

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Photo : Jo Latimer

Winter 2008

Spring Show 29th March 2008

Calling all members to enter. If you have never exhibited before, just have a go. Yours may be the best exhibit on the day. Make sure you follow precisely the schedule in the 2008 Programme and study the hints from the judges printed below. All entry details should be given to our Show Secretary Barbara Macknish between 6 and 9pm on the Thursday prior to the show. 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 about 4:15pm.

LATE ENTRIES WILL NOT 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.

Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

February 11th Low Maintenance Gardening David Fitton

February 17th Snowdrops & Hellebores at Meadow View, Hodsoll Street

Once again Barbara Macknish will be opening her garden to the public between 11am – 3:30pm to view her magnificent display in aid of the Eleanor Foundation. There will be a plant stall and teas will also be available.

February 23rd Open Day at East Horticulture, Leydenhatch Lane, Hextable

This annual event is held between 8am and 1pm with complimentary refreshments whilst you browse around their extensive stock of plants and sundries. Take your programme along for a discount.

March 5th Gardening Quiz Night at Millbrook from 7 'till 9pm

This is in aid of the Greenfingers Charity which looks after Children's hospice gardens. They would like teams of 4 and £3 per person which includes refreshments. If you would like to take part, please speak to Hazel Borrow.

March 10th Guerrilla Gardening Richard Reynolds

March 29th SPRING SHOW

April 14th Lavender Simon Charlesworth

May 12th Aspects of Fuchsias Ron Holmes

June 9th Summer Social

June 25th Advanced Warning of our Summer Garden Visit
RHS Hyde Hall and the Beth Chatto Gardens

We will visit Hyde Hall in the morning and the Beth Chatto Gardens in the afternoon. The trip will cost no more than £13.50 for members (£14.50 for guests).

Recent Events

November 12th Regeneration of the Forests of Hong Kong & China Dr Griffiths

Dr Griffiths spoke about the work he has been involved with to reforest previously denuded woodland. He showed us about the symbiotic relationship between trees and certain fungi.

December 10th Christmas Supper

The 56 members and friends who attended enjoyed another excellent meal by Vicki Hooper and her team. After dinner Margaret Davies entertained us with a talk about 'A Way With Words'.

January 10th AGM

Prior to the serious business of the evening, Viv Sims gave an illustrated talk and explained the history of Ightham Mote. After a short refreshment break the AGM was held. The Chairman's report for 2007 is appended to this newsletter.

Plant Stall

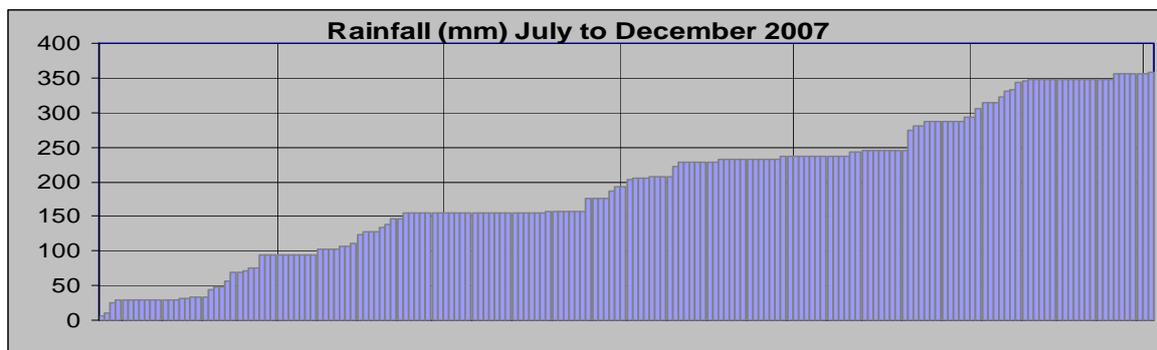
I'm sure you have seen press reports of how Garden Centre plant prices will be increasing as they pass on their increased costs to customers, so instead of buying plants there why not buy seeds and bring along your excess seedlings to sell on our plant stall. This way we can all obtain a wider variety of plants without huge expenditure.

Please ensure that they are labelled and provide the plant stall with a list of your plants showing the asking price and the quantity of each as you will receive 50% of the takings from the sale of your plants. Members may advertise other items on the notice board without charge, but if a sale is achieved a donation to the Association would be appreciated.

Members' Show

The Members' Show starts at the February meeting and details of the classes can be found with the Monthly Programme in the 2008 Schedule. The first class is the 'Selected Item' and is specified but the second item, 'Member's Choice', can be anything from the garden which is perhaps looking spectacular on the evening or is of special interest. The entries are judged by a club member and points out of 10 are awarded for each exhibit. These points are totalled at the end of the year and the entrants with the most points from both classes will each receive a cup and prize money of £2.50.

2007 Rainfall



This graph shows the cumulative rainfall from July 1st to December 31st 2007. During this time the total rainfall was 357.5mm or 14" making a total of nearly 30" (763mm) for the year. July recorded over 2½ times the average rainfall for the month, whereas the rainfall for September was about ½ of the average. During the second part of the year, temperatures were either average or below average.

2009 Programme

At present the club has no Programme Secretary to coordinate the programme for next year. Obviously it would be good if a member came forward to do this and if anybody would like to know more about what is involved please speak to a member of the committee. The process of selecting speakers is normally done by a group so you would not be left to flounder alone. It is best for all of us that we have an interesting and varied programme and to this end the committee would be interested to hear suggestions for speakers or topics that members would like covered. Again please let a committee member have your suggestions.

The Future

The committee are proposing that the nomination process for officers of the club begins in the autumn when a list will be made available for nominations/volunteers. We hope that this will make the process of electing committee members easier as discussions can take place over several months rather than on the evening of the AGM. Rest assured we do not intend making the process as complicated as the US Elections!

Historical Snippet

Poppy

Common Names: Poppy, Popple (*Old English*)

Botanical Name: Papaver.

Family: Papaveraceae

“An intensely simple, intensely floral flower”, said John Ruskin of the field poppy in *Prosperina*. “All silk and flame: a scarlet cup ... like a burning coal fallen from Heaven’s altars ... No sparing of colour anywhere – no outside coarseness – no interior secrecy”.

The botanical name is from the Latin *papaver*, possibly going back to Pap, a milky food that could have associations with the opium poppy’s milky juice. The field or corn poppy, *Papaver rhoeas*, takes its name from the Greek *rhoeas*, possibly from the root *rho*, “red”. The substance rhoeadine is found in the flowers, and when you see the intense, glittering mass of a poppy field, it is not surprising to find that the colour is from a specific chemical.

Corn poppies thrive in soil that has been freshly turned, because the seeds need light to germinate. This is the sad reason why they flourished so exceedingly well in the battlefields of France during and after the First World War. The ground had been churned and turned by guns and battles, and poppy seed, now exposed to the light, germinated by the millions. For ever after the red corn poppy was associated with war.

The dried petals of the corn poppy contain a soothing substance that the ancients used medicinally, but it is not comparable to the milky latex of the opium poppy, *Papaver somniferum*, which has been known medicinally since before we really have records. The opium poppy’s name comes from the Latin *somnus*, “sleep”. The narcotic opium is derived from this latex, which is allowed to

dry on the slashed seed pods and then scraped off; it gets its name from the Greek *opion* or *opos*, meaning “vegetable juice”.

The actual seeds of the opium poppy are not narcotic, and the dark seed of the *Papaver somniferum* are used widely in bread and cakes. It is quite legal to buy the white seeds of *Papaver somniferum* var. *hortense* in America too, and in fact many nurseries sell them, but it isn’t technically legal to grow poppies from them. The Oriental poppies, which are perennials, sound much more daring, but are in fact harmless as far as opium goes. Another garden poppy is the apricot and coral coloured Iceland poppy, or *Papaver nudicaule* from the Latin for “bare stemmed”).

Shirley poppies were bred from field poppies by the Rev. William Wilks, a vicar of Shirley, in Surrey. While admiring a patch of poppies in the field behind his house, he noticed one of them had a small band of white along the edges of its bright red petals. Every year he selected out all the flowers except his white-edged variety, which gradually changed until he had bred a rainbow of new colours on a pure white petal base.

Poppies are easy to grow but cannot be moved. The seeds have to be thrown down where they will be. Even then the dabs of impressionist brilliance they give our gardens are not always where we plan them. “The poppy is the slyest magician of the whole garden,” wrote Alice Morse Earle. “He comes and goes at will. This year a few blooms, nearly all in one corner; next year a blaze of colour banded across the middle of the garden like the broad scarf of a court chamberlain. Then a single grand blossom quite alone in the pansy bed while another pushes up between the tight close leaves of the box edging”.

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

News From Cobham Gardeners

13 th February	Gardening at Eden and how to do it at home Tickets, if still available, are £2.	Matthew Biggs
12 th March	Garden History	Rosemary Alexander
12 th April	Spring Show	Starts 3.15pm at Meadow Rooms
26 th April	Plant Sale	Owletts from 10am
14 th May	TBA	

The meetings start at 8pm in the Meadow Rooms at Cobham.

Hints and Tips for Spring Show Exhibitors

- 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 bulbs 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. Also remove any 'garden centre' labels as this gives the impression that the plant is newly purchased (see rule 2 in the programme).
- 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.

The Chairman's report for 2007 follows:

Although the membership was slightly down on 2006, I believe that the club had a successful year. I'm sure you will agree that 2007 programme proved most interesting and varied and I hope you will enjoy the meetings and other events planned for 2008.

Our 2007 AGM began with a short talk on 'Creating a Vegetable Garden from Scratch' by Barbara Macknish. This was followed by a cheese and wine buffet and finally the business of the evening.

February saw a welcome return of Fred Booth who spoke about the Wildlife of the North Downs. Another old friend, Hillary Newman told us how to garden in dry conditions in March. Problems with the hall booking due to Easter lead to the cancellation of our April meeting but Ron Holmes will come and give his talk about Fuschias this May.

Our May speaker was the ever enthusiastic Ian Currie and such is his retention of weather related statistics, I wondered whether we'd ever finish the meeting.

On 7th June we made the first of our 3 very successful trips when we visited Bardown Oast where the owners Nigel and Susan Bowie showed us around. Nigel showed us some of the livestock they have and the cottage garden whilst Susan took us around the gardens surrounding the Oast House. Fortunately the weather held so we were able to enjoy our cream tea outdoors as planned. Thank you to Elizabeth Thomas for organising the trip.

Our summer social on 11th June consisted of a small show with three classes. Those present voted for their favourite entries and well done to Sue Appleton, Val Fairweather and Ann Nicholson who were deemed to be the class winners.

Once again we had a very successful stall at the Nurstead Fete. Events like this can raise a decent sum for the club and it is vital that we continue to make the most of these opportunities as the funds raised can subsidise other activities such as outings and the Christmas supper. Thanks are due to

Connie Smith for working so hard to organise the event, to everybody who helped on the day and to all of those who donated plants and prizes for the tombola.

On a rare dry evening in July we visited Lullingstone Castle where we enjoyed a guided tour around the house with Guy Hart Dyke before being shown around the World Garden gardens by the plant crazy Tom.

At our August meeting we heard about the trials and tribulations of the Brogdale Horticultural Trust. Mike Austen, our speaker brought along samples of fruit for us to try.

In September when our speaker, Helen Yemm, failed to show up we had an informal question and answer session. After refreshments Barbara Macknish as Show Secretary gave some hints on exhibiting at our upcoming Autumn show.

For our October meeting the speaker, Paul Twyman, filled the stage area with a large selection of plant material and told us how he uses them all to best advantage.

During the following week we made an extremely successful trip to RHS Wisley where even the weather was kind to us. On the success of this trip, we have already booked an outing to RHS Hyde Hall and the Beth Chatto Gardens for June 25th 2008. Thank you to Hazel Borrow for organising both trips.

Dr Griffiths returned in November and spoke about the reforestation of Hong Kong and China with reference to the work he has been doing there and in other locations. Once again it was a very informative talk.

Our Christmas Supper was much enjoyed by those present. Once again, Vicky Hooper and her team prepared and served an excellent meal and the speaker Margaret Davies gave us food for thought with her talk 'A Way With Words'. On behalf of everybody I would like to thank Hazel Borrow for organising everything with Vicky and to Elizabeth Thomas, Val Fairweather, Jennifer Ward and Sue Collard for the striking table arrangements and of course to everyone who helped with the setting up and clearing up.

Both of our shows were well supported in spite of less than favourable weather conditions (as ever). It was particularly pleasing to see the hall and especially the tea room full of visitors. Thanks to everybody who helped in any way with the shows and particularly to Barbara Macknish and Clare Williams for their efficient organisation of both events.

I would particularly like to thank all of the committee for their support and efforts during the year. Of course there are others who have helped too: Vera Bingham who ran our raffles, to Mike Hughes who has kept us well informed with the quarterly newsletters, to Sue Appleton and Maureen Parnell for running the plant stall.

Sadly we have 3 current committee members who have for various reasons decided to step down and their presence will be sorely missed. On behalf of the association I wish to thank Elizabeth Thomas, Val Fairweather and Ann Smith for their work and will take this opportunity to offer a token of our appreciation to them.

We are all here tonight because we care about the club and its future. If the committee is not replenished on a regular basis then the club has no future. I would urge you all to seriously consider joining the committee. Please be assured that any new committee member will not be left to flounder but have the full support of the rest of the committee. We meet 10 times a year for between an hour to 1 ½ so most of the club business is carried out in around 15 hours per year. Whether or not you are on the committee I personally value your input as to how the club is run.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody for their support during 2007 and wish you all happy gardening in 2008.

Jo Latimer
Chairman.