


# Ash Parish Garden Club

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

 ash parish garden club



Monthly Newsletter Apr 2020

**ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS**

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**EDITORS NOTES**

Brian –Stories to [ernestperry33@gmail.com](mailto:ernestperry33@gmail.com) hard copy to Chris

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**JOHN SAYS**

Time flies like an arrow  
Fruit flies like bananas

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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.

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## THIS MONTHS RECIPE

### LEMON CREAM Serves 4

#### You will need

Three quarters pint milk  
Half oz gelatine  
4 tablespoons cold water  
3oz castor sugar  
2 lemons

#### To do

Dissolve sugar in warm milk.  
Dissolve gelatine in the water.  
Warm gently.  
Add dissolved sugar and milk to dissolved gelatine.  
Both mixtures will combine without curdling if they are about the same temperature.  
Lightly whip cream with strained lemon juice, whisk into milk mixture.  
Pour into a 1.5 pint mould rinsed in cold water.  
Or split between small containers  
Allow to set.

*Mrs. E. Rees*

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## APGC TRIPS FOR 2020

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).

**GARDENING CALENDAR APRIL**

April is a transitional month that can often bring unpredictable weather, so what will need doing in the garden is largely dependent on the weather conditions.

**Plant**

As a general rule, this is the time for planting up, supporting young plants, and for forward planning ahead of the summer. Sow tomatoes, runner beans, basil, green pepper, marrow, courgettes and sweet corn in individual modules undercover for planting after the frost.

April is the best time for creating new container displays. If there's space, pot plug plants into larger pots – cheaper than buying bigger pot plants in a month's time. Plant up summer baskets and grow undercover before positioning in late May. Sow half-hardy bedding plants in seed trays or cell trays undercover.

**Maintain water features**

If you have a water feature in your garden, now is the time to give it its annual round of post-winter maintenance. Clear out ponds: take out planting baskets and fish (keep in buckets of old pond water), bail out the water, remove sludge and refill. Rainwater is best, but let tap water stand for a week before putting fish back in. Plant new pond plants using special pond baskets from garden centres.

**Protect**

Now is the time to watch out for early pests and diseases – hit them hard now to avoid problems later on. Use fine Environmesh to protect young carrots from carrot root fly.

April can still bring frosty nights, so protect tender flowers and vegetables from late frosts – keep horticultural fleece on standby. Young, upright-growing plants will need some form of support: stake tall perennials such as delphiniums and sunflowers with 'grow through' supports.

**Go indoors**

Don't forget the house plants, either: water and feed more often now they're actively growing.

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

SPRING SHOW	CANCELLED
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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**ZOMBIE DEATH FUNGI TARGET THE WORLD'S ANTS**

FIFTEEN newly discovered fungi can all control the brains of ants in cruel and unusual ways in the moments before killing them.

Zombie ant fungi are parasites that are mostly found in tropical forests. Once inside its host such a fungus alters the ants behaviour in ways that favour its own reproduction, for example by compelling the ant to seek a place other ants are likely to pass. The fungus then sprouts a long stalk, sometimes right through the back of the ants head. Infectious spores bloom at the end, making it easier for the fungus to brush onto another ant.

"Besides their beauty, its striking how these fungi evolved and are so well adapted morphologically and ecologically to infect their hosts," says Joao Araujo at Pennsylvania State University. Araujo and his colleagues have now described 15 new species of zombie ant fungus from the Brazilian Amazon, Japan, Australia, Colombia and the US.

They were collected by Araujo or by travelling colleagues. The 15 species include fungi that force ants to bite into tree trunks, plant stalks or leaves before dying {Studies in Mycology,

One fungus, called *Ophiocordyceps blokebornesii*, is found in Missouri and infects a species of carpenter ant that builds its nests in dead logs. The fungus compels the ant to die after biting into the wood inside a dead log. There, the fungus can infect a new victim while staying sheltered from the elements.

In the Amazon, *Ophiocordyceps monacidis* forces a species of odorous ant to die under a type of moss. The fungus mimics the moss's sex organs with its spore-spitting stalks. Araujo isn't sure exactly why.

**PAUSING FOR NATURE**

**During these unprecedented times, it has never been so important to connect with what brings us joy.**

With events, education activities and volunteering sessions now cancelled until the end of June, it could be easy to feel isolated. Shifting focus and staying active can make this transition easier and help everyone find joy in ways we have been unable to do in our previously busy lives.

For this reason we wanted to take the opportunity to remind you of the beautiful nature reserves in Surrey which are ready and waiting for you to explore. Why not exercise (at a social distance) surrounded by bluebells or get up early and listen to bird song?

You can also enjoy the wildlife in your gardens, which should now be full of birds, butterflies, bees and early blooms.

Just like wildlife, we should all be busy inspiring people with ways to connect with nature during this difficult time. Keep in touch with us our website and newsletter, on social media and through regular e-news updates!

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**POETS CORNER*****Flowers***

Yes; there is heaven about you: in your breath  
And hues it dwells. The stars of heaven ye shine;  
Bright strangers in a land of sin and death,  
That talk of God, and point to realms divine . .

Ye speak of frail humanity: ye tell  
How man, like you, shall flourish and shall fail:-  
But ah! ye speak of Heavenly Love as well,  
And say, the God of flowers is God of all . . .

Sweet flowers, sweet flowers! the rich exuberance  
Of Nature's heart in her propitious hours:  
When glad emotions in her bosom dance  
She vents her happiness in laughing flowers . . .

Childhood and you are playmates; matching well

Your sunny cheeks, and mingling fragrant breath  
Ye help young Love his faltering tale to tell;  
Ye scatter sweetness o'er the bed of Death.  
**HENRY FRANCIS LYTE (1793-1847)**

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## **HUNTING WILLOW SEEDS IN HUNDRED ACRE WOOD**

WINNIE-THE-POOH scoured Hundred Acre Wood in search of honey in A. A. Milne's beloved children's tales. In Ashdown Forest in Sussex, UK, the wood's real-life inspiration, Alice Hudson and Ian Willey are looking for something less sweet, but equally vital.

The researchers from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, are seeking willow seeds to deposit in an underground vault. The plan is to preserve them as an insurance policy against future threats. "We don't know what's going to happen," says Willey.

More than 12.5 million seeds have been collected and banked by Kew's UK National Tree Seed Project (UKNTSP) since 2013 to preserve genetic diversity in the long term. Willow is a tricky customer when it comes to seed-banking, which is why Hudson and Willey's field trip is one of the first of its kind.

As cattle graze nearby, Willey spots the yellow catkins of creeping willow (*Salix repens*), a shrubby tree that spreads across the ground. There is just one problem - the seeds have gone.

This is one of the reasons why banking willow seeds can be challenging. There is a brief window of opportunity, usually just a few days in April or May, to grab them before they are carried off by the wind. "The difficulty is, you blink and you miss it," says Willey. Fortunately, nearby willow clumps hold the telltale white fluff, a sign of seeds that will soon be spread.

Another issue is that identifying willow species correctly can be difficult even for experts like Willey and Hudson. The trees are known to hybridise, for example between goat willow (*Salix caprea*) and grey willow (*Salix cinerea*).

However, *S. repens* is relatively easy to spot, because it is the only willow with such a creeping growth form and shrub-like height. Paper bags are soon filled with seeds, starting the race to get them to the seed bank.

If seeds aren't safely stowed within a fortnight, they won't be viable. Most arrive at the Millennium Seed Bank, also in Sussex, by post, while today's are driven over by Willey and Hudson.

Inside the bank, the seeds are dried and cleaned. Half are then stored at -20°C and the rest are cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen. The former allows easy access to seeds, while the latter is better for long-term storage.

Not all species are suitable for banking: conventional storage only works for seeds that can tolerate drying, and not all native UK tree species can.

Then there is the issue of trying to replicate the genetic diversity that is found in the wild. But the UKNTSP seems to be managing that. One study found the bank had 86 per cent of the alleles - or variants of genes - present in wild yew, for example.

And what about bringing the seeds out of storage and back to life? "We are confident in our ability to germinate them once they come out of cryo or the bank," says Hudson. Should disaster befall the UK's creeping willow, it could be a seed collected today that ensures the forest that inspired Milne's fiction lives on.

**Adam Vaughan**

**12.5m** Number of seeds have been stored by the UK National Tree Seed Project

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“OK you bugs and beetles, weeds and weevils, remember me from last year? Well, I’m back!”