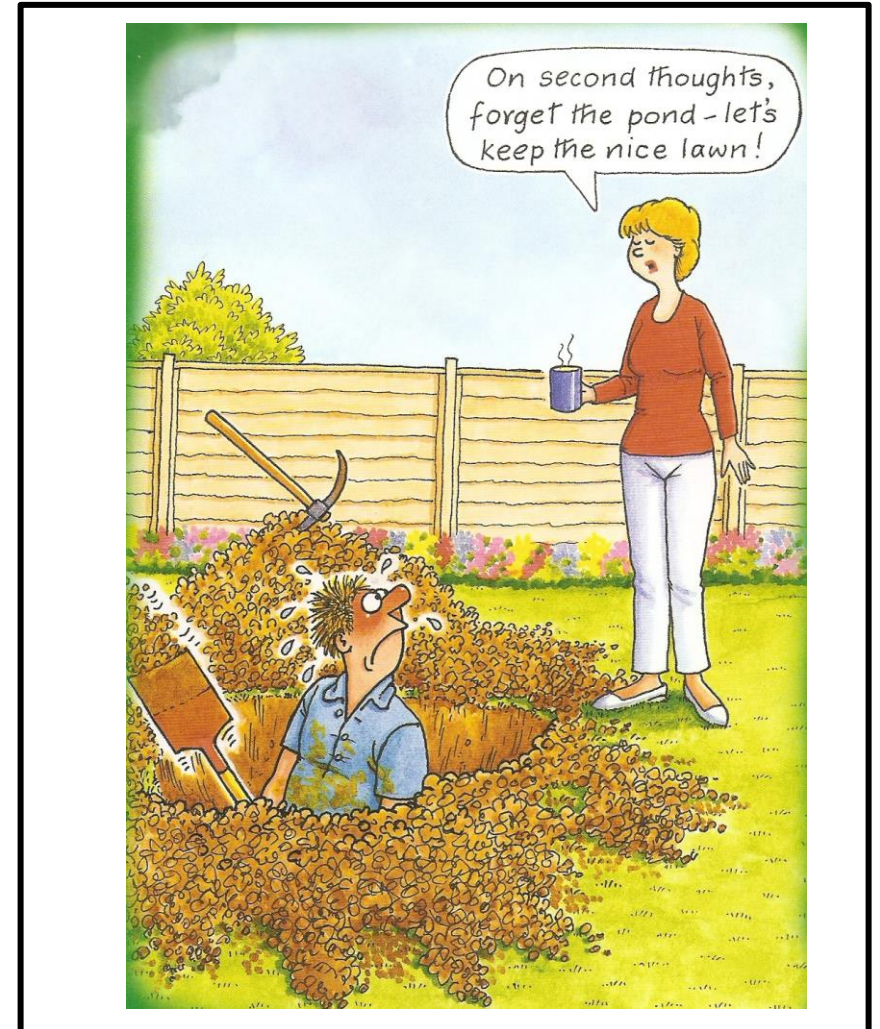
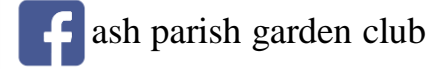


# Ash Parish Garden Club

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



Monthly Newsletter June 2021

**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

I have to inform the club of the sad news that Chris & I attended the funeral of our dear friend Marjorie Davis on Tuesday 25th May. Being born in June of 1924 she had a good innings and along with her husband Phil it was a varied & interesting life which included her love of gardening. Marjorie took over as Chairman of the club from me in early 1990 and oversaw many club activities including competing at

several and winning awards at the Chelsea Flower Show. The family asked that any donations in her memory be forwarded to the Phyllis Truckwell Hospital.

## 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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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RHS Hampton Court	6 - 11 July
RHS Tatton Park	21 - 25 July
<b>AUTUMN SHOW</b>	<b>TBA</b>
RHS Chelsea	21 - 26 Sep

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## GARDENING CALENDAR JUNE

June is all about regular, consistent maintenance of your plants; in short, remember to weed, water and feed your plants, and do it often.

### Feed

Pay special attention to container plants, bedding plants and veggies. Liquid-feed tubs and baskets every two weeks if you haven't already mixed in controlled-release fertiliser. Feed tomatoes, peppers and aubergines with a high-potash feed such as Tomorite every two weeks (also useful for feeding pelargoniums).

### Harvest

June is also the time for harvesting onions – the right time is when the leaves turn yellow.

### Bring indoors out

To maximise on summer blooms, move any summer flowering house plants into the garden.

**CHRYSANTHEMUMS**

Pippa Greenwood

Chrysanthemums, with their richly coloured flowers in a host of shapes and sizes are great in the garden, on the allotment, in containers and in the greenhouse. Plant out in the next few weeks for flowers during late summer and into autumn, with blooms in bronzes, mahoganies, golds, creams, yellows, pinks, deep reds and purples.

**Growing Tips**

Check the information on the chrysanthemums you choose, as exactly how you treat them depends on the type or varieties you have. As a rule, they'll need planting with a spacing of 30-45cm (12-18in) and many will need support from a cane or proprietary support. Choose a well-fertilised and well-drained spot to grow them in the garden.

When using pots or containers, make sure they have plenty of drainage holes. The best compost is a loam-based John Innes No.3, and I'd add a little horticultural grit to keep the drainage good.

Chrysanthemums need regular watering to flower well, but take care not to over water. To get the best out of them, a weekly feed during the growing season is worthwhile. You can buy specially formulated chrysanthemum fertilisers but if you don't have one to hand then a high-potash liquid feed will do well.

Pinch out the tips of chrysanthemum plants so that side-shoots will form rapidly, which will keep the plant bushy and flowering well. Just remove the tip of the young plant, leaving about five leaves. If you want your chrysanthemums to produce fewer but larger flowers, you will need to 'disbud' each flower stem by removing all the buds and side shoots (when they are about 2cm long), so that you are left with just the top or terminal bud. If you prefer more but smaller flowers (a 'spray') then you'll need to do the opposite i.e., remove the terminal bud and leave all the side shoots.

Chrysanthemums should be stored in frost-free conditions from late autumn until May, once there is no danger of frosts. Carefully remove most of the garden soil from their roots when you lift them for storing and trim both the top growth and the roots back to about 25cm.

Temporarily 'plant' them in seed trays of well-drained compost kept in a frost-free spot. Keep the plants on the dry side with occasional light watering of the roots, watering them a little more in early spring to encourage the plants to grow away strongly, ready for planting out. Varieties that have caught my eye include:

'Primrose Enbee', an early spray type with simple, primrose-yellow blooms

'Chestnut Talbot Maid', an early spray double with near-spherical brown flowers

The outdoor pot and bush 'Pompon Collection' in colours including 'Red' and 'Red Bronze'

'Green Mist', a wacky variety with lime-green spidery flowers

'Misty Primrose' with near-spherical bright yellow flowers

The 'Spartan' chrysanthemums - 'Raspberry' with pinkish petals and a golden-yellow centre

**POETS CORNER*****John Keats***

Where are the songs of Spring?  
Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden croft;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

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**THIS MONTHS RECIPE****CHOCOLATE COCONUT CRUNCH****You will need**

4ozs margarine  
2ozs castor sugar  
Mix 4ozs self raising flour  
3ozs desiccated coconut  
2 teaspoonfuls cocoa

Cream together margarine & sugar  
Well mix dry ingredients & add to the creamed mixture.  
Press into a baking tray and bake for 20-25 minutes Reg. 3.  
Spread with melted chocolate.  
Cut when cold and enjoy

*Mrs. E. Rees*

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**OVERLOOKED HEROES**

Jo Arnell explores how biennials are the often overlooked heroes of a successful planting scheme

Imagine a plant that looks after itself, one that will flower early, that will grow in difficult shady situations, that after flowering will quietly, sometimes even decoratively, set seed for the next generation and then bow out, and allow summer flowers to take centre stage. Well, I give you, ladies and gentlemen, the biennial. A national treasure if ever I saw one. While we are busy trying to coax our pampered and expensive garden centre lovelies into bloom, up they pop, asking for nothing, giving masses and, once established, rewarding us year after year. I have found myself complaining about the cheerful abundance of some of them (yes, you, forget-me-nots), but would never be without them.

So what exactly is a biennial? The clue is in the name, in that they flower every other year, bi-annually. Ostensibly they are annuals, but they spread their flowering season over two calendar years - from summer to the following spring, instead of from spring until autumn. Biennials owe their existence to the changing of seasons - and the fact that the leaves fall off the trees as winter approaches. The consequence of the trees staying bare until April is a leafless chink of light in early spring where the biennials have found a niche, opportunistically blooming before the canopy of leaves closes over them. They are the natural colonisers of woodland glades and hedgerow edges, adapting their lifestyle to the sequences of light and shade. It is for this reason that a biennial will germinate and grow a whorl of basal leaves during the first year - to be ready to burst into flower early and make the most of the spring sunshine. This makes them ideal for growing in tricky areas of the garden; many, like foxgloves, forget-me-nots and honesty, seem to positively enjoy dry shade, so will grow under trees, on the shady side of walls and other bleak, godforsaken places (and we all have our share of those).

### **Good Companions**

Biennials are excellent plants to grow among spring bulbs; they flower at around the same time and can be used to contrast, harmonise or generally enhance the appearance of a spring display. If you love tulips - and most of us do - you may not love their large and floppy leaves quite so much. A frothy skirt of forget-me-nots or eye-catching counterbalance of honesty will do a good job of hiding, or distracting, from the less than lovely tulip leaves - that must be left on to strengthen the bulbs for next year. Be careful not to let the biennials swamp emerging bulbs and young perennials though, as they will do a good job of blocking light as well as fading bulb leaves and may overwhelm other young plants. Forget-me-nots in particular can enthusiastically smother emerging perennials, so may need thinning and weeding out.

### **Self-sowers**

Biennials have a (mostly) welcome habit of self-seeding, so you should only need to sow them once. You can allow them to self-sow - often they will find the very best places for themselves and grow away more strongly than those you have carefully planted. Depending on your style of gardening - which may be

related to the time you have available, the self seeders can be managed in two ways, or in a combination of the two. The first is to allow nature to take its course and let the plants self-seed where they like. This way many serendipitous planting combinations can occur, with plants finding exactly the right places to grow, often in situations you would never have positioned them in - and sometimes in far better ones. This works best if your garden is fairly weed-free, if not, you will need to be able to identify your plants at an early stage and try to separate the weedlings from the seedlings. Most self-seeding plants germinate best in free-draining soil, and will struggle on heavy, claggy clay. Try to open up the structure of clay soil by incorporating organic matter and again. It is such an astonishingly beautiful plant.

Now that so many more people are 'discovering' the countryside, and soon could perhaps visit some of the restored meadows across the country, they will have the chance to experience the sheer pleasure in seeing some of these plants. There is a growing movement to create meadows on both a large scale and in tiny domestic are You'll probably have heard about the mini-forests that ; being created; both on urban and suburban sites as well as in the countryside. The same can be done

with wild flowers. If there is anything good that has come from the pandemic it is that people have realised how much that is joyful is on their doorsteps; bird song, wild flowers, trees and that they too can join this burgeoning movement 'meadow makers'. I was talking to a friend of mine about my mother who remembered verges full of cowslips in her childhood. We can get these memories back. Cows self seed like mad so all you need is one plant and it will do the rest! The same friend has childhood memories of grasshoppers in their thousands in the countryside as well as all manner of other insects and of course these would have brought in birds like swallows and my favourite, swifts. We can have this again and just think of the benefits to our collective health and wellbeing.

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## **US DESERT IS A BEE HOTSPOT**

Hundreds of bee species live in a patch of land on the US-Mexico border  
**Jake Buehler**

THERE are about 20,000 known bee species on the planet.

Hundreds of them can be found in a patch of desert along the US-Mexico border about the size of Heathrow airport, meaning it has the world's densest aggregation of bee species yet measured.

Unlike plants and many other organisms that see the highest diversity in the tropics, bees seem to be most diverse in warm, dry regions. So when Robert Minckley at the University of Rochester in New York had the opportunity to

study bee populations in the Chihuahuan desert at the US-Mexico border, one of his main goals was simply to count how many species were there.

Minckley and his colleagues targeted a site composed of a former cattle ranch in the Mexican state of Sonora and the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. From 2001 to 2008, the group collected bees with traps in the desert scrub, then later identified the species.

From tens of thousands of individual bees, the team counted | 473 species from a 16-square-kilometre area (The Journal of Hymenoptera Research, in press).

"That's a tremendous number of bees," says Minckley. The team estimates that 14 per cent of all North American bee species found north of the US-Mexico border call this region home, the vast majority of which live solitary lives and nest in the ground.

Other locations in the US have logged more bee species, says Minckley. But these are in national parks, which are far larger, more variable regions thanks to bigger changes in elevation and habitat across their massive landscapes.

The group's site at the border is a more homogeneous environment, fluctuating by only 120 metres in elevation, and is mostly home to creosote bush, mesquite and cactus plants.

The incredible bee diversity on the border may have many causes. The site sits at the confluence of the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts, subtropical dry forests and the Great Plains - each of which has its own set of bee fauna. Another contributor may be the local climate. There is a spring bloom and then a second one after monsoon season starts, providing a twice-yearly flower bonanza.

Karen Wright at Texas A&M University says the findings are "a wonderful achievement", though not that surprising. Her sampling project in New Mexico's Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge has yielded 372 bee species so far.

Compared with the stable tropics, deserts experience wild climatic swings: hot to cold, deluges to drought. It is possible that this variation has encouraged the evolution of new species, she says. The dryness of these habitats may also help ground-nesting solitary bees, says Minckley. Ground nests are often plagued by fungi, which might be a bigger problem in the wet tropics

Whatever the causes of this glut of bee species, documenting biodiversity is important, says Melanie Kazenel at the University of New Mexico. It may help scientists "better understand where, when and why [wild] bee declines are occurring", she says.