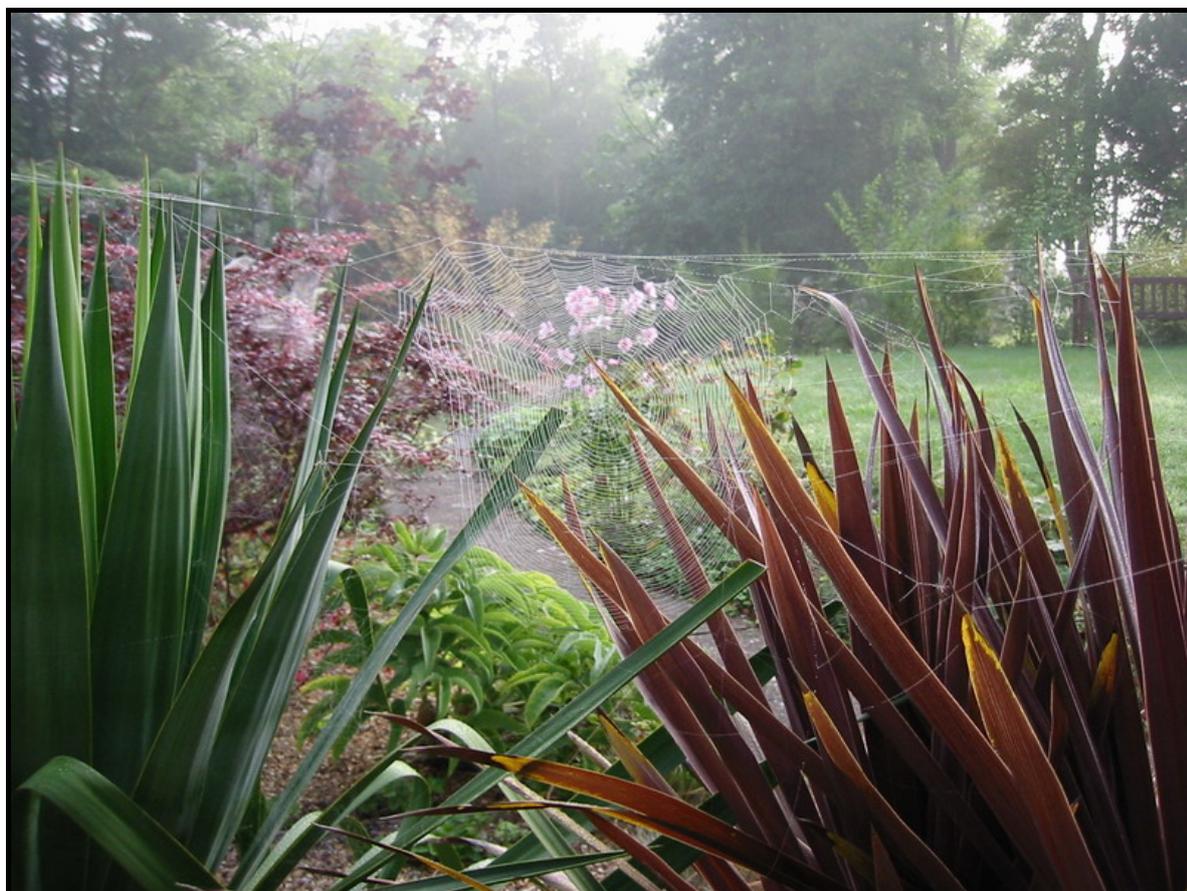


MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2005

Christmas Social Monday 12th December 2005 at 7 for 7:30pm

Tickets priced at £16 each 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 on the next page. Again this year we ask that you bring you own 'wine' in order to keep the price down. Water and glasses will be provided. Our entertainment this year will be a talk on 'Mechanical Music since 1700' by Paul Bellamy.

Christmas Menu

Starter

Watercress Soup
Roll & Butter

Main Course

Roast Turkey with traditional trimmings & seasonal vegetables
or
Aubergine & Ricotta Rolls on a Tomato & Basil Sauce

Dessert

Raspberry Sherbert
or
Strawberry & Cinnamon Torte
or
Cornish Clotted Cream Cheesecake with Cherries
or
Cheese & Biscuits

Coffee & Petit Fours

Recent Events

August 8th

Ponds & Water Gardens

Mrs Janet Bryant

Having spent many years lecturing on ponds and water gardens, Mrs Bryant's talk was full of sensible advice much of which she had learnt by trial and error when she created her first pond. Site a new pond where it receives about half a day's sunshine and avoid planting near trees. Aim to have the pond surface approximately 1/3 covered with floating aquatic plants. When planting it is important to use nutrient poor soil but it is not necessary to use aquatic compost. A plastic bottle of water will keep a pond from freezing solid.

September 12th

Hints for Competition Cooking Mrs Geraldine Sampson

Mrs Sampson gave an enthralling talk including 'live' exhibits for the audience to taste and test. The emphasis was on WI standards which are more specific than those used by our regular judge, but the advice given will undoubtedly improve the chances of success. A decorated cake has icing just on the top. A gateau has icing around the sides in addition. Did you know that biscuits are cut with a wavy or fluted cutter and scones with a plain one? Sausage rolls made with shortcrust pastry have their seam underneath and those made with puff or flaky pastry have their seams on the side. Bread should be made the day before the show, so that it cuts more easily for the judge and a 1lb loaf is made from 1lb of dough not 1lb of flour. Adding a pinch of salt to egg makes for a glossy glaze.

September 17th**Autumn Show**

We had a beautiful warm and sunny day for the show and the hall was full of the most amazing colour. There were 201 entries to the show (190 in last year's Autumn Show) from 15 entrants (16 last year). All classes had entries and all entrants won a prize!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome two new exhibitors, Di and Chris Spree. They both made their mark in the Autumn Show. It is lovely to see roses back on the show bench and some more competition in the vegetable classes.

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Townsend Vase | Anne Nicholson |
| Championship Cup | Barbara Macknish |
| Hill Cup | Elizabeth Thomas |
| Coronation Cup | Claire Williams |
| Stevens Cup | Elizabeth Thomas |
| Harvel Floral Bowl | Di Spree |
| Garden News Shield | Douglas Nicholson |
| Garden News Top Tray Gold Award | Chris Spree |
| National Vegetable Society Medal | Chris Spree |
| Everard Bowl | Chris Spree |

Thanks go to everyone who helped set up and dismantle the show, those who baked wonderful cakes to sell and who ran the refreshments and to Vera for running the raffle.

The show dates for next year are set as 25th March and 16th September. The bulbs for the Spring Show are Class 1: Hyacinth: China Pink and Class 2: Daffodil: St Patricks Day. Exhibitors please note that the flower classes in the Spring Show have been renumbered to correct the point distribution for the Hasler Vase and the Harvel Spring Challenge Awards. **Jayne Macknish (Show Secretary)**

September 29th**Visit to Highgrove House gardens**

On a dry, sunny day the 25 lucky members passed through the security checks and were admitted to the gardens of Highgrove. Sadly we had to leave cameras on the coach as no photography was allowed during the visit. We disembarked just outside the Orchard Room built to provide a site for various functions including the cup of tea we enjoyed after the tour. Once handed over to our guide we were led off into the gardens. The Prince is very involved in the garden and enjoys spending as much time there as his duties allow. Highgrove houses the national collection of beech and hostas. There are 10 full-time gardeners and many part timers. All of the guides and staff we saw were volunteers. Our guide does one tour a week. Nice job if you can get it! Ask anybody who went and they will tell you what a marvellous experience the visit was. Well worth the long coach trip.

October 10th**The Royal Palaces Gardens****Mr James Buttress**

Mr Buttress spent 25 years working in the Royal parks of London only retiring when the service was privatised. The displays are planned 3 years in advance and the beds change shape every year. Some 2-3 million bedding plants are used annually and some of the plants are treated with a growth retardant. All waste material is shredded and composted for re-use. Every year the parks provide a venue for some large events and these involve careful planning and nowadays significant safety considerations. A booklet of events is produced and it is also possible to join conducted tours of some of the gardens.

Forthcoming Events

12th December 2005 Christmas Supper

9th January 2006 AGM

13th February 2006 Vegetable Growing Mr R.H.Bailey

Cobham Gardeners Society

November 9th AGM commencing at 8pm in the Meadow Rooms.

December 7th Christmas Party at the Meadow Rooms

February 8th The society is delighted to welcome internationally renowned vegetable grower Medwyn Williams.

The meeting starts at 8pm in the Meadow Rooms. There is no charge for members but visitors will be charged £2 to help offset the cost.

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 Elysi*, 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)