



Blossom at East Malling Research Centre

Photo: Jo Latimer

Spring 2013

August 12th 2013

Summer Social and Mini Show

Our summer social will consist of 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 £2 non-members will also be welcome to come along and take part. There is no need to pre-book your entries, just bring them along on the evening and exhibit. The 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)



Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

- May 13th Free Range Pig Farming Bev Brown**
- May 17th Coach Trip to Goodnestone Park and the Secret Garden at Sandwich**
- The cost of the outing is £24/person. The coach will leave Morrisons at 9am, Norwood Lane at 9:10am, Meadfield Road (opposite Meopham School) at 9:20am and Culverstone/Hodsall Street at 9:30am. Please let Hazel know where you wish to join the coach.
- June 10th The Principles of Pruning Fruit Trees Mike Austen**
- June 24th Evening Garden Visit Manor Road, Sole Street**
- July 8th Memories of Iran Arthur Nichols**
- August 12th Summer Social & Mini Show (details on front page)**

Recent Events

February 11th AGM & Seed Swap

Our AGM was postponed in January due to snow but went ahead at the start of our February meeting in spite of the weather. Local gardener lecturer and plantaholic, Caroline Halfpenny spoke about the Gardens of Cornwall and showed many photographs of the main gardens there. We also held our second seed swap.

February 17th 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 for once the weather was kind. The opening and subsequent sales of snowdrops has raised over £800 for the Eleanor Foundation.

March 11th Member's Forum

This meeting was cancelled due to snow.

March 23rd Spring Show

Saturday 23rd March 2013 dawned white and glistening. Yes, Spring Show Day and it was snowing! One of our judges rang at 8.30am to say she was going to set off early as they had had a heavy downfall of snow. She had packed the car with a blanket and shovel and was going to hope for the best. At 10:00am entrants began arriving at the Meopham Village Hall laden with pots covered with beautiful blooms. We then realised we would have a show after all. By 12:45 the hall was full of a heady perfume from the multi-coloured hyacinths that had been entered. We had a large display of domestic entries, hobbies and pastimes and floral art. A couple of the local schools and Girl Guiding communities had also been approached to encourage entries in the two Junior Classes. There was a good show of entries from the Meopham Rainbow Unit, a few from Meopham Primary School, one from a member's grandchild and one in the 11-16 year category.

Overall we had 38 entrants, 21 members and 17 children, with 204 entries. Our judge, who battled through the snow, was very impressed at the quality (and quantity) of the exhibits, especially because of the recent weather. Many villagers arrived in the afternoon and enjoyed the home made tea and cakes, the plant stall and raffle.

The Show Secretary and her Assistant would like to thank all those who participated in the show and the setting up beforehand.

For information relating to the Meopham Garden Association go to our website at

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk

The Spring Show Trophies were awarded as follows:

Chairman's Cup	First in Class 1 – Hyacinths	Lesley Foxwell
Melliker Cup	First in Class 2 – Daffodils	Lesley Foxwell
Hasler Vase	Best Exhibit in Classes 3 – 11	Lesley Foxwell
Oldham Goblet	Best Exhibit in Floral Art	Gail King
Diploma	Best Bloom in Spring Show	Janet Oxford
Harvel Spring Challenge Cup	Most points in Classes 12-38	Barbara Macknish
Meryl Burgess Salver	Most points in Domestic Classes	Enid Lander

Sharon Sperling (Show Secretary)

April 8th

The Lobb Brothers

Matthew Biggs

“A story wanting to be told” is how broadcaster Matthew Biggs introduced his talk. He spoke passionately about the 19th Century plant hunters, the Lobb Brothers, William and Thomas. There is so much to be discovered about their lives and Matthew asked us all to listen out for snippets of information about them and the plants they brought back. William worked for the Veitch Nursery and hunted plants in North and South America. He brought back the Monkey Puzzle Tree, the Giant Redwood, Ceanothus and Delphinium. His brother Thomas went east and brought back tender rhododendrons, carnivorous plants and orchids.

Keeping Up-to-date

Those members who use our website might be interested in the recently added ‘NEWS’ section. The purpose of this area is to make information available to members as soon as possible. This is not intended to be a replacement for other forms of communication but to keep members informed about transient events such as outings, show updates and whether or not a meeting will take place due poor weather conditions.

In the News

Royal Visitor to East Malling Research Centre

On the 17th April, the Princess Royal marked the 100th anniversary of the East Malling Research Centre. Arriving by helicopter (though without Daniel Craig like her mother), she toured the site and praised the horticultural research work done there before planting a tree near to another she had planted 25 years previously. Afterwards she was presented with a bottle of ‘*East Malling Centenary apple juice*’ produced on site and said that they had made their own apple juice at home for the first time last year.



(Jo Latimer)

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Bees

The EU has now banned the neonicotinoid pesticides blamed for destroying bee population.

Two recent lectures held at East Malling Research Centre highlighted current research on bees; the first was by the only professor of apiary in the country, Francis Ratneiks who presented *The Sussex Plan for Bee Health & Wellbeing* and the second highlighted the plight on bumble bees was given by Mark Brown from Royal Holloway. The value of pollination carried out by bees in the EU is estimated at €153bn and £430 million in the UK alone (Breze et al 2011). Bumbles and wild bees are the best pollinators. Honey bees and bumble bees are in competition and don't necessarily visit the same plants, which is important as it keeps the bees moving between plants and leads to better pollination. Bees need open flowers to access the nectar. Common and wildflowers such as lavender, borage, origanum are particularly good and better than those bred for form. Bees have to search further for food in the summer (50 sq km area has been measured) partly due to increased population. Clover fields and set asides proved less popular than SSSIs and field margins. Ivy pollen is a very important source in the autumn.

Monsanto

A damning report about the effects of the chemicals and genetically modified organisms developed by Monsanto appears in <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/doc/MonsantoReport.pdf>. It concludes that Monsanto "has undue influence over lawmakers, regulators, and our food supply" and "the active ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide may be the most biologically disruptive chemical in our environment, being responsible for a litany of health disorders and diseases including Parkinson's, cancer and autism", according to a new study. <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/04/03-2>

Looking at the impacts of glyphosate on gut bacteria, it has been found that the herbicide "enhances the damaging effects of other food borne chemical residues and environmental toxins," and is a "textbook example" of "the disruption of homeostasis by environmental toxins."

<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/04/26-3> and <http://www.commondreams.org/further/2013/04/10-2>

Biochar

Farmers in Belize are excited about biochar, as are carbon capture scientists, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and multinationals such as Kraft and Nestlé. It may provide a carbon sink, it may save degraded soils, it may alleviate rural poverty and is probably "the oldest new thing you've never heard of". It is essentially charcoal, but burnt at a lower temperature and with a more restricted flow of oxygen. Its proponents believe it helped support ancient cities in the Amazon, where soils would not otherwise have been able to sustain large populations.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardeningequipment/9970889/Biochar-a-slow-burn-success.html>

Crocks

It's a sacred principle of container gardening, but putting crocks at the bottom of a container can do more damage than good according to a recent newspaper article.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardeningadvice/9946017/Using-crocks-to-help-containers-drain-A-potty-idea.html>

New Pests

The May edition of Gardening Which has an article that can help with identifying some of the new pests in the UK such as beetles, scale insects, leaf miners and midges and gives advice on dealing with them. We hope to collate this information and make it available on the website.

Grafted Veg Plants

Gardening Which (April) has tested these plants and finds that they do not significantly out-perform those raised in a conventional way.

"Free" Trade

Obama's recent proposal for a "Free Trade" agreement between the US and EU is supported by large corporations, but not by public interest and environmental groups here or in the US. "FTAs" erode sovereignty, labour and, importantly, environmental protections creating a "global race to the bottom" in the name of "liberalizing" trade and economic growth. A particularly disturbing aspect of current FTAs arises because they allow commercial challenges to national environmental regulations. This proposal comes as corporate wealth and power is rapidly increasing, while the public is subject to demands for austerity. It would be the largest free trade agreement since NAFTA in the mid-1990s.

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