

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Winter 2004

Spring Show Saturday, 20th March 2004

It is time to make sure all your exhibits are going to look their best by the time of the show. Remember the judges look for quality and uniformity, so take care of any plants that show promise. Our Show Secretary, Jayne Macknish asks that you make sure you let her know what you will be entering by 9 pm on Thursday 18th March. The fee is 10p for each entry. Exhibits may be staged on the Friday evening between 9 and 9:30 pm and between 10 am and 12:45 pm on the day of the show. Admission is free, doors open at 3pm and prize giving is at 4:15pm.

NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED

If you enter something in the show, please help clear up afterwards and make sure to take your own entries home. Buckets and black sacks will be provided to help with the operation. Please do not expect others to clear up for you.

Forthcoming Meetings & Events

March 8th Practical Propagation for Small Gardens – Mrs J Talboys

March 28th Stall at Village Hall Indoor Boot Fair

Members are welcome to bring along anything they no longer need between 9.00 & 10.00 am. The fair will finish at 2.00 pm and any unsold items will have to be collected. *Please ensure all items are individually priced and indicate whether we can drop the price to sell towards the end of the day.* All proceeds will go to Club funds apart from the hire of the table which will go to the Village Hall Management.

April 19th Gravesend's Forgotten Canal – Mr B Macknish

May 10th Growing Flowers for Drying – Mrs C Alexander

July 13th Proposed Visit to Pashley Manor Gardens

Pashley Manor Gardens are located in Ticehurst, East Sussex. They surround a Grade I listed timber-framed house, dating from 1550. The house is not open to the public. Many eras of English history are reflected here, typifying the tradition of the English Country House and its garden. For further details see page 4.

Recent Meetings

December 8th Christmas Supper

Once again members and their friends enjoyed an excellent meal followed by some lively entertainment from a Victorian Christmas as presented by Marie Sumner.



January 12th

Prior to the serious business of the evening, Ann Knief gave an illustrated talk about Leeds Castle where she works as a guide. After a short refreshment break the AGM was held.

February 9th

Dusty Miller took the 'romance' out of organic vegetable growing by immediately pointing out that a pure organic method was almost impossible to achieve. Bees visiting neighbouring non-organic pastures and polluted rain are just two examples of how difficult it is to exercise control over our crops. He also reminded us that, with the exception of man-made radioactive concoctions, all chemicals are actually produced from elements *naturally* occurring on planet Earth.

Dusty shared a plethora of information and presented many tips on how to grow vegetables as organically as possible. He covered basic principles such as feeding, composting and crop rotation along with his homespun remedies for treating mildew and the solution to the slug problem. A very interesting and amusing talk which continued after the tea break and prompted many interesting questions which Dusty answered in his inimitable way.

Jayne Macknish

Historical Snippet

NASTURTIIUM

BOTANICAL NAME: *Trapaecolum*.

FAMILY: Tropaeolaceae.

Monet's famous garden at Giverny relied heavily on nasturtiums. They fitted the impressionist style of shimmering blurred colors, and they spilled over pathways like exuberant brush strokes. Monet was a contemporary of Gertrude Jekyll, and his garden, like hers, was revolutionary – a freely painted garden in an era of formal bedding. But as well as being informal and beautiful, nasturtiums are valuable in the garden for filling in space with a minimum of effort and expense. As early as 1592 John Gerard observed that “one plant doth occupie a great circuit of ground”.

Nasturtiums originated exclusively in South America, and were first described by the Spanish physician and plant collector Nicolas Monardes in *Joyfull News out of the Newe Founde Worlde* (1569). In the middle of every nasturtium petal, he noted, was a spot like “a droppe of bloode, so redde and so firmly kindled in couller, that it cannot bee more”. But when most plants then were grown for usefulness rather than beauty, he said of the nasturtium, “I sowed a seede which thei brought me from Peru, more to see his fairnesse than for any Medicinall virtues that it hath.” One can picture him at his desk with a nasturtium in front of him, gazing into the flower, careful not to miss the tiniest beautiful detail for his readers.

The name comes from the Latin *nasus*, “nose”, and *tortus*, “twisted”, because their pungent smell makes the nose wrinkle or twist. The botanical name is from the Greek *tropaion*, “a trophy”, referring to the shield-like shape of the leaves. In ancient Greece,

the shields and helmets of defeated enemies were fixed onto tree trunks. Linnaeus saw the plant twining up a post and thought the leaves looked like hanging shields and the flowers like helmets.

Monardes' nasturtiums were *Trapaecolum minus*, smaller than the *Trapaecolum majus*, which came to Europe later, in 1648, and was the ancestor of our garden nasturtiums. Other nasturtiums include the Canary creeper, which is quite often grown in modern gardens as a summer vine, and a tuberous variety in Peru, used for food. Our garden nasturtiums are eaten too, and sometimes the seeds are pickled.

Thomas Jefferson planted nasturtiums every year. A letter from him to Bernard Peyton, not long before he died, said, “I missed raising *Nasturtium* seed last year and it is not to be had in this neighbourhood. Can you furnish it?” He wanted enough seeds for a bed of nasturtiums ten by nineteen yards!

In the world exhibition in Paris in 1878, there were thirty varieties of nasturtium. They are so easy to grow that these days professional horticulturists rather tend to ignore them. Of course there is not much point in their promoting them: a child can throw seed in the ground and they will come up and cover the least fertile spaces with gorgeous shields and helmets. But their “fairnesse” is still irresistible, and no summer garden should ever be without them.

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

Here is a way to make use of hanging baskets in winter – to make a bird table. They stop large birds and squirrels from getting at the food and the plastic covering keeps it dry.



Visit to Pashley Manor Gardens - Tuesday 13th July

The Gardens offer a sumptuous blend of romantic landscaping, imaginative plantings and fine old trees, fountains, springs and large ponds. This is a quintessentially English Garden of a very individual character with exceptional views to the surrounding fields.

Delicious lunches and teas are available on the Terrace Café. Picnics may be taken on the tables and benches in the Car Park field, with a marvelous view of the front facade of the House and surrounding hills. In the Garden Room Café there is an exhibition of Botanical drawings and paintings by leading artists. There are often sculptures exhibited in the grounds. All these works are for sale! There is a gift shop and also plants for sale.

Disabled visitors are made most welcome. However, wheelchairs can only be negotiated around some parts of the garden with difficulty. There is a loan wheelchair which can be pre-booked and a special toilet facility.

Please phone Vera Bingham if you would like more information. Pick up points will be confirmed nearer the time.

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Visit to Hatfield House & Flower Festival – Sunday 13th June 2004

Hatfield House was built by Robert Cecil 1st Earl of Salisbury and Chief Minister to King James I in 1611. It stands within its own Great Park and is currently home to the 7th Marquess of Salisbury.

The organic gardens date from the early 17th Century when John Tradescant the Elder was employed to plant and lay them out. Tradescant went to Europe where he found and brought back trees, bulbs, plants and fruit trees, which had never previously been grown in England. These beautifully designed gardens included orchards, elaborate fountains, scented plants, water parterres, terraces, herb gardens and a foot maze. The present Marchioness continues to maintain the gardens in a style that reflects their Jacobean history

The 1000 acres (404 hectares) of parkland immediately surrounding the house is crossed by marked Nature Trails and three (from 30 to 90 minutes walk) are described in detail by a leaflet.

At the time of our planned visit there a Flower Festival and Floral Art Competition is being staged in the Old Riding School.

The National Collection of Model Soldiers is on display at no extra charge.

Weather permitting a brass band will be playing under the chestnut tree in the West Garden.

As well as the self-service licensed restaurant in the Palace Yard, luncheons will also be served in the Old Palace, where Elizabeth 1st held her first Council of State when she was proclaimed Queen in November 1558. Picnics are welcome in the park though not in the gardens.

The coach, leaving at about 9:30am, will pickup from several stops through the village. The total cost for the trip, including the coach, will depend on the number traveling but will be no more than £15.50. For more information contact Jackie Fullalove.