



WELLINGTON FIELDS ALLOTMENTS NEWSLETTER December 2021



Forward from the Chairman

Is it too early to wish everyone a very merry Christmas? Strange as it sounds, as I write this at the end of November, I'm already thinking ahead to Christmas day and what veg I can use this year – certainly red cabbage, potatoes and leeks, although disappointingly after a bumper crop last year, my sprouts have completely failed.

On more mundane but important matters, we held our AGM a couple of weeks ago and those who attended gave us some very positive feedback and our committee were thanked for all the work they do on your behalf to ensure the allotments are in tip top shape to enable them to run smoothly and safely. We approved the rents for next year and you will see in February that we have had to put the rents up slightly next year to cover RPI, water and general cost increases. I'm sure you will agree though that you're still getting great value for money!

As also discussed at the AGM, our major development this year was the construction of the compost, woodchip and manure storage area, and what a fabulous facility it is. The compost storage area is full to the top at the moment and I would recommend you top up your plots and raised beds this time of year and ASAP before it's all gone! I used several barrow loads myself last weekend and I can vouch for the quality of the material.

Into next year and beyond, the Wellington Field Allotments committee will continue to look after our fabulous facility on your behalf, but we can always do with some help. We have a couple of vacancies on the committee and are looking for some new members and some fresh ideas. It's not a major commitment – we meet in the pub every 6 weeks or so, share a beer or two and discuss the upkeep and smooth running of the site, plus we have the occasional working party for maintenance purposes. If you're interested, please contact Jane Garner.

Which just leaves me to say have a great festive break and thank you all for your continuing support.

Simon Ellin, Chair

Committee Notices / Key Dates

1. Thank you to all those who attended the AGM and to Jane for organising and writing up all the minutes for the year.
2. Thank you to Pete Appleton who has arranged and delivered manure to the site.
3. Thank you to Karen for organising the Kings Seeds delivery for members.
4. There is a huge pile of compost ready for plot holders to use.
5. The water is now turned off on the site.



Jobs on the Allotment!

Top tasks –

1. These are the months to ensure you have sharp pair of secateurs to hand as pruning begins in earnest. Fruit bushes and trees will have shed their leaves and will be entering their dormant phase, so now would be a good time to prune them, with the exception of cherries and plums.
2. Carry out winter digging, clear weeds, apply compost or well-rotted manure to beds. Clear weeds and mulch around the base of existing fruit trees and bushes and prepare the ground to plant new fruit stock.

Harvest vegetables for Christmas

1. You can harvest lots of veg for Christmas, including parsnips, leeks and winter cabbages, all of which can be left in the ground until you need them. It's difficult to harvest crops from frozen soil, so if temperatures plummet, cover the soil with straw or fleece.
2. Harvest Brussels Sprouts when they are around one inch in diameter, before they 'blow open'. Pick them from the base of the plant up, twisting them away from the plant. If you have grown potatoes for Christmas, they should be ready now.

Net brassicas

Keep kale, winter cabbages and other brassicas covered with netting to protect them from hungry pigeons. It's time to remove any yellowed leaves, so that fungal diseases such as grey mould and downy mildew don't take hold.

See our website for further December ideas:

<http://www.the-site.name/allotments/guide/december.htm>



Recipes from Karen Appleton

Pumpkin & Coconut curry

This is a very mild curry; you can spice it up by adding chilli)

Ingredients

For the amchar masala mix

- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 1 tsp black mustard seeds
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 tsp black peppercorns
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- sea salt and black pepper

For the curry pumpkin

- About 750g/1lb 10oz pumpkin, seeds removed, cut into chunks
- 75g/2¾oz cashew nuts
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1cm/½in piece ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 tbsp curry powder
- 1 tbsp amchar masala mix from above
- 1 x 400ml tin coconut milk
- 200g/7oz chopped tomatoes from a tin
- 1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained

Method

1. **To make the amchar masala**, mix together all the ingredients and set aside. You will not need all of the spice mix for this recipe, the rest will keep in a jar and can be used in other recipes.
2. **For the curry pumpkin**, preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4. Put the pumpkin chunks on a single layer on a baking tray, season with a little salt and pepper and roast for about 30–40 minutes, or until caramelised and golden-brown. Set aside.
3. When cool enough to handle, remove the skin from the pumpkin and cut into smaller 4cm/1½in chunks. Set aside.
4. Grind the cashew nuts in a food processor to a fine powder. Set aside. **(I haven't tried it yet, but the next time I make this I'm going to use desiccated coconut instead of cashew nuts)**
5. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat, then add the onion, stirring regularly until softened – about 10 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, curry powder and 1 tablespoon of the amchar /chaat masala, stirring continuously until the aromas hit you (about 20 seconds or so). Add the coconut milk, tinned tomatoes, cashew nuts, chickpeas and cooked pumpkin. Increase the heat to bring to the boil, then immediately reduce the heat to low. Simmer for about 15–20 minutes, or until thickened. Season to taste. Serve with rice or any Indian bread.

Pumpkin & Potato Gratin

Serves 4-6 Prep 45 mins, cook 30 mins

This can be prepared ahead & kept in the fridge for a few hours before cooking.

- 3 tbsp oil
- 1 lge onion, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 700g squash, cut into wedges, peeled & cut into chunks
- 450g potatoes, peeled & cut into small cubes (I use more potatoes)
- 8 sage leaves, finely chopped
- 140g dolcelatte cheese, cubed
- 50g grated parmesan
- 150ml veg stock
- 284ml carton of double cream



Topping

- 50g melted butter
- 140g fresh breadcrumbs
- 25g walnuts, hazelnuts or mixed nuts chopped
- Handful of fresh parsley, chopped

Method

1. Heat oven to 200C gas 6. Fry the onion in 1 tbsp of oil until soft, once cooked lift out with a slotted spoon & put in an oven proof dish.
2. Heat the rest of the oil in the pan & add the garlic, chilli, squash, potatoes & sage. Toss in the hot oil for about 5-6 mins until lightly browned all over & then add to the onions.
3. Scatter the 2 cheeses over the veg, season & mix well. Combine the stock & the cream & pour over the veg.
4. Melt the butter in a frying pan, add the breadcrumbs & nuts & stir until lightly browned. Add the chopped parsley & scatter over the vegetable mix. Cook for 25-30 mins until bubbling & golden brown

For more ideas please see our website

<http://www.wellingtonfieldsallotments.org/hixonpages/cooking.htm>

Composting

Why make Compost?

Your plot will inevitably generate green waste, from weeds to old crops and spent compost, but please do not be tempted to dispose of it at your local tip or on the bonfire. This “waste” is actually a tremendous resource, as a large percentage of it can be recycled into compost that will enhance the fertility of your allotment garden. Your “black gold” will

- Improve soil texture
- Improve aeration of the soil
- Increase water–holding capacity of the soil
- Improve soil fertility
- Feed micro- organisms that keep soil healthy
- Reduce landfill pressure
- Save you money

Please follow our guidelines when you put garden materials in the compost bins so that we produce the best possible compost for all. Visit Alan Hartley’s recent article on making good compost.

<http://www.the-site.name/allotments/articlehixon204.htm>

Committee Members

Chairperson - Simon Ellin.
Vice Chair- Chris Hilton
Treasurer - Karen Appleton.
Secretary - Jane Garner.

Committee Members: -
Mark Connell;
Alan Hartley;
Nick Brookes;
Suzanne O’Farrell.

Contact Details for Jane Garner,
Secretary - fjanegarner@hotmail.com

Don’t forget we have our own Facebook page and group that we would like to see more people using! You can post anything you want within reason about the allotments.

www.facebook.com/WellingtonFieldSHixon

.....*Happy Gardening*

