

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

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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.

EDITORS NOTES

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

NEW PROGRAM SECRETARY

Program Secretary Mrs Penny Slack has arranged for the 2024 speakers but in order for a program to be organised for 2025 a new program secretary needs to be found. Any volunteers?

GARDENING CALENDAR DECEMBER

As the year draws to its close, and the days are at their shortest, limit gardening work to protecting tender plants and aiding wildlife in your garden.

Feed – Keep bird feeders topped up and make water available.

Water – Although it makes sense to water plants sparingly at this time of year, do make sure that container plants don't dry out completely.

Protect – Protect tender palms and tree ferns. Stuff a few handfuls of straw into the crown, tie up the leaves or fronds, and then wrap the whole plant in horticultural fleece, tying it off securely at the bottom. Don't use plastic sheeting or bubble wrap – on warm days your plants will sweat and rot.

Indoors, keep houseplants happy by moving them away from radiators and into a sunny, cool spot.

Plan ahead

Last but not least, take some time to curl up in a warm spot and plan next year's garden

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Moroccan-style turkey meatballs with cauliflower couscous

Serves 4 Prepare 15 minutes Cook 30 minutes

You will need

1 courgette (about 250g), coarsely grated

500g pack turkey thigh mince

2 tsp Cooks' Ingredients Ras El Hanout seasoning

1.5 tbsp olive oil

3 carrots, peeled and cut into spears

1 tsp ground coriander

1 onion, diced

400g can tomatoes with olive oil and garlic

» 2 x 300g packs cauliflower and kale couscous

Half 28g pack coriander

To do

Preheat the oven to 220°C, gas mark 7. Grate the courgette into a double sheet of kitchen paper and wring out the excess liquid. Tip into a bowl with the turkey mince, ras el hanout and some seasoning. Mix together with your hands, then shape into 16 meatballs. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large non-stick frying pan and fry the meatballs for about 10-12 minutes, turning regularly, until golden all over.

Meanwhile, toss the carrots with the remaining 1/2 tbsp oil and ground coriander. Spread on a parchment-lined roasting tray and roast for 20 minutes, turning halfway through.

Lift the meatballs from the pan and set aside on a plate. Fry the onion in the residual oil in the pan for 5 minutes until soft, then add the tomatoes and 200ml water. Bring to a simmer, return the meatballs and cook for 10 minutes. Cook the cauliflower couscous according to the pack instructions, then serve with the meatballs, roasted carrots and a sprinkling of coriander.

MULLING IT OVER

Some things just go together, like cinnamon and Christmas. So let's make some mulled wine, says Sam Wong

What you need

2 oranges

150 grams of caster sugar or granulated sugar

5 cloves

5 cardamom pods

1 cinnamon stick

Pinch of nutmeg

2 bottles of red wine

WE ALL know red wine goes with beef, white wine goes with fish and lager is the ideal foil for a spicy curry. But can science explain why some drinks are a perfect match for certain foods?

One hypothesis for explaining flavour matches is that foods go together well if they share many aroma compounds (see page 70). But this theory has its critics, and in any case, different rules are likely to apply to food and drink pairings, when the two partners aren't usually in the mouth together at the same time.

In a study that asked wine and beer experts to suggest food matches, some pairings were thought to match because of a certain similarity in taste – for instance, acidic wines with acidic cheeses. In other cases, elements that are strong in different ways were said to balance one another – like salty cheese with sweet wine.

Sometimes, we appreciate a drink that can neutralise the aftertaste or mouthfeel that remains after we eat certain foods. For example, tea contains chemicals called saponins that help to wash out greasiness – which probably explains why my wife insists on a cup of tea with fish and chips. Conversely, eating cheese has been found to reduce the astringency

of a red wine, perhaps because of an attraction between fat droplets and tannins.

Some pairings are best avoided because the two elements interact in an undesirable way. A 2009 study reported that some red wines containing high levels of iron led to an unpleasant, fishy aftertaste in scallops. For some people, artichokes can make wine taste sweet, due to a chemical called cynarin. This molecule binds to sweet taste receptors without activating them. When you sip a drink and the cynarin is washed away, this frees up the receptors and triggers a sensation of sweetness.

While these chemical and perceptual phenomena play a role in some successful combinations, there is no doubt our enjoyment of food and drink pairings is partly down to familiarity and cultural context. Sometimes, we might want to choose a drink that matches the occasion, rather than the food being served. According to a study carried out in Germany, participants found the smell of cinnamon more pleasant at Christmastime than in the summer, and also associated orange and cloves more strongly with Christmas.

This seems like a good enough reason to make mulled wine. Start by infusing the spices in a syrup: add the sugar and spices to a large saucepan along with the orange peel and juice, then add just enough wine to cover the sugar. Heat until the sugar dissolves, then simmer until you have a thick syrup. You can store this syrup and use it later, or add the rest of the wine, heat gently and serve immediately. Blue cheese would be a fine companion

WOODS AND HEDGES

WHITE BRYONY *Bryonia dioica*

In an early autumn hedgerow the bright-red berries of bryony add a considerable splash of colour. The plant climbs and clings, its long stem held by coiled tendrils rising from the bases of leaf stalks. The leaves are large (usually 10–15cm in length), deeply lobed and sculpted.

Unlike the seeds, the flowers are unobtrusive, though they must be clearly visible to bees. Male flowers and female flowers grow on different plants; both are greenish, appearing from May to September. Bryony is a poisonous plant and is our only native representative of the cucumber family.

PRIMROSE *Primula vulgaris*

For over a thousand years the primrose has figured in folk songs and stories. In recent years it has become a talisman for town dwellers with their hearts in the country, but it is an increasingly scarce plant around cities where it suffers from over-picking.

The primrose is a perennial herb growing from a rhizome which in the late winter sends out a rosette of wrinkled leaves, heavily veined underneath, broadest at their tip and up to 15cm in length. The flowers follow in March and April – sometimes much earlier and sometimes continuing into June if the season is cool. They grow on pink-flushed, downy stalks from a main stem base. What look like five petals are in fact the lobes of a corolla; these contract into a narrow mouth where the cream-yellow is augmented by a streak of orange. The scent is sweet and reminiscent of violets.

YELLOW PIMPERNEL *lysmackia nemorum*

Closely related to the ubiquitous creeping Jenny of hanging baskets and cottage gardens, this is a perennial of damp woods and hedgerows, draping itself over the leaf litter and growing to 40cm in length. The leaves are opposite, 2–4cm long, slightly fleshy and shiny green like creeping Jenny, but oval and pointed rather than rounded.

The flowers are warm yellow, a corolla with five calyx teeth, opening to a diameter of 10 or 12mm. The flowers grow from leaf axils on very fine stalks, usually only 2 or 3 at any one time, so the plant rarely puts on a great show. It is, however, likely to be met with at any time between May and September, in all but the driest woods.

THE GREAT FLOWER FABRICATION**3-D printing may save a threatened thistle**

There's something particularly cruel in using beauty to kill, but that's exactly what scientists at the Chicago Botanic Garden set out to do earlier this summer in the sand dunes of northern Wisconsin. There Kayri Havens and her colleagues planted about 60 3-D-printed flowers to lure invasive weevils to their death.

For more than a decade, beginning in the 1990s, scientists deliberately distributed the invasive weevil *Larinus planus* throughout the country to consume Canada thistle, an aggressive weed that had run rampant through American farm fields and rangeland. But like many well-intentioned species-control efforts before it, the plan went awry. The long-snouted insect jumped host and attacked native thistles, including the Pitcher's thistle, a flowering spiky plant that grows only in the Great Lakes region and was listed as a threatened species in 1988 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in response to habitat destruction. Left to its own devices, the seed-eating weevil could cut the Pitcher thistle's possible time to extinction in half, Havens says.

She now hopes the 3-D-printed thistle fakes will come to control the biocontrols. The plastic purple, blue or white (lowers—some halfway open, others in full bloom—sit atop 20-inch-long dowels alongside the real things on Wisconsin's Door County peninsula. Most are outfitted with cotton wicks saturated in a lemony or wintergreen scent, both known to attract weevils. "We needed a chemical signature that weevils go crazy over," says botanist Pati Vitt. Video cameras currently capture fauna] activity at the faux-studded floral plots so researchers can catalogue which models the weevils favor, the number of insects that visit and how long they stay. Once the scientists discern the shape, color and smell combo that attracts the weevils—but not bees and other pollinators—a trap will be designed. It could take a few years to determine all the particulars, so for now the weevils that

take a shine to the 3-D-printed blooms are captured by hand when possible and thrown in soapy water to die. If the counterfeit scheme works, fields of 3-D-printed flowers might one day stand guard over Wisconsin's dunes. —Debra Weiner

SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU LAUGH

Church Notice board Bloomers!

1. Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.
2. Ladies, please don't forget the jumble sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands
3. Don't let worry kill you – let the church help.
4. Thursday night – potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.

Groan Corner

1. What did the cucumber say to the pickle? You mean a great dill to me.
2. What do you call a sad cup of coffee? Depresso
3. How do you organize a Space Party? You planet
4. Where do Pirates get their hooks? Second hand shop.

Happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year