

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, June 24th 6pm

Visit to The Plant Specialist,

Great Missenden

www.theplantspecialist.co.uk

See last page for directions and details of Thrive visit on 29th July.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I hope you enjoyed Chris Chadwell's talk in May on 'Flowers of Kashmir', I found it very interesting and his slides showed what a beautiful country it is. I'm only sorry that so many of his pictures and much of his talk concentrated on a trip he'd made in the mid-eighties, it would have been more topical if he'd brought us more up to date with the situation and scenery out there. However, it was a stimulating evening and he is an excellent speaker. You will probably remember that I told you in May that I had recommended a walk he should do round here in Cookham Dean as he wanted to bring his young son to see the places where Kenneth Grahame lived and set 'Wind in the Willows'. Although he hadn't done this prior to giving us his talk, as he'd planned, he rang me the following day to say he was sitting in the garden of the Jolly Farmer where he and Oliver (son) had just had lunch after completing the walk, and they'd much enjoyed it.

The Committee met last week and we discussed further the idea that the Society might provide and plant up troughs or tubs at Cookham Station. We haven't yet heard whether NetRail(?) would agree, but it does seem rather fraught with problems so we decided to defer it for the time being. However, we have agreed to provide and plant 2 hanging baskets and the narrow bed along the road at the Village Hall, and the Village Hall Committee have given us £75 for this. In fact the work has already been done, thanks to Carolyn Foster, but we need some help in keeping the plants watered. Pam Campin has looked after them so far, but she will be away next week and we are hoping that some members will agree to help us with this. There is an outside tap by the back door of the Hall, and there will be a watering-can behind the wheelie-bins, so if you think you can spare a little time for this, please contact Pam Campin (483279) so that she can work out a rota. Thank you very much if you can help. You may also like to know that we now have just over 100 members in the Society, which is perhaps an indication of how much people enjoy listening to a good speaker on a subject related to gardening, which is of great topical interest. At the same time, I must remind you that anyone who has not paid their subscription by the end of April will not be eligible to receive the newsletter.

I'm sorry I wasn't able to get some fuchsias for the summer competition this year, but the geraniums (or pelargoniums, to give them their proper name) bought as replacement seemed very popular as they were all sold so good luck with them over the summer. We look forward to seeing them all back at our September meeting so that we can judge which plant is the best. Several of us in the Society will be opening our gardens next Sunday (14th) as part of the Open Gardens Day in aid of Thames Hospicecare, so do come along and support us if you can, and please pray for a fine day.

Following our visit to the Plant Specialist, we have a break until our September meeting, but don't forget the visit to Thrive on 29 July – more details about both these visits later in this newsletter. So enjoy the summer in the garden, look after those geraniums and let's hope we have some lovely weather.

Susie Tremlett

A wet visit to Holker Hall Gardens

On a recent short break in the Lake District the weather turned very wet and we headed for Holker Hall near Grange-over-Sands in the South Lakes. The Victorian hall and estate are owned by Lord and Lady Cavendish and the stately home has been in the same family since the 17th century. The 25 acres of gardens are part woodland, part formal and when I was there the tulips and rhododendrons were in full bloom although rather battered by the weather. The gardens have been under the care of a new Head Gardener since 2008 (Yvonne Cannon) and for the first time were open for all four seasons in 2008. I loved the gardens for their



design and for their variety. There was a positive feel about the changes that had clearly been made in recent years with the tennis court having been transformed into a beautiful, calm summer garden with interesting planting. The formal Edwardian garden designed by Thomas Mawson was replaced in 1993 by an Elliptical garden designed to appear circular from the house. Local slates and cobbles feature in the design and give it a contemporary feel. The National Collection of Styracaceae is held at Holker Hall. I was unfamiliar with this genus of trees and shrubs but they thrive on moist, loamy, lime free soil in sun or semi shade and the distinctive feature is the pure white pendulous flowers which appear in late spring and early summer, unfortunately not in flower during our visit. The paths in the formal garden were lined with mop headed trees which must be looking very pretty about now. This genus includes Halesia, native to North America, and Pterostyrax, a group of Asiatic trees and shrubs.



The herbaceous beds in the garden were well kept and the natural support system of twigs can just be seen in the photograph, above right. Beyond the summer garden the amazing Neptune water cascade flows down from a statue of Neptune created in the 17th century by Italian craftsmen. When

we were there it was framed by majestic rhododendrons and the fountain spouting through the rain was quite ethereal. To offset the formal gardens there are wild meadows dotted with camassias, grottos, a labyrinth and the famous Holker Lime with a girth of 79 metres. There is a Garden Festival at the end of May, a Motor Museum, a food hall, gift shop and very good restaurant. See more on the web site www.holker.co.uk. GT

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday, 17th June 10am-3pm 'Summer Living Exhibition' Barn Galleries, Aston
£4 entry Lunches/teas

Local NGS Gardens

Thurs. 18th June Lords Wood, Marlow
Sunday 21st June Bradenham Manor, Hughenden Manor
Wednesdays in June, July and August Waltham Place Gardens
Wednesday 1 July Dorneywood Garden
Wednesday 15th July Gypsy House, Great Missenden 2-5pm

This is the garden of the late Roald Dahl. The plants are supplied by the Plant Specialist and the nursery will be selling plants on the Open Day if you missed the Society visit.

Notes from a French Garden

Once again, I arrived too late. This year, I not only had to miss the mimosa which grows with wild enthusiasm on my hillside and has to be kept firmly in check after flowering in January and February, but even the wisteria sinensis was over by mid-April. The white variety (I'm not sure which one it is; it just came labelled White) that I am encouraging to clamber over an iron pergola on the south side of the house was stunning though. It grew a lot last year and every new strand was covered in flowers. I always admire the elegant restraint of wisteria in England, but here it seems to grow with an exuberance seldom seen at home. And although most plants are more expensive than in England, and the nurseries on the whole very poorly stocked unless you want oleanders, some plants mainly grown in Italy are fabulous value. Mature, standard wisterias cost me around £20, so of course I have three – two more than I needed.



All the books say that the early spring is the peak season here – the Esterel in the Var – but I always forget how early that is. I just caught the end of my many ceanothus varieties (invaluable on inhospitable dry banks), the climbing roses, the yellow Banksias, *R. laevigata* (a wonderful

semi-evergreen single white that is reputed to be somewhat tender) and *Senateur La Follette*, an old variety that I had been told did well in the south of France. I haven't planted many roses, but visiting a garden outside Tournettes sur Loup at the beginning of May with a local garden group I saw so many varieties flourishing that I am encouraged to try some more. The owner told me that most of the more vigorous old varieties such as *Wedding Day*, *Rambling Rector* and *Bobby James* all do well despite the summer, as well as varieties of the China roses.

I was advised to plant away from the southerly aspects but that they would all flower well even on the north and east, so I am eyeing up a couple of large oaks and fantasising about romantic trails of white hanging down. Several of the David Austin roses are also popular, with *Winchester Cathedral* getting special mention – although they are dreadfully expensive here with someone considering 49 euros each quite cheap! If I do decide to plant any, I will be bringing them down with me and just hoping that the softer English stock will stand up to the heat.

My hostess was also growing quite a lot of English herbaceous subjects that I had failed with, or not thought to try, including peonies, hemerocallis and sweet Williams, as well as vigorous varieties of clematis such as *c. tangutica* and *c. cirrhosa* – in fact, *c. flammula* grows wild around here despite the mimosa and wild arbutus telling me the soil tends to acid. All of this is a valuable lesson for me planting a new garden in Cookham, where I am expecting drier summers, even if the first two years haven't been!

Gardening on a rocky, hot hillside has always been a challenge. I got my first lesson from the previous owner of the house who looked astonished when I carefully handed back a tin labelled 'Dynamite' found in the shed. 'But you will need it,' she said, 'if you want to plant a shrub.' How right she was; although I was never brave enough to blast a planting hole, it would have been a lot easier if I had. Tentative prodding around the rocks to find soil depth sufficient for my new purchases meant fancy landscaping ideas were mere fantasy. And like many new gardeners, I wanted to plant big and instant. I really had to learn the hard way that small plants would establish much more quickly and successfully, though it still seems to take a couple of years before subjects get their feet down and really start to grow.

At the moment everything is green after a very wet season, but the heat has started and summer dormancy will soon take over. They call it the 'little winter' here, when many plants lose most of their leaves and have a summer hibernation. And much to my surprise even things that I expected to do really well – *artemisia*s, *lithospermum*, *brachyglottis*, *perovskia* among them – sit and sulk, or go leggy and look quite unhappy even with some drip irrigation, while ivy and honeysuckle rampage over hedgerows when I would have thought it too hot for them. And although I have a lemon tree full of fruit (carefully wrapped in fleece for the winter) the hillside can get quite sharp frosts so more tender Mediterranean subjects are not possible. I have no *bougainvillea* or *strelitzia*, and the blue *plumbago capensis* gets frosted back more or less every year.

The real problem, of course is being an absentee gardener. Just as I'm getting in the swing, it's nearly time to come home and pay some attention to my Cookham garden, or I will miss all those new roses as well... so now I just hope for the promised hot summer to give me inspiration for both gardens, and the energy to do more than dream.

LG

Cookham Dream Garden

At a recent meeting I asked all members to think of the plants they would highly recommend to a friend moving into the area with an empty garden, or plants that you would put in a new garden if you were moving locally, in other words, those that give you most pleasure and that you would buy again. We will assume for this exercise that cultivation hints will accompany the plant in the final listing. The 'Cookham Dream Garden' will have sunny and shady areas and it will have our mainly alkaline soil with pockets of clay and chalk.

The categories will be;

Small garden trees
Shrubs
Climbers
Perennials
Annuals
Bulbs



(again, don't worry about size and numbers as this dream garden is flexible!)

Think about your favourites through the seasons and come up with a list of no more than five in each category. I will include a form for your nominations in one of the autumn editions of the newsletter. If you like you can add brief reasons for your choice but just the name will do if you prefer. You don't have to nominate for every category either, as you may just want a shrub garden etc. There may be duplicates between you all, but that will be the interesting part ! Members from outside the Cookhams please contribute as this is just a fun exercise.

Gill Townend 01628 483092

Member's tip

To cover the edges of plastic pond liners:

Lie a block of turf out on a piece of plastic in a quiet / shady corner of the garden & leave for a few months, water if necessary.

Roots will form a mat underneath and you can then cut to shape & cover offending plastic. I have found this has worked well for me! The edge of the grass is in contact with water & supported by a small log. It has survived quite happily for several months so far!

(Thanks to Clare Padmore for this)

Deadline for copy for the September newsletter is 6th September. If you visit any gardens or discover anything about a horticultural product or outlet, good or bad Please share your thoughts and experiences with the readers of this newsletter. I am looking for someone to report on Cookham Open Gardens so budding reporters please volunteer.! Contact Gill Townend on gilltownend@aol.com The Farm, Church Road, Cookham Dean SL6 9PR (01628 483092)

Details and directions for summer visits on the next page



Details for Summer visits (Members only)

Weds. 24th June 2009 at 6pm. Visit to The Plant Specialist, 7, Whitefield Lane, Great Missenden, HP16 0BH www.theplantspecialist.co.uk tel. 01494 866650 £2 per person, payable to treasurer at the venue.

Keith Pounder will show us round the Nursery and answer questions, then we can explore the small garden, followed by tea and an opportunity to buy plants.

Directions. 16miles, 30-40 mins.

From Cookham, travel to Great Missenden via Bourne End, forking right at Furlong Road onto A4094 and continue to Wooburn Green. At edge of Green, fork right on to B4440, pass green and head up the hill. Turn right at roundabout on to the A40. Go straight on at next roundabout and continue to Old Beaconsfield. At main cross roads, continue through roundabout, along London End. At next roundabout turn left on to A355 (Park Lane) signed to Amersham. Continue to follow A355, then at roundabout before the bottom of the hill, take first exit on to A413, signed Great Missenden and High Wycombe. At next roundabout, take 2nd exit, signed Great Missenden and stay on the A413. After 3 miles, going through one roundabout, look out for a left fork, London Road. Take this and pass the Chiltern Hospital on your left. After just under a mile, turn left into Whitefield Lane, which is opposite the entrance to Missenden Abbey, before the High Street. Go under the railway bridge and the Nursery entrance is on the left. Parking in field, nose into hedge please, will be signed and is shared with Gipsy House (Roald Dahl.) Details also in NGS Yellow Book. Any problems, tel. Mary Downes 01628 524881 beforehand or 07906278051 on the night.

Thrive visit

Weds. 29th July 2009. Visit to Thrive, the Horticultural Charity at the Geoffrey Udall Centre, Beech Hill, south of Reading, at 5:30pm. The garden provides a place for adults and students with special needs or disabilities for therapy. Own transport. We will have a guided tour of the garden by our fellow member, Becky Pinniger, who works at Thrive as a Horticultural Therapist. This will be followed by tea and cake. There may be an opportunity to buy plants. £3.50 per person, payable on the evening, to include a donation to the charity.

Directions

Take the M4, Reading bound, to junction 11. Take the first exit left signed to A33 Basingstoke, and at the roundabout immediately after this, take the first exit left signed to Beech Hill and Three Mile Cross. Proceed for about 1 mile, until you see a Murco garage on your right. Turn RIGHT here into Beech Road. Continue on for about 1 ½ miles until you reach Beech Hill. After the Speed limit warning sign, the turning for Thrive is on the RIGHT, signed Thrive and Trunkwell House. Proceed along the driveway and the car park is on the left (ignore the left turn into Trunkwell House). The journey takes 40 minutes from Cookham.

To give us an idea of numbers, please e-mail kmdownes@btinternet.com or tel. Mary Downes on 01628 524881 or Pam Campin on 01628 483279.