

## October 2015: When the plot isn't all wine and roses



Having an allotment can be a rewarding and enjoyable pastime. Fresh air and exercise with lovely fruit and vegetables to boot. What happens though when things go wrong? When the amount of time you can spend cultivating your plot is significantly curtailed...

This could be because you have a health problem, someone close to you is ill or work obligations unexpectedly increase. These things do happen from time to time, but just as time and tide wait for no man, neither do the weeds. Very quickly, especially in the growing season, a tidy plot can turn into a wilderness! If the situation is liable to persist for a number of weeks what should you do?

Firstly, let the Allotment Officer\* know. Then he will be aware of the situation and be able to take your circumstances into account during his inspections. The Allotment Officer will always look sympathetically and in confidence on your circumstances. Depending on the situation it's a good idea to let your allotment neighbours know. After all they will soon notice your absence and also be the reluctant beneficiaries of wind blown weed seeds. So, is that it? Let folk know the situation - job done?



*This image was taken recently on an Edinburgh plot. The shed has been used as a home by rabbits. Evidence of rat poison points to another infestation from the recent past.*

Well no, as a plot holder you still have an obligation to keep your plot in a reasonable state and have a consideration for others on the site. Moreover, neglected plots can allow difficult perennial weeds like horsetail to get a foothold, or even notifiable weeds like Himalayan Balsam (see last month's Newsletter).

If you find yourself in this situation here are some possible actions that you might take. Have an "action day" and strim the plot. This will keep it looking tidy and stop the weeds from seeding. Hoe any areas that you can, this will stop the weeds getting a start and only takes minutes. Cover the hoed areas with a tarpaulin to keep the weeds from reappearing. These actions could be completed relatively quickly and accommodated in even the busiest of schedules. Or why not enlist the help of a few friends and finish up with a bar-b-que and a few drinks as a reward. In this way you will be fulfilling your obligations as a plot holder even under difficult circumstances. Moreover, it will be much easier to bring your plot under cultivation once your personal circumstances return to normal.

So if, for some reason, you are finding it difficult to keep your plot in an acceptable condition and tending it is becoming more of a chore than a pleasure I hope my suggestions are of some help.

John McKinlay.

Craigentiny (personal capacity).

(\* if you are on a Council plot. Otherwise contact your site administrator.)

**Training opportunities at Bridgend Growing Communities in 2015**

**"An Introduction to Organic Vegetable Gardening"**

Want to grow your own fruit and veg in 2016? This two-day course will give you all the knowledge and skills you need to get you started on the journey.  
Course fees £75.

Part 1 Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.  
Part 2 Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October 9.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

This course is accredited by Scotland's Rural College, and a certificate is available.



To reserve a place, go to <http://bridgendgrowingcommunities.org.uk/learning/course-4561.p/>  
or more information, contact Bob Ford - [bobfordbg@gmail.com](mailto:bobfordbg@gmail.com)

Both sessions take place at the Bridgend Allotments:  
41 Old Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh EH16 4TE  
Telephone 0131 264 9559  
Email - [bridgendgrowingcommunities@gmail.com](mailto:bridgendgrowingcommunities@gmail.com)  
[www.bridgendgrowingcommunities.org.uk](http://www.bridgendgrowingcommunities.org.uk)



41 Old Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh EH16 4TE  
Tel: 0131 264 9559  
www.bridgendgrowingcommunities.org.uk



# Trading Scheme: Nearly time to place your orders for next year



*Do you love spuds?*

Details of the potato and onion scheme will be available this month. As usual you will be offered a selection of around 22 potato varieties

covering First Early, Second Early, Maincrop and Salad (all 2.5kg) and some Albert Bartlett premium varieties (2kg). Most will be old favourites but for the adventurous there will be some new ones such as Organic Colleen, a First Early; Divaa, a Second Early with eel worm resistance; and Mozart, a sturdy main crop excellent for mash and roast. All are around £3 a bag. (This price includes 50p which will go to site funds). A variety of onions and shallots will also be available loose with 500g priced at £1.50 for onions and £2 for shallots (with 25p for site funds). Also, hessian sacks will be sold at 50p each.

These prices and quality are very competitive offering substantial discounts as well as boosting site funds. Look out for details and place your order with your Site Representative as soon as possible. Delivery will be in February at Inverleith.

---

## **An Illustrated History of Scottish Allotments**

For your diary: Monday 12 October, 2pm - The National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, EH1 1EW

Jenny Mollison explores the rich tradition of Scotland's allotments. As relevant today as 100 years ago, allotments have sustained communities through two World Wars and the Depression. Mollison is co-author of 'Raising Spirits: Allotments, Well-being and Community', Secretary of the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society, and writes a regular column in 'The Scotsman'.

Free. Book [online](#) or phone 0131 623 3734.

---

## **Plum Glut?**



What it takes:

500g plums

175g granulated sugar

1 litre bottle brandy

This recipe makes enough for 2 x 500ml bottles.

How to make it:

Halve and stone the plums. Crack 4 of the plum stones with a hammer.

Divide all the stones between 2 small pieces of muslin and tie into parcels with string.

Divide the plums between 2 x 1 litre storage jars. Add a parcel of stones to each jar. Divide the sugar and brandy between the jars, and tightly screw on the lids.

Keep in a dark cupboard for 6 weeks. Shake the jars gently every few days until all the sugar has dissolved, then leave to settle.

After 6 weeks, remove the stones, then return to the cupboard and store for another 4 weeks.

Pour the brandy into clean bottles, leaving the fruit in the jars. For a clear liqueur, strain through a coffee filter first. The fruit is delicious to eat (though very alcoholic). Remember: drink responsibly.

Sterilisation tips: Pre-heat the oven to 140C/120C Fan/Gas 1. Sterilise a bottle by washing it in hot, soapy water, then rinse well. Put in the oven on its side for 30 minutes.

Adding plum stones to this fruity brandy gives it a warming, nutty flavour. It'll keep for about nine months.

---

## **FEDAGA AGM: 20th October**

Another date for your diary: the FEDAGA AGM. It's at the Southside Community Centre from 7.15 on Tuesday 20th October. An opportunity to hold your representatives to account and hear of developments. All affiliated sites should be represented. All welcome, whether you're a delegate or not.

---

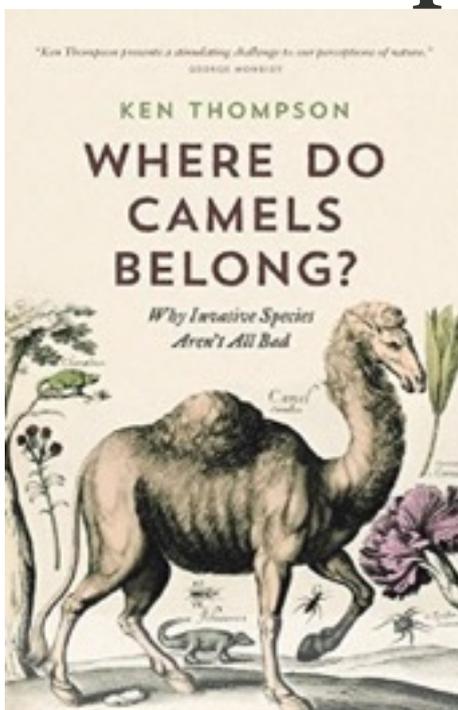
## **Community Empowerment Bill: Engage for empowerment**



A date for the tail end of your diary: On 2nd December – An introduction to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act and its impact on community growing. Of interest to allotment activists and aspirant activists.

This event will be organised by the Grow Your Own Working Group. It will give participants a better understanding of the details of the Community Empowerment Act and what it will mean in practice for them and the groups they support. Participants will be able to ask questions of the Bill team, talk to 'experts' in relevant fields and discuss opportunities, challenges and solutions presented by the new law. More information [here](#).

## Invasive species blowback



Following the piece about Himalayan Balsam last month, Charles Passmore of Midmar writes in defence:

It might be mentioned that it is a) a pretty flower and b) offers end of season nectar for bees. The evidence of it taking over the world is not exactly conclusive and the efforts and costs to eliminate it will probably be a complete waste of time and money. Regarding so called invasive species -v- native species argument I commend the following book: "Where do Camels belong? - The story and science of invasive species" by Ken Thompson

You can see a comment about it [here](#).

PS - I have some Himalayan Balsam on my plot, courtesy some horse manure, and they are pretty and easy to pull up if you so wish. Less invasive than chickweed, couch grass etc etc.

I stand accused...

# Last chance for apple press...

The FEDAGA apple press is nearing the end of its inaugural autumn tour with one final date at Inverleith on the 10th. It has already been to Midmar, Prospect Bank and Saughton Mains.

An unsolicited appreciation from Prospect Bank: "Can we propose a vote of thanks for the loan of the apple press last week? Thanks to those who went and collected it too. It was really good to make use of some of our less-than-perfect apples. Such a lovely simple machine. We had fun and made a few pints of lovely juice."

---

## ...and an appeal for contributions to a Harvest Banquet



Joanne McArthur, Project Coordinator for the Centipede Project writes:

We are a community project in North Edinburgh, closely affiliated with North Edinburgh Arts and are organising a Harvest Banquet to be held on Monday 12th October where local residents will be invited to share a free meal. The event will also be used as an opportunity to raise awareness around food poverty. We are looking for donations of produce to cook for the meal and I wonder if you would be able to help?

We particularly need potatoes.

If anyone would like to donate to our banquet we are able to pick and/or collect produce.

Thanks in advance for your help.

Contact Joanne on 0131 315 2151 or by e-mail via their [website](#) .

©2015 Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotment and Gardens Associations | FEDAGA