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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 SEPTEMBER

September can be a time of relative peace for the ornamental gardener: generally, there is less to do during this month than other months, apart from collecting seeds from summer-flowering plants.

Maintain water features

For gardens with water features, now is the time to cover ponds with netting to prevent water-logging during leaf fall in the autumn.

Harvest

In a kitchen garden, now is the time to enjoy the rewards of your hard work and pick your vegetables and fruit; remember to dig up any remaining potatoes, otherwise they will be destroyed by slugs.

Protect

Cover any tender salad leaves with bird netting, and pick late-fruiting raspberries and blackberries.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AUTUMN SHOW 9th SEPTEMBER

THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN**Cool-season coming up**

Perhaps you share with me the need to garden. Where I live, this means I feel bereft and aimless from November to March, when I can't plant anything in the ground and the harvest is minimal. One way I have remediated this loss is to plant cool-season crops under a simple low hoop of plastic in early autumn, so

that I get greens in winter. I'm not always successful at getting the timing right, as the heat of early autumn can be too high to germinate cool-season seeds like spinach, and when they do germinate they can fry under the plastic covering. But when I get it right, there is nothing like the triumphant gratitude of picking a bowl of salad greens while the world is frozen. The greens from a hoop house or cold frame are unlike any you will buy at the store, and even different from spring garden greens. Winter veggies are tough. Their cell walls are strong against the cold, able to survive cycles of freezing and thawing. Their roots hold strong under the soil, protected just enough to stay alive. The leaves are dark green, and tend to be small and dense. They match the feeling inside me in winter: sturdy, rooted, biding time till spring.

The cool-season garden suggests, however, that while winter is a time of dormancy and rest, with a little shelter there can still be life and growth. Sometimes we can be like dandelions growing in cracks - nothing can hold us back; we are diamonds in the rough. But after a while, without support, we wither and stop growing. We need a kind soul to bring us a little water, a little encouragement. We are more like tender perennials than hardy dandelions. When our needs are heard and respected, when we are given just a little boost of natural fertilizer at the right time, we can flourish.

THE WINTER TUNNEL OF LIFE

At times, it feels like our own ground is frozen solid and we can't garner enough nutrients to keep going. I experienced this when my children were growing out of their baby stage, and it was time for me to figure out the next steps in my life. I was debating pursuing a teaching licence, but I felt hesitant leaving behind my work as an energy healer and massage therapist, and moving on to something new. Yet I hadn't been wholly happy as a healer. It felt like a pot that didn't quite fit my root ball. Then, out of the blue, I was asked to substitute teach for a day, and it was enough to show me how much I love teaching. It is just the right sized pot for me. I just needed that little nudge to show me the way.

I'm mixing metaphors here, but whether we're talking pot size to root ball or frozen ground beneath a winter tunnel, what it all amounts to is that we need

the right ground to support us, the right climate to keep us going. Gardening in any season reminds us

that the spark lives in us at all times, but we need that call, that request, that support to pull us where we need to go. Then, when the time is right, we can flourish.

One autumn I planted spinach beneath a plastic tunnel, and though it grew just tiny little leaves before the frost, it came back in very early spring. By April, when spinach can be planted in an unprotected bed, I had such a jungle of greens I was giving away bags to friends. With that little bit of protection, my spinach was able to flourish when light and temperatures began to increase. The same has been true for my work as a teacher. The process I went through to change careers mid-life, to find the best place for me to root, wasn't always easy, but it felt right. And when all the pieces were finally in place, I was like that spring crop of spinach, sharing my love and my gifts with others. Is anything waiting beneath your metaphoric winter tunnel, ready to burst into new life? How can you support this rebirth? There is always growth, always life, even in the dark and cold of winter.

When you do not know what is waiting to unfold and grow, the trick is to go into the silence of the winter tunnel. Listen to the stillness. Don't direct or label or force, just listen. In stillness and silence sometimes what we need to hear is revealed. Then we must let it germinate in its own time.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Scary Sun-dried Tomato Bread Rolls

If you are enjoying some blood-red pepper soup, you really have to team it up with some form of bread. What better accompaniment than these scary sun-dried tomato rolls?

You will need

1 lb. strong white bread flour

One & half tsp. salt
2 tsp. sugar
1 oz. butter
2 oz. finely chopped sundried tomatoes
2 tbsp. sundried tomato paste
Half tsp. easy blend dried yeast
9 fl.oz. lukewarm milk
Reserve a few chopped tomatoes for 'teeth'

To do

Put all the dry ingredients into a bowl.
Rub in the butter.
Add the chopped tomatoes and the tomato paste.
Mix together with your fingers.
Add the yeast. Finally add the milk.
Knead on a lightly floured surface. Shape into a ball.
Leave to rise in a buttered bowl in a warm, draught-free place until doubled in size.
Take out and re-knead into rolls.
Press a few chopped tomato 'teeth' into one side, in the shape of a scary grin
Place on a buttered baking sheet and allow to rise again.
Cook at gas mark 5 or 190°C (375°F) for about 20 minutes until they are golden and hollow-sounding when tapped underneath.

HYSSOP

Simon Courtauld

Years ago, I had a few plants of hyssop. When I moved house, I left the hyssop behind. I don't remember using it to flavour food or to edge a border, but I have recently learned there are several good reasons for growing this herb again. Perhaps the best reason is that hyssop apparently repels cabbage white butterflies. According to the gardening writer and seed-supplier Sarah Raven, three plants, in the ground or in pots, around a 5ft x 15ft bed of brassicas, should keep the little horrors away during summer.

Hyssop can be grown from seed sown outside now, or from cuttings taken in summer. While white-or pink-flowering hyssop can be found, most varieties will produce blue flowers, not unlike those of bugle or sage. The plants should grow up to two feet, they will self-seed and, as hardy perennials, will spread their roots like mint, to which hyssop is related.

Carefully controlled and pruned, hyssop will make a colourful, low hedge, preferably in full sun and a soil which is not too acid.

The flowers have a pleasant scent which is attractive to bees.

There are several references to hyssop in the Bible. On the cross, Jesus was given a vinegar-soaked sponge on a stalk of hyssop and, in the Old Testament hyssop was used in purification rites.

'Purge me with hyssop,' David asks God in the Book of Psalms, so that he may be cleansed in body and soul.

The herb has a long history of medicinal use; an infusion of its leaves has been thought to have healing properties. More easily recognised, however, are hyssop's culinary properties.

The chopped, young leaves of hyssop, a slightly bitter-tasting herb, go well with rich meat such as venison and feathered game; also with fatty fish.

Some sausages may benefit from flavouring with chopped hyssop, and the flowers are decorative in a salad.

The Carthusian monks may have adapted their recipe for Chartreuse liqueur since the 18th century. Among the many plant ingredients, I hope that hyssop is still included.

MADEIRA

DAVID WHEELER

Madeira has long been a favoured holiday destination for senior Brits, largely because of its benign climate and scenic splendour. Volcanic, verdant, mountainous and remote, this Portuguese outpost lies north-west of the Canaries, sharing a latitude with Bermuda. Unlike those other retreats, Madeira's beaches are almost nonexistent, with cliffs rising sheer from great oceanic depths, saving it from the bikini brigade. The word 'genteel' surfaces.

Madeira wine, made famous by the Blandy family who settled there in 1811, has carried the island's name far and wide - with, of course, a little help from Flanders and Swarm, m'dear. Less well-known is Madeira's flora. From the deck of an anchored-off Union Castle liner in 1963 (I ran away to sea as a young teenager), its misty blue complexion provided my first glimpse of a foreign country, although it would be another 52 years before I made landfall, discovering then the source of that enigmatic blue: jacaranda trees, flowering their hearts out in late April and May.

Gardeners will find much to absorb them on Madeira. On recent visits I have ascended the heights above Funchal (population 100,000, half the island's inhabitants) to explore the dramatic seven teen-acre ravine garden of Monte

Palace, situated some 1500ft above sea level, described by Madeira aficionado Gerald Luckhurst as a place 'where East meets West, North blends with South; an Aladdin's cave of wonders, peopled by a multitude of sculpted figures; a curious cabinet of garden art that unconsciously mimics Alexander Pope and the Tradescant's, seeking only to dazzle and amaze'. It is the creation of Jose Berardo, one of Portugal's wealthiest citizens, combining myriad Portuguese ceramics, rock crystal, mineral and gemstone exhibits and modern museum-quality African sculpture - set among pines, azaleas, cycads and tree ferns thickly planted on slopes and terraces flecked with koi-filled pools and oriental architectural fragments. It's a collection of collections, excitingly approached by cable car from Funchal's seafront.

Cable cars also transport visitors to Madeira's botanic garden, surrounding the former private villa of William Reid, whose name is forever linked with the island's most famous hotel. Because of its well-labelled plants it makes a good starting point for those unfamiliar with an abundance of sub-tropical flora.

On a recent visit I was lucky enough to meet Madeira's president, Miguel Albuquerque, whose collection of roses is established at his family's Quinta do Arco on the north coast below towering cliffs clothed in indigenous evergreens. Here, unusually, in a sunny walled garden, a vast array of roses is arranged by breeder, rather than by colour or chronology. Curvaceous beds double as living catalogues where visitors can explore individual varieties created by the likes of such renowned European nurserymen as Kordes, Ducher, the Guillot dynasty, Vibert and Nabonnand, alongside British growers such as Harkness and David Austin.

Over a glass of Madeira wine on the terrace of his official residence I soon forgot I was talking to a leading politician. Senor Albuquerque's passion for roses is paramount and only the scheduled opening of a cabinet meeting dragged him away. But before official duties called he waxed lyrical about his favourite Bourbons and Centifolias. I couldn't nail him on his preferred breeder or colours, but I sensed his heart belonged to the world's long-established breeders and to the mysterious deep red hues found in such magnificent roses as 'Etoile de Hollande', 'Guinea' and the tenebrous 'Schwarze Madonna', all of which - hooray! - can be grown with ease on English soil.

HOW A HONEYBEE CLONED ITSELF HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF TIMES

THE workers of a South African subspecies of honeybee can clone themselves, with one individual having done so many millions of times over the past 30 years. Some of the clones can even develop into queens that can take over the hive.

Asexual reproduction -parthenogenesis - isn't uncommon in the insect world, but having offspring that are genetically identical to the parent is. That is because, during the reproductive process, genetic material gets mixed up in a process called recombination. As a result, even if there is only one parent, its offspring end up with a slightly different genetic make-up.

However, the female workers of the Cape honeybee (*Apis mellifera capensis*), native to southern South Africa, have developed the unusual ability to clone themselves while effectively avoiding recombination during reproduction, says Benjamin Oldroyd at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Doing so carries important benefits. Normally, asexual reproduction can be lethal in honeybees because about a third of the genes become inbred, and the larvae don't survive, says Oldroyd. But a Cape honeybee worker clone remains as genetically healthy as her mother. "It's quite remarkable," he says.

Curious about how the worker clones maintain such strong genetic integrity without inbreeding, Oldroyd and his colleagues compared the genomes of Cape worker bees, Cape virgin queens and their offspring. Cape queens generally reproduce sexually, so to force them to reproduce asexually, the scientists fitted them with a strip of surgical tape glued with nail varnish to prevent them mating.

The researchers genotyped one queen and 25 of her larvae, and four workers and 63 of their larvae.

They found that the asexually produced offspring of the queen showed levels of genetic recombination that were 100 times greater than seen in the cloned offspring of the worker bees.

In fact, the worker bees' offspring were essentially perfect copies of their mothers, says Oldroyd, which suggests that the Cape worker bees have evolved a mutation that effectively prevents genetic recombination during reproduction {Proceedings of the Royal Society B, doi.org/gkgxjs}.

One line of clones has been re-cloning since 1990, with the same individual copied hundreds of millions of times, says Oldroyd.

The clones can prove problematic for the health of the colony, however. Generally speaking, the queen bee is the only individual that reproduces, while other bees carry out their own duties to keep the colony healthy.

If the workers begin cloning themselves - which can happen if the hive is disturbed in some way - this delicate balance is destroyed. In some cases, one of the clones can even develop into a queen of a dysfunctional hive.

"Eventually, the workers just sort of hang around laying eggs not doing any work," says Oldroyd. "The colony dies, and [the cloning workers] spread to the next colony."

Even after these workers have invaded a new colony they continue to lay eggs, disrupting and potentially taking over that colony too.

"They kill about 10 per cent of South African colonies every year. It's like a transmissible social cancer," says Oldroyd

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