



Hon. President
George Cowgill

The Newsletter

No.109

November 2020

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Welcome to the autumn 2020 edition of your Garden Club Newsletter.

So long autumn, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness", and hello to winter: "Doesn't it get dark quick now?"

Hats off to everybody who has used time unexpectedly acquired to really get on top of their weeding and to try new things in the garden. Like many people I'm looking to accentuate the positive and make the best of it.

Personally I was really touched to find a rainbow painted pebble on my door step during lock-down back in April and amongst the sadness and worry about covid and those lost to us there is always much to find hope and humour in.

Whilst the club's activities this year have been restricted by the need to respect social distancing the Sales Hut has continued to be available to members and we can all hope that the situation will have improved enough that we may safely return to something closer to our normal activities next year.

I hope this cheery yellow background helps lift your spirits!

Happy gardening!

Kevin

Items for the Newsletter should be emailed to

kmiles856@icloud.com.

A note from our

Chair, Tracey.

Many thanks to all our members who have continued to support the Club over the past months.

Just a brief update of where we are in terms of our planned activities and decisions.

Committee meetings:

Meetings have been arranged online, with a further 'meeting' planned in December. As always, we are seeking new committee members – if you are interested please contact any of our current committee members who will forward on your details.

In line with Government requirements, we reluctantly took the decision to suspend the Annual Show, coach trips and our social calendar until further notice. We will however review this at our next meeting and keep you updated.

In the meantime, on behalf of the committee, I would like to send our very best wishes to everyone and keep yourselves safe.

Tracey Lawton.

Deadheading

I am normally hopeless at getting around to dead heading, -about once a week is my limit. As a result of lots more time in the garden and generally trying to be more mindful I have been much more vigilant about deadheading and thoroughly enjoyed wandering around my garden in the evening snipping off dead heads.

Particular successes have been my Phlox, particularly the ones that I hadn't Chelsea Chopped and I still have a white one covered in flowers.

I also bought some white Marguerites for tubs which I thought were quite expensive at the time in May but they kept going with regular deadheading and then a slightly more severe cut back in early September and now they are covered in flower again. They have turned out to be good value for money.

I also have quite a lot of dahlias dotted about in the herbaceous borders and they have given brilliant colour and still are, again responding to regular deadheading as are perennial wallflower and Centaurea which is still flowering now (mid-October)!

Just shows what results a little more attention to detail brings.

Ann Huson

Sales Hut 2021— Comments Welcome!

Firstly I'd like to offer my thanks on your behalf to Lesley Taylor who has been particularly actively involved with work at the hut this year. She has done a great deal of casual selling and received all deliveries of stock. It reminded me of "Open All Hours" but without Ronnie Barker! I have only been involved this year with stock checks and ordering stock and so a big "THANK YOU" is due to Lesley from all of us.

Next year's seed stock has been ordered and will be kept frost free until the Hut re-opens next year. The covid situation has effected demand and stock for next year has therefore been streamlined to avoid the unfortunate waste that we had this year. Shallots and Red Onions in particular were not popular and much went to the compost heap.

Your suggestions and feedback, to help us provide you with what you want (at very cheap prices) and, to help us avoid waste, is greatly appreciated..

Potatoes (the reliable choices)

Early - "Foremost"

Second Early - "Charlotte"

Onion/Shallots Sets:

White Onions: "Sturon"

Beans seeds

Broad Beans: "Bunyards Exhibition"

Climbing French beans: "Cobra"

Climbing French beans: "Blue Lake"

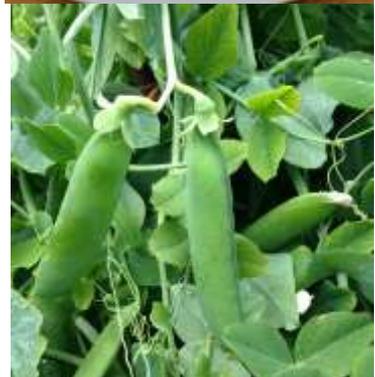
Runner beans: "Firestorm" (by request)

Peas (both very popular)

"Hurst Greenshaft"

"Kelvedon Wonder"

Trevor Mitchell



Recipe for Apple Cake

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Ingredients:

2 Eggs

250 mls. cooking oil

300 gms castor sugar

5 large cooking apples peeled, cored and diced (500 gms chopped)

2 tspns cinnamon

1 tspn vanilla essence

275 gms plain flour

1 tspn bi-carbonate of soda

½ tspn salt



Method:

Line the base of a shallow baking tin (approx..9"x 11", 20x30cm.) with parchment.

In a large mixing bowl sift dry ingredients together.

Add the apples and mix in.

Whisk eggs, vanilla essence and oil together.

Add to the dry ingredients and stir to form a sloppy mixture.

Place in tin and bake at 180 C for about 1 hour until brown and firm to the touch..

Allow to cool in the tin.

Dust with icing sugar to serve.

Christine Fawcett



(My effort! Too tasty to wait for it to cool..... Kevin)

TO PEAT-FREE OR NOT TO PEAT-FREE?

It is now widely accepted that extracting peat from peatbogs that have taken thousands of years to form is damaging to the environment. Much of our horticultural peat is imported from as far away as New Zealand, so it also has high transport impact.

One of the best peat-free composts Sylva Peat-Free is endorsed by the RHS and stocked at the Hut for members. Craven College (Skipton) Horticultural Dept. concluded it to be the best currently available after trialling several brands.

My own, not very scientific, trials this year using both Sylva Peat-Free and Sinclair Peat-based composts to grow potatoes in large tubs showed little difference in the yields or taste, though those grown in the peat-free had less scab damage.

Peat-free compost requires a different watering regime. It is free draining and the surface layer in particular dries out quickly, even though the lower layers may still be quite moist, so care must be taken not to over-water.

For sowing small seeds I found it better to cover with a fine vermiculite rather than a layer of compost. For larger seeds, such as sweet peas and beans, planted deeper, the vermiculite was not necessary. I also found peat-free compost did not hold onto liquid fertilizer very well. It may be better to use a granular or slow release fertilizer mixed into the compost before planting instead.

Those of you who watch Gardeners' World may have noticed that Monty uses customised blends of peat-free compost mixed with: garden compost; leaf mould; coir and grit: varied according to the needs of the plants. This may be a step too far for most of us, but changing our watering and feeding regimes is a small price to pay for being able to reduce our environmental impact.

Sarah Withers

The Ups and Downs of an Allotment During 2020

Having an allotment during 2020 has been brilliant for us, we have always enjoyed it and this year it has provided us with a bolthole somewhere to go different from home and very safe, although we share a part of it with friends we were seldom there at the same time.

The dry weather early in the year meant that we could get lots of digging done, and we thought we would have a bumper year with everything doing well.

Of course there are always downsides, no rain meant we had to water a lot and although there was lots of sun there was often a cold wind. Our French Beans struggled to grow and we didn't have a single plum after a heavy crop last year. Apples have been scarce and very small, even the blackberries haven't been as abundant as usual, the weeds have flourished and proved very difficult to deter. The jackdaws enjoyed a lot more of our peas than we did.

Over all most things did well lots of asparagus, cauliflowers and broccoli. I never thought we would have a glut of cauliflowers.

We missed our longstanding neighbour and member of the garden club John Parker who had a stroke last year and is currently in Lowfield Care Home with his wife Mavis, he was always happy to give advice with a smile and we wish him well. We have a new neighbour now Jimmy Seed who I am sure will look after it as John did.

Overall a good year and we look forward to 2021 and its challenges.

Noel and Elaine Hodgson

TOP 10 JOBS FOR DECEMBER FROM THE RHS

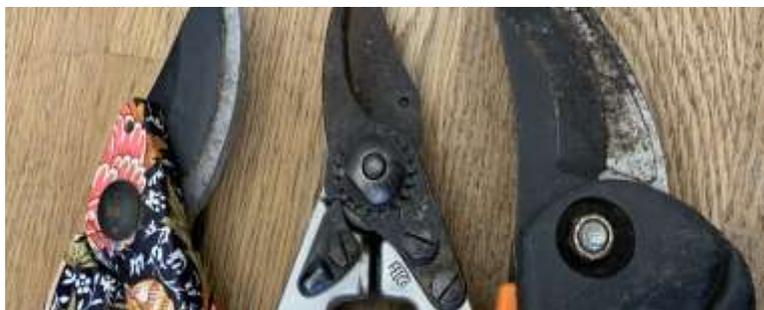
As we approach the shortest day of the year in December you will need work to keep you warm outside, such as digging and tree pruning. Check your winter protection and if you have a greenhouse make sure the heater is working.

Hopefully there are not too many jobs left to do this year so you will have time for some fireside garden planning.

Top 10 Jobs for December

1. **Check your winter protection structures are still securely in place**
2. **Check that greenhouse heaters are working**
3. **Insulate outdoor taps and prevent ponds from freezing**
4. **Prune open-grown apples and pears (but not those trained against walls)**
5. **Prune acers, birches and vines before Christmas to avoid bleeding**
6. **Harvest leeks, parsnips, winter cabbage, sprouts and remaining root crops**
7. **Deciduous trees and shrubs can still be planted and transplanted**
8. **Take hardwood cuttings**
9. **Keep mice away from stored produce**
10. **Reduce watering of houseplants**

Hardwood cutting are taken in the dormant season (mid-autumn until late winter) after leaf fall, avoiding periods of severe frost. As well as trees, climbing plants and deciduous shrubs, some evergreen plants and fruit including: gooseberries, black, red and white currants, fig, mulberry can be propagated by hardwood cuttings at this time of year. The ideal time is just after leaf fall or just before bud-burst in spring.



Sales Hut— Staying Safe in 2020



The Sales Hut—re-opening March

When the hut closed in March we had no real idea of when we would be reopening and it's difficult to remember quite how the world was in April and May. What I do remember is being very glad to have my allotment and feeling even more grateful and lucky to live in such a beautiful part of the world.

The situation of the hut lends itself to safe trading and so we were able to re-open at the beginning of June. By happy chance our suppliers were able to deliver just before we opened and so the hut was fairly well stocked for the steady stream of members who came along. Everybody was very compliant, remembered to socially distance and usually used the one way system for entry & exit! We received an unexpected number of plants from members which not surprisingly sold quickly. We have also sold a lot of the peat free compost and hopefully more people will be persuaded to try it next year. The hut opened for one Sunday each in July & August as historically they have always been very quiet trading months & then opened for the first 3 Sundays in September when as expected we were kept busy until we shut up shop for the winter. Some members remained anxious about being around other people in public spaces and took advantage of the option to come to the hut out of hours & I was happy to deliver to those who were shielding. The aim was to keep all activity outdoors and in this year when very little has gone right we were blessed with dry weather most Sundays. I think most people who came along had their spirits lifted by being able to do something that felt fairly normal and familiar and also seeing old friends in a safe environment .

In the last few years the club has been very lucky to have had a fantastic group of people, led by Sandra Evans, who have ensured the smooth running of the hut on Sundays. Covid 19 however has meant that they weren't able to participate this year as they would have liked and we've missed you all.

Trevor was very generous in his comments about me but the hut couldn't have opened without the commitment of Sarah (our new treasurer) Tracey (our new chair) & Gerry who has refused all offers of a title. Thanks also to the club members who have helped out at the hut over the summer.

The plan is to open the hut next year on March 7th but these days nothing is definite so watch this space!

This last year we have depended very much on email to communicate with members especially about the hut. If you haven't received emails it may be that the email address we have on record is either mis-spelt or no longer correct . **If you would like to be kept informed please contact Chris Fawcett (christine.fawcett@mypostoffice.co.uk) with your correct email address.**

Lesley Taylor

Useful and Beautiful

According to William Morris you should, “have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.” The same could be applied to gardens and here are two plants that tick both boxes for me. Not looking their best at the moment it being the end of the season but nonetheless I wouldn't be without them.

Comfrey

Any gardener knows about Comfrey – or so I always thought – and yet I'm still surprised that many people don't appreciate what a useful plant it is. It's old name “Knitbone” indicates its efficacy in healing and Comfrey ointment is said to be good for back pain, osteoarthritis and sprains, amongst other things.

In the garden it's generally used as a liquid fertiliser and a useful source of potassium. I've never actually tried making Comfrey liquid – it all sounds a bit of a faff and the result is said to smell disgusting. However, I've found it useful as a green mulch – just pick the leaves when they're well developed and prior to flowering. Chop them up with shears and place around the base of plants. Gloves are recommended since the plant is hairy and could cause skin irritation. After a few days and depending on the weather the leaves die back and eventually disappear into the soil. Depending on growing conditions I can usually get at least four pickings in a season.

However, it's always worth leaving the plant to produce its lovely purple-pink flowers since bees love them and on a warm sunny day it's alive with buzzing insects.

Sweet Cicely

The clue's in the name! A beautiful umbellifer with creamy white flower heads and delicate green foliage it grows wild in the hedgerows locally and is easy to distinguish from its cousins by its distinctive aniseed smell. Also known as English Myrrh it's been used by herbalists for centuries. It is also a good source of nectar and pollen for bees and many other pollinating insects.

I use it to sweeten stewed fruit and thereby cut down on sugar. A handful of leaves and stalks placed in the pan when stewing rhubarb, gooseberries, apples etc acts as a natural sweetener and also leaves behind a pleasant hint of aniseed. You remove the leaves once the fruit is cooked and depending on how sweet your tooth is you may need to add some sugar but will certainly need to use less.

Like Comfrey, cutting it back once the flower heads have set seed prolongs its season. For ages I couldn't understand why I couldn't grow plants from the black torpedo- shaped seeds it produces until I bothered to research it and found it's one of those plants that requires stratification (cold treatment) for germination. Spring root propagation is the recommended method and it's also possible to buy it from nurseries. Please be aware though that as a wild plant it's protected and shouldn't be dug up from hedgerows. **CF**

Useful and Beautiful Comfrey & Sweet Cicely



Answers to the Gardening Quiz 2020 (See back page)

1 a) 2 b) 3 c) 4 b) 5 all of them 6 c) 7 a) 8 b) 9 b) 10 b)

Gardening Quiz 2020

1 Who was the earliest presenter of “Gardener’s World”?

- a) Percy Thrower b) Arthur Billet c) Geoff Hamilton

2 Which fertiliser can be obtained from nettles?

- a) Potassium b) Nitrogen c) Phosphate

3 Which herb is said to go “nine times to the devil and back” before germinating?

- a) Coriander b) Oregano c) Parsley

4 Which disease is currently killing ash trees?

- a) Ash Canker b) Ash Die Back c) Ash Leaf Drop

5 Which of the following plants is potentially poisonous?

- a) Deadly Nightshade b) Potato c) Foxglove

6 Which of the following can cause major problems for gooseberries?

- a) flea beetle b) blackfly c) sawfly

7 How many varieties of snowdrops are there?

- a) 75 b) 42 c) 103

8 Which wild plant is known as “Old Man’s Beard” or “Traveller’s Joy”?

- a) Speedwell b) Clematis c) Willow Herb

9 What type of plant are the following – Cloudy Day, Christmas Grapes, Cupid?

- a) cabbage b) tomato c) potato

10 D H Lawrence wrote a short story called “The Odour of” ?

- a) Lilies b) Chrysanthemums c) Roses

Answers are inside beneath the picture of comfrey / sweet cicely



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