

Horticultural Society remembers

The Horticultural Society is mourning the death of its Chairman, Norman Wheatley, who had been an active member for nearly 50 years (see obituary on page overleaf). Norman had planned to hand over the chairmanship of the society at its Annual General Meeting in November, but died peacefully in his garden in July. At its 247th Show held on Saturday 16 September at the Free Church Hall, a floral tribute in his memory reminded members of Norman's long service to the society. But he certainly would have wanted the show to go on, and so it did - very successfully - although torrential rain the previous day had flattened some of the flowers intended for display. Members made a tremendous effort so that a very colourful display of dahlias and other flowers, as well as fruit and vegetables, greeted the many visitors.

Overall winner of best exhibit in the show, with a beautifully fresh trug of vegetables and salads, was Aileen Flucker, who also won many of the other

vegetable and flower classes against strong opposition from Ken Murrell and Chris Page, among others. In the cookery section, which included jams and preserves, there was an unusually large entry, especially for the country fruit cake and the chocolate yoghurt cake, the delicious and simple recipe for which appears below, and the judge commented on the very high standard she had found in all the food classes.

Prizes and medals will be presented at the Society's Annual General Meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday 21 November at Fellowship House. Why not come along? At the AGM a new committee will be elected which will want to hear from YOU what kinds of activities you would like the society to provide. A brainstorming session will be held on a date to be announced in Suburb News. If you would like to put forward ideas, or, even better, join the committee, please contact the acting-chairman, Marjorie Harris (8455 6507) as soon as possible.

Your own allotment?

Just think. On your plate; new potatoes which have just popped out of their skins from finger and thumb pressure under a running tap; baby carrots crisp and sweet; french and runner beans that don't bend, but snap cleanly without a trace of stringiness; glossy courgettes, and peas that burst sweetly against the roof of your mouth. Perhaps to start your meal, a cob of really fresh sweetcorn, whose natural sugars haven't turned to chewy starch on the supermarket shelf. Or asparagus tender enough to need only a token exposure to steam. And to round off the meal, strawberries, raspberries or currants still warm from the sun on their skins.

These are delights enjoyed by many Suburb allotment holders. There are a few misconceptions, however, that would-be plot-holders should be aware of. The most commonly held is: 'If you've got an allotment, a few packets of seeds will provide you and your family with free organic fruit and vegetables for most of the year.' Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? That's because it is.

There is more to growing your own produce than scattering seeds and coming back a few weeks later to collect your harvest. But there's also more to it than merely getting free - and better flavoured - food. There's the healthy outdoor exercise, the friendship of neighbouring plot-holders and the sense of achievement that comes with every basketful of healthy produce. But it does take effort. Though not necessarily as much as some folk imagine. And it does take time. Though, again, not as much as it used to. Modern aids and techniques, and the resurrection of a few neglected old ones, have meant that a family who can devote two to three hours a week - perhaps a little more over the late spring and summer period, when growth is at its most hectic - can keep abreast of Mother Nature's inbuilt instinct to cover any available ground with the fastest-growing weeds she can muster.

Here in the Suburb we are truly blessed with an abundance of allotments well protected from the theft and vandalism which afflict so many municipal sites. Compared with the great tracts of plots bordering polluting dual carriageways we see in other parts of the borough, ours are located in quiet pockets of land surrounded by back gardens. The odd hour working gently in one of these little havens of peace and productivity can be the perfect antidote to business stress as well as offering the freshest fruit and vegetables your family have ever tasted. But a word of warning. If you don't think you can give those few hours a week to the plot, don't invite the disappointment of seeing your early hard work go to waste as nature reclaims its ground and your neighbours are forced to share your weeds. It does not require a huge commitment, but it is a regular and ongoing one if you are to enjoy all the benefits and satisfaction that such a creative hobby can give you and your family.

There is a range of plots available in varying sizes, and many residents, who don't feel up to managing a whole plot, arrange to share with a friend or neighbour. This has many advantages: holiday watering during dry spells is easier to arrange, surplus produce is reduced and the pleasure from a shared achievement is a pleasure doubled.

So if you'd like an open air pursuit that doesn't entail hiking miles over rugged terrain, dangling off beetling rock-faces or pelting through undergrowth aiming paint-soaked projectiles at each other, but prefer a more leisurely appreciation of Mother Nature, while reaping the (edible) rewards of a creative co-operation with her, perhaps cultivating an allotment might be the answer for you.

If you think it is, a call to David Rapson on 8458 5094 or Douglas Thomas on 8458 4131 could well set you on the right path.

TERRY RAND



Evelyn Thomas among the marigolds that keep her vegetables pest free.

Eric Holme on the plot which won him this year's Phyllis Young Trophy for best kept allotment.



Chris Page, Aileen Flucker and Marjorie Harris

CHOCOLATE YOGHURT CAKE

Ingredients:

5fl oz vegetable oil (not olive oil); 4 level tablespoons of golden syrup; 3 eggs; 3 rounded tablespoons of cocoa; half a level teaspoon of salt; 5fl oz natural yoghurt; 6oz caster sugar; 8oz self-raising flour; half a level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda; 6 cubes of sugar (crushed)

Method:

Pre-heat oven to gas Mark 3, 170C, 325F. Pre-grease and line 8-inch (20cm) cake tin.

Mix together the oil, yoghurt, syrup, sugar and eggs, and beat well. Sift in the flour, cocoa, bicarbonate of soda and salt. Mix. Pour into cake tin. Place in centre of oven for at least 1+1/4 - 1+1/2 hours. When ready, leave in the tin on a rack to cool. Turn out and sprinkle the crushed sugar cubes on top. Wrap in foil. Best kept for one week before eating. Bon appetit!

MARJORIE HARRIS



Parsley, lettuce, courgettes and sweet corn - chemical free and bursting with flavour.

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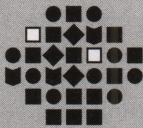
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