

Newsletter

February 2009

Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society

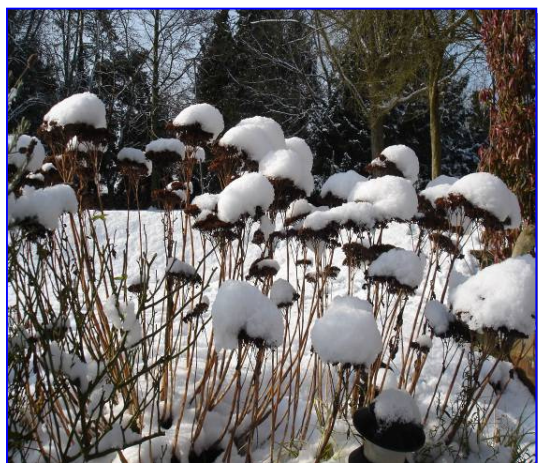
NEXT MEETING: **Wednesday February 25th at 7.30pm**

COOKHAM DEAN VILLAGE HALL

Plant Propagation; Seeds and Vegetative Methods

Talk and demonstration by Eva Rogers

Chairman's Letter



shall see him again before too long as he has so

Snowy Sedums in a Winter Hill garden

because they don't have a pond or any water in their garden, but there was nevertheless an excellent attendance, and latterly several of our speakers have commented on what good audiences we have – let's try and keep it that way.

What a start to February! My garden was like a sponge before this heavy snow, so it will be almost impossible to do much out there for a while so it's cutting or clearing and 'greenhouse gardening' for a while I suspect. Looking back to last February's newsletter, I see that Brian was reminding us about our Society daffodil bulbs which, due to the "very mild winter" we'd been experiencing he thought would need to be kept as cold as possible. Rather different this year, so the pots will need lifting and bringing into a cold greenhouse, window ledge or cold frame to bring them on a bit. A high potash feed (Phostrogen, Tomorite or

I think all those who were able to come would agree that we had an extremely good evening at our January meeting, when Brian Fisher talked about "Ponds & Water Gardens". Having tried for so long to get a really good speaker on this topic he did not disappoint, and if I didn't already have a pond I'm sure I would have wanted to create one after listening to him. I expect Brian could talk about knitting patterns if asked, but I feel sure we

many interesting subjects on his list. I know a number of members didn't come

similar) at the end of the month will help to give the blooms a good colour. I think we shall need to do some juggling between outdoor and the greenhouse or somewhere warm to try and have them at their best by the March Show.

Our February meeting will be a practical demonstration on propagation by different methods which I anticipate will be a really interesting evening. I do hope we shall get a good attendance again, and the Committee will try and arrange the room so that as many people as possible can see Eva Rogers at work. She comes from Witney so I hope bad weather won't be a problem for her.

Brian Thompson will be moving permanently to Wiltshire at the end of this month, and having seen his new garden when I went to lunch there recently, it's plain he's going to be very busy and he has plenty of space for hundreds of sweet peas. We all wish him well and hope we shall see him again sometime – our loss is Upavon's gain, I can't see him not getting involved in the local horticultural or garden society there.

The seed orders have now all been sent off, so there will be plenty to do once we get some better weather. I hope to see you at the February meeting.

Susie Tremlett

Membership Reminder

If you haven't renewed your membership subscription (£7) please do so at the February meeting or send to:

Mrs Janet Shanks, 144, Whyteladies Lane, Cookham Rise, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 9LA

(cheques to Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society)

An Independent Local Nursery to keep in mind for Spring:

The Plant Specialist, Whitefield Lane, Great Missenden.

This lovely nursery, in a lane opposite the entrance to Missenden Abbey, is well worth visiting for its collection of sensibly priced, good quality plants. Established only in 2002 "the nursery is dedicated to growing a wide range of new and interesting perennials and grasses which also make good reliable garden plants". All these are grown on site using material from their own stock beds, with the exception of a few plants which are difficult to propagate or new introductions bought in as plugs and grown on. Specially mixed loam-based potting compost is used, which the gardeners feel is worth the extra

expense and weight as stronger plants are more likely to transfer successfully to the garden.

2008 Price Guide:

1 litre pots £2.80 - £4.90

2 litre pots £4.20 - £6.90

An informative catalogue is available at £1.

You enter the garden through an archway, beyond which are attractively laid-out wooden edged beds full of plants. They look very well cared for. Many AGM (RHS Award of Garden Merit) plants are featured and all are arranged in alphabetical order, according to type. There are separate sections for shade-lovers, container-grown bulbs and grasses. Labelling is mostly very comprehensive. Advice and assistance are always on hand. This even extends to being rescued with an umbrella in a sudden downpour!

Beyond the sales area is the garden itself, well worth walking round for its neatly edged lawns and examples of companion planting. Lots of ideas here. Paths wind in and out of a small woodland area where you can see the exact type of environment needed for each plant. You can sit and admire it all from strategically placed, often sculptural seating, before you go and make your purchases.

Mary Downes

www.theplantspecialist.co.uk

Opening Hours: Thurs. Fri. Sat. 10am - 6pm, April to October.

tel. 01494 866650



GRAHAM STUART THOMAS

The centenary of the birth of this great gardener, plantsman and author is on 1 April and the National Trust, with whom he worked for many years, has published an appreciation of his life.

"Born in Cambridge, his fascination with plants and gardening began at an early age. On leaving school at 16, he became a student at the University's Botanic Garden. He then moved to T.Hilling and Co., a nursery near Woking in Surrey, not far from the garden of Gertrude Jekyll, where he eventually became manager.

By the early 1950's, the National Trust had acquired some of the greatest gardens in Britain, among them Cliveden, Powis, Killerton, Hidcote and Bodnant. It decided to advertise for a gardens advisor to help with on- the- ground guidance. Graham Thomas was familiar with the Trust's gardens and thought that the post might make an interesting part-time job in the summer while he continued as a nurseryman.

His personality was well suited to the task. A slight, quietly spoken, bespectacled figure, well mannered and neatly dressed, with a fresh flower in his lapel on every garden visit—which Trust colleagues would be challenged to identify—he was orderly, unflappable and very particular. His outstanding knowledge of plants and calm but firm approach instilled confidence in the head gardeners who worked with him and who always respectfully addressed him as 'Mr Thomas'.

The breadth of gardens Graham Thomas worked on was vast, from formal gardens to the sumptuous Jekyll-style herbaceous borders he redesigned at Cliveden. He helped develop major plant collections, such as those at Sheffield Park; brought gardens back from the brink, notably at Mount Stewart in Northern Ireland; and was a major influence in the first attempt to completely restore a historic garden in Britain, at Westbury Court in Gloucestershire.

In 1972 when the Trust took on the care of the redundant walled gardens at Mottisfont Abbey, Graham Thomas saw the opportunity for a permanent home for his collection of pre 1900, old fashioned shrub roses which he had been collecting for almost 40 years, saving many species from extinction in the process. When he began working for the Trust in 1955, Graham Thomas advised on only seven gardens. By the time he retired eighteen years later, the number was approaching 100. Garden conservation was in its infancy after the war and Graham Thomas ensured that the standards he set helped to increase visitors to Trust gardens, at the same time inspiring a generation of gardeners to experiment with his planting philosophy"

This piece is an extract from a longer article by Jacq Barber in the Spring edition of the National Trust magazine.

TULIPS AT CLIVEDEN



Put a note in the diary to visit Cliveden from second or third week in April to see 25,000 Tulip 'Salmon Perfection' which have been planted in the Long Garden alongside the topiary and statuary. Depending on weather conditions they should flower through to mid May. Andrew Mudge, the Head Gardener who came to speak to our Society last year, has made some dramatic changes to the gardens so it is worth a visit to experience the wonderful new vistas which have been opened up.

More dates for your Diary

RHS Flower Shows (more details on www.rhs.org.uk)

Tues 17th and Wed 18th February RHS London Plant and Design Show

Sat 21st and Sun 22nd March RHS London Orchid Show

Tues 31st March-Wed 1st April RHS Greener Gardening Show

National Trust events (need to book for walks)

14th, 15th 20th and 22 February Warden's Winter Walks at Hughenden Manor

20th and 21st March

Spring has Sprung at Greys Court; guided walk through the garden

18th/19th April

Spring Plant Fair at Waddesdon Manor (Sat. 10-5pm. Sun 10.30-4.30pm) Rare and unusual plants from specialist nurseries.

26th April

Woodland Walk in Spring at Cliveden

Further details , timings and booking on

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/thamesandsolentevents

Deadline for the March newsletter is 6th March . Contributions to Gill Townend at gilltownend@aol.com or to discuss phone me on 01628 483092.