



Sustainability Matters AKA 'Not digging your scene'

We all know there is a huge amount of interest in 'growing your own' these days and food security is a major concern. Now there is another technique gaining headlines to help growers maximise their yield while minimising their effort... and this interesting method of organic growing is not just for allotments but for home gardeners across the country too. The 'NO DIG' approach is not actually very new (it's Japanese and ancient) but is gaining more attention through the passionate promotion of the thinking man's Alan Titchmarsh - Charles Dowding, an author & organic market gardener. The theory is that if you disturb the soil as little as possible you preserve its structure and the health of the organisms living in it, crucially, leaving the network of Mycorrhizal (soil fungi) threads undisturbed.



- Preserves soil structure & biological life
- Reduces weeds
- Vegetables & flowers thrive
- Better aeration & drainage
- No fertilisers needed
- Saves time & work
- Grow successive crops on the same patch

Facebook: @merryleesustainability

You need to be sure that you've thoroughly cleared the ground of all vigorous perennial weeds & most importantly, their roots. The real baddies at Merrylee are couch grass, creeping buttercup, ground elder, bindweed, dandelion & docks (have a look on the internet if you're unsure what any of these bad boys look like). After that cover the ground with a mulch of cardboard and add a couple of inches of compost on top (home-made, bought-in or well-rotted manure). Then plant straight into the compost. In future years, mulch with compost just once a year - in Autumn or Spring is fine too. In this way you feed the soil rather than the plants and no fertilisers are needed. There's more information on Charles Dowding's own website and his 'No Dig' videos are on YouTube. He seems to be a fungi to spend time with..

Taking the p*ss

Despite the guidance and plenty of notice, somebody disregarded our important message about the toilet being closed for business. The committee did not take the decision lightly when deciding to withdraw the facility for members in order to reduce the risk of bacterial contamination. As a result of this selfish behavior, the toilet has now been fully sealed and **MUST NOT BE USED** until further notice.



The View from Plot 65



Don't worry! I'm respecting your personal space and writing this at a safe distance of at least 2m.

I've been cheered by the number of folks I've caught up with at the plot in the last few weeks and am delighted with the progress that many are making, particularly our new crop who are doing really well and making their mark. There are lots of smiles around too which is just great to see. There is no doubt that many of you, staying safe at home, will be getting frustrated by the enforced absence, but let me remind you that if you need a wee hand or some support to keep the plot ticking over or made 'weed safe' please get in touch. We can only offer help to those who ask and in these awful times, help is given gladly. So don't be shy! We still have a few vacant plots to allocate (something we had hoped would be completed by now) and there is still time for a newcomer to get wired in to enjoy the season ahead.

In the covering email for the last newsletter, Ian made reference to the reduction (indeed a 100% withdrawal) of Presidential Hugs during this difficult time. For the scores of you who have written expressing sadness at this, I can assure you that I am storing them up for later... Anybody preferring NOT to receive a post lockdown hug should write to Ian in the first instance sighting your reasons. To qualify for an exemption, you'll just need 15 really good reasons and a letter from the Queen.

If you haven't already, there is still time to make your McLaren's order by emailing them - see page 2 for the details.

Until next we speak my friends... (at a distance, naturally)

Best wishes and take care, DL

Mowing & Strimming

Last month we asked for volunteers to help cut our extensive grass paths and edges. The reaction was astounding... in total, we received the square root of hee-haw... which was somewhat disappointing. Anyway, there are bigger problems in the world just now, but just in case you missed it last time, please get in touch if you can help us do some mowing and strimming. The more folk we have, the less everyone has to do. Full training and a safety brief will be available for everyone taking part - at a distance!

Please let us know if you can help via the volunteer email address below, our drop a line to the Facebook page.

Facebook: @merryleeplothold



2020 Committee Contacts

Please get in touch with any of the committee if you have questions or concerns about your plot or want further information regarding events, work parties or advice.

Derek Livesey	(President)	(65)	07768964027
Ronnie Bain	(Vice President)	(24)	07976846278
Ian McCracken	(Secretary)	(9)	07580287498
Sheila Hawthorn	(Treasurer)	(49)	
Lesley Swift	(51)		
Eric Livingstone	(21A)		
Sally Packer	(53B)		
Heather McEwen	(54A)		
John Copland	(45B)		

Correspondence & general enquiries should be emailed to:

merryleeplots@yahoo.co.uk

volunteer for events and work-parties using this address

volunteer4merrylee@virginmedia.com

DATES FOR THE DIARY 2020

Rhubarb Rhubarb

6 vaguely interesting things about rhubarb and a recipe

Rhubarb originated in the inhospitable climes of Mongolia. During his 13th-century journey to Cathay, Marco Polo noted it growing "in great abundance" in the mountains of north-west China. Because of its chilly origins, Rhubarb survives even the harshest winters and is almost impossible to kill

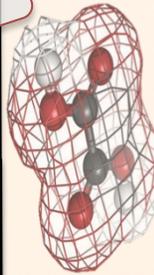


Rhubarb was first used as a medicine: when the ancient Chinese and, later the Greeks and Romans used the dried roots as a laxative

People first used it as a food in the early 1800s, when plants man, Joseph Myatt discovered that diced, stewed, and laced with coconut, orange, lots of sugar, porridge and lashings of custard, Rhubarb stalks can actually be rendered scrumptious *



Rhubarb leaves are NOT poisonous under normal circumstances, but they DO contain a compound called Oxalic acid which can be fatal if you eat enough of it (e.g. your whole bodyweight in one sitting) The body's Calcium store is rendered inactive when the Oxalic acid binds to it causing extreme deficiencies. The 'killer' reputation began during The First World War when people died after eating too much as a 'healthy' replacement for green veg. The leaves CAN be composted safely and will not be harmful



Rhubarb is technically not a vegetable, but it's not a fruit either! It is actually a Petiole – the botanical term for a stalk which attaches the leaf blade to a stem. However, since 1947 Rhubarb has been *legally* considered a fruit after a New York court ruled that as it's usually eaten in a dessert so should be classed in the same way (but mostly as a sneaky way to save companies money on US import tax!)



Roobarb was a green cat created by Grange Calveley for the BBC TV animated series. He first appeared in 1974 with his rival & best pal, Custard, getting into all kinds of trouble. 30 x 5min episodes were animated by Bob Godfrey & narrated by lovely Richard Briars

* **Roobarb & Orange Coconut**

Crumble with Custard
400g Plot-fresh Rhubarb
1 medium Orange
100g Brown Sugar
60g Solid Coconut Oil
80g Plain Flour
70g plain porridge oats
Pre-heat the oven to 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6

Chop the Rhubarb into medium size chunks and grate and juice the orange. Mix together the Rhubarb, the orange zest, juice & half the sugar in a bowl. Transfer to a 22 x 15 x 6cm baking dish. Mix the flour, oats & remaining sugar then rub in the coconut & sprinkle the mix over the Rhubarb

Bake for 25 mins & serve with lashings of custard



JUNE

Saturday 20th June
Mid-Summer Social from 5.00pm
All Family and Friends Welcome

let's hope so

JULY

Saturday 4th July
Coffee Morning from 10.30

let's hope so

Sunday – late July (date t.b.c.)
Plum tree pruning masterclass 10.30

hopefully

AUGUST

Saturday 1st August
Coffee Morning from 10.30

Oh, Jeez, surely ?!

Saturday 26th August
OPEN DAY
12pm – 3.00pm
A Public Event. All welcome Maybe.... !

SEPTEMBER Something really good to look forward to... t.b.c.

OCTOBER Saturday 3rd October
Final Coffee Morning from 10.30

NOVEMBER Sat 7th & Sun 8th
Work Party days – tasks TBC

DECEMBER Thursday 3rd
AGM & Review of the Year

Nursery Bulk order scheme Reminder

Due to the unique nature of the Covid-19 situation affecting supplies across the board, the range and availability is more limited than anticipated e.g.. There are no seed potatoes, onion sets or seeds available and grow bags don't appear in the catalogue but WILL be available... Please ask about volume and cost of these when ordering.

'Recycled' is screened compost, ideal as soil conditioner & raised beds (no added fertiliser). Deliveries are limited to the 50 L bags 'Bedding' has a finer tilth and contains fertiliser - ideal for pots and tubs. Only in 50 litre bags.

Send your order email to
<mailto:adam@mcclarensnurseriesltd.co.uk?>

Use 'MERRYLEE PLOTHOLDERS' as the delivery reference and include your name, Merrylee plot no. & tele no. McLarens will get in touch to confirm price (which includes our group discount) at which time members will pay with their payment card details.