



# Summer News

Newsletter No. 44 July 2012

[www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org](http://www.StroudCommunityAgriculture.org)

## The Rain it Raineth Every Day

There is only one topic on any gardener's or farmer's mind at the moment, and that topic is... rain. In the last newsletter, after recounting how many crops we had managed to plant in that very dry period in March, I wrote "lets hope it rains now to water them in". It hasn't stopped raining since. We have had over twice our normal rainfall in each of the last three months. The consequence of this is that we have had to rush to complete jobs in the short windows of dry weather. We have managed to keep up with the work needed, though many times jobs have been delayed.

Some crops are really not enjoying this weather, particularly those sun loving plants such as the squashes, courgettes and tomatoes. We have planted them out but they look very pale and sorry for themselves. Also the potato field is very water logged and it would be impossible to weed or harvest any at the moment.

Some of our favourite pests have been enjoying this weather though. We have plenty of all-time favourite pests to choose from, depending on the type and time of year, and at the moment it is the slug. We planted out over 2000 brussels sprout and cabbage plants in May. They have all suffered terribly from the slugs and we have lost virtually all of these plants. To add to our woes we had to cover them with a crop cover (a very large piece of very fine net material) to keep the rabbits off but unfortunately this has encouraged the slugs to remain more active. We have sown another batch of plants as replacements (very late replacements). It's too late to sow brussels so we have sown kales and broccoli. The slugs are also slowly shredding the emerging sweetcorn, and have destroyed the spring cabbage and some

of the courgettes as well. Good year for slugs – bad year for farmers.

Weeds love the rain too. It's not our hoeing that kills weeds; it's the sun that dries them out afterwards. Our efforts to hoe them can soon be undone when a series of rain showers waters the up-rooted weeds back in. So there are some areas that are looking very weedy and neglected.



On a brighter note, some crops are doing well. We have plenty of broad beans coming on, the carrots at Hawkwood are looking good, there's plenty of cavolo nero kale at both farms and the beans in the

polytunnel are beginning to mature. There is also a great display of sweet peas in the walled garden at Brookthorpe should you want to go there and pick some for yourself.

We put a new plastic cover on the middle polytunnel at Hawkwood in one of those rare patches of warm settled weather. The old plastic was vandalised some years ago and was getting very tattered and we thought that this would be a good time to replace it. We'll probably do the other damaged polytunnel later this year.

I would like to welcome Rachel to the farm. Rachel will be working with us until September before going to take up a traineeship with the National Trust. As with every year we have a great team of worksharers, and staff working on the farm, all equipped with wellies, raincoats and sun hats. We don't want the drought to return, but wouldn't mind having to use those sun hats a lot more than we are at the moment.

**Mark**

## Farm Camp – This Summer

This year will see another farm camp at Hawkwood - weekend of 8/9th September. With bring, share & cook BBQ over fire pit. Saturday 5pm stay for eve or camp overnight until Sun lunch. Sunshine guaranteed.

**Saturday Afternoon Farm Days** are held monthly, alternating between the two farms. They are a time for everyone to come together and help out with some jobs on the farm, and enjoy a social time – with cakes and tea. Everyone is welcome to come along, for as long as suits, to work, play or cheer. Look out for more events on email alerts.



Local United is a not-for-profit co-op made up of community enterprises which promote social ventures to move communities more rapidly towards a low-carbon future.

The vision of Local United is to be a new economic model based on the Co-operative historical precedent which puts a vibrant human society back in balance with the planet. Local United is founded on the belief that the collective intelligence of communities is at the heart of this process.

Local United is setting up a network of mentors to encourage the growth of CSAs, food hubs and lots of other social enterprises focused on sustainability across all sectors. To provide some match funding for this work, Local United has set up affiliation programmes with several green energy providers

Stroud Community Agriculture has signed up to offer these affiliation programmes through Local United so that if you switch to one of these suppliers we will receive money for our community.

These ethical energy suppliers don't have lots of confusing tariffs with short term deals, but instead offer competitive long term rates with clear pricing structures. This means that once you

have switched you won't need to worry about coming to the end of a cheap deal and ending up on a really expensive tariff. You can relax and know that you are already on a consistently competitive rate.

Switching is simple, all you will need to do is follow the simple steps on the Local United website. Every year you stay signed up with the supplier they will pay £20 or £30 (depending on which provider you choose) to SCA, and you don't need to pay extra for that, it isn't added on to your bill. It is just a payment that the ethical companies make to us because we have asked you to switch.

If this offer is just the incentive you have been looking for to switch to an ethical energy supplier or just a great opportunity for you to help Stroud Community Agriculture then please visit the Local United Website - <http://www.localunited.net/community/switching>.

For everyone who signs up to change to a green energy provider, SCA will receive £20 or £30 (depending on which provider you choose) per year whilst you remain with that provider. Please pass this on to anyone else who you think might be interested in switching – and remind them to select SCA from the list of community groups!

**Nick**



**Memory Trees** Sue Dance plants a Stella Cherry Tree in home field at Hawkwood in memory of her mother Florrie Stevens (4 November 1921 - 5 March 2012). She writes: I have also grafted an apple tree in memory of my dad Harry Stevens (13 October 1923 - 25 November 2007), and donated a Vranja Quince which is in the orchard at Brookthorpe. All the trees were from Dave Kaspar at Days Orchard. I think it is great that we can celebrate our families in this way. We can visit the special trees whilst collecting veg or participating on the farm.

### Sam and the Animals

Water, water everywhere. It has been so wet over the last two months I can hardly remember three days in a row when it did not rain. The hay fields are ready to cut but with no sign of a let up in the rain it has to wait. Silage only takes three days of good weather to make whereas hay takes more like five. For this reason we will most likely make silage instead of hay as the longer we leave it now the more the quality of the grass goes down. We have made some silage earlier in the year which yielded well but is not enough. Unfortunately if we end up making silage there won't be the usual hay harvest as it's an all tractor affair bringing in the silage bales. I know this is an enjoyable job for a lot of you but we must do what is right for the cows and the land.

The cows at Brookthorpe have been given access to the barn and silage as they are making a mess of the fields. Since opening the gate they have stayed in the barn voluntarily for 4 days! This is unusual as they don't normally mind a bit of rain but it has become too much for even them to bear.

The pigs have also come in because they have turned their paddock into a mud bath. Even though pigs need mud in hot weather it is of little interest to them in the wet. Also there is little vegetation left for them to eat. Our sow Ezmie is hosting Horace a boar from the neighbour. He will be with us for six weeks in the barn at Brookthorpe. He is a Gloucester Old Spot too.

Our other sow Dora has sadly gone off to the butchers. She had had only two piglets in her last litter and became very protective to the point of being quite dangerous. It is never easy to make a decision to send off an animal, especially a mother animal from the farm, but sometimes it is necessary. The risk of her getting out and injuring someone was too high. We will be rearing on one of her daughters to replace her and be company for Ezmie. We need a name for her, any suggestions are welcome.



The sheep are well. We had 11 lambs from 6 ewes, which is good. There are 6 ewe lambs which will join the flock and make it a nice size for our farm. They are currently at Brookthorpe but will come up to Hawkwood soon.

As you might know there has been talk about goats coming to the farm. This process of finding out if the farm can support them is still ongoing. We will let you know as soon as a decision has been made.

Thanks to all of you who made it to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary barn dance. It went really well with everyone enjoying themselves. Hopefully we can build on it and make it even better for next year.

I wish you all have a warm sunny summer. See you on the farm,

**Sam**



## Stroud Community Agriculture

**Everyone is welcome to join in and enjoy the farm, including non-members.**

We are looking for new members for the farm. Please tell everyone you know about us. If you know of an event or somewhere that you think would be good for us to promote the farm, please let the core group know. We work to the following principles:

- *To support organic and biodynamic agriculture.*
- *To pioneer a new economic model based on mutual benefit and shared risk and ensure that the farmers have a decent livelihood.*
- *To be fully inclusive. Low income shall not exclude anyone.*
- *To be transparent in all our affairs. To make decisions on the basis of consensus wherever possible. To strive towards social justice.*
- *To encourage practical involvement on all levels.*
- *To offer opportunities for learning, therapy and re-connecting with the life of the earth.*
- *To network with others to promote community supported agriculture to other communities and farms and share our learning (both economic and farming).*
- *To encourage Stroud Community Agriculture members, in co-operation with the farmers, to use the farm for their individual and social activities and celebrations.*
- *To develop a non-exclusive sense of community around the farm.*

### Core Group

The core group meets one evening a month. For dates, venues & times, contact Sue Dance.

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*Photos by Ute & Francis*

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