



🌀 Newsletter February 2023 🌀



Find us at www.norfolkorganic.org.uk

Registered charity no 1064425



We are a local group for Garden Organic and the Soil Association



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We are now into the new year and looking forward to what this will bring. We had a good zoom meeting with our president Bob Flowerdew and this has been written up in the following pages, so those that could not attend can follow up with his usual words of wisdom.

A few of us were at the Gardeners Question Time, that is available on the BBC radio 4 catch up where Bob was also in fine form giving us his take on the audiences particular questions and comments. I did attend but was a bit miffed that the rest of the audience were not invited to interject with further pearls of wisdom?!

Last years weather is now behind us and the local vagaries have been written up with the highest temperatures in Cambridgeshire being reported, also the wettest and hottest place in Norfolk that occurred in the same place. This is also written up in the weather report kindly given by the Norfolk Weather Quest & weather view.

We have the Members profile by Bee Springwood and if anyone else has a Crome they would like to share with a photo, that would be interesting...so why are they called Cromes when they are always dull and rusty?? Answers on a postcard.....

This years Potato Day is happening again this year on 11th February and if any one would like to help with this please get in touch with our secretary Julian Turner, there will be about 50 varieties available and this will be at **Otley College, Charity Lane , Otley, Suffolk IP6 9EY.**

Please look at the article for further info and also at the website <https://eapd.chessck.co.uk> This is full of pictures and other info including the Potato Day history and a few poems as well as listing the potato varieties.

Robert 'Wifly' Bailey

If you truly love nature ; you will find beauty everywhere .

Vincent van Gogh





Website: norfolkorganic.org.uk



Facebook: Norfolk Organic Group



Twitter: @norfolkorganic



Instagram: Norfolk.Organic.Group



What's app group: Vicente on 07443 033261
Julian on 07748 627778

Treasurers Thoughts



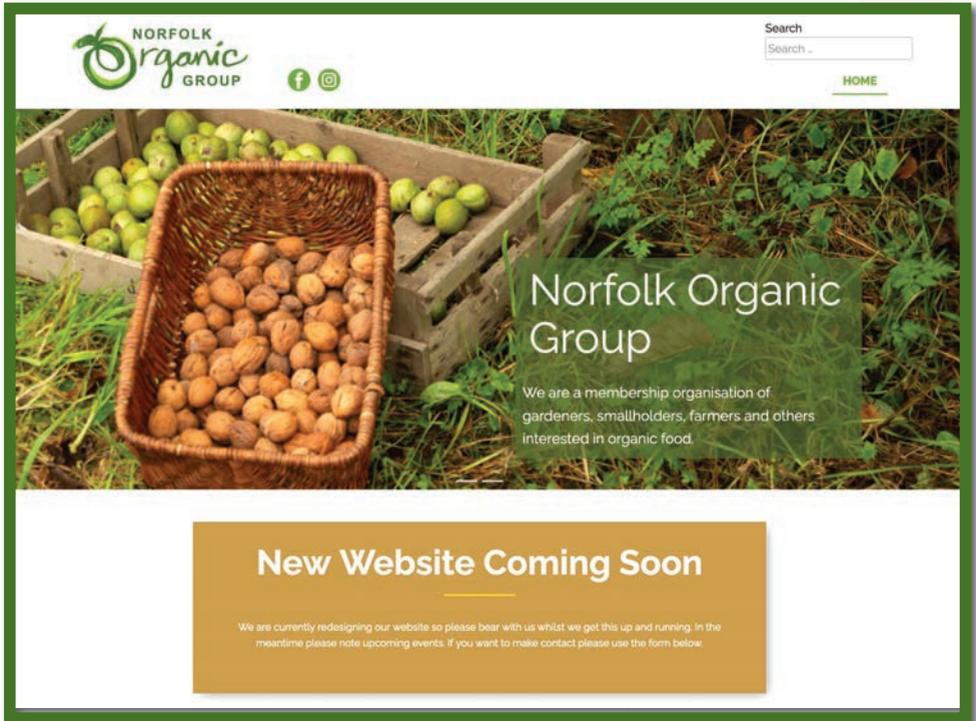
Slowly the light is returning as we step into our Organic new year, and we look forward to the longer days of spring, when we can sow our seeds and watch with excitement as nature emerges from its winter slumber. Yet the winter months are a precious time for reflection and preparing our plans for the months to come. It is also the ideal time to observe our growing spaces, plant new trees and shrubs, tend to our pruning and feed the soil with a thick layer of compost. It is a time of imagination as we envisage our interventions nourishing and enriching our environment. Nature is never still and the more open aspect of the winter garden, bare of its foliage, makes it easier to spot the new life emerging as bulbs push through the soil. Who is not heartened by the simple joy of seeing the first fragile aconites in flower?

Likewise Norfolk Organic Group has been busy planning and we have some amazing and informative talks and events in the pipeline for 2023. We have two inspiring and passionate speakers for the now traditional winter Zoom talks in January and February. March, we have our first face to face meeting, with Charles Dowding having just confirmed for 11 March – this will be a ticketed event for further details see Charles Dowding article on page 19. Sabine Virani is booked for our regular meeting on 27 March which will also include our AGM.

In addition to our meetings some of you will have noticed that we are launching a new website. This is still in development at the moment but we hope to have this up and running soon. The intention is that this will be an informative and inspiring shop window, encouraging more people to learn about the benefits of Organic growing and hopefully encouraging them to join.

And finally this may be the last Treasurers Thoughts, for a while. Happily, Bee Springwood has stepped forward to become our new Chair. After a few months of the position being vacant, this is great news and we look forward to the return of 'Chairs Chat' in future newsletters....

Paul Lucas



The screenshot shows the Norfolk Organic Group website. At the top left is the logo for 'NORFOLK Organic GROUP' with a green leaf icon. To its right are social media icons for Facebook and Instagram. Further right is a search bar with the text 'Search' and a 'HOME' button. The main banner features a photograph of a wicker basket filled with walnuts, placed next to a wooden crate containing green apples. Overlaid on the right side of the banner is the text 'Norfolk Organic Group' and a paragraph: 'We are a membership organisation of gardeners, smallholders, farmers and others interested in organic food.' Below the banner is a large orange box with the text 'New Website Coming Soon' and a smaller paragraph: 'We are currently redesigning our website so please bear with us whilst we get this up and running. In the meantime please note upcoming events, if you want to make contact please use the form below.'



The Big Garden Birdwatch event is happening over the 27th-29th January, This is organised by the RSPB and can be found on the rspb.org.uk/birdwatch website.

*It will never rain roses. If we want more roses
we must plant more trees.*

George Eliot



Bob asserted that his organic garden model had moved from managing “pest and disease” to one that valued species diversity. He had been losing crickets and grasshoppers in his tidy well-mown garden. Reason being these insects laid eggs in grass tufts to overwinter. Additionally he found the longer grass more attractive.

He had also grown late-flowering bulbs, recommending Pheasant's Eye daffodils. The grasshopper comeback was remarkable. His interest in them surged and led to him identifying a nematode parasite specialising in grasshoppers.

He felt the sad loss of garden birds was partly due to food loss ... like slugs and insects, As an aside, had the motor car had an impact on insect populations? If the annual kill per windscreen had been 1kg, how many tonnes were the millions of vehicles culling? Bob saw a pyramid of predation in the garden. Layers actually, with weasels, stoats and cats on the top layer (not forgetting the revival of birds of prey). The top predators and those lower down needed death for their life. We should recognise this. He'd been noticing sparrowhawks, barn owls and bats.

He remembered his success in keeping water butts clean by stocking them with goldfish. This came to an end as he was losing fish. Eventually he found he had been feeding a kingfisher.

Bob turned his attention to butterflies. We are not doing enough attracting the adults with flowers, if we are not ready to feed their larvæ. Some 200 Lepidoptera feed on the likes of docks and thistles, native species not found in the tidy garden.

We should also plant native tree species like willow and hazel. These can be coppiced to manage their size.

Teasels got a mention, as dirt collectors! Perhaps a good plant to limit the impact of traffic pollution.

And so to peat in sowing and potting composts. A tricky issue with sowing compost contrasted with potting compost. Sieved garden compost is usually better but needs sterilising (can be achieved by putting in a microwave). There is no reason to use peat now as leaf mould can be used instead. While our peat bogs are drying out! Although John Innes feels that using this in the garden is useful as a carbon sink.

We need to attend more to nutrients in compost, peat never did supply these. Comfrey is potash rich and may yellow leaves, while borage and nettles supply magnesium. Mulching is ideal but too much manure will make the soil very hot. When Cobbett was writing he mulched with loads more manure and said that Brassicas planted out when hot would seek out roots. Coir matting is definitely Bob's best mulch, while long life carpet has a problem with shedding micro plastics. Natural/pure wool carpet is good but may need more layers to protect the moisture levels.

A synthetic carpet has its place however, it will attract slugs and snails, which congregate under it and can be picked off.

Ladybirds seem to arrive all at once. They need to have tall things to climb up, and then are able to fly off. Ladybirds appear to overwinter in low growing perennial areas. If pruning, collect your lady birds and you can keep them in an organic bag. If you have fires, coal ash from a stove, can be mixed with cement for concrete slabs. Wood ash and old cooking oil could make soap, or wood ash with compost for a surface soil dressing.

Bob had also been thinking about climate change. We might need to wheel out potted plants normally kept under glass or polythene when the heat got too intense. He also turned to companion plants. He was finding it more important to identify bad neighbours. For example, borage suppressing germination near it.

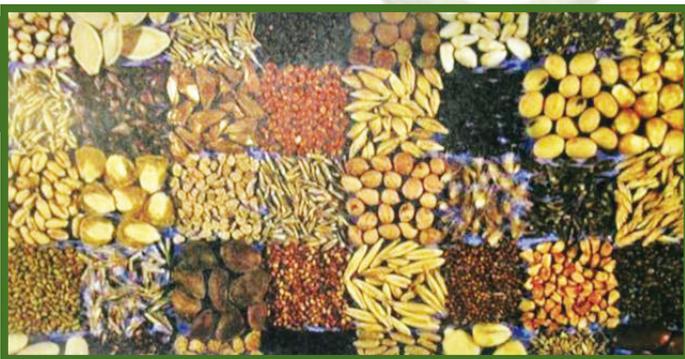
Bee Springwood

Norwich Seed and Plant swap



The Norwich seed and plant swap is happening again this year on the 19th of February 1pm till 4pm. Bob Flowerdew will be attending with his books for sale, quite a few in Polish and Lithuanian! It is being held as usual at St Mary Magdalene Church Hall, Silver Rd.

Also Kasia Puzio will be giving a talk on wildlife friendly gardening.



A garden is a grand teacher.

It teaches patience & careful watchfulness; it teaches industry & thrift; above all it teaches entire trust.

Gertrude Jekyll.

For peats sake, this long standing campaign by Garden Organic has taken a step forward by the announcement that Defra will be banning the sale of peat to amateur gardeners by 2024 . However the professional sector will still be able to use it .

Ben Margolis talk on The Grange - A Garden of Sanctuary



After a last minute cancellation due to illness, Ben Margolis kindly stepped in to provide a fascinating talk on his experience setting up and running The Grange as a Garden of Sanctuary for refugees with his wife Sophie. Ben has always been fascinated by Permaculture. After what he described as 'burn out' in a high powered job as Campaign Director of The Climate Coalition, and the frustrations after the Copenhagen Climate summit, he turned to Permaculture to help give meaning in his life. He attended a course with Hannah Thorogood an amazing permaculture teacher who also runs the Inkpot Organic Farm, in Lincolnshire. He explained how Permaculture is a concept developed by Bill Mollison & David Holmgren based on environmental ethics and principles to help people live a more sustainable and regenerative life.



One of Permaculture's design tools involves looking at zones and sectors. In simple terms Zone 0 is your house and internal environment, Zone 1 is the external space most frequently used and should therefore be located closest to the house. Zone 2 is less frequently used and is therefore slightly further away and so on... until you get to zone 5 which is defined as natural wilderness. Initially conceived as a sustainable agriculture system it can be used in garden design and can also apply in a social context. When Ben and Sophie took on The Grange and decided to share their home with refugees they viewed the zones in a wider context. The grange is set in 10 acres in Great Cressingham near Swaffham and they saw the house as Zone 0, the garden as Zone 1, the village as Zone 2, Norwich and Norfolk as Zone 3, UK as Zone 4 and the world as Zone 5.

Ben Margolis talk on The Grange - A Garden of Sanctuary



Inspired by Sophie's previous work with asylum seekers Ben partnered with Roots Norwich and Room to Heal to gain therapeutic skills and understand how to create a safe space. These projects were then able to send people to The Grange. There were a lot of challenges sharing their home and garden in this way, as it required a lot of supervision both of volunteers and refugees. However it was also very rewarding as friendships formed and asylum seekers gained skills in a welcoming and non-judgemental environment.



To help integration in the village (Zone 2), they held open days at The Grange and welcomed the villagers to various events including an annual duck race. Looking at Zone 3, in 2013 Ben became active in making Norwich a City of Sanctuary. This is a coalition of local refugee support groups who promote a culture of welcome and now includes 18 schools in Norfolk as well as the UEA as University of Sanctuary.

Zone 4 - the Thriving Communities project, set up by Ben and supported by the Permaculture Association to understand how permaculture helps people from disadvantaged and marginalised communities. This was followed by working with the community gardens at Grapes Hill and developing Gardens of Sanctuary, to support and inspire community growing spaces and award them a badge of honour.



Ben Margolis talk



The global Zone 5 was Permaculture for Refugees. Ben worked with a small group of educators with a shared vision to bring permaculture design and understanding into refugee camps, transforming health, opportunities and food production; as well as education about alternative economies, group decision-making and relationships with other communities.

‘Sharing our home with people from all over the world restored our faith in the human capacity for love, kindness, forgiveness and resilience.’ He and Sophie went from their post-Copenhagen despair about humanity to feeling part of creating a more sustainable, resilient and equal world. He is proud to leave the legacy of The Grange, now a permaculture demonstration site and the first place in the UK to be designated as a Home of Sanctuary.



Ben now shares his experience teaching how to run a permaculture refugee centre. He is also an advisor to The Climate Coalition in the UK.

Review by Carol Sharp & Paul Lucas



DATE	PRESENTER & TITLE	VENUE & MODE	DESCRIPTION
30 th January	Adam Alexander Creating a garden from scratch (organic, permaculture based)	Zoom at 7.30	Adam is a well known seed collector and gardening writer, who started his garden from nothing about 15 years ago. This is some of the story.
27 th February	Susan Young Growing beans and other pulses	Zoom at 7.30	Following the publication of her book Beans, this is an exciting resume. Growing Beans-diet for healthy people and the planet.
11 th March	Charles Dowding Workshop with Farmshare and evening talk	pm at FARM evening venue at the Forum	More details on the No-Dig article
27 th March	Sabine Virani What is Agroecology and can it help reverse the climate and ecological crises? Followed by the AGM	Friends Meeting House at 7.30	Sabine has been involved in the Green New Deal and in particular, the new deal vision for a food secure Norwich. This entails many strands of activism, planning and community sharing.
24 th April	Nick Thompson Forest Gardening	Venue tbc	Forest Gardening is an aspect of Permaculture which bodes well for managing climate change.
May date tbc	Composting, all about it Bee Springwood and friends	tbc Trowse Allotments	Bee is a NCC Master Composter since 2014, and will offer a demo session with Q and A and a small handout on do's and don'ts for beginners and experts to add to.

*Gardening is learning, learning, learning,
that's the fun of it you are always learning*

Helen Mirren



As I type this, Potato Day is just 4 weeks away. Us organisers now get worried how well it will go, what have we not done and so on. We hope the weather is favourable! But really I am setting out how much we need NOG members as helpers. While we share the event with Suffolk Org Gardeners and Ipswich Org Gardeners Gp, they are smaller groups and NOG is the “backbone” this year. IOGG has yet to recover from the pandemic even.

We need help to set up on Friday 10th Feb from 2pm onwards. Most likely until nightfall. On Saturday 11th, doors open at 10am, but helpers are needed earlier. We advertise working until 2pm, but it will slow down after 12 noon. We like to be wound up by 3pm. There should be ample opportunity for lift sharing and sharing makes sense for us being so far away. Travelling time makes it a longish day both Friday and Saturday. We offer volunteers £6-worth of seed potatoes for their bother.

It is rewarding to find yourself in the midst of enthusiasts, and it is one of those occasions when you show a wider public how practical organic can be.

A couple of pallets will hold the potato stock, mostly in 25kg sacks. These will be displayed in shallow labelled cardboard boxes. As the customers take tubers, we have to top up from the sacks. On other tables the cost is totted up for the punter to pay.



We also run a seed swap table, an onion set table, a root trainer sale, insect barrier mesh sales, helpers' tea/coffee. This takes a lot of us. And I haven't mentioned the entry door! There will be other stalls but they will have their own staff fortunately.

Julian Turner

*Gardeners learn by trowel
and error.*

Everyone



Norfolk Organic Recipes



Butternut Squash Soup Thai style - simple, serves 4-6



- ① 1 medium onion, chopped
- ② 2 cloves garlic, skinned and finely chopped
- ③ 1 medium butternut squash, peeled, seeds removed, chopped.
- ④ 1 small can coconut cream 160ml (or larger can coconut milk)
- ⑤ Vegetable stock, about 300ml
- ⑥ Thai 7 spice seasoning to taste (see jar - I use Schwartz, about 2 level tsp)



Gently fry onion in oil until softened, add garlic, then spice to fry gently 2 mins

Add squash, coconut cream and stock.

Simmer 20 mins, blend smooth.

I sometimes serve with cooked prawns or garnish with fresh herbs such as chervil or coriander.

Sheridan Chaffe.

Multi purpose casserole / stew



Using any veg you like (*there are no limits*)

Use a pan, with oil of your choice, heat up, add chopped onion and garlic then fry a little. Add finely chopped carrot, parsnip, swede, celery, peppers (*fresh or frozen*), with some mushrooms.

Stir and allow to brown a little, add some tomato paste, stir, and let it brown a little more, then add a stock cube and a tin of chopped tomatoes.....

To season, add herbs and paprika/chilly powder of your choice.

Allow to simmer until vegetables are just soft, add some water if it goes a bit dry. Add a tin of strained red kidney beans or brown lentils, let it cook until consistency is right. Serve with rice, or put it in a dish, cover with mashed potatoes, topped with some cheese. Bake until golden and it will be as good as shepherds pie.

Colin Irons.



Lots of activity has been apparent on Bluebell South. Our new allotment officer Helen has been instrumental in procuring a skip to help people taking on new plots to dispose of previous rubbish and detritus left by vacating tenants. Thus making the plots more attractive.

An informative poster has been erected to remind tenants about the potential harm of clearing their plots of all vegetation. Plants give homes to all the helpful bugs and critters that are needed for the next years viability. For example the new season's pollinators. She stresses this is not an excuse to let the plot look like it has been a abandoned, so avoiding a stern letter from the Allotment officer!!

There is also going to be a soil survey project by the UEA looking at the influence of different Allotment Husbandry Styles on earthworms and soil structures. If anyone would be interested in this project then they could get in touch with the Allotment Officer who has all the details.

At the moment there are 23 vacant plots after the initial surge that occurred during the Covid era.

Interestingly, on the wildlife side, there is a definite decrease in the Greenfinch population, It has been attributed to the fact that bird tables and feeding stations are not being regularly cleaned and disinfected of viruses that tend to lurk in these places.



Also one of my more random presents this Christmas was a jar of bunny poo! And I think this was inspired by Bob Flowerdew's talk on the amount of free manure that all the allotment fauna gives us when leaving their "calling cards". This bunny poo, produced at an almost conveyor belt level, is remarkable. I am sure Henry Ford would have been equally impressed at this production rate!!

Robert Bailey

The Weather Report



October brought us some quite balmy weather with temperatures reaching into the high teens but we did get the high winds from Storm Callum reaching 50mph in some places. However we did get temperatures up to 26°C for a few days before falling to the mid teens, an almost Indian summer with lots of activity on the allotment.

We did get quite a lot of heavy rain towards the end of the month with Walsingham getting about 4" but Winfathing only getting about 1.5". So, overall October was about 0.6°C warmer than the 30 year average with above average sunshine and below average rainfall.

November was warmer and drier than average with temperatures in double figures. We also had high winds up to 40mph and some lightning and intense rain in the west of the region. This month experienced quite a few misty and foggy mornings and days, almost the miserable November type weather that we were used to in the past! Overall November was 1.2°C than the 30 year average, but sunnier and drier than average.

December brought in some more seasonal weather with falling temperatures and some snow in the second week with sharp frosts and temperatures of about 2 - 3°C. This brought out the salting lorries and although this was ok for the main roads the cycle paths and routes were treacherous so I actually rode on the roads to avoid anything untoward happening.

There were more hard frosts in the middle of the month with temperatures dropping to -10°C but with a change of the wind direction the temperature rose to 14°C with lows of only 10°C overnight. We then experienced milder weather at the end of the month and overall December temperatures across East Anglia were 1.2°C below the 30 year average due to the prolonged colder spell early in the month.

Due to the early cold snap the government sent out £25 vouchers for vulnerable people on benefits. I also picked my last raspberries in the first week of the months.

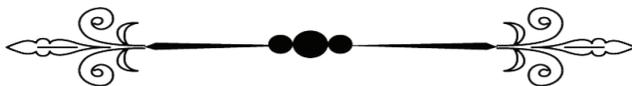
Robert Bailey.

*Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful.
They are sunshine, food, & medicine for the soul.*

Luther Burbank



NDG's Amazing Comestibles Directory



Herbs & Spices.

Norwich Market stall 42 / 43.

Run by Gareth since 1975 this outlet sells lots of herbs, spices, dried fruits and a selection of organic oats, rice and mangoes. There is a large selection of teas including Gareth's own speciality.... Repar-tea!!

Substrata wines.

Norwich Market stall No 52

A large selection of organic wines run by Tom, they sell wines with depth on biodynamic principles that help the environment and reduce soil erosion.

Sunshine Soaps.

SunshineSoaps.co.uk

All our soaps are made by hand in the UK and they are preservative free and made in the traditional cold process method using organic, vegetarian and vegan friendly sustainably sourced natural ingredients.

Folland Organics.

Bespoke Organic Fruit & Vegetable Boxes

Folland Organics that used to be on Norwich Market specialise in certified organic fruit & vegetables and produce a weekly list allowing customers to choose their own produce for delivery. Working with local growers and national/international wholesalers they stock an excellent range of fresh produce that both supplies a steady range of staples and changes with the seasons.

Email Robert & Shelley for further details and to receive their weekly list:

follandorganics@zohomail.eu or call **07909821095**

Thorns.

Exchange St

Located in central Norwich, Thorns provide organic seeds in their large gardening dept together with a plumbing section for all the watering requisites and lots of hardware and tools to get the job done!! And when you have finished in the garden they also sell kettles, cups and saucers and plates to make a nice, well earned, cup of tea!!

‘How I Garden’, by Adam Frost (2022, BBC Books/Penguin)

It is available in the Millennium Library at the Forum in Norwich or can be bought new for £22 in Waterstones. Starting out as a gardener and trying to introduce organic principles can be rather daunting for the uninitiated. Award winning garden designer and BBC Gardeners World presenter Adam Frost’s book is an accessible and practical guide. Much of his training has been gained on the job working to look after and then to design gardens. But he credits his grandparents for his creative approach and love of gardening. Introducing his two Nans – tidy Nan and messy Nan, he explains how they both showed him the different ways of gardening. Yes, tidy Nan had manicured lawns and controlled the plants whereas messy Nan let things go a bit wild and never threw anything away.



Preparing to garden

Adam takes the reader through the key tools and knowledge for gardening, with useful sections on preparing and improving the soil, growing fruit and vegetables and choosing the best plants for your space. Adam places an emphasis on making the soil as good as it can be and thinks it as important as other principles such as crop rotation.

Doing things differently

The book outlines his 'layering' approach to gardening which departs from the more familiar way of planting trees at the back border, shrubs in the middle and herbaceous plants at the front. He prefers mixing things up to look more natural and less formal. One way he does this is with interplanting – so that you might have edible rhubarb growing in with your flowers, and why not! This diversity in planting helps to create a natural balance – the ladybirds will get rid of your aphids if they have habitat to thrive in.

He shares his favourite plant lists (herbaceous plants for shade and sun, bulbs, shrubs, trees) offering a helpful mini guide for navigating and choosing the right plant for the right place. The recommended edible ornamental plant choices offer food for thought. Sea kale has lovely colours for a mixed border, is perennial and can be used like sprouting broccoli. The Potato bean (also known as Ground nut) is an unusual herbaceous climber with flowers as pretty as Sweet peas and tubers (potato like) that taste nutty, like sweet potatoes. It also fixes nitrogen in the soil. Though it might be tricky to source the seeds!

From seed to kitchen table

The book reminds us that we can harness nature by cleverly selecting self-seeding plants to do their own thing in parts of the garden. Adam's favourites include the Foxglove, Poppy, Angelica, Aquilegia, Sweet cicely and the Baltic parsley. The section on sowing seeds and growing fruit, vegetables and other plants is also really practical and helpful for a beginner or less experienced gardener. This includes a list of easy to grow and care for flowers, herbs and vegetables.

The book is nicely illustrated with images of his family in the garden and their favourite recipes, as well as ideas for using foliage and flowers in the home. 'How I Garden' shows how we can bring the gifts from our garden, patio pots, or herb patch into our homes too.

Juliette Harkin

Housework is for those who do not know how to garden.

All of us

Charles Dowding

will be in Norwich on Saturday March 11th 12-4pm
at Norwich FarmShare
and talking at the Forum at 7pm.

Norfolk Organic Group and Norwich FarmShare invite you to spend time with 'No Dig' expert Charles Dowding. Tickets will be on sale shortly, please check the websites. Two events are on offer:

Practical session at Norwich FarmShare

During the afternoon Charles will be hosted by Norwich FarmShare, where he will share some practical tips on how to achieve success in the garden without digging. With the aid of practical demonstrations in the market garden, participants will learn about the principles of no-dig gardening, making and using compost, what is compost, how to smother and stay on top of weeds, how to set up beds and paths, how to orientate beds and propagation.

There will be a short refreshment break in the middle. Tickets are £60 and we only have 20 spaces. To purchase a ticket for the afternoon workshop at the farm follow this link <https://www.norwichfarmshare.co.uk/events>

Once you have purchased your ticket we will send you more information.

Evening talk at The Forum, Norwich

No Dig for Easier Abundance.

Charles explains how his gardening practices have evolved since 1982, when he made beds for the 1.5 acres of his new organic market garden. In that first autumn, he mulched with old hay to prevent weed growth, then discovered a huge increase of slugs! From that starting point has evolved his simple, easy methods for smothering weeds when starting out, This is followed by little-and-often maintenance of beds and paths. They are mostly weed and slug free! His talk is about growing food more easily and quickly. For example, he does not harden off seedlings, and practices little rotation of vegetables. He explains simple ways to propagate, making and using compost, and protecting plants from cold and pests. His trials show us the benefits no-dig brings. These include cropping undercover in the winter and summer, year round planting so that beds are mostly full. Thus you have food year round, including from store. He offers tips on saving seeds, using wood chip, and best ways to water.

The evening talk will take place at The Forum at 7pm DOORS OPEN at 6.30 for refreshments books and info. Tickets are £8 for NOG members and £12.50 for non-members. There are 120 places. To purchase a ticket for the evening talk follow this link <https://www.norwichfarmshare.co.uk/events>

I recently did a half-day workshop on natural dyeing with plants, led by Ilona who runs hempontoast.co.uk.

We gathered at the Norwich FarmShare site at Whitlingham for a bright but cold Sunday morning, Here I found pots already brewing on an open fire, with onion skin, alder, elderberry, and all sorts! We had a prepared tee shirt to play with, adding dried flowers and leaves and pounded oak galls, rolling them up to keep damp and warm for the coming week until the natural dyes have given their best. I've checked mine, and the hollyhock is coming along nicely! We also had time to dip our strips of pre-mordanted fabric into the steaming pots, and find beautiful colours emerging, which have stayed bright on my strips. A thoroughly enjoyable, well run, well resourced session. Maybe NOG will book a session for us all to learn a bit more about it? I looked on Ilona's website and spied all the beautiful handmade natural fibre and natural dyed clothes for sale too. So if you are keen to shop as local as you can, I'd recommend hempontoast.co.uk

Bee Springwood



Member Profile - Bee Springwood

1. When and where did you first begin to garden?

Both parents, but especially my mum, were keen gardeners for designing and flower borders. I was given a small bed to plant in aged about 6. I loved vegetables then, but mostly I loved pansies, nasturtiums, bonfires for outdoor cooking, tree climbing and tree house building. All from the blessing of a decent sized suburban garden.



2. When did you hear about and join NOG?

I joined HDRA national in 1981, I think, and found NOG later, in the late 80s.

3. What other horticultural enterprises are you involved with?

I joined the Norfolk County Council GO Master Gardener and Master Composter scheme (the latter still going) in 2010. Keen to support others to grow their own food, and grow organically. Then I joined FarmShare when Transition Norwich began, in 2011, and have been involved ever since, supporting locally grown agroecological veg and fruit.



4. Do you have a special gardening tip you would like to share?

If you move to an existing stocked garden don't make any big changes for a year, until you've really seen the seasons, shrubs, veg etc all come and go at least once. Then do your redesign. Having said that, go straight to no dig, for sandy soil especially. It's transformed my watering, feeding, and weeding efforts for the better.

5. How much time do you spend in the garden?

It varies, but whenever the sun is shining, I want to be out, at least looking about and pottering. My old bod can't manage more than a couple of hours at a time. After 40 years in the same garden, I'm getting better at sitting and enjoying it. But once you start looking, there's always something to do that could take the whole day and into dusk.

6. Favourite Vegetable?

One for each season, but leeks, purple sprouting broccolli, broad beans, runner beans. So many others! As a vegi/pescatarian of 45 years I do love my veg.

7. My favourite tool?

It has to be my TWO sets of Felco secateurs. The first pair was given to us as a thank you for helping a friend clear her dad's sheltered housing flat: found under his sink with other gardening treasures.

I'd never afforded myself a set, but we did give my mum a pair for smaller hands on her 60th birthday, and come the day of clearing her house, they also came home with me. We live in a terrace with garden front and back, so it's perfect to keep a set by each door. I'd almost say, I never go out the door without them. There's always some green veg or herbs to snip and bring in, or deadheading to do on the way to the compost.

But I'd have to mention, too, my beloved stainless steel "ladies" border fork, almost the only tool we bought new in 1982 for this garden. I try not to disturb the soil, but angled dig-in and gentle lift, without breaking the soil top lets me weed out the ever present ground elder with most of its root threads intact. And it loosens sandy soil enough to scoop out a hole for planting by hand. As it's very small, it's all done without knacker my muscles in the process.

I grow plants for many reasons, to please my eye,
or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or challenge
my very patience, for novelty or nostalgia,
but mostly for the joy of seeing them grow.

David Hobson

My Partner's birthday was coming up and they were leaving lots of seed catalogues around the house ... I gave her a Magazine rack!

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