

# MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Photo: Jo Latimer

## Winter 2009

### Spring Show 21<sup>st</sup> March 2009

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 2009 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 9<sup>th</sup>      The Vegetable Garden      Mr G. Francis

February 15<sup>th</sup>      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.

March 9<sup>th</sup>      Britain in Bloom      James Buttress

March 21<sup>st</sup>      SPRING SHOW

April 13<sup>th</sup>      BANK HOLIDAY – NO MEETING

May 6<sup>th</sup>      Coach Outing to RHS Wisley

Due to the high cost of the coach, Hazel will be collecting a non-refundable £10 at the March and April meetings. We hope that this will be the total cost of the trip. Please listen for the travel details at our meetings.

May 11<sup>th</sup>      Care of Roses      Paul Twyman

June 8<sup>th</sup>      Summer Social

You may be interested in a programme called 'A Farm for the Future' to be shown at 8pm on February 20<sup>th</sup> on BBC2. It is part of the Natural World series and covers the basics of permaculture.

## **Recent Events**

November 10<sup>th</sup>      12 Months of Colour      Julia Jarman

In spite of losing her voice, Julia made us all envious of her colourful garden. We hope to arrange a visit there.

December 8<sup>th</sup>      Christmas Supper

The 56 members and friends who attended enjoyed another excellent meal by Vicki Hooper and her team. Our entertainment entitled 'A Kent Christmas' was enjoyed by those present.

January 12<sup>th</sup>      AGM

After the serious business of the evening, we were able to look at photographs brought along by those present whilst enjoying some light refreshments. The Chairman's report for 2008 is appended to this newsletter.

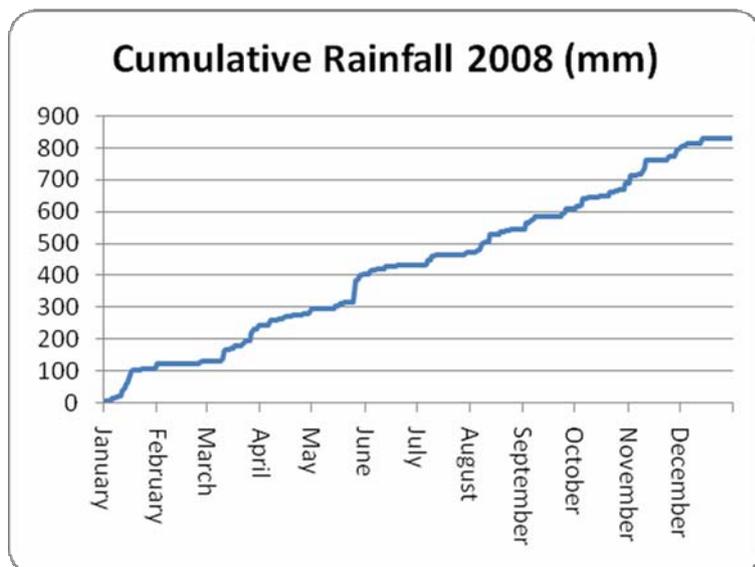
## **Plant Stall**

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 labeled 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 2009 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.



## 2008 Weather Summary (Source – The Met Office)

Rainfall was above average every month apart from February, June and December. Sunshine was above the monthly average except for August, September and November. Temperatures were above average except for October and December. Gravesend was the warmest in the country on October 12<sup>th</sup> at 22.9C but generally last October was the coolest since 2003. April was the coolest since 2001, no doubt helped by the snow on the 6<sup>th</sup>.

## 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.



Photos: Mike Hughes

## Historical Snippet

### Honeysuckle

Botanical Name: *Lonicera*  
Family: Caprifoliaceae

Adam Lonicer, (or Lonitzer), was a German physician who practiced in Frankfurt and, in 1555, published a book on natural history. A later botanist said, "His herbals though used widely and reprinted many times, had little or no influence on Linnaean and post-Linnaean taxonomy", but, in 1753, Linnaeus named the honeysuckle "*Lonicera*" after him. The bush honeysuckle, *Diervilla*, is of the same family (see "Weigela").

Wild British honeysuckle was known from earliest times as "woodbind", although other climbing plants bore the same name. Possibly Shakespeare's "woodbine" is *convolvulus* (see "Morning Glory"). Generations of children have "sucked honey" from the beautiful flowers, which John Gerard compared to the "nose of an Elephant". They are pollinated by the hawk moth, and a Viennese botanist, Kerner, once placed a hawk moth three hundred yards away from the nearest honeysuckle early in the day and marked it. When dusk fell, he watched the moth gently wave its feelers and then head straight for the honeysuckle.

Sometimes honeysuckle is trained around young straight branches, which are later cut to make walking sticks with a spiral imprint on them, but is always had to be controlled in gardens. John Parkinson said he knew the wild honeysuckle "yet doe I not bring it into my garden, but let it rest in his owne place, to serve the senses that travel by it, or have no garden." The "Northern" honeysuckle, he said, was "entertained into their gardens onely by those that are curious".

We should have been less curious when we entertained the Japanese, or Hall's, honeysuckle. It was introduced into America in 1862 by Dr George Hall, an American doctor who opened the

Hospital for Seamen in Shanghai. It was carefully sent home in a Wardian case and cosseted in a Long Island nursery, one of the treasures the Parson's Nursery officials unpacked as carefully as "an original of Raphael or Murillo", but it soon spread to cover much of the eastern seaboard and has become a terrible pest.

When cursing Hall's honeysuckle we have to remember that he also introduced the beautiful little star magnolia. Meddling with plant distribution is, as we know now, tricky. As in love affairs, it is hard to get the right balance. We introduce plants, rejoice, and coddle them, but when they prosper we call them invasive. We should have left them alone – but then we could have missed much that is beautiful as well. Japanese honeysuckle is a menace, but on the banks busy highways its scent even overwhelms the stench of exhaust.

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

### Winter Garden

"In winter's cold and sparkling snow,  
The garden in my mind does grow.  
I look outside to blinding white,  
And see my tulips blooming bright.  
And over there a sweet carnation,  
Softly scents my imagination.

On this cold and freezing day,  
The Russian sage does gently sway,  
And miniature roses perfume the air,  
I can see them blooming there.  
Though days are short, my vision's clear.  
And through the snow, the buds appear.

In my mind, clematis climbs,  
And morning glories do entwine.  
Woodland phlox and scarlet pinks,  
Replace the frost, if I just blink.  
My inner eye sees past the snow.  
And in my mind, my garden grows."  
Cheryl Magic-Lady

## News From Cobham Gardeners

11 <sup>th</sup> February	Herbaceous Perennials	Laurie Manser
11 <sup>th</sup> March	Growing Your Produce on Your Allotment	Dr Merilyn Canet
4 <sup>th</sup> April	Spring Show	Starts 3.15pm at Meadow Rooms
25 <sup>th</sup> April	Plant Sale	Owletts from 10am

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

## **The Chairman's report for 2008:**

I'm sure you will agree that 2008 programme proved most interesting and varied and I hope you are looking forward to the meetings and other events planned for 2009.

Our 2008 AGM began with a short talk on Ightham Mote by Viv Sims. This was followed by a cheese and wine buffet and finally the business of the evening.

Our February speaker, David Fitton turned up very late and in my opinion the talk was disappointing. However, a lively talk from Richard Reynolds, the Guerrilla Gardener, in March more than made up for that. In spite of the dreadful weather we had guests from as far away as Essex thanks to the publicity by Andy Garland of Radio Kent who was also present. He recorded several interviews during the evening which were subsequently aired several times.

In April our senses were tantalised by a talk on Lavenders by Simon Charlesworth of Downterry Lavender. Fuschias were the topic in May when Ron Holmes was finally able to come and give his most informative talk.

Our Summer Social in June once again consisted of a small show with three classes. Those present voted for their favourite entries and well done to Gloria Kinch, Janet Oxford and Winifred Hughes who were deemed to be the class winners.

We also had a very successful stall at the Nurstead Fete in June. 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 the Christmas supper. Thank you to everybody who helped on the day and to all of those who donated plants.

Later in June we had an excellent coach trip to RHS Hyde Hall and the Beth Chatto gardens.

It was in early July that we received the terrible news that our President Douglas Nicholson had died. I will always remember the support and encouragement he gave me after I became Chairman. In recognition of his outstanding service to the club the committee have decided to inaugurate the 'Douglas Nicholson Award' and Barbara will give more details in her report. We are also delighted that former President Bill Roberts has offered to sponsor the trophy.

On a cool evening our July meeting was held at outdoors in the garden of Owletts. Thank you to Jennifer Ward for putting together our ploughmans suppers.

In August the subject was bees when Mr March gave a very informative talk on the plight of our honey bees.

In September we had a practical talk on Alpines by Robert Wiseman.

Our old friend Laurie Manser returned in October to tell us how he grows his vegetables. Sensible, practical advice as ever.

In November, a last minute replacement speaker, Julia Jarman, made us very envious with her year round colour talk illustrated by pictures mostly taken from her garden. We hope to organise a visit to her garden this year.

Our Christmas Supper was much enjoyed by those present. For the final time, Vicky Hooper and her team prepared and served an excellent meal and the entertainment put us all into a festive mood. In the mad panic to clear the hall by 11pm, I neglected to thank Hazel Borrow for organising the evening and to Winifred Hughes (with technical assistance from Mike) for the striking table arrangements and of course to everyone who helped with the setting up and clearing up. We need to decide soon what format the December meeting will take so please pass on your thoughts to the committee.

Both of our shows were well supported in spite of less than favourable weather conditions (as ever). With several usual contributors out of action for the Autumn Show I believe we put on an incredible display. 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 Elizabeth Thomas and Val Fairweather for continuing to organise the teas.

Sadly we have one current committee member, Connie Smith, who decided to step down for health

reasons and I'm sure we'd all like to wish her a full recovery. On behalf of the association I wish to thank her for all her work, particularly for coordinating our Nurstead Fete stall and will take this opportunity to offer a token of our appreciation to her.

We are all here tonight because we care about the club and its future. The membership should not expect the current committee members to continue ad infinitum. Should we reach a point when we cannot continue, I would suggest that we consider merging with another local club. Here the obvious choice would be Istead Rise as we already have an overlap of members. I hope this does not become necessary and would urge you all seriously to consider joining the committee. We meet 10 times a year for between an hour to 1½ so most of the club business is carried out in around 15 hours per year. Please be assured that you would have the full support of the rest of the committee.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody for their support during 2008 and wish you all happy gardening in 2009.

Jo Latimer  
Chairman



Photos: Mike Hughes