



Milnathort & Kinross Allotments Association

Autumn 2015 Newsletter

Open day and harvest fete!

Saturday 26th September was the date of the second MKAA open day. Around 30 people attended the day with sales of plants and home baking raising over £100 for the association's funds. Popular amongst children was the slug top trumps challenge! Well done everyone who contributed to making the day a success!



Introducing the new board....

Many thanks to all those who came along to the AGM on 6th October. The year was summed up before the existing board all stepped down and the new board was elected. Details of the meeting to follow in the minutes. Here they are! From left to right—Jennifer Best, Sid Grant, Pauline Copeland, Jimmy McLaren, Denise Dupont, Tiziana Hetherington and Amanda James.



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Sensory garden

Back in the summer volunteers from the Day to Make a Difference volunteering programme, run by the Lloyds Banking Group, made a fantastic start on the sensory garden. Since then work has continued on the paths and the beds are in the process of being constructed. When it's all finished and planted up this will be a wee haven for all, with planting designed to stimulate the senses and encourage hands on exploration.



Sensory garden taking shape with the type 1 base laid by volunteers in the summer. A special self binding gravel was then laid and compressed to make an accessible path. Followed by construction of the raised beds. Planting over the next few months and into 2016 will provide a feast for the eyes, nose, ears, fingers and hopefully those taste buds too!



Forest gardening - Not having a forest doesn't mean you can't do some forest gardening!



It's all about copying the way forests grow in order to use space in the most efficient way and grow plants with different preferences in the same place. Basically it's all about layers, the canopy, the understory, the shrub layer and the ground floor. The wonderful thing being that you can adapt your plant choices depending on the available space.

Like anything new it can sound a bit daunting but in their usual fashion Plants with Purpose, aka Margaret Lear, in a recent website blog break it down and banish the nerves. If you're intrigued to discover more then visit <http://plantsandapples.co.uk/2015/09/22/do-you-need-a-forest-to-have-a-forest-garden/>

The community garden has it's own little patch of 'forest' developing thanks to the efforts of Harriet and Rory Stewart and others.

Any suitable plants would be more than welcome additions to this area.

Autumn spider web in the MKAA forest garden.

Forest gardening is an excellent way to increase biodiversity in a garden or on a plot as the complexity created by the different layers provides more places for wildlife.



Located just up the road in Bankfoot near Perth Margaret and Andrew Lear run Plants with Purpose and Appletreeman respectively. Those of you that came along to the Open Day in 2014 will have met Andrew as he kindly came along with some trees for sale and also supplied the apple tree that Lesley Riddoch planted for us. The tree that is currently dripping (well, for its size anyway) with apples in the community garden!

Andrew also came along and shared his knowledge and skills with us at the Planning, Planting and Protecting Orchard Trees workshop earlier this year. I, for one, felt like I had been let in on some secret language where I could all of a sudden understand the importance of M and 26 (it's nothing to do with roads).



Andrew and Margaret Lear

I would urge you to visit the website

www.plantsandapples.co.uk and browse at your pleasure.

There are nuggets of information tucked neatly up in blogs along with catalogues to make you wish you had double the space to plant trees and herbs! Information on events and markets where you can

catch up with them is also easily found. Perhaps the most pleas-

urable thing is the way the information is presented in a friendly and encouraging manner making it feel as if anyone can grow anything.



The tree supplied by Appletreeman, Andrew Lear, in July this year busy growing apples.

Wild and wonderful wildlife

Part of the joy of being outside working on your plot or in the community garden is the unexpected encounters with wild things that usually pay you no attention as they go about their business. Here is a wee overview of some wildlife sightings from the site by various people, including Duncan Davidson who ran 2 moth traps on the site in September catching varying numbers of seven different species.

Moths - Mouse Moth, Dark Arches, Large Yellow Underwing, Small Square-spot, Black Rustic, Rosy rustic and Brown-spot pinion.



Just like it says on the tin, Large Yellow Underwing has yellow underwings. These are hidden when the moth is at rest and all you see are the forewings which are brown. This makes it fantastically camouflaged against wood and vegetation, however if it is disturbed it flies off showing the bright yellow which the predator sees and follows. By landing and immediately hiding the yellow the predator is tricked into continuing to look for the yellow while the now brown moth is overlooked.

Common darter dragonflies have also been seen on site, perhaps even laying eggs to stock the wildlife pond! Males are red and females are brown-green and are often seen resting on surfaces such as picnic tables and hard paths.



Recipes - Ann Barlow continues to look after us with these fantastic suggestions for using our produce. Many thanks Ann!

Beetroot and Chocolate Cake

Some of you might already have this recipe from last year's open day, but it is so good it is worth repeating.

For the cake

175g plain flour
10g baking powder
75g cocoa powder
225g caster sugar
3 eggs
225g raw beetroot (roasted, peeled and chopped)
200ml corn oil

For the chocolate ganache

250 grams dark chocolate
250 ml double cream

Method

- 1) Preheat the oven to 200C / gas mark 6.
- 2) Grease and line a 20cm cake tin (pref spring form)
- 3) Sift the flour, baking powder, cocoa powder and sugar into a bowl.
- 4) Blend the eggs, beetroot and corn oil in a blender until smooth. Fold the beetroot mixture into the dry ingredients. Bake for 40 minutes.
- 5) Meanwhile, make the ganache. Put the double cream into a saucepan and simmer gently until just before it reaches boiling point. Break the chocolate into pieces and put into a mixing bowl.
- 6) Pour the warmed double cream onto the broken chocolate and mix gently until the two are blended together to make a silky chocolate icing.
- 7) Remove the cake from the oven and leave to cool, once chilled generously cover the cake with the chocolate ganache.

Next newsletter

The Winter newsletter will be in January so if you have any suggestions for content or photos, stories, reviews and any other items of interest then please get in touch with the board. Cheers!

Twice baked Spinach and Ricotta Soufflés (Serves 6)

Think Soufflé is difficult? They are not. Particularly when they are twice baked. They can be made a couple of days in advance or freeze really well.

Ingredients

900g. young leaf spinach
50g. Ricotta Cheese
4 Large free range eggs (separated)
50g. Butter (plus a little for greasing)
Grated Parmesan
275ml milk
50g plain flour
Salt, pepper, cayenne pepper, nutmeg

Method

6 x 10 cm soufflé dishes, greased with butter, dusted with some of the parmesan. Baking dish deep enough for the dishes to stand in 1 cm water

Pre heat the oven to gas mark 4, 350° F, 180 °C

Wash the spinach well and remove thick stalks and damaged leaves.

Place in a large pan with a pinch of salt, lid and cook over a medium heat for 4 mins (no water)

Drain, when cool enough to handle squeeze until it is quite dry. Finely chop.

Melt butter in a pan, add flour and mix until a smooth paste is formed, add the milk and whisk until smooth, cook very gently for 5 mins.

Remove from the heat and add the ricotta and chopped spinach. Cool slightly and add the egg yolks, mix well. Season with salt, pepper, cayenne pepper, grated nutmeg.

In a large very clean bowl whisk the egg whites until stiff, add one spoonful to the soufflé mix to loosen it, then carefully fold the mix into the egg whites.

Divide into the soufflé dishes, sprinkle the rest of the parmesan on the tops. Place in the baking dish and pour 1 cm of boiling water around them.

Bake in oven for 20 mins. Lift out of the water and cool on a baking rack.

To reheat: Remove from fridge or freezer in time to return to room temperature. Place in a pre heated oven gas mark 4, 350° F, 180 °C for 30 mins.

Serve immediately – a blob of sour cream on the top and a sprinkling of chopped chives, finishes off the dish perfectly.

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