

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- ☒ SPRING SHOW 12th APRIL
 - ☒ RHS Malvern Spring Festival – 8-11 May
 - ☒ PLANT SALE 10th MAY
 - ☒ RHS Chelsea Flower Show – 20-24 May
 - ☒ OUT MEETING 2nd June
 - ☒ SUMMER SHOW 7th JULY
 - ☒ RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show – 1-6 July
 - ☒ RHS Flower Show Tatton Park – 16-20 July
 - ☒ AUTUMN SHOW 6th SEPTEMBER
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GARDENING CALENDAR FEBRUARY

A lot can be achieved in your garden during February, particularly on days when the ground isn't frozen or waterlogged.

Plant

Plant bare-root trees and shrubs, and 'in-the-green' snowdrops (snowdrops with leaves). This is also a good month for planting Jerusalem artichokes, shallots, raspberries and blackberry canes, if weather conditions permit.

Prune

February is also the time to hard-prune your hedges, if you didn't do it in the autumn. Deciduous garden hedges can all be cut back fairly hard now. Make sure the frosts haven't lifted newly planted trees and shrubs, re-firm around them lightly using your hands or heels if necessary.

In terms of plant maintenance, now is the time to cut back deciduous grasses, ideally down to 15-20cm before new shoots emerge. Deadhead winter bedding plants for bushier displays later in the year, and start preparing seed beds for spring vegetable sowings.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

CHICKEN MYERS

You will need

225g (8oz) Broccoli florets
4 chicken breasts (skinned)
298g (2oz) mayonnaise
60ml (4tbsp) fresh double cream
2,5ml 1/2tsp curry powder
25g (1oz) grated cheddar cheese

To do

Cook broccoli in boiling water until almost tender. Drain well.
Place broccoli and Chicken Breast in a shallow oven proof dish.
Mix together the mayonnaise cream and curry powder (you can use light mayo and part milk cream for healthier option)
Spoon over chicken and broccoli coating them well sprinkle with cheese
Bake at 190C (375F) Mark 5 for 45-50 minutes or until chicken is tender.
A fan oven may need to be set a little lower.
Serve with rice or whatever
Brenda Sayer

WOODS AND HEDGES

GROUND-IVY *Glechoma hederacea* This is a short, straggling or creeping plant, common along hedgerows and overgrown borders in city parks and in most kinds of

woodland. The leaves are conspicuous, as in many shade-tolerant species, heart shaped, rounded at the tip and bluntly toothed. They are covered with hair and grow in pairs along a square stem.

Until the 16th century, when hops became popular, ground-ivy was used to flavour and clear ale; the leaves have an astringent or bitter smell when crushed. The flowers grow in whorls around the bases of the leaf stalks and are purple/blue; the corolla is up to 20mm long with a three-lobed lower lip. This is one of the first flowers of spring and is usually over by the end of May.

WOODRUFF *Galium odoratum* A plant that was once gathered and used to mask the (usty smell of stored linen, woodruff gives off a lovely fresh scent of new-mown hay when it has been recently cut. It is a member of the bedstraw family, characterised by distinct whorls of rather pointed, narrow leaves. In the case of woodruff the 'ruffs' are composed of 6–8 rough-edged leaves each up to 4cm long. The flowers are less distinctive, ivory coloured, small (about 5mm in diameter) and funnel shaped with a four-lobed corolla, grouped together in umbrella-*j] shaped heads. The stem is square or oblong in cross section, and grows to a height of between 15 and 30cm.

This is a perennial herb of calcareous woods, often overlooked but sometimes very common even in mature beechwoods. It is in flower during May and June.

WINTER WONDERLAND

Hallelujah! Days are longer, fair-weather gardeners are emerging from their burrows and green shoots are shooting everywhere.

Hellebore-hunters are active. Galanthophile gurus are on their hands and knees, rear end uppermost -bottomising, says a botanist { friend. But Lent lilies and snowdrops aren't the only flowers.

Of the several winter-flowering honeysuckles - shrubby, steadfast easily grown, easily sourced - *Lonicera fragrantissima* unfailingly braves the February elements, sporting small, creamy-white flowers, which are, yes, fragrant. It's been in British gardens since 1845, when Scottish plant-hunter Robert Fortune hauled it back from one of his China exploits.

A close relative, *L. x purpusii*, is also worthy of a favoured spot, where its perfume can be huffed. It has a couple of named improvements: 'Spring Romance' and the similar, exceedingly free-flowering 'Winter Beauty'. Go on. Buy both. Sweeten future Februarys.

Find fragrance too among the daphnes - more expensive but worth their pennies; sorry, guineas.

A clue to its sweet odour is embedded in the species *Daphne odora*. It's another Far Eastern shrub, for which the mighty and wholly reliable Hillier Manual of Trees & Shrubs advocates some winter protection but nevertheless considers it 'hardy enough to withstand frost of considerable severity'. That's my kind of plant. And Hillier will guide you to many another.

We gardeners are perhaps tempted by too much exotica; it empties our wallets, as well as our gardens.

Don't let *sarcococca*'s tricky spelling put you off. These smallish evergreen shrubs with fine stems and foliage amply repay the purchase price with a

prolonged annual abundance of petite yet terrifically strong-scented, white flowers. They're happy in the shade too, against a north-facing wall. A few blossoming sprigs in a vase bring more than the promise of spring indoors. Camellia sasanqua is among the earliest of its clan to brighten mid- to late-winter days. It bears 'numerous progeny' (Hillier again), appreciative of some shelter against a south- or west-facing wall. I'd say its many varieties are too costly to experiment with. But, if tempted, satisfy your yearning with 'Crimson King' and/or 'Narumigata'. Leave the plentiful others to folk with heated glasshouses, in which they can bask in something akin to a Mediterranean climate.

Two more woody must-haves where space is available: Garrya elliptica 'James Roof' for its intriguing pale grey catkins up to eight inches long at this time of the year; and any of the hamamelis (witch hazel) fraternity whose 'spidery' flowers, from the palest yellow to rich ruby red, adorn naked branches throughout these chilly weeks.

But, here again, you'll need a deep pocket if you want a group of them, although there's no risk of their being slayed by any of winter's full-on blasts.

Heathers I don't do. But if you must, garden centres will be happy to oblige. They'll be flooded with them right now.

Lamentably leaving aside hellebores and snowdrops – the gardening press overdoses on them at this time of year – I can guide you to some alternative delights.

For years, I've grown Iris reticulata, whose ball-bearing-sized bulbs I pot up as soon as they reach the shops each autumn. It's their clear blues of a spring sky that I crave, beautifully realised in the varieties 'Harmony', 'Blue Planet' and the newish Alida'. Try them intermingled with sunny yellow / danfordiae and stand by for swathes of uplifting colour on six-inch stems.

And what better promise of a forthcoming spring than the equally fail proof splendour of the diminutive crocus? Common, perhaps – but so are roses in their season.

Plant hundreds come September. Their plenty nourishes the soul.

SOMETHING TO MAKE YOU LAUGH

Q what kind of music do Bubbles hate?

A Pop

Q Why did the hairdresser win the race?

A He knew a shortcut

Q How did the picture end up in prison?

A He was framed

Q What do solicitors wear to work?

A Lawsuits

Q Why did the bullet lose his job?

A He was fired

Q Why can't a toe be 12inches long?

A Then it would be a Foot

Q What does the House wear?

A Address

Q What's orange and sounds like a carrot?

A A Parrot

Q Why do French people eat snails?

A They don't like fast food

Q Why do prawns never share?

A They are shellfish

Q How do trees get on-line?

A They log on

Q How do billboards talk?

A Sign language

Q How was Rome split into two?

A They had a pair of Caesars

Q Why is Peter Pan always flying?

A He neverlands

Q What do PhD students eat when they are hungry?

A Academia nuts

Q Why should you always knock before opening the fridge door?

A In case there's a salad dressing

Q Why couldn't the sesame seed stop talking?

A He was on a roll

Q How much room should you give to the fungi?

A As mushroom as you can

Q What do you call a cup of coffee with a pair of trousers in it?

A A cupachinos

Q What do you call a fake noodle?

A An impasta

THE CROCUS

Beneath the sunny autumn sky,
With gold leaves dropping round,
We sought, my little friend and I,
The consecrated ground,
Where, calm beneath the holy cross,
O'ershadowed by sweet skies,
Sleeps tranquilly that youthful form,
Those blue unclouded eyes.
Around the soft, green swelling mound
We scooped the earth away,
And buried deep the crocus-bulbs
Against a coming day.
"These roots are dry, and brown, and sere;
Why plant them here?" he said,
"To leave them, all the winter long,
So desolate and dead."
"Dear child, within each sere dead form
There sleeps a living flower,
And angel-like it shall arise
In spring's returning hour."
Ah, deeper down cold, dark, and chill
We buried our heart's flower,
But angel-like shall he arise
In spring's immortal hour.
In blue and yellow from its grave
Springs up the crocus fair,
And God shall raise those bright blue eyes,
Those sunny waves of hair.
Not for a fading summer's morn,
Not for a fleeting hour,
But for an endless age of bliss,
Shall rise our heart's dear flower