

## ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

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## EDITORS NOTES

Brian –Stories to [ernestperry33@gmail.com](mailto: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.

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## GOING DUTCH

DAVID WHEELER

Mid-September, Dordrecht: I'm standing alongside a row of dusky, orange *Tithonia rotundifolia* - Mexican sunflowers - towering above my head, and I'm 6ft tall. They're perennial on their native southern US grasslands but grown as an annual in northern European gardens.

My visit to South Holland (one of 12 provinces that comprise the Netherlands) marks a fond farewell to this year's summer, an anguished season for many gardeners as we struggled to nurture our darling plants in temperatures more likely experienced in the Nile delta.

Skeins of early-morning dewy cobwebs curtain the vegetation, swallows are gathering on overhead wires, and flamboyant flowers shed petals to reveal a miscellany of tawny seed heads - a survival grain store for non-migratory birds during the coming shorter days.

This is the garden of Villa Augustus, a hotel imaginatively converted from Dordrecht's 18th-century water tower, where residual, interior industrial bones - girders, rafters and panelling - have been cleaned and amusingly dressed in an eclectic array of unlikely 'shabby chic' furniture and exciting fabrics. Its floriferous and utilitarian gardens give me as much pleasure now as they did on an earlier midsummer visit.

A trio of inspired Dutch designers and architects - Hans Loos, Dorine de Vos and Daan van der Have - grappled with this redundant building and improbable watery site in 2006, excavating the immediate four-acre surroundings to a depth of several feet and importing some 11,000 cubic yards of new soil.

Apart from its formal layout, there's a bosky 'English garden' threaded with sinuous paths, a limonaia for the overwintering of pot-grown citrus, box and hornbeam hedges cut with niches for some spirited 'classical' statuary, a pair of glasshouses wherein ripen dessert grapes, tomatoes and peppers, and a few shade-giving mulberry and cherry trees.

But the formal layout is the beating heart of this exuberant garden, looked after by a team of dedicated grafters under the direction of English head gardener Kate Shepherd, who made the Netherlands her home some 40 years ago.

What excites me most about these gardens are the Mondrian-like blocks of colour interspersed with roses on knee-high hoops and orchard fruits on criss-cross cordons. Annual and perennial plants flourish in small, square, rectangular and triangular beds in a design almost entirely bereft of curves and circles.

At the year's end, it remains bountiful, illuminated by geometric swathes of salvias and antirrhinums, shoulder-high feathery cosmos, smokey-blue asters, heleniums, lime-green nicotiana, bright orange calendulas, persicarias and chalky-white Japanese anemones.

Among them, destined for the hotel's restaurant and market cafe, is a cornucopia of brassicas, salad greens, herbs, an arsenal of heavy pumpkins and squashes and, a trick I've not seen before, courgettes trained up sticks to protect them from the ill effects of a damp bed, to save space and for ease of picking.

Why, though, a utilitarian urban Victorian building renamed Villa Augustus? My companion, Dutch-born garden historian Sophie Piebenga, gives two possible reasons: to commemorate Emperor Augustus, who restored order and calm to the Roman state, allowing for the development of the villa rurale to which well-to-do Roman city dwellers could retire for relaxation; and the month of August is possibly the richest month for garden harvests.

Whatever the reason, strive to weave this remarkable establishment into your 2019 travel plans.

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## **THIS MONTHS RECIPE**

### **Damson, Cinnamon and Apple Pudding**

Damson trees are a wonderful sight in Spring with their clouds of white blossom and in Autumn there is the bounty of their downy, purple fruits. Mixing damsons and cinnamon together with apples makes a delicious autumn pudding.

You will need

Half lb damsons

Half lb cooking apples

2 oz butter, unsalted

4 oz sugar (or more if preferred)

2 egg yolks

4 tablespoons fresh white breadcrumbs

Half pint double cream  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

## To do

Wash the damsons and peel, core and thinly slice the apples.

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the fruit and sugar, just cover with water and simmer until the fruit is soft.

When cooked, cool and puree the fruit, remove the stones and add more sugar if preferred.

Blend in the egg yolks and the breadcrumbs.

Stir the mixture over a low heat until thickened then put into a bowl and leave to cool.

Meanwhile, whisk the cream lightly and then fold in to the cooled fruit puree, add the cinnamon and mix well.

When cold, spoon into individual bowls or sundae glasses and serve. Serves 4.

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## GARDENING CALENDAR NOVEMBER

November seems to be a dead month in the garden, but there are still jobs that need to be done before beginning a spell of "armchair" gardening. There is even some sowing that can be done now- and this is the perfect tulip planting time.. The important jobs are summarised below:-

**BULBS** - this is the Tulip planting month. Always remember that shallow planting is the main cause of failure with these bulbs. Other Spring flowering bulbs should already have been planted.

**FRUIT** - The sooner fruit trees are planted, the better, although the planting season extends to March. But never plant in wet sticky soil. Start pruning establish fruit bushes, apples and pears. Cut out most of the old Black barked branches from the Black-currants. Last Summers growth on the branch ends of gooseberries, redcurrants, apples and pears need to be cut back by one third. Cut right out from Blackberries, loganberries and Summer fruiting raspberries all the canes which carried fruit this year.

**VEGETABLES** - Dwarf broad beans and early peas should be sown now for Wintering and cropping under cloches. Lift and store root vegetables for Winter use. Carrots, beetroot, turnips and kohlrabi all keep well in trays when the roots are covered in peat. For the best flavour, leave parsnip roots exposed to frost on the surface of the soil until just before eating. Chicory can be lifted for forcing now - roots should be placed upright, close together in deep boxes or pots in ordinary soil and covered with sand. They should then be brought into a dark place which has a temperature of about 60 °F, 16 °C. The Chicory should then be ready in about 3 weeks.

**GREENHOUSE** - Greenhouse plants should be protected against Frost and Damp. Keep all ventilators closed while frost persists.

**HERBACEOUS PLANTS** - As late perennials finish flowering, cut down top growth. Weed and fork between the plants.

**HOUSE PLANTS** - A thorough weekly examination of plants is necessary - on the same day and at the same time of the day. Plants may be dormant, but pests aren't.

**LAWNS** - remove fallen leaves from the lawns regularly, using a proprietary leaf sweeper or a besom.

**ROCK GARDENS** - Top dressings on the rock garden should be lightly stirred to allow air to reach the soil. A routine spray against pests during dry spells will help to clean plants and protect them through the Winter months.

**ROSES** - As soon as roots arrive from the Nurseryman, remove them from their packaging and sprinkle them liberally with water. Broken stems and roots should be cut away cleanly.

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## **CLUB EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES –**

### **November 2018**

- 1st Aldershot Floral Design Demo: Seasonal Splendour, by John Chennell  
Dee Kelly 01252-350944
- 1st Sunningdale Gardening for Bumblebees, with Dr. Nikki Gammans  
Pat Bond 01344-623891
- 4th Surrey Chrysanth LATE CHRYSANTHEMUM SHOW, Abinger Hammer V. Hall  
Kevin Taitt 01420-474528
- 6th Jacobs Well Composts, Growing Media and Mulches, with Paul Patton  
Pam Lomax 01483-767225
- 6th Lightwater The Woodland Trust, with Francis Halstead  
Lynn Bull 01276-502497
- 6th Merrow AGM then Surrey Safari with Geoff Lunn  
Jenn. Bayley 01483-572781
- 8th Nat Veg Soc. Growing Vegetables, with Michael Abel. East Horsley V. Hall  
Beth Otway 01483-420989
- 10th Banstead LATE AUTUMN SHOW 2-5 Community Hall, Banstead  
Diana Beck 01737-271243
- 11th Egham Unusual shrubs for your garden, with G. Pattison  
Chris. Harberd 01784-452146
- 12th Yateley How Plants solve Crime, with Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas  
Hazel Goddard 01252-874532
- 13th Ashford Wild Flowers in the Garden, with David Bevan  
B. Baghapour 01784-247907
- 13th Brooklands The Secret Life of the Mole, with Chris Stewart  
Barb. Royston 01932-569441
- 13th Ewell Flowers for Christmas (Floral Art. Demo) with Sheila Stracy  
Lynne Mason 0208-393-9257
- 13th Ewhurst AGM then Talk on National Trust Gardens, with David Hunt  
Anne Dyball 01483-271812

- 13th Wokingham First Aid for Gardeners, with Elizabeth Davidson  
wha-general@outlook.com
- 13th Worplesdon Shrubs, the backbone of your garden, with Geoff Hawkins  
Sheila Dyke 01483-481841
- 14th Ashtead Show Time – the build up to Chelsea, with Paul Patton  
Jennie Pilford 01372-373348
- 14th Virginia Water The Exotic Garden at Wisley, with Gemma Neech  
Linda Gillham 01932-564834
- 15th Churt AGM then World of Butterflies, with John Baker  
Maggie Wright 01428-715304
- 15th New Soc. Camberley Thrive. Social and therapeutic horticulture. Neil Wilcox  
Chris.Thompson 01252-837640
- 17th Wokingham WINTER SHOW 2.00 PM St. Pauls Parish Rooms, RG41 1EH  
wha-general@outlook.com
- 21st Ripley The History of Squires Garden Centres, by Sarah Squire  
Liz Cooper 01372-458313
- 21st Sandhurst My Friend Jane, with Geoff Lunn  
Chris Dresler 01420-768965
- 22nd North Warnborough Monets Home and Garden, with Jennifer Carter  
Pam Forey 01256-703412
- 24th Hardy Plant Soc. Confessions of a gardener, with Alan Sargent.  
Sandra Hartley 01372-727715
- 27th West End Plants have feelings too! Mr. Peter Almond  
Judy Douch 01483-475133

**Please contact secretaries direct for further details.**

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## **WHEN PLANTS TALK DIRTY**

Plants produce volatile compounds to communicate. In different combinations, these can tell other plants to "prepare for attack", or they can attract or repel insects. However, air pollution is disrupting these lines of communication by breaking down many of these chemicals, including some of the most common ones that give plants their distinctive aromas.

### **Myrcene**

A peppery, woody scent with a touch of carrot, myrcene is produced by many plants including rose and orchid flowers, and tobacco and tomato leaves. It degrades readily in the presence of diesel exhaust, which can confuse pollinators such as bees.

### **Monoterpene limonene**

A citrusy scent produced by oranges, lemons and cannabis, this degrades into as many as 1200 different compounds when mixed with ozone.

**Beta-caryophyllene**

A clove-like scent produced by roses and lavender, this is readily destroyed by pollution, which may explain why flowers in urban gardens are lacking in aroma.

**Beta-ocimene**

With its tropical citrusy odour, this is more quickly broken down by pollution than any other scent tested, Mixed with diesel exhaust it becomes undetectable in less than a minute,

**Benzaldehyde**

This almondy scent reacts with ozone slowly compared with other volatile compounds produced by plants,

In the UK, nitrogen dioxide from diesel exhaust is undoubtedly doing damage. Its impacts on human health mean there are legal limits for emissions, but these are regularly breached. For example, hourly levels of nitrogen dioxide shouldn't exceed 200 micrograms per cubic metre more than 18 times in one year, yet in parts of London this happened in just the first few days of 2017.

Urban gardeners may notice the effects. "These pollutants definitely affect the smells from plants," says Dr Blande. Nitrogen oxides can reduce the time for which some floral scents linger in the air from 18 hours to a mere 5 minutes. Scented flowers such as roses don't have the same strong aroma in cities that they have in rural locations, says Dr Blande. You have to get really close to smell them, and even then you are unlikely to experience the full aroma because compounds such as the clove-like beta-caryophyllene are quickly destroyed by pollutants.

It's not just our noses and poetic natures that suffer when the scent of flowers is disrupted. "I don't think it would be too big a jump to suggest that air pollution could also be a factor in reducing the numbers of flying insects," says Prof Girling. Insect numbers have been falling globally, a situation that came to prominence in 2017 when it was revealed that insects in German nature reserves had declined by an alarming 75 per cent in just 27 years.

Miscommunication between flowers and insects could be particularly significant for pollinators such as bees. Although no one has yet measured the overall impact this has had on bee numbers, Dr Girling has found that the common volatile myrcene is particularly easily damaged by diesel exhaust - and this can lead honeybees astray. His team found if they removed myrcene from flowery scents, only 37 per cent of bees still recognised them.

As the language of plants becomes increasingly garbled, the impact on the survival of pollinators and plants themselves threatens to destabilise whole ecosystems, with serious implications for the natural world and commercial crops. Efforts are under way to reduce pollutants such as diesel exhaust but progress is slow. The good news is that there is a simple and immediate step we can take to help plants communicate: grow more of them to mop up the pollutants. Some plants are better

at this than others, but research suggests reforestation is a particularly good option because trees have a large surface area to absorb ozone and nitrogen dioxide from the atmosphere.

Urban planners are already moving in the right direction. Many cities now have vertical gardens and living walls. Near London's Victoria train station, for example, a 20-metre-high wall contains more than 10,000 plants. Even trees are being planted on the sides of buildings. In 2014, the first forest skyscraper went up in Milan, boasting 800 trees and almost 20,000 other plants. In China, the Nanjing Green Towers, currently under construction, will have 1100 trees along with thousands of other plants, and a whole forest city is planned in Liuzhou.

Such urban forests do, of course, have their communications undermined by pollution, but they also serve to reduce its impact on other plants. What's more, with more plants closer together they don't have to shout as loudly to be heard. It seems like a no-brainer. Nevertheless, Dr Fuentes injects a note of caution. He points out that some plants produce lots of organic molecules that are precursors of ozone, so can make matters worse when mixed with dirty city air. "Oaks, poplar trees -those are no-nos," he says.

And what about rural areas? Although such places are often cleaner, pollutants can have a disproportionate effect here because of their impact on commercially important plants. The solution, says Dr Fuentes, is to plant more flowers around crop fields - in particular, he recommends petunias. These won't just clean up the pollutants that disrupt plant communication, but will also attract pollinators. If the flowers smell sweet, that's even better for our human noses. It's a win, win, win solution.