



## May 2020: Special Edition 6

Dear Members,

Wonderfully sunshine; followed by a week of rain – well it was April. Now we are into May; my beans plants are in the garden; the tomato plants are planted in the greenhouse and the green bins are full. The Lilac trees are in bloom and the yellow flowers on the Laburnum glow. I think this is a wonderful time of year!

Sadly, we have had to cancel the Plant Sale due for outside the Co-op on 16 May as we cannot control social distancing. If you have spare plants or vegetables, or if there is anything you want to buy, please email me asap with details and we may be able to fulfil some requests; otherwise please put them outside your gate and encourage new gardeners.

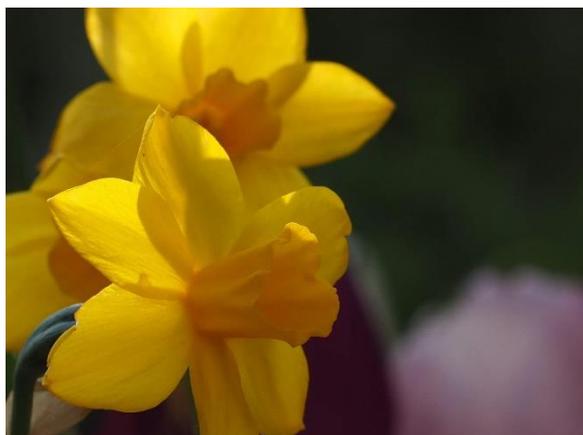
We have another quiz this week, plus the answers to last week's, some new plant facts, photos of members gardens and some surprising things about compost! Contributions please to [kateawilkinson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kateawilkinson@hotmail.co.uk)

Keep well and safe and enjoy the garden!

**Kate Anthony Wilkinson** (Chair)

### MEMBERS GARDENS

Some lovely photos from Sally's garden, including what must be the first dragonfly of the Year!



Henrietta says she only has a small town garden but her Angelique tulips (from Riverside Garden Centre) are superb! We often forget that lots of plants can be grown in pots on a patio, balcony, in a yard or lining a pathway.





Ian and Margaret tell me that they are not tidy gardeners but love to see things self-seeding. They have dug over their vegetable patch ready for potatoes and Russian Kale which they have been self-seeding for years. Apparently, the young leaves as very good as salad and the old leaves for steaming. They also grow Nasturtiums which they use as salad (flowers and leaves) and pot up and put in their conservatory to provide a supply though most of the winter. The dwarf cheery supplies copious fruit provided the birds do not get them first!



More wonderful tulips, this time in Mary's garden.



## THIS WEEK'S QUIZ - Anagrams of Culinary Herbs

Below are six mixed up herbs; rearrange the letters to find them. Answers in Edition 7.

1	A LEG CAIN
2	MINES PART
3	YEARS OR M
4	ROTA GRAN
5	YEW SLICE TEC
6	REPLAYS

## COMPOST – Facts

Many of us have compost heaps or containers, recognising the ecological as well as economic benefit of “growing our own” compost.

According to the RHS, we should be putting all waste vegetable matter into our heap in the form of layers – weeds, outside leaves of cabbages, broccoli, lettuce, pea haulms, soft hedge clippings, lawn mowing, waste straw and dead leaves in autumn, but avoid thick stuff like cabbage stalks (and tea bags). If you can get animal manure then spread a layer, or add some sulphate of ammonia and water in. Tread or compact down from time to time and cover with a thick layer of soil. Add another layer of waste and this time add some chalk or limestone, again watering in and adding a layer of soil. Build up the heap in layers, adding manure/sulphate of ammonia and lime to alternate layers until the heap is about 4ft / 1.2m high – at this point start a new heap.

In dry weather you will need to water your compost heap every week. Turn the heap right over after a month in summer weather and water again if it is dry. Turn again after 4 weeks in warm weather or 6 weeks in cooler weather. After turning cover with a layer of soil until you need to use it.



Alternatively, you can purchase a plastic compost bin (available from NS Council) which has a lid. The same principle applies in making layers in the bin, and watering, and when full, empty out and turn.



Don't forget we have a class for home made compost at the Flower Show!

Jim and Julia have been busy with their compost heap – and sent some surprising photos of how their heap has developed over the winter – the long lost watch still works!



What strange things have you found in your compost heaps?

Mushroom compost is excellent for the garden, both for digging into plots and for use as surface mulch. However as with most things in life there is a “but”. In this case, beware of excessive amounts of chalk which will lead to a high pH and cause yellowing of many of the plants leaves (lime-induced chlorosis) by suppressing the production of chlorophyll, which gives plants their green colour.



Mushrooms are, of course a fungus and therefore the grower is creating exact conditions which will also suit all other (including harmful) fungi. Consequently, the compost is made to an exacting formula, worked out years ago by a Dane called Rasussen (the *Ramussen System*). The compost is encouraged to “heat up” by its own bacterial action, to which several nutrients are added plus water. The compost is turned three times, being peak heated to 130-140°F / 56-60°C thereby achieving complete sterilisation and leaving it completely free of all pests and diseases. When ready, the compost is then impregnated with the mushroom spawn, kept warm, moist and very dark. No light, at all, must be allowed.

As the mushrooms grow and develop, the mushroom caps would come up very unsightly, with manure/compost adhering to them, thus reducing sales appeal. Consequently, a clean material so spread across the tops of the beds,



called casting material. This can be peat, sterilised soil or often chalk (photo below).

When buying spent mushroom compost (photo above) for your garden, always check that there is no excessive amount of chalk for the reasons set out above. It is quite easy to see, as small bright white bumps incorporated in the sample.



Mushroom compost is very useful for digging into vegetable plots or when making new borders. As standard allotment plot (90ftx30ft) can easily use 2 tons per years, incorporated when Autumn digging. However, avoid use near ericaceous subjects such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Camelias and most Heather, as they will not like the pH.

Thanks to Chris Young and RHS for Compost facts. More plant facts in next week.

## GARDENING KEEP FIT

Some good news in this time of lockdown. I am not going to be leading a keep fit class. That is definitely good news.

However, according to a report in the Daily Mail (thanks John for spotting this), a work out with a spade and trowel may not create the 6-pack desired by the gym fanatics but a study has shown that gardeners are more confident in their physical attributes. No matter what their size and shape, gardeners scored higher than non-gardeners when asked how they feel about statements such as “I feel good about my body” or “I am comfortable in my body”. Prof Viren Swami, from Anglian Ruskin University, who conducted the research on allotment holders said, “Positive body image helps foster psychological resilience, which contributes to overall well-being”.

So, there you have it – we gardeners are more resilient!

Edition 7 to follow soon!

### LAST WEEK'S QUIZ:

#### SPLIT FLOWERS

##### ANSWERS

ANE	MONE	FREE	SIA	PHL	OX
AS	TER	HOS	TA	POP	PY
AST	ILBE	I	RIS	PRIM	ROSE
AZA	LEA	LIL	Y	RO	SE
BEG	ONIA	MARI	GOLD	SNAP	DRAGON
CAME	LLIA	MYR	TLE	STO	CK
CARN	ATION	OR	CHID	TU	LIP
CLEM	ATIS	PAN	SY	VIO	LET
CRO	CUS	PE.	ONY	WEST	ERIA
DAI	SY	PET	UNIA	YAR	ROW