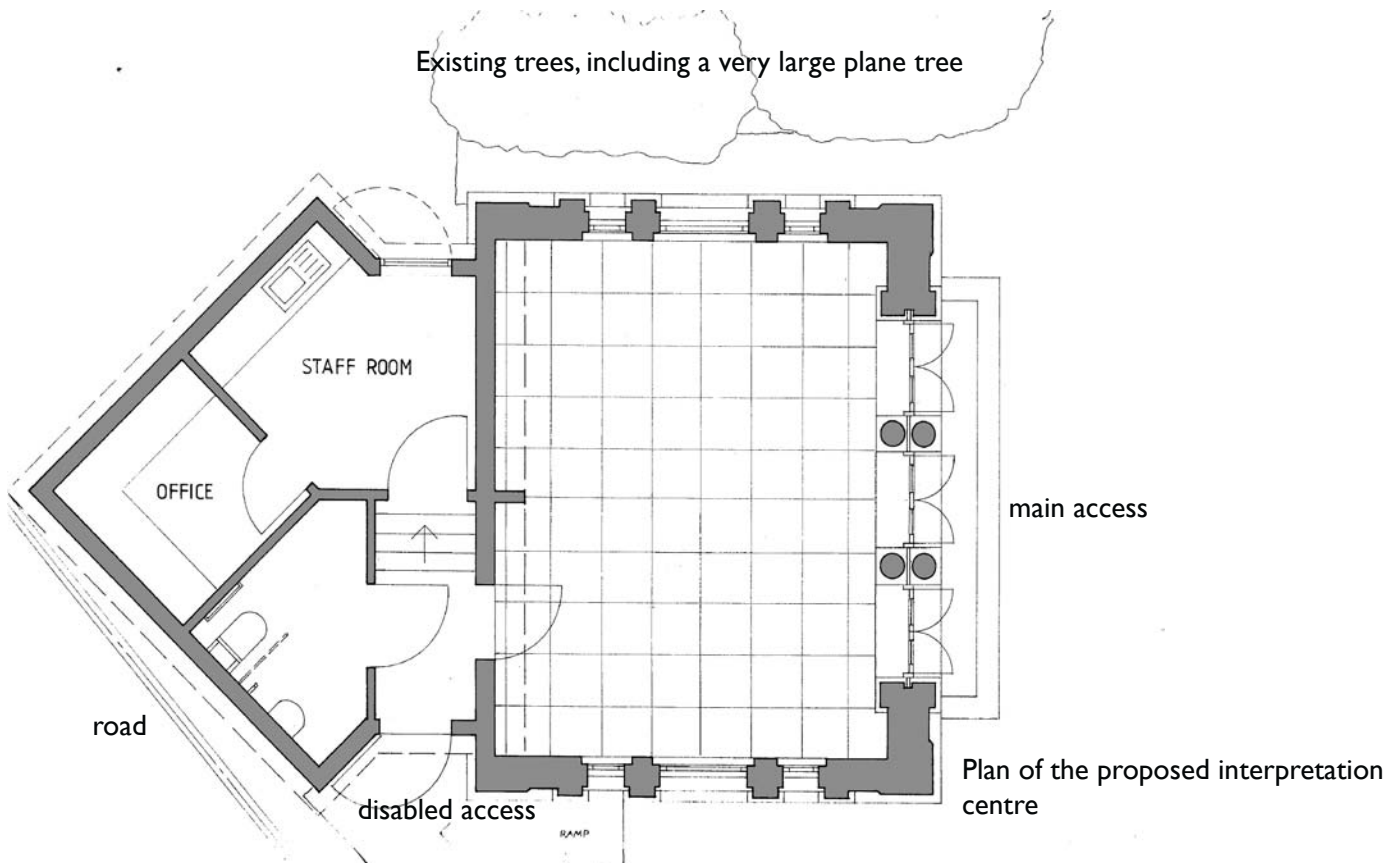
### **www.bbc.co.uk/gardenersworld/**

The website of the programme with a load of pages and message boards mainly populated by people asking questions rather than answering them.

### **www.growveg.com**

Harrod Horticulture again, with a rather good allotment planning tool available for 30 days free. After that it costs (typically) £15 a year, but bag your plan quickly and then unsubscribe.

# Temple teaching opportunity



THE NEW INTERPRETATION centre in Royal Victoria Park is very slowly taking shape inside and at the back of the Temple of Minerva, near the pond in the Botanic Gardens. Slowly because the project has hit a number of unforeseeable snags over the last few months, including the discovery of the foundations of a much older building underneath the extension, and wet rot in the roof of the existing part. Both problems have now been overcome and the project is back on schedule for its opening in the Spring. The centre will act as a source of general information about the park, and as a classroom for visiting school groups to learn more about plants and wildlife. Space in the centre is quite restricted (because users of the park resisted the idea of anything larger being built) so the facilities inside will be more electronic than hands-on, though that can be provided in the surrounding gardens. All this chimes in with pressure to get children learning about the outdoors and a government initiative 'Learning outside the classroom' which is intent on rolling back the risk-aversion culture of recent years. It also fits in well with the inclusion of topics about growing plants and outdoor activities in the 'key stages' which are the current flavour in teaching. But the limitations of the new centre mean that it cannot achieve all the goals laid down by these initiatives, which has provided an opportunity for BOG to help. The community garden is a safe 400 metres walk, mainly on grass, from the interpretation centre, and the facilities it provides could be mutually beneficial. Already Sheila and her volunteers have demonstrated the success of school visits to the garden and letters from the children reflect their enjoyment of visits.

Meetings to discuss ways in which BOG can help (and of course benefit) from the new centre are planned with Glenn Humphreys, who is in charge of the project for the council, and very interested in co-operation.

## OBITUARY

### JANE LANGLEY

**Jane Langley, who had been a member of the group for some time, died suddenly in January. She had recently acquired an allotment which she was working with her husband and sons.**

**Jane was 62.**

**'Her sudden, unexpected death came as a great shock to us all,' says Sheila Blethyn. 'She was a very bubbly chatty person.'**

**Sheila attended the funeral along with Tim Baines, Kate Mills, and Pauline McGrath.**



# Another chance to get the pip

Once upon a time there was a very popular little book called Once a Pip, produced via BOG and all about apples. Being so proudly uncommercial, once the print run was sold out (quickly) no-one thought to get any more printed. Until now.

A revised version of the book with additional recipes is currently being prepared and will be available in good time for this year's apple crop - by which time an impoverished multitude will fight to get hold of something which explains how to make a cheap pud from the garden windfalls they have always thrown into their green wheelie in the past.

So watch out for the bumper new Once a Pip. Coming soon to a farmer's market near you. Here is a recipe from the original book that is still relevant to this time of the year.

**PLEASE SEND YOUR FAVOURITE APPLE RECIPE TO [g.andrews@mac.com](mailto:g.andrews@mac.com)**

## CABBAGE WITH APPLE AND JUNIPER BERRIES

2 lb white cabbage  
2 oz butter or margerine  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 crushed clove of garlic  
12 crushed juniper berries  
2 cooking apples, cored and diced  
2 oz sultanas  
salt and pepper to taste  
chopped parsley to garnish

•Wash the cabbage and shred it finely.

Heat the butter in a large, heavy-based saucepan. Add the onion and cook until transparent.

Add the crushed garlic and the juniper berries and cook for a few seconds. Stir in the cabbage, chopped apple and the sultanas.

Season with salt and pepper.

Cover the pan and cook gently until tender, about 20 minutes.

Stir occasionally to prevent the cabbage from sticking. If necessary add a little vegetable stock or water.

Serve sprinkled with parsley.

Here is another recipe, volunteered by Rosemary Alvis. It sounds wonderful.

## FRUIT AND CINNAMON TORTE

### Ingredients:

5 oz butter  
5 oz caster sugar  
5 oz ground almonds  
5 oz SR flour  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
1 egg  
Grated zest of 1 orange  
Half a tub cream cheese  
8 oz fruit

### Method:

Cream butter and sugar  
Add almonds, flour, cinnamon and beaten egg  
Oven 180 C  
Grease tin, spread half of mixture on bottom and flatten mixture  
Spread fruit over this  
Sprinkle zest over the top  
Dot blobs of cream over this  
Intersperse these with the rest of mixture dotted over surface so that cream shows in gaps.  
Bake for 45 mins. Cool in tin.  
Serve with juice and cream.

Can be made in food processor.  
Can be served hot, cold or as cake.

Fresh or frozen or bottled fruit can be used.

If frozen /berries it is easier to cook them first, (+ sugar to taste).

Use excess juice as sauce.

Make double the quantity and freeze.

Try to keep base from going soggy if reheating.

Great for : Raspberries, currants, strawberry and apple, mincemeat instead of mince pies. Gooseberries (try adding a little elderflower cordial).

## DATES & EVENTS

All events at the community garden unless another venue is given

Weds from Mar 11- May 13	Community Farming & Gardening course : tutor Tim Baines hedgelaying, chicken incubation, pig rearing/farrowing and new stock introduction. soil cultivation, seed sowing, plant care and harvesting	Bath City Farm and BOG garden (Contact Tim)
Sat Mar 21	Development group	11am
Sat Mar 21	Mike Atherton a biodynamic gardener from Stroud .Talk	11am
Tues April 14,	Development group	11am
Monday May 4	Growing Green Day	
Sat May 9	Development group	11am
May 28 – 31 and June 4-7	Kilter theatre group: Roots	See article for details.
June 6	John Brookes' plant sale	Old Brewery , Southstoke
Tues June 9	Development group	11am
Sat July 11,	Development group	11am
Tues Aug 11	Development group	11am

The BOG stall at the farmers' market will resume on April 4 and then on the first Saturday of every month

# Smith, the evil blighter fighter

**I**T'S SUCH A common name but mention Smith to a bunch of potato farmers and you can be sure of a strong reaction. Say 'full-Smith' and you won't see them for dust.

It's all about potato blight — *Phytophthora infestans* — to be precise, the most dangerous of the 600 diseases that can affect potatoes, and the one most likely to ruin your crop if you are a small-time gardener.

A Smith period is that time when conditions are just right for the spores of the deadly blight to explode across the country, laying waste to potatoes and tomatoes (usually just when you



are about to pick them) in a matter of hours.

That's the bad news. The good news is that there is a way to beat the blight by getting a wake-up call as soon as there is any possibility of the spores landing anywhere near you. The warning is accurate right down to your postcode (or even the postcode of your allotment), and it's free.

Blightwatch is a website tool developed to help farmers and growers identify the risk of an infestation immediately there is any risk. It's also available to amateurs on the same basis. If you have a computer and internet you can register your email and the postcode of your spuds and know that any danger of blight will be preceded by an alert like the one shown here. You can even arrange for it to be sent as a text to your mobile, but that's not free. Another similar service is provided by

## Twice the problem

UNTIL THE 1970s, there was only one type of blight in the UK, and this was unable to produce resistant spores that could survive the winter.

There are now two types (A1 and A2) which can mate and after that produce resistant spores, although the indications so far are that this rarely, if ever, happens in the UK.

Mating between moulds of different mating-types is required for the production of resistant spores.

the scintillating-sounding Potato Review magazine.

Until a couple of years ago the risk of potato blight infection was based on the calculation of Smith Periods for only a limited number of weather stations around the country. Now the Blightwatch service covers the whole of the UK.

Blight is a water mould, and its spores overwinter on infected tubers, particularly the ones you overlook when harvesting that turn up as volunteers next spring.

The spores develop on leaves, spreading through the crop when

temperatures and humidity gets the right balance. Rain washes spores into the soil to infect young tubers, or they can blow for miles on the wind.

First signs of an attack, dark patches on the tips of leaves and on stems, don't look serious and can easily be missed, but ignore them and within a day or two your entire crop could be a wasteland.

## And if that fails? Spud first aid

GROW ORGANIC advises that initial blight symptoms may not spell disaster for potatoes — the disease may not spread through the crop if the weather turns dry.

If the crop is badly infected (10 per cent or more of the foliage killed), it is generally advisable to cut off and remove all potato foliage to help prevent spread to the tubers and to other potato and tomato plants. Removing the foliage obviously stops any further growth of the crop - highlighting the benefit of growing early maturing varieties, and early planting of maincrop varieties to ensure maximum growth before blight strikes. Don't harvest the crop for two to three weeks after defoliation. By then, tubers will have thicker skins and blight spores on the surface will have died.

Tomatoes cannot be shielded so easily. Grow Organic advises that you check plants on a regular basis for signs of blight. Remove infected leaves as soon as you notice them.

Bordeaux mixture is a copper-based spray traditionally used by organic

### What is a Smith Period?

**A full Smith Period occurs after at least two consecutive days where the minimum temperature is 10° C or above and when the relative humidity is 90 per cent for at least 11 hours. If the humidity is 90 per cent for 10 hours on both those days it is called a near miss.**

White mould spreading on the underside of the leaves will make the plant collapse, while the potatoes will quickly become a mush with a truly evil smell. Tomatoes go a dull brown and the skin hardens.

More worrying is the fact that there are now two types of blight in Britain, and that the new arrival survives the winter much more easily.

It is also more likely that a cross between the two types would be resistant to the types of chemical treatments used by non-organic professional growers.

[www.blightwatch.co.uk](http://www.blightwatch.co.uk)  
[www.potatocrop.com](http://www.potatocrop.com)

growers to control blight. It can protect healthy foliage, but cannot cure the disease once established. So, to be effective, it has to be applied regularly to healthy plants as a preventative measure which is not considered good organic practice. For this reason, Garden Organic does not recommend the use of copper sprays as a way of combating blight.

Once blight symptoms show eat fruit as soon as possible. If you have any green tomatoes on a plant affected by blight, pick off and turn into chutney — quickly. Don't bother trying to ripen the fruit.

Blighted leaves and stems can be added to your compost heap; the fungus will not survive in dead plant material. Do not compost blighted fruit, their moisture will enable fungal spores to reproduce next spring, carrying blight onto your new crops, but they will not survive. Alternatively, take all affected plants to the local recycling centre. These centres compost on a very large scale, thus generating high temperatures which will kill the disease.

# Bringing the play to the plot

Kilter theatre company invites Bog members, their friends and families, to grab a spade and elope to the community garden for 'Roots — Allotment tales of love & vegetables' described as a theatrical contemplation on the future of food.

Olly Langdon, a BOG member and one of the founder directors of Kilter says: 'As cheap imported fruit and veg rapidly become a thing of the past, the time is ripe for digging.

'Through an intimate tale of love and the land, Kilter leads you and your neighbours on a gentle journey down the bean-rows to investigate food-security in the approaching post-oil world.

'Get some dirt under your fingernails and join the dig for victory! Please bring biscuits to share...'

Previous events include Remote Patrol in Widcombe's Abbey Cemetery and Back on Track (right) along the Bath-Bristol cycle track.

Tickets £9, £7 Concs & Uni Staff, £4 BUSU.

Limited places, advance booking advisable.

May 28 – 31 and June 4-7

7.30 with matinees at 2.30 on Saturdays and Sundays



Kilter is a sustainable theatre company which creates theatre to fit the site and engage its audience in issues about the environment, social justice and English heritage in Bath.

[kiltertheatre.com](http://kiltertheatre.com)



## Just how secure is our food?

Here are some statistics — sorry but they are necessary in this argument — Britain imports 51 per cent of its food. Food prices rose 6 per cent last year. About 30 per cent of the food gets thrown away (largely by the supermarkets). Nearly two thirds of the wheat grown in Scotland is turned into Scotch, mainly for export.

The numbers all come into play when the arguments over 'food security' start. And they have all been paraded again since the publication, at the beginning of February, of a long-awaited report on the subject from Chatham House, the weighty London-based think-tank.

The main conclusion of that report is that the times of cheap food have gone, and won't be back. Among the reasons:

- a rising global population eating more protein as it becomes less poor

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### Have fun with your slugs and snails

Slugs and snails 'can be fascinating to observe' as well as being the number one veg garden pest, says Garden Organic, introducing one of its member experiments for 2009. It wants you to collect, count, and identify — and photograph — snails and slugs in your garden. The 'best photos' (their words) will be published in *The Organic Way*.

They also want to hear tips for controlling and managing slugs and snails in your garden to help update their factsheets.

Here's one anecdote for them. Last summer seven snails (with the food they had been eating) were left inside an anti-slug copper band in a plastic box. An hour later five were outside the ring. The following morning all had escaped.

Maybe the copper rings only work for slugs?

- the food industry's dependence on expensive oil and natural gas to produce and transport foodstuffs
- global shortages of agricultural land, water and rural labour
- our refusal to embrace GM crops (which means we can't feed our animals on cheaper GM feed)

The high level of imports make us vulnerable to global food or commodity shortages caused by poor harvests or disease outbreaks. 'The UK can no longer afford to take its food supply for granted ... a food crisis in the UK is not unthinkable,' the think-tank said.

It called on the government to invest more money in agricultural research, including agricultural technology; to reopen the debate over GM technology; and to restructure supply chains to address environmental issues and develop longer-term relationships with suppliers.

But Defra, the environment and food ministry, says that if you took into account our ability to produce food in this country we could supply about three quarters of our food from our own resources — though it might be a rather boring diet through the winter. That ratio is better than at most times through the last century.

Weak sterling means that the economy would be better off if we grew more but what would happen to the banana growers if we all ate only our stored apples through the winter?

Food security is an easy subject on which to pontificate. It gets more difficult when you try to take into account all the detail. But once again it looks like the supermarkets are going to come out as prime suspects for blame whatever position you take.

So much so that even Philip Blond, a right wing Tory, has proposed the break-up of Tesco for the good of the country.

# Garden sharing: everyone's a winner in Totnes

WITH ALLOTMENT WAITING lists in Bath of anything up to eight years for the best sites, and lots of householders, particularly older people, with gardens they can't keep on top of, the idea of sharing the garden with someone else has been growing in popularity. But how can it be organised?

Fortunately, those industrious people in Transition Totnes appear to have cracked it, largely by ignoring all the obstacles and ploughing on. Could it work in Bath?

This is what Lou Brown, the Totnes organiser has to say:

'People have been asking what are the hidden downsides and difficulties? Do we run criminal record checks? No — I do chat to the gardeners for quite a while when they come in, and make sure I feel confident in their commitment before I match them with someone.

'I also would say that the process is relatively self-selecting. People either show up to meet you at the office or they don't, and by the time you have talked gardens for a while and had them sign some forms and agree their boundaries the only people left tend to be those who are really genuinely keen.

'The experience has been profoundly positive and there have honestly been no drawbacks. All the 21 gardeners and the many garden owners have worked and shared their spaces with respect and commitment. The idea is a very basic one, and humans are so good at cooperating and working together beautifully as long as everyone knows what to expect.

'The most surprising thing for many people who've phoned to ask about how to run it smoothly, is that there have been no bad surprises. People don't tend to take advantage of each other when they are working together on this kind of project - it's about sharing, community,

**BOG is working with Transition Bath to create a local gardenshare scheme. Information on progress from Peter Andrews**



and a bit of hard work. I find that seeing how people cooperate like this and how happy it makes them to do so really inspires me to believe in our potential for community living.'

The basic steps to a garden sharing scheme are:

1. Recruit gardeners and sharers through posters and advertising
  2. Interview owners, get photos of the garden. Make it very clear that the owner offers
    - an agreed part of their garden and
    - that the gardener is responsible for their plot and will share a proportion (say 1/4 - 1/5) of the produce
    - that the gardener will not do other general garden upkeep (to protect gardeners from false expectations).
  3. Start recruiting gardeners
  4. Have a general chat with each gardener about their experience and commitment. (In Totnes they enlist them in a supported farming organisation which means they are covered for public liability insurance.)
  5. Try and match the gardener with the right garden.
  6. Phone the owner, tell them about the gardener and give some idea of their situation
  7. Give the gardener the garden owner's number to meet
  8. Check next week how it went
  9. Give both parties a call from time to time and at the end of each season send out feedback forms
- Each side also fills in a form which is a commitment to the scheme.
- [www.totnes.transitionnetwork.org/gardenshare](http://www.totnes.transitionnetwork.org/gardenshare)**

## Your chance to be a sharing pioneer

Remember this picture? In the autumn newsletter we passed on the message from Claire that she was looking for someone to help them with this, their new orchard garden in Keynsham.

It has 11 apple trees, an area for growing, and an old greenhouse.

Claire said: 'We are hoping to set up our orchard garden as a mini centre..so it could appeal as a mutual project to the right people or person. We would like to find enthusiastic, perhaps retired people who are wanting a green project.'

You might have thought she would be knocked over in the rush to take up the opportunity, but she says that she has received no approaches from BOG members and the offer is still open.

'We didn't get a response, but that is okay as we are still

moving in and have boxes to unpack and stuff. It would be nice to get to know some reliable..organic growers, or people who want to keep some guinea fowl or something and perhaps do up an old greenhouse and use that and other space. It is a nice location; the soil is a bit rocky, but okay. There are rabbits!

'We would like to meet keen people looking for a bit of an allotment/smallholding space perhaps, and find some way we could share it.'

Well that was then. Autumn was not the best time to advertise the offer, and Keynsham isn't easy to get to from some parts of Bath, but surely in the Spring someone will be interested?

**Initial contact: [g.andrews@mac.com](mailto:g.andrews@mac.com)**

# The joy of soy

## Danny Smith's guide to growing and eating your beans

**S**OY BEANS ARE the richest source of complete vegetable protein (35% of dry weight) and used in many different ways in east asian cuisine.

They are also pretty easy to grow in the UK, just make sure you get a suitable variety (Thompson & Morgan sell them or contact Dan for a few seeds to try) and easy to harvest and save seed from.

The plants are quite pretty with trefoil type leaves, shortish (up to 60cm tall) but with tiny flowers on the stem swelling to small clusters of furry bean pods.

Start off the seed in small pots/modules indoors in late April (they need to be 18-20 °C to germinate properly) and plant out after 3 or 4 leaves have opened, in a sunny position, spaced 15cm apart in rows 45cm apart.

Keep them well watered and weeds well hoed.

By September seed pods should have formed holding up to 4 beans, each bean about 15mm by 10 mm.

The pods can be harvested while still green and steamed whole for 'edamame' beans (serve lightly salted and strip the seeds from the pods with your teeth).

If the pods are left on the plant for drying, wait until all leaves have withered before removing to allow maximum growth of



beans.

Strip the pods from the stalks and pod as you might peas (NB hairy pods may cause irritation to hands). Note that the dried beans are completely round, not bean shaped - they return to bean shape after soaking though!

Probably the most widespread use for soy beans is in soymilk and tofu, so here's how to make them.

## Turning beans into soya milk...

Soak 125g soybeans over night

Drain and rinse

(Optional Step: microwave soaked beans for two minutes - kills enzymes that make milk 'beanier' tasting)

Liquidise beans with 1 litre of fresh water

Heat gently until milk is boiling, and boil for 10 minutes to

destroy digestion inhibiting bean enzymes (use a large pan and keep an eye on it - it can froth up a lot)

Strain through muslin to separate solids (Okara)

Cool milk and store it in the fridge for up to three days

(Several makes of automatic soymilk makers are available to make this a lot quicker and easier)

## ...and then into a block of tofu

To a litre of soymilk add a couple of tablespoons of lemon juice/vinegar and stir in well. Leave for a few minutes and stir again - you should see that the soymilk has curdled and is separating into 'curds and whey'.

Strain through muslin, keeping all the 'curds' in the centre of the cloth (using really fresh milk that is still warm from the cooking leads to faster curdling). Wrap cloth around curds and squeeze well. Store for up to 3 days in the fridge immersed in fresh water if not using immediately.

**SOYBEANS HAVE BEEN CULTIVATED FOR SO LONG THAT THE LINKS WITH THE ORIGINAL WILD STRAIN CANNOT BE TRACED. THEY WERE A CRUCIAL CROP IN EASTERN ASIA LONG BEFORE WRITTEN RECORDS, AND CONSIDERED SACRED IN CROP ROTATION AS A METHOD OF FIXING NITROGEN.**

The Okara strained from the milk is itself quite nutritious being high in fibre and still containing a lot of protein. It can be used as a bread making additive, a porridge substitute or in rissoles/burgers. But it can also be used to make a granola type breakfast cereal:

Mix Okara with about the same volume of porridge oats, half the volume of dessicated coconut, sugar to taste and some vegetable oil. Mix to a dryish cake mix (add more oil if it's too dry - water or soymilk will mean it takes longer to bake). Spread the mix in an oven tray and bake in a low oven (or the bottom shelf while you're cooking something else), stirring occasionally until it becomes golden brown, dry, crunchy lumps. Cool and store in an airtight container. Serve as a breakfast cereal - add dried fruit to taste.

# Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held at St Marks Community Centre, Widcombe, Bath on November 29

Present : Pauline Magrath, Dan Smith, Sheila Blethyn, Sian Meredith, Matt Lewis, Bill Brown, Verona Bass, Rosemary Alvis, Gill Christie, Geoff Andrews, Maggie Dibben, Philippa Donaldson, Virginia Williamson, Kate Mills, Len Fawcett, Jon Lucas, Lyn Barham, James Bond, Janet & Bernard Thomason, Tim Baines, Su Kendal Jennie Fairweather, Steve Chamberlain, Helen Woodley and Sylvia Hudnott

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We had lunch before the AGM and it was very good to meet up with other members. Before the AGM started, Peter mentioned the death of Jean Hale's husband, Robert. Jean is a member of the committee.

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1. The Minutes of AGM held on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2008 were approved.
2. Report on activities in the past year

**Shed of Steel** : Peter thanked everyone who had generously contributed towards the new shed. Special mention was given to Bill Brown and Jenny McEwan for their generous contributions. A plea went out for a chest of drawers which would help tidy up the inside.

A padlock for the shed is needed as well as the main lock.

**Garden Development Group** : Sheila reported that the group had held three meetings on alternate Tuesday and Saturdays. There would be no December meeting, the next meeting being Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> January.

They were looking for a small garden shed to incorporate into the design of the new TreeBog. With new legislation it was felt that this would have to be made wheelchair-friendly.

There was a short discussion about using more self stored water. It is hoped to connect the waterbutts [which we already have] to the children's area which needs re-roofing, and to the greenhouse. This would ensure that, not only would the garden become more environmentally sound, but there would be a source of water in the winter when the water is turned off to the allotments. Someone commented on the over-use of tap water and suggested the erection of a slightly sloping roof over the new shed to provide another area of water to be siphoned off. We await volunteers to construct this.

Ked resigned and has been replaced by John Gibbons who to the date of this report was felt to be doing an excellent job.

He has repaired the tool rack and it is hoped that tools will be kept in better condition by keeping a container of water and brush outside the shed so they can be cleaned before being put away.

It is proposed that a cold frame will be built to help with the propagation of plants.

Pauline has planned a vegetable rotation for the garden and Bill will draw up a list of seeds to be bought. Some of the garden members have requested some information on garden rotation [why & how to grow], so some sort of information sheet will be drawn up.

Next year we must ensure better labelling, especially on the tomatoes.

Mention was made of biodynamic growing and Sheila has approached the Stroud group, which she thinks is our nearest biodynamic group, to ask if they would be willing to give us a talk on biodynamics. However, James Bond mentioned Wootton-under-Edge which they felt was nearer.

The reskinning of the old polytunnel should have taken place a few weeks back but the youngsters from the Uni did not turn up to help, so it is hoped that this will be done shortly with our members. The floor of this polytunnel will be fully slabbed, which will make it more useful.

Apple Juicer : a list of parts is required as when it is returned this would ensure that it comes back complete.

The Garden Co-ordinator rota list was sent around for people to offer their help.

**Schools Visits** : Sheila organises these and thanked everyone who helps. There had been very successful visits from St Andrews, Holt, and Oldfield Park schools; and the Percy Community Centre. The visits have been made more difficult as there is now only 2 hours parking allowed in Victoria Park.

**Square Meal** : Tim and Mat initiated this project which was carried out at the Bath Spring Flower Show. Unfortunately it was not 100% successful. However, Bath City Farm showed great interest and they will probably carry out a similar project in 2009.

**Seed Swap** : this was not as successful this year due mainly to the weather. However, Ros Pears and Sue Kendall are running it next year at St Marks Community Hall on Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February from 3-5. Reminders will be emailed to members

nearer the date.

**Newsletter** : Geoff Andrews was thanked for producing the excellent new style newsletter which is now mainly emailed saving on postage and printing costs. Geoff asked for articles for the next newsletter in the Spring.

**Trading Hut** : to give some background in 2007 the Trading Hut, run by the Allotment Association, was not opening regularly and the supplies were unreliable so Pauline & Tim offered to run it as a separate entity. This year it has opened 50 times during the year with two voluntary people helping at each session, 75% of the helpers being BOG members and 75% of the buyers being Allotment Association. A few members of BOG are also Association members. The 2008 income is £4,765 with a net profit of £718 [gross £995].

However, Pauline has been upset by the accusation of the Association of her not being reliable. The Allotment Association want to pull out of the National Society of Allotments & Gardens and they feel that BOG members should not be able to trade at the trading hut as they are able to take advantage of the cheaper cost of seed bought wholesale, mainly from E.W. King.

A long discussion took place and it was suggested that there is joint or reciprocal membership for members of the Allotment Association and BOG. There are also many other seed suppliers who would be willing to sell wholesale. Tim and Pauline will report back on the Association's thoughts.

**3. Treasurer's Report** : this was approved and James Bond mentioned that Avon Organic Group's insurance seemed a lot cheaper than ours. He and Dan will liaise about this.

The **Farmers Market** did not make any profit this year as they have bought special trays which made the transport of veg and plants to the market much easier. Thanks were given to all those who help with this. Again the question came up of supplying information about BOG. Peter had printed 1000 leaflets which should be tucked into each purchase. The problem is lack of space and Gill Christie will look for a stand.

4. Appointment of Auditors : Lyn Barham offered to

audit the accounts.

5. Election of Committee : all members were willing to stand again

6. **Any Other Business**

**Resolution for new Constitution** was approved in the main, but Tim would like 'Community' incorporated into this as he feels that this would be of use to us if we apply for funding. He will liaise with Peter about this and report back to the committee.

**Subscription** : this has been held at £8 for several years and it was agreed to increase it to £10 for 2010.

**Temple of Minerva** : Geoff Andrews has been working with the Parks Department. Victoria Park now has a reduced staff of three people responsible for the whole park. Geoff showed plans of the Temple which is being rebuilt and made into an educational interpretation centre for children. It will hold 40 people. The contact is Glen Humphries. The Parks Dept are constrained by the Key Stage system and there is a big push for children to use outside areas. This may be an opportunity for the use of the Community Garden to be combined with the courses run at the Temple. If anyone has any ideas, Geoff and Peter will liaise with the Parks Department to use the garden.

Helen Woodley mentioned the Guildhall Archives, which no-one had heard of, saying that there were several pictures of BOG.

She also mentioned that the Developers of the Bath Press site were asking for consultations about the site. Helen will inform Peter of the closing date.

Geoff Andrews thanked Peter for acting as Chair for the past few years.

7. Close of Meeting : around 4pm with tea & more cakes, followed by an auction of produce which raised £47.

## CONTACTS

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## OFFICERS

**Chair Peter Andrews**  
**Membership Secretary and Rota**  
**organiser: Sheila Blethyn**  
**Treasurer: Dan Smith**  
**Minuting Secretary: Sylvia Hudnott**

**Committee**  
**Pauline McGrath, Kate Mills, Jean Hale,**  
**Rosemary Alvis, Matt Lewis, Tim Baines**