



Taken at the Lost Gardens of Heligan

Photo: Jo Latimer

Summer 2013

Autumn Show 21st September 2013

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 2013 schedule. Entry details should be phoned through to our Show Secretary Sharon Sperling between 6 and 9pm on the Thursday prior to the show. She will also be accepting e-mail entries to shows@meophamgardeners.co.uk. The entry form is available from the Shows part of the website. Please follow the instructions there and make sure they are received before 6pm on the Thursday. The fee is 10p for each entry.

Exhibits may be staged on the Friday evening between 8.30 and 9pm 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.

NO LATE ENTRIES WILL 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.

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Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

August 12th Summer Social

Our summer social will consist of a small show with the winners voted for by those present. There will be quizzes, 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)

September 9th Plants for Shade Colin Moat

September 21st Autumn Show

October 14th Wildflowers, Fruits and Fungi Sue Buckingham

November 11th A to Z of Garden History Russell Bowes

Recent Events

May 13th Free Range Pig Farming Bev Brown

Roundwood Orchard is a local, family run pig farm. They operate an "Open Farm" which means people can visit at any time to see the pigs. Please check their website www.roundwoodorchardpig.co.uk for more details.

They have 400 pigs free to roam on 70 acres of land at Broomfield Farm. A *Free Range Pig* lives outside all of its life in open pens and behave naturally, whereas an *Outdoor Reared Pig* is born outside but is brought in at 8 weeks old to be reared inside.

Contrary to popular belief, pigs are clean animals. Within 24hrs of being born the piglets are 'sty trained' and do not 'mess' in their beds. They are clever and funny, especially around people who don't know them. The pigs are kept away from the strawberry beds as they adore eating the fruits. Piglets have been known to lay flat on their tummies and wiggle under the electric fence to get out and visit other pigs and parts of the farm. They never go too far though from their families.

May 24th Coach Trip to Goodnestone Park and The Salutation at Sandwich

In spite of the dull, drizzly day, we enjoyed looking around these two beautiful, but contrasting gardens. Goodnestone Park with its grand house surrounded by several acres of gardens and mature trees is still family run. The Secret Garden is in the centre of Sandwich and although on a smaller scale it is still packed with a variety of plantings and was full of colour.

June 10th The Principles of Pruning Fruit Trees Mike Austen

Mike Austen from Brogdale Farm returned to talk to us and spoke about 'The Principles of Pruning Fruit Trees'. He stressed the importance of buying good quality tools. He explained the reasons for pruning and what time of the year it should be done. We all came away with a clearer idea of what we should be doing. Now we just need to practice!

June 24th Garden Outing to Wallingford, Sole Street

In contrast to our evening garden visit last year, the sun shone as we enjoyed a look around this most beautiful and interesting garden. The money collected from the evening was donated to the restoration fund for the local hall at the end of Manor Road.



July 8th

Memories of Iran

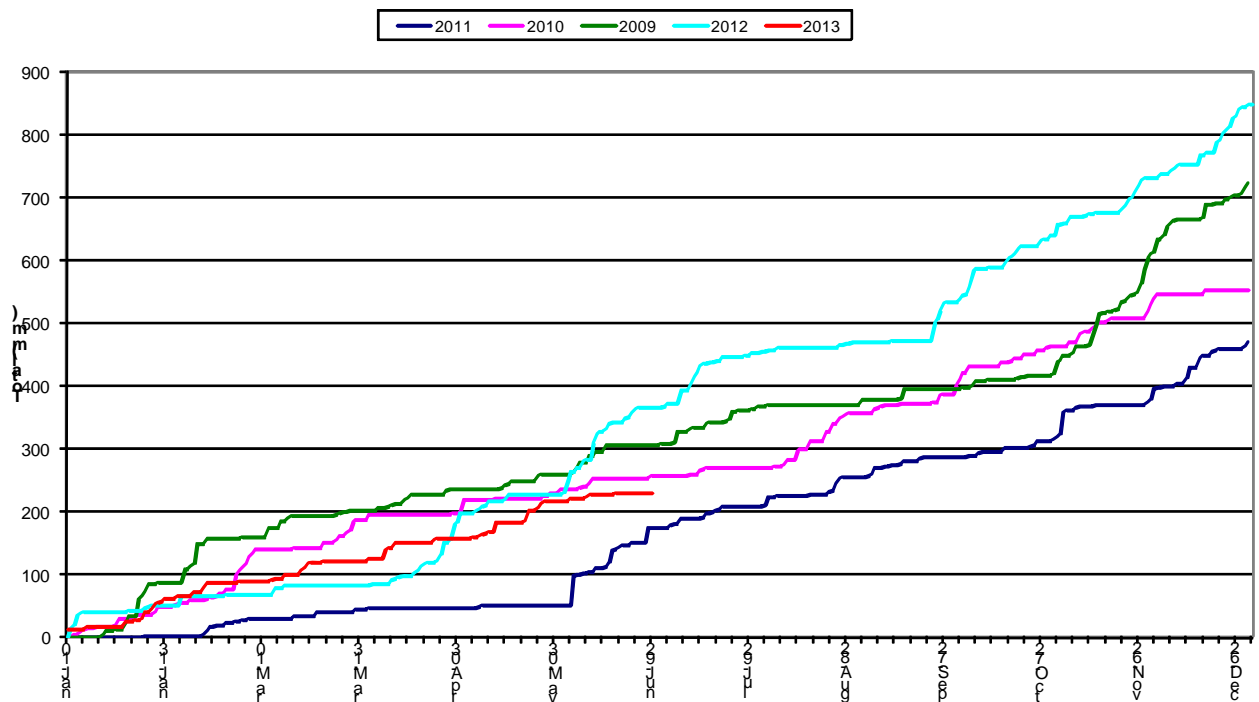
Arthur Nichols

Arthur is a modern day plant hunter who visited Iran in 2004, 2008 and 2010 with a group of friends and although they went at the same time of the year, he was surprised by the variation in the plants seen. The Iranian people are very friendly, but the driving is awful and quite dangerous. However, they hire the same friendly coach driver every year and he is just as interested in plants as they are and helps spot unusual varieties. He regaled us with stories of their travels and showed us some spectacular photos of rare plants.

Rainfall

This graph shows the cumulative rainfall from January 1st to June 30th 2013 along with the annual rainfall for the 4 previous years. The total rainfall up until the end of June was 229.5mm or 9" which is much less than the same period last year. The averaging period referred to below is the 30 years 1981–2010.

Rainfall Recorded in Meopham



The year began very mild and dry, but it turned colder with a period of significant snowfall across much of the country causing considerable disruption between 18th and 25th. A change to milder, wetter, windy conditions at the end of the month led to a rapid thaw and some localised flooding. January was drier and duller than average and with a mean temperature of 3.3°C it was also slightly cooler than average. The first part of February was rather unsettled but the second half was cold, cloudy and dry giving the longest spell of dry weather of the whole winter. Overall February temperatures were 0.9°C below average at 2.8°C. February was somewhat drier and duller over southern England. March was one of the coldest Marches on record and the coldest since 1962. The mean temperature was 2.2°C, which is 3.3°C below average. It was the coldest calendar month since December 2010 although Gravesend recorded a maximum temperature of 17.1°C on the 5th. It was drier but also duller than average in eastern areas. Heavy snow on the afternoon of the 11th coincided with our March meeting which had to be cancelled.

The cold dry weather continued into early April with some wintry showers but temperatures returned to near the seasonal average. A maximum temperature of 23.1°C was recorded at Faversham (Kent) on the 25th. A minimum temperature of -11.2°C was recorded at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) on the 2nd. It cooled again towards the end of the month with widespread frosts. The UK as a whole was drier and sunnier although with an average temperature of 6.3°C it was the coldest April since 1989. The cool theme continued into

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May, with temperatures below average for much of the month not helped by the northerly winds. It was also unsettled at times and the 14th was particularly wet but there was also some pleasant spring sunshine. The provisional UK mean temperature was 9.5°C, which is below average, making it the coldest May since 1996. It was wetter than average but with about average sunshine. Overall this was the coldest Spring in the UK since 1962.

June began settled and quite sunny but it turned more unsettled and cooler. A muggy and humid spell over the south later in the month made for very warm conditions in any sunshine. The latter part of the month was again mainly settled and fine. The south-east received only a third of the average rainfall. June overall was a rather cool month with temperatures slightly below average at 12.8°C but it was warmer than the last two Junes. There was about average sunshine. A maximum temperature of 27.2°C was recorded at Heathrow (Greater London) on the 30th with minimum temperature of -1.1°C recorded at Tulloch Bridge (Highland) on the 1st.

Engaging with Young People

Following a grant for £200 from the Kent County Council to our club, the Show Secretary and Assistant Show Secretary started the project to involve more young people in the sections of our shows designed for children to enter. Three local schools (2 primary and one special school) were contacted as well as the local Rainbow group consisting of girls between the ages of 5 and 7. All of this was in addition involving club members' children and grandchildren. The support for these classes increased dramatically thanks to this grant and the increased work with young people which it supported.

On the spring show day, we had 17 very interesting entries in the "Garden in a Shoebox" which was a good improvement on some previous show entry numbers. At the prize giving the children present were awarded a packet of sunflower seeds and those who were not there received their seeds via the schools. Ten families also visited the show and two enquired about joining. One of the parents also expressed an interest in being our contact with the school and all these links will be developed over the coming months.

We have also gifted seeds to the schools for their gardens and invited them to take part again in the autumn show. Due to this successful KKC funding, the project was supported in kind by Millbrook Garden Centre who donated seeds. This has allowed us to extend the project into the autumn with a planned gift of bulbs, as mentioned as an aspiration in our application. We will be purchasing the bulbs as they become available in late summer using the vouchers purchased.

Sharon Sperling, Show Secretary

Longfield Academy Project

The Longfield Academy have begun to create an 'Eco-Garden' to encourage the pupils, some with special educational needs, to get involved with gardening. They have asked the local community for whatever help they can give. There is of course no garden society in Longfield and the committee feels that it would be nice to assist them. Gail King has agreed to co-ordinate our efforts and so far some members have donated surplus plants, pots and other gardening items which we hope will help them.

2014 Spring Show Bulb Selections

We have selected some beautiful flowers for the Specified varieties and would like to encourage everyone to give it a try. There is much fun from comparing progress or lack of it with other members as everyone has a slightly different approach to bulbs.

The bulbs selected are cheaper than last year but still retain the excellent quality needed for showing. They are Class 1: *John Bos* and in Class 2: *Unsurpassable*. We will be ordering the number of bulbs based on the indications of interest at the Summer Social. Bulbs should be available for purchase from the September meeting.

For those interested in details on growing techniques, there is advice in the current club programme on page 10. Also printed below are some tips from Bloms who will be supplying the bulbs.

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Growing Daffodils in Containers and Pots

Plant in deep tubs or bowls as soon as possible, plunge outside in a cool spot and cover with 15cm of soil, leaf mould or peat. Never allow the soil to dry out and ensure regular watering during prolonged dry periods, even in the middle of winter. During a prolonged wet spell the plunge should be covered by a piece of sheeting.

If no garden is available, the bowls must be stored in a cool, dark shed or garage. Provided that the bulbs have been planted no less than 12-16 weeks, the pots may be brought into a cool greenhouse, cold frame or unheated room indoors near the light by early January. A temperature of 9-10°C is ample until the flower buds are visible. At this stage they can stand slightly increased temperature 10-12°C.

Kent Federation Show

Our club is a member of the Kent Federation of Horticultural Societies, which celebrates their 75th anniversary in 2013. Every year they hold shows similar to ours with a county-wide focus. Their Autumn Show on Sunday September 22nd. There is an inter-society challenge in which we may like to participate as a club. We need only enter four of these categories and if this interests you, do let Sharon or Claire know. We may also ask 1st prize winners from our own show on the 21st if we may use their entries the next day. More information is available on their website (www.kentfed.com).

Sharon Sperling, Show Secretary

In The News

EU-US FTA: Many people will be unaware that secret discussions are under way between the (unelected) EU Executive and a delegation of American corporate lawyers regarding a Free Trade Agreement. There is no public input into the nature of this agreement. MEPs will not be able to debate it; they will only be able to vote for it or against it. It is likely to be an investors' charter with no benefit to the country.

The precedent set by NAFTA (North American Free Trade Area) shows there is a great danger that the agreement will make it much more difficult and costly, or even illegal, to prevent the widespread introduction of GM crops and other such products. Glowing reports from the official NAFTA web site are belied by well-documented criticism available from the Public Citizen web site. <http://www.citizen.org/Page.aspx?pid=1043>

Kew's Growth Strategy: hybrid crops without the genetic modification. The plan is to crossbreed crops with their increasingly endangered wild cousins to help boost resistance to climate change. (One may wonder why this work has not always been at the forefront of research. Perhaps because of the allure of easy pickings from GM technology or because so many research establishments were sold off to private concerns that emphasise the wrong priorities.) <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/kews-growth-strategy-hybrid-crops-without-the-genetic-modification-8735533.html>

Study: Insecticide Use Linked to Invertebrate Die-Offs. Dutch research reveals correlation between water polluted with imidacloprid and low numbers of aquatic insects. The world's most widely used insecticide is devastating dragonflies, snails and other water-based species, a groundbreaking Dutch study has revealed. Published on Thursday, May 2, 2013 by The Guardian <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/05/02-0>

Hawaii's Local Struggle in the Global Movement for Food Justice. People in Hawaii are battling to protect their land, water and health from the impacts of the agrochemical-GMO industry, which has been using the fragile and treasured islands as their main testing ground for experiments with new chemical-crop combos, biopharmaceuticals, and other agrochemical products, polluting the environmental commons and pirating ("patenting") global genetic commons in order to make massive amounts of wealth for a very few. <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/07/23-3>

US Department of Agriculture Fast-Tracks 'Rubber-Stamp' Approval of 'Dangerous' GE Seeds. This move allows the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to "make a determination of non-regulated status for crops with GE traits that have already been approved in another crop" without a new review allowing for a more "timely and predictable review process," according to Mike Firko, APHIS Acting Deputy Administrator for biotechnology regulatory services. Watchdog: 'It's clear that these federal agencies are working on behalf of corporate agribusiness, not US taxpayers and consumers.' <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/07/23-9>

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Pesticide Use Spikes as GMO Failure Cripples Corn Belt. The culprit? Bt corn—a type of genetically engineered corn with insecticide built into its genes. "Surprisingly" enough, studies show, resistant insects and worms are appearing and leading to the use of even more insecticide.

<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/07/09-6>

Unauthorized GM Rice Threatens World Supply: Strains of unauthorized, genetically modified (GM) rice have been found in United States' exports in over 30 countries, threatening 'widespread contamination' to the world's rice supply. This news follows the recent discovery of a strain of non-approved GM wheat on a farm in Oregon. <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/07/08-7>

Government Scientists: "No way to assure the safety of genetically engineered foods (1992)". It is a bit disheartening that this information has been known for so long and yet nothing has changed in the regulation or promotion of this potentially devastating technology. http://www.saynotogmos.org/scientists_speak.htm

Frances Moore Lappe, Vandana Shiva blast the 2013 World Food Prize going to GMO scientists with the biotechnology giants Monsanto and Syngenta. They claimed that GMO scientists' work contributes to hunger and ecological devastation while not advancing nutrition, and noted the irony of Monsanto being awarded at a time of rising worldwide opposition to the seed giant. The prize going to the biotech giants "sends precisely the wrong message about sustainable solutions to hunger and poverty." Mark Bittman of the New York Times noted "Never mind that Monsanto is a sponsor of the prize (and that the list of other backers reads like a who's who of big ag and big food), or that we never get to know the names of either the nominees or the nominators". <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/06/28-8>

GM Crops: Genetic Colonialists. Kumi Naidoo, born and raised in Africa, criticizes Owen Paterson for his attempt to portray GM as the solution to world hunger. Most GM is in fact for commodity crops production using chemical-intensive methods. But pressure is constantly applied to African governments by big US corporations, because Africa and Asia are the only industry hopes for GM expansion. The UK and Owen Paterson can help 'feed the world and save the planet' – by opposing GM crops and African land grabs.

Published on Tuesday, June 25, 2013 by The Guardian/UK <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/06/25-2>

Tory MP says pro-GM Environment Secretary Owen Paterson is 'industry puppet'

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tory-mp-says-progm-environment-secretary-owen-paterson-is-industry-puppet-8686133.html>

Palm-Oil Giants Dodge Responsibility for Toxic Smog Covering Singapore. A record-breaking hazardous smog forced millions of people indoors. Environmentalists charged that the nation's vast palm-oil industry's slash-and-burn tactics sparked the environmental disaster. The thick haze was so hazardous that officials ordered Singapore's over five million residents to shutter up inside. (Such a dangerous smog would also be injurious for the indigenous population and for animals.) <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2013/06/20-3>

Vandana Shiva claims that "Monoculture of the Mind" makes one rich man named Bill Gates finance one Australian scientist named James Dale who knows one crop, the banana, to impose inefficient and hazardous GM bananas on millions of people in India and Uganda. She goes on to say, "Nature has given us a cornucopia of biodiversity rich in nutrients. Malnutrition and nutrient deficiency result from destroying biodiversity. The Green Revolution has spread monocultures of chemical rice and wheat, driving out biodiversity from our farms and diets. And what survived as spontaneous crops — like amaranth greens (chaulai) and chenopodium (bathua) that are rich in iron — were sprayed with poisons and herbicides. Instead of cherishing them as iron- and vitamin-rich gifts, these vegetables were treated as "weeds".

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/04/24-8>

BBC Horizon Programme on Bees discussed virus transmission by the varroa mite, insecticide poisoning and habitat loss as possible causes of the recent decline in bee populations. The possibility of genetically modifying plants to produce pheromones to repel specific pests was also presented, but one wonders how long it would take for natural selection to bypass this technology. (One must also wonder what long-term effects systemic insecticides may have on human nervous systems, since the fruits and grains from treated plants that most of us will unwittingly eat must also contain these chemicals.)

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b037y0zf

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