



NEWSLETTER XIV Winter 1996

And Winter slumbering in the open air
Wears on her smiling face a dream of Spring.

If a certain bag of bulbs lying in a corner of the shed is left unattended, Spring next year will remain a dream. My own difficulty here lies in the fact that I now have no recollection of where I wished to plant the bulbs for maximum effect. Last April, it was easy; the garden was full of obvious gaps. And I know for sure that I shall spear a burgeoning hyacinth or two with my trowel. Feeling s of guilt all round...

We begin the Winter Newsletter with a warm welcome to new members: West Bagborough Dunkswell, Central Somerset Green Gardeners, Stogumber and Milborne Port. This brings our membership to 138 clubs. If you know of other clubs or secretaries who would benefit from Federation support, then please let me know.

SPEAKERS & JUDGES REGISTER

All club secretaries are now in possession of the new edition. Please look after it, since these lists are for the exclusive use of member clubs only. I hope you find it convenient to use. The SFGC Committee would like to underline the need for the programme organizer to confirm a Speaker's suitability by having a short chat on the telephone before a firm booking. We have in mind here things such as communication skills, personality, knowledge and appropriateness of the topic. Should these be felt to be less than satisfactory, then Hon. Secretaries are asked to notify the SFGC Committee. Likewise, if you encounter any difficulty, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or any Committee Member; we are there to help. A list of names and telephone numbers of the SFGC Committee was published in Newsletter XII. Deletions and additions to the Register are printed separately - please add new names to page 21. I should be grateful if Hon. Secretaries would let me know the name and address of any speaker or judge not on the list, whom they would recommend.

FEDERATION QUIZ

A pleasing number of clubs have been quizzed. Allegations of interrogation have been totally without foundation! As things stand at the moment, the two leading scores are held by Moor Gardening and Link-up Gardening Club A with 64 points and 59 points respectively. These two teams are not yet assured of a place in the Final; they could be toppled in the next few months. West Somerset Organic Group are about to swing into action... It is planned to hold the Final at the Annual General Meeting at Cannington on Tuesday 13th May 1997.

HORTICULTURAL TWINNING

Our towns do it with their foreign counterparts, so why not gardening clubs? Chedington & South Perrott have made a start. Ron Hewitt, the Chairman, tells me that they have had a most enjoyable and successful exchange visit with Piddle Valley Gardening Club, viewing each others gardens. This strikes me as a splendid idea. Where will it all end? Who will twin next? Please keep me informed.

INSURANCE

The Federation Public Liability and Cups & Trophies Insurance has been taken over from 1/11/96 by G.A.Bonus Plc, a member company of General Accident, who, incidentally, were our insurers for the first three years after the scheme was introduced. We are assured that the terms and conditions of the cover of both Public Liability and Cups & Trophies remain unchanged, and the excesses of £250 and £50 respectively are also the same.

All Clubs will have received full details of the schemes and the premiums for 1996/7 with their subscription notices in September. It is possible to join at any time by contacting the Chairman or Treasurer.

SOMERSET WILDFLOWERS MEADOW APPEAL

As indicated at the Annual General Meeting in May, the Federation was contacted by the Somerset Wildlife Trust with a view to asking member clubs for help in raising funds for the Wildflower Appeal. After all, native species from whatever country of origin form the basis of our garden hybrids. Each Garden Club will probably be approached by Franchesca Denning, Fund raiser for the SWT, but in the meantime, she writes as follows:

Can Your Club Help Save Somerset's Wildflower Meadows ?

This summer Somerset Wildlife Trust launched the Wildflower Meadows Appeal to raise £200,000 to purchase this rapidly disappearing part of the English countryside, and to encourage greater understanding of why wildflower conservation is so important.

In the last 50 years a staggering 97% of Britain's wildflower rich meadows have disappeared and over 300 species of our native wildflowers are now on the brink of extinction with many animals dependant on this habitat fighting to survive.

The Trust has found several meadows to purchase and the challenge is to now raise £30,000 from sympathetic gardeners to buy at least one of these meadows and save part of our unique countryside for future generations. Stogumber has already risen to the challenge and are having a village garden opening and several other gardeners have agreed to hold fundraising events for the Appeal. **However, we need your Club's help.**

Just £60 will adopt a meadow patch

£300 will adopt a Plot

£2000 will buy an Acre

Donations will receive a special designed Wildflower Certificate and invitations to various wildflower events. Donations of over £300 will be acknowledged on the Meadows' Donor Board. **IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW TO HELP CALL SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST ON 01823 451587**

Franchesca Denning

One statistic which might stimulate gardeners into action, is that the Snake's head Fritillary, *F. meleagris* is now only to be found in our gardens. It has been eradicated from the wild in Somerset. Gardeners have a part to play in holding these plants in custody. My Father-in-law used to maintain that agricultural land was always a bargain, being far cheaper than good quality linoleum! With meadow land at 42p a square yard, it probably still holds true!

ROSECLEAR

As most alert gardeners already know, Roseclear, the Miracle Garden product, has been banned from garden, or any other, use, for reasons of safety. If anyone still has in their possession, bottles of this product, they are in breach of the law. However, don't panic and pour it down the drain. Telephone FREEPHONE 0800 118822 to obtain details of how to return bottles and receive a voucher for replacement.

PEAT-FREE COMPOSTS

While still in the Green Mode, I will draw attention to B&Q's efforts to market a multi-purpose compost which, it is maintained, is free of peat. The compost from bark chippings is being sold by B&Q at the price of £2.99 for 80 litres. Now they have sold out and will not be re-stocking until the Spring, so they told me. I think we should keep asking until stocks appear again.

AGE CONCERN SOMERSET

I was approached by Mrs Hazel Fleming ,Services Manager for Age Concern,giving details of a Gardening Scheme operating in the Taunton Deane area.Perhaps you know of someone who can help.She writes:

Greenfingers

A scheme was launched in Taunton Deane earlier this year to help older people with the upkeep of their gardens.

For many people gardening is a great delight and a source of pleasure,but can turn into a nightmare for older people who are no longer able to cope physically.Hence the much loved garden becomes a problem as grass and hedges grow up and weeds take over.

Sadly,too ,many older people live alone and are distant from relatives who might have been able to help them.

Several local charities,Age Concern Somerset, The Taunton Deane Association for Neighbourhood Care,Help the Aged,CVS as well as Taunton Borough Council, have combined efforts to organize a scheme to help those in need to keep up their gardens.A Co-ordinator has been employed to manage the scheme,a vehicle has been supplied as well as some basic tools.However,more volunteers are needed to undertake simple gardening tasks such as mowing the lawn,weeding borders and general tidying.

We desperately need people with a few hours to spare a week.If you are able to help ,even in a limited way,please contact John Patey 01823 271355 or 01823 322113

HESTERCOMBE GARDENS

The County Council now recognizes the importance of these gardens ,which are no longer in danger of being sold or closed to the public.

For 1997 the Jekyll-Lutyens Garden and the Combe Garden will be run as a single site to visit with one entrance fee.The gardens will be run by an operating company who will also run a visitors' centre with ,it is to be hoped, refreshments and plants for sale.

The Friends of Hestercombe will be changing their role from being a protest group towards that of a support group.Their AGM will be held on Saturday 18th January 1997 at 2 pm at Hestercombe.

OBITUARY

We regret to report the death of Mrs A Hill of Bradford Abbas Horticultural Society,where she had been Secretary for many years.Mrs Hill was also a Speaker on the SFGC Register,and had battled on through a prolonged illness.

SEASONS GREETINGS

This Newsletter was planned in the Summer,contemplated in the Autumn and kicked into gear in the Winter.It now arrives with the Christmas Cards.Which only leaves me to wish you and your Clubs a very Happy Christmas and every success in and out of the garden ,greenhouse ,conservatory or cold frame in 1997.

Pip Harwood Hon.Sec.