



South East Essex Womens Environmental Network

NEWSLETTER

August 2012

Word from the secretary

Summer has been a long time coming and I'm not even sure if anyone knows how long it's staying for! So while we have our 'summer-with-added-climate-change' break, the newsletter has been compiled and will give you something to read either by the fire side or on the beach – depending what the hour is. We have had a good few months at SEEWEN. The welcome return of our Earth Day in April and we've had talks from the dormouse society and the allotment is bursting into life – although a bit wet! The biggest 'thing' that has happened has been our last meeting at Fresh Horizons. I, personally would like to send Sister Liamme a very special farewell and heartfelt thanks as she moves onto her new challenge where I hope she will be soon be settled, and well. I will miss her always smiling face appearing in the most unusual places as I go around my business in Southend. I know all the WENNies will be very sad at the loss of her support to the group, and having to move to a new venue, but onwards and upwards we must go! Enjoy the newsletter. See you in September.

Diary Dates –

First meeting of the New Term, in the new location! Growing Together, Fairfax Drive – 20th September

Manchester Drive Allotment Association open day - 2nd September 2012.

Apple weekend 20st + 21st October - check SEEWEN website near the time for further details.

Bonfire celebrations at the plot - 3rd November 2012.

Fourth Thursday in every month – transitional Towns meeting in Cricketers Pub, London Road, Westcliff-on-Sea



If you wish to receive information on the next WEN event direct to your mobile, text 'Yes Please' with your name to 07941154166. You will not be charged for any texts you receive, and you can cancel at any time by texting 'no more' to the same number. It's a great way to receive a little reminder in the busy world we live in.

Shake and vac

Need to freshen up and remove odours from carpets or rugs but don't want to resort to chemical products? Simply sprinkle with bicarbonate of soda, leave for a couple of hours or overnight, then vacuum

Roots of Change

The Roots of Change study group is still going strong. We are just over half way now and the reading matter is much more positive.

When we started we were all feeling dismayed about the history of Great Britain's role in empire building and the ability of many countries, including us, to walk into trusting communities, take what they wanted and justify it in the name of "civilising" the heathens. We were very interested in learning that this civilising influence has done endless harm because it has encouraged cultures to abandon their traditional ways of living and the forced "schooling" of their young people has meant that they have lost their way. They have forgotten their old skills but they are unable to properly live a "modern" life because they are too poor. They have been forced off the land and moved in droves to the cities. We have all read about the huge shanty developments on the outskirts of all the world's big cities.

We have read about the setting up of trade agreements after WWII and how these agreements are really just a way for the rich countries to get richer at the expense of the poor countries.

Our last meeting, however, looked at grassroots challenges to this unbalanced and unfair system. We read about the term "The Great Turning". This describes how many, many small groups, all over the world, are taking steps to gain control of their own destiny. It was suggested that there is much more happening in this way than is ever reported, simply because it isn't in the interests of big corporations to take any notice of the groundswell. Perhaps they're hoping that if they ignore it then it will go away...

Eileen

All-purpose cleaner

Make your own Mild All-Purpose Cleaner to clean dirt, food spills, stains, and build up on most surfaces. Its deodorising properties make it an ideal solution for cleaning fridges, microwaves, tiles, even children's toys. Mix 4 tablespoons of baking soda and 2 pints of water, then wipe surfaces with a soft cloth.

Dormice talk

Karen and Sue from Southend Dormouse Group came to give a talk on dormice for our last meeting of the 'term'. They came equipped with a slide show presentation, notice board and some very cute cuddly toys! We only have one true and very cute type in England - *Muscardinus avellanarius* (or Hazel or Common if your Latin is not up to scratch). We were shown slides to explain how to tell a Dormouse from Field or House mouse and Karen and Sue spoke about how the dormice habitat needs to be very 'breed specific'. Changes to woodland management, farming practices and hedgerows have caused numbers to fall. However, they also explained how the conservation strategies being implemented in Belfairs Nature Reserve have helped to records numbers of breeding Dormice as the area meets with their habitual requirements. Nest boxes have been distributed throughout the reserve and they are checked on a monthly basis to see if any dormice have taken up residence. There is a waiting list to join the count, which takes place once a month. You can contact the group via karenbigmore@btinternet.com to put your name on the list.

24 million wheelbarrows of peat are used every year by amateur gardeners. This has a devastating impact on the environment, and releases thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. Find out how you can avoid peat, including peat-free products available to buy,

News from the Plot...

Waitrose Community Matters Scheme

Last year I submitted a form for The DigIn to be considered as a one of the Community charities for which shoppers can vote as a worthy cause by the Green Token scheme at the Leigh Waitrose store. We were very



lucky to be chosen...and even more fortunate to get enough green tokens to receive a cheque for £229 which was a great boost to funding the plot. In February Carol, Eileen and I went along to receive the cheque from Karen Green of Waitrose. Camera shy Sharon (?) had trouble with the buses and missed the chance to be paparazzi snapped for the Echo!" (Never mind, Sharon, your later front page Echo spread, (article about the DigIn), has shown you aren't the shrinking violet you claim to be !!!!

By Pauline

DIY pots for seeds

Start your seeds off in DIY pots, made from recycled materials around your home. There's plenty of plastic containers you can experiment with, or try paper or cardboard if you want to transplant straight into the ground without disturbing the roots.

Shock Horror - Tomatoes Ravaged by Blight

Last summer, the tomatoes grown at DigIn were very badly affected with blight and there was a very poor crop.

So when we saw the opportunity to take part in an experiment that is trialling tomatoes for blight resistance, we thought we could learn a lot! This is one of many trials that Garden Organic have set up.

It works like this: we registered for the experiment and Garden Organic sent us 4 different varieties of tomato seeds, labelled A, B, C and D. Three of these are new varieties that they think have greater resistance to blight and the fourth is a typically susceptible variety for "control".

All the tomato plants are now set out on the allotment and we are observing and recording what happens.

We don't know the names of any of the varieties but hopefully we will be helping to select tomatoes that grow healthily. We'll keep you updated with our results.

You'll grow into them

Don't throw away old pairs of tights - cut the legs off and fill them with compost to make a mini grow bag. Simply tie the open end and cut small holes along the length for planting vegetables or flowers. Alternatively, use them to tie larger plants to stakes.

More on Waitrose and the latest news

While we were chatting to Karen she mentioned that Waitrose, as well as raising



money for community projects, also supports the community with Task Force workers and said if



we needed any extra hands at the Dig In for any future projects to let her know..... Who is going turn down an offer like that???

So when we needed the ground levelled for our storage shed Waitrose arranged for

some lads to come along and do the job for us. Brilliant! Sharon, Alma and Jacky were on hand to show them what was needed, and then they set to work.

They did a fantastic job in double quick time and after all the preparation work was completed, more men turned up to put the shed onto the site, led and directed by Chief co-ordinator and tool man , Bill, and ably assisted by stalwart Eric and Priceless Price. Thanks to all these efforts we now have a storage shed for our wheelbarrows, trugs and assorted odds and ends that we have accumulated.



Once the shed was up we all sat down to a well-earned cuppa and chat and enjoyed the humorous tales of growing up on a farm which Price told us.

By Pauline

Scrub up well!

Mix olive oil with ground sea salt and a little brown sugar to make a natural exfoliating scrub for shower time.

Summer Care murmurings

I take service users to the allotment most Fridays in season and weather permitting.

I take them there in my car and when we arrive they say hello to everyone. We all get ready with the necessary equipment e.g. wellies, gloves and boots. We are asked to do various jobs that need doing. We pick up the right tools and I give support where needed.

When the work is done we all sit down for a drink and cake.

When the produce is ready we are given some to take back to the Day Centre like potatoes, lettuce and beans.

As we have been going for a long time we have got to know each very well and enjoy the company and chat.

The fresh air does us good and we appreciate and learn how the food is grown and it tastes great.

The service users that go really enjoy the time spent there and it gives them the opportunity to learn and mix with other people and are very happy when they bring the produce home.

Anna

Corks for canes

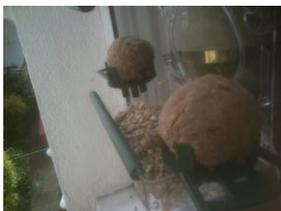
If you use canes in the garden to support plants, corks are just perfect for popping on top to protect yourself from accidental pokes. Carefully make a hole in a used cork with a screwdriver - then pop on your cane. Their colour blends particularly well with bamboo canes.

Father's Day

As my hubby was away singing his heart out with his cousins at the Falmouth Sea Shanty Festival this Father's Day I did the honours on his behalf with the card and present for my lovely father in law, Bert. As he is now nearly 95 and can't get down to his garden to feed and watch the birds which he used to really enjoy I decided to buy him a window bird feeder.



I have attached the feeder to the outside of his lounge window so he can watch the birds feed as he sits in his chair. It sticks to the window with suckers and has a tray for seed and 2 attachments for fat balls. In case the suckers come unstuck there is a security cord attached to the feeder which is fed through the sash window and secured inside. Bert was thrilled. So if you know of any elderly people or if you live in a 1st floor flat it is still possible to watch birds feeding. If you want any more details let me know. I hope the next photo I take of it will be one with a bird on the feeder!



Pauline

Chip off the old block

Did you know that defrosting your freezer can save you cash and energy? When the cooling elements are covered with ice, they have to work harder to keep the interior space cold, which means wasted energy and bigger bills.

Earth Day



Our Earth Day celebration held at Growing Together in Southend on April 22nd had 're-skilling' as its theme. We shared lots of ideas about skills which were very common in everyday life in years gone by but which are now much less common. The aim was to encourage people to re-learn some of these old skills, to become more creative and more independent and less reliant on buying things made by workers often on the far side of the globe. Knitting and crochet, baking and gardening, home-made cosmetics and foraging were all on offer as well as lessons in how to make a wormery or a stag beetle hotel.

Bike maintenance and story-telling, tai chi and singing were all part of a fun and informative day. A good time was had by all!



Eileen

Make woodwork gleam

Mix two parts vegetable oil with one part lemon juice to make a fresh and effective polish that will give a deep, natural lustre and a refreshing scent to wooden furniture.

TWIG SHOP

TWIG can be found at the bottom of Hamlet Court Rd – a lovely double bayed shop with lots of character. TWIG – The only Way Is Green – started off as a funded project to raise awareness of energy efficiency and continues to be led

by Trust Links. The project has now expanded and seeks to reduce not only energy use but food miles in promoting Essex food.

Cathy MacBride who now co-ordinates the shop is a self-confessed foodie and is passionate about using local ingredients. Although not an Essex girl – having only been in the County a mere 26 years – she believes that every County should be proud of the food they produce and Essex has plenty to shout about.

The shop sells a mix of products such as flour and apple juice from Chelmsford, jam and pickles from Heybridge, chutney from Leigh and of course Essex honey. Also available are fresh ingredients from Growing Together – the community garden of Trust Links. This month continues to see rhubarb and lettuces and the introduction of broad beans and more herbs.

TWIG is much more than just a shop though; many of the visitors come for advice, exchange of ideas and sometimes just a chat. The hub is used to collect information on other food producers who may want to sell their produce, to examine potential initiatives such a community bakery, community business kitchen. Evening get togethers are on the cards and lots of summer activities are being planned.

It's not just food that comes under the 'Made in Essex' banner, the shop is also promoting local products such as soaps, natural soy candles and jewellery. Books too are available from local authors and the shop is a member of Book Crossing where books can be picked up free, recorded on a website and then circulated around Southend, around Essex and eventually around the world.

TWIG – made in Essex – celebrating everything Made in Essex – celebrating Green Essex

TWIG 49-51 Hamlet Court Rd, Open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, Sat. 9.30-4.30

Slick solution

Get rid of oil stains on clothes by rubbing chalk onto the affected area before washing. This should get the job done without resorting to chemical stain removers or petrol.

You may have heard about BookCrossing - if not read on!

Launched in the USA in 2001, Bookcrossing now has over a million BookCrossers with more than 9 million books travelling throughout 132 countries worldwide.

Wikipedia defines BookCrossing as –
“The practice of leaving a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others, who then do likewise.” The term is derived from www.bookcrossing.com a free online book club which began in order to encourage the practice, aiming to ‘make the whole world a library’. Basically, you register your book online and the book is then given a number. You then either send you book to someone who has requested it or ‘release it to the wild’, or in other words, a designated book crossing library. You can then track your book, using its number, through the bookcrossing website. The UK Bookcrossing Unconvention is coming to Colchester on September 28th & 29th and will have author talks, ghost walk and a visit to the Bookcrossing telephone box as well as all the other activities you would expect – i.e. meeting other Bookcrossers! Please see the website <http://2012.bcukunconvention.co.uk/> for further details.

Lawns are yawns

Help your lawn conserve water by letting it grow longer. Mow less frequently or mow high to encourage root growth - it will also give the grass a chance to self-seed. Alternatively, save yourself the effort of mowing and encourage more meadow species. Mow a path through the middle to show it is meant to be that way and is not the result of neglect.

Disclaimer – The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of WEN. Reproduction of any article without direct consent of the author is prohibited.