

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Photo : Jo Latimer

Winter 2010

Spring Show 20th March 2010

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 2010 schedule. 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 21st 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 8 th	Growing Vegetables Organically	Vanessa Jones
March 20 th	SPRING SHOW	
April 12 th	Flowers & Gardens of Japan	Colin Jones
May 10 th	Guerrilla Gardening Update	Richard Reynolds
June 14 th	Garden Outing to Tangle Wood	

Recent Events

November 9th Compost Nick Robinson

Nick, a former head gardener at Yalding Organic gardens, gave us many useful tips on making our own compost rather than buying it in.

December 14th Christmas Supper

The 57 members and friends who attended enjoyed an excellent meal prepared by our new caterers. We were then entertained by Dawn Leech and her dancers. If anybody took any photos, the dancers would be keen to have copies.

January 11th AGM

Due to the bad weather conditions, the AGM was postponed until the February meeting. The Chairman's report for 2009 is appended to this newsletter.

Members' Show

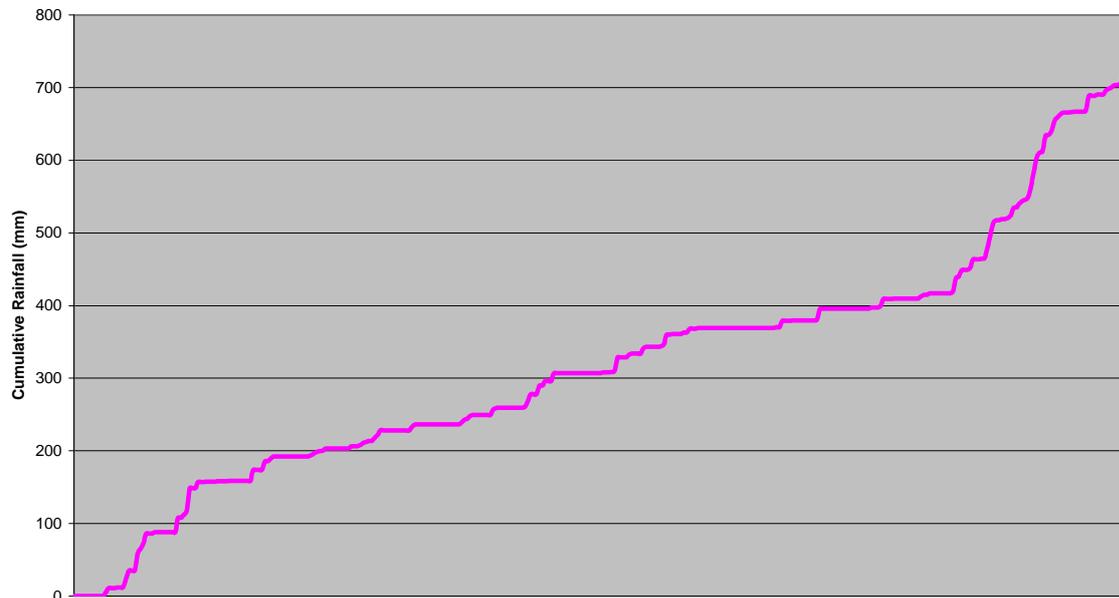
The Members' Show starts at the February meeting and details of the classes can be found with the Monthly Programme in the 2010 Schedule. The first class is the 'Selected Item' and is specified but the second item, 'Member's Choice', can be anything from the garden which is perhaps looking spectacular 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.

Plant Stall

If you have plants you wish to sell, 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. Please remember to take any unsold plants home at the end of the evening. Members may advertise other items such as garden tools on the notice board without charge, but if a sale is achieved a donation to the Association would be appreciated.

2009 Rainfall Figures

Rainfall 2009



This graph shows the cumulative rainfall for 2009. The total of 723mm was 40mm less than that recorded for 2008.

January was the coldest since 1997 with average rainfall some of which fell as snow. February was the dullest since 1993 with around average rainfall some of which was also snow. March was the driest since 2003 and recorded temperatures above average. April, May and June were drier and sunnier than normal. Gravesend recorded a maximum temperature of 21°C on 1st May whilst Wisley ended June (29th & 30th) with 31°C. July was the wettest on record although temperatures and sunshine were about average. August was unsettled with about average rain. Gravesend was the hottest in the country for two days with 28.9°C on the 5th and 30.3°C on the 19th. Temperatures were also above average for September, October, November and the first part of December. September was drier than normal and Gravesend recorded 28.7°C on 8th September and 19.6°C on 27th October. November was the wettest since 1914 but once again Gravesend recorded a nationwide maximum of 15.5°C on the 12th. After the mild start to December snow arrived on the 17th and made the month colder and wetter than average. (Source: The Met Office)

All Change

I've got to accept it I know
The cold winds are starting to blow
With a chill in the air
And the branches all bare
Any time it is going to snow.

The leaves spiralled down from the trees
In response to the stiffening breeze
The scene is bereft
With not a leaf left
We must be quite near a big freeze.

The borders are looking forlorn
Bedraggled the hoar-frosted lawn
Runner beans - not a trace
Tendrils hanging in space
In the mist that collects before dawn.

No sign now of aphid or slug
Put away the spade, trowel and trug
Redundant wheelbarrow
No prize-winning marrow
And the cat fast asleep on the rug.

As fallow lies meadow and fell
I'll sit by the fire and dwell
On the day that I'll see
A green bud on a tree
And snowdrops awake in the dell.

Brian H. Gent

YACON

Botanical name: Smallanthus sonchifolius

Family: Asteraceae

Three or four years ago, on Gardeners' World, Monty Don visited a garden where the owner was growing yacons. It was autumn and they pulled a tuber from underneath a plant and ate it raw, commenting that it tasted mildly like a pear. There was tremendous interest and all sources of the tubers were almost immediately out of stock. However, we were able to acquire two tiny plants in 2008 and they produced five tubers that were grown on in 2009.

Yacons should be kept in a frost-free environment. To keep the plants growing at a slow pace, keep them at around 55-60(F) in full light. When nights are above freezing they may be planted into the garden. The leaves are tender, so if there is a threat of frost the plants should be protected. Plant in fertile soil so that the tuberous crown is 2-4 inches below the soil surface. Plants are tolerant of light frosts, but will be killed by a freeze.

Harvest the yacons in the autumn. The plant produces two types of tuber. The large lateral tubers, which are clearly swollen roots, have no eyes for propagation and are strictly for eating. The other tubers have eyes and are located above the lateral tubers and cluster around the growing stem. The tubers with eyes should be stored in a cool but frost-free environment and are replanted in the spring.

Yacons store their energy as *inulin* and, from Wikipedia ...

Inulins are a group of naturally occurring polysaccharides (several simple sugars linked together) produced by many types of plants. They belong to a class of fibers known as fructans. Inulin is used by some plants as a

means of storing energy and is typically found in roots or rhizomes. Most plants that synthesize and store inulin do not store other materials such as starch.

Inulin is increasingly used in processed foods because it has unusually adaptable characteristics. Its flavour ranges from bland to subtly sweet (approx. 10% sweetness of sugar/sucrose). It can be used to replace sugar, fat, and flour. This is particularly advantageous because inulin contains a quarter to a third of the food energy of sugar or other carbohydrates and a ninth to a sixth of the food energy of fat. While inulin is a versatile ingredient, it also has health benefits. Inulin increases calcium absorption and possibly magnesium absorption, while promoting the growth of intestinal bacteria. Nutritionally, it is considered a form of soluble fiber and is sometimes categorized as a prebiotic. Inulin has a minimal impact on blood sugar, and—unlike fructose—is not insulemic and does not raise triglycerides, making it generally considered suitable for diabetics and potentially helpful in managing blood sugar-related illnesses. The consumption of large quantities (particularly by sensitive or unaccustomed individuals) can lead to gas and bloating, and products which contain inulin will sometimes include a warning to add it gradually to one's diet.

What we have found.

We grew two yacons in 12-inch pots. They remained in the greenhouse all summer (2009) and were well watered. Clearly they needed more room as the lateral tubers were squashed hard against the side of the pots. In fact, the tubers almost filled the pots on their own. The yield was about 2kg per pot.



Photos: Mike Hughes

The Chairman's report for 2009 follows:

May I wish you all a belated Happy New Year. I hope you are looking forward to the meetings and other events planned for 2010 but first lets take a brief look back at 2009.

We began in January with the AGM and a photographic exhibition by members. We also enjoyed a cheese and wine buffet.

In February our speaker, Mr Francis told us about growing vegetables. We learnt about the Britain in Bloom competition from judge James Buttress in March.

The date of our April meeting clashed with Easter and so we didn't meet again until May when Paul Twyman made a return visit to talk about the care of roses.

Our Summer Social in June once again consisted of a small show with three classes. Those present voted for their favourite entries and congratulations are due to Barbara Macknish, Maurice Redsell and Winifred Hughes who were deemed to be the class winners.

Also in June we also had another successful stall at the Nurstead Fete despite there being fewer visitors than in previous years. The funds raised at events like this help subsidise other activities such as the Christmas supper so it is vital that we continue to make the most of these opportunities. Thank you to everybody who helped on the day and to those who donated plants.

At our July meeting the subject was soft fruit and although the speaker was clearly knowledgeable, his presentation was not good. This was followed in August with a talk on cacti by David Godden.

In September daffodil expert Mrs Doulton inspired us to grow and show of daffodils. An excellent speaker, who we will certainly be inviting to speak again in the future.

Garden Autumn & Winter was the subject of the talk in October when Mrs Easter showed examples of plants which give colour during the coldest months of the year.

Nick Robinson was our speaker in November and told us about various ways to produce good compost at home rather than having to buy it in.

Our Christmas Supper was much enjoyed by those present. The meal prepared and served by the new caterers was excellent and this was followed by a lively dancing display by Dawn Leech and her team. (If anybody has been inspired to take up tap I'm sure Dawn would be pleased to see you). I would like to thank Hazel Borrow for organising the evening and Jo Armstrong and Gail King for the striking table arrangements and of course to everyone who helped with the clearing up.

Both of our shows were well supported and once again it was particularly pleasing to see the hall and especially the tea room full of visitors. It was a highlight for me to have Life Member, Bill Roberts presenting the prizes at the Autumn Show. Thanks 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 and Mike Hughes who has kept us well informed with the quarterly newsletters.

We have two committee members, Jennifer Ward and Ron Borrow who wish to retire from the committee and I'm sure you will join me in thanking them for their work whilst serving on the committee. It would be good to see a regular turn over of committee members in order to keep fresh ideas coming along. Joining the committee should not be seen as a life-long commitment but an opportunity to influence the running of the club in the short term. We are fortunate that most of the serving committee are willing to stand again but a few new members would be most welcome. 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 a year.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody for their support during 2009 and wish you all happy gardening in 2010.

Jo Latimer

A Look Forward to Spring:



Photos: Jo Latimer