

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Summer 2001

Autumn Show

You may have noticed that our Autumn Show is earlier this year. The date for the show is **Saturday 8th September 2001**. As usual there are 45 classes with sections for flowers and foliage plants, vegetables, fruit, flower arrangements and prepared foods. Take a close look at the plants mentioned in the show Schedule and carefully nurture any that you have that fit the classes. The rules for our shows are listed in the Association Programme and Schedules booklet. Call and tell Jackie by 9pm on Thursday 6th September, which classes you will be entering. **Note: No late entries will be allowed.** Come along to the village hall and stage your exhibits between 10 am and 12.45 pm on Saturday (or Friday evening between 9 and 9:30 pm if you won't be around on Saturday). Make sure your exhibits and staging correspond exactly with the wording in the schedule. If you have surplus plants or tools, please bring them for sale on the plant stall and, if you are doing some baking, please make an extra cake for sale in the tea room.

Recent Events

May Meeting

Mrs Bryant made a welcome return after 12 years and talked about 'Gardening in Tubs and Containers'. Her illustrated talk highlighted some unusual containers and gave us plenty of ideas of the types of plants that grow well in containers. She offered many tips on getting the best from plants in a confined and sometimes hostile environment.

June Meeting

Miss Jackie A'Violet who runs a nursery in Aylesford spoke to us about her passion, 'Hardy Geraniums'. She grows 450 varieties from a list of over 800 that are registered. These plants cross-pollinate so easily that any garden with more than one plant is quite likely to produce a new variety. Geraniums have been found in most countries from the hottest to the coldest. They were mentioned as early as the 1st century AD and used by 13th century monks to treat gout. Jackie also grows other hardy perennials such as buddleia in her 'field'.

July Meeting

Our Summer Social at the garden of Julie and Eric Goodwin in Shorne was blessed with fine weather. About half the 30 acres are essentially managed parkland with flowerbeds and shrubs, the rest agricultural. A big 'thank you' to Bill & Vera and Elizabeth & Val for the fine array of refreshments that were served at the summerhouse near the 300 square metre pool. We raised £88 for the Kent Air Ambulance.



Forthcoming Events

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|-----------------------------|--|---------------|
| 8 th September | AUTUMN SHOW | |
| 10 th September. | Herbs for Health | Mr B. Bossom |
| 8 th October | Gardening in Miniature with Sinks and troughs | Mr N. Gossune |
| 2 nd November | Growing Vegetables from Scratch | Mr D. Miller |

Autumn Show

Let's make this the best show ever and pack the hall with the finest exhibits that we can produce. Enter as many classes as you can and help to make the show into a real competition. Don't let the 'old hands' win a class by default because they made the only entry. Your entry might be just that bit better on the day.

Tips: All classes require you to select for the best quality, but for classes that require multiple items (e.g., fuchsia florets, potatoes), you need also to choose them for uniformity. So try to find those of the same size, colour and shape. In the case of that jar of jam, the judge last year commented that the jars should have wax disks and new lids (plain paper ones are perfectly satisfactory).

People and Pollution

Everything that we do impacts upon nature. As part of the natural world we are entitled to make our (modest) impact. However, when we take more than our share or attempt to control or improve upon nature, things always seem to go wrong.

In the garden we use magical pesticides that eventually poison the soil or waterways. In the fields we use monoculture and harvest so efficiently that wildlife starves. We control our own diseases, then suddenly find that there are some particularly nasty bugs that can beat us at our little game.

We use mowers and cultivators to mould our own patches, but these machines pollute with fumes and noise. They also cause pollution on a much wider scale because their manufacture involves dirty smelting processes and energy derived from coal and oil; then, of course, there is the problem of their disposal when they are worn out.

Pollution has been a nuisance ever since people gathered into hamlets, towns and cities, but until a hundred years or so ago it was mostly a local problem. Now it is worldwide. Moreover it is set to get many times worse as industrialisation spreads and the poorer people in the world aspire to much higher standards of living. The prospect is even worse when increases in population are taken into account. Standards of living might improve, but the quality of life is unlikely to do so for those other than the absolutely destitute.

Perhaps the fact that we are able to foresee where the present trends can lead us is positive, but it is so difficult to get people to do anything about it. Perhaps we can look upon even the negativism regarding environmental issues in the United States as a positive sign when people who live under the emissions of the proposed new power stations flex their political muscles and when the next accident occurs at a nuclear power station.

Historical Snippet

'Capability' Brown's mid-18th century idea of a designed landscape with fields and clumps of trees vied with the more romantic ideas of the poetic school of a pastoral idyll where classical statues, ruins, urns and temples would be found dotted about the garden. Rivers and streams were re-routed and lakes created in order to compose a picture. Formality was swept away but the trappings of the Italian style of garden were still present.

Towards the end of the 18th century Humphrey Repton designed several picturesque-style gardens in Kent, an example being Cobham Hall. According to Holinshed Cobham Hall had, in the 15th century 'one of the most notable gardens in the land, a rare garden'. Some Italian features were present before Repton arrived. An aviary was built before 1758 and the classical Mausoleum and the orangery at the end of the 18th century by James Wyatt.

Apart from the landscaped park, Repton also created an informal flower garden for Lady Darnley. This contained several Italianate features including Merlin's Grotto and an Ionic Temple with Roman altars, originally designed for Ingress Abbey was moved to Cobham in 1820. The 4th Earl of Darnley collected classical remains and neo-classical sculpture which were used throughout both the house and garden. There are also urns of cheap artificial Coade stone in the garden.

By Victorian times the pattern of garden design was again shifting from the early 19th century ideas of lawns and island flower beds of Loudon to a revival of the gothic style and a liking for fantasy. The Italian designs lent themselves to this form. Public parks were starting to become fashionable. One of the first, the Rosherville Gardens at Gravesend, was set in an old chalk quarry and had small temples and statues set into the cliff. Elizabeth Brabazon, visiting the garden in 1862, remarked that:

'The gardens as seen from a handsome balustrade near the entrance, are laid out in the old English style, with mimic temples, terraces, arches, formal walks and fountains playing into ornamental basons'

It is interesting to note that what she describes as an old English style has so many Italian elements.

Oxenhoath is a good example of the formal Italianate style, created by William Andrews Nesfield. A parterre de broderie was edged in cast stone rather than the normal low greenery. Cast stone was also used for urns and a fountain giving an Italian/French feel.

Penshurst was restored to the former Italian Renaissance style in 1850 by George Dervey who used a Badeslade print of 1719. Ornamentation was a vital ingredient of the Victorian garden and grottoes and rock gardens from artificial stone were popular.

Early 20th century garden design became more varied as people travelled more. Chinese and Japanese designs were not unusual, sometimes as small theme gardens. Sir Reginald Blomfield created a series of pleasure gardens at Godinton among which was an Italian garden. A vista led the eye through to a pool and then on to the countryside

beyond. Blomfield's designs went back to the Renaissance idea of creating a house and garden as a single entity. Elizabeth Hall suggests that the renewed interest in Italian gardens came from popular publications such as Edith Wharton's *Italian Villas and their Gardens*, published in 1904.

(From an essay by Ann Kneif)

To be concluded ...

Poetry Corner

The Gardeners' Hymn

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

But what we never mention,
Though gardeners know it's true,
Is, when He made the garden,
He made the baddies too.

All things spray- and swat- able,
Disasters great and small,
All things Paraquatable,
The Lord God made them all.

The greenfly on the roses,
The maggots in the peas,
Manure that fills our noses,
He gave us all of these.

The fungus on the goose-gogs,
The club root on the greens,
The slugs that eat the lettuce,
And chew the aubergines;

The drought that kills the fuchsias,
The frost that nips the buds,
The rain that drowns the seedlings,
The blight that hits the spuds;

The midges and mosquitos,
The nettles and the weeds,
The pigeons in the green stuff,
The sparrows on the seeds;

The fly that gets the carrots,
The wasp that eats the plums;
How black the gardener's outlook,
Though green may be his thumbs.

But still we gardeners labour,
Midst vegetables and flowers,
And pray what hits our neighbours'
Will somehow bypass ours.

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

(From the Village Magazine of St Mary Platt where acknowledgements were given to the parish magazine of St Mary's, Ellesmere, Shropshire, July 1998. Original source unknown.)