

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2004

Christmas Social Monday 13th December 2004 at 7 for 7:30pm

Tickets will be on sale for our Christmas supper until the end of November. Please make your choice of main course and dessert from the menu (next page). Again this year, in order to keep the price at £15, we ask that you bring your own 'wine'. Water and glasses will be provided. Our entertainment this year will be a talk by the actor Maurice Tripp who will be talking of his experiences working in theatre.

Christmas Menu

Starter

Pumpkin and Apple Soup
Rolls & Butter

Main Course

Roast Turkey with Chipolatas, Stuffing, Cranberry & Vegetables
or
Courgette, Tomato & Basil Tart

Dessert

Raspberry & Cinnamon Torte
or
Hazelnut and Coffee Meringue with Chocolate & Brandy Sauce
or
Red Fruit Jellies
or
Cheese Board

Tea/Coffee & Mints

Recent Events

9th August

Culinary Herbs

Mrs Jean Bowles

Mrs Bowles explained that herbs were first recorded in Babylon and ancient Egypt. The Queen of Sheba brought herbs and spices as gifts for King Solomon. The Greeks continued their use and documentation. Marco Polo travelled east to find new supplies. Following the historical introduction she described the culinary use of some 20 common herbs.

13th September

Trees and Shrubs

Mr David Butt

Mr Butt, an RHS speaker, treated us to a clear and instructive talk, demonstrating methods of propagation with material that he brought with him, explaining how and when the various procedures should be carried out. He was besieged by members during a long tea break and afterwards continued answering questions more formally to those present.

11th October

The Small Greenhouse

Mr Hilary Newman

Hilary Newman made a welcome return and this time to speak about 'The Small Greenhouse'. He showed slides of various types of greenhouses and discussed pests and their remedies with us.

Autumn Show 2004

A consequence of less-favourable weather combined with some regular contributors being unavailable was that fewer entries were on display. The Decorative Foliage and/or Berries class was very well supported once again, but it was disappointing to find only one entry in class 10 and nobody entering a novice flower arrangement. We need more entries for the show to remain successful and attractive to the public who were noticeably absent at this show.

Barbara Macknish won the Stevens Cup (best exhibit in the Floral Section).

Tony Thomas won the Harvel Floral Bowl (best bloom in the Rose class).

Douglas Nicholson won the Garden News Shield (most points in the vegetable classes 18-31).

Douglas also took the Top Tray award and the National Vegetable Society Medal (most meritorious exhibit in the vegetable classes).

Winifred Hughes won the Hill Cup (best exhibit in the Floral Art classes).

Claire Williams won the Coronation Cup (most points in the Domestic classes).

Barbara Macknish won the Championship Cup (most points in the non-domestic classes in both shows).

Claire Williams won the Townsend Vase (most points in the domestic classes in both shows).

The Everard Bowl is awarded to the new exhibitor accumulating most points in both shows. Sadly, this year there were no new exhibitors to both shows, so the trophy is sitting in a box in my spare room!

I'd like to thank Vera for running the raffle and providing a welcoming face at the door. Thanks also go to those working in the kitchen, supplying refreshments to our members and visitors all afternoon, and to those who made the cakes, which didn't disappoint. (Jayne Macknish)

Forthcoming Events

13th December 2004 Christmas Supper

10th January 2005 AGM

Ann Kneif will give a talk on the "Italian Influence on Gardens in Kent", a subject which formed part of her studies at the Open University. Just as we carry ideas back from our visits to gardens here and abroad, rich people who went on grand tours when travel was more leisurely, more difficult and sometimes hazardous were inspired to emulate features they had seen abroad.

This year our reduced committee has worked very hard to organise our regular club meetings, the Spring and Autumn Shows and the Christmas social. We have also organised the programme for 2005, but we need more people to serve on the committee to help in any way. We urge members to consider joining the committee. We meet on the first Tuesday every month except for January and August, usually for about one and half hours. We fully understand that it is not possible for every committee member to attend every committee meeting as we all have other commitments, but the more people we have, the less each has to do. However, it is vital we have a new treasurer for next year so please, if there is anyone willing and able to take this office, please speak to any committee member. You will be given help and assistance at the meetings and when you require it.

14th February 2005 Vegetable Growing

Mr R.H.Bailey

Historical Snippet

Rudbeckia

Common Names : Coneflower, black-eyed Susan.
Family : Compositae.

The best known rudbeckia, a native of North America, is affectionately known as “black-eyed Susan,” who figures in many ballads and songs. In the “Ballad of Black-Eyed Susan” by John Gay, she goes aboard a ship to ask the “jovial sailors” where her sweet William has gone. The plants descriptive name *hirta* (Latin for “hairy”), refers to its hairy stem.

Linnaeus called the coneflower *Rudbeckia* after Olof Rudbeck the Younger, who taught at Uppsala University and whose father had founded its botanical garden. In 1730 he offered Linnaeus a job tutoring his three youngest children.

Both Rudbeck and his father were leading scientists and botanists. Together they compiled a volume, called *Campus Elysii*, of all plants known at the time, illustrated with thousands of woodcuts. It was lost in a fire that destroyed much of the town of Uppsala in 1702. Rudbeck the Younger, still energetic although in his sixties, was working on a giant thesaurus of European and Asiatic languages when he met Linnaeus.

Linnaeus had just written a paper introducing his revolutionary theory on the sexuality of plants. His system had the beauty of simplicity. By counting male organs (stamen) and female organs (pistils), anyone who could count could sort plants into one of twenty-three classes. It became the most widely used system of classification until the early nineteenth century. Of course its blatant sexuality caused its own problems. Linnaeus referred the stamens as “husbands” and the pistils as “wives”,

and the flower itself became the “marriage bed”. Teaching botany had to be X rated, and by 1808 the bishop of Carlisle wrote despairingly that “nothing could equal the gross prurience of Linnaeus’s mind” (see “Love-in-a-Mist”).

Linnaeus had been so poor he used to block the holes in his shoes with paper and he was frequently short of food. But in Rudbeck’s house, his days of poverty were over. He named the coneflower after his patron, saying, “So long as the earth shall survive and as each spring shall see it covered with flowers, the Rudbeckia will preserve your glorious name”. He added that he had chosen a noble, tall plant that flowered freely and that “its rayed flowers will bear witness that you shone amongst savants like the sun among the stars”.

There is another floral black-eyed Susan, the greenhouse vine *Thunbergia alata*, which was introduced from South Africa in 1772 by Thunberg (see “Japonica”) and is often grown in America as a summer annual. It was named by Verduyn den Boer, who said, “As long as in our Paradise of flowers there wanders a single botanist, so long will the name of Thunberg be held in honoured remembrance”.

Mostly neither botanist is remembered, and those black eyes of Susan have taken over. Even if we use their botanical names, we often do not remember whom they represent, But Rudbeck, who enjoyed three wives and fathered twenty-four children, seems, like Linnaeus, to have been no prude – and he is well commemorated by saucy Susan’s flower.

(Adapted from *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names* by Diana Wells)

Did you know?

Allotment sizes are measured in rods, an old Anglo-Saxon unit, so-called because it was the length of the rod used to control a team of eight oxen.

A rod is 5.5 yards (5.03 metres)

A chain = 22 yards = 4 rods = 20.12 metres and is the length of a cricket wicket.

A furlong = ten chains = 40 rods.

A mile = eight furlongs.

An acre is the area of land that could be ploughed in a day, being a furrow long (furlong) and a chain wide or 160 square rods.

Allotment sizes are usually five or ten rods. A ten rod allotment is ten square rods in area, $10 \times 5.5 \times 5.5 = 302.5$ sq yd (253 sq m).

In metric terms, a ten rod allotment is one fortieth of a hectare. In imperial units it is one sixteenth of an acre.