
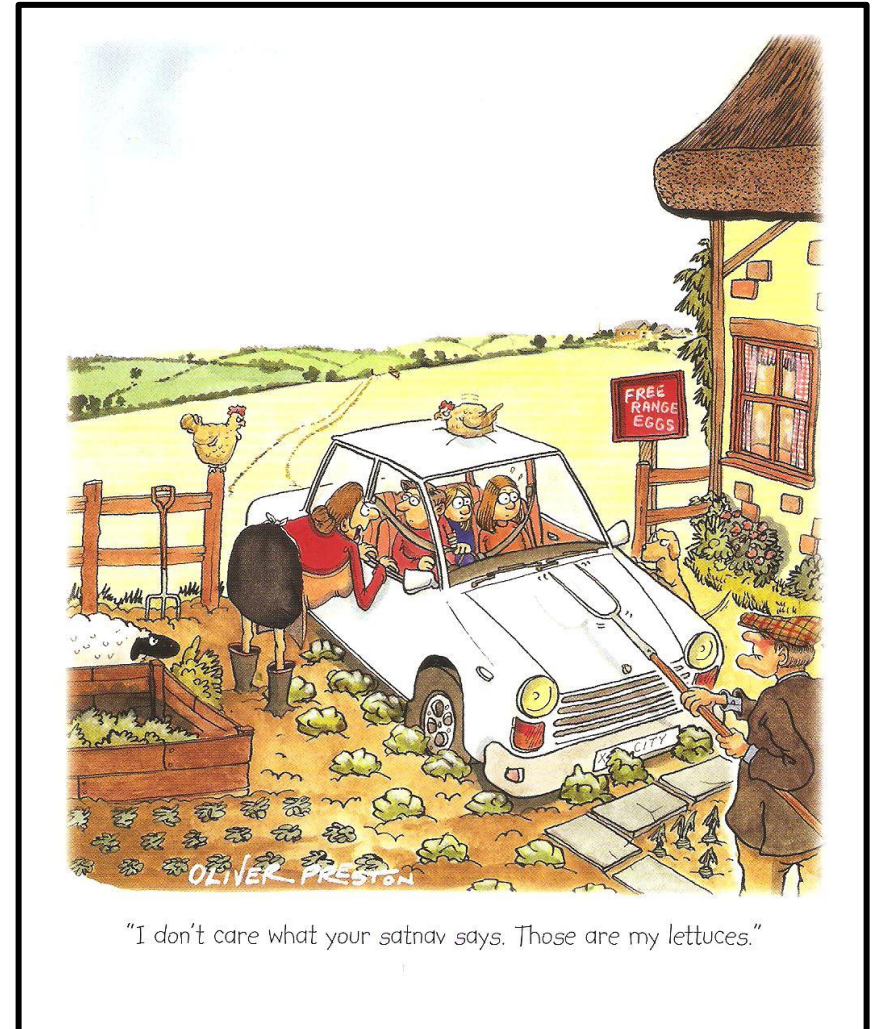


# Ash Parish Garden Club

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

 ash parish garden club



Monthly Newsletter May 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

## 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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## DID THIS PLANT HELP VIKINGS LOSE CONTROL?

The English word "berserk" is derived from berserkers, violent Vikings said to consume something that induced rage before battle.

Historians have long assumed that fly agaric, a hallucinogenic mushroom, was the berserkers' drug of choice. But now ethno botanist Karsten Fatur says Vikings likely took henbane (below).

The plant is more common in Scandinavia than fly agaric, he says, and has compounds with greater links to aggression.



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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

<b>PLANT SALE</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> May (Collect Orders at Hall).</b>
RHS Malvern (spring)	6 - 9 May
RHS Hampton Court	6 - 11 July
RHS Tatton Park	21 - 25 July
<b>AUTUMN SHOW</b>	<b>TBA</b>
RHS Chelsea	21 - 26 Sep

**GARDENING CALENDAR MAY**

May is when the garden really begins to wake up – and it's the time to gear up for the summer.

**Lawn maintenance**

Now's the time for active lawn maintenance – and the last chance to to sow or lay new lawns until autumn without using sprinklers. The lawn will need weekly mowing from now until autumn, and the edges will need trimming.

**Plant**

Pay special attention to tender vegetables and soft fruit. The end of the month is the best time to plant out tender courgettes and aubergines if you have a kitchen garden, as well as planting our summer bedding plants.

May is also the time to repot pot-bound container plants in pots 7-10cm bigger than the current ones. Remember to tie in long climber shoots to their supports with soft string.

**Protect**

With insects becoming much more active as temperatures rise, be especially vigilant about pests. Pick off scarlet lily beetle from your lilies; their larvae rapidly defoliate plants. Watch for vine weevil in container plantings – irregular-shaped notches to leaf edges are tell-tale signs. The young grubs in the soil eat roots, and fast. Use natural nematodes to control them. at the end of the month.

Cover soft fruit bushes with netting to prevent birds eating the fruit, and if you are growing strawberries, put straw around or under them.

**Prune**

Don't forget about the plants that have just finished flowering; prune spring-flowering shrubs.

**Feed**

Feed spring bulbs with Growmore or blood, fish and bone.

Cover soft fruit bushes with netting to prevent birds eating the young fruit

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**POETS CORNER**

***Sowing***

It was a perfect day  
For sowing; just  
As sweet and dry was the ground  
As tobacco-dust.

I tasted deep the hour  
Between the far  
Owl's chuckling first soft cry  
And the first star.

A long stretched hour it was;  
Nothing undone  
Remained; the early seeds  
All safely sown.

And now, hark at the rain,  
Windless and light,  
Half a kiss, half a tear,  
Saying good-night.

EDWARD THOMAS (1878-1917)

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**THIS MONTHS RECIPE**

**Friday fish pie**

**Serves 6-8 Prepare 30 minutes Cook 25-30 minutes**

You will need

*750g potatoes (approx 3 large)*

*75g butter*

*2 leeks, finely sliced*

• *1 clove garlic, crushed*

\* *3 tbsp plain flour*

*50ml dry white wine*

*400-450ml semi-skimmed milk*

*175g Cheddar cheese, grated*

*1 tsp mustard powder*

*500g fish pie mix (from the fish counter, or thawed from frozen)*

*150g raw king prawns*

*2 tbsp olive oil*

To do

Preheat the oven to 200°C, gas mark 6. Place the whole unpeeled potatoes into a pan and cover with boiling water. Simmer for 15-18 minutes until tender but not soft when poked with a knife. Drain and submerge the potatoes in cold water for at least 10 minutes.

Place a large pan or casserole dish over a medium heat. Add half the butter and allow to melt, then tip in the leeks. Sauté until soft, then stir in the garlic and cook for a further two minutes. Add the remaining butter and allow to melt.

Sprinkle the flour onto the leeks and stir until coated, then add the white wine. Cook for 1-2 minutes, then gradually add the milk, stirring all the time, until a thick, smooth sauce forms - you may not need all the milk. Season well and stir in 100g Cheddar cheese and the mustard powder.

Once the cheese has melted, add the fish and prawns to the sauce. Stir to combine, then transfer to a large ovenproof serving dish and set to one side while you make the topping.

To make the rosti topping, peel the skin off the potatoes (it should come away easily) and grate coarsely into a large bowl. Stir through the olive oil and season well. Spread the rosti over the fish, filling in an even layer and making sure it covers the mixture right to the edges. Sprinkle over the remaining 75g cheese and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until piping hot throughout and the prawns are pink and the fish cooked through, with a golden and crunchy topping. Serve with a side of buttered greens.

#### **TIP**

You can use any type of fish in this pie, but I'd recommend a good balance between smoked, oily and white to get the best range of flavours and textures.

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## **AUTUMNAL CHELSEA**

DAVID WHEELER

Unlike the horticultural faithful and, indeed, Her Majesty, I have never been a regular attendee of the Chelsea Flower Show.

Once every three or four years has been enough - not least because, for the past 40 years, I have lived some 200 miles from London. And why, anyway, would anyone want to leave their own garden in the glorious month of May?

And apart from the designer show gardens, there's the recurring risk of sameness in the marquee, where growers and nurserymen profile their delights in - sometimes - similarly repetitive displays. True, there are always new plant varieties to discover, but these soon find their way into television programmes, gardening columns and, thankfully, commercial outlets.

I first went to the Show 50 years ago and most recently in 2017. The coronavirus pandemic caused its cancellation last year, but in the hope that the disease will be well under control by later this year, the Show's oh-so-regular (since 1912) third-week-of-May slot has been shunted on to the third week of September.

Leaving aside visitors' thoughts on a four-month postponement, I have instead been talking to some of the movers and shakers closely involved with this annual spectacle.

'The Royal Horticultural Society is our premier gardening charity, running five stunning gardens, to say nothing of its horticultural advisory service. Much of the money for these activities comes from the Chelsea Flower Show,' says Christine Skelmersdale, proprietor of Broadleigh Gardens in Somerset, one of our foremost specialist bulb growers, who served on the RHS Council for 11 years.

She adds, '2020 saw a devastating reduction in [the Society's] income across the board - so it is totally understandable that it will wish to attempt to have its premier show in 2021. While it is disappointing that it cannot be at its normal time, and very hard for the exhibitors of spring-flowering plants such as tulips, what a great opportunity it offers exhibitors who would not normally be able to exhibit or have a chance to show another range other than the stale Chelsea standard fare.

'Just imagine the pavilions filled with spectacular displays of dahlias, gladioli, asters, tender perennials like salvias - all of which will be at their peak as well as the more normal traditional herbaceous plants and trees and shrubs.'

'How will Old Roses be made to defy nature and bloom in September?' asks Michael Charlesworth, chair of the Heritage Rose Group. 'Their absence may be missed this year, but the wondrous colours of late summer and autumn will be welcomed.'

Woody-plant expert and RHS insider Maurice Foster agrees. September 'creates an opportunity for plants to be exhibited that never get a look in at the spring event and, though it is a little late, we might see a good show of colourful late-summer performers such as hydrangeas. Magnolia grandiflora might come into play alongside the more lowly ericas, callunas and daboecias [heathers]. There are

some very good buddleias worth showing, along with loads of fuchsias, hebes, hibiscus, abelias and, perhaps, some hypericums.' While possibly 'a little early for autumn colour, plants like oxydendrum and some maples might be showing a leg'.

Echoing Christine Skelmersdale's concern about the RHS's vital cash flow, Maurice charitably concludes that the move 'is an interesting social and horticultural experiment, as well as a kind of vaccine for the Society to help it combat the financial pandemic'.

A Chelsea September seems to be winning favour all round. I won't book my train ticket just yet, but the week of 21st to 26th September is heavily inked in my diary

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## **ASPARAGUS PEAS**

SIMON COURTAULD

I have just bought my first packet of asparagus pea seeds and have been learning about this curious vegetable. It is not a pea, nor is it related to asparagus, but it has attractive crimson flowers, similar to sweet peas or vetch in appearance, and odd-looking, winged seed pods, said to have the flavour of asparagus.

According to the Royal Horticultural Society, the plants 'really will put the wow factor into the vegetable patch'. However one may react to this hyperbole, asparagus peas may be worth a try, and as sprawling plants they will look equally good as ground cover in a flower border.

The seeds should be sown under glass in early spring and planted out in mid-May, or sown directly into the ground when the risk of spring frosts has passed. The growing plants require little attention, and the seed pods should start to form from the flowers after about eight weeks.

The most important advice relates to the picking of the pods, which should be done regularly and when they are no more than an inch in length. The delicate asparagus taste can be detected only if the pods are eaten - raw or cooked - soon after picking.

If they are allowed to grow any larger, they will become stringy and the taste, in the words of one or two comments I have read, is more akin to that of cardboard or carpet underlay. Since asparagus peas are popular in Asian cooking, it may be advisable to dip or cook them in a few spices.

However, I look forward to the experiment and may grow asparagus peas alongside a variety of mangetout peas - Shiraz or Carouby de Maussane - with purple flowers; Shiraz has purple pods as well.



Asparagus peas were known in the time of Elizabeth I, while mangetouts have a more recent history. I avoided them when they were fashionable in the 1970s, and was not impressed with their flavour. But now the idea of both these pea substitutes is quite appealing. At least the flowers will look pretty.

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## **THE THERAPY GARDEN**

A chat with Katrina Young from The Therapy Garden to hear more about the important work they're doing and how they adapted to the tumultuous events of 2020

### **How did The Therapy Garden get started? Give us some background info for context.**

The Therapy Garden is a beautiful, tranquil garden which has been made what it is over the years by all the people who have been there. The Therapy Garden doors were first opened in 1998 by Normandy resident Ann Adey, after seeing first-hand the benefits gardening had on a friend overcoming an anxiety disorder. Since then, the centre has developed from a small local community project into an established charity. Now there are around 50 volunteers, 30-50 clients, and eight staff (although these numbers are variable at the moment due to Covid-19).

### **What is the garden like? What do you grow there?**

The site is roughly two acres and is an eclectic mix of garden that includes veg gardens, raised beds, flower borders, landscaped areas, lawns, pond, wildlife areas, polytunnels, and a few garden structures such as a garden room, bandstand, and living roof shelter. The centre building includes a kitchen and main classroom area where people can cook, and craft with what they have grown. We grow a varied amount of crops at The Therapy Garden. As well as ornamentals for the garden and shop, there are all sorts of edibles ranging from cucamelons to rhubarb! There are always some interesting varieties people like to try. This year we had butternuts, melons, loofahs, lemongrass and 'Lemon Crystal' cucumbers amongst all the usual veg.

### **How does the garden benefit the local community?**

Our local community is really important to us and we value all the people who have been involved with us over the years. Some of the ways we offer back to it could include:

Health and wellbeing to clients, staff, volunteers and visitors,  
Support groups,  
Workshops,  
Local produce and crafts into the community,  
Outreach projects - schools, care homes, community projects,

A beautiful (and very reasonable) venue hire of the garden and building, Educational benefit. We offer formal and in-house horticultural qualifications, but we also try to inspire and encourage people to love being outside in nature and finding something to enjoy about it.

## **Who do you work with and what are some of the different projects you run?**

The people we work with and projects run at The Therapy Garden include:

**Cultivating Skills'** The Therapy Garden offers social and therapeutic horticulture to adults with a range of physical disabilities, learning difficulties and mental health challenges.

**Grow to Work'** Young adults aged 19-25 with additional needs are invited to join our 'Grow to Work' group where they can participate in a range of horticultural work experience activities.

**Green School'** Our Green School offers teenagers the chance to develop practical, vocational skills and study towards a City & Guilds qualification in horticulture.

**Stroke of Genius'** Social and therapeutic horticulture is offered to stroke and brain injury survivors where person-centred gardening activities can benefit long term recovery and general wellbeing.

**Garden Pastimes'** The Therapy Garden offers social and therapeutic horticulture to Alzheimer's and Dementia clients. The beneficial qualities of gardening are widely recognised as a way to improve overall health and well-being.

**What is the most rewarding thing about being part of The Therapy Garden?**

For me it is the people, no doubt. As a horticulturist it is an exciting project to be involved in. There are always projects going on. The garden is evolving constantly and the people who come here are at the heart of it.

**How is the community project helping to bring new people to gardening?**

As well as the projects already mentioned that we are involved in, we enjoy (where we can) being involved in local events and trying to 'spread the word' about the wellbeing benefits of horticulture and gardening. We also open up for NGS open days a couple of times a year, and our volunteers, clients and staff enjoy the opportunity to chat to people and spread the word. It is a great feeling to promote the positive aspects of gardening, and something we all feel enthusiastically about.

**In what ways have 2020's restrictions changed things at the garden?**

2020 has really been an unusual year for us. We were closed during the first lockdown and running on skeleton staff (from having around 80 people over a week onsite, we went to just two or three). Our focus had to change and with no one here to garden we concentrated on basic maintenance and edible crops, letting the flower borders go wild. We maintained contact with people through regular phone

calls, post, e-mails and social media so they could keep up to date with garden progress and their projects.

Before re-opening, our fabulous volunteers came in shifts to get the garden ready and we re-opened cautiously, with strict and careful adherence to the precautionary guidance, to clients and limited numbers of volunteers. As many of our people are vulnerable it was important to still be a safe place for people to enjoy. With such fantastic weather supporting us it has been a fairly positive experience and people are happy to get back outside. We focus on being outdoors, so aren't offering cooking or indoor crafting, and have adapted the way we work. People are settling in well to it and overall seem to enjoy being back.

### **What do you have planned for the future? Do you change things much year-to-year on the plot?**

The Therapy Garden has always had exciting projects going on, and most of these are 'on hold' while we focus fundraising on keeping us going so we can keep providing a service to the community. Once we do, our next big garden project will be to replace our raised beds, and then update our pathways. We were also in the middle of fundraising for a new purpose built sensory garden. For now though, our focus is bringing people back safely and maintaining communication with those who aren't returning yet. Year to year on the plot we grow the usual staples, but also whatever the clients and volunteers wish to grow - so it is exciting to see what happens!

### **Any final comments...**

Please do look us up, come and visit next year on our open days, tell people about us, and the massive wellbeing benefits of horticulture. It really does make a difference to people.

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A blonde teenager, wanting to earn some extra money for the summer, decided to hire herself out as a "handy-woman"

She started canvassing a nearby well-to-do neighborhood. She went to the front door of the first house, and asked the owner if he had any odd jobs for her to do.

"Well, I guess I could use somebody to paint my porch," he said, "How much will you charge me?"

Delighted, the girl quickly responded, "How about £50?"

The man agreed and told her that the paint brushes and everything she would need was in the garage.

The man's wife, hearing the conversation said to her husband, "Does she realize that our porch goes ALL the way around the house?"

He responded, "That's a bit cynical, isn't it?"

The wife replied, "You're right. I guess I'm starting to believe all those dumb blonde jokes we've been getting by email lately."

Later that day, the blonde teenager came to the door to collect her money. "You're finished already?" the startled husband asked.

"Yes, she replied, and I even had paint left over, so I gave it two coats."

Impressed, the man reached into his pocket for the £50 and handed it to her along with a £10 tip.

"And, by the way," the teenager added, "it's not a Porch, it's a Lexus."

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A man was walking by a pet shop when he noticed an advertisement in the window. It said "Talking Centipede Only £5" He stopped and looked in amazement, so he went inside and bought the talking centipede and took it home in a box.

After a while he opened the box and said to the centipede "its such a lovely day outside shall be go for stroll?"

No reply was heard from the centipede

So he repeated in a louder voice "its such a lovely day outside shall be go for stroll?"

No reply was heard from the centipede

So he repeated his words but shouting them at the box "its such a lovely day outside shall be go for stroll?"

***Eventually a reply came from the centipede "keep your hair on, I heard you first time, I'm still putting my boots on."***