



Photo: Jo Latimer

Spring 2011

Summer Show 11th July 2011

Our summer social event will be a small show with the winners voted for by those present. There will be a quiz and a raffle and refreshments will be provided. There is no charge to members but for a mere £2 non-members will also be welcome to come along and take part. The three classes are as follows:

1. A rose selected for fragrance
2. A flowering pot plant (pot no larger than 20cm (8"))
3. A vase of garden flowers (Association vases will be provided)

There is no need to pre-book your entries just bring them along on the evening and exhibit.

Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

May 9 th	Herbaceous Perennials	Laurie Manser
June 13 th	Garden Outing to Green Leas, Pilgrims Way, Wrotham	
July 11 th	Summer Social as detailed above	
August 8 th	What the Judge is Looking For & Staging Your Exhibits	Robert Wiseman
16 th July	Garden Safari	11am – 4pm

We are having a Garden Safari this year to boost the club funds and ask that all members support us in this endeavour. Thank you to those who have offered to open their gardens but even if you're not opening your garden, please offer assistance to those that are whether it be helping them sort out their garden before the day or to help on the day. Tickets priced £5 will be on sale from June.

Recent Events

February 14th Members Forum

This was our second member's forum where all present are encouraged to take part in a Q&A session. We had a lively discussion on wide ranging topics with many tips or remedies suggested. Details of the subjects discussed can be found on our website.

February 20th Snowdrops & Hellebores at Meadow View, Hodsall Street

Once again Barbara Macknish opened her garden to the public to view her magnificent snowdrops and hellebores and raised about £600 for the Eleanor Foundation.

March 14th Growing Hamamelis Chris Lane

Chris is owner of the Witch Hazel Nursery near Sittingbourne and holder of the National Collection of Hamamelis and he spoke about his obsession. It all began when he worked at Hadlow College and noticed a witch hazel bush which was actually in flower having survived an extreme -18°C frost. The nursery is only open to the public on a couple of days of the year but well worth a visit.

March 26th Spring Show

After another very cold winter, starting with early snow in November, it was a relief that the 2011 Spring Show was very well supported. The move to one week later seems to have worked well. We had over 200 entries from 26 competitors, including two juniors and one new member.

Judge June Wilkins remarked on the high standard of the entries. She also made some helpful comments, which we will consider when drawing up next years schedule.

Congratulations to the award winners: The Diploma for Best Bloom went to Barbara Macknish along with the Hasler Vase and The Harvel Spring Challenge. The Chairman's Cup was won by Claire Williams. Maurice Redsell won the Melliker Cup and Winifred Hughes won the Oldham Goblet. The new trophy, the Meryl Burgess Salver was won by Enid Lander.

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Thanks to all those who helped setting up and clearing away, those who were judges' stewards, those who donated lovely cakes and helped to run the tea room, and those who worked on the plant stall and the raffle. Thanks particularly to Claire for making our first show go so well, Barbara for being there when we needed to consult and most of all thank you to all the exhibitors who made the show possible.

Sharon Sperling (Show Secretary)



Photos: Jeff Latimer

April 11th The Woodland Trust – History and Aims John Harvey

The trust was set up in 1972 to protect our native woodlands. Founder Kenneth Watkins, a farmer and engineer, was well aware of the value of woodlands at a time when many native woods were being grubbed out and replaced with coniferous trees. Another huge loss of trees occurred in 1970-80s when Dutch Elm disease wiped out 40 million trees and further damage was done by the storm of 1987. At 12% forested land, the UK lags well behind the rest of Europe where 40% is forested. The Trust is working hard to plant more trees on land that it has bought and also on that of willing landowners. They are keen to get children involved and they currently have the *More Trees More Good* initiative to do just that.

For more information look at their website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

Kent Federation of Horticultural Associations

Our club is one of over 200 affiliated members. On March 13th, I attended their Mini Spring Show and annual general meeting along with Barbara Macknish. It was held in a large hall at Ditton Community Centre just off the A20.

This is a good opportunity for those who enjoy showing entries and I'd like to encourage people to consider entering. Our members would certainly find that our club standards are of a similar level, or higher level in some cases.

As an affiliated club, we are entitled to enter their shows as individuals or to put in a combined club entry in some classes. The KFHS Mini Spring Show had many classes similar to our own show. We have asked for their new schedule for 2011, which was delayed due to difficulties with their summer show location. The Summer and Autumn Show details will be available soon. Information will be on the website www.kentfed.com/. Check out the gallery on the website for pictures of the entries for the Mini Spring Show.

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There were other exhibitors' stalls, a plant stall, a raffle and a very nice buffet lunch for those who attended. It was an interesting morning and I recommend it to all club members.

I now receive the KFHS newsletter as an email, so send me a message (Sharon@sperlings.co.uk) if you'd like me to forward it to you.

Sharon Sperling

In the News

Favism

A recent article in "Kitchen Garden" by Lucy Holliday highlights the special relationship between broad beans, humans and malaria. Broad beans have been a major food resource in the Mediterranean for over 8000 years. However, some people react adversely to eating the bean and in severe cases, even by breathing the pollen. The reason for this reaction, which is known as *Favism* is that the sufferers cannot produce a certain enzyme that controls red blood cell metabolism. The trouble with broad beans is that they contain chemicals that can induce the body to break down red blood cells. The effect of these chemicals is tiny on normal people, but the regulation of red blood cell metabolism in those with Favism is already abnormal and the chemicals from broad beans can destroy so many red blood cells that the transport of oxygen throughout the body can be disrupted.

Favism is the most commonly inherited enzyme deficiency in the world. It is strange, therefore, to find that the Mediterranean, the home of the broad bean, is the area where the highest incidence of Favism is found. It is also common in tropical Africa and Asia. Wherever you find a high incidence of Favism, you also find mosquitoes and where there are mosquitoes there is malaria. It so happens that the parasite, *Plasmodium*, that the female mosquito carries requires a host with healthy red blood cells in which to reproduce. So the large numbers of damaged red blood cells carried by Favism sufferers are of no use to Plasmodium. Hence it is probable that although there are serious dangers from Favism itself, in milder cases the condition protects against certain death from malaria.

More on GM

Despite 30 years of rampant GM development, no GM crop is better than natural varieties. The shenanigans of the biotech industry is alarming, bordering on terrifying. Below is a small sample from articles extracted from recent publications.

There is further evidence of worldwide concern about the problematic impact of GM crops and they are highlighted by several letters in the journal *Permaculture*. Jed Picksley, for instance, demolishes "DEFRA's assertion that it will be possible to keep GM free open air pollinators of species that have GM equivalents growing in the UK". He cites evidence from <http://www.gmwatch.org> and other web sites from Spain and Australia, the implications for bees at www.stopgm.org.uk/gathering-momentum.html and lawsuits arising from GMO cross-contamination in America at <http://www.i-sis.org.uk/MonsantovsFarmers.php>. Evidence of worldwide resistance to GM in "Africa (see www.nyeleni.org/?lang=en), India, China, the Americas, Spain and France."

Picksley also mentions that "last year was the first year that both China and America grew less GM crops ... "because of the failures in the 'promise' of GM crops so far." Also, as a

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result of farmers spraying to control weeds throughout the season, 13 species have become resistant to glyphosate.

Another letter, from the Reverend Peter Doodles, addresses the serious health effects in Argentina where the government restructured its economy by growing GM soya for export (mostly to feed livestock in the EU). The effects of spraying millions of litres of glyphosate herbicide has caused high rates of birth defects, infertility, stillbirths, miscarriages and cancers. In addition, the environmental effects of spraying include "killed food crops and livestock and streams strewn with dead fish". He quotes Dr Dario Gianfelici, from Cerrito, who reported "drastic changes", people aged 30 dying from cancer, an increase in respiratory diseases and malformed children. In Canada no oil seed rape is free from GM contamination and now the government there wants GM to be accepted against the wishes of 80% of the public. In India the promise of greater yields from GM cotton actually resulted in a 20% decline leading to the suicides of hundreds of farmers.

Rev. Doodles also reminds us that the person in charge of the FDA (US Food and Drug Authority) in 1992, was Monsanto's former attorney, Michael Taylor, who allowed GMOs on the market without any safety studies and without labelling. The FDA policy claimed that the agency was not aware of any information showing that GMOs were significantly different. Seven years later, because of a lawsuit, 44,000 secret internal FDA memos revealed that the policy was a lie. Not only were the scientists at the FDA aware that GMOs were different, they had warned repeatedly that they might create allergies, toxins, new diseases and nutritional problems. But they were ignored and their warnings were even denied ... Frighteningly, Michael Taylor is now the U.S. food safety czar in the Obama administration. Rev Doodles also cites the Organic Consumers Association of America concerning the career of Margaret Miller who, as an employee of Monsanto, wrote a report on a growth hormone for the FDA. Immediately after writing the report, Ms Miller went to work for the FDA and her first job was to approve the report that she had just written for Monsanto!

This video, <http://www.commondreams.org/video/2011/04/30>, includes a discussion of the Indian experience of Monsanto and describes local efforts to retain age-old sustainable lifestyles.

RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch Results

This survey is carried out annually by members of the public and the results of the 2011 survey have been published. Many of the small birds which were badly affected by the 2009/2010 winter seem to have come through last winter fairly well. The RSPB believes this is because they had a good breeding season last year. Sightings of goldcrests doubled, long-tailed tits were up by a third and coal tits increased by 25% compared to the 2010 survey. The most frequently spotted birds during the 2011 survey were as follows;

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. House Sparrow | 4. Blue tit | 8. Goldfinch |
| 2. Starling | 5. Chaffinch | 9. Robin |
| 3. Blackbird | 6. Woodpigeon | 10. Collared Dove |
| | 7. Great tit | |

Grass Clippings – extracted from Gardening Which? May 2011

You may remember that we reported in the Autumn 2009 newsletter that the ban on *aminopyralid*, a commercial weedkiller, had been lifted and it was now back in use having been withdrawn in 2008 following problems with residues persisting in farmyard manure which was then used to grow crops in domestic gardens and allotments. In the US herbicide residues have now been found in clippings from domestic lawns that were collected as green waste so is it possible that the same could happen here? How many of us give a second thought to where our garden waste ends up?

Some domestic lawn products contain clopyralid and there is a risk, albeit a low risk, of it turning up in domestic compost. The waste advisory body (WRAP), the Chemicals Regulation Directorate and manufacturers have agreed that the labelling on products containing clopyralid need to be clearer. Affected products include Evergreen Gun! Lawn Weedkiller, Evergreen Lawn Weedkiller Ready to Use, Verdone Extra, Verdone Extra Ready to Use and Vitax Lawn Clear 2.

The advice is to leave the clippings from the first mowing after treatment on the lawn and compost the clippings from the next 3 mowings for at least 9 months before using. Also do not dispose of the clippings via council composting schemes. Unfortunately the revised labelling does not need to be in place until February 2014 so there is still plenty of time for this chemical to get into the system.

Perennial Vegetables?

An article published recently in the Daily Telegraph by expert grower, Mark Diacono points out that whilst most fruit and herbs we grow are perennial, vegetables tend to be sown from scratch each year. In part this is due to the fact that home growers follow commercial growers who've relied on fossil fuels to provide cheap energy to carry out all the work that is required when growing annual vegetables. In fact, the food we buy now takes around TEN times as much energy to produce as it gives us. Of course the carbon footprint is huge due largely to the use of man-made nitrogen fertilisers. Making a tonne of fertiliser requires a tonne of oil, 108 tonnes of water and releases 7 tonnes of greenhouse gases in the process (*London's City University (An Inconvenient Truth About Food, Soil Association, 2008)*).

Perennials are an increasingly important part of how we feed ourselves and how we garden. With rising prices and dwindling resources we now have further incentives to grow some of our own food. Of course this does require some hard work if you are not going to have the help of fossil fuelled cultivators and man-made fertilisers. This might suit some as a means of saving on gym membership but the alternative is to grow low-maintenance, low-energy perennials like asparagus. The added bonus is that they taste far better than shop bought and you know how they have been grown.

Those new to growing tend to start with annuals before progressing to perennials and many newcomers to edible gardening are often interested in 'permaculture' (permanent culture) and low-carbon growing.

Residents undercut council to restore nature park

A vandalised nature reserve on Holt Island in St Ives, Cambridgeshire has reopened after local residents rejected a £300,000 council scheme and did the repair work themselves for a tenth of the price in half the time.

April 2011 – The warmest on record

The Met Office have stated that April 2011 was the warmest since their records began. Much of the country experienced temperatures that were up to 5C warmer than normal for April. The average temperature of 10.7C was 0.5C higher than the previous record set in 2007. Here in the south-east we had miniscule rainfall and following on from a very dry March this can only cause problems for us later in the year.

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