
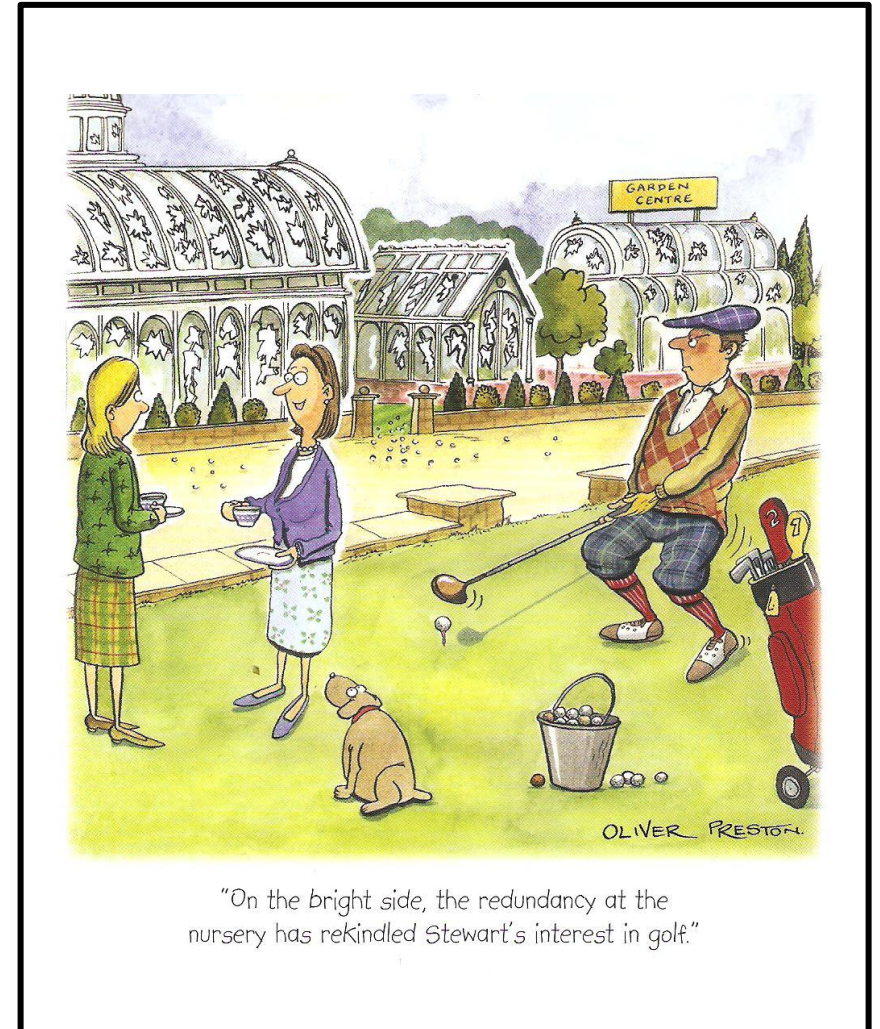


Ash Parish Garden Club

www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk

 ash parish garden club



Monthly Newsletter Oct 2020

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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.

SIR HAROLD HILLIER GARDENS

Winter Gardens

Rubus C. sericea and C. sanguinea have bright winter stems in shades from yellow, lime-green, orange and red to purple-black. Planted in groups of three or five for massed stem effect and cut back to 6-12 inches from the ground each spring to ensure the brightest stem colour the following winter.

Striking Contrasts

In the world-famous Winter Garden at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Romsey, one of the most striking plant pairings is the bone-white stems of Rubus cockburnianus, or white-stemmed bramble, arching over massed plantings of Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'.

If you prefer more colour in your garden, pair the orange stems of Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire' with low evergreens such as Euonymus fortunei varieties or evergreen ferns. Summer grasses such as molinia, panicum and pennisetum often hold

their seed heads long into the winter and contrast well with evergreen plants such as Viburnum tinus in bud and flower at this time of year.

All (Year) Rounders

In a sheltered spot, an acer (Japanese maple) is a great winter plant. Many have bright winter stems almost as impressive as cornus. They are hardy in most UK winters once established but may need protection in colder years. Acer 'Sango-kaku' has red-orange stems while A. 'Katsura' is bright yellow and A. 'Beni-maiko' scarlet.

Skimmia offer year-round evergreen foliage, glossy green and attractive. They set bud in late summer and hold it throughout the autumn before flowering in late winter or early spring with a fragrant, lily-of-the-valley scent. The flower heads are actually made up of hundreds of tiny individual flowers. There are male and female varieties - females such as S. 'Nymans' will produce red berries if pollinated by a male such as S. Rubella which tend to have showier flowers. There are also self-fertile varieties such as S. 'Temptation' with attractive flowers and berries together

on the same plant. Skimmia look great planted alongside the dark winter stems of Cornus alba 'Kesselringii' or the bright red of C. alba 'Sibirica' and they do benefit from a little shade - too much sun can yellow the leaves.

Finally, one of the best year-round plants for the small garden is Prunus 'Kojo-no-mai'. Look out for it in the early spring in full flower but plant it at least as much for the autumn foliage colour and the fantastic, architectural twisted stems of winter.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

RHS Hampton Court	CANCELLED
AUTUMN SHOW	CANCELLED
RHS Malvern (autumn)	CANCELLED

POETS CORNER

from **When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd**

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings, Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love, With every leaf a miracle - and from this bush in the dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig with its flower I break.

WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Earl Grey fruit loaf

Serves 12 Prepare 15 minute's + soaking Cook 1 hour 10 minutes

You will need

2 Earl Grey teabags 200g Love Life Raisin Mix
75g dried cranberries
150g dried apricots, chopped
2 Medium Free Range Eggs
200g light brown soft sugar
2 tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil

250g plain flour
2 tsp baking powder
Half tsp salt
2 tbsp clear honey

To do

1 At least 6 hours before you want to make the tea loaf, place the teabags into a large measuring jug and pour over 350ml boiling water. Allow to brew for 5 minutes, then add the raisins, cranberries and chopped apricots (leave the teabags in). Cover and leave to soak for 6 hours (or overnight) for the tea to be absorbed.

2 Preheat the oven to 160°C, gas mark 3 and line a 1kg loaf tin with baking parchment or a tin liner. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, brown sugar and oil until well combined. Add the flour, baking powder and salt and mix until a thick batter forms.

3 Remove the teabags from the steeped fruit and squeeze any excess liquid into the jug. Add the dried fruits and any remaining liquid into the batter and stir until well combined. Scrape the mixture into the prepared tin and smooth the top. Bake for 1 hour 10 minutes, or until a skewer inserted comes out clean. If the top of the cake starts to look too brown before cooking is over, cover with a sheet of foil for the remainder of the cooking time.

4 Allow the cake to cool slightly for 5 minutes, then use a pastry brush to coat the warm top with honey. Leave the tea bread to cool completely before slicing and serving with or without butter. This cake will keep for 2-3 weeks stored in an airtight container.

GARDENING CALENDAR OCTOBER

October is the time to start tidying up and preparing for winter in earnest, while still enjoying the harvest.

Harvest

If you have apple or pear trees, now is the time to pick the fruit.

Protect

Move any tender plants, including houseplants, into a conservatory or greenhouse – don't forget to check that any heaters you have are working properly. Container gardeners should remove any drip trays and raise terracotta patio pots with bricks or special pot feet (from garden centres) so they don't sit in water over

winter and crack when it freezes. This is also the time to stop all feeding, as your plants are slowing down for the winter.

Plant

Now is the time to plant up your spring bulbs, excluding tulips, which should be planted up in November.

Tidy

Fallen leaves are an important natural resource, so don't simply discard them: clear up fallen leaves into black bin bags or create a separate pile next to the compost heap to make leaf mould ready for next October's soil conditioning.
Continue planting spring bulbs, but leave tulips until next month

QUINCE CHARMING

Emma Hughes

THE quince tree was a part of the family and, as families so often are, it was taken for granted. Planted by Trish Maunder's mother-in-law in the garden of their Kingweston farm, it had watched over this peaceful corner of Somerset for more than half a century. Every autumn, it yielded a bumper crop of Rubenesque fruit, which Mrs Maunder gave away to friends. Then, in 2014, life threw her a curveball.

When my daughter Izzy was 10, she went down with ME and chronic fatigue,' Mrs Maunder remembers. 'I couldn't work because I had to be there to look after her and I thought to myself "Right, I'm going to take these quinces and actually do something with them".' The question was, what exactly? Tough and knobbly, quince is inedible in its raw form and stewing will only get you so far.

As she looked at the tree, her thoughts turned to northern Spain, which the family had recently visited. There, gamey manchego cheese came to the table accompanied by twinkling slabs of quince paste or membrillo. 'I'm a real foodie, so I'd been trying as much of it as I possibly could,' admits Mrs Maunder.

Membrillo is synonymous with the Iberian peninsula (it's also big in Brazil), but it used to be popular in Britain—Edward I planted a quartet of quince trees at the Tower of London in 1275 and 17th- and 18th-century cookbooks were full of recipes for quince pies, pickles and preserves.

Inspired, Mrs Maunder gathered up some fruit and began the painstaking work of washing, peeling and simmering them the traditional way, with sugar and water. 'It was very time-consuming, but there's nothing quite like the smell; the perfume is extra-ordinary,' she recalls.

Her husband and daughter were guinea pigs for the first batches. 'They told me it was much better than the Spanish stuff, but I thought they were just saying that to please me.' Still, it spurred Mrs Maunder on and, after a while, she realised they had a point. 'Continental membrillo can be a bit watery and lack a strong quince flavour, because the warm weather means you need a lot of irrigation to keep the trees alive,' she notes. 'Mine's different—it has quite a lot of depth to it.'

To start with, the membrillo-making was merely a hobby. However, the Somerset foodie scene is a small world and it wasn't long before word got out. First, chef Mitch Tonks contacted Mrs Maunder to ask if he could use her membrillo in the ox-cheek dish he was creating as part of his makeover of First Great Western's dining cars. The two of them struck up a friendship over deliveries and, in 2015, he invited her to his Dartmouth Food Festival. 'I took him some membrillo as a present and, when I was there, he introduced me to Mark Hix,' she explains. A well known champion of British produce, his eyes lit up as soon as he tasted it. 'He introduced me to his head chef at HIX Soho, who wanted to put it on the menu.

The rest is history.' 'Trish's membrillo is a truly fantastic artisan product,' Mr Hix tells me. He's paired it with roast mallard (the spicy sweetness is a match made in heaven) and sprout tops, as well as a trolley's worth of British cheeses, from Westcombe Cheddar to Gouda-style Mossfield and baked Guernsey Goddess. He's named it as one of his favourite things to have come out of the West Country, with Julian Temperley's cider brandy and Black Cow milk vodka {COUNTRYLIFE, November 27, 2013}. No small praise for a producer hailing from what can credibly be described as the nation's larder.

After getting so much attention, some producers might have been tempted to scale up unsustainably, but Mrs Maunder has kept her cottage industry deliberately low key. She hasn't taken on any staff and, although she's planted an orchard of 30 supplementary quince trees, 'it's still a case of sending my husband up them,' she laughs. She makes her membrillo on a trusty four-oven Aga, but is thinking about converting the laundry room into a workshop.

The priority is her existing customers. 'I want to make sure I can look after Mark, because he looks after me,' she says. At the end of the day, it's always been a family affair.

Somerset Membrillo (01458 223603; www.somersetmembrillo.co.uk)

PLANT HUNTERS

Sue Whigham explores the origins of many popular plant species and how they were discovered

I must say that when my son and daughter-in-law announced that they were going to take a sabbatical in the summer of 2019 and, with their daughters aged six and four, travel to Colombia, I initially had alarming visions of dangerous jungle trails, groups of heavily armed FARC rebels and threat of kidnap.

I suppose what I was thinking of is what happened to Tom Hart Dyke from Lullingstone Castle and his travelling companion, Paul Winder, back in 2000. They found themselves in the inhospitable jungle of the Darien Gap between Panama and Colombia with Tom following his wild enthusiasm for orchids and Paul in his pursuit of adventure. They were kidnapped by a rebel group and spent nine months in their company. Since then, Tom, a modern day plant hunter, has undertaken many other plant hunting trips, including one to Central Peru in 2009 where he came upon an entire clump of *Puya raimondii* (Queen of the Andes) flourishing at over 14,000 feet where virtually nothing else grows. This particular bromeliad is on the endangered list in the wild. To see the plant flower must be extraordinary. Some of the flower spikes are over 44ft tall with each producing over 10,000 creamy white flowers. And to cap it all, the flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds. Can you just imagine it?

And then, in a chance conversation at a recent meeting of the local Hardy Plant Society, I got talking to a friend who said she was related, she knew not how, to Reginald Farrer who made his name with his book, *My Rock-Garden*, in 1907. This book kindled a huge interest in alpine plants and rockeries amongst British horticulturalists of the time. She also grows and loves alpine plants so it must be in the genes.

Reginald was born in 1880 in Clapham, North Yorkshire, and was heir to the estate of Ingleborough Hall where some of his plant introductions are still to be found. He was seen as an eccentric and somewhat difficult man but his scope of exploration and search for, in particular, alpine plants which started in the European Alps led to expeditions further east taking in, amongst others, countries such as Japan and Korea, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) as well as two forays into China. I spotted one of his introductions from China, *Viburnum farreri* (fragrans) in full fragrant flower at the weekend.

I like the story of him wanting to replicate a plant covered rock face that he'd spotted in Ceylon. He rowed out onto a lake near his home, loaded his shotgun with seeds collected on one of his expeditions and fired it into the nearest rock face.

Many of them took and this piece of Yorkshire became the only true natural rock garden in the country at the time.

According to some records, active plant hunting dates from 1495 BC when Egyptian pharaoh, Queen Hatshepsut, commissioned an expedition to go to Somalia in search of incense trees, *Commiphora myrrha*, the tree from which the resin, myrrh, is derived.

And subsequently the Romans, as they expanded their Empire, whilst not actively plant hunting, introduced non-native plants to our shores as foodstuffs. Think of the ubiquitous ground elder and the rather glamorous umbellifers, Alexanders' that grow along the coast in Kent and Sussex.

After that, medieval monks would have exchanged medicinal plants through their monasteries both here and in Europe. Up until the mid sixteenth century, most new plants would have come from Europe until the Middle East became a source of horticultural treasure as the plant hunters of the time spread their nets further afield.

And in the 17th century came two hugely influential generations of the Tradescant family. John Tradescant the elder, (1570-1638) was gardener to Charles I and his son, John the younger (1608-1662), was gardener to Charles's wife, Catherine of Braganza. They both travelled extensively in North America returning with hitherto unknown plants, amongst them the tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, the swamp cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, plane trees and pineapples. They are both buried in the churchyard of St Mary at Lambeth, which stands close to the gatehouse of Lambeth Palace. The church was de-consecrated in the 1970s and in 1977 became the Museum of Garden History.

If you have a chance to go to Lambeth Palace Gardens, and it is open to the public on certain days, you can see a particularly fine specimen of *Liriodendron tulipifera* there - look out for the pineapples on the columns of nearby Lambeth Bridge which commemorate the Tradescant's introduction of such an exotic fruit.

Subsequently, The Royal Horticultural Society, founded in 1804 'for the improvement of horticulture', sponsored a number of important collectors who braved incredible hardship in far flung countries of the world to feed the ongoing demand for anything new and exotic. They included famous names such as Robert Fortune, George Forrest, David Douglas and Frank Kingdon-Ward, all of whose exploits are, quite frankly, hair-raising. Both the RHS and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew continue now to work with people on plant and seed collecting forays, including Tom Hart Dyke. Sue and Bledwyn Wynn-Jones of Crug Farm Plants in North Wales were originally farmers but combined their love of plants and travelling more than 20 years ago to travel the globe seeking out specimens that grow in an equitable climate and which will therefore survive our weather conditions. They travel together or sometimes with friends and fellow botanists. Their usual modus

operandi is to leave their nursery in the autumn for two or three months, having chosen a country and read up on the flora growing there and those plants they think might be hardy enough for our climate in England.

They make contact with local universities and work with local botanists sharing information and knowledge. They also follow strict quarantine rules, a must these days to guarantee biosecurity. Usually Bleddyn sends any seeds he has collected by runner to Sue at 'base camp' where she sets to cleaning, drying and packaging them up. The whole procedure is a lengthy one as often the quantity of seed is small and germination can, in some cases, take years.

The walled garden at their nursery is full of exotic looking plants and unfamiliar genera. Their Chelsea garden in the Royal Pavilion last year showed an interesting selection of plants for dry shade and included plants such as unusual aspidistra – just what we need with ever increasing parched summers in the South East – from Vietnam and South China as far as I can remember. The oreopanax they grow is very exotic and rather fabulous. As is the hardy Schefflera taiwaniana with huge and jungly leaves. They have an interesting website, to say the least.

So plant hunting continues with entrepreneurial private nurseries collecting plants and seeds from countries which weren't always open for exploration. And like the plant hunters of old, they are highly motivated as they were and perhaps a little bit obsessed. They have found hardier forms; have discovered plants with 'garden potential' and plants which will form the basis of hybridising more and more interesting and beautiful varieties.

I remember visiting 'backstage' in the wondrous Kirstenbosch Garden in Cape Town really quite a few years ago and then they had people scouring other parts of South Africa for plants that might prove to be garden worthy in Europe. It all took time and each plant would be grown on and observed long before they were launched on to the horticultural public.

Imagine how dull our gardens might have been but for the plant hunters and how lucky we are to have a climate that can accommodate such a huge range of plants. There is even a *Puya raimondii* growing at the World Garden at Lullingstone. I wonder if Tom Hart Dyke grew it from seed. I know that the plant, being monocarpic, needs to and does produce literally thousands of seeds before dying.
