



# THE SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS



Newsletter XIX

Spring 1999

*"You will never achieve a blaze of colour unless you have a greenhouse, some green fingers and of course, a huge orange and blue umbrella".*

Sellar and Yeatman, Garden Rubbish.



In one of his gardening books Christopher Lloyd commenting on certain arrangements of plants which give a "riot of colour" asks, "Who wants a riot in the garden anyway?" Gardeners, new to the business, have a tendency to get carried away, planting anything anywhere. I know I did, still do in fact; the principle being, I suppose, nothing breeds success like success. You're bound to hit the mark at some stage and that spurs you on to greater experimentation. Further down the road of experience we get less adventurous and do things according to the book.

### A Riot of Colour!

My daughter-in-law is a case in point, a complete novice a couple of years ago, but an ardent enthusiast, in spite of Toddler-with-Trowel-in-Hand, Unhygienic Cat, Small Plot, the Lot! Undeterred she plants and plants again, -with success I may add.

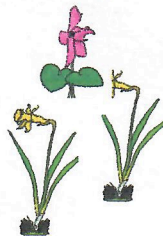
People should get medals for this sort of thing.

One dreary November day, I was delighted by the sight of a small riot of colour at the bottom of her garden.

"You've got a fine display there, Marion, what are they? Are they.....?"

"Cyclamens." she answered brightly, "Aren't they good? I bought them a fortnight ago and they really do brighten up that end of the garden, don't they?"

"Yes, they do indeed.....But hmm...cyclamen...You do realize they are not really hardy?" I tried not to sound like a Stuffy

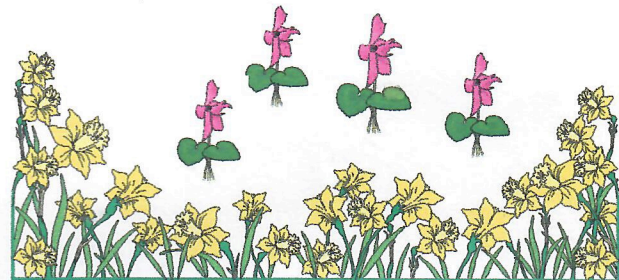


Horticultural Know-all. "A frost may finish them off", I ventured. "Might it not be best to bring them inside...." "Oh, we had a couple of frosts last week and they seem to be all right." she riposted with cheerful confidence.

Now you just can't argue with that sort of approach! Only time would tell.....And it did!! The cyclamen put on a lovely show at Christmas and the New Year. One or two strident blooms greeted the first daffodils. I was shown the lovely foliage in the summer. November came again and so did the cyclamen.

"I was right not to take any notice of you, wasn't I?" Marion said with a hint of pioneering gleam in her eye. "Yes, of course, of course," I said unconvincingly.

I was there again last week. The daffodils will be greeted with some riotous blooms and so, no doubt would the tulips, and the petunias.



The upshot of all this is clear. Since the seasons have gone to pot, we may as well join them.

Throw away your gardening books, ignore expert advice and if you want to plant a *Dicksonia antarctica* in your rockery, what's to stop you? I am growing climbing roses in pots.

After all these ramblings you will find this Newsletter full of powerful, provocative stuff.

### Read and pass on the information.

Moreover, *please* let us have your reactions and suggestions to the articles.

- Do ensure** -that your Visits Organiser receives the Garden additions
- that your Programme Secretary has the Speakers Amendments
- that your Show Secretary gets the Guideline Amendments.

Philip Harwood Hon: Sec:

### Chairman's corner

Flower Show time will soon be upon us. For the next few months Clubs will be holding their shows and in most cases the entries will be exhibited by the same members who have supported their Club Shows for many years. I am afraid that we hear all too often that entries are down and it is difficult to raise new interest.

There are various reasons for this, one of which is the fear of prospective new entrants that their produce will not be good enough. May I, therefore, remind all Secretaries to look at the Federation pamphlet on 'Guidelines for Exhibitors' a copy of which you all received when you joined the Federation. This was produced many years ago to help not only those club members who had loyally submitted their entries for many years without success, but also for new Club arrivals in an effort to get them to support their Flower Show at once. The pamphlet only costs 30p per copy (min:10 copies) and you can get them on application to our Secretary. May I suggest that your Chairman or Secretary mentions this pamphlet at your April or May meetings so that you know how many are required and you can order them at once. A successful Flower Show to you all!

John Starnes. Chairman S.F.G.C.

### The fifteen point judging system

We have recently learnt of a Fifteen point Flower Show judging System proposal which has been devised with the object of making judging in the smaller shows simpler and easier for the exhibitor to understand. The R.H.S. handbook stipulates a multiple points system for almost every flower, fruit, and vegetable allotting so many points for different aspects such as condition, colour, uniformity, size, shape, etc and many exhibitors may find this somewhat complicated. The new suggestion is that each exhibit is judged solely on three criteria; Presentation, Quality, and Uniformity each earning up to five points. The proposers of this system claim the following advantages:

- 1) All classes would be judged by the same criteria.
- 2) Exhibitors would know exactly how their entries would be judged.
- 3) Personal preferences of judges would be minimised (though not completely eliminated)
- 4) Judging time would be reduced.

Please note that this advice should not be taken as a recommendation by your Committee. It is part of our function to pass on to our Members Clubs any new ideas or suggestion about Horticultural or Flower Show matters and let them decide for themselves. If you have any comments to make, do let us know.

John Starnes. Chairman S.F.G.C.



### Guidelines to Show Organiser.

You will find an amendment to the Guide with this new letter. Please pass it on to your show organiser and keep it with the S.F.G.C. pamphlet. For advice on shows please contact Mrs Vernon-Samuels, Bye-ways, Slough Green, Taunton. TA3 5RR Tel: 01823 480502



### S.F.G.C.

You are invited to attend the **Annual General Meeting** which will take place on Tuesday evening 11th May 1999, at Clifford Old Hall, Cannington College, Cannington, Bridgwater.

There will be an opportunity to tour the gardens and greenhouses as John Addison of Cannington has kindly offered to guide a group on a garden walk. This year, by the law of averages, the weather *must* be fine. The garden visit will start around 5.45pm. Refreshments will be available. This will be followed by the business of the A.G.M. The final of the Federation Quiz will take place around 7.45-8.00 pm and Lyn Spencer-Mills will chair the Quiz.

More than one delegate from each club is most welcome but a club is restricted, of course, to one vote in the business meeting.

We hope for a good attendance. If Hon: Secs: find they cannot attend please send someone else, even just to look at the flowers and have a jovial chat with fellow members about club problems and successes. You will find it a very friendly affair.

### Tomorrow's Garden World

#### I. You have been warned

An article appeared in The Times last September highlighting research by French Scientists who had produced a breed of flightless ladybirds. The purpose of these mutants was that they would eat more aphids if they could not fly! In trials the new ladybirds have proved effective in protecting cucumbers and melons.

However a warning has been sounded by a Cambridge scientist who points to the extreme hardiness of this modified species. In parts of the U.S.A. where it was introduced as a pest control, it has ousted other species to become one of the most common ladybirds. They could take over...

#### II. You have been warned

Contact Breakers! It is still surprising how many gardeners with all that horticultural know-how still ignore simple safety precautions. You are exhorted to remind members of the need to use a contact breaker whenever an electrical tool is used. The most common error of course is the use of electrical equipment in the rain. This is dangerous! Under normal conditions a contact breaker prevents very serious injury and simply saves the gardener from electrocution should a short circuit occur. Last season I cut the flex instead of the grass! Easily done, but protection is easy too.



## Gardens Open

Ray Box has included a couple of new gardens for you to visit this year. This leaflet is to be put with the yellow Gardens Open Booklet. Secretaries are reminded that all these openings have been negotiated by Ray and clubs are urged to visit one or two of the gardens in the S.F.G.C. booklet. Please mention the Federation when you make a booking. There are some super gardens to visit, with special private opening times for Federation Clubs. Ray hopes you find this booklet a helpful guide in your planning. Please let us know if you discover anyone with a garden willing to open privately for the Federation. Also please let us know how helpful the booklet is - mention it to Ray Box at the A.G.M. in May or write a letter.

Now read that long running series Ray's Garden Visits.

## Ray's Garden Visits

Visits and Outings undertaken by Kilmersdon Gardeners in 1998.

### Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May

A conducted walk with Christopher Cornell through the Mells River Valley between great Elm and Mells

On a sunny and warm afternoon seventeen K.G. members and friends joined Christopher for what was expected to be an informative and humorous exploration. On our way towards Mells we were given the origins and uses of many and varied plants from the greater plantain to hemlock, introduced to the peculiar mating habits of the damsel flies (of which there were clouds varying in colour from almost black to the brightest green). We saw the very brief lifespan of the mayfly cut short by being plucked from the air by a trout. On our return journey we were diverted to inspect the ruins of the fossil iron foundry where there is still evidence of the way waterpower was used to make high quality tools good enough not only to be transported throughout the country but exported as well. Christopher was accompanied by Vera, who usually operates the Magic Lantern at his presentations. On this occasion she was employed on taking notes of the unusual plants found and also proved adept at finding the egg clusters of quite rare butterflies including those of the orange tip.

One of the benefits of this type of walk is that Christopher will donate his fee to a Naturalist Trust. On this occasion the chosen organisation will be 'The Bluebell Sett' run by Pauline Kider and her family at New Road Farm, East Huntspill.

### Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June

An Evening visit to Brimsore Gardens, Yeovil.

One of the many benefits of being a member of the Jardin Gold Card Club is a visit to one of the group's four Garden Centres where visitors are given a talk, free refreshments and allowed to purchase plants, shrubs and sundries at 25% off list price. This garden centre is at the edge of a large fruit farm and it was a pleasure to walk through this to a series of ponds or tanks in a valley where anglers were catching and returning quite large carp.

If club programme secretaries are interested in the benefits of joining the Gold Card Club Scheme they will find Gillian Goodfellow on 01935 817747 most helpful.

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July

All day visit to Hampton Court Palace Flower show.

This outing had an inauspicious start. Before 45 members and friends of K.G. could leave the village hall car park, by coach, news was received that a multi vehicle pile up at Hook had closed the preferred motorway route. A lengthy and somewhat tedious journey along the M4 meant that we did not arrive at the appropriate coach park until after 1.00pm. A short but very interesting journey, by ferry, along the Thames to the barge walk entrance, did a great deal to restore the group's good humour.

A leisurely inspection of the Craft Village (everything from Cheddar Cheese to hand crafted silver rings) and then on the long line of show gardens which continued up to the banks of the Long Water. In my opinion two gardens were outstanding, one which features bronze figures of fairies and the other, the H.M.P. Leyhill Plot with its marvellous display of vegetables. From the gardens we went into the flower marquees with the roses taking pride of place. Banks of beautiful flowers to admire. To order an Ingrid Bergman standard rose seemed an unmissable opportunity.

Back through other marquees full of plants, shrubs, topiary to have a final look at the craft village before queuing for the ferry back to the coach park. The weather, during the day was kind to us until an hour before we were due to leave.

I am sure we did not see half of the attractions but we did our best! It was an outing to be repeated. Perhaps the answer is to leave very early in the morning to be at Hampton Court when the gates open or better still stay overnight.

Alison Morean of R.H.S. Marketing on 0171 821 3042 is a very useful source of help and information.

### Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August

An evening visit to the four gardens of members and friends at the Street Chilcompton

Prof. K. and Mrs Rhona Dawson at Moorlands

A pleasant garden with specimen plants and shrubs in borders with a concealed vegetable area with some most unusual varieties and a potting shed adjacent to a ruined cottage on the banks of the stream. In days long gone this was evidently the home of the village washerwoman.

Mr and Mrs Edwards at Ashberry Weir

A splendid medium sized garden with nice plants and shrubs. Its outstanding feature was superb cannas in pots.

Mr and Mrs B. Seal at Abingdon House.

Featuring lilies and water feature. An attractive hedge skilfully hid the vegetable plot.

Mr and Mrs Schiterfield at 2, Gainsborough.

A nicely shaped lawn bordered by unusual shrubs and plants. The vegetable patch and fruit bushes were bounded by a high, north-facing wall which gave rise to discussions on the plants or trees most suited to this situation. The visit to the gardens was followed by a pub supper at the Redan. I feel sure that most Garden Clubs will have members with interesting gardens and with a little effort, would provide a pleasant evening visit.

Ray Box, Kilmersdon Gardener's Programme Secretary.



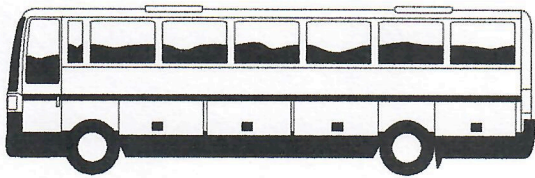
### Calendar of events

My thanks to all Club Secretaries who have sent information to be included in the Calendar. Now please publicize these events at your meetings.

There might be an organized visit in there somewhere, a collection of cars to a nearby show, complete with a few onions and a bunch of dahlias to be entered in the open classes. Schedules are available through local secretaries. If you cannot find a name to contact get in touch with one of the committee and they will provide.

How about raiding someone else's plant sale for a change? There might be something different besides the dessicated feverfew in the broken yoghurt pot!

There are spring bulbs to be enjoyed in March and wonderful cacti, dahlias, pelargoniums in the summer, ending with a fanfare of fine chrysanthemums in November. So many of our shows are underestimated but are a splendid tribute to the dedication and effort of Somerset and National Gardeners. Book those char-a-bancs now...



### H.T.V. Garden Calendar

The producer of HTV's Garden Calendar, Maggie Lomas is looking for more small or large gardening problems to sort out.

Apparently the response from gardeners was a little disappointing last year. Perhaps we are all a little wary about letting the cameras in, but if you or your members have a problem which can be dealt with in a short space of time in terms of advice and so on, then you are asked to contact: Maggie Lomas, Garden Calendar, HTV West, Bath Road, Bristol BS4 3HG Tel: 0117 9722722 anytime between now and October.

By the way, the experts giving advice are Nick Wray and Mary Payne, well-known to many clubs already.

### Speakers register

Another leaflet is enclosed. This one is destined for the Programme Secretary. Please keep this amendment with the other inside the S.F.G.C. register. If you know of a good speaker, especially in the West of the County, who is not on our list, please contact me. Likewise, if you know of speakers or judges who have retired keep me informed.

### Allotment - Self Management

Weston- Super-Mare Horticultural Society with the full agreement of the Town Council are looking into self-management on its main allotment centre which contains Weston's horticultural shop and store buildings. The allotment site is in a prime position being only half a mile from the town centre. It is well known that many allotment

sites are being lost to development. Weston has six sites in all, one or two of which may be lost in the near future.

With this in mind the Weston-super-mare Allotment club was founded. From our site members, a Committee was formed and officers appointed, along with a Sub-Committee to form a constitution for the new club. It took two attempts to get our constitution worded correctly with the assistance of the N.S.A.L.G. of which we are members.

The committee drew up a list of requirements for the Council to agree to, namely, topping off dangerous and overhanging trees, the repair of boardway, rental terms of the site and so on.

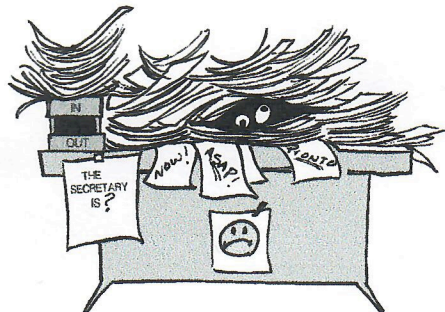
Our next meeting with the Town Council in March should be interesting. I shall let you know of further developments. Ted Gill. Chairman W-S-M- Horticultural Society.

### Club Cri-de-Coeur

Does the following quote from a letter I received sound all too familiar?

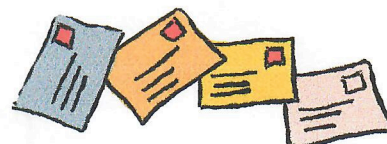
"As a new club it is very difficult trying to get all the various jobs covered, but I do hope that I am not secretary for ever. It is really not my forte"

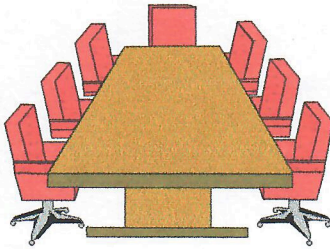
To do the secretary justice, that club is really thriving. But if things are difficult please contact the S.F.G.C. You have a list of the Committee members to contact if need be. And do emphasize to potential 'officers-in-waiting' the advantages and support that are on hand in the form of the Federation. Again, if you think the Federation could do more or something different, then tell us. Write to us, send in an item for publication in the newsletter.



### Letters to the Secretary

In future issues of the Newsletter we intend to include a letters section. Please jot us a line or encourage any of your members to write in and let us know their views. We will publish them with pleasure, with the proviso that opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the S.F.G.C. Committee. So let us have your reactions to anything in this issue, your anecdotes or problems, whether these be administrative or gardening. You may wish to air your concerns about Club Management. We might even have a 'Name and address withheld' section.





The officers and members of the committee in 1999 are as follows:

### Officers

#### Chairman

John Starnes 01935 881308  
Stoneleigh, Duckpool Lane, West Chinnock, Crewkerne.  
TA18 7QD

#### Vice Chairman

Lyn Spencer- Mills 01460 76389  
Hooper's Holding, High Street, Hinton St George TA17 8SE

#### Secretary

Philip Harwood 01749 679182  
Fernville, Bath Road, Wells BA5 3HR

#### Treasurer

Bill Thomas 01934 822627  
Littleton, 3, Littlefields Avenue, Banwell  
BS29 6BE

#### Members of Committee

Ray Box 01716 434415  
Tramore, 25, New Bath Road, Radstock BA3 3ED  
Barbara Child 01984 640765  
20, Castlemead, Washford, Watchet TA23 0PZ  
Ted Gill 01934 628758  
30, Brighton Road, Weston-super-mare BS23 3QG  
Pam Kellett 01823 601530  
Springdale, Smeatharpe, Honiton, Devon EX14 9RF  
Nick Rigden 01278 671376  
Cridlands West, High Street, Spaxton, Bridgwater  
Marian Vernon-Samuels 01823 480402  
Byeways, Slough Green, Taunton TA3 5RR

#### Ex Officio

John Addison 01278 655000  
Cannington College, Cannington TA5 2LS



### Final Cuttings

A warm welcome to four new member clubs:  
Sampford Peverell, Long Ashton, Charlton Horethorne, and  
Broadwindsor.

My thanks to everyone who keeps me up to date and again to  
Pam Kellett for the presentation of this Newsletter. And  
particular thanks to those who have made a contribution to  
this newsletter. Let's have some more.

*For your  
Diary*

### Date for items in Autumn Newsletter

If you or one of your members wish to have an item included in  
the Autumn Newsletter, be it a letter, a comment, dates for  
Spring Shows, or a short article, would you ensure that it  
reaches me **before 1st October 1999**

Finally I leave you with a couple more items from Sellar and  
Yeatman's Modest Garden Plan;

*"1. Neighbours would be impressed if you had a tennis court,  
a croquet lawn, and, if they can recognize one, a Pleasance.  
2. The bottom of the garden will inevitably become an  
Unpleasance, centring round the bonfire emplacement ; so to  
make up for that, how about a gazebo, a ha-ha, a  
rhododendron drive and a vinery? -They give tone to a  
place."*

Have a Happy Gardening year!

Pip Harwood, Hon:Sec:  
Fernville, Bath Road,  
Wells BA5 3HR  
Tel: 01749 679182

