



Pretoria Road allotments, Patchway, Bristol

Reasons to be Cheerful

Why grow your own vegetables? Well, there's the practical advantage that it's often cheaper than shop-bought produce, but for most of us the real benefits are far greater than this. Anyone that has had a go at growing their own will tell you that the taste of a home-grown tomato, or the sense of well being derived from digging up a row of fresh new potatoes is second to none. There's also the opportunity to grow the old fashioned, or unusual varieties, that simply aren't available in shops... and if this isn't enough, you'll be saving on the food miles at the same time.

A traditional plot devoted solely to fruit and vegetables is a luxury in most small domestic gardens, but well worth the space if you can. Unless you have lots of space to spare, it may be best to avoid growing main crop potatoes, as a wide variety of them are always on sale in every supermarket at reasonable prices. Instead, you can try to grow your favourites such as asparagus (always expensive to buy) peas (picked fresh they taste different to anything you've ever bought) and pull carrots early (when they are bursting with flavour). You can also try the exotics that are rarely found in the shops such as globe artichokes, salsify and scorzonera.

I have noticed over the last few Newsletters, I have been struggling to find New Topics and ideas for our Newsletters. Can member plot holders, please submit to me any ideas of any aspect of growing your own vegetables and these will be included in the future Newsletters.





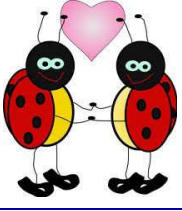


Soil types and preparation

Understand your soil and you're halfway to gardening success. Soil acts as an anchor for plant roots and holds air, water and plant nutrients which are essential for continued plant growth. Depending on your soil type – ranging between clay to sand – it will have both beneficial and negative properties for growing veg effectively. Although clay soils hold nutrients well, they are heavy, slow to warm up and tend to be too wet in the winter and too dry in the summer.

Contact the committee: growpretoria@gmail.com

website: growpretoria.org

Calendar of events 2012

<p>January 2012 28th Jan. 12am – 4pm. Seed Potatoes sale – BBQ, Cakes & Raffle</p> 	<p>February 2012</p>	<p>March 2012</p>
<p>April 2012</p> 	<p>May 2012</p>	<p>June 2012 Bacon butty morning</p> 
<p>July 2012 Patchway Festival - Lottie open to public – BBQ, table top activities and scare-crow competition</p> 	<p>August 2012 National Allotments Week 14th Animal homes and wildlife gardening workshop for children</p> 	<p>September 2012</p>
<p>October 2012 Halloween Party. Fancy Dress. Best Pumpkin. Halloween Games.</p> 	<p>November 2012</p>	<p>December 2012 Christmas Fayre at Lottie Sell Lottie Recipe book</p> 

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Soil types and preparation (Con't)

At the other end of the spectrum, sandy soils are very light, easily eroded, dry and lack substance and the ability to hold water or nutrients. Regardless of your soil type, the key to improving any soil is to dig in a high organic matter soil improver. Regular applications of organic matter each year will improve soil structure and provide a reservoir for water, beneficial organisms and plant nutrients.

Planting Early Potatoes

What to grow

There are dozens of different potato varieties, usually described as early, second early and maincrop potatoes. These names indicate when they crop and also give you an idea of the space you'll need, how closely and when they can be planted.

You should concentrate on the earlier types if you're short of space, and it's also worth remembering that earlies are less likely to encounter pest problems as they're lifted so much earlier in the year.

How to chit

Chitting simply means encouraging the seed potatoes to sprout before planting.

Start chitting from late January in warmer parts of the country or in February in cooler areas, about six weeks before you intend to plant out the potatoes.

Each seed potato has a more rounded, blunt end that has a number of 'eyes'.

Stand the tubers with the blunt end uppermost in trays or old egg boxes, with plenty of natural light.

The potatoes are ready to be planted out when the shoots are 1.5-2.5cm (0.5-1in) long.

Future Events

Seed Potatoes for sale on Saturday 28th January 12– 4pm, at the shed.

First early and main crop - just 99p/kilo with a pick and mix - There will be a BBQ, cakes and raffle -

First Early are Arran Pilot, Lady Christl & Lady Christl.

Main Crop are Desiree, Maris Piper & Pentland Crow.

This is a good opportunity to obtain potatoes at a very reasonable price.

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