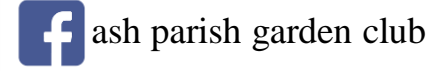


# Ash Parish Garden Club

[www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk](http://www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk)



Monthly Newsletter May 2020

**ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS**

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>TEL NO</u>
Chairman	Mr J Poole "MEADCOTT" Badshot Lea Rd	01252 319621
Secretary	Mrs. B Ames 97 Longacre, Ash	01252 686303
Treasurer	Mr. Ian Chant 18 Glenmount Road, Mytchett	01252 544195
Show Secretary	Mrs. B Winton 2 Elm Hill, Normandy	01252 333756
Social Secretary	Mrs. H Chant 18 Glenmount Road, Mytchett	01252 544195
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

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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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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PLANT SALE	TO BE NOTIFIED
RHS Malvern (spring)	CANCELLED
RHS Chelsea	CANCELLED
Gardeners World Live	CANCELLED
SUMMER SHOW	6 July
RHS Hampton Court	6 - 12 July
RHS Tatton Park	22 - 26 July
AUTUMN SHOW	12 Sep
RHS Malvern (autumn)	26 - 27 Sep

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## APGC TRIPS FOR 2020 – at the moment

5th July Visit to RHS Wisley Gardens. Meet at Victoria Hall at 1pm and return at 5pm. Cost £5 for those on minibus. For those who wish to use their own transport, meet us at the entrance at 1:30pm to collect your entry tickets.

19<sup>th</sup> July. Visit Diple Mill, Hartley Wintney. Meet at Victoria Hall at 1:15pm return at 5:30pm. There is a café on site. Cost £11 each (includes entry and minibus).

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## POETS CORNER from *Serene is the Morning*

The gay gaudy tulip observe as you walk,  
How flaunting the gloss of its vest!  
How proud! and how stately it stands on its stalk,  
In beauty's diversity drest!  
From the rose, the carnation, the pink and the clove,  
What odours delightfully spring!  
The South wafts a richer perfume to the grove,  
As he brushes the leaves with his wing.

**WILLIAM WOTY (1731-1791)**

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**THIS MONTHS RECIPE****ICED GINGER OATCAKE****You will need**

8oz rolled oats  
2 level tablespoons golden syrup  
2 level teaspoons ground ginger  
4oz margarine  
4oz brown sugar

**To do**

Mix together oats, ginger and sugar.  
Put margarine and syrup in pan and stir over heat until blended.  
Mix in dry ingredients.  
Press into tin and bake at Reg. 4 for 20 - 25 mins.

**Icing:**

6 level tablespoons icing sugar  
3oz butter  
1 level tablespoon ground ginger  
3 level teaspoons syrup

Put all ingredients in pan and stir over gentle heat until well blended.  
Pour over oatcake, it need not be cold.  
When cold mark into squares and cut up.

*Mrs. E. Rees*

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**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 repot 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

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**MEETING THE GROWERS**

(Let's hope that they are able to cope with CV19)

Ensuring thousands of plants are in the perfect state of bloom for RHS Chelsea Flower Show is no small task. We ask two of the growers from Hilliers nursery who were responsible for our Chelsea plants 2019 about timings, techniques and their own passion for horticulture.

We asked Jo Fell (Head Grower) and Peter Gill (Section Grower) What are your day-to-day tasks and roles for Chelsea?

J: I'm the head grower for our Bentry nursery site in Hampshire and I also lead the team on the nursery for all plant production and preparation for Chelsea. It's my job

P: I am a grower for the section of the nursery that grows the majority of our herbaceous perennials. I am also involved with preparation of all the plants and trees for Chelsea, with tasks including making sure the crops are put in the cold store at the right stage, potting, watering and pruning.

**What made you want to work in horticulture?**

J: After I left school, I started a diploma in agriculture, so I have always had an interest in growing. I struggled to find work that was arable based, so decided to go into horticulture.

P: I realised my original career path was not for me and I was more suited to being outdoors than on a computer. Hillier gave me the chance to try nursery work, from then I have never looked back.

**On to Chelsea. Roughly, how many plants are grown for Chelsea and how many make it to the show ?**

J: It depends on the size of the garden and planting area. This year we will require between 3,500-4,000 plants. We will grow an extra set percentage for each crop, depending on their difficulty, to allow a selection of the best for the finished garden.

**How do you work together with the designer and Chelsea team on plant selection & review?**

J: We hold monthly team meetings from around September, focussed on plant selection. We review lists of previous Chelsea plants, our nursery production lists, new introductions and the ideas from the designer. We visit our Hillier container tree nursery to make tree selections and frequently walk our plant nursery where we have designated Chelsea growing areas. These meetings become more frequent from spring onwards and just before we are due to lift the selected plants ready for the build.

**What are the timings to try and ensure plants are in perfect bloom at Chelsea?**

J: To give you an idea, we have already started talking about plants for Chelsea 2020! Once a Chelsea show has finished, we bring back certain stock which we keep year on year. We have some 20-year-old acres - I'm not sure how many Chelsea appearances each of them has made!

For the mid-size to smaller shrubs and herbaceous, timing depends on the weather. We may need to bring plants on or we may need to hold them back using our cold store. It can be a little bit of trial and error.

P: My part in preparations normally begins around October when we do the first load of potting. After this we

have numerous potting dates and cultural tasks to get the plants ready, which involves a huge amount of pruning. Our cold store is a life saver. By the beginning of May we have normally filled around 200-300m<sup>2</sup> of cold store space!

## **What are the main growing techniques you use to get plants to their best for Chelsea?**

J: We have many varied growing environments on our nursery, so we ensure our Chelsea plants are situated in the environment which best suits them - shade-loving plants grown under shade etc. The right growing environment, being pro-active to weather changes and constant monitoring is key!

P: The main difference for Chelsea compared to normal production is the forcing on of plants or having to hold them back. A lot of the plants that look the best for Chelsea have either needed to be brought on in a hot house or kept back in a cold store to prevent the flowers from going over.

## **What is the most enjoyable part of the Chelsea experience?**

P: I love the final stage of loading. I really enjoy the rush of trying to get all the plants up to the show. It's always a challenge to fit 16ft ornamental trees onto a 10ft high lorry but it's all part of the experience.

J: For me, it's working in a fantastic team made up from all different departments of Hillier and, at the end, being able to step back to see the finished garden and know that all the blood, sweat and tears was worth every second. It's quite an emotional time once the garden is built! Then it's fingers crossed for a gold medal...

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## **MAKE TIME TO REALLY SMELL THE ROSES**

Gardening is definitely addictive. It's easy to become obsessed with getting everything just right in your outdoor space, and forget to simply sit back and admire the result of all your hard work from time to time.

That's why, a couple of years ago, a Garden Day was launched in Somerset to mirage local gardeners to get together with friends and neighbours just to celebrate their plots at the start of the growing season.

It was such a success that the idea has now been rolled out across the UK and, this year, Garden Day will take place on Sunday 10 May. How you celebrate is up to you the key thing is just to relax and enjoy the day in your garden with special people around you. What a wonderful idea!

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### **A DAY AWAY FROM CHARTWELL IS A DAY WASTED**

that's what Sir Winston Churchill said about his Family home near Westerham in Kent.

Whilst staying in the RA care home earlier this year I came across the January issue of a magazine called Pitchcare (it's for greenkeepers & groundsman) and amongs its 148 pages I found a 9 page article some of which I will share with you.

As you all probably know Chartwell is now ran by the National Trust, the gardens and countryside manager is Tim Parker who as well as Chartwell looks after two other gardens, Emmetts Garden, a few miles away, and Quebec House in nearby Westerham. He's incharge of roughly thirty acres of formal gardens, and about forty acres of woodland and pasture beyond, which are spread out to the south and east of a house indelibly linked to our darkest and most glorious passages in history. It's a great sight on a late autumn morning. As winter beckons, there is still a wonderful pallet of colour wherever you look. Churchill bought Chartwell in 1922 and, years later, said he did so for the view over the Weald of Kent, which remains largely the same after nearly a century.

Henry Jarvis, the National Trust's Senior Marketing and Communications Manager at Chartwell told us "The house is closed each November over the winter months whilst the National Trust team complete significant conservation work to the Churchill collection." The gardens and grounds at Chartwell are very much the focus of a new initiative just launched by the National Trust. It comes in the form of a hand-held audio guide now freely available to visitors.

Tim Parker explains the thinking behind of the guide: "Chartwell became a place where Churchill could pursue his fascination for nature and wildlife. From the Rose Garden, much loved by Clementine Churchill, and the fruit and vegetables framed by the walls that Sir Winston helped build, to the tree-house inspired by one constructed for the Churchill children, the outdoors here is a canvas touched by the lives and memories of the family. The guide helps paint the picture for visitors."



Recent developments at Chartwell include the introduction of a plant quarantine area to prevent any influx of disease that may spoil the collection in the heritage gardens here, and the complete refurbishment of dilapidated glass houses with electric bench mat heating. The latter means Tim is able to grow on site many more of the plants he needs, and this further reduces risk of importing disease. Tim describes this as one of the best advances in recent times. Chartwell is Grade 2 listed and these wooden glasshouses had to be restored rather than replaced. They are very impressive. There is a six-strong full time National Trust team looking after the gardens and grounds, plus an apprentice. Tim is proud that Chartwell has the privilege of being chosen by the Trust to help future groundcare professionals working for the organisation because of the wide variety of work and conservation activities here.

Tim says “We are now managing the orchard area as a meadow with natural wildflowers.” Time and resources saved here is allowing Tim and his team to put more into improving the lawns closer to the house and, in particular, one of Lady Churchill’s favourite areas, the croquet lawn, which abuts the south facing side of the House. The croquet lawn emphasises the family aspect of Chartwell. Lady Churchill was an accomplished player and it always played a big part in family life here. Actually it had originally been a grass tennis court, Clementine Churchill being a pretty good tennis player too. There had been a smaller, cramped croquet lawn also near the house, but as Lady Churchill grew older and less mobile tennis was abandoned in sole favour of croquet, and the tennis court became a larger croquet lawn with the original one switching to an ornamental lawn.

Churchill was definitely connected to the natural landscape it seems. In particular, he had a passion for butterflies and sought the expert advice of renowned lepidopterist L H Newman about what plants to grow to attract certain species. In many ways, Sir Winston was very much a conservationist, and certainly a nature lover. Wildlife gardening and creating a water harvesting system for Chartwell’s walled garden made him a garden enthusiast ahead of his time.

Volunteering is a hallmark of the National Trust and it relies on it heavily for its success. Tim has no fewer than seventy of them to help with grounds maintenance and associated work, of which about ten act as visitor guides, and these are trained by Tim and his team. This volunteer labour force helps year round with routine weeding, dead-heading, edging and the like. They also play a part in the bigger project work and make a valuable contribution to clearing borders and rejuvenating them. They work alongside Tim’s team in cutting back, reconditioning the soil and planting of fresh stock. Tree planting, pond clearing and fencing are other areas where volunteer input is much valued.

The National Trust has a lease arrangement with a local farmer enabling him to graze livestock on some of the field areas beyond the lake. “Previously, these meadow areas have, if anything, been under-grazed, encouraging a build-up of

thatch,” said Tim. “More regular grazing of cattle and sheep has helped reduce this and encourage planted wildflower swathes to prosper. The aim is make the lower fields yet more floriferous and appealing to visitors when they are free of livestock.”

For more about Chartwell or any of the organisation’s properties visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

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## **INSECTS ARE DYING OUT**

up to eight times faster than larger animals and 41% of insect species face extinction. This is a grave cause for concern - it impacts people as well as wildlife. Insects pollinate three quarters of our food crops, as well as being a vital food source for many birds, small mammals and fish. Loss of their habitat and overuse of pesticides are two of the major causes of this looming catastrophe. However, the good news is that it's not too late to act.

Go chemical-free in your garden and help to revive our insect populations. If you've used chemicals in the past, this might sound like an invitation to every pest for miles around to shred your garden... and that might well happen at first. But, with time and patience, you'll end up with a healthier garden for ditching the chemicals.

Spraying to deal with pests can often kill the predators too, or at least make them want to avoid your garden. When you stop using chemicals, aphids are the first creatures to return as they have a short breeding cycle. Their predators may take longer to come back, but stick with it and know it will be better in the long run! Our top tip for going chemical free is to ensure your garden has as much variety as possible, so that no one species will be able to gain control. The more complex and varied your garden is, the more resilient it becomes.

Protecting your plants with horticultural fleece or mesh can prevent a range of pests, from invertebrates to birds, from accessing your plants. A tougher barrier like a cloche (which can be made at home by repurposing a plastic bottle) may be appropriate in some situations, especially for protecting young seedlings in order to give them a head start.

A popular way of repelling slugs is to use crushed eggshells or coffee grounds scattered around plants. In dry conditions, this will irritate the slug, and will naturally degrade into the soil with time. Using salt is not recommended unless you are growing plants that thrive in salty soil! Copper is also said to repel slugs, and gardeners use it in a range of forms, including coins, stripped electrical wire, or copper tape.

In the end, you'll wonder why you ever needed chemicals in the first place.