



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue LV I

Spring 2018

A Chanted Calendar



*First came the primrose
On the bank high*



*Then came the windflower
In the valley left behind*



*Then came the daisies
On the first of May*



*Then came the cowslip
Like a dancer in the fair
A golden fillet round her brow
And rubies in her hair*



Sydney Dobell 1824 - 74

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Introduction



Dum gramen crescit, equus in moriendo quiescit

While the grass grows, the steed starves

Never let the grass grow under your feet



Proverbs

Ancient & Modern

After a pretty dreary start to the year, things are on the move once more. There's a great greening of the gardens going on, buds on shrubs, trees and bushes and a bursting blast from the borders. Grass everywhere. We can now revel in one what twee poet called 'The joy of Verdure'. Did that include the labour of the mowing machine?

My old dictionary defines a lawn as 'a close-mown turf-covered piece of pleasure ground'. I like the idea of a pleasure ground. I remember listening to the advice of an expert gardener on the secret for a good lawn. The key lay in frequent light mowing during the month of March. I've just had a dekko at my turf-covered pieces and he wouldn't have been impressed. So, what's in a lawn? In my case, quite a lot. I spotted daisy, dandelion, plantain, crepis, ajuga, primula sp., speedwell, wood avens, celandine, a bit of rye grass, fescue etc. etc.. Rather encouragingly, what I had, I decided, was not a lawn but a wildflower meadow. Now do I set to work or the leave the cobweb - ridden mower at the back of the shed? What I have not mentioned is the unnerving presence of huge swathes of mosses and liverworts in variety. Plenty of different shades of green and pleasantly springy underfoot. Not so much a meadow as a slice of neglected gardening.

And if you forgotten how much of a chore a lawn can be, take note of the following piece of information:

Hand mowing consists of

- a) **non-stop mowing**, which is when the knives are 'set too kind' and the machine canters kindly over the greensward without affecting the length of the grass one way or the other, or
- b) **full-stop mowing**, when the knives are 'set too cruel' and the machine suddenly jibs gnashing its teeth madly into the turf while the handle socks you a cruel punch in the solar plexus.

Motor mowing on the other hand usually turns out to be either

- a) **non-stop motoring** or
- b) **non-start mowing.**

Sellers & Yeatman - Garden Rubbish

Take your choice!

Or you can leave the machine where it is and take note of what's going on... e.g. the AGM in Dorset - the first time the Somerset Federation has left the county. Then there are all those shows and events in the calendar, the insurance to get straight with our help and so on. Lots of positives.



Pip H

Speakers and Judges List - updates

Speaker email amendment:

Page 38 - Pauline & David Wright - now- davepw2017@gmail.com

Page 27 - Mrs. Charlotte Popescu now - charlotte@cavalierpaperbacks.co.uk

If you can recommend a speaker then do please let us know using the Speakers & Judges form available on the Federation website.



Data Protection Act

All Clubs need to be aware that the current Data Protection Act is being updated and a new Act comes into force on 24th May 2018. The act applies to all organisations including Clubs such a Gardening Clubs. It is important that you make yourself aware of what is included in the legislation. This issue will be included in the Agenda and discussed at the AGM in May.

Chairman's Corner Spring 2018



Writing this at the beginning of February, I was remembering that five years ago at about the same time, we were literally snowed into our house, our camellia shrubs in the front garden after a relentless night of heavy snow, had fallen across the path, and we were unable to get to the gate and out of the garden! The access to the side gate of the house was also covered in deep snow, and this was eventually

cleared but only after a back breaking couple of hours sweeping and shovelling! This winter, things have been so different, hardly a flake of snow has touched the ground here.. it has been very wet and cold, but only with two or three hard frosts. We think ourselves lucky when we consider how treacherous the weather has been in other parts of the UK, especially in the far north and Scotland. Back in the winter of 1962/63 (The Big Freeze,) I was working in London for the Electricity Board, laying high tension cables which when connected, would carry 11,000 volts. These cables had to be laid in trenches, four feet deep, with concrete tiles laid on top, before the trenches were filled in. During that winter, where snow and frost lay on the ground until early March, the paving slabs on the footpaths were frozen solid and the only way they could be lifted, was to lay cotton waste soaked in paraffin on top and allow them to 'burn' through, until the slabs were frost free allowing us to lift them. The frost had penetrated a further eighteen inches down into the ground and pneumatic drills had to be used to remove the soil! 'Health & Safety' I hear you asking...well, in those days they were two words which were never connected!!

Living in London at that time, I never had a garden and under those conditions I never realised how much the wildlife must have been seriously affected. Many years later, moving to Surbiton, and then here to Somerset, gardens & gardening entered my life, and the wildlife as far I am concerned is now one of the (if not, the) most important thing in our garden. We are already on our third sack of nuts and tubs of fat balls, countless apples are halved and staked through into the grass by six inch nails, this is to keep the squirrels from running off with them, and not to deter our little puppy Louie, who fortunately doesn't seem to care for them.

Over the years we have certainly had a good variety of wild birds visiting the garden. Blue Tits, Black Cap, Blackbirds, Thrush, Woodpeckers, Dippers, Kingfishers and Sparrow Hawks to name just a few and a few years ago, a very shy Water Rail spent six weeks in our front garden, but sadly - he/she has never returned.

Of course, the price of nuts, apples and fat balls pays off...the birds remain when the feeding stops in middle to late spring, when the weather is warmer and they can fend for themselves. The resulting empty snail shells prove that

they quite like their surroundings and are obviously happy to nest and keep us company!

Well spring is on the way! The bulbs are beginning to appear and with the lighter evenings, it's an exciting time, everything fresh and new...no doubt you have plans maybe for improving things in your own gardens, but the most important thing of all, is to enjoy what you are doing...and although it can be hard work, gardening can be great therapy....and very fulfilling.

My best wishes to you and your members, I do hope I will meet as many of you as possible at the AGM in May, until then.

God Bless.

Erl



STOP PRESS

Since I wrote my article, and before it went off for printing, thought I'd let you all know, we had almost 30cm depth of snow in our garden...!!

The Last One

You stand all alone in the darkness
With no one to see your face
Surrounded by whispering shadows,
Of trees and neglected space

You wait all alone in the sunlight
Mid brambles and tangled grass
You sway in the rain and the tempest
'Til summer and autumn pass

And who is to see your beauty
That out of the confusion grows
Alone in what once was a garden
A sweet scented perfect rose



*Author unknown.
Regards Erl*

Lyn Spencer-Mills
President SFGC 2011 to 2017

This is a piece I had not expected to write. Lyn passed away in December 2017 and Somerset lost one of its most vibrant horticulturists and the Federation one of its greatest supporters. Joining the committee in 1991 when the Federation had 76 affiliated members she was a tireless force in its development to its present position of over 230 clubs.

What was striking about Lyn was her capacity to be active in doing things and getting them done. The design and creation of her and Ken's splendid garden, Hoopers Holding in Hinton St George, were testament to her tenacity and determination to realise the plan from paper to perfection. She always started by establishing a strong structure, her approach reflecting her scientific background. She had a strong inclination to seek out and find the unusual and rose to the challenge of growing exotics, always with blooming success, never brooking failure. Most of what she grew had unpronounceable names but her beloved hedychiums, those ginger lilies were a constant delight to her. She and Ken, of course, held the National Collection for number of years, ceding them finally to the Bristol Zoological Gardens. Firmly committed to opening gardens to the public she supported the NGS for over 30 years. Another passion was cats, again those quirky Devon Rexes which she bred to become champion of champions, supporting the Cats Protection League all the while.

Life for and with Lyn was never dull and she shared her enthusiasms all over the South-West region. Her knowledge, experience and expertise were always available to everyone. She will be greatly missed.

Pip Harwood



It's Springtime! - Here we go again

It seems such a long way between poring over seed catalogues in January or February, while tucked up all warm and cosy indoors, and actually sowing the seeds. But, in truth, it really is only a matter of a few weeks; and how anxious those weeks can be, the anxiety level rising or falling in correlation to how the weather behaves – or doesn't! We prepare well ahead for the gardening and growing season: tools sharpened, check; lawnmower serviced, check; bags of compost delivered, check; the last of the leaves raked up, check; early weeding completed, check; all seeds, bulbs, tubers etc ordered, check; decisions made about what plants to add to the garden and what, if any, additional kit we might need, hmmm, work in progress..... so that we're on the front foot for coping with this busy and time-critical part of the gardening year.

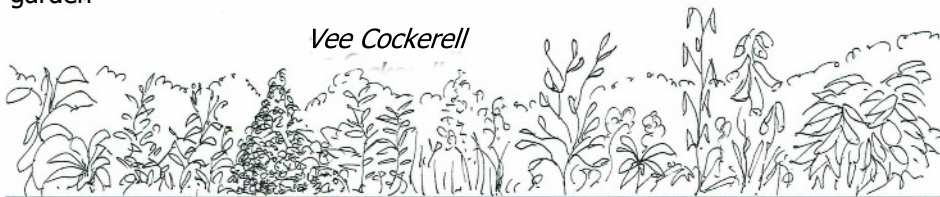
Even though daylight hours are steadily increasing, the weather and, particularly the temperature – probably until the early part of May – can be so fickle, keeping us very much on our toes. It seems as though we are either behind schedule if the weather is sunny and warm for the time of year or are impatient to get on with things if it's cold and wet. (Actually, as I write, the snow outside is about 6 inches deep, the wind is absolutely icy and the weather-men tell us that we have had the coldest temperatures in March since whenever. It is enough to make you think that global warming is not such a bad idea after all! Hopefully, by the time you read this, the snow will be a thing of the past and it will be a lot warmer.)

But, as we know, we gardeners are, by and large, an optimistic lot. So, while waiting for the signal – somehow known by instinct or by the process of umpteen previous years of trial and error – that the time is right to start sowing seeds, rejuvenating perennials or acquiring some plug plants we imagine warm, sunny days refreshed by gentle, balmy breezes with garden borders and pots full of colourful, dancing flowers and bountiful vegetable plots and fruit gardens full of deliciousness. So, how to keep up the momentum required for turning packets of seeds or plant lists into sensory delights for later in the year? Is it a matter of habit and/or determination? Is it the necessity of having a challenge? Do we like having aching backs, sore knees, grubby fingernails and probably wearing old, scruffy "gardening" clothes? Surely it can not be just a matter of "keeping up with the Jones's" or outdoing our neighbours? – although the ubiquity of 1st prizes and gold medals at flower shows, both local and national, including the various and highly impressive RHS flower shows, would lead one to suppose that part of the gardening ethos is to be competitive. Is it boredom or lack of adventure beyond our homes? Is it because we think it is the right thing to do? Or is it because it is, simply, what we do?

For my part, I am pretty sure the reasons are many and complex. Firstly, I grew up with the advantage of having a large garden to enjoy playing in. (When we

were small, I remember my sister and I would construct "horse jumps" from bamboo canes and would then have show-jumping competitions - no horses, just us doing the jumping - round the orchard and when we were a little older we would play tennis for hours – no net or lines for a court – on the main lawn). Secondly, along with the large garden of my childhood, there were two parents, particularly my mother, who were keen gardeners. Thirdly, I prefer to have a plot of land that is attractive and even beautiful rather than like a waste-land at the back and/or front of the house. And there are other drivers for my gardening. It' a good way to get exercise and fresh air and of keeping oneself occupied. With care and attention to what one is doing it can be very rewarding and, ultimately, very worthwhile. It does not (or should not) impinge upon or adversely affect anyone else. It can be an economical way of providing food. A pleasant, interesting garden can provide the perfect setting for all sorts of social gatherings. A well-stocked garden can provide constant delight in the beauty and complexity of everything growing in it. A garden can be a place of sanctuary and revival of the spirits. The list goes on and on. But, for me, perhaps what gardening is all about is summed up in the old Chinese saying: "if you want to be happy for an hour, get drunk. If you want to be happy for a year, make some money. If you want to be happy for a lifetime, plant a garden"

Vee Cockerell



SOMERSET GARDEN DAY
Sunday 13th May 2018

From flower gardens and greenhouses, to allotments and orchards, people from all over Somerset are invited to down tools and celebrate their gardens no matter what size or shape on Sunday 13th May for Somerset Garden Day.

What you do in your garden is completely up to you. Use fresh flowers and greenery from your garden to make flower crowns, invite your neighbours over for tea or enjoy a BBQ in your garden and share your Somerset Garden Day celebrations on social media using #gardenday.

For more ideas and inspiration, visit www.gardenday.co.uk and follow us on:

Twitter: @GardenDayUK

Instagram: @somersetgardenday

Facebook: @somersetgardenday

Hashtag: #gardenday

How Not To Treat A Lawn

Over the last twenty five years, the pristine lawn lovingly cared for by it's previous owner has taken an awful lot of abuse. Football, rugby, cricket, hockey and tennis balls, bikes, badminton nets, parties, barbecues and more have all contributed to it's present state.

In the years since the family left home the lawn has recovered a little. It will never look as it did because we neither feed or spray it with weed killer. I am happy

so long as the lawn looks green. I love watching the bees and butterflies that feed on the clover and other wild flowers such as achillea and knapweed that have appeared over the years. Every now and again during the summer the under gardener insists that the mower won't cope if the grass gets any longer and cuts it.

Around four years ago we noticed a lump the size of a small grass covered mole hill had appeared in the lawn. The mower sliced the top off it and we gave it little more thought. The mower continued to take the top off the lump from time to time all that summer.

The following year the under gardener commented that the mower now drove up and over the lump, which had now elongated into a long barrow shape. Every morning as we looked out of the window the main attraction was no longer the green woodpecker that always seemed to be there, but the lump which was growing by the day.

There was much speculation as to the cause of the lump, moles were dismissed because there was no soil on the surface. There were no entry or exit holes, maybe it had something to do with old land drains on the move. One wag even enquired as to the whereabouts of grand-ma!

There was nothing for it, the lump needed to be investigated. Had any of us really thought about it the answer was staring at us in plain sight, the green woodpecker. The lump was constructed by it's favourite food. Our grassy knoll was in fact a very large red ants nest, and as the lawn no longer served as a playground no one suffered any of the consequences of disturbing an ants nest, until my husband stuck a spade into the middle of it!

Needless to say our industrious ants immediately began rebuilding and our beautiful green woodpecker is still about.

I'm glad to say in this garden nature always has the upper hand.

Sally Hawkes



Wordsworth, Holford Combe and my Botany Notebook.



Walking down Holford Combe, one April day, I was struck by the conjunction of three plants growing on the margin of the stream, a few paces down from the northern end of Combe House Hotel. There they were; a lady's finger, a marsh marigold and a clump of yellow iris, or flag, the last of these not yet in flower. The sunlit beauty of these then gave me a moment of great joy, and, since then, some flashes of complete happiness in the odd moment when, alone, I have remembered them. Since then I have also remembered, from my distant childhood, part of the reason why this intense happiness, though not unusual, might have come about.

When I was a boy, one of my School Certificate (then called- 'Matric') subjects was botany, another was art, which everybody took. Everybody taking botany had a botany notebook, which consisted of alternate pages of blank and lined paper, and each week's prep. consisted of making a water-colour painting of the plant selected for that week's special study, flanking an objective drawing of key features, and annotation, on the facing page.

Our excellent art programme (for which I shall always be grateful) began with a year of objective drawing of plaster models of cubes, cones and other regular solids, together with studies of perspective. In the second and third years, some time was spent on bookmaking, in which we made the covers, marbled the opening pages, heated the fish glue, and eventually stitched our own books together. My choice for the contents of my book consisted of all my botanical drawings and paintings.

When I remembered this, I, an old man, on this April day, suddenly understood an additional reason why the sight of this group of plants gave me such a joyous moment, for what I was looking at fused with my enduring, vivid, memory of those paintings of so long ago. Then I remembered how Wordsworth, who must have walked this same stretch of road so many times, when he was exploring the area from Alfoxton, taught us how confrontation with beauty can sometimes provide a benediction not only of the moment, but, one where past and present fuse in sight and recollection, such that the experience leaves us amazed; for the moment entirely happy; and enriched beyond measure.

Dr Leslie Hoose

Holford



The Bishop's Palace Garden

Apart from the last days of February and first few days of March we had a very productive winter in the gardens. It was only too wet to garden on a few occasions and it was yet another mild winter especially December and January which were very mild compared to average. February was colder than recently but would have been common in the 1970s and 80s! Many plants including the grass did not stop growing until February and many did not stop until the extreme snowfall and frost at the start of March.

We concentrated on a couple of major projects during the winter one of these was finishing digging the last section of winter border. This was easy to dig and must have been cultivated for vegetables in the past because it was deep dark brown soil and a pleasure to double dig (well that is what I told my garden team as they were digging it!). We have planted it with Daphnes, Mahonias, Cornus, Sarcococca, Picea pungens 'globosa', Hamamelis 'Diane' and 'Aphrodite' amongst many. This planting completes the winter garden on the west side of the south lawn.

The larger and more difficult border to dig was the apple store border on the opposite side of the inner gardens. This was back breaking work to double dig and one of the worst we have prepared. It was full of rocks and stones and unusually we have not found any coins or anything of any interest. We also only dug up 20th Century litter and rubbish which suggests this has been built up significantly over the last hundred years. We dig all our borders by hand because it is the best way to prepare the soil, you could use mini diggers but these make a mess and are not as efficient. This new border will be full of Roses 'Darcey Bussell', Agapanthus 'Northern Star', Astelia, Lupins and many more herbaceous plants. The style will be similar to what we have already but using many plants and cultivars that we do not have, structure will come from a couple of Irish Yews which will mirror those in the hot border. Whilst we could have created a very different border (more contemporary) I feel that in a relatively small area the style needs to remain similar for the garden to work cohesively and flow effectively. We tend to use the boundary of the hedge in the hot border to separate the inner garden styles English Garden/Contemporary and Picturesque/Gardenesque. The outer gardens are also split into different areas although here they are split up by water/bridges.

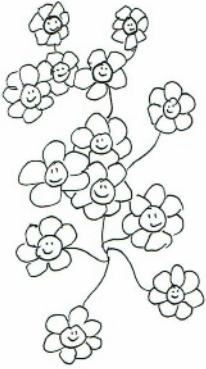
We hope to see you in the gardens during the spring and summer and are always happy to answer any gardening questions.

James Cross

Head Gardener & President of Wells & District Gardening Club



How gardening helps Alzheimer's sufferers



Gardening exercises the mind as well as body and provides stimulation for those suffering from mental health issues such as Alzheimer's.

As well as keeping you fit and trim, taking regular exercise and watching your weight helps prevent many of our modern ailments: cancer, heart problems, diabetes, strokes, and even depression, dementia' and Alzheimer's. Gardening is one of the best, most addictive ways to exercise I know. But it is equally a great comfort and an outlet for people who are already suffering.

When I met a friend recently whose mother is suffering from Alzheimer's, she mentioned just how much happiness and satisfaction she gained from gardening. Apparently, when your memory fades you often remember the parts of your life that gave you most happiness. She can recognise scores of plants, and is even able to reel off their Latin names, but may not remember who she is talking to. My friend said gardening gives her peace of mind and keeps her happily occupied in a place where she feels safe and secure.

Mental problems are very scary and knowing that you can still do things that are rewarding and enjoyable and which are also beneficial is a tiny bit on the bright side. Gardening is filled with opportunities to exercise the mind and the body, which keeps the motivation levels high. It is also an ideal pastime to do alongside a sufferer, something you can do together at any speed and in any way you like. If you are in the early stages, you can start developing your garden so it caters for the aspects of gardening that give you the most satisfaction and enjoyment.

There are several notable examples of gardens designed especially for people with memory problems. Cleve West's gold-winning garden at Chelsea in 2008, for Bupa, was all about "exploring the value of outdoor space in terms of how it can enhance wellbeing" and was targeted for people suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia. A key aspect of the garden was creating the feeling of a safe sanctuary, while at the same time being stimulating and exciting.

The path had a figure of eight layout – often recommended, as dead ends can cause sufferers to become confused. The path was wide, smooth and did not produce glare (which causes problems as eyesight can also start to become impaired; reflections can seem like water and shadows like spooky holes).

The main purpose of Cleve's garden was relaxing, but in care homes such as the Wandering Garden in Roanoke County, Virginia, for the Friendship Retirement Community, they also create opportunities for residents to garden. They have two large raised beds as well as burgeoning borders on the flat, and

they emphasise the importance of the garden being secure (so no wandering off can occur), which allows the occupants more independence.

They make sure all plants are non toxic. In advanced stages, sufferers can start to eat things they would not have found tempting before (as well as weed out things they wouldn't have!) so it is necessary to be a bit more cautious. A central covered pergola adds a focal point and encourages them to congregate and socialise. Bird houses and bird feeders are included, which are topped up regularly by residents. In a sheltered home I worked on, I also included an outdoor aviary as a centre point. This is a continual source of interest, and the chattering outdoor budgies fill the courtyard with sound.

The Wandering Garden has just opened this month and they say the benefits of the residents being able to spend time outside, exercising or relaxing, really helps their attitude. They become less worried and more stimulated. The residents feel involved with their natural surroundings instead of being alienated by illness. They are surrounded by beautiful fragrances and fresh air, all in a safe environment.

The Alzheimer's Society is a good source of information. They point out that exercising in the garden helps develop the appetite, boosts energy levels and promotes a better night's sleep. They stress the importance of maintaining, as far as possible, existing skills that give pleasure and confidence.

Continually adapting your garden to make it more usable is key. Bear in mind that motivation can be impaired so it may be necessary to provide the impetus initially. Building raised beds means weeding, planting and harvesting can be done at a more accessible height, making it more enjoyable.

Adding plants that make you feel relaxed, such as lavender, as well as plants that are thought to help memory, such as lemon balm (which is the subject of trials at Newcastle University) is helpful. As is growing vegetables that you relish, sweet peas for picking or just a wild patch of flowers, a safe wildlife pool, long grass and a low-slung hammock to watch the birds from — anything that pulls you out there.

Although dementia damages the memory and reasoning, the emotions remain intact. When sufferers become emotionally charged, encouraging them to express their emotions is helpful. For some reason they appear to become less highly charged and calmer outside in the fresh air.

If you do not have a suitable outside space, indoor plants are another option, or else the Alzheimer's Society organises group gardening services. These usually run once a week throughout the summer and last a couple of hours. Small groups of 10 to 15 members grow plants in raised beds and are able to take home their produce. In the winter the services are monthly and inside and they do garden-related tasks and crafts and plan what they will produce in the

next seasons.

One group in Uttlesford, Essex, has won seven prizes this year for its produce. Groups such as these have a strong social aspect, which is highly beneficial both to the sufferer and their nearest and dearest.

Written by Bunny Guinness

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardeningadvice/8920209/How-gardening-helps-Alzheimers-sufferers.html>

**Somerset Federation
of Gardening Clubs**

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Thursday 24th

May 2018

Doors open 6.15pm
7pm start followed by
an Illustrated Talk
by Kathy Crouch

Kindly hosted by
Thorncombe
Gardening Club
Village Hall
Chard Street
Thorncombe
TA20 4NF



Refreshments - Raffle - Plant Sale

www.sfgc.org.uk

Profile of a Federation Club - Sandford Gardening Club



The gardening club in Sandford was formed in 1974 and in the first year had a total of 74 members, at this time the annual subscription was 50p. The turnover in the first year was £228:00 and they were able to raise enough funds through subscriptions, donations and monthly 'bring and buy stall' to hold a flower show the following year, this was also helped with donations of trophies from local residents and organisations. A few years later two flower shows were held the first one in June and another in August.

One of the founder members, Fred Awford, remained with the garden club until his death in 2012 a total of 38 years, at which time he was our president. Our current president is also a long standing member of some 35 years.

In the early years outings were arranged to various venues including Wisley, Bowood House, Knightshayes, Hidcote and Abbotsbury. This tradition of day outings has continued until the present time when we shall this year be visiting Spetchley Park and Stonehouse Cottage Gardens in Worcestershire

The club joined the Suttons Seed Scheme for members in 1977 and is still operated very successfully today. Sandford Gardening Club became a member of The Somerset Federation in 1986 soon after it was formed in 1984. The annual subscription in 1986 was £7:00, which remained the same until 2012.

Unfortunately membership declined during the late 1990's but with renewed enthusiasm from the committee and members this has increased year on year and now stands at just under 80. The yearly subscription is now £8:00 which includes refreshments, with monthly meetings being held 8 times a year in The Village Hall. Guest speakers are invited to give talks on various subjects of interest to our members.

Each month a different member provides prizes for a draw which are paid for by the club and volunteers serve the refreshments. An interest table is organised by the secretary providing items of news, details of neighbouring clubs activities, various publications and our club photo album which is of special interest to new members.

Three events are held each year which are open to the public. In March a members Bulb Show takes place, for which one of the classes the bulbs and containers are supplied to members by the club. May is the time for The Plant Sale when herbaceous perennials, bedding plants, sweet peas and tomato plants are all offered for sale at very reasonable prices. This event has been run for many years and provides the funds for planting up the village tubs twice

Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

a year by The Gardening Club. Our flagship event is The Summer Show in August which is always very well supported when visitors are treated to wonderful displays of flowers, vegetables and crafts. Refreshments are served and a raffle is held as with the Bulb Show.

This year in September we are holding a special event, an evening with Toby Buckland in Shipham Village Hall together with refreshments and a raffle.

The AGM is held in October with a guest speaker and light refreshments being served. A Christmas Party is held in December when entertainment and a buffet are provided for members.

A Bulb scheme is operated in the autumn and chicken manure pellets are obtained for members in the spring all of which are offered at discounted prices

We like to feel we are a friendly club and put a great deal of emphasis on the social side, with cream teas and picnics periodically held in various members gardens when everyone can get to know each other. We all feel the club has come a long way since 1974 and we continue to strive to improve and maintain an interesting club.

The Committee Sandford Gardening Club

Help Needed

The Somerset Federation continues to do well. We all know that. But it doesn't run itself. You know that in your own organizations. We have an active (and jolly) Committee Of Seven. For the greater part of the year we do nothing. Or rather we are idle on the Federation front. When we do get busy we still enjoy what we are doing. We wouldn't do it otherwise.

We meet together twice a year for a chat over coffee and cake and make decisions. We do need some of you to assist us.

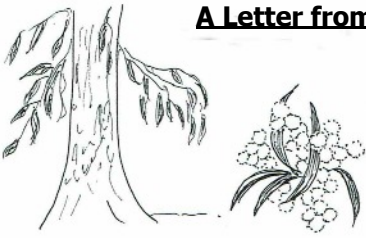
If you can press a button on a computer then that's a basic qualification. We are not asking for gardening experts. They are in the garden.

So please get in touch with an offer to help. Give me or anyone else on page one a ring to have a chat. You would be doing something worthwhile and meeting such nice people all over the region. Please give it consideration and show this request to others in your club.

Pip Harwood 01749 679182



A Letter from Canberra - Australia's Iconic Trees



Eucalypts (or "gum trees") are the essence of Australian flora and have been described as the universal Australian. Eucalypts are an essential part of Australian culture and their sight and smell are a defining part of Australian life.

The term "gum tree" is derived from the habit of some eucalypt species exuding a sticky, gum-like substance from the trunk. This is by no means a general characteristic but "gum tree" has become a common generic term for most eucalypts.

There are nearly 900 species of eucalypts. They dominate most Australian landscapes, from the moist tropics in the north, cool forests and mountains of south-eastern Australia to the edges of the arid interior of the country.

Eucalypts are critical to the survival of animals and soil organisms and are key to the healthy functioning of the ecosystems they dominate. The ability of many eucalypts to re-sprout from dormant buds allows them to survive fire, drought and climate change.

The sight of the blue haze from eucalyptus oil is common in much of Australia's wooded landscape. Soldiers returning by ship from the First and Second World Wars were said to be able to smell the aroma of the eucalypt before land was visible.

Eucalypts are a vital resource of the Australian environment. The most important commercial use is in forestry.

Wattle or Acacia is another Australian iconic plant.

Acacia pycnantha, or Golden Wattle is the Australian floral emblem and the wattle is reflected in the sporting colours of the nation.

Of the 1300 species worldwide, around 1000 of them are Australian. Some species grow into trees, but the majority of wattles are fast-growing shrubs and ground-covers.

Acacia occupies vast areas of the Australian continent and is found in a wide range of differing habitats from coastal to sub-alpine regions and from high rainfall to arid inland areas. They are particularly prevalent in the arid and semi-arid and the dry sub-tropical regions of the country.

The leaves of most Acacia species are, botanically, not leaves at all. They're flattened leaf stalks called phyllodes. Their advantage is that the tough and leathery structures are very resistant to moisture loss.

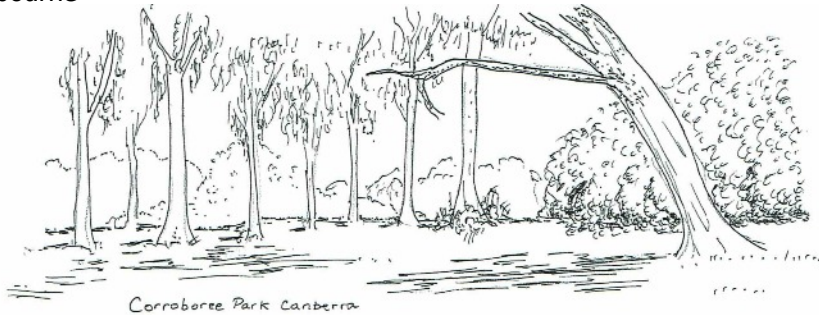
In the wild, many wattles behave as pioneer plants, establishing quickly after

fires and other soil disturbance. Another interesting feature is their root system. Wattles are a legume and fix their own nitrogen from the air.

Bill Upton, Canberra

With thanks

References and extracts from publications of the Australian Government, National Botanic Gardens, Centre for Australian Biodiversity Research and Australian Native Plants Society, Australian Broadcasting Corporation programs and "Australia's Iconic Trees" Professor Ladiges, School of Botany, University of Melbourne



Website Update

We have managed to get another web address for the Federation to help make it easier for you to punch in the address. Instead of **www.somersetfederationofgardeningclubs.org.uk** all you need to do in future is to punch in **www.sfgc.org.uk**

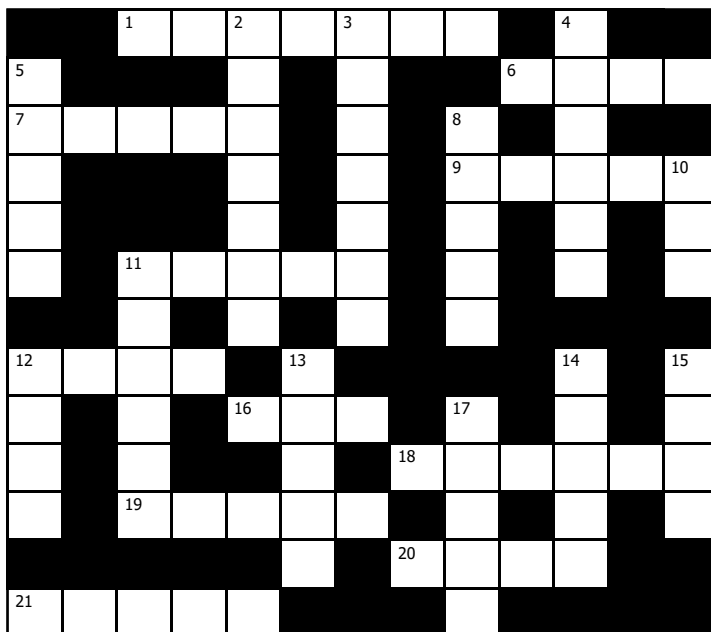
At the moment emails need to be sent to the old address but we hope to change that to the new address in the near future. We will announce the change both on the website and by emailing all clubs with an email address.

We hope you enjoy using the website but if you have any ideas of improving the website we would be delighted to hear from you. All emails are acknowledged and replied to as soon as is practical.

More photos of your events, gardens or outings would be appreciated.

www.sfgc.org.uk

Gardening Crossword



Submitted by John Dunster

Across

- 1. Its fruits are possibly ripe after a short month.
- 6. The green twins.
- 7. Replace damaged trees
- 9. Weeds cooked as a vegetable.
- 11. It can make a hole in bad pears.
- 12. Soil of imaginary shire that's rich.
- 16. Costly contribution to salad.
- 18. Could it make a hole in a towel outright.
- 19. As you broadcast there is some just reward.
- 20. Worked earthily as a brick carrier out east.
- 21. Is such grass nice to lie on

Down

- 2. Stings no gross fellow.
- 3. Look around very quietly for possibly sweet things.
- 4. Leave many trees devastated.
- 5. It's vegetable may have fur on it.
- 8. It's like daisy to give us a piece of Pasternack.
- 10. Actually bigger than michaelmas daisy.
- 11. Gardening suit.
- 12. Can be green as a meadow at Flamborough head.
- 13. Flowers for a girl starting school.
- 14. Cried when many a weed was rampant.
- 15. Annual decrease.
- 17. A growing source of second class accommodation.

Gardening Crossword - Autumn 2017 Answers

- Across:** 1. Apes 3. Shrub 7. Algae 8. Buttercup 9. Smash 10. Stares
 14. Urged on 16. Gorse 18. Bolt 20. Slug 21. Snail **Down:** 2. Easter 4. Reaps
 5. Daisy 6. Tuber 11. Shoots 12. Tulip 13. Bed 15. Galls 17. Cos 19. Gum

Fun Corner

One cold night a man is sat by the fire watching his favourite television programme. The wind is howling and all of a sudden there is a tap, tap, tap on the door. The man thinks nothing of it and gets back to his telly. Five minutes pass and there it goes again, tap, tap, tap. So in a bit of a mood he gets up and opens the door. No one there! So he goes back and sits down. Just as before there is a little tap, tap, tap on the door. Up he gets again and opens the door. A quiet little voice shouts out "down here", the man looks down, and at his feet is a little snail.

The man says rather sternly "WHAT DO YOU WANT???" "I'm cold and hungry, can I come in and sit by the fire and have something to eat??" says the snail. "NO", says the man and he lifts his foot, swings it back and takes an almighty swing and kicks the snail right over the garden wall. The man sits down and gets back to his programme.

Six months pass and the man is having his lunch when he hears a little tap, tap, tap on the front door. He thinks to himself for a while and then goes to answer the door. There at his feet is the same little snail and the man says again "What do you want??" And the snail answers back in a little forlorn voice, "What did you do that for?"



Two gardeners have entered their potatoes in a vegetable show. One is declared the winner and swaggers over to boast of his success to the other gardener. 'Not surprised I won, to be honest,' he says. 'I thought yours were looking a bit on the small side. 'That's true,' says the other gardener. 'Mind you, I grew them to fit my mouth, not yours.'



Final cuttings

Well, there we were, sap rising and all set for a taste of Spring, making jocular remarks about mowing the lawn and so on, when the garden got clobbered. Many parts of the county fared far worse than we did here in Mendip but it still takes the wind out of our sails and probably life out of some of our plants as well.

Recovery, when it comes can be swift. On the Sunday I had fieldfares and redwings plundering the remnants on the cotoneaster in a bleak landscape of snow. Monday morning, thrushes gone, a blackbird was tuning up and the great tits resumed their visits to the nest box. Taking the hint we pick up where we left off and look ahead .

By now club secretaries will have received a copy of the Calendar of Events, very well supported this year. Many thanks to all who sent in details. Now its up to the rest of us to visit our neighbours, see their shows, admire their beans and be envious of their gardens.

To stimulate you further, a copy of the NGS booklet may be in your hands with the promise of some garden delights for a good cause.

Another enticing event for you is the Federation AGM which this year is being held for the first time outside the County boundary in the village of Thorncombe in Dorset, close to Forde Abbey. Thorncombe Gardening Club are our hosts this year on 24th May. More details are found elsewhere in this issue. It promises to be a very enjoyable evening. The business meeting is kept to the minimum so there are plenty of opportunities to meet friendly folk, swap stories, share experiences, listen to a good talk and enjoy great refreshments in an informal atmosphere.

New members this year are Monksilver Horticultural Society, Fivehead Gardening Club, The Charltons Horticultural Society and Norwell Garden Club in Nottinghamshire. We wish them all well.

My thanks to David Talling who transforms and shapes this newsletter into a coherent whole, to Mo for keeping me, and you informed and to Wendy who is brilliant at giving me a hand.

With which on behalf of your Committee I wish you much Spring sunshine and Summer joy to follow.

Pip Harwood

