

Hummersknott Gardener's Association



WINTER

This season I've been trying to get our plot ready for the spring, initially I tried to grow a cover crop of red clover on my beds over winter both to suppress weed growth and aiming to hoe it into the beds in Spring to add nitrogen, I would even feed and dry some flowers for my house rabbits. Sadly it failed to germinate. So by weeding then laying down cardboard and mulching on the top with leaf mould and compost I'm hopeful as in past years that the covering will suppress weed growth until spring when I can get straight onto planting.

In the meantime the my garlic is sublimating (experiencing very cold weather) in some of my beds which will aid the clove splitting into bulbs.

A long time ago I tested the antibacterial effects of garlic in petri dishes, amazingly the allicin in garlic kills off many bacteria and is released by crushing the garlic bulb (For more follow the link). I use the varieties we grow from Solent Wight to Lautec and the extremely spicy Carcassone in our Thai curries, on toast, add it to my chicken's drinking water I even make a cleaning solution to sanitise my greenhouse over winter. What will you be doing on your allotment over winter?

Vanessa Hilton, Secretary



STORMS

Lately we've had a couple of big storms, Arwen and Barra. Some of our fellow plot holders have experienced significant wind damage and the route many walkers take to the plots resembled a cross country walk with horse jump style tree trunks across the path.

So what do we have to expect over the coming months? I'm no meteorologist or fortune teller so have no idea how many storms we'll have or how severe they will be but this is what they will be called; Corrie (shelter in the Rovers Return), Dudley (Moore), Eunice, Franklin (Roosevelt), Gladys (Knight and the Pips), Herman, Imani, Jack (and the Beanstalk), Kim (Jong-un), Logan, Méabh (try pronouncing that), Nasim, Olwen, Pól, Ruby (slippers), Seán, Tineke, Virgil (Thunderbirds) & Willemien.

Potentially useful crossword clues... Names are chosen by the British, Irish & Dutch meteorological services. While storms that originate elsewhere retain the given name to reduce confusion. However bad it is let's hope they don't run out of names!

Paul Hilton

NOTES FROM THE APIARY

Bees cleverly control the temperature of their colony

As most of you will know my bees are located in the Apiary behind the cabin in the main car park.

At this time of the year the bees will be in a cluster together with the Queen on a few frames at the centre of the hive. Despite the almost complete lack of metabolic activity in the bees: by uncoupling their wings from the large thoracic flight muscles, the bees are able to shiver by rapidly contracting and relaxing the muscles without actually moving the wings. This metabolic activity generates heat to maintain the cluster as close as possible to an optimum 35°C.

During the middle of winter the cluster temperature may fall as low as 20°C. As the ambient temperature falls lower the bees pack ever more tightly together, decreasing the surface area of the cluster to reduce heat loss. If individual bees become too hot they migrate to the edges of the cluster to cool off. As the temperature starts to rise in the spring, the bees begin to move more actively and brood rearing starts. Malcolm Harding, Chairman

A Few Facts about Bees

- There are 25,000 known species of Bees.
- The Queen Bee is wholly unable to care for herself.
- She has attendant bees that follow, feed and groom her, and carry away her waste.
- A honey bee dies after it stings, unlike a wasp.
- The Queen Bee has a sting with smaller barbs and may be extracted after a sting without killing her. So can sting many times.
- The Queen's sting is often reserved for killing other queens within the hive.

Bibliography. Collins Beekeepers Bible

Moving muscles to shiver creates heat.



Seed Swap
Saturday 29th January 10.30-12

Please Contribute
to our Spring Newsletter
Write max 100 words or send a photo to
hummersknott@gmail.com

