

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

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EDITORS NOTES

It's a long time since any of you have given me any copy for the newsletter.
Please do your best to find me an article.

Brian -

Stories to ernestperry33@gmail.com hard copy to Chris

R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY

We are affiliated to the RHS who's benefits include competitive insurance cover, free gardening advice, a free group visit to an RHS garden, (54 members to visit Wisley *club trip in Summer*) access to medals (*Banksian medal*) and show stationery and a free monthly copy of The Garden magazine (*see Brenda Winton if you wish to view*). Our membership number is 10564709.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- RHS Flower Show Cardiff – 13–15 April 2018
 - SPRING SHOW 7th APRIL
 - RHS Malvern Spring Festival – 10–13 May 2018.
 - PLANT SALE 12th MAY
 - RHS Chelsea Flower Show – 22–26 May 2018.
 - SUMMER SHOW 2nd JULY
 - RHS Chatsworth Flower Show – 6–10 June 2018.
 - RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show – 2–8 July 2018 (Preview 2 July)
 - RHS Flower Show Tatton Park – 18–22 July 2018.
 - AUTUMN SHOW 8th September
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THE TRUE STORY OF VALENTINE'S DAY

We all love the romance of Valentine's Day and we all know the story of how the day became to be celebrated. Or do we? We know St. Valentine was imprisoned and executed for officiating at a marriage but do we really know why. The origin of this day that is renowned for the expression of love really isn't romantic at all.

St Valentine was a Roman Priest at a time when an emperor called Claudias persecuted the church. He was a harsh ruler passing a law prohibiting the marriage of young people. This was based on his belief that young unmarried soldiers fought with more abandon than married soldiers. His thinking was that a married soldier would always have his wife or family in mind and not take any risks that may result in his death.

It was a permissive society at this time where many men would have more than one family. And yet St Valentine realised that many were attracted to the Christian faith. The church was opposed to polygamy and thought that marriage between one man and one women was sacred and was to be encouraged.

The idea of them to marry within the Christian church was what Valentine wished for and he secretly married many couple, going against the law prohibiting young marriages.

Inevitably Valentine was caught, imprisoned and tortured for performing the marriage ceremonies, taking a stand against the ruling of Emperor Claudius the second.

There are legends surrounding Valentine during his time in prison. One is about Judge Asterius, he was to interrogate Valentine in line with the Roman law of the time to prove that Valentine had acted unlawfully.

Asterius' daughter was blind and it has been said the Valentine prayed with the young girl healing her illness. Asterius was so astonished it is said that he himself became a Christian.

In the year 269AD Valentine was sentenced to a three part execution of beating, stoning and finally decapitation; His ultimate price for the belief in Christian marriage.

The story goes that the last words he wrote were in a note to Asterius' daughter. The girl whose sight he had healed and he signed this note 'from your Valentine'.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Pancakes are not just for Pancake Day but it is easy to forget about them at other times of year. They are extremely versatile for both savoury and sweet dishes, making a speedy supper dish or pudding in very little time.

Make a batch of pancakes when you have time, interleave each one (flat) with greaseproof paper, wrap, then store flat in the freezer until needed. Or they will keep several days in the fridge. They only need a short time to de-frost before being pliable enough to use, if you're in a real hurry, warm in the oven a few minutes.

For savoury fillings:

- try chopped, sauted leeks with bacon, in a bechamel sauce inside each pancake, folded and placed in a lightly oiled or buttered ovenproof dish, topped with more sauce and browned in a medium oven for 15-20 mins.
- for a vegetarian version without bacon, try some cooked haricot or other beans with the leeks in a cheese sauce.
- or try spinach with cheese sauce.
- if you made pots of ratatouille with last year's glut of courgettes, that goes very nicely in pancakes, with a bechamel or cheese sauce on top.
- or caponata (similar but made with celery or fennel) is another variation.

Layered pancakes make an impressive-looking dish but are not difficult to create. Thinly spread a pancake all over with filling, place in an oiled, ovenproof dish, top with another pancake, more filling, and so on ... Different fillings make this even

more attractive. Then a light sauce on top, into the oven for 20 mins. and you have a complete meal in one dish.

For puddings, instead of traditional lemons and sugar (good as it is)

- try home made jams, perhaps warmed slightly in a pan.
- or home-grown fruit, lightly cooked and sweetened.

As a starter, or light lunch, fill 1 or 2 pancakes per person, place in an overproof dish, cover with buttered greaseproof paper and warm in the oven for 10 mins.

- try a little white sauce with grated raw vegetables.
 - cream cheese softened and mixed with chopped celery and apple, maybe walnuts.
 - or cream cheese with fresh, chopped herbs (eg chives, parsley, thyme, mint, marjoram, according to what you have available)
-

PEAT-FREE COMPOST IS NOT ALWAYS THE ANSWER

Alan Harris

THERE'S still a long way to go for many plants including begonias before an acceptable peat alternative is found.

The main problems with all the peat-free composts I've tried are that they hold too much water in the lower half, dry out too quickly near the top and leach nutrients too easily.

Begonias like a uniform moisture level throughout the pot to avoid root problems, together with the steady slow release of nutrients necessary to give balanced growth.

Improvements can be made by mixing in perlite or vermiculite but this makes for a very expensive compost that's still inferior to a peat-based one.

John Innes No 2 is the best mix for final potting, although it can be difficult to find a consistently good product. Whichever compost you're using, store it somewhere warm for a week or two, ready for starting tubers next month. Keep your stored tubers in a cool, frost-free place and check and remove any that show signs of rot.

Potential problems

Tarsonamid mite: This and vine weevil are undoubtedly the most serious pests of all types of begonias, particularly under glass.

Tarsonamid mite is more troublesome in hot, dry summers and when greenhouse humidity is low. The mites attack the growing points in midsummer, quickly decimate the whole plant and rapidly spread to nearby plants. Damaged plants look as though they've been attacked with a blow torch, with black and shriveled foliage and buds. No chemical control is available to amateur growers, but several biological controls used for red spider mite, such as *Amblyseius cucumeris*, give some protection.

Vine weevil: The weevils themselves do little damage, apart from the odd hole in a leaf, but the creamy white grubs, which are about 6mm long with a brown head, do

enormous damage to the tuber and root system. Fortunately, this is fairly easy to prevent by mixing Provado Vine Weevil Killer into your compost, as recommended by the manufacturer, or using a biological control. Give begonias grown outside in tubs or baskets an additional treatment in August as the effectiveness is reduced by heavy rains.

Caterpillars: Tortrix moth caterpillars cause the most problems. About 10mm long and lime green in colour, they arch their back as they move. The best way to control them is by torchlight and remove them by hand.

Powdery mildew: First showing as small specks of an ash-like deposit, this disease, if left untreated, will soon cover the whole plant, it's often difficult to see on foliage begonias until the attack is quite advanced. The problem is most common in late summer and autumn. Prevention using a variety of suitable fungicides at two-weekly intervals during the growing season but stopping before flowering. It's also worth giving another couple of sprays during late September after flowering.

Stem rot: This black or brown rot is usually wet and affects the succulent stems of tuberous begonias and occasionally semperflorens. Left untreated, it is fatal. It's worse if plants are overfed, given excess nitrogen or kept close together. Remove the infected area as soon as possible with a sharp knife, dry the area with a soft tissue and paint on methylated spirits is best,

APGC TRIPS 2018

Sunday 13th May RHS Malvern Spring Show. Cost £38 each (transport and Entry Fees) Leave Hall at 8:30am, returning approx 6:30pm. Non Returnable Deposit £20 to be paid by 2nd April. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/malvern-spring-festival/about-the-rhs-malvern-spring-festival>

Sunday 8th July East Lambrook Manor Gardens. Cost £24 each (transport and Entry Fees) Leave Hall at 9am, returning approx 6pm. Non Returnable Deposit £10. <http://www.eastlambrook.com/pages/>

Saturday 18th August Great Dixter. Cost £25 each (transport and Entry Fees) Leave Hall at 9:30am, returning approx 6pm. Non Returnable Deposit £10. <https://www.greatdixter.co.uk/>

On all the above trips a comfort break will be made in both directions.

Sunday 9th September RHS Wisley Gardens. Cost £4 each (for those using minibus only) Leave Hall at 1pm, returning approx 5pm. Free for those who meet us at Wisley at 1:30pm. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley>

Friday 23rd June to Monday 26th June. Our 4 day trip to Lynton, N Devon. We still have 1 single person vacancy. Cost £225 includes 3 night Dinner, Bed & Breakfast, Transport and Entry fees to all gardens.

SHF SPRING TALK

The Surrey Horticultural Federation Spring Talk
Head of the Arboretum at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Tony Kirkham

and his new talk

'Trees - A Cut Above the Rest'

Lots of topical information about trees and their care!



2.30pm Sunday 4th March 2018

**Normandy Village Hall, Manor Fruit Farm,
Glaziers Lane, Normandy, GU3 2DE**

Tickets (including tea/coffee):

SHF Affiliated Clubs/Members: £7.50 in advance

Non-members/Visitors: £10 in advance

Cheques payable to Surrey Horticultural Federation, and sent to Secretary Janet Arm, Redleaf Nursery, Green Lane, Tilford, Farnham, GU10 2AP
Please enclose a S.A.E. Tickets bought in advance are non-refundable.

All tickets at the door £10 each

Any queries Tel: **01252-783133** or email: janetarm@btinternet.com

www.surreyhorticulturalfederation.org

Ewhurst Horticultural Society

**VAL
BOURNE**



SYDNEY SCOTT LECTURE

7th March 2018

EWHURST VILLAGE HALL 7.30pm for 8pm

Tickets..... Members £5.00..... Guests £10.00

Wine and soft drinks bar nibbles Raffle

Tickets@ewhurstshortsoc.org.uk or 01483 271812

Val Bourne is an award-winning garden writer, organic gardener and lecturer and she gardens on the wind-swept Cotswolds at Spring Cottage – high above Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire. Her third of an acre garden is managed without using chemicals – something Val has always believed in. She is a hands on gardener and a committed plantaholic.

LECTURE

First-Rate Perennials

One of the secrets of gardening successfully is choosing the best plants and this lecture selects some of the best doers in the garden and it also explains to gardeners why it's such a good plant. The talk features 46 personal favourites.



Mitchmere Farm Garden PO18 9JW will open for
The Sussex Snowdrop Trust



Sunday 11th February, 11am to 4pm
Refreshments, snowdrops for sale. Entrance: £4 children free, please no dogs.



National Vegetable Society – Surrey
Wednesday 14th March 2018

“Successional Sowing & No Dig Gardening”

Speaker: Charles Dowding

(Teacher, author, appears on TV & radio & innovator of no dig gardening)

Main Hall, East Horsley Village Hall,
Kingston Avenue, East Horsley, KT24 6QT at 8pm

NVS Members Free, NVS Affiliated Society Members £1, Visitors £5.00,
RHS Students £2

GARDENING CALENDAR FEBRUARY

There are two ways of looking at the month of February: It is cold, grey, wet and miserable, OR it is the shortest month, the days are getting longer, the sun's rays feel warmer and there are a huge number of flowers and scents, if you take the time to look!

So, I think we will go with the second option, as I have been finding more and more treasures, albeit they are small offerings such as tiny early cyclamen, heathers, delicate violas in their many colours, *Lonicera fragrantissima*, *Prunus subhirtella* 'autumnalis rosea' (early flowering cherry), crocus, snowdrops and the earliest daffodil February Gold - to name but a few! Also, there are catkins and willow flowers in abundance and the bark of Acers, Dogwoods and Willows are starting to glow red, orange and bright green.

The structure of the garden is very clear now without all the leaves of herbaceous plants, trees and shrubs, so it is easy to spot the spaces that need filling up. Green is the main strength of a garden, but before you venture forth to a local garden centre, do look carefully at the size, shape and colours of the leaves that you already have. All the plants will be laid out in varieties, so you can compare them and work out what would fit in best. For example pittosporum grow to different heights but they all have small oval leaves, which range in colour from vibrant acid green, to variegated pale green, pink, silver and the wonderful *P. tenuifolium* 'Purpureum' that has dark purple leaves, which looks spectacular when planted behind the poppy 'Patty's Plum'.

It really helps if you take a rough sketch of the area you want to add to, with existing plants described on it; then really look at the plants that are on display and make your choices. Also, it is useful to move the plants around the garden, whilst they are still in their pots, to see where they look best. Smaller plants should be planted in groups of three or five. With our clay soil it is best to line the bottom of the hole with some gravel to aid drainage.

Do get out there and start to explore but try to keep off the grass, especially when it is frosty, to avoid damaging the tender grass shoots. Another amazing thing is that the blue tits have started to inspect the nesting boxes and giving them a good spring clean, ready for the next brood. We have two boxes on the rear wall of the house, which faces north and even though the French doors are in constant use, both are used each year, which is a real treat.

Some positive jobs for this month: Plant bare-root roses in a sunny, well-drained spot. If your soil is Cranleigh clay, then add gravel under to roots as I mentioned above. Clip deciduous grasses, such as *Miscanthus*, down to ground level before their active growth begins to show through. Also, if you lifted dahlia tubers and stored them in a frost free area, then they should be potted up in compost now, kept warm on a window sill or greenhouse and watered regularly until they start to shoot. They cannot be planted out in the garden until all danger of frost is past - normally at the start of May.

If you have the chance then there are lots of seeds that can be sown now too