



Somerset Federation of Gardening Clubs

Issue XLIII Spring 2012

Points of Interest

***Thuggery in the
Borders***

Lawns for Wildlife

Lenten Hellebores

***Speakers you have
known***

Chairman's Corner

Final Cuttings



Quand nous chanterons le temps des cerises

Et gai rossignol et merle moqueur

Seront tous en fete !

Quand nous chanterons le temps des cerises

Sifflera bien mieux le merle moquer !

When we sing of cherry time the nightingale
and the mocking blackbird will rejoice as well !

When we sing of cherrytime the mocking blackbird
will be singing the better song !

Le temps des Cerises 1867



Somerset

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SOMERSET FEDERATION OF GARDENING CLUBS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

to be held in the Village Hall, on Thursday 17th May at

BUCKLAND ST MARY near Chard, in the Blackdown Hills TA20 3SP

Courtesy of YARTY GARDENING CLUB

Talk : CLIMBERS AND WALL SHRUBS

REFRESHMENTS, PLANTS FOR SALE etc.

From 6.30 onwards



They are not long the days of Wine and Roses

Ernest Dowson

What a beautiful word is Spring !

Leigh Hunt



You can take your choice. You can watch with regret the fleeting passage of time, whether it's roses or cherries which arrive back again with increasing familiarity. Or, you view the business in a spirit of optimism and eager anticipation.' *Le Temps de cerises* ' was an immensely popular French ballad written in 1867 full of romantic notions of the cherry season, of gay nightingales and derisive blackbirds. Oddly and unexpectedly, it was taken up by the insurgents of the Paris Commune from 1871 becoming their theme song in the bloody last days which marked the end of the their revolution

As I write there are no signs of cherry blossom but the daffodils have returned once again, the tulips are waiting in the wings and the blackbirds are singing outside.

Welcome to the 35th Federation Newsletter designed to keep you in touch with what you ought to know and in touch with each other. In these turbulent days, leaving aside the nineteenth century, it's good to know that you are not alone. In fact the Federation membership now stands at well over 250 affiliated clubs, quite a few beyond the borders of Somerset.

Down in the south of the county, within spitting distance, as they say in those parts, of Devon, lies the little village of Yarty whose Gardening Club is kindly hosting the Federation AGM on Thursday the 17th of May in Buckland St Mary Village Hall from 6.30 onwards.

Now here's a chance for clubs in some of our most outlying districts to get together and meet up for a pleasant and convivial evening. Details are shown elsewhere in this newsletter and a notice and invitation will be sent next month. So all you Devonians and folk from West Somerset and North Dorset, come and give your support to the Committee and members of Yarty Gardening Club.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



It's almost a year since I became Chairman of our Federation – where does the time go? I must say that I have really enjoyed working with our committee over the last few months and it has been a real 'eye-opener' realising just how much effort is contributed by each member. Their enthusiasm never wanes and our meetings are a delight, and so I would like to thank them on your behalf for their contribution to our Federation, and especially – for the precious spare time they forfeit, to ensure that the Federation runs smoothly and successfully. I look forward to working with them again in the coming year.

A request from you – our members please. Could we have more information regarding speakers...? It would be extremely beneficial to all clubs if we could have feedback on the speakers you employ for your meetings. Recommendations by word of mouth are normally the best way of ensuring an enjoyable and interesting meeting, and so anything you have to say on presentation, content and importantly - value for money, would be welcome. I am more than happy to receive any recommendations from you, which we can then discuss at future committee meetings.

Finally, I hope I may look forward to seeing as many of you as possible, at Yarty Garden Club for our AGM on the 17th May.

Kindest regards Erl

Spring Savings with Protek Products

With spring on the doorstep it's time to start planning your wood care projects that have been put on hold during the winter months.

Protek are a Somerset based manufacturer of quality timber preservatives that would like to offer all readers a 10% discount from their wood preservative ranges.

Visit their website to peruse the full range of quality products and enter discount code PPSWGC0212 at the checkout to claim your 10% discount.

This discount code is valid until 30th June 2012

www.protekwoodstain.co.uk - 01749 344697
info@protekproducts.co.uk

Hellebores and in particular Lenten Hellebores - Orientalis Hybrids

What is it that attracts so many people to fall in love with these bewitching winter flowering plants. Their charm lies in the fact that they start to flower at the end of January, at a time of year when most sensible gardeners are still indoors studying the seed catalogues. Bad weather can delay their flowering but these remarkable plants manage to shrug off the frost, snow and freezing temperatures and in so doing draw the summer gardener outside to marvel at their beauty. Once you have acquired a couple of plants or so, it is not long before you find yourself searching out more singles, doubles or anemone types in a variety of colours. The original Lenten species came from the northern parts of Greece and Turkey in a limited range of hues and over the years, dedicated breeders have slowly hybridised stock to produce the wide and exciting range of plants that are for sale today. - I was one such person who found myself unable to resist the attraction of these captivating plants and travelled long distances to acquire the treasures that were on offer from specialist nurseries.

As I was already running a small plants nursery growing a variety of perennial plants, it was a natural progression to try my hand at pollinating from the plants that I held in my collection. I had taken on an undeveloped garden in the early 1990s and this was to give me the canvas to lay out various beds for my hellebore plants. These plantings have become well established over the years and their flowering in March is a truly inspiring sight at a time of year when spring is slow to gather pace. I hold two Open days at this time of year and the garden is Open by Appointment to Garden societies and groups with a talk and guided tour from March.



Juliet Davis, Kapunda, Southstoke Lane, Bath BA2 5SH

kapundaplants@hotmail.co.uk

A post-script to the above which may arrive too late for you this year. During our delightful visit Juliet was asked about cutting hellebores for indoors.

The answer - Lemonade.

I put a bunch into a vase of lemonade and they lasted 5 full days instead of the usual five full minutes. I think they need to be cut young. But for me, Juliet's advice worked to my satisfaction.

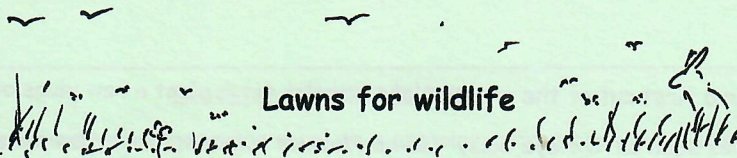


One of the most pleasing sounds of
Springtime to be found all over the country,
is the contented cooing of osteopaths
as Man picks up his
garden spade

DIGGING

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun
Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into the gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down
Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills Where he was digging.
The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands
By God the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day Than any other man on Toners bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.



Lawns for wildlife

Large areas of beautifully mown, level grass are a really classic feature of the British garden, which few of us would be happy without. Male gardeners in particular might feel quite at a loss in the garden without a good lawn to mow! While this pristine turf does have an important role in most gardens increasingly people are realising that with a little extra work it can become a much more interesting feature. A typical lawn is a virtual monoculture made up of two or three species of grass, chiefly perennial ryegrass, while an old meadow would be likely to contain well over ten species of slender-leaved grasses such as bents (*Agrostis* sp) fescues (*Festuca* sp) and meadow grasses (*Poa* sp). This is particularly significant for our butterflies many of whose caterpillars feed on these native grasses, for example the Blues, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and some Skippers. The good news though is that there are now many different meadow mixes available containing these native grasses with some wildflowers, which is excellent if you are starting from scratch or removing existing turf.

However, for most people who want to keep much of their lawn there are other ways of increasing biodiversity. A very simple way to create interest is to plant native primroses *Primula vulgaris* into the turf creating a lovely early display which will be valued by the first pollinators emerging from hibernation. As they flower so early any mowing can easily be delayed until the flowers have died. Cowslips *Primula veris* can also work well and they seem to be available in many garden centres now.

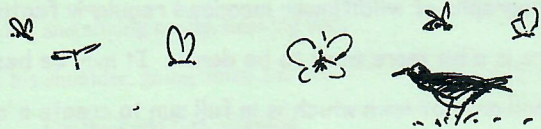
If you want to be a bit more ambitious and you've been inspired by the wonderful photographs of wildflower meadows regularly featured in gardening magazines, then there is a bit more work to be done! It may be best to start small, first choosing a small area of lawn which is in full sun to create a 'mini-meadow', then if all goes well you can always extend it.

After a first cut of the grass in late March/ April, plant a few plugs of some key species such as Ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, Lesser knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*, Musk mallow *Malva moschata* and Meadow Cranesbill *Geranium pratense*. Of course depending on your soil type there will be other wildflowers which will also do well, for instance with a slightly alkaline soil you could include Salad burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Small scabious *Scabiosa columbaria* and Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*. There are a number of specialist wildflower plant suppliers now who sell the plugs so it can all be relatively easy. It is also always worth sowing some seeds of yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, an annual which is semi-parasitic on grasses and reduces their vigour.

Now the area can be left for the plants to become established and you can sit back and enjoy the newly colourful habitat with all the wildlife it will attract. How exciting to hear your first grasshoppers or crickets calling on a balmy summer's evening and then to watch different birds moving in to feast on the new insect supply or to sample the range of grass seeds. Apart from some paths through if the area is big enough, mowing can be left until September. Don't forget before you mow you will need to check the meadow carefully for frogs, slow worms and even hedgehogs who will now be using the wonderful new habitat you've created! All the cutting needs to be removed and then you also need to mow any regrowth. This does make it all sound rather straightforward but in fact that's rarely the case! If your lawn has some more aggressive grasses they may well smother some of the wildflowers, especially in the first year, then in future years some of the wildflowers may well dominate to the detriment of others. The final result may well be very different from your initial vision but undoubtedly it will enhance the garden and provide a wonderful new area for wildlife.

Penny Richards

Somerset Wildlife Trust



Speakers you have known

Very occasionally the Federation receives a complaint about a particular speaker. The cause for dissatisfaction varies. It could be lack of preparation, irrelevance, hesitant or inaudible presentation and so on. What matters is that the Federation should know about it.

It is most important that we should maintain a high quality to which you as member clubs are entitled. If you have an experience which has led to a disappointing evening then please inform the Secretary.

In theory all names on the S.F. Register of Speakers and Judges are of persons who have been recommended or proposed/offered as being suitably qualified. Although the Federation cannot guarantee the quality of any particular speaker, members may be assured that everything is done to ensure satisfaction.

Programme secretaries are well advised to contact speakers by telephone if possible as a conversation with the person in question can give an indication of what to expect. If doubt arises one can always say that final arrangements have to be made with the Treasurer or Committee.

But please let us know if problems arise.

The Sad Saga of the Sons of Dombey

SALVIA dombeyi



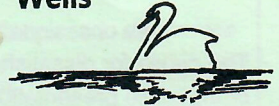
The portents are not good. There seems to be only a few miserable sticks masquerading as cuttings but they don't fool anybody - they are just a few miserable sticks.

'Dombey was rather bald, rather red, and though a handsome man, too stern and pompous in appearance, to be prepossessing. Son was very bald, and very red and though (of course) an undeniably fine infant, somewhat crushed and spotty in his general effect, as yet.'

Charles Dickens Dombey and Son. Chap. 1.

Ignoring the ' as yet' at the end of the quotation, the combined forces of Wells and District Gardening Club are about to throw in the trowel and start again from scratch. Or seek another challenge.

News from the Bishops Palace - Wells



The lottery funded development project is due to finish in May which we are all looking forward to! When finished we will have a new glasshouse and community garden which will be very reminiscent of a kitchen garden, a full network of wheelchair friendly paths, new access into the area containing St Andrews Well and new gardeners and community gardeners mess/store rooms.

The new Bishops Table Cafe re opens on the 11th Feb seven days a week and can be used without needing to purchase a ticket as can the shop. We also have a large new learning and education room especially for school groups and other education groups. The stable yard also contains new offices, toilets and a volunteer mess room.

The undercroft floor is being relayed with cut stone and under floor heating. The centre of the ceiling will contain a projector which will project interactive pictures onto the floor. The undercroft will still regularly be used for weddings and any larger events.

The moat bridge is currently being relayed with cut stone and the driveway (from the Bishops Eye) will have a brighter aggregate applied to it. The Bishops Green will be tidied up and bollards re instated to limit parking to only the cathedral side of the green. This will make the area even more attractive for picnics and relaxing in during the summer. The swan feeding platforms have also been improved considerably and one will have seating.

Visitors will see many changes in the gardens. We have created a large border on the South lawn which follows the line of the historic wall it will be planted with bold plants and conifers which are shown in the 1830 sketch.

On the East Lawn we have removed much of the lawn and created new pathways, we will be planting a knot garden copying one of the crests in the oriel (hanging) window. The corner terrace has been opened up for small music and theatrical performances.

In the outer gardens the area containing St Andrews Well will be accessed by the creation of a new bridge and boardwalk. The area gives us a chance to plant lots of shade and moisture loving plants.

The garden of reflection design is complete and currently there is a large mound of soil which will be levelled and a very stylish and contemporary garden and garden building will be created.

A big thank you to clubs and individuals that have made a donation to the winter appeal, we have raised £4,500 towards garden related work, which you will see funding the garden developments over the next few years

Please come and visit us for a group tour in the day or evening, perhaps followed by coffee and cake or a meal in the cafe. It costs £5 per person for a guided group tour.

Brochures are available if you contact Moira on (01749) 988111 ext 200 or E Mail
Moira.anderson@bishopspalace.org.uk.

Thuggery in the Borders

Many years ago, in a fit of impetuous enthusiasm I offered a bit of my time to the Federation. In order to discuss further what I was going to do (and I am still doing it) the founding Chairman, Bill Johns of Castle Cary, visited my garden. My wife and I had not long taken over the bare garden and had made little impact on it. There was a lot of grass. There was also a very small patch of pretty daises. " You'll have to get rid of those straightaway," said Bill. "Otherwise it'll be too late". I muttered something about the lilies of the field and Solomon in his glory—but only to myself. The prudent voice of the Experienced Gardener had fallen upon deaf ears. But Bill was dead right , of course. Twenty years on, the grass has flattened into a daisy meadow interspersed with swathes of lawn moss.

To my mind that is what a lawn is for; daises, buttercups, hawkbit, clover and so on - but that's only to my mind. On the other hand, a line, a firm line, has to be drawn somewhere, particularly when it comes to that border project and its sensitively planned planting. At least in theory, and it is always worth remembering that each garden contains the seeds of its own destruction.

One gets accustomed to dealing with the domestic annual and perennial weeds, battles and skirmishes enjoyed on a frequent and familiar scale. Now what drives tolerance over the edge, however, is the Greek bearing Gifts: a smiling, triumphant well-intentioned neighbour trotting in with " a lovely little thing. It takes very easily. It has pink or orange flowers. You probably know the name of it.. even I can grow it.." And so on. Stifling the warning bells jangling furiously and smiling generously, you express the warmest thanks and surprise. Since they are regular visitors they have got to be humoured. Rather along the lines of hoiking out that inappropriate birthday or Christmas gift to put on show, you plant the confounded thing in what you think is a containable corner. Then you forget it. Suddenly it's all over the place, creeping through the shrubbery, trundling across the lawn, where mowing has no effect, entangling itself at the base of the thorniest roses, strangling your lilies

and alliums, in fact smothering and murdering all your lovely things.

They don't come singly, either. Another one that you don't recognise, arrives in a broken yogurt pot. Too late. This time it is soapwort. It's all very well for the National Trust to bang on about washing their precious fabrics in a traditional solution of saponaria, but in the garden it's the very devil. The RHS could do its bit here by producing a horticultural equivalent of the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, the list of forbidden books which Pope Paul IV introduced in 1559. This could include such garden nuisances as euphorbia robbiae, montbretia, crepis, day lilies, soapwort, some hardy geraniums, dead nettle and ivy (good cover).. The list could be endless.

Personal choice and preference come into all this in a large measure. One mans poison is another's meat. To some Lady's Mantle, *alchemilla mollis*, is a cottage garden charmer. To others it is an invasive intruder. Some people it has to be admitted, tolerate daises in the lawn. Sympathetic understanding of others' motives has a part in this. I remember sowing seeds, pricking out, potting on ' some lovely things' for the N.C.C.P.G, as it was then, Plant Sale at Edington Village Hall. Doing my bit for charity. Bringing along half a dozen pots, I thought would raise a couple of quid. My gifts were politely, if quietly accepted and I wondered why they remained unsold at the end of the afternoon. The label said it all to those who knew.... And I didn't. *Carex pendula*, the Pendulous Sedge. Fine in the right place, but boy, can it rampage like a barbaric horde if let loose and unchecked as it is in my neighbour's garden....

Not guilty, m'lud.



Instant Garden Challenge

National Gardening Show 31st August—2nd September.

The challenge is to build a garden in 2 hours at the Show. You are allowed one helper and you will be pitted against a similar team of 2, your garden will be marked out and retained by sleepers and will be 3.65m by 3.65 in size.

Cheddar Garden Centre are generously providing plants (flowers, trees and shrubs) and non plant accessories for each team.

Water is available, but plumbing for water features will not be possible. Electricity is not provided and digging is not permitted, neither is any kind of livestock including fish. Battery operated tools can be brought in by competitors and you will need garden hand tools.

The whole challenge will be narrated by the celebrity of the day and sponsored by Cheddar Garden Centre.

If you are interested, please phone 01749 822231 for more details from Sue or Sandie

SOMERSET GARDENS

Talk by

MARION MAKO

*Some well known, some hidden, and
the characters who made them.*

Richard Huish College, Taunton TA1 3DZ

Thursday 17th May at 7.30 pm

£5.00

Information 01823 289605

or talks@tauntoncivic.org.uk



Final Cuttings

Since our last newsletter, we have welcomed South West Orchid Society and Winterbourne Down and District Horticultural Society to our membership and we wish them well.

I end with the usual exhortations. Please tell us if we have the correct contact address. If you wish to receive information via e-mail, then please let us know, particularly if your email address changes. Some information, however, needs to be sent out by mail e.g. information on speakers, N.G.S. booklets etc. Talking of which please make use of the yellow book for your summer visits.

And let the Federation know of any speaker or judge whom you can recommend to another club.

My grateful thanks to Judy Combes for sorting out the scribbles into something legible.

Your Committee wishes to extend its good wishes to all members for a successful and productive year.

See you at Buckland St Mary in May.

Pip Harwood Hon. Sec. SFGC

Federal Committee on the Environment

Dear Sirs:

Reference is made to your letter of the 15th of June 1970 concerning the proposed development of the site at [illegible].

The Committee has considered the information provided and is satisfied that the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant planning regulations.

It is recommended that the proposed development should be approved subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Yours faithfully,
[illegible signature]

[Large rectangular area containing faint, illegible text, likely a form or schedule of conditions.]

Section

Federal Committee Members

Chairman: [Name]
Vice Chairman: [Name]
Members: [List of names]

[Additional text or names]

[Additional text or names]

[Additional text or names]

[Additional text or names]

[Additional text or names]

