

SUSTAINABLE WHDDON

Sustainable Whaddon is a group of interested villagers who are looking at ways we can enhance the ecology and biodiversity of our village, along with opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint. We meet every couple of months to discuss ideas, are planning a stall at the Village Fete in July and, going forwards, will write articles for the Whaddon News, starting with some thoughts on sustainable gardening and setting up a seed library.

You can get in touch with the group at sustainablewhaddon@whaddon.org

Sustainable Gardening

Sustainable gardening is a concept that has no “official” definition, but in practice it means gardening without doing any harm to our planet or its inhabitants, and preserving precious natural resources. The main principles of sustainable gardening include:

- growing suitable plants for the local conditions;
- reducing waste and avoiding chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides and inorganic fertilisers;
- minimising materials that need to be imported from the outside world, such as peat, soil and compost will make a more sustainable garden;
- In addition, growing your own food and cut flowers, collecting and growing seeds from your garden, home composting and maintaining soil fertility are all good for sustainability and can save money too.

Whaddon Seed Library

Collecting and growing seeds from garden vegetables and flowers has been practiced for many generations and is a truly sustainable way to propagate new plants. It's also fun and can occasionally result in surprising new varieties, and of course saves money compared to purchasing new seeds every season. Most “heirloom” vegetables have been propagated in this way since they were developed in the 1930's.

Two general types of seeds are available commercially, the open pollinated type and the F-1 hybrid type. Unfortunately seeds collected from F-1 hybrid plants will either be sterile or not grow back true-to-type so are not viable for propagation. Therefore, seeds should only be collected from open pollinated plants as these usually grow true-to-type and will not change dramatically over multiple generations. Although open pollinated plants may have less disease

resistance and be less consistent than F-1 plants they can still produce fantastic and sustainable vegetables and flowers for the garden.

Sustainable Whaddon would like to encourage all the keen gardeners in Whaddon to collect and donate garden vegetable and flower seeds to a seed library that would then be made available to all villagers. Anyone interested should collect seeds during the coming summer and autumn and add these to the library. Then, next spring these would then be made available to anyone interested in growing them.



Broad, runner and French climbing bean seeds

Seeds should be harvested from the plant when fully mature. Separate the seeds from the surrounding tissue or pulp and allow them to air dry on waxed paper or a wax-coated paper plate for several days. Keep out of direct sunlight but place them in a well-ventilated area with low humidity. Once dry they can be stored in a labelled paper bag or envelope.

Suitable easy vegetables include tomatoes, peppers, broad beans, runner beans, climbing and dwarf French beans, peas and squash (though squash easily cross pollinates if several varieties are grown together, as do cucumbers and melons). Slightly more challenging would be the biennials such as onions, leeks, parsnips, beetroot, carrots and the cabbage family. Alliums such as garlic, shallots and elephant garlic can readily be propagated by saving their bulbs from year to year.

Easy flowers include marigolds, sunflower, sweet pea, cyclamen, poppies, snakes head fritillaries and morning glory, but the majority of annuals and perennials are suitable. Usually only species “come true” from seed and the hybrids will give mixed results.

More details about the workings of the seed library will follow later in the year, but in the meantime, get collecting!

Jenny Grech and Chris Selway