

Slopefield News

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A Note from the Chair

Greetings and welcome to the very first Slopefield Allotment Association newsletter. This newsletter is another way we are trying to inform everyone about what is happening at Slopefield. Firstly, you are probably asking – why an association and what does it do. Well we have been asked to form a group to represent interests at Slopefield by the council who have similarly asked all other allotment sites to do the same. It aims to improve two-way communication about the provision of facilities at our site. Things such as water supply, site security, composting services, and for opportunities for grants to improve our environment.

We all have our plots for many different reasons including the opportunity to escape for a while and away from bureaucracy so please be assured that our association is most definitely not about rules and regulations, only the opportunity to improve our site for the future and for all. A committee was voted in at a recent plotheolders meeting where we had represen-

tation from all of the rows. People kindly agreed to volunteer their services and time and we thank them all. If you get a chance, say hello to your row reps who will be only too willing to keep you up to date on what's going on, or if there is an issue you would like to raise then they can bring it to our attention. Remember there is always the red letter box at the notice board for any messages and suggestions you may have.

So what's on the horizon at Slopefield? Things like the Slopefield **safe** campaign which is all about informing people of the gate lock and ensuring that before the lock becomes active we all know about how to use it properly. We have had instances of theft, fly-tipping and vandalism but we have an opportunity to make our site more secure. However it really does rely on everyone closing the gate when they leave.

There are "starter plots" for people just new to plotting, who can give it a go and see how they get on before tackling the sometimes daunting prospect of a full plot.

Many people might not have tried things out before so please help by offering advice and give assistance if you pass by. These small plots are to be established on Plots 2 and 22.

We are also lucky that the Council has given over Plot 11 to us as a Community site for the association. The aim is to develop it in the coming years as a community space where people can come together, chat, learn, and just enjoy the space. We are looking for ideas on how we should use this area so all suggestions in the red box please. On the back of the feedback received we will build a plan for the plot and let everyone comment. Or come along to the BBQ there on Sunday 5 Sept, meet up with other plotheolders and find out more.

Well we wish you well with your plots, and hope that our new Association can maintain Slopefield as a friendly, peaceful and rewarding place for all. We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Bob and Sue
Slopefield Chairs

Slopefield Yahoo Site

Keep In Touch

Our newly-formed Slopefield Yahoo site (below) presently has the Minutes of all Slopefield Allotment Association meetings, and will, in time, have much more information/news. To access this site you need to become a Slopefield Yahoo group member, and for this you need to have a Yahoo account (i.e. a Yahoo email

address). If you do not already have one, you can create one by typing in the Slopefield Yahoo address into a web search, and following the instructions to join. I found this to be a tricky procedure, and so suggest that you find a teenager (or similar) to help you if you (like me) are not computer literate. Once in the 'create an account'

procedure, your 'primary email address' should be the email address to which you want any messages from the Slopefield Yahoo site to be sent. This could be the new Yahoo email address that you have just created or, most likely, the email address that you would normally use. You will now be a member of the Slopefield Yahoo group!

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/slopefield/>

Email

To contact Slopefield Yahoo group members just send an email to the address below. This email will show up on the Slopefield Yahoo site (see above on how to access this), and will

also be sent automatically to all Slopefield Yahoo group members at their allocated email address. The email will have [Slopefield] in the subject line. When you first sign up you may

have to check your spam/junk email box in case the email gets sent there by mistake. If you find it here then choose 'not spam/junk'. This will move the message to your inbox.

slopefield@yahoogroups.com

On-site

There is a Notice Board at the site entrance which has important messages and dates. A Site Map is also to be found on the Board and you are very welcome to add your name to this to help give the personal touch. The Red Box

(see below), is located at the side of the Notice Board – please post any suggestions or communications here. The Minutes Board has the minutes of the most recent Association meeting, and is located on the first set of com-

posting bins (at the entrance to the site). Each Row now has a Row Rep – consult the Site Map to find out who yours is. Your Rep can report back to the next Allotment Association meeting with any issues you have about the site.

The Red Box



You can use the Red Box to contact the Committee about any issues to do with the site, or your own plot. Please also use it to tell us about anything related to Slopefield. We may be able to publish it in future Newsletters, to the benefit/interest of other plotters. Have you seen any interesting birds or animals? Are there any problems on

the site you want to report? Any ideas for events? Any spare tools to swap? Know a good place to get scaffolding boards for raised beds? Have extra chitted potatoes etc to swap/give away? Spare seeds? We could have a Swap Shop section in the next Newsletter. Do you have any specialist knowledge – birds/animals (a Nature Notes Section?)

Or have you had success with growing something and could share this with others. Hopefully we could have a Top Tips section in the next Newsletter. Would you be willing to help to organise events or contribute an article to our next newsletter? Any favourite recipes? Or ideas for the Community Plot? We would like to hear from you!!

Pest Alert – The New Zealand Flatworm

The New Zealand Flatworm, *Arthurdendyus triangulatus*, was first sighted in the UK in 1963 and is most concentrated in Northern Ireland and Scotland. It lives on earthworms and will greatly reduce their population, sometimes to below detectable levels. The flatworm prefers wet conditions.

They have flat, purple-brown bodies with buff-coloured undersides and edges, pointed at both ends and covered with a sticky slime. At rest they are about 1cm wide by 6cm long, extending to about 12cm when they move, but narrower. They are usually found coiled up with a 'halo' of slime under pots, stones, wood or pieces of polythene, where the surface is damp – not crawling about unless disturbed and heading for cover.

They either wait for the worms to surface or follow their burrows and other channels in the soil. When feeding they seem to lie on top of the

earthworm, perhaps using their sticky mucus to hold on, excrete digestive enzymes which liquify the worm, and absorb the soup that results.

New Zealand Flatworms are a great threat to soil condition and the wildlife which feed on earthworms, and every means should be employed to prevent their spread and eradicate them if possible. Some pastures in



Northern Ireland have become waterlogged due to the loss of the earthworm population. Unfortunately many have been shared between friends as they swap plants.

By adding lots of organic matter the population of earthworms can be improved.

It is possible to trap the flatworms by laying sheets of black poly-

thene, or placing bin-bags of compost around and collecting any which congregate underneath.



They can be moved to another site accidentally if they cling to a bag or plant pot. Chopping them up may not be enough to kill them as even these pieces have been seen crawling away.

So grind them up between two stones, add to very salty or boiling water, or burn them – better still, do all four!



Please also let us know if you find one/ need help with identification. Bob Ferrier, Plot 79, should be able to help.

At rest. The front is the more pointed end when it is moving.

The underside is paler.

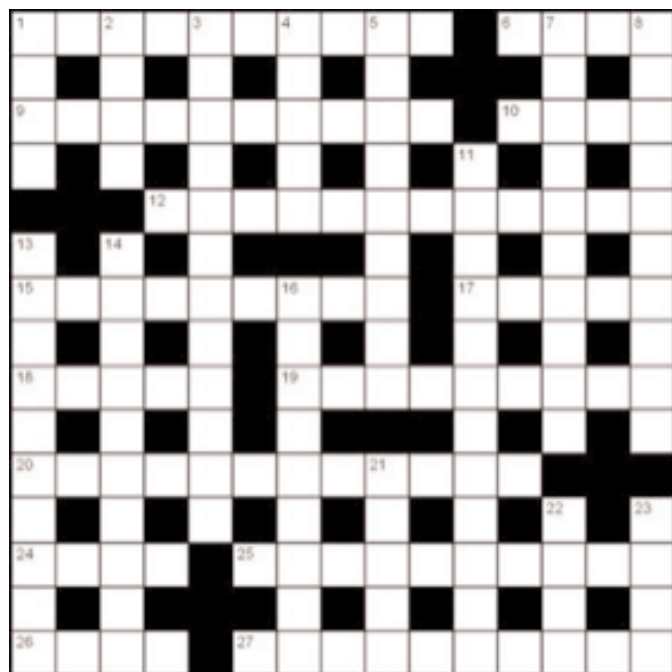
For more comprehensive information and advice about flatworms, go to

<http://www.dgsgardening.btinternet.co.uk/flatworm.htm>

(The information in this article was distilled from this.)

Slopefield Crossword

(Compiled by our very own Lorraine!)



Across

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Inclined to be cultivated! (10) | 17 Small French peas? (5) |
| 6 Cut down (4) | 18 When chocolate grows on trees (5) |
| 9 Youth organisation in which a "Gardener" badge could be earned! (4,6) | 19 Powerful circular currant?? (9) |
| 10 High yielding blight-resistant potato, sounds Irish (4) | 20 Well organised (12) |
| 12 Time every new plot-holder looks forward to (5,7) | 24 Instrumental in 20 across (4) |
| 15 Traditionally made from Durum wheat (9) | 25 Flowering (10) |
| | 26 Positively a town & water dam in Northern Spain (4) |
| | 27 Daisy's family (10) |

Down

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Wise old herb (4) | flowers (5,5) |
| 2 "Ladies Fingers" (4) | 11 Outrageous, silly (12) |
| 3 David Austin speciality (7,5) | 13 The science of mental life (10) |
| 4 Useful climbers, these girls are poisonous! (5) | 14 Radishes, fast growers, used as these (5,5) |
| 5 Having the nature of a blood-sucking parasite (9) | 16 A small variety of love-apple (9) |
| 7 Combines, binders, threshers (10) | 21 The fabled (5) |
| 8 These hold up the | 22 Plotters invariably covered in this! (4) |
| | 23 Frightful monster (4) |



Green Shoots – notes from a novice

With some trepidation I acquired my plot in April this year. I'm a gardening novice – enthusiastic, with fond childhood memories of pulling weeds on my father's vegetable patch – and have found the reality of yards of overgrown god-knows-what and with more rubbish than useful structure on my plot quite a challenge! I'm grateful for all

the advice I've been given, even the 'torch the lot and start again' line of thinking. Best of all was to get in other people to help: namely a long suffering sister and various friends who've donated either time, plants or brawn.

With a little effort I've managed a scattering of useful veg: some eaten by caterpillars and

slugs, some, I think, dug up by mice or rabbits (did I mention I've no fence?), some killed by lack of water (sorry), but some have actually tasted pretty good!

The Slopefield Association has been very useful for me, full of information and advice. Hopefully next year I'll manage an entry in the Giant Onion competition!

Seasonal Recipe – Wendy's Winter Warmer!

Stamppot (pronounced Shtum-pot) is a traditional Dutch dish, usually based on kale and potatoes, and nearly every household in Holland will have their own version of it. My mum is Dutch and as a child we often had this on a Sunday evening in the winter. I have

suggested both a meaty and a vegetarian version here. If you want, you could also add other vegetables, such as grated carrots or onions. As child, we always had it with the frothing butter topping, but you could use gravy instead. For or a really wonderful vegetarian Stamppot, I

suggest substituting spinach for the kale. I often made it this way for my friends and flat-mates during my student days – it must have gone down well as it is still requested by them to this day, over 20 years on! Enjoy!

Stamppot

Ingredients (serves 4–6)

Dutch Smoked sausage

500g curly kale (weight after leaves stripped from the stems)

1.5 kg potatoes

Salt and pepper

Butter (50g–100g to taste) or substitute gravy instead

For the vegetarian version substitute a boiled egg per person and some grated cheddar cheese instead of sausage.

Method

Boil and mash potatoes

Strip the leaves from the hard stems of kale, and chop. I often use scissors for this, especially after cooking to chop even smaller if necessary, so that the kale easily combines with the mash. Boil for 20 mins, until soft. Drain.

Add the kale to the potatoes, mix, and season with salt and pepper.

Heat the smoked sausage, and then slice the horseshoe into rounds.

Melt the butter in a saucepan, and let it froth for around 20 seconds before taking off the heat.

Pile up some of the Stamppot in the middle of each serving plate. Then, using the back of a teaspoon, hollow out a little crater on the top of each mound. Pour the frothing butter (or gravy) into the crater. Surround the Stamppot volcano with smoked sausage slices, piled all round its base. You will find that even children will eat

their greens when presented like this!

For the vegetarian version, slice the egg lengthways into four pieces, and then place this on top of the mound. Sprinkle with grated cheese and top off each mound with a splash of the frothy butter. If you want, you can pop this in the microwave/under the grill for a few seconds to warm up the egg and melt the cheese a bit.



BBQ – Plot 11

Events Diary

There will be BBQ (family invited) on **Sunday 5th September at 2pm**, to christen our Community Plot (Plot 11) and to meet fellow

plotters, of course! Bring a wee something to cook on the BBQ, and something to drink – and maybe any spare produce from your plot!

We'll provide the rolls, tomato ketchup, paper plates and cups.

Hope to see you there!

Giant Onion Competition

For those of you who took one of the Kelsae onions a few months ago – now's your chance to win a PRIZE!!

Please bring your Kelsae along to the BBQ

on 5th September – or label it and leave it beforehand in Plot 4 if you can't make it on the day. So as not to feel left out if you didn't get a Kelsae, just bring along your Biggest Onion (any

species), and we'll have a wee competition for this too.

Please note your prize specimens will end up on the BBQ! It's just for a bit of fun!

Other Events

Do you have any ideas for other events? For instance, we might have an annual Potato Fair (come along a swap spare potatoes on a Saturday morning), or have seed/plant swap days. Perhaps even a photographic competition or a Quiz Night. We hope to arrange some

'on-site' talks/demos in the future, for instance a



talk about composting. Does anyone have knowledge they would

be willing to share with fellow plotters? Anything from how make a comfrey press, or propagate dahlias, to looking at wildlife etc. Please let us know if you have ideas/ are willing to help organise events/would consider giving a talk/demo on site.

Newsletter

We plan to bring out a seasonal Newsletter four times a year: end of August, November,

February and May. All contributions gratefully received! Thanks to Patty for

doing all the technical and artistic stuff, and to Lorraine for the crossword.

Association Meeting

Date for next meeting is Thurs 30 September

at 8pm, at Aberdeen Grammar Rugby Club,

86 Queens Road. All welcome!