

Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 29th April 7.30pm
****Cookham Dean W. I. Hall****
'Extending the season in the border'
A talk by Carolyn Foster

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

What a splendid Spring Show we had last month! It was certainly the best ever in the years I've been a member and, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank everyone who contributed, either by bringing entries for the various classes or helping in other ways. It was a great success all round, and our Judge, Les Waldren, was most complimentary. I still can't really get my head around the different types or classes of daffodils/narcissi, I remember learning something about this when I did a gardening course a few years ago but it all seems rather esoteric for those of us who simply enjoy planting different varieties of bulbs in our garden every year. It did seem, from what the judge said, that there might have been more than one variety among the 'Society's bulbs' but I know Brian Thompson believed they were all a type called 'Spellbinder' (in case anyone wants to plant them again).

We have been replacing some roses in our garden over the last month, and because, like many people, we can't and don't want to plant them in a different place, we have put them in the same bed they were in before. I know one is always advised not to use the same soil etc. when replanting, but it's not always possible to find somewhere new. Many people in this area have told me that they can't really grow roses in their gardens, but we have been fairly fortunate in that respect, so we have experimented this time with the mycorrhizal fungi that is now supposed to deal with the problem of 'rose-sick' soil. It means putting plenty of good compost round the plant and sprinkling the bottom of the hole with this product, making sure that the roots of the rose come into contact with it. I'd be interested to know if anyone else has tried this, and what the results were – meanwhile, watch this space! It can also be used for most other plants (it says on the packet).

Please remember that this month's talk, by Carolyn Foster, on Wed. 29th April will be in the W.I. Hall, next to the Village Hall, as we have agreed to let the Cookham Festival use the Village Hall that night for one of their events. I look forward to seeing you there.

Susie Tremlett

Spring Show Report 2009

What a magnificent sight! The evening of Wednesday 25th March saw the Village Hall transformed by all the colours and scents of Spring. With last year's figures in brackets the figures were; 28(23) members brought along pot plants, arrangements or cut flowers and bravely entered some of the 15 classes on offer that night. The overall number of entries (i.e. pots on tables) was 112 (77) and I think the entire display was the best in recent years.

When all the entries were set out, our judge Les Waldren, arrived to judge them in his own inimitable style. Never one to hold back on his opinions of the quality of the specimens on offer (or indeed if we have even managed to get them in the correct class) he nevertheless judged the

flowers, as always, with fondness and an eye to their individual merits as well as injecting humour into his remarks so no one needed to feel their entry wasn't worth the effort.

The Prizewinners.

Class 1 – The silver cup for “An arrangement of Spring flowers and any foliage”, was won by Pam Proctor for her arrangement containing Camellia, Forsythia, lime green Hellebores and Mahonia. Class 2, the Society Class (5 bulbs in a pot purchased from the Society last Autumn) attracted the largest number of entries with 14 pots of bulbs. The winner of this class was Gill Townsend and she was awarded the Society Cup.

Points were awarded for each prize card. 1st = 4pts., 2nd=3pts., 3rd=2pts. and HC = 1 point.

The silver salver for most the points in the show was shared between Pam Proctor and Carolyn Foster with 22 points apiece.(see below) Runners up were jointly Chris Luke and Margaret Maskell with 14 points each.



The Spring Show also provided an evening to socialise (with thanks to the tea ladies) , seed swap (with thanks to Mary and Becky) and I hope to inspire you for next year. Come and do it all again in March 2010!

Chris Sibbald



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Remember: Friday 24th April to Monday 4th May

Cookham Festival

www.cookhamfestival.co.uk.

Including:

Sunday 26th April Stromenti at Lea Barn. A musical event celebrating rare and exotic plants
Daily 10am-6pm The Odney Sculpture exhibition throughout the gardens and water garden
Sunday 26th April Odney Club Garden open as part of the NGS 2pm-6pm

Sunday 26th April 2.30 pm NCCPG visit to the National Collection of Brunnera and Omphalodes at Hearn's House, Hearn's Lane, Gallowstree Common, Reading, Berks, RG4 9DE. Car parking is available on site and there is limited disabled access. Directions, 5 miles north of Reading and 5 miles west of Henley down a marked lane.

The visit will include an introduction to Brunnera and Omphalodes and a conducted tour of the collections and the extensive adjoining gardens. Refreshments will be provided and plants will be available for purchase. The visit and refreshments are free to NCCPG members but an opportunity will be provided to make a donation to the NCCPG for those wishing to do so. There is indoor accommodation for the talk and refreshment should the weather be inclement. **Please advise of your intention to attend to Mrs J Pumfrey e-mail Joanpumfrey@lineone.net or 0118972 2848** (Our society is a member of the NCCPG)

Monday 4th May **Cookham Spring Fun March** ,walking to raise money for the Windsor Parapet Trust. Details from Jo Piercey 01628 471890 or Jennie Carr 01628 520620 or log on to www.cookhamspringfunmarch.co.uk

Wed. 6th May **Waltham Place Gardens** open under the NGS (Weds until 23rd Sept.)

3rd-25th May

Artspace at Barn Galleries Open 10-5pm Art, ceramics and sculpture in a beautiful garden setting. Well worth a visit. See www.barn galleries.com for more details.

Sunday 14th June

Cookham Dean Open Gardens. 2-6pm. 8 gardens open this year (including 3 new gardens) on Grubwood Lane, Kings Lane, Dean Lane and Winter Hill. All offers of help would be appreciated for teas, plant stall, cakes etc. Please give an hour or so of your time for this worthy cause. Contact Barbara Dent for more information. 476512.

Sunday 14th June 2pm. Open Day, Plant Fair and NCCPG visit to the Digitalis Collection at The Harris Garden, Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading, Berkshire, RG6 6UR. The NCCPG are sharing and organising this event with The Friends of Harris Gardens. There will be plant stalls selling respective members' donated plants and a number of specialist nurseries will have for sale rare and unusual plants. In addition the 12 acres gardens with their many interesting features will be open to visitors and we hope to organise two conducted tours for NCCPG Members. NCCPG would welcome plant donations and offers of help in manning our stall from BBO Members. **If you can contribute then please advise Helen Moorcraft on 01753 853074 or hmoorcraft@yahoo.co.uk.**

Wednesday, June 24th 2009

An early evening visit for our members to **The Plant Specialist** Nursery and Garden at Whitefield Lane, Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire has been confirmed. We will have a guided tour of this independent Nursery and be able to walk round the beautifully laid-out garden (easy access) followed by tea and coffee. There will be an opportunity to purchase plants. They specialise in interesting perennials and grasses, examples of which can be seen growing in their garden. Parking is available and it is hoped that as many as possible will share transport. Further details will be available at the next meeting when we should like to assess approximate numbers, although we shall not expect you to make a definite commitment. www.theplantspecialist.co.uk Speak to Mary Downes or Pam Campin for further information.



Seed ordering

Ruth Spencer Jones organised the seed ordering for the society for countless years, so much so that when she moved out of the area there was hardly a stampede of members offering to take up the reins! I volunteered 3 years ago and have kept it going with a steady stream of about 15 stalwarts ordering seeds each year. You will know this hasn't been without its ups and downs but now it's established it runs itself - almost.

So we don't fall into the trap of one person doing it forever (again) I would like to hand the job over to another member from this September. I chose to be a committee member too but this is not an essential part of the job. It only takes a couple of hours in December and again in January to collate the orders, deposit the cheques with the treasurer and then send the orders off.

If you would like more details or would like to volunteer please contact Chris Sibbald (01628 522304) chris@sibbald.demon.co.uk

HONEY BEES

As gardeners we are very aware of the role of bees and I am grateful to Elizabeth Runnacles for sending me this information as part of a Women's Institute campaign for more research into their decline

“Currently, honey bees are coming under threat from pests and diseases for which treatments are not fully understood or are ineffective. Many bee keepers have experienced the complete destruction of their hives from such diseases, whilst the UK is losing its bee population at around 30% a year (up from just 6% in 2003).



The decline of honey bees represents a major loss in biodiversity, as honey bees are not only responsible for producing honey, but play a vital role in pollinating plants for food and other crops. Approximately a third of our human diet is directly dependent on bees, making them central to our existence. In the natural environment, bees are also responsible for pollinating around 90% of the wild plants which produce seeds and fruits on which birds and wild animals depend, thus making them even more central to our world's existence.

Bees are crucial to the maintenance of a balanced and thriving ecosystem. Without bees, many flowers and plants cannot be pollinated, resulting in massive plant species loss. A bee campaign would therefore also be about the care of our natural environment

Existing campaigns on the issue:

_ The **British Bee Keepers Association** runs a campaign called Honey Bee Health at Risk calling on the Government to increase the funding for bee health research.

_ The **Bumblebee Conservation Trust** runs an awareness campaign called Bumblebees in Crisis, which provides practical information for individuals to support bees in their gardens.

_ The **Co-operative Group** is running a campaign called Plan Bee. It has contributed £150,000 for bee research, has implemented a pesticide ban as part of its ethical policy and has proposed a 10 point plan to save the bees

_ The **British Science Association** is running the Save Our Bees campaign as part of National Science and Engineering Week (starting 6 March 2009). This is sponsored by Rowse Honey which has also put up research funding.

_ **Operation Bumblebee** is a campaign to encourage farmers to put the habitats which will support and encourage bee populations back into Britain's fields. It provides practical advice about how to do this, as well as seed packs and helps farmers understand the ecological as well as financial sense of this action

_ Hold **bee awareness talks at local WIs**, from experienced bee keepers and others.

_ Encourage members to plant **bee-friendly plants** and record the uptake by bees over the seasons.

_ Lobby MPs to support local bee keepers and to put questions about support for bee research to the House of Commons.

_ Encourage local authorities, businesses and residents to plant bee-friendly flowering plants in gardens or in window boxes.

_ Work with local beekeepers and businesses to ensure that there is a local market for the honey produced, in order to help raise awareness of the plight of bees.”

BEST BUY GROW BAGS (from Gardening Which?)

Many members use grow bags for tomatoes and other crops. Here are this season's 'best buys'

Exceptional Value J Arthur Bower's Grow bag at £2.29 and Westland Grow Bag at £1.99

Other best buys are: Homebase Fruit and Vegetable Planter £3.99, Levington Tomorite Giant Planter £4.99, Westland Instant Planter with West + £3.99, J Arthur Bower's Planter £4.29

Best buy peat free bag New horizon Organics and Peat Free Grow bag £3.29

Good tips for using Grow Bags

- Before opening, shake the bag to loosen the compost
- Before planting, lay the bag flat to spread the contents evenly
- Pierce the base of the bag a few times for drainage
- For the optimum tomato yield, plant three plants per bag
- Read the instructions on the bag
- Feed greedy crops like tomatoes and cucumbers 1-2 times per week, 3-4 weeks after planting out.
- Water little and often. DONT let the grow bag dry out. A drip irrigation system can help combined with a timer if you go away.
- Support cordon tomato varieties with a grow bag frame (Harrod Horticultural and Two Wests and Elliot are best buys)

*******Free to Good Home*******

Old fashioned paraffin heater – free to good home! Contact Sue Wilkes on 01628 482098”

Membership Reminder. Please contact Janet Shanks on 525576 if you have not yet renewed your membership.

Copy for next month's newsletter to Gill Townend before 6th May please. gilltownend@aol.com or 483092.