

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?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- RHS Malvern Spring Festival – 18-21 May
 - **PLANT SALE 11th MAY**
 - **RHS Chelsea Flower Show – 21–25 May**
 - **OUT MEETING 3rd June**
 - **SUMMER SHOW 1st JULY**
 - RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show – 2–7 July
 - RHS Flower Show Tatton Park – 17–21 July
 - **AUTUMN SHOW 7th SEPTEMBER**
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GARDEN CLUB TRIPS 2024

Sunday 19th May 2024. Visit Scotney Castle & Gardens, Tunbridge wells , TN3 8JN

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/scotney-castle>

Leave Victoria Hall at 9:30am returning 5:30pm approx. Cost £20 each for travel and £17 for entrance. If you are National Trust member, you only pay for Travel (£20). There will be a comfort break stop on outward journey.

Monday 3rd June 2024. Visit to Wisley. (Please note this is a WEEKDAY AFTERNOON VISIT).

Our Out meeting. No meeting at Hall in the evening.

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley>. Leave Victoria Hall at 1pm returning at 5pm Approx.

Cost **FREE to Garden Club members, £5 non members.** Includes Travel and entrance

Saturday 6th July 2024, Visit Godinton House and Gardens, Ashford Kent TN23 3BP

<https://godintonhouse.co.uk/gardens/about/>. There is small café on site Leave Victoria Hall at

9:30am returning 5:30pm approx. Cost £30 each, includes travel and entrance. There will be a comfort break stop on outward journey

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 re-pot 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

THIS MONTHS RECIPE**Lemon curd baked cheesecake with ginger nut base**

Serves 10-12 Prepare 20 minutes +chilling Cook 50-55 minutes

You will need**For the crust**

- 250g Ginger Nuts, smashed to a rough crumb
- 100g butter, melted

For the filling

- 680g cream cheese
- 100g caster sugar
- 2 Medium Eggs, at room temperature
- 70g Greek-style yogurt
- 1 lemon, finely grated zest

To top

- 6 heaped tbsp lemon curd

To do

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C, gas mark 6. Screw up a 50cm-long sheet of baking parchment into a tight ball then open it out and smooth it flat again. Use this to line a 20x20cm square baking tin (not a loose-bottomed one). Let the sides rise up and mould the paper tightly into all the corners. Set aside.

2 Combine the crushed biscuits and melted butter in a large bowl. Tip into the prepared tin and use your fingers to carefully press the crumb mixture evenly to form a base. Place in the fridge to set while preparing the filling.

3 Beat together the cream cheese and sugar in a large bowl with a handheld whisk until light and fluffy. Add the eggs and beat until fully incorporated. Add the yogurt and lemon zest, switch to a rubber spatula and gently mix until smooth. Remove the chilled base from the fridge and pour the filling into the tin.

4 Place a larger roasting tin (at least 30x30cm) in the oven and put the cheesecake tin inside it. Fill the larger tin with enough water so it reaches halfway up the sides of the cheesecake tin.

5 Bake for 45-55 minutes (reducing the temperature slightly towards the end of cooking if it starts to colour too much), or until the cheesecake is just set. Turn off the oven, prop

the oven door open with the handle of a wooden spoon and allow to cool for 1 hour. The water bath and this slow cooling will reduce the chances of your cheesecake surface cracking.

6 When cool, place the baked cheesecake in the fridge overnight. In the morning, gently spoon the lemon curd onto the surface of the cheesecake, then return to the fridge for at least 2 hour or until ready to serve. Lift the cheesecake from the tin using the paper 'handles'. Run a sharp knife under warm water then dry and use to cut neat squares or rectangles. You can keep the cheesecake covered in the fridge for up to 3 day:

WOODS AND HEDGES

COMMON DOG VIOLET *Viola riviniana*

This is the common violet of woods and pastures throughout Britain, but there are several similar species, especially in the south. Violets are perennial herbs, growing from rootstocks to a height of 10 or 20cm. The leaves are heart shaped and deep green. Most have purple-mauve flowers, about 2cm in width, which appear in March and April. The flowers are unusually shaped having uneven petals. The spur at the back of the lower petal identifies the species – the common dog violet has a pale broad spur whilst that of the early or pale dog violet, *V. reichenbachiana*, is dark and tapering. One species, the sweet violet, *V. odorata*, has a strong scent and has been widely planted in gardens and hedgerows well away from its natural range in the south and east.

RED CAMPION *Silene dioica*

The deep rose-pink petals of red campion brighten wood edges and verges from April to October. The flowers measure about 2cm across and have five deeply notched petals. Close examination reveals that they are not all the same; those on some plants have 10 stamens whilst those on others have five well-developed styles. The former are male, the latter female. Individual plants produce flowers of a single sex.

This is a shade-tolerant biennial or perennial plant but in extreme gloomy conditions it tends to grow tall (nearly a metre high), pale and with fewer flowers. The leaves are opposite, broad at the base but narrow further up the stem. The whole plant is covered with soft hairs. The papery capsules, which persist long after the tiny black seeds have been dispersed, are useful for winter flower decorations.

SOLITARY SPRING BEES

When thinking of bees, naturally you would think they all live in large colonies, with hives humming from the sound of thousands of bees busy at work.

However, this is not the case as some bees prefer their own company and live a solitary life.

There are numerous types of solitary bees and many that take wing with the first signs of spring. In fact, most of the bees we see in early spring will be of this kind. Solitary bees don't sting and are incredibly important pollinators of flowers, fruit trees and crops like oil-seed rape.

Solitary bees dig their own bur-row and live in it alone. Depending on the species, a solitary bee nest can be found anywhere. But don't worry about your house walls, solitary bees prefer holes in the ground or sandy-banks. They can also be tempted to live in specially made 'bee houses' and even old snail shells.

Some of the most common spring solitary bees you are likely to see in the early months include the early mining bee, tawny mining bee and hairy-footed flower bee.

The early mining bee is one of the earliest solitary bees to emerge and can be active from March until June. They are very small, and females can be identified by a dark red tip on their abdomen plus a covering of foxy hairs on their back.

Tawny mining bees are covered in ginger fur and are a common species. They fly from April to June, coinciding with the flowering of fruit trees like cherry, pear and apple. Females collect pollen and nectar for their larvae which develop in her underground chamber and then spend winter as a pupa.

You are likely to see the signs of these bees before seeing one itself. Their nests leave volcano-like mounds in the ground as the entrance to their burrow.

As the name suggests, male hairy-footed flower bees do indeed have very hairy little feet. They are also incredibly territorial and will protect their own small patch of flowers. These wonderful bees are amongst the first to appear in spring, with males emerging as early as late February. They are common locally and in the south of England, where you will likely find them feeding on lungwort, comfrey, ground-ivy, dead-nettles and primroses with their exceptionally long tongues.

There are many more bee species, solitary or otherwise. To find out more about our precious pollinators visit the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust website: hiwwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/invertebrates/bees-and-wasps

A sweet idea

Eating local honey is often recommended as a treatment for hay fever. Does it have any effect? James Wong investigates

It is that time of year again. The days are brighter, daffodils start popping up around my neighbourhood, the dawn chorus of birdsong finally returns each morning and my social media starts filling up with anxious questions about whether local honey can treat hay fever. Now, I realise this is a little self-interested, but here is my attempt to get to the bottom of the best evidence we have to date, once and for all. Or at least until more studies come in.

With approximately 20 per cent of people in the UK affected by an allergic response to airborne pollen, it is perhaps unsurprising that many are turning to an everyday food that contains small amounts of pollen, but doesn't trigger the allergy, as a plausible-sounding remedy. Being great-tasting, widely available and relatively inexpensive, honey would indeed be an excellent vehicle to administer non-triggering doses of pollen. This is supposed to work as a form of immunotherapy to prime our bodies to deal with the summer onslaught. When you consider the potential side effects of the antihistamines used in conventional medication, you can definitely see the allure. But what does the evidence actually say?

Despite the frequency with which local honey's therapeutic effect is claimed, there seem to only be three scientific studies that have systematically investigated it. Sadly none of them, arguably, in a particularly robust way.

The most recent one is a 2013 study carried out in West Malaysia. This found that after consuming a multifloral honey produced by a tropical bee species deep in the rainforest for four weeks, people showed an improvement in symptoms for allergic rhinitis, which continued to the end of the eight-week study and beyond. PDFs of the report are often sent to me by people from the UK and US as "proof" that local honey is indeed a cure for hay fever.

The first thing that piqued my interest as a Malaysian botanist coming across this study is that hay fever is essentially unknown in the humid tropics. In the equatorial climate, plants don't release pollen en masse in the same short windows that they do in highly seasonal, temperate regions. Indeed, when you look at the methodology of the study,

it didn't even look at hay fever at all, but at other allergies to dust and pets.

Even if it did, is a rare honey from a rainforest bee comparable with that of European honeybees foraging on totally different plants for people in the UK and US? Can this Malaysian honey even be described as local to the participants in the study, who didn't live in the heart of rainforest reserves, let alone to people on the other side of the planet?

Finally, let's look at the dose of 1 gram per kilogram of body weight used in the study. For me, that's 90 grams of honey per day, which is three times the maximum daily amount of sugar the National Health Service in England recommends I consume. I note the researchers didn't track the weight or blood sugar levels of the participants after the addition of more than 10,000 calories from sugar during the study.

What about the other studies? A few years before the Malaysian trial, a team in Finland reported that people consuming birch pollen honey had "significantly better control of their symptoms than those on conventional medication only". But birch trees are pollinated by wind, not by bees, so what is birch pollen honey? The answer is honey with added pollen. So, again, is this a like-for-like comparison?

The only other study is from 2002 from the University of Connecticut, which appears to be the best-designed of the three to test the claim of whether ordinary honey consumption can improve hay fever symptoms, by people consuming one tablespoon of honey per day, and found no significant difference.

It is important to point out that in the latter two trials all the participants were given honey on top of the existing antihistamines they were taking. So whatever the result, the idea that honey is a more (or less) effective alternative to these medications can't be established as there was no side-by-side comparison. Furthermore, all the trials were very short term and tested really small groups of people, so much more evidence is needed to authoritatively confirm or negate this claim.

What we can say, however, is that the bold statements we often see simply aren't supported by solid evidence at this time. Indeed, when we look at the alleged mechanism of action behind this claim, it seems increasingly shaky, because the vast majority of people with hay fever are allergic to tree and grass pollen, not those from insect-pollinated flowers, which are what are used to make honey. So, for now, I am afraid this online fact should probably be confined to the fiction pile.

BEWARE OF THESE



WARNING!

Aconitum napellus, Monkshood, also known as
 Helmet Flower, Friar's Helmet, Wolfsbane

This popular garden plant is one of the most poisonous plants in the garden, and all parts of the plant are poisonous. The principle alkaloids are aconite and aconitine. Of these aconitine is thought to be the key toxin.

Ingestion of even a small amount results in severe gastrointestinal upset but it is the effect on the heart, where it causes slowing of the heart rate, which is often the cause of death.

The poison may be administered by absorption through broken skin or open wounds and there are reports of florists being unwell after working with the flowers but there are no documented cases, so wearing gloves is necessary. Its distinctive taste makes it unpleasant to eat so accidental poisoning is extremely rare but not unknown. The taste is described as initially very bitter followed by a burning sensation and, then, a numbing of the mouth.

SPRING SHOW RESULTS

Most Points Section 1	1st	51 pts	Hazel Chant	2nd	24 pts	Muriel Brodrick	3rd	24 pts	Barrie Ames
Most Points Cooking	1st	10	Hazel Chant	2 nd	4pts	Barrie Ames			
Most Points Handicraft	1 st	20	Hazel Chant	2 nd	5 pts	Margaret Neate	3rd	4 pts	Barrie Ames
Most Points all sections	1st	81 pts	Hazel Chant	2 nd	32 pts	Barrie Ames	3 rd	24 pts	Muriel Brodrick

PLANT SALE 2024

www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk

Ash Parish Garden Club

PLANT SALE

Ash Victoria Hall
(Ash Hill Road, Ash Vale)

Saturday 11th May

10am - 1pm

Alpines

Shrubs

Bedding Plants

Annuals

Perennials

Vegetables

Basket Plants

For further details or information contact
Beverley Ames on 01252 686303