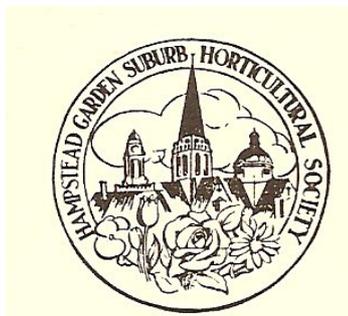


he Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society

Affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society

Newsletter - January 2016



Editor: Katja Goldberg
katja.goldberg@yahoo.co.uk
www.hortsoc.co.uk

101st AGM and Prize-giving 2015

Gladys McLeod



The 101st AGM opened with the presentation by HortSoc Vice President Joan Rees Phillips of the Winifred Price Cup jointly to Zara Shattock and Rosa Coury-Reid. Olivia Redman was presented with the Jack Rumbold Children's Cup and her sister Melissa with the Tony Holton Award.

HortSoc Chairman Chris Page told members the Society had had another successful year. It had been a very busy one too with a Seed Swap, a trip to Wisley, a talk by Dennis Lynch from Sunshine Garden Centre, and a trip to Borde Hill and High Beeches. The very popular Plant Sale was followed by the June Show, the Suburb in Bloom Garden Competition and Suburb Open Gardens. July began with a three-day visit to the gardens of Shropshire and Cheshire, followed in August by a trip to Capel Manor and Daisy Roots Nursery. The September Show was followed by a talk on Biddulph Grange the following month by Russell Bowes.

Between all these events, Chris said, Committee members had found time to encourage future gardeners in local schools to grow flowers and vegetables in their school gardens. Bulb-planting and miniature garden workshops were held in the local library for enthusiastic primary school-aged children. Other activities included helping with the planning and planting in the new Fellowship House garden and the contribution of floral displays to the St Edwards's Church Flower Festival.

Chris thanked all Committee members for their hard work throughout the year.

There were no changes of the officers or other post-holders this year. Jackie Murphy was welcomed to the Committee.

A Very Special Victorian Garden

Gill Read



As an Autumn treat we had a fascinating talk by an enthusiastic Russell Bowes on Biddulph Grange. Russell presented the talk as a journey through a gallery of pictures, showing us the history of the Victorian house and, particularly, its amazing garden, which has been described as one of the most exciting survivals of the great age of Victorian gardening.

In the 1840s horticulturalist James Bateman bought an old vicarage and large garden. He extended the house and created an extraordinary garden in which to display his extensive collection of plants sourced from all over the world. Money was no object as he pursued his collecting obsession but, after 20 years, the money ran out. He sold up and moved with his several sons to Kensington!

The house burned down in 1896, was rebuilt, and then served as a children's and, later, orthopaedic hospital until 1991, during which time the gardens were neglected. The house and grounds have been National Trust property since 1988, when a programme of restoration began and is now almost complete.

The result of this long period of complex work is what we can see today and Russell's gallery of pictures changed from a journey of neglect and eventual restoration to one of delight and fascination. He took us on a tour of separate themed areas hidden from each other so that there was a surprise around every closely clipped piece of topiary or imaginatively shaped hedge, bank or rockwork. We were led from one area to another by paths, steps or tunnels, experiencing all corners of the globe on the way: a Chinese garden based on a willow pattern design, an Egyptian court with guardian sphinxes, an Italian terrace ... and in each the rare and exotic plants appropriate to the area.

Then there were the usual Victorian favourites - hydrangeas, dahlias, ferns, rockwork and the first example of a stumpery - and much more. Particularly impressive were the herbaceous border - another Victorian first - and the long border of dahlias set against a wall and divided into alcoves by topiary buttresses. So much to see ...

We very much enjoyed Russell's talk and all the great pictures. Clearly this most interesting garden is simply asking to be explored and it would be lovely to have a HortSoc visit there some time in the future.

October Half-Term Bulb Planting Workshop at the Community Library

Katja Goldberg

Seven children were signed up to participate. Everything was prepared down to the last detail as efficiently as ever by Yvonne Oliver, who brought baby narcissi, irises, grape hyacinths and crocuses together with bulb compost, pots and written bulb-planting information for the children to take home.

Two 9-year-old boys were particularly enthusiastic and knowledgeable about planting and soon



helped to get the younger girls engrossed in the tasks and confident to stay without a parent by their side.

Following a discussion on what a bulb is and how to care for it, the planting took place. A welcome snack followed, the children posed for Marjorie, and parents arrived with bags in which to carry home the good work and watch what would happen by spring. Look out for photos of the results in the library later in the year!

It is hoped that this new generation of budding gardeners will soon be keen to join HortSoc and even tempted to enter this year's Flower Show (11 June and 10 September – see *Handbook 2016* for further details) in the children's classes, where prizes and cups are to be won!

Details of future workshops for primary school ages can be found in the above library.

Autumn Update of Work in Garden Suburb School Nature Garden

Ruth Beedle and Diane Berger



The children have been busy. It's incredible how much can be achieved by seven or eight hard little workers in Gardening Club - which only lasts for 30 minutes!

The children have raked up the leaves and made a huge pile in the compost corner supported by wooden pallets. They are terrific team players, taking it in turn with the plum job - pushing the wheelbarrow full of leaves at speed onto the top of the pile before releasing it!

More crocus bulbs were planted in the lawn and the beds, and the children are becoming adept at using trowels and filling up the holes with earth after planting. It's fascinating to see them changing their attitude over the weeks to getting muddy or grubby hands from horror to pleasure!

A big thank you to HortSoc for providing the bark chips so the children could replenish the compacted bark along the path. They had a wonderful time doing it too.

If we have an extended dry period over the winter we will let the children use the hand mower – everyone's favourite job and very useful for macho energetic pupils!

After cutting back the huge straggly buddleia weyeriana quite severely last March, it flowered beautifully and is looking much happier.

One query to members: the pond was still full of life in late October - notably middle-aged tadpoles - and we were loath to clear it for fear of destroying pond life. If there are any pond experts out there we would very much appreciate some help and guidance, such as when to rake out the dead leaves, and naturally you would be welcome to join us one Friday lunchtime (contact Diane Berger on 020 8455 0455)!

Quirky Questions at Quiz Supper

Liz Thomson



From the question 'Cranberry belongs to which botanical family?' to 'What's the story, morning glory?' (a line from the Oasis hit song), the annual Quiz Supper was both challenging and fun.

Quizmaster John Mathias, a young Nicholas Parsons with gravel, kept the tempo moving along with great good humour, ably supported by Vincent Berry, who compiled an impressive score chart.

The catering team was no less superb, serving all a delicious supper with ease and speed.

It is a most enjoyable and well organised event. Our thanks go out to all involved. We hope their enthusiasm for quirky questions will inspire another quiz next year.

Dates for your Diary 2016



| | |
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| Sunday 21 February | Outing to Welford Park to see the snowdrops |
| Thursday 24 March | Gardener's Question Time |
| Thursday 14 April | 'Gardening for Wildlife' (talk) |
| Wednesday 11 May | Trip to Wickham Place and Ulting Wick |
| Saturday 14 May | Plant Sale |
| Saturday 11 June | Flower Show |
| Wednesday 22 June | Suburb in Bloom Competition |
| Sunday 3 July to Tuesday 5 July | Trip to Somerset (3-day residential) |
| Sunday 17 July | Trip to Chenies Manor |
| Wednesday 7 September | Trip to Wisley Plant Fair |
| Saturday 10 September | Flower Show |
| Thursday 13 October | 'Entering and Judging Cookery Classes at our Shows' (talk) |
| Tuesday 8 November | AGM |
| Saturday 10 December | Celebrate our Society: Bring and Share your Favourite Dish |

Further details on 2016 Events

Sunday 21 February: Trip to Welford Park

A country house and estate near Newbury noted for a spectacular display of snowdrops. The tea rooms serve light lunches and there is also an opportunity to buy snowdrops 'in the green'.

Thursday 14 April: 'Gardening for Wildlife' - a talk by Anne Luder

Anne is a former lecturer at Capel Manor and a garden designer.

Wednesday 11 May: Trip to Wickham Place Farm ...

A 14-acre garden with a 2-acre walled garden dating from 1706. It has a knot garden, a folly, a pond and woodland. There is a 250-ft wisteria growing along one of the walls.

... and Ulting Wick

Created in 2004 out of the debris of an old working farmyard, which is now the heart of the garden and the area where colour is dominant. Surrounded by the listed barns, the four box parterre beds are filled in spring with thousands of tulips. These are planted each year to ensure the bulbs are top quality.

Sunday 17 July: Trip to Chenies Manor

The delightful grounds and gardens of Chenies Manor, with the house as an impressive backdrop, make an ideal location for the annual Plant and Garden Fair.

Wednesday 7 September: Trip to RHS Garden Wisley

Autumn Plant Fair

Garden Girl

Caroline Broome



THREE THINGS TO DO TO PREPARE FOR SPRING

It can be a challenge to find something of the gardening variety to enthuse about at this time of year so I tend to wander into the greenhouse looking for inspiration and - sure enough - as soon as I start pottering about, I find jobs that do actually need doing!

Before starting anything horticultural though, do tidy up. I find a vacuum cleaner of the Henry variety can deal with most nasties – e.g. cobwebs, mouse droppings, mildewed leaves, spilled compost – and household rubber gloves should protect you from frostbite when clearing soggy catalogues and moss from the window frames. So that's January taken care of.

Now here are some jobs to be getting on with during February and March:

- 1. Starting off overwintered begonia tubers** So where did I leave off in the last Newsletter? Your tubers can be brought out of storage at the end of February. It's likely that they will already have tiny 'pips' (new shoots) appearing on their surfaces but, if not, it doesn't mean they're dead. Provided they are dry and firm they should sprout within a few days once potted up. Fill 9cm plastic pots with a multipurpose compost and horticultural grit mix, one for each tuber. Make a dimple in the surface of the soil and bed the tuber in (concave side

up), lightly covering it with soil. Water sparingly and place in a warm, light position such as a windowsill or conservatory - corms will rot or develop weak etiolated stems in an unheated greenhouse. Stems should grow on within a couple of weeks. Water occasionally when soil is dry. They shouldn't need repotting until ready for planting out in May.

- 2. Preparing for seed sowing** Be selective about what you choose to sow as it's always difficult to throw away unwanted seedlings. You can always donate unwanted seed packets to the HortSoc Seed Swap. Check the packets are in date. I file my veg and herbs separately from my flower packets, then into month order, then indoor and outdoor sowings. Clean trays and lids, pots and polythene bags that fit over the pots (if they are not to hand you are not likely to bother and the seeds will not germinate), dibbers and tampers. Last but not least, *do not sow seeds too early* as I have a habit of doing - you'll only end up sowing them again later.
- 3. Check dahlias, cannas, salvias and fuchsias** Dahlia tubers stored in slightly damp soil and/or newspaper should be checked and any rotten pieces discarded or cut away to avoid spread. If you're planning on taking cuttings you can start them off in fresh pots in March but there's no hurry if you're going to replant them outdoors. Cannas that were cut down to soil level and overwintered indoors won't start to grow until spring so just ensure that the soil is slightly damp. Salvias and fuchsias that were brought inside with their bare stems intact should be misted with water every now and then and any dried leaves still clinging on should be removed to avoid mildew.

THREE DECIDUOUS SHRUBS THAT LOOK BEST IN WINTER

- 1. Corylus contorta (Corkscrew Hazel or Harry Lauder's walking stick)** This upright shrub reaches 10ft x 10ft. Best planted in well drained soil in sun/part shade. It has crinkly, toothed, mid-green leaves in summer and pendant yellow catkins in late winter and early spring. But it comes into its own in winter with its strongly twisted, spiralling stems.



- 2. Edgeworthia chrysantha (Chinese Paper Bush)** is a small shrub, growing to no more than 6ft x 6ft. Slow to get established, it doesn't like to be moved once planted, so choose a sheltered location with sun/part shade as it's not as hardy as its cousin Daphne Odora. Rich, well-drained soil is a must along with regular irrigation during the summer and autumn while buds are setting. And, like its relative, it has wonderfully fragrant winter flowers.



- 3. *Hamamelis x intermedia Pallida* (witch-hazel)** is a spreading, deciduous shrub with attractive leaves and good autumn colour in October. But it's noted for its lovely, scented sulphur yellow flowers that are borne in abundance in late winter and early spring. This specimen plant is ideal for adding interest to a sunny winter border where its fragrance can be appreciated. Flowering twigs can be cut to perfume rooms in winter.



THREE GARDENING TOOLS YOU SHOULDN'T BE WITHOUT

- 1. Gloves** If you find yourself tearing off your lumpy gardening gloves in sheer frustration as you can't actually feel what you're doing, then try Wolf Garten Garden Bed Gloves. They are hard-wearing and made of abrasion-resistant material on the palm, are stretchy and have breathable material on the back of the hand, which ensures a comfortable snug fit. I wear surgical gloves underneath them to protect my skin and nails and keep my hands dry. Wearing them, I can prune all but the thorniest roses and sow the smallest of seeds. They are machine-washable, come in three sizes, and are quite cheap too.



2. **Scoop** I use this compost scoop almost as much as I use my secateurs. The wooden handle and metal scoop are much more robust than plastic versions. Apart from its intended function, I use it to top dress pots with gravel, to scoop out large chunks of clay soil when planting (it has a solid joint between handle and scoop and has quite a sharp blade), to fill up bird feeders, and to distribute mulch around the delicate crowns of perennials.



3. **7-litre plastic trug** Most of us use the large round plastic bucket tubs with handles by now but this small version is also invaluable. You can use it to carry your hand tools, collect cuttings, carry small plants, and for dead heading as you move around the garden. They are so cheap and widely available in many colours at discount stores. You can use them to store vermiculite, sharp sand, horticultural grit and perlite. I fill them with water to wash soil off the roots of perennials when I am cutting divisions.



BOOKING FORM

COACH OUTING TO WELFORD PARK

SUNDAY 21 FEBRUARY

To: Events Secretary Diane Berger, 86 Willifield Way NW11 6YJ

I wish to book ... seats for the outing to Welford Park @ £28.50 pp. (to include a hot drink on arrival)

TOTAL £ ... (cheques payable to HGS Horticultural Society)

Name

Address

Tel No

Email

Signed