



## NEWSLETTER XIII SPRING 1996

"The most unkindest cut of all..." (Julius Caesar)

The pruning season is upon us and, being an irresolute and unscientific sort of person, my own pruning tends to be a little haphazard. Face to face with a bristly shrub, secateurs at the ready, I always find myself thinking, do I do it now, or should it have been done six months ago? My wife constantly accuses me of butchery, but I am not the Ghengis Khan of the Garden that my father was. So I felt completely confident when tackling the Forsythia. My wife was unconvinced. "Look at it..It's a ruin! It gave a good display before you got at it!" Up to a point she was right, it did. However, this year I have been vindicated. No, there won't be a cheerful display this year, nor next for that matter. Complacently triumphant, I unveiled the real culprit. It was old friend Spadger. Straight from a main course of peanuts, the resident tribe of voracious sparrows were picking their dainty way through a dessert of Forsythia. The Cydonia japonica has suffered the same depredation; this being sheer ingratitude on their part, since it had been purposely left unpruned as a rather shaggy des. res. for the little creatures. But I bear them no ill-will. They are as much a part of the garden as the grass or dandelions. Thus a little wiser I approach the shrubbery with new confidence to my cutting edge. Now for that Cytisus battandieri....or should I wait till the summer...?

### THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Federation will take place during the evening of Tuesday 14th May 1996. There'll be an opportunity to see the splendid gardens of Cannington College, as Nick Rigden has kindly offered to lead a Garden Walk before the meeting in the Clifford Hall of the college at Cannington, Bridgwater. If you or a delegate from your club have not seen the gardens with their National Collections and fine houses, then do take this chance. On the principle that lightning does not strike twice, I predict a lovely evening after last year's unspeakable wet. The tour will start around six and the AGM after seven.

If you are unable to attend yourself, please pass this information on to someone else in your club.

### SPEAKERS AND JUDGES REGISTER

A new revised and updated S.F.G.C. Speakers and Judges Register is being compiled. Hon. Secs. and Programme Secs. should note that the new edition will not be available for some weeks yet but will be published as soon as possible. If you are encountering real difficulty, then please let me know.

### SEED TRAYS

Friends of St Margaret's Hospice have some 10 dozen half size Plant Pak seed trays used once only. Price 75p for 5 trays. Please contact either Bill Huson on 01278 662910 or Denis Harvey on 01823 283865 if interested.



## CUPS AND TROPHIES INSURANCE

We are at present negotiating with the Insurance Company for the above insurance in which a number of clubs have shown an interest. It is still not absolutely certain that we can obtain an acceptable policy, but we are optimistic that this can be done. Meanwhile, any club which did not reply to our earlier invitation and which might still be interested, should contact our Chairman, John Starnes as soon as possible, sending in the form which was enclosed with the Autumn Newsletter. One thing we do know is that it will be a fixed premium regardless of how many clubs enter. So, the more clubs who take advantage, the lower the premium.

## FEDERATION QUIZ

A number of clubs who originally expressed an interest in participating in the Quiz, have still not responded to the letter sent out by Lyn Spencer-Mills, asking for preferences on options about the format. Would those clubs please make contact. Replies have been received from 10 out of the 21 clubs contacted.

## SHOW GUIDELINES

I am very grateful to Keith Akeroyd of Somerset Fuchsias, Michael Carpenter of Wellow, Audrey Hills of Buckhorn Weston and Kington Magna and Sheila Lewis of Halse and District for submitting show schedules, guidelines, advice and information on show organization. All these points need to be collated and edited. This will take a little time before publication is possible.

## CANNINGTON COLLEGE OPEN DAY

Open Day will take place on Saturday 18 May 1996. The part-time/leisure course booklet will be available and will include a larger range of gardening and horticultural courses for all ages and tastes! Courses are offered as morning, afternoon and evening classes to suit most people. A copy will be sent to all member societies and garden clubs of the Federation. Please ensure that club society members get a chance to look at its contents!

## HESTERCOMBE GARDENS

A reminder of the special Open General Meeting to take place on Saturday 23rd March at 2pm at Hestercombe House. An added attraction will be a tour of Combe Garden. The Friends of Hestercombe will also be looking for garden stewards for 1996. If you or your club are in a position to help you are asked to contact Mrs P Hennah, Alster Cottage, Wood Street, Milverton TA4 1LG Tel: 01823 400639 who has kindly offered to take over as Volunteer Co-ordinator for 1996.

## LADY MUCK ORGANIC COMPOST

Here is the Garden Club Price List for 1996.

40ltr/20kg	50 bags plus	£3.75/ bag
	25-49 bags	£4.00/bag
	15-24 bags	£4.25/bag

All prices quoted include vat @ 17.5% and delivery to one address only.

Orders picked up direct from premises £3.25/bag incl. vat minimum 4 bags. Phone for directions. 24 hours notice required.

Marshwood House, Whitegate, Forton, Chard Tel: 01460 220822 (not after 7pm or Suns) or Mobile :0585 282181

## EVENTS LIST

A word of exhortation to use the list for personal and club visits. If you cannot manage Malvern this year, try Bath Spring Show - it might surprise you. There's a 10 Gardens Walk at Norton Fitzwarren, a big Festival at Lympsham, small Spring shows, specialist shows, fuchsias, geraniums, cacti, dahlias and chrysanthemums as big as your head. Something to go and see all through the year!



## A PINCH OF GROMORE FOR YOUR CLUB?

Does your club need a tonic, a touch of fertiliser, something to give it a bit of zip, even though it has a few strong shoots - or is it yellowing at the edges or poisoned by weevils from below? Here are a few ideas to produce a good healthy club, to give it back its zest.

The most important aspect of any club is the atmosphere that hits all members especially the new ones, on arrival. For a start, is the hall warm enough in the colder months? If not, switch on early. Now that the members know they are going to be warm, are they going to feel welcome? Members should know all the Officers, and their names, first names. Nobody should feel on their own, even if they have arrived on their own. Someone on the Committee can be appointed as welcomer, introducing people, keeping an eye on them, particularly at coffee time. Get them chatting about their black spot or their bromeliad.

What about the Committee? A mistake to avoid at the AGM, is to ask for nominations, and then say, "We've had no nominations, so it's up to you!" and sit down snarling. People hate volunteering. So try saying, "If anyone would like to help on the Committee, (make it sound appealing and cosy, informal get-togethers, nice cakes and biscuits..) then come and have a word with me at coffee or after." If they don't, sidle up to one or two and ask them personally. Age is no barrier. You need a mixture.

Right, we are warm, welcomed and have a good 6-8 strong committee - now, what about the meeting? The programme, already discussed by the Committee, needs to be as varied as possible, something for everyone. Keep the business of the meeting short, friendly and informal. Try not to nag or scold, however much members deserve it! Encourage and encourage and encourage - especially if you want contributions for plant sales and shows.

To attract new blood, endeavour to get your club meetings reported; not easy, but keep plugging away. Put notices about the club in the letterboxes of new residents or of those with pretty gardens, the community centre, local shop windows, library, garden centre etc. Above all have one or two functions per year where the public can see you in action - plant sale, show, coffee morning, gardens open for visits. Try a garden stand at another local function. This could be reciprocal.

Programme cards at the start of the year are vital. Mini plant sales on a regular basis, plus raffles, help to keep the club solvent. Speakers can be expensive. To keep costs down, use your own members e.g. for garden questions, a few members show their own slides for 10-15 minutes each, or 5 minutes to talk about a favourite plant or garden.

Contact the S.F.G.C. for suggestions and for possible links with neighbouring clubs. A joint meeting means that you can share an expensive speaker. Try a quiz or share a coach for an excursion.

Ron Hewitt of Chedington and South Perrot, some of whose ideas have already been included, offers the following suggestions:

Get a notice in the Parish Magazine.

Use free/ inexpensive speakers. They do exist and they are good.

Sell spare plants - ring round and get others to do the same.

When new members join they are offered a good plant or so to take away. They will return!

Cakes are always a good fund raiser. Sell them anywhere.

Diversify - don't just adhere to gardening. Try wildlife, bees, conservation; attract a broader membership in a small community.

Engage a lively speaker for the Christmas party.

Above all, be enthusiastic and determined!

Trips are popular, but not always well supported at the busy summer weekends. Members cars can be used for short evening trips, but make sure that lifts are offered to all who need them, leave no one out.

Sylvia James of Long Sutton G.C. recommends a Mystery tour, leaving at about 5pm, visiting a garden for a picnic supper. Or a garden walkabout, seeing two or three members gardens, ending up with coffee and biscuits... of course.

Stress the social side as well as the gardening side. The more members are involved, the more they will have fun and there will be less need for applications of "Gromore".

Jane Harwood Wells & District G.C.



## GARDENS OPEN BOOKLET

Secretaries are asked to note that the Gardens Open Booklet issued to all clubs last year, will not be replaced this year. Any substantial changes will be published in a later addendum. If you have any queries please contact either the Secretary or Ray Box .Tel.no. 01761 434415.

## GARDEN VISITS 1995

I am grateful to Kilmersdon Gardeners for the following notes on the clubs' outings last year. An early Spring Visit to two gardens in Stanton Prior.

The Rectory - Mrs G Mesquita

Features a pond created from a medieval bog garden with many very large carp. Interesting shrubs and fruit arches.

Church Farm - Mrs L Hardwick

An example of how to make a thin soiled rocky patch into a n interesting area of plant associations, with herbaceous borders and shrub roses.

Summer Visits to two famous gardens in Gloucestershire.

Hidcote Manor Garden

A superb Grade 1 garden owned by the National Trust. Surprises through every entrance cut in its tall hedges, where differing kinds of gardens are revealed. Many unusual shrubs and plants.

Kiftsgate Court

A long two hundred yards back down the lane from Hidcote. Features outstanding shrubs and plants. The Rosa filipes "Kiftsgate" is a most unusual sight. The hostas, rose hedges and paeonies also deserve special attention. The tall hedges of mixed holly and beech are particularly attractive.

If you only visit one of these gardens, you should, in my opinion, choose Kiftsgate. Evening visits chosen from the booklet.

Lower Severalls Herb Farm - Ms Mary Cooper

A developing garden with many shrubs and plants in front of an attractive 17th Century Farmhouse. Also has a vegetable patch that is undoubtedly a source of great satisfaction to its owner. A Sue Ronsell buffet supper provided the ideal end to a pleasant visit.

Sherborne Garden Litton - Mr & Mrs J Southwell

A large visitor friendly area, consisting of different gardens, cottage, rock, bog, etc all obviously tended with great love, care and attention. First class plants from a local, small nursery are on sale.

Ray Box Kilmersdon Gardeners

## MORE SHORT COURSES

Propagation, Pruning, Planting. Small groups (4-12) either whole day or afternoon. Mrs Sally Gregson, The Mill, Henley Lane, Wookey 01749 676966

Flower Arranging from beginners to competitors.

Mrs Elizabeth James, Sackmore Cottage, Sackmore Lane, Marnhull, Dorset 01250 820401

All Aspects of Gardening. Flexible courses to suit clubs or individuals.

Mr Nelson Redland 21 Palmer Street, South Petherton 01460 241280

## GARDEN VISIT TO FRANCE

Milverton Hort. Society is off to view some gardens in Normandy 20-22 May. If you can make the 4.30 am start from Milverton and are interested in this intriguing venture, contact Roger Masters 01823 400601.

## FINALLY

My thanks to all those clubs who have sent me information on a variety of subjects. Keep the info. coming. I am still receiving those blue returns - most helpful! Have a splendid gardening year. That snow did a little pruning for me!

Pip Harwood Hon. Sec.