

## *Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society*

**NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, October 27th 7.30pm**  
Cookham Dean Village Hall

### **Plant Pest Recognition and Control**

**A talk by Andrew Halstead**

(RHS Principal Entomologist and regular contributor to The Garden magazine.)

#### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

As usual, Brian Fisher did us proud at our September meeting and his illustrated talk on grasses was fascinating. I have a number of the grasses he mentioned round my pond and the thought of digging them up and dividing them makes me feel quite faint, but it confirmed my belief that they really are lovely plants if one has the right place and a fair amount of room for them. I'm sure Brian could talk on any subject under the sun if one asked him to.

I must also say how impressed I was with the fuchsias that members brought which they had grown from the small plugs we sold in the spring. I bought 2 myself, one bit the dust fairly soon afterwards and the other grew on all right but I'm afraid I neglected to give it much love and care and very little feed, so I was too ashamed to bring it on the evening. Congratulations to Charles Elly for his magnificent plant, and also to Claire Phillpott and Wendy Craig for their excellent efforts.

For those of you who were not at the September meeting, we had our 'competition' daffodils for sale there, at 60p for 5. They will be also be available for sale at the October meeting, so do please buy some and try your luck. The variety is 'Cornish Sun' and we bought them at one of the Garden Sales at Pinder Hall, and were assured by Vernon Brown that they are a reliable variety. Mary Downes and I thought they were really good bulbs although we didn't know the variety, so I hope we shall get an excellent display at the Spring Show in March.

I shall unfortunately be away for the October meeting but I know you will enjoy hearing Andrew Halstead on pests and diseases in the garden (or maybe when you've heard him talk you will wonder, as I did when I heard him before, whether it's worth trying to grow anything in the garden successfully!) \However, I know he will be extremely interesting so do please try and come. I look forward to seeing you again in November.  
Susie Tremlett

### *Getting down to Grass Roots*

A perennial favourite of the Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society, Brian Fisher astounded us with the most amazing range of grasses and grass effect plants. Long, thin, stately ones; short, fat, clumpy ones. And even those of us who were not great enthusiasts at the outset, were heard to say "I think I'll go and plant grasses." Some like couch grass, also known as *twitch* grass, quick *grass* or simply quitch are the scourge of all gardeners. With rhizomes determined enough to grow right through a potato, they have the potential to be weapons of mass destruction in any garden. Even alluringly graceful grasses like Gardener's Garter are very invasive and therefore best grown in a pot. By focusing your attention on the tufted varieties of grasses a profusion of problem free possibilities are available. But wonderful names like Bowles Golden Grass, Quaking Grass and Wild Dancer make it easy to be seduced by the names alone. My personal

favourites were the tall, stiff, upright Karl Foerster, which you can see in the Secret Garden at Cliveden, and the gentle, graceful Wavy Hair Grass, which Brian explained to us, gives the illusion of moving even on a completely still day

Brian also dazzled us with a cornucopia of interesting facts about grasses:

- They are pollinated by the wind, not by insects
- Bamboo and sweet corn are both grasses
- It is best to cut back boarder grasses in the spring when they are beginning to shoot
- Pond grasses should be cut back now to prevent them rotting into the water
- Black grass is a member of the sedge rush family and not a grass at all!
- Most grasses are perennial but some like Quaking Grass are annual
- Garden centres all too often stock expensive tender grasses that look amazing when you buy them but will not last a year so check before you buy

Suitably inspired, I for one will be heading to the Cotswold Wildlife Park at Burford next August, the grass border there looked just sublime, and to Great Dixter where the main entrance has been transformed from a formal grass lawn with regimental stripes to a wild and wonderful meadow of flowers and grasses.

Talking of flowers, Brian also very kindly agreed to judge the Society's Fuchsia Competition. Months of careful nurturing, pinching, feeding and imploring words of encouragement, came to an end with a glorious profusion of pink and purple blooms. How amazing to think that a few short months ago these spectacular plants were tiny, insignificant plugs. The much coveted silver cup was won by Charles Elly, whose leaves had a lustre and his flowers a depth of colour all of their own. CP

## *Hergest Croft Gardens, Kington, Herefordshire.*

*In August I was lucky enough to be able to visit these delightful gardens in the Welsh Marches, with views of the Black Mountains. Although it was a rather drizzly day, it was still possible to enjoy walking round the park and woodland. Four distinct gardens, covering seventy acres overall, have been created, each conveying a feeling of harmony with the landscape.*

**Park Wood** is a secluded valley within an ancient oak wood, full of rhododendrons and exotic trees, including Eucryphias (Autumn flowering.)

**Maple Grove** has some wonderful and unusual acers and we were told to look out for the hanging red fruits of *Acer pectinatum* ssp *forrestii*, indeed spectacular. The gardeners hope to propagate this in future. Also demonstrating the role that the gardeners here play in species conservation and finding new plants for British gardens, were examples of trees they have grown from seed, requiring years of patience. Chinese silver firs, *Abies delavayi*, are being grown as part of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh's conifer conservation programme.

In front of the house is a croquet lawn, enclosed by yew hedges and the terrace was full of agapanthus, with steps leading down to a Slate Garden, edged by six varieties of box. Paths continue on, winding round a lily pond and past an area labelled "Under New Design" (I could do with that label as a permanent feature at home!)



The **Kitchen Garden** was very productive and lovely herbaceous borders, still colourful, swept off into the surrounding landscape.

Back near the house is an original Edwardian greenhouse, full of scented pelargoniums.(see left)

An excellent value nursery, tea-room and small shop complete the picture.

**Lawrence and Elizabeth Banks** have continued to develop the gardens created by four generations of their

family. Elizabeth gave an interview in her garden about her new role as President of the RHS, just before the Hampton Court Flower Show, during which it was broadcast. Hergest Croft Garden is a marvellous example of plant diversity and species conservation and well worth a detour.

RHS members free except May, June and Oct. Future events at Hergest include **Saturday October 16th, 10-4.30pm RHS and Maples Society Special Maple Day** and **Autumn Plant Fair Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October.** see [www.hergest.co.uk](http://www.hergest.co.uk) for details. MD

## Autumn Diary

**Saturday October 23rd, 2010:** Harvey Stephens, Head of the Savill Garden, will give a guided tour of the garden which should be in its glorious autumn colours. The tour will start from the Savill Building at 14:00 but why not make a day of it and visit the Valley Gardens in the morning? There are lunches/teas etc at the Savill Garden and there is a picnic spot nearby. There will be a number limit, and the cost will be £6.65 per person to cover the garden entry (preferential group rate) unless of course you are a Friend of the Savill Garden. This cost will also cover the cost of parking at the Savill Garden car park.

**Sunday November 21st, 2010:** AGM of local NCCPG at Waterperry Gardens (in the classroom) at 14:00. There will also be a speaker (subject to be confirmed).

POST CARD FROM MARRAKECH September 24<sup>th</sup> 2010

*Only four days after moving house I flew off to Marrakech for a return visit after 42 years. As a student in 1968 our priority was not to visit gardens so on this return visit we headed for the Jardin Majorelle in the Ville Nouvelle. Jacques Majorelle, a painter, acquired land in Marrakech in 1924 and began to develop this very individual garden. In 1947 he opened it to the public and in 1964 Yves Saint Laurent bought the villa and garden with Pierre Bergere. With the help of a local botanist the garden is now an oasis of calm in the mahem of Marrakech. Calm lily ponds vie with strong vertical shapes of desert cacti and the giant bamboos which create a tunnel effect in parts of the garden.. The guide book describes it thus...."skinny cacti slouch against cobalt blue plaster walls like wasted rock stars and goldfish flit through pale green reflecting pools in shocking orange flashes" It was fun but not quite as psychedelic as that!! It is now a shrine to Saint Laurent who requested that his ashes be buried here following his death in 2008. GT*



## RHS PLANTS OF MERIT

If you don't always get to the last page of The Garden magazine you may have missed the excellent series on Plants of Merit. In a recent newsletter I explained how a plant came to receive the AGM award and below is a selection from recent months' recommendations;

### ***Malus 'John Downie'***

*This excellent garden tree is tolerant of a range of soil types from sandy to heavy clay. Upright and narrow when young but broadening as it matures. It grows 3-5metres, white flowers open from pink buds in spring and in autumn the orange red crab apples are abundant (too abundant in my case...do not plant near the drive!)*

### ***Magnolia 'Susan'***

*This is a compact magnolia with deep reddish purple tulip shaped buds. It is slow growing and easy to maintain, reaching a height and spread of no more than 2metres Grow in well drained acid to neutral soil.*

***Viburnum plicatum f.tomentosum 'Mariesii'***

*First awarded the AGM in 1929 and reconfirmed in 2002 ,this deciduous viburnum has distinctive tiered branches with lacy flowerheads in spring and good autumn colour. Full sun is preferred but will grow in part shade and likes a moist, well drained soil (but mine grows on heavy clay)*

***Gladiolus x colvillii 'The Bride'***

*This tender perennial corm requires a sheltered location and full sun for growing. It flower sin late spring with white, funnel shaped flowers on stems up to 60cm tall.*

***Euphorbia characias 'Portuguese Velvet'***

*This plant was given an AGM in 1998. It has a compact habit growing to around 60x60cm with grey green velvety leaves arranged spirally around upright stems. Yellow green flowerheads in spring and drought resistant.*

***Iris 'Stepping Out'***

*If you have the right conditions for tall bearded iris then this cultivar has purple blooms and white falls with purple edges. A loamy neutral soil in full sun is best with the rhizomes facing south.*

***Wisteria floribunda 'Multijuga'***

*This Japanese wisteria has the finest and longest racemes, almost 3ft long. The fragrant blooms are lilac with darker markings and appear at a similar time to the feathery foliage. Less vigorous than other cultivars.*

***Clematis 'Frances Ravis'***

*Flowering reliably in full sun or part shade in April and May, this is a pretty pale violet blue clematis with nodding heads. Plants reach 10metres and are reliably hardy in cold situations.*

***Beetroot 'Boltardy'***

*Good colour ,texture and taste this beetroot has smooth-skinned, rounded roots and is particularly resistant to bolting*

***Lettuce 'Little Gem'***

*A cos lettuce suitable for smaller spaces or containers this cultivar has a sweet flavour and crisp texture It is resistant to root aphid and needs a moisture retentive soil in full sun. Originally awarded the AGM in 1993 it has been recently reconfirmed.*

**AND FOR MY OWN AGM.....**

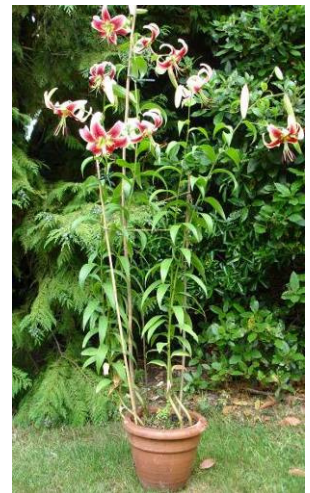
**LILIUM SHEHEREZADE**



*Regular readers of this newsletter may remember that about four years ago I described an experiment of planting lilies in pots and wondering how long they would last before succumbing to lily beetle or death by neglect. I planted three Sheherezade lily bulbs from Bloms in JI no3 compost in a clay pot 8 inches in diameter.*

*Amazingly these bulbs flowered better than ever this year with hardly any attention. I have not fed them, watered in*

*the growing season only, left them outside through all the winter weather (though in a sheltered corner) and just allowed the dead foliage to die down naturally. They were repotted in the same pot two years ago in my own compost. I found one lily beetle about three years ago and squashed him quickly. The photo shows 18 flowers on July 26<sup>th</sup> this year.*



**Smell of jasmine 'as calming as Valium'**

The sweet smell of jasmine is as good as valium at calming the nerves with none of the side effects, according to new research. Inhaling jasmine oil molecules is said to transmit messages to a brain region involved in controlling emotions and tests showed mice calmed dramatically when their cage was filled with jasmine scent, causing them to cease all activity and sit quietly in a corner. Results published online in the Journal of Biological Chemistry can 'be seen as evidence of a scientific basis for aromotherapy' Thanks to Elizabeth Runnacles for sending me this . Perhaps members of HortiSoc could conduct their own clinical trial ?

Contributions for next month's newsletter to [gilltownend@aol.com](mailto:gilltownend@aol.com) or 01628 483092 or send to 38 Rookery Court ,Marlow SL7 3HR. I am sure many of you will be out enjoying the autumn colours so please share your experiences with our members.