

**NEWSLETTER**

May

2011

NEXT MEETING: **Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm**

## Wildflowers and the Management of Chalky Grassland

**A talk by Michael Keith-Lucas,**

### Chairman's letter



*Alliums underplanted with tulips at Grey's Court. Photo by Mary Downes*

things horticultural.

I'm not sure how many people will have rushed home after our last meeting and started planting trees, but Pamela Holt gave us an interesting talk on how it should be done. In my experience tree-planting is something of a group activity, or certainly for more than one person to undertake as it usually involves a lot of digging and heavy lifting. I think actually I would have welcomed more about the 'aftercare', e.g. pruning and cutting back, and when add to our knowledge of all

Unfortunately the lights in the hall were not very co-operative and it is to be hoped that those responsible for installing all the new lighting and heating etc. can do something to improve matters – as it happened it was quite a warm evening but the heating wasn't working and could have been a real problem. Full marks to Pam Campin for all her efforts to try and persuade the powers that be that they really must give more thought to the users.

As I write this, it is at last raining heavily and perhaps I can now 'get planting'. My ground has been almost rock-like for some time which has made weeding the borders extremely difficult. I have managed to get the sweet-peas and potatoes in, and the broad beans, garlic and shallots are doing quite well, but the greenhouse and frames are filling up with plants that will need to go out as soon as conditions are right. The

blossom was amazing this year and over all too soon, but thankfully we didn't have a frost while the fruit was setting, so with any luck we should have a good crop of tree fruit later on. The cow parsley in our field looks quite beautiful at the moment, and hopefully the big walnut tree there, which we think must be at least 100 years old, will have plenty of walnuts although it's always a battle between ourselves, the squirrels and crows to get the nuts – they always have the advantage because the tree is far too big to be picked so we have to wait for the nuts to fall.

We shall be taking names at our next two meetings of members who would like to come on the visit to Lady Stevenson's garden near Ascot, on Wednesday 13 July, at 6.30 p.m. The address is 'Old Waterfield' postcode SL5 7LJ, so I do hope we shall have a good take-up. More details will be given in next month's newsletter. I look forward to seeing you at our May meeting.

Susie Tremlett.

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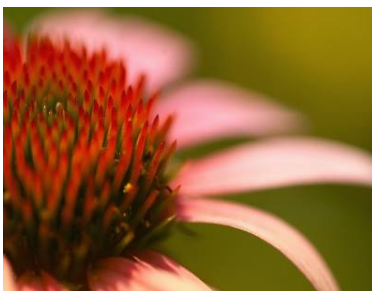
## AGAPANTHUS

Members will recall the talk by Jim Rodda about the National Collections of plants around the UK. The agapanthus collection is held in Devon at Pine Cottage Plants ([www.pcplants.co.uk](http://www.pcplants.co.uk))

Dick Fulcher grows over 400 varieties of agapanthus, many of which were transferred from Bicton College where Dick used to work. His tips for success with agapanthus are

- ✓ Remember there are two main types; hardy deciduous and evergreen, more tender ones
- ✓ For flowers in the first year buy strong, healthy plants in 1.5-2 litre pots. (not bare root offers from weekend newspapers!)
- ✓ Agapanthus need an open, sunny position in the garden
- ✓ They like a well drained soil...sandy soil is ideal
- ✓ Potted plants do need protection in winter
- ✓ Pot plants into larger pots each spring, using good quality loam –based compost with added slow release fertiliser.
- ✓ When the plants get too big to take out of their pots, resort to liquid feeding during the summer months.

## DIARY



*Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011 Plant Sale at Wembury Altwood Close Maidenhead SL6 4PP Carolyn Foster's annual sale in aid of Thames Hospicecare. 10am onwards. Patio and basket plants, tomato plants,*

*perennials and hanging baskets to order. Coffee, tea and homemade cakes, ploughman's lunches, raffle. Well worth a visit for top quality plants at reasonable prices. Please support this good cause.*

### **Open Gardens (Air Ambulance)**

In 2010 Open Gardens raised in excess of £20000 for the Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance. The following are a selection for you to visit in May and June. Don't forget the NGS gardens too!

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> May Denham and higher Denham Village gardens 2-5pm £3.50 for 5 gardens

Sunday 22 May Grange Cottage, Temple Lane, Bisham SL7 1RS A new garden to the scheme, this is a charming riverside cottage with an interesting approach to growing fruit, flowers and vegetables in a smaller garden. 2-5pm £3.50

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June Little Paddocks, New Road, Bourne End SL8 5BZ With long reaching views of the Thames this 3 acre garden has mature trees, an orchard, herbaceous borders pond and vegetable garden. 2-5pm £3.50

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June The Manor House Hambleden Village. RG9 6SG Another new addition, this garden is 4 acres with sweeping lawns, stunning rose garden designed by Peter Beales and a large vegetable garden. 2-5pm £3.50

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June Coltmans, The Street, Waltham St Lawrence RG10 OJJ One of 3 gardens open in The Street, this one surrounds a 16<sup>th</sup> Century house. 2-5pm £3.50 for all 3 gardens. Coltmans Farm garden has sculpture by Dick Budden.

### **Gardens open for The Royal Berkshire Charity at the Royal Berks Hospital.**

Below is a small selection of the 13 gardens open for the above charity. For further details and to book a place contact **Phone - 0118 322 6969** Email - [jan.jewson@royalberkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:jan.jewson@royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**North Down** Open Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June. 2pm Postcode: HP8 4EL

Location: **4miles South East of Amersham, 4miles North East of Beaconsfield.**

**Opposite the green in centre of** village. At Crown Inn turn into Up Corner, on to Silver Hill. At top of hill fork right into Dodds Lane. North Down is 6th opening on Left. Limited parking in Dodds Lane

**Description:** ¾-acre sloping North facing compartmentalised site with mature trees. Difficult stony soil. Designed with scenic effect in mind and interest throughout the year. Large grassed areas with island beds of mixed perennials, shrubs and some unusual plants. Variety of rhododendrons, azaleas, acers, clematis and a huge kiftsgate rose up an old apple tree. Displays of sempervivum varieties, alpines, grasses and ferns. Small patio/water feature. Greenhouse. Italianate front patio to owner's design

**Blewbury Manor** Open Wed 8<sup>th</sup> June 2.30pm Postcode: OX11 9QJ

**Location:** 4miles South East of Didcot. Turn off A417 in Blewbury into Westbrook St, after 1/3miles bear Right at sign to village hall (car parking in school car park & in village hall car park). Continue into Berry Lane & house is 20yds on Left

**Description:** Part C17 Manor House (not open) with moat set in a garden of about 10 acres. Features include a parterre; flower garden, herbaceous and mixed borders; pergola; decorative vegetable and herb garden; stream planting and woodland area; lake and sunken gravel garden surrounded by hornbeam allées. Large traditional courtyard with late season flowering border

**Greenfield Farm Open Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June. 6pm Postcode: OX49 5HG**

**Location:** 4miles from J5 of M40, 7miles from Henley. J5 M40; A40 towards Oxford for ½m; turn Left signed Christmas Common. ¾m past Fox & Hounds. Turn Left at Tree Barn sign

**Description:** 10-acre wild flower meadow, surrounded by woodland, established 14 yrs ago under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Traditional Chiltern chalkland meadow in beautiful peaceful setting with 100 species of perennial wild flowers, grasses and 5 species of orchids. ½m walk from parking area to meadow. Opportunity to return via typical Chiltern beechwood

**IS IT IN YOUR DIARY? Our Society visit to Old Waterfield at Ascot on 13<sup>th</sup> July @6.30pm. More details next month.**

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### **“Sharing with the Newts”**

This was the title of a recent lecture given by internationally known gardener and writer Noel Kingsbury at the RHS London Spring Plant Fair. He addressed various topical questions from the world of gardening.

For example “ How can we be greener?” This has become an enormous industry and led to the marketing of such products as “Frogitats “ and “Hogitats”, “Slug-Stoppa” and peat-free compost. Noel Kingsbury feels that the purchase of such products does not quite let us off the hook. There are many better things we could be doing to make our gardens more environmentally friendly. No gardening is natural, but he recommends we take a more naturalistic approach to our plots and the wildlife will follow. He cited Waltham Place (which we visited last summer) as a good example of encouraging bio diversity, but in no way suggests the ordinary gardener has to go to such extremes. He does not think one should be socially ostracized if admitting to the use of Round-

Up! But he suggests a lighter touch with weed controls and pesticides. A softer, less formal style of planting means that weeds and pests become less of an issue. Organic gardening can work in a small space, whereas used globally it becomes wasteful.

Sustainable materials are another area for investigation. According to him the jury is still out on the use of peat. Scientists are still working towards an effective alternative, particularly for the early stages of seed sowing. The USA imports its peat from Canada, but it is taken from beds that are constantly being replenished, unlike our use of fossilised peat bogs.

One issue that he feels is more clear-cut is the appalling amount of the use of plastics. The garden is one place where we can help with this. Many alternative plant pot materials are being tried and we should certainly look out for these.

In Noel Kingsbury's view, offering a diverse habitat can have more impact on wildlife than following rules such as sticking to native plants only. It is more important to shoehorn in as much as possible and grow vegetation in layers, from ground to treetop level, not necessarily excluding straight lines (birds don't care.)

Overall, this interesting lecture offered a very balanced view of the environmental picture, although he was mostly preaching to the converted. When I next spot one of those scarlet lily beetles I shall deal with it the Pippa Greenwood way, which I am sure I don't need to describe..... MD

### **Kew's Millennium Project "Adopt a Seed" Scheme**

We are now part of the world's most important practical conservation project. Members chose to donate part of the proceeds of the April raffle to save the **Nematolepis wilsonii**, the shining nematolepis, threatened with extinction as a result of devastating bush fires in S.E. Australia in Feb. 2009.

The adoption pack will be available to see at the May and June meetings. MD

Contributions to next month's newsletter by 6<sup>th</sup> June please to Gill Townend [gilltownend@aol.com](mailto:gilltownend@aol.com) or 01628 483092. Don't forget there is no newsletter in July or August so this is your big opportunity to share your gardening thoughts before September!!