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A better garden this week

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NEWS

APPEAL GOES OUT TO PRESIDENTS AND PRIME MINISTERS

Perhaps America's First Lady will sow her 'summit' seeds in the new White House veg and herb garden



First Lady is growing veg

AMERICA'S First Lady, Michelle Obama, is creating a new veg and herb garden at the White House. She is working with 26 schoolchildren on the project and some of the produce will be cooked in the White House kitchen and also go to help the local soup kitchen, according to the website www.mycapitalgardensusa.co.uk. The website features a collection of some of the best farmers' markets, wineries, gardens and national parks in the Capital region which includes Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland. Monty Don introduces the site and there's also a competition to win a holiday.

GROW PLEA TO WORLD LEADERS

Seed company's daring summit stunt pays off

By Carol Warters
NEWS EDITOR

WORLD leaders attending the G20 summit in London have been urged to join the 'grow your own' brigade. But the seed company who sent packets of veg seeds to the world's most powerful people, including presidents, prime ministers and a king,

nearly ended up in trouble with the Law. London-based company Seeds of Italy sent a letter and seeds to every head of state attending the summit imploring them to encourage schools, factories, offices, homes, hospitals and public offices to 'get the world growing again'. But a 'serious' phone call

from the Metropolitan Police asked Paolo Arrigo, of Franchi Seeds of Italy, why he was sending the leaders little packets and asking what they contained. Fortunately the firm had received a swift response from UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown on 10 Downing Street headed paper, thanking them for taking the initiative.

"After a long and very thorough interrogation, they were happy to let it pass with the positive results seen from a letter from Gordon Brown's office," said Paolo. "We're certain that other leaders also saw the packets and hopefully they are growing a pack of Franchi seeds in their veg plots right now. "We were really chuffed

and very proud to receive a reply from Gordon Brown," he added. The seeds included were a mixture of Venetian carrots and alpine lettuce to Neapolitan basil and Ligurian tomatoes and the message was a genuine one, added Paolo. "Seeds still germinate during a crisis and we all need to eat, but an increase

in domestic vegetable production and a shift in government policy is needed to safeguard the future of our children," Paolo told Garden News. "Children that grow vegetables, eat vegetables and should grow their own at school so as to experience nature at first hand." He said that as well as

keeping youngsters healthy with regular exercise, 'growing your own' saves food miles, helps children to appreciate food as well as taking ownership and responsibility of the world's resources. "No part of growing vegetables is bad - the produce is good for you, the plants are good for the environment and compost

down. To all the leaders on the planet earth, we say 'what you sow, you reap.'" Seeds of Italy have launched an appeal to help the victims of the Italian earthquake. Visit their website at www.seedsofitaly.com and click on Italian Earthquake Appeal on the homepage.



Gordon Brown thanked the firm for taking the initiative



"We're certain that other leaders also saw the packets and hopefully they are growing a pack of Franchi seeds in their veg plots right now"

Do you have an allotment story?

ALLOTMENTS have a unique role in British life - as valuable green spaces, communities for bringing people together, and above all as somewhere to grow your own healthy food. If you've already got a plot, you could be ready to enjoy your best summer ever, but perhaps you're still on the waiting list... There's currently a huge demand for allotments and a wait of several years or more isn't unusual. Garden News is planning an in-depth series on allotment gardening and we need your help! We'll be looking at waiting lists and we want to know where the longest is. Tell us how long you've been waiting. We'll also be investigating whether local councils do enough to stop people hogging plots and whether they're sticking to legal obligations to provide plots. In fact, if you have anything to say about allotments, our team at Garden News want to know about it. Perhaps you're paying an exorbitant rent - or barely anything. Or maybe your plots closed down years ago and are still lying derelict. Write in and let us know and send some pictures, if you have any. The editorial address is on page 46 or you can send an email to carol.warters@bauermedia.co.uk



Happy gardeners at Stoughton Infants School in Surrey

School's garden helps children eat more veg

TWO thirds of children at a primary school refused to eat any kind of fruit and veg at lunch times - until they discovered gardening. Now nearly all plates are packed with healthy bites and the youngsters are eating things that they would not have tried before, Belinda Wilson, joint head teacher at Stoughton Infants School in Surrey has revealed. The school's pupils were the first in the country to achieve all five levels of the RHS Campaign for School Gardening benchmarking scheme and have transformed an outside space into a dynamic learning environment. Belinda Wilson recognises the educational and health benefits of the gardening scheme: "A recipe that went down very well was raw spinach, carrot, cucumber, tomato and lime salad and all ingredients were grown by the children." As well as eating the fruits of their labours, the young pupils met up with gardening superstar Alan Titchmarsh at the RHS flagship garden at Wisley, Surrey. He was launching a funding scheme for green fingered pupils across the country. At the end of the month, the RHS will take over the management of the Alan Titchmarsh Gardens for Schools Trust, creating a fund from which RHS Campaign for School Gardening schools can apply for grants of £500 to help them develop their gardens further when they reach a certain level of the benchmarking scheme. Schools will be able to apply for grants from September. For more information on the campaign, visit www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening

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www.liveforgardening.com