



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs Magazine

Issue LXVII

Autumn 2023



An inhabitant of the wildest woodland and the gayest garden, the most frequented road, and the most retired lane, the hedge of the pasture field, and the neighbourhood of every country-house, the Robin is an acquaintance of both old and young, and to each and everyone he seems like an old friend.

The Rev. F. O. Morris - A History of British Birds 1850

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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



Autumn Fires

In the other gardens
And all up in the vale,
From the autumn bonfires
See the smoke trail!

Pleasant summer over,
And all the summer flowers,
The red fire blazes,
The grey smoke towers.

Sing a song of seasons!
Something bright in all!
Flowers in the summer,
Fires in the fall!

Robert Louis Stevenson

Hello Everyone,

I hope your clubs are thriving and you have been able to go on garden visits and that flower and produce shows have been well supported. We have welcomed some new clubs and sadly some have folded. Hopefully they may be resurrected again at some point.

I hope you have managed to have a look at the new look SFGC website and are getting to grips with the members' area. I find knowing that the Speakers and Judges list is always up to date is a great help and saves possible embarrassment when organising speakers for my own club.

As I write this, it feels like autumn has come already but I know there is still hope of an a short Indian summer before autumn sets in properly, so I shall continue to enjoy the summer flowers and not put away the garden furniture and cushions just yet... A strange summer and perhaps more of what we have been used to, and some things have flourished and some haven't, which is more or less the norm. I tried growing aubergines for the first time and was pleasantly surprised with 3 or 4 fruits per plant of a decent size. They need to be sown very early and seem to grow slowly at first but finally got there. I shall try again.

The hedgehogs seem to have stayed all summer, not residing in the garden, but coming to feed and drink most nights. They were especially dependent during the dry spell in June as there was little

natural water or food about and some would have been pregnant or with young hoglets. In the autumn it is often youngsters coming and feeding up before hibernation. According to my camera they come about 4.00am, so I reckon they party all night then stop by for breakfast before going to bed!

This summer I was lucky enough to travel to South Africa and see the flowering of Namaqualand in the Western Cape. They had had very



heavy winter rainfall, the heaviest in decades, which had resulted in some of the best flowering seen in a very long time. These pictures were taken near Kamieskroon, south of Springbok. The majority of the flowers were the orange beetle flowers (*Gorteria diffusa* subsp. *diffusa*) which don't open until noon. There were also *Arctotis* species which we see some of here as cultivated plants. Nearer the coast were the Vygies or Livingstone Daisies as we know them. Individually all the flowers were beautiful and it was lovely to see ones that I recognised from home. But it was the sheer volume of them in an otherwise arid landscape that was so spectacular and something I will remember for a very long time. I feel very lucky indeed.



This will be my last introduction as I am stepping down from the role of secretary for the Federation. It has been lovely talking to various clubs and I wish you all well for the future. Wishing you and your families a very happy Christmas and new year.

Best wishes, *Wendy*.

Chairman's Corner



A warm and sunny Wednesday morning Louie and I are on our way up into the hills for a nice long walk to Beacon Hill overlooking Minehead. Once again we walk alone, not a single person anywhere in sight, (long may it continue!) We are both enjoying the wonderful scenery and a lovely breeze coming from the North West keeping us both cool. From Beacon Hill down to Bicknoller post and up to Ladies Edge. The hills are alive with the sound of bees hundreds of them everywhere all enjoying the heather and gorse, everywhere the hills are resplendent in an enormous cloak of purple and yellow much too beautiful to hurry pass so I find a grassy mound to sit and take it all in, a sight that will remain with me forever.

From down in the Combe I hear the distant sound of a mobile phone even here there is no escape from technology anything happening in the world we all hear about it within minutes. Reflecting on times passed; the slower pace of life with news and information attained by television, radio or newspapers. In those days there were morning and evening papers, 'Evening News', 'Star' and 'Standard' were the late afternoon newspapers in London. Sitting here on the grassy mound looking out over the hills my mind wanders back into the past remembering our little flat in Wimbledon both of us having stressful jobs. One evening Mo said we both need a break so let's book a few days away at a hotel. In those days work kept me away a lot so I had a hotel guide that I kept with me (Ashley Courtney) leafing through the pages we settled on two one in Somerset the other in the Malvern Hills.

A toss of a coin and two weeks later found us on our way to Somerset to stay at the Combe House Hotel.

Down the A39 to the village of Holford left into a small lane to an unmade road leading to the hotel. The first thing we noticed approaching our destination was a large Monkey Puzzle Tree tall and majestic beside the entrance, turning into the driveway there was the Combe House settled deep in the hills, a long black and white building with a large water wheel at the far end and to our right beside an ancient Yew tree a full size tennis court and to our left a





building that turned out to be a small indoor swimming pool.

As we walk into the reception area in the corner was a telephone booth which was strange but all would be revealed later. We were escorted to our room, looking around all the furniture was of age but had obviously been well cared for, the room was spotless with crisp white sheet's turned down ready for our visit, the en suite had everything you could need including big white fluffy

towels - this will do for us we both agreed.

After we had unpacked we noticed there was no television, no phone, no tea making facilities. It transpired the hotel had one television in the lounge only, one telephone (the booth in reception) tea or coffee was brought to your room whenever required, no newspapers were available - we were isolated in a time warp so that anything that happened in the world would pass us by! WOW what a find this hotel was, a place of tranquillity that would allow all the stress of modern life to fall away. Richard the owner a former London chef bought the hotel and decided to keep it as a sanctuary for his guests to completely relax. All the staff who were mainly local, were trained by Richard with food prepared from locally sourced produce, ice cream, jam, marmalade, chutneys (the



Victorian Chicken Pie was to die for) all prepared in the kitchen and at one time the jam was made from fruit from their kitchen garden and pats of butter (unwrapped in those days) in little dishes.

Each morning we would walk in the hills returning late afternoon, change and down into the restaurant for our evening meal and into the bar for a few glasses of wine.

To say we left our first weekend visit with sadness is an understatement.

So began our love affair with Holford that continues to this day.

God Bless, Erl

‘Sunflower, good morning, you sure do make it like a sunny day’



This year I have been a bit busy; I started my first full time job, I transferred to a different university to complete my degree part time and I work extra hours at my local pub. Therefore, the time I have to spend in the family garden has been very limited. However, it has not gone neglected.

Instead of a our traditional vegetable plot bursting with chard, potatoes and beans as normal, it has been transformed into what has been named the ‘sunflower jungle’. I sowed three packets of sunflowers; giants, titans and evening sun varieties. They were carefully potted in March and then transplanted to larger pots in late April before finally being planted in the vegetable patch in May. Now, as I write this in the early September heatwave the tallest sunflowers yet to flower are approaching 12 foot! Despite my lack of time this year to get gardening, watching these sunflowers grow has been truly joyous. The sunflowers are attracting many pollinators, and I hope to harvest the seeds for the birds to eat over winter.

As a young person interested in horticulture I am passionate about the need to make sure our gardens are biodiverse and that they are spaces for nature. Having recently joined the Horticultural Society I’m keen to introduce a nature chain project to the village after being inspired by the project founded in Limpley Stoke. I hope this will entail talks and events that encourage villagers to plant for wildlife. Additionally I would like to get the local pre-school and village primary school involved with planting seeds, building bug and bird houses and going on nature walks.

Finally, next year the vegetable patch will once again be returned to its former glory, but for the first time I am hoping to take the ‘no dig’ approach. Having roped in my younger brother to do the March sowing whilst I continue to complete my degree, by the start of June I will have more time to ensure it is once again bursting with crops. But of course there will still have to be sunflowers in there somewhere!

I hope to be able to develop further the Wellow nature chain project and I want to arrange lots of wonderful events with the Horticultural Society that helps celebrate the importance of biodiversity in the garden and wider village landscape.

*Ashling Hammerton
Wellow & District Horticultural Society*

TICKING THE BOXES

Having enjoyed two excellent talks in March, one with the Wells Gardening Club: Rewilding by Chris Sperring, and one with the Wells & District Wildlife: Re-Wild Your Garden for Insects (Rewild Chew), I found myself thinking about what I had achieved in the ‘wilding’ direction. I am limited with what I can do in my present garden. I don’t have room for a wildflower meadow; I can’t make my own compost because of lack of space and rats; I have no neglected, undisturbed corners where ivy can grow or I can hide a pile of stones or logs for wildlife cover; I have few places suitable for nest-boxes - but - I do have a pond; I do have one nest box at present, and a bee hotel; I do leave some seed heads on plants over winter; and I am trying to provide some shrubs for future nesting sites. As regards a wildflower meadow, one can still help insects with well-chosen perennials and bulbs, without the tricky, long-term maintenance of ‘artificial’ meadows. A garden with plenty of carefully chosen wildlife-attracting plants can be just as beneficial and Rewild Chew gives a useful list of such plants:

<https://greenchew.org/rewildchew-wildlife-attracting-plant-list/>.

With careful planning, one can have plants that are advantageous to wildlife in bloom for a good part of the year.

My previous garden in Cumbria was different altogether and I was pleased to find, in retrospect, I had ‘ticked most of the boxes’ of ideas suggested from both talks. So I thought I would share some of my past ‘wilding’ successes with you – before the concept of wilding was so widely understood.



Front garden - October, looking to left & right from property

It is best to provide a variety of habitats as much as possible in a garden – hedge or shrubs/trees, flowers, veg/fruit, grass, water, shelter, space, light, . Apart from water, all of these I was able to

provide. The garden was about half an acre, split on two levels, surrounded on nearly all sides by a hawthorn hedge. In the lower level, at the front of the bungalow, which was originally mostly lawn, I planted trees, herbaceous beds, and bordered the long gravel drive with low-growing sedums.



At the back of the bungalow, on a higher level, we had a small field which, after the sixteen years we were there, we had changed to include a copse (with nest boxes and bird feeders), a 'dead hedge' (a barrier of prunings) and brush piles – both good for small mammals and insects – areas of long grass with pathways cut through and a clearing to sit in (suggested

Herbaceous beds and Sedum drive - the latter, a great attraction to bees.

by Chris Sperring!), a large undisturbed pile of stones covered with grass (great for toads), a large insect hotel made from pallets, a wildflower patch, four apple trees (3 cultivated and one Crab) and a soft fruit/veg/compost area.



Copse with Brush Piles



Fruit & Veg area

I'm so thankful I had the opportunity for such a challenge and the satisfaction it brought to me as well as the benefits to wildlife, of which there was plenty – perhaps a story for another time!

Erika Smith - Wells & District Gardening Club

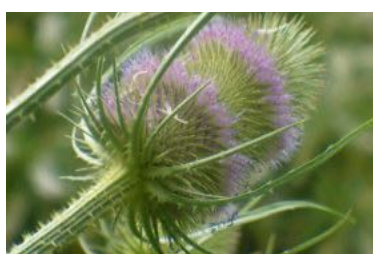
Supporting and Protecting Our Natural World. The Teasel



Everything about the teasel is spiky– the stems, leaves, 'sepals' and even the flower. Here, there, and everywhere there is a spiky, rigid prickle and yet, bees, butterflies and birds especially gold finches love them. Once teasels arrive in your garden, naturally or by design I am sure that you will want to welcome them though they

do tend to self-seed just about anywhere even in tarmac and in paths wherever they feel happy.

Teasels are tall (up to 6 feet) but usually do not need staking unless in a very exposed position. They are elegant and spectacular biennials. In their first-year compact prickly rosettes of leaves are produced and now is perhaps the time to remove unwanted plants. In the second year it will be time for flowers.



I find myself waiting for the wonderful flowers that are cone shaped. They produce bands of purply/bluish flowers that begin in the centre of the flower head and then spread upwards and downwards from there.

This is when bees and butterflies start to arrive though how they manage to push aside the spikes I cannot think.

As the flowers fade to brown, they remain on the teasel and will be there winter



long. That is when the next treat comes as goldfinches arrive in, maybe family groups, called charms, to extract the many, many seeds. Again, how such small creatures manage to penetrate the spikes right



into the seed head I cannot explain. In fact in my garden, they select the teasels rather than the purpose built feeders that are filled with Niger seed especially for them!

The teasel has other attributes on a cold frosty or snowy day their outline will be beautifully etched in frost. They also make excellent decorations with other seasonal plants at Christmas time especially is sprayed with gold or silver paint for example. They are also used in floristry decorations.



In spring it will be time to cut back the teasels and put them on a brush pile maybe because a new generation is ready to grow. Easy gardening with huge pleasure added.

There is some debate by scientists and experiments being carried out to see whether the teasel might be a carnivore. The leaves are very unusual for they are cupped around the stem so that water collects in the hollow so formed. I have certainly seen birds drinking water from the little reservoir, but insects drop into the water and usually cannot escape so they die. It is apparently possible that teasels use the dead mush as food. Some experiments that compare teasels with insects trapped and those without notice that though the plant does not grow more prolifically there are more and larger seeds thus ensuring healthy new generations. Another line of thought is that the water prevents insects such as aphids from climbing up to the flower and damaging it.



Did You Know?

In the past it was found that by fluffing up the wool, it created tiny air pockets in the fiber which prevented the heat from escaping as quickly. The teasel was used to raise the ends of the fiber on the wool cloth which created these air pockets. Teasing (carding) made the wool seem fuller, hence the name of the teasel. Some weavers still use this process, and more are likely to I believe. It works!

Di Redfern

Asters – Daisy, Daisy

As the nights begin to lengthen and the sun loses its bite, the softer light suits the blues and pinks of asters. Once martyrs to mildew which covered every Michaelmas Daisy with fungal white powder, the aster family has been explored more widely recently for those species that are mildew resistant. (It was particularly the ‘Novae Belgii’ asters that were vulnerable).

Additionally, to add to the confusion, asters have been visited by the botanists and some labour under the name *Symphotrichum*. So, there is the tall, black-stemmed *S. Laeve* ‘Calliope’ which towers above its neighbours with sprays of light blue flowers in autumn, and *S. ‘Little Carlow’*, an old favourite with its soft blue flowers in September and October. It brings a touch of autumn to the fading summer borders, and associates well with some of the ‘Novae-Angliae’, or New England varieties. These old favourites are headed up by *S. Novae-Angliae* ‘Adenken and Alma Potschke’ (most nurserymen recognize the ‘Alma Potschke’ part of her name). She boasts heads of glorious carmine-pink flowers that work well with the darkest violet *A. n-a* ‘Marina Wolkonsky’. Together they make a striking contrast with the striped *Miscanthus* ‘Morning Light’: a well-behaved grass that does not spread or seed everywhere.

Gardeners in the know often choose to plant another resistant form, *A. x Frikartii* ‘Monch’. It starts flowering in August with large, open violet flowers on a short clump, about 60cm tall. It makes a good front-of-border plant in full sun, with well-drained soil.

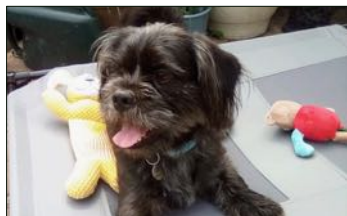
Lately Aster ‘Autumn Jewels’ are winning gardeners’ hearts. They are bright colours: *A. ‘Sapphire’*, *A. ‘Rose Quartz’* and *A. ‘Purple Diamond’*, to name but a few: all forms of *A. dumosus* that is mildew-resistant and dwarf flowering. They are recommended for pot culture. A mixture of ‘jewels’ in a dark brown pot would look very well on a sunny terrace.

Asters are easy to look after. They flower throughout the autumn, taking the garden through to the beginning of winter, when they benefit from being cut down to the ground. Those in the garden could then be fed and watered, while those in pots can be taken out entirely and planted elsewhere, preferably somewhere with light, well-draining soil in sun, water them well and give them an organic mulch to establish their crowns.

Sally Gregson
(Henton Gardening Club)

Cheeky Chappie With a Waggy Tail

After a couple of years pet free following 20 years enjoying the company of cats we were ready for a new companion and after much discussion decided to find ourselves a dog. Not too big, not too small, likes a walk and a cuddle, preferably a rescue. Most importantly my husband requested “A cheeky chappie with a waggy tail.”



On the 1st of August a door opened at St. Giles Animal Rescue and in bounded Rusty a Shih Tzu Beagle cross. He jumped straight up onto Eddie’s lap and then scabbled across a small table to come and see me, we were both smitten! You’re asked to go home and think about whether this is the right dog for you, but no discussion was needed. So,

on the 11th of August we returned and with little prompting Rusty jumped onto the back seat and once fastened safely sat next to my husband quite happily for the journey back to Minehead.

Of course, with any dog and I suppose a rescue in particular you can’t be sure exactly what to expect. I soon found out that sleeping in the kitchen was not Rusty’s idea of the best place. I stuck it out until 1am trying to settle the howling little chap and then gave up, reluctantly allowing him upstairs much to his delight and us as he settled immediately on the bed!

To my astonishment he has little knowledge of gardening. He’s chewed off a rose stem, thinks pruning is the signal to start a game of tuggy with the stems and I’ve removed any loose wood from the garden before he takes it to chew up!

You may be thinking bet they regret this decision but I have to say he is the most wonderful company and after a month now we couldn’t imagine life without him. He loves going out and about, enjoys car journeys and has made friends with a mature Fox Terrier who is showing him the ropes. As he’s only 2 he’s a bit of a doggy teenager and tries to pretend to be sleeping when we want to take him on early morning walks. Best of all he keeps us smiling.



So, I will be training my garden mate to be a little less destructive. It may take some time but perhaps he can pull up a few weeds, now that would be helpful!

Rachel E Hill

Wincanton & District Gardeners Association

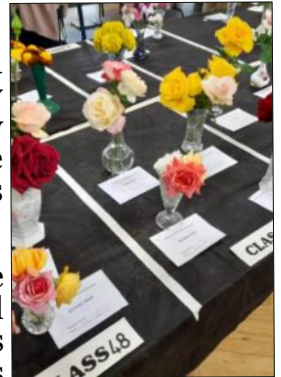
We are a very active club, and this year has been no different. We have planted all our usual town planters and they look really lovely at the moment.



A very successful trip to RHS Rosemoor at the end of June had 48 on the coach a very good number despite the global financial situation.

We were hosts to the Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs' AGM in May, which was a lovely and special evening for our Association. It was well attended and the topic of the talk and the food went down really well.

July came and our Members Rose and Sweet Pea show. The roses were numerous but only 1 entry in the Sweet Peas. The cup for Roses was won by Richard D'Arcy our present Chairman with the cup for Sweet Peas won by Jane Findley our Talks and Events organiser.



In early September we held our Annual Flower Show and lots of people said it was one of our best shows ever. 3 people won more than 1 cup. Marcus Giles our President, he also won the Banksian

Medal, Richard D'Arcy our chairman, he also won the Bronze Medal and Andrew (Chutney) King who grows the most magnificent large onions.

Also, this year we had Sarah Beeny and her film crew filming our judging and show for her next series of a Life in the Country. This was such a wonderful opportunity for our Association. We are now looking forward to it being on the Television sometime next year.

Gill D'Arcy



Berries at Autumn Quiz - Name the berries.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



by Di Redfern - Answers on page 18

Matthew Symond's Top Tips for a Small Garden



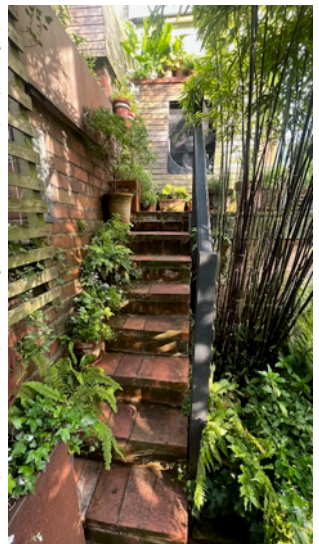
South Bristol Gardening Club's Matthew Symonds has been announced as the winner of the B&Q Gardener of the year competition. Although his garden is only 21ft x 18ft (6.5m x 5.6m) Matthew has utilised every space. There's a sunny raised deck with glass balustrade to sit and view the garden from above and a shaded seating area for relaxing or alfresco suppers. A mini greenhouse for growing seedlings and tomatoes. A rectangular pond with a gentle waterfall provides calming sound and a haven for wildlife. Every space is filled with plants including ferns, hydrangeas, anemone, hostas, hazel, bamboo, and roses. Wall topped planters squeeze in more planting space, and an environmentally friendly (but not very attractive) air-source heat pump is disguised beneath a shelf of

potted plants. Even the water butt has a dual use hosting a potted water loving arum Lilly.

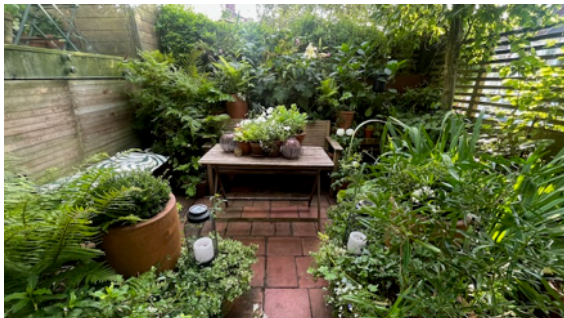
Matthew Share's his top tips for making the most of a small garden.

Think big! It's counter intuitive but finding space for a big feature plant of medium sized tree can help give the illusion of making your garden feel bigger. Planting something like a fruit tree can also bring all year-round interest with blossom in the spring, fruit in the summer, and autumn leaf colour.

Grow up! Don't just think about what you can grow on the ground, use walls, fences or structures like an archway to grow climbing plants. There are so many to choose from but roses, clematis or Jasmine will produce wonderful flowers and scent. Some plants will need support to grow up, but plants that will grow without supports include ivy or Virginia creeper.



Let the wildlife in. The quickest way to bring wildlife into the garden is by introducing water. You don't need a big pond (although if you've room for one you'll be sure to attract frogs!), even a glazed plant pot filled with water or a bird bath will attract, birds, insects and other wildlife that will help you too by eating the bugs and predators that will otherwise eat your plants.



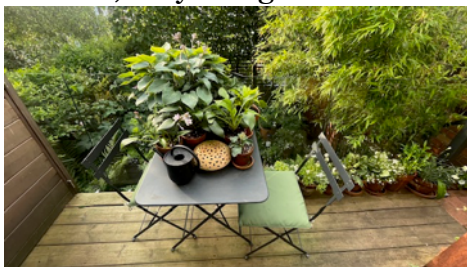
Take a seat! Every garden, however big or small, should include a seat or two so that you can sit and enjoy being amongst your plants. Be warned though, once the gardening bug grabs you, you'll be constantly spotting gardening jobs you want to, so will find it hard to sit down for long!



Everyone can grow a garden. You only need a few packets of seeds and some soil so don't need to spend a fortune. There is something wonderful about sowing some tiny seeds and watching them germinate into seedlings, then plants, and

before you know it you have beautiful blooms or tasty crops you can eat. If you've never grown from seed before, easy things to start with include tomatoes, sunflowers and cosmos.

Matthew Symonds has joined the Somerset Federation of Gardening Club's list of speakers covering topics including small space gardening, city gardening and community gardening projects.



Matthew Symonds

Portishead & District Horticultural Society - 160th Anniversary

As a keen gardener I joined the Portishead and District Horticultural Society in 1993. My aim was to make friends and improve my gardening skills. I subsequently joined the Committee and whilst I am the Programme Secretary I am also the General Secretary. Now retired I spend a lot of time organising the Summer Show. The Show has expanded over the years and is now much more than the original Flower and Produce Show.

This year we were celebrating our 160th anniversary, the first Show having been held in 1863 and I had organised an array of arena attractions for our visitors. Whilst I am busy in the lead up to the Show I can usually relax by the Saturday of the Summer Show as my main tasks are to meet and greet the arena entertainers. Well, things did not go to plan. Three attractions were unable to attend on the Saturday, all for valid reasons, however this left me with a dilemma what to do? Trying not to run around like a headless chicken I rearranged timings and asked other events to fill the slots. I found a replacement for the children's fun sports by asking the Portishead Guides Team. Obviously they were not expecting this so this necessitated me taking a trip to their headquarters to pick up some

parachutes and hey presto the children had a great time. On the Sunday it poured down with rain so we had to move acts, including the Stepping Stones School of Dance who had been rehearsing all year for the Show inside the top marquee. The feedback from the visitors for both days was fantastic so we clearly did the right thing.

In addition to being affiliated to the Somerset Federation the Portishead Horticultural Society are also members of the ASAO - The Association of Show and Agricultural Organisation. They have also recently celebrated their 100th anniversary and they kindly gave members a large



rosette to award to 'our' champion. We selected Gail Malyon who won the RHS Banksian Medal for the most points and ten cups or salvers for her fabulous floral exhibits, including this stunning Lily. Gail only recently joined the Society and really enjoys coming to our monthly meetings to expand her already extensive gardening skills.

Like many gardening clubs the Portishead Club has seen a decline in the number of members over the years. We have also seen an increase in the cost of putting on the talks. We decided to make more of an effort through promoting our monthly talks on social media and also via a specific promotion at our Summer Show. We were fortunate in that the first talk after the Show was from Nick Wray from Bristol Botanical Garden on Plants and their Pollinators, which I can thoroughly recommend. I am delighted to report that we gained five new members, who joined at the Show and two more since via social media and attending Nick's excellent talk as visitors.

Speaking of Shows and talks, I had the pleasure of visiting Malvern Spring Show and was fortunate enough to see Adam Frost on the stage who told us how he got into gardening - very entertaining! Having watched the Chelsea Flower Show I have to say that I was disappointed that Mark Gregory only got a Silver Gilt for his fabulous walled garden when Cleve West got a Gold for a derelict building site full of weeds - others of course might disagree given the new trend of re-wilding. I am visiting the Malvern Autumn Show shortly with the Society as we have organised a trip. I am planning on buying lots of Spring Bulbs as the Dutch growers are usually there.

Linda Hodgetts
General Secretary

Autumn Berries Quiz - Answers

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Cotoneaster (horizontalis) | 2. Blackthorn (sloes) |
| 3. Pyracantha | 4. Hawthorn (haws) |
| 5. Alder Blackthorn | 6. Spindleberry |
| 7. Butcher's Broom | 8. Hypericum |

Talaton Garden and Produce Association



For those asking Who? Where? Talaton is a small village of some 450 people and lies roughly equidistant from Exeter and Honiton or 2 miles from Whimble if that helps. The Association has been around for over 70 years and is probably the oldest and most active in the village.



Well, the Show's over for another year! And what a good show it was. The sun shone, in spite of doom-laden forecasts, and exhibits and attendances were wonderful. There were 70 classes split between 5 sections and in total some 285 exhibits were up for judging. In addition, and hugely supported, were the Childrens' classes. Such clever enthusiastic work – the potato grown in a bucket never ceases to surprise!

Looking back through the year the Association has been active with a couple of visiting speakers, one on Wildlife gardening and one on Shrubs, and a visit to Regency House, Hemyock, AND a very successful plant stall that was a useful source of income. Whilst never allowing money to be the driving initiative the escalating cost of coaches and some speakers does highlight the need to keep the coffers full. The subs from a family membership of 46 don't go a long way with the average coach costing over three hundred pounds. Still to come, a hugely popular Pumpkin Competition, an AGM, and a stall at the annual Christmas Fair.

We are lucky in having a few allotments which have proved popular although it's probably a fair reflection that the village community changes and maybe the busy lives of younger couples pushes in the direction of the supermarket rather than the garden. As mentioned though, the enthusiasm of the children maybe gives hope for the future.

Where do we go now? Finding speakers with topics that appeal – and ones we can afford is always on the cards. Trips to interesting places – we are looking at closer venues that allow self-driving. Recently a

trip to Knightshayes was booked but it seems that the gardens there are undergoing a huge overhaul and are not really ready for Association visits. Probably a review of entry fees to the Show will be needed. Only this year actual membership was amended to be £5 per family which is more realistic and has been generally accepted.

So, a small population limits what our Association can achieve but having survived for over 70 years and having a very happy and willing Committee there's hope for us all.

Chris Harwood (Chairman).



Autumn at Stourhead

I took up my camera and started to walk
Around familiar pathways with strangers I'd talk
A popular place for the tourist to wander
Look at the sights and colours I'd ponder.

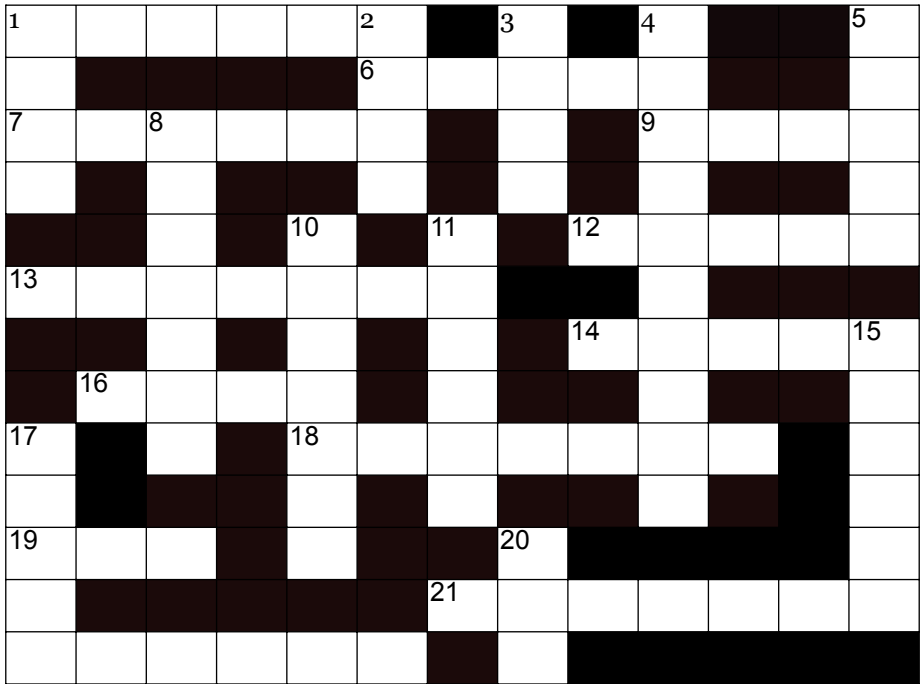
From green to yellow, orange to red
Piles of leaves like golden carpets spread
Everywhere I walk my eyes could see
All the changing colours on every tree.

I've walked this path so many times before
Each time I find something different in store
But the autumn colours I love the best
Everything preparing for winters rest.

Rich are the colours, dark in the lake
What enchanting pictures they all make
I know they will all stay in my head
This autumn walk at my beloved Stourhead.

© Gill D'Arcy

Gardening Crossword - by John Dunster



Across

1. The willowy plant contains one.
6. Heather has one to care about.
7. Ali has to make a bloomer.
9. Woody feature of Lampeter.
12. Work hard to produce new plants.
13. Plant gets chaps in confusion.
14. Plate design showing part of a flower.
16. Second lubricant got from the ground.
18. For fruit it may go to Capri.
19. Half a sodden piece of turf.
21. Flowers to provide with drink and food.
22. Suit for gardeners.

Down.

1. Cases of vegetables.
2. Kate goes out for wood.
3. Riddle solvable in fits.
4. Juicy fruit we let Roman consume.
5. Fold the petal
8. Leguminous food compounded to a rich mixture.
10. Flowers for Judy.
11. New clippers required ashers broken.
15. One depart s perhaps when they fall.
17. New shoes possibly of rubber.
20. Price reduced for lettuce.

Answers on page 25

Letter from Canberra

“If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere” Van Gogh
There are 15 National Parks in the UK, 10 of which are in England. Natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage make these living and working landscapes truly unique.

Australia’s National Parks can be similarly described but magnitude necessarily differs. Australia has over 600 National Parks covering 28 million hectares, or nearly 110,000 square miles. From jungles to snowlands, deserts to rainforests and coral reefs to woodlands, Australia is a microcosm of the world’s geography.

Only a few National Parks are managed at a national level by the Australian Government. Most are conserved by State and Territory Governments.

Pulu Keeling National Park is Australia's smallest National Park.



An isolated coral atoll of about half a square kilometre in size, it is part of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Australia's most remote island territory lying some 2000 kilometres northwest of Perth in

the Indian Ocean.

Located within the driest region of the Australian continent, the **Munga-Thirri – Simpson Desert National Park** is in the centre of the Simpson Desert. It is one of the world’s best examples of parallel dunal desert and, at 3.6 million hectares, it is the largest National Park in Australia.



The Munga-Thirri-Simpson Desert National Park features a wide variety of desert wildlife in a landscape of dune systems, playa lakes, spinifex grasslands and acacia woodlands. The Simpson Desert’s sand dunes stretch over hundreds of kilometres and lie across the corners of 3 states – South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

I’ve been fortunate to visit several National Parks in the UK and many in Australia over the years. In my fitter, younger days, hiking in National Parks in NSW was a favourite pastime.

We enjoyed sailing the Whitsundays, located in the Great Barrier



Reef Marine Park and equally memorable was visiting Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory. A timeless place with exceptional natural and cultural values.

Close to home in Canberra is **Namadgi National Park**.



Erl, brother Kjell and wife, Joan, visited Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve with me in 2018. The Reserve is part of Namadgi National Park. With time constraints we could only see a very small part.



Erl may remember we walked through The Sanctuary, a large wetlands ecosystem surrounded by bushland. Protected by a predator-proof fence for some 40 years, it created a refuge for a range of native animals.

Namadgi National Park is located on **Ngunnawal Country**, an ancient and diverse landscape managed by Ngunnawal people for tens of thousands of years. **Aboriginal rock paintings** can be found in the Park.



The area has a European history dating back to the 1830s, when settlers moved into the area and cleared the valleys for farming.



Notable was Englishman William Brayshaw. The family homestead demonstrates how settlers lived in this region. Life was hard, particularly for the women and children.

Namadgi National Park Park suffered badly in a bushfire in 2020, with around 80% of its vegetation burnt and a significant loss of native fauna. Over 20% of Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve suffered a similar fate.



An army helicopter, conducting reconnaissance for landing sites for remote area fire-fighting teams, attempted to land for a toilet break when their landing light (which can get as hot as 550°C) ignited the fire in dry grass. Within about 12 seconds, the aircraft was almost engulfed in flames. It managed to get away with minor damage, but left a swathe of destruction.

Several of Canberra's southern suburbs, 12 kilometres from the Park, had been on high alert. This was downgraded but residents remained vigilant.



Canberra at night with the fires in Namadgi National Park



Namadgi will be in a recovery phase for many years to come. Some signs are encouraging. Bogs and fens have been restored. Most flora species appear to have recolonised impacted areas with growth of fire-affected tree species and saplings, native grasses and shrubs. Orchids and wildflowers are back.

Sadly, our wildlife suffered the most. Kangaroo and echidna numbers are now on the increase and many of the birds have returned, as have some threatened species. Five koalas rescued from the fire have been returned to the Park. There are some historical platypus sightings but not many and there have been none since the fires.

The Namadgi National Park may never be what it was in 2018. The Director of Namadgi National Park has predicted that the canopy will come back but the ecosystem will change, with more extreme weather events, higher temperatures and the threat of more intense bushfires.

“With climate change, with the challenges we face at the moment, it might be going through a transition to something completely different – we’re not sure...”

With thanks to the ACT, NSW and SA Governments and their agencies. Photos, news and other reports from the internet.

*Bill Upton
September 2023*

Answers to Crossword

Across:

1. Pliant 6. Erica 7. Dahlia 9. Tree 12. Graft 13. Spinach 14. Petal
16. Soil 18. Apricot 19. Sod 21. Poppies 22. Spades

Down:

1. Pods 2. Teak 3. Sift 4. Watermelon 5. Pleat 8. Haricot
10. Garland 11. Shears 15. Leaves 17. Hoses 20. Cos

A Rose for Christmas

By Stir-up Sunday the garden has settled into its winter torpor. I don't put the garden to bed, preferring to let plants fall asleep as they will. The last roses of summer linger into late autumn and then they too bid adieu. But each year, however harsh the season, one rose remains awake. 'Mme Isaac Pereire' has a final task to undertake.

My garden is 800 feet above sea level in the Blackdown Hills. Rainfall is high, mists sweep over us. "Roses? You'll never grow roses there," the wife of the local Brigadier barked when we moved to the village thirty-six years ago. My mother smiled politely but did not admit that the moment we had completed the house purchase, she and I ordered dozens of roses. Love and TLC ensure they thrive.

'Mme. Isaac Pereire' is a favourite. How could one not revere this beautiful old lady in her gown of magenta silk? Armand Garcon, a garden labourer from Rouen, bred this sumptuous rose, naming her 'Le Bienheureux de La Salle'. Fortunately for the rose-loving world, nurseryman Jacques Margottin spotted it and with the help of one of his wealthy clients, Fanny Pereire, the widow of a famous Parisian banker, he purchased the rights in 1881 and changed the name to 'Mme. Isaac Pereire'.

Each spring, we peg Mme. Isaac's arching stems to hazel benders and she rewards us with a profusion of huge, quartered blooms packed with petals. The heady fragrance wafts across the garden on summer evenings and golden autumn days. Later flowers are if anything more perfect than the summer flushes.

At Advent she is still in bloom, one or two flowers, bedraggled from autumn rains. Then comes the Christmas morning ritual. I wander the garden and pick one last rose, always the same rose. It is usually frosted or sodden, edged with suede. Mme. Isaac is there for me, my faithful friend, always yielding up that final bloom. She says, "I am waiting for you to pick your Christmas rose and then I will take my rest."

I snip the bloom, thank her, and bring it indoors. By evening the petals have fallen and lie scattered on the table, crisping in the heat from the log fire. But a faint scent lingers about them as if Mme. Isaac is whispering as she falls asleep: "Summer is past now, shed tears for its lost loveliness, but only briefly because summer is yet to be."

Miranda Gudenian

Time for Celebration!

What connects the following: The first mobile phone call; The iconic Duracell bunny; Pink Floyd's timeless album "Dark Side of the Moon"; the humour of Peter Kay; and the Sampford Peverall & District Garden Club? They're all marking their 50th anniversary this year!

2023 commenced with our Annual General Meeting, where fresh faces took up the roles of Secretary and Treasurer on the committee. After the official proceedings, members engaged in a lively quiz to raise funds for the Devon Air Ambulance. The new committee promptly swung into action, finalising speakers and brainstorming ways to commemorate this special anniversary.



To inaugurate the festivities, several members gathered on a splendid spring morning to plant a tree in the Community Orchard. This tree honours the club's contributions over the past five decades, aiming to create a legacy for the village that can be cherished for at least another 50 years. The tree, generously provided by the Devon Wildlife Trust through the Council's Landmark Tree Scheme, was received with gratitude from Peter

Bowers, one of our dedicated Tree Wardens. In the coming months, a plaque will be added to the tree, accompanied by an essential rabbit guard.

In May, our annual Spring Fayre unfolded. Following a challenging winter and a slow start to the year, our members shone by offering an impressive array of plants for sale. To attract more attendees, we experimented with guest tables selling crafts and plants. It was heartening to see the guest table fees covering our venue costs. Raffle prizes, generously contributed by members, garnered significant interest, and the ever-popular homemade cakes, along with tea and coffee, were a hit. After a few lean years, the success of the event not



only uplifted spirits but also contributed profits for upcoming speakers.



June brought a celebratory meal at Tiverton Golf Course. Bathed in sunshine, we savoured a delightful three-course meal with a picturesque view of the golf course. The meticulously decorated table and attentive service enhanced the experience, making it a memorable evening.

Our July meeting marked the conclusion of the formal celebrations with a twist—Prosecco and Cake! A refreshing change from our usual coffee and biscuits routine.

Come October, some of our members will participate in the Pottinger Cup Quiz, an annual contest among four local clubs. Hoping for a victorious turn, we cross our fingers for a win this year, after a bit of a drought.



Throughout the year, our committee has diligently worked to revamp the club's image, enhancing communication, information sharing, and the overall club atmosphere. Introducing seed and magazine swaps, boosting the "flower of the month" tradition, and even creating a club Facebook page in lieu of a website are among the steps we've taken.

As we look ahead to the next 50 years, uncertainty looms. The challenge we face is attracting an active membership with the time to engage. In an era dominated by technology and platforms like YouTube, the question arises: "Why should I join my local garden club?" Our warm and welcoming club offers a platform to exchange ideas, celebrate successes, and even learn from hiccups. It's a wonderful place to connect with fellow gardening enthusiasts and gain hands-on gardening wisdom from peers and experts alike. Becoming a part of your local club offers the chance to shape the future of gardening, in whatever exciting forms it may take.

Jan & Clair - Sampford Peverell & District G.C.

The Season of Mists and Mellow Fruitfulness

Autumn started officially on 1st September but your garden will also be telling you that the season has changed. Tender plants are adapting to fewer daylight hours and colder night-time temperatures by losing vigour and beginning to close down for winter and fruits on trees and shrubs are ripening fast.

Harvest is the end of the gardening cycle for fruit and vegetables but there is no cause to be disheartened because, of course, it is also the start of the next cycle. The apples and blackberries that we pick today dreaming, perhaps, of crumbles to come, were not intended for human mouths but for birds and animals to eat and distribute the seeds to give rise to new plants next Spring. The foliage that dies down goes into the soil to be converted into fertility to support that new life.



Autumn is the ideal time to review the growing season just ending to help plan our plant and seed purchases for next year. Writing this in August, the first seed catalogue has arrived - Kings Seeds catalogue for our Gardening Club group order.

2023 seems to be a bumper year for fruit. Soft fruit was bountiful and, for once, the netting held and we had our share, leaving the birds to be satisfied with the leftovers. Top fruit is the heaviest ever with apples and plums weighing branches to the ground. Our William Crump apple, an excellent keeper, has fruited with real enthusiasm for the first time. We can take no credit as have done nothing different, the weather gods have just been kind starting with good production of fruit buds in the hot sun last summer.

On the veg plot, French Beans just keep producing, with Runners also doing well. Maincrop potatoes have been dug following the usual attack of blight but the yield is disappointing. Maybe it struck early before the tubers had developed well enough or perhaps the rain was not as plentiful as it



seemed. As usual, those horrid little black slugs have ruined a lot – time to try Nematodes next year?

We got our peas in early, to avoid the moth, but yield was again poor. We have experimented with Hurst Green Shaft sown much later than recommended, mid-July, and they are magnificent, covered in flowers, so there is hope of filling the freezer. The Florence Fennel is growing well and, as usual, the Winter Squash is trying to take over the world. Our favourite variety is Barbara which grows to the size of a small marrow and keeps well until the following Spring.

Some you win.....

Nick Matthews

Final Cuttings

I make no apology for the Robin on the cover. It won't be the last such image you see before the year is out. After all, this companionable bird is a continuous presence throughout the seasons in our gardens and deserves its status and recognition. The other day I found a photo of Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Foreign Secretary in the first decades of the 20th Century. Arguably a better naturalist than politician, the picture showed him with a robin perched on his hat. The caption added that St Serf of Culross also had a similar experience with a pet robin centuries before in 565 AD, a bird killed by his boisterous pupils but brought back to life by a pious Kentigern who later became St Mungo, Glasgow Cathedral's dedicated saint. We need these constant connections in a variable world. We need them to keep in touch with reality.

And that's where the Federation comes in. It's clear from the willing contributions that we are achieving just that. So a big thank you to all those who have sent in pieces and please keep them coming. We need your photos, snippets and in particular updates on club details if and when there are changes, especially to Club's personnel.

Moreover, I would like to thank all the members of the SFGC Committee for their unremitting devotion to all those tasks carried out on your behalf.

Finally, from us all, may I extend the warmest wishes for the Season and the New Year.

Pip Harwood
Hon. Pres.



