



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue XLIV

Spring 2013

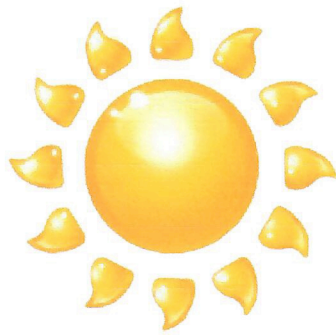
Points of Interest

Chairmans Corner

It had to be Yew

Some things not to say as Chairman

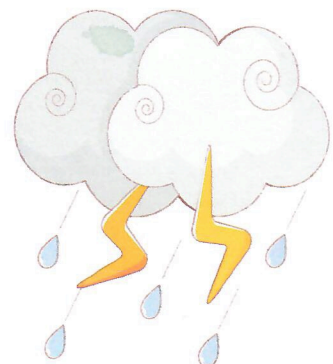
Final Cuttings



*In old Savannah, I said Savannah
The weather there is nice and warm
The climate of the southern brand
But here's what I don't understand*

*They've got a gal there, a pretty gal there
Who's colder than an artic storm
Got a heart just like a stone
Even nice men leave her alone*

Hard Hearted Hannah 1924



INTRODUCTION

They call her 'Hard -hearted Hannah'

The vamp of Savannah

The meanest girl in town

Ager, Yellan & Bernstein 1924

I had an aunt called Hannah and, out of mischief, my father would tease his sister with this popular song from the 1920's. One couplet in particular amused him:

'Making love to Hannah in an old armchair

Was like striding through Alaska in your underwear `.

Gardening has been a bit like that this Spring with scarcely an urge to go out and do something creative. We have had this sort of thing before. In March 1891 a blizzard struck the South West, and the Great Western 'Zulu Express' left Paddington at 3pm on Monday arriving in Plymouth 4 days later at 8.30 pm on Friday. An early Easter doesn't help matters, either, which means this newsletter will reach you after the festive season and it's not because of the 'Zulu Express'

Please copy or pass on any information or ideas to whom you think would like to see it. Please give some thought to one or two of the special items.

SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

Kindly hosted by DING GARDENING CLUB

THURSDAY 23RD MAY 2013

At HORTON VILLAGE HALL near ILLMINSTER TA19 9QR

From 6.30 pm onwards

GUEST SPEAKER - DAVID MANNERS ARPS

WILDLIFE IN THE GARDEN

PLANT HERITAGE

ATHELHAMPTON PLANT FAIR

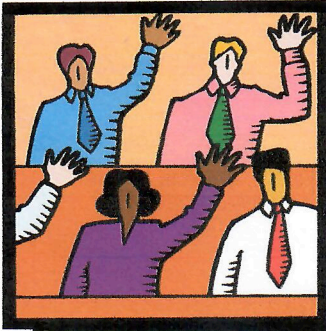
SUNDAY 5TH MAY 10.30 - 3PM.

Entry to House and Garden £7.50

SOME THINGS NOT TO SAY AS CHAIRMAN

Blunders and confusions to avoid

1. I don't know where everyone is tonight—there's usually more than this. Perhaps there's something on television.
2. It's good to see such a great audience tonight. You must have heard of the splendid spread that Beryl and her team have laid on for us afterwards.
3. Graham NOT Geoff, you say... I was mixing you up with the saxophone player... Ho! Ho! Ho!
4. Now, what John knows about vegetables isn't worth knowing.
5. Our speaker tonight is going to talk about the Azores where Betty and I spent a wonderful few months as we told you at Christmas... so I am looking forward to hearing all about the magic mushroom rooms and the bougainvillea.
6. 'The cause and effects of cross pollination in the Swamp Rush of Uttar Pradesh ` Funny title ! But I am sure Dr Spot will make it absolutely fascinating !
7. Our speaker, Mrs Rose has also brought her daughter along as an aide- memoire, she tells me. At our age we need all the help we can get with those tricky botanical names, don't we?
8. Pillong Island ? Isn't that where they have some VERY peculiar initiation ceremonies? I'm really looking forward to that! ... and of course the plants...
9. Not only is Brian splendid to look at.... But his photos are splendid, too
10. Mrs Simkins has a very nasty cough so would you all move up a little closer to the front, please ?
11. This reminds us of the last time, doesn't it ? You remember the chap with the Power Point, fumbling around for hours in the dark ?
12. Well, the projector was rather in the way there. Anyway, now can we all help to pick up the slides and mend the damage.
13. Now he is with us, we'd better pay attention. It's getting rather late and you know what happened the last time we kept the janitor waiting.
14. Of course, I was lucky. I've got `O' level Latin.
15. What a lot of slides ! Must be a record and some were really good.
16. Next time we have a really good speaker.
17. Oh, dear. That was rather long. That doesn't leave us much time for the coffee and the raffle.
18. We welcome Mrs Thorn who is not one of the many gardeners on the High Towers Estate, as I thought—she actually owns the place!
19. Well, I think we all enjoyed that, didn't we?
20. Well, everyone, I am sure that was really splendid but I'm afraid I left my hearing aid on the kitchen table.



YOUR COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU

If you feel you are in a position to help us running the Federation you would be welcomed most warmly. We have a couple of meetings each year and we enjoy what we do.

National Gardens Scheme Somerset County Leaflets

Included with your copy of the Spring News Letter is a copy of the NGS Somerset County Leaflet; further copies are available from libraries, garden centres, tourist information centres etc. Please make use of your copy when organising outings as there are 127 gardens and village groups open for your entertainment in 2013. All the garden owners put a huge amount of effort into making their gardens ready for you. Home made teas, plant stalls with amazing bargains and various other "extras" are available. Many of the garden owners are willing to make a special opening by appointment for groups and we are delighted to welcome you.

Your entrance fees go to worthy charities relating to the caring professions, such as Marie Curie, Carerstrust, Help the Hospices, Perennial etc. Our small garden in Hinton St. George will be celebrating 25 years of continuous opening this year, so please come and visit us!

Lyn Spencer-Mills

E-MAILS

Whenever you have occasion to contact the Federation via email, would you please mention the name of the Club. Mo and Judy are very clever at this sort of communication but they are not clairvoyant.

NEXT YEAR 2014

At the moment we do not have a venue for the Federation AGM next year, so please give the idea of hosting this jolly occasion some consideration.

SPEAKERS & JUDGES REGISTER

The review of the Speakers & Judges Register is well under way and will be with you later in the year. In the meantime thanks to all who have made a contribution to what is going to be an invaluable document.

It Had to Be Yew

The pavement was covered with yew clippings, green, bursting with life, cut off in their prime. A handful or two, in a few well-sanded spade cuts at the back of my soft fruit corner, repaid their rescue, as yew will readily do, by becoming thirty or so vigorous cuttings. These thrived on neglect, and a year later were optimistically set out to shelter a windy corner. They will tell you yew grows slowly. No, it doesn't. In six or seven years I had a hedge nine foot high.

There is always something so powerful about the rich green life of those scattered clipping. Whenever I gave my hedge its annual trim, I found I just had to save a couple of hundred for the same treatment as the originals. This became an annual ritual, the same spade cuts in a small open cold frame. I would first move it on from the root-tangled oblong clump of last year's batch. Clump followed clump, their various heights increasing with the passing years, as did their inextricably tangled roots.

With Disney's dwarves, I could have sung "I don't know what I dig them for, I just dig-a-dig dig" Eventually, great and small, more than a thousand healthy, crowded *Taxus Baccata*. Ridiculous! So I put a nation-wide ad, (£75) in the Independent for the following Saturday:

"April Hedging? It had to be Yew! Bare root plants £10 for 15"

"Not next Saturday! We're going to Lucy's" said my wife. No problem. I bought an Answer phone (£45) and phoned it from Lucy's on the Saturday evening.

Four messages already,

1,) Have you left yet? 2) & 3) It's only me 4) Doesn't matter Dad, I only wanted advice on tree planting.

Back home on Monday, no messages yet. Tuesday, nothing, silence still on Wednesday and all Thursday. Friday a CUSTOMER! Fifteen of my yews actually wanted! But by the rector of Orford? I knew Orford. Two years earlier I had celebrated my birthday in the Butley and Orford Oysterage, that simple and simply splendid fish restaurant in far Suffolk. And of course the Rector's phone call came on my wife's birthday. Obviously there was only one possible course of action—dig up and disentangle the best fifteen rooted yews, load them into the boot of my old Saab and drive 230 miles to Orford and a booked table for two at the Oysterage. The birthday fishy delights were even better with Chablis, and the B&B at the Kings Head every bit as good as we remembered.

We took our yews to the Rectory. The excellent Rector and brother gardener took out his cheque book. "Put it towards the collection" we said, as one does.

On the way home the Saab's alternator died (£226)

My daughters have done the sums and think Alan Sugar would have fired me.

Tony Corney

Sandford Gardening Club.



Chairman's Corner

Sitting by the fire on a very cold February evening, but feeling nice and warm and watching the flames moving between the logs, my mind started thinking about the previous year. Rain, rain and more rain...Mo and I had just the one barbecue which ended up being cooked under a large umbrella!

All this really began with water companies imposing a hosepipe ban last April and it hasn't stopped raining since! Quote - "It will take many years for the water table to recover" - I don't think so, with floods in many parts of the country and some unfortunate people being flooded three or four times. We have a stream running through our garden and I had never seen the level so high or running so fast.

Then came winter with more rain and snow. After Christmas some respite, no rain to speak of but very cold, 'that's it I thought, it looks like the weather could be getting back to normal!'

Early February and out came the snowdrops, what a beautiful sight that is - we have them all over the garden. Then the snow arrived, over 12" - the deepest I have known since we have lived here in our village. The snowdrops were obviously buried and I thought 'that's that, at best they will be lying flat to the ground!'

Shrubs and trees were bent double under the weight of the snow, many hours were spent in removing as much snow as possible and my word, it was so cold but a worthwhile task as I managed to save all but one shrub (a lovely red camellia) which I suppose isn't too bad!

Then came the rain again, well as you can imagine, rain and snow melting meant a lot more water and our stream this time - a raging torrent flooding an area of the herbaceous banks on either side, but fortunately the stream is below our house so that was something to be thankful for!

Two days later, looking out of the window, it wasn't raining, the snow had gone and there - all standing proud were our snowdrops - an unbelievable sight.

What a climate we have but isn't nature wonderful!

But where does the time go...it's almost a year since our AGM at the Yarty Garden Club. This year's venue is at Ding Gardening Club (details are included in this issue of the newsletter) and the committee and I are look forward very much, to seeing as many of you as possible at this meeting.

God Bless

Erl

WEBSITES

If anyone knows of a website designer and/ or manager the Chairman would be very interested to hear about them. Please contact Erl 01278 741152

Fagus Gardening Group have a comprehensive website which has details of lectures and outings and you are invited to visit:-

www.fagusgardening.co.uk

They meet in Nailsea Methodist Church

Special lecture ; Chris Beardshaw 18th November 2013

BISHOPS PALACE GARDENS UPDATE

There is now even more to see at the Bishops Palace with the opening of the Community Garden. Amanda is our community gardener and thanks to Amanda and her team they have transformed the fallow area of the gardens into an area with cut flower beds, vegetables and fruits borders and raised vegetable beds for disabled gardeners. They are also creating a dipping pool with help from local schools. The produce will be used in the Bishops Table Café and extra produce will be sold along with our plants

The Garden of Reflection will open this summer and contains a colour garden with a purbeck stone pattern of the cathedrals lady Chapel window, the colours within reflecting the stained glass. There is also a densely planted area of birch trees with an artistic, contemporary garden building in the middle with an open roof and circular seat.

The gardens are slowly coming back to life after the cold March and in early May the Foxglove tree in the arboretum will be well worth a visit with its purple foxglove candelabra flowers. We are also busy creating the new gardens by St Andrews Wall and the new boardwalk which will be a luxuriant planting of damp and shade loving plants. In all 14 acres of gardens full of inspirational planting and having the unique garden feature of Wells at it's heart.

The gardens are open daily from 10—6. Tel (01749) 988111 or visit www.bishopspalace.org.uk

James Cross Head Gardener

Final Cuttings

These lines are written while we are still in the grip of the bleakest of weather, as personified by H.H. Hannah:

'Talk of your cold refrigerating mamas ??

Brother, she's the polar bear's pyjamas`

That seems to sum up our climate this past year. But we live in hope with an optimistic expectation that the miserable little seedlings on the window sill which have moved not a jot since they emerged, will flourish and display in riotous compensation later in the year.

What does seem to be flourishing are gardening clubs. We welcome St Petrocks Gardening Club of Timberscombe to our membership which now totals at 252. We say goodbye to Cannington and District Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society, who have folded through lack of support. So we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 23rd of May at Horton Village Hall, near Ilminster. A very convivial evening is promised.

Pip Harwood, Hon Sec

