



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue LXII

Spring 2021

***Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood
sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
bough
In England - now !
Robert Browning (1812- 89)***



Contact Details of the Officers & Committee Members of The Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

President:	Philip Harwood	Tel: 01749 679182
Chairman:	Erland Plomgren	Tel: 01278 741152
Secretary:	Wendy Williams	Tel: 01749 344823
Treasurer:	John Dunster 8, Copse End, Winscombe, N. Somerset. BS25 1JS	Tel: 01934 844777
Asst. Treasurer:	Neil Garnett	Tel: 01935 826939
Webmaster:	David Talling Email: webmaster@sfgc.org.uk	Tel. 01278 741116
Database Secretary:	Mo Plomgren	Tel: 01278 741152
Speakers & Judges:	Sally Hawkes General Enquiries: enquiries@sfgc.org.uk Website: www.SFGC.org.uk	Tel: 01278 652658

Speakers List Updates

Unsurprisingly all the new speakers on the Speakers List have been willing to give Zoom talks. They can be found on the Zoom list and Zoom list update which clubs have already received via email.

Zoom Speakers Intellectual Property

It is important that you seek permission from speakers if you wish to record their zoom talk for future use.

Updates

Change of address:

Mr James Crebbin-Bailey page 9

Red Roofs, Higher Street, East Quantoxhead, Bridgwater. TA5 1EL
01278 741799

Paul Cumbleton page 10, is now Zoom only.

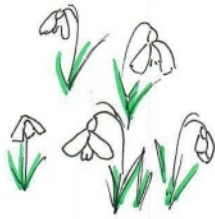
Andrew Tolman page 33, is now on Zoom

Nick Wray page 38, change of email address nicholas.wray@bristol.ac.uk

Withdrawals

Marcus Dancer page 11

Don Everitt page 13



Introduction

*Deep sleeps the Winter,
Cold, wet and grey;
Surely all the world is dead;
Spring is far away.
Wait! the world shall waken;
It is not dead, for lo,
The Fair Maids of February
Stand in the snow!*



Cicely Mary Barker 'The Snowdrop Fairy' (1895-1973) – English Illustrator and Author



It's been a tough time, let's make no bones about it nor dwell on it further.

Spring is on its way, despite that freezing cold spell in February and as I write this snowdrops abound, and with them bring hope and cheer. They are associated with many myths and legends. According to one, they date back to the Garden Of Eden. After God banished Adam and Eve, Eve grew tired of the endless winters (she's not alone in that!) An angel came to her and created snowdrops from the snowflakes and proved to Eve that winter doesn't last forever. Another German legend, which I rather like, is that God asked the flowers of The Earth to give colours to the snow.

The flowers all refused but the snowdrop happily gave the snow its colour. In return, the snowdrop got to bloom before the other flowers. These legends help explain their link with hope. Snowdrops even appear in the Victorian language of flowers: If you hanker after someone and want to know if there's any hope, one should send a posy of snowdrops. And apparently they also protect one from witches! But not viruses.... though Galantamine is used for the treatment of cognitive decline and memory impairment.

There are also more sombre connections, Christians associated them with purity and Victorians planted them on graves, which is probably why they are so often found in cemeteries. Some thought that a resemblance to a shroud brought bad luck and so they were not brought into the home or hospitals. It was even thought that they would cause hens to have infertile eggs! I have heard that about daffodils too.

Enough of that, they are also clever little things. (With apologies to the botanical purists for being anthropomorphic, I was always being told off for that.) They have specially toughened cells at their growing points to enable them to power up through the frozen ground like mini pneumatic drills. This gives them a lesser known common name of snow piercer or in French 'perce – neige', more commonly used. 'Antifreeze' proteins in their cells stop the water in their cells

freezing so although they look wilted or dead during a prolonged frozen spell, they perk up as if nothing had happened once a thaw sets in. They hang their little heads, not because they are ashamed or shy, but because it keeps their pollen dry, and ready for bees and other insects when, at around 10C they will open their petals to allow the bees in. They know there is no point in doing so when it is any cooler as the insects won't be about.

Although we may not be able to visit some of the more well known gardens to see snowdrops, such as Colesbourne and East Lambrook Manor, I hope you are able to see some in your own gardens or at least your neighbour's. Failing that, perhaps in the hedgerows and woodlands.

And we will all look forward to be able to visit gardens again soon and have club meetings (without Zoom) and outings... we won't know ourselves!

Meanwhile, stay safe and keep on gardening,

Wendy.

'Carry on Gardening' Part 11

Since my article about the front garden project in the last newsletter, things have improved greatly! After almost desecrating the front garden and its plants, we had help from a friend who with shovel, rake and plenty of stamina that both Erl and I just couldn't muster at the time, dug over the flower bed and cleared all the weeds and broken roots and provided us with more or less a blank canvas to create somewhere with less maintenance. We bought bags of gravel, (it's amazing how builders yard staff



come flocking to help a woman on her own, no wonder Erl sends me to buy these things....!) We dug ourselves a little path, laid down a liner and before we knew where we were, an altogether different aspect of the garden resulted. We planted up daffodils but, at the time of writing this, its bitterly cold and as yet they all have to bloom. However we do have a few camellias just beginning to flower and later, they will be pruned and the hydrangeas cut back and the grass will be mown and tidied and then no doubt.....I'll be finding something else to do, watch this space!



Mo (Plomgren) February 2021

Mrs Prickles

Although this is not strictly about gardening, I would love to share with you the story of Mrs Prickles who raised her family in a small courtyard garden in Bampton last year. My friend Jeni was alerted by her next-door neighbour that they had a hedgehog in their adjoining gardens. An 8 ft wall surrounded the two gardens with a wooden fence separating the two. At some point Mrs Prickles had climbed the ivy-covered wall to get in there. She even managed to get into the neighbour's house through the cat flap at night to help herself to the cat food! Before long, though, she decided that Jeni's garden would be more safe and secure, away from the cats and so she crept through a hole in the fence under a huge clematis, into Jeni's garden. She then set about constructing a nest behind the summer house, helped by Jeni and her neighbour, who collected leaves and left them out for her to pick up and it is here that 5 little hoglets were born.

Jeni became her carer and foster parent to her babies for 8 weeks – the time it takes for a mother hedgehog to birth and wean her hoglets. Jeni looked after the little family, keeping her distance but putting out food every evening. Jeni and her husband set up a camera to photograph the little family as they grew but at the end of



8 weeks Mrs Prickles had had enough of being a parent and left the little hogs to it! Jeni and her neighbour realised that they needed to find a home for the hedgehogs and sought advice from Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital who said they should try to find a suitable wild place where there were no badgers. Eventually Jeni managed to find a home for them in a large wild garden and after a scramble to catch them all, they were taken to their new home on the outskirts of Wiveliscombe.

You may wonder why this hedgehog was named Mrs Prickles - it is because Jeni has written a book, documenting the story in full and the hedgehog was named by her 9-year-old Granddaughter, who has also illustrated the little book. Jeni is selling these books for £5 and the proceeds will all go to the Devon Wildlife Trust. To find out more just email rogerreading@yahoo.co.uk

Judi Chambers - Bampton in Bloom



Chairman's Corner Autumn 2020

It's raining, I'm sitting in my rocking chair overlooking our front garden and the rain is pouring down the windows and I'm thinking about this article and what to write... I envy those who can look at a blank piece of paper and immediately see text of sentences, words, stories unfold and an artist who can see landscapes, colours and puts pen or brush onto the paper or canvas and without hesitation can begin and bring things to life; it's a wonderful gift! So as I sit and mull all this over, I then remember my last article

back in the autumn and that I promised to tell you of more experiences I have encountered whilst on my many years of walking on the Quantocks!

Four occasions now spring to mind, two involving sheep and two with deer, one of which especially, I know I will never experience again.

All my walks are taken in the mornings, some very early and on this particular occasion during the summer, I was with our two cocker spaniels, Benjie and Toby (now sadly passed away) walking down from the hills to the footpath in Hodderscombe. As we descended, we could hear a lot of noise coming up from the combe and Benjie, Toby and myself hurried down to investigate. On reaching the bottom, we discovered a fully grown doe entangled in wire, (fortunately not barbed!)



As we approached, her struggling increased with Benjie and Toby barking not helping the situation. I put them both on leads and tied them up further away



and then I went closer to the deer which by now was completely stressed and frightened to see what I could do. I have never been this close to a fully grown deer before and the power was incredible, the more she struggled, the tighter the wire became. As I got nearer and nearer, I could see that fortunately for her, the wire was trapped around her hoof, should it have been higher up her leg, it would have cut her, I would think, to the

bone. I would then have been in a very different and difficult situation. I

managed to grab the wire which as you can imagine was as tight as a bow string, and struggled to get it free from her hoof. After what seemed an eternity, I managed to get it all off, the wire springing back with such force it took the skin off four of my knuckles, but a small price to pay to free this amazing animal and I could have received much worse! Off she went without a backward glance of thanks but what a lovely warm feeling I felt inside!

A cold frosty morning, the sun just rising above the hills, Benjie and I are walking through the woods on our way up to Hare Knap. Out of the corner of my eye I could see a sheep lying down, too far to see if it was a ram or a ewe but I knew something was not right. As we walked through the trees it became clear it was a large ram, with a thick long branch caught up in his horns. He stood up looking at me and I could see that the branch must have



been there for some considerable time, judging by the trail he had made dragging it through the trees. It's strange, but as with the deer, when you find yourself in this sort of situation, you do not consider your own safety, all you want to do is help.



It took me a long time to remove the branch from him, all the time, he just stood still. When I finally got him free, he turned his head and looked at me and our eyes met for maybe four or five seconds, I was completely overwhelmed by this feeling and then with that, he turned and walked away!

This experience has happened once before with a large stag and I will tell you about that next time.

My very best wishes to you all, enjoy the Springtime, with all its beautiful new beginnings and I hope very much that at some time, your meetings can resume and that your events can go ahead.

God Bless
Erl

Origanums both Culinary and Ornamental make Delightful Plants for Sunny Well Drained Spots in the Garden.

Culinary Origanums have a sweet warm spicy flavour and ornamental forms are interesting, attractive, and pretty plants in a summer border. Origanums work on several levels in my garden in Somerset. They are easy to grow: indeed, wild forms are common up on the Mendips. They thrive in sunny well drained conditions, and need no watering except to settle them in. Drought tolerant plants are welcome these days.

The 'Herb Lady' in Wells Market is Alison. Her family propagate a wide range of herbs at their nursery: Glenholme Herbs, near Sherborne.

<https://www.glenholmeherbs.co.uk/>

Keen gardeners and cooks always look forward to the exploring the wide range of herbs on Saturdays in the summer. Glenholme has a good variety of culinary Origanums.



The highly decorative golden marjoram: *Origanum vulgare* 'Aureum' is a culinary herb and is delicious in sauces and on pizza. It is also a useful decorative plant as its chartreuse green leaves make a good evergreen ground cover. I have it growing to the left of an upright Rosemary bush. Like all marjorams its flowers are a real magnet for bees, bumble bees and hoverflies.



My favourite green Origanum for flavour from Glenholme Herbs is *Origanum vulgare compactum*. I could not wait to divide it and was delighted to get a second plant later in the season. The low cushion forming plant, with clusters of tiny, pale pink flowers, emphasised by dark maroon calyces, grows in my gravel garden, and would work equally well as an edging plant, or ground cover beneath roses.

Each year I have added ornate decorative Origanums from specialist nurseries, and here are a few of those growing in the garden in 2020.

Paul Cumbleton showcased an excellent decorative Origanum during his talk to Henton Gardening Club on Crevice Gardening. *Origanum Emma Stanley*, with its arching stems of magenta pink bracts, is now a new addition in a small gravel garden. Luckily, I was able to obtain a plant from Pottertons. <http://www.pottertons.co.uk/>



'Kent Beauty' is a prostrate Oregano with blue green foliage and thin trailing stems, with showy plump, drooping, hop-like bracts which are pink fading to lime green at the base. They get longer as the season advances. This ornamental hybrid was introduced by Elizabeth Strangman, a British Plantswoman

Tortworth Plants based in Gloucestershire is one of the nurseries that comes to Rare Plant Fairs at the Bishop Palace, they brought Origanum Bristol Cross.

<https://www.tortworthplants.co.uk>



Taller at around 30cm, Origanum laevigatum Herrenhausen is different on account of the darkness of the foliage and upright stems. These set off the tiny bright pink flowers crammed into the ever growing terminal heads perfectly.

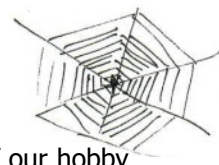
I have found that cutting back after flowering is over, encourages fresh new growth on the culinary marjoram, which can continue to be used through the year. The old flowering stems on the ornamental marjoram can be tidied up at any time, but in any case before the new growth emerges in early spring. I find that cutting back in late October ensures the crowns are not covered with wet decaying leaves.

Why not visit my blog and search for more Origanums:

<https://noellemace.blogspot.com/>

Article and pictures Noelle Mace 2021

Indoor Gardening



One of the simple pleasures of gardening lies in bringing aspects of our hobby into the house. A bunch of flowers on the table, a house plant on the windowsill, seedlings in the warmth, soggy dahlia tubers under the stairs or relics of summer sunshine masquerading as floral art. All this can come under the broad heading of Indoor Gardening. Magazine articles are forever urging the harassed garden owner (who just wants to have a bit of a rest in the sleepy months), to throw open the windows, to embrace new vistas, to grasp the nettle of trendy new ideas and create a mesmerising House of Eden at 2b, Marigold Villas, the envy of all the residents in Lobelia Avenue.

What they omit to tell you is that along with all this interior decoration and cultivation comes some insidious little hazard in the form of clouds of whitefly on the pelargoniums, invisible micro-creatures who drill little holes in the crassula, pesky little black flies which land in the milk jug and so on. Only one action to take. Remember the old army slogan: *Engage closely with the enemy*. For some reason victory, at least in this house, seems unattainable.



Last September a new electric stove arrived to replace the gas one. Out of the blue, a spider took up residence in its web above the new appliance. After a one or two relocations, it is now happily domiciled over the kitchen table. There are in the UK 40 varieties of orb spiders and this is one, the most common or garden spider. Evidently it is a female since this is what female spiders do, but normally, and

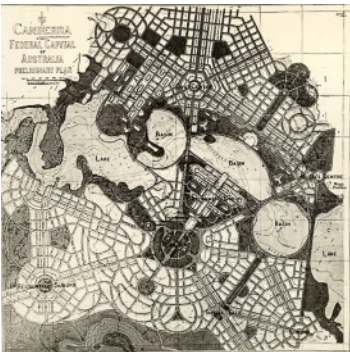
there's nothing normal about these times, they hibernate in crevices and other convenient nooks. Not this one. For months she, for the females build the web, sits contentedly living off the fat of the garden brought in on the seasonal foliage and wintering tender plants from outside. There is plenty of fodder judging by the little black specks in the coffee and dancing in the lamplight every evening. The new guest is without a name as yet, though if it falls into my cornflakes, it will soon have a few. Her status has been raised through a sort of tier system to that of Domestic Pet. Which is brilliant since there are no vets bills to be paid.

Pip Harwood

A brief pictorial impression of Canberra (and regions)

This description of Australia's National Capital is not intended as substitute for Wikipedia or any of the brochures you can access through your local travel agent. Rather it is Canberra seen through the eye of an amateur photographer who enjoys taking pictures.

First up, Canberra, like many national capitals, is a planned city. The original design was by American architect Walter Burley Griffin who in 1912 beat 136 other entrants in a design competition for the capital. This design established the concept of the lake, which is at the centre of Canberra and is now called after him. The lake, which was finally filled in 1964, is substantially the same as this original drawing on the left below. It has substantial scenic and recreational value and provides a foreground for many pictures of Canberra.



Original Urban Plan by
Walter Burley Griffin

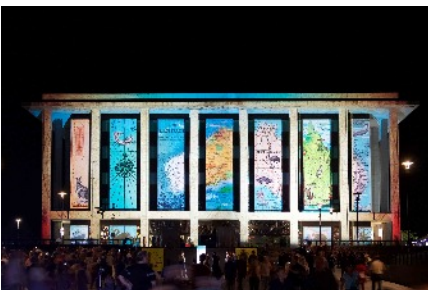


Dragon Boat practice
on Central Basin in
front of the Australian
War Memorial



View of King's Avenue Bridge
spanning the lake

The lake is also the setting for major National Institutions. In pre-Covid times some of these buildings have been used for light displays as part of Canberra's annual Enlighten Festival:



National Library of Australia showing
early maps from its collection



National Science and Technology
Centre illuminated with pictures of a
recently discovered peacock spider

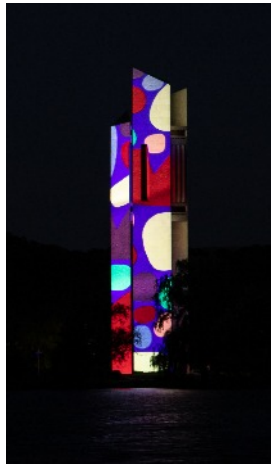
Canberra's annual Floriade is situated close to the lake. Fireworks to commemorate Canberra Day are launched from the lake.



The Canberra Carillon, which was a gift from the British Government to the people of Australia to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the national capital, is situated on an island in the lake. Apart from regular recitals, the Carillon is sometimes lit at night to signify particular events:



Colours of France to commemorate the Charlie Hebdo massacre



Projection of part of an Indigenous Art



Green (St Patrick's Day?)

A variety of water birds have made the lake their home. Black Swans and Pelicans are usually present and white-faced herons are regular visitors.



The new Commonwealth Parliament House was built on a hill above the old one. Despite its elevation it was designed to fit into the landscape of the hill and much of it is, in effect, underground. The most distinguishing feature of the building is the very large stainless steel flagmast which is a major Canberra landmark. It carries a flag 12.8 metres long and 6.4 metres high, which is about the same size as the side of a double-decker bus.

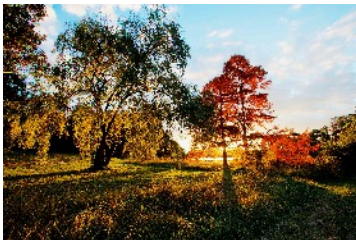


Parliament House from Red Hill



Parliament House from the National Arboretum with full moon rising

Canberra is affectionately known as the Bush Capital (the subject of an earlier Letter from Canberra) because of the close proximity of forested areas and extensive plantings throughout the city. Thanks to careful early tree selection the city benefits from both all round greenery and autumn colour in the season. These photos from Weston Park give an idea of the inner city environment in early autumn.



Canberra is also close to major National Parks, East Coast beaches and the Australian Alps.

Namadgi National Park and the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve are on Canberra's doorstep and has some spectacular scenery and wildlife views.



Namadgi. Wild flowers



Platypus, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

Canberra is not on the coast, but the beach is less than three hours away and is very popular with Canberra residents.



Tura Beach, South Coast NSW

Also close to Canberra and very popular in winter is the Kosciuszko National Park. In late summer the alpine wildflowers are a drawcard for visitors.



Alpine Wildflowers

*Graeme Taylor - Australia
28 January 2021*

Halse and District Gardening Club

Just as we thought we were seeing some optimism for resuming our Gardening Club programme for 2021, we were all hit with the 3rd lock down, which has devastated many lives. As a Gardening Club we offer our thoughts and prayers to so many who have been affected.



It is so hard for us who are in lock down to think of how the year will roll out, but one aspect we shall never be bored with seeing out of our windows is the seasonal changes, and all that is dynamic in nature. Climate change can be seen in many ways which heightens our acceptance of the need for us to do things slightly different.

We see grass seeds growing in December, when it is generally accepted that soil temperatures should not be above 5^o C, and some roses of unknown origin producing small delicate flowers.

Having moved myself into Halse in

the past 12 months I have not been able to fully meet all the wonderful gardeners in my village, yet I have had many a conversation over my wall to passers-by, who offered supporting advice for cutting back a very overgrown garden. Brambles that seemed to be the size of my wrist, along with trimmings and cuttings to fill many a trailer, came



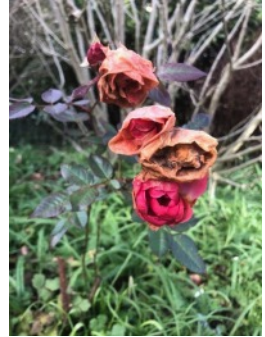
out over the summer to reveal the makings of what was once a beautifully cared for garden. I can only hope we can give it the respect it deserves and the bushes which are cut back can be radiant once more.



Where we have moved soil and recreated borders has exposed high activity of one of our greatest assets.....WORMS. Worm castings are bubbling dark nutrient rich earth from the depths, and aerating areas in so much need of drainage. Followed by the obligatory mole the evidence of a healthily active soil, rich in soil microbes, which

in turn keep the worms healthy, a visual sign that the "soil food web" is functioning as required. (www.soilfoodweb.com)

Although the acid loving Rhododendrons on my alkaline soil may need some detailed attention, the daffodils are bursting out of the ground and priming themselves for colour, which is only currently provided by vibrant purple flowering Heather, yellow Primroses and variegated bushes.



New to our village this year is our community pub, with its outdoor spaces which we cleared of overgrowth last autumn and is waiting for some strategic inspiration. I



feel sure the community will pull together again this spring to create something magical, for us to eventually come out from behind our isolation and enjoy together. How we miss the dulcet tones of laughter resonating through the village from the beer garden. How we miss the stroll through the village to take in the neighbours' borders and wish we had chosen better in ours. How we miss the hanging baskets adorning the walls, Buddleia calling the butterflies and the smell of wild hedges supporting nature at its best.

Roll on 2021 we need you to bring us back some colour and spirit.

*Kevin Ashford
Chair - Halse and District Gardening Club.*





No Let-Up In Winter

In my experience, while there is generally a bit less horticultural stuff to do during the winter, the cold, the gloom and the wet conditions make what is done much more of a chore. Everything seems to take longer, which is very ironic when there's much less daylight in which to do it. Yet, even when the sun seems almost to disappear altogether, the lure of just getting out in the garden or to the allotment is very strong and can be rewarding despite any initial misgivings. So, as I write this at the end of January, I'm wondering what I have accomplished over the past three months while so many activity options have been ruled out.

In the first couple of days of November I managed to remove about 99% of the wretched weed *soleirolia soleirolii* – as the RHS would have it – but perhaps better known to many as mind-your-own-business or baby's tears (I just call it a b....y nuisance!) from right along the north facing border of my garden. I know I haven't eradicated it and that it will be back but..... Then the tender pot plants from the courtyard were transported in several barrow-loads to the greenhouse to be safely tucked up, away from frosts. I had previously removed the defunct tomato and cucumber plants to the compost heap at my allotment and, following a short holiday along my drive, their 20-odd pots of compost as well. The seven red pepper plants which produced a lovely crop in my summerhouse were similarly dealt with. Leaves were raked up and bagged up and the bags also taken to my allotment. A significant project presented itself due to the collapse of one leg of a wooden pergola arch. This project is still at the planning stage except gaining access to the collapsed structure which I have already started. The rest of the garden looks a bit unkempt; well it would, wouldn't it, having been untouched since the autumn? But I know that all it will take to smarten things up will be few days of dry weather without it being too bitterly cold, so that I can get out there with secateurs, loppers and border fork to do the necessary. I mustn't hang about because Mother Nature has already started to do her bit for the spring flower show!

And what of my allotment? There was mixed success with the winter vegetables: brilliant Brussels sprouts, beautiful cauliflowers but celeriac a near-complete failure. I then had to dig up the spent crops (hard, heavy work), dismantle the insect mesh tunnels covering the brassicas and lug the mesh home for spreading out on the lawn to straighten it up. I have removed all but about ten of the early summer raspberries; they had spread and were taking up too much room, their yield had dropped very significantly and the area had started to become infested with bindweed. Golly! That was more hard work and may have to be repeated if the remaining plants don't give a better crop now that they have more light and elbow room. I cut down the spent canes of the autumn raspberries and they are now lying in two neat piles, ready for use as pea supports. There were two major winter projects. The first was the arrival of

some very heavy duty ground cover which I had ordered online. I'm a great fan of covering the forked-over areas of the plot – once they are vacated by the annual crops – with woven mesh to prevent weed growth and to keep the soil just a wee bit warmer during the winter months. I used the new covers to replace the baling plastic sheeting which I have used here in Somerset. But it's not entirely satisfactory: it's quite lightweight and pretty easily torn or pierced. I always anchor the covers down with sacks of stones, old fence posts, sacks of leaves, pots of spent compost from the greenhouse etc. The good news is that the new heavy-duty stuff didn't budge an inch during storm Christoph. The second of these major winter projects was the acquisition of another smaller plot next to my existing allotment. The idea is to provide more room, particularly for growing lots of pumpkins for the pumpkin carving in the village hall event for children in the village – and a few kids beyond. Half the time I'm excited at the thought of having more allotment space, the other half of the time I think I must be totally bonkers. It is quite a large addition but I've told myself I don't have to use all of the space for annual crops – think of all that extra weeding, hoeing and watering! Once the pumpkins are accommodated, I'm thinking that I could have, perhaps, a small apple orchard (well, a couple of apple trees on dwarfing rootstock) and, possibly, a small poly-tunnel to grow more tomatoes and so that I don't have to share the summer house with sweet pepper plants. At the moment the whole area is covered (another bout of jolly hard, heavy work) with the spare, weed unfriendly baling plastic sheeting and I'll just have to see how it all goes. Swallow hard. Straighten back. Optimism.

Vee Cockerell

West & Middle Chinnock Gardening Club.

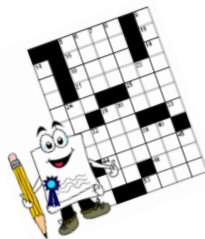
Autumn 2020 Crossword Answers

Across

3. Poppies
7. Melon
8. Iris
9. Insect
10. Pears
11. Tulip
14. Aster
15. Bud
16. Plum
18. Reappear
20. Hoe
22. Broom

Down

1. Fern
2. Lobelia
4. Olives
5. Primrose
6. Seedy
11. Tuber
12. Redwood
13. Elder
17. Myrtle
19. Plot
21. Bur



Garden Time with Sampford Arundel Gardening Club

Some time ago, one of the speakers at a Gardening Club meeting told us about Horatio's Garden. It was a tragic but ultimately inspirational story that we would like to share with you.



The Horatio in question is not the man on the column in Trafalgar Square but Horatio Chapple. As a teenager Horatio had his heart set on becoming a doctor and worked as a volunteer at the Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre, Salisbury where his father, David Chapple, was a spinal surgeon. He was surprised that patients, many of whom were there for long periods, had no access to outdoor spaces. He came

up with the idea of a garden at the Centre and set about finding out what sort of garden patients would like. Overwhelmingly, the answer was that the patients wanted a beautiful space that was accessible for wheelchairs and beds in all weathers. A sanctuary that was in complete contrast to what they were experiencing on the wards. With the help of his family, he began planning the fund raising to turn his idea into reality.

Then tragedy struck. Aged only 17, Horatio was killed. He was on an adventure trip to Norway, organised by the British Schools Expedition Society, when a starving polar bear attacked the party's camp. Horatio died and two other boys and two leaders were wounded before the bear was shot. That was in 2011. In his memory, it was decided to build the garden he had been planning and donations began pouring in to make this happen.



Cleve West, a well-known garden designer who had won Best in Show at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2011 agreed to design the garden. Cleve already knew the Centre as his best friend had been a patient some years before. He used Horatio's research as the starting point and then listened to the views of everyone involved – patients, nurses, therapists, doctors and managers to guide his design. Because the garden was for patients whose mobility would be

limited, he even asked to be taken around the site in a hospital bed and a

wheelchair to understand how to make the garden relevant to the patients.

The garden he designed opened in 2012 and won an award from the Society of Garden Designers. The Judges said: "This is what healing gardens should be like. It has beautiful planting that works with the scale of the building and helps to reconnect people to nature."



The garden is a place of peace and tranquillity, where patients can relax on their own or meet with each other or with their friends and family. There is a long rill running through the garden – a rill is a small stream, typically straight and between paving stones – so there is the calming sound of flowing water. 23 trees give structure and encourage birds, who also add attractive sounds with their song. Flowers and herbs stimulate the sense of smell and grasses give motion as the breezes blow.



When I sat under the arbour, hearing the birds and the running water and seeing the garden around me made me feel as if I was back home in my garden again." – said one patient.

This seems a very worthwhile cause and following the success of the garden at Salisbury, Horatio's Gardens can now be found at four other spinal injury units, including the famous one at Stoke Mandeville (designed by Joe Swift) and one in Scotland (designed by James Alexander-Sinclair). Further gardens are in development in Northern Ireland and Wales and, in time, it is hoped to have Horatio's Gardens at all 11 spinal injury units in the UK.

The construction of new gardens and the maintenance of the existing gardens is paid for entirely by public donations and fundraising events.



Please see the charity's website for more details about the gardens and how to donate – just search 'Horatio's Garden'.

We are grateful to the charity for allowing us to include photographs from their website in our article -we have made a donation to thank them.

*Submitted by Sue & Nick Matthews
Sampford Arundel Gardening Club*

Cilla Helps to Clear the Plot



I had been helping my friend Julie on the Alcombers Women's Institute allotment in Minehead for a few months last year when a fellow allotment holder suggested I take on another plot which was about to become available. My first thought was that I had enough to do with our existing project but I had to admit it was in a lovely situation.

Central to the site, it sits on a slope and has a super view towards North Hill and the sea. Though very overgrown there are lots of fruit bushes, an apple and plum tree and the promise of more goodies hidden away beneath the undergrowth, I was smitten! I received the keys in late May and then it

was time for the hard work to begin.

The council had kindly done a bit of basic strimming so it was possible to get round the plot. The hot dry spell in April ensured that the cuttings were like hay, so easy to rake up revealing the original lines of the veg beds. But what to do with the stuff? I'd already made a number of trips to the recycling centre but wanted to keep that to a minimum and my compost bin was yet to be constructed. Then a thought came to mind as I glanced at a small dead tree trunk on the plot probably once a lovely fruit tree. I'd make a scarecrow.

I do hope that neighbouring householders were not looking out of their windows over the next few days as they may have got a bit of a shock. I started with an old pair of trousers, tied the ankles and merrily started stuffing the legs. Goodness they were heavy to carry when full, luckily I had a shed to store them in to save the vision of a pair of bodyless legs. Then I filled an old t-shirt and stuffed a hessian shopping bag for the head. It was coming along nicely.

I managed to join the head to the body using the handles of the shopping bag and an old jacket covered all the lumps and bumps. More stuffing of the sleeves took place using the dry grass and twigs came in very handy to make hands and hair which was kept in place by my husband's old flat cap. A pair of holey slippers came in handy to use as feet.

Cilla is surviving the winter quite well and so far has only lost a hand which was easily replaced. I don't think she scares any birds at all but as a plot tidier she's been superb. Just between you and me Cilla was originally supposed to be a Cyril but the curvyness of the body due to my overstuffing and a narrow waist made another allotment holder suggest I change the name, I hope Cyril err Cilla isn't offended!

*Rachel Hill
Minehead Garden Club*

For the Love of Tomatoes

My falling in love with tomatoes began when I moved to Somerset in 1996.

I was born in Sussex and enjoyed fruit and vegetable growing in the garden and allotment with my father. When I was eleven years old I tried to get a paper round, but you had to be twelve, so I went to work on Saturdays for a local fruit and vegetable man, who had two 30' glasshouses, to help him work three or four markets.



I learnt to water the tomatoes and cucumbers, boil the beetroot and fill my pockets up for my Mum. Tomatoes were always my favourite.

Time passed, and I always grew a few tomatoes with varying degrees of success. Fast forward to 1996. No work to be had, only a job picking tomatoes at Isle Abbots, near Ilminster.

When I arrived - blimey 20 acres of glass, hot as hell. Was shown the colour to pick; keep the caylx on; fill the box on your trolley; up and down 60' rows. Each box holds 15kgs; hot, covered in green - it was 5 - 6 hours hard work. You had to pick ten boxes per hour. If you didn't do ten per hour you were shown the door.

The men usually made the rate, but the women were in a different class; some could pick twenty boxes per hour.

From picking I swiftly moved on to "trials work". Interesting work as several seed companies supplied a dozen plants each for trials. The growing season was February to October. When the plants were 6" tall you started recording the growth, number of flowers, number set, size of fruit, taste, weight. All were recorded weekly and the information sent to the different seed companies.

I moved on to become picking supervisor in the two 5 acre houses. I had most of the women pickers working for me. If you could keep them happy and picking they picked at a tremendous rate and earned good money on piecework. But you learnt not to upset them, as some came from Chard (sorry Chard).

The commercial growing of tomatoes is an interesting story. I did cobble a bit of talk on this one time when the speaker didn't turn up.

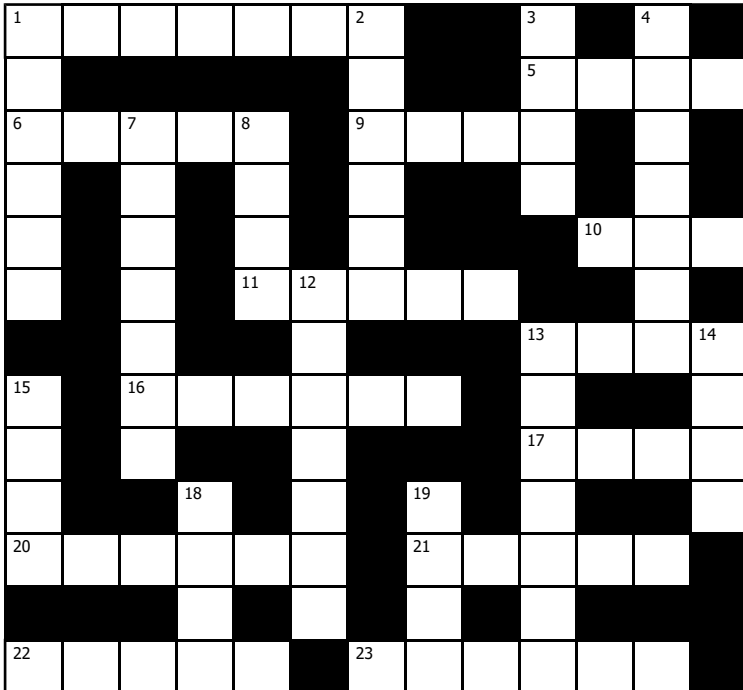
Now retired, I have two 10' x 6' glasshouses at home and grow around 250 plants annually - cherry, plum, beef, standard types. Our gardening club gets a 60% discount from the seed supplier so seed is not too expensive.

I charge 25p per plant (cheaper than Lidl) and make a few bob for the Club, I give some away as favours and sell a few. I also make lots of pasta sauce for the freezer.

Les Bayliss

Ding Gardening Club

Gardening Crossword - by John Dunster



Across

1. Fir cone source
5. Prune and spruce
6. It's earthy and colourful
- 9 & 8 down - A number of trees associated with Covent Garden
10. Plant that comes up in May
11. Shoot the rotten prigs
13. A plant with regrets
16. On a car bad rust that's possibly growing
17. Herb is a wise old fellow
20. Endlessly she makes bloomers all over the place
21. Murphy for instance has a right to public transport
22. A fruit that gives a chap energy
23. Suit apt to show dirt

Down

1. Plant 150 more than necessary
2. Athlete and climber
3. Stop holding up the flower
4. Perhaps endlessly treating with chemical fertiliser
7. Just the plant to border part of the canal
8. See 9 across
12. Garden structure by Olga, cleverly
13. Our beds contain not even one whole plant
14. Tennis star still having growing potential
15. As for beet it's cooked and eaten roast
18. Haul back out of the garden
19. Give up making pots

Autumn 2020 Crossword answers on page 18



Bishop's Palace Gardens

I have been lucky over the past year to have been able to continue working as normal in the palace gardens and during the first lockdown I had an enforced three-month period outside. I was able to entirely focus on the gardens which I thoroughly enjoyed. Although many people joked about how nice it must have been having the gardens to ourselves I actually missed everyone and it never felt right being closed. It is great that we have stayed open since and that a common-sense approach to being outside prevailed. Interest in gardening has grown even more over the past year and I believe the garden retail sector has grown more strongly over the past few years than anything else. It is an extremely healthy hobby and one that need not be costly. It is good that it links well with a growing environmental awareness.

In 2004 we decided to leave areas of the arboretum and rampart bank longer and mow once a year. We were immediately rewarded with lots of common wildflowers and then after about ten years orchids started to appear, both bee and pyramid which were probably from seed blown from the National Trust nature reserve at Tor hill. Numerous bumble bee nests have appeared within the long grass along with voles, shrews and mice which is no doubt why we can hear the tawny owl much more in recent years! Our area is larger than most gardens, but it is still relatively small on an environmental level but shows that it can make a difference, as of course can the tiniest garden.

We have recently created a stumpery under the huge holly oak, which is full of tree ferns, sword ferns, hostas, foxgloves, Epimediums and lots more. It is a Victorian themed area which works well as a contrast within a more formal part of the garden. This summer we need to source more stone to line the bark pathways and some more stumps! As last year we struggled with all the restrictions. We have always looked for inspiration from old sketches, photographs and from the building and bishops. Some of the pictures show a picturesque and romantic style which we have incorporated into the development of the south lawn. The crests of the oriel window (containing a crest of the portcullis) helped us to develop the portcullis knot garden and a dragon that Bishop Jocelin defeated helped us create the Jocelin sculpture. In time our artist in residence Edgar Phillips hopes to create a stained-glass dragon too! There is always plenty to do and create in the gardens and we hope you will be able to visit us this year and see what we have been doing.

*James Cross - Head Gardener
President, Wells & District Gardening Club*



Nectar



Which plant would you choose?



Bee with her pollen basket

As gardeners we are increasingly asked to plant for pollinators but how do we choose welcome plants? Pollinators are searching for pollen plus nectar.

We may think mostly of bees as pollinators which they are but there are others equally important namely hoverflies, lacewings, wasps, butterflies, moths and other insects such as beetles.

Pollen is a fine, sticky substance found on stamens which are the male flower parts. Each plant species has a unique pollen grain. Pollen is usually yellow, but may be orange, purple or even black. Its primary role is to fertilise the stigma or female parts of the flower. so ensuring the survival of the species. When bees visit flowers, they gather pollen, some of which then falls off onto other anthers as they fly from flower to flower.

How do pollinators use pollen?

Pollen is mainly used by bees because it is full of protein plus fats, minerals and vitamins. Queen bumblebees use pollen to engage their ovaries after hibernation, so they can start laying eggs. Bees also collect pollen to feed their young. Some pollinators eat pollen themselves, such as some types of beetle and wasp.

Pollen varies from plant to plant in quality and quantity. The flowers that offer the best quality pollen are members of the legume family (Fabaceae.) such as clovers, peas, beans, lupins and trefoils such as bird's foot trefoil. If lawns were mown less often or even just a patch of lawn left long clovers and trefoils are likely to flower, providing a much-needed source of pollen.

How do pollinators use nectar?

It's a reward.

Plants reward their pollinators for ensuring that pollen is transferred from male to female parts with nectar. Nectar is water containing sugar and pollinators love this but they have to work their way to the nectaries at the base of petals so brushing by the pollen coated anthers as they go leaving some on the stigma of other flowers. Plants and insects have evolved together over many years and so this whole process is very efficient. Different insects prefer different plant shapes and size, so reducing competition. As gardeners wanting to support pollinators we need to find out about this amazing relationship between insect and plant.

Nectar itself is very variable both in sugar content and availability. Bees like nectar to be 80% sugar. For example dandelion nectar contains 50% sugar

whilst apple blossom only 25%. Thus the bee would choose dandelions because it has to spend less energy extracting water and adding more sugar. Some plants produce more nectar than others and are so more sought after. Some plants produce nectar on demand like Penstemons, but it is a very energy demanding process for the plant. Being so sugary, nectar is packed with carbohydrates, which give bees the energy they need to fly. Indeed, it's thought bees can live for only 24 hours without nectar, unless they're hibernating.

Other pollinators use nectar, too, including butterflies, hoverflies and other flies, and some beetles. They all use the energy from the nectar to find mates and establish nests.



Large flowers such as this foxglove are accessible to larger insects like bumblebees. There is a plant shape, 6 in all, to suit each type of visiting insect species. Single flowers are the most accessible because there are fewer petals for insects to negotiate before they can reach the nectaries. Blackberry, apple blossoms and single roses are good examples

Plants use a number of signals to attract pollinators to their flowers, including colour, scent and markings. For example, bees prefer purple and blue flowers. Also, flowers have guide line markings that can only be seen in the UV colour-spectrum, helping to guide insects to the pollen and nectaries.



Pollen Grains

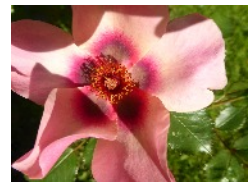
It is important to provide a variety of different plants because different insects are adapted to use specific plants. It is even



Angelica gigas

more important to provide a range of plants for as much as the year as possible especially early and late when food is short and insects may die in their search for food. Bees especially have plant favourites so it is a good idea to plant groups of the same plant together to avoid the insect using too much energy in its search for its chosen flower.

Plants that are umbrella shaped like cow parsley are especially welcome to pollinators because there are many flowers close together so that insects can crawl over the plant without wasting valuable flight energy. Such plants include angelica, fennel, coriander, parsley and many vegetables if some are allowed to seed such as carrots and leeks,



Single roses. You can easily see guidelines

Which plants produce most nectar?

- spring vegetation, such as hazel, snowdrops, primroses, crocus, willow, hellebore, heather, wild cherry, dandelion and hawthorn.
- fruit trees;

- acacia, lime, apple, chestnut;
- woodland undergrowth such as campions, willow herb and meadowsweet and many varieties of geranium such as the cut leaf or meadow cranesbills, knapweed, ajuga and cat's ear.
- Perennial border plants, herbs & climbers sweet peas, lupins, vetch family, wisteria and honeysuckle, echinops, Michaelmas daisy, lavender, borage, marjoram and chives.

*Di Redfern -
through Sandford Gardening Group*

Spring is not Far Away!

Even in the dreary cold wet days of the winter there are still some cheerful reminders that spring is just around the corner. Here are just a few of my favourites.

Some of my favourite plants are in flower at this time of the year. Snowdrops, or to give them their botanical name *Galanthus nivalis* are looking pretty with their dainty white and green heads nodding in the breeze. If you would like to grow more of these in your garden plant them when they are in the green, or in leaf rather than planting dry bulbs in the autumn, as they tend to dry out quickly and not establish. We are fortunate in having gardens in the area open to the public which specialise in snowdrops such as East Lambrook Manor Gardens and Elworthy Cottage Plants near Taunton. Here you can see many different varieties and take your pick from the huge range for sale.

If you like collecting plants (as most gardeners do!) then Hellebores are a great genus of plants to grow, particularly the orientalis types. Preferring cool moist soils in shade, this range of plants will flower for about three months. Best planted where you can look up at the nodding flowers, the addition of dwarf narcissi and hyacinths will complement the colour scheme.

Coronilla glauca is a great favourite of mine showing off fragrant yellow pea-flowers almost continuously through the year. Preferring a sheltered position, it will grow against a wall or fence and happily in a pot.

Daphne bholua Jaqueline Postill is a fabulous plant that produces very fragrant dainty pink blooms on a shrub which will grow to 3 metres in time. Plant it in a sheltered site where you can enjoy the fragrance as you pass by. This *Daphne* is extremely hardy, originally found in Nepal in 1982 by Alan Postill from Hillier Nurseries and named for his wife.

Enjoy your winter garden!

*Felicity Down -
Tintinhull Gardening Club*

Wellow and District Horticultural Society

Greetings Fellow Gardeners. At the time of writing, 2021 promises, I'm sure you'll agree, to be another somewhat odd year, although now, just maybe, there is the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel! At least the blue tits have started to investigate the nesting box and the daffodils are now flowering, which should cheer us up.

Despite the cancellation of 2021's Seedy Sunday in February, we have managed to have a Zoom talk! This was delivered, in early February, with photos, by fellow-villager, Jane Rees. Jane is an excellent photographer, so this was quite a treat. She knows a great deal about the flora as well as the fauna, so not only did we have the treat of her wildlife photos, we also saw and heard about some of the extraordinary plants which grow there.

As gardening is our main strength, it is no surprise that IT skills are fairly low down on our list! So, after various attempts at practice runs (many thanks to those who gave it their best efforts), we ended up having to use the free 40 minutes on Zoom, then have all our audience log back in for the second part. This was remarkably successful and after one more unforeseen Zoom-glitch, the talk continued. How lovely to be reminded there is still a world out there. Everyone was happy!!



By the time you are reading this, we should have already had our next event. This is another Zoom-talk in March, now on its 3rd rescheduling! This one is entitled "Rewilding", by well-known local personality, Chris Sperring. Luckily for us, he has his own Zoom account, so we don't anticipate any glitches for this one (fingers firmly crossed).

As for the rest of the year's events, well, we are planning them as usual (Plant Sale in May, Flower Show and Country Fair in September and with a fair wind, maybe a few other events in between). More decisions on the "how-to-do these" after Easter.

Here are a few reminiscences from the 2019 Show.

Judging underway in the marquee in 2019, cookery classes in the foreground.



And just maybe, once again, we will be able to award our various cups and trophies to this year's winners of the morning's competitions.

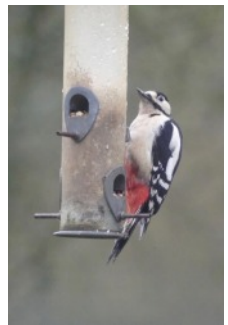


Our president, Alex Martin, receiving a cup from Councillor Butters, for his prize-winning horticultural skills in 2019

All photos above courtesy of member Jane Rees

If this has whetted your appetite, please do visit our website (hortsoc.wellow.org) and look at our photo gallery. Even better, if all goes well, everyone will be welcome at the Show on 4th September!

In the meantime, I am enjoying our bird visitors and hope you are doing the same.



Bird photos courtesy of member Rob Greig

*Avril Greig
Secretary
Wellow & District Horticultural Society*



Final Cuttings

***Always look on the bright side of life
Dum ti dum etc.
M.Python***



What a rum old year! Those of us who are still here are determined to see this thing through.

Many of you and your clubs have seized the moment by the scruff of the neck and, to my own personal admiration, have mastered the mysteries of the Super Technology and have enjoyed presentations with your members with heart-warming success, albeit in two dimensions. So well done, indeed. The number of speakers offering talks via Zoom is growing rapidly and Sally and Mo are terribly busy on your behalf keeping things up to date.

As if we did not already know it, they continue to tell us that gardening is good for the soul, the spirit and our health. More and more folk in fact are discovering flowers that bloom in the Spring tra la! Now we are peering into the future which is what gardening is all about. Let us grasp the nettle whether in your prize-winning window box or a more expansive acreage and set to work. Gentle exercise is the key, though the larger the garden the less gentle the exercise.

All the welcome signs of Spring are coming thick and fast. The first snowdrop, the first daffodil or the first tulip, each one of these emerging from the soil is more than enough to melt the heart of the crustiest hard-centred curmudgeonly being.

To all those who have contributed to this issue, a huge thanks to you. It is really very gratifying to receive so much support, especially this year. So please keep the flow of information moving. And we are all greatly indebted to David Talling, who has controlled the technicalities of it all.

Finally, two acknowledgements. To all of you who have kept your Clubs going one way or the other. It is a tribute to your tenacity and commitment that the Federation membership still stands at a total of 220. And you have found ways to do it.

The second vote of thanks must go to your Committee, as a sheerful bunch of enthusiasts who like yourselves have stuck to the task of keeping the Federation on the right track.

Keep cheerful and keep looking ahead to things to come.

On behalf of your Committee have a peaceful Easter and successful seasons following.

Good luck!

Pip - Hon. Pres.



