

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

CANCELLED AUTUM SHOW

Unfortunately our show secretary run into several problems regarding last month's show. We had a drop in the numbers of members entering which I think can be put down to Her Majesties Funeral. Where we did get individual reasonable numbers unfortunate illness occurred and members had to cancel. Due to the hot weather over the summer members entering were only able to raise single items. So all in all the numbers just didn't add up to a worthwhile show.

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

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.

CHERRIES

In April, when the large cherry tree here was clothed in more white blossom than in previous years, I was reminded of the lines from A E Housman's A Shropshire Lad: Loveliest of trees, the cherry now Is hung with bloom along the bough, And stands about the woodland ride Wearing white for Eastertide. By the beginning of June, lots of pale green fruit had formed which, if one assumes it's an acid Moreno cherry, can be used for making puddings and jam. They are usually too sour to be eaten raw.

Sweet cherries used to be grown mainly in orchards in southern England, but recent breeding in Canada has brought varieties that may be grown in smaller gardens and in cooler conditions.

A few varieties of sweet cherry are self-fertile, such as Stella and Sweetheart, but most need to be pollinated by a compatible variety, which may be a Morello.

Most cherries nowadays are grafted on to Colt rootstock, producing trees of about 15 feet in height and spread, but which can be restricted as bushes or fan-trained against a wall or fence.

Containerised trees maybe planted at any time, bare-root trees between November and early spring. It is important to choose a site for maximum sun, to stake freestanding trees and to net them against birds when fruit is about to appear.

So long as pollinating insects can get at the flowers, netting is also advised in a cold spring to protect the blossom. Large pebbles placed around the base of the trees will generate warmth in the sun and help the fruit to set.

Of the many varieties of sweet cherry, most will ripen in late July or August and should then be pruned. Summer Sun -despite its name - is suited to cooler, sunless summers and more exposed areas.

A dark red cherry, eaten fresh from the stalk, is one of the joys of summer, though one may doubt the words of the song - life is rather more than just a bowl of cherries.

GARDENER'S INJURYTIME

DAVID WHEELER

Outside work has been a tad underpowered for the past few months, not least because of my partner's hernia operation in early April.

Not one to do things by half, Simon turned out to have two hernias - one on the left side, one on the right (yes, we called them Keir and Boris, and they caused agony in equal measure).

He elected to have repair surgery for both on the same day. The prescribed post-hernia-op recuperation period is between six and eight weeks. During that time, rest is essential and the lifting of anything other than a mug of tea or a crafty roll-up is verboten.

Within a month though, I caught him eyeing up the lawn mower. So I hid the petrol can and ear-defenders, which proved only to increase his sense of challenge'.

The operation, performed at a private hospital, has so far proved enormously successful and the expense (less than £3,000) and a waiting time of just three months from diagnosis to knife - against the local NHS waiting time of three years - have paid off.

Twinges of pain remain occasionally felt (Keir causes most angst -I speak apolitically), while a hitherto daily soundtrack of groans and gripes has largely diminished. The petrol can and ear-defenders are back where they belong. The sound of the mower purring in the far-off orchard is music to my 76-year-old ears.

Throughout injury time, we have had the now-indispensable help of a day-a-week gardener, Daniel. Thirtyish, tall, muscular, knowledgeable and

obliging, he turns up punctually every Friday morning and it takes much persuasion on my part to pull him aside for even a ten-minute coffee break. He's worth his guineas.

An elderly friend, alas recently departed, added considerably to the anxiety caused by a terminal illness by watching the decline of her garden due to her ailing strength. She was an energetic and diligent gardener for most of her 80 years. She was proud that her beautiful garden was crafted - and maintained -by her own hands, and hers alone.

Foolishly, in my opinion, because she was well able to pay for some muscle, she held off employing some help, fearing it would be too pricey or, worse, not carried out as she would like.

Thankfully, she relented a couple of months before her death, and watching a capable young man nursing her beds and borders brought her unexpected pleasure and peace of mind in those final weeks.

With a smile, I hand over a small wodge of used tenners at the end of Daniel's eight-hour day, wishing only that I could afford to engage him more frequently. It isn't, however, his manpower alone that I value. He has good ideas of his own and contributes sagely to the way we are cultivating and developing our new-found 12 acres. And I like the way he'll say if there's a chore he can't handle successfully or, without risking serious injury, expect to perform safely.

Having moved to south-west Wales just 11 months ago, we are yet to see what surprises our garden has in store for July.

Recent delights have been the flowering of a 20-foot bay tree, the bountiful blossoming of numerous wild-cherry trees and the appearance of early purple orchids in the boundary hedgerows. We hope to mark our first anniversary with modest satisfaction (and the imminent arrival of an ambitious shipment of spring-flowering bulbs).

Let Daniel's presence prevail and may my own reserves continue to contribute usefully. As for Keir and Boris, it looks like goodbye to both of them.

WHY A LOW ALLERGEN GARDEN?

More than five million people in the UK have asthma, which, like hay fever, can be set off by a reaction to many different allergens - including pollens and mould spores - that originate from the garden. Grass pollen is the

most frequent cause of hay fever. In the UK 30% of people are allergic to grass pollen.

Despite continuing research much of which is funded by Asthma UK, no cure has yet been found for asthma. However, we now know much more about what triggers asthma and hay fever, and the benefits to be gained from trying to avoid some of these allergens.

The Asthma UK low allergen garden demonstrates a few simple measures that can be taken in the garden to lessen exposure to allergens and thereby help reduce the severity of asthma and hay fever symptoms.

Where to start

The most important thing is to learn which plants to select. Choose plants that are insect pollinated. The pollen from wind-pollinated plants is light and floats around in the air and can trigger hay fever and asthma symptoms. The pollen from insect-pollinated plants is heavy and too large to inhale.

Avoid heavily scented plants. These can be replaced with gently fragrant herbs such as mint or rosemary.

Plants in the daisy (Asteraceae) family, the pink (Caryophyllaceae) family and plants with downy leaves can also cause an allergic reaction.

When should I garden?

It is best to try and get the garden in order in the early spring when the pollen count is low. In the summer, on hot, still days, the pollen grains are released and do not blow away, and it may be best to remain inside the house on these days.

It is also worth remembering that pollen levels are generally lower first thing in the morning and on cool, dull days.

Check the pollen forecast on the radio and in the newspapers. Remember, it's important to consult your doctor or nurse regularly for reviews of your asthma and hay fever treatments.

Things to consider

Grass Consider replacing the lawn with attractive paving. If this is not possible, remember an electric cylinder mower is best. Shut all windows before mowing.

Mulch Use gravel as a non-allergic mulch.

Water Think about a water feature. Gentle running water is soothing, although fountains may make pollen and mould spores airborne. Pool plants do not cause allergies.

Compost Remove all rotting vegetation and compost to avoid moulds growing and releasing their spores into the air.

Ground cover Plant low allergen ground cover plants to cover exposed planting areas and stifle weeds.

Plants Remove any plants that are not low allergen plants. Replace with suitable plants from the low allergen plant list.

Hedges Replace hedges with a painted fence or any kind of wall. Hedges harbour dust, pollens and mould spores, which are released in strong winds and when the hedge is cut.

Remember wearing sunglasses while gardening can help to reduce pollen contact with the eyes and associated symptoms.

Gardening in the morning or early afternoon is best, as pollen counts are highest during the late afternoon and evening.

Plants for low allergen gardening

Herbaceous plants

Acanthus Tellima
Ajuga reptans Tiarella
Alchemilla mollis Tradescantia
Aquilegia Trollius
Aruncus dioicus 'Kneiffi' Veronica
Astilbe Viola
Astrantia
Brunnera Climbers

Bergenia Clematis
Campanula Parthenocissus
Delphinium quinquefolia
Diascia Vitis vinifera
Dicentra
Dierama Annuals
Epimedium Antirrhinum
Filipendula Eschscholzia
Foeniculum vulgare Impatiens

Geranium Mimulus
Geum Nigella
Hemerocallis Tropaeolum
Heuchera
Hosta
Shrubs, conifers and trees
Houttynia Aucuba
Iris Buxus
Lamium Cotinus
Ophiopogon planiscapus Cryptomeria
Origanum Deutzia
Pensternon
Hebe
Phygelius Hydrangea
Polemonium Nandina
Prunella Phormium
Rodgersia Photinia
Salvia Prunus
Saxifraga Pyrus pendula
Scabiosa Viburnum
Scrophularia
Sisyrinchium Symphytum

Roses
Unscented varieties