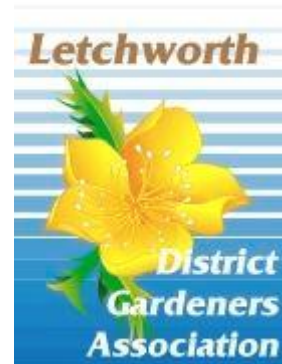


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# Gleanings from the Compost Heap

Autumn 2004

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Please note that the date of our Annual General Meeting has been brought forward to Thursday November 18<sup>th</sup>. The venue is the same – the Guide Hall at 247a Icknield Way, Letchworth Garden City. The kick-off is 7.30pm.

After the business is over, the usual refreshments will be followed by a floral slide show presented by Veronica Tomkins entitled “The South West”

### It's The Taste!

Much has been spoken and written by the experts about the wonderful flavours we can enjoy from home grown produce. What a pity it is that the seed and plant breeders cannot copy the retailers of cheese, coffee, wine etc. and provide their customers with marks out of ten for the taste of the varieties they sell.

A few years ago, I restocked my fruit cage with a new variety of raspberry. The second year's crop lived up to its sales notes completely – a heavy crop of big, firm, dark red berries. Regrettably tasteless pulp in the mouth. The third year was the same, so I dug them out. I obtained fresh stock from a different source of a different variety. Fingers crossed for the flavour factor!

However, it does not pay to be too hasty in grubbing out disappointing soft fruit. Many years ago I planted a promising variety of blackberry. Again the first two crops were fine for looks but definitely lacking in taste. The third year I was lucky. The flavour was very good and has remained so.

Last year, at the Association's “Pass it on” talks, a strawberry tasting item was included in the evening's entertainment. Four different varieties were sampled and the results were almost unanimous. Two varieties scored similar ratings and the other two had so little flavour they were considered almost tasteless. Now you will note that no allowance has been made for the sex of the tasters. On this occasion both ladies and gentlemen were in agreement. When it comes to decisions over the smell of flowers – that's another story entirely!!

### Store news from Peter Faulkner

By the time you read this I shall have had the delivery of Autumn onion sets “Radar”. There might just be a few left..... Arriving with them will be “Aquadulce” broad bean seeds.

We are still awaiting news of the seed potato despatch date. Again I have asked for a ‘guest’ variety. Last trial “Kondor” was very popular, but we don't know yet what will be sent this year.

Another trial order has been for John Innes Seed Compost. I have asked for just one pallet, which will be about 50 bags.

Further to the warnings in the last ‘CH’ and the notices in the store concerning “Pathclear” and “Weedol”, when our stock is gone there will be no more. The makers say alternatives will appear but we have no more news than that.

Shallots - since my requests in earlier newsletters, I have had about a dozen ‘expressions of interest’. I need to buy a 25kg sack to get a good price and that means 50 bags would be looking for a home.

I have been asked to make a trial order for tomato seeds, variety “Shirley”. My bulk order will be placed in mid-November, so this is your last opportunity to tell me what else we should consider trialling. With sufficient demand, I will try anything!

To conclude, bear in mind those items you will need over the winter when the store is closed and pick them up before the end of November.

### Show news from Paul Heydon

To start my report on the Autumn show, did anyone leave a small wooden bowl behind? To claim ring me on 686630

Setting up the Show on Friday caused us a possible problem due to a shortage of tables, but as we had no entries for the chrysanthemum classes it worked out just right. We had one more exhibitor than last year but 50 more exhibits. A beautiful array of dahlias filled a complete run of tables. Two full runs of tables of vegetables and fruit, but no cabbages. I heard exhibitors say that they took what I said to heart and entered.

It was a wonderful show, thank you all for your support.

### Our shows, generally

For nearly a century our flower shows have been a challenge to our growers, flower arrangers, bakers and brewers. For the handful of visitors and the twenty - odd entrants there is an afternoon's delight. The Autumn

Show on the 4<sup>th</sup> September was considered to be well up to standard.

After the prize giving, the gathering was invited to give their suggestions and criticisms. These were all carefully recorded. Two days later, on the trip to the RHS gardens at Wisley, half an hour was spent with their advisory department who described their own experiences and passed on several worthwhile tips.

One of the suggestions is that we should introduce a competition for members interested in photography where their best efforts with a horticultural subject can be shown.

Perhaps we could take in another interesting idea for an item where the best is voted for by the visitors, rather than a professional judge.

Maureen and Paul have set up a sub-committee to examine all of these points in detail. A revised and updated schedule is planned and, with the support of the members, we can look forward to "Bigger and Better" next year.

Finally, Roy Heydon has retired from his long service on the show committee. Would you be willing to give Paul a hand with the paperwork? Please ring 686630 for details.

#### **"Passing it on" - Laurie Cook's notes.**

The visit to the R.H.S gardens at Wisley on Sept. 6th Monday was very good, although four people went sick on the day. Comments overall were very good, in other words, let's do it again. People attending the lectures or talks on the third Thursday of every month have been very pleased with the content. So why not come along in the forthcoming year and see what's on offer, especially since the following year is our centenary. We are putting together a programme of topics at the moment so if there are any topics you want included, ring me (674046) or Jack (682723) and we'll work on them.

#### **The Second Garden**

A perennial problem for most fruit and vegetable growers has been what to do with surplus produce. We have considered an Association-run stall

- a) On a town market
- b) On a farmers market
- c) On Sundays at the Flint Road store.

None of these created any real interest because no one was prepared to man the stalls.

Then it was suggested we have a "working arrangement" with an independent greengrocer but nobody had any contacts.

So, after the grower's families, friends and neighbours had taken all they wanted the rest finish on the compost heap. A sad waste of seed, time and effort until now.

A member recommended we work with the W.I. by supplying their stalls with homegrown fruit, vegetables, potted plants and cut flowers so enquiries were made. The good news is that this method could be a nice little earner. The bad news is that everything has to be properly packed and labelled, although the W.I. will supply labels and punnets.

The nearest W.I. market is Baldock and interested members are invited to visit the Baldock Community Centre any Friday morning to see how it's done. Go about 9.45 to avoid the initial queue and scrimmage. If your appetite has been whetted, further detailed advice can be found on the Store notice board.

Following recent meetings with NHDC staff the problems of site maintenance are still no nearer to being sorted out. The cause is – no money. Irrespective of health and safety requirements nothing will be done to repair the roads. It is a distinct possibility that the roads will be closed altogether, with access restricted to tractors by NHDC nominated contractors.

#### **Garden waste recycling**

We have had reports of members being turned away by site staff at the Blackhorse Road point on a variety of excuses, so enquiries were made at NHDC in Gernon Road. They say

- 1) It is not an NHDC activity. It is operated by WasteAware, a company acting for the H.C.C. and other local authorities. Their HQ is at County Hall, their phone number is 08457 – 425000 and their website [www.wasteaware.org.uk](http://www.wasteaware.org.uk). Their regulations can be found on the website.
- 2) Free dumping of garden refuse is for domestic residents only. Commercial contractors have their own site
- 3) If you have permission to top, trim or fell trees on your land, they will take the branches or trunk to a maximum of 150mm (6inches) diameter. Anything bigger, contact WasteAware for their advice.
- 4) No vans please! Rumours that cars with seats folded down are viewed as contractors vehicles have been reported but I have seen no signs of this on my regular visits.

#### **The Website from Robin Gale**

##### **DO YOU MAKE USE OF YOUR INTERNET SITE?**

Log onto [www.ldga.org](http://www.ldga.org) and get the latest news before publication of the next issue of the Compost Heap. If you haven't viewed our page then you have missed the early news on the very successful Wisley trip, a message about helping elderly people to garden and the names of the Summer and Autumn show winners.

We also have set up links to numerous organisations and attractions which you, as a keen gardener will find very interesting.

Have you ever thought, "if only I kept a previous Compost Heap I know that there was a reference to this problem"? No problem, just go to the website and call up any of the previous issues, which are posted there.

Would you like a colour copy of the Compost Heap before most of your friends receive their black and white one – no problem, just e-mail Kathy our Membership Secretary and she will send you an e-mail to tell you when the next issue is on the web. There is a link on the website set up for you to contact Kathy.

Please make full use of our site and any comments, please send to me at "[gale.micaform@boltblue.com](mailto:gale.micaform@boltblue.com)."

*If you have any comments on the "Compost Heap", have an article suitable for future issues, or are willing to help with distribution in your area, please contact me Jack Collins on tel 01462 682723 or at:- 12 Cashio Lane Letchworth Herts SG6 1AX. If you are prepared to help with the annual membership renewal contact KathyBee at 14 Paddock Close tel 01462 672134 e-mail [beekathy@aol.com](mailto:beekathy@aol.com)*