



THE SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS



Newsletter XVI

Winter 1997

Garden Song

*I scorn the doubts and cares that hurt
The world and all its mockeries
My only care is now to squint
The ferns among my rockeries*

George Sims

Another year all but completed with the usual gamut of horticultural delights, laments and anomalies. The Gallica Roses were wonderful, the tomatoes a blighted disaster, and the auriculas and cowslips blooming in August. In other words a typical year in the garden.....

However, the year has ended on a very sad note with the loss of Joyce Harding of Bath, a long standing Committee member. An obituary is printed later in the newsletter.

As is now apparent to you, the Federation Newsletter has a new look about it, which I hope you will find appealing. This brings us on to the first and important item - a word of exhortation from the Chairman.

A Special appeal from our Chairman

What do you do with this Newsletter?

Our friends the Kent Federation included the following observation in their last newsletter which may be very relevant to our Federation as well;

' We feel that it should at least be circulated amongst your Committee members and ideally to as many of your members as possible. Hopefully this is what happens. However, if it is read by the Secretary or official to whom it is sent, with no attempt being made to inform individual members of its contents, then sadly we are wasting our time.'

We appreciate that distribution to all your members may not be practicable, but does the recipient extract those portions which may be of interest to them and announce them at your next meeting? e.g. -Flower Show dates of other clubs with OPEN classes. Some members might like to exhibit there.

-The latest prices for the Organic Fertiliser and would they like to organise a bulk purchase. Many clubs now do so.

-Did the clubs in Taunton Area tell their members about Hestercombe needing volunteers during the summer, as notified in the spring letter?

Your hardworking secretary spends much of his time and effort on your behalf to produce this newsletter and if you do not help by circulating any appropriate portions to your members then his time is being sadly wasted. Please do your best!

John Starnes

A word from the Hon: Sec:

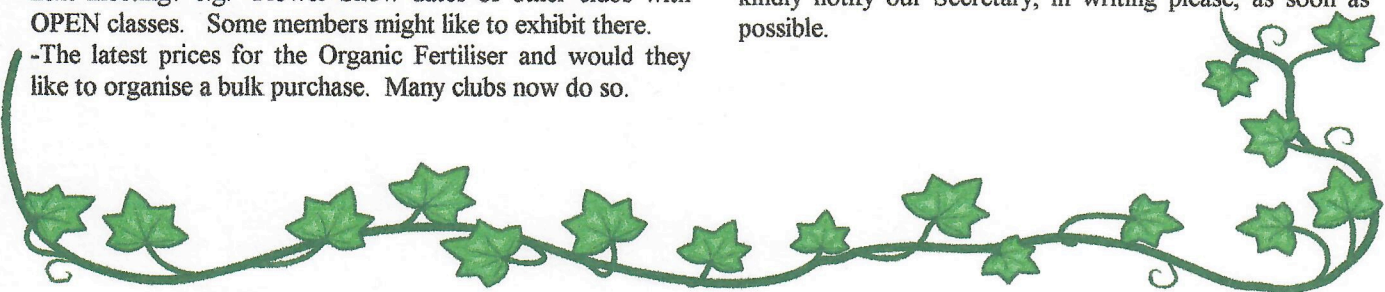
Now you feel guiltlessly impelled to act upon the above, allow me to point you in the right direction. Among the items of this newsletter you will find information for your programme secretary. Please pass these very important details on, if appropriate. A number of organisations seem to be still using the 1993 Speaker's List. You should all have in your possession a green booklet, to which these enclosed amendments refer.

To ensure that everything is hunky-dory as the Americans say, please let me know of any ambiguities or problems.

I should like to welcome the new clubs to our membership this year Bourton, Wrington, Somerset Garden Trust, Creech St. Michael, Blackborough, Brislington, Halstock, Colford, Taunton Chrysanthemums, and South Bristol. The S.F.G.C. list now stands at 148 members

Club Lists

We occasionally receive requests from organisations connected with gardening, such as Garden Centres, Compost suppliers, Garden tool and implement manufacturers etc., to send them our club lists for an appropriate fee. It is quite possible that information coming from these organisations might well be of interest to Club Secretaries and their members, and we would not wish to withhold from them any possible advantages. However, we realise that some of the clubs may not wish to receive advertising information of this sort, so, if you would like us to exclude your club from these lists, kindly notify our Secretary, in writing please, as soon as possible.



Ray's Garden Visits

Trips and Garden Visits undertaken by Kilmersdon Gardens during 1997

May 31

All day visit to Exbury Gardens

In order, hopefully, to enjoy the full beauty of Exbury Gardens, it was decided to forego the early Spring visit and bring forward the all day trip to the end of May, only to be frustrated by the earliest flowering spring for 40 years. Consequently many of the rhododendrons and azaleas were over, but it is indeed fortunate that Exbury has so many attractions including the largest rockery areas I have ever seen, large lakes filled with carp, a meadow filled with rare native plants and flowers running down to the river and many hidden gardens and rare trees. It was also fortunate (modesty almost forbids me from saying - a stroke of genius) that we also booked the services of Paul Martin, the head gardener, to give us a guided tour. This tour, by an enthusiast, lasted two hours and included anecdotes about the family, tales about the rivalries between Kew, Wisley and Exbury and even some tricks that the TV cameramen get up to. He also showed us a conifer tree, which looked very dead to me, reputed to be the only remaining specimen in the world. Some of its plant material had been sent to a Wincanton farm in order to attempt rejuvenation!

The visit ended with our members enjoying a tasty tea in the cafe before buying some first class, relatively cheap, plants and shrubs from the well stocked nursery.

All in all a visit that I would recommend any garden club to undertake.

Mrs Barbara King on 01703 89120315 is a very helpful source of information.

July 9

An evening visit to Withy Lane Farmhouse, the home of Sq. Ldr. And Mrs Tomblin, Followed by a pub supper at the Quarry Arms Keinton, Manderville.

This garden features a superb Kilmarnock Willow which used to be a store house for the hose, watering can etc, and also provide considerable entertainment for the grandchildren. The garden has a system of close planting so that the weeds just don't get a look in. There is a small vegetable garden which is organically maintained but this year there were problems with the Pink Fir Apple Potatoes. They had huge haulm but no tubers larger than a small finger nail. Lifting one of the plants soon provided the answer -bone dry soil. A quite common cause of failure this year and one that I would suggest can be easily overcome by ensuring that the soil, under the haulms is kept moist and occasionally given a feed of weak Chempak 4. After about an hour 33 members gravitated to the Quarry Arms. The large number may have slowed the service but the food was excellent. The conversation was humorous and uninhibited and everyone enjoyed themselves. I think that a pub supper definitely breaks down barriers and is an experiment likely to be repeated by KG next year.

August 13

An evening visit to Barthers Farm Nursery, Chapmanslade, Wiltshire.

A visit with an inauspicious start! When 36 members of KG arrived the gates were closed and locked! The hasty and breathless arrival of a member of staff saved me money. I had been told by one member that I should reimburse him for waste of petrol! This was accepted as black humour and one of the 'perks' of being a programme secretary. The nursery, at the time of our visit was being modernised, but there was still plenty to see. Our tour was conducted by the plant propagation manager who showed us the huge beds of plants and shrubs, the new propagating houses, the compost preparation room. The compost is made of 50% composted bark, 50% moss peat, slow release fertiliser and water retaining gel. Finally we were shown the stock plants and shrub area which provided a marvellous view over the Westbury Vale, northwards towards Bath and eastwards to the White horse. On our way back to the plant retail area we were able to examine the automatic watering system. The foolhardy were somewhat closer than the cautious! The visit concluded with tea and biscuits, animated conversations with our guide and the purchase of some superb plants. This visit is a programme secretary's dream. It is entirely free, even the tea and biscuits and the shrubs can be purchased at 10% discount. The Royal Oak at Corsley is only about 2 miles away for those who enjoy good food and real ale. Help and friendly advice can be obtained from Mrs Diana Walker on 01373 832294

Now that should have whetted your appetite for a garden walk or two next year. How about passing this on to your programme secretary? There are many more gardens in the S.F.G.C. Gardens open booklet to be explored. If you have mislaid your copy, then contact either Ray or myself and ensure that your club visits at least one of the gardens featured.

Events 1998 Dates for your Diary

Why not organize a visit to someone else's do?

Here are some events I have already been given for 1998

March 28	Banwell Spring Show	Village Hall
April 3	Halstock Spring Show	
May 2-4	Hinton St George Village Gardens Open	
May 11	Banwell Plant Sale	Village
June 27-28	Hinton St George Village Gardens Open	
August 29	Halstock Summer Show	
September 5	Banwell Flower Show	

Clubs with Open classes might get more entrants if we publicize shows with open classes. Send back all details early next year on the enclosed slip.

One more date to note:

The Annual General Meeting of the S.F.G.C. will be held on Tuesday May 12 1998 in the evening at Cannington College Nr Bridgwater.

There will be a chance to view the gardens before the meeting and the federation Quiz Final will take place after the business. So keep the date free for somebody!



Change of officers

Our treasurer has noticed that a number of amendments and changes are notified after the renewal of subscription notices are sent out. This indicates that our earnest requests for Clubs to notify our secretary of any change of officers seems to be falling on deaf ears. Please realise that we are unable to give you the first class service we aim for, if we do not have up-to-date records, so do let us have any changes as they occur.

Insurance

A reminder from the Chairman J.L.S.
All participants might like to be reminded that the scheme covers Public Liability (not any material loss or damage) against accidents caused by the negligence of Club Officers and Members in the following circumstances:
Accidents at Club Meetings
Accidents at Federation Meetings
Accidents at Flower Shows
Accidents at Outings to Stately Homes organized by Member Clubs
Accidents at other Official Outings organized by Member Clubs
Accidents at Official Garden Walks
Accidents arising out of the consumption of food and drink on Club Premises and at Club functions
Any accident to the Public incurred in respect of a member Club carrying out its normal business as a Gardening Club.

There are certain Special Exclusions which should be noted:

1. Marathon and sponsored walks or rides
2. Firework displays or bonfires
3. Injury to participants in 'Its a Knock-Out' or 'Donkey Derby' races
4. Loss or damage to articles hired in or personal effects of members
5. Special conditions apply to Bouncy Castles so, if any Club is likely to use one for children at their show, do contact our Chairman beforehand for a check of these conditions.

Quiz news

There are 19 clubs taking part in the quiz each with 2 teams. Three clubs have already had their quiz and they had a an enjoyable evening. It was good fun. I hope more clubs will enter next time.

Lyn Spencer -Mills

Organic fertiliser

Organico Ltd have told us that their 1998 prices are:-

15 to 24 bags	£3.10 plus vat
25 or more bags	£2.90 plus vat

Free delivery to one address in the federation area, Bags are approx 40 litres which is enough to cover 250 sq. yds. at lawn rate. A sample 20 litre bag is offered for those who do not know the product. Quite a number of our Clubs are taking advantage of this reduced offer. Contact Jim or Roger of Hayes Lane, Compton Dundon, Somerton Tel; 01458 272202
Mention the Somerset Federation

Obituary

Joyce Harding S.F.G.C. Committee 1984-1997

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Joyce Harding on November 17 1997 after a long illness. Joyce had been a member of the Federation Committee since its foundation in 1984.

In the garden and greenhouse she had special fondness for cultivating and exhibiting begonias, an enthusiasm which she shared with many societies, both as a speaker and as a judge. Indeed, in her own town of Bath she was instrumental in organizing and promoting The Bath Spring Show for many years. As a judge, she was always in demand, eventually serving of the Committee on South West Britain in Bloom. At Bath Horticultural Society she was Honorary Secretary for a long time, before becoming Chairman.

Her cheerfulness, common sense and genuine warmth will be missed by all who knew her, both locally and beyond the County boundaries. Gardening in Somerset and members of the Federation in particular, have lost a very good friend. We extend our sympathies to her husband, Derek and her daughter, Alison. The Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs has made an appropriate donation to the cancer Unit of the Royal United Hospital, Bath.

Finally

Before the last verse of George Sims' 'Garden Song' I should like to thank all secretaries who have provided me with information and who keep in touch. It is encouraging to learn that the Federation's work is appreciated and felt as worthwhile.

My heartfelt thanks to Pam Kellett of the Blackdown Hills. Having just joined the committee, it is her technical wizardry that has produced what you are reading. Isn't it splendid?

*Let him who'd have the peace he needs,
Give all his worldly mumming up,
Then dig a garden, plant the seeds
And watch the product coming up.*

The Seasons Greetings to you all and a productive and flourishing 1998

Pip Harwood Hon: Sec:

