

Newsletter

January 2009

Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society

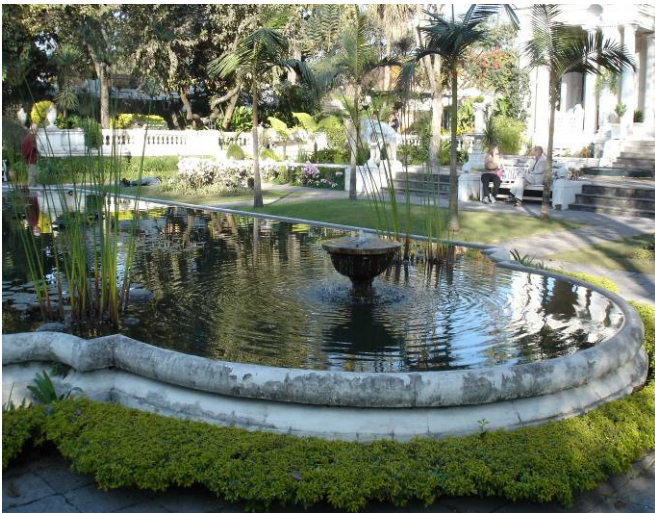
NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 28th January 7.30pm

Cookham Dean Village Hall

Ponds and Water Gardens

A talk by Brian Fisher

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



Garden of Dreams, Kathmandu, Nepal

This is my first 'Chairman's Letter' and I am sure I speak for all our members when I say how very sorry we were to say goodbye to Brian Thompson at our AGM in November. He has been the Society's Chairman for several years now, and he will be a hard act to follow, with his good humour, expert knowledge of gardening and, not least, his annual production of wonderful sweet-pea plants for all those of us who love to grow this beautiful flower. I personally have much enjoyed serving on the Committee with him, and it was with great pleasure that we were able to give him a garden voucher for £80 from the members which we know he will have no difficulty in spending on his new garden in Wiltshire. We also gave his wife, Gill, an

orchid plant in a pot, as a 'thank you' for all her support and help while Brian has been Chairman. Mary Fallon, who has been a committee member for a number of years, was also given a garden voucher, but I don't think she will be using it just yet as she is renting a cottage, also in Wiltshire, while she looks round in the area for a house to buy.

We had a very good attendance at the AGM and as a result have recruited 4 new people to the Committee – Pam Campin, Carolyn Foster, Penny Meredith and Claire Philpott. It will be really good to have some new ideas for our future programmes and activities, and I hope they will enjoy being more involved. Although the November meeting is usually well supported, I think the demonstration this time by Brenda Copas of "How to make a Christmas Door Wreath" was undoubtedly a big draw and she really came up trumps with some lovely ideas and examples of ways of using different flowers and foliage to produce beautiful and decorative features for our front doors. She had asked that, instead of a fee, we should give a donation to the Thames Valley Adventure Playground, and this we were more than happy to do.

I hope you will enjoy the 2009 programme – our first meeting on 28th January will be an illustrated talk by Brian Fisher on 'Ponds and Water Gardens'. This is a subject that we have tried to cover before, but our last attempt was a complete disaster. As the Programme Sec., I don't know when I've felt so embarrassed as the speaker talked about azaleas in Richmond Park and other unrelated subjects, and finally admitted that he'd never actually had a pond and knew virtually nothing about them. When I mentioned this to Brian Fisher when he last gave us a talk, he said he would be able to cover this subject without any difficulty, so I've taken him at his word and I think we can be sure of a good evening. He rang me in early

December, just before he was due to leave on yet another lovely cruise where he was lecturing, to assure me that everything was in hand, so I hope there will be a good attendance and plenty of interest.

This very cold weather is not exactly conducive to gardening, but hopefully it will kill off some of the bugs that seem to have appeared recently, particularly those rather nasty ladybirds which seem to have become the grey squirrels of the insect world. I'm sure someone will tell me that they're very beautiful and do absolutely no harm at all, but I'm not convinced. Have a very Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you all sometime in 2009.

Susie Tremlett

An Inspirational Evening with Chris Beardshaw

In November Chris Beardshaw gave the John Bond Memorial Lecture for the Friends of the Savill Garden. This turned out to be a most entertaining and informative evening, delivered in his own inimitable style of a passionate gardener who remains in touch with the nitty-gritty of growing plants.

He related the story of a project he was involved with in 2005-6, which was to restore the more or less derelict gardens of Boveridge Park, Wimbourne, Dorset, now Boveridge House School, a special school for children with a variety of learning difficulties.

Via tales of drunken caretakers and hidden cellars, we heard how his team gradually uncovered the intrigue surrounding the designers of the original 1920s formal garden, who turned out to be no less than Thomas Mawson (the famous landscape architect) and Gertrude Jekyll. As these two were not the best of friends, they undoubtedly collaborated unknowingly.

Excavation of the site and old photographs revealed Mr. Mawson's design for the terraces and water features. Miss Jekyll's hand-written planting scheme formed the basis of the restoration of the herbaceous borders (125m x 3m.)

As Boveridge is a listed garden, the restoration had to be 100% accurate, which was going to be very expensive to achieve, so a magic wand was waved and a great deal of hard work led to the garden being transported to Chelsea (and back), where it achieved a gold medal in 2006. The cause of the restorations was promoted and this unique garden highlighted. The pupils contributed to this success and now proudly show visitors round **their** garden, which is used for teaching and therapeutic purposes as well as sometimes being open to the public.

The show garden followed Mawson's design with a strong, symmetrical principle softened by Jekyll's planting schemes. Clipped yew hedges, a reclaimed stone wall and herbaceous borders edged the lily pond. (View the garden at www.rhs.org.uk/chelsea/2006/exhibitors .

In describing this restoration project, Chris managed to include how to deal with bindweed and ground elder (turf and mow for a season), several tips for deterring deer and other mammals (human hair clippings on the ground and strings of the cheapest, smelliest soap along the grazing line, or in the case of squirrels, as baubles dangling from the bird-table.) If anyone tries this, let me know if it works!

Chris Beardshaw's humour and enthusiasm, his respect for the great gardeners of the past and his ability to interpret their ideas for today's amateur gardener added up to a very interesting evening.

Mary Downes

NATIONAL GARDENS SCHEME

Last year some 3,600 owners opened their gardens as part of the NGS. A survey of owners revealed that where couples are concerned, there is usually a strict division of labour. Men generally prefer formal and tidy, and women choose informal and romantic. More than half of those surveyed have separate areas from their partners, and a third of these don't allow their other half to trespass. Some even have a neutral zone in between!

GREEN WASTE

For those of you who have not yet read your Royal Borough newsletter this is a reminder that if you do not compost your green waste then the Borough is supplying green bins for a dedicated fortnightly collection of garden waste for recycling at a charge of £29 a year (in addition to the normal household waste collections) For more information 01628 683800

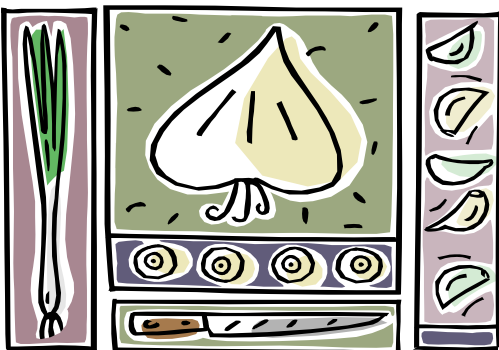
CLEVER BUMBLEBEES.

Recent research at Cambridge University has found that that several plants, such as hibiscus, tulips and peonies which have iridescent petals have waxy lines in their petals which give them this iridescence. Further research on these lines then led scientists to realise that other plants such as legumes, buttercups and asters also exhibit this quality although not necessarily visible to the human eye. Bumblebees are able to see the iridescent colours and tests have shown that they can learn which hue will lead to pollen and which should be ignored

SNOWDROP TIME....WELL NEARLY!

From the end of this month there should be plenty of opportunities to visit gardens famed for their snowdrop displays. Those closest to us include Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire, Welford Park nr Newbury, Cerney House and Painswick Rococo Garden in Gloucestershire. A full list can be found on www.greatbritishgardens/snowdrops . If you want to add to your own collection, try to plant them 'in the green' after flowering in late spring. Snowdrops like a well drained deep, loamy soil on the alkaline side . Split clumps when they become congested. Well known snowdrop suppliers include Avon Bulbs, Broadleigh Bulbs, Foxgrove Plants and Harveys Garden Plants. (All have web sites using these names followed by .co.uk) For a catalogue from Dr Ronald Mackenzie, an award winning RHS exhibitor, please send an A5 sae to The Snowdrop Company, Barn Cottage, Shilton, Oxfordshire OX18 4AB

GARLIC



If you have ever thought of growing garlic but never tried there is still time to plant the bulbs. The best variety is *Solent White* (a 'soft neck' variety) both for quantity of bulbs and storage qualities. The 'hard neck' varieties have fewer but larger cloves and do not store as well. *Purple Moldovan* is the best variety to choose in this category. Supermarket bulbs do not, apparently, produce good quality cloves.

Garlic is supplied as whole bulbs but do not separate the cloves until just before planting. Bury the cloves, pointed end up using a dibber and bury so that the tip is just covered with soil (if the tip is exposed birds may pull them up) Space 15cm apart in rows 30cm apart and water in a dry summer. Keep weed free and harvest when the tops have dried off by lifting carefully with a fork. Leave on the ground to dry off completely (or on a greenhouse bench if it is a wet autumn) and store in a cool place.

Message from Chris Sibbald re Kings Seed orders

There is a minor problem with some item numbers in the catalogue being the same for two different products. If you wish to order from the Kings catalogue in January, please could you write the item name alongside the price on your order form and then I know which packet of seeds you require. Phone Chris if you need clarification.(01628 522304)

Deadline for next issues copy is 6th February to Gill Townend 01628 483092 or gilltownend@aol.com