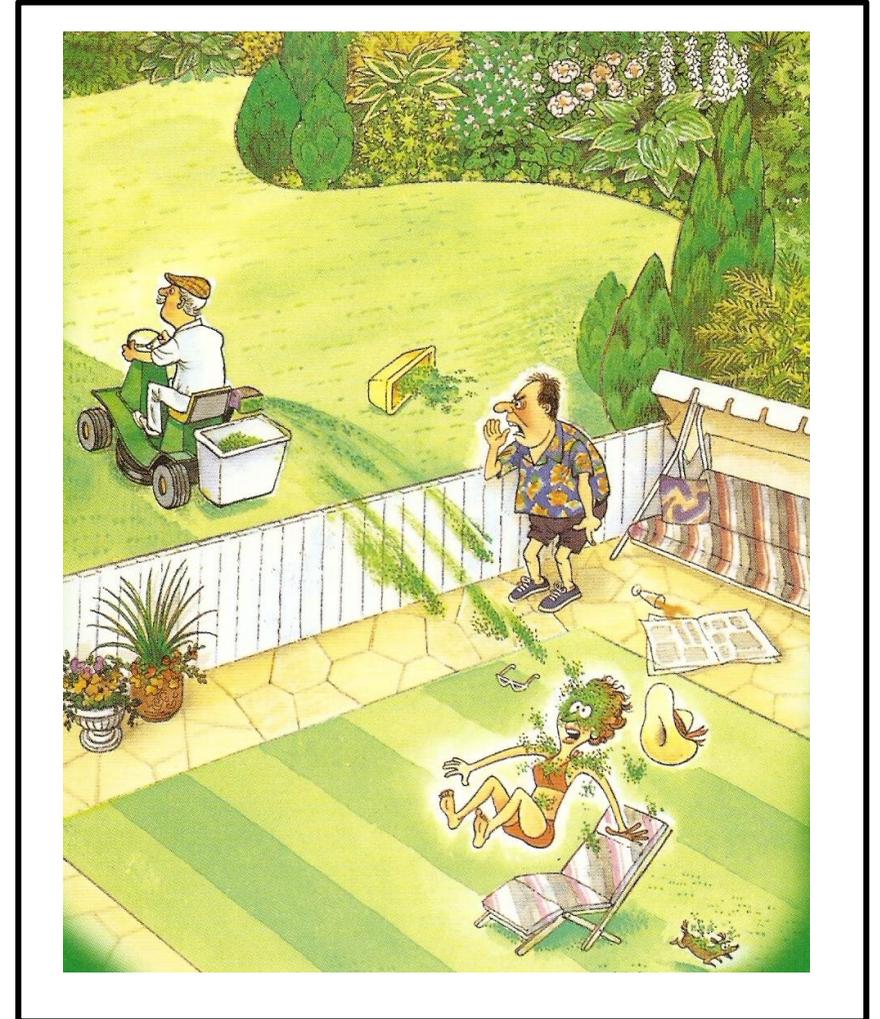


Ash Parish Garden Club

www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk



Monthly Newsletter July 2019

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>TEL NO</u>
Chairman	Mr J Poole "MEADCOTT" Badshot Lea Rd	01252 319621
Secretary	Mrs. B Ames 97 Longacre, Ash	01252 686303
Treasurer	Mr. Ian Chant 145 Carfax Ave, Tongham	01252 329767
Show Secretary	Mrs. B Winton 2 Elm Hill, Normandy	01252 333756
Social Secretary	Mrs. H Chant 145 Carfax Ave, Tongham	01252 329767
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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EDITORS NOTES

Brian -Stories to ernestperry33@gmail.com hard copy to Chris

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.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RHS Hampton Court	1 - 7 July
RHS Tatton Park	17 - 21 July
AUTUMN SHOW	7 Sep
RHS Malvern (autumn)	28 - 29 Sep

CAPTIVATING COSMOS

Cosmos are wonderfully colourful traditional cottage garden plants prized for their abundant, silky, daisy like flowers and their easy-care nature in the garden

One of the quickest and prettiest ways to fill an empty space in a border is to grow cosmos, the daisy like flowers which come in varieties which will give a garden a true kaleidoscope of colour. They are easy to grow, especially from seed, add height to a border without flopping over as they reach up to a metre in height and are a real magnet for bees and butterflies. In fact, these flowers prefer a bit of neglect.

Cosmos is a member of the aster family and is one of those flowers that likes to bask in full sun from dawn until dusk. Dappled shade may result in lanky plants with fewer flowers but they will bloom from early summer until the first frosts of the autumn.

Many cosmos flowers sport lacy foliage similar to ferns or asparagus that is beautiful in its own right. Petals of single varieties surround a small yellow pollen disk with a simple ray form; double varieties may resemble little carnations. A wide range of colour options is available and includes all hues of pink, red, yellow, and orange.

Cosmos flowers are easy to grow by direct seeding in the garden. Plant them after the date of the average last frost, but if you accidentally plant them too early, don't worry: as a self-seeding annual, cosmos plants "know" when to germinate, and the seeds won't suffer from exposure to frost.

If you have an area of the garden where the soil isn't quite what it could be, you can plant your cosmos here, as long as the site is sunny and well drained. Scatter the seeds across your planting site, drag a rake across the seed bed to help the seeds come into contact with the soil, and look for germination after about a week.

Water sparingly after plants are established.

Cut plants in half when seed pods outnumber flowers to rejuvenate plants for the second half of the growing season.

If you don't mind leaving cosmos plants in place for a month after the first frost, birds, especially goldfinches, will continue to feast on the seeds.

Space plants approximately two feet apart; with tall cosmos, space plants closer and let them support each other. Cosmos are light sensitive and don't bloom their best until late summer, when the days grow shorter.

Cosmos is a native of Mexico. Along with faking gold, silver, and other riches from Mexico, 16th-century Spanish explorers sent hundreds of cosmos back to Madrid. Cosmos wasn't collected until the late 1700s, however, the flower made its way to England in 1789, thanks to the Marchioness of Bute, wife of the English ambassador to Spain.

This late start in British gardens probably accounts for the plant having no widely used common name, answering instead to its genus name, Cosmos, which comes from the Greek word kosmos, meaning "beautiful."

Cosmos need light soil with average to poor fertility that has a neutral or slightly alkaline pH and is well-drained. Soil that is too rich yields weak-stemmed, sparsely flowered plants that bloom late and flop over, so avoid soil that has been heavily fertilised, and don't feed the plants.

Pinch off spent flowers to encourage continuous blooms. Pinching stem tips can reduce height and encourage branching but isn't necessary. Deadheading lengthens the bloom season. Cosmos plants that aren't deadheaded will self-sow.

Use taller plants in the back of the border and to fill in around bunches of perennials such as lilies, irises, and ornamental grasses. They're also stunning combined with annuals, such as cleome, and tender perennials like cannas and dahlias. Smaller or dwarf plants are ideal near the front of the border, in containers, or as edgings. You can also use cosmos as a fast-growing annual hedge or in a cutting garden and make them outstanding cut flowers. „

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

CHICKEN with PINEAPPLE and ALMONDS

You will need

- 1 medium sized chicken (31b) (1kg)
- seasoned flour
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon clear honey
- 2.5oz (65g) butter
- 1oz (25g) brown sugar
- 2 young carrots
- 4 tablespoons vinegar
- 1 small green pepper
- 2 level tablespoons cornflour
- 2 rounded tablespoons shredded pineapple

Half pint chicken stock
4 spring onions seasoning to taste
4 tablespoons pineapple juice
loz (25g) blanched almonds

To do

Cut away all the flesh from the chicken and put the bones to simmer with about 1 pint water for the stock. Cut the chicken flesh into fork-sized pieces, toss in seasoned flour and fry gently in 2oz (50g) of the butter until tender. Dish up and keep warm while preparing the sauce.

Scrape the carrot and shred into wafer-thin slices. Add to the frying pan with the de-seeded and shredded green pepper, the shredded pineapple and cut up spring onions. Stir in the juice, soy sauce, honey sugar and vinegar.

Simmer for 3 minutes, then add the cornflower blended with the chicken stock. Stir until boiling when the sauce will become clear and slightly thickened. Check the seasoning and pour over the chicken. Scatter with almonds browned in the remaining butter and serve with rice. Serves 4.

GET SET FOR CLASSY ONIONS

Medwyn Williams

ONIONS for the 'under 250 grams class' is one vegetable that most growers could stage at their local show and even at county or provincial shows.

If you can't grow them well from seed, it's a lot easier to start them off from sets. I can recommend 'Centurion' and 'Hercules' and unless the show schedule states differently, you could also enter red-skinned 'Red Baron' which has a beautiful shape.

To have these onions ready for an August show they should have been started first in small cells and then planted out during April. That's because the onions need to be approaching the right weight now in order to be ready for the bench from early August.

Being ready means that the necks will have dried out and can be tied with raffia to give added proportion to the shape and size of the onion. Your onion will also have one complete skin of a pale straw colour that usually darkens as the bulb fully harvests.

In my heated greenhouse I usually grow mine from seed sown around the end of January and 'Vento' is my current favourite.

To achieve a quality set with top uniformity, you need to inspect your onions and measure their circumference daily. Clean up all yellowing or dying skins and look closely for any split skins and remove them.

Measure the onions from when they are about 23cm (gin) in circumference, so you can keep your eye on the growing pattern. Pull tall bulbs with a classic 'Kelsae' onion shape, such as 'Globo', when they get to about 25cm (loin). 'Vento', however, can be left to grow on until it reaches around 27cm (10in).

In both cases the only way to make sure that your bulbs weigh in at just under 250g is to lift one, trim off the top foliage leaving the neck about 5cm (2in) tall and trim off the roots. If the onion is too heavy, the rest must be harvested smaller.

Wash the bulbs using a soft sponge, dry them off and dust them with some zinc starch and talc to help dry out the outer skin evenly while also helping them to colour up.

I place my onions on a large seed tray with about 2.5cm (1in) of fine sawdust as bedding. I keep the tray in my garage attic, where there's some shade and plenty of air movement around the bulbs.

I tie up every bulb that I feel has the potential to make the grade and sort them all by placing them on a dish of sand to see how well they match. This is the 'uniformity' that the judges are looking for and includes matching the colour of the bulbs as well as the form and depth of the onion.

POETS CORNER

Sweet-briar Fragrance on the Air

Sweet-briar fragrance on the air,
Late spring's forget-me-not, and early summer
Saxifrage and poppies, peonies and thyme,
Three young thrushes under the rhubarb leaves,
Broad beans in flower, pansies
Pricked out in boxes, too young for the border.
I have been alone; yet wish earth the better
Because of yet another summer my old eyes have seen
The beauty of this garden, the cattle grazing
Beyond the hawthorn hedge of my quiet acre.

KATHLEEN RAINE (b 1908)

GARDENING CALENDAR JULY

This is often one of the hottest months of the year and a great time to sit out and enjoy your garden. Keep plants looking good by regularly dead-heading, and you'll enjoy a longer display of blooms. Make sure you keep new plants well watered and hoe off weeds, which thrive in the sunshine.

Top 10 things to do this month

1. Check clematis for signs of clematis wilt
2. Place conservatory plants outside now that it is warm
3. Water tubs and new plants if dry, but be water-wise
4. Deadhead bedding plants and repeat-flowering perennials, to ensure continuous flowering
5. Pick courgettes before they become marrows
6. Treat apple scab
7. Clear algae, blanket weeds and debris from ponds, and keep them topped up
8. Order catalogues for next year's spring-flowering bulbs
9. Give the lawn a quick-acting summer feed, especially if a spring feed was not done
10. Give woodwork a lick of paint or preserver, while the weather is dry

FLOWERS

Sowing and planting

Autumn-flowering bulbs, such as autumn crocuses, *Colchicum*, *Sternbergia*, *Amaryllis* and *Nerine*, can be planted now.

Some seeds are best planted just after collection, and others may need specific climatic conditions to break dormancy (e.g. some alpiners). If unsure, then sow seeds in 'batches', i.e. one immediately after collecting, one in winter, and one in the following spring.

Cutting back, pruning and dividing

Cutting back plants in baskets followed by feeding can encourage new growth and help revive tired displays.

Cut back delphiniums and geraniums after the first flush of flowers to encourage a second flowering period. Feed after cutting them back.

Deadhead flower borders regularly to prolong flowering. Disbud and dead-head dahlias if growing for large blooms. Leave roses that produce attractive hips.

Divide clumps of bearded iris.

Plants with a carpet-like growth habit, e.g. some alpiners, can become patchy, with central areas dying off. These patches can be in-filled with gritty compost, to encourage re-growth.

Propagation

Take cuttings of patio and container plants ready for next year.

Pinks and carnations that have become leggy, can be propagated by layering or by cuttings. Propagation can improve the appearance of untidy clumps.

General maintenance

Prop up tall perennials such as lupins, delphiniums and gladioli if staking was neglected earlier in the season.

Liquid feed containerised plants and keep well watered in dry spells.

Some late-flowering border perennials may benefit from a quick-acting feed before they come into bloom, especially if the soil is not very fertile.

Mulching borders can help retain moisture, and keep down the weeds - this will save a lot of work. A really thick layer of mulch (5-7.5cm/2-3in all over) works best.

Most perennial weeds are best dealt with in the summer when the weeds are in active growth. Digging out often works, but applying a weedkiller can be more practical, particularly for large areas.

Planning ahead

Start collecting seed from plants you want to grow next year, especially annuals such as *Calendula*, poppy and love-in-a-mist.

Pest and disease watch

Inspect lilies for the scarlet lily beetle whose larvae can strip plants in days.

Vine weevils can also be a problem at this time of year.

Small holes and tears in new foliage of ornamentals such as *Caryopteris*, *Fuchsia* and *Dahlia* are most likely caused by capsid bug damage.

Watch out for aphids (greenfly and blackfly) on stems and leaves of young shoots.

Sudden collapse of apparently healthy clematis, especially the large-flowered cultivars, could indicate clematis wilt.

In dry weather powdery mildew can play havoc with plants such as clematis, roses and *Lonicera*.

Look out for and treat black spot on roses and scab on *Pyracantha*

APGC TRIPS FOR 2019

For all following garden visits a deposit of £10 is required at time of booking.

Sun 14TH JUL Lavender Farm Selborne Rd, Alton UK Cost £10 each

<https://www.thelavenderfields.co.uk/>

Stopping off at Avenue Nursery Lasham for Lunch <http://avenuenurseries.com/>

Leaving Victoria Hall at 11am, returning approx 5:30pm

Sun 8TH SEP Great Comp Garden, Sevenoaks

<https://greatcompgarden.co.uk/> We shall be having Lunch at the Great Comp Tearoom.

This is a RHS Partner Garden.

Cost for RHS members £10 each

Cost for those without RHS membership £17.50

Leaving Victoria Hall at 10am, returning approx 5:30pm

THE TREE BUMBLEBEE

In 2001, a new species of Bumblebee was recorded in the UK; *Bombus hypnorum* or the Tree Bumblebee. Since that first Wiltshire record, it has spread rapidly and increased in numbers quite spectacularly, such, that in the southern half of Britain it is now one of the more common species in gardens and the general countryside. In Europe, it is found across a very wide area, including Scandinavian regions north of Britain, so it is unlikely that its arrival is attributable to climate change, but rather it is perhaps a late colonist which failed to get here when the continental land bridge was still present. Perhaps this species is less able to cross the channel than other species, and arrived as an importation among plants or such like. However it got here, it found a countryside ideal for it and has now spread as far as southern Scotland.

Fortunately for those interested in charting its progress, this is a very distinctive bee species which is unlikely to be confused with any other resident species. It is the only species which is divided into 3 equal sized blocks of colour and the only species to combine the colours ginger (thorax), black (middle) and white (tail). This colour pattern is shown by all three caste members - queens, males and workers, and there are no lookalike 'Cuckoo Bees' such as are found to parasitise some species of bumblebee. The other

unusual feature of this species is its tendency to nest high up in holes; it would naturally select holes in trees, but it takes very readily to small hole nest boxes and crevices in buildings etc. Our other species tend to nest close to or under the ground, in old mouse nests or heaps of vegetation and are rarely found, but the tree bee is quite conspicuous in its nesting habits. Perhaps because of this exposed nest site choice, it also seems to be more aggressive than other species, and is often encountered by humans, leading to a higher risk of bee stings than with our 'traditional' bees!

We've been seeing *hypnorum* at Lark Rise for 3-4 years now, but for the first time a nest has appeared in a blue tit box right outside Robin's office! So far, just some annoyed buzzing from the box and disappointment for the blue tits has resulted from this occupation and we are very pleased to have this addition to our biodiversity. There is a chance that this new bee species will cause problems for small hole-nesting birds like blue tits but time will tell. It's very interesting that this bee can clearly find enough food out there for a rapid expansion at a time when many other species are struggling and even going extinct. This suggests that *hypnorum* has different requirements to other species; the dwindling species tend to require very large areas of natural flower-rich habitat to complete their lifecycle, but *hypnorum* can thrive in gardens. It also emerges very early in the year unlike the declining species, so can take advantage of the increasingly early seasons; frequently, *hypnorum* produces two generations in a year, unlike most other bumblebees in Britain, so numbers of queens going into hibernation for the winter are generally very high.

This year, we started our first serious attempt at monitoring bumblebees at Lark Rise, with a fixed transect route which will be walked every month of the flight period. Data from this will feed into a national survey organised by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust so it will help us understand our own bees as well as help point to changes occurring across the country. We've already recorded 7 species on the transect route, including hypnorum, after just a couple of trial visits in May lead by bee expert Trevor Grange. Apart from the nice easy hypnorum many bee species are tricky to identify; there are several similar-looking species and considerable variation within a species (with males and workers looking different to queens, and cuckoo species looking like their hosts, for example). Add to that the fact that the bees don't sit still like butterflies, and can quickly buzz off before you get a proper look at them, and you have quite a challenge! But they are such an important component of our countryside that it is good to put the effort in and find out which parts of our farm are of prime importance to the bees, and why. In May, the big areas of hay meadows were relatively poor for bees, with very few plants in flower and high exposure to the wind; hedgerows with white deadnettle in the herb layer, and the stream banks with comfrey, were far more important. As the clovers and knapweeds start to flower in the meadows, and the numbers of worker bees increase, we may well see a rise in the importance of the meadows. - Vince Lea