

GROWING TOGETHER

*Newsletter of the East Hampshire
Self-sufficiency Group – a Group of the
Henry Doubleday Research Association*



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**All meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of month
at 7.30 in Triangle Centre at Liss, unless otherwise
specified.**

**For those who are interested the group's web site is:
www.ehss.org.uk**

November 2008 Newsletter

November's talk, on Wednesday, 12th, will be "All about
Potatoes" by John Trim.

**Alert! Our Christmas meeting will be our social, and will
be on the 3rd Wednesday for one month only, Wednesday
17th of December.** Please bring something exciting to share
(food) and something to drink, (you don't have to share!!)

Paul Strike will be giving us a quiz to keep our minds
working, and Percy Heath will run a raffle. Can you bring a
raffle prize?

At our September meeting, someone lost a £5 note. It was
found near the wall in the front row. Chris Nash has it safe!
Oh dear, October's meeting was a bit disorganized I believe!
For future reference; if I am unable to attend, I will inform
others on the committee as I did this time, and arrange for
someone to open and close the meeting (as I did, but the best
laid plans, etc) if the main door is locked, ring the bell, the
Liss runners are there, as are the yoga group. Alternatively, to
the right of the building is the side door, used by the Liss
runners, and we can get in that way.

Talk given by Dru Furneaux to the "Greening Petersfield
group on Thursday, 30th October.

The EHSS group had its first meeting on 1978, in little village
hall not far from here. The day of the meeting, set up by our
President, Alec Fry was flagged up on local radio, and to
everyone's great surprise, 400 people turned up! The TV
programme "The Good Life" was on and the group received a
letter from the cast.

After 30 years, we still meet once a month, the second
Wednesday, at 7.30 in the Triangle Centre in Liss. We run at
about 100 members and their families, have a monthly
newsletter which gives a resume of the previous meeting,
articles and exchange/ for sale notices, all for £12 a year, (10
at present, but due to rise in Jan 09) our talks range from
environmental topics, animal husbandry, fruit and veg
growing, and wildlife. Take bees; a talk on bees will tell you
not only about keeping them, but why we need them. No bees,
no pollination, no food--where does that leave us?
Our members range from the interested, without skills,
through to experts in their fields, (hedge-layers, gardeners, bee
keepers, award-winning cheese-makers and meat rearers. We
have a whole-food stall, ordering from a bulk supplier at a
discount, and selling to our members at a smaller discount and
thus raising money to pay for speakers.. round and round it
goes!

We also have talks by alternative health practitioners, and look
to doing things for ourselves, perhaps using honey to heal
wounds. Now that's pretty green! I make my own beeswax
and turpentine furniture polish. It costs pennies. Works
brilliantly, and smells wonderful, and I don't spend hours in
my kitchen in a pinny and sandals!

John Seymore, the doyenne of the SS movement gave us a
talk in those early heady days. Many of us wanted to get back
to a simpler more basic life—rearing animals, growing fruit
and veg, making our own clothes, even our own crockery!
When I look back at how simple ordinary daily life was then
compared to now, I'm amazed! We bought basic ingredients
with which to make meals, we could still find butcher,
greengrocers, fishmongers in almost every village, let alone
the towns! So for many of us involved in the SS movement it
was about rearing and growing and making our own bread,
rather than buying these easily obtained essentials. Being able
to sew or knock up a rabbit hutch was virtually taken for
granted, and what we couldn't do for ourselves, someone
nearby could do, or show us how to do. Now we seem to have
2 generations of adults who don't know where to begin, and as
for growing something to eat, its seems as remote a skill as
astro physics! This is not just a pity, it's appalling. A huge
number of people could not survive without the backup of
modern life; the supermarket with its ready meals and
sandwiches, all year round salads and fruit, to mobile
phones, computers, internet, and cars. Don't get me started on
that one! I have nothing against any of these things, I use them
all and the key word for me is use, I try not to rely on them to
conduct my life. I would not live in a house that relied entirely
on electricity, gas or oil for heating and cooking. If you can,
fit a wood burner, it will always keep you warm, boil a kettle
and cook a meal.

Local food. Your most local food is that you produce yourself.
Small garden? Very small garden? Try pots and containers,
grow tomatoes in hanging baskets, grow runner beans up
trellis on your house or fence. Sprout seeds in jars, mustard
and cress on window sills. Not quite so local; get to know
your neighbours, the older ones are good! Do they grow
anything? Do they have a surplus you can buy or swap for

something else? Drop the idea of equality of exchange. 3 hours babysitting (or granny sitting) in exchange for a dozen eggs, some beans and a lettuce may not have an equal monetary value but is worth its weight in gold. Interacting with other people on a simple day to day basis is good for your mental health. I'm so glad to see people like Jamie Oliver and Hugh Furnliegh-Wittingstall and doing such a good job teaching us all how to do things and getting people together. You don't have to be best friends with someone to enjoy working together on a project.

We can't go back to basic living, rear all our food, tan leather and make shoes, give up our jobs, nor would we want to; we need to move forward, take the best from the 21st century. We do have choices, we can live more sustainably, take more personal responsibility for our lives. We can teach our children to cook, sew, grow things; do real things, not sit voyeuristically in front of an electronic device. If we do not do so, it may be forced upon us by outside influences. As things are in Britain, our power stations are getting old and many are due to be decommissioned, and shortages could result in rationing by price or by leaving us without power for some time each day.

Local food may not seem to have anything to do with power stations, but everything we do has a knock on effect on everything else. Look for local supplies. You've got Rother Organics in Nywood, Organik in Liss. Pester your local authority to lease you land for a community garden, orchard, agricultural project. Let your kids get involved in growing something, let them know its ok to get wet and chilly and tired; dry cloths and a warm bed will sort that out. Use your free library to find out what you want to know.

Think about what Local means; buy a lettuce from your neighbour; he spends that money buying eggs from his neighbour, (your neighbour too), give the outside lettuce leaves to his chickens, complete the circle.

Buy a lettuce in midwinter from your supermarket and you help pay the wages of your neighbour, good, his or her manager, who may live in Sussex, and who pays his/ her water bill to a company which is owned by a French company or electricity owned by a German company... your money leaves the community and goes abroad. Ok, that's how things are; but its not very green and sustainable. So do what you can.

Anyway, enough of that...if anyone has any questions, please go ahead, and thank you.

I gave this talk last night, Thursday 30th October, the response was very encouraging and Greening Petersfield are going to put a link on their web site for us.

Dru

It was decided at our last committee meeting that next year's subscriptions would have to rise by £2 a year, to £12. Very sorry, but necessary, due to rising costs, particularly hall rental.

Soft Fruit on Wednesday 8th October 2008 for EHSS group

I hope I can do justice to Peter Collett's talk on 'Soft Fruit'. He is such a knowledgeable man with much experience of growing fruit of all kinds. Peter's talks are always illustrated with his beautiful, informative slides but he credits John Glover with some of the loveliest.

Most soft fruit likes **soil** on the acid side of neutral and none likes to be waterlogged. The soil should contain plenty of organic matter. If the soil is too alkaline then iron and manganese are trapped and chlorosis occurs - remedied by

acidifying the soil, adding compost or growing in raised beds. **Blueberries and cranberries** like acid soil and can be grown in an 8 inch raised bed but beware, badgers are partial to blueberries.

Feed annually particularly K (potassium) to encourage fruit. Peter feeds one year N, P, K for leaf, root and fruit and the second year only P and K. The time of year is crucial – just when the new growth starts in April and mulch for water retention.

Peter still prefers **bare rooted** shrubs planted between November and March ideally before Xmas avoiding wet or frozen ground. Planting at adverse times makes the plant think(!) 'I'm going to die' and produce lots of fruit. The Scottish Crop Research Station has produced many new fruit varieties 'Ben' Blackcurrants, 'Glen' Raspberries and 'Loch' Blackberries. It is worth growing varieties with good disease resistance.

The **redcurrant** is more closely related to the gooseberry than the blackcurrant whose flower is very different and is pruned differently. Redcurrants and gooseberries fruit on 2 or 3 year old wood are pruned like standard fruit trees with an open centre for light and air. Blackcurrants fruit on last year's wood so pruning to encourage new growth by taking older wood to the ground and renew the bush every 3 years.

The **blackcurrant** is shallow rooted. On planting, cut 2" above the soil and push the cut stems into the ground as they will root. Traditionally large varieties (Wellington, Amos Black, Baldwin, Malling Jet – late, vigorous) are planted 6' apart. Newer varieties are smaller (Ben Sarek – mid season, B Connan, B.Tyran). Ben Sarek is weak stemmed and requires tying to a central stake. . Main disease is Big bud which is a gall mite. Remove the buds and burn. The mite also carries a virus causing Reversion where the leaf becomes smooth.

Red and white currants can be trained as a cordon, fan or standard and may be grown in pots. So long as there is indirect light they can be grown facing north (as can gooseberry). 'Redstart' has good disease immunity also good is Jonkheer van Tets grown as a cordon. White currant varieties are White Transparent/Pearl/Grape/Versailles.

Gooseberry can be grown as bush, cordon or step-over. Mildew is a serious problem if there is not enough air circulating. Invicta and Rokula are mildew-resistant.

Jostaberry is a gooseberry/ blackcurrant cross – a large bush with large succulent berries.

Raspberry is a woodland planting liking acidic soil. Summer raspberries fruit on last year's wood. Tie to wires to prevent them flopping. Cut fruiting canes to the ground as soon as they have finished.

Autumn raspberries fruit on this year's wood. Usually they are cut to the ground in early spring but it is possible to have two crops by cutting the strongest stems down to 80cm which then fruit on side shoots in July. Cut out when they have finished and new growth will grow up and fruit at the tip from July to October. Pull out weak canes before fruiting so energy goes into strong canes. Varieties - Glen Prosen, and Glen Moy or Tulameen, both with almost no prickles. Raspberries can get root-rot with dieback of foliage. Don't replant in the same place for 2-3 years.

Blackberries can easily be grown by tying to an upright stake if space is limited and tolerate a certain amount of shade but not trees. Remove fruiting stems as soon as they have finished. Overwinter by tying canes in a bundle so if the outer ones suffer the inner are protected. Varieties – Oregon 'Thornless' - ornamental with long season, or Loch Ness. There are many hybrid berries. Tayberry is larger, sweeter

and less vigorous than Loganberry. Silvanberry has four parents!

There are many ways of growing **Strawberries** accessibly including growbags on stands in polytunnel, on pallets and breezeblocks. Ken Muir sells chilled runners ready in 60 days and they will survive in growbags if frost-free for 3 years. Use fleece to stop the flowers getting frosted.

Thank you Anna

And here is a write up very kindly done by Noreen Madgwick, thank you, Noreen.

Our guest speaker, Peter Collett followed his previous lecture which dealt with fruit trees by giving us a comprehensive illustrated talk on soft fruit.

He advised planting bare rooted plants from November on. In the case of black currants, prune back to 4 or 5 buds from the base to create strong plants and use pruning's as cuttings; in subsequent years remove about 1/3rd of old stems to ground level to encourage new growth as black currants fruit best on new wood

Red, white and the newer pink currants fruit on old wood so a framework is formed—bush, cordon or standard- and side shoots shortened as with apple pruning; tips can be shortened as necessary. Gooseberries are treated similarly to red currants.

Summer fruiting raspberries are cut back to 4 or 5 buds when planted and thereafter the complete cane is removed to the ground after fruiting – new canes produced during the summer will fruit the following year. Autumn fruiting raspberries are cut to the ground each spring but an interesting variation is to cut back strong old canes to about 3' ; these old canes will produce fruiting side shoots in the summer before the new growth fruits in the autumn, thus extending the fruiting season – this method is used on a commercial scale.

Blackberries, together with the numerous crosses between blackberries, loganberries and others are pruned as summer fruiting raspberries, by removing old fruiting canes to the ground

Strawberries can be successfully grown in growbags for at least 2 seasons before replacing plants. Chilled runners bought from Ken Muir really do perform well.

All soft fruit needs potash to fruit well and nitrogenous fertiliser for growth – feed well each spring. Keep bushes open and airy for health and this means removing any weak or surplus growth. Sickly plants should be dug up and burnt. All soft fruit prefers a slightly acid soil but will do well on chalk in a raised bed

Scottish plant breeders have been foremost in the production of new varieties for superior fruit and disease resistance, also producing less vigorous varieties for smaller gardens. Full sun is not necessary when choosing a site; currants and gooseberries will do beautifully as cordons on even a north wall.

Peter recommends Ken Muir but also Blackmoor Estate if a local nursery is chosen.

Many of the slides were taken at the speakers own garden and also at the excellent RHS fruit gardens at Wisley. Noreen Madgwick. **Thank you Noreen.**

More notes from a hot country

During the seven years in which Erna and I have been spending quite a lot of time in Spain – initially part-time in the farmhouse we were restoring, and during the past year in our new home closer to the sea – we have noticed a lot of changes. Recently we thought there was a real breakthrough on the way, when the *Junta de Andalucía* (regional government) announced (and widely advertised) a monthly organic

farmer's market in the car park of the decidedly un-organic local supermarket. When we passed the site the previous evening, we found piles of covered market stall components ready for assembly, and so we were looking forward to an organic spending spree the next day.

Sadly, the event proved to be a total flop. Spain, it seems, isn't ready for organic yet: it can't produce it, and there seems to be little demand. There were three small vans with a table outside each. One came from the extreme west of Spain, close to Gibraltar; another was from the far east, in Almeria; and just one was relatively local. The combined food miles virtually outweighed any organic appeal, and the range on offer was pathetic: some bread and cakes; cheeses; and a meagre selection of fruit and veg. Only the very biggest hypermarket in the area, catering largely for foreigners, has even a small selection of organic produce.

However, we have seen many changes over those seven years – some good, some less so. The public rubbish bins to which we have to take our waste (for there are still no house collections in the countryside) have been split into different sections for recycling, to keep a token compliance with EU laws. Much of the time they're so over-full that people put everything into any bin with some remaining space, but maybe they will learn eventually. They still dump their unwanted kittens and puppies there, to either fend for themselves or be adopted by foreigners. Other things have definitely improved: car drivers now usually stop for you at zebra crossings; and some motorcyclists even obey the law and wear helmets. Smoking in public places seems to be less of a problem, whereas previously even the receptionist at the medical centre was merrily puffing away; bars and restaurants now choose whether they will be smoking or non-smoking (and display the fact) so at least you know where you can enjoy an unpolluted meal.

One major change is that we really feel (even over that over that short period of time) that the climate has changed and become more extreme, with hotter summers of unbroken drought, more violent storms with devastating hail and floods which I know I've mentioned before, made worse by the acres of greenhouses and ever-increasing areas of concrete). The climate changes have also been reflected in the type of fruit trees being planted; the traditional olive or almond groves are being grubbed out in favour of more tropical (and lucrative) mangoes. They even grow attractive clumps of banana palms right on the beach now! More and more colourful birds from Africa like parakeets and bee-eaters are visiting the south of Spain, and some like hoopoes which used to migrate back to Africa during the winter are deciding to stay.

Today Erna and I have met our nearest and biggest farmer, and thanks to our regular Spanish classes and organised conversation sessions we were even able to understand him and make ourselves understood – a real breakthrough which makes us feel much more comfortable about living here. He was so nice to talk to, and we will be seeing more of him in future as his wife has agreed to come and do some cleaning for us once a week. He has also promised to show us over his greenhouses and fields once the new planting is under way. They do have a primitive form of rotation, but often only between two types of crop and more usually it's an artificially enforced monoculture. The salad potatoes were planted several weeks ago for the earliest crop, and are already well up, with maincrop not far behind. The seasons are all over the place here, and the renewed rains bring our second spring, so we'll now be sowing and planting all the sorts of things which used to go into our Liss garden in March and April. Plants

which have struggled to survive the baking summer, like our many roses, are now at their very best, and these will last through until next May. We do feel that the very height of the summer has become rather too uncomfortable now, as it's impossible to work outside during most of the day, and we'll be looking hard for a little place of our own back in the UK in which to spend our summers in a less extreme climate (despite the rain!). So maybe we'll see more of you in future. However, we do love these new challenges and wish that more of our old friends in the EHSSG could have a chance to see our efforts if they ever come this way.

Best regards to all,

Alec (and Erna).

RECIPE CORNER

DATE AND APPLE SLICES

1lb (450g) cooking apples
2oz (50g) shelled walnuts
4oz (100g) stoned dates
4oz (100g) wholemeal SR flour
4oz (100g) brown sugar
1 tbsp (15ml) clear honey
1oz (25g) melted butter or marg
1 egg
pinch salt

Dice apples, chop walnuts and dates and put in basin with all remaining ingredients. Mix well then spread in lightly greased 8 inch (20cm) square shallow tin. Bake for half an hour at 200°C (400°F/Mark 6) until golden.

Thank you for another lovely recipe Christine.

BARTER BOARD

Butchered Hogget for sale at £6.00 per kilo. The next batch is due on 3rd October, with another batch due in January 2009. Possibly if demand is high I may do an interim lot in November or December. We have large flock of Jacob sheep in Hawkley, and regularly send hogget to the slaughter (hogget is a sheep older than 12 months, but younger than 24 months. It has the tenderness of lamb, but a much better flavour!)

We also supply the Selborne Arms with mutton, and will take orders for the next slaughter of retired ewes. Again the price is £6.00 per kilo

Please contact John or Vicky on 01420 538 423

E-mail: John.Gibbon@scottwilson.com

http://www.hawkley.force9.co.uk/index.html#Meat_for_sale

per card to the H.D.R.A. sites at Ryton, Yalding, and Audley End.

In addition, group members, at the discretion of the owners, can gain entry for one member to a further 10 gardens including Barnsdale, Brogdale, R.H.S. Wisley and West Dean.

HDRA tickets no longer available from Chris Nash. **Dru** now holds them. For loan of the membership card(s).
Phone her on 01730 814193

EXHIBITION & SALE
OF
CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS
AT

REDFORD HALL, NR. MIDHURST
Friday 21st & Saturday 22nd November 08
10am – 4pm

This year's exhibition and sale promises to live up to the high standard of past shows with numerous crafts such as weaving, pottery, hive products, embroidery, glass, jewellery, leather and much more – the perfect place to find that "one-off" Christmas present. Entrance is free and there will be home made soup, cakes, tea & coffee, with donations to Samaritans. For more information please call 01428 741530. We look forward to seeing you there!

Free Entry to Gardens

Our group affiliation to H.D.R.A. entitles us to use our two group membership cards to gain free entry for two members