

## MEETING REPORT - **Fertilising and Conditioning Your Soil.**

Sadly, our advertised speaker, Guy Deakins, had suffered an accident so we were grateful to Peter Dale who stepped in at the very last minute with a detailed talk on how to get the best out of raised beds for fruit and vegetables on a five year rotation.

Apart from Blueberries, all fixed beds need at soil pH of 6 to 7. If you are growing blueberries they need ammonium sulphate and a twice yearly mulch of pine needles or bark. For other fruit, blood fish and bone is needed in early Spring with a mulch of well-rotted organic matter.

6 weeks before flowering apply potash, and all fixed beds should be in the sun.

Rotation prevents diseases and checks pests and breaks the life cycle of pathogens.

Your beds should be divided into exclusively Potatoes, Legumes, Brassicas, sweetcorn and cucurbits (squashes etc), and onions. Potatoes thrive best with a pH of 5 -6.

You should know the soil pH of each bed or section of your garden, and pH levels need altering to suit your crop. If it is too alkaline, add organic matter, animal or plant waste to promote microbes. If too acid, add bases such as lime and magnesium and calcium.

Crops will deplete nutrients so these must be replaced. 6X chicken manure pellets have high levels of nitrogen, but lower levels are better utilized by plants. You can dissolve chicken pellets in water to make a drench or liquid feed. Horse manure can be added to compost bins but must be left for at least a year before use.

Growmore has a pH of 7-8 and is best suited to peas and beans and should never be used on ericaceous plants. Good old Epsom salts can be used effectively to replace calcium and magnesium, while blood, fish and bone is a good general purpose food. Bonemeal is great for root crops, bulb flowers, corms and tubers. Peter's take-home message was test, adjust and feed.

Peter runs the Amersham Allotments Association garden shop, next door to Amersham Cricket club in Woodside Road. You can join for £2 a year to use the shop only, which has discounts through bulk buying. It is open Sat/Sun 10-11am from Good Friday onwards. A very useful piece of information! ( Please ensure you close the gate after you.)