

Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue XXXI

Spring 2005



Points of interest

- Chairman's Corner
- Speakers' Register
- A.G.M.
- Bishop's Palace, Wells

Inside this issue:

A.G.M.	1
Chairman's Corner	2
New Club	2
Moonglow Plants	3
Old Deanery Garden, Wells	4
The Onion Patch	5
Lawn Care	6
Speaker's Register	7
Cacti and Succulents	7
Taunton Flower Show	8



"For now sits Expectation in the air."

W. Shakespeare

Henry V



Introduction

Daffodils, hellebores, snowdrops, camellias and primroses are all blooming together. In January I had China roses flowering for the New year. It is as if our garden plants are throwing themselves joyously as Harbingers and Bridesmaids, into the preparations of an approaching Celebration. A Celebration, moreover, which we ourselves view rather more reluctantly, I suspect. Nevertheless, setting aside churlish resistance and uncomfortable objections, we are obliged to anticipate and even embrace the inevitable impending Nuptials, viz. the forthcoming Wedding ofOld Mother Nature and Father Global Warming. These two Ancient Crocks have been consorting for some time of course. We all knew about it but none of us wanted to face the fact. Now we have to and the world will not be the same again.

"You sow hemlock and you live to see the ears of corn ripen.."

Machiavelli.

My Sparrows are back!

A number of years ago I mentioned in the Newsletter (no. XIII) the voracious predation of my Forsythia and Chaenomeles at the beaks of my resident gang of sparrows. Over the subsequent years their numbers dwindled alarmingly. The year before last I was left with three. For a common species which relies on its gregariousness for successful breeding this spiral of decline was desperate. Gladly forsaking a spring display from the shrubs I supplemented the diet, winter and summer, with seed and nuts. The plan seems to have paid off.

My own half a dozen or more are thriving – in fact as I write I see they have invited friends over – a chattering, chirping melée of nearly a score. The suburban spadger lives on, at least for the time being.

Of course other alarm bells still ring. The following is an extract from the editorial of last summer's newsletter of the Hampshire Federation of Horticultural Societies.

"Where have all the white fly gone? For the last 15 years or so, my greenhouse has been plagued with the little b-beasts. I have disinfected, smoke bombed, sticky yellowed and sprayed, inspected every plant, given them doses of nicotine from a little meths fumigator that my father gave me and all they seemed to do was cough and carry on breeding. Tomatoes grown against the house wall have been the same – absolutely covered. Having read about the use of brewed rhubarb leaves as an organic insecticide, this year I have a small pot of rhubarb in the greenhouse and no white fly! But there are hardly any outside either and I have used nothing there.

So where have all the white fly gone?"

Where indeed? And what's next?



A.G.M. 2004

will be held at the Village Hall of Norton Fitzwarren
Friday, 27th May
at 7.30pm

Hestercombe Gardens will be open free

Wine and reception by Philip White at 6.00pm

Wye Vale Garden Centre open in the afternoon

See details on Page 4

Buffet supper
for all after the meeting



Applications for Hestercombe Gardens must be received by **Friday 6th May** enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

Please **do not** contact Hestercombe direct.



Chairman's Corner



Firstly - progress on the renewal of our Register of Speaker - in response to my initial questionnaire, there was a veritable flood of replies. Sadly, many of our speakers have taken the opportunity to withdraw for various reasons (see separate list). Some 20 have still not responded and I am in the process of telephoning their last known number to check their intentions. This will inevitably result in a shorter, hopefully less frustrating, list for our bookings secretary, to work from. Of course, we are doing our best to recruit new speakers to replace the numbers and I would be most grateful for suggestions for new speakers from any of our member clubs before we close the list and start the next task of collating and cross referencing. Please - your help is needed!

On a much happier note, Portishead and District Horticultural Society has volunteered to host our AGM in 2006 and are making arrangements for an interesting evening for our entertainment and delight. We do so hope that the variety

will continue. Whilst we are forever grateful to Cannington for hosting us for many years, it became apparent that, to attract as many clubs as possible to this event, we needed variety. We started the ball rolling with the meeting at Bishop's Palace in Wells, which was a huge success. This was followed last year by the AGM in Hinton St. George, with open gardens and buffet supper. This year Norton Fitzwarren are hosting us and their excellent programme details are elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Here comes a plea! Would your club consider hosting an AGM in future? The Federation is happy to fund the wine and make a contribution to any food which provided by a club.

The essence is in the variety of entertainment you can add to the official meeting - perhaps you have members with lovely gardens we could visit, a team who could act as a Garden's Advice panel or your suggestions for any other ancillary form of entertainment would be welcome.

Lyn Spencer-Mills, Chairman of S.F.G.C.

Seeds on Fertile Ground

An enthusiastic report from a new club

East Huntspill is a new, small gardening club, formed just over a year ago. The formation of our club was the result of an appraisal of the needs of the area and a garden club was on the wish list. With help and direction from Cllr Jane Moreton from West Huntspill Horticultural Society and Bill, a judge and electrician, I made some posters and put an ad in the local paper and the parish magazine and 14 people turned up on the first night. We started meeting in a cold Church Hall, but now meet in our splendid new village hall, in the committee room which is plenty big enough at present. We only pay £3.00 per hour (cheaper than the Church Hall!)

We only have about 16 regular members, but we are slowly growing (like a precious plant)! We do not have a membership fee as yet, but we charge £1.00 per person which includes tea and biscuits, for each of our meetings. We decided on bi-monthly meetings as we did not want to run out of ideas and speakers but hope to grow and meet monthly in the future. So far we have enjoyed slide shows, speakers and trips out.

The speakers included a local person who specialises and shows Dahlias and gave us a very interesting talk; a local judge, an electrician by trade, spoke about electricity in the garden, pond features, lighting and how to be safe; a man from Bridgwater showed his slides on gardens he has visited in England. He confessed that he did not know the flowers names so we had a competition on identifying the flowers! We have also enjoyed two speakers from the Federation Speakers list.

For the trips to other people's gardens we meet in the hall car park, and share cars. We visit gardens twice a year and spent a very enjoyable evening at Sally Gregson's garden in Wookey. Last year the local District Council awarded us £200 for Britain in Bloom. We spent the money on large, heavy, non-transportable(!) tubs and plants for the village, planted daffodils in the verges, planted three flower beds and gave money for landscaping the village hall.

We also had a plant stall at the annual Plant Sale and coffee morning to raise

funds for the new village hall. We made £83, thanks to the generosity of local traders and growers.

Do any Federation members have any ideas to encourage the locals to beautify our village so we can enter the Pretty Village competition this year?

We would be glad to host any event for the Federation.

Well I think I have warbled on enough, which reminds me, don't forget to feed the birds.

Kay Bennett, East Huntspill.

East Huntspill Hall invite you to their coffee morning.

Saturday 4th June 2005

10.30 onwards

Giant plant sale

in the large garden, weather permitting

(not necessarily giant plants!)

If you have any plants to donate or swap, bring them along

Cautionary Tales 1

Some years ago an eminent gardener and rosarian embarked on the planting of a new rose plot in his garden. Scores of new roses were planted according to the instructions in the rose book he had published. The work completed he resorted to the garden shed for refreshment

pouring out a mugful from the bottle on the shelf. Too late he realized after a few mouthfuls that it was not his home brew. He succumbed to the poison some hours later.

It has taken gardeners and authorities years to reach the obvious conclusion that

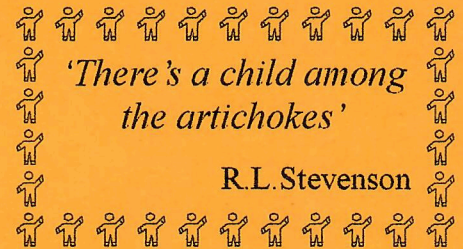
pesticides are poisons and happily, the shelf in the shed is more depleted these days. Disposal of old poisons must be done properly i.e. taking them to the local waste disposal plant and not just pouring them down the drain to pollute our drinking water.

Cautionary Tales 2

One of our Committee members had a frantic telephone call from a programme organiser. "Have you got a copy of the Speaker's Register as the Secretary will not let me have a look at it?"

There was a small, baffled pause,

followed by an authoritative blast down the wire to the effect that the said member should immediately get back to the secretary and demand the list. Full stop. No nonsense. Or else!
Nothing has been heard since.


'There's a child among
the artichokes'
R.L. Stevenson

Moonglow plants



Gardens at night

Extracted from the R.H.S. Affiliated Societies Newsletter

Top 10 plants for a Night-time garden.

Gardening for biodiversity need not mean an untidy, 'wild' patch. Make the most of your garden at night by planting a 'night-time' border to provide an attractive focal point for when relaxing outdoors, as well as attracting wildlife. The plants in this top 10 have been chosen for their night time performance - night-scented plants, architectural plants which create striking silhouettes in the dark, and luminous coloured plants (such as white, silver, blue and purple) that 'glow' under moonlight. All carry the AGM (Award of Merit) which is a measure of excellence awarded by the RHS.

Buddleia davidii 'White Profusion' AGM

A luminous plant with fragrant flowers that makes it irresistible to moths. Also try the deep purple 'Black Knight' AGM for a dramatic contrast. Plant in a sunny well-drained position.

Caryopteris x clandonensis 'First Choice' AGM

A small compact deciduous shrub with clusters of vivid blue flowers opening from deep indigo buds in last summer. Blue flowers will glow under moonlight, attracting moths. Grow in a sunny sheltered spot in well-drained soil.

Cynara cardunculus AGM (globe artichoke)

Loved by moths, this plant creates a striking silhouette at dusk. Grow in well-drained soil in a sunny sheltered position.

Eryngium giganteum 'Silver Ghost' AGM

Moth friendly, tiny blue flowers sit within the rosettes of silvery-grey bracts of this architectural plant. Grows best in poor to moderately fertile soil and in full sun.

Hebe 'Great Orme' AGM

A moth attracting shrub of small pink to white flowers clustered in dense spikes. Also try 'Sapphire' AGM for a blue/purple variant. Easy to grow in poor to moderately fertile soil in sun or partial shade.

Jasminum officinale AGM

This white-flowered jasmine is a vigorous twining shrub producing very fragrant flowers, attracting moths and glowing under moonlight. Ideal position is a warm, sunny and sheltered spot, but can cope with partial shade.

Lonicera periclymenum 'Graham Thomas' AGM

Honeysuckle produces a wonderful aroma in the evening making it particularly attractive to moths. 'Graham Thomas' is a

large twining deciduous climber. Its white flowers turn buff yellow over its long flowering season. Thrives in any moist well-drained soil, but grows best in partial shade.

Nicotiana sylvestris AGM

This flowering tobacco plant is sweetly scented and a magnet for moths. The luminous white salver-shaped flowers grow up to 9cm long in the summer. Prefers fertile, moist but well drained soil in sun or partial shade.

Oenothera fruticosa 'Fyrverkeri' AGM (evening primrose)

Night flying insects are attracted to the delicate fragrance of this pretty flower. Remaining closed during the day, its petals then uncurl at dusk. These drought tolerant plants are ideal for stony sites in full sun.

Verbena bonariensis AGM

Its tall, erect stems, that grow up to 2m in height, make this a good architectural plant. Moths, as well as bees and butterflies in the day, are attracted to the clusters of small, purple flowers. Grow in a sunny spot, in moist, well-drained and moderately fertile soil.



The Old Deanery Garden, Wells

The 'restoration in spirit' of the old Deanery Garden to celebrate the life of William Turner the 16th century, physician and priest who was Dean of Wells twice, is well under way. Since October 2003, a group of volunteers had been working in his secret garden, behind the battlements on the north side of the Cathedral Green. Working to a five year plan, they are on target to revitalize this historic garden.

William Turner was the first to name plants in English and, because of this, is known as the Father of English Botany. The preparation of a data base of the plants he mentioned in his books has allowed identification of those appropriate to use. For him, all plants of use to man were 'herbes' including trees and grain crops. Lists have been made of plants suitable for early flowering and foliage, also late flowering, foliage and seed pods to give guidelines on suitable

planting.

The felling of trees which are dead, dying or inappropriate in age will allow us to replant with a mulberry, quince, medlar, apple trees and a perry pear with drifts of annuals underneath. The Victorian curved paths will be replaced with straight ones which is more in keeping with Tudor times. The view from the entrance gate will be enhanced by the removal of a yew tree which obscures the wonderful trunk of the copper beech with its surrounding carpet of Cyclamen hederifolium. The viewing banks immediately behind the battlements will take longer to improve; but we have ideas which include a contemplation seat made of turf, and easier access to the top of the banks. We envisage the construction of herbers, the provision of an information board and, if possible, an allée covered with climbing plants.

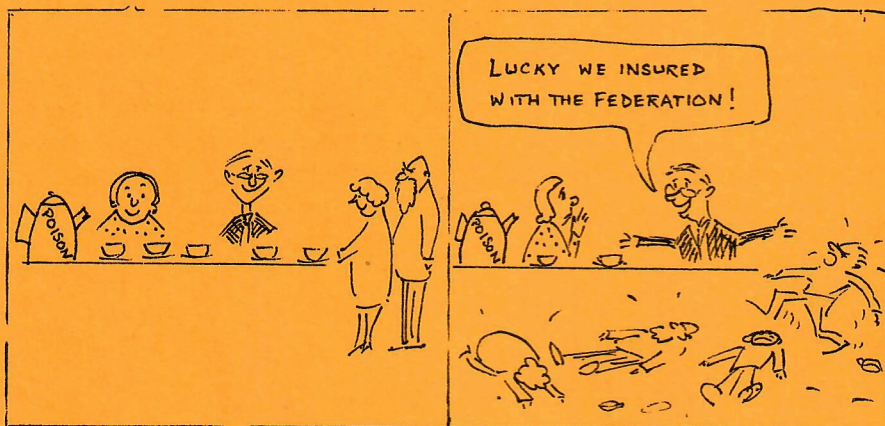
All of this will require money, and the formation of Friends of the Old Deanery membership organisation is being implemented. There will be an annual Spring Lecture and other fund raising events, including Open Days. The next open day will be on May 30th, with another later in the year. A Sponsorship Scheme is being established to buy specific plants or hard landscape items. For Open Days we need stewards. It must be explained that opening to the public is restricted because the Old Deanery is now the office of the Diocese and its Conference Centre so the garden is a private one. However we are now ready to accept Group bookings.

If you are interested in receiving further information, please contact the Project coordinator,

Mrs S.R.Hanks, 9, Hawkers Lane, Wells Somerset BA5 3JH.

Katrina, 17b St Johns Street, Wells
Tel: 01749 674815

Wells and district Gardening Club



Groworganic

15-24	40 litre bags	£3.99
25 plus	40 litre bags pellets	£3.88
15 plus	20 kg bag pellets	£6.99

Prices include vat

Tel 01458 272202

Ask for Jim Searle and mention the Somerset Federation.

101 Ways of dealing with Gastropods

No 45 Make a pond in the garden. Many people testify to the fact that the denizens of even a shallow pond make encouraging inroads on the slug and snail population

No 46 Pull evergreens away from the walls and you will find a host of snails hibernating cosily. Murder them in their beds with a squashy wallop with the back of the spade. It should be done on January 7th.

No 47 Odd bricks, paving slabs, lying in the grass, will hide whole families of small black slugs. The cutting edge comes into action – again best before the end of January.

No 48 Dandelion rosettes give shelter to little slugs. Hoick them out and don't give them a chance. You don't have dandelions in your garden? I don't believe it!

No 49 A friend of mine used unwanted gifts of a particularly nasty after shave to deter cats, who, being discerning creatures, took no notice. Snails might.....

No 50 Paraffin is effective; very smelly therefore must be good.

No 51 Try a ring of fire. The neighbours would be interested.

And so would the Fire Brigade.

No 52 What about DYNAMITE?!!!

[If there is a sense of desperation creeping in here it is simply because I am running out of ideas. Over half way through to the target of 101 I give up! For the record, I am no longer troubled by snails or slugs to any obsessive extent. And no, I do not use poisons. Now I wonder if Boots have any trinitrotoluene....]

*"But in the mud and scum of things
There, always, always, something
sings"*

R. Waldo Emerson: *The Poet*



A Few Aspects of My Gardening

It is the beginning of March and at the moment I am sitting on the bed in Beth's room, looking out over a back garden that is a wilderness, Clandown Village, White City above Midsomer Norton, right through to Pean Hill tower on the horizon framing the Mendips.

It is snowing hard and the view of the hills is somewhat obscure. It is said in this area that when you can see the Mendips it is going to rain and when you can't, it is raining.

Do you, as I do, sometimes sit and think and at other times just sit?!

A brief reference to my garden, which once produced cup winning vegetables. It now has every weed known to Hessayon and some that he hasn't heard of! (A slap on the wrist brings me back to normal and stops me feeling sorry for myself.)

Back to the Garden year.

Medwyn Williams of the multi gold medal winning exhibits at Chelsea, considers that his garden year starts in the first week in December when he sows his onion seeds in small multicelled trays in hear controlled propagators set to a temperature between 50 and 60 degrees F.

In the same month, on the shortest day December 22nd he plants out his shallots. I tend to slavishly follow Medwyn's methods because I have proved to my own satisfaction that they work. It may well be worth considering the varieties that can be used.

Onions (Recommended varieties to be sown in J1 seed compost.)

Kelsae Now owned by Johnson's Seeds and definitely the variety for raising very large onions

The world record weight for a specimen is between 12-13lbs. The one difficulty is what do you do with the specimens after they have been shown?

Mammoth

Seeds and plants supplied by the Robinson family. All gardeners should give themselves a treat now and again and mine is to order Onion or leek plants. Onions of up to 5 lbs are reasonably easy to produce. Robinsons also supply plants and seeds of a smaller onion, Mammoth Red, which is very tasty. There are other suppliers of quality onion seeds. Find one that suits you and stick with it.

Marshals onion sets **Showmaster Bred** (hybridised) to confuse Show Judges. It is very difficult to identify the difference between Showmaster and the largest Kelsae. I fancy Showmaster. They keep better!

The onion bed

This should be very rich indeed with a PH of about 7 which means in its turn lime will have to be introduced regularly to reduce the acidity of composts and manure. It is best made by digging in old manure (2 years old or more) or compost in the autumn then adding a suitable fertiliser such as blood bone and fish at about 2oz per square yard nearer to the planting out date in April. I don't rotate my onion bed because this means you have to start the enriching process all over again every year. Also during the growing season all plants should each be given a pint of water every week.

Diseases

One of the most invidious diseases which affects all the onion family, onions, leeks and shallots is a fungal disease, white rot. It becomes apparent when the leaves turn yellow, the bulbs fail to increase in size and the root plate becomes a stinking mass of rot. Hessayon, the technical gardening author, suggests that you deal with it by not planting any of the onion family in the affected bed for at least twelve years. Within a few years you will be unable to grow the onion family for a long, long time!

Margaret Robinson, a very helpful plants woman whose family have been growing onions in the same rich bed for over 120 years suggests you can control (not cure) the disease by removing the affected bulbs, together with a great deal of the underlying soil and burning it. Do not put it on the compost heap! In my opinion control can be increased if the hole left is filled with the correct mix for soil treatment of Armillaton, or Jeyes fluid, both organic phenols.

Shallots

Available varieties are **Hative de Niort**, and **Hybrid Ambassador**, **Dutch Red**, **English white**, and **French Torpedo** (long)

All planted in a similarly prepared bed as for onions on the shortest day, December 22nd

Hative de Niort Ambassador.

Available from some seed companies and many Specialist Vegetable raisers. A single bulb, quite expensive to buy, will produce four flask shaped bulbs with beautiful, honey coloured veined skin. In my opinion, the best shallot for exhibition. Cooks well too!

Dutch Red, English White and French Torpedo (Long)

The Dutch and English shallots are not uniform because one bulb will produce a multiplicity of new bulbs. In spite of being misshapen they are very tasty when cooked. The relatively new **French Torpedo** shallot is the latest Chef's fad. It is supposed to be better tasting. Very difficult to produce a uniform set for showing.

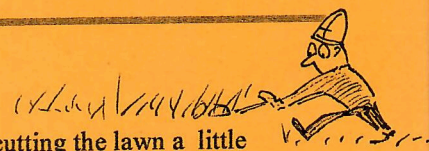
The finest producer of Hative/ Ambassador shallots I have ever seen, was the late Ken O'neon who exhibited at Mells show before it folded. He could produce shallots up to 3" in diameter and at a past show offered me a specimen to try. As kind as that offer was, I would have valued his secret methods of growing, much more. I must tell you the story of my talk on growing delicious vegetables at the inaugural meeting of the Chilcompton garden Club. At the end of my talk I was approached by a lovely, elderly couple standing hand in hand. They were concerned that, though they had been gardening for 25 years, according to me, they were doing it all wrong! Somewhat taken aback I assured them that if they considered their crops to be nice looking and tasty they couldn't possibly be doing anything wrong. This story will now preface any talks I may give.

In future editions of the Newsletter if the Managing Editor and Production Manager agree I would like to write articles on the seed bed, composts, vegetables and the greenhouse. If you managed to read this to the bitter end, thank you. If not I fully understand!

Ray Box
Kilmersdon Gardeners



Lawn Care



Before writing this article I had thought of writing about why, when I put down lawn fertiliser, it decided not to rain for weeks whether it is spring, summer or autumn!

However I decided to write about lawn care and how to achieve the perfect lawn. There is no doubt that a perfect lawn stands out more than anything else in an English garden and unless it is a drought year it is easier to achieve that many people think.

A good lawnmower is essential, preferably a cylinder, for the best stripes, with blades that are sharpened annually. We raise the height of the cut in a dry spell.

If you follow the annual procedure listed below I guarantee a perfect lawn even if you have a fly mow or electric mower.

February

The first cut of the season, using a rotary or electric mower and box. Do not cut too short!

March

The lawns can be fertilised this month using a slow release granular feed applied on a dry, sunny afternoon and when rain is forecast within the next few days. This has never happened and I panic it will not get watered but it

usually rains when you least expect it! Apply it a few days after the lawn has been mown. Try to avoid the powdery fertilisers as they scorch too easily.

April

The lawn can be cut using a cylinder mower this month or a rotary mower on a lower setting. 28 mm for the first couple of cuts and then 25 mm for most of the season. You should not need to cut more than twice this month.

May

The grass is much stronger now and a lawn weed killer can be applied but not during a drought. I think a liquid form is the most effective. The grass will look weakened after the application but it does recover within a few weeks especially if fertiliser was applied in March.

June/July/August/September

Further applications of fertiliser can be made, if necessary, and the weather permits. Weed killer can be applied for a second time early in September if the grass is growing strongly.

October/November

The work carried out now makes the biggest improvements to the lawn next year. It is worth scarifying the lawn to remove the thatch which is mostly dead grass. This can

be done by cutting the lawn a little shorter and then raking the lawn or using a machine such as a SISIS Autoturfmán. Scarifying promotes healthy growth by aiding air circulation and making it easier for rain and fertilisers to penetrate the surface. Aerating the lawn using a small garden fork is ideal, just push it in half-way and move it from side to side a few times to relieve compaction. In the past, at Sissinghurst Gardens, I used a machine called Robin Dagger. A prong, powered by a motor, goes 2.5 ft into the ground, then the machine produces pressure which makes the ground rise and fall below your feet. If you have large patches of dead or weak grass you can also hollow or slit tine which means removing cores or making slits in the lawn. The cores should be removed and a suitable top dressing mixed with grass seed can be raked and brushed over the area. James Cross, Head Gardener Bishop's Palace, Wells

Do come and visit the Bishop's Palace this season and see the changes. It is open most days except Saturdays. Please ring 01749 678691 if you have a query to do with opening times or booing groups. We are happy to answer any questions on this article or any other horticultural issues. Look for Rob or me in the gardens!

A.G.M. on Friday May 27th

Norton Fitzwarren garden club welcomes all Representatives of member clubs to the Annual General Meeting to be held in our village hall on Friday 27th May at 7.30pm.

In conjunction with this occasion, Hestercombe Gardens, Taunton, have generously offered free admission to the gardens on the day, followed by a reception commencing at 6.00pm with a glass of wine where Mr Philip White, the Chief Executive, will give a presentation on the future developments of these famous gardens.

The reception will last not more than an hour to allow for travel time to Norton Fitzwarren for the AGM at 7.30pm.

To enable flexibility, up to two tickets per club for Hestercombe are available on applications only from Mr M.J.Hawkins, Chairman Norton Fitzwarren Garden Club, "Trelawn", Pen Elm, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6PD

Additionally, whilst in Norton Fitzwarren an invitation has been extended to all Federation members to visit Wyevale Garden Centre at Pen Elm on the A358 (Minehead Road) as indicated on the map. Production of any garden club membership card will entitle the holder to a 10% reduction (excluding gift vouchers and discounted items).

We wish you all a very enjoyable day and look forward to meeting you at the AGM which will be followed by the now traditional supper.

The Speaker's Register

Calling all Speakers!

After a request in the last newsletter for names and addresses of new, potential speakers for the Register, Hon: Sec: received a most thorough and helpful list from Lionel Shirley of Fremington Garden Club near Barnstaple. As a result of this a number of new names have been added.

This was a heartening response.

Surely, there are, out there, more we could use. Would each person who reads this, please review their local knowledge and send in the name and address of somebody whom they could recommend and who does not appear on the S.F.G.C. list.

In particular more speakers and judges are sought in Devon and Wiltshire where new clubs are joining the Federation.

Your Chairman who is reviewing the Register is anxious that our provisions meet the necessary high standards you require.

Moving Goal Posts

News from Hinton St George

At a meeting of our village hall committee last night, I heard of new legislation to become effective in November 2005 relating to licensing for the consumption of alcohol. Up to now, when we have held a 'Cheese and Wine' party we have always understood that if no charge is made for the wine, or the food that went with it, we did not require a licence. From November, however, having paid your club membership fee, you will be deemed as having paid for the wine! There seems to be three ways around this problem.

1. Ask your guests to bring their own wine which seems a bit short on hospitality,
2. Obtain an entertainments licence which costs £21. It must be obtained 6 weeks in advance and the individual licence holder becomes responsible for upholding the licensing laws in full. Could be onerous!
3. An individual (not the club) must donate the wine free of charge.

Please send names and addresses of potential speakers to Lyn Spencer-Mills, Hoopers Holding, Hinton-St-George TA17 8SE. That is all you have to do!

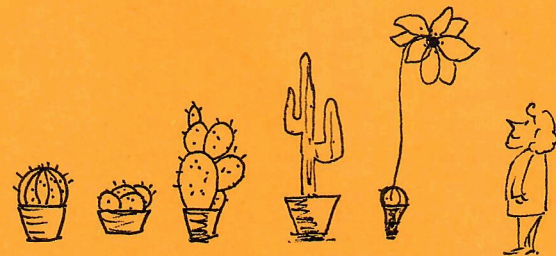
Thank you, Fremington, for giving the lead.

Footnote:

Names on the Federation Register should be treated confidentially. The Register is for the exclusive use of member clubs. If other organisations wish to compile lists it is up to them to approach speakers. The Federation refuses to divulge the contents of the Register to anyone who is not a member club. After all, that is one of the advantages you pay for!

The above is my understanding of the situation as it relates to our own village hall, However, some halls may have chosen to hold an overall licence which would cover the sale of alcohol. It is therefore important to check the situation with the management of the place in which you hold your meetings before embarking on the traditional Christmas parties or other entertainments where alcohol is on offer.

Lyn Spencer Mills



Growing Cacti and Succulents for pleasure

Have you ever thought of having a change with your greenhouse and houseplants?

Do you worry about looking you fuchsias and geraniums whilst you are on holiday? No immediate friend or kind neighbours to water them?

Well if you grow cacti there is nothing to worry about. They are quite able to look after themselves for two of three weeks and even enjoy the sunshine just as you will be doing.

It is widely thought they only flower every seven years. Not true. Once they reach the flowering stage they will do it for you every year, some flower twice a year if grown correctly. You will be surprised at the magnificent flowers with some appearing even in the depth of winter.

It helps to know where your plant comes from, which gives you a clue on how to treat it. Some grow in Peru and Chile where they only get sea mist and South Africa where it rains every five years. No plants grow in the desert as is commonly thought, but both cacti and succulents grow in semi-deserts under bushes, in cracks of rocks with no soil for their roots.

The range is enormous and you don't need a huge greenhouse – just a few on a windowsill will give great pleasure. You will also be helping conservation, as plants in Brazil and Madagascar are being ripped out and left to die so roads can be built. Without the cacti societies all round the world these plants will soon be extinct.

We have a society here in Weston-Super-Mare with meetings on the third Thursday of every month and are held at the Community Centre, Lawrence Road, Worle, at 7.30pm. A top speaker has been booked each month.

We have an exhibition of plants at the Friends Meeting House, High Street, Weston-super-Mare on May 28th where we will be showing plants from as many countries as we possibly can. There will be plants and garden plants for sale and of course a cup of tea. You are welcome to join us. Plenty of advice should you need it - that is free!

For further information do ring me
June Baker 01934 633198

Taunton Flower Show

Vivary Park in Taunton will throw open its gates again this August to welcome thousands of visitors to Taunton Flower Show. Dubbed the *Chelsea of the West*, this year's Show promises to be one of the best ever, with Designer Show Gardens, Trade Exhibits, and Sales, Crafts, Entertainment from British Airways Pipe Band, Portsmouth VCC Field Gun Display team, Game Goer Country Display, Heaven's Gate Dog Display, Taunton Deane Gymnastic Club Display and a good deal more.

Enthusiastic amateurs and professionals of all ages are encouraged to enter their prize blooms, displays, crafts and vegetables. A preliminary schedule is available on request.

New for 2005 is a field dedicated to activities for children with Miniature steam train rides, arena displays, Punch and Judy and a children's entertainer.

Further details are available, from the Show Secretary, Tel 07775 5632510 or

visit the web site a www.tauntonflowershow.co.uk

Somerset Federation Committee

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Mrs Marie Wheatley 01935 881421
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Crewkerne TA18 7QA

Taunton Flower Show

Vivary Park



Wednesday 11.00 am - 8.30 pm,

Thursday 10.00am - 6.00 pm

August 3&4 2005

Admission £7.00 for adults,
£5.00 for Senior Citizens

£1.50 for 7 -17 year olds, under 7's free.

Reduced entry fee £4.00 for adults after 5.00pm
on Wednesday August 3

Final Cuttings

Since the last newsletter we have welcomed the following clubs to whom we extend our good wishes.

Potterne Gardening Club, Edington Gardening Club,
Wembury Garden Society and Marston Magna.

The total membership of the Somerset Federation now stands at 237! Perhaps it is worth saying at this juncture that if you have a neighbour whom you think would benefit from membership of the Federation then please send me their names and address or make contact yourself. The

subscription still stands at £7 per annum and the increasing number testifies to the fact that it is worthwhile belonging to the Federation/ So, if you know of a club please get in touch. The Federation's success depends entirely on pooling resources. As well as names of clubs not on the list please send in names and addresses of good speakers and judges. It is to your advantage to do so.

The calendar of your events, which Barbara Rahn has prepared is enclosed which enables you to see who is doing what and with whom. Other clubs' events are always worth a visit. If you have a Spring show please send in the details to be included in the Autumn Newsletter, as these shows are usually too early for the Calendar.

Once again the newsletter has a strong flavour of Wells. It will continue to do so as long as copy from other parts is not sent in! Please let me know what is happening in your neck of the garden My grateful thanks go to those who have made a contribution to this newsletter.

Caveat Lector. I should perhaps add that some of the views expressed are those of a hard-pressed editor and do not reflect in general Federation Policy. On the other hand, if you disagree with anything you find contentious, please put it in writing and I shall be delighted and relieved to publish every libellous word!

Narcissus 'February Gold' bloomed in January—and is still blooming in March; clearly in need of re-branding. The cold snap has put a brake on things but not for long... The head-long skelter is in full flow. Go careful now. We don't want to fill the chiropractor's coffers, valued though the services are.

A last reminder about the A.G.M. Please contact **Norton Fitzwarren** about your Hestercombe tickets.

My warm thanks to Pam Kellett for the design and form of this newsletter. The process of Information Technology is still a happy mystery to me but she works magic.

The whole Committee extend their good wishes for a successful season and hope to see as many of you as possible on **27th May at Norton Fitzwarren.**

Pip Harwood

Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs



