

April 2024 Meeting - Lindsay Huggins "Allotments"

Lindsay Huggins has been an allotment gardener for more than 30 years. He began his talk with a brief history of the allotment movement, which dates back to Anglo-Saxon times. During the nineteenth century, allotments were leased to the poor, and the standard area of 10 rod x 1 rod was said to be big enough to feed a family of four. 1 Rod = 5.5yards or 5.03metres, so a standard 10 rod allotment is approximately 250sq metres, or roughly the size of a doubles tennis court.

Lindsay plans his gardening year starting in October, when he draws up his planting plan for the year ahead. The next stage is the seed order, then Lindsay would normally double-dig the whole plot, removing perennial weeds like mares tail and bindweed. However, his allotment is in Framlingham, overlooked by Framlingham Castle, and in October 2023 the site was flooded, and remained waterlogged and unworkable until the middle of March 2024.

Tool selection is obviously important for the serious gardener, and Lindsay's favourites included his Wolf Weeder, good for annual weeds; his Wolf Cultivator, which brings the severed roots to the surface; a crome, which he uses to prepare seed beds and break up lumps in his clay soil, and a 4-stroke Mantis cultivator, which was a gift when he retired from teaching.

For background reading, Lindsay recommended "How to Grow Vegetables and Fruit" by Percy Thrower. However, although it is a great book, and full of good advice, Lindsay said that it is also very much of its time, and the liberal use of pesticides and herbicides would not be acceptable today. "The Vegetable Expert" by Dr D.G. Hessayon or "The Allotment Month by Month" by Alan Buckingham would also be good choices. Keeping a diary or journal is also a good idea, as it encourages the gardener to compare notes from year to year and remember what worked and what didn't!

Pests, such as muntjac deer and pigeons, can be a problem, but Lindsay has a scarecrow on his allotment which he dresses to reflect current sporting events like major football tournaments or cricket test matches.

There is no Thursday evening Horticultural Society meeting in May. Our annual Plant and Cake Sale is on Saturday, 18th May, at Ardleigh Village Hall, from 09.30am to 11.30am. This is a great opportunity to buy good quality, locally grown plants at excellent prices. Please note that the Plant and Cake Sale is cash only.

The next regular Horticultural Society meeting is on Thursday 13th June 2024, when Pip Wright will be "Exploring East Anglia by Bus Pass".

Members and visitors are welcome to attend any of our meetings. Entry is free for members, and the admission charge for visitors is just £2.00. The talks are followed by refreshments, (tea or coffee and biscuits), and there is a raffle and plants and produce for sale.

Annual membership of Ardleigh Horticultural Society is £5, which includes free admission to all the monthly meetings on the programme up to June 2024 and the Annual Flower and Produce Show on Saturday 17th August, 2024.

The monthly meetings, Plant and Cake Sale, and the Annual Flower and Produce Show are all held at Ardleigh Village Hall. Schedules for the 2024 Society's Annual Flower and Produce Show are available from Ardleigh Convenience Store and Craft Nurseries. More information is available on our website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/ardleigh-horticultural-society/>