



Sustainability in Colwich & the Haywoods (SinCH)

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Green Fingers Newsletter 4

Autumn/Winter 2021

A new beginning?

Some would say Autumn is the end of the season, but others would argue that it is actually the beginning of the next season.

It's time to take stock of what has been done this year, what's worked and what might be done next year.

A useful guide to Wildlife Gardening through the seasons can be found [here](#).

Branchery

You may have come across "stumperies" at stately homes before. Being made from the roots of large trees these tend to be large scale features.

Locally, Jaquie has developed a novel take on this and hopefully will keep us updated on what happens.

"My plan was to create a stumpery but branches from a damaged oak tree offered themselves up. I laid a carpet of composted leaf mould and as the branches were in position I filled any spaces with more natural compost.



Initially I've planted a selection of ferns and filled up with perennials I know will grow in this area. I let in natural light by trimming back overhanging ivy and watering with rain water during dry spells. Fingers crossed for next season." Some advice from Gardener's World on this subject [here](#).

Lucy's veg plot

What a year it's been! We've learnt such a lot about growing-our-own fruit and vegetables already and have hugely appreciated all the advice and support we've had from family and SinCH friends alike.



As you can see from the photo above, we've enjoyed bumper crops of chard, courgettes, tomatoes and spring onions from the raised bed.

Our sunflower plants grew to over 7 foot tall and whilst they were eventually felled in a brief overnight storm, they were beautiful to see and loved by the bees!

I have started planning changes I'd like to make next year and the first will be that I have bought some dwarf cherry tomato seeds called 'Micro Cherry'. I will be able to grow them under cover, hopefully avoiding the dreaded tomato blight which started to attack this year's crop. Gardener's World advice on managing this disease can be found [here](#).



Having lots of unripened fruit allowed me to fire up the hob, reuse some glass jars and try out a green tomato chutney recipe [[here](#)], which I'm looking forward to gifting this Christmas.

Whilst I may not have won the family 'biggest pumpkin' competition, it was great fun and the acorn gourds seem to grow well in our garden, particularly the ones grown in our compost bin. They look fantastic and will work great, roasted and made into soup using recipes such as this one [here](#).



Eating in season

Pumpkin soup and other autumnal classics are a great way of reducing food waste, especially following Halloween. Growing-your-own and eating seasonally not only reduces your food miles and costs less, but also provides tastier and healthier food for you and your families. To see what's in season when click [here](#) and [here](#).

Simon's Wildlife Gardening

In advance of winter I have found a small area behind the shed to create a mini-wildlife shelter using bits of branches collected round and about. See [here](#) for advice on a larger project.

Here's an update on the all-year round nectar quest;

A great autumn plant is the Stonecrop (Sedum Spectabile). These bright pink flowers are very attractive to bees and other pollinators.

These are hardy plants and easy to split in the spring to make new plants [see below].



This year I also have lots of self-sown [Forget-me-nots](#) so I can split clumps of these up (it's not worth trying to move individual plants) and spread them about for an early spring source of nectar.

Autumn is the time to add some bulbs in the garden or in pots. Crocuses and Grape Hyacinths are dead easy to plant. As well as providing a great splash of colour as spring kicks in they are really popular with pollinators.

But nectar is only part of the story. As important, if not more so, are the habitats which are used for breeding and overwintering.

Looking at the plants in our garden and the "Nature Network" nearby I think we are doing well for pollinators. We have lots of wild patches around and about to help

Finally, leaving seed heads over the winter, especially on plants such as teasels, thistles and sunflowers, will help birds through the coldest months.

Allowing vegetation to die back naturally also provides food and shelter for a range of creatures.

Plants for Free

October to December is a good time to take hardwood cuttings, or evergreen plant cuttings.

Amongst the plants worth doing are deciduous shrubs such as roses or flowering currants. You can also take cuttings from honeysuckle and jasmine.

For RHS advice on how to do this see [here](#).

Plants for Nearly Free

SinCH supporters have been encouraged to bring seedlings and other plants to our monthly Plastic-Free social events at the Lamb and Flag. These can be swapped for other seedlings or food and in this way we can share our surpluses and encourage people to try something a bit different.

Alternatively, in exchange for the plants and vegetables available we ask for small donations to help build up SinCH's funds. At the recent SinCH AGM, held at The Orangery in Ingestre our Treasurer reported that these had totalled a very useful £143.91 – thank you to everyone that has contributed.

Take a look at Liz – she took some of our sunflower seedlings and here's the fantastic result!



So please consider joining in with some of next year's Green Fingers activities.

There are lots of ways you can take part including;

- Sharing your knowledge and skills with us, either at one of our events or by contributing photos or short articles to our newsletter
- Donating your surplus seedlings, plants, fruit and vegetables for others to learn from and enjoy. These can be swapped for other produce from fellow Green Fingered friends
- Join our Green Fingers organising group so that we can improve/expand our events

Your input please

Please give us feedback on the newsletter - what's been useful to you so far and what else you'd like to see.

Many thanks to Jaquie and Liz for sharing their experiences this time. If you'd like to contribute to the newsletter yourself or have a project you want to share just let us know.

Please share your thoughts, experiences and photos. If you have got a question about how to do things, or need some advice and support please get on touch

The Green Fingers Group are planning to meet soon to see how things worked in 2021 and to start thinking about what we want to do in 2022. Thank you to everyone who attended the SinCH AGM and contributed their thoughts for future plans. Amongst the ideas proposed so far are:

- Extending the plants and produce available at the Lamb and Flag events
- Linking in more closely with other local groups
- Running gardening workshops
- Tool library

If you would like to attend the meeting and join in more with the running of our Green Fingers group, please let us know.

To get in touch, please chat to us at any of our events, or contact us via info@sinch.earth

THANK YOU

We hope you've enjoyed this latest newsletter, and that it has inspired you to start planning for next year's growing season, and to consider gardening with nature more in mind.

We look forward to the spring, when we'll be back with another edition of the newsletter packed with more ideas and reflections on growing-your-own and sustainable nature friendly gardening.

Happy planning!

The SinCH Green Fingers team x