

# GOGG NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2020

## Hugelculture – Clare Sheridan

Hugelculture comes from the Permaculture school of thought where you make the best use of land, efficiently and sustainable, living lightly on the planet, in harmony with nature. A Hugelculture is made by starting with digging a pit and placing a log in it, then smaller branches and then twigs, this is covered by upside down turf and then soil, so that the whole structure is an elongated mound. We made ours 1 ½ metre long, 1 metre high, and 0.8 metre wide., but they can be made any size. The idea is to make use of vertical space and to preserve moisture.



Dig a pit and put logs in



Branches are added



Turfs are added upside down



Filling gaps with turf & soil

Continued...



Planting up with strawberry plants around the top.

Peas and beans planted as seeds around the sides.



Hugelculture semi - established with, peas, nasturtium, strawberries and the addition of self seeded borage and nigella. Broad beans have also been planted but have not come up yet. Having made the bed in April then the long hot weather spell in May dried it out a bit whereas when really underway the idea of the Hugel is that it keeps moist and fed by the gradual breakdown of the internal wood. Initially it is best to sow nitrogen fixing plants to replace any taken by the wood, but by next year we can grow any plants we wish. I will keep you updated.

## Local Wildlife Report for Leckhampton – Barbara Kelly

We had an amazing baby bird bonanza in our garden during May and June. I spotted: baby blue tits, great tits, long-tailed tits, robin, blackbird, starlings and wrens. The wrens were hilarious as they whirr around like clockwork toys, but the absolute highlight was a family of baby goldcrests; they are like ping-pong balls covered in grey/green feathers. Also had a greater spotted woodpecker in the garden, but had to shoo it away as they will attack young birds. There were martins and goldfinches overhead and one, possibly two hedgehogs came for food every night.

On Leckhampton hill, the wildflowers have been thriving during quieter times. In May we saw a total carpet of thousands of cowslips, on the grassland between the trig point and the edge of the hill. I have never seen so many. The same day, we saw two hares in a crop field on the hill. We used to see them regularly there, but had not done so for years. June yielded linnets, yellowhammers, skylark and a sparrow hawk on the hill.

### Wildlife



↙ The **Nursery Spider** lays her eggs and carries them around with her in an egg- sac until they are almost ready to hatch. She then deposits them on a plant and covers them with a web; she then stays with them constantly until they hatch

↘ Spot the grasshopper



## **Lockdown – Leo Fletcher**

After all that warmth and rain, lots of things are thriving: first the yin-yang beans, now the runner beans, loads of tomatoes and courgettes, spinach and Chard, salad, beetroot – and your onions are growing nicely.

Runner beans are patchy; I always plant far too many, hoping to extend the season.

This year, the ones that get more sun and started well stopped growing, many shrivelled and died during the heat waves.

Currently I'm picking handfuls, so I hope that continues.

If I have any that have gone over, I let them dry out and shell them for the bean seeds, these keep us going for months.

Plums - as usual my Victoria didn't do much. But we have some wild ones at the bottom of the garden. I put down a few sheets, left the fruits to drop on them, and gathered 21 kg!

With so many, we'll have lots of jam and deserts, and a big batch of plum wine.

Not many apples, and they're dropping early, often still green, so I won't be making any cider, unless Transition Cleeve manage to have an Apple Day next month.

I did a lot of walking during lockdown, when I was shielding, because I'd be unlikely to meet anybody, so it was safe.

Since then gardening has taken my time.

We used to get the occasional hedgehog and Fox, but not for ages.

I've always had holes in all my hedges, and especially under the railway fence where they used to come from, but I think lack of citing indicates lack of numbers in the undergrowth alongside the railway, which used to be home to anything.

## **Growing Food for Health & Wellbeing during our COVID19 Summer**

### **Lesley Greene**

The usual gardening year of Garden Shows, open days, picnics, garden tours, flower shows, have not happened this summer due to COVID19 but those restrictions led to an explosion of interest in gardening and allotments during the year. The search for green and open space, contact with nature and growing your own food has been one of the revelations of this plague.

One Parish Council – ours in Bisley - has coped with a big increase in requests for allotments since March; by September we will have opened up new plots and fulfilled all requests.

Over the summer I asked allotment holders some questions about how Allotments helped their Health and Wellbeing and had a fantastic response. I thought you would be interested to hear

what some of them said and I am certain this applies to those of us who grow in allotment or gardens.

Most allotment holders replied that they grew a substantial contribution to the household's fresh food on their plot (*"fresh veg on tap"*!), citing freshness, tastiness, no chemicals, the pleasure in growing 'your own', helping children understand where food comes from (*"its nice for the children to grow things and know the cycle of plants..."*), & reducing food miles. Importantly there were many who appreciated 'growing your own' – (*"there's nothing like growing your own veg then eating it and it tastes much better too"*)

But all of them said that there is more to allotment growing and gardening than growing food. The NAS held a summer competition for photos and video's and these show the wider benefits of growing and gardening – see <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/news-events-campaigns/nationalallotments-week/> .

In Bisley the allotment holders spoke about those benefits, ranging from belonging to a diverse community (*"I've been 10 years in Bisley and thought I knew a lot of people but now with an allotment I'm meeting so many more people I didn't know before"*), being closer to nature and to other members of the community (*" a place to chat and banter" ... "that is great for mental health"*). Physical exercise was very important even though hard work (*"does my back in but great to be in the fresh air ..."*). They felt strongly that growing and gardening contributes to key human values and senses sometime list in 'normal' life – especially peacefulness (*"my sanctuary"*) (*its so peaceful I can let my mind wander"*) , giving and sharing... (*"I grow extra for the Food Bank".....*) and swapping plants, and stories with other plot holders. Clearly the allotment – and the garden -are places to unwind and help wellbeing.

Several allotment holders said they loved *"feeling the soil between your fingers"*, *"putting my hands into the soil- makes me feel good"*) and being *"in touch with the soil"*, and there is research to show that mycobacterium vaccae, the bacteria found in good, living soil can trigger serotonin the 'happiness/relaxation' chemical in the brain... (*"I am less stressed because of being absorbed in something else emotionally more robust and lighter.."*) (*"...it gives for the soul..."*)



In "The Plague" Albert Camus wrote "the pestilence is at once blight and revelation...." Growing food and gardening, getting our hands back into the earth, is one revelation that has been (in a sense) offered to us, reminding us to hold onto it after the pandemic.

## Black Turtle Beans - Carol Shayle

I have often wondered if the various dried beans I buy at the supermarket would grow, so during Lockdown I sowed a few Black Turtle Beans as an experiment. The bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) is small and shiny and especially popular in Latin American cuisine.

I sowed them in a tray before transplanting them into a very large pot. Presently due to the number rabbits visiting the garden I can't grow vegetables in the open ground. The beans have grown about 20 inches up canes. They should come to maturity about 90 days after germinating and should be harvested when the leaves are falling off. I'm hoping to dry them and use in Miso Black Bean Stew, a recipe that contains asparagus, kale, leeks and black beans, all of which could be picked from the garden.



of



Incidentally the Black Turtle Beans cost £1.10 for 500grms which is really cheap seed!

## Trials & Tribulations – Vic & Stella Ellis

Stella and I realised some years ago that neither of us had “green fingers” and growing vegetables has often been a problem for us particularly as bad backs have limited the efforts we can make in recent years.

Stella is rather more knowledgeable than me but neither of us is really much of a grower. This may surprise some members who think that as long-term members of the GOGG committee we must be experts but Stella is on the committee as Treasurer because of her accounting skills and

I'm there for my writing and administrative ability! We do however enjoy our garden which is mostly full of fruit trees, flowers and shrubs with only a small space devoted to veg. growing. Afterall, being an organic gardener doesn't mean you're mainly concerned with growing veg.!

We have six 1 metre square raised beds in our long, narrow suburban strip in which we try to grow some of our favourite vegetables. The site is not as sunny as we'd like but is protected from the worst of the winds and gets quite a lot of sun in high summer. One of the beds is planted permanently with autumn raspberries and the rest used for annual veg and sweet peas. This year we have used 2 of the beds for runner beans, one for courgettes, one for Swiss chard and one for sweet peas and parsley. Initially the courgettes were inter-planted with lettuce plants which Elaine had given us and these were quite productive. Normally one of the beds would have been used for French climbing beans rather than runners for an earlier crop but the nursery didn't have any available. As usual each of the beds was treated with a layer of our home-made compost and chicken manure before planting.

Because of lockdown we had to buy plants from the local nursery but the "White Lady" runner beans have proved quite successful as the white flowers were not attacked by our local house sparrows. However, they were quickly covered in blackfly and, at Elaine's suggestion, we purchased online some ladybird larvae. These turned out to be tiny, and it took some time for them to bring the blackfly under any sort of control. At present our 20 plants are providing plenty of beans of good shape and flavour! Next year we will have to buy our ladybird larvae earlier so that they are ready to deal with the blackfly before it spreads too far but we shall use "White Lady" again.

The courgettes have proved very hit and miss perhaps due to the sharp changes in temperature and rainfall over this strange summer. Also, we were unable to purchase our usual self-fertile variety on-line. At times they have produced sufficient fruit but at others not much at all! Last year the Swiss chard was mostly destroyed by the pesky house sparrows which have increased in numbers in recent years so this year we used a pop-up cage which has been very effective in protecting them and we have feasted regularly on the leaves and ribs.. However, probably because of the heat, some of the plants quickly bolted. The sweet peas have done well but the parsley hasn't liked the heat!

Our fruit harvest also looks like being disappointing as we didn't get a very good set on our apples, pears and plums despite the fine spring weather. Also, we didn't get hold of any refills for our codling and plum moth traps in time perhaps because COVID 19 had put us into rather a state of shock! So what fruit we have is gradually falling off the trees due to insect damage! I suppose that one of the dangers of being a wildlife-friendly, organic gardener is that we attract so many unwanted insects,

However, despite our problems with veg and fruit we have really enjoyed the garden this year. It has been full of colour all spring and summer and has been a great boon during lockdown. The roses in particular were magnificent and many of the herbaceous plants have really revelled in the hot weather with white phlox and yellow rudbeckia looking very good at the moment.. We realise how lucky we are to have a nice garden and lovely countryside around in which we have been able to walk most days during this most difficult period.

## Brenda's (Jones) Garden on May Hill



Border edged with sedum



Colchicum under lilac



*Buddleia weyeriana*

A lovely species plum from Wiltshire – comes true from suckers – not grafted



Annual poppy



*Clematis rhederiana*



Sedum



White berried hypericum

## **Russell's(Partridge) Tip for Summer Colour**

Just to let you all know, perhaps you already know, that Nemesias thrive in the baking hot sunshine and relative drought if watered regularly. Although they are listed as an annual, two plants reappeared in June and have grown quite vigorously in their pots until now (mid August). Nemesias have given me great pleasure along with a variety of plants in the challenging courtyard garden at Cheltenham Caring in the Community.

Happy Gardening from Russell.

## **Terry's(Peachey) Ramblings**

Hi everyone, I've missed you all with your sunny smiles and helpful advice. Not to mention the informative talks and visits. I've wasted away, what with no garden visits and cakes! (Actually the weight is going back on, what with the fruit glut!)

It has been a strange time, and also a time for sharing, I've given potting compost, seeds, plants and produce to grateful neighbours. We are lucky to have an allotment but at first it was unclear whether we could visit and so my plans for a shady retreat in my garden was put on hold. We quickly dug over and planted the area with veggies. We have reaped some very good fruit and veg and luckily the allotment was within limits. (Alan did spend a lot of time there!)

I had a packet of Mystery Annual Perennial seeds bought last autumn from Chiltern Seeds. Planting these has been brilliant, I'm still not sure what some seedling are, but I have had some lovely surprise flowers. One very large flowering plant in a too small pot, but it looks okay. And looking forward to overwintering the rest for next year.

I've knitted for our new grandson and great-grandson, and knitted blankets for kittens charities using up lots of oddments of wool.

The things that I missed during lockdown: - the noise of planes, butty vans, ice-cream vans and the smell of chips within 100m of every pub. Also strangely, the smell of other women's perfume. Darn it's getting back to the noise and smells now.

I was very pleased to put into action the sharpening techniques picked up at GOGG, our dog grooming scissors worked a treat on our 'Hair@Home' cuts, I even let Alan do mine. Well who would see anyway? I bought dog clippers early on so that Maisie was kept cool. Not a bad job either, although I gave her 'bikini' line a miss. Too risk for a snip.

After several years, my Vic plum tree has been brilliant, fresh, frozen, jam and now today bottled plums and shared with neighbours too. Now for those damsons..... Then the apples and sweetcorn.

Hedgehogs visit our garden and leave calling cards, they have worn a dip in the gravel under the side gate, they must be doing okay as we see quite a few out walking in the dark. I saw two

kestrels nearby the other day, quite a rare sight now for these wonderful birds. I have also seen the odd red kite.

To end on a positive note, I haven't spent much time on housework, whoever said on their deathbed "I wish I had done more housework?"

Keep well and like me, be happy and grateful that we have a love of gardening and some lovely GOGG friends to meet up with again soon.

## **Lockdown – Sylvia Bennett**

From the beginning of "lockdown" my allotment has been one of the main activities everyday, giving me exercise, social contact, and an abundance of vegetables. Broad beans planted in November last year were really prolific and escaped blackfly, the beetroot, leeks, lettuce, peas, and now runner beans, courgettes and sweetcorn all thriving. All of my fellow allotmenters attending their plots have been glad to have a chat (from a distance) and compare notes and commiserations after that late frost. It killed all my first lot of beans and many potatoes!

Walking has been a joy especially in the Spring/early Summer and I photographed as many wild flowers, birds and insects as I could, making a collage and a record of sightings. There were so many paths, byways and fields close to my house that I had never explored and which revealed new wonders every day. new wonders every day.



The Butterfly Orchid was a solitary flower just off a footpath, then I came across a superb display of Pyramidal and Spotted Orchids. The Swan's nest on the Horsebere stream meadow and dew pond drew me back often and I was rewarded when I saw the male and female followed by 7 fluffy cygnets swimming towards the bank. The Mallard ducks in Barnwood park produced 18

offspring and I have watched their progress, unfortunately, seagulls, magpies, and egrets have diminished the brood and only about 6 survived

One May evening I stood on the bridge over the Barnwood bypass which is usually very busy and looking into the distance both ways it was completely devoid of traffic.



Mallard Family

The display of wild flowers and blossom was quite spectacular this year. First came the snowdrops and daffodils in Dymock woods, primroses, and bluebells on Chosen Hill. Then followed the cherry, chestnut, hawthorn, blackthorn, elderflower and lime blossom all laden down with their precious source of food for the bees and pollinators. The special wild flower meadow at the end of Lobleys Drive exhibited more variety of plants, - betony, common mallow, tree mallow, restharrow, meadow cranesbill, meadow sweet and others I have yet to identify.

The walk from Berkeley Castle to Stone and back along the ridge through Whitecliffe deer park is beautiful with views of the river Severn and beyond, we saw Roe and Fallow deer and fields of Buttercups spread out before us instead of the usual rape seed.

We walked the Coppit Hill ridge near Goodrich with views over the river Wye to the Welsh mountains and made our way back on the riverside walk under Symonds Yat rock where there were people wild swimming, Foxgloves thriving in the open common land.



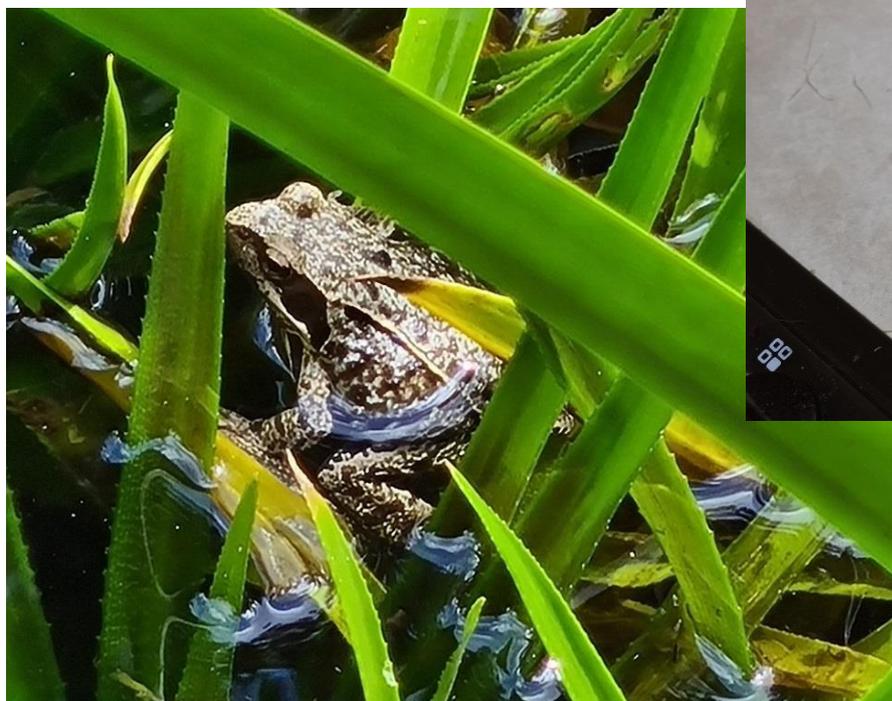
Ornamental Horse Chestnut

Gloucestershire richly deserves the adjective "Glorious"!

## Answers to Tree Quiz from last newsletter

1	Oak	8	Balsa	15	mulberry
2	Ash	9	Sycamore	16	Cedar
3	Holly	10	Red cedar	17	Eucalyptus
4	Beech	11	Coconut	18	Laurel
5	Maple	12	Date	19	Alder
6	Chestnut	13	Yew	20	Willow
7	Birch	14	Palm		

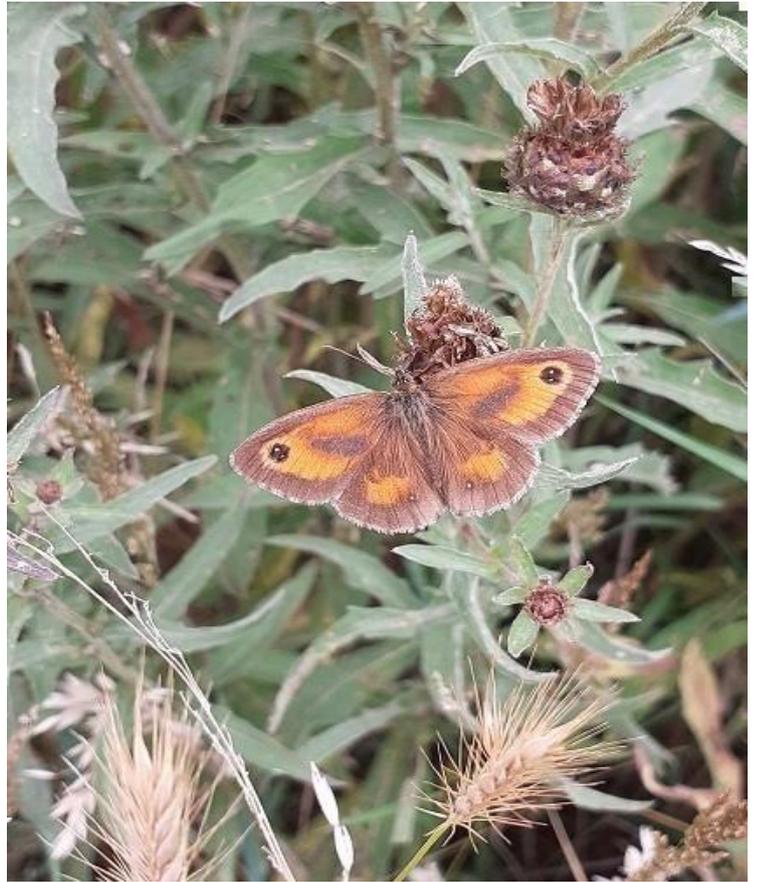
## Sue & Robin's garden produce & pond visitor



## Highleadon Common



**Lizard Tail pond plant**



**Gatekeeper butterfly**

(note two white spots within the brown spots)

## Name that Bird

1	Collects bling	9	It guards the Tower of London	17	Leighton ..... Bedfordshire town
2	Cockney 'bird'	10	Spin around	18	Speedy
3	King Arthur's wizard	11	Greedy Bird	19	Pen & cob
4	Heathland chicken	12	Adult squab	20	Be disgruntled
5	It has a bald patch	13	Sir Christopher.....	21	Tree drummer
6	Mind your head	14	Gulp down	22	Brag
7	Scarlet flier	15	'..... Eye' narcissus	23	Lifts heavy items
8	2 <sup>nd</sup> early potato	16	Crimson beginning	24	Batman's sidekick

## Guess what?



## From the August Garden provided by Lesley Greene

### With kind permission from Erin Baker

#### Recipe: Cauliflower and Chickpea Jalfrazi

Small head of cauliflower broken into florets

3tbs sunflower, rapeseed or coconut oil  
1 tsp cumin seeds

Half tsp asafoetida

1 dried chilli

3 small onions diced

3 tomatoes diced

3" piece of grated ginger

3 cloves chopped garlic

1 chopped green chilli

1 tsp ground turmeric

1 tsp chilli powder

1 red and 1 green (or 2 green) peppers  
sliced

400g tin chickpeas

1 tsp ground coriander

1 tbs the or rice wine vinegar

2tsp garam masala

1. Oven 200C/180Fan. Spread cauliflower pieces and drizzle with 1 tbs of the oil, season, bake for 25-30 minutes
2. Heat remaining oil and fry cumin seeds, asafoetida and dried chilli until aromatic
3. Add the onions and fry until softened. Add and fry tomatoes until they break down.
4. Add 2/3 grated ginger, chopped garlic, green chilli, turmeric and chilli powder, cook for a few minutes.
5. Add peppers fry 3-4 minutes.
6. Lower the heat and add the cauliflower and chickpeas. Stir and cook, add a bit of water if looks too dry.
7. Toast cumin seeds (dry) and grind.
8. Stir in vinegar, ground cumin, coriander, garam masala and any grated ginger left.

I made this with garden cauliflower, garden onions, garden green chilli, garden peppers, garden garlic, garden tomatoes, (2 green as they hadn't turned red), garden coriander, and snap peas instead of the chickpeas. The recipe is delicious and is Erin Baker's from the Natural Cookery School

**WITH MANY THANKS TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS**