



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue LXIV

Spring 2022

***So, he scraped and scratched and scabbled and scooged,
and then he scooged again and scabbled and scratched
and scraped, working busily with his little paws and
muttering to himself, 'Up we go! Up we go!' till at last,
pop! his snout came out into the sunlight.***

Kenneth Grahame *Wind in the Willows*



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	Tel: 01278 652658

General Enquiries: enquiries@sfgc.org.uk

Website: www.SFGC.org.uk

Website Update

For an up to date list of Speakers and Judges, please refer to the Private area which the Club contact person can access by using a password that is issued by request. This will ensure that Speakers who are no longer available are not needlessly contacted.

The Private area also includes Quiz Questions (and answers) that can be downloaded. The Constitution, A Year on my Allotment booklet and Federation accounts are also available for viewing and downloading.

To gain access, the registered contact person should contact David Talling (webmaster) by sending an email to: webmaster@sfgc.org.uk

Introduction

*Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.*

*Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.*

*And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.*

A E Houseman *A Shropshire Lad*



Signs of spring, both flora and fauna, are appearing, blinking, opening and stretching in the sunshine and hopefully our clubs are also emerging from what feels like a long enforced hibernation. Although many have kept going via Zoom, newsletters and outside meetings, and some got going again in the autumn, I know many have been more cautious and are only now starting indoor meetings again. I hope these all go well for you all and that members return with enthusiasm along with committee members who are like gold dust or rare hybrid snowdrops, valuable and sometimes hard to find. Sadly a few more clubs have folded for various reasons but we are very pleased to welcome two new clubs, Cowick Lane Allotments and East Huntspill – please do get in touch if there is anything we can help with.

We are optimistic that there will be an AGM this year. Holford Gardeners' Club have kindly offered to host it on Tuesday 17th May 2022 and invitations will be sent out in due course.

There have been quite a few amendments to the Speakers & Judges list which was last printed in 2020, although this has been kept up to date on the members section of the SFGC website. Please contact David Talling webmaster@sfgc.org.uk if you wish to access this. A new list has also been printed and will be sent out to members.

As I write this we are in the midst of Storm Eunice, probably the worst storm we have had in a while, and I hope you have all come through without too much damage. It does seem the way of winters these days and does more damage to our gardens than several nights of minus 10C. My own is quite exposed so everything is tied down or put away but a lot of destruction still occurs.

Despite having cleaned and cleared the houses, the hedgehogs have decided they are not up to scratch this year. They have checked them out and may have had an overnight B&B as there are hedgehog shaped holes in the dry leaves inside but no permanent residents. I am expecting a formal complaint. But on cutting back the leaves of my hellebores I found a perfect hibernacula with one fast asleep, so I piled a few more leaves on top and left him or her to it. Fickle creatures, one does one's best. Food and water is still going when the weather is warmer so others are visiting from surrounding gardens.

Enjoy spring and summer in your own gardens and the many more private and public ones that will be open with restrictions easing, and enabling club visits to be more adventurous. NGS booklets will be sent out to all clubs shortly so do support these if you can.

Wendy Williams

Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Annual General Meeting

Hosted by Holford Gardeners Group

7pm - 17th May 2022

**Holford & District Village Hall
A39 diag. opp. Plough Inn
TA5 1SD**



Refreshments on arrival.

6.15pm Doors open - 7pm AGM

Followed by - Guest Speaker

Dr. Tim Upson - RHS Director of Horticulture

Light supper - Plants for sale - Raffle

<https://www.SFGC.org.uk>

2023 SFGC AGM - Your help is needed.

If any Club is willing to host the SFGC AGM in 2023 then please do let us know at the 2022 AGM being held in Holford or by contacting the Chairman on:

Chair@SFGC.org.uk or Tel. 01278 741152

Chairman's Corner - Spring 2022

As many of you know, Mo and I have lived in Holford in our current house for almost twenty two years, with a garden just over a quarter of an acre. Other than growing shrubs, flowers and a few trees, the garden is purely for the wildlife that live and visit. In all the years we have been here, we have never used anything to harm them, we are purely organic and pesticides/slug pellets have never been used within our boundary! It always amuses me when I read or hear of gardeners out of an evening, with a torch to catch and kill slugs and snails. Not once have we ever had to use that method, we believe there is

a balance and by investing in decent bird feeders and an area laid aside for two compost heaps both giving homes to slow worms and small mammals, growing flowers to attract the bees and the butterflies, everything seems to thrive quite well. Our mature large hostas growing by the stream are pretty much intact all through the summer, until later in the season when they suddenly seem to be juicy enough for them to be nibbled and then a few holes might appear! Our garden is truthfully more than enough for us to cope with, but we do have a little help each week or so for the mowing of the grass or trimming the hedges and this is very much appreciated.



Before clearance

after ten years and would not require this plot anymore, we discussed the possibility of taking it on ourselves, not to cultivate it for any purpose other than to keep it for the wildlife. The owner was happy for us to take this on and the first job was to have a lot of the ground cleared of brambles, rubbish, barbed wire and ferns which were over five feet tall! We hired a company to do all this work and then we discovered we had five ash trees, each around thirty feet tall affected by 'ash die-back'. These trees are eventually going to be felled but we

You may wonder then, why on earth we have decided to take on the rental of a plot of land adjacent to our garden - which in itself is about a third of an acre. This area was up until last summer rented by our neighbour, but is owned by a person who Mo and I know and who lives in Hampshire and which has been in his family for a couple of generations. We live in a conservation area, so building of any kind is a no-go (thankfully!) and as our neighbour was moving

have asked the lads doing the job to keep as much of the trunks standing as possible, which hopefully can be used by woodpeckers, insects and small mammals. The top branches will be placed around the edge of the site creating a dead hedge, alongside the already cut down brambles and ferns, which will create a haven for the wildlife. Some of the posts around the site were loose and rotting at their base. I found some lengths of steel piping which I cut into five foot lengths, and punched into the ground in front of the posts, using a sledge hammer and wired the posts to them to make them all secure; it was hard work but saved us a lot of money!



Walking around the site this morning, I noticed bulbs shooting through, some I think have never seen the light of day for years. We have placed two benches up at the top of the plot so on a summers evening, we can sit quietly and enjoy the serenity and listen to the bird song.



After clearance!

For Christmas the family bought me a 'wildlife' camera, after carefully installing it on one of the trees, have captured some pictures - not of a deer or a badger or any other little animal, but only of me !! - early days.....!

I look forward to writing to you all again in the autumn, to let you know how we are getting on...but I have a little suspicion that Mo is

planning something, I saw her reading the vegetable section of the seed catalogue!

I hope you all have a successful gardening season and that your clubs can now look forward to holding your meetings and events again this year.

God Bless,

Erl

A letter from Canberra

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." Chinese proverb

There are 900 species of eucalypts in Australia. My stories are about

- Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*):
- Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*)



Blackbutt grows mostly in north-eastern New South Wales, either in natural habitat or plantation. It grows up to 70 metres tall and 3 metres in diameter. Mature plantation Blackbutt grows to about 40 metres.

The wood is hard and strong and is used for building construction, flooring, posts and poles.

Internet photo: native Blackbutt forest



Internet photos: Blackbutt decking and flooring

Jarrah, from the south-west region of Western Australia, can grow up to 50 metres with a width of 3 metres. It has been extensively logged for its dense, dark-red hardwood timber. It has been used in bridge and wharf construction, flooring and general building but its qualities are best seen in fine woodworking, furniture and cabinet making.



Internet photo: native Jarrah forest



Internet photo: Jarrah flooring

Following retirement from the Civil Service in 2000, we moved to acreage in northern NSW. It was there we met Chairman Erl's brother, Kjell and his wife, Joan. We lived about 2 km away.



I decided to establish a small Blackbutt plantation and the experience was fulfilling-preparing the ground, planting, tending and maintenance. We started with 50 mm tubestock in 2002.

The only problem was basal sweep, defined as *"a tree whose trunk is inclined from the vertical at ground level, then curved upward so that the rest of the main stem is upright"*. This occurs in some plantations with hot, humid conditions in the first few months after planting. Basal sweep affected only 10% of our plantation, better than the industry average.

Our business plan was necessarily long-term as blackbutt plantations take 18+ years to achieve 90% mature timber density and up to 30 years for harvesting. We had planned to produce high quality logs for plywood and poles but moved from Tyalgum.



Today, the plantation (photo opposite) stands tall but, sadly, it has not been commercially optimised.

Kjell and I had worked on a plan to prune and thin regularly, leaving the best trees more room to develop, with sales of smaller cuttings as logs and posts ... but that's life.

I also tried my hand at woodwork when living at Tyalgum.

A local cabinet maker had been awarded a Churchill Fellowship and, after his return from overseas study, we talked about building tables from Jarrah.

He was opposed to clear felling of forests and hated to see waste. He liked to use recycled and salvaged timber where possible.

We discovered some rough-sawn Jarrah planks, probably 100 years old, in an old barn and thus began my "apprenticeship". Two coffee tables took some 9 months to complete. It required patience, which was not easy for me, but the end result was worth it.



I also decided to build a small dining table and benches using glued laminated Jarrah, where dimensioned timber sections are bonded together with structural adhesive. Most of the work was done by a furniture maker on the NSW north coast. The results were equally satisfying.

Bill Upton - Jan 2022

A Frosty Night in Coldshowlder



I get out my slides, my notes, the projector, the stand and the screen and the map. I'm speaking at Coldshowlder on 8th - the 8th? My gosh that's tomorrow night and I haven't had a call from the secretary!

Maybe I've got it wrong, maybe they've got it wrong! I'll wait until this afternoon and then phone her. She seems rather bored but confirms and due tomorrow, and "Remember it's our AGM, so come at 8 not 7.30... You do know it's our AGM don't you?"

No, I didn't. This is the first I've heard of it. "Well, it was in the letter I sent you", she responds briskly. I checked the letter - it wasn't mentioned nor was the later starting time.

We arrive - the AGM is winding up and as people start to move around organising coffee etc. I look for someone to say hello, to welcome and so on. But no one appears to notice us at all as we lug our equipment over to the front of the hall, hunt around for a table and power points for the projector, and erect our screen. We are invisible - the chairperson sits at her table, writing busily, head down, no smile, no greeting. I approach a member. "Who is the secretary?" She points vaguely at two women deep in conversation. I approach, they glare. I introduced myself - a slight baring of teeth by the Hon.Sec. and a perfunctory nod.

No pressing the flesh, no welcoming words! What sort of place is this? I am accustomed to delighted welcomes, handshakes, sometimes even a hug and a kiss. I can't believe it! "How long do you want me to speak?" I ask. "As long as you want." She turns back to her companion. "Do you want a break in the middle?" "Suit yourself." She replies curtly. Right? Five consecutive hours without a break, sunshine, no toilet stop and you'll be lucky to get home before one in the morning!

It's past eight. The chairperson has delegated someone to bring us coffee, again no word was spoken. Is this a silent order I've wandered into? I moved to the front ready to start. The Chairperson gathers her papers, indicates me with perfunctory gesture. None of the usual pleasantries, and away we go. Talk about a warm up act. A cold hostile audience like this would floor even the cockiest northern comedian! I'm not daunted, in fact I'm in fine form. I give my

introductory patter, a few jokes, the sort that usually creates an atmosphere for bon homie, before the real business starts..... no response at all!

Do they speak English or is this a ghastly mistake! Am I addressing a party of refugees from Chechnya or should I suggest a mass visit to the loos for everyone to get comfortable, and then a fresh start? Perhaps it's a simple surfeit of coffee. That must be it! I persevere, slinging everything at them, masses of gardening info, excellent varied slides - something for everyone - but not this bunch. They sit in stony silence and I find myself laughing helplessly at my own jokes, keeping the slides on just a little longer so they have time to respond to a particularly interesting shot, pronouncing foreign names in an over the top way, and very reluctantly, not allowing myself to start doing funny impersonations and silly voices to add zest.

At the end, I feel I have given it the performance of a lifetime. I'm totally exhausted, sweat pouring off my face, legs wobbly and as I finished triumphantly, one person gives two tentative hand claps, followed by a deafening silence. This is incredible! I can't believe this. What sort of people are they?

The Chairperson rises wearily to her feet and mutters "Well thanks for that - and now John has a really interesting vegetable to show us."

The vegetable is triumphantly produced and the audience goes wild - hooting, laughing, clapping until the rafters ring.

Now, I know what I should have done! Hang all the talk, hang the slides. All they wanted was a rude parsnip! Well, why didn't they say so? I could probably have provided a saucy pumpkin as well! But will I go back again? No!!!



They can promise me that they will press my flesh - a handshake from each member of the club, a bear hug from the secretary and even a kiss from the chairperson, complete with bags of clapping afterwards. Nothing can tempt me back to Coldshowlder.

Jane Harwood

Championing Colourful Camellias

"In the bleak Mid Winter frosty winds made moan. Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone." *Poem by Christina Rossetti.*

The words of Rossetti's poem 'In the Bleak Mid Winter' has seemed particularly apt following the bitter cold of January and February.

Our gardens have been largely stripped bare of Summer's lush foliage and colour, but Wintertime doesn't mean that the garden is entirely devoid of blossoming cheer, despite the cold.

Dainty snowdrops, crocus, a range of miniature narcissi and early primroses are just a few early Spring blooms that venture forth and brighten winter's darker days with their subtle colour palettes of white, cream, and pale yellow.

But shrubs, particularly evergreens such as the Camellias, can also play an important part in the winter garden, providing structure, definition and fantastic colour.

The glossy evergreen leaves of the Camellias look good all year round, but the bonus is the gorgeous display of vibrantly coloured flowers in shades of white, pink or vibrant red that burst forth during late winter and early spring.



Origins: Originating from China, there are 250 known different Camellia species, and thousands of Camellia varieties to choose from in varying size and flower forms of single, semi double, anemone, peony, rose and formal double.

Many of you may know that one kind of Camellia gives us tea, so if you are enjoying a cuppa whilst reading this article that would be apt!

Perhaps a lesser known fact is that in Latin, camellia means "helper to the priest" and was named after the Jesuit botanist, Georg Joseph Kamel who practiced pharmaceutical botany in the late 17th century.

He is known for his work in the Philippines, where he lived for more than 20 years dedicating his life to discovering new treatments from native plant sources.

Although there is no record of Kamel working with camellias, the flower was named after him by Carl Linnaeus to commemorate his many contributions to the world of pharmacy.

Flowering periods: Two of the Camellia groups flower at different times. Camellia sasanqua cultivars pictured here flower in Autumn and winter.



Camellia japonica and Camellia x Williamsii cultivars flower in later Winter and early Spring.



Pictured here in bud Camellia Japonica Dr Burnside

Planting positions, soil requirements:

Most Camellia cultivars prefer partial or dappled shade, although Camellia Sansasqua will tolerate a sunnier position.

Plant camellias in a sheltered position, away from cold winds and early morning sun.

Above all, Camellias need to have their roots in ericaceous soil. If your soil isn't ericaceous, either grow your Camellia in a container filled with ericaceous compost – available at garden centre outlets - or if you are planting into the ground, fill the planting hole with ericaceous compost.

Water the Camellias regularly when first planted, and remember to feed them in early Spring with an ericaceous fertilizer. We actually feed our Camellias with ericaceous fertilizer more often.

Pruning: Prune after flowering if needed, and keep well-watered through the summer, because this is when the plants produce next year's flower buds. For us, watching the buds slowly fatten and begin to show colour at the tip extends the enjoyment of the Camellia season.

Camellias can actually be pruned very hard, though only if necessary. One of our Camellias is known as "The Rescued Camellia", because we rescued it from being thrown in the tip!

Our Rescued Camellia.



This lovely mature Camellia, its blossoms a beautiful pink/red, had been totally hacked down when we saw it in a village garden. Just one thin little branch remained, but it had a bud!

We took it home, planted it in the garden in ericaceous compost, and kept our fingers crossed. We'd read that Camellias could be pruned almost to a 'hat stand' shape, and still survive. Well, this one did, reaching a height of well over 6 feet and rewarding us each Spring with a profusion of blooms.

Bonsai Camellia

Camellias are favoured as bonsai for their flowers that appear in profusion, so if you fancy trying your hand at Bonsai cultivation, three species in particular are commonly used:



Camellia japonica, C. reticulata and C. sasanqua.

Overcoming problems: If camellia flowers fail to open, it could be due to frost damage. Direct sun in the morning can also dry out the developing flow-

er buds too quickly, drying the outer petals and preventing the flowers from opening.

Brown patches on camellia flower petals are caused by camellia flower blight. It is caused by a fungus, *Coborinia camelliae*. Although the effects are similar to frost damage, with blight, the whole flower is affected, with flecks on the petals, and they will drop early. There's no chemical solution so remove any affected blooms as quickly as possible and clear away any dead leaves and debris from the base of the plant. Bin or burn them to prevent further contamination – do not add to the compost heap.

Yellowing leaves are caused by lime-induced chlorosis. It's due to high alkalinity in the soil and means the plant isn't getting enough iron. If your camellia is in a pot, repot into fresh ericaceous compost and give the plant a feed with ericaceous plant food. If it's in the ground, add a layer of leaf mould, composted bracken or composted pine needles and treat with a product that contains chelated iron or sequestered iron.

Sooty mould on the surface of the leaves is caused by leaf scale insects that stick like limpets to the undersides of the leaves. We lost one of our Camellias years ago as we didn't know how to treat this problem until too late. Use a soft soap solution, formulated specifically for plants, to wipe off the insects and the mould.



Camellia Japonica Lady Campbell

Finally:

Camellia flowers are said to symbolize love, affection, and admiration, and eternal love or long-lasting devotion.

Each colour is said to have its own special meaning.

- White camellias symbolize adoration and is given to someone who is well-liked.
- Pink camellias symbolize a longing for someone and is given to someone who is missed.
- Red camellias symbolize love, passion, and deep desire.

Julie Hill - Sampford Arundel Gardening Club

All Set to Go Storming Ahead

I'm not entirely sure why I hadn't done the usual autumn clear-up in my garden. Perhaps I was too busy putting my allotment to rights after the fair amount of havoc caused by storm Arwen, including the almost complete destruction of my new polytunnel. Perhaps it was just laziness. It might have been a case of having too many other demands on my time. Maybe I'm just getting slower at doing things. It's possible I was simply fed up with all things horticultural – what with the polytunnel business. Anyhow, for whatever reason, with a fairly long and dry period in January - pretty unusual for that time of year - and being motivated by a quite strong sense of guilt, I decided that I would get out into the garden and give it some serious attention. So, starting between the fence and the greenhouse at the end of the garden, I slowly, methodically worked my way around, anti-clockwise: raking up leaves from the borders and the lawn; cutting back and hard-pruning shrubs, particularly a deutzia Monbeigii, and a rogue Virginia creeper which, by last September, had covered the greenhouse; weeding; cutting down last summer's dead stems; forking over the newly cleared beds; removing dead specimens. The work was all pretty difficult and mostly quite hard. The weather, although dry, was cold, gloomy and overcast. The amount of debris necessitated at least a couple of trips each week to the tip. "Put it on the compost heap", I hear you cry out; the trouble is that the two 1 cubic metre compost bins at my allotment are currently completely full! My shredder worked overtime. My hands seemed to be permanently cold and I pretty much exhausted my repertoire of bad language in the battles against the persistent and invasive weeds.

Slowly I have inched my way round the garden and am now only some 30' from my starting point. I've had a good old sort out of just over half of the main, south facing border; you'll remember I had made the "strategic decision" last spring to leave it and get on with other things. I've cut the spiraea right back which had grown over a section of a stone seat nearby. I remember watching my father making the stone seat when I was about 9 and, dismantled for both of its subsequent moves, it has accompanied me, from its original site beside a lily pond. It's now on a circular paved terrace in the north east corner of the garden which catches the early evening sun in the summer. With a tranquil view diagonally across the length of the garden, it is my favourite spot to sit in the evening and enjoy a glass of wine while the light gently fades. Further along, other plants have received some drastic treatment: a viburnum bodnantense Dawn which had started to assume monster proportions and, not without considerable regret, I have cut down a cytiscus Boskoop Ruby which had become completely misshapen, was growing forwards more than a metre or so over the lawn, and had completely engulfed the rather decorative pump handle still in place above the now disused and covered well alongside it. I shall miss the mass of striking burgundy coloured flowers covering the cytiscus in June (but I'm

toying with the idea of acquiring a replacement in due course) but the previously inaccessible ground beneath it is simply infested with ground elder which I can now get at and dig out. The very large stone jug on the well cover, positioned so as to appear to be for catching water from the well pump (!) is now fully visible and makes a rather striking focal point.

The rest of the main border still requiring my version of a good old sort out includes pruning a climbing rose - possibly Kiftsgate - that, true to its nature, has climbed and entwined itself into an apple tree to a flowerless height of some 20'. (Luckily I recently treated myself to a brand new pair of telescopic handled loppers which should be just the ticket for doing this particular job.) There's a variegated cornus *Elegantissima* which needs cutting down to the ground so that the new deep red stems which will regrow will be even more striking during next winter and, anyway, much as I love the dainty, fluttery leaves from April to October, this shrub has also got totally out of hand. It's the same story with an *eleagnus ebbengii*, with a *physocarpus Diabolo* and its deep reddish-brown leaves, with a *rhamnus*. And as for the silver leaved and silver stemmed *teucrium*.....Hopefully, once I have reined them all in, I'll be able to give the *philadelphus Belle Etoile* some much needed TLC - but I've got to find it first! I still have what I call the "secret garden" behind the shed to clear and sort out - about 10' by 15' - which will be interesting, but I'm looking forward eventually to walking along the stepping stones there to watch the huge hostas re-emerging and to keep the clematis plants in touch with the pergola they are supposed to scramble over. With its spruced-up look in time for the spring the garden is already rewarding me with newly opened snowdrops and daffodils and the fragrant flowers on a couple of *sarcococca* - one by the gate into the garden and the other as I walk past on my way to the greenhouse.

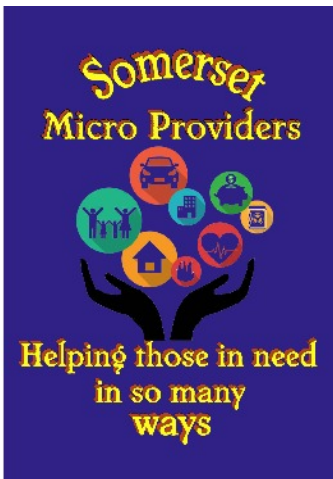
I have also managed to have a mega clear-up in the courtyard and to attend to the front garden (a narrow raised bed with a 2' high retaining wall running along almost the entire length of the house), as well as sweeping up the piles of leaves accumulated since last autumn at the side of the road by the retaining wall. The very evening after I had finished at the front of the house I opened the front door to a visitor, to see a large amount of straw at the edge of the road all along the front of my house, straw that had obviously been dropped by a passing lorry. The newly-achieved but short-lived cared-for appearance had been most satisfying and had felt worth the effort, so you can imagine my dismay - no, let's be honest - my frustration and fury at what really was the last straw. So, there I was, the following day, going over the whole sweeping up exercise again. But then storm Duncan blew quantities of the ***** straw from other places to the area I had cleared, necessitating yet another session with the broom, but storm Eunice finally blew away every last straw. However, I suspect that storm Franklin - which has been raging outside while I have been writing this - will have blown a whole load (literally) of other debris against the

retaining wall. No wonder gardening is a non-stop activity. But, storms permitting, one other garden job I must get on with is to cut the grass which seems to have kept growing during the relatively mild winter. But the mower is still being serviced, so the grass will have to wait a bit longer. Then of course, I'll have to turn my attention to the allotment. All the seeds are here, ready and waiting. Hopefully I'll catch up with everything before too long.

Vee Cockerell, West & Middle Chinnock Gardening Club.

Somerset Micro Providers

Not many people may know of the army of registered professional self-employed people that can offer care and support within your home.



Since 2015 self-employed care workers have signed up to the community catalysts programme, founded by Somerset County Council. The programme which supports people in their own homes, enabling hundreds of people to remain in their familiar surroundings. The scheme has proved successful as now the membership has grown to over 360 micro providers, working across Somerset today.

What makes this level of help different is micro providers can offer a friendly one to one level of affordable care, tailored to customer's needs. The micro provider can plan their work Rota so that they can meet the times that customers want them to arrive, having a familiar friendly face, has

also benefited customers and has taken the stress out of getting the professional care that they need. Micro providers are local to their area and can support each other when cover is needed for sickness or holiday leave.

For micro provider to join the accredited scheme they must be DBS Checked, have appropriate training, relevant insurance, and policies and procedures for their services.

What do we do? anything and everything to enable someone to stay at home. We can be cleaners, carers, dog walkers, and gardeners.

There is a full list of micro providers on the Somerset County Council web site and your local Village Agent knows who works in your area.

For any more information on Micro Providers across West Somerset please contact - Vicki James on 07475 803652

Slugs and Snails

'And my garden is now admirably beautiful, and were it not for Slugs and Snails would be inimitable. But these mucilaginous Molluscs have eaten all my Higher-cynths and also, my Lower-cynths'. Edward Lear 1883

Slugs and snails still feature in the Top Ten garden pests as they undoubtedly did in the nineteenth century. In a very early issue of this newsletter there was a serial list of ways to deal with these creatures. In fact the list eventually reached the targeted 101 methods recommended - both civilised and barbaric and plainly desperate. Here's a sample:

1. The Hammer. Simple, satisfying, messy.
2. Mow the lawn at night. Simple, satisfying, messy.
3. Do we have to mention blue pellets? Lethal to everything, ground beetles as well.
4. Hunt out hibernation quarters with mallet or machete. Look behind ivy, ferns against a wall. Again, simple, satisfying and sadistic.
5. Bung them next door. We've all tried that one.
6. Midnight searches with torch and kebab skewer.
7. Play their favourite tune '*Lettuce, I'm dreaming of you*' on comb and paper and they will follow you down to the bus station, refuse dump etc.
8. This is ace. Have you tried a pet duck? It may require a little light salad after feasting but you won't have any more pests, except the duck, of course.
9. Hostas are good slug fodder. Place hostas in pot. Place pot in shallow tray of water. No holes in foliage. In theory.
10. These creatures love bran, which makes a good diversionary food. It fills them up resulting in loss of appetite for your tender lettuce. Not convinced? Move on to ...
11. Plant a row of lettuce with a clear notice: **FOR SLUGS AND SNAILS ONLY**. This makes them members of an exclusive and elitist club.
12. Copper wires at ground level attached to car batteries make a good deterrent. Up the voltage if desired!
13. Replant your whole garden with hanging baskets. Ask yourself: Were snails and slugs a problem in Babylon?
14. If you can't beat them, **EAT THEM!** Word will soon get around and that would scare them off.

15. Snails hate crossing copper wire. Surround your vegetable plot with a pest- proof mesh of interwoven copper threads and the job's done!
16. Spray your plants and beds with washing-up liquid. They hate baths and it foams up nicely when it rains as a bonus.
17. Slow worms and grass snakes are brilliant native predators. Encourage them into your garden and if that fails, how about a Puff Adder or Banded Krait?
18. The Gibbet Principle. Leave the remains of your previous hand to hand encounters lying around to deter the rest.
19. Rats, yes, rats. They eat anything; so encourage not discourage.
20. Here's the Answer - the Cannibal Snail. Yes, it does exist. *Testacella haliotidea* has a small shell attached to its tail and it feeds on slug species. Bravo!

Pip Harwood

Plants for Pollinators Quiz.

There are 4 wildflowers and 4 cultivated plant flowers. All grow well from seed saved from year to year. Each plant is likely to attract different pollinators and at different times of the year. Of course, there are many more!

Name the following:



A



B



C



D



E



F



G

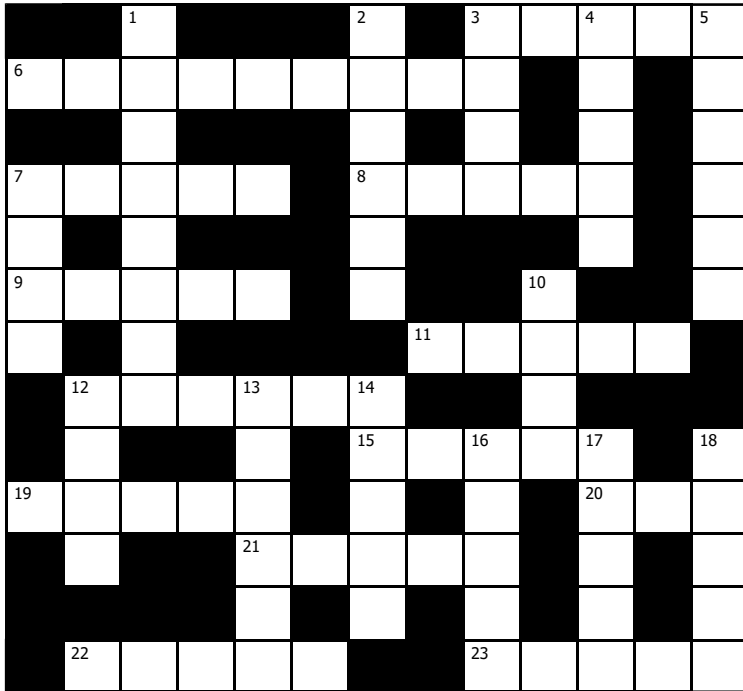


H

Di Redfern

Answers on page 26

Gardening Crossword - by John Dunster



Across

3. In the garden with much clever topiary.
6. Tree for which Caledonians yearn.
7. Tether the French tree.
8. Louts break up the plant.
9. Heather has one to care.
11. Vegetable for which seed is scattered out west.
12. Supplies of flowers.
15. Special rates for seeds.
19. Sweet extract of asparagus.
20. It is seedy but has some appeal.
21. Gathers spears possibly.
22. Allotments for deprived pilots.
23. A few flowers to treat with insecticide.

Down

1. An expert in all sorts of blooming things.
2. Cultivator at the helm.
3. One takes a step to destroy it.
4. Only half the tree is wood, rubbish.
5. Willowy line in roses perhaps.
7. Vegetable doesn't sound waterproof.
10. Give up producing some nice delphiniums.
12. Hit that pest.
13. It might be uprooted but not with a stick.
14. Wheat stalks as treatment for warts.
16. Being thorny can cause some sores.
17. Impale fruit for the last of the Mohicans.
18. A plant the poles have to pay out for.

Answers in next Newsletter

Make Do and Garden

Gardeners have a long history of thrift. Saving seed, reusing compost bags, making leaf mould the list is endless. A very useful habit in our current challenging times particularly as it has been difficult to source some items and the looming increase in the cost of living together with a desire to impact as little as possible on our environment is uppermost in my mind.

However, in the spring of last year it was very much 'needs must' when a shed was removed from our garden (taken by a friend and rebuilt on his allotment) only to reveal some loose concrete pavers laying on the ground below. Not the continuation of the existing patio I had hoped to see. Initially I contacted some businesses with a view to having the patio professionally remade but with no success. Everyone was very busy and I began to hear that there were shortages of building materials. I felt a bit guilty desiring the perfect patio and decided that a homemade makeover was a better idea.

With a bag of cement and some sand (if you read my previous article about the removal of our fake grass you may remember I had plenty to hand!) together with some grit usually reserved for topping pots but also useful to make an edging between the two different pavings, I set to work. The result is a serviceable bit of patio where I have placed a table and chairs, edged with heuchera and ferns.

The new patio area is situated in a corner next to the house. To provide a bit of extra privacy for the sitting area I realised I needed to screen a section of open trellis on the top of our fence. I had planted a climbing hydrangea to do this but



progress is slow. I thought a willow screen would be ideal but it seemed a waste to order a

length when I really only needed to cover part of the fence which had the trellis topper.

I solved the dilemma quite unexpectedly with the help of storm Arwen. I was taking a walk following the storm and noticed that pathways were strewn with debris from the surrounding trees. The fine, pliable twigs were ideal for me to weave into a screen. Now the result is hardly glamorous but it's very effective, lets the wind



through and I hope to cover it with annual climbers come the summer.

I do try to think of cost effective ways to garden and also to use my small patch to the maximum. One of our supermarkets had a pack of broccoli seedlings on their discount shelf in early autumn. As I have a number of pots I thought I would try to grow the broccoli alongside the existing plants. It's been quite successful, particularly in the company of our little olive tree. It seems a shame to harvest it as they appear to have become good friends!



I hope you also enjoy a bit of thrifty gardening, it can be a lot of fun trying to think of alternative ways of using something. We enjoyed a ready made trifle at Christmas and the packaging isn't going to waste. As the bowl has a lid I have a mini greenhouse and will sow some tomato seeds in it, can't say the results will be as tasty as the trifle but we will have to wait and see.

Rachel Hill, Minehead Gardening Club



One Swallow may make a Summer.

It seems so sad that the number of swallows that migrate to us in summer is declining so drastically.



Flies of all kinds, beetles, moths and aphids are just a few of the enormous variety of flying insects that a swallow is catching as it skims, turns and dives with breathtaking agility over pastures, hedges and mature trees. All the better if there are sheep, cattle or horses grazing. They attract even more insects.

The swallow whilst in flight, can somehow tightly pack a mixture of insects held together with saliva. Such a bolus would typically include 11 large and up to 40 smaller items

which are fed to the young. A pair of swallows is likely to make between 10 and 25 visits to the nest every 30 minutes, depending on the time of day, availability of insects and needs of the young. Bringing up three youngsters from hatching to fledging needs approximately 1000 visits to the nest over 21 days. Exhausting work.

An awful lot of insects are needed. However evidence shows without question that insect numbers are declining- perhaps because of the intensification of farming with more mono cultures and fewer ponds, orchards and meadows plus the routine use of pesticides.



My turn!

New housing takes up former farmland. Each leads inevitably to the loss of habitats and food sources for many including the swallow family.

Swallows seem doubly threatened. Their traditional association with humans means that swallows have a particular liking for buildings – barns, porches and stables in which there are ledges or solid rafters on which they can secure their nests. These are made of individual pellets of mud cemented together with grasses into a beautifully symmetrical cup shape. Such a nest takes about 10

days to construct and another day to line with feathers. Once built it is likely to remain as a permanent home for future generations of that family, unless, of course, it is removed. It is astonishing that nests are destroyed because of the mess created over the breeding season.

The modern trend for barn conversions means eviction for many swallows. How shocking that after a huge migratory journey (6000 miles approximately) back home, the swallow finds no home. Added to this is our penchant for tidiness, and security, meaning that once open garages, roof spaces lofts and barns are now sealed against all intruders including swallows, swifts and bats.

Throughout the UK swallow nests are legally protected if they have eggs or young but nests not being used are not. However swallows always return to the same nest so this does not help the swallow. The state of the insect is equally hard to address without changes in the type of grasses sown and with the return of more sheep and cattle grazing out of doors. The increase of horse keeping and provision of stables seems a positive step for the entire swallow family.



How to catch a tumbling youngster.

Gardeners can play a huge part too. Creating a variety of habitats will encourage bio diversity including an increase in insect species, whilst cutting a swallow- sized hole in a shed/garage door will give access to a bird but not to an intruder (not even a cat or squirrel).

Swallows are birds evocative of summer days. It would be terrible to take them so much

for granted that we miss the stresses from which they may well already be suffering.

Friends of mine love their swallows so much that they hang umbrellas beneath each nest to catch baby birds that fall out and then they can be returned to the nest!

Let's look forward to the return of more swallows this year and perhaps we can do our bit by encouraging insects and providing and keeping traditional nest sites.

Di Redfern

The Tale of two signs – Bampton, (just in) Devon



In the early 1990's Miss Burke, the Art teacher from Bampton school, designed a new painted wooden Sign to be erected in the centre of the town. Bampton's middle school closed in 1992 and many of the pupils were involved in bringing ideas together so that it could be ready as a commemoration. It was an important piece of Bampton history and will be fondly remembered by many residents and pupils alike. Time, however,

marches on and by 2018 it was beginning to rot and the features on the Sign were no longer clearly visible. Bampton in Bloom look after the floral decoration and planting around the Sign and it was decided that they would fund a new one. A local artist, Barbara Beckett, was responsible for the design, using some of the elements of the old sign and adding features of the town both historically and now. Brian Littlewood, a master at his craft of woodwork offered to carve and construct the new oak sign in his spare time. Three years on, it is complete and standing in the same place as the former Sign. The town is hopeful that it will stand for many years to come.



Judi Chambers - Chairman Bampton in Bloom

Autumn 2021 Newsletter - Crossword Solution

Across

- | | | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| 1. Victoria | 6. Privet | 7. The earth | 9. Pecans | 10. Lily |
| 11. Derris | 16. Garden | 17. Resown | 18. Bolt | 19. Root |
| 20. Meddler | | | | |

Down

- | | | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 1. Vetch | 2. Creeper | 3. Aphis | 4. Sickles | 5. Nettle |
| 8. Reaps | 11. Digit | 12. Redwood | 13. Marrow | 14. Henbit |
| 15. London | | | | |

Pollinators Quiz - Answers

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| A. Knapweed | B. Bird's Foot Trefoil | C. Field Scabious | D. Hogweed |
| E. Echinacea | F. Michaelmas Daisy | G. Foxglove | H. Echinops |

Our Allotment

The local allotments have hardly changed in the almost six years since we gave up our two half-plots. We had taken on one half-plot in 2010, when the whole site was new, and a little while later, we took on the one next door too. A lot of my earlier memories were down there, from helping to plant the hedge, to the muddy, wet day when we all pitched in to help sort the drainage. I admit I never really appreciated it then, especially when I had to walk past the itchy borage with bare legs! But my brother and I could always be occupied by cycling around on our bikes, or going down to the manure heap - which was enormous at the time! - to fill up the wheelbarrow, a task that always took twice as long as it should have!

But when my parents decided to home-educate my brother and I in 2016, my mum didn't have the time to look after the plots too, so we had to give them up. Since then, we've been cultivating our more manageable garden, which, though yielding comparatively little, has still helped us out in contributing something to our plates. Our fruit bushes have kept us in jam, which has necessitated clearing out an entire cupboard to keep it all in! This year we also preserved the usual surplus of runner beans - which thrive in the moist soil by our compost bins - by freezing, salting and in chutney. In addition, we were blessed with lots of apples, plums and blackberries from friends, customers and hedgerows!

Yet, though we do very well here for fruit, our garden is too dry and exposed for potatoes - our staple - and we've dug over all that we can reasonably dig! And since I began the RHS Level 2 course in Horticulture, by correspondence, in September, space to apply what I learn to practical situations became increasingly enticing. On our lockdown walks, we used to walk past the allotments and look to see if there were any plots that looked vacant!



Then in the early autumn, through our contacts in the Horticultural Society, our names were put on the Allotment Society waiting list. We were then contacted by the Society's Secretary about two plots that were available - a half plot and a full - towards the end of January. We viewed them a few days later, and decided the half-plot was much too small for our needs. If we were going to have a plot, we wanted to make it worthwhile. So, within a week, the full plot was ours.

Perhaps we were a little mad, for the plot is entirely covered with tarpaulins, having been untended and overgrown for some time. But I don't suppose we'd do very much if we *weren't* a little mad!

So, the day after taking it on, we were down there, pulling back the first tarpaulins and starting to dig it over. It didn't take very long to assess that our heavy clay soil is in need of plenty of manure to get it into a healthier state. But while we wait for spring and the possibility of a full load of manure being delivered, we are working hard to get it all dug over, remove all the tarps, and turf out all the rodent residents who have had a lovely time tunnelling away under cover. We met one the other week while we were digging up his house and we're hoping he and any friends have scarpered!

Our progress however, has been hindered by our recent positive covid tests. Some of us had had symptoms for days before our tests turned out positive, and had done a great deal of digging in that time! Typically, we were well again for most of the subsequent isolation period, and when we would normally be out and about again after a cold, we had to sit around vegetating at home! Those of us who have now had our two negative tests are trying to ease ourselves back in, but with one of our team still in isolation at the time of writing, it does not seem quite fair that we should be out enjoying ourselves. Hopefully we'll all be back to it soon.



After a couple of weeks

In the meantime, we have been planning our first crops, and looking forward to being free to visit our favourite little garden centre for seed potatoes and onion sets. One crop we are especially looking forward to is the Carlin pea. A heritage variety, this brown pea used to be a staple in England, especially in the North.

The plants are stocky and strong, with lots of tendrils (though they support themselves fairly well) and pinky-purple flowers. The peas are left to dry on the plant before harvesting. They are soaked overnight before cooking. In the North, they are traditionally simmered in water until just soft, then seasoned with salt and vinegar, or rum and brown sugar. These 'parched peas' are eaten on Bonfire Night, or on Carlin Sunday, the fifth Sunday of Lent, which this year is April 3rd. Or whenever you fancy some, which is what we do!

We grow these from traditionally grown, British organic peas which we buy in bulk to eat. As we have been able to grow only a few plants in the confines of our garden, much of the harvest is saved for seed. This means that they should gradually develop a tolerance of our local conditions, and when we grow them down on our plot, hopefully we will get a successful crop!

Esther Clark - West Huntspill Horticultural Society

How was it for you? Keeping a society together during Covid

In 2020, the Uplyme and Lyme Regis Horticultural Society had a bumper year planned, with over 30 events. We managed a film show, two talks and two trips before Covid struck. Then, like everyone, we faced the dilemma of what to do. After all, it was going to be over by late summer - wasn't it?

Many of our members live alone and our society is an important social forum, so we initiated a newsletter to keep people in touch, sending postal versions to the few without email.

In April 2020 committee members provided photographs, plant swaps, local suppliers open for business and a recipe. As we got into our stride and others contributed, we added online gardening activities, news from national gardening bodies and virtual garden tours. Eventually we ran to 21 issues and every edition produced thank you notes, which made the effort worthwhile.

Our annual May plant sale was cancelled but one member had loads of veg plants well under way when Covid struck. Instead, he sold them from his driveway, we publicised it well to our members, and the plants sold out quickly, raising much needed funds for the local food bank.

With no live speakers, we experimented with Zoom. A virtual coffee morning with volunteers tested both the technology and the experience. Buoyed by this we created our own Gardeners' Question Time, two 'show and tell' evenings of members' gardens, a quiz, and a 'Marmalade Matters' session. From December 2020 to June 2021 we Zoomed with external speakers - when we realised that our own endeavours had been much more challenging technically to organise!

Back to summer 2020 and we took our summer show virtual. We created special publicity posters, cut the classes to 12, and ran it for fun. Tubers for our Potato-in-a-Bucket competition had already been distributed so we asked people to photograph and submit their results. Our website photo galleries went live at the opening time of the real show. Over 40 people submitted nearly 80 entries, a very positive result. We turned our autumn show virtual too, with 39 members sending over 130 entries.

Early in 2021 we opted to stage our July summer show. New plans included outdoor distribution of competition potatoes and plants, a one-way marquee, fewer competition classes and last-minute catering changes to cope with a late extension to Covid restrictions. Around 1,000 visitors came, really appreciating a 'normal' day out.

After that life went roughly back to normal, although Omicron scuppered our December 2021 meeting.

Looking back, our early action meant there was virtually no gap in contact with members. And at our postponed AGM in late 2021 one member proposed a motion thanking the committee for keeping the society going – very gratifying.

We recruited nearly 70 new members during the Covid period and even though others will have moved on, we're hopeful our 2022 numbers will hold up well, keeping our society vibrant and viable.

Tricia Boyd - Uplyme & Lyme Regis Horticultutal Society

Final Cuttings

Like Mole, after many a long month underground we emerge blinking into the sunlight and if we don't feel as if we are 'rolling in the warm grass of a great meadow', at least there is a more optimistic note this Springtime. I heard a radio presenter talk about the 'ship of state sailing towards the sunny uplands ' which was an odd mixture of metaphore but we knew what he meant. The weather always dominates any gardening activity and this winter has been both mild and ferocious. All you clubs, however, have been patiently tenacious and deserve congratulation for having survived in reasonable fettle thus far. Caution still hangs in the air but a more normal calendar seems feasible. So, well done and may you continue to thrive as the social contact of congenial and regular meeting is such an important element of a gardening club's function.

Furthermore I would like to extend, on your behalf, thanks to your Federation Committee who have been quietly putting and keeping things in place to enable you to proceed with confidence. Updating lists and contacts, revising and amending speakers names and details, juggling with the vagaries and complexities of subscriptions and insurance, keeping the website up to speed, as well as solving minor and major problems at long distance, your Chairman's team under his lead, has kept the Federation successfully ticking along. So well done to them and well done to you!

Happy gardening for the rest of the year!

Pip Harwood

