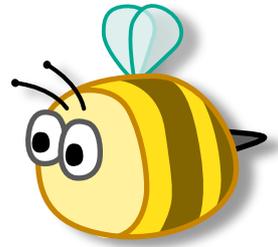




NEWSLETTER

Summer 2014



Since our last newsletter...

Visit by Mary Clear of 'Incredible Edible Todmorden'

On the evening of 4th April at the Alton Assembly Rooms we were delighted to welcome Mary, the originator of the Incredible Edible Todmorden group. About 60 of us, including some new faces, and some visitors from Andover, Farnham and Petersfield, gathered to hear her, and we were not disappointed. I'm sure most of us were captivated, she is a very inspiring person. She briefly explained (with photos) their desire to promote food-based learning for the whole community, involving all the schools in the town, and using land belonging to public bodies for the growing of vegetables and trees. During the talk and in the question time that followed a number of practical tips were given that we are hoping we may be able to take up, such as using a traffic light system for fruit and veg harvesting, and producing a town map of our plots, (this is now in progress!). It was just a shame that her visit was so short.

(see www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk for more details of their organisation)



Seedling Swap 2014

We had another busy and enjoyable annual seedling swap in Cross and Pillory Lane, as part of the Craft Market on Saturday 10 May. As well as vegetables, fruit and herbs we had plenty of companion and bee-friendly plants on offer. We were supported by our regulars and were grateful to Roger Baker for bringing boxes of seedlings at the start of the morning, to supplement what we had from our committee's greenhouses and conservatories. As well as those who came to do swapping, we had plenty of people who took seedlings away for a donation and we made a healthy profit that we can 'plough' back into the work we do on our plots and planters around the town. If you haven't participated this year, it's a great way to extend the variety of things you have in your garden or allotment

and an excellent way of getting rid of the excess at the same time, if all the seeds you plant germinate.

Thank you to those who supported our stall and to the supporters and committee members that staffed the stand for the day and erected and dissembled it. If you missed it and if you didn't... see you next year, same place, similar date!

Waitrose Tokens.

We are very grateful to Waitrose for their donation to us following the recent collection of green tokens in the Alton store. This has enabled us to donate herb plants to all the schools in Alton to encourage their gardening clubs.

Contact Us:

Tel: 01420 84677
Sonia Clark - ALFI Secretary

Website:

www.altonlocalfood.org.uk

Facebook Group:

Alton Local Food Initiative

Forthcoming events:

Come and see us at the following events:

Community Festival

Alton College Saturday 5th July

St Lawrence Fete

Saturday 12th July from 10am

Schools' competition

Our annual competition this year is all about herbs. We are asking children to plan a herb garden and send us a drawing of their design. The entries should be on a piece of A4 paper with the child's name, age, year group and school written on the back. The plan should be for a garden 1 meter square. All entries should be taken to the Allen Gallery by the deadline of Friday 27th June. Prizes will be awarded for the best designs in pre-school/Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. More information from the Schools Liaison Co-ordinator Clare Allen - clare.allen47@gmail.com

To give you some ideas, there are herbs planted all around the town and you might want to go and have a look at the planters in the High Street or visit the new herb garden in the Allen Gallery garden. Entrance to the Allen Gallery is free, and the small herb garden contains some of the more unusual herbs.

ALFI AGM

Monday 21st July,

Meet at the Railway Arms
6.45 for a tour of local ALFI plots.

AGM to follow at 7.30

Do come and support us!

Plots and planters...

Working Parties

A couple of working parties have taken place in each of April and May at both the Station and Westbrooke plots, see articles below for more details....

At the request of the Allen Gallery, ALFI has planted a raised bed with some less well known herbs in their beautiful garden.

STOP PRESS Work has begun to assess the potential of a plot in St Lawrence vicarage front garden.

Barrels

Steve Dearing cleared and prepared the barrels for planting. Sweet peas are growing up one wigwam and runner beans are growing up the other. French marigolds have also been planted. We have a 'snip your own' sign up now to invite people to snip herbs from those growing in the barrels if they need them. Two extra planters with parsley and chives have been added to the barrel 'line up'. The hops will soon begin to cover the wall opposite The Railway pub again.

Station plot



Since the last newsletter the main raised beds at the Station plot have been completely rebuilt by volunteer Steve Dearing. The *before and after* photos show how smart they now look. A well-attended working party on 6th April pruned, tidied, weeded, manured and mulched so that the plot was ready for planting. Broad beans, onions and garlic are already growing. The fruit tree and fruit bushes have flowered and the raspberries are showing new spring growth.

Westbrooke plot

Blues and purples were the eye-catching colours at the plot in May - chives and rosemary flowering in the herb garden, some lovely purple-flowered broad beans in the raised beds and cornflowers in the 'bee-friendly' barrel. We have been sowing and planting seedlings in the two raised beds in the last couple of working parties, and should soon see the results filling up the spaces. A fine row of sticks already has runner and french beans starting to climb, and some sweet peas too, although they seem slower to get going!

We have a number of containers - a potato bag, a pot with rocket growing nicely and another full of herbs. We have a path of thyme and chamomile between the raised beds - the thyme also just starting to show its purple flowers. And our two gooseberry bushes have tiny gooseberries forming. At the back of the plot we now have a proper compost heap and next to it we are sowing wild flowers, especially poppies. (They may have to compete with ivy and brambles growing in from the fence!)

We hope to have a better water supply this year as Alton Town council have agreed to fill our bin from their 'watering lorry' from time to time.



Recipe

Making a Herb Crust

- 330g white bread, dried in the oven at 140°C if not stale
- 3 tbsps fresh parsley
- 2 tsp thyme leaves
- 2 tsp rosemary leaves
- 50g grated parmesan (optional)
- salt and pepper

Basil or tarragon can also be added - or try your own combinations

Blitz breadcrumbs in a food processor, add the herbs and blitz briefly again. Add cheese and season to taste.

Use as a crispy coating for chicken, plaice goujons or rack of lamb. Coating meat lightly with dijon mustard or beaten egg ensures the crust sticks.

Volunteers Please!

We are always keen to welcome new volunteers for any of our activities. Just one or two hours a month can achieve so much!

