

CORONA-YOUR-OWN

Helping you to get organic growing despite the disruption
e-Newsletter 18 2 November 2020

Welcome

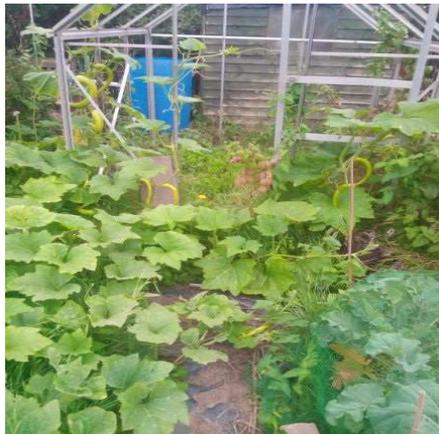
After a rather long gap (I was waiting for enough contributions to make a newsletter), here is the latest offering as we go into another, hopefully shorter, lockdown.

A Tale of Two Squash

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way — in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only." The opening sentence of a Tale of Two Cities has a surprising relevance to the impact of and reaction to the current global pandemic.

Anyway, back to the squash. I have heard from other people that their winter squash have not done well this year. This is a photo of the most pathetic butternut squash plant ever. I think what happened is that when I planted it out – into heavy clay soil on the allotment – although I watered it well and kept it watered, the moisture just didn't penetrate deep enough and the roots couldn't spread out, hitting brick-like consistency soil (my comedy carrots, featured in an earlier newsletter, I think had the same problem – could grow down a few cm in moist soil, and then literally hit a brick wall and went sideways instead). The single squash it produced is 8cm long

On the other hand, the Tromba d'Albenga plant in the photo is at least 4 metres long, but growing sideways as well (I had to pull it back from spreading onto the neighbouring allotment and up their fruit cage) and has produced multiple fruit – some maturing like squash and some more courgette-like growing up the damaged greenhouse frame. The mature squash in the photo is 3+ kilos, but the heaviest was 4 kilos. Not the best flavoured squash – sweet and useable, but no nutty taste.



Various from Gillie

Put kitchen or toilet roll cardboard over young leeks – it helps keep them straight and clean.

As it is around the time we would normally meet for harvest supper, what about sharing some of the things we might have talked about around the table? (eg. Something strange, funny, interesting that happened in my garden, allotment, farm, somewhere I visited this year). Also, any new finds on the food front – in a shop, a new price, a new product, harvest recipe, etc.). How we coped during lockdown – strategies which worked for us. Also, contributions seem rather sparse – we are a 40 strong membership, but only a few are making contributions – others need to put their ideas forward to share.

Free – a wooden work table. Tripod shape, like a stool, with a lower shelf for tools. 14 inch diameter top, 33 inches high - tel: 01926 854609.

Horseradish from Ross

Last year Susie gave Karen and I a horseradish root. It was an act of sympathy when she heard I'd killed my previous attempt. Horseradish is an infamous weed which grows abundantly, but it needs sunshine, and I had put it in a shady spot. On the allotment in the open sun that one root bore two vigorous plants. I dug a foot deep to harvest the root which I still managed to snap where it was an inch across. It'll be back next year.

In the kitchen I washed and peeled it in the sink, my hands beginning to sting. I chopped it into cubes and pulped it in the food processor, adding salt and enough cider vinegar to create a paste. Lifting the lid off the food processor launched an acidic cloud reminiscent of school chemistry experiments!



The prepared horseradish should keep a few months in the fridge. Last night we mixed a little with yoghurt and mayonnaise for a sauce, and with cream cheese, lentils and beetroot for a pie filling. One teaspoon at a time...

Cherries from William

Someone who admired the wooden frames that were protecting our two new cherries (see an earlier edition of this news) wondered what happened to them outside the cherry season. Please see them stacked against the north side of our greenhouse. That is where they will stay until next needed. You may also like to admire the 'wormery', the two compost bins and the compost tumbler. You don't need to study too much the nettles, the rusty milk churn or the washing line!



COOK-YOUR-OWN

Soda bread from Mark

We had a near disaster when the fridge thermostat moved unobserved and so the yogurt froze solid, and when it thawed had no structure/texture, but was just runny like buttermilk. Used in a soda bread recipe (very like the HEOG one - <https://rps.gn.apc.org/organic/resources/sodabread.pdf>) and made best farls* yet - much better than lemon juice soured milk! Just a tip!

* <http://allrecipes.co.uk/recipe/5157/irish-soda-farls.aspx>

Questions

Loganberries from Pippa

I asked for help with pruning my apple tree & then the black currant bush at same time. The loganberry bush nearby had next year's growth trailing everywhere, as was on point of removing this year's to make another wigwam with next year's growth. Thinking probably he was doing me an extra favour, this person has cut off most of the loganberry's next year's growth. Shall I still cut off all this year's growth, or might I still get some loganberries on it next year?

Many thanks in advance

Courgettes from Bobbie

Has anybody had the problems with courgettes that involves very bitter fruit {inedible and toxic} because of a concentration of cucurbitacins? On researching this it can be caused by unusually hot ,dry weather. Or the buying of a packet of Mr fothergills or Unwins courgette seeds named quite ironically Zucchini. They have been withdrawn but I did grow some. Plants now in the green bin. Wondering if others have experienced this for either reason?

POSTSCRIPT

Feedback from our readers is important, so if you have ideas, news or tips you would like to share, please let us know.

If you have any questions related to organic growing which you think our members might be able to answer, let us know and we will try to include the questions and replies in our newsletters.

You can contact us at enews@heog.org.uk.

Gillian McGivern