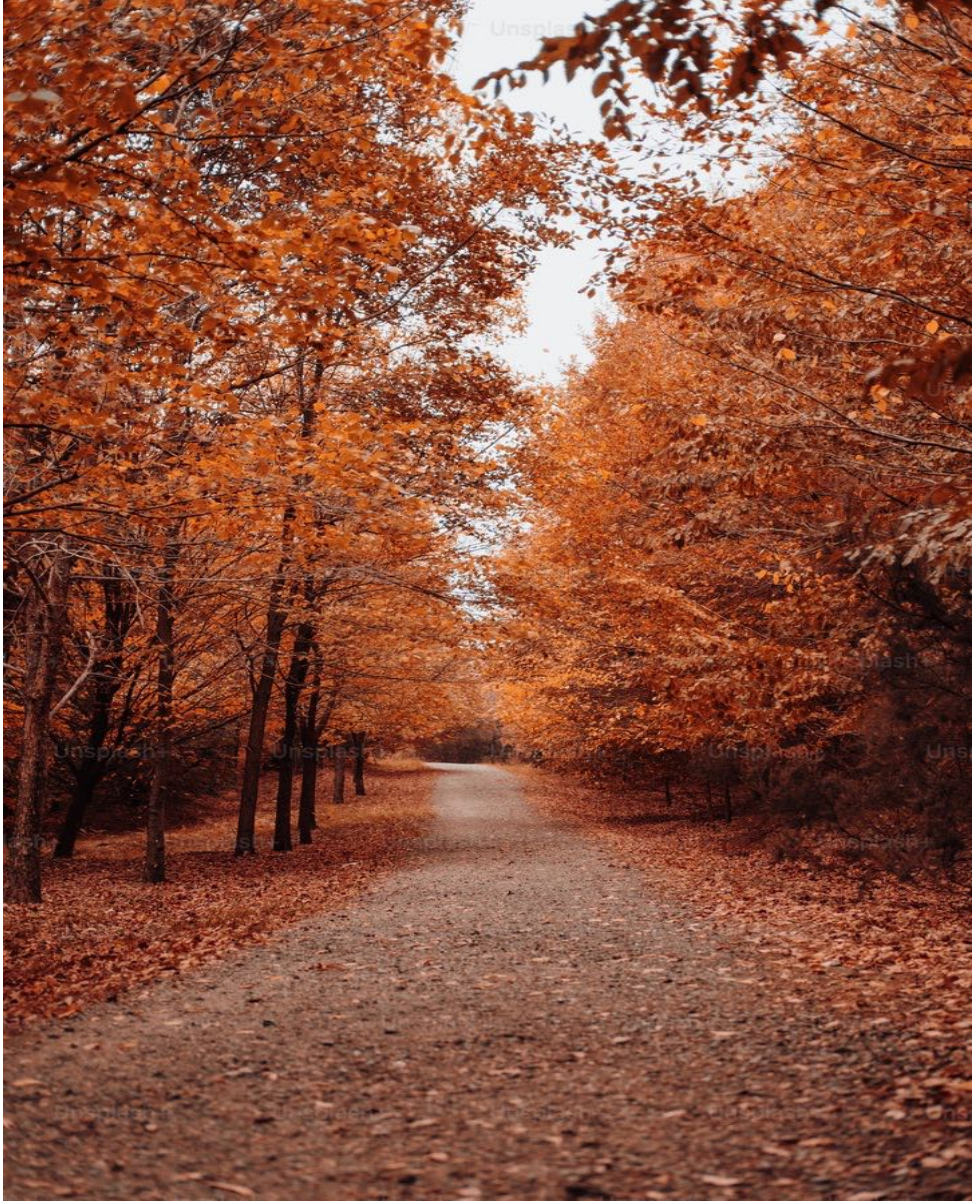




Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs Magazine

Issue LXIX

Autumn 2024



Contact Details of the Officers & Committee Members of The Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

President: Philip Harwood Tel: 01749 679182

Chairman: Erland Plomgren Tel: 01278 741152

Secretary: **Vacancy (Volunteer required)**

Treasurer: John Dunster Tel: 01943 844777
8, Copse End, Winscombe. BS25 1JS

Database Secretary: Mo Plomgren Tel: 01278 741152

Speakers & Judges: Sally Hawkes Tel: 01278 652658

**Web Editor &
Newsletter:** David Talling Tel: 07484 162918

Co-Web Editor: Catherine Gregory Tel: 07421 471387

General Enquiries: enquiries@sfgc.org.uk

Website\Newsletter: webmaster@SFGC.org.uk

Website: <https://www.SFGC.org.uk>

Speakers & Judges List

To access the updated Speakers & Judges list your Club registered contact will need to request/or already have access details to a Private area. There have been a large number of amendments over the last few months. Please use the updated list to book speakers and judges.

To help us keep this up to date we would appreciate nomination of speakers and judges that could be useful for other clubs. Please ensure the speaker and/or judge is aware of their nomination.

Introduction

Thanks go to all of you who have submitted articles for this Autumn Federation Magazine. Without you we would not have such a varied, informative and interesting publication. Please keep the articles coming for future editions.

This year we had our AGM hosted by the Sandford & District Gardening Club in the Shipham Village Hall. They laid on a delicious spread, excellent speaker and a great raffle – the only disappointment was that I did not win on the raffle. Overall, an excellent evening, so a big well done to their organisers.

We need another Club to volunteer to hold the 2025 AGM. Usually held in May but can be held on a night of the Club's choosing. Funding is given to cover expenses and help with organising is available. If you are proud of your Club, then come forward and agree to hold the 2025 AGM. Get In touch with our Chairman (Erl Plomgren)

WANTED

A CLUB TO HOST THE 2025 SFGC AGM

Expenses are covered by the Federation.
For further information contact the Federation Chairman (Erl Plomgren)
chairman@SFGC.org.uk / 01278 741152

Please notify us of your major functions so that they can be published on the Federation website so they reach a wide audience.

Do not forget that the Speakers & Judges list is no longer published in paper format but is only available on the Federation 'members' website for Club committees. If you do not currently have access to the website then ask your Club Federation contact to request the details.

Wendy Williams (Federation Secretary for many years) stood down last year and we are looking for someone to fill the post. If you can help us then do please contact our Chairman to discuss what is involved in taking up the position.

I hope you all have a superb Christmas and look forward to seeing some of you at the Federation AGM.

David Talling

Chairman's Corner - Autumn 2024

Looking at the calendar recently, it dawned on us that we have lived here in Holford



in our current house for just over twenty four years, it really feels that only a few years ago we were choosing wallpaper, paint and configuring rooms in the property, but then, we realised how long ago that all was as more and more we noticed everything was beginning to look a little tired, so over the last year, we embarked with freshly painted rooms and all the trimmings (as Mo says) that go with it - but - as I always write, where did all that time go!!?

The rear garden here as I've written previously is a quarter of an acre, sloping up at one side across the stream (that runs through the garden and down from the Quantock hills) onto Lower Hare Knap, a walkers paradise and with a gate from the top of our garden leading onto the path, is a huge bonus! During the first ten years, I spent many months re-erecting the stone walls and clearing the terraces especially on this side of the garden. Constructed a work area, two compost areas and reinforced the banks of the stream with stone and steel, bringing in approximately thirty tons of scalping to repair the paths, all this anticipating this would keep the deer and rabbits out! Before we had an irrigation system installed, buckets of water from the stream were taken up and down to maintain all the shrubs, which kept us fit to say the least, along with the buckets of scalping and building materials!!

Along came a piece of land two or three years ago for rental adjacent to our garden which we have also written about in previous magazines, where Mo has a small enclosed allotment and where the wildlife and wild flowers abound, especially in the early spring with snowdrops, primroses, bluebells (and tiny orchids here and there) and are an absolute delight. We are quite happy for the odd deer to take refuge as we purposely left a small gap in the fence/hedge and often find a young buck or Monkjack resting in the small copse. We had the ash-die back trees pollarded by a professional tree surgeon team (so plenty of logs for the winter), strimmed back some ferns, planted a couple of evergreen shrubs from our garden and we have created a 'dead hedge' around the perimeter of the land using all the pruning of shrubs, trees and cuttings so providing habitat for the insects and small mammals. Finally, we have recently enclosed some asparagus in a caged area which seem to be doing well....so far!

You may wonder why on earth did we take this extra piece of land on...well, we know the owner who lives many miles away (although 'a born and bred Holfordian') and we wanted to rent the land purely for conserving all the wildlife in there (and a few potatoes!) as it was possible that someone else could come along, take it over, perhaps using pesticides to control the weeds etc.,

So our work load increased... and as most of you readers out there will know, as one gets older, gardening gets more and more difficult and despite Mo and I still in reasonably good health, it can be back breaking work trying to maintain such a large area.

We do have help when our regular chap (Michael) can get here, to mow the grass in our front and rear garden and at the right time of year, will cut the hedges, but it was the weeding, moving plants around, digging anything up, pruning etc., that was beginning to get a little harder. Mo then suggested we scout around locally for some extra help and after a few days, three lovely young people volunteered to help. So Louis (aged 20) his sister Maisie (aged 17) who live in our village and Louis's friend Amy (aged 21) joined us to help on a paid basis that will assist them with their studies. They have, as they say 'worked their socks off' on the days they have been here, individually mostly as all are at University or college and do need some time to themselves! Their work ethic is just incredible, they work hard, never waste time and nothing is too much trouble, even so far as carrying stones and earth around to rebuild areas that needed repair, not least to their commitment to the tasks in hand and at times do not have to be told what we'd like carried out....they just see what needs doing, raking leaves, sweeping paths and so on, this is all a



testament to the encouragement of their supportive parents as well., they are fun to be with and despite their subjects in the academic environment - which is miles apart from gardening and horticulture - have shown so much interest in the natural world and have admitted how much knowledge they have reaped and appreciate. We too have been rewarded inasmuch we feel we have helped them learn a little and that - as importantly - they have enjoyed their days with us....we will miss them when they return to their studies.... it has

been a joy to work with such enthusiastic young folk.

I wish you all the very best for the coming months and of course, a very, very early happy and peaceful festive season! Do keep sending any posters or notices for events your club may be holding to David, our webmaster, (even if they are during the winter months!) and articles are always very welcome for publication in the next magazine in the spring. Thank you all for your continued support to the Federation and its' committee.

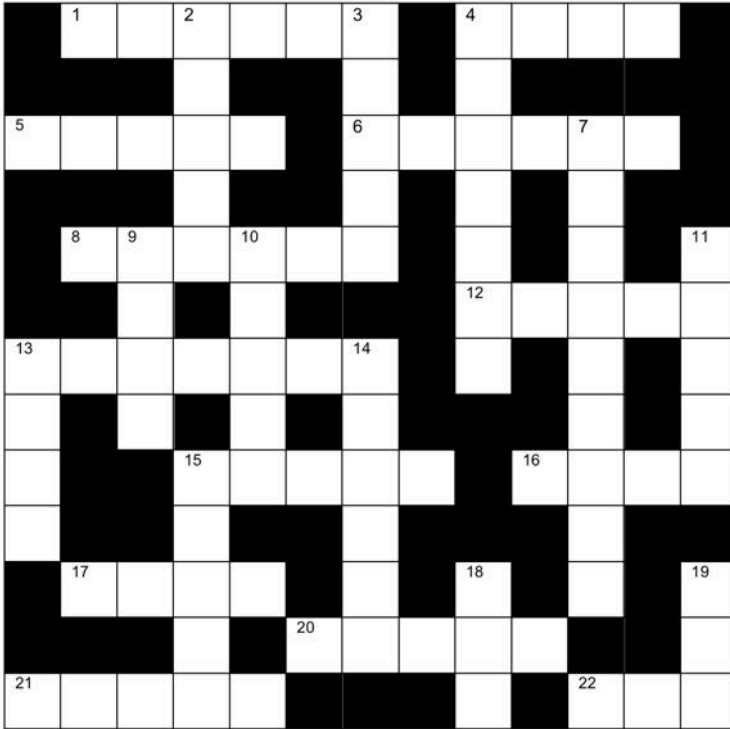
God Bless,

Erl

Please Note

When a member of a club needs to contact the Federation please ensure it is **the registered authorised contact** who does the contacting. For accessing the Speakers and Judges Register or a query about an entry on the website or anything regarding your Club it is only the registered authorised contact we can reply to. Contact via email is preferred as research can be carried out and a quick reply given.

Crossword by John Dunster



Across

1. A motto for the vegetarian
4. Yearn for a tree
5. They grow right in the heart of the fens.
6. Flowers one gets out of bed.
8. A plant for cold Romeo
12. Left to support a tree.
13. Fit role for clover for example.
15. Chart needed for the French to find a tree.
16. Shrub found in all the best gardens.
17. A New Zealander with taste.
20. A tree like a writing instrument.
21. Fruit seed to put in the earth we hear.
22. Plot a bit of disobedience.

Down

2. Fruit that gives a male drive.
3. One rambling rose to get a willow shoot.
4. Flower that starts to mutate in April.
7. Tree always found to be fresh.
9. King and slippery fellow turn over vegetable.
10. Plant a single in the Oval possibly.
11. A remarkable time in the garden.
13. Understand it has a possibility for growth.
14. One reposes under fifty one flowers.
15. Could it chop up a worm at the end of June.
18. A vegetable often green in appearance.
19. Half sodden piece of turf.

Answers found on page 14

A letter from Canberra

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”

Mahatma Gandhi

As your readers would be aware, Lions is a world leader in community and humanitarian service. There are many Lions Clubs in the UK and Australia and I recently joined the Lions Club of Canberra Belconnen to help in its fund-raising activities to assist the disabled and disadvantaged in the community.

One of the biggest activities of the Club is its involvement in the Canberra Balloon Spectacular. This is an annual event where balloonists from Australia and abroad gather to fly over Canberra. It is also one of the last capital cities in the world to allow flights across its skies. Each morning over 9 days and subject to weather, balloons launch from the Parliamentary Triangle area near the National Library. The weather this year was good with flights on 8 days.



The first balloon festival was held in 1996 and until 2024 it commenced during the final days of Canberra's two-week long Enlighten Festival. Multiple buildings within the Parliamentary Triangle are illuminated with breathtaking creative colourful imagery, and within the open lawns, there are night food markets, activities, music, film and family fun.

Balloons over Lake Burley Griffin and the Australia Museum

Parliament House at night during the Enliven Festival



The Balloons Festival is one of the four leading balloon events in the world.

In 2024, over 42000 people attended. Some 25% were from interstate or overseas.

There are vantage points around Canberra and along the shores Lake Burley Griffin. Many gather at the launch area and most people get to their favourite spot before dawn. The best all is to fly in one of the balloons and bookings are made months before. Moderate levels of fitness and wellbeing are required.



It's at the launch area where our Lions Club comes into its own. We provide food and drink for the many hundreds of people who are at the balloon launch site. It involves months of planning, equipment hire and the purchase of consumables. Volunteers start well before dawn, normally from 5 am, to prepare for the onslaught of hungry and thirsty visitors.

The Launch Site





A 9m x 10m marquee along with tables were set up and we had access to a generator for our power needs. We had the use of a cool room at a discounted rate and LPG gas was donated

We keep prices reasonable and provide a menu from tea, coffee, water and soft drink through to a full breakfast of sausages, eggs, baked beans and pancakes. For this we charge \$14 (£7).

Discounted meals were provided to the balloonists and Festival volunteers to offset the cost of our site and the marquee.

It is a human production line. At the back and centre of the marquee, volunteers cook and prepare the food. At the front, some 10 or so Lions serve customers.

My baptism of fire was to assist a fellow Lion in preparing baked beans, from 3 kg tins to a large pot heated with gas and from there to the front counter.



This year, we had 22 people per shift during busy times. Labour was provided by Club members and families, special friends & Down Syndrome families. Total hours worked were 1011. Readers may be interested in the quantities of food, drink and utensils used by our Lions Club over the Festival

<u>Product</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Product</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Plates	5,000	Oil	26 litres
Knives/Forks	5,000	Maple Syrup	36 litres
Pancake Mix	160 kg	Plastic Cups	2,000
Sausages	1,900	Tomato Sauce	16 litres
Bacon	260 kg	BBQ Sauce	8 litres
Bread	240 loaves	Coffee	20 kg
Eggs	285 doz	Choc	14 kg
Baked Beans	250 kg	Chai	2.5 kg
Orange Juice	182 litres	Sugar portions	1,500
Milk	230 litres	Cups	3,000
Skim Milk	10 litre	Stirrers	2,000
Soy Milk	10 litres	Napkins	1,000
Almond Milk	10 litres	Tea Bags	200
Lemon Juice	6 bottles	Paper Towels	10 rolls
Sugar	2 kg	Water	200 bottles
Margarine	3 tubs		

We managed to earn about \$45,000. After costs, we made a profit of just over \$30,000 (£15,500), enabling us to help those in need. There are many organisations we help and one of these is Pegasus Riding for the Disabled to which our Lions Club contributes about \$5,000 each year.



In 1973, local horsewoman, Bid Williams, was approached by a therapist at Canberra Hospital to see if a few children with disabilities could have some pony rides. Bid recalls ... “In the beginning we were woefully ignorant of the implications of the rider’s disabilities – we just had to ‘suck it and see’”.

However, on the first afternoon, she recalls that a young girl, who was usually wheelchair bound, rode under a tree and reached up to touch the leaves. Suddenly the girl shouted "I can touch them! They are so soft!" As joy and tears transformed the girl's face, Bid was hooked forever and riding for the disabled was born in Canberra.



Today, Pegasus Farm is a large, ongoing organisation bringing happiness to many disabled children. It has a variety of programs for the disabled with volunteer help.

With thanks

- Lions Club of Canberra Belconnen
- Balloon Aloft Canberra
- Pegasus Riding for the Disabled

Photos

- Lions Club members
- Pegasus Riding for the Disabled
- Internet

Bill Upton - August 2024

THE SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS NEEDS YOU

To help us to grow the Federation, we need new committee members.

Ideally people with ideas and comitment, willing to work in a team. You will be willing to take on a specific role suitable to your talents. We meet three times a year to consolodate our work.

Contact the Chairman - Erl Plomgren -
chair@SFGC.org.uk - 01278 741152



West Pennard Gardening Club Favourite Speakers



We are an active friendly club based in the village of West Pennard, Somerset attracting members from both our village but also from the neighbouring villages and towns. We have grown rapidly from 10 members post covid to 60+ members now. We meet monthly and have a variety of speakers and trips. Whilst all our speakers bring knowledge and interest, here are my favourites from recent meetings.



Container Gardening: Speaker: Mike Burks, Horticulturist, owner of 3 Garden Centres. Container Gardening has become more fashionable, generally gardens are getting smaller in new houses with only balconies in flats. During Covid 3.5 million people took up gardening, many with only a small patio or balcony, hence the popularity of containers. Covering the types of containers, types of soil to use and the variety of plants that can be grown, we learnt lots. Mike encouraged the club to think about more perennials in containers in addition to annuals and to consider how

these are grouped for the look.

Introduction to Carnivorous Plants: - Speaker: Nigel Hewitt- Cooper, RHS Gold Medal Winner –

Nigel brought lots of his lovely plants to help his talk and had a great slide show. There was so much detail, but I was awed at the wonder of nature and its ability to adapt. Some of my high lights were: How a Venus Fly trap works – inside the leaf there are fine trigger hairs, the insect has to touch them twice and the trap closes. The enzymes produced by the plant breaks down the insect from the inside and absorbs the fluid to live. The leaf opens a few days later leaving only the tough skeleton of the insect to blow away. The beauty and variety of the Pitcher Plants – Sarracenia – these plants were of varied colours and shapes but all had a similar process. The leaf forms a pitcher, often with a lid, the edges are beautiful and have nectar with a narcotic to attract insects and make them sleepy. They are also slippery and the insect falls into the pitcher, which is full of digestive juices and are broken down into food!! There were so many environmental adaptations by these plants: some had adapted to trap insects underground, the King Pitcher, large enough to trap a rat. The Pitcher that attracts a Tree Shrew who sits on it to eat the nectar, which contains a laxative and it poos into the pitcher plant which then uses the faeces as food. The Hairs on Sundew plants that reflect the heat in Australia so the plant can survive. The amazing colours and flowers to attract insects both to eat and for pollination.



Briefly a couple of other talks that captivated us were: -



Nature as Your Neighbour:

Speaker Colin (Higgy) Higgins from Somerset Wildlife Products came to talk to us about how to bring Nature into your Garden. This is vital to ensure we have an abundant food chain, increasing the number of pollinators naturally in your garden and helping to take care of pests without the use of pesticides. Higgy broke his talk into 3 areas, Water, Food and Shelter, the things we all need to survive and how we can increase the wildlife and bring a natural balance to our gardens by

some small actions in these areas.

Magic of Herbs: Speaker Bett Partridge, DBTh URHP a qualified medical herbalist.

Herbal Medicine is an ancient method of healing with the use of whole herbs, which contain many supportive nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, hormones, enzymes and trace elements, thus offering a truly holistic approach to improved health and well-being. Nearly half of pharmaceutical drugs currently being produced are of plant origin. Bett took us through some of the more common herbs that she uses commonly in her treatments. There are too many for this article but here are a few that I found interesting: Hawthorn, the flowers have a calming effect, the berries are good for arthritis. Elderflowers as cordial or wine good for winter colds and catarrh, the berry is great for circulation. Camomile has a very calming effect, which we know from the popular Camomile tea but using it in water for handwashing is also good.



Meadowsweet is herbal Gaviscon, great for indigestion, hangovers and contains natural aspirin. St John's Wort can be made into calming oil. Calendula (Marigolds) infused in oil are good for the skin and healing. Rosemary infused in water as tea is good for headaches and circulation. Lavender oil we all know is recommended for sleep but also has antiseptic properties for cuts. Sage has a calming effect and is for the sore throats

and memory loss!! Echinacea boosts the immune system in winter. Such an interesting subject!

We always welcome new members, £20 for annual membership or £5.00 for a single talk, refreshments, raffle and a great welcome guaranteed! More details at www.westpennardvillagehall.com or karenrussell53@icloud.com

Karen Russell - West Pennard

No Place Like Gnome



During the covid, in forced isolation in our village, the quiet was invaded by one, then two, then this whole family of little people.

Then I presume one of the birds dropped a seed and I ended up with a 15ft 6inch triffid I wrote to the RHS who are still yet to identify it. As the years have gathered at a pace to 2024, I'm over run with gnomes. I have contacted his majesty's (gnome) home office but they say they are best kept here than being rehomed in gnome (home) counties. Apparently they are too

gentrified and are more inclined to a statue of Venus those parts. As for this plant, it can be viewed from the space station and gives the astronauts hours pleasure measuring its daily growth.



in



Yours in hope of a rescue, and identification on who this flower pot person is will be rewarded with a years supply of manure from our local farmers.

Romany Poppitt Price - Banwell

Slugs and Snails



One of the biggest challenges to gardeners this year has been slugs and snails. The RHS chose to launch a “Love your Slugs and Snails” campaign during a very mild and wet winter and spring, while we witnessed many seedlings being stripped of their foliage overnight!! Slugs and snails are an important part of our gardens’ ecosystems by breaking down decaying matter, but the balance has tipped in their favour this year. This has been compounded by the arrival of an invasive species, the Spanish Slug, see photo. They’re mainly orange in colour, firm to the touch, and very slimy. They continue to be active even in warm dry spells. We have found literally hundreds on the prowl at night in our garden.

Dr Ian Bedford, entomologist, was one of the first in the UK to identify the problem some 12 years ago in the South East. He says, over time, blackbirds learn to wipe off the excessive slime which keeps them moist during the summer. However it can be years for the natural predators to learn this and make an impact. In the meantime the recommendation is to gather them up at night into a bucket of soapy water, put either bleach or salt in when they have drowned then bury them in the garden. Don’t cut or squash them as many contain parasites which can be harmful to pets. They breed prolifically so it’s important to get on top of this. We have been killing over 100 a night over the last 30 or so days. Beer traps work to a degree but, to keep numbers down, night time patrols are best.

Angela Daveney - Topsham Allotments & Gardens
(courtesy of David & Stella McLarin)

Crossword Answers

Across

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Tomato | 4. Pine | 5. Ferns | 6. Irises | 8. Clover |
| 12. Larch | 13. Trefoil | 15. Maple | 16. Hebe | 17. Kiwi |
| 20. Aspen | 21. Berry | 22. Bed | | |

Down

- | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| 2. Mango | 3. Osier | 4. Primula | 7. Evergreen | 9. Leek |
| 10. Viola | 11. Thyme | 13. Twig | 14. Lilies | 15. Mower |
| 18. Pea | 19. Sod | | | |

Unusual Plants

I have a 200-foot garden, which is my pride and joy. On the garden wall, there is a plaque inscribed in Latin, which roughly translates to: "When overwhelmed by the affairs of study or business, repair to these quiet haunts and refresh your mind by strolling among the flowers." I do this every day. The plaque's origin lies in the greenhouse at Wallington Hall, a beautiful National Trust property in Northumberland.

In spring, my garden comes alive with daffodils, forget-me-nots, bluebells, and a camellia shrub adorned with beautiful red blooms. Summer brings a lovely display of cosmos, Michaelmas daisies, petunias, roses, pansies, and many more.

I am particularly interested in growing exotic and economically useful plants, including peanuts, cotton, bananas, aubergines, and bottle gourds.

Peanuts are botanically fascinating; after flowering, the stems bury themselves in the soil where the peanut forms, a process known as geocarp. Native to South America, peanuts are used in confectionery and produce an oil for cooking.

In my greenhouse, I grow cotton. The cotton used in commerce is derived from the fibrous contents of the seedpod.

I also grow banana plants. Although tender, they survive the winter if protected by fleece wrapping. (See picture.)

Aubergines thrive in my greenhouse, producing glossy, egg-shaped fruit used in the kitchen to make moussaka. They belong to the Solanaceae family, which also includes tomatoes.

One of the more unusual plants I cultivate is the pitcher plant. I've seen them growing in the southern United States. Their tall, funnel-shaped leaves have smooth interiors. Flies, attracted by the sweet nectar on the lip of the leaf, slide inside and are dissolved by an enzyme. The plant, which grows in acidic, nutrient-poor bogland, derives its nutrition from the flies it captures.

Lastly, I grow bottle gourds (*Lagenaria*), a climbing member of the Cucurbitaceae family. After drying and painting them, I use them to decorate my house.

John O'Neill - Chairman, Filton Garden Club, Bristol



The best way to garden is to put on a wide-brimmed hat and some old clothes. And with a hoe in one hand and a cold drink in the other, tell somebody else where to dig.

Texas Bix Bender

The challenge of designing and building a Long Border at RHS Tatton Flower Show in July.



Having completed an RHS horticulture course as an adult learner a couple of years ago, I discovered that my older sister Sarah Watson had completed the same course a year earlier. This passion for gardening must have been inset from an early age, most likely from our grandparents. Although neither of us were in a horticultural career at the time, we decided to collaborate and apply for a Long Border at RHS Tatton despite living 150 miles apart! Many video calls and emails entailed.

The theme for the borders was to create a design to 'Make a statement'. This is purposely left ambiguous by the RHS team to allow designers to interpret it as they see fit.

Both having young families we quickly decided that a family theme was our focus, with the title of our border being 'A family affair - family gardens are the future'.

This was both fitting that we were a brother and sister team (who had never worked on anything or with each other before) and that our dad (Mr Buzzking/The Staffordshire Puppet Tree) became our main sponsor along with the generosity of Notcutts garden centres, Felthams farm and RocketGro.

Bearing in mind that RHS Tatton is in July, our design had to be submitted by mid January, with acceptance not being until the beginning of March and embargoed about announcing it until mid May.

So, never having designed before, we both had ideas that we discussed and incorporated them into the design. The main ideas being to up-cycle everyday family items and it being a design for all generations. I also threw in a curve-ball that I wanted everything to be edible, which would prove to become a challenge at times, but also an opportunity to learn and inspire,

Keeping to a tight budget and keeping to our theme that gardens are fun and collaborative for the family, we wanted to grow most of the plants ourselves - with the weather we had this spring it certainly was a challenge!



After months of growing, nursery visits and plant list tweaking (a plant list had to be submitted to the RHS team with adjustments allowed up to 6 weeks before the

show) it was finally time to load around 250 plants that had been grown in pots over the past 4-5 months and taken over not only my garden, allotment but also grandparents garden into a van and make the trip from Somerset to Tatton park. This in itself was a challenge, but make shift shelves, bungees, boxes and tape being used to secure them, including several 6ft tall sunflowers grown by my 7 year old daughter I set off at 6am Friday morning for the 196 mile journey.

Upon arriving at Tatton, we were met with our 22x6 ft raised bed to turn into what had only been on paper.

Incorporated into the design were two 3ft x 6ft screens I had made with a bicycle wheel inset and a cut out flower design made from plywood made to look like Corten steel (these were made to act as screens for the border to add an avenue of intrigue, act as trellis for runner beans, peas and Cucamelons to climb along with being a cost effective way of creating impact and up-cycling old bicycle wheels). We also had a dolls house belonging to my niece which had been passed down through generations made into a more of a bug mansion rather than a bug hotel. We also used a child's sand pit as a pond, again a way of re purposing items many families have.



There were 22 long borders in total, and what was reassuring was that around two-thirds of the designers were not in horticultural careers (yet) which shows that gardening is accessible to all.

After 5 days of putting the border together in light rain, literally hundreds of plants

were finally in, from Marigolds, Dahlias, a Cherry Tree, Rosemary Standards, Purple Sprouting Broccoli and Cornflowers to interesting and fun herbs such as Blackcurrant mint, a Curry Plant and a Cola plant, the sun came out along with the judges for the start of the show.

A fantastic 5 days watching the border physically grow, showing and inspiring visitors and seeing what we put together achieving our aim of showing that gardens are fun, functional and bring generations together with people of all ages discovering that many everyday flowers have edible elements, having fun smelling the different herbs, taking away ideas of up-cycling items and having fun pinching the strawberries and blueberries.

All of which was topped off by being awarded an RHS Silver-Gilt Medal.

Michael Leech of Somerton Gardeners Club

The Impatient Gardener

Why is it that Presenters on Gardeners' World and garden writers get so excited about sowing seeds?

My feeling is it's because they are sure of the outcome. Almost always, their planting medium is specially mixed, their seed trays go into a greenhouse resembling the size of the Crystal Palace and the seeds always germinate. Then there's the pricking out, the potting and the bringing on, finally planting out in neat rows or filling entire borders. Easy - so the Presenters make it appear.

Me? I enjoy these programmes, but sowing seeds raises my anxiety to a whole new level. I prefer to short circuit the process and go for ready-to-plant-out young, vigorous plants (preferably shrub or perennial) that provide instant impact! No wonder my husband calls me the impatient gardener.

I'm never convinced any of my seeds will germinate. Not having a Crystal Palace of my own, my seeds have to contend with the propagator on the window sills, so if by some miracle germination occurs, the seedlings tend to reach towards the light no matter how many times I might turn the tray.

I try to ignore the growing stack of colourfully illustrated seed packets that arrive each month with our copy of a garden magazine. The stack adds to my torment, and I finally give in.

I start off well, carefully sowing and spacing the seeds and levelling the soil. Several failed attempts at germination over the last couple of years resulted in a blame game on whether the correct sowing medium was purchased! Peat free compost, I'm afraid, added to the stress!

Not for the first time I wonder why the Foxgloves in our garden produce literally thousands of little seedlings, all by themselves. The phenomenon of the self-seedlings is both gratifying and annoying as none of the special white Foxgloves I sowed from a packet of free seeds germinated.

But this year – better seed sowing success! I'm not sure why but the seeds germinated, late but well, with some varieties tried for the first time. Tagetes, Antirrhinums, Cosmos, Lavatera, Ammi and Cleome grew to fill gaps in borders filled predominantly with shrubs and perennials. There was even enough to give some away to friends.



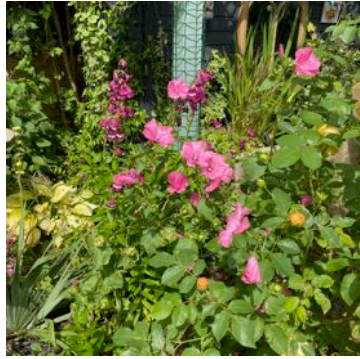
After germination, and the potting on, the next problem was keeping the seedlings protected from slugs and snails, and the sparrows.

The sparrows had developed a particular taste for my lettuce and any other salad crop I was trying to grow. This was my reward for spending a vast amount of the household budget on fat balls, meal worms and tasty seed for them to feast on.

Having observed the sparrows tearing into previous salad crops, grown as usual in our 'cot' – a sort of raised bed on our patio - I decided enough was enough.

Husband was enlisted to construct a hinged lid to the cot which would have very fine strong net over it all to keep out butterflies, slugs, snails – and the birds. A fortress!

First into the cot were the trays of flower seedlings as these too had previously been decimated by slugs and snails. Once these were planted out, salad seeds were sown



in the cot, so far defeating incursion by unwanted intruders.

There were some disappointments with the flower seeds. After three years, I've given up trying to grow white Cornflowers because of the three that germinated, none survived planting out, falling prey to slugs again. We don't use pellets.

Only three Cleome (the Spider plant) seeds germinated. Nurtured carefully these tall growing plants with wicked little thorns on the leaves went into a large pot, finally revealing the most beautiful

and unusual purple flowers. Even these only just survived. Strong winds snapped one and hundreds of caterpillars invaded another. Noticing the lacy appearance of some leaves, the caterpillars were swiftly dispatched and the flower heads were saved.

I mustn't be too hard on the birds, certainly not the

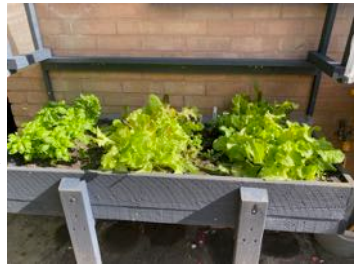


cheeky salad-eating sparrows. We have had virtually no infestations of green or black-fly this year, though the sparrows failed to explain how they missed the caterpillars devouring the Cleome.

Am I a seed-sowing convert with more patience? We'll see.....

Meanwhile Bon Appetit to the birds!

It seems our feathered friends are getting used to a diet that no longer includes our household's salad.



Wincanton & District Gardeners Association

As I am writing this article, we are about to hold our 67th Annual Flower Show here in Wincanton. We are hoping once again for a bumper number of entries. We all know the weather has made it so much more difficult this year. Lots of cold wet rainy weather, then lots of really very hot days, strong winds and nothing much that seemed normal this year.

We have had a busy year with lots of very interesting talks and demonstrations. Our Rose and Sweet Pea show brought in new members entries, which made it much more interesting. We had a wonderful day trip to RHS Wisley which was very well supported by 41 of us. The weather was kind and everyone had an enjoyable time.



WDGA Trip to Wisley

In the Gardens Wisley

We still have some very interesting talks to come this year. Our AGM is on 4th October with a talk by Julie Haylock on Autumn Container Planting. November 1st Claire Hart on Problem Areas – Looking at Soil Types. December we are having a talk by Ian Williamson all about Tasmania and his trip there. Anyone who wishes to attend any of these are most welcome, it is only £2.00 for non-members or you can join for the very reasonable membership fee of £7.50 per year per person. We would love to welcome you.



WDGA Town Planter



WDGA Town Planter

We have also been busy with our town planting and it's been a challenge with the weather, but the planters are all looking good. We were also very lucky to get a generous donation of plants from Otter Nurseries this year, to help celebrate their 60th year in business. We expressed our thanks to them, as it all helps towards the costs. We are also financially supported towards the plants, by our Town Council.

Richard and myself have also been out and about visiting different gardens during our holiday in Cornwall. We went to 4 different gardens and all were beautiful in their own way. We visited Trebah Gardens, Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens, Trilissick Gardens and Trengwainton Gardens. All of these were different but

beautiful. The Sculpture Garden was really lovely, and you could sit in the garden and see St Michaels Mount in the distance, truly magnificent.



Trebah Gardens

Tremenheere Sculpture Garden

We are planning another good programme of talks for 2025. We hope our membership will be as good as this year, as we have 65 paid up members,

This will be my last piece of writing for the SFG as I am retiring as Secretary of the WDGA this October, also Richard is stepping down as Chairman. Unfortunately, if these two positions cannot be filled, which is looking doubtful at present the WDGA will have to stop running. We have been asking for a secretary for nearly 2 years and to date nobody has stepped forward. This will be a great shame but I feel I have given all I can and it's now time for some quality time for us both.

I have enjoyed contributing to the SFG Newsletter and lately submitting some of my poetry.

I will still be looking out for the Newsletter to see what you are all doing and achieving.

Gill D'Arcy - Association Secretary WDGA

Gardening brings a deep sense of joy and fulfilment. Tending to plants connects us with nature, offering a peaceful escape from daily stress. Watching seeds sprout and grow into vibrant flowers, vegetables, or herbs is incredibly rewarding. The process fosters patience, mindfulness, and a sense of accomplishment. Fresh air, sunshine, and the rhythmic tasks of watering or pruning provide physical and mental benefits. Plus, harvesting homegrown produce brings a unique satisfaction. Whether creating a colourful flower bed or cultivating a vegetable patch, gardening nurtures both the earth and the soul, turning small efforts into beautiful, living results.

Anon.

Wintertime

Days are getting shorter
Nights become so long
Another year is ending
Now that summer has gone.

Outside its cold and rainy
So inside we all want to stay
Howling winds and frosty morns
Just wish they would all go away.

Fields all churned and muddy
Rivers running full and high
Hedges bare of leaves and blossom
Winter days will hopefully fly by.

Birds are always searching
For food like nuts, berries and seed
Where upon the trees and branches
They fight with gusto and greed.

So in the long days of winter
When the weather is bleak and dire
Guess the only sensible thing to do
Is to sit by a nice warm fire.

© Gill D'Arcy



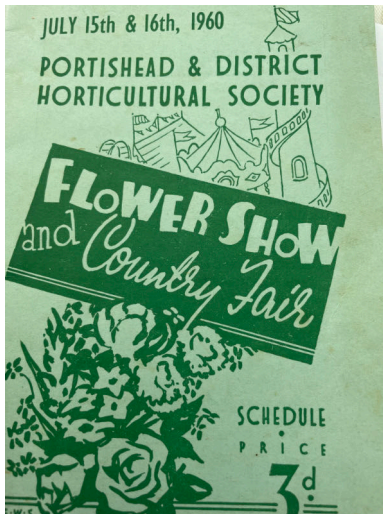
Portishead Horticultural Society 1939 – 1963

In my last article I covered the history of the Portishead Horticultural Society and Show from 1863 to 1939, so this is a continuation.....

Like many other Horticultural Societies, the Portishead Horticultural Society were unable to host a Show during the second World War. We were fortunate in so far as the Committee retained the Society bank account with a view to continuing the Show when the War had ended and this had the grand sum of £231 2s 2d. Sadly the minutes from the first meeting held after the War show that the only surviving Officer was the Treasurer, so a new committee had to be formed. Fortunately a lot of the local residents and previous Society members came forward and after much discussion it was agreed the first Show should be held on the 5th and 6th August 1949.

Many of the Horticultural and Handicraft competition classes that preceded the war were retained, and a lot of the vegetable and floral classes remain largely unchanged today.

In 1950 the Society decided to become Affiliated Members of the Royal Horticultural Society and they continue to be members and to enjoy its many benefits, including the award of the Banksian Medal, which is always hotly contended.



Prize money for the Horticultural and Handicraft classes has varied over the years and additional prizes were often provided by local companies. R Brown and Sons offered 1/2 cwt, 1/4 cwt and 14 lbs of Universal Manure and the Committee agreed that this should be awarded to the winners of the Best Collection of Vegetables. Blackmore and Langdon provided a beautiful cup which was, naturally, to be given to the Best Begonia's. Mr Howell the local Butcher gave a live piglet to the Show which for many years which was skittled for - can you imagine that happening in 2024!

Records show that entertainment has always been varied - Charles Heal was a regular providing Swings, Roundabouts and Carousels. During the 1950's and 1960's we had Police Horses, Marching Bands, Boxing Competitions, Caged Birds, Dog Shows, Goats, Tugs of War, Cavey and Rabbit competitions and Skittles.

The Society purchased a 3.78 acre field in 1951 for £700, and this is now known as The Flower Show Field and is located on the corner of Clapton Lane and Clevedon Road. The Society intended to apply for a mortgage but a member of the committee very kindly offered to provide the capital for the purchase and to carry out work at the field as the level had to be raised to overcome the marshy ground and make it more suitable. Frustratingly the minutes were written in the old fashioned way with just the surnames of the members, so I have not been able to establish precisely who Mr Whittle was. I can however say with some certainty that it was an extremely good idea to buy the field, which is now the Society's most valuable asset. More recently it has been granted "community asset" status removing it from the green belt, thereby ensuring it cannot be built on. The pavilion which had been

previously purchased for £28 was moved from a field at the end of the High Street and is still used today, as the Show Office, which only goes to Show how well built it was.

On the 19 and 20 July 1963 the Flower Show and Country Fair celebrated its Centenary. Prizes were donated by the publishers of Woman's Own, Amateur Gardening and the Smallholder in addition to McDougalls Flour, Victoria Flour Company and Henry Jones Flour.

The Cookery classes for that year gave recipes which specified a particular flour, which I can only assume was agreed with the each company. I have no idea how the Judges could possibly have known which flour was used so I assume none were found to be

"Not as per schedule".

To be continued.....

Linda Hodgetts



SPEAKERS AND JUDGES ANNOUNCEMENT

It is **ESSENTIAL** that before you book a speaker, the **UPDATED** list on the 'members' website is checked. This list is updated as the corrections, deletions and additions are received. If you do not have access to the 'members website' then get your authorised contact to request details from: webmaster@SFGC.org.uk



The printed copy of the Speakers and Judges list is no longer printed and any old copies should be destroyed.

Surviving the Winter.

Already wildlife is starting to find ways of making life easier for getting through the winter ready for a new spring breeding season. It's hard to survive. There will be less food and shelter available plus harsh weather conditions at times. The aim for many is to conserve energy by moving as little as possible and to hide from predators. Each movements entails a loss of energy which may be fatal.

Each species has a different strategy for survival.

There are many ways to survive harsher times and here are some. As usual I am just touching the surface hopefully to whet appetites for finding out more.

- Moulting. For example, my geese have just shed most of their feathers to produce a completely new set that will insulate the body efficiently and repel moisture. Mammals too may moult to produce new and thicker fur.
- Continue as an adult but in a safe hiding place. Butterflies such as the comma, red admiral, peacock, brimstone and small tortoiseshell do this. Other invertebrates may find safety in wood piles, crevices in walls, holes in plant stems, leaf litter and in the soil.
- Survive as an egg as do crickets and grasshoppers or in various larval stages including caterpillars. This is common in butterfly species.
- Migrate to warmer climes as does the painted lady butterfly plus several bird species such as swallows, swifts and house martins. Some moths and hoverflies also migrate to return in spring
- Store caches of food such as nuts and berries. Jays, squirrels and nuthatches are adept at this.
- Plants also save seeds that contain the needs for a new plant once the right conditions prevail for germination. Sometimes seeds are wrapped in an edible fruit so that they may be dispersed to a new location by various creatures and then germinate in the spring.
- Hibernate. Only 3 British mammals hibernate fully – bats, hedgehogs and dormice. They may occasionally awake to excrete, change their home or have a snack.
- Put on extra weight early in the autumn to help get through hard times. Some lose weight such as shrews and moles
- Dormancy or diapause where bodily functions partially shut down.
- Grow a thicker coat like badgers and foxes or change diet. Foxes change from fruit and insects to small mammals in winter.



Can we help to increase survival rates in our gardens?

We should certainly resist being too tidy in the autumn and leave cutting back and clearing garden plots until the spring. If you find this impossible leave some places undisturbed with plenty of hiding places so that overwintering creatures can find safety from predators, inclement weather and most of all disturbance. All moving means energy loss.

It's important to be consistent when feeding birds from feeders since they may become reliant on that energy source especially during very cold weather. Small birds must find and eat between one quarter and one third of their body weight every single day. Fail to do this and they will die. Up to 85% of the day may be spent searching for food.

Tip

If a hibernating butterfly wakes up in your house relocate it to a cooler place such as a shed or garage. Put in an open box to keep it calm.



Provide places in which stores of food can be kept over winter. Below the base of an unused beehive acting as a store for cherry stones later eaten by wood mice.

Try to cut back hedges once all the berries and nuts have been eaten to help birds and late butterflies. This is a small shrub *Cotoneaster horizontalis*.



Best not to cut back all in one go and certainly not annually for native shrubs only produce flowers and therefore seeds, fruit and nuts every **SECOND** year. May be cut a third of the vegetation each time leaving mature growth for shelter. Remember to leave the undergrowth at the foot of the hedges intact. This is an ideal spot for hibernating and generally hiding for reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.

Ivy is a real winner having everything including a bad reputation!

Here are its virtues:

- Evergreen so providing shelter for a variety of creatures such as butterflies like the brimstone and other over wintering insects.
- Grows in the shade where few other plants grow.
- Provides shelter for small birds such as wrens when deciduous trees are bare.

- Flowers very late in the year-November/December and therefore provides pollen and nectar for pollinating insects especially honey bees and late flying butterflies. Honey bees store some pollen in their hive as a source of protein for their young in the spring.



- Berries provide winter food for blackbirds, thrushes and even fieldfares and redwings
- Flower buds provide food for the Holly Blue butterfly.

Remember to have plenty of log and or brush piles as hiding places!

Diane Redfern



Drimpton and District Gardening Club Summer Show asked for Banksy inspired graffiti to be produced for show. This is one of the submissions inspired by a speaker giving a talk about reducing plastic in our gardens.

Christine McPherson

Mr. Hope's Violets

In centuries past, romance and sweet violets went hand in hand. The symbol of Aphrodite, goddess of love, they were revered by the ancient Greeks and sold on the streets of Athens, brought there from specialist nurseries in Attica. Leap forward to the dwellings of Tudor Britain where the heart-shaped leaves and flowers were used as strewing herbs, crushed underfoot to release their perfume to "cure the air of noxious odour". Josephine threw a posy of sweet violets to Napoleon when first she met him. By the late nineteenth century the flower was high fashion with thousands of bunches dispatched daily on Devon's special 'violet train' to Covent Garden's flower sellers. "Lovely violets! Devon violets!"

'Dig for Victory' sounded the death knell when the violet fields were requisitioned for the cultivation of vegetables in the Second World War. The sweet violet never recovered popularity especially once showier, longer-lasting flowers began to be imported by aeroplane to supply the cut flower markets.

Each year at the tail end of winter, when the first sweet violets come into bloom in my Blackdown Hills garden, my thoughts turn to Mr Hope. His wife had died young, he had no family: this he imparted to my parents and me when, passing his house, we would stop and chat to him as he tended his garden. His wife, he told us, had loved fragrant flowers and each plant, the white hyacinths, the copper-coloured wallflowers, the starry daphnes, the crimson Gallica roses, he had chosen in her memory.

As the years went by and I grew from child to adult I saw less of Mr Hope. One day, passing the house, I found him standing supported by two walking sticks amid the now rather forlorn garden. It was February, we exchanged remarks about the weather as English people do, and I was about to walk on when suddenly he said, "Do you happen to like violets? Many people nowadays do not seem to care for them, but do you?" When I said I did he invited me to tea.

The cottage was tiny, two up, two down. I remember embroidered cushions, blue and white china, Dundee cake. "Now," Mr Hope said, when we had finished our tea. He rose stiffly and led me through the kitchen to a door which he opened. He smiled at my gasp of amazement as I stepped into a conservatory brimming with pots of violets, all in full flower, scent filling the air. He moved ahead of me, introducing me to each variety and each - I could tell - was his friend. "This is 'The Czar'," he said, touching a rich purple bloom, "Do you know him?" I confessed I did not.

"Here is 'Mrs Barton'," he stopped in front of a white violet, "she was named long ago, after the wife of the foreman of the Windward Violet Nursery in Devon." I caught a waft of exquisite fragrance. "Now, this is 'Marie Louise', 'Coeur d'Alsace' and 'Mrs Pinehurst' and here is the 'Baroness de Rothschild'... Entranced, I followed Mr Hope, sniffing the tiny flowers, admiring the shades of colour, maroon purples, blue purples, amethyst and lilac, ivory and rose. "And this one I bred myself," his fingers caressed a plant covered with flowers the colour of a glad March sky after rain. "I have called it 'Mrs Hope'."

Miranda Gudenian- Yarcombe

"Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh how beautiful' and sitting in the shade"

Rudyard Kipling

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

“A female Hen Harrier has just flown by,” said my friend. That was unusual enough but to be said whilst trying out a pair of binoculars from the lounge window was even more unusual. “Pull the other one”, I nearly said – but my friend knew her birds. “I distinctly saw its white rump”. I dashed outside and was just in time to see a harrier shape disappearing above the rooftops, but couldn’t have identified it at that distance. I was almost speechless. What are the chances of seeing a Hen Harrier, fleetingly, in a gap between rooftops on an estate?! Certainly, a case of being ‘in the right place at the right time’ – a moment too soon or too late and it would have gone on its way unobserved. Flying in the direction of the Avalon Marshes, we enquired later in the day whilst at Ham Wall whether one had been seen there. Yes, but in February (this was April) so it was reassuring to know they had been seen in the area, even if this latest one hadn’t stopped by.

We often hear the phrase ‘right plant, right place’, and yes, birds have their right places (habitats) too, but they move, and it’s us who need to be in the right place, right time to see them, which is the fun of birdwatching! Two other, similar instances occurred, again both from my lounge window. Two more birds on spring passage – a very bright Robin – what? – double take - no, a male Redstart! Sitting on our fence – wow! A few minutes for good observation on my part and then it was gone. A bird flitting in a tree, a distinctive feeding flight – off the tree, swerve and back. A Spotted Flycatcher! I cannot remember the last time I saw a Spotted Flycatcher - great excitement. Here one minute, gone the next, but leaving me on a ‘high’ for the rest of the day!

I received an even greater high when busy gardening in my small plot in April. Head down, grubbing out weeds, I was suddenly alerted by a loud, almost musical call that sounded close by. It took me a moment or two to assimilate it and then, having an inkling of what it might be, looked upwards into the deep blue sky, locating the sound, to see four Cranes way up high, going in the opposite direction from the marshes this time. Their far-carrying bugling could be heard by me so clearly down below. (Their calls can be heard up to 2 miles away.) What a moment! They were obviously expanding their territory and I was interested to hear shortly afterwards that two Cranes had been seen peeling off from a group of six flying over the Ham Wall reserve. We now know that that pair have successfully bred and produced their first chick at Ham Wall. I wonder where the other four have ended up ...

I’ve never been an early riser but was fortunate, mid-August, to see the maiden flight of a Common Darter which had emerged from the garden pond. I had missed its emergence but the exuvia was still attached to the reeds and next to it was the darter. Having warmed up, it opened its wings wide and took off, landing amongst the Sedum spectabile for temporary safety. The next time I checked, it had gone.

You don’t need to travel far to ‘see stuff’. Just keep ears and eyes open. Very often it’s the little things that are all around us that we easily miss if not alert. Over the past two years, as wild flowers have been allowed to proliferate, I have noticed one particular plant that has taken to growing on the kerbsides at the lower end of our close. Ignoring it at first, thinking it was Groundsel, but then realising its flowers were a pale rather than



bright yellow and its leaves long rather than lobed, I discovered it was Canadian Fleabane. How many people, I wondered, have dismissed it as Groundsel, or even 'just another weed'? However, for that plant it was in the right place and I saw it at the right time in order to identify it! Unfortunately, I have since discovered that it is becoming invasive in this country and is resistant to herbicides – one downside, perhaps, from 'wilding'? But that's another subject...!

Erika Smith

Annual Show – Is it worth it?



Timsbury has held an annual flower show in August since 1961, only missing one in 2020. Every February, as we start planning, we ask ourselves will this be our last one? There is so much work that goes into these shows behind the scenes and seemingly less interest in gardening.

This year we were pleased to note that the number of entries and visitors was up. The day itself was nice and sunny, which probably helped along with the lovely cakes and a welcome cup of tea. Given the ups and downs of the weather this summer it is

amazing that so many flowers and vegetables were grown. When walking into the hall you were met with the beautiful, colourful Floral Art scenes, flowers such as dahlias, roses and gladioli. This was quickly followed by exclamations of amazement at the size of the very large onions and the length of the carrots and the parsnips, the latter needing to be displayed on their own table. How do people manage to grow them that big and all the same shape?

There were two standout classes for the children: the design for the cover of our schedule (and we were fortunate to have the support of the local primary school); the colouring of a farmyard scene (new to us). It is difficult to encourage interest in these classes when there are so many competing demands on families' time.

Once again there was a wealth of talent displayed in the art, photography, handicraft and cookery classes. It is reassuring to know that skills such as knitting and baking have not been forgotten in this digital age. You do however wonder how the cookery judge manages to take just a little bite from the very tempting exhibits.

Will we continue? Was it worth it? When at the end of what seems like a very long day you see a child who has entered for the first time going home with a big smile clutching their prize money. The answer to both questions is **YES**.

Laura – Timsbury Gardening Club

Reinventing our Summer Show

Our summer show has always done well but it's been increasingly difficult to find volunteers (close to 70 were needed in 2023) and to avoid giving our committee members a nervous breakdown.



Our show was also only five weeks apart from the Uplyme village fete, making it difficult for locals and visitors to distinguish the two events. As we're based near to Lyme Regis and the Jurassic coast any date in the summer is a challenge, facing potential clashes with Regatta and Carnival Week, Lifeboat Week,

festivals for Fossils, Folk Music, Morris Dancing, Busking, Sausage and Cider – you get the idea.

This year we finally decided to take the plunge and make a radical change. We would focus on horticulture, gardening, the natural world and the local environment. The show marquee would take pride of place, filled, we hoped, with competition entries for flowers, fruit, vegetables, craft, photography, cookery, wine and preserves. We would back this up with a smaller number of stalls on the playing field and would continue to serve cream teas and cakes in the village hall as usual.

That meant getting rid of quite a few things. Out went the artisan, charity and local society stalls, unless they met our new criteria. Out went the dog show. Out went the entertainers and bouncy castle. Out went our own stalls for Pimms and Prosecco, and the food tombola. All of this felt like quite a bold move and didn't meet with universal approval. We wrote early to previous exhibitors explaining why we were making the change and received an understanding reply from virtually all.

We also decided to move the show from early July to early August to coincide with the first Saturday of the Regatta and Carnival Week but not conflicting with major daytime events. This change incidentally meant that our field PA system also went, as our PA operator was part of Carnival Week.

The change of focus gave us an opportunity to bring in some new attractions, however, without creating too much work. We invited the church flower group to hold a flower festival concurrently, using our theme of herbs. We introduced a Gardening Advice stall with two local horticultural experts. We arranged talks and demonstrations at some of the stalls and we beefed up our raffle. The local croquet club set up a 'have a go' session aimed at families. Finally, the church bellringing group volunteered to ring the bells before the start of the show.

Perhaps our most risky change was to cut the price of entry. In 2023 we charged £3 for adults; this year we cut it to £1. Luckily our society funds are healthy so we reckoned we could support any losses.

How did we do?

Thankfully good weather on the day attracted 700 adult visitors. Around 500 competition entries were received - about 10 per cent down on the previous year - but everything fitted into the marquee, rather than spilling over into the village hall, and overall made the marquee look better.

The kitchen team worked flat out all afternoon as demand for refreshments was as high as ever. Our own stalls sold well, the raffle nearly doubled its takings and our traders/educational/local stalls had a successful afternoon. In all, we still had 30 stalls on the field, making a good display.

The Gardening Advice stall was really successful although the demonstrations and talks had a more mixed outcome. Perhaps one of the most surprising results from the day was how much people enjoyed the lack of public announcements! And there was good traffic between the show and church flower festival.

One exhibitor said: “We thought the new format of the show was great and a lot of people were saying what a peaceful and calm atmosphere it had.”



While a volunteer said: “Initially I was surprised that the show was much smaller than previous years, but actually I think everyone was very happy with the greater focus on our local community life, the opportunity to meet up with old friends, enjoy the delicious tea, browse on the book stall, buy plants, honey, etc. and of course admire the splendid display of garden produce in the marquee.”

The icing on the cake was that we made a surplus of over £900 for the day, which will enable us to continue to make a good donation to local charities.

Tricia Boyd

I always see gardening as an escape, as peace really. If you are angry or troubled, nothing provides the same solace as nurturing the soil.

Monty Don.

Talaton Garden and Produce Association

Another year slowly draws to a close ! Bit premature , but the local stores are full of plastic father Christmases, laughing reindeer and singing dwarves! All that's missing are the Christmas trees. So, it must be soon Christmas.

In my garden the Goldfinches have made a welcome return with the perennial problem of more Niger seed on the ground than in the Goldfinch ! Interesting that the feeding habits of the sparrows has evolved, and they now hang precariously on to the Niger seed feeder.

Luckily, Talaton Garden and Produce Association has had a good and fruitful year and at the moment windfalls are providing our wildlife with food.



A talk by Andrea Rye on alcoholic plants proved an attraction – don't ask which part was the attraction. Later in the year Julia Tremlett of Bickham House and an ex-Treasurer of the NGS gave a wonderful talk on the history of the NGS. What initially one thought might be a somewhat dry topic evolved as totally enthralling and I can highly recommend the talk. In July we in fact visited Julia's Garden at Bickham House and the garden proved to be as interesting as the talk. The cream tea was the icing on the cake, so to speak.



Open Gardens was ever popular with well over a hundred visitors. Saturday was wonderful but the sun had his hat on for the Sunday, and a sou'wester would have been more appropriate. One interesting visitor was found on the Rosemary !

The Annual Show ! Now there's a thing. It was well attended with a good number of exhibits. The children's sections were really encouraging – gardeners of the future – and a new Photographic class proved to be popular. It really is incredible just how many potatoes a child can grow in a bucket However, a minor error in the schedule proved to be problematical. The Honey class ,inadvertently fell into the "no screw lids" group and needless to say one entrant followed the instruction and popped a strip of cling film on. His entry was immediately disqualified. Everyone else obviously didn't bother reading the schedule and submitted wonderful jars of honey with lids on. One unlucky beekeeper did make his objections very plain.



The village is lucky in having six allotments, all of which are in use and well gardened. Water on site is an issue, with little cooperation from Southwest Water but water butts and drainpipes seem to suffice.

Membership remains constant but the pull of the supermarket is still strong and there are numerous patches of bare concrete or, at best, lawn in the parish.

Still to come is the Pumpkin Show in October and the AGM in November. The AGM will be the time that the proposed new Constitution and change of name is discussed. We may be the Talaton Garden Club this time next year.

Chris Harwood - Chairman, Talaton Garden and Produce Association

Out and About on a Scooter

There's no doubt that we live in a beautiful area but accessing it can sometimes be a challenge for us, as my husband is very limited in walking and regularly uses a mobility scooter to travel around our home town, Minehead. The centre is flat with some excellent shared pedestrian and cycle routes which go to Alcombe and beyond.



A visit to RHS Rosemoor last year with friends was very enlightening, I noticed they had scooters or rather Trampers as they are called, robust mobility scooters that can manage the slopes, pathways and some of the grassed areas of the beautiful gardens. I returned a few months later with my husband having booked a morning with the Tramper.

Being an experienced 'scooter' Eddie took no time to learn the controls and soon we were off! We travelled over to the Orchard and Kitchen gardens beyond, stopping for a coffee

and discovered the back of the Tramper made an excellent temporary table. It was so lovely to enjoy those beautiful gardens together and gave us the confidence to try other scooter trips.

If you read my previous article you will already know that we now have a rescue dog called Rusty, our cheeky little chappie! We wanted to plan a special day out to celebrate him turning 3 and Wimbleball Lake was just right for us all. It's a stunning location and there is a relatively easy Tramper route over to the dam on the far side and we had a picnic in a shelter overlooking the lake which was next to the pathway. Just one word of warning, if you do take your dog be prepared for high excitement, as quite rightly they have to remain on a lead, the wonderful sniffs



were too much for Rusty he adored exploring everywhere at high pace and I think i now have one arm longer than the other!



Our latest trip was to Dunster show and we were so lucky with the weather. Disabled parking was right next to the scooter hire area and entrance. The showground is flat and there was plenty of room inside the tented areas for the scooter. We did go early, arriving shortly after the showground opened and were pleased with that decision as the show became very busy by lunchtime.

I'm not sure where our next adventure will take us but we know that disability shouldn't limit us and that with a bit of planning we can enjoy a grand day out together.

Rachel E Hill

New Roses 2

Following on from my previous article about breeding new roses I will outline just what happens next with my new rose seedlings. After the first or second flowers produced on each new rose I will have decided just which ones I want to keep for further investigation. I will mark these by tying some red wool around the stem and the other seedlings not selected will be pulled up and thrown away with “green waste”.



I leave these selected ones to grow on in the boxes until the Autumn when I transplant them outside quite close together in rows. They are left to survive through the Winter growing on their own roots. Tall roses will be trimmed back slightly.

In early Spring, when the weather permits, I will prune them all quite hard back to an outward facing bud and give them a little granular rose feed. A small number will not have survived the winter plus others will not be healthy enough to grow properly. During the growing season from June onwards the roses will repeat flower several times and produce new shoots. Health is the priority now and all the seedlings are never sprayed against rose diseases.

Earlier in the year I will have received an order of Laxa rose rootstocks and these are used for budding roses onto to produce a replica rose. When budded onto the rootstock the seedling rose may develop extra vigour and might change colour slightly and even have more petals. The roses purchased as a bare root rose or a pot from a rose supplier or a garden centre will have probably been budded on a Laxa rootstock.



I bud my roses onto the Laxa stocks during July and August. I cut the



bud from the leaf joint and make a T cut on the bottom of the stock near the roots. I carefully insert the bud into the cut and bind the cut with a florist tape and water well for about three weeks. After this time I can remove the tape and if the bud is green it will have taken. I normally bud two or three of each seedling which I think has potential.

In early Spring the rootstock is cut off just above the little bud and by April the new rose will start to shoot and grow from the little green bud and will flower in June or July.

I have entered some of my roses at Rochfords Rose Trials in Hertfordshire. Each trial lasts for three years and all the roses there are judged by a panel of judges. There are usually seventy plus roses in each trial from breeders all

over Europe some professional some amateur. It's good fun really, even with all the work involved.

David Bryant - Burnham on Sea

Farmborough Flower Show - 80th Anniversary Show

The Farmborough Flower Show was held in the Farmborough Memorial Hall on Saturday 31 August 2024. It was a very special day in the history of the show, as the first one was held back in 1944, so this year was the 80th anniversary of the Flower Show and it was celebrated in some style!



There were some amazing entries in well over 100 classes both from Farmborough residents and in the open classes. There were flowers, vegetables, fruit, baking, preserves, photography, crafts and a variety of entries in the children's classes.

The judges had a hard job deciding upon the winners of many classes as the quality and quantity of the entries was just so good. The Hall was a wonderfully vibrant sight with the glorious colours of all the flowers and the children's art work making the Flower Show a splendidly colourful celebration of nature and of people's skill and creativity.

To celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Flower Show all sorts of entertainment was organised, with children's games, a coconut shy, ice creams, a barbecue and even a live band in the Hall Gardens. The weather was very kind to us, which was greatly

appreciated! Within the Hall a raffle (with some extremely good and generous prizes, many thanks to all who donated them), a tombola, guess the weight of the cake and the usual excellent tea and cakes organised by Dawn and Ann.

When the doors opened at 2.30pm people flooded in, with record numbers coming through the doors to enjoy the spectacle of the Flower Show! It was a splendid event and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended. It was agreed that it was one of the best Flower Shows in living memory and one keen gardener and Flower Show regular commented that it was the best quality and range of home grown produce they had ever seen, which was a sentiment echoed by many.

The prizes were presented by the family of the late Ray Hunt, who has been involved with the Flower Show for many, many years and was greatly missed on the day.



All in all it was a wonderful event, enjoyed by many from both Farmborough and other surrounding villages. The Committee would like to thank everyone involved, especially the sponsors and all entrants and hope to see you all again, same time, next year!

Sally Davis

Longburton Garden Club

The main focus this year was to celebrate the foundation of our club 40 years ago, and we decided to do this by holding an **Anniversary Flower Festival and Cream Tea** in Longburton Church. To reflect the ethos of our small Dorset village, this was a non-competitive display of flower arrangements on the theme of *An English Country Garden*. Members and residents decorated the church with posies from their gardens and a committee member made a feature pedestal.

Two Founder Members opened the festival and gave a short talk on the history of the club, concluding by saying:

'Over the forty years, committee members have changed, membership has fluctuated, and even our regular venue for meetings has moved; but the one constant that remains is a mutual interest in gardens and all things related, and the community spirit that exists in our village.'



Other events this year have included a very successful Plant Sale, an enjoyable Guided Tour of Hestercombe, and a programme of talks such as Making a Butterfly Garden, Growing our Own Vegetables, and Pruning.

Next year we look forward to hearing about the Scilly Isles, Gardens for the Rich and Famous, From Seed to Show, and Putting the Garden to Bed for the Winter.

We currently have a membership of about 45 and welcome anyone who would like to join us as a member or as a guest.

Gwenda Brocklehurst

The Garden Shed

Ah, the garden shed. That humble, often overlooked structure nestled in the corner of your garden. It stands there, stoic, and unassuming, a silent sentinel guarding your lawnmower and rusty tools. But let's not be fooled by its modesty. The garden shed is a veritable treasure trove .



First, let's talk about the shed's exterior. It is usually a patchwork of peeling paint and mismatched wood, giving it a charmingly rustic look. Or, as I like to call it, "shabby chic." This aesthetic is not just a design choice; it's a lifestyle. The shed wears its weather-beaten appearance like a badge of honour, proudly proclaiming, "I've seen things. I've been through storms, both literal and metaphorical."

Inside, the shed is a labyrinth of forgotten projects and misplaced ambitions. It is where dreams go to hibernate. Remember that time you decided to take up woodworking? Your half-finished birdhouse is still there, gathering dust, a testament to your fleeting enthusiasm. And let us not forget the collection of spider webs that have turned your shed into a five-star arachnid resort. Spiders from all over the neighbourhood come to vacation in your shed, spinning webs and telling tales of the giant human who occasionally disturbs their peace.

The garden shed is also a master of disguise. It can transform into anything you need it to be. Need a workshop? Voilà! It is a carpenter's paradise. Need a quiet place to escape from the chaos of family life? Presto! It's a sanctuary of solitude. Need a place to hide from your responsibilities? Abracadabra! It's a procrastinator's paradise. The shed is the Swiss Army knife of backyard structures, versatile and indispensable.

But the true magic of the garden shed lies in its ability to bring people together. It's a social hub, a gathering place for neighbours to exchange gardening tips and gossip. It's where you bond with your kids over DIY projects that never quite turn out as planned. It's where you share a laugh with your spouse as you both try to remember why you bought that inflatable flamingo in the first place.

And let us not forget the shed's role in the great British tradition of pottering. Pottering is an art form, a delicate balance of doing something and nothing at the same time. It's the act of moving things around in the shed without any real purpose, just for the sheer joy of it. It's a meditative practice, a way to clear your mind and find inner peace amidst the clutter.

In conclusion, the garden shed is more than just a storage space. It is a symbol of resilience, creativity, and community. It is a place where dreams are born and sometimes forgotten, where laughter echoes and spiders reign supreme. So, the next time you step into your garden shed, take a moment to appreciate its quirky charm and the joy it brings to your life. And remember, a shed is not just a shed; it's a treasure chest, waiting to be discovered.

David Talling

