

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

OFFICE	OFFICERS	TEL NO
Chairman	Mr J Poole "MEADCOTT" Badshot Lea Rd	01252 319621
Secretary	Mrs. B Ames 97 Longacre, Ash	01252 686303
Treasurer	Mr. Ian Chant 54 Aldershot Road, Church Crookham	07850 498544
Show Secretary	Mrs. B Winton 2 Elm Hill, Normandy	01252 333756
Social Secretary	Mrs. H Chant 54 Aldershot Road, Church Crookham	07754 888994
Victoria Hall Rep	Mr. Brian Perry 9 Drake Avenue Mytchett	01252 542341
Mag Editor	Mr. Brian Perry 9 Drake Avenue Mytchett	01252 542341
Prog Secretary	Mrs P Slack 16 Firacre Road, Ash Vale	01252 311210

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS	1
R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY	1
EDITORS NOTES	2
GARDENING CALENDAR JULY.....	2
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.....	3
THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN	3
THIS MONTHS RECIPE	5
APGC TRIPS.....	5
TRAVELLERS TALES	6
CHARD.....	7
BLOOMS AT CHELSEA.....	9

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 hard copy to Chris

GARDENING CALENDAR JULY

July is a time of vigorous growth and flowering – and for the gardener, this is the time for properly managing all that growth.

Weed, feed and dead-head

Continue vigilant weed control. Up the feeding: seasonal patio displays and baskets will do well with a weekly dose of liquid tomato fertiliser.

Dead-head bedding plants to encourage more flowers; cut back delphiniums and geraniums after the first flowers to encourage a second flowering, then feed with Blood, Fish and Bone. Tie in vigorous climbers firmly to their supports.

Water

July often brings the hottest summer weather, so up the water for the plants that need it. Bedding plants, leafy vegetables, seedlings and new plantings are most prone to drying out. Ideally, water your plants early in the morning or in the evening; avoid watering during the hottest part of the day.

Protect

Some pests thrive in hot summer conditions, so check susceptible plants – such as roses – for blackspot, mildew and rust, which can be rife right now.

Maintain water features

Water features will need care, too: use a rake to thin out any overgrown oxygenating plants and algae from ponds. Top up ponds in hot weather, ideally with water-butt water.

Don't mow

If it's dry, stop mowing the lawn, or, if possible, raise the height of cut. Brown patches in hot spells are inevitable but the lawn will quickly recover, so there's no need to water.

Paint

Dry summer weather is good for your garden outbuildings and fencing: paint wooden

sheds, fences, arches and arbours now.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show – 4–9 July

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park – 19–23 July

- OUT MEETING 7th AUGUST

AUTUMN SHOW 9th SEPTEMBER

THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN

Listen to the Falling Rain

Without water in some form, we cannot garden. Wells and moisture stored in the soil through permaculture techniques are very useful, but what a garden needs, at least to some degree, is rain. Rain brings not only non-chlorinated water, but each drop also contains a particle of soil. Rain clouds and storms carry soil around the Earth, sharing minerals with gardens downstream. Rain connects us with everyone else on Earth.

TOO LITTLE, TOO MUCH . . .

A few years ago, we experienced a pretty severe drought. Though I watered from the hose and by using grey water from our showers, my plants didn't do very well.

They grew stunted and didn't produce fruit. The water that comes from my tap wasn't sufficient to nourish my plants; the chlorine and other chemicals were perhaps obstacles the plants had to overcome. My garden needed the natural, unaltered gift of real water. Rain brings life.

Too much rain, though, is of course just as problematic. One summer we experienced a ninety-day stretch of measurable precipitation, and while our tomato plants were massive and dark green, they produced no fruit. More rain than that, or lots of rain in a short time span, and we experience flooding. No gardens - save rice paddies - can recover from severe floods. So rain teaches us about the nourishing gifts of nature, but also about balance and gratitude. We hope for just the right amount of rain, and when it comes we are filled with a sense of things being right in the world.

Before plumbing, rain and various aqueduct systems were all we had to water our fields. Drought meant death, and even the end of whole civilizations. In parts of Africa and Asia, this is still true. It is no wonder that across many

cultures we find rain gods or guardians, like Dudumitsa from Bulgaria, the Yoruban Oya and Aztec Tlaloc. Rain, both literal and metaphorical, is mentioned throughout the Bible. Rain is life. We are learning, too, that even in industrialized, developed nations, we cannot just do whatever we like with rain and the rest of the planet's water. Draining aquifers faster than they can replenish, we are upsetting the balance of the planet's life-giving water. Perhaps we need to return in some way to water management practices based on mindful gratitude.

FIFTY WORDS FOR RAIN

Rainstorms come in many different flavours. Perhaps we gardeners could come up with fifty descriptive nouns for rain. There is light, misty rain like one finds in a cloud forest. Pounding rain that strips leaves off the trees. A gentle rain you know will last all day, or even for several days (my favourite). Rain can come in bursts, just enough to wet the pavement and fill the air with petrichor, then blow past. Summer rain clears the air and makes fat droplets in the dust. When I worked at a plant nursery one summer, a heavy rain falling on the corrugated roof brought a halt to all conversation. Moss-creating rain is somewhere between mist and gentle rain. Early winter rain sinks into your bones and urges you to curl up with a gardening book instead of going outside. What kind of rain do you love?

AN INVITATION FOR MINDFULNESS

Often when it rains, I feel calmer and more settled. Partly this is because of low pressure; I could always get my sensitive toddler to nap in the afternoons when a storm came through. Also, I feel calmer because while life doesn't stop for rain, we get a sort of reprieve from going and doing so much when wet stuff is falling from the sky. But also I think rain reflects the soul of an introvert, yin and quiet. As sky and Earth are united through water, we come gently into ourselves. Rain is an invitation for mindfulness.

Listening to rain can be a simple meditation. Next time it rains, take time to become present through the sound of the rain. Hear it patter on the window or pound on the roof. Let your breath move in and out of your lungs. Can you feel more moisture in the air? You are breathing in water from some other place on Earth. You are here now, in this intersection of time and space, weather and breath. Close your eyes and let the sound become you. Water is life. You are life. All is one.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Parkin

This is always popular and usually the first food offering to disappear as soon as it is placed on a plate.

You will need

9 oz. plain flour

7 oz. sugar

4 oz. porridge oats

2 heaped tsp. ground ginger

5 oz. British butter

7 oz. golden syrup

3 oz. black treacle

A rounded teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

1 dsp. vinegar

Quarter pint milk

To do

Put the flour, sugar, oats and ginger into a large bowl.

Melt the butter in a pan over a gentle heat.

Add the syrup and treacle to this mix.

Once melted, pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients in the a bowl.

Add the bicarbonate of soda and the vinegar to the centre of the mixture.

It should fizz.

Put the milk into the syrup saucepan and heat slightly.

Swish it around to gather up any trace of treacly syrup.

Add to the mixture and stir well.

The mixture should now resemble batter.

Pour into a roasting tin which has previously been buttered and floured.

Bake for about an hour or so in the middle of the oven - at about gas 4 or 180°C (350°F).

Allow to cool before cutting into squares. This is one recipe which improves with keeping as long as others allow you to.

APGC TRIPS**Wisley 22nd July 1:00 pm**

Our annual visit to Wisley, Free entry to all members. Minibus leaves Victoria Hall at 1pm, returning approx. 5:30pm, cost for those on minibus £6 each. If you wish to use your own transport, then meet us

outside at reception at 1:30pm for your Free Ticket. Please let Ian know you are going so he can get sufficient tickets

TRAVELLERS TALES

David Wheeler

For garden-minded people in an urban or suburban neighbourhood, Ben Dark's *The Grove* will ring bells.

Subtitled *A Nature Odyssey in 19.5 Front Gardens*, it tells the often surprising stories that cling to a score of everyday plants -magnolias, buddleias, camellias, privet, tulips, hollyhocks, wisteria. These trees, shrubs, climbers, perennials and bulbs are known even to the least horticulturally-minded bod.

The Grove refers to Grove Park in the London Borough of Lewisham, ten minutes' walk from Dark's house, as familiar to him as the creases in the palms of his hands.

As a gardening teenager, recently transplanted to a city on the south coast from a rural Cotswolds village, I, like Dark, took an interest in the plants all around me. I was soon hooked on fuchsias (named in honour of German physician Leonhart Fuchs, 1501-66).

They are a gaudy genus I duck today, (except for the delightfully slimline, bicoloured, though dubiously hardy *F hatschbachii*). Still, learning some basic expertise from them, I honed propagation skills that I continue to practise on a variety of other plants.

Herr Fuchs is not alone in having plants named after him. Many more plants commemorate a disparate bunch of botanists, explorers and men of the cloth.

Take magnolias. Dark says their flowers emit 'a metabolic warning... an amplification of the tree's scent, a sweet, lemony tang, dominated by linalool, the terpene alcohol found in tangerine peel and lavender flowers'. They are named after French botanist Pierre Magnol (1638-1715). *Buddleia*, according to Dark, is 'such a railway plant that it shocks when met in an herbaceous border'. It honours English cleric Adam Buddie (1662-1715).

And camellias, to the Victorians, 'came to symbolise either perfected beauty, admiration or longing, depending on which author was pulling it all out of thin air that day'. They venerate Czech Jesuit missionary Georg Joseph Kamel (1661-1706). My, they got around in those days.

Their popularity might render them insignificant to some horticultural sophisticats. But Dark's chosen genera nevertheless include species and cultivars worthy of high praise and, in some cases, prestigious botanical importance.

Take our traditional hedging plant privet. Explore its kith and kin and you'll discover semi-evergreen *L. quihoui*, the so-called wax-leaf privet. It's native to China and Korea, sporting large panicles of fragrant white flowers in late summer.

No less a figure than the late Graham Stuart Thomas, National Trust gardening supremo for 20 years, once told me of its garden value, to be cherished above its cohorts. He grew it in his suburban garden near Woking, among a plethora of his adored roses.

Asking himself which garden on the Grove is his favourite, Dark replies that 'none is a clear front runner'. Instead, he ponders what he'd do if he ever had a Grove Park garden of his own.

Spoiler alert: 'This imaginary space,' he concludes, is the 'V2' garden of the book's subtitle, 'one that is almost real because it goes everywhere with me'.

And don't we all carry such an imaginary place in our heads? I certainly do.

Dark's book amused and educated me during recent bouts of insomnia. I found snippets of information that now elevate my occasional street wanderings to something approaching a botanical exploration.

At less than a tenner for the paperback edition, that's truly affordable schooling.

CHARD

After the drought of last summer, it has been interesting to recall which fruit and vegetables flourished and which did not.

Thanks to a frost-free spring, we had a record crop of apples and quinces - but no plums. The raspberries suffered from lack of rain, while we had our first crop of ripe figs in 15 years. In the hedgerows, blackberries were plentiful,

though small, and the red autumn berries - hips, haws and guelder rose - were a joy to see.

Among the vegetables and herbs I have grown in the past year, successes were leeks, carrots, shallots, yellow beetroot, courgettes, coriander and climbing borlotti beans. French beans, however, were disappointing and runner beans an almost total failure.

I wrote here three months ago that I had given up on the runner beans but, having been advised by a farmer friend to spray the flowers in the evening, we did achieve a small picking in mid-September.

After a patchy potato crop and turnips that never swelled, there should be plenty of Brussels sprouts for Christmas.

No vegetable grew better during the long hot summer than the rhubarb chard (*Bietola da coste*), from seeds supplied by the excellent Italian merchants Franchi. We have been cutting it every week since August, and the dark red stems and leaves were still providing colour against the green rocket in late November. Franchi are very generous with the quantity of seeds in their packets, and I shall be sowing more rhubarb chard in early spring.

Chard is a variety of beet, often with green leaves and thick white stems, sometimes called Swiss chard. In fact it originated in coastal Sicily rather than landlocked Switzerland, but it may have been named after a 16th-century Swiss botanist, Gaspard Bauhin.

'Bright Lights' is another variety I have grown successfully, with red, yellow and white stems which are worth cooking separately from the leaves.

Chard is slow to bolt and can be harvested almost all year round. And, on the evidence of last summer, it tolerates drought conditions quite happily.

BLOOMS AT CHELSEA

Enjoy these showstopping plants in your own space, says Hannah Stephenson

RISES are often the colourful stars of the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, not just in deep blue hues, but in yellows and rustic oranges too. Renowned garden designer Sarah Price is designing the show's Nurture Landscapes Garden, which features a plethora of irises in a variety of moody pastels, purples and deep yellows, inspired by the artist and plantsman Cedric Morris and his naturalistic garden at Benton End, Hadleigh, in Suffolk, where he bred and planted 90 different varieties.

"Irises are always a favourite at Chelsea, because they provide a natural moment when they bloom and you are really seeing them at their peak," Price enthuses.

Want to grow your own irises? Price offers this step-by-step guide...

What types of iris might you plant?

"Cedric experimented with plant breeding but the iris are a strain of *Iris germanica*, bearded irises. Those we are used to seeing today are highly bred, so maybe slightly shorter but flower for longer. But there is something particularly beautiful about the Benton iris."

Price's favourite is the 'Benton Olive', a yellow-olive Iris with drooping outer falls delicately streaked with purple.

You can also grow our native *Iris pseudacorus* in ponds, where their roots and crowns can be covered by water, and *Iris robusta* 'Gerald Darby', with purple flower stems which carry blue flowers in midsummer and will grow in shallow water.

Which situation do they need?

Most irises are happiest in full sun, although the variety *Iris foetidissima* (stinking iris) will grow to around 80cm in deep shade, producing purple flowers followed by orange berries.

When do you plant them?

"The planting season is generally April to October. I usually buy them in a pot or in divisions from other gardens," says Price.

What about soil?

"They need neutral free-draining soil, and never feed with nitrogen, because it will just produce leaf growth."

How should you plant them?

"Their rhizomes (like bulbs) are baked in the sun so that they can create the flower cells to ensure good flowering the following season," explains Price. "So if you have a sun trap in the garden, plant the iris so their rhizomes are on the top of the soil or the gravel, so that they get a good baking.

"It's really important that they have space around them to thrive. Irises will form dense colonies, but the more space you give them, the more they will flower for you. They bulk up quickly, so plant the plants around 20-30cm apart so there's a good air flow between them."

Can you plant them in pots?

"Yes, Iris reticulata are great for pots. They look like little bulblets, which you'd just plant a few centimetres below the soil."

Do you need to protect them from the wet and cold?

"Provided they are in free-draining soil, they should be fine. I live in Wales and I don't protect mine, although the worst thing for them is winter damp, but if you plant them in a sunny spot in free-draining soil or add grit to heavier soil, they should be ok."

How do you maintain them?

After flowering, remove the spent flowers at the base of the stem, so the plants can concentrate their energy into producing a new rhizome, Price advises.

They should be divided every four to five years, after flowering, usually in July. It's good to replant them as soon as possible, and cut back the leaves into a fan shape to prevent wind rock, she suggests.

Can you extend the flowering period?

"No. They are fleeting (they may just flower for a couple of weeks, depending on the weather) but when they are flowering, they are magnificent. Some strains are hardier and don't get rust, such as "Jane Phillips" a very dependable iris with a pale lilac- blue flower, also has a nice fragrance in May & June.