

# MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Beth Chatto Garden - Photo : Jo Latimer

## Summer 2006

### Autumn Show September 16<sup>th</sup> 2006

Calling all members to enter. If you have never exhibited before, just have a go. Make sure you follow precisely the schedule on pages 12-13 of the 2006 Programme. All entry details should be given to our Show Secretary Barbara Macknish between 6 and 9pm on Thursday September 14<sup>th</sup>. The fee is 10p for each entry. Exhibits may be staged on the Friday evening between 9 and 9:30pm and between 10am and 12:45pm on the day of the show. The doors open at 3pm and admission to the show is free. Take the opportunity to buy plants, raffle tickets, tea and a slice of cake before the prize giving at 4:15pm.

NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED

*If you enter something in the show, please help clear up afterwards and be 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.*

## Hints based on the judge's comments from the 2005 Autumn Show

- For extra points, ensure that the back of the plant looks as good as the front and the plant is as symmetrical as possible.
- In Section 1 plants must not be displayed in decorative pots as this gives an unfair advantage and the entry may be disqualified.
- Ensure your plant pot is the correct size as if it is not your entry will be disqualified.
- The judge commented on the quality of the fuchsia florets and how difficult they were to judge. His decision was based on uniform colour, most symmetrical centres and good styling.
- Class 13 – Vase of garden flowers is judged on the quality of the flowers as well as the skill required to grow them.
- Ensure you have the correct number of items as per the schedule as too few or too many will lead to disqualification.

## Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

September 11 <sup>th</sup>	Protecting Garden Wildlife - Simon Crosland from Growing Home
September 13 <sup>th</sup>	Visit to Lullingstone Castle and the World Garden See the still evolving World Garden as featured in the recent BBC2 series. We meet there at 6:30pm and will tour the garden with Tom Hart Dyke before his father, Guy, will show us around the house. The cost is £6 and if you would like to come but don't have transport please let us know in advance and we will try to accommodate you. For more information contact Kathy McNicol or Jo Latimer.
September 16 <sup>th</sup>	Autumn Show as detailed above.
October 9 <sup>th</sup>	Irises the Year Round – B. Baughan
November 13 <sup>th</sup>	First 10 Years Gardening at Owletts and Onion Growing Tips - Chris Spree
December 11 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Supper

## Forthcoming Events at Cobham Gardeners Society

September 9 <sup>th</sup>	Autumn Show at the Meadow Rooms in Cobham. Starts at 3:15pm and admission is free.
October 11 <sup>th</sup>	'Italy from seed to plate' – Paolo Arrigo of Franchi Seeds
October 14 <sup>th</sup>	Autumn Plant Sale at 'Rozel', Round St, Cobham
November 8 <sup>th</sup>	AGM and presentation of trophies
December 6 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Party

## Recent Events

May 8<sup>th</sup>

Garden Design

Ken Akers

Using slides from his gardens Mr Akers showed how a few simple tricks can make all the difference to how a garden is perceived. For example using smaller plants closer to the house can make the garden look larger than it really is. In some situations it is also possible to 'borrow' landscape from the surrounding area. He also stressed the importance of noting the conditions and planting accordingly.

June 12<sup>th</sup>

Summer Social

Our summer social began with members arranging their exhibits for the three classes. This was followed by a quiz before we were able to enjoy the refreshments provided. During the break those present voted for their favourite entries and the winners were as follows:

1. A fragrant rose
2. A plant *grown* in an unusual container
3. A vase of garden flowers

Elizabeth Thomas  
Maureen Parnell  
Winifred Hughes

June 24<sup>th</sup>

Nurstead Fete

The plant stall and tombola raised £288 for our funds. This was a magnificent effort and the committee would like to thank all those who donated prizes, plants and their time to make this a success. Particular thanks to Jennifer Ward who worked so hard in organising this event not only on the day but also during the months and weeks prior to the fete.

July 12<sup>th</sup>

Visit to Yalding Organic Gardens

On a beautiful summer evening, members and their guests were given a guided tour around the gardens before enjoying a generous ploughman's supper in the restaurant.



Yalding Organic Gardens - Photos : Jo Latimer

## Historical Snippet

Dahlia

Botanical name : *Dahlia*.

Family : *Compositae*.

Dahlias are called after Dr. Anders Dahl, a Swedish botanist. Until recently they were also called "georginas", after the botanist Johann Georgi of Petersburg. The name is still used in Eastern Europe.

The history of their introduction is confused as well. They originated in Mexico and were grown by the Aztecs, who named them "*cocoxochitl*". Spanish invaders sent them home to the old world, but dahlias did not, like some floral imports, take European gardeners by storm.

One story recounts that dahlia tubers were stolen from the royal gardens in Madrid and taken to the Jardin du Roi in Paris. Another nice story says that they were imported directly to France by Monsieur Menoville, who had been sent to Mexico by the French government to smuggle out cochineal insects, (a precious source of red dye, protected by the Spanish). Menoville reputedly sent the tubers home to Paris as food for the insects on the journey. The cochineal insects died, but the tubers were then sent on to the Jardin du Roi, whose curator, Andre Thouin, saw the dahlia as a possible edible substitute for the potato. Although it is not the proper food for the cochineal insect, the dahlia is said to be edible and the Aztecs had indeed used it for food. One Victorian described dahlias as having a "repulsive, nauseous peppery taste which inspires equal disgust to man and beast".

After Thouin's brief interest in the dahlia as a food source, the plant seems to have disappeared until several decades later. There had been no place for them either in the French formal gardens or the great English landscaped estates of the eighteenth century. But in the early nineteenth century seeds were sent to Berlin, where they were named for the botanist Johann Georgi; they were also sent by Lady Bute, wife of the British ambassador in Spain, to England, where they were named after Dahl, a physician and pupil of Linnaeus. When they returned to the New World, they were known as "Mexican georginas".

The Empress Josephine uprooted her precious dahlia cultivars after some were stolen from Malmaison by a lady-in-waiting.

Soon dahlias became immensely popular. In 1826 a prize of one thousand pounds was offered for a blue dahlia, and one dahlia tuber was reputedly exchanged for a diamond. Victorians enjoyed a showy lack of discretion in their material surroundings and the contemporary style of gardening now fitted dahlias admirably. They now could connect the fashionable new shrubberies with the formal beds of flowers raised in hothouses and "bedded out". Perhaps this flamboyance was a way of compensating for discretion in so many other spheres of Victorian life.

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

## Poetry Corner

Our England is a garden, and such  
gardens are not made  
By singing 'Oh how wonderful' and sitting  
in the shade,  
While better men than we go out, and start  
their working lives  
By grubbing weeds from garden paths  
with broken dinner knives.

### Rudyard Kipling

Long live the weeds that overwhelm  
My narrow vegetable realm!  
The bitter rock, the barren soil  
That force the son of man to toil;  
All things unholy, marred by curse,  
The ugly of the universe.

### Theodore Roethke, 1908 - 1963, Long Live the Weeds

Perennials are the ones that grow like weeds,  
biennials are the ones that die this year  
instead of next  
and hardy annuals are the ones that  
never come up at all.

### Katherine Whitehorn



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