



## Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

*Issue LXI*

*Autumn 2020*

*And gobbling turkey cock wi noises vile  
Dropping his snout as flaming as a cloak  
Loose as a red rag over his beak the while  
Urging the dame to turn round and smile  
To see his uncooth pride her cloaths attack  
Sidling wi wings hung down in vapoury broil  
And feathers ruffid up while oer his back  
His tail spreads like a fan cross wavyd wi bars of black*

*John Clare November 1827*



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### Speaker List Update

#### Additions

Angela Morley BSc(Hort) Dip PSGD. Band D - 40p/mile - Travel limit 35 m  
Sunny Cottage,Platterwell Lane, Pylle Y Wildlife cards.  
Shepton Mallet. BA4 6SR  
01749 830205

[angela@wildgardens.co.uk](mailto:angela@wildgardens.co.uk) [www.wildgardens.co.uk](http://www.wildgardens.co.uk)

Topic- Gardening for wildlife

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Adam Pasco, Band E £125 - 45p/mile.  
43 Latham Ave, Orton Longueville, Would require overnight  
Peterborough. PE2 7AD accomodation  
07816662390 Topics available via Zoom.

[adam@adampascomedia.com](mailto:adam@adampascomedia.com)

Topics - Golden rules of gardening. Grow the best glorious plants. Gardening the natural way. Easy ways to better gardening. Create a garden for every season, Spring into action get set for summer. The flower bulb calendar - colour throughout the year.

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Stephen Powles, 01884242965 Band C - 5 topics - otters - hornets.  
[s.w.powles@btinternet.com](mailto:s.w.powles@btinternet.com)

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#### Withdrawals

Adrian Hutchison page 21. Neil Lovesey page 25.



## Introduction



Well, what a strange time it has been and I hope you have all found ways to manage. Those with gardens were certainly blessed and kept busy with an exceptional spring and summer.

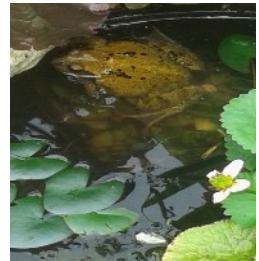
I know we have all missed our Club meetings, outings, plant fairs and shows and generally getting together and I hope you have found ways to stay in touch. Most clubs have had to cancel everything for the foreseeable future though I know a few of you with larger village halls and good systems in place are managing some talks and meetings, albeit on a reduced scale. Personally I found it a real blessing when public gardens were able to reopen and I made sure I visited one a week for my sanity and inspiration for own garden. Some were struggling with reduced numbers of staff which just goes to show a good garden takes a lot of effort and hard work. But then we knew that already!



Like many of you, I took on a project, albeit a small one. I have a pond with Koi which also has frogs but the koi eat any frog spawn so I never get tadpoles and increase the frog population. So I decided to build a very small one which I hoped the frogs would find and lay spawn in February.

They did find the pond! Someone said (I forget who), build it and they will come..... very true!

Talking of the koi I had a very interesting thing happen to one of them; it got sunburned in all that early spring sunshine we had. It is gold and developed a bleached streak on its back. I didn't think much of it until it started peeling just like we would, poor thing, and I was worried about infection. Its scales came off and I was desperately shielding the pond with umbrellas and tablecloths and still it would find the only sunny spot! I am pleased to say that it healed with no ill effects and continued to sun bathe through the summer, as it just loves the sun. Apparently they develop their own sun screen but the early strong spring sunshine proved too much. Who knew?

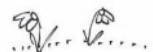


The hedgehogs continued to stay in the garden and feed and drink every night until early August when they always disappear, to where I know not. There were lots of them but I did not see any babies sadly. They still visit occasionally now but have vacated their houses, which gives me a chance to clean them out and get them ready for winter. Hopefully they will be back to hibernate, usually by early November depending how cold it is.

By the time this newsletter goes out, we may well be wishing we could hibernate too, but hopefully there will be some of those magical crisp, sunny, cold days when we can get out even if only for a short spell to clear the cobwebs! And it won't be long before those snowdrops start poking up their little heads...

Wishing you and your families a happy Christmas and a better new year.

Wendy.



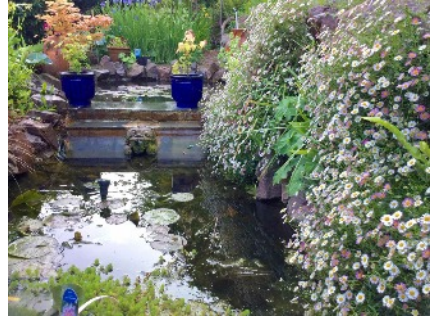
## Chairman's Corner Autumn 2020

Well, what a year! Hopefully we won't see the likes of one like this again; I hope that you have all come through this very strange time safe and healthy. I will not dwell any further!

As I write this on a very warm summer's evening, Mo and I and our little dog Louie are sitting on the small patio by our ponds, the sun is setting behind the trees and a soft breeze is gently moving their leaves; the heady perfume of the flowers surrounding us enhances the flavour of the wine we

are drinking, which seems to taste so different on nights like this, it can only be this wonderful environment that provides the ambience of the moment and makes one feel at peace with everything!

Looking up into the sky, there are swifts flying high above catching their evening meal. It's amazing that to think that by the end of summer, they will migrate to south of the Sahara, thousands of miles away, a bird not much bigger than a penknife can fly that far, I find quite unbelievable. I did some research only to discover that they can live on average for over six years, but it has been known that they can live over ten (the highest ever recorded lived for over twenty one years!) and that during their life, some could travel an incredible 120,000 miles, in effect that little bird could fly around the earth over five and half times. This makes me think how insignificant we all are in comparison!



As the light now begins to fade in the garden, out come the bats flying along their usual route, again feeding on the insects in the air above our ponds and the stream, where the breeding ground of moths, midges, dragonflies and all the other little creatures, seem to come alive all at once! It's just wonderful that we have the privilege of having such a garden, all the work (and there's been a lot of it this spring and

summer!!) has reaped rewards, we've carried out little jobs and projects that normally we wouldn't have done, so we think ourselves fortunate we could keep

ourselves busy, with of course the lovely recent hot weather helping!

Now as the shadows lengthen, I remember how in late winter and early spring the beautiful sound of the skylarks, singing their little hearts out as they rise vertically and so dramatically over the heathland up on the hills...and then the first sound of the cuckoo echoing through the combes, so now, as we are entering the early stages of autumn, I look forward - God willing - to experiencing all those magical sounds and sights again next year.



I have witnessed many things on my walks on the Quantocks, some of which I will write about another time, but I think one of the most memorable was on one early morning, which was particularly frosty, with the hoar frost covering all



the trees and which became even more noticeable as I climbed higher. On reaching the top of Hare Knap, I decided to turn down into the combe, when just at that moment, the sun rose above the hill and sent beams of light cascading down through the trees onto the combe floor, turning the whole area into a brilliant light blue. I have never seen anything like it as the light bounced about the trees highlighting the hoar frost to its

absolute brilliance, a photograph I don't think could have captured such a scene, but it will live in my memory for the rest of my life!

Back to reality - we have sat until it's got dark, collected our glasses and toddled off into the house, to retire for the night to look forward to yet another day, amongst all this wonderful nature that we all share.

I wish you all a very early Happy Festive season, I wish you all a Healthy New Year for you, your club members and families and that you enjoy your gardening, whether it be on balconies, in window boxes, on patios, in pots, acres or allotments and I look forward to seeing you all next year.

God Bless

*Erl*

## Greetings to all Garden Societies in the Federation.

Today (15<sup>th</sup> August) should have been the biggest day of the year for our society, our annual Garden and Produce Show. We usually have between 400 and 500 entries and incorporate a local Hanging Basket Competition, judged and sponsored by our local supermarket management, with shopping vouchers for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Our committee have been trying to organise something to remind members and Stalbridge residents that we are still a thriving Society. This led to one committee member speaking to a neighbour, who had just begun a Facebook Page called "Stalbridge Garden Photos" to which people are invited to contribute. Having had a look at the page, we approached the Page Manager and agreed to collaborate. Whilst we were on a roll, we approached the supermarket manager, who kindly agreed to transfer his sponsorship and judging skills to a Facebook version of the competition. As take-up was slow and many baskets had gone over by the time we got started, we added window boxes and planted containers to the competition, and at close of play, there were around 40 entries!

One unexpected benefit has been that, to date, 18 of the contributors to the Facebook page have asked about how to join our Garden Society!! It seems we each have something to offer each other.

The previous competition on that web-page was for Roses. There are some beautiful examples on show there!

We have just been notified that our village hall will open again next Monday, but the conditions of hiring are quite properly most demanding, (sanitising, social distancing, face coverings..) I think that the average age of our members is late 60s, which makes reconvening at this stage, a bridge too far. We've provisionally agreed to review restarting next April, to enable planning for our annual Plant and Jumble Sale in May.

We'd be pleased to hear of any other initiatives under way, which may help keep our friends interested!

*Tony Moore. Chair - Stalbridge Garden Society.*



## Carry On Gardening!

When we moved here in 2000, there were some shrubs and trees in our front and rear gardens which were relatively small... but one forgets that like children,



they grow...some not as tall as others, depending of course on the genus of the family, some chubby, some slim! Here in the front garden, we inherited some beautiful Camellias, pink, cream, dark red and white (the latter always blooms just in time for the Christmas dinner table!) Back in those days of 2000, they were just above the

front wall...some five feet high (in old money) ... the Kiftsgate Rose that kept company with them, a plump bush of white....Twenty years later, the front

garden - until recently I must add - resembled somewhat of a secret garden through which a mass of spiteful rose branches and now very tall and stout camellias shadowed the lawn and kept a lot of light from the house; a Rowan enclosing the telephone wire (we have no underground cables here!) a thick hedge of laurel, the once tidy bed of flowers in the herbaceous borders stretching to reach an ounce of light and



sunshine and the ground below them, a haven for the odd rat who would appear



from the ditch that runs down the lane to feed from the bird table, the local cat - of course - searching for the rat and the birds either nesting, feeding or just enjoying the safety from the sparrowhawk in the thick foliage which is evergreen throughout the year. To liken the wild inaccessible grounds to the Sleeping Beauty's castle is an understatement, 'though whilst we

certainly don't live in a castle, the area in front of the house would have you believe that behind all this mass of greenery, there could be a small version of the Disney one!

So I say to Erl, 'we need to be a bit ruthless and do some hard pruning, cutting back, we have lots of wasted space...etc., etc.,' and for the last five years, each spring and summer I have approached this subject but Erl says, 'no, leave them for another year' and so it goes on.....BUT, this year, with no shopping expeditions, no holidays, no days out, no coffee breaks with walks at the beach, not even the pub to disappear to of an evening but with the weather being so co-operative, I managed to persuade him, who finally got the gun out of its holster and bit the bullet!

Well, after looking as though I'd been scratched by a hundred cats, despite long gloves, the Kiftsgate rose, (sadly - as she was a beauty) was brutally pruned and I discovered on the way down and through the mass of branches, that half



of it was dead.... It took almost four hours to actually begin this task of clearing and cutting back and another whole day for Erl and our helper to finish it off....Well, what a difference; we had daylight, we discovered amongst all the 'forest' a little hydrangea that must have been gasping for life for the last couple of years and we actually could see over the wall to wave to any passerby!

A couple of camellias were 'trimmed' - but just a little and the earth dug over and since then, has been soaked and soaked, either by rain or hosepipe ready for planting up spring bulbs.... But the Rowan still waves around above the telephone wire and the Camellias could still do with a haircut, but not until next spring, after they have bloomed, and when new planting will begin and beds renewed.

So Covid19 - you were a nasty bit of work, but for some of us, you made us do the jobs we wouldn't normally have done and kept us from being indoors, mooching around and generally being fed up... so fortunately at least, in some way - you did us a favour and we have something to show for it!

*Mo (Plomgren)*



## A letter from Canberra

### When the Bush Capital is filled with a chorus of birds

There are more than 200 species of birds in Canberra, to us an orchestra of Antipodean delight

- screeching cockatoos, galahs and lorikeets,
- whistlers like parrots and rosellas,
- our carollers, the magpie and currawong,
- the iconic laughing kookaburra,
- hooters, like the tawny frogmouth,
- and many others



These are daily Canberra experiences enriching our unique natural environment. What makes this so special is that all these birds are also found in our own gardens.

Here are some of my favourites, with photos from fellow Llewellyn Choir bass chorister, Graeme Taylor.

### Cockatoos and parrots

Cockatoos and parrots are the most visible and audible of birds in Canberra. The most prolific of these in numbers and sound is the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, sounding to the uninitiated like "a thousand squeaky doors" when in flocks. Others include the Gang-Gang Cockatoo and Pink and Grey Cockatoo (Galah).



Sulphur-crested Cockatoo



Gang Gang Cockatoo



Galah

Most parrots are brightly coloured, the most common of which are the Crimson and Eastern Rosellas and King Parrot. The Rainbow Lorikeet is the most spectacular in colour.



Rainbow Lorikeet

As an aside, Rainbow Lorikeets can get inebriated when eating and drinking fermented flower nectar. Not good for their health and survival but in moderation they can be acrobatic clowns when seeking nectar from trees and shrubs.



King Parrot

### Kingfishers

The raucous cackle of the Laughing Kookaburra is an essential feature of the dawn chorus. They have the most distinctive and well-known call of any Australian bird and use a "wait and swoop" technique to catch prey. Snakes and spiders are part of the Kookaburra's diet. They kill their prey by holding it in their beak and beating it against a tree branch or stone.



Laughing Kookaburra

The kookaburra's famous chorus of laughter is part of Aboriginal legend. The cacophony each morning is a signal for the sky people to light the great fire that illuminates and warms the earth by day.

## Nocturnal birds

A frequent bird of prey in Canberra is the Tawny Frogmouth. During the day when roosting, it usually adopts a posture which makes it resemble a broken-off branch and blends in almost perfectly with its surroundings.



Tawny Frogmouth with chicks

To finish where I started ... like us, birds sing because they can and nothing can extinguish the need for song.

Of course, an English dawn chorus is sweet and harmonious. Down under, it's different but equally compelling. For those who are interested, Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe's music deeply reflects Australia and its landscape. English composer David Matthews finds Sculthorpe's music as poetically evocative of Australia as the music of Vaughan Williams is of England.

*Bill Upton  
August 2020*

## With thanks

- Canberra Ornithologists Group "*Birds of Canberra Gardens*"
- David Matthews "*Birdsong and Music*"
- David Rothenberg "*Why Birds Sing*"
- Birdlife Australia
- Graeme Taylor

## **The Ding Gardening Club**

The Ding Gardening Club is highly successful and is well known for its ability to attract a large membership. It holds nine meetings a year, all with excellent speakers. They also have two or three trips out, usually in the summer months, and the Christmas meeting is especially well attended, with its buffet, wine and free raffle. A Spring Flower Show is a popular annual event for members only - no entrance fee, no prizes, just for fun. It fills the hall with wonderful flowers and the perfume is unbelievable. All this for just £10 per year.

The Ding was founded in 1987 and meets in Horton near Ilminster. Its membership is 90+ strong and it averages about 70 people at every meeting.

Until a few years ago it also had an annual plant sale, but found it was becoming less popular - so instead now have instigated a monthly sales table where members donate anything garden related, from plants to tools to the extremely popular cheese biscuits made by the Treasurer! It brings in almost as much as the plant sale, without nearly as much hard work.

So if you want a few hints and tips on running a successful club:

- Have good speakers - not necessarily expensive ones. The most popular meeting of 2020 was six members each speaking for 10 minutes on a variety of subjects.
- Have a mid meeting break for refreshments enabling members to socialise and give a donation towards refreshments.
- Have a sales table.
- Have one or two trips out (even if self drive) so members can go as a group and discuss the gardens they see.
- Don't be greedy - you are not a savings club.
- Above all - enjoy yourselves.

Anyone is welcome at the Ding Gardening Club - young and old - experienced gardener, or new to the delights of plants. Why not go along to one of the meetings as a visitor for a small fee. They usually meet on the first Thursday of the month February to May and September to December.

So its the DING, not the Dang, not the Dong or even the Dung (as we have sometimes been called!).

*Les Bayliss*

*Chair Ding Gardening Club*

## Wellow & District Horticultural Society - Events 2020

Like many other organisations, we have had to cancel several of our planned events this year. However, we managed to hold our first ever "Seedy Sunday" seed swap before the coronavirus took a hold in the UK, on February 16th. Everyone brought along their own seeds to swap, plus any leftovers in bought packets. There was also tool sharpening, a seed potato stall, seeds and plants from Derry Watkins, and a shiitake mushroom workshop. Plus, of course, the usual outstandingly good teas, coffees and cakes! We were delighted to make over £125 for the HortSoc coffers, but only afterwards came to understand it would be unlikely we would be able to spend it this year!

Events we have either cancelled or postponed (so far) include a talk by Chris Sperring on "Rewilding" (luckily rescheduled for October); a visit to Rosie Craddock's "No Dig Garden" in the neighbouring village of Shoscombe; and our annual summer garden party. The final blow came when we had to cancel our annual Flower Show and Country Fair, scheduled for September 5th. We worked hard (especially our Chair, Bridget Woollen) to try to come up with a workable alternative, but in the end, there was insufficient support for us to proceed with any of the various ideas. However, given that several of the RHS's shows, rescheduled for September, have now also been cancelled, we feel we are in good company.

Despite the lockdown, the annual Plant Sale in May was able to go ahead, with some extraordinary planning and management. Instead of the usual social event in Wellow Village Hall, one of our members, the redoubtable Rob Greig, set the whole thing up from his garage. The good people of Wellow and surrounding areas grew and donated an astonishing 1700 plants, which were dropped off, one donor at a time, on a tight schedule. As you can see from the photo of Rob in his garage, the plants were of an exceptionally high standard too.



All plants were listed in an online catalogue, from which people could order what they wanted (until things started to run out, which was only hours into the system going live). Everyone was then either allocated a pick-up time for their order, or a delivery was arranged for them, so no-one came into contact with anyone else, Rob kept his minimum 2-metre distance and gloves were used at all times.

By this point (early May and well into lock-down), we knew that our expenditure this year would be well down (if not non-existent), so made the decision to donate all takings to a local charity, the Bath & North East Somerset Carers' Centre. This was in recognition of the amazing work family carers do, and the very difficult time they were experiencing without any outside help for their

loved ones in lockdown. So, imagine our delight when our very generous purchasers rounded up the cost of their plants to an amazing grand total of £789.25p.



Here is our socially-distanced Chair, Bridget Woollen, presenting the cheque to the Treasurer at the Carers' Centre, Gordon Westwood. Rob is lurking a further 2 metres behind!

Gordon looks very pleased with the cheque!!



You can find out more about us by going to [www.hortsoc.wellow.org](http://www.hortsoc.wellow.org)

Our very best wishes to you all in these strange and uncomfortable times. Keep gardening!

*Avril Greig*

*Secretary, Wellow & District Horticultural Society*

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### **APOLOGIES TO WORDSWORTH - anon**

I wondered lonely as a cloud  
Two meters from the madding crowd,  
When all at once my name was called  
To enter Waitrose hallowed hall.

This was the pensioners' special hour.  
I'd gone to get a bag of flour  
But I forgot, when through the door  
What I had gone to Waitrose for.

The Waitrose staff are very kind.  
I told them it had slipped my mind.  
They asked what else I had forgot,  
They clearly thought I'd lost the plot.

I phoned my wife again to ask.  
She reminded me of this special task.  
"I need some flour to bake a cake  
with all that cream you made me  
take".

"Ah yes, I recall", I had to lie,  
I dared not ask what flower to buy  
But then I saw them next the tills,  
A bunch of golden daffodils.

Submitted by:  
*Nigel & Jeanne Nightingale*  
*Alpine Garden Society - Exeter Group*

## Stopping Plants Drooping Down

This shows a simple technique I have used during lock-down.

It serves several purposes – garden centres were closed so I could not buy metal hoops to stop plants falling over the lawn edge; I used grass that would have gone in the green waste bin if the Council had not stopped emptying it; and it is environmentally sustainable.

*Liz Randall*

*Over Stratton Gardening Club*



Stipa arundinacea is very tough and strong. I cut it, then while it is still green and flexible, plait it into long lengths. I use these as swags to stop plants drooping onto the lawn



## Alliums

What a wonderful range of Alliums we have to choose from. Summer is certainly the time to appreciate them, and to plan for the following year.



Allium carinatum subs pulchellum

Firstly, we need to consider where they could be planted and thrive in the space we have. From a window box, or planter to a garden with long views there are alliums that can thrive, given well drained soil, and as much sun as is possible.

For our members keen on vegetables, in the kitchen garden there are many alliums on offer. As well as growing onions from sets, sowing seeds for spring onions, or at this time of year sourcing young leeks to see you through the winter, have you ever considered growing garlic? There are plenty of tips available on line from The Garlic Farm on the Isle of Wight:

<https://www.thegarlicfarm.co.uk/growing/tips-and-advice>.

I took five cloves off a clove grown in the county and planted them last October, and I look forward to harvesting them in August.

Splitting two chive pots bought as fresh herbs from a well know supermarket chain, over two years, I now have a lovely flowering border which is most attractive to the bees.

In the mixed borders and amongst grasses, the decorative alliums come to the fore in making a statement. The new gardens at the American Museum in Bath use the majestic Allium Summer Drummer.

Last Autumn I added two new decorative varieties to the garden:

After seeing **Allium schubertii** in the wonderful gardens of Derry Watkins north of Bath last year, I bought 9 bulbs planted in groups of three around the garden. This week they are basking in the sun, and the largest inflorescence is over 50cm across. I'll be harvesting the seed heads and using them in arrangements and for Christmas decorations as suggested by Sarah Raven.

<https://www.sarahraven.com/articles/what-to-do-with-your-allium-seedheads.htm>

Another new allium for me this year has been **A. Nectaroscordum siculum**. Planted and viewed with the light shining through, it is easy to appreciate the beauty of the loose nodding umbels of cream flowers, flushed pink with green. These are again a favourite with bees and pollinators. I watched late evening as a bumble bee tried to work out why it kept falling out, as it attempted to



Allium nectaroscordum siculum



settle down half a dozen times before it flew off and found an upward facing flower.

It is quite possible to grow alliums from seed to flowering in a couple of years. One of my favourite smaller alliums which I grew from seed collected from a friend's garden is the gorgeous **A. carinatum subs pulchellum**.



Allium schubertii

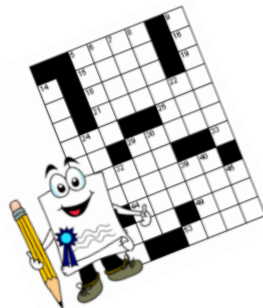
Noelle Mace - June 2020  
Somerset Hardy Plants

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### Spring 2020 Crossword Answers

#### Across

1. Sepal
3. Insect
6. Vegetate
8. Sow
9. Tendril
11. Basil
13. Reaps
16. Aphis
17. Olives
18. Haulm
20. Moss
21. Walnut



#### Down

1. Sweden
2. Aster
4. Sod
5. Trowel
7. Tulip
10. Capsium
12. Peaches
14. Shrub
15. Teasel
17. Onion
19. Mow

## Humes's Blush Tea-scented China



For a decade or more there has been a rose constantly blooming in a large container which is hefted around the garden wherever a bit of added interest is needed. It is a resilient and amiable plant enduring drought without too much complaint when it misses the watering can. It probably deserves much better attention, but some plants are much more tolerant of human neglect than we are.

This particular rose has a story behind it as many do though this one is part of rose history, much of which is told in its name: *Humes's Blush*

*Tea-scented China*. Towards the end of the eighteenth-century parts of the Orient were opened up for trade with Europe and new found wealth in Western Europe provoked an explosion of demand for novelty of tastes and fashion. New garden plants were greatly relished. Sir Abraham Hume specialized in chrysanthemums in his Hertfordshire nursery but he also received specimens of roses from China.

All roses which arrived from China caused a sensation since quite simply they had the reputation of blooming more than once. This was an exciting innovation and new colours too were introduced like blood red. The specimens which Hume received were pale pink with delicate pointed foliage accompanied by a fragrance of china tea. In 1809 the Admiralty gave special dispensation for Hume's plants to be conveyed through the Blockade to that great rose collector the Empress Josephine. This in spite of the fierce war between England and France. The magic of gardening. The great botanical artist P-J Redoute's depiction of this rose has appeared on countless coasters, table napkins and tasteful wall prints.

My own plant blooms cheerfully in Spring, then in Summer with occasional surprises in October and November.

Modest and undemanding it never ceases to give pleasure. As St Paul would say, 'Neat but not gaudy'.

*Pip Harwood*

## A Bee Hotel Project

It's not just the small kids who have been doing fun things during lockdown. Two big kids in Wells have enjoyed making a bee hotel which, as soon as it was erected, had bees queuing up for the vacant rooms! We had noticed a large number of Red Mason bees visiting a patch of our brick wall that's bathed in sun for most of the day. Unfortunately, there were no new holes in the brickwork for them. When we saw four of these gentle creatures 'scrapping' over one hole we decided something had to be done. A couple of days later, a joint effort produced what we hoped would be a 'des-res' for the bees!



In a very short time, the bees had discovered the new hotel and were investigating what was on offer (first come got the better rooms!). About two to three weeks later, over half of the cane tubes were filled and sealed – it was interesting to note that the 'poorer quality' rooms (those with too large or too small diameters) were left till last. However, after another couple of weeks all but 2 of the 65 canes were filled. Just two canes that had diameters that were too wide to be filled, were left.

Our next task will be to take the hotel into our garage in October, to avoid the worst of the weather, and reposition it in March next year, for the bees to emerge in the warm spring sunshine.

It has proved a fascinating exercise. Here are some things we learned along the way:

- Red Mason bees are gentle. The males do not have stingers and the females rarely sting.
- A number of cells are made within each tube. Eggs that will be female bees are laid in the first cells, males in the last ones; meaning that, the following spring, the males will emerge first and then mate with the later emerging females. Hence, not all bees seen around the wall are females looking for homes; they could be males looking for emerging females. Males die after a week or two.
- The females are bigger than the males. Length and width of nesting sites determine gender of bees. The shorter or narrower the nesting tubes, the more males will be produced. The optimum diameter and

length of tubes should be 0.5cm by 15cm. (Which means a lot of bee hotels one can buy ready-made are more ornament than use!) Ours are 13cm long with a variety of cane diameters, which we had cleared of pith and dirt.

- The female bee provides pollen and nectar for each egg in each cell, which is then blocked off by mud. The female dies after her task is completed (4-6 weeks later).
- Unoccupied tubes could be used later in the season by Blue Mason bees or Leafcutter Bees.
- Mason bees are better pollinators for the garden than Honey bees, so it is a good thing to encourage them!

*Erika Smith*

*Wells & District Gardening Club*

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## **Dandelion Facts:**

**Dandelions are NOT weeds, but are from the same family as sunflowers.**

**1 cup of dandelion greens = 535% of your daily recommended vitamin K and 112% of vitamin A.**

**A Dandelion Seed can travel up to 5 miles before it lands.**

**Every part of the dandelion is edible.**

**Up until the 1800's, dandelions were seen as extremely beneficial. People would remove grass to plant dandelions.**



**HR**  
NC

## The Why, What and How of Green Manuring your Vegetable Plot.

Good soil structure is central to the health and success of the crops we grow in our fields and gardens. Plant roots must be able to access both air and moisture and if the soil is compacted this becomes difficult; a well-used path through grass will show poor growth or even bare patches. Heavy rain on uncovered soil will also compact the ground and leach out the nutrients that plants will need the next season. Leaching is especially serious on sandy soil.



Green manures are plants grown specifically to cover the soil when no crop is present, in order to reduce the compaction by rain and to tie up nutrients until next years' crops are ready to use them. The green manure rots down and maintains, or

even adds to, that magic ingredient, 'humus'. This is the organic matter that changes ground-up rock into soil and the more humus you have, the healthier your soil will be.

So, green manures are a good thing and the rewards of using them should repay the time, effort and cost of growing them. You just sow the seed, leave them be and later dig them in.

The simplest, and cheapest, green manure is to let the weeds grow when you have lifted your crop and dig them in before next season. This works reasonably well but you must eliminate all perennial weeds, such as nettles and couch grass, otherwise they will colonise your plot. You must also not let any weeds seed as this stores up trouble for the future – as in the old saying, 'one years seeding means seven years weeding'.

Plants grown specifically as green manure have some benefit over weeds – for example, they fix nitrogen from the air or produce large quantities of material to become humus. I'll give details of two that I use regularly that both have the advantage of not belonging to the same plant family as any commonly grown crop so can be used without disrupting your rotation plan.

### Phacelia

This is a super plant to use. It grows quickly from a Spring or Summer sowing and can be dug in before it flowers – usually after about two months. It is an ideal way to



cover a patch of bare soil when there is a break between crops. Alternatively, the lazy way to use Phacelia is to let the plants overwinter. They will give a lovely show of blue flowers – very popular with insects – and then die down to form a mat over the soil. The earthworms will drag down the remains into the soil and all that will be left for you to dig in will be a few stalks.

To grow phacelia, rake over the vacant plot and broadcast the seed fairly thickly. Broadcasting means spreading the seeds on the soil with an action like dealing cards. Rake very lightly to settle the seeds in the soil and perhaps tamp down gently with the rake held vertically.



If the weather and the birds are kind to you, you will have a jungle of plants about 40cm tall in next to no time. Whether you dig in before flowering or in Spring when just stalks are left, it is an easy job. Once the material is incorporated into the soil you can sow anything you want. (The smaller the seeds, the more uniform and fine the soil needs to be, whilst the larger

seeds like potatoes don't mind quite a bit of un-rotted material.)

### Grazing Rye/Hungarian Rye/Ryecorn

This one goes by a number of names and be careful not to get Ryegrass which is something completely different. Garden seed companies sell small packets as Grazing Rye but if you have a large area to sow, Mole Valley Farmers used to sell it by the sacksful as Grazing Rye – farmers use it to get early grazing in Spring, before the grass gets going.

The big advantage of Grazing Rye over other green manures is that it forms a lot of bulk both above and below ground to become humus and leaves the soil in a fantastic state. One of the big disadvantages is that it forms a lot of bulk which is very hard work to dig in – no need to go to the gym. Even a sharp spade needs a hefty shove to cut through and chop up the leaves, which



are often more than 30cm tall. Next Spring I'm going to run the mower over the plot, with the grass-box of, before trying to dig.



The other disadvantage is that as the plants rot down, they release a chemical that inhibits the germination of the seeds of any other plants. The books say that this effect ceases after four weeks but I've found that it takes longer. Grazing Rye is therefore most useful for plots that are going to be planted rather than sown the next season, such as with potatoes, brassicas and squashes and cucumbers.

Sow from August to November (although I find it does not always come up from later sowings) as for Phacelia but tamp down a little harder. Some seed will not get covered and this will please the birds. I did try sowing in drills but this took so long I gave up – one of those seed-sowing machines that you push along would be ideal but are a bit expensive unless you have a very large area to sow.

#### Others to try

There are lots of different green manures to try, with suitability for various circumstances. If you go to the website for Kings Seeds Ltd., where Sampford Arundel Garden Club members get their seeds at a discount, and search for Vegetables/Green Manures there are a good selection listed, with advice about uses and sowing times. The link below should get you there.

<https://www.kingsseeds.com/Products/Vegetables/Green-Manure>

*Sue Matthews- Sampford Arundel Gardening Club*

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### **A Lockdown Oddity**

A couple of months through this business, my son in Australia remembered my birthday and sent me a copy in the Asterix series, namely Asterix and the Chariot Race (*Asterix et la Transitalique 2017*).

The story went according to the usual plan - the Gauls outsmarting the rest of the cosmopolitan field, particularly the Romans much to the intense frustration of Caesar himself. However, it wasn't until I was quite a few pages into the story that the penny dropped. The name of the Romans' chief participant and favourite to win hook or by crook and roared on by the local crowds was .... *Coronavirus* !

He lost !!

*Pip Harwood*

## Bampton in Bloom

Bampton in Bloom will not have been the only association to have changed its offering to the community this year. We were not able to get plants from our supplier in April and early May while we were in lockdown. Our marvellous local nurseryman spent most of his time delivering garden supplies to us all

when he could get them, recognising that it was only gardening that was keeping us going! Well done Cove Nursery. So no hanging baskets this year. We are pleased to say that we did manage to get most of what we needed to do the usual troughs and garden areas around the town by the end of the month, even if we didn't get our first choices.

We made the decision early to cancel our annual weekend of open gardens planned for the end of June. Such a shame as they were all looking so wonderful but of

course we couldn't social distance or keep to any of the other government rules so it was for the best. We were, however, able to start up a Virtual Bampton Gardens Facebook page, which gave us all a lift and we could compare notes on everything from our seedlings, roses and perennials, to cucumbers, tomatoes and squashes. There were even some lovely shared sunsets and a local celebrity chicken!

We have had the normal challenges of too much or not enough rain, with lots of picking over and deadheading but we hope to make it through to the changeover of summer bedding to winter in October, funds permitting.

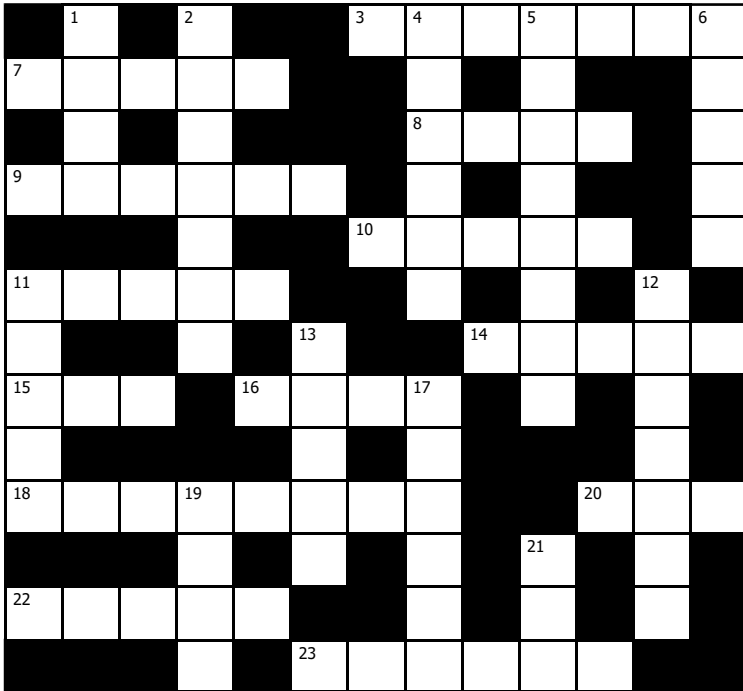
*Judi Chambers*

*Chairman - Bampton in Bloom*





## Gardening Crossword - by John Dunster



### Across

3. A growing source of food and drink.
7. No elm can produce one.
8. She opens up when the lights are low.
9. Six footer perhaps in the religious group.
10. Something juicy for the quiet listeners.
11. Flowery trade union mouth piece.
14. It can grow at various rates.
15. A potential bloomer.
16. A juicy lump perhaps.
18. Come again to harvest the fruit.
20. He holds nothing but a garden tool.
22. A growing source of second class accommodation.
23. Cuttingly do the hush listeners.

### Down

1. It grows right in marshy area.
2. Toss an essayist a flower.
4. A duck lives on fruit.
5. A blooming old maidish English miss.
6. Unwell in the way relating to the pulse.
11. Murphy perhaps reformed the brute.
12. Big and growing Edward lacks a way to enter the back door.
13. Its presumably been growing longer.
17. She's evergreen.
19. Allotment scheme.
21. A half buried seed head.

*Spring 2020 Crossword answers  
on page 17*

## A Wild Garden?

Ours is a wild garden - well, mainly, the rest is just badly-behaved. It is 0.95 acres - (including 2 houses, garage, a shed and 2 greenhouses) Its custodians are a son and stepmother. We are different - 1 likes straight lines, plants equidistant, and no weeds on the flower beds. The other is so laid back she's almost horizontal. (We are also helped and guided for 2 hours a week by a sensible & invaluable person who does all the essential work of sweeping, digging, cutting back, pruning).



In spite, or because of this, the resulting garden is amazingly interesting and unusual.

Wildflowers grow on the grass, scarlet pimpernel shares the chamomile, courgettes mingle with marigolds, nasturtiums creep among the lettuce, ground elder frames the jewel garden, old narcissus bulbs flower among the new beech trees.



There are the well-behaved parts, of course; the vegetables are nursed in cold frames, the soft fruit in cages, the apple trees in the orchard - well, just do their own thing really. Beans are grown in large pots in the (intentionally) wild garden. There are 'Audrey Leadbetter' style flower beds, and hanging baskets.

As far as possible, collected rainwater is used (not possible completely) and 'environmentally friendly' pest control. (Boots and the farmer's hedge are useful). Newts, slowworms, and lots and lots of bees.

This spring a west facing bank was a breathtaking mass of blue and white throughout its 40 foot length, and always the planted beds have been an ever-changing joy.

We are so lucky to have gardens at any time, of course, but this year they are surely an extra blessing.



*Philip & Joan Knowlman - Wellington Garden club*

## Our Crab

When we bought Orchard House in 2006 there was no orchard, although the plot may have been the orchard of the big house next door. There was, however, a single large cherry tree, or so the estate agent's details said, and we waited through spring and summer as the blossom fell, the little red fruits swell only to realise that this was no cherry but a Crab-apple tree, with white blossom and red cherry-sized fruit, possibly the Siberian crab, *Malus baccata*, multi-stemmed and as high as the house, about 15m. It stands directly outside the upstairs study window, and we can see the seasons change day by day, and the attendant wildlife.

Now in early April the tree is coming into leaf, small leaves uncurling, which means a new set of birds to join the usual company of finches, sparrows, nuthatches and tits. In come goldcrests, which are not common in this garden



as they are conifer specialists and next door's spruce has now gone. They are joined by chiffchaffs already and there will be a blackcap arriving before long; taking tiny insects from the unfurling leaves. The topmost branches provide stands for blackbirds, song thrushes and greenfinches to belt out their mating songs, which is a fairly risky undertaking with the sparrowhawk about.

Within a month the blossom will cover everything, flushing pink but turning to white, and the birds become more difficult to distinguish, though the bullfinches arrive. However, as the insect life ramps up not only will the tits be searching for caterpillars but the swallows and martins will be hawking for the insects. Just occasionally,

though much less often these days, we may attract a spotted fly-catcher, always returning to the same branch. But the most obvious feature, as we hang the hammock from the lower branches, is the constant noise of thousands of bees, honey and bumble and including the Tree Bumblebee, a newcomer to these shores. Then we shall notice that some of the blue tits have not yet got their blue cap, so are juveniles, and all the youngsters of many species are lined up, so they need plenty of mealworms and fat. No doubt there will be our annual visit from a great spotted woodpecker introducing its chick to the food sources.

In autumn it will go quiet as the birds vanish into the woods, although the noise is maintained with wasps as well as bees, and the constant blip of little

crab-apples bouncing on the wooden decking, or a plop as they fall into the pond. Unfortunately they are very acid which certainly does not help the pH of the water. Any ideas to help that? Up above the blackbirds mark out their bit of tree to forage, but they are so busy fighting each other they don't notice the finches and sparrows making off with most of the fruit.

As autumn turns to winter so the birds return in numbers, now with added Bullfinch and treecreeper, and that extraordinary sound of the starlings clicking their bills. This is also the time when constant work has to brush away the fallen crabapples, and perilously pick some for jelly-making. One tree takes you up close to life and death, and now one of the five limbs is clearly dead and a line of fungus along the trunk marks the infection. This is, by crab-apple standards, a very large and very old tree, and it is dying. We cannot imagine the garden without it.

*Peter Howard - Exeter Group of the Alpine Garden Society*

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### The Garden Tiger Moth



The Garden Tiger Moth is apparently a common moth of meadows and gardens though this is the first time that I have seen one. It was sun bathing on the kitchen window. You can just see parts of the orange hind wings. If disturbed the moth displays its orange hind wings with blue-black spots



and can produce a clear yellow fluid from two ducts just behind the head to deter predators.

The caterpillar eats a wide variety of herbaceous plants, including nettles (yet again!) broad-leaved dock), water dock, dandelions, burdocks, houndstongue and many other garden plants.

They overwinter as a caterpillar and hatch in the spring.



Tiger Moth caterpillar or Woolly Bear

Tiger moths are decreasing in numbers partly because of tidying gardens for the winter and cutting back hedges.



Tiger Moth eggs on the under side of leaves

*Di Redfern - through Sandford Gardening Group*

## 2020 and Bad Behaviour on my Allotment

No, not people. Plants.

What a roller-coaster of a year it's been! We've had turbulent and rapidly changing weather, going from wet-through after months of winter rain to bone-dry and a heat wave in April then back to storms and gale force winds at the height of summer. We've had – and are still having – all the ramifications of the Covid-19 saga throughout which I'm sure I would have been driven utterly bonkers had it not been for my garden and my allotment, in both of which I have been able to spend more time than usual; and the strange thing is that, while tending both of them, life has seemed so utterly normal. **BUT.**

Along with everything else seeming to be so erratic, some plants and crops on my allotment have behaved really badly – disgracefully – this year while, at the same time, I have had some spectacularly good crops. Firstly, the sweetcorn (a variety I have grown very successfully for years) refused to germinate, except for three out of fifty. It was the same story with a second sowing. I begged them to co-operate, encouraged them with kind words, all to no avail. In the end I used an old packet of sweetcorn seeds that was at the bottom of the seed box, sowed them less carefully than usual, put the little pots in the summer house and told them to get on with it. Every one of them came up and I have actually just harvested a total of twenty-six cobs, all of which, bar two, are now in my freezer. I had similar defiance from the carrots and it needed three sowings and, eventually, a really severe talking-to before they decided to step in line and think about producing a crop. There was more disobedience with the strawberries. Masses of flowers in April and early May promised a large crop which then didn't really happen, apart from one decent picking right at the start. Two of my rhubarb plants grew spectacularly well and I gave away armfuls of succulent sticks to umpteen grateful neighbours. The third one really disgraced itself by dying. My little Victoria plum tree managed to produce only about five decent plums and a large portion of it sulked for weeks and has now died. Such a disgrace. Maybe it had a suicide pact with the rhubarb, a variety also, incidentally, called Victoria. Will I grow broad beans again next year –ever? Despite copious watering and vigilance on my part, they simply allowed themselves to become infested first with blackfly and then with rust and were not ashamed of expiring in full view of my fellow allotmenters. What unseemly behaviour, I don't know what they thought they were doing but it was most embarrassing. But the prize for the worst and most loutish disobedience has to be awarded to the climbing French beans. As soon as they germinated in pots in the greenhouse, the seedlings shot up far too assertively and became all a dreadful tangle. After I had planted them out they took no notice of my reprimand and, egged on by a rather capricious wind, started the most appalling squabble, insisting on growing up each other's poles or simply lying idly about. I separated the adversaries and carefully showed them whose pole was which,

but they took absolutely no notice. However, eventually, and I suppose it was because the weather was too hot for squabbling, they calmed down, became content with sharing each other's poles and really flourished in their new found camaraderie.

Although the allotment hooligans have driven me to distraction and, on occasions, almost to tears, I have had many compensations with A\*\* results and bumper crops from all the well-behaved inhabitants. Particularly noteworthy have been asparagus, sugar pod peas, calabrese, garlic, cabbages, raspberries, greengages, tomatoes and pears. And from the greenhouse the cucumbers, although they have, regrettably, copied the French bean example of trespassing – this time amongst the indoor tomatoes – have been cropping non-stop since mid-June.

I mustn't complain, I suppose, about the unseemly behaviour this season, I guess it goes with the "grow your own" territory. By Christmas, it will all be forgotten and I shall still be enjoying a wonderful selection of nutritious and delicious fruit and veggies.

*Vee Cockerell - West & Middle Chinnock Gardening Club*

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### **Wincanton & District Gardeners Association**



During lockdown, a small group of Wincanton & District Gardeners Association, at safe distancing, managed to plant all the towns planters again this year and it has been greatly appreciated by the townsfolk and visitors alike walking and essential shopping. This



is done twice a year and a grant is normally given by the Town Council. We plan to plant again in the Autumn.

We have not been able to hold any meetings, talks and our flower show is cancelled as well this year.



All very sad but we are not alone in this situation.



*Gill D'Arcy - Secretary Wincanton & District Gardeners Association*



## Final Cuttings

$\Delta x \cdot \Delta p \geq \hbar$



$i\hbar \frac{\partial}{\partial t}$

*An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds  
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,  
The childing autumn, angry winter, change  
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,  
By their increase, now knows not which is which.  
A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Following that bit of Shakespeare, here's an unexpected dose of Quantum Physics for you.

*The more precisely the position of some particle is determined, the less precisely its momentum can be predicted from initial conditions.*

Roughly, you know its position but you don't know where it's headed nor its speed. This, apparently is known as The Heisenberg Principle of Uncertainty formulated by Dr Werner Heisenberg with great excitement in 1927 among brainy quantum physicists then and now, my grandson included to whom I am indebted for trying to explain it all to me. What is clear, however, is that in this Age of Uncertainty, none of us have a clue about the exact situation of our gardening clubs in the future. Next year's plans are lost in a fog of contagion.

All we can do is support each other and keep in contact as much as possible. The Federation can only offer limited provisions but please make use of means such as the website and get in touch if advice is needed.

But ignoring for one moment Titania's grouching, what is certain is, that once the leaves have been cleared away, the bulbs planted and bits, and only bits of the garden tidied up, the snowdrops and daffodils will be making us smile again and we realize that there is always something to look forward to. Keep grubbing on and we shall meet again in our lovely gardens. That's a certainty which even the Herr Doktor H. would not dispute.

To assist programme Secretaries, a second booklet of three quizzes will be available to all member Clubs before the end of the year. Keep an eye on the website for its publication date.

And finally, our thanks to all those who have made a contribution to this issue. It is really heartening to see so many different clubs represented in these pages. Please keep the snippets, photos, stories coming in.

Particular thanks are due to Dave Talling who has arranged and organised it all in such an excellent fashion.

All good seasonal wishes for the coming months and a splendid and better New Year.

*Pip Harwood*

