



# THE GRAPEVINE

Sponsored by

*Peter Vardy*



## June 2018

### NEXT MEETING

#### FRIENDS OF ROTTEN ROW

Speaker: Brian Quinn & Sue Paton

Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June, 7.30pm

Dalgety Bay Community Centre

### FORTHCOMING 2018 EVENTS

1<sup>st</sup> JUNE

#### FRIENDS OF ROTTEN ROW

Brian Quinn & Sue Paton

2<sup>nd</sup> JUNE (Saturday)

#### DBHS ANNUAL COACH TRIP - GARDENING SCOTLAND

8<sup>th</sup> of JULY (Sunday)

#### DBHS ANNUAL COACH TRIP BY CAR TO EATS ROSYTH

### CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

At our May meeting, Robert Jones gave us a good talk about his many visits to the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. He is a good photographer as he was able to demonstrate. Robert is a member of Colinton Garden Club and is the Communications Officer. Hmm.....does DBHS need one of those I wonder?

It was good to welcome Judy & Norman Kurzman on a flying visit from Australia

Michael Gourlay  
Chairman  
DBHS

### BIG BEE NEWS

I've include this whole report on the ban of chemicals by the EU. It was backed up by science and a public petition signed by over 5 million people. You might think that would be the end of the subject.

The EU has approved a total outdoor ban of the world's most widely used insecticides because of the danger they pose to bees and other pollinators. The ban on neonicotinoids is expected to come into force at the end of 2018.



The move completely bans the outdoor uses of three neonicotinoids, or neonic, across the European Union. They include Bayer CropScience's imidacloprid, Syngenta's thiamethoxam and clothianidin developed by Takeda Chemical Industries and Bayer CropScience.

The EU had already opted for a partial ban in 2013 on the use of the three chemicals on flowering crops that attract bees, such as maize, wheat, barley, oats and oil seed rape (canola).

"All outdoor uses will be banned and the neonicotinoids in question will only be allowed in permanent greenhouses where exposure of bees is not expected," the European Commission said in a statement.

In February, the European Food Safety Authority issued a report adding to the mounting scientific evidence that neonics are a risk to wild bees and honeybees, whose numbers have been plummeting in recent years.

BBC News noted that manufacturers and some farming groups opposed the action, saying the science remains uncertain.

"The Commission hasn't been able to find that these restrictions have delivered any measurable benefits for bees," Chris Hartfield from the National Farmers' Union in the UK, told the BBC.

"That has been a big question for us, and if we can't be certain they can deliver measurable benefits why are we doing this?"

The new regulation will be adopted in the coming weeks and will be applicable by the end of the year. Some farmers believe it will have significant impacts on the types of crops grown across the Continent.

"The irony of the current restrictions is that it has led to the decline of oil seed rape being grown in the UK and that's reflected across the whole of Europe," Mr Hartfield said. "We're not decreasing our consumption of that product; we are just importing it from outside Europe, where it is often treated with neonicotinoids. I would expect to see that continue."

Some campaigners believe that the extended ban heralds a new era for EU farmers where the needs

of the environment are seen as more important than production.

"It's a significant indication that we need a different form of farming across Europe that farms with nature and not against it," said Sandra Bell from Friends of the Earth. "The ban on neonicotinoids could be a really important step towards a more general questioning of the use of pesticides and the harm they are doing to our environment."

Greenpeace EU food policy adviser Franziska Achterberg welcomed the news but urged the EU to make sure the three neonics are not simply swapped with other harmful chemicals. "These three neonicotinoids are just the tip of the iceberg—there are many more pesticides out there, including other neonicotinoids, that are just as dangerous for bees and food production. Governments must ban all bee-harming pesticides and finally shift away from toxic chemicals in farming," Achterberg said.

Lori Ann Burd, director of the Center for Biological Diversity's environmental health program, praised the decision by European Union regulators, but added that the "EU's wisdom highlights the Trump EPA's folly."

"Although U.S. beekeepers reported catastrophic losses again this winter, and just this past week the EPA closed a comment period on another suite of damning neonicotinoid risk assessments, rather than banning these dangerous pesticides, the agency is actually considering *increasing* the use of neonics across another 165 million acres," Burd said.



## EARTHWORM WATCH

The Earthworm Watch project is run by environmental charity Earthwatch and the Natural History Museum and aims to reveal the impact of humans on earthworms and the soils they live in.

Beneath our feet, earthworms are quietly maintaining the fertility of our soils and protecting us from environmental hazards. As they burrow through the soil, worms leave gaps in their wake. This creates storage space for rainwater and decreases the risk of flooding on the surface. By carrying organic material into the soil worms also ensure that the carbon it contains stays below ground, reducing the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere.

The survey takes under an hour and involves digging two small holes to count earthworms and measure soil properties



### **Who Can Survey**

Anyone with safe access to a green space, such as a garden, allotment, park or school grounds (with permission).

### **When to Survey**

Collect data in Spring and Autumn, which is when earthworms are most active.

### **Free Project Pack**

The free Project Pack contains the essential ingredients needed to conduct your survey, but you

also have the option of printing the downloadable materials and sourcing your own mustard and vinegar. Any regular vinegar or powdered mustard is fine - just remember to use the same products throughout your survey. You will need 15ml of vinegar and 30g of powdered mustard - one heaped tablespoon (about 15g) of mustard powder per 500ml of water.

### **More Information**

The website <https://www.earthwormwatch.org/> has more information about the project including how to register, download/send for project pack, view the results in so far and advice on how to improve your soil for earthworms. The results received so far have already disproved some of the team's assumptions on where to find earthworms.

## MORE ABOUT EARTHWORMS

There are three types of worms:

1. Anecic earthworms are the most common earthworms in the UK. They are the largest species, often reddish brown, and they make permanent *vertical* burrows in soil. They feed on leaves on the soil surface that they drag into their burrows. They also cast on the surface, as often seen in grass. They make middens (piles of casts) around the entrance to their burrows
2. Endogeic earthworms are pale coloured - pink, grey, green or blue - and make *horizontal* burrows through the soil to move around and to feed. Some can burrow very deeply in the soil.
3. Epigeic earthworms don't make burrows but live on the surface of the soil – often in leaf litter and in compost. They rapidly consume the compost material and reproduce very quickly. They are usually bright red or reddish-brown, and the compost worm, in particular (known as brandling or tiger worms) are often stripy.

4. An average earthworm can live **4 to 8 years**, provided it is not eaten by a predator. In earthworm farming controlled conditions, up to **10-14 years**.
5. An **earthworm** breathes oxygen by absorbing it through its moist skin. It likes damp soil, but if the **rain** is very heavy, the oxygen in the water-logged soil may run **out**. Then the worm has to **come** up into the air to breathe. On top of the wet ground, the worm can breathe and wriggle along and travel above ground to a new location.



6. A giant earthworm called Dave wriggled his way into the record books. The 40cm (15.7in) annelid, weighed 26g, and was the size of a small snake and the largest earthworm found in the UK. He weighed the same as a small chocolate bar.

## **INVERLEITH CELEBRATE 100 YEARS**

It was recently discovered that Inverleith Allotments, Edinburgh, were first created in 1918. Then Superintendent of Parks, Mr John Wilson McHattie, drew up plans to put a large portion of Inverleith Park under allotment cultivation. The rent was set at ten shillings a year, which is worth about £20 today. As more facts about the site emerged we determined to publish a short history in time for our centenary.

Our founder, Mr McHattie, was a gardening visionary. He managed many gardens, including the Duke of Wellington's, before arriving in Edinburgh. He is best known for the floral clock in Princes Street Gardens, still there today. This



allotment site lasted just four years. After WW1, in 1922, it was decided to return the site to park - specifically because too little space was available 'for girls activities', particularly hockey.

The site returned to cultivation in 1940 along with other parks, as the city 'Dug for Victory'. At that time another visionary, Mr Victor Webb, worked to maintain the importance of allotments in Scotland particularly for the unemployed to grow food. Victor was an active member of SAGS. During the 1950's the attraction of allotments diminished as food became cheaper. Plots in Scotland were reduced from 70,000 to fewer than 7,000 by the year 2000. Somehow Inverleith Allotments survived albeit in a reduced size from its heyday.

A forty page booklet has just been produced in time for centenary celebrations next year. It contains much detail from the past together with more recent history from current plottolders. If you would like a copy (for a small donation) then contact me, Stuart McKenzie, at [stuart@stulu.co.uk](mailto:stuart@stulu.co.uk).

## **GRAPEVINE**

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