

**ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS**

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**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.

### **EDITORS NOTES**

Brian –Stories to [ernestperry33@gmail.com](mailto:ernestperry33@gmail.com) hard copy to Chris

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### **NEW PROGRAM SECRETARY**

Program Secretary Mrs Penny Slack has arranged for the 2024 speakers but in order for a program to be organised for 2025 a new program secretary needs to be found. Any volunteers?

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### **GARDENING CALENDAR NOVEMBER**

Autumn is a busy time for gardeners.

#### **Plant**

Plant up bare-root trees and shrubs throughout November. To enjoy some colour during the winter, plant up tubs and baskets with evergreen perennials, ornamental grasses, winter pansies and polyanthus.

#### **Protect**

Trees over 1m will need staking for support, especially in exposed locations. November is a rainy and windy month, and frosts are not uncommon. Protect roses from wind rock by pruning them, and protect any container plants in non-frost-proof pots by wrapping bubble wrap around them. Your furniture will need protecting at this time of year, too – cover any wooden pieces, or move them into the conservatory.

#### **Maintain lawns**

November is the last chance to create new lawns from turf; choose a dry day when the soil's not frozen or waterlogged.

#### **Prepare ahead**

It's also the time to dig over your veggie patch; leave soil in large clumps and let the weather break it down into a crumbly finish.

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## **THIS MONTHS RECIPE**

### **BAKEWELL SLICES**

Pastry base — thin (tin approx. 8 inch, x 8 inch.)

You will need

Topping

4oz ground rice

4oz sugar

4oz margarine

1 teaspoon almond essence

1 egg

#### **To do**

Line square tin with pastry — base only.

Spread thinly with apricot jam.

Fill with topping.

Smooth over, brush with water, sprinkle with caster sugar and flaked almonds.

Allow about half hour to three quarters on 350 degrees.

Mrs. R. Dawson

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## **ROOTS AND BEANS**

Simon Courtauld

The root vegetables that I have grown during the past year have mostly been successful, especially a prolific variety of early potato called Jazzy. The beetroot -red, golden and white - grew well, and the carrots were sown with taped seed, which made thinning unnecessary. In the past I have usually failed to thin carrots, and they have suffered.

One is advised to lift beetroot and carrots in October and store them in sand. But, in my experience, they go limp after a few weeks and are better left in the ground until needed.

The Solent Wight garlic was a great success and should keep well through the winter. And the Jerusalem artichoke plants, having grown eight feet tall with yellow sunflowers during summer, now have roots ready to be dug.

Among the disappointments have been turnips and pak choi, which may have disliked the wet summer, and, surprisingly, yellow courgettes which too often had gone mushy at the ends before being cut.

The yellow French beans did much better, and a second sowing in August produced beans in late October. The runner beans, having made a slow start, would not stop; we have them frozen in bags as well as cartons of runner-bean and coconut curry.

My broad beans were looking good until a mass attack of black fly invaded not only the leafy tops but many of the pods too. I planted some more beans in mid-June and we had a reasonable crop less than three months later, with not a black fly in sight. I was pleased with the borlotti beans grown last year, and intend planting cannellini beans in 2024.

In late autumn, we were still cutting coriander and rocket, both with good flavour. The fig tree produced a huge amount of foliage, and little green bullets which showed no sign of becoming edible; but we did finally pick a dozen ripe fruit on 1st November.

Brussels sprouts and kalettes – my new favourite vegetable – are swelling on their stalks; they will be ready for Christmas and enjoyed for several weeks into the new year.

**WOODS AND HEDGES****SANICLE** *Samcula europaea*

Sanicle was a healing herb in medieval times: hence its name, from the Latin sano, I heal. It is an unusual plant, a member of the Umbellifer family, but the dense little flower heads or 'umbels', 5 or 6mm in diameter, are round rather than platform shaped, and the outer ring of individual flowers is composed of stamens only. The inner flowers are white pink in colour and are very small; it is these that develop later in the summer into hooked seeds which are picked up in the fur of woodland animals and subsequently dispersed far and wide.

Most of the leaves, shiny and deeply forked, grow from the base of the plant on 1 stalks. Sanicle is a perennial, growing up 60cm high, flowering from May to August, t it is not a showy species and is often overlooked among communities of other land plants. It is found on lime-rich soils in beech and ash woodlands and also in old loamy oakwoods.

**DOG'S MERCURY** *Mercurialis perennis*

An old Yorkshire name for this leafy plant of dark places is 'boggart-posy', 'boggart' being a particularly nasty sort of woodland fairy. Dog's mercury grows especially well on limestone soils but will thrive in many dry shady situations, often along hedgerows linking old woods and coverts.

This is a perennial herb with long creeping rhizomes, sending up fresh green stems in the very early spring to a height of about 40cm. The leaves are opposite, broad and spear shaped and about 8cm long. They form a dense dull-green foliage which soon shades out other vernal plants such as wood anemone and primrose. The flowers are very small, no more than 5mm across, composed of green sepals rather than petals. Male and female flowers grow on separate plants, the males densely on a tall spike, the females 2 or 3 at a time on a short spike. The latter develop into hairy fruits on elongated stalks. Like its relatives the spurge, this is a poisonous plant, described by the great herbalist Gerard as 'dangerously purgative'

**FUNGI (GOOD TIME OF YEAR TO GO HUNTING FOR THEM)**

The fungi kingdom comprises of a vast group of organisms that are made up of microscopic thread-like cells called 'hyphae,' that propagate by airborne spores. Many species form a complex network know as a 'mycelium', which take up nutrients from their surroundings and may have a symbiotic relationship with other organisms. They can be found almost everywhere, from the human body, to the depths of the sea.

The world of fungi is hugely complex and still not fully understood. At the basic level, fungi can be said to include moulds, yeasts and the most recognisable club fungi with their familiar fruiting bodies. The 'mushrooms' you see in woodlands and gardens generally belong to this group and are known as 'Basidiomycota'. Most species reproduce asexually through the production of spores in the gills or pores found on the underside of the fruiting body.

It is now believed that plants could not exist without the presence of fungi, so intertwined is their relationship.

Many fungi species have a symbiotic relationship with plants and trees. This is known as mycorrhiza. The fruiting body that we see above ground is only one small part of a 'mushroom'. Underground hides 'mycelium', a vegetative mass made up of hundreds or even thousands of fine threads that can spread over long distances. Fungi mycelium can capture water and nutrients that are out of reach of plants and trees, bringing them close to their roots. The roots take water and nutrients from the fungi and in return give sugars made during photosynthesis.

A honey fungus species with a mycelium network measuring 2.4 miles across in the Blue Mountains in Oregon is thought to be the largest living organism on Earth!

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**LATE-FLOWERING LUST**

DAVID WHEELER

The asters are among us again. Hooray! So too the hydrangeas. Hurrah!

Also the dahlias. As fashionable as they are, I don't grow these any more. I leave them instead to their many addicts who exhibit them at village shows and fetes all over the country at this time of year.

I had an uncle who grew prize-winning whoppers between rows of his equally elephantine-headed chrysanthemums. Surprisingly, I never caught the dahlia bug – surprisingly because, as my gardening chums will vouch, my floral tastes are, to say the least, broad. I did grow a few dahlias as a teenager. I was fond and indeed proud then of their overblown blooms and gaudy palette. Subtler varieties exist, of course, but somehow...

As for hydrangeas, the 200 or so different varieties in my newly installed collection are seemingly set well to provide a pageant I won't be able to ignore this time next year.

Asters, supreme prairie flowers, give generously to the garden's splendour over several late months. In blues, pinks and almost every mauvy/purple shade between, as well as white, these covetable Michaelmas daisies either come diminutively or stalk our beds and borders like gentle giants.

The place to see (and buy) them is in the lee of the Malvern Hills, at Old Court Nurseries at Colwall. The more than 400 cultivars making up the Plant Heritage National Collection illuminate a series of display beds set among many other August/September-flowering trophies. After COVID's recent travel restrictions, I'll be glad to tread Old Court's sinuous paths once more.

Most gardeners rank gentians as another diminutive genus – and see them as a springtime delight rather than denizens of late summer. But consider the willow gentian, *Gentiana asclepiadea*, an easily cultivated late-season perennial up to three feet tall, with bowed fronds bearing a long succession of true gentian-blue trumpets.

In a previous garden, I wove this beauty liberally through a tribe of peonies (their springtime flowers long since spent, they were adorned in August by

seed pods like jesters' hats) just as their foliage began to adopt glorious autumnal hues of dusky crimson. The gentian's contrasting blue was electrifying – better than expected.

Other stately inhabitants of August flower-beds can be found among the lobelias. No, not the bedding-out or hanging-basket kinds, but the leggy, perennial *Lobelia cardinalis*, whose full-on colour of guardsman red (fabulously strong in the variety 'Queen Victoria', intensified by mysteriously dark stems and leaves) places them among the season's rightful indispensables.

Another equally tall and regal lobelia, *L. siphilitica* (early European settlers in its native US deemed it a cure for syphilis), bestows a typically good blue or desirable shot of violet.

My much-thumbed copy of Marina Christopher's *Late Summer Flowers* (2006) reminds me of other lobelias I still want to try – notably 'Hadspen Purple', which she describes as having 'sumptuous, plum-purple flowers on tall [4ft] sturdy stems'.

For oldies fearful of plants that might be too tall and, like us, in need of support, there are numerous low-growers that just as ably boost the season's incandescence. Try *Liriope muscari*, the shorter asters, tireless perennial geraniums or the highly scented little *Heliotrope arborescens*.

Horticulturally, I can think of nothing better for delaying winter's looming blitz than the planting of luminous late-summer flowers – or the viewing of someone else's galaxy.

I'll be back among more of these nth-hour lovelies next month, further celebrating their boundless range and diversity, their general ease of cultivation and the rich dividends paid by their annual reappearance.



**KEEPING COOL****This flower refrigerates itself to withstand heat**

**SOUTHERN SPAIN'S LANDSCAPE** in high summer is perhaps best described as "crunchy." Under the unrelenting sun, grass turns to brown straw, and almost everything green shrivels and dies— except for the clustered carline thistle, a plant with humble yellow flowers and a surprising superpower.

Every August this thistle is one of the only plants to flower in most of Spain's arid Mediterranean habitats, giving it a virtual monopoly on the local bees and other pollinators. But how can the thistle survive, much less bloom, when its neighbours are reduced to twigs and dust?

Spanish National Research Council evolutionary ecologist Carlos M. Herrera was conducting a census of pollinators in the Sierra de Cazorla mountain range when he peered into a thistle blossom, lightly touching the flower, to see how much nectar was inside. To his astonishment, it felt unmistakably cool—even after hours in direct sun. Herrera says he immediately sensed he was "about to make a discovery."

During scorching Spanish heat waves, Herrera measured the temperature inside thistle flower heads and the ambient a temperature less than an inch away, found the flower heads were routinely nine degrees Fahrenheit cooler than the surroundings, with the difference approaching 18 degrees F for some flowers on the hottest days. His observations are detailed in the *Scientific Naturalist*.

Sanna Sevanto, a physicist and plant physiologist at Los Alamos National Laboratory who studies how plants respond to environmental stress, says Herrera's finding is exciting and could confirm risky plant survival strategy that has until now, only been theorized.

Sevanto and other scientists have documented apparent self-cooling in tree leaves, but that effect is probably coincidental, she says. To perform photosynthesis, leaves need access to carbon dioxide, which enters

through tiny pores called stomata on a leaf's surface. When stomata open to let carbon dioxide in, some water escapes, thereby causing evaporative cooling that lowers the leaf's temperature slightly.

But for the Spanish thistles, evaporative cooling could be the goal rather than just a side effect of photosynthesis. Herrera suggests the plant could essentially be sweating: sacrificing precious water, extremely scarce in Spain's arid summers, to prevent its delicate reproductive organs from overheating.

Herrera says that such cooling could occur anywhere that the flower head contains water, including in its liquid nectar. Some flower species have stomata on their petals, which Sevanto says would be an easy route for releasing water. Opening stomata in a drought is a big gamble, though, and she notes that so far "we have not observed a plant that would do it to cool themselves."

As well as checking the thistle's petals for stomata under a microscope, Herrera has more experiments planned for the next sweltering summer. For one, he will manipulate a plant's water supply to try to prove its cooling is really a "sweating" action, and in a second, he will look for novelties in the thistle's root structure that could explain how it is able to take in enough water to invest in cooling.

As heat waves become more frequent and intense with climate change, it's increasingly important to study unusual adaptations that help plants survive heat stress. But ultimately, "whether these plants will have water enough to keep the system working," Herrera says, is "another story." —

Elizabeth Anne Brown

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**SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU LAUGH**

1 After worship one Sunday a young boy told the vicar "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money". "Well thankyou" the vicar replied, "but why?" "Because my dad says you are one of the poorest preachers we've had"

2 A young couple invited their aged rector for Sunday lunch. While they were in the kitchen preparing the meal, the rector asked their son "what were they having to eat", "Goat" the little boy replied. "Goat?" replied the startled rector. "Are you sure about that ?" "Yes" said the little boy, "on the drive back from church I heard Mum say to Dad, "Remember, We're having the old goat for dinner tonight"

3 On a church notice board. At Tuesday evening's meeting, the discussion topic will be "What is Hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.

4 What did one hat say to the other? You stay here and I'll go on ahead.

5 What did the Pirate say when he turned 80? "Aye Matey"

6 I went to buy some camouflage trousers but couldn't find any.

7 I couldn't figure out why the baseball kept getting larger. Then it hit me.

8 If attacked by a mob of clowns, go for the juggler