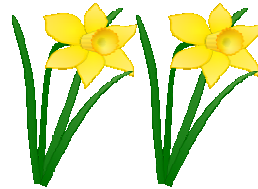
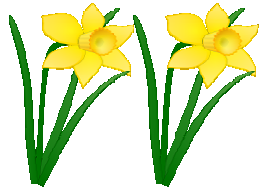


# Newsletter

March 2

Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Societ

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 30th March 7.30pm**



**SPRING SHOW**

**COOKHAM DEAN VILLAGE HALL**

**Stacina 7.30pm-8.30pm**

## Chairman's letter

March is the month when every magazine or newspaper article about gardening seems to exhort us to carry out lots of jobs to start off the growing season in the garden, but the weather over the last few weeks has been so cold that I for one find it very difficult to spend much time outside. I'm just longing for some warmer days so that I can get to grips with pruning the roses and doing all the tidying up that still needs to be done, I'm a believer in leaving dead foliage on many plants as a form of protection as long as is reasonably practicable. It does mean, of course, that there will be a great deal to do in a short space of time but I don't see the point in sowing seeds in very cold ground where they will either rot or get eaten by all the things that live underground. I have sown some broad beans in plastic, newspaper-lined fruit boxes and they're in the frame to give them a bit of a head-start, and my potatoes are being chitted prior to going in the potato-sacks, but I haven't got much further on the vegetable front yet. My 'Society' daffodil bulbs are certainly not show-stoppers, in each pot only 4 out of 5 have shown they're alive, and they're not very tall, but I'm sure others will have done much better and I look forward very much to seeing them at our Spring Show on 30 March.



Speaking of the Spring Show, you will find the schedule in this newsletter together with some tips for showing your exhibits, I'm sure we shall as usual have a very good display.

I have two shrubs in my garden which really come into their own at this time, one is *Lonicera fragrantissima* and the other is *Stachyurus praecox*. The *Lonicera* is really beautiful at the moment, covered in small creamy-yellow flowers and with a lovely scent. I've had it for several years, but it's better now than it's ever been, it's about 6 ft. tall with a 5 ft. spread and is a lovely eye-catcher at a rather dreary time of year. Very easy to grow, and I think

widely available. The *Stachyurus* (see above) has beautiful yellow catkins in March, it's like a small tree now. Rather slow-growing, I've had mine about 6-7 years now, but it flowered quite early on and again is a beautiful thing in the early spring. I wonder why so many spring-flowering shrubs have yellow flowers, perhaps there is some scientific reason for this and I'd be very interested if anyone has an answer. I hope as many of you as possible will come to the Spring Show, it's always such an enjoyable evening even if you don't have anything to exhibit. I look forward to seeing you there. *Susie Tremlett*

## National Plant Collections – A Living Library of Plants.

Jim Rodda, long term advocate and an enthusiastic local organiser (Bucks, Berks and Oxon) of the charity National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, talked to us in February about “Plant Zoos”, an apt description of the part played by the National Plant Collections.

While Britain has and can sustain a rich variety of plants, plant diversity is under threat worldwide. Jim explained that plants are the poor relation in the pecking order for saving endangered species, making the NCCPG very important in its role of conservation via National Collections.

More than 650 collections exist in Britain and Ireland, cared for by about 450 collection holders. A collection relies on the expertise of individuals, with the back up of a national organisation, to give “as complete a representation of a genus as possible.” Collections exist to conserve, keep records of and make available to other growers (like us!) as wide a variety of garden plants as we can have. If anyone has visited the **Plant Heritage** marquee at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show, they will know what this means to gardeners.

Examples of plants, which have been lost and now “found” again include varieties of *Passiflora*, *Primula auricula* and *Hyacinth*. Jim showed us a colourful bubble graph demonstrating the relative importance of the National Collections as a proportion of all cultivated plants in the UK, although we needed a bit of help with the Latin labelling. He pointed out that some plants are in need of Collectors, the top ten of these including *Calendula*, *Nicotiana*, *Cercis* and *Fatsia*. This list is compiled by dividing the plants into groups ranging from the “critically endangered”, through “vulnerable” to those of “least concern at present.”

We then saw an example of a record based on the *Crocus* genus and its species, showing rarity and which ones can be found in a National Collection or in Plant Finder. He explained the use of that excellent annual publication, RHS Plant Finder, which describes plants and tells you in which Nurseries you can buy them. It was even suggested that we might establish a jointly held National Collection in Cookham, although the requirements might be enough to put off anyone but the very dedicated and time-rich gardener!

The NCCPG, of which the Society is a member, produces a **Directory of National Plant Collections** annually (we have a copy.) All collections are listed and 30 are local: eg.

Bucks apples and cherries at Hughenden Manor.

Pleiones ( a type of alpine orchid) at Bourne End (March is a good month to view but do phone first.) Ian Butterfield 01628 525455.

9 Collections (inc. Mahonia, Magnolia and ferns) at the Savill Garden.

Euphorbia at Oxford Botanic Garden.

Clematis at Shillingford, near Wallingford.

Brunnera at Gallowstree Common, near Reading.

Silver Saxifrage and Catalpa (previously at Cliveden) at Waterperry, near Oxford.

**Saxifrage Weekend** is 26-27/03/2011. Info on [www.waterperrygardens.co.uk](http://www.waterperrygardens.co.uk)

Find more information on [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com) or ask a Committee Member. MD

## Jottings

- ❖ If you have overwintered dahlia tubers, now is the time to restart growth. Pot up into large pots and grow on in a cool, frost-free place. Keep an eye out for slugs that would like to nip them in the bud. Plant out in May.

- ❖ Unless you are an expert, wait to sow tomatoes that might get leggy inside waiting for it to be warm enough to plant out.
- ❖ For a sunny spot, try new Iris "Cranberry Sauce"- looks good enough to eat, with wine coloured scented blooms. Available from April from [www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk](http://www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk) or tel. 01939 251173.
- ❖ Look out for Monty Don presenting Gardeners' World again (hurray!) from his own garden, starting 11<sup>th</sup> March.
- ❖ Some of us will have received orchids as presents over the Christmas period, or at least bought them for our friends, and useful advice on repotting *Phalaenopsis* (moth orchids) was published in The Garden magazine recently and is summarised here. To succeed with moth orchids you need to understand that they grow epiphytically on trees and rocks, rather than in soil. My mistake has clearly been to pot them on into a compost too rich and to do it too frequently as they only need to be repotted every three or four years. Specialist orchid compost is a mix of bark, perlite and charcoal which is very free draining. The best time to repot is in spring or early summer; carefully remove the plant from its pot and shake off the old compost. Cut off any roots which look brown and soggy with secateurs and choose a pot only slightly larger than the previous one that will accommodate all the roots. If you have to cut off several roots you may be able to use the old pot. Clear plastic pots allow light through to the roots which photosynthesise. (I didn't know that!) Put a small amount of compost in the bottom of the pot, position the plant in the centre and gradually fill the pot while holding the orchid in place. Tap the pot to settle the compost, firm very gently and do not force any aerial roots into the compost but leave them outside as before. Water well but make sure the excess water can drain away. MD and GT

### **ELIZABETH HOUSE RACE NIGHT**

Please support this fund raising event on Friday 1st April at 7.30pm Pinder Hall, Lower Road, Cookham. **TICKETS £12.50**, to include delicious hot supper. Tickets from Lynne Williams 01628 819224

## **Spring Show Guidelines**

*Staging will take place from 7.30pm to 8.30pm when you can set up your exhibits. There will be a Help Desk should you have any queries and tea or coffee will be served from 8pm*

*A fun quiz will be held while the judging takes place and then we will find out who the winners of the Spring Show are and the reasons for their success*

**There are only three rules about entering the Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society Spring Show:**

- You must grow the plants yourself
- You need to be member - you can join at the Spring Show (Membership fee: £10)

- There is a small fee of 50p per entry per person, and remember you can only have one entry in each Class.

With 15 different classes or categories to enter, the 2011 event will be judged by daffodil expert Les Waldren from Surrey, and a small cash prize awarded for 1<sup>st</sup> (£1), 2<sup>nd</sup> (60p) and 3<sup>rd</sup> place (40p). There are coveted silver cups for the winner of Class 1, Class 2 and for the most successful exhibitor overall.

For those of you who haven't exhibited at a Show before here are some basic guideline indicating what Les will be looking for:

- Flowers that are open but not blown
- Daffodils at right angle to the stem, not pointing up or drooping
- Clean leaves with no brown marks or damage. It is better to take a marked one off as carefully and discreetly as possible rather than leave it there
- It is better to stake and tie a plant nicely, rather than leave it floppy
- Remove any insects or bugs
- See *Notes for exhibitors* below for more information about what to do and how best to do it

A guide to each of the Classes is attached to this newsletter. **Vases are provided for all classes but you can use your own container in Classes 1 and 14.**

## **Notes for exhibitors**

- *Don't forget your schedule. Work out in advance which classes you will enter. It probably helps to label your blooms before you get to the hall. Any exhibit which is slightly past its best will not score highly so pick fresh stems, preferably the day before the show depending on the weather at the time....one bad storm and the whole lot could be flattened on the day of the show, so if you remember, try to listen to the forecast.*
- *When cutting your daffodils from the garden look for flowers of a similar size, with heads at right angles to the stem, and cut more than you need. When you return to the house select the best blooms, without blemishes, tears or discolouration. Also avoid those blooms where the seed head behind the flower is starting to swell as this means it is past its best and Les will say it is 'going over'*
- *Place the blooms in a deep container of water and keep them in a cool, dark room (garage is ideal). I then transport them to the hall in the same tall flower bucket (minus the water) or a trug. Again, take a few spare blooms in case of accidents.*
- *Vases are supplied. Before you start arranging make sure that there is water in your vase. It helps if you have some wet newspaper to scrunch up in the vase which will support your stems. Alternatively, take a small plastic bag of moss from the lawn or the woods. This is very flexible for arranging and looks attractive. Collect this a week or two before if you need to.(Newspaper will be supplied)*
- *Take a pair of secateurs to the show for final trimming of stems.*
- *The judge will be looking for symmetry in your exhibit so try to select your stems accordingly and 'face' them up well i.e. when you look directly at the daffodils they*

should be looking back at you! The blooms at the back of the arrangement should be slightly higher than those at the front.

- If exhibiting hellebores, Les Waldren will be looking for fresh blooms that are not developing their seed heads. Previous winners of the Society bulb class have often supported the foliage with thin sticks and twine if it is floppy. Again, moss around the base of the bulbs does look attractive but will not affect the result.
- I think professionals then do a lot of tweeking of the petals and cleaning of pollen, but that is for advanced exhibitors!
- Finally, don't worry about your neighbours' exhibits on the bench: just trust your own judgement and remember it is fun!

For help in sorting out your large cups from your small cups look on [www.thedaffodilsociety.com](http://www.thedaffodilsociety.com) GT and CF



## SPRING SHOW SCHEDULE

**(Vases are provided for all classes but you can use your own container in Classes 1 and 14 )**

Class 1: An Arrangement of spring flowers and foliage in a container of your choice. The finished result must be no more than 18" (46cm) wide but can be any height

### Daffodils

Class 2 Also known as **The Society Class** because you have to have been a member of the Horticultural Society since last autumn to enter this Class when daffodil bulbs could be purchased for planting in pots of 5 and presenting here

Class 3 **3 large cup/trumpet** daffodils in a vase

*(A large cup daffodil has one flower to a stem and when you bend the top petal down it is shorter or equal in length to the cup)*

Class 4 **3 double** daffodils in a vase

*(A double daffodil can have one or more flowers to a stem, with doubling of the petals or the cup or both)*

Class 5 **3 bi colour** daffodils in a vase

*(A bi colour daffodil has a variation in the colour of the petals and/or cups)*

Class 6 5 daffodils **of the same variety** in a vase

Class 7 **5 miniature** daffodils in a vase *(Flowers less than 2 inches in diameter, with short stems)*

Class 8      **3 multi head** daffodils in a vase

### **Other Spring Flowers**

Class 9              Any pot or bowl of growing spring bulbs

Class10              A single primula plant in a pot (*This can be anything from a primrose to a polyanthus of any colour*)

Class 11              Any decorative indoor pot plant      (*That you have owned for a minimum of 12 months* )

Class 12              3 stems of hellebores in a vase      (*With no seed heads showing*)

Class 13              Vase of cut spring flowers from your garden. (*No flowering shrubs or tree blossom*)

Class 14              1 Stem of camellia in a vase, can be of your own choice

Class 15              Spring flowering shrubs. 5 stems with one of each variety

***If you have any further queries please call Claire Phillipot on 01628 473631***