



## **HARDINGTON GARDEN CLUB**

**NEWSLETTER MARCH 2021**

### **CLUB NEWS**

As we write the Garden Club committee are looking forward to having their first face to face committee meeting of 2021 at the end of March. We have kept abreast of all the legislation and guidelines regarding meetings but it will be great to finally have an opportunity to move forward with the club and seal all the plans that have been on hold for such a long time.

When meetings do resume indoors, be sure the whole committee will take all the relevant remaining guidelines into account as we want every member to feel comfortable and safe whilst enjoying our joint love of gardening.

If any members would like to put forward ideas for the club and the 2022 programme we would love to hear from you; your input is invaluable in making the club something you want to be part of.

We would like to say "thank you" to Rachel who has already sent a provisional list of plants that she will have available at the plant sale in May. We know many others have seeds and plants on the go.

We would also like to say a huge thank you to Rosie for her all her fantastic work in editing and producing the Newsletter especially through this difficult time; it has kept the continuity of the club and has encouraged a couple of new members to join even whilst we are still unable to have meetings. We thank her for all the wonderful articles she produces each month and the time she takes to research the detailed Best Buy lists. THANK YOU.

Kate & Andy

**Stop Press:** *We will be having our Gold Club discount evening on 21<sup>st</sup> May, (fingers crossed). Look out for details later.*

### **MORE REASONS TO KEEP OUT OF THE GARDEN**

Do you know what these phobias are? Answers on page 6.

Panthophobia  
Pteridophobia  
Ranidaphobia  
Rupophobia  
Scoleciphobia

Seplophobia  
Selenophobia  
Tonitrophobia

## **NEWS FROM THE GARDENING PRESS**

- Glyphosate withdrawal: following Brexit, permission for glyphosate (the active ingredient in many garden weedkillers) to be sold in Great Britain is expected to be extended until at least 15th of December 2025.
- Melcourt is adding a set of John Innes blend composts to its range – SylvaGrow John Innes for seeds and SylvaGrow John Innes No1, No2 and No3. The peat content that is usually in John Innes formulas will be replaced with a mix of composted bark and wood fibre.
- Next time you buy compost you might see a sustainability rating for it on the point-of-sale information. This will give you an idea of its environmental impact during manufacture. Similar to the traffic-light system used for energy logos on white goods, the ratings will have five bands. Other information will include a list of the ingredients used in the compost with those with the greatest volume listed first. To come up with the ratings, an audit trail for each component that goes into a compost has been created. This is based on seven criteria: energy use, water use, social compliance, habit and biodiversity, pollution, renewability and resource-use efficiency. Every manufacturer inputs where they sourced their materials, along with information about its transport and distribution, and their composting procedures. A benchmarking committee decides where each compost should sit within the five bands. The process will be repeated every year, so re-formulations and new composts will get an up-to-date score. Missing from the audit list is whether a component stores carbon or releases it to the atmosphere. Measuring carbon is a hugely complex subject and to do it for all components would take time and delay the launch of the ratings. It will be looked at in more detail in the future.

## **SPRING FORAGING**

Earlier today the smell of wild garlic lured me to the woodland at the bottom of my garden where my beautiful white hellebore plants are taking over from the snowdrops, crocuses and early daffodils only to give way to wild hyacinths, bluebells and fritillaries. I then found myself thinking about spring foraging in the countryside. Walking miles with or without a dog is good for our physical and mental health but we have been doing it for some 12 months; why not add another dimension to our walks with eyes fixed on the ground to search for nature's food gifts?

I was a member of the CPRE\* many moons ago and I remember one of their statements which goes as follows:

“Foraging, after all, is about more than just trying to find a bit of free food. It’s about making a connection to the wild world, reminding us that all foods begin with growing things, nurtured by soil, sunlight and water.”

The Woodland Trust publishes a foraging calendar as well as recipes to put to good use the wild food we collect. Let us explore what nature has to offer in the Spring:

**Chickweed** (*Stellaria media*) is an overlooked and underrated weed with cleansing and healing properties and is packed full of vitamins and minerals; its tender leaves can go in salads with lemon and olive oil dressing, be blended into homemade pesto, or used to liven up fish or chicken. The tiny white, edible flowers make a pretty salad garnish.

**Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*) - all parts of this slightly bitter plant are edible, both raw and cooked. Add young leaves to salads, sandwiches or pies. Flowers can be used in many dishes from risotto to omelettes, for decoration and to make beer and wine. Unopened buds can be marinated and used like capers. Roots can also be thrown into stir-fries or added to vegetable dishes, or try making dandelion coffee by drying then grinding them.

**Goosegrass** or cleavers (*Galium aparine*) - if you’re eating this as a vegetable just use the fresh looking tops when the plant is very young before the seeds appear in summer. As the plant matures it becomes fibrous and bitter. Cook it as a green vegetable or add to soups, stews and pies. You can also eat the seeds. Wait until they’ve hardened, then roast and grind to use as a coffee substitute.

**Gorse** (*Ulex europaeus*) - take care when picking the flowers because it has prickly spine-like leaves. They are delicious eaten raw in salads or steeped in fruit tea. Or experiment and infuse its sweet flavour in gorse ice-cream or gorse wine.

**Hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*) - young leaves and unopened flower buds have a pleasant nutty taste. Clusters can be eaten straight from the hedgerow, or add them to green salads, potato salad or sandwiches.

**Nettles** (*Urtica dioica*) - pick the tips of the leaves – they’re tender and give the best flavour. You can use gloves to avoid being stung. The leaves have a taste somewhere between cabbage and spinach. You can use nettles in the same way as spinach or to make tea, beer or soup (try creamy nettle and potato).

The above plants are but a few and I am sure the experts among our members could add many more to the list but please, if in doubt, leave out or take advice from someone you know and can trust to identify the real thing.

Annie

\* Campaign to Protect Rural England

## LILIES

I have had some lilies in pots for many years, and have not looked after them very well apart from topping them up with new compost now and then. So they have, understandably, put on a poor show lately. Having seen Monty Don's splendid summer display of Regal Lilies on TV the other night, I was interested to read some advice on growing lilies in pots, and now is the time to start them off.

It seems lilies generally do not like alkaline soil although experts disagree on which varieties do tolerate a high pH. But they do need well-drained richly organic soil and lots of light, without competition from other plants.

If you plant the bulbs in (recycled!) black plastic pots, they can be dropped into the middle of the border when in flower, or into ornamental pots on the patio where you can enjoy their perfume.

- Add some controlled release fertiliser to the compost as lilies are greedy.
- Plant the bulbs deeply with at least 15cm of compost above.
- Feed with tomato fertiliser when they are growing strongly.
- In the following year, top-dress with fresh compost and controlled-release fertiliser.
- Watch out for red lily beetles and pinch them off.

One of our previous members, Eve, always doused the soil around her lilies with vine weevil pesticide to destroy the lily beetles' larvae, and I found that worked. Eve's lilies were as beautiful as Monty's and very fragrant!

Rosie

## **WINYARDS**

So here we are again, after two weeks of sunshine with a few days where we were lulled into thinking Spring had come, even if it was cold - we are now being beaten by more days of wind and rain which has pushed us back indoors. Let's hope it doesn't last long as I love this time of year, seeing the bulbs I optimistically planted in the autumn starting to show that the garden is coming alive. It is so uplifting to look at the lovely bright blues, purples and yellows of crocus; the sunshine yellow of daffodils and the pops of red, blue and chocolate colours of the anemones. These have all appeared after the subtle tones of the hellebores and the wonderful white swathes of snowdrops, which seem to get bigger with every year and almost instantly fill the areas that we have cleared.

We cannot believe we are at the start of our fourth year here in Hardington although the garden is telling us otherwise. When we moved in, our first project was at the front of the house as we felt it was a more manageable area. However, it still involved the removal of extremely large brambles. It is very much a spring garden as this was the time it was first planted, and this year it is already showing us that the plants have become more established and are truly settling in. This gives me hope for the areas we have started clearing and developing in the back garden.

We are creating two distinct sections behind the house: the nearest will have a more managed aspect with the lawn regularly mowed; beyond this, the area we call the paddock, will have a more wildlife-friendly feel with rough grass around the vegetable, fruit and flower beds. After clearing one corner of the paddock, Andrew experimented with sowing wildflower seeds during the autumn and, on close inspection, we can already see different seedlings popping up, so let's hope we will get a splash of colour in the summer.

At the bottom of the paddock we have, at long last, managed to remove an apple tree which had collapsed into a neighbouring ash tree last winter, but then became home to a wasps' nest which put its removal on hold. Now we are able to clear the area and add some more woodland style shrubs around the remaining trees to go along with the rhododendrons that we planted a couple of years ago.

It still surprises me how quickly a garden can change and what seems like a small insignificant plant one year - usually rescued from the tender loving care area of the garden centre or grown from a tiny seed - placed in a huge expanse of soil, can change into something beautiful the next.

Kate

## **BEST BUY GROWING BAGS**

*This year's Gardening Which? results - tested for growing cucumbers during an eight week trial.*

### **Best Buys**

- Levington Tomorite Giant Tomato Planter with Seaweed (score 94% peat content 45%) 42 litre £6.50 = 15p per litre from garden centres  
Weight of best quality cucumbers per bag – 10.9kg
- Levington Original Gro-Bag (score 87% peat content 70%) 27 litre £3 = 11p per litre from garden centres  
Weight of best quality cucumbers per bag – 10.1kg
- Miracle-Gro Performance Organics Fruit and Veg Organic Planter (score 87% peat content 60%) 30 litre £7 = 23p per litre from garden centres  
Weight of best quality cucumbers per bag – 10kg
- Melcourt SylvaGrow **Peat-free** Planter for Organic Growing (score 86%) 45 litre £7 = 16p per litre from garden centres  
Weight of best quality cucumbers per bag – 9.8kg

### **Other Bags to Consider**

- Westland New Horizon Tomato Planter (score 73%, **peat content 0%**) 40 litre bags from garden centres £6 = 15p per litre.  
Weight of best quality cucumbers per bag – 9kg
- Wilko Growbag (score 73%, peat content 50%) 33 litre £2.50 = 8p per litre.  
Weight of best quality cucumbers per bag – 9.3kg

### **Comments**

B&Q, Dalefoot and Humax Grow Bags have been re-formulated since the tests.

There were only two peat-free options available. Peat has always been used widely in the past in grow bags as it is light, making them easy to move, and holds water well. This is important as grow bags can be tricky to keep watered.

The two peat-free bags on test, however, showed they can be just as good as those with peat.

Note the different sizes of the Best Buy bags. The smallest bag produced only a slightly lower cucumber yield than the largest!

I plan to report on the best container composts in April.

Rosie

## **PICKET LANE NURSERY**

Picket Lane Nursery, Picket Lane, South Perrott has new signage. Let's support our local nursery.



## **REASONS TO KEEP OUT OF THE GARDEN – ANSWERS**

- Panthophobia – is the fear of disease. Not limited to plant disease.
- Pteridophobia – fear of ferns
- Ranidaphobia – fear of frogs
- Rupophobia – fear of dirt
- Scoleciphobia – fear of worms
- Seplophobia – fear of decaying matter. Compost heaps fit in this category.
- Selenophobia – fear of the moon
- Tonitrophobia – fear of thunder

*We are attaching news from the Gardens Group to this issue. Hope you find it useful. Mike Burks makes some interesting comments about the transition to peat-free composts.*

*Thank you to Annie and Kate for your contributions. Is there anyone else out there?! Please send items for the next newsletter by Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> to [rosemary.richards@icloud.com](mailto:rosemary.richards@icloud.com)*

**GARDENING AND LAUGHING ARE TWO OF THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE  
YOU CAN DO TO PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH AND A SENSE OF WELL-BEING**

– David Hobson

## **GOLD CLUB NEWS March 2021**



It's good news! We are able to allow clubs to go ahead with their discount shopping visits if they are happy to do so, subject to current restrictions of course. Sadly, as part of our rigorous Covid19 prevention measures we will not, for the time being, be able to include the traditional talk and tea/coffee during the visit.

Don't forget to visit our new online store within our website where you can buy plants, bulbs, seeds, seed potatoes, compost and mulch, fertiliser, pest control, gifts and gift vouchers, wood products, pots, bird care and seasonal essentials. Free local delivery and a 2 year Hardy Plant Guarantee as always....

*Anita*

### **Tales from the potting shed - by Mike Burks**

Here we are, at the time of writing, in Lockdown 3. The good news is that many have now been vaccinated and it looks like I might get mine by the end of May too!

More good news is that garden centres are classed as essential retailers and so we have been open and although very quiet from customers visiting us we have been very busy in other ways. Firstly, we have turned the centres around from how they were in December and we are all set up for the Spring. We have also been enormously busy with all of the orders for compost sent in by our Gold Club members – almost double previous years which suggests that you are all getting ready for a busy gardening year!

Thirdly, we set up a webshop to help us deal with the number of enquiries that we are likely to get if we were locked down again. The webshop is just for customers within our 25 mile radius for free delivery and whereas it doesn't yet have our full range of products it is proving very popular with those who aren't able to, or wanting to, come out at the moment.

Next January our Gold Club members will be able to order compost, seeds etc. using the agreed discount but it still will be possible using the existing paper system and a visit is always better in real life!

The drive-thru compost shops so popular last year will be back available in the next few weeks. Those of you who just want compost can drive in and use the tills outside to make a speedy and very safe visit.

One of the big themes for 2021 (and beyond) is that there is a big push to get rid of peat from composts. The reason for this is that peat bogs are not only important sites of scientific interest but that they are also enormously important for soaking up carbon. Harvesting can damage the ecosystems and release the carbon contributing to climate change. The challenge to replace peat is not straightforward and some early attempts weren't great. However, we are now stocking some 5 peat-free multi composts and a dozen other peat-free soil improvers, specialist composts and the like. All of these will be on promotional

multi buys and there will be lots of information available to help you in the transition if you haven't already made it. We have been peat free in our own nursery for some time now and so are experienced in how to use these alternative mixes.

In the garden centres to keep everyone safe we have our one-way systems in place. We learnt a lot last year and so have simplified some of these routes where possible especially at Brimsmore. These routes and the precautions with two metre spacing, the screens at the tills, the sanitising of hands and equipment kept us all safe last year so we know that they work.

Sadly, as everywhere, our restaurants are closed although The Engine Room at Poundbury and The Apple Tree at Brimsmore are doing takeaways. At each site one of the chefs has stayed on to make sure the hardworking garden centre teams are looked after at tea breaks and lunchtimes!

We don't yet know when the restaurants will be able to reopen but it certainly will be with the socially distanced table spacing as it was for the most part of 2020.

In the plant departments we are overflowing with a wonderful range of stock. The centres look very exciting and its great to see everything coming to life after what seems like a long winter. This week the young plug plants started arriving and outside there are some fabulous displays of Primroses, Hellebores, Rhododendrons and Camellias to name but a few!

You will notice some changes when you next come in; at Brimsmore the new goods-in area at the back of the centre is up and running moving lorry unloading out of the car park, the shop has moved into the greenhouse and the tills are in a new spot compared to last Spring.

At Poundbury there are some new automatic doors being installed in the next few weeks and at Castle an extension to the restaurant is being built whilst its quiet! So, we haven't been hibernating during the wet and the cold!

And last but not least it will be Poundbury's 15th birthday this Spring! Where did that time go?

We will be celebrating with lots of projects out in the community so keep an eye out for that in the coming weeks.

We could all do with a bit of a celebration couldn't we!

*Mike*