



Somerset

Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue XLVII

Autumn 2014

Points of Interest

The Season

Summer's gone and over!

Fogs are falling down;

And with russet tinges

Autumn's doing brown.

Introduction

Boughs are daily rifled

By the gusty thieves,

And the Book of Nature

Getteth short of leaves.

New Series

DESERT ISLAND

PLANTS

Chairman's

Corner

So November endeth –

Cold, and most perverse –

But the month that follows,

Sure will pinch us worse.

Speakers + Judges

Supplement

Thomas Hood The Season (Slightly adjusted)

Your Committee

Final Cuttings

Committee contact

Details

Competition

Website News

INTRODUCTION

*Winter. What's Winter? Is it cowardly
To draw the curtain on the misery
Of outward day? Shut out the tears of rain - And wind – Dishevelled ancient hair of trees
And soaked garden seen through window – pane?
V. Sackville-West. Winter*

Now, here's a question. Does anyone water their gardens any more these days? I mean really water. Not just fooling around with a watering can, dashing from pot to pot, container to container, giving all a quick splash before tripping over the garden rake in the approaching darkness in the haste to get back to the armchair before the commercials are over. No, what I have in mind is the serious business of soaking the beds, the plots and rows of runner beans. Oh, those runner beans! My father used to leave the hose on all night. **All night!** Is that done anymore? This was Serious Watering. He was joined by that other Serious Waterer: that chap – it was usually a chap – in shorts, standing in that absurd and slightly embarrassing posture with the lengthy hosepipe, thumb over the end to achieve a finer spray, squirting away all evening long. When was the last time you saw someone writhing and wrestling with yards of contentious plastic – all tangled up like that statue of Laocoon and his sons vainly fighting off those enormous serpents?

After all, the garden centres are packed with miles of the stuff on an assortment of handy or unhandy reels. The shelves are crammed with sprays, hoses and roses, jets and squirters, drizzling tubes and dripping gizmos. But perhaps there's the clue to the answer. Technology perhaps has taken over. The Serious Waterer has become an Aquatic Technician, a mere facilitator. A flick of the wrist and a hidden dribble solves the whole caboodle. Look around the corner from the aquatic department web; mechanical toys for the boys and the girls. Not only cutters and scrapers, pricklers, mowers and blowers, dibbers and dabbers, strimmers and stabbers, pruners and shearers, grinders and grazers – something for everyone. Who buys all this paraphernalia? Most of us I am sure can easily resist the temptation to take ours to the checkout now.

On a personal note, rather like Laocoon, I have an awkward and habitual trouble with the flex of the electric mower. Only I know how many times this sinuous orange serpent has been shortened during the mowing season. One gadget is indispensable: the Circuit Breaker!

Talking of things indispensable, you will find in this current issue, sound advice, words of encouragement and information, as well as request for responses: all indispensable to the organisation of your club and of the Federation. Please take note, pass on or return as appropriate.

*Gardening requires lots of water.
Most of it in the form of perspiration.*

Lou Erickson

A New Series : **DESERT ISLAND PLANTS**

Here are my indispensable garden plants.

1. A rose: the climber Alfred Carriere. White pale pink centre. Robust, disease free, scented, good in shade, friendly stems, prolific flowerer.
2. A salvia: Cerro Potosi. Pretty hardy, magenta flowers, especially late in season. Scented foliage. Found growing in the wild in S. America.
3. A fern: Polystichum Setiferum. The soft shield fern. A British native but wintergreen. The first plant I bought when I moved into Fernville (because it was fernless).
4. Another green one: Cotoneaster Watereri. Can grow tree size but gives full value – wintergreen leaves, masses of insect-covered flowers, followed by berries which last until the redwings and fieldfares finish them off in winter.
5. A Tree: It has to be a birch, either the native or the Himalayan Jacquemontii.
6. Lemon Verbena: A strong enough and enduring fragrance which my nose can catch.
7. Another rose: Rose Gallica 'Charles de Mills'. Susceptible to black spot but indispensable in my garden since it kicked off my interest in historic roses.

No room for more – but I would have like Salvia 'Armistad' or a honeysuckle or a species tulip or

Pip Harwood

Chairman's Corner - Autumn 2014

This time last year, I wrote about the possibility of Mo and I having a pond built in our garden, here in Holford. We both thought that the ideal location would be across the stream and up on the second 'terrace' (our garden is on a hill!) to take the place of quite a big flower bed, that was getting far too much for us to work on. After a couple of estimates from other contractors, I was discussing the project with our local builder, Paul Saunders, known locally (and affectionately) as 'Hadrian' - so named because in our village, he has built and re-built so many walls! "I know you haven't any design or plan Erl, but I'm sure I could build it for you" he said "I've built one before, a little one I have to say, but I'm willing to have a go, if you want me to." We did...!

Well, it turned out to be a huge under-taking, not least because the whole site had to be dug out by hand, as it was impossible for us to get any machinery through our side gate and across the little bridge over the stream. Three back breaking weeks later, the two ponds had been excavated and were ready for the liners. As I wrote earlier - there had been no drawing or plan, so Paul, Mo and I just allowed the design to evolve as work progressed, with nothing too much trouble on Paul's part. Stone walls were constructed; the two liners fitted and stone work built around the ponds. Some time ago I had bought two gargoyles from a small reclamation yard near Wells. "I could install those for you Erl" Paul said; a statement I am sure he regretted as they weighed a ton! Eventually they were fitted with one gargoyle cascading its water into the large pond and the second into the smaller one, however, this took several attempts of getting the water to flow as we wanted it to... but the joy of this is that we have an irrigation system in our garden, worth every penny it cost twelve years ago so that the water we use is pumped from the stream, into the pond and out again!

What a great job Paul has done, the whole scheme looks unbelievable for an amateur 'pond builder'... not just the ponds, but a lovely pathway was created and steps up to a small patio which we will use as a sitting area. His basic skills of workmanship in the building trade had helped tremendously and as I said earlier, nothing was ever too much trouble, he did everything we asked for, never once saying "I can't do that" or "maybe" - it was always the positive... although he did admit that at the end of the project, he felt completely exhausted (and I am not at all surprised as he worked so hard) something which normally he would never have told anyone. So a job well done Hadrian (whoops, sorry - Paul !)

The next phase will be just as exciting. We have installed lighting but first we need to attend to the planting of marginal and pond plants, and we favour a slightly Japanese theme as we have already bought a couple of Acer trees, but I have a sneaky feeling that we will be off to a garden centre or surfing the 'net' before any of that - as Mo has her eye on a nice three piece rattan outdoor sofa set.... she says she has just the place for it (and the late summer 'sales' are on !!)

My warmest regards to you all and my sincere good wishes for the forthcoming festive season, which will arrive in no time at all, so enjoy your gardening - at least until the first frost strikes!

God Bless

Erl Autumn 2014

Speakers + Judges Supplement

There is a Speakers + Judges supplement included with this newsletter. Please make it available to the person who is organizing the programme or the show. So often I am contacted by a member, whose job it is to arrange the events and who has been left in the dark with an outdated list which can lead to embarrassment. So, please pass the information on.

Your Committee

The success of the Somerset Federation – and it is a success, since we are possibly the largest County Gardening Club Federation in the country – our success is due to the friendly sharing of ideas and information. We, that is, your Committee, like to keep things going in an accessible and simple fashion.

Now, if any of you would feel like giving us a hand with the odd task, then you would be most welcome. The committee meet a couple of times a year in a congenial and informal fashion, fuelled by coffee and biscuits. What we do we don't regard as work – we just do it – and we enjoy doing it. And, as was said, it's successful.

So, please give it a bit of consideration and get in touch either with the Chairman, Erl on 01278 741152 or myself Pip on 01749 679182

WEBSITE UPDATE

It has been a very challenging beginning to the newly introduced Website for the Federation, having only gone live in May.

However, what a 6 months it has been. As webmaster, I have experienced highs and lows; success and disasters, but the aim of reaching the majority has certainly been achieved and can only grow!

On average I receive about 2 emails per day on, predominately, items for the notice board. What a selection of interesting talks and events available to us all. Several events I have attended myself and thoroughly enjoyed. Some requests I have had to decline through either being inappropriate for our member clubs or because they haven't even come from one of our member clubs!

I am now working with the National Garden Scheme (NGS) to help and promote the opening of gardens amongst our members, which is very rewarding. Then 'to bring me back down to earth' there was one occasion when I worked on the website for 5 hours, pressed the wrong button and lost the lot, plus the page format. Panic!!

However, I wish to thank all those who have contacted me, for their patience and support and between us all, the next 6 months will hopefully mean a better and more refined website. I certainly look forward to the next year's itinerary of events and speakers. I somehow feel privileged in knowing about them all in advance and rewarded in the knowledge that all this is now available to 100's by visiting the website.

Thank You

Tina Franklyn. Webmaster.

31st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2015

THURSDAY 14TH MAY

Graham Nicholls, the Chairman of Timsbury Horticultural Society has kindly offered to host next year's AGM in the Conygre Hall, Timsbury, near Radstock.

More details in the next newsletter.

A Couple of IMPORTANT MESSAGES

The first is a signal that in the New Year, you will receive a simple form to complete and return in a stamped addressed envelope. It is very important that this is done efficiently. It concerns quite simply the details of the main club contact and will improve the service we have to offer.

The second notice concerns the form enclosed with this newsletter. It is for the Calendar of Events which Lyn will be compiling to be issued next Spring. Please complete with Special Events only. This means shows, keynote speakers and special community events in which your club has a part. Normal programme details cannot be processed and this applies to the splendid notice board on the website.

A YEAR ON MY ALLOTMENT

Copies of Ted's Allotment booklet are still available. Every club was sent one. If more are required, please contact Hon. Sec. Cost £1.50 plus postage.

FINAL CUTTINGS

The weather determines our seasons and our gardens and this year we have enjoyed a good autumn. Cider apples are small, they tell me, but other plants are as they should be at this time of year. A short while ago at Timsbury, my wife and I had the pleasure of admiring two magnificent blooms at the North Somerset's Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society's November Show. The size and perfection of the exhibits were breathtaking. And it is encouraging to enjoy the hard work, single-mindedness and dedication of folk who so clearly love their hobby. Thank you to all who exhibit. Please support your shows big and small.

This year the Federation has said good-bye to more clubs than it has enrolled. However, the latest member 'Charity Specialist Plant Fairs' is very welcome and our total is still over 230.

With a warm wish that the seasons remain in proper order, I would like to express thanks to all those who keep in touch and on behalf of your Committee, to extend the Season's Greeting. My grateful thanks to Tina also, for transforming my scribbling into coherent legibility. This is on top of her work with the website.

A bountiful New Year to you all.

Pip Harwood. Hon. Sec. 01749 679182

Horticultural Fleece?

I was lucky enough to have been given three, 2 metre tree ferns and have nurtured them through four winters. Well aware that they are expensive beasts, I have swaddled them in various protective coats, ranging from old split-cane blinds to the conventional straw inside wire netting – all rather scruffy and untidy looking.

This year, I realised that one of our friends in the village had a small flock of Balwen Welsh mountain sheep, which have dark brown fleece for which there is no conventional use and are therefore un-saleable. For £10, I became the happy owner of eight brown fleeces which I wrapped round my ferns and secured with black bird netting, with enough left over to do the same job on some of the *Musa basjoo* bananas. Because of their colouring, from a distance they do not even show that they are in winter dress, whilst close up they look like big cuddly furry animals. They currently smell slightly of lamb chops! But I have high hopes of their effectiveness as insulation. Perhaps I have opened up a new market for Balwen fleece and hope to report of success (or failure) of this unconventional winter woolly for tree ferns, next spring.

Lyn Spencer-Mills. President.