

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

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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

TRIPS FOR 2022

All deposits are non returnable

11th September Broughton Grange as seen on TV

<https://www.broughtongrange.com/gardens>

Meet at Victoria Hall at 9am. Return to Victoria Hall approx. 6pm. Comfort stops in both directions. There's a Café on site. Cost £30 each

Deposit £10 to reserve your place

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AUTUMN SHOW MOVED TO 17th September

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.

THE MESSAGE OF THE GARDEN**Small Gardens**

Sometimes we have to accept that we don't have the time or the space for a large garden. Rather than regard this as a failure or a deficiency, we can approach it as an opportunity to get creative. Gardens are about relationships - with plants, the Earth, our communities and ourselves. Any garden is a gift and a journey, even if it is one little pot of marigolds. The garden is what we make of it. The popularity of fairy gardens illustrates how a small garden can be just as rewarding and fun as a big plot of land.

In fact, I would argue that an apartment needs a garden even more than a house. I've lived in apartments twice, and plants made all the difference. In the first, I was home for the summer from college, and my mother and I put tomatoes and flowers on the balcony, which overlooked a busy street. Across this busy street, a family was evicted while we lived there, all their stuff dumped on the lawn. We knew drug deals were likely happening all around us, though we weren't in any immediate danger. The pots of plants sitting proudly on the artificial grass-covered balcony brought a sense of normalcy and nature to our space.

In the second apartment I lived in, we didn't have a balcony. My boyfriend and I and our two cats shared our space with a lot of indoor potted plants. The cats especially enjoyed them. I learned which plants they liked to eat and which they ignored. As soon as we relocated to a house with a garden, they stopped gnawing on potted plants. I knew just how they felt. I think without the plants we had, though, cleansing the air and bringing us green leaves and dark soil, I would have become rather depressed in our apartment. Small spaces need plants. Plant people, and cats, need plants.

MAKING THE MOST OF A SMALL SPACE

If you live in a small space with only a balcony or a patio, there is so much you can do to create a tiny farm of your own. In many ways, pots are easier to work with than a full-sized garden. While I have a large suburban plot, I

always grow a few things in pots myself. Pots are portable, so I can move them in and out of microclimates, or get them inside for a hailstorm or a frost as needed. They are easy to water. For me, a primary benefit of potted plants is that I am not struggling with the heavy clay soil in my garden. And again, there are those cute fairy gardens. Pots can be filled with pretty rocks and shells, or even tiny wind chimes, to make them not only potted gardens, but little spaces of retreat and magic.

What do you want to grow? Potted gardens, such as herbs in the kitchen, tropical plants in the sunroom or tomatoes on your balcony, offer the flexibility that our modern culture so often requires. A portable potted garden allows us to connect with soil and plants without a great deal of space. A potted garden allows you to control temperature and water. Therefore, you can use the potted garden to express your unique gardening dreams. Do you miss your home climate, or do you wish you lived someplace different? Perhaps you can grow a plant from that region in a sunny spot or even a terrarium. Just as you might wear a dress from a culture you feel connected to, a small garden can offer you a bit of the energy of your dreams and inner self.

Living in a small space doesn't just limit you to pots and hanging gardens, however. Consider other possibilities for spending time in the garden, such as community gardens, nearby gardens and school gardens. Volunteering at a local school garden, or

tending an elderly neighbour's garden, is an opportunity for service and getting in time with those good soil microbes and green brothers and sisters. Every plant, every plot of tended soil, makes the world a greener, fresher and more caring place. Every moment spent in a garden fills your heart with the compassion of green and growing things.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Messy tart

Serves 6

This free-form tart works with all sorts of seasonal fruit combinations: peach, pear or plum slices, raspberries, stoned cherries or, as below, rhubarb, strawberries and blueberries. Pretty much anything goes, so either mix it up to your liking or stick to just one fruit. Just remember that

some fruits take longer to cook than others, so adjust the size of the pieces accordingly -raw apple will take longer to soften than raspberries, so the apples should be thinly sliced. It's best to assemble the tart right before baking to prevent a soggy bottom. However, you could make and even roll out the pastry and prepare the fruit earlier in the day.

You will need

For the pastry:

- 180g plain flour or a mix of half spelt and half plain flour
- 1 tbsp caster sugar
- 120g cold butter, cubed
- 110g full fat cream cheese
- 2 tbsp iced water

For the filling:

- 200g rhubarb, cut into inch-long pieces
- 275g strawberries, leafy tops removed, and halved
- 100g blueberries
- 1 tbsp cornflour (or 2 level tsp for non-juicy fruits such as rhubarb, stone or orchard fruits)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract, or the scraped seeds from half a vanilla pod
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 2 tbsp ground almonds
- 1 heaped tbsp flaked almonds
- 1 small egg, beaten

To do

- 1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6.

2 Put the flour, sugar and a pinch of salt into a food processor and whizz for 5 seconds. Add the butter and spoonfuls of cream cheese.

3 Pulse for 10 seconds or until it looks like crumbs. Add the water and pulse until it forms a dough. Pour onto a large piece of non PVC cling film and press into a ball. Wrap and freeze for 15 minutes to chill it quickly.

4 Mix together the fruit, corn flour and vanilla and set aside.

5 Put a large piece of baking paper onto the work surface, then sprinkle with the flour. Unwrap the pastry and put into the centre of paper. Sprinkle a little flour over the pastry and roll out to a large thin circle 5-7mm thick. Move the pastry and its paper onto a flat baking tray. Spoon the ground almonds onto the pastry and spread out until about 5cm from the edge. Heap the fruit on top of the almonds.

6 With the aid of the baking paper, pull up the sides of the pastry to hug the fruit and stop it falling out. Don't worry if the pastry has to fold over itself. Brush the pastry with beaten egg then stick the flaked almonds to it, patting them on with your fingers.

7 Bake for about 40 minutes or until the pastry is brown and cooked all the way through. Serve hot with vanilla ice cream or custard.

BEFRIENDING BEES

Bees are in danger of becoming extinct in UK cities, Christine Stock looks at how we can all help in our gardens

Experts now warn that, without help from the public, the humble bee could disappear from our cities altogether. We take some expert advice on what is best to plant for the second half of 2020 and discover ways to save a struggling bee.

In the UK alone 35 species of bees are under threat of extinction. This is especially true in our urban areas, where every time a new building development is constructed on green space another habitat is irreversibly lost. Land use has changed drastically in the past few decades - according to environmental group Plant life, 97 per cent of wildflower meadows have been destroyed over the past century.

Bees play a pivotal role as go-betweens in nature's life cycle, pollinating the plants we eat and encouraging our environment to naturally flourish. The more cities harbour natural plant life, the better our urban bee populations will fare - so even if you've only got a small garden, a balcony, a patio or a tiny pot on the window ledge you can still make a difference.

The best flowers you can plant for bees include purple flowers like lavender, buddleia and catmint, as bees can see purple more clearly than other colours. Also tubular-shaped flowers like foxgloves and snapdragons; herbs like thyme and rosemary-; honeysuckle and clematis in the winter; bluebells, rhododendrons and forget-me-nots in the spring; delphiniums, foxgloves and hollyhocks in early summer; and dahlias, cornflowers and ivy in late summer.

You can also help bees by planting fruit and vegetables like apples, pears, onions, peas, beans, courgettes and cucumbers.

Carolyn Dunster, specialist in city gardening and author of *Urban Flowers*, says:

"Late planting for summer and autumn could include scented climbers such as honeysuckle and jasmine and ivy flowers are hugely attractive. It's not too late for annual and perennial flowers that bloom into October such as *Verbena bonariensis*, *Nicotiana*, *Monarda* and nasturtiums. Any brightly coloured, single-petalled flowers are good -check out plants for pollinators on the labels."

One of the positive impacts of lockdown in the UK is that we've all looked to our gardens more and have reconnected with the nature on our doorsteps, including bees.

Wildlife expert Sean McMenemy from wildlife supplies website Ark Wildlife reports a 188 per cent increase in visitors looking for bee products in his online shop, compared to the 2019 Spring season. Among the top selling products has been nest boxes for Mason Bees, which are endangered creatures and critical garden pollinators.

When it comes to saving a struggling bee, Sean says it is better to wait than intervene.

"Bees often take a rest and an inactive bee does not mean it is in difficulty," he explains. "If a bee remains in the same place for longer than 30¹⁵

minutes, it is likely to need help -ideally move it on to nectar rich flowers in a sunny spot. Natural food and warmth is the best thing for it.

"If no sun/food is available you can move it to a warm spot, ideally outdoors, and offer it a little white sugar and water solution, just a few drops in front of it. Do not risk it falling in the solution as this may harm it. Honey, brown sugar and artificial sweeteners should be avoided and never offered to bees."

Bees are non-aggressive unless threatened, so stay calm if a bee lands on you.

Sean says: "A bee is slow-moving and has no intention of stinging you - it's just trying to find its bearings or warm up in the sunshine. If it lands on your body or flat clothing, slowly walk to a sunny spot where you can place it in full sun on a plant, fence or table."

If you're looking for a bee charity to support, Sean says the Bumblebee Conservation Trust is an excellent UK charity whose mission is to increase the number and distribution of bumblebees. Other charities to support include The Bee Friendly Trust - who are particularly focused on creating urban habitats for bees, The Wildlife Trusts and Give Bees a Chance.

JANE AUSTEN'S WELSH ARCADIA

David Wheeler

If Bryan's Ground, our former Herefordshire home, was E M Forster Arts & Crafts, Upland, our new resting place in Carmarthenshire, is Jane Austen Arcadia. We will garden differently.

I'm no stranger to South Wales. My father grew up in Swansea, and happy memories of childhood holidays on and around the Gower endure. We are further west, a mile from the Towy estuary as the gull flies, not far from Ferryside.

We decamped in mid-August. The weather was fair. Mornings were crisp, afternoons were hot, evenings were still long and fiery sunsets out in the Atlantic radiated far inland deep into the night.

We had clocked up 28 years at BG. So the uprooting process was unfamiliar, expensive, occasionally fretful and something of an ordeal. Our worldly goods were packed, driven and unloaded by a team of seven men in seven lorries over a seven-day period. I lost count of the tea bags and biscuits consumed - the guys needed to maintain their strength.

After all, we were moving garden as well as moving house, which meant the handling of a considerable accumulation of benches, oversize terracotta pots, wheelbarrows, a bowser, push and ride-on mowers, an armoury of tools and a consignment of worthless but much-loved, moss-encrusted sculpture and ornamental ironwork.

Separate arrangements had to be made to transfer some 200 live plants, propagated over a six-month period before we sold up. Enter Richard, an old friend and sometime 'man with a van' Less springy than he was, owing to recent heart surgery, he was aided by his wife, the kind of gal who gets a jobdone while § others stand around thinking about it.

I was careful not to water the plants too much before moving, as those extra gallons would weigh heavy on the van, resulting in smaller cargoes and more trips. Surprisingly, the entire ensemble was safely shipped in just two journeys, thanks largely to the ingenious use of several old garden tables to create two more 'floors' in the vehicle on which to stack things. Blessedly, the plants were refreshed by a light shower when released from incarceration.

I write after just one week and cannot yet claim to have fully explored our dozen or so mostly wooded acres. But, having performed a few chemical tests when we first saw the property, I am assured of the soil's fecundity. Weeds also tell you a lot.

A towering rhododendron, possibly Old Cornish Red, stands some 40 feet high, planted 100 years ago and said to be in flower from mid-February until the end of May. And with a pH of between 5 and 6.5, my hydrangeas won't be pink.

Our proximity to the sea should protect us from early and late frosts - the gardener's worst enemy. We're sheltered from marine gales and comfortably enough inshore for the wind to jettison potentially plant-damaging salt.

Thankfully, Upland has not been intensively planted, providing us with a largely clean canvas on which to work.

I have gardened in double harness with a partner of more than 30 years. We're well aware of each other's likes and dislikes, meaning we will most likely create two gardens again (with, of course, cross-over privileges) - one beautifully and appropriately designed, the other (mine) more highly tuned to a plantsman's incurable acquisitiveness.

In receipt of the state pension for more than a decade, I'm anxious not to waste time. Trundling backwards, so to speak, from Howards End to Mansfield Park, I heed Shakespeare's apt reminder in Twelfth Night: 'In delay there lies no plenty.'

GREEN YOUR WALLS

Growing ivy is a great way to cover ugly walls and support local wildlife. Just don't let it get the better of you, says Clare Wilson

THE latest thing in architecture is green buildings - covering walls and roofs with a carpet of plants to insulate, soak up rain and provide a home for wildlife. Many such buildings need complex systems for holding and irrigating the soil, but there is a much easier approach: growing some ivy.

Ivy is a group of about a dozen species of evergreen climbing plants in the genus *Hedera* that are happy in shade or full sun and with most kinds of soil. They don't need supports as they grow aerial roots that latch on to most things. Many people use ivy to quickly cover an ugly wall or fence. It also provides nectar for pollinators and its berries are a valuable food source for birds in winter.

In a temperate climate such as the UK's, an ivy covered wall will slightly warm a room in winter. As well as insulating, ivy cools a room in summer through shading and by water evaporation from its leaves. "It cools the surrounding air. It's like sweating," says Tijana Blanusa at the University of Reading, UK, who has examined the insulating effects of climbers. She and her colleagues found that *Hedera helix* ivy created a larger cooling effect than two other climbers, Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) and climbing hydrangea (*Pileostegia viburnoides*).

This is probably because its leaf cover is so dense, says Blanusa. *Hedera helix*'s exact cooling effect is hard to quantify as it depends on so many factors, but it could be by a few degrees, she says.

Ivy has a reputation for damaging buildings, but according to the UK's Royal Horticultural Society, this doesn't usually happen unless they already have cracks - the aerial roots can't penetrate sound masonry. The other fear is that it can make walls damp, but Blanusa's study found that ivy raised humidity next to the wall by only a small amount. You do need to be careful, though, as once ivy has been in the ground for a few years, it can grow like billy-o. In some parts of the US and Australia, certain kinds of ivy are classed as invasive weeds.

I can empathise, having had a few battles with ivy plants that I let get out of control. If it reaches the roof, it can get under tiles and block gutters. So don't plan on covering a wall with ivy unless you

are willing to get up a ladder twice a year to cut off any shoots that are approaching danger zones. One option is to paint vulnerable structures with anti-graffiti paint that contains a chemical called silane. This reduces attachment of the plant's aerial roots.

Because of ivy's vigorous nature, I also wouldn't recommend planting it in a flower bed with the intention of covering a fence or shed, as you will be forever pulling out shoots trying to take over the patch. Instead, you could use a large pot or confine it to a small patch with a few bricks -I took some from my patio. You just have to keep the upper hand.