

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

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ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS	1
R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY	1
EDITORS NOTES	2
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.....	2
GARDENING CALENDAR MAY.....	2
THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN	3
THIS MONTHS RECIPE	5
APGC TRIPS.....	6
DRONE GUARDS SPOT BUGS FROM ABOVE	6
BRIAN'S BIRTHDAY TREAT	7
SPRING SHOW RESULTS	8

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RHS Malvern Spring Festival – 11-14 May

- PLANT SALE 6th MAY

RHS Chelsea Flower Show – 23–27 May

- SUMMER SHOW 3rd JULY

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

GARDENING CALENDAR MAY

May is when the garden really begins to wake up – and it's the time to gear up for the summer.

Lawn maintenance

Now's the time for active lawn maintenance – and the last chance to to sow or lay new lawns until autumn without using sprinklers. The lawn will need weekly mowing from now until autumn, and the edges will need trimming.

Plant

Pay special attention to tender vegetables and soft fruit. The end of the month is the best time to plant out tender courgettes and aubergines if you have a kitchen garden, as well as planting our summer bedding plants.

May is also the time to re-pot pot-bound container plants in pots 7-10cm bigger than the current ones. Remember to tie in long climber shoots to their supports with soft string.

Protect

With insects becoming much more active as temperatures rise, be especially vigilant about pests. Pick off scarlet lily beetle from your lilies; their larvae rapidly defoliate plants. Watch for vine weevil in container plantings – irregular-shaped notches to leaf edges are tell-tale signs. The young grubs in the soil eat roots, and fast. Use natural nematodes to control them. at the end of the month.

Cover soft fruit bushes with netting to prevent birds eating the fruit, and if you are growing strawberries, put straw around or under them.

Prune

Don't forget about the plants that have just finished flowering; prune spring-flowering shrubs.

Feed

Feed spring bulbs with Growmore or blood, fish and bone.

Cover soft fruit bushes with netting to prevent birds eating the young fruit

THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN

The Scent of the Garden

Can you conjure up a scent memory of fresh rosemary leaves? Wet soil after a shower of rain? The first violet of spring? What are your scent associations with the garden? Smell ties us to place and experience as much as images and sounds; for some, smell might create even stronger associations and memories. Smell is the only fully developed sense at birth. Smell molecules go straight to the brain, accessing memory and stress centres directly. When we talk about scent, we often think of essential oils or other strong smells. But even subtle scents in the garden are part of what make us slow down and connect with the Earth.

A friend of mine who lived in Hawaii for several years breathes deeply when we visit the tropical greenhouse in the local botanic gardens. The smell 'is Hawaii' for her. In this same greenhouse, there is a little terrarium housing poison dart frogs. Through the mesh on the top you can smell the mosses, flowing water, plants and humusy soil. There is a dankness but also sweetness. It smells like life. The scents in both indoor and outdoor gardens can bring us straight to emotional centres of the brain that speak to something ancient and wordless. Scent helps us understand the land.

SNIFFING OUT INFORMATION

Plants communicate through scent. The smell of freshly cut grass is a call for help. Flowers make scents that call to their specific pollinators, some sweet as

vanilla (literally) and some distasteful (to us) as rotten flesh. I wonder if we humans could cultivate the ability to read plant scents, to know what weather is coming or what minerals are missing from the soil through the scent of a plant's leaves and flowers. I wouldn't be in the least surprised to discover that this is a latent skill we once had as hunter-gatherers. The best-smelling plant might lead us to the most nutritious seeds, for instance. One would be like a plant whisperer, but a plant smeller instead.

Farmers historically used scent (and also taste) to determine the make-up and health of soil. We can still tell if soil contains lots of clay or organic material from its scent. The former smells dusty and damp, while the latter is sweeter and might smell mossy or like leaf litter, sort of like the frog terrarium at the botanic gardens. Soil that has too much ammonia or that smells rotten or swampy might indicate the need for aeration and added compost. We can add that to the list of mindful gardening tasks: besides plant smellers, we need soil smellers. Perhaps it's not a full-time job, but taking time to smell your soil, your plants and the compost in your garden will likely tell you something you don't have to search for online to understand. The scents speak to a primal relationship with the land.

THE SCENT OF MEMORIES

Smells, like colours, are hard to describe, but we often know just what a person is talking about, having experienced that distinct smell ourselves. One scent that always stirs the senses even has a name, coined by two Australian scientists in the 1960s: petrichor, from petro (relating to rocks) and ichor (the fluid that flows in the veins of the gods). It's the scent of rain hitting parched soils and dry tarmac. Just the memory of this smell takes me back to summer in the Pacific Northwest - fat raindrops hitting the supermarket car park to clean and cool the hot summer air, and the metallic, dusty scent of petrichor. I remember not only the images, but the feeling. To me, petrichor smells exciting, full of possibility, but also safe and comfortable.

Scent is an important part of sensory gardens for people with visual impairment or other limitations. We can all enjoy sensory gardens, however, running our hands over the soft and pungent woolly thyme, inhaling the scent of chocolate cosmos and sniffing the pineapple mint. Scent is a way, therefore, that we can make our gardens more inclusive and compassionate. Include in your scent garden smells that take you back to a cherished garden memory, like your grandmother's roses, or lavender for that trip to Provence. My friend who missed Hawaii might grow spicy-scented *Matthiola incana*, or stock flowers. I could include a stone birdbath that invites the scent of petrichor. What would

you include in your sensory memory garden? All you need then is a meditation cushion or a bench, and you've created a healing garden of your own. The scent garden can be a place to know yourself better, a place to invite trusted friends and share with them your stories, and invite them to share their own.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Garlic Bread

What better accompaniment can you have to a barbecue than garlic bread? This is simple to make and truly delicious.

You will need

A French stick

Crushed garlic

Butter or a mixture of butter and olive oil spread

Salt

Chopped parsley or mixed dried herbs

A little black pepper (optional)

To do

Put the butter/butter mixture into a dish.

Mash it until soft with a fork.

Add the crushed garlic, salt, herbs and pepper.

Mix until all the ingredients are evenly distributed.

Lie the bread down on a breadboard and cut in half. (This just makes it easier to handle.)

Stand each of the cut halves on end, cut-side down.

Slice lengthways down the two upstanding halves.

You now have four equal-sized pieces. Butter the four pieces with your herby, butter-garlic mixture.

Either place on a baking sheet and cook in a hot oven for about 4-5 minutes.

Or wrap up in foil and place on the barbecue until heated through. Once cooked, cut or break into chunks to accompany the other barbecue foods.

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

DRONE GUARDS SPOT BUGS FROM ABOVE**(buy one for the club?)**

THEY might be small, but bark beetles can ruin a forest. In the US, they have devastated tens of millions of hectares in the past decade alone. In Europe, however, a combination of drones and artificial intelligence might be giving trees a fighting chance.

Bark beetles burrow into trees and lay eggs under the surface of the bark, where the larvae feed on the tree's inner layers and eventually chew their way out. All of this damages the tree's vascular system, fatally weakening it.

Within months of an infestation, great swathes of forest can be irreversibly damaged, leaving only grey leaves and dead wood. If the problem is spotted in time, foresters can cut down infected trees or apply pesticides. But they have to know it is happening.

This is why Skylab, a drone and software company based in Hamburg, is scanning spruce forests in Germany.

The multispectral cameras used can image the ground below at a resolution of 2 centimetres, and are mounted on large drones that can fly for an hour per charge. The drones cover up to 150 kilometres a day, looking for signs of infestation.

Healthy leaves with plenty of chlorophyll absorb nearly all the blue and red rays in sunlight, but reflect more green light and infrared. However, stressed plants produce less chlorophyll and reflect more light across most of the spectrum. The cameras can pick up these differences, creating maps of forest health.

Machine learning algorithms trained on the data can then churn out a disease risk index for each tree. This is calibrated using spot tests on the ground.

The idea is that workers can focus on disease hotspots first. "When you detect these stress signals, you can work out the densest infestation spot," says Skylab's Rene Heim.

The team is also using the technology to monitor apple orchards for early signs of apple scab, a disease that blights the crop and knocks 90 per cent off its value, and to check vineyards for signs of fungus associated with a number of destructive diseases.

Skylab is not the only player in this field. Drones paired with machine learning and spectral imaging equipment are already helping to identify farmland that needs more watering or specialist treatment, while a team in Denmark is using drone mounted cameras to spot weeds and mark them for precision herbicide treatment.

Danny Donoghue at Durham University, UK, says unmanned aerial vehicles lend themselves to these kinds of applications. "This technology opens up new opportunities for environmental monitoring at the scale of the individual plant that was not previously possible," he says.

BRIAN'S BIRTHDAY TREAT

On the 24th March Chris & I stepped inside the Old Laboratory at Wisley to explore the fascinating interactive exhibits that bring to life previously hidden stories of its history. We ventured through a series of rooms that highlight the different themes and time periods.

There is the 1920s restored lecture theatre with an on screen display of past activities, we found out how the RHS supported the wartime 'Dig for Victory' campaign and discovered the pioneering work of RHS scientists over the years.

Two such items were work carried out by James Kirkham Ramsbottom who saved our daffs from eelworm and George Fox Wilson who invented a flea beetle trap which kept our brassicas safe.

The main entrance is impressive with plaques of previous notable occupants where you can sit in comfort on embroidered cushions.

Please note, visits to the Old Laboratory must be pre-booked at rhs.org.uk/wisleylaboratory

SPRING SHOW RESULTS

Fruit, Flower Veg

1st 587pts Hazel	2nd 42pts Beverley	3rd 35pts Ann
Best Exhibit	Class 27 Ann Poole	
Best Daffodil	Class 5 Hazel Chant	
New Exhibitor	Margaret Smith	

Cooking

1st 5pts Beverley

Handicraft

1st 18pts Hazel	2nd 14pts Margaret Smith	3rd 5pts Maggie Neate
Best Exhibit	Margaret Smith	

Overall Most Points in Show

1st 76pts Hazel	2nd 47pts Beverley	3rd 35pts Ann
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