

row. If you need some tips on planting, or need help with your plant selection, do please ask any member of the Plants Team for advice.

**GROW YOUR OWN** Time to plan your crop rotation, or decide what changes need to be made for the 2013 fruit and veg season in the garden or allotment. Refer to any notes you made through the season. No doubt we are all hoping for a better growing season, so it's a good time to review the varieties you sow and maybe investigate improved types by doing some catalogue research through the dark nights. Keep picking the winter greens. Support Brussels sprouts and protect winter cabbage. Protect all delicate stone fruits such as peaches and nectarines with fleece.



**BUY** your fresh Christmas tree in good time – if choosing a cut tree make sure that it looks nice and green – give it a shake and avoid any that lose a lot of needles. There are many different types of tree available, however, this year we are stocking the low-drop Nordman Fir and Noble Fir trees. Whatever you choose cut an inch off the base of the trunk and stand your cut tree outside in a deep bucket of water for at least 24 hours before bringing it into the house. Try and find a cool spot in the house for the tree (avoid radiators!) and make sure it sits in a reservoir of water which is topped up regularly – treat the tree like a cut flower! Christmas trees are now in stock at the Garden Centre.

**MAPLES** can be moved now for winter protection with Japanese maples going into larger pots - if required - as they have gone into dormancy. Make sure there is sufficient drainage in the base of the pots. Work additional grit with your lime-free compost to help drainage. Wait until the late spring before you do any light pruning as acer die-back of stems tends to be more common through the period of dormancy. Move Japanese Acer trees to a sheltered spot and protect them from cold winds.



**CLEAN-UP** cold frames, cloches and greenhouses as a matter of routine. Clean and disinfect glass, metal and wood work, getting into all the nooks and crevices where pests and disease are likely to harbour. If you need to fumigate, then go for either Deadfast Greenhouse Smoke Generator (contains Permethrin 3.5g, £5.99) or Deadfast Greenhouse Sulphur Candle (300g, £5.99), a greenhouse disinfectant. Always follow the instructions in the packaging before use.

## Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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**WINTER OPENING HOURS:** Mon.-Sat: 8:30am-5.30pm, Sun: 10am-4pm  
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## NEWSLETTER

LATE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

### Fruitful gains at our Apple and Bee event

We hope you enjoyed our Apple Weekend back in early October. We certainly had fun staging it and judging by your kind comments, the weather nor the season didn't dampen spirits. We staged over 50 apples and crabs apple varieties, our apple identification wizard John Edgeley was kept busy helping identify countless fruits in various shapes, sizes and colours; and nurseryman Fritz de Zutter chatted to many of you on growing fruit, especially giving advice on selecting the best rootstock for your particular locations.



From the outset this year we wanted to bring to the attention of gardeners the plight of the bee and to highlight their vital role in all successful fruit growing, namely pollination. As many of you

know we installed two hives at the Garden Centre back in May and they have exceeded our wildest expectation in their establishment and honey production. Over the weekend we spoke to many of you and on the Saturday our beekeeper, Farokh, kindly brought along a bee observation chamber to enable visitors (and the children loved this!) to get up close to the bee colony, including spotting the queen bee.



Our special thanks also goes out to our local horticultural group, Tingewick & Water Stratford Horticultural Society, who provided tasty treats for sampling, by our customers, including apple chutney. They also gave away copies of the recipes to those who wished to make their own, having tasted the samples. Keen collector Tony Thurlby from Tingewick brought along a fantastic range of vintage old tools and hand lawn mowers, to continue the self-sufficiency theme. Apple expert Marcus Roberts discussed aspects of selecting, planting and establishing Heritage apple varieties and shared his wealth of experience in setting up community orchards.

Our raffle raised over £200 for our chosen charity, Air Ambulance Berks, Oxon & Bucks. All winners have been notified.

Finally, a big thank you to YOU for joining us in this special celebration... and it was great to see so many familiar faces and a fair few new ones as well.

So, don't forget to make a note in your diary for our Potato Weekend, on Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th February, 10am-4pm on both days. This event is always a firm favourite as we celebrate the humble potato and kick-start the new grow-your-own season.



## A £5 reason to recycle your Christmas tree with us in 2013

Buy your cut real Christmas tree from us and return it for recycling in January 2013 and we'll give you a voucher worth £5\* off your next £25 or more shop with us through January 2013! Simply collect your coupon when you purchase a Noble or Nordman Fir tree, keep it safe and return it back with your tree after Christmas. Conditions apply; see coupon for full details. \*The £5 Gift Voucher can be redeemed throughout January 2013.



## Step into Christmas

Please do check out our Christmas display which features the best in themed displays, including Woodland (wood, white, champagne and lime green); Emerald Green & Gold; Red & Silver and Pink, Purple & Blue. Freshly cut Noble and Nordman firs together with potted trees will be displayed under the Seasonal Canopy together with wreaths, cut conifer and mistletoe as we lead up to the big day. To complete the yuletide theme we have artificial trees, lights (indoor and outdoor), tinsel, baubles and much more. If you are looking for festive gift ideas then we have plenty of inspirational ideas for the home, for friends, or to spoil yourself, including toiletries, homeware and the perennial favourite - Yankee Candles.

Chatting to the Shop Manager, Rachel De Cann, many Christmas products are already selling well, so as always, don't delay purchasing as the popular lines always tend to sell out first.

Our cyclamen and poinsettias are locally grown (less than 20 miles from the Garden Centre) this season, so we are helping reduce our carbon footprint as well as supporting a local grower and business. We'll have a good range of colours and sizes, plus, don't forget, we can beautifully gift-wrap your individual plants (pictured, poinsettia) and planted arrangements as well. For full details, pop along to our Customer Service Desk.



Please make a note in your diary - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December (between 9am-5:30pm) come along and support Marie Curie. Local members of the Cancer Care



Charity, in seasonal attire, will be serving mulled wine (fruit juice will also be available) and mince pies throughout the day to our customers as they hopefully collect donations for the charity.

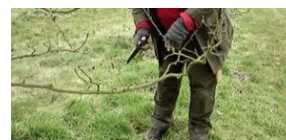
pots cracking in the cold frosty weather. Do stand pots on feet to help drainage throughout the winter, especially pots containing more tender plants. Have in place fleece jackets to quickly wrap around tender plants such as cordylines, palms (pictured), bay and olive trees.



**VEG PLOTS** This is your last chance to prepare your soil before winter sets in. Once the soil becomes very wet or frozen then you will have to wait until mid-spring before you can dig it without damaging the soil structure. However, you can lay some polythene or landscape fabric temporarily over the soil to help keep further moisture off the soil. Clear the weeds and old crops and add organic matter to the soil as you dig. If you produce a fine tilth, you need to cover it to protect it from winter rain, which will otherwise damage the soil structure. You can use a good layer of compost, leaf mould, sow a green manure or even use plastic sheeting. The soil will then be easy to plant or sow into the following spring.



**HAPPY HOUSEPLANTS** Don't overwater your indoor plants! Many plants are killed by overwatering through the winter months, so aim to keep them on the drier side, especially foliage houseplants. However, the likes of azaleas need to be kept moist at all time (but **not** sitting in water) to flower well. Ensure all your plants receive as much natural daylight as possible. However avoid moving plants too regularly as this can cause stress and leaf drop. Generally speaking, once a new plant is established in its new location, apart from turning it to help encourage balanced growth, it's best not moved. Popular Christmas plants such as poinsettias, moth orchids and planted bowl arrangements need warmth and to be located well away from cold draughts.

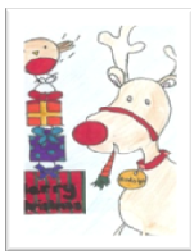


**ROUTINE** Take hardwood cuttings from buddleja, cornus, deutzia, forsythia, roses and viburnum. Plant root wrapped roses, including ramblers and climbers as well as bush roses, in well-prepared soil. Roses are greedy plants and you do need to add compost (home-produced or planting compost), well-rotted manure as well as bonemeal into the planting hole to give them the best possible start. Don't skimp, you'll regret if you do as roses are ultra-responsive and give generously if pampered. Rootgrowth should also be on your shopping list, especially if you are planting in soil where roses have been there before.

**BARE-ROOT** season is well and truly here and there's plenty of opportunities to establish hedging, fruit trees, ornamental trees and soft fruit over the next few months. Planning is essential, if you purchase your plants early, they can be easily heeled in (in a temporary trench) so you are ready to get the plants into their final planting positions when the soil and the weather is favourable. Deep trenches are not essential - a good spade's depth and 2 or 3 spades width is the ideal for hedge lines working in some planting compost or well-rooted manure into the soil as you plant. You need to boost the roots, essential for good establishment, so work in some bonemeal as you dig the



Likewise, if you are in a situation where you are were planning to establish some ash trees, we would recommend to go for the likes of Oak, Birch, Sorbus, Hornbeam and Beech.



### Well done Alice!

During the autumn the Horticultural Trades Association ran a nationwide competition to design a Christmas Card. We actively promoted this competition and thousands of children entered nationwide. However, Alice Daniel, aged 11, from Bicester designed, drew and handed in this fantastic design into us to enter. The great news is that Alice's entry was selected the best in the Midlands section, collecting a well-deserved £50 National Garden Gift Voucher.

## 10 tasks for late November/December

**WILDLIFE** Help the wildlife in your garden survive the cold, wintry weather by: Ensuring the birds have a good source of bird food. Replenish bird feeders, or hang one if you have not done so in previous seasons. All feeds, including peanuts, are safe, as the breeding season is now over.



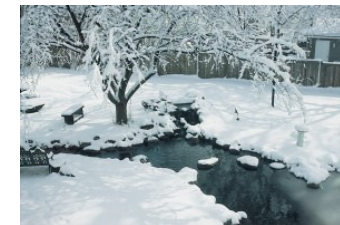
Clean out bird baths. Do ensure you provide clean water for wildlife to drink. If you find the water is frozen in bird baths, just carefully break the ice and top up with fresh water. However, you may need to repeat daily if temperatures remain below freezing. Don't be a tidy gardener! Leave some seed heads and berries standing on plants, rather than cutting them back, to provide food and shelter for wildlife. Make a small stack of logs to provide useful shelter for insects and amphibians over the cold winter months and make a leaf pile for hibernating animals and ground-feeding birds overwintering. Clean out nesting boxes so that birds can shelter inside them during the winter. It is now recommended that wild birds are fed throughout the year, but as the weather gets colder and natural food becomes scarcer they become more reliant on artificial feeding. An excellent feed for this time of year is Peckish Winter Warmer. This is a good quality seed mix with a high fat content for extra energy.

It does not contain wheat, which is not very attractive to small birds, and it is enriched with natural Calvita. This contains essential nutrients including carotenoids, calcium and vitamins A, D, E and Biotin for healthy growth. Details are given on the packs. It is good to see the birds feeding, but not so good to see the speed at which they go through the food. The large packs of mealworm have traditionally been 800 gram plastic tubs and the large packs of suet balls have been plastic tubs of 50. These are very convenient and are still available, but as cheaper and more environmentally friendly alternatives we offer 1.2 kilogram resealable pouches of mealworm and cardboard cartons of 150 suet balls. You can now feed the birds generously and still leave some money in the bank!

**TIDY-UP** Collect the rest of the leaves that have fallen from the trees for composting as leaf mould. Do some early wrapping by covering any large outside containers with bubble wrap, fleece or hessian, to help prevent the

## Preparing Your Pond for Winter

With autumn slipping into winter the pond enters a state of suspended animation as the water cools and the metabolism of fish and plant life slows right down, writes Danielle Homewood. At this time of year, a few last jobs remain to be done to prepare the pond for the colder months ahead and to ensure that its inhabitants will over-winter successfully and have the best possible chance of a good start when things warm up again next spring.



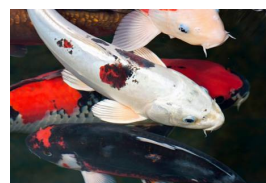
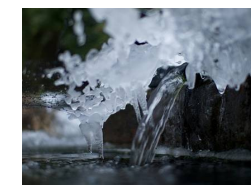
### Plant protection

Now is a good time for a final clean up, to remove any leaves which may have found their way under the net cover, or any dead plant foliage which was missed during autumn pruning. Leaving excess organic matter in the pond over the winter can harm the water quality, which is why some pond-keepers recommend using this opportunity to do a partial water change and remove some of the sludge from the base of the pond. This material is made up of a mixture of decaying plant matter, fish waste and other material which has sunk to the bottom and its gradual decomposition will add significant quantities of nitrates to the water, over time.

By the onset of winter, any frost-sensitive pond and bog plants should already have been protected or removed as appropriate and hardy water lilies lowered into the deeper reaches of the pond, the non-hardy varieties being covered and stored somewhere cool, but frost-free. It is also the time to transplant lilies, if desired – cutting off the leaves and stalks to leave the buds and shortening the rhizomes by around a third.

### Fish considerations

Having been winding down the feeding of fish and moving to a low protein diet as autumn progressed, once the water temperature reaches 10–12 degrees C, a good quality wheatgerm-based food – available in stick or pellet form – should be used until winter finally grips. At around 7 degrees C, fish naturally stop eating and drift into a state of semi-hibernation. At this time, the fish tend to retreat to the deeper portions of the pond, where during winter, the water is warmer – and the deeper the pond, the more noticeable is this temperature effect. To avoid disturbing the warm layer that they are languishing in, it is a good idea to take steps to reduce the pond re-circulation which will tend to mix in colder surface water. Some pond-keepers choose to switch off their pumps, often removing them for routine maintenance, while others favour decreasing their flow rate and relocating them away from the deeper reaches.



In the same way as the fish slow down for winter, at around 10 degrees C and below, the biological activity in the filter is also much reduced – so switching off the pump is not quite so drastic a step as it might seem.

However, before doing so, it is as well to check the manufacturer's instructions, since some kinds of pumps must be removed and re-greased if they are not to be run for any length of time. With no real need of filtration throughout the winter, this is an ideal chance to disconnect and drain the bio-filter, strip it down and clean it thoroughly, storing it – along with the pond's UV clarifier – in a safe, dry place until it is needed again.

In bad winters, ponds in some areas may be prone to be iced over for prolonged periods. This is not ideal for any fish they contain, since an enveloping cover of ice stops the natural exchange of gases at the surface, trapping carbon dioxide and other gases in, while keeping oxygen out. There are various solutions, from small electric heaters to floating something on the surface, the idea being that its gentle movement breaks up the ice as it forms, stopping a complete layer forming. Opinions vary as to whether a bobbing football really works – but the plastic ducks some pond-keepers use certainly make the pond look cheery!

A final point to consider is adding a net over the pond if it does not already have one – at this time of year to keep out cats or herons rather than leaves. In their semi-torpor and made more conspicuous by the lack of vegetation in the pond, fish make easy targets for passing predators, so it can sometimes be a good idea to give them a bit of added protection. Winter in the pond is something of a dead time, when plants, fish and other creatures have done their growing and breeding for one year and now must simply survive the cold to start all over again in the next. While this enforced dormancy may offer little spectacle to captivate the water-gardener, it is never-the-less an essential part of the cycle and with a little bit of care and attention as the days draw in, we can be sure that the pond and its inhabitants are up to the challenge.

### A jolly good read....

Our 2012/2013 Catalogue came out a little later than usual this year as we did a major re-vamp of its appearance, and we hope you think it is an improvement. With a lot more colour illustrations we hope it will make the choice of plants, especially roses, much easier.



The new introductions we think it worth mentioning here are firstly the plum 'Jubilee'. This is an improvement on 'Victoria', an already superb and well tested variety. 'Jubilee' (pictured) produces high yields of plums which are larger than 'Victoria', of uniform size, with a good sweet flavour and they are very succulent. The flesh is yellow and the skin an attractive red. It is a perfect dessert plum, but also cooks well. On top of this it is very hardy and has excellent disease resistance.

Another fruit – blueberries. We have introduced the variety 'Blue Pearl' as this would be ideal for those wanting to grow the berries but have an alkaline soil and need to grow them in containers. Grown with 'Sunshine Blue' as a pollinator, both these varieties would be great in pots as they only grow 2-3ft (60-90cm) in height. Both are semi-evergreen and 'Sunshine Blue' also has the advantage of excellent autumn colouring.



This charity is a centre of excellence for the education of pre-school children with autistic spectrum disorder and other communication difficulties, and makes a huge contribution to the lives of the children and their families. The production costs have been fully funded, so **every penny** raised from its sales will go directly to The Puzzle Centre.

The book contains some 200 simple but delicious recipes which have been contributed by cooks from all over the UK, and is divided into starters, main courses, fish, vegetables and salads, and finally puddings. It costs £10, and would make an ideal Christmas present. Copies of the book are available from our book department, or from Louise Sellers at lsellers@learhouse.com or call 07778 542592.

### What should I do if I think my ash trees have the dieback disease?

We have put together some useful contact details, websites and a smart phone app to help you understand the plant disease. Do please ask at the Plant Info Office if you need any further information and have further questions to ask.

**Be vigilant** Chalara dieback could appear in ash trees anywhere in Britain, especially where young trees imported from continental Europe have been planted. Early action is essential if we are to eradicate this disease from Britain before it becomes established. The Forestry Commission urges you to inspect frequently any ash trees in your care, and especially any which have been planted during the past five or so years.

**Report it** to one of the following Forestry Commission and FERA addresses if you suspect you have found infected trees:

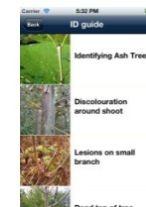
Forest Research Tree Health Diagnostic and Advisory Service T: 01420 23000  
Forestry Commission Plant Health Service, T: 0131 314 6414  
FERA Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate, T: 01904 465625

The Forestry Commission is the best website to access for further information, pictures of symptoms etc., including a short video about symptoms and life cycle of the *Chalara* fungus. It can be found at: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara>

The BBC website also has a useful link on their site to help understand the issues raised about the disease. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-20171524>

One of the easiest ways of identifying and reporting the ash dieback disease is to download the AshTag app. You can get hold of the free AshTag app for smart phones at the App Store for the iPhone and the Android App from Google Play.

Finally, if you were planning to establish some ash for wood production and burning this season, we would suggest some alternative trees that produce good heat, such as beech, hornbeam, quickthorn and blackthorn.



- 3) It is also important to protect the comb and wattles from frost bite as this, if severe enough, can lead to the loss of the comb's fingers and the bottom of the wattles. It is also very painful so the best way to help prevent this is to use a 'Winter comb and wattle protector' (pictured) or petroleum jelly as this helps to keep the wattles and comb moisturised. The tell-tale signs of frost bite is a darkening of the wattles and comb but if the area turns black it may already be too late as the blood supply has been lost.



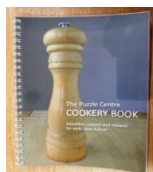
- 4) Keeping drafts out of the chicken coop is essential too but you do not want to cut off good air flow into the coop as this help stop many pests and diseases. Keeping the door to the roosting area shut at night on nights that are only just below freezing is normally adequate but when the forecast is for very low temperatures your chickens may need a little more insulation. This can be done by using an old duvet or such like and wrapping it around the coop but again you do still need to be mindful of ventilation.
- 5) Please do not be tempted to place a heater inside the coop as this causes a fire risk, and also the sudden change in temperature when the bird go outside in the morning can cause a sudden death by shocking them.
- 6) Your chicken coop will also need to be kept clean although it may be tempting to leave the chore of mucking out for an extra day or two when the weather is horrid. The birds will be spending more time in their coop than over the summer as the day length is shorter. You can help keep them warm by adding some extra bedding to the coop as well. There is also another important consideration to make, when the weather is very wet, if your chicken run is on grass it can become very muddy so if possible you should move the run to a fresh patch as and when practical. However, if you cannot do this you can put a layer of straw down in the area which can be taken out and replaced when necessary.
- 7) When it comes to feeding your chickens over the winter they will tend to eat slightly more when the weather is cold. They do need constant access to feed but it will need to be kept as dry as possible to prevent it from becoming wet and mouldy. It is also a good idea to give your chickens a little extra corn an hour or two before dark as corn provides useful slow release energy and as this will help the chickens keep warm from the inside.



Do not despair if you find you get fewer eggs through the winter, this is quite natural. Spring isn't too far away and your girls will have had time to rest up over the winter and be ready for egg production as soon as the longer and warmer days arrive.

### The Puzzle Centre Cookery Book

We are delighted to be supporting and selling a new book, The Puzzle Centre Cookery Book. This Cookery Book has been produced by a group of local fundraisers to provide much needed revenue for The Puzzle Centre, based in Middle Claydon, near Buckingham.



Whilst writing about fruit, don't forget that if you have room for three or more fruit trees, apples or pears, it is worth buying them all at the same time as the price comes down from £14.95 each to only £13.45 each, a saving of £1.50 a tree.

The range of root-wrapped roses, now available, has changed since last year with some of the old favourites retained but many other varieties added. These plants really are excellent value even if purchased singly, but if you need a few roses take advantage of the offer of buying six roses for the price of five, that is six for £34.95.

If you are wanting an ornamental tree we have added the 'Red Obelisk' Crab Apple, which due to its small size and narrow habit is ideal for small gardens where most crab apples would be too large. It has very attractive pink blossom which fades to white then the tree will be laden with bunches of bright red conical shaped crab apples, which, if you don't mind picking them, are excellent for crab apple jelly. Another reasonably small tree is Sorbus 'Olympic Flame' which would be a great tree to plant to commemorate this year. It will have large bunches of creamy-white flowers in spring followed by red berries in the autumn which will add to its beauty as the leaves turn brilliant orange and red. And finally in this section is the Snow Pear.



This tree takes its common name from its silver-green leaves with white undersides, which emerge in spring as white then turn dark red in autumn. These contrast well against the very dark, nearly black bark on mature trees. It also has velvety snow-white flowers in spring followed by small, mildly sour but edible pears.

The ornamental shrub section has been increased considerably but only a few are listed in the catalogue as the availability of many varieties varies throughout the year. If you visit our web-site all those available at any one time will be listed, but if you do not have access to the internet, just give us a ring and we can post you details.

It does not seem possible that the 'bare-root' season is on us as one feels we are still awaiting summer. However, having had some frost already the leaves are starting to fall from the trees, so plants are going dormant and can be lifted from their growing positions in the fields, and they will be ready for sale. As usual our advice is for you to get preparation work done now whilst the ground is relatively warm and is not too wet. If you are not sure what you should be doing just give us a ring on 01280 822133, or e-mail on [enquiries@buckingham-nurseries.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@buckingham-nurseries.co.uk) and we will give you all the advice you need.

For those using Rootgrow, an excellent product, there is now a new size, 1kg which sells at £24.99 but this is not listed in the catalogue but is on the website.



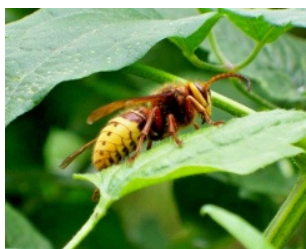


Also Plantworks, the manufacturer of Rootgrow have introduced a new fertiliser called Empathy After Plant, which is ideal to use after planting with Rootgrow, or just as a general fertiliser. It is organic and contains plant derived nitrogen for top growth, seaweed meal and green compost as a plant derived source of potassium for flowering and fruiting. The humates offer a source of organic acids which are essential for fertile soils, and the mycorrhizal fungi, which are also in it, produce a sticky protein which improves the soil structure and helps bind the nutrients in the soil. We would thoroughly recommend this as an excellent fully organic produce to use, and at £9.99 for 1kg., this will treat 10m<sup>2</sup>.

## Bees and wasps

As our regular readers will know our new hives of bees have thrived this year, even though many local bee-keepers have had problems with their hives. We extracted 25 jars of wonderful honey from the frames from one hive, but none from the other which was not so active. Recently we prepared the hives for winter, making sure the bees are healthy and will have enough food to sustain them. In the spring we will put back the frames with the remaining honey which was not spun from them and this will not only give the bees a good source of food, but also the cones are already there so they will be able to start filling them as soon as enough pollen is available.

This year we have not been troubled by so many wasp nests as usual. Wasps are, of course, excellent creatures to have around in spring and early summer as they eat vast quantities of aphids, but as they increase in number during the year they have to be contained, firstly because they not only eat aphids but attack fruit, boring holes so the fruit is damaged and will not store. Also they have a nasty habit of stinging people, sometimes for no apparent reason.



We also nearly always have visits in the Plant Information Office from hornets, *Vespa crabro* (pictured), which we all have kept well clear of as they look rather like large, fierce wasps. However, apparently this reputation is undeserved as they are generally docile and less likely to sting than wasps. You must stay clear of their nest as if you do get too close they will feel threatened and will then attack.

If you find you have a nest in the garden, just keep well clear. Hornets are temporary residents and will only use the nest for a single season as the colony will die and only the newly mated queen will survive, having hibernated for the winter.

The hornet is an insect to be welcomed in the garden as they not only feast on crop pests but they are also important pollinators. So next year be pleased if you have a hornet's nest nearby!

## A book of tasty secrets

Now is the time when you should be lifting dahlia tubers to store them for the winter and replanting next year. We hear from many of our customers that they do not do this as they always lose them – they rot off, dry out, get eaten by vermin or many other disasters. However, in James Wong's new and fascinating book, *James Wong's Homegrown Revolution*, he advocates eating the tubers, known as jams! Dahlias were originally brought to our shores as they were considered to be a prized edible crop, and he points out that runner beans with their decorative red flowers and ability to cover quite an area in one season, were introduced as an ornamental crop and they were not eaten. Apparently the jams can be roasted like parsnips, also they are great made into rösti, or can be made into a delicious winter warming soup. I haven't tried this yet, and unfortunately I have not grown any dahlias this year, so will have to wait until next autumn, but if any of our readers give it a go, please let us know the results.

We would thoroughly recommend the book, James Wong's 'Homegrown Revolution', which is on sale in our book department, priced £20.



## Winter care for your chickens

Here are a few hints and tips on caring for your chickens during the winter months. Although chickens in general are relatively hardy over the winter and cope well with the cold there are a few things that can be done to help them through those cold dark months, writes Kate Williams.

- 1) Chickens will still drink a lot over the colder months so access to clean fresh drinking water is essential. There are no water additives that will prevent the water freezing, that are safe for water that is going to be consumed, but there are a few things that can help you.
- 2) The best way to prevent the water freezing overnight is to take the water inside, chickens don't drink a lot of anything while they are roosting so they won't miss it and in the morning you can put the water out without having to waste time defrosting it. You will, however, have to check their water at least twice a day if the day time temperature does not rise above freezing. There are, however, some tricks that can help prevent water freezing but these are not infallible. Some people with easy access to electricity place a water heater in to the drinker as this works well but is not always possible so other alternatives are to place a cork or small floating non-toxic object in the base of the drinker so the chickens have a way to keep the ice broken.

Alternatively you can try wrapping the outside of the drinker with several layers of bubble wrap, as although this will not stop the base from freezing, it will help stop the drinker from freezing fully.