



# Newsletter

Autumn 2018



Group. Alton Local Food Group

Web [www.altonlocalfood.org.uk](http://www.altonlocalfood.org.uk)

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## Taking the Strain out of Gardening

### Green manures

Continuing our theme of “Making gardening easier” now may be the right time to think about sowing some green manures on areas where produce has already been harvested.

According to the RHS ([www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)) green manures are fast-growing plants sown to cover bare soil. Often used in the vegetable garden, their foliage smothers weeds and their roots prevent soil erosion. When dug into the ground while still green, they return valuable nutrients to the soil and improve soil structure.

Green manures are usually sown in late summer or autumn and when dug in the following spring, they release these nutrients back into the soil. An example might be *Winter grazing rye* that will carry on growing all winter before being incorporated back into the soil in spring.

### Benefits

Green manures belonging to the pea and bean family (legumes) have the additional capacity of storing (fixing) nitrogen, a valuable nutrient, from the air to their root nodules, but only in summer. Other benefits of green manures include protection of the soil surface from compaction by rain and shelter for beneficial insects such as ground beetles.

### Problems

A dense carpet of green makes a perfect environment for slugs and snails, so control measures may be needed after green manuring.

We have used green manures successfully at the Station Plot in the area where the potatoes have been grown this year. My particular favourite is *Phacelia* which if left to flower has attractive purple flowers that bees love.

*Phacelia* is a quick growing hardy annual green manure that germinates at low temperatures and is ideal for sowing from March until September. It will grow up to 1m in height and is tolerant of cold temperatures and may over-winter if it's not too cold. It suits most soil types but is particularly good in dry ones.

*Phacelia* is listed as one of the top twenty honey-producing flowers for honeybees and is very attractive to bumblebees and hoverflies. (Hoverflies eat a lot of aphids). A small patch could be left to flower, especially near to vegetables to attract pollinating insects to the area, but don't have too many as the insects will feed on the *Phacelia* rather than the veg. It also makes an excellent cut flower and has a long vase-life with strong stems.



Green Manures

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Alton Farmers' Market 2018

Saturday 13th Oct

Saturday 10th Nov

Saturday 8th Dec

### ALFI Harvest Feast

October 13th at Methodist Church Hall

10.30am—2.00pm

### Energy Alton

Film—'Tomorrow'

Weds 19th September Community Centre

### Community Gardens Working Parties

St Lawrence Vicarage Sundays 10.30—12.30

30 September

28 October

Station Plot Sundays 10.30—12.30

7 October



LOOK OUT ELLIS !!

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The evening started with an interesting visit to the Station Plot where Ellis Pritchard outlined the various methods that we have been trialling to help with watering; this is in line with this year's theme "Taking the Strain out of Gardening". Then after a walk past the revamped Railway planters; more than 20 members and guests gathered at the Railway Arms for the AGM. The Chair, Lesley Willis, reviewed another successful year for the group. As well as thanking all the committee and supporters, a special thank you was noted to the Alton Town Council groundsmen who always have done so much to support ALFI.

The group is very keen to continue our links with local schools and, this year, following a generous grant from Alton Beer Festival we have been able to foster links with pre-school groups. In line with the theme the schools competition for 4-11 year olds was to design something labour saving for gardening. There were 242 entries and the prize-winners efforts were on show, many thanks to Ty Smith for judging the competition.

Lesley Willis has decided to step down from the committee and she was presented with a gift and thanked for her dedication and enthusiasm as Chair and undertaking various committee roles since the group was formed nearly ten years ago. The formal meeting finished with an opportunity to socialise and enjoy refreshments, as always an enjoyable evening. Please go to [www.altonlocalfood.org.uk](http://www.altonlocalfood.org.uk) to view more about ALFI's activities.



DON'T FORGET!! HARVEST FEAST

October 13th Methodist Church 10.30—2pm

60ml/2fl oz extra virgin [olive oil](#)  
1 tbsp chopped [garlic](#)  
Handful [basil](#) leaves (preferably Italian), chopped  
Sea salt and ground [white pepper](#), to taste  
1kg/2¼lb green [courgettes](#), cut lengthways, into quarters, then into 1cm/½in slices  
750ml/1¼ pint [chicken stock](#)  
60ml/2fl oz [single cream](#)  
Handful flatleaf [parsley](#), chopped  
50g/2oz freshly grated [parmesan](#), plus extra to serve

#### To serve

Crusty [bread](#)  
Green [salad](#)  
Salt and freshly ground [black pepper](#)

#### Method

- 1.Heat the oil in a heavy-based pan over a medium heat.
- 2.Cook the garlic, basil, salt and courgette slowly for 10 minutes, or until the courgettes are lightly browned and softened.
- 3.Add white pepper, to taste, then pour in the stock and simmer for 8 minutes, uncovered. Remove from the heat.
- 4.Put three-quarters of the soup mixture into a food processor and blend until smooth.
- 5.Return the mixture to the pan and stir in the cream, parsley and parmesan.
- 6.To serve, ladle the soup into a bowl and season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Sprinkle over more parmesan, to taste. Serve with crusty bread and a green salad.

## Courgette and Garlic Soup

