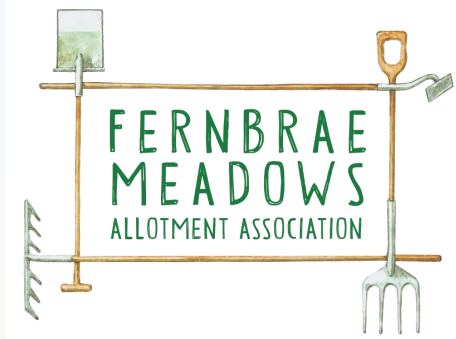


Summer 2024



FEATURING...

New Hub Update
Slugs and Snails
Site Maintenance

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Newsletter



The New Hub – Almost There



As you will notice the new hub at the front gate is nearing completion thanks to the hard graft and long hours put in by Colin Smith and John Watt. Without their expertise, know-how, ability, and design skills the project would never have gotten off the ground.

There have been others involved in sourcing funding and materials free of charge or at reduced prices from local suppliers. Another association member, David Shaw, has been invaluable in advising on the electricals required.

Because there is no mains electricity, on site, in order to have lighting and be able to charge power tool batteries an alternative had to be found. A self-contained off-grid system was the solution however this system is very expensive and a grant to fund this has been submitted. At present the committee are awaiting a decision on whether they have been successful.

When finished the hub will be fully insulated and completely accessible to ensure that all members are able to use it all year round.

Since the allotment site beginnings there has been an ongoing problem with intruders and vandalism, therefore it was decided that any structure must be as vandal proof as possible. The association were extremely fortunate that a local Rutherglen company (Cladco) agreed to supply all the external wall and roof metal sheets free of charge. Without their generosity to enable the building to be wrapped in a metal cladding there was always a concern that vandals would set fire to it.

To get this project going it was decided to seek grants and a number were completed by the Association's committee, to no avail with the exception of a grant of £2500 from South Lanarkshire Council. It was looking increasingly likely that the Hub Project remain a dream because of lack of funding however the committee decided to approach local business to see if they would be willing to support the project by either donating materials or supplying materials at very competitive prices. Thankfully, a few companies decided to support us, and the hub started to become a reality.

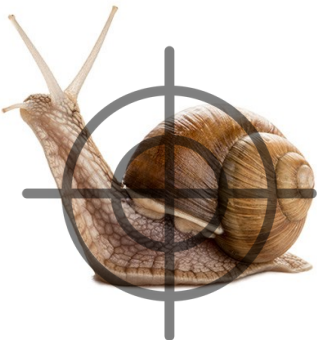
It is envisaged that the Hub will become at the centre of activity within the allotments and will be used for events, open days, demonstrations, presentations to name a few. For too long, too many ideas and projects have been put on hold because of the lack of an appropriate venue BUT that's about to change.

And so here we are today with the extraordinary effort and teamwork that the end is in sight.

That's what Association membership is all about!



Slugs and Snails



It seems, this year, that every gardener is bemoaning the loss of plants and vegetables with slugs and snails being blamed as the No.1 culprits. Slugs and snails are common garden animals, and they are well suited to the damp, mild climate of the U.K.

There are ways to try to minimise slug and snail damage:

- **Transplant** sturdy plantlets grown in pots rather than directly sowing seeds. Slugs are attracted to young seedlings. Transplants can be given some protection with cloches.
- **Predators should be** encouraged to enhance the allotment's biodiversity: birds, frogs, toads, hedgehogs, slowworms and ground beetles eat slugs and snails
- **Torchlight searches** can be carried out on mild evenings, especially when the weather is damp, hand-picking slugs and snails for disposal.
- **A nightly patrol** of your allotment to remove slugs and snails would be ideal but not very practical for most people.
- **Rake over soil** and by removing fallen leaves during winter can allow birds to eat slug and snail eggs that have been exposed, but this may make a less welcoming environment for predators and other wildlife
- **Place a piece of cardboard** on a part of you plot and the slugs will hide underneath which allows you to gather them for disposal

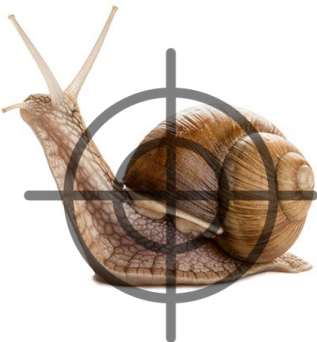
Slugs and snails will always be present and are a normal part of a horticultural ecosystem. If you want to protect your most vulnerable plants or vegetables, you might want to manage the slug population by using traps, biological control or the many other suggestions that are common practice.

Traps, Citrus traps of lemon, lime, orange or grapefruit are also recommended. Cut the fruit in half remove most of the fruit. Then you turn the halved fruit peel upside down like an igloo first cutting a square out at the base as an entry point. Place on the soil in the evening and the slugs will take up residence within for you to remove the next morning

Biological control ('Nemaslug') is specific to molluscs, with no adverse effect on other types of animals, and is available as a microscopic nematode or eelworm watered into the soil. The nematodes (*Phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita*) enter slugs' bodies, infecting them with bacteria that cause a fatal disease.

- This should only be used in a targeted manner, as it will affect all species of slugs, including the beneficial ones that do not feed on live plants
- The nematode biological control available to control slugs is unlikely to affect snails, as they rarely come into contact with the soil-dwelling nematodes

To be effective, moist, warm soil – temperatures of 5-20°C (41-68°F) – is required. So, spring to early autumn is the best time to



apply nematodes. Best results are achieved by applying in the evening to moist but well-drained soils; they may be less successful in heavy soils such as clay

Common Practice Suggestions

Container gardening slug and snail tips :

- Try a sandpaper circle around plants.
- Copper tape applied around the container.
- Two bands of copper tape placed around the container can be connected to a small battery.
- Vaseline spread around the outside of the container 2cm from the top.
- WD40 sprayed around the outside of containers.
- Top dress around plants with sharp grit or gravel.
- Vick Vapour Rub smeared around the pot.

Soil and Raised Beds

- Bark spread around plants.
- Used ground coffee should then be spread around plants.
- Diatomaceous earth is a powder of ground down rock similar to pumice stone and is abrasive. They don't like to move over it.
- Cat litter sprinkled in a circle around plants deters slugs and snails.
- Sheep's wool pellets
- Beer traps work so they'll die happy. Pour a little beer into sunken yogurt pot or jam jar.
- Human hair. This dries the moisture out of them.
- Top dress with sharp horticultural alpine grit.
- Crushed eggshells or crushed seashell are too sharp for slugs and snails to slither over.
- Empty the contents of the vacuum cleaner around the plants which are affected
- Attract birds to your plot to eat slugs. Be warned you may get squirrels and rats visiting where the birds feed.
- Salt does kill slugs and snails but should only be used on paths. It will kill your plants and make your earth infertile if it comes in contact with your soil.
- Encourage hedgehogs as they will eat slugs.
- Water your plot directly on the soil in the morning rather than evening. Plants will take up water from the plants roots during the

course of the day. If you water your plot in the evening as slugs come out on patrol when the allotment and paths are wet.

Additional Hints and Tips

- To help keep the slug population down try clearing slime from paths surrounding your plot with vinegar. Apply with a hand mister. It will help to stop them mating.
- If you manage to get slug slime on your fingers, vinegar will remove it.
- Epsom salt sprinkled in a ring around a plant will deter slugs and snails. Wear gloves when applying Epsom salts.
- A cup of Epsom salts mixed to 5 gallons of water can be used to rid plants of pests.

Slug Resistant Plants :

- Parsley.
- Creeping Thyme.
- Potatoes
- Mint.

Put the mint in a container or it will spread everywhere in your plot. The pot could be sunken in the soil or raised bed.

- To reduce slug damage, try planting lettuce as slugs are very fond to lettuce and hopefully they will then leave your other plants alone.
- Furthermore, you can regularly spray plants with a garlic wash (Go online to get the recipe).
- Please note garlic is toxic if consumed in volume by cats or dogs and this also applies to any other member of the allium family.

Should I use slug pellets?

No – slug pellets (even organic ones) have been shown to have negative effects on wildlife in the garden. It's better to encourage natural predators and use the cultural and biological control methods outlined above.

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A reminder that the council's Rules and Regulations for Allotments (2021) states that "the tenant shall be responsible for the keeping of the boundaries and paths adjacent to his/her allotment plot in a clean and tidy condition. Where the path is adjacent to two allotments, the respective tenants shall come to an agreement as to how it is to be clear of weeds and any obstructions".

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If you have any brambles on your plot growing adjacent to the perimeter fence, please feed them through to form a barrier which will deter trespassers from climbing over. By adopting this practice, we have had less intruders and vandalism.



Site Maintenance

Site Security

Please ensure that you keep the entrance gates padlocked, at all times. There has been a large turnover of plots recently which has resulted in a lot of new faces and if the gates are not locked it would be difficult to tell who friend or foe is.

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Comfrey Tea Recipe



A Simple (and Stink-Free) Recipe for Comfrey Tea

Here's a quick and easy recipe for a no-added-water comfrey tea fertiliser that packs plenty of goodness without the usual stink.

Comfrey tea, or comfrey fertiliser, is an all-organic, easy to make plant food that provides excellent nutrition, especially for flowering and fruiting plants. Comfrey is rich in potassium (K), which is required for fruit production, and also contains potash (P). Potash is actually another term for Potassium, P is actually Phosphorus) and nitrogen (N). A liquid comfrey feed has a higher NPK ratio than farmyard manure."

N.B. comfrey tea is for use on *plants only*, and is not for drinking. Although comfrey can be used to ease inflammation via topical application in poultices or lotions, the plant is toxic if ingested and could seriously damage your liver.

Comfrey (*Symphytum spp.*) is a quick-growing deciduous perennial and an amazingly bee-friendly nectar source.

This method is recommended by Garden Organic.

1. Harvest Your Comfrey

Comfrey dies back in autumn and begins to re-emerge round about the start of April. By mid-May it's probably looking like this:

Opinions differ as to whether or not to chop the entire plant off a couple of inches above ground (the fastest method) or to cut individual leaves. If possible leave any flowers or flower buds on the plant – bees love them – but you can remove the flowers to make more energy available for leaf production if you prefer.

2. Tear, Crush, Pack in a Pot

All good tea needs a good teapot, in this case consisting of an inner and an outer container. For the inner, I use a bog-standard terracotta plant pot with a single hole at the bottom, and for the outer a plastic plant pot without any drainage holes. The terracotta pot should fit inside the plastic pot snugly, ideally with at least a couple of inches of clearance underneath.

Crush, tear or otherwise bruise the comfrey leaves and pack them tight into the pot, filling it right up to the brim if you have enough leaves.

Some comfrey tea recipes will tell you to add water at this stage, but that method will result in an almighty stink as the plethora of bacteria and microorganisms in the water get to work on digesting the comfrey and fart out all sorts of waste gases.

For less stink and a more concentrated end product, **do not add water**. The leaves will rot down quite happily with the help of the bacteria and microorganisms already living on them, the yeasts in the air etc., (which for some reason are a lot less, er... farty).





3. Put a Lid on It

The lid needs to be big enough to cover the pot and keep out the rain (no water, remember?) and heavy enough that it won't be blown away in the wind. You could use a small concrete paving slab, but a plastic lid weighted down with a brick will do just as well.

4. Leave it Alone

The tea brewing process takes around 8 – 12 weeks, largely depending on the weather (the warmer, the quicker). You'll know it's done if you take a sneaky peak under the lid and see that the comfrey leaves have all-but disappeared (any plant matter remaining in the inner pot can be added straight to your compost heap) and the bottom of the outer container will be sloshing with lovely, thick, brown-black, concentrated comfrey tea, which you can drain off and store for when you're ready to use it on your plants.

The volume of liquid you end up with will obviously depend on the volume of leaves and size of container you brew in.

5. Slosh it Around

To use your comfrey tea, you'll need to dilute it to approximately 1-in-20. So, for a standard 10-litre watering can, that's about half a litre of concentrate. You can then use the feed on your fruit bushes, fruit trees, courgettes, squashes, tomatoes, cucumbers etc. to aid with fruit set and development, or on your flowering plants to boost their blooms.

For a more nitrogen-rich feed to use on your leafy veg, you can make nettle tea via the same method.

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Plot to Pot Recipes



Courgette Cake

This simple, subtly spicy easy courgette cake is deliciously moist and a great way to use up a glut of courgettes. Each serving provides 209 kcal, 4g protein, 32g carbohydrate (of which 18g sugars), 7g fat (of which 1g saturates), 1g fibre and 0.5g salt.

Ingredients

80ml vegetable oil, plus extra for greasing

150g light brown sugar

2 free-range eggs

160g courgette, coarsely grated

180g plain flour

2 tsp baking powder

2 tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp fine salt

2 tbsp demerara sugar, for sprinkling



Method

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6. Grease a 900g/2lb loaf tin and line with a long strip of baking paper.

In a bowl, mix together the oil, light brown sugar and eggs until smooth. Stir in the grated courgette.

In a separate bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Tip the dry ingredients into the courgette mixture and stir until just combined.

Transfer the batter to the prepared loaf tin and sprinkle the top with demerara sugar.

Bake for 45–55 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the loaf comes out clean. Leave to cool in the tin for 20 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and leave to cool completely before slicing.

Recipe Tips

For extra texture and flavour in this courgette cake, stir 70g/2½oz each of chopped walnuts and raisins into the batter just before pouring into the tin. For extra decadence, drizzle with a lemony icing.

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Pea and Mint Soup

This minty pea soup is as fresh and easy as it gets and tastes wonderful when served with crisp Parma ham or bacon.

Preparation time

less than 30 mins

Cooking time 10 to 30 mins

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 litre water

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Large handful fresh mint, leaves only

500g fresh peas (shelled weight) or frozen peas can be used if fresh aren't easily available

Drizzle olive oil

200ml crème fraîche

4 slices Parma ham, fried or grilled until crisp (optional), to serve

Method

Bring the water to the boil in a large pan and add a generous pinch of salt.

Add the mint leaves and bring the liquid back to the boil.





Add the peas and cook for 2-3 minutes, until the peas are just tender and bright green.

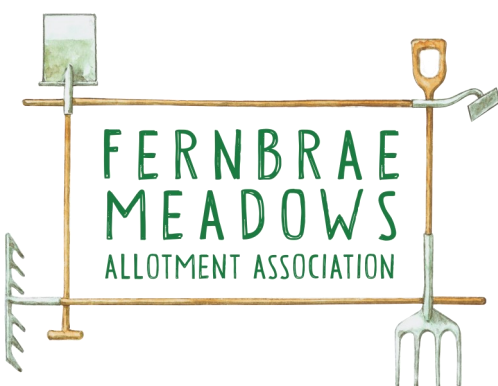
Strain the mint and peas, reserving the cooking liquid, and transfer the peas and mint to a food processor or use a hand blender. Allow to cool for 3-4 minutes.

Add just enough of the cooking liquid to cover the peas and mint, then blend for 1-2 minutes, to create a smooth, bright green purée.

Season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper and add a generous drizzle of olive oil.

Add 140ml/4½fl oz of the crème fraîche to the pea and mint purée and pulse in the blender for a few seconds, until combined.

To serve, pour equal amounts of the soup into four warmed bowls. Add a neat tablespoon of crème fraîche into the centre of each and, if you



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