

Cumbria Organic Gardeners and Farmers



Keeping in Touch – October 2025



Erinaceus europaeus – the European hedgehog

From the Editor

Do come along to the AGM in November. The focus of the speaker this year is hedgehogs. See some information on this singular creature from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society on page 4, to whet your appetite for the talk.

At the back of KIT you will see a poster from Frankie Kennett, co-ordinator for Cumbria Master Composters, reminding us all what we should do with any pumpkins we use for Hallowe'en.

And, if you're wondering what to do with all those leeks you have growing, try the recipe on page 6, a dish designed by my son.

Letter from Garden Organic

Dear Garden Organic volunteers,

You may have seen in our latest e-newsletter, that we are part of a campaign led by the Butterfly Conservation Trust, asking UK retailers to end the sale of synthetic pesticides for unlicensed use.

The Big Butterfly Count has taken place for 15 years, and in that time more than twice as many widespread species have declined significantly than have increased. Despite this year's excellent weather for butterflies, only average numbers were recorded. This is why we are calling on supermarkets and garden centres to end the sale of synthetic pesticides, which harm butterflies.

Please sign the open letter, and share with others: <https://butterflyemergency.good.do/rescue-mission/stop-the-sale-pesticides/>

You can find out more about the dangers of pesticides, and alternative to garden pesticides, on our website: <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/expert-advice/pesticides>

Thank you from the team at Garden Organic.

Patrick Halling
Project Coordinator
linktr.ee/gardenorganic

Also from Garden Organic

To mark the [Heritage Seed Library's](#) (HSL) half century of seed saving, we're launching a unique 'seed relay', in October, which will see precious heritage vegetable seeds shared, sown and saved across the country.

The relay will have three parts: in England in 2025, Scotland and Wales in 2026, and a special celebration will take place in Ireland. The first leg of the Seed Relay will start from Bocking, Essex, where the seed of the HSL was first sown, and where Garden Organic founder [Lawrence D Hills](#) began his groundbreaking organic gardening and conservation work.

During the giant 50th birthday 'pass-the-parcel' event, the precious heritage seeds will travel more than 200 miles to be shared among key individuals, organisations and communities across England, before finishing at Garden Organic.

At each stop-off point, supporting 'seed champions' will take a packet of seed from the golden anniversary parcel to grow (and eventually harvest and save), and pass the rest of the seeds onto the next destination.

Check the Garden Organic website for details of this relay; I am told you can get involved even if you are not a HSL member. <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/search?q=seed+relay>

The group of COGF members who visited Ryton in August saw the good work that was being done there at the seed library. Members of the Heritage Seed Library can request six varieties of seed completely free every year. Membership costs £21.

Here are of the benefits of growing Heritage Seed Library seed:

- support the conservation of rare vegetable varieties for future generations;
- get your hands on exclusive veg varieties not available anywhere else;
- increase biodiversity in your garden;
- save your own seeds from one generation to the next;
- help to maintain genetic diversity within vegetable crops, which may be useful to the plant breeders of the future.

For more information: <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/hsl>

Reports

COGF at Apple Day, Hutton in the Forest 28th October

There was a group of four of us on a good sunny day promoting the organic way of producing food, giving out leaflets and membership forms. The visitors to the stand were needing advice, especially on garlic. Free apples went down well.

There was a lot of interest about COGF, especially from younger people, so I think the organic message is becoming the mainstream one at long last. Thank you to all who helped on the day.



Editor's note: It's always good to see some lovely organic produce for sale. I heard positive comments about the tremendous garlic on display. Also good is that there were four organic stalls together offering meat, cheese/dairy products, fruit and vegetables – and good advice!

British Hedgehog Preservation Society

Hedgehogs in farms/gardens

Hazards:

Garden ponds can be death traps to small mammals. Always ensure that there are several gently sloping slipways around the edge of the water to allow animals to escape if they fall in.

Cattle grids can also make for difficulties, as small animals including hedgehogs cannot escape from the sheer-sided pits beneath. The result could be a horrible and long drawn out death by dehydration and/or starvation. A small ramp or slope in one corner of the pit enables the trapped animals to walk out.

Ramps (150 – 200 mm wide) can be made of concrete, wood or metal, should not have a smooth surface and should have a slope not exceeding 1:2. The pit should be adequately drained. If it is impossible for an animal to gain access to the whole of the pit i.e. if it is sectionalised, more ramps would be required.

For further details refer to British Standards Institution (2006)
BS 4008:2006 Specification for cattle grids. London: BSI.

Caring for Autumn Juveniles:

Hedgehogs sometimes give birth to their hoglets late in the year. Such youngsters may not have enough time to build up sufficient fat reserves to enable them to survive hibernation. The absolute minimum weight to see them through the winter is 450gms (1lb) and any hedgehog below this weight is likely to have problems if it tries to hibernate.

Autumn juveniles, (i.e. youngsters found alone and under 450gms (1lb) after the end of September) will need extra help, even if it's just additional feeding in the garden. Hedgehogs found under 450gms (1lb) after the end of October will need to go to an independent hedgehog rescue to be overwintered. Once in care, hedgehog rehabilitators prefer to get autumn juveniles up to an optimum weight of 600gms (1lb 6oz) or more before considering release, because they will lose weight initially upon re-introduction to the wild.

If you find a hedgehog under 450gms (1lb) after the end of October, it will need help. For First Aid the hedgehog should be given extra warmth, either a warm hot water bottle wrapped in towelling or blanket or placed on a heated pad with room to get away from the heat should it get too warm. It should be placed in a box lined with torn newspaper or clean towelling or fleece for bedding.

If for some reason they cannot be brought indoors for immediate first aid, outbuildings would be acceptable if heated and flies can't get to the hedgehog, but don't put the box directly onto a metal grid or wire floor, or straight onto concrete – hedgehogs have sensitive feet and the cold will permeate through. Offer meaty hedgehog food, meaty cat or dog food or cat biscuits and fresh water. NEVER COW'S MILK.

As with all hedgehog casualties this is a specialised job, and the hedgehog(s) should be passed onto an experienced rehabilitator as soon as possible. Call BHPS on 01584 890801 for details of your nearest independent rescue.

Hibernation:

If you want to attract wildlife to your garden, ensure there is easy access for them, leave wild areas and avoid 'tidying up' too much. Hedgehogs tend to hibernate between November and mid-March and may choose the stack of leaves or branches in your garden that you have built as a bonfire pile. For this reason if you have to get rid of such material, move it to a different spot immediately before setting fire to it; a hedgehog may be sheltering or hibernating in it. Light from one side only to allow an escape route for anything you have missed. They like to nest under things (e.g. sheds, hedges and brushwood) and need plenty of dry leaves to build their nest.

Recommended by the BHPS:

'Hedgehogs' by Dr Pat Morris (Whittet Books, £14.99) is gratefully acknowledged. Dr Morris is one of the country's leading hedgehog experts and his book gives factual, down to earth information on hedgehog behaviour, habits, physiology and private life, illustrated with delightful and amusing drawings by Guy Troughton.

Information provided by the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (B.H.P.S). Please contact B.H.P.S. on 01584 890801 or visit www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk for further advice.

Future Event

COGF 2025 Annual General Meeting and talk on Hedgehogs at The Braithwaite Institute, Braithwaite, Keswick, CA12 5RY on Sunday 16th November, 2.00 p.m.

The business part of the AGM is usually quite quickly dealt with but is a useful opportunity for members to raise any queries they may have and/or give useful feedback to the Committee and the body of people present. It is also hoped that seed orders will have arrived for distribution.

The meeting will be followed by the talk on hedgehogs from Gary Norman, who looks after them at Cumbria Wildlife Trust's headquarters at Gosling Sike. Following that we will have a shared tea. Any items to be shared, savoury or sweet, are welcome

Directions to Braithwaite Village Hall

Braithwaite Village Hall is not in Braithwaite village. The hall is on the north side of the A66 while Braithwaite village is on the south side.

Approaching along the A66 from the Penrith or Keswick direction you should note two turnings left: the first signposted Braithwaite and the second about 300 yards further on signposted Thornthwaite. The entrance to the village hall car park is on the right about 50 yards after this second turning left.

Approaching along the A66 from the Cockermouth direction you should note two turnings right signposted Thornthwaite which are spaced almost 2 miles apart. The entrance to the village hall car park is on the left about 200 yards after the second turning right signposted Thornthwaite. The car park entrance is after a signpost for a third turning right to Thornthwaite but before the turning right itself and just after you pass the village hall on the left.

Recipe

Sweet Potato and Leek Pancakes



Makes four

Ingredients

Two medium sized sweet potatoes
4 medium sized leeks
cheese for grating

Cheese sauce

50g (2 oz) butter
40g (1.5 oz) flour
425ml (15fl oz) milk
75 ml (2.5 fl oz) cream
40g (1.5 oz) cheese
salt
pepper

Pancake mix

55g (2 oz) plain flour
1 egg
pinch of salt
100mls (3.5 fl oz) milk
35mls (1.5 fl oz) water

Method

Make up the cheese sauce and the pancake batter. Peel and dice the sweet potatoes and gently fry. Chop the leeks and fry them, then add both to the cheese sauce, retaining some of the sauce to spread on top of the pancakes.

Make up four pancakes and share the filling between them.

Place in an ovenproof dish. Spread remaining sauce over pancakes and sprinkle with grated cheese. Place in a preheated oven (180°/350°/gas 4) for 20 minutes to heat through.

Cumbrian Farmers' Markets

- **Brampton** – last Saturday of the month
- **Brough** – 3rd Saturday of the month
- **Carlisle Cathedral Close** – 1st Saturday of the month
- **Cockermouth** – 1st Saturday of the month
- **Egremont** – 1st Saturday & 3rd Friday of the month
- **Houghton** – 2nd Saturday of the month
- **Kendal** – last Friday of the month
- **Keswick** – 2nd Thursday of the month
- **Milnthorpe** – 2nd Friday of the month
- **Orton** – 2nd Saturday of the month
- **Penrith** – 3rd Tuesday of the month
- **Sedbergh** – every Wednesday
- **Ulverston** – 3rd Saturday of the month

Hugh's joke:

Hedgehogs: Why can't they just share the hedge?

Tip:

It isn't too late to plant out field beans as a green manure. Sow 10cm apart in rows 15 – 20 cm apart. The root nodules fix nitrogen, but need to be dug in before the beans develop.



HAVE A GREEN HALLOWEEN!



Don't throw your Halloween pumpkins in the bin. Find out how to use up leftovers and compost them - head to our pumpkin blog!

SCAN HERE



Learn how to compost via our
FREE course
Guest password:
Recycle4Cumbria21



There's loads more composting info on our Linktree page



And discover more about Cumbria Master Composters or get in touch



**garden.
organic**

Diary of COGF Events in 2025

Sunday 16th November, 2.00 pm

COGF AGM, Braithwaite Institute, with a talk on hedgehogs



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