

# Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue XXXV

Spring 2007

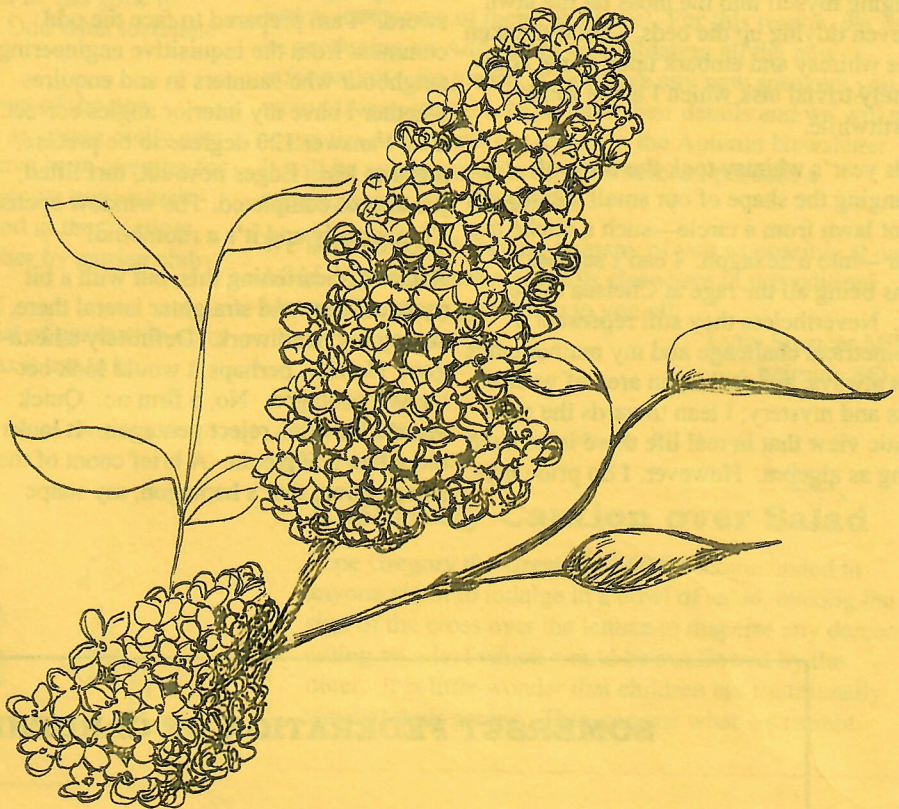


## Points of interest

- A.G.M.
- Cannington

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*Go down to Kew in lilac -time, in lilac time;  
Go down to Kew in lilac-time  
(it isn't far from London!)  
And you shall wander hand in hand with love  
in summer's wonderland;  
Go down to Kew in lilac -time  
(it isn't far from London!)*

*Alfred Noyes  
Barrel Organ*

# Introduction

*The beds and walks were vanished quite:  
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,  
The greatest grasses Nature laid  
To sanctify her right.*

Elizabeth Browning  
'The Deserted Garden'

As the days lengthen and the snowdrops appear and disappear and the blackbirds face up to each other on top of shrub and rooftop, the annual resurgent interest in gardening gets into gear. Every year that compulsive urge takes over and instead of flinging myself into the moss on the lawn or even tidying up the beds, I am overtaken by a whimsy and embark upon some completely trivial task which I alone think worthwhile.

This year's whimsy took the form of changing the shape of our small suburban front lawn from a circle—such a cliché my dear—into a hexagon. I can't see hexagons being all the rage at Chelsea quite yet. Nevertheless they still represent a geometrical challenge and my mathematics was always, and still is, an area of weakness and mystery; I lean towards the simplistic view that in real life there is no such thing as algebra. However, I do pride my-

self on my albeit very tenuous grasp of geometry.

Dispensing with set squares, protractors and theodolites etc but armed with pieces of string and straightish stems plundered from the nearby Pampas clump I set to work. A certain amount of self-doubt and self-interrogation about the choice of implements did creep in but perseverance was the key, I told myself. Remembering the old adage: "Once I have set my hand to the plough, I do not readily sheath the sword," I am prepared to face the odd comment from the inquisitive engineering neighbour who saunters in and enquires whether I have my interior angles correct. Yes, I answer 120 degrees to be precise, more or less. Edges now cut, turf lifted, job almost completed. The window opens, "Tea's ready and it's a rhomboid!"

Rather disheartening this, but with a bit more off here and straighter lateral there, I survey my handiwork. Definitely a hexagon! Hmm....perhaps it would look better as a pentagon. No, a firm no. Quick second thoughts reject pentagon. It looks more like a 50p coin. A brief count of the sides -seven, that's heptagon, my shape

has six sides even if my wife had to count them twice. It's a pleasing enough shape as well, providing a much needed sense of order in the shambolic structure of this part of the garden. We shall see if it remains so. All in all, more personally satisfying than scraping bits of moss in all directions.

So much for whimsy.

Now for substance. Please read and pass on any information in this newsletter to the appropriate person. Your Committee would like to draw your particular attention to the advice on insurance with special reference to that knotty problem of opening gardens to the public.....

Pip Harwood



## SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 9th May 2007

at

East Huntspill, near Bridgwater

7.00p.m.

Courtesy of East Huntspill Gardening Club

who held their first Horticultural show for 50 years in 2006

with 540 entries

## Chairman's Corner

I hope that your gardens are all as perky as mine is looking today, bristling with spring bulbs, an amazing parrot's bill bowed with exotic pink flowers, a rather rude looking *Melanthus major*, with long droopy racemes of dark maroon flowers in pink bracts and an *Acacia pravissima* foaming with a veritable froth of yellow stamens. Two months ago I was in despair at the amount of damage our neighbourhood badger had done to our lawn, but alas, now I miss him! He had been a regular visitor for nearly three years but just after Christmas, we realised that he was missing -the food we put out remained untouched and we fear that he has gone to meet the great white badger in the sky. Odd what love/hate relationships we gardeners develop!

We now feel ready to face the first visitors of the new season for the National Garden Scheme as spring really gets underway. We, at Hooper's Holding, have been opening for them for the past 18 years and love to receive our visitors - either on the general open days advertised in the "Yellow Book" or for private visits organised either by garden clubs or individuals.

I know we, as a Federation produce, a list of gardens to visit but also that it is somewhat out of date as it use to be

organised by our old friend, Ray Box. We are in the process of revising it but please, meanwhile, enjoy garden visits via the "Yellow Book". A copy of the free Somerset N.G.S. leaflet is enclosed with each of these Newsletters and they are freely available from garden centres, libraries and information centres. Please use them and help benefit the worthy charities we support whilst having a great day out.

We have had many addition and also a few deletions to our Speaker and Judges List, which have been transmitted to you as enclosures with our newsletters. However, I bet you have lost at least some of them, as I have! For this reason, we will be producing an Addendum consolidating all the new information. So please, if you have any new speakers you would like to suggest, let us have their details and we will try to get the Addendum out to you in the Autumn Newsletter. It will be another couple of years before I produce a complete new list, I'm afraid.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our AGM of which there are details elsewhere in this edition. Meanwhile happy gardening to you all.

Lynn Spencer Mills  
Chairman SFGC



### Speakers' fees and expenses

It cannot be stressed too often that programme secretaries, particularly those new to the job, should negotiate speaker's fees and expenses at the time of booking. This should be followed up by a confirmation with all details in writing.

It is difficult to pin down some speakers on expenses but a 40p or 50 p per mile extra cost on a longish journey and back can come as quite a shock.

One Treasurer was over heard querying the mileage at the 40p rate, asking ruefully "Oh, you want us to pay your fare back home?" It's difficult to argue the point and you just have to cough up on these occasions. But forewarned is forearmed.

If the asking price is more than you wish to pay, the advice is to say that you would have to speak to your committee or treasurer before an agreement is reached. Pre-variation usually wins the day.

### A Sainly Caution over Salad

Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) recommended to anyone about to indulge in a bowl of salad, making the sign of the cross over the lettuce to disperse any demon sitting on a leaf which would be swallowed by the diner. It is little wonder that children are traditionally wary of their greens. They can see what we cannot.

### Almost Human

Lupins, like lots of Society Leaders,  
Are rather important and very gross feeders.

Daisies are neat little servants in villas,  
Who wait upon tulips, narcissi and scillas.

Snowdrops are choirboys—such emblems of purity,  
May lose this effect on approaching maturity.

The Poppy—a flapper, who's 'almost a lydy,'  
A bit highly coloured and very untidy.

Lilies are like miss Elizabeth Arden  
(or Helena Rubinstein—begging her pardon);  
And Weeds are the tramps in a gentleman's garden.

Reginald Arkell

## South West Alpine Flower Show

Put your hand up those who have not yet attended an alpine flower show. Oh! That many. Well you don't know what you are missing.

These dedicated alpine flower shows are organised by the Alpine Garden Society, an international organization with members all over the world, and attract most of the top growers and showers of rock garden plants in Britain.

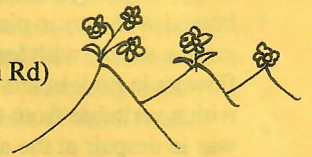
The South West Alpine Flower Show is held annually in Exeter and is one of the most important horticultural events in the area, bringing together many of the best exhibitors in the south of the country, coming from as far afield as South Wales, Nottingham and London. The standard is incredibly high and most of the world's mountainous areas are represented by the plants on display, including the Alps, the Andes, the Himalayas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa and New Zealand. You see plants here that you have only seen in books, if then and grown to perfection.

I'm not a specialist, I hear you say, although I do have a small rock garden. But you are a keen gardener, that's why you are a member of a gardening club, and as such, I know you will be interested in seeing the plants on display. Only superlative comments have been made by the many 'ordinary' gardeners who have attended in the past, and I am sure that yours will be added if you come this year.

### Details:

Name: South West Alpine Flower Show  
 Organisers: Alpine Garden Society Exeter Group  
 Venue: St Luke's High School  
 Hart's Lane, (off Hill Barton Rd)  
 Exeter EX2 5AP  
 Map Ref. SX954920  
 (Near Middlemoor Roundabout)  
 Leave M5 Jct 30  
 Date: Saturday 31st March 2007  
 Time: Plant sales open at 10.00am  
 Show opens at 12 noon until 4.00pm  
 Entry: £2 (AGS members free)  
 Refreshments: Yes  
 Parking: Free

As an added bonus there are 13 nursery stalls to encourage the plant buyers and these can seriously damage your wallet. I look forward to welcoming you all to what I am sure will be wonderful experience.  
 Roger Stuckey, Chairman, Alpine Garden society, Exeter Group.



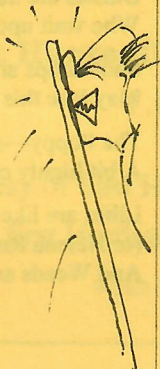
### The Objection to being stepped on

At the end of the row  
 I stepped on the toe  
 Of an unemployed hoe.  
 It rose in offence  
 And struck me a blow  
 In the seat of my sense.

It wasn't to blame  
 But I called it a name!  
 And I must say it dealt  
 Me a blow that I felt  
 Like a malice intense.

You may call me fool,  
 But is there a rule  
 That the weapon should be  
 Turned into a tool?  
 And what do we see?  
 The first tool I step on  
 Turned into a weapon!

A poem from  
 Gloucestershire Federation's Newsletter



### Groworganic

Organico Ltd, Hayes Rd, Compton Dundon,  
 Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6PF

Spring is just around the corner and we all look forward to preparing the soil by digging in **Groworganic Fertiliser**. This enables Groworganic to replenish the ground in a natural way by putting humus back into the soil ready for another growing season.

Please do not confuse Groworganic fertilizer with other manures which have not been OVEN HEATED.

We also stock 6x/groworganic odourless chicken fertilizer pellets in 8 kg and 20kg sizes, available for immediate delivery, ideal for lawns and larger areas of garden.

Please note that smaller quantities may be collected directly from the factory.

Opening hours 0800-1600 Mon. to Fri.

Groworganic delivered prices to Federation Garden Clubs for Spring 2007

15/24	40 litre bags	£3.70 +vat = £4.35
25 plus	40 litre bags	£3.50 +vat = £4.12
25 plus	8kg tub Pellets	£3.50 +vat = £4.12
15 plus	20kg bag Pellets	£5.95 +vat = £6.99

# Important

## Public Liability Insurance

### Liability of garden owners

One particular point has often arisen and this concerns the liability of club members who open their garden to the public or to similar groups.

Our policy does NOT cover accidents to visiting groups or to the public, which occur due to poor garden maintenance, because the accidents would be the responsibility of the garden owner.

If the garden owner is a member of a club **THIS MAKES NO DIFFERENCE** -the member becomes the garden owner and, as such, must accept a garden owner's responsibility and should

ensure that he/she has adequate insurance against accidents due to insufficient garden maintenance, such as loose steps or crumbling walls etc.

Our policy covers accidents on garden walks (which must be officially organised by the club, and not just a few individual persons) where negligence is proved against an action by one of the members of the official visiting group.

John Starnes  
President SFGC

Please note:

A more detailed document will be sent out together with the notice of our Annual General meeting, including the policy's exclusion clauses.

## Show time

Here is an extract from Cecil Torr's 'Small talk in Wreyland' 1918, reminiscences and observations about life in and around the Dartmoor village of Lustleigh near Bovey Tracy.

'Like many other country places, Lustleigh started a flower show, which soon became a show of vegetables and poultry, with fewer prizes for flowers than for such things as cream and honey, needlework and cookery. There were athletic sports as well, with kiss-in-the-ring and dancing on the grass to the strains of a brass band and played—'a proper old Pandey Romy Un,' as someone called it, meaning Pandemonium, I think. People came to it from a distance, as it was held on a bank holiday in August, and they could spend their morning on the Cleave and finish off with this.

I missed the Lustleigh flower show in 1900, having just gone up to town; but a friend wrote me this account of it next day.



"We went in about 2, when it opened and found some disorder in the main tent, as it had partially blown down earlier.... Then there was a horrible noise, and a great gust of wind ripped the poultry tent almost in half. The whole thing began to collapse, men were rushing in and being pulled out by screaming females, some were tightening the ropes, which others immediately loosened, and presently a great loose flap of canvas overturned the stand of cages—a horrid mass of ducks and fowl screaming and quacking and flapping all over the crowd, pursued by owners and upsetting everything. And just at this moment the big flower marquee—which was of course deserted was caught by a tremendous puff of wind and torn right up and dropped on the tables inside. It wasn't heavy enough to be dangerous, but I wish I could give you any idea of how funny it was to see \*\*\*\*\*, who was rather

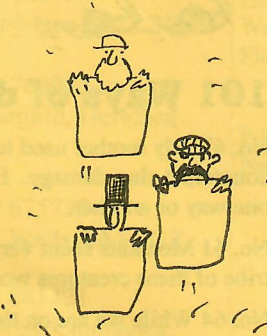
bossing the show, creep from under the canvas with an old lady, an infuriated fowl pecking at his knicker-bockered calves. One of the nicest incidents was a little old lady in a velvet mantle and black curls, careering backward over the ground, knocking people over as she clutched at the tail of a huge escaping, crowing cock with one hand, and with the other arm embraced a captured but still struggling and squawking goose. In about an hour after it was opened everything on the ground was swept quite flat. But excursion trains kept arriving, whose innocent passengers paid their sixpences—you couldn't see the ruin from outside—and wondered why the crowd assembled at the gate laughed at them. However it was worth while to see the village boys fighting and scrambling under the fallen tents for the apples and potatoes."

Cecil Torr

And from Somerset, Crowcombe in fact, from the diary of the Rev. William Holland of the Parish of Over Stowey, a description of a 21st birthday party of one of the Carew family, Friday 13 March 1818.

'(My daughter) gave us a full account for there was an Ox roasted whole, girls running races for Ribbands, men in bags competing for prizes and Old Women racing for snuff and tobacco, besides a compleat entertainment for the Tennant and Farmers and a dance at night and moreover a Grand dinner for the Gentleman.'

Any new ideas for you here? In any event both books are highly recommended.



## Milton Lodge Gardens, Wells

We are open for business as usual this year on Good Friday 6th April.

Normal opening times are Tuesday, Wednesday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 2.00-5.00pm  
Groups most welcome by prior appointment.  
Ring 01749 672168.

The annual Specialist Plant Sale now in its 11th year, will take place on

Bank Holiday Monday 28th May at 10.00-4.00pm.

For further information visit our new website [miltonlodgegardens.co.uk](http://miltonlodgegardens.co.uk).

Simon Tudray-Quilter

## Horticulture at Cannington

The walled gardens continue to be redeveloped with the priority at present being the landscaping of the major areas of the the gardens. The new glasshouses are a wonderful addition to the college and a fitting replacement for the old "H" block which many will remember and were demolished in 1997. Display sections, such as temperate and tropical areas are fully planted and there are excellent facilities for propagation and growing on.

The reality of the master plan for the gardens is developing well with the intricate pattern of hard paths being laid out and the soil preparation of the planting areas being achieved prior to the extensive planting programme. Although the weather has not been kind, work is

pressing on for a late spring completion for this part of the gardens.

The college is delighted to have obtained one plant of the rare Wollemi pine. Long thought to be extinct and only known through fossil records the pine was discovered in 1994. It was discovered in a deep gorge in the Blue Mountains just 200 km west of Sydney, Australia and to the botanic world is as dramatic as suddenly finding a dinosaur roaming in the local park!

The Wollemi pine has unusual pendulous foliage with light apple green growing tips in spring, contrasting against the dark blue green of the mature foliage. It is unique in that the leaves are arranged in two ranks along the branches and the bark of mature

trees is very distinctive, closely resembling bubbling hot chocolate! In winter the tree produces polar caps, white waxy coatings striped with ruby pink to protect the growing buds.

The weekend of the 12th and 13th May Cannington will host its Wisteria Festival. It promises to be a colourful weekend with a number of nurseries setting up stalls and 17 local schools will each be battling against each other by building their own individual small gardens. It will also be a chance to walk through the new glasshouses and see the progress of the landscaping within the gardens.

Nick Rigden

## Annual General Meeting Our Activities

You are cordially invited to a friendly and jolly evening on Wednesday 9th May 2007 at East Huntspill, near Bridgwater at 7.00pm.

The AGM will be short and to the point. Following the business at 7.30pm there will be an entertaining talk by Pete Tinney entitled 'Anecdotes of Country Life'.

At 8.00pm refreshments will be served.

All this is courtesy of East Huntspill Gardening Club and promises to be a thoroughly enjoyable affair. In fact the organisers have promised that 'an excellent evening is assured.'

East Huntspill is on the main A38 and the lovely village hall is easy to find by the church. Parking is very easy.

Your committee hope to welcome as many of you as can possibly make it.

### Competitions and Shows

We hold two Shows each year. In Spring, we have our 'Members only' Show at our usual Monday meeting. In Autumn, we hold an 'Open' Show on a Saturday. For both of these Shows, members are often supplied with a plant to grow on and exhibit, usually a fuchsia or geranium, but one year we tried a seed potato in a bucket to see who could produce the most potatoes from it.

We regularly compete in the National Amateur Gardening Show at Shepton Mallet. In the last seven years we have won the Club section in 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004. We were runners up in 2001 and 2003 and came third in 2005.

Trowbridge and District Horticultural Society

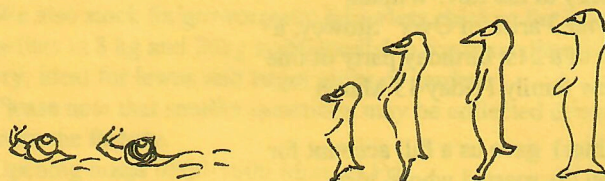
### Speakers and Judges List

Please pass on to the relevant person the enclosed small list of additions and changes.

## A Gratifying Testimony from Devon

I have been in touch with you now and then during my 14 years as secretary and would just like to say 'Farewell' and thank you to the Federation for all the support we have had since joining you. My time as Social Secretary was considerably eased by virtue of the Speakers Register and I know our Treasurer has found the Federation Insurance provision very comforting! He, by the way is not retiring - I hope he stays in the post for many years yet.

Sylvia Brace  
Retiring Secretary  
Topsham Allotments and Gardens



### 101 Ways of dealing with Gastropods

No. 62 My mother used to do peculiar things with grapefruit skins to counteract slug damage. How it worked I fail to recall but give it a try one way or another.

No. 61 Meerkats seem very popular at the moment. I am sure a small tribe of these creatures would reduce the slug population.

No. 64 While we are on the subject why not pangolins and armadillos?

## Federation committee

Most of the present member of the SFGC committee are willing to stand for re-election this year. However there are a couple of vacancies. If anyone in your club feels that they would like to join the committee and have a say in the direction of its affairs they would be most welcome. The committee meets in a very friendly fashion a couple of times a year. Just get in touch with Lyn 01460 76389 or myself 01749 679182 for a chat. Even if you live way outside central Somerset, please consider yourself eligible.

## Presumptions

There are two presumptions that may be forgiven. One is to stir another man's fire; the other is to pull the obvious weeds in another man's garden, and of these two, stirring the fire is least apt to cause resentment. Some visitors cannot resist the allure of toying with fire tongs. These are usually people who have an excellent opinion of themselves as makers of fires and I accept their incendiary presumption with hospitable complaisance.

But let a caller's eye catch the Pigweed amid the Phlox, let him casually lean over and pluck it out, and I'm on the verge of saying, "What bad manners!"

The mote that is in thy brother's eye which we are told to leave strictly alone until we have first removed the beam from our own, is a mere trifle compared with the weed in a stranger's garden.

Richardson Wright

## Somerset Federation Committee

### President

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

### Chairman

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

### Vice Chairman

Mr Nick Rigden 01278 671376  
Cridlands West, High Street, Spaxton, Bridgwater

### Secretary

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

### Treasurer

Mr Bill Thomas 01934 822627  
Littleton, 3, Littlefields Avenue, Banwell,  
N. Somerset BS29 6BE

### Committee Members

Mr John Addison (ex officio) 01278 655000  
Cannington College, Cannington TA5 2LS

Mr Michael Hawkins 10823 282050  
Trelawn, 4, Pen Elm, Norton Fitzwarren TA2 6PD

Mr Ted Gill 01934 628758  
30, Brighton Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 3QG

Mrs Pamela Kellett 01432 760075  
Lakeside, 22, St Mary's Lane, Burghill, Hereford  
HR4 7QL

Mrs Barbara Rahn 01749 675753  
1, Dells Court, St Thomas Street, Wells BA5 2UZ

Mrs Marie Wheatley 01935 881421  
Yeoman's Wake, Higher Street, West Chinnock,  
Crewkerne TA18 7QA

## Final Cuttings

Things, especially, plants in the borders, move around greatly at this time of year. Garden paths are littered with pots and balls of herbaceous mud awaiting new homes. A hectic time, reminiscent of my former working life which echoed the parody of a Shakespearean historical drama in the sixties revue 'Beyond the Fringe', which went something like:

"Wessex, get thee to Sussex. Suffolk, hence to Gloucester and Gloucester thee to Worcester etc."

One hopes the plants themselves forgive the uprooting and redistribution.

Since the last newsletter we have said goodbye to Blackdown Hills Gardening Club and West Coker Garden Festival. We welcome, however, Motcombe Gardening club, West Camel Gardeners' Club, Exmouth Garden Club, Nempnett Thrybwell Gardening Club, Hardy Plant Society Devon Group and Coombe Bissett and Hornington Garden Club. This last club is situated near Salisbury and is the furthest east of our membership district—and very welcome, too. Since the club which lies furthest west is Plymouth our geographic range is impressive, as is our total membership of 244 clubs.

Please keep telling us what you require and the Federation will try to fulfil it. But it does depend upon pooling our resources. It is vital that information on good potential speakers and judges, on good gardens to visit and advice on shows and events is shared. Send the info in and we can distribute it.

'Somerset get thee to Devon, Devon to Wiltshire.'

My thanks to all who have provided news and information.

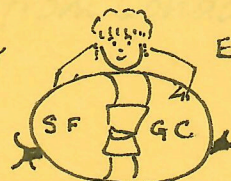
Finally I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to Pam Kellett who mystifyingly translates scribbles and scrawls into the brilliant presentation you can read. This is done from somewhere in Herefordshire and I still don't know how.

We look forward to seeing many of you in East Huntspill on 9th May. Floriferous Easter Greetings

Pip Harwood

P.S. Wells and district Gardening Club is succumbing to Alfred Noye's exhortation and visits Kew on 13th May. Lilac time?

HAPPY



EASTER!

Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

# Federation Committee

# Resolutions and Constitution

There are two resolutions that may be brought before the Federation. The first is a resolution of motion and the second is a resolution of censure. A resolution of motion is a statement of opinion on a subject that is brought before the Federation for its consideration. A resolution of censure is a statement of opinion on a subject that is brought before the Federation for its consideration and is a statement of disapproval of the actions of an individual or a group of individuals.

The Federation Committee is responsible for the following:

- To receive and consider all resolutions of motion and censure brought before the Federation.
- To advise the Federation on the merits of such resolutions.
- To recommend to the Federation the appropriate action to be taken in respect of such resolutions.

The Federation Committee shall also be responsible for the following:

- To receive and consider all applications for membership of the Federation.
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## General Federation Committee

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## A Gratifying Testimonial from Peter

I have had the pleasure of reading the testimonial from Peter and I am sure that it will be a great inspiration to all who read it. Peter's story is a testament to the power of the Federation and the support that it can provide to its members. I am sure that Peter's story will be a great inspiration to all who read it.

The Federation is a great organization and I am sure that it will continue to provide support to its members for many years to come. I am sure that Peter's story will be a great inspiration to all who read it.

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