

# Compton Allotment News – July 2017

*Welcome to the July edition of Compton Allotment News.*

*Articles, pictures, photographs, open days, recipes, news, advice on growing, etc...*

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Studio 12 Art Club (based in Wanborough) are visiting the allotments on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July.  
Welcome back.

Thank you to everyone who has sent in photographs and articles this month.

The following is a note from the Committee:-

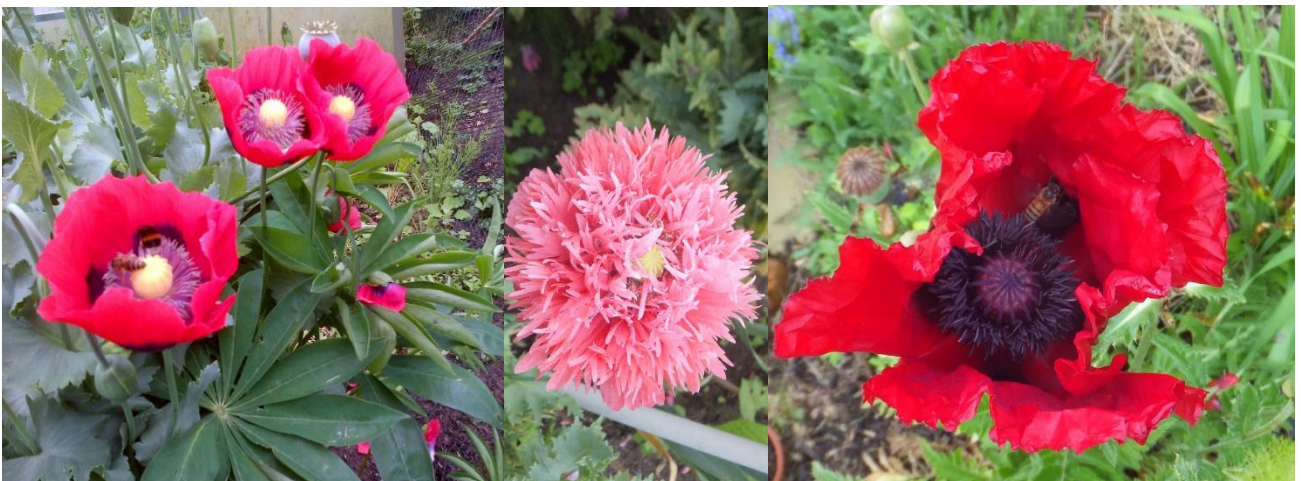
## **Water on the allotment.**

The recent rain at the end of a very dry spell has been very welcome giving us a respite from the arduous watering required to keep the plants alive. Our water is metered and is one of the top two expenses we incur, so a dry summer will drive an increase to our water bill and potentially an increase in the rent we pay for our plots. Watering is absolutely necessary, but I would ask that we are at all times vigilant about not wasting water, I thank those who have accidentally left taps running and offered donations to cover the cost but would prefer there was no waste. I feel I must reiterate the hosepipe restriction we have in our tenancy agreement. "Tenants may use a hosepipe to fill a covered water container but not for general watering. If other tenants wish to use the tap then the hose may be disconnected." Please could we observe this use of hosepipes.

If you spot or discover any problems with taps please let Colin Venton know as soon as possible on 01483 861595 or 07984670960. These numbers are on our website and also on the noticeboards at the allotment.

Ben

The allotment has been very colourful in June. The poppies on everyone's plots have been so lovely and with little rain (until recently) they have not been bashed down.  
Bottom left picture sent in by Howard Thompson.



## A swarm of bees have taking a liking to our allotment - *update*

Susan and Graham Kimber have been doing a fantastic job of looking after the bees.

They were moved very recently to a new home and are being well looked after.

So a very happy outcome and ending.

Queen bee



*The following article is by Susan Kimber*

The first check of the colony, two weeks after the swarm had been hived, was very encouraging. The bees had taken all the feed that had been placed directly on the frames, the queen had completed her mating flights and there was evidence that she was now in lay as small areas of brood, together with pollen and nectar, were seen. The queen also made her first appearance, surrounded by her court of workers

The bees were transferred into a 5 frame nuc (nucleus) box, a smaller and more suitable hive for the size of the colony. This box also made it much easier to move the bees from the allotment site to the apiary so that the colony could be helped to expand.



The latest check showed that the colony is flourishing, the first new bees were emerging, there were three frames with brood and plenty of stores (nectar and pollen) around the brood area. The workers had also been busy drawing out the foundation on the two new frames ready for the queen to lay more eggs. Apart from supplying the pheromones that keep the colony together this is her only task now – and she was caught on camera doing just that!



Queen laying eggs

Young brood

Pollen

Nectar

# Beauty is in the eye of the beholder!



**Mullein Caterpillar and Moth**

The adult moth is rarely seen but is found on the wing during April and May. The bright yellow, black and white larvae are easier to spot and are seen busily feeding in June/July, not just on mullein but they will also eat the leaves of figwort (the family of flowers to which mullein belongs) and buddleia

How is it possible from such a colourful caterpillar it turns in to a brown moth.

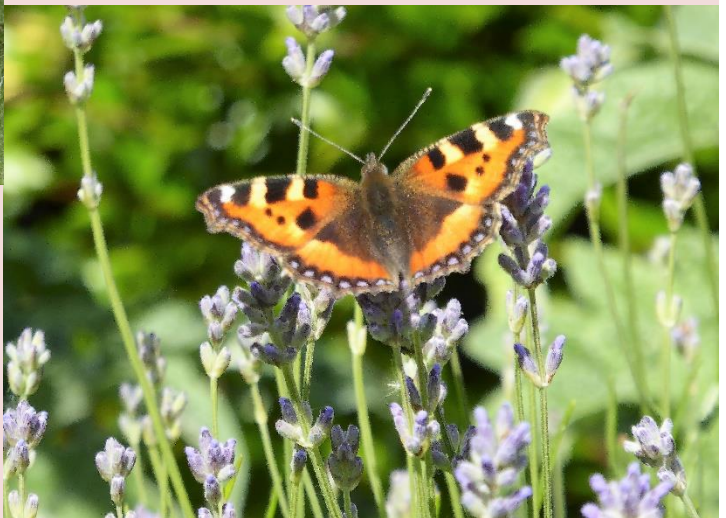
*Caterpillar photograph – David Underdown.*



## **Small Tortoiseshell Caterpillar and Butterfly**

The Small Tortoiseshell can be found in a wide variety of habitats. (Our allotment being one.) Anywhere where the larval foodplant Common Nettle is present.

This butterfly is in decline, so don't be in too much of a hurry to get rid of your nettles.



Again, how is it possible from such an unlikely looking caterpillar it turns into one of our most beautiful butterflies.

# Bill and Heather's Page

It's July and most of our plot is filled with crops that have been planted or sown earlier in the year, but there is still time to sow some vegetable seeds for a late Summer harvest.

Beetroot, carrots (fast maturing varieties such as 'Nantes Frubund') French beans and perpetual spinach can all be sown direct into prepared seed drills, remembering to water the drills first if the soil is dry.

Perpetual spinach (*Beta vulgaris*) is actually a beet grown for their edible leaves, which is why it is commonly known as leaf beet. Unlike 'true' spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*), leaf beet is very easy to grow: It will not run to seed, the growing season extends through from Spring to Winter and it will provide a minimum of three harvests as the leaves will re-grow after being cut. We use the leaves as a direct replacement in any recipe where spinach is required and it makes a very good sag aloo (spinach and potato curry).

Our Autumn onions have survived through June, so we will definitely be harvesting them this month along with our shallots and garlic and, as all of our squashes have been planted out, we will sow a green manure in the space vacated. Clover is recommended for light, sandy soils like ours, but I find that digging clover in to be too much like hard work. Instead I choose Phacelia sown at a rate of 1g per square metre. Phacelia has a beautiful scented foliage that attracts pollinators and a dense, ferny foliage that smothers weeds. However, it can easily self-seed, so I dig it in soon after flowering, turning it over to a depth of 15cm.

We can usually depend on some showers during our wonderful English Summers... add some sunshine and you have ideal growing conditions. Unfortunately, this applies to weeds too. Weeds compete directly with your cultivated crops for nutrients, light and water, they provide cover for slugs and snails, and will set seed at an alarming rate. The key to weeding is 'little and often': 10 – 15 minutes each visit makes the task less daunting. So get that hoe out!

I acquired this little hoe from a second-hand stall at a fete some years ago for 50p and it had obviously been 'well loved' by its previous owner. It's perfect for weeding in around your vegetables, being small enough to get in close without damaging the stems. I'm not sure if it was handmade, but I haven't seen anything like it in the shops.

Drop us an email if you have any questions ([bill.fordham@gmail.com](mailto:bill.fordham@gmail.com)) or come over to visit us on Plot 28D!



# Ann Gooding answers questions

## How did you hear of the allotment?

*I originally heard of the allotment from my good friend and neighbour- Heather Fordham.*

*Having spent 15 years plus living in Godalming, I realised that I knew very few local people, and with redundancy/retirement looming, I thought that having an allotment would be a really good way to meet new friends.*

## How long have you been on the allotment?

*I think that I started on this allotment in 2009.*

## What are your 3 favourite things to grow?

*I always grow sweet peas as I love the scent, and the more you cut the more you get. I love growing squashes of all types as they are often a real delight either in looks, flavour or speed of growth. I also love growing Cape Gooseberries as they look fantastic and people are often amazed that they can be easily grown in the UK.*

## What has been your greatest growing success?

*A sunflower that reached to my bedroom window, and a citrus tree grown from seed that unexpectedly filled my first, very small polythene greenhouse with the most exquisite scent in February.*

## What notable failure do you recall?

*I cannot grow onions, 6 months on they are about the same size as the sets I planted. This year is their last chance!*

## What tips for growing would you give to others?

*Don't worry if other peoples plants are well ahead of yours in early May. Later sowing/planting will usually catch up in very quick time.*

*If you have a greenhouse, sow one or two courgettes really early and grow them on in big pots. Last year I had courgettes in April - which was a delicious treat. The pots can be moved outside in a sheltered spot as soon as danger of frost has passed - just in time to give your Tomatoes etc.. the space they need.*

## Anything you would like to grow, but our climate is against us?

*Mangos!*

## Your favourite fruit and vegetables?

*Whatever has just come into season.*

## What are your earliest memories of being on an allotment?

*I had an allotment in Northamptonshire before moving to Godalming. It was not a council owned plot and therefore had no piped water. Each evening after work, I spent a couple of hours or so taking 6-8 watering cans of water to the plot, and I remember an old boy saying to his dog (who had stuck his nose in one of the cans), "come away lad, I know how far she has had to carry that".*



## How to make a Hoverfly Lagoon

Hoverflies are important pollinators and you can help some species of them which need stagnant water, by making a habitat for them.

Take a small pot and line it if it has a hole or holes in it. Cram it absolutely full of green waste – weeds or grass clippings are fine – anything that is green. Put in about four short bamboo sticks or twigs which will enable the larvae to climb out when ready to pupate. Fill the pot with water and place a few leaves on the surface to give the adults something to land on.

Placing the pot in shade will slow down evaporation but is not absolutely necessary.

Monitor the water level.

Hoverfly habitat made!



## Squirrel Problems !

An interesting article is in the Gardeners' World magazine for June.

A reader wrote in asking for advice as to how to keep squirrels out of his fruit cage.

Bob Flowerdew replied that squirrels tend to avoid cats and he suggested getting a piece of fur fabric, fashioning it to look like a sleeping cat and putting it in the fruit cage. Likewise they don't like snakes and again he advised getting a child's toy snake or making a piece of hosepipe to look like a snake. Both of these items would have to be moved around regularly to keep up the pretence.

Suspended glittery objects and CDs will also work, but only if moved often.

*Both articles sent in by Colin Venton*

Surrey Hills Plein Air Group (outdoor painting)  
Visited the allotment on Friday 23rd June

