

SMALL FARM TRAINING GROUP

November 2022 Newsletter

This month's newsletter includes:

- 1000 Years of Traditional Farming, Part 8
 - Farm Safety, Part 2
- Meet our new Group Training Officer, the lovely Gabby Dolan
 - Sow Grow and Cook (its Crab Apple time!)



November 2022

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Letter from the Chair...

By Zoe Chinman

As the year draws to a close, I am delighted to say I have good news, good news, and even more good news!

I'll start with the good news that we have now recruited a lovely volunteer to oversee the administration side of the training and workshop courses we run, some of you may have met our new Group Training Officer (GTO) Gabby already, but if you haven't do go and say hello and introduce yourself. Huge thank you to her for volunteering to do this – it's quite a task! You can find out more about Gabby later on in the newsletter.

My next bit of good news is related to the first.... now we have a GTO, we have been able to start planning workshops and events again. There are already lots of talks, events and workshops ready to book, so do pop on the website and book any that take your fancy. As we get more people volunteering to run workshops, and more courses arranged, we will get these added to the diary too.

And finally, my last bit of good news is that the AGM is shaping up nicely, we now have nominations for every single committee post, so if we get enough of the membership to attend and to vote the new volunteers in, we can hit the ground running with a full committee for the next year.

What events are coming up..

NOVEMBER 2022

18th November – Social Supper and AGM

DECEMBER 2022

TBC

JANUARY 2023

20th January - Free Talk:
Protecting our rivers and seas

FEBRUARY 2023

17th February – Free Talk:
Animal Feeds, types and purposes

Due to the absence of a Group Training Officer (GTO) over the last two months, we sadly had to pause the booking of additional courses but we're delighted to say that we've now found a replacement GTO so watch this space and there will

PLEASE do come and give YOUR committee some support at the AGM, without these volunteers (who give up a lot of their time), we wouldn't have a group, so please show them some love and appreciation by giving them a hands up, and a "Ooh Ahh" on the night and vote them in. Tickets can be booked from www.SFTG.org.uk, free and include a hot dinner and soft drinks.

I'm looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the AGM, otherwise, my next letter will be in 2023! (assuming I get re-elected – fingers crossed).

All the best,

Zoe



1. August's illustration from the Julius work calendar

1000 years of traditional farming – Part 8: August

By Paul Lovatt-Smith

"How great the harvest is" goes the hymn. The gathering-in of the corn is the pinnacle of the traditional farming year, when all hands are on-deck and the heat is on to try to get the crop off the field, in as dry a condition as possible, and into storage "ere the winter storms begin".

Four out of the twelve illustrations in this tenth century calendar concern the farming of cereals. The fact that one third of all the monthly drawings are given over to this one type of food shows how important cereals were in the Saxon diet. No wonder that there is an old saying that bread is "the staff of life".

In 2007 a Shropshire GP, Dr Roger Henderson, used historical documents to estimate that medieval peasants would have consumed almost two loaves of bread's worth of cereals per day. This enormous quantity would have given them most of the 3,750 kCal of food energy that they needed to fuel up to 12 hours of labour. By contrast, current NHS guidelines are for 3/5ths of this energy requirement, 2,250 kCal per day. What sedentary lives we lead, in comparison to our forebears. And why is there so much intolerance to what used to be a staple food? Could it be anything to do with the numerous artificial additives that are now used in both growing and cooking?

soon be more courses coming!

If there is a course you would like to do but haven't seen listed, please don't hesitate to let us know.

Get Social...

Don't forget that we're also on Facebook and Instagram...why not follow us and see what we're up to!

Insta:

[@small_farm_training_group](https://www.instagram.com/small_farm_training_group)

Facebook:

[Small Farm Training Group](https://www.facebook.com/SmallFarmTrainingGroup)



Why not let us follow you and your Facebook/Insta accounts and we can help you with your smallholding dreams and promote your goods to SFTG followers?



Your SFTG committee needs YOU...

By Zoe Chinman

With the AGM just round the corner, its time to consider the election of the SFTG committee members. Some current committee members have volunteered to re-stand and we also have some new volunteers for you to consider, but if you do want to throw your hat in the ring then absolutely, please

The calendar's artist cleverly shows a production line of the process of harvest, proceeding from left to right. Six men are involved in the work and a seventh, on the left, is overseeing the task. This man is clearly in authority as he is dressed in a robe and holds a spear. The fact that there is an armed overseer emphasises the importance of the harvest. This man also appears to be blowing on a horn held in his left hand. Is this the signal for a break? You certainly need frequent stops for drinks when working out in the fields under a hot August sun.



Figure 2: The robed overseer with spear and horn

To his right, a man with a sickle, or reaping-hook, is grasping a bunch of corn stalks just below the ears and cutting them a few inches off the ground. The corn could be wheat, barley, rye or oats, or a mixture of these, which was sometimes grown. It is above his waist in height, unlike modern cereals which have been bred short to lessen the amount of straw.

We have tried reaping like this and have found that although many weeds are left behind when the handful is cut out, inevitably some are still attached and need to be discarded, by running the point of the sickle down through the cut

stalks. If the corn has grown well, there are fewer and smaller weeds but if grown poorly, then much more work is needed to separate weeds from corn during reaping.



Figure 3: Two reapers and two sheafers. Note the sheaf measuring tool.

Next there is a second reaper who is throwing a handful of clean corn behind him so that it can be safely stacked together into a sheaf. The sheaf making is being done by the third man, who also has a tool, seemingly for checking the diameter of the sheaf. A sheaf is made by gathering an armful of stalks, letting them fall upright onto the ground so that the base of each is at a roughly similar level, then grasping the lower stalks between the thighs. With two hands free, a few spare stalks are twisted together to form a rope which is bound around the middle of the sheaf and fastened with a couple of twists and the end tucked back in. The whole process takes less than a minute and makes a surprisingly steadfast package.

do!! We would encourage anyone who can spare some time to consider a role on the committee. The Job Roles and descriptions are as follows:

Treasurer – (Di Bowley standing for election)

This is one of the more important and time-consuming roles within the group. You don't need advanced accountancy skills, but you need to be able to read a balance sheet and like working with numbers. This post will appeal to someone who enjoys attention to detail and gets a kick from knowing that the accounts are accurate. We try and streamline our accounts as much as possible with online payments rather than cash or cheques.

You will work closely with the membership secretary and training organiser(s) to make sure that the correct money comes in and that you pay tutors and issue refunds as well as pay other bills. You need broadband so that you can make bank transfers and communicate by e-mail.

The accounts are in an Excel spreadsheet, so you need to be comfortable with spreadsheets and making bank transfers. We also use Paypal. Initially there will be quite a lot of new software and payment methods to learn – none are difficult, but you will need to make the time to get to grips with our systems.

You will also be required to attend the committee meetings via Zoom, and share your excel spreadsheets / update of the accounts at the meetings.

You will need to do an annual recap at the AGM to the members.



Figure 4: “April” heritage wheat sheaf with straw binding, August 2021

The use of a sheaf measuring tool implies that each sheaf had to have a standard diameter, indicating that this was the way that productivity and yield were measured at harvest-time. One can imagine one of the harvesters saying

something like this to his wife later that evening: “It was a good day today on Alfred’s cornfield, my dear. We carted away twelve hundred and fifty-six sheaves.”

A fourth man carries a sheaf towards the cart and a fifth appears to be throwing one up to a man on the cart, who is catching and stacking them. As the pile of sheaves grew higher on the cart, throwing, catching and stacking would have become more difficult. And more fun, I suspect.

The sheaves would then have been taken home to be stacked, presumably out of doors. In which case they would probably have been stacked into a rick, a weather-proof structure built on a wooden frame resting on mushroom-shaped staddle stones, to keep out rats, mice and other vermin. The finished rick would have been thatched with straw against the rain. Making such a rick, which could keep the precious grain safe and dry for many weeks until the corn could be threshed, requires knowledge and experience. Nowadays, staddle stones are used mainly for garden ornaments and the skill of rick-building has been all but lost.



Figure 5: A small thatched corn rick at Bunratty Folk Park, Co. Limerick. Photo by Jessamyn via Flickr.

On our smallholding, we have been growing cereals on a very small scale (under ¼ acre) for over 15 years. For the last 7 years we have grown a variety of heritage spring wheat called April which is long-straw wheat like that shown on the calendar. Having tried several harvesting methods, including the same as that shown on the calendar we now pick the ears off by hand, as this seems to be the most efficient and enjoyable way to harvest such a small area. There is no need to

deal with weeds and the straw can either be reaped later or left to compost down. This method is documented by Diodorus Siculus, a first century BC Roman historian, as the way that the iron-age Celts used to harvest: “The method they employ of harvesting their grain crops is to cut off no more than the heads...” This method would probably have been considered primitive and slow by the Saxons but we find it strangely addictive and conducive to good conversations.

Skills needed: Attention to details, good with numbers, organised.

The Chairperson (Zoe Chinman re-standing for election)

The Chairs role is predominantly the glue that holds the group and committee together. Technically there isn’t an awful lot to do as the Chair in terms of tasks, but it is very challenging and time consuming as you are called upon on an almost daily basis. There will be someone or something nearly every single day that needs your advice, help, sign off, or opinion on something.

Tasks: Attend all committee meetings. Liaise with all other committee members both collectively at group meetings and individually in person, on the telephone or by Zoom to offer mentorship, advice, and ensure their tasks are still on track. Provide help and support to any other committee member who needs help on their task.

Answers general membership questions, press, business queries etc via email and telephone.

Attend as many SFTG events as possible, including Friday night meetings, shows like Heathfield and South of England, summer BBQ and Harvest Picnic.

Skills needed: Very people orientated, positive mindset, good admin ability, computer literate, good internet skills. Needs someone who is happy to be “The Face of the SFTG” and probably more extrovert than introvert in personality.

ViceChair (Debbie Gordon is re-standing)



Figure 6: Picking wheat the prehistoric way, August 2022

Weeds are much more of a benefit than a problem in our organic system. Not only do they provide food and shelter for wildlife but also they form the basis of the pasture cover which replaces the wheat when the harvest is done.

Compared with the chemically-cleaned monoculture of neighbouring conventional wheat crops, our corn patch is a buzz of insect activity and biodiversity.



Figure 7: Wasp Spider and weeds in wheat, August 2015

Figure 8: Female bush cricket in wheat, with green weeds in the background, August 2022.



Stand in for the Chairperson on any of the above issues.

Give help and support to the Chairperson in terms of any of the above issues that need an extra pair of hands or to stand in for the Chair. Attend as many SFTG events as possible, including Friday night meetings, shows like Heathfield and South of England, summer BBQ and Harvest Picnic.

Skills needed: Good admin ability, computer literate, good internet skills. Can be less people focused, would suit an introvert or extrovert personality type, as much of the support to the Chair is "back office" support.

Newsletter Editor (Caroline Upton is re-standing for the role)

Responsible for the creation of the SFTG newsletter. Collating articles from SFTG members and committee members for publication and developing editorial articles for publication.

Tasks: Producing and sharing the newsletter electronically with all members.

Skills needed: computer skills and an ability to coerce articles from others.

Friday Night / Social Events Organiser (Cat Bush is standing for election to take over this role)

The Friday nights meetings organiser needs to arrange talks (or relevant films), for 9 months of the year (not August, November or December). Meetings are on the 3rd Friday of the month. About 2 weeks before a meeting contact the speaker to ensure they are still



First Aid on Farms and Small Holdings..... Part 2

© By Tim Williams

This is the second part of a first aid article written by Tim Williams for the SFTG. He is a local smallholder and ex-surgeon.

The Health and Safety Executive reported¹ 41 people died in the UK as a result of agriculture-related activities during 2020/2021. The commonest cause was being struck by a moving vehicle or being in one that overturned. Agriculture has the worst rate of worker fatal injury (per 100,000) of all main industries, with the annual average 20 times as high as the all-industry rate. Over half those who died were aged 60 years or older and the youngest was a 2-year-old child. As to household risks (and this of course also applies to farms, particularly those with houses or cottages and ancillary facilities), there are five dread Apocalyptic Horsemen:

Poisoning is a leading cause of preventable deaths. While an opioid epidemic (Oxycontin) in America was responsible for a high number, household poisoning remains a serious risk – especially for small children. The wrong medication, too much medication, and exposure to toxic substances including drain cleaners and bleach can all cause poisoning: label weed-killer and similar chemicals and store them out of reach of children (and teenagers), who may try to experiment.

Falls have long been a top cause of ambulance call-outs. Children fall off beds, tables, and dressers. Healthy adults may fall off roofs while performing routine maintenance. Elderly individuals often lose their balance and fall during normal daily activities, even when just rising from a chair. This can result in lacerations, broken bones including hips or wrists, and even damage to the spinal cord or brain. While most falls are minor, the wrong landing can lead to more than a skinned knee. Take safety precautions on roofs and ladders. Supervise children during playtime, on farms, in the garden and

available and put out a notice on the Forum reminding members of the talk.

Coordinate with whoever is doing teas and coffees, to make sure we have volunteers. There is a proforma statement that says everything else that needs to be added about the evening. Remind whoever is looking after our facebook page to put out an announcement, you will need to give them the important details and if possible a nice image. Like wise for the SFTG website. We request people to book so that we know who to contact in the case of late cancellation due to bad weather etc. You will receive an email each time someone books. (There will usually be people turning up on the night without booking.)

The organiser needs to be at the hall (currently the Goward Hall) between 7.15 and 7.30 to greet the speaker, set up any audio-visuals that are needed, and make sure everyone signs the signing in list. Before the meeting the previous chair (Paul Lovatt Smith) made announcements of forthcoming events and welcomed everyone to the meeting but in recent years the meetings organisers have done this. Ensure that if the speaker requires a fee that the treasurer knows how and how much they wish to be paid so that it can be done promptly. We have meetings organised up to and including next February, so there is plenty of time to come up with new ideas. I can pass on all relevant computer files to the new meetings organiser.

This is not a difficult job, and takes 3-4 hours a month, plus the meeting itself.

¹ Fatal injuries in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Great Britain 2020/21'

especially near water or when climbing trees. If you are older or take care of an older individual, consider a cane, walker, or other mobility aid (including wall handles around the house and in the bathroom) to reduce the likelihood of a fall.

Electrical devices, unsupervised stoves, candles, hairstyling tools, chemicals, and other hazards may contribute to serious and life-threatening **burn** injuries. Many of the incidents occur in the kitchen and bathroom – anywhere hot water is on tap. At 70°C, water can cause a third-degree burn in a one second. At 56°C, it can cause a third-degree burn within 15 seconds. To avoid burn injuries, keep hot pots out of reach of children. Never wear loose and flowy clothing while cooking. To reduce the risk of tap water scalding injuries, adjust your water heater’s thermostat and consider installing an anti-scald device to protect small children.

Suffocation or Choking

Young babies face an increased risk of asphyxiation from blankets, clothing, and sleeping practices. Exposure to certain substances including carbon monoxide can be insidious and result in chemical suffocation.

Very young infants should be put to bed on their backs (the ‘Back to Sleep’ campaign substantially reduced cot deaths). Be sure to follow all recommended best practice for tucking in infants, install a carbon monoxide detector, and discourage young children from playing the “pass out” game to avoid suffocation-related injuries.

Drownings

If your home or facility has a pool, hot tub, pond or fountain please take extra care. There’s always the risk of small children, inexperienced swimmers or anyone enjoying alcohol drowning, and this can occur in seconds, sometimes just out of sight. Dry drowning has become a major concern of parents in recent years and is due to spasm in the respiratory system causing airways to close up. The condition can create oxygen-related injuries within minutes of exposure.

Secondary drowning can occur up to 24 hours after exposure and also cause oxygen-related injuries or death. Full-immersion drownings are more common than other forms, but all represent a serious household risk. Nonetheless, after seemingly prolonged immersion recovery is often possible (sometimes as a result of the so-called ‘seal reflex’) and resuscitation should continue until trained help attends.

Membership Secretary (Karen Boehm is standing for election, Michelle Oster is standing as Membership Mentor to support Karen)

Overview: Responding to membership enquiries from new and existing members in a timely manner.

Maintaining an up-to-date database of members, including GDPR preferences. Issuing a welcome email to new members, including new member’s pack and latest newsletter. Preparing and sending membership cards. Managing annual renewals, including updating forms associated with membership. Performing annual refresh of the database i.e. removing leavers, tidying up data. Providing memberships lists for the Newsletter and limited membership information to Windmill Feeds (for the purpose of providing members with a discount). Liaising with the Treasurer on financial aspects of membership. Acting as a signatory to the STFG bank account.

Skills: Good communication skills, good IT skills, well organised.

Time commitment: Daily monitoring of SFTG Membership email +1/2 hrs per week (Oct-June)/ increased time required during renewal period.

Attendance at Zoom committee meetings and AGM.

Social Media, Sales &

Marketing (Jay Kendall is standing for election).

Keep the groups social media Facebook and Instagram up to date with current news, share members stories, events, and other interesting smallholding



Trug Making

By Debbie Gordon

A Sussex Trug is a wooden frame basket almost exclusive to a small region in East Sussex. The handle and rim are of locally coppiced Sweet Chestnut, the body is formed of willow boards and the feet should be of the same willow.

Traditionally used by local farmers and market gardeners for harvesting produce, measuring and feeding livestock they are now more generally used in the home and garden.

Apparently it takes on average 6 years to master the range of skills needed. We were incredibly lucky (and in my case heavily supported!) to be able to craft an entire trug in just a 1 day course.

related stories. Promote the group to new and old members. Promote workshops, courses, talks, and social events using social media, canva, mailchimp and the in house forum.

Skills needed: A basic understanding of all of the above, or at willingness to learn the majority of them. Good general computer skills.

Attendance at Zoom committee meetings and AGM



Letter from the Editor

By Caroline Upton

Who doesn't love a handy tip! This one comes from an RHS programme that I watched recently where they advised against putting tomatoes in the fridge. Read on for the 'why'...

The reason they gave was that when you harvest a tomato, because it has a desire to self-seed, it tries to make itself as attractive as possible to a 'predator' (basically anything that might eat a tomato and help to disperse the seed) by becoming riper, firmer and sweeter. As they are tropical plants, if you pop the fruit into a fridge which is typically at around 4oC, it inhibits those reactions from the fruit.



Meet the Member – Gabby Dolan

By Gabby Dolan

I was brought up in the Isle of Man, on a farm, we had cows, sheep and crops. When I finished my education I went to work in the Merchant Navy shoreside, my role was training and Development Manager. My job has taken me all around the world where I have been lucky enough to live in several different countries. We moved to Laughton, East Sussex 5.5 years ago and we have a lifestyle/small holding of just under 10 acres which encompasses quite a lot of woodland.

At this time we have chickens and a large veg patch and polytunnel and have just planted an orchard.

I volunteer at Raystede and I work as training coordinator for a local care home establishment.

Our dogs are mini schnauzers Scruffy who is 5 years old & Conni who is 2.





Haymaking

By Marie-Angel Chevrier

To celebrate the ancient Celtic festival of Lughnasadh we held a Haymaking by Hand Festival on the 30th and 31st of July 2022. The event was co-organised by the East Sussex based Small Farm Training Group (SFTG), through its treasurer Jenny Cloke, and Marie-Angel Chevrier, Director of Genesis Agenda Ltd (GA Ltd). The event took place at Terra Firma, near Cowfold West Sussex. For the last 1½ years Genesis Agenda has used this 5.8 ha small farm to demonstrate permaculture, eco-tho agriculture, ecotechnics and wilding..

Fifteen people over the two days learnt how to scythe and how to make hay bales with a hand-made wooden baler whilst protecting the hay from the rain (rather conspicuous by its absence in July!).

We had three tutors Frank Wright, Colin Close, who is editor of Windrow, the newsletter of the Scything Association of Britain and Ireland (SABI) and Terry Standen. Marie-Angel Chevrier acted as tutor and co-ordinator, whilst Jenny Cloke made and laid out the most outstanding food for us all on both days.

On day one, after the introductions, this varied group of smallholders and gardeners learned to assemble a scythe, to hone the blade with stones and to use it to cut grass. Colin, Frank and Terry each took a group of three or four into the meadow and pretty soon the grass was falling in neat windrows, and no one cut anyone else's feet!



Acorns

By Jenny Cloke

This year there is a bumper crop of acorns on my oak trees. Some years the trees produce far more acorns than others and this year is a good year for acorns – probably because the spring was dry and summer hot. The last bumper crop was in 2020 – another hot and dry year! Some of my ewes adore eating acorns – on a par with eating ewe nuts!

Unfortunately, acorns are poisonous. They contain gallotannins which lead to gastrointestinal problems, kidney damage and occasionally death. Some domestic animals tolerate acorns much better than others. It is most common in sheep, but cattle, horses and goats can also be affected. Pigs are very rarely poisoned by acorns and they are usually deliberately turned into oak woods in the autumn to fatten them up.

The best way of preventing acorn poisoning is to prevent sheep coming into contact with the acorns. I hope that because so many of my ewes like eating acorns that there will be fewer for one individual to eat too many! Some years I have picked up acorns from the ground and removed them but this year I haven't got round to it. The symptoms of acorn poisoning are that the animal loses condition and has abdominal pain. She may also be



We had our lunch break, enjoying a sumptuous feast laid out by Jenny, in the cool woodland in the middle of the farm and ate extremely well, washed down with cool drinks and three different local beers.

Marie-Angel gave a short talk on the management of the seasonal growing cycle of pastures with the scythe, both grasses and so called 'weeds', which may not always be...and a lively discussion ensued on meadow creation and regeneration.

We then learned topeen the metal of the blade thinner and sharper in the afternoon, using two types of hand

anvil and a hammer. Colin also demonstrated an electric-powered peening machine he had brought with him from Devon, and all were interested to see how much better their scythes cut afterwards ... We therefore set to with a vengeance to cut the rest of the ¾ acre meadow which had languished in the heat wave and drought conditions throughout July (In July only 5mm of rain fell and although there was rain in June the spring was also very dry)

Some people then raked and turned the grass which dried extremely quickly in the heat and we also learnt how to protect hay from the rain by using an A-frame and by making crocks (little hay mounds) with the help of hay rakes as well as some of the theory of rick design.

Day 2 morning started at 7a.m. so the remaining student group, now only 4, could experience how morning dew helps make cutting faster and more efficient. By then the grass area had been completely scythed so we practiced on thistles, brambles, and nettles, showing how handy the scythe is in dealing with weeds.

For this workshop most people brought or bought Austrian scythes but Terry Standen works solely with the English scythe. He is current British champion and gave a talk about the differences between the Austrian and English scythes and the history and making of the English scythe. A single man was capable of cutting 2 acres of corn in a day with an English scythe. The hard steel blades were made by such skilled hand forgers that some are still in use two hundred years later. Terry recounted how its historical uses as a crop harvest tool by a skilled population of steel makers influenced its ingenious design and manufacture, and how, sadly, those skills were lost in the 1930's and all English scythes are now second-hand ones - one Terry has dates back to 1689, before the French Revolution! This generated much talk about the cultural (and political) renaissance of agricultural crafts which both the SFTG and GA Ltd promote.



dehydrated and have diarrhoea or constipation. There is no antidote to acorn poisoning but providing a diet high in protein – so good quality grass and possibly hay helps. Some cattle farmers also include calcium hydroxide in their cows rations.



Your committee members

By Caroline Upton

We'd love to hear from you! For anyone wanting to reach out the SFTG committee members then please find our contact details below as well as who does what...

Chairperson

Zoe Chinman
Chair@sftg.org.uk
07540 633909

Vice Chair

Debbie Gordon
ViceChair@sftg.org.uk

Treasurer

Jenny Cloke
Treasurer@sftg.org.uk
01435 813252

Group Training Officer (GTO)

Gabby Dolan
GTO@sftg.org.uk

Membership

Michelle Oster
Membership@sftg.org.uk
07958 771773

Friday Night Meetings

Jenny Huggett and Cliff Baylis
Meetings@sftg.org.uk

Finally, we made the grass windrows into hay bales using a hand baler constructed four years ago by Frank, using a design available from the "Caring for God's Acre" website.

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk>

and the plans downloaded from:

<https://www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/HAY-BALER.pdf>

Our little team soon became faster at pushing the wooden baler on its little wheelbarrow tyres across the field and churning out bales, as the weather was threatening with large black clouds. Shortly before the 4p.m. finish time, we had the thrill of a sudden gust of cool wind followed by a few large drops as we were finishing the 19th, and last, bale. The team of five fine-tuned bodies working in unison raked the hay into very large crocks, loaded the baler with forks, pressed the load and tied the knots then rushed the precious bale of winter fodder into the old horse trailer cum barn!.

All in all, the participants were extremely pleased with the learning experiences of the Festival and voted unanimously for it to happen again next year, hopefully with a few more people!

So ... we hope to see you in 2023...



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Crab Apple Jelly

Ingredients:

2kg crab apples
1kg caster sugar
The juice of a lemon
Chilli flakes or a sprig of
rosemary (optional)

Method:

Wash the crab apples, remove the stalk and blossom head (if still present) and cut away any bruised parts.

Put into a large pan and cover with water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 25 mins until the apples are soft and pulpy.

Place a piece of muslin into a sieve and leave the pulp to drip through overnight. **Do not squeeze or press the pulp at this point or it will result in cloudy jelly.**

The following day, measure the juice out for combining with the sugar. You will need 10 parts juice to 7 parts sugar. For



Sow Grow Cook – its Crab Apple Time...

By Caroline Upton

Now is the time that most Crab Apples are ready to be harvested and you can tell if they're ready by slicing an apple in half and checking the colour of the seeds. If they are brown then they are ready.

There are a few reasons why having a crab apple in the garden is a great idea. They provide year round interest with some stunning floral displays in spring (they will be literally dripping with beautiful flowers in stunning white and pink), they will provide an early source of nectar for insects and also act as a pollinating partner for other apple trees and then in the autumn time they serve up a feast of crab apples – ideal for making jellies for us to enjoy but also ideal for feeding the birds when their usual food stores start to deplete.

The name is thought to come from the old English term of 'crabba' meaning 'sour' and they are also known as the 'wild apple' or 'sour apple'. They are a close relative of the more domestic apple tree that we all know and love and are also associated with love and marriage. Apparently if you throw a crab apple seed into the fire and say the name of that special someone, if it explodes then its true love.

If you need any more encouragement to get out there and buy yourself a crab apple tree, we have included a delicious recipe in the newsletter for making crab apple jelly. And its really easy to mix it up and make a crab apple and chilli jelly or maybe a crab apple and rosemary jelly.

example, 1kg of juice requires 700g caster sugar. Add the lemon juice and bring to the boil to dissolve the sugar. Once the sugar is dissolved, you can add a pinch of chilli flakes or sprig of rosemary if you so desire. Totally optional.

Bring to a rolling boil until the mixture reaches 105°C and then pour into hot sterilized jars and seal the jars whilst its still warm so that it creates a seal.



Welcome....

We'd like to give a warm and hearty welcome to the following people who have joined the SFTG in the last few months.

Our new members are:

Stephanie Sinden
Alex, Ruth, George and Lola
House
Claire and Abi Tyler
Ginny Freeman
Rebekah, Daniel, Matthew and
Elijah Lopez
Rebecca and Sascha Kriese
Rosalynd Ingram
Suzi, Georgie, Alex and Melia
Masterson
Charlotte Ridley
Derek and Gillian Shrubbs
Alison Ingram