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

AUTUMN SHOW 7th SEPTEMBER

GARDENING CALENDAR SEPTEMBER

September can be a time of relative peace for the ornamental gardener: generally, there is less to do during this month than other months, apart from collecting seeds from summer-flowering plants.

Maintain water features

For gardens with water features, now is the time to cover ponds with netting to prevent water-logging during leaf fall in the autumn.

Harvest

In a kitchen garden, now is the time to enjoy the rewards of your hard work and pick your vegetables and fruit; remember to dig up any remaining potatoes, otherwise they will be destroyed by slugs.

Protect

Cover any tender salad leaves with bird netting, and pick late-fruiting raspberries and blackberries.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

SHERRY MOUSSE

You will need
4 eggs
1 pint cream (double)
2 tablespoons water
3oz castor sugar
loz gelatine
4 tablespoons sherry

To do
Separate yolks and whites into bowls.
Beat egg yolks and sugar well together. Add sherry.
Melt gelatine in hot water and cool a little before adding to egg mixture.
Beat egg white very stiffly and fold into mixture. Then fold in lightly beaten double cream.
Place in ordinary refrigerator to cool.
Miss D. Green

HIDECOTE

With its lush botany and timeless design, Hidcote in Gloucestershire is one of the country's most enchanting gardens, and this year marks the 75th anniversary since it came into Trust care. Garden designer and broadcaster Chris Beardshaw explains its enduring appeal

My first encounter with Hidcote garden in Gloucestershire remains brilliant in my memory. I first visited as a child of eight, tumbling out of my parents' sweltering car and into what felt like a garden refuge, roamed across immaculate lawns, rich in sweet fragrance from a summer cut. My hands

brushed the textured foliage of the tapestry hedges and I marvelled at the boisterous borders, full of exotic blooms under an azure sky.

In that moment, as a child at Hidcote, I became a gardener - in my own mind, at least. I had already been exposed to horticulture growing up: firstly at my father's precise and methodical allotment, and secondly at my grandmother's chaotic ornamental garden where a plant's ability to survive was reason enough for its inclusion. What drew me to Hidcote was the effortless harmony of the perfectly cultivated plants which had been choreographed to provoke an emotional response. It was a lesson in the impact of beautiful spaces on our wellbeing.

I'm far from the first, or last, gardener to be so taken by Hidcote. It has a unique place in the history of the National Trust, as it was the first garden the charity took on for its own sake, rather than as part of a mansion or great estate. Seventy-five years later, Hidcote is still considered one of the UK's most influential Arts and Crafts-inspired gardens. Remarkably, more than a century after it was created, it continues to evoke the quiet revolutionary spirit of its era even as it inspires generations of contemporary gardeners and designers.

But this most photographed and celebrated garden was never intended as an exhibition piece or site of reverence. The garden emerged, not from a single grand plan but organically, over the course of 40 years, out of the curious mind of its escapist creator Lawrence Johnston. I find that attempting to understand his personality helps explain the unique character and temperament of the garden to me.

Lawrence Johnston's upbringing made him something of an enigma. He was born in Paris to a wealthy American family and was largely educated at home in Paris and London before attending Cambridge University in 1893. After university, Johnston travelled north to Northumberland to become a farming pupil, revealing an early inclination for the outdoor life. His father was a veteran of the American Civil War and Johnston followed his father's

military footsteps, becoming a British citizen and then serving in the Second Boer War.

Johnston showed some early signs of a burgeoning interest in gardening. One was a 'beautiful little rock garden' he created while lodging at Little Shelford in Cambridge in 1902. His horticultural flair might have been further kindled during his first posting to South Africa in 1900, because by 1904 he has been elected as a fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society, where he's known to have frequently borrowed books from the society's library.

Johnston would go on to revisit South Africa later in life on plant-collecting expeditions, to find rare species to bring home to his garden.

But this was just one side of him, as Johnston was, by all accounts, a conflicted soul. Rarely photographed looking directly at a camera, he valued privacy over the limelight and seemed content with his dogs and fellow gardeners.

Johnston's mother had hoped that he would one day become a member of the landed gentry, and so she bought him the 120-hectare(300-acre) Hidcote Manor in 1907 as a canvas for him to realise her dream.

But instead of cultivating a great estate, Johnston turned most of his attention to gardening. He hired an unemployed local named Frank Adams to be his head gardener, and in 1907 began nurturing the landscape. The pair started by laying what's known as the Old Garden.

Visitors today can still enjoy their scheme of informal herbaceous borders with froths of bulbs and shrubs in soft colours, set off by the bricks of the manor's old walled garden. Next, they created the White Garden, with its singular colour theme of white petals against fresh green foliage. The White Garden demonstrates how Johnston took inspiration from the Arts and Crafts movement as he paired clipped, formal, medieval-style hedging with wild and naturalistic planting, all in white.

These two 'garden rooms' are excellent examples of Johnston's vision to create 'a wild garden in a formal setting', and were his first tentative steps towards the fully realised garden that visitors enjoy today. Many of Hidcote's admirers believe that these are his most refined and structurally eloquent garden designs.

Finding his stride, Johnston developed the next stages of his garden with striking confidence. He created a visual link from the old walled garden by making an axis where two gardens would sit. The first was the elegant, French classical-style Stilt Garden, with fiercely trimmed hornbeam hedges on top of exposed trunk 'stilts'. At a right angle, he built an Italianate Bathing Pool flanked by topiary birds and sound tracked by a burbling statue fountain. Quite remarkably, as well as being beautiful in their own right, these linked spaces formed the structure from which all of the following character gardens flowed. In one move, Johnston had secured the design integrity of the whole future scheme.

Neither Johnston nor Adams were proven garden creators, yet together they had crafted a quite extraordinary canvas. This would have been an accomplishment for any proficient landscape designer, but for a self-taught horticulturalist and novice designer, it was remarkable. Hidcote's success as a garden is testament to Johnston's appetite for knowledge, sensitive eye and understanding of staging and styling plants.

Johnston didn't leave many records, so we don't fully know where his primary sources of inspiration came from, but the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement courses through the garden. You can see its aesthetic play out in the topiary hedges and stonework walls of the garden rooms, reflecting the principle of a seamlessly connected inside and outside, and through the authentically wild planting schemes, rich in texture and colour, with nature front and centre.
You can see how the Arts and Crafts movement might have appealed to the creative yet introverted Johnston. It had emerged as an antithesis to industrial practices, putting its focus instead on hand-crafting, artistic intelligence and a Romantic belief that creativity is most authentic when the artist is immersed in nature.

It's likely Johnston drew on two prominent contemporary references - Thomas Mawson and William Robinson. Mawson, a millworker's son from Lancashire who, like Johnston, was self-taught, honed his skills in

architecture and classical arrangement. He published The Art $ Craft of Garden Making in 1900, which became a definitive guide to gardening and design. You can see Mawson's preferred formal structure and geometric layout reflected at Hidcote.

By contrast, William Robinson was a graduate of Glasnev in Gardens near Dublin who preferred a natural, relaxed style. His 1870 book The Wild Garden encouraged informal planting which respected individual plant colour, form and aesthetic personality over a strict planting layout. Robinson mixed native and exotic species, sowed lawns with swathes of bulbs and planted shrubs, herbaceous and annuals in a new 'naturalistic' style.

Johnston's greatest achievement might be the way he took these two approaches and blended them. He gave each of Hidcote's 28 garden rooms its own character, but he also carefully considered the way they would work together as a whole.
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The way the garden responds to seasons, weather and maturity delights me. It's a work of art

By the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, Johnston now in his 70s, put his mind to the long-term future of his beloved garden. He approached the National Trust 1943, who after deliberating, decided to accept Hidcote in 1948 as their first garden of national importance, under a Gardens Fund launched jointly by the Trust and the Royal Horticultural Society to save such gardens.

For me, Hidcote is one of the few gardens whose spaces can simultaneously excite me with their style and structure while reassuring me with an enveloping calm I find myself stumbling across views I've never seen before, a previously quiet corner blossoming in a new way. The way the garden responds to seasons, weather and maturity delights me. It's a work of art.

The 75th anniversary of the Trust's relationship with Johnston's garden brings a reminder of the vulnerability of such garden spaces. I think it's vital to stay true to his original vision, preparing the garden to inspire the next generation of horticulturalists and garden creators

WOODS AND HEDGES

HERB BENNET *Gem urbanum*

The leaves of herb Bennet (also known as wood avens) are composed of small lateral leaflets but with a much larger lobed leaflet at the tip. Once known and recognised, it is often the foliage that is picked out first along damp wood edges and rides where the species is most common.

Although the plant grows up to 60cm high, the flowers are quite small, appearing singly on long stalks and measuring about 1.5cm across. They are composed of five pointed green sepals above which, and alternating with the sepals, are five rather small pointed petals, bright yellow in colour. After flowering from June to August, a head of nutlets or achenes develops; these are hooked and rely for their dispersal on passing badgers and foxes, or by wandering cats which then return home and preen out the seeds on

to carpets and sofas. Years ago, the clove-smelling rootstock of this perennial herb was used to keep moths out of linen.

WILD STRAWBERRY *Fragaria vesct*

Fruits of the wild strawberry are small and it takes a lot of disciplined collecting to have enough to fill a dessert spoon. The taste makes it worth almost any amount of trouble. The bright-red colour of strawberries is an invitation to all animals and birds, the evolutionary intention being to have the tiny seeds swallowed and excreted at a later time and place. The succulent flesh is the price the plant must pay for the service.

The wild strawberry grows from a rootstock to a height of 5—30cm and spreads by runners. The leaves grow on long stalks and are trifoliate, composed of three egg-shaped and deeply toothed leaflets, shiny green on top but silky grey underneath. The flowers are small, no more than 18mm across, and have five white petals. During the flowering season (April to June) it is easy to overlook this little plant among the rich flora of scrubby woods and pastures on basic soils. By midsummer the nodding fruits have proclaimed their presence to mice and the short sweet harvest is under way.

The cultivated strawberry developed over the last 300 years is derived from an American relative.

NORTH-FACING GARDENS?

By Colin Fernandez Environment Editor Daily Mail

A SUNNY south-facing garden has always been seen as the most desirable outdoor space.

But that may be changing, according to a leading estate agent who claims warmer summers in the UK could soon make them uncomfortably hot.

Dominic Agace, boss of Winkworth, suggests that north-facing gardens may become a better option as climate change marches on.
And he says a north-west facing garden - which gets some sun at the end of the day - is probably the best of both worlds.

Heat records were smashed in summer 2022, with temperatures hitting 40.3C (104F) for the first time, in Coningsby, Lincolnshire.
Houses that have been extended with south-facing glazed conservatories and side returns may become unbearably stifling, Mr Agace added.

He said: 'It's getting incredibly hot in the summer. What we see now is maybe people have wonderful glazed extensions to their houses, and it doesn't matter what you put on them, you can put on filters for the sun, but they become incredibly hot. What you often see is people putting in portable air conditioning units to make them usable.'

He said his 78-year-old mother, who lives in Barnes, south west London, is finding her south-facing garden too hot.

'A classic example, my mother, who has a south-facing garden, has to go from the back to the front of the house when it's really hot. It doesn't help with her breathing,' he said. "Traditionally it was always south-facing gardens that were the most desirable, it would allow children to play all day in the sun.

'But that was when we didn't have the heat we have now. You don't want direct sun in the garden all the time.

'If you are south facing, it's straight on your whole kitchen and garden.' He suggests a better arrangement in the future might be what Mr Agace has himself the north-west-facing garden.

This is cooler, with shade in the mid-afternoon - the hottest time of the day - and then some sun in the evening.

He said: 'We have a very small garden facing north-west at an angle.

We have sun coming in the evening, when everyone is back from work, you can enjoy a bit of sun in the garden and not fry in extreme heat. That's not a bad way of living.'

In further comments to Wink-worth's property podcast, Mr Agace, 45, said: 'As summers get hotter, those who have extended their houses with conservatories, glass roofs and side returns, it's good not to have the baking sun all day long.

'Certainly for young kids, or elderly people, south might not be ideal.'

THE BEST PLANTS FOR YOUR PLOT
Five for a south-facing garden
Ceanothus, Hebe, Rosemary, Agapanthus, Lavender

Five for a north-facing garden
Hydrangea, Hosta, Fern, Garryaelliptica, Bergeni