

Newsletter

February 2010

Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society

NEXT MEETING: **Wednesday February 24th at 7.30pm**

COOKHAM DEAN VILLAGE HALL

A Tour of Trevarno, a Cornish Estate

Talk by Gill Townend

Chairman's Letter

I was so relieved that, despite all the awful weather we had in January, it wasn't too bad on the day of our meeting and so Tim Walker had no problem getting to the Village Hall. He is such an excellent speaker, and although I've heard him several times in the past, I thought his subject this time was so timely and informative, and gave us plenty to think about. It's just a pity that we can't do much in the garden at the moment, the ground is so wet and I think we've still probably got more cold weather to come.

At least we can do a few things in the greenhouse, including sowing some seeds. On the subject of seeds, the committee decided at our last meeting that, after this year, we would not put in a bulk seed order to Suttons or any of the other seedsmen, Chris Sibbald has only had 8 members giving her orders this year. It always involves a lot of work on her part (or that of anyone else who does it), and last year she had a really difficult time with Suttons who got things wrong and made a mess of the discount. Now that there is such a wide range of seeds and plug plants available in garden centres etc., and many people (myself included) like to buy from several different sources, we felt it simply wasn't worth the amount of time and work involved to earn the Society just £30 or thereabouts. Chris has done a sterling job during the time she's undertaken this job, but she wants to give up now and nobody else has volunteered to take it on, so we won't be doing it next year.

As I mentioned in January, Carolyn Foster has kindly agreed to give a short demonstration at our February meeting of how to exhibit daffodils and other plants at our Spring Show in March. It seems a lot of people are unaware of the methods used when showing flowers etc. and the fact that the Society has its own supply of "vases" for this purpose. There are various things one can do to present exhibits well and we hope this demonstration will encourage more members to enter one or more of the various classes. The full show schedule will be included in our March newsletter. By the way, don't forget about your daffodil bulbs you planted in the autumn!

I hope to see a good audience for Gill Townend on 24 February as I know from experience that she will give us an excellent talk on that Cornish garden.

Susie Tremlett

Best buys for seed and potting compost

This is the time of year when thoughts turn to sowing seeds and buying compost. In the past I have tried to summarise the Best Buys as tested by Gardening Which? magazine and below are this year's recommendations. In all 24 composts were tested. At around £4 per 70 litre bag the B&Q compost seems a good buy. I should point out that these results were based on the formulations last spring in order to test through a growing season so there may have been changes since then.

PEAT BASED COMPOSTS

SOWING SEEDS(and taking cuttings)

B&Q Multi-purpose compost
B&Q Sowing and Cutting compost
New Horizon Grow Bag

FOR GROWING ON YOUNG PLANTS

B&Q Multi-purpose compost
B&Q John Innes No2 compost
Westland West + Multipurpose compost

PEAT FREE COMPOSTS

Westland West + Peat free Multi -purpose compost
New Horizon Peat Free grow Bag
(The two composts above did not perform as well as the composts containing some peat but still produced healthy young plants.)

DON'T BUY....Homebase Multipurpose Peat Free Compost
Vital Earth Seed and Cutting Compost

NEW FLOWERS FOR 2010

In spring 2009 Gardening Which tested out 27 varieties of new flower seed from a range of different seed suppliers. Two varieties were also sent out to a sample of members for trialling in their own gardens. My selection of the best performers is.....

Nasturtium 'Double Delight Cream' from Thompson and Morgan (TM)

This variety has been bred to hold its double flowers above the leaves and it is a pretty creamy yellow colour with a long flowering season. I am not a nasturtium fan but will try this one.

Nicotiana 'Whisper Mix' from Mr Fothergills, Plants of Distinction and Moles Seeds

Available in a deep and pale pink mix this was a very popular new introduction. Although unscented they were disease resistant and had a flowering season from mid July to late August.

Dahlia 'Clangers' from Suttons

Usually grown from tuberous roots GW grew this dahlia from seed in a March sowing. With spiky cactus flowers in a wide range of colours from pink, peach, orange and scarlet, these seed sown plants were in full bloom by July. Only attacked by powdery mildew in late September the roots could be stored or even kept in the ground in a sheltered spot.

For the full report see Jan/ Feb Gardening Which? magazine.

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TIPS FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST'S GARDENERS

Not sure where to start after this hard winter? New to gardening? Take some inspiration from some of the National Trust gardeners and get stuck in.....

- ✓ March is the best time to lift and divide herbaceous plants.(as long as the soil is not too wet or frozen) As the soil warms up they should settle well.
- ✓ Put compost on your soil, the darker the better as it absorbs more sunlight.
- ✓ If you can get hold of a mulch put a good thick layer on your flowerbeds.(Chris House will deliver mushroom compost locally in Cookham , 01753 620041 to leave message)
- ✓ As daffodils only flower for a short period in spring, remember to mark out where they are so that in the autumn you can fill in the gaps with new bulbs or move existing ones.
- ✓ Aim to get your general pruning done by mid March
- ✓ April is the best time for staking herbaceous plants. Use twiggy stems and create a kind of cage around the young growth which will then grow through in a natural way.
- ✓ Grow sunflowers and teasels for the birds next winter!

RANDOM JOTTINGS from 2009 by Janet Shanks.

With the current weather conditions and consequently being subject to enforced confinement within the house – not being able to get down to the allotment or into the garden I have at last sat down to write up two garden visits that I have made and enjoyed during the year.

Firstly in the early summer we were lucky enough to visit family in British Columbia, Canada. As part of our trip we took a ferry from Vancouver to Vancouver Island. Much to my surprise the island has twenty gardens that are open to the public and thus constitute "The Garden Trail". Many of these gardens are open year round but the season is mostly between April and the Fall. It is recommended to travel the Garden Trail by car but because of shortage of time we went to the island as part of a days coach tour. The coach tour included a visit to **Butchart Gardens** towards the south of Vancouver Island close to the capital, Victoria, at Brentwood Bay. The garden started in the early 1900's from a former limestone quarry and covers 55 acres. It receives a million visitors each year but despite this we did not feel overwhelmed by people and we were easily able to view the spectacle and the plants. The gardens were the result of an idea to beautify the worked out limestone quarry and forms the now famous Sunken Gardens.



The project started as a hobby and as a result of extensive world travels over the years many exotic shrubs, trees and flowers were collected. The gardens have grown over the years and from the Sunken Garden have now expanded to include a Japanese Garden, Rose Garden, Italian Garden and Mediterranean Garden.

The gardens were easy to negotiate as there were unobtrusive paths lacking obstructions making it easy walking even for those with walking difficulties. From the entrance one follows a path to Waterwheel Square. On the left of the Square is a bower containing masses of hanging baskets with the most amazing display of fuchsias and begonias overflowing their baskets and providing a glorious mass of colour. Following the path

round a curve the most stunning views are revealed over the Sunken Garden. There is a switchback staircase leading to the main path that winds between beds of annuals amongst flowering trees and shrubs planted right to the base of the towering walls. The path runs along a lake and on the right is a lawn with a perennial border backed by a bank of large flowered St. John's wort and dotted with Japanese maples. There is also a fountain where the water rises 21m (70ft) providing a magnificent display and giving the feeling of coolness in the heat. From the Sunken Garden one passes on to the Concert Lawn where they hold firework displays in the summer evenings although our schedule did not allow us to stay and watch. On the edge of the lawn are examples of totem poles carved in 2004 to commemorate the gardens' 100th anniversary.



Then on to the rose garden with many varieties of hybrid tea roses all marked with country of origin and the year they were registered with the American Rose Society. The Rose Garden was not at its best but there were arches covered with rambling and climbing roses. The way continued into the magnificent Japanese Garden with its steps and small stream. This garden was started in 1906 with the assistance of Isaburo Kishida, a

Japanese landscaper. Through the trees at this point one caught a glimpse of the sea with a dock for visiting boats and seaplanes at Butchart Cove and a view of the Saanich Inlet beyond. Just breathtaking.

We didn't have enough time to really look at the rest of the garden. The ferry from Vancouver had been late due to a malfunction! One could have spent all day here quite easily especially as there was also a restaurant and coffee shop with a splendid seed and gift store. The gardens had glorious displays of colour everywhere but my one disappointment was that this was mainly achieved by swathes of annuals that were obviously ripped up when they had finished flowering and replaced with new ones. Most of the annuals were ones we would expect to see in our parks and gardens here in the summer. Still a fantastic place and well worth a visit if you ever get the chance.



Secondly a very different garden. **Caerau Uchaf Gardens**, said to be the highest private gardens open to the public in North Wales at over 1000ft. The gardens are at Sarnau a very small village on the A494 north east of Bala. The gardens were started in 1994 and are an ongoing project by their owners Toby and Stephanie Hickish of Summer Gardens Ltd., an award winning Garden Design and Landscaping Company. They have built show gardens at Hampton Court and Tatton Park R.H.S. Flower Shows. For this garden you will need a good pair of walking shoes, probably substantial wet weather gear and to be fairly fit to get the best out of it. Some of the more formal part

of the garden is fairly flat but many of the paths wander up the hillside thus providing stunning views of the surrounding countryside. The garden is divided into several smaller gardens such as vegetable, lawn with borders, rose walk, beach hut and garden, orchard, wildlife, boncyn fort, willow maze, Adam and Eve and pergola and croquet lawn. There are some interesting plantings although the weather was so awful - pouring with rain when we visited that the garden didn't show to its best advantage. Despite the weather we enjoyed the afternoon. The owners were very friendly, I bought an unusual salvia called 'Hot Lips' and we were grateful for our cup of tea and homemade cake. There are one or two holiday cottages for let within the gardens. You can find them on www.summersgardens.co.uk



Finally I also found this telephone box in Wales on the platform of Llanuwchllyn railway station – just fabulous.



Reminders

RHS LONDON SHOW 16th and 17th February. see www.rhs.org.uk

DISCOVERING WELSH GARDENS - 23 February 2010

International photographer, Charles Hawes, is coming to Cookham on 23 February from his home in Wales to give an illustrated talk "Discovering Welsh Gardens" which is taken from the recent book by Stephen Anderton for which Charles did the photography. The talk takes you through a tour of 20 Welsh gardens during which Charles gives some tips on garden photography and makes some candid remarks about the gardens themselves. This is a fantastic opportunity to hear a first rate speaker. The talk will take place on Tuesday 23 February at the Cookham Dean WI Hall at 2.30pm. For more information contact Liz Kwantes 01628 525130 or liz@cookham.com.

There promises to be a spate of new gardening programmes in 2010. Alys Fowler will front her own series in which she tries to live off home grown produce for the year...probable start is February. A new series featuring Carol Klein will be on the BBC and Alan Titchmarsh's favourite UK gardens is also scheduled. Keep an eye out for details in the press.

Wednesday March 3rd Come and hear about the Village Shop

There will be a meeting in the Village Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 3rd March at which you will be able to hear all about the proposal for re-opening a village shop in Cookham Dean.

It is really important that many people attend as the attendance will be taken as the measure of support for the whole concept of re-instating a village shop. At the meeting we will explain how you will be able to help the project succeed.

If you are not able to attend but do support the concept of having a village shop in Cookham Dean, then I would welcome an e-mail from you underlining your support.

Richard Campin Chairman of the Post Office Shop Committee
richard.campin@btinternet.com

Programme News Jan. to Dec. 2010

February 24 th	Gill Townend , Local Garden Designer Trevarno, a Cornish Estate.
March 31 st	Spring Show Judged by renowned local gardening expert Les Waldren
April 28 th	Brian Davis, experienced nurseryman and garden consultant, Robust Plants for Shady Places
May 26 th	Carl Sadler, well-known coppice woodman and rural crafts expert Trug-making and Bee-keeping.
June 30 th	Jennifer Harmer, Garden Historian History of the Flower Arranger's Plants
September 29 th	To be confirmed
October 27 th	Andrew Halstead, Principal Entomologist for the RHS Plant Pest Recognition and Control
November 24 th	AGM Gill Townend and Carolyn Foster will present the results of our tried and tested plants survey: Cookham's Dream Garden

Contributions for the March newsletter to Gill Townend 01628 483092 or gilltownend@aol.com by 6th March please.