



## A NATIONALLY RECOGNISED SUPPORT ORGANISATION FOR ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENERS

[www.swcaa.co.uk](http://www.swcaa.co.uk)

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# NEWSLETTER

### Welcome to the Summer edition of our newsletter.

Hopefully you will all be out there enjoying your allotments and the feeling of things getting back to somewhere near "normal" What a wonderful time of year this is to be a gardener with plenty of crops bursting into life and hopefully so yummy early harvests too.

Myself along with my husband Dan are in the process of creating a brand new Mediterranean inspired wildlife garden and the most exciting bit for me is I now have my own micro allotment which we've created using sleepers to make some fabulous raised beds. We don't have a massive garden and trying to get in everything we want takes some planning but its starting to take shape.

Since giving up my allotments 3 years ago I have really missed growing my own produce, I now have runner beans, sweet peas, sweetcorn, courgettes, tomatoes, a chilli plant, beetroot, carrots, spring onions and lots of different salad crops all doing well. I will be posting the progress of the new SWCAA allotment on our facebook page so be sure to have a look.

At the time of writing we are just coming out of the lock down with most places now being able to re open, after such a tough time for everyone lets hope we can enjoy the rest of the year and hopefully some fabulous sunshine which is definitely good for the soul. **Ayesha Hooper Director/CEO**



We are looking to start a new feature on our website and face book page featuring allotment sites, plots and their produce from all around the country. We would love to hear from you with your stories and pictures of all things allotments. If you would like to contribute please email us with a bit about you/your site and any photos you would like to share.

We are also looking for your handy tips and tricks too!!  
Contact us at [swcaa.cic@outlook.com](mailto:swcaa.cic@outlook.com) We look forward to hearing from you.

### Eat Raw!!

#### Why not try

Courgettes in wafer thin slices dressed with a tomato and herb sauce or cubed and added to a salad for an extra crunch.

Beetroot grated over salads not only adds vibrant colour but has a lovely nutty flavour.

Coleslaw made with red/white cabbage, sliced radishes, red pepper and grated carrot with a olive oil, lemon juice dressing seasoned with sea salt and black pepper.

Broccoli florets and apple thinly sliced in a salad with a sprinkling of juicy raisins.

Mung beans, chick peas and lentils are fine to eat raw if they are sprouted first.

Bulb Fennel sliced thinly, this is delicious raw and you can also add the feathery tops too.

Gazpacho soup was invented for the summer. Refreshingly cold on hot summer days, this classic Spanish cold tomato soup deliciously combines the best of summer vegetables from the allotment.

#### Don't eat

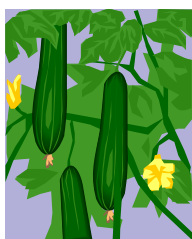
Potato's, these should not be eaten raw, they contain a compound called Solanine which gives you stomach cramps and diarrhoea.

Red kidney beans are poisonous raw. they contain high levels of phytohemagglutinin, a known insecticide which plants have developed to stop pests from destroying their seeds. They can cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

Cannellini beans have a lower level of phytohemagglutinin as the kidney bean but are still toxic if not cooked properly.



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**Pinching out Cucumbers and other undercover favourites**

Once it gets going there's no stopping a cucumber plant, so if you want to get into your greenhouse or polytunnel again then a little careful pruning will help. Start by training the main stem up a tall cane at least the height of the greenhouse and tie it in with twine. Once it reaches the top pinch out the growing tip, this will encourage it to start producing more side shoots all the way up the main stem. Once a fruit appears on each one, count two leaves after where the fruit is growing and nip the shoot's growing tip back to this point. This helps the plant concentrate on developing its crops. Keep a look out for any male flowers with a simple stem (females have a

baby cucumber behind them) and remove them otherwise you'll have bitter cucumbers, keep this up throughout the growing season and you'll get a fantastic crop.

**Do** pinch out the leading shoots on melons once they have around five leaves and are about 30cm tall. This will encourage side shoots where the fruit will appear. Select the four strongest and pinch out anymore that grow. Tie these to a horizontal cane and when the flowers appear you can start to hand pollinate them by dabbing the centre of each one in turn with a small soft paintbrush.

**Don't** allow tomato side-shoots to grow to long before you pinch them out. The bigger these get the more energy they will take from the plant. Just pinch out the shoots whilst they are still small throughout the season.

**Grow edible flowers**—The flowers of some plants can be just as tasty as the fruit or stems and make a valuable extra harvest and a great addition to your plate. Flowers have formed part of our diets for thousands of years. The Chinese were experimenting with edible flowers as far back 3,000 B.C.E. The Romans used violets, roses and lavender in their food. Many restaurants today use petals to add a unique flavour and appearance to their dishes. Edible flowers are always best when eaten young and fresh from the garden and will taste even better if you can pick them early in the morning before they've had too much sun. Wash and dry them gently by dipping them in a bowl of water and gently shaking. This should also help remove any bugs or dust from the petals.

Put them in a plastic container in the fridge and aim to use them within a few days. The petals are the best part of many edible flowers so remove the bitter heel at the base of the petal as well as stamens, calyx and pistil of larger flowers. Some like pansies can however be eaten whole. Courgette flowers and daylilies are best picked whilst still in bud or just at the point of opening and are great dipped in a tempura batter and deep fried.

**Some tasty flowers to try include:**

**Cornflower** - has a sweet/spicy clove like flavour - **Radish** - sweet with an earthy tone, **Rocket** - has a sweetness that offsets the pepper taste, **Dahlia** - Water chestnut and spicy apple to carrot.

**Hibiscus** - A lovely addition to fruit salads or to make a citrus-flavoured tea. The yellow flowers of **calabrese** or **kale** that has bolted have a lovely delicate flavour and a great addition to your salads.

**Honey suckle** - can be enjoyed by sucking out the sweet nectar from the base of the flower, petals can be used to make a tea or syrup. **Magnolia** - The young flowers can be used fresh or pickled. **Nasturtium** - Tasting peppery, like watercress, these make a lovely colourful addition to any salad. **Pansies** - Mild and fresh-tasting, these are great in a green salad or as a garnish.

**Rose** - Use in drinks, fruit dishes, jams, and jellies they have a wonderful delicate fragrance. **Scented Geraniums** - The flavours range from citrus to a hint of nutmeg.

**Sunflowers** - Petals, buds and seeds are all edible. **Fuchsia** - remove all green and brown bits and the stamen for a better flavour. **Peony** - The petals taste lovely fresh in salads, or lightly cooked and sweetened. **Daisies** - An excellent source of vitamin C. The leaves roots and flowers of the lawn variety are all edible and are said to be a great anti-inflammatory.

**Don't pick** faded, dusty, old or discoloured flowers in your garden (or when foraging) that are near a road or an area that animals use.

**Don't treat** your edible flowers with pesticides. If you do have a problem with pests, cut the flower back and encourage regrowth instead.

**Flowers to stay away from** as they are toxic include Poppy, Foxglove, Daffodil, Bluebell, Clematis, Hydrangea, Rhododendron and Lily-of-the-valley.

*Edible Flowers*

