

# The GROWER

March 2016

[www.cheshamallotments.org.uk](http://www.cheshamallotments.org.uk)

Email your articles, ideas or news to [thegrowernewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:thegrowernewsletter@gmail.com)

## *Judging the Allotments by Mike Allenby*

*Every year at the AGM, prizes are awarded for Best Large Plot, Best Small Plot and Best New Tenant. If you have ever wondered what they are looking for, here is the information from the Chief Judge...*

At the first visit in June we look at every plot on the Cameron Road, Asheridge Road and Bellingdon Road sites, having previously done our homework to determine which plots are small or large and which are being used by new tenants. A small plot is equal to, or less than, 6½ poles on all sites; a large plot is equal to, or more than, 7 poles on the Asheridge Road / Bellingdon Road sites; and equal to, or more than, 8 poles on the Cameron Road sites. Anyone who rents more than one small plot on a particular site will be judged as the tenant of a large plot (unless the sum of the areas of the plots is less than the criteria for large plots). A new tenant is someone who started their tenancy anytime between 1st June of the year preceding the judging year and 31st May of the current year. We do take some notice of what time of year the tenancy started, for example: if a plot has just started to be turned over in June and we see that the new tenant has only had the plot for a couple of months then we make a note to revisit in August. If, however, the new tenant has had the plot since October/November and very little has been done, then we won't revisit in August. Some new tenants are lucky and get a plot that was previously well looked after and others get a plot that hasn't been worked properly for a year or two, but we don't know the previous history so can't make allowances for the initial state of the plot at the start of the tenancy.

We also have to consider previous winners since anyone winning one of the categories (with the exception of the winner of the new tenant category) is not eligible for judging for the next two years. So a winner in 2016 will not be judged again until 2019. All new tenants regardless of site are judged in one category. All tenants of small plots regardless of site are judged in one category. Tenants of large plots are judged in one of two categories – either Cameron Road or Asheridge Road/Bellingdon Road.

**When we judge the allotments there are three criteria that are awarded points:**

We award up to **40 points** for the **number of varieties** being grown.

Points, again up to **40**, are awarded for the **perceived quality** of those varieties.

We then look at the **tidiness of the plot** and award up to **20 points**.

During the first visit in June we make a short list of each of the four categories. For new tenants we give a “first impression” score out of 20 to determine which plots should be revisited during the second judging period. All other categories are marked out of 100 as explained. We make a second visit in August this time looking only at plots on the short lists, marking every plot out of 100. The scores of the two visits are added together to determine 1st, 2nd and 3rd in each category.

**In 2016 the planned judging dates are 10th June and 5th August.**

**New Allotmenteers Need To Do Better!**

In 2015, there were 25 new tenant plots to look at (which we did) and only 4 plots (3 in Cameron Road, 1 in Bellingdon Road) were worthy of scoring and they received 12, 13, 17 and 18 marks out of 20 as a “first impression”. When we revisited in August the plot that we gave 12 marks to wasn't worth rejudging but, thankfully, the other 3 were.

***FISH AND CHIP SUPPER/QUIZ***  
***16th APRIL***  
***— BOOKING FORM INSIDE!***



## CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP CALENDAR

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Coffee mornings	Saturday mornings 10am—12pm. 20th & 27th Feb and 5th March 16th April—16th October (4th June and 20th August at Asheridge Road.)	Focal Point Hut, Cameron Road  and Asheridge Road Allotments
Fish & Chips/Quiz Evening	Saturday 16th April 7.00pm	McMinn Centre, East Street
Open Day	Saturday 13th August 10am –2pm	Cameron Road Allotments

### CHESHAM IN BLOOM

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Mother's Day Event (children potting up plants)	Saturday 5th March 10.00am—2.00pm	Broadway Baptist Church
Chesham In Bloom/Mayor's Charity Fish & Chip/Quiz/ Raffle £8 per ticket	Saturday 19th March 7pm	McMinn Centre, East Street Contact Vince Crompton 782926 Or Kathryn Graves (Town Hall) 583798
Plant Sale	Saturday 28th May 10am—2pm	High Street, Chesham

### CHESHAM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

EVENT	DATE & TIME	LOCATION
Potato Sale	Saturday 9am—12pm. 20th & 27th Feb and 5th March	Trading Hut, Cameron Road
Plant Sale	Saturday 21st May 9.30am—12.00pm	Trinity Baptist Church, Red Lion Street

## Fish and Chip Supper/Quiz Night 7pm, 16th April 2016

**BOOKING REQUIRED FOR .....PERSONS,  
COST £8 PER HEAD**

I enclose payment of .....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Tel. No.....

Email.....

**Please bring your own drink and nibbles AND a dessert with a view to sharing.**

**There will be a RAFFLE, so bring some extra cash!  
Contributions for RAFFLE also gratefully received.**

Please indicate the number of meals required below :

FISH

SAUSAGES

FISH CAKES

VEGETARIAN

**Contact Vincent Lucas on 01494 774198 or Allen Tilbury on 01494 782926 to reserve your places or hand your form / money to any Allotments Group Officer/Representative. Please make any cheques payable to Chesham Allotments Group. Thank you. This form may be photocopied.**

## A Weapon Against the Dreaded Foe?

*For more years than I care to contemplate I have, like you all, suffered from the dreaded, found everywhere, slugs.*

It's raining as we speak and I can almost hear the invisible army of herbivore Destroyers, preparing for their latest foray from the grass verges onto our allotments, and the cries of anguish from fellow allotment holders: "I don't bloody believe it; look what they've done...." etc. However, this year, I have discovered what could change our lives, and that of our slinky foes, for ever.



I decided that enough was enough. I had grown potatoes for years and for all that



time they had become covered in scab and eaten by slugs that bore in to make a snug little home inside the tuber. I decided that in addition to beer traps – quite effective slug bait – make sure you hide them under a tilted brick, pot or plant of wood – I would try something I had never heard of before: nematodes. It sounded rather sinister and the brochure claimed that after two sprayings with a watering can, your plants would be clear of the dreaded dark destroyer. I was somewhat sceptical but I conquered my doubts and, when the potatoes had peeped through the chilly soil, I added the powder to a full watering can and administered the liquid. Two weeks later I repeated the process. Then in late June as the earlies had started to 'go over', as we experts call it, I could contain myself no more. Would I find the usual disappointing crop or.....? Well you can imagine my delight when the first root produced a fine, clean and SLUG FREE crop followed

by every single plant bar one. I've never had such a result and the main crop promises to be just the same.

I didn't use nematodes anywhere else but I shall next year and I suggest you do so and banish slugs for ever!

*Chris Spruytenberg*



**If you missed the December edition of The Grower.....** it's because it is a web only edition! Go to our website [www.cheshamallotments.org.uk](http://www.cheshamallotments.org.uk) to catch up and also to read any back issues you may have missed.

### CHESHAM IN BLOOM FUND-RAISER

Following on from its successful first outing last year, the committee have decided to dedicate another coffee morning to raising funds for Chesham In Bloom, this time on 14th May. A great chance for green-fingers to get together and open to all so please invite family and friends to drop by too!

### The Return of The Coffee Morning

How have we all survived the winter without the Saturday morning fix of cake, coffee and the good-natured banter of our fellow allotmenters? The good news is—they will soon be back! From 16th April through to 16th October, our talented teams of bakers and baristas will be providing the goodies 10am –12pm at The Focal Point at Cameron Road, apart from 4th June and 20th August which will be on the hard standing at Asheridge Road. If you are a whizz with a whisk or handy with the hot water and would be happy to spend an occasional Saturday morning serving at the Focal Point Hut or you would like to provide a cake sometimes, please contact our coffee morning co-ordinator, Beverly Mackay, at [beverlymackay@virginmedia.com](mailto:beverlymackay@virginmedia.com).



### YOUR GROWER NEEDS YOU!

As Spring bursts into life and renews your growing passions - what could be better than to pen a few lines for The GROWER? How do you choose which seeds to grow? What have you learnt *not* to do since becoming an allotmenteer? Doesn't have to be a long article, anything of interest will do. This is a forum for sharing knowledge so please put your green fingers to the keyboard and email me a few lines! *Kate* [thegrowernewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:thegrowernewsletter@gmail.com)



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## GRASPING THE NETTLE



Look, don't make that face. Or groan, I can hear you from here. Yes, I am about to try to persuade you to eat nettles. Not only do they require no work, are around when everything else is running low, and taste good: they are also packed full of protein, Vitamins A and C, manganese, potassium, calcium and iron. (Popeye should have eaten nettles instead of spinach, he never would have had any trouble with Bluto).

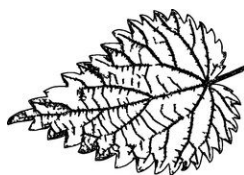
So, the tricky bit is obviously the sting. The stinging hairs act like hypodermic needles, squirting histamine and other chemicals into the skin. Aesop wrote *'Gently touch a nettle and it'll sting you for your pains/ Grasp it as a lad of mettle and soft as silk remains'*. Theoretically, if you grasp them firmly enough you will squash the stings before you can be impaled and not be hurt. Do try if you wish, but I disclaim all responsibility: personally I favour a rubber glove for picking. Those who compete in nettle-eating competitions roll the nettles very tightly which does the same thing. Again, attempt at your own risk.

The other health and safety notice is to only pick the very young leaves at the top of the plants. NEVER eat nettles when the plants have started flowering as then the leaves contain cystoliths and, not only will cystoliths affect kidney function, not in a good way, they will also sting in a very uncomfortable part of your anatomy.

**How to eat:** cooking removes the sting. Wash the leaves (still wearing the gloves) then either boil, sweat in a little water or bake in oven.

### Nettle Pesto

Take a pint of **washed nettles** (slightly squashed to measure) and boil in water for 2 mins. Then put in a clean tea towel and squeeze out the water. In a food processor, chop **2 cloves of garlic, 50g pine nuts**, a pinch or two of **salt** and some **pepper**. Add the **nettles**. When it is all chopped, slowly add **extra virgin olive oil** until you are happy with the consistency. Then add **50g of finely grated parmesan** or any **hard cheese** you like. Check for taste, add more **salt/pepper** as required. Use as pesto!



### Nettle fact!

Nettles are very fibrous and so can be made into cloth. They were used to make German uniforms in WWI when cotton was in short supply!

### Nettle Soup

Sauté a **finely chopped onion in butter**. Add a peeled **cubed potato**, a minced **clove of garlic**, washed **nettles** (half a pan's worth? It's hard to be specific) and **chicken or vegetable stock** to cover. Simmer gently for 15mins then process to a smooth soup and add a little **crème fraiche or cream** and **salt and pepper** to taste.

### 2016 is the UNITED NATIONS Year of the Pulse!

In the next editions we will looking at peas and beans, so if you have any great recipes for the pulses we can grow or tips on growing them on your plot, please email them in. In the meantime here is a **useful runner bean tip**—the pods develop at equal lengths along the vine so use thicker poles for them to curl round and they will be closer together, easier to pick, and the vines will not run out of pole so quickly.

## CHESHAM ALLOTMENTS GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

ALLEN TILBURY (Chairman) Plot 104 CR	TIM ANDREW (Vice Chair) Plot 48A CR	RAY WILLIAMS (Treasurer) Plots 215/216 CR	YVONNE WEBSTER (Secretary—Minutes) Plot 63A CR
ANDREW SINCLAIR (Correspondence Secretary) Plot 45B CR	JIM ABBOTT (Representative) Plot 31/32 CR	VINCE CROMPTON (Representative) Plot 36 CR	BEVERLY MACKAY (Representative) Plot 3B AR
VINCENT LUCAS (Representative) Plot 227D CR	KATE HUTCHINSON (Editor—The Grower) Plot 58D CR	DAVE HALL (Representative) Plot 12CR	TONY MUIR (Representative) Plot 28 AR
JANE MACBEAN Town Council Representative	CR = CAMERON ROAD AR = ASHERIDGE ROAD		The representatives are here for you. Please do come and talk to us about any issues!