

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

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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 hard copy to Chris

GARDENING CALENDAR OCTOBER

October is the time to start tidying up and preparing for winter in earnest, while still enjoying the harvest.

Harvest

If you have apple or pear trees, now is the time to pick the fruit.

Protect

Move any tender plants, including houseplants, into a conservatory or greenhouse – don't forget to check that any heaters you have are working properly.

Container gardeners should remove any drip trays and raise terracotta patio pots with bricks or special pot feet (from garden centres) so they don't sit in water over winter and crack when it freezes. This is also the time to stop all feeding, as your plants are slowing down for the winter.

Plant

Now is the time to plant up your spring bulbs, excluding tulips, which should be planted up in November.

Tidy

Fallen leaves are an important natural resource, so don't simply discard them: clear up fallen leaves into black bin bags or create a separate pile next to the compost heap to make leaf mould ready for next October's soil conditioning.

Continue planting spring bulbs, but leave tulips until next month

HOSTAS

These hugely popular shade-loving plants are primarily grown for their beautiful foliage. There's a vast range to choose from, with leaves in all shades of green, as well as dusky blues and acid yellows, sometimes variegated or flashed with cream or gold, ruffled, smooth or distinctively ribbed. Many also produce small trumpet-shaped mauve or white flowers in summer. Hostas are notoriously irresistible to slugs and snails, but are also much loved by gardeners, who often amass large collections.

Where do hostas grow best?

All hostas give their best in moist soil in partial shade, certainly away from bright sunshine whether in the ground or a container. In general, though, yellow-leaved cultivars prefer some sun, along with a few hostas that are tolerant of sunny conditions.

Do hostas grow better in pots or the ground?

Hosta grows better in containers as opposed to garden beds because they do not have competition from weeds which can be hard to remove without harming the roots of the plants. Container hostas are easier to grow in shady areas as well. You can move them around if the sunlight is too strong.

Will hostas return year after year?

Hostas are reliable long-lived perennials. When planted in the right spot and cared for properly, they will come back year after year, often getting bigger and better with each season - something which is a huge attraction to gardeners who collect different varieties.

What month is best to plant hostas?

You can plant hostas all year round, but spring and autumn are preferable. It's best to avoid planting in mid-summer, when temperatures are high and the water table is low, as this can prevent the plant from establishing well. Mid-winter is also a bad time to plant hostas, as the ground is cold and often frozen.

Do hostas have a lifespan?

Hostas require little care and will live to be 30 or more years if properly cared for. While most known for thriving in the shade garden, the reality is more nuanced. The ideal situation is dappled shade.

Do hostas multiply on their own?

Hostas can spread, either through underground runners or seeds. Rhizomatous Hostas that spread underneath the soil are the worst offenders. These varieties will spread almost indefinitely. Non-Rhizomatous varieties will grow in clumps that reach a mature width.

What should I do with hostas when they get too big?

Using a spade and/or garden fork, dig six to eight inches outside of the crown of the plant. Depending on the hosta variety, the root system may extend eight to 18 inches deep. Starting from one side and working your way around, dig beneath the roots, then ease the clump out of the ground.

Do hostas lose their leaves in winter?

By winter hostas will have entered their dormancy stage and the leaves will have completely died back. You don't need to do anything with your hostas over winter, they are completely hardy and do not need bringing inside or frost protection.

How deep should you plant hostas?

Perhaps deeper than many think. Dig a hole, at least 12 inches deep and almost twice the size of the mature plant. Mix in a good layer layer of organic matter.

How do I protect my hostas from slugs?

Slugs and snails love hiding in crevices and behind stones. Take their hiding places away. Try putting your hostas in pots, then protect the pots with Vaseline or WD40 which make them greasy and prevent slugs and snails from climbing them.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN**The Kingdom of Fungi**

Throughout the soil, snaking their way through rotting logs, are the hidden wizards of the natural world. Mycelium, the lacing white strands produced by some species of fungi, transform organic matter into rich, nourishing humus. Gardeners are beginning to learn what forests have known for millennia - that rich soil comes largely from the work of fungi - and are learning to invite them into the garden instead of trying to destroy them. While it is true that some fungi are responsible for plant diseases like rusts, mildews and tree fungus, most fungi in the garden are beneficial. Mushrooms and mycelium cycle carbon, taking it out of plant matter and into the soil. They create soil by breaking down wood and other fibres into fluffy dark humus. Certain fungi even help protect plants from consumption by insects and herbivores.

TUNING IN TO FUNGI

Mycelium grows from some types of fungi, and these inconspicuous tendrils do more than just break down plant matter. They also form part of nature's Internet. By connecting into the network of mycelium, plant roots are actually able to communicate via chemical signals to other plants. This communication network covers large distances and can link different species together. The network helps plants share nutrients and builds their immune

systems by helping to fight off pathogens. In our information age, we could potentially learn a lot from the fungi, who perfected the information highway long ago.

The mindful gardener knows to sit and listen, to learn from this kingdom of fungi, mushrooms and mycelium. What do the travelling strands of white tell us about cycles of life? One thing I have learned from fungi is that they are not all the same, and the different types have different functions. Some break down plant lignin while others transform cellulose. Another kind of fungi just recently discovered, called endophytic fungi, live in between plant cells and protect plants from herbivores and drought. The world of fungi is vast and varied, and we are beginners in understanding it. This sings to me of the value of diversity. I am reminded to listen to the varied voices of others, especially those different from me and what I am used to.

MASTERS OF MINDFULNESS

Fungi reminds us, too, that change, healing and growth all take time. With our relatively short lifespans and our tendency to separate ourselves from nature, we humans want things to happen immediately. I want it to be time to plant seeds now, even though it is still late winter. Then I want the plants to grow, bloom and fruit. As they grow hidden from our eyes in mysterious processes, the slow-growing bodies of fungi - perhaps more than other beings in the garden - remind us that we need to allow time for ourselves to grow and evolve. Sometimes we have to let things sit awhile as the threads of transformation do their work.

Curiously, when we become present to the moment, mindful of existing right now, we step gently out of our impatience and hurry. Perhaps mushrooms are masters of mindfulness. Certainly they are not wrapped up in their minds, stressing about what particle of cellulose to deconstruct next. Fungi, and plants too, can become teachers, showing us how to be present to what is, and to allow changes to happen in the natural flow of time.

Fungi teach us about balance, about interconnection and about the strength of diversity. They strengthen the garden and the forest, and they may prove to be one of the keys to a sustainable future. Researchers are very interested in fungi's potential in the field of medicine, especially in regards to cancer care. Certain fungi are able to remediate toxically polluted sites. A team of designers have created ways to grow leather and wood substitutes out of mushrooms, which costs less and is more sustainable than cattle farming or cutting down trees for lumber. Everywhere they grow, fungi produce rich soil, a gift to gardeners. Next time you see them coming up in your garden, send them thanks, for they are likely creating health in the soil.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE**Roast apple, blackberry & hazelnut cake**

This is a lovely hazelnut-rich sponge. You can put a layer of cream on top as well as in the middle, then scatter with the extra hazelnuts and blackberries to decorate

Serves 10 Prepare 50 minutes + cooling Cook 30 minutes

You will need**For the cake**

- 325g blanched hazelnuts
- 225g butter, at room temperature
- 225g light brown soft sugar
- 4 British Large Eggs, lightly beaten
- 300g self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 150ml whole milk

For the filling and topping

- 500g Bramley apples
- 1 tbsp caster sugar
- Approx 10g light brown soft sugar, to taste
- 175g blackberry jelly
- 250ml double cream (double if putting cream on the top as well as in the middle)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract (double if putting cream on top)

- 15g icing sugar (double if putting cream on top), plus extra for dusting
- 150g blackberries

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C, gas mark 4. Butter and line the base of 2 x 20-22cm cake tins. For the filling, halve the Bramley apples and put them in a roasting tin where they can lie in a single layer. Sprinkle with 1 tbsp caster sugar and add about 75ml water. Roast for 30 minutes, or until the flesh has collapsed and there are bits of caramelised sugar in patches. Leave to cool.

2 For the cake, put the hazelnuts in a clean baking tin in a single layer and toast in the oven for about 10 minutes, or until you can smell the nuttiness. Leave to cool. Remove 25g of the nuts and set them aside. Put the rest in a food processor and pulse to break them down. You want some big chunks at the end and some ground nuts too. The pulse button stops the nuts from becoming too oily.

3 Cream the butter and sugar for the cake until pale and fluffy. Add the eggs a little at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix the flour with the baking powder and a quarter tsp salt. Add the milk and flour alternately, then fold in the chopped nuts.

4 Scrape into the cake tins and smooth the tops. Bake in the oven for 20-30 minutes, or until you can see the edges of the cakes are leaving the sides of the tin and a skewer, when inserted into the middle, comes out clean. Leave the cakes in the tin for 10 minutes, then turn them out onto a wire rack and leave to cool.

5 Scrape the flesh out of the apples, discarding the core and skin. Mash the flesh. Add enough brown sugar to make them a little less tart but remember that you're going to have jelly and whipped cream in the filling along with the apples (so they shouldn't be too sweet).

6 Lay down the bottom layer of the cake and spread the blackberry jelly over it. Whip the cream until it can hold its shape well, but don't overdo it. Add vanilla extract and enough icing sugar to sweeten the cream. Spread the cream (using only half if also using it for the top) over the jelly, then spoon the apple puree on top.

7 Put the second sponge on top and dust with icing sugar. Bash the reserved toasted hazelnuts in a pestle and mortar, using only enough force to halve them. If using a second layer of cream, add it now, then arrange the blackberries and hazelnuts on top of the cake.

LILY TURF

A covering of low-growing, slowly spreading evergreen foliage is a useful thing to have for a shady area of the garden, and when it comes with the added bonus of attractive flower spikes later in the year, that makes it all the more invaluable.

Liriope, the lily turf, is one such perennial and *Liriope muscari* 'Okina' is a fine example. At this time of year, it is still producing masses of flower spikes covered with distinctive bobbles that open into little violet-blue blooms. As the season progresses, the clump of fresh green slowly turns into a carpet of purple that looks wonderful in low autumn sunlight, and the flowers will often keep on coming until the end of the month.

'Okina' grows to around 35cm high, with a spread of about half a metre, and what makes it particularly noteworthy is that in spring the strappy leaves emerge white before slowly taking on a frosty, lightly speckled appearance and eventually turning a fresh green.

It's happiest in full or partial shade, but will cope with a sunny spot if it's in moist but well-drained neutral to acid soil (once established, liriopce can tolerate periods of drought too). Aftercare couldn't be simpler: just cut down tired-looking leaves to the ground in spring to encourage new growth, then leave it to get on and do its thing. If it starts to outgrow its allotted space, you can dig up the clump and divide it in spring.

Liriope muscari 'Monroe White' is another lovely option with pure white flowers that are larger than other varieties, but on shorter stems. It's especially good for brightening up dark corners, and looks good planted along a pathway, or even in a container.

ORCHIDS -FUSSY BUT FANTASTIC

Orchids, despite claims that they are simple to take care of, can be very fussy. They are not flowers that can be set on the windows!!! and forgotten about- they must be tended

To grow an orchid, you have to think like an orchid.

The golden rule for orchid success is to duplicate the plant's natural conditions as closely as you can. In nature, most orchids are epiphytes, meaning they grow on other objects, clinging to rough bark or even stone. The showy orchids favoured by most people are usually either phalaenopsis hybrids, so-called moth orchids or dendrobium hybrids.

They are quite particular about their light, their water, and their humidity, and they must be cared for just so.

Orchids need lots of light, but direct sun is too intense. They should be placed near a northern or southern window with bright indirect light, or near an eastern or western window with blinds or drapes for protection. You can gauge the amount of light your orchid is getting by checking its leaves, which should be bright green and perky. If the leaves are yellow, brittle, or showing signs of sunburn, there's too much light; if the leaves are a deep, dark green, there's not enough.

When you touch the leaves during the day and they are noticeably warmer than room temperature, move the plant to a cooler spot. Popular orchid cultivars like Phalaenopsis and Oncidium need less light than varieties such

as Dendrobium and Cattleya, so if you're growing one of the low-light varieties, err on the side of soft, diffuse light.

Orchids thrive in daytime temperatures of about 75°F and night time temperatures of about 60°F.

Some orchids come packaged in cheap plastic pots with the roots packed in soaked moss. Obviously, this violates two of the main rules of successful growth. There is no air flow around the roots, and the roots are never given a chance to completely dry out. Thus, the plant cannot breathe and root rot is inevitable. Orchid roots are highly specialised organs designed to soak up water very quickly and breathe. They do not extract nutrients from soil. The first step with any new orchid is to enjoy it. Don't attempt to repot a flowering plant.

After the bloom is done, go ahead and cut off the dead lower spike with sterile snippers and repot the plant. Orchids should be potted into specialised orchid pots in orchid mixture.

Tips for care

Caring for your orchid is pretty simple. During the summer months, water it weekly and heavily. Let the water drench the roots and fill up the pebble tray (this will provide extra humidity). It doesn't hurt every so often to even put the plant in the kitchen sink and really soak it down. Don't worry, you won't kill it as long as it's allowed to dry out afterward. During the growing season, feed it once a week with a weak solution of a powder or liquid fertiliser.

In the winter, keep your plant warm and cut the water back to once a month or so. Mist it every so often to make sure it stays hydrated. Don't fertilise it. If you see signs of distress, such as yellowing leaves, wrinkled leaves or no blooms, move the plant and keep tweaking your conditions. Once an orchid finds a happy spot, and falls into a routine, the plant should regularly throw out new roots and leaves or canes (depending on the type) and reward you yearly with a beautiful bloom.

Different orchids to try

Phalaenopsis or Moth Orchids are very popular as they make good indoor plants because they can tolerate the drier heat of central heating as well as being almost perpetually flowering,

Cymbidium orchids are best grown in a cool conservatory and placed out of doors in the summer. They are mostly winter and spring flowering.

Odontoglossum are very popular as they have such a wide range of colours, shapes and patterns. They range from large showy flowers on compact stems to tall branching spikes of many tiny bright blooms.

JANUARY 2024 MEETING

Our monthly meetings usually fall on the First Monday of every month, however we are struggling to get a Speaker for January as its NEW YEARS DAY.

We are looking at having the meeting on January 2nd (Tuesday), but this also depends on speaker availability.

We will let you know nearer the time of our decision

AUTUMN SHOW RESULTS

Most points in Section 1	1st	101 Penny Slack	2nd	67 Hazel Chant	3rd	45 Mary Harris
Best Dahlia Exhibit	class 142 Mary Harris					
Best in Exhibit in Section 1	Class 156 Penny Slack					
Best Pot Plant	Class 162 Hazel Chant					
Best Fuchsia Exhibit	Class 158 Mary Harris					
Most Points in section 1 Veg.	1st	33 Penny Slack	2nd	14 Mary Harris	3rd	9 Maggie Neate
Most Points in section 1 Fruit	1st	10 Penny Slack	2nd		3rd	
New Exhibitor with most points in Section 1 Squire's Garden Centres	1st	Mary Harris	2nd	Penny Slack	3rd	Hazel Chant
Section 1 Squire's Garden Centres						
Most points Section 3 Cookery	1st	5 Mary Harris	=1st	5 Penny Slack	3rd	4 Hazel Chant
Best Exhibit in Section 3 Cookery	Class 197 Mary Harris					
Most points Section 3 Handicraft	1st	15 Hazel Chant	=2nd	10 Margaret Neate	=2nd	10 Margaret Smith
Best Exhibit in Section 3 Handicraft	Class 212 Margaret Smith					
Most points in all 3 Sections together	1st	106 Penny Slack	2nd	86 Hazel Chant	3rd	59 Mary Harris