



## News from the Allotment

Hello, my name is Simone LeBoff and I occupy the plot at Ivinghoe allotments next to Ernie's. We have been neighbours for the past three years, during which Ernie has provided me with sound advice and all the news, in exchange for cups of coffee. I would like to thank him for his excellent articles in this magazine over the many years. They have been interesting, amusing, and full of growing information. I will try to fill his gardening boots in this role, but as a relative novice I expect it will be a journey of success and failures we can go on together.

I also must thank Gloria. I too have chickens, only three, but Gloria has been an invaluable source of advice; first when one of my original mini flock fell ill and died, then on how to successfully introduce two young Silkies. Gloria, as I am sure you know from her previous writings in this magazine, is passionate about chickens and what she doesn't know.....

Ernie has already introduced you to many of the people who have allotments. They're all very friendly, helpful and make a lovely community, so why not come down to the Ivinghoe Allotments to meet them on Saturday 14 August, as part of Allotment Week 2021. You could see for yourself the individuality and appeal of the allotments and perhaps discuss how and why build a Huegel, the practical beauty of a willow fence, or the variety of dahlias to grow.

This year my main experiment, albeit not entirely scientific, has been with potatoes. I have used a variety of heritage potatoes arranged identically in different beds but sown and grown in distinct ways to see what produced the best outcome. I took one idea from Sam (another allotment neighbour) and built a potato box from pallets (actually my friend Nigel did it as to me DIY means 'don't involve yourself' and neither my husband, Roger or myself are practical, though I am learning and improving). I part filled the box with compost, then placed the potatoes on the soil and covered them with straw. I did the same with a raised bed, along the lines of one of Suttons' YouTube videos (highly recommended). The third method was to cover the whole bed in black plastic, slit it with a knife, plant the potatoes into the earth and waited for the leaves to pop up through the slits. All methods are supposed to suppress weeds and keep in moisture. The box lets you plant in a confined area if space is a premium.



So far, all three seem to be working well, judging by the amount of foliage above ground, but I will let you know when I dig them up.



I am also growing a variety of courgettes and cucumbers in brightly painted tyres, peas in tubs and runner beans using jute for them to cling to. I am also trying to cultivate some more unusual crops, so have oca in an old tin bath, Jerusalem artichokes (that seem to pop up where they want), cardoons and artichokes, celtuce and celeriac. I intend to plant more adventurous vegetables and have generously been given a variety of Korean seeds by my neighbour Ran, which I hope will germinate and which I can use in a recipe for Kimchi, also taught to me by Ran.

Before I set off for a two week break in Cornwall I worked extremely hard to ensure that everything was done. I weeded the beds within an inch of their lives, mowed the grass and edged (both the allotment and the garden), planted many plants, some at 6am on the morning we departed. Even the greenhouse, full of seedlings, was well ordered. I was proud and quite exhausted from my efforts.

Whilst we were away the weather turned hot, so Ernie judiciously watered everything. Then, inevitably, it rained, a perfect cocktail to make an allotment go whoosh, especially the weeds and the grass.



Fortunately, I find weeding very therapeutic, accompanied by a podcast such as The Archers or a talking book and may well refer to some of the more enthralling 'reads and listens' in the future. At this time of the year, it is important to stay on top of the weeding, continuously cut and feed the sweet peas and of course deadhead roses and other bedding plants.

I think that is all for now. I hope to see you on Saturday 14 August but in the meantime, should you have a glut of broad beans, especially those that are older and bigger and don't know what to do with them, may I suggest you fire up your barbecue or a griddle pan and cook until they are soft and blackened on both sides. Leave to cool but in the meantime prepare a small bowl of salt flakes and using a cheese slice shave either Pecorino or Parmesan. To eat, pod the beans from their pods and combine with a little salt and sliver of cheese. A quick and easy snack or appetiser and which everyone will love (always goes down a storm in my house accompanied by a chilled dry Rosé)

Take care Simone x