



Photo: Jo Latimer

## Winter 2013

### Spring Show 23<sup>rd</sup> March 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. All 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](mailto:shows@meophamgardeners.co.uk). The entry form is available from the Shows part of the website. Please 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.

**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.*

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## Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

February 17<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. Entry is £1.

March 11<sup>th</sup> Garden Forum & Seed Swap

March 23<sup>rd</sup> SPRING SHOW

April 8<sup>th</sup> The Lobb Brothers Matthew Biggs

Members will be able to get in for free but tickets will be available to others for £5 each so please invite your friends and family to come along and enjoy this talk by a regular member of the Gardener's Question Time panel.

May 13<sup>th</sup> Free Range Pig Farming Bev Brown

In addition to our regular meetings, we are hoping to visit a local garden in June and run a coach trip to the Secret Gardens of Sandwich and Goodnestone Park Gardens in July. Details of these outings will be publicized as soon as possible.

## Recent Events

November 12<sup>th</sup> Plant Heritage Jude Lawton

After the war small local plants began to disappear so the National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens (NCCPG) was formed to try to save them. Plant Heritage as the organisation is now known is the world's leading garden plant conservation charity, brings together the talents of botanists, horticulturalists and conservationists and the dedication of keen amateur and professional gardeners. Their mission is to encourage the conservation of cultivated plants in the British Isles, supporting and publishing research into these plants, their origins, their historical and cultural importance and their environments, and helping to educate the public in the importance of cultivated plant conservation.

December 10<sup>th</sup> Christmas Supper

The 49 members and friends who attended enjoyed an excellent meal with entertainment by a couple of singers from GEMS.

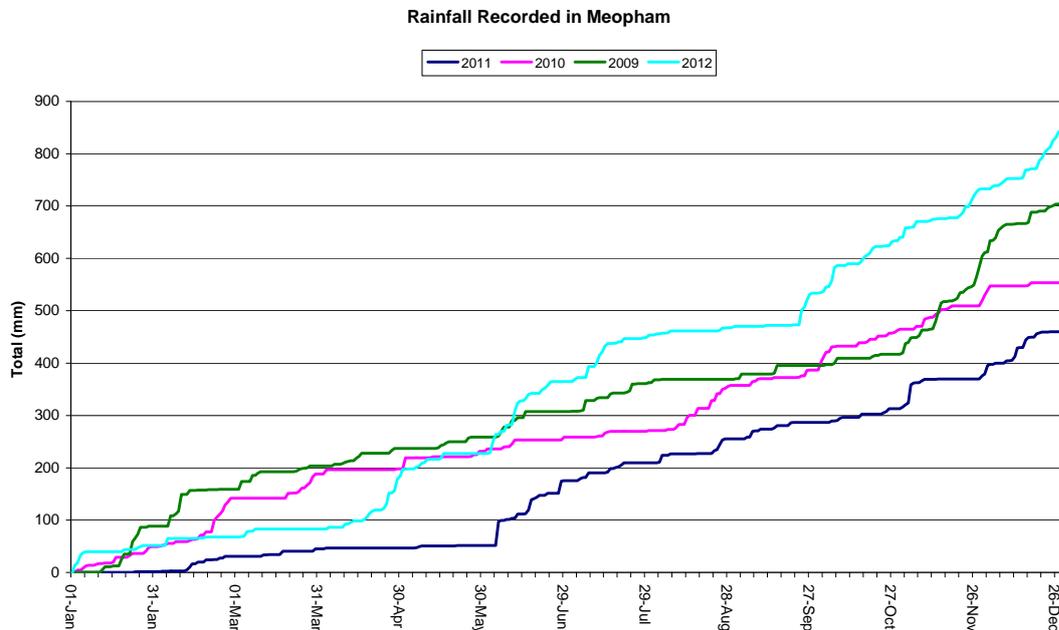
January 14<sup>th</sup> AGM & Seed Swap

This meeting was postponed due to adverse weather conditions and the AGM will take place at the beginning of our February meeting.



## Climate

The graph displays the cumulative rainfall recorded over the last 4 years. It shows quite how much wetter 2012 was compared to previous years. Total rainfall for 2012 was 849mm (33.4") which is almost double that of 2011 (470.5mm (18.5")).



The year began stormy but mild with above average temperatures in January. February began cold with the only lying snow of the winter arriving on the 5<sup>th</sup>, but it was very mild by the end of the month. March was generally dry and sunny with Gravesend recording 19°C on the 15<sup>th</sup> and record temperatures elsewhere towards the end of the month. After the very dry start to the year and with a hosepipe ban in force, April was provisionally the wettest on record. May was mostly cool and unsettled but it warmed up at the end of the month, with a new May temperature record for Scotland of 29.3°C set on the 25<sup>th</sup>. June was cool and the wettest in England and Wales since 1910 and it was particularly disappointing for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Gravesend recorded the maximum temperature of 28.6 C on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The hosepipe ban was subsequently lifted at the beginning of July but the rain continued to fall.

Early July was cool, cloudy and wet causing flooding. The weather improved towards the end of the month and was settled for most of the Olympic Games. St James's Park recorded 30.7°C on the 25<sup>th</sup> but overall July was the coolest since 2000. August was a little warmer and drier than normal with a maximum temperature of 32.4 C recorded at Cavendish (Suffolk) on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The very wet ground and cloudy summer proved difficult for wildlife, particularly many insects and birds. It also hampered efforts to harvest crops and affected yields. Early September was settled and warm with the Paralympics enjoying generally fine weather. The second half of the month was cool making it provisionally the coolest September since 1994. Sunshine totals were above normal. October was wet for much of the time, but with a couple of short settled spells. It was provisionally the coldest October since 2003 and sunshine totals were below normal in the south-east. November began cool and showery but was milder mid-month. A very wet spell towards the end of the month caused flooding and landslips. Temperatures were slightly below average with a maximum temperature of 16.4 C recorded at Kew Gardens (Greater London) on the 13<sup>th</sup>. December began generally unsettled with wintry showers bringing some snow to the north and east of the UK. Thick, freezing fog and ice caused some hazardous conditions with some flights cancelled on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Further rain, on already saturated ground, caused significant disruption to both road and rail travel over the Christmas holiday period. The Thames barrier was raised on the 27<sup>th</sup> to reduce the risk of the high tide exacerbating flood risk. Temperatures were about average and it was provisionally wettest December since 1978 although it was a relatively sunny month.

*Definition: 'average' is for data recorded from 1981 - 2010*

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## In The News

### Bees

It is good to learn of large companies like B&Q taking commendable action to help save bees. I don't know about you, but we hardly use any chemical bug killers. Ladybirds enjoy greenfly snacks and so I kidnap them and then release them where they can eat their fill - especially in the greenhouse. Elsewhere a finger and thumb keep the aphids in check. Also, the greenhouse never gets sterilized because the good guys like spiders get killed and are not there when the rapid pest repopulation takes place.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/9835181/BandQ-Homebase-and-Wickes-remove-bug-killers-blamed-for-decline-of-bees.htm>

### Organophosphates

Once again we are reminded of the dangers posed by even low levels of exposure to organophosphates in pesticides.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9716249/Pesticide-exposure-harms-memory.html>

### Common Pesticides 'Can Kill Frogs Within an Hour'

New research suggests the chemicals are playing a significant and previously unknown role in the global decline of amphibians. Tamsen Miller says "It amazes me that people are surprised that poison kills things."

January 24, 2013 by [The Guardian/UK](#)

### Abandoned Allotments

The Telegraph recently highlighted the increasing numbers of neglected and abandoned allotments and many tenants are being asked to quit. The article pointed out that television gardening programmes make gardening look easy and had inspired many people to get allotments only to find that they could not work it successfully. Anyone who has tried to keep even a modest patch of garden in pristine condition will be aware that a standard allotment (a tenth of an acre) is going to require substantial commitments of time and effort.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/plants/vegetables/allotments/9754198/Amateur-gardeners-inspired-by-TV-being-turfed-off-overgrown-allotments.html>

### Worst U.S. drought conditions in 50 years

The current drought in the US is essentially the same one that has been going on since 2010, and which last year encompassed more than 65% of the country, more than at any time since the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. It is having some impacts that make it tough to ignore. In 2012, more than 9 million acres went up in flames. Only dredging and some eleventh-hour rain kept the mighty Mississippi River from being shut down to navigation due to low water levels; continuing drought conditions make "long-term stabilization" of river levels unlikely in the near future. Several of the Great Lakes are soon expected to hit their lowest levels in history. In Nebraska last summer, a 100-mile stretch of the Platte River simply dried up. Drought led the US Department of Agriculture to declare federal disaster areas in 2,245 counties in 39 states last year, and the federal government will likely have to pay tens of billions for crop insurance and lost crops. As ranchers became increasingly desperate to feed their livestock, "hay rustling" and other agricultural crimes rose.

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/01/18-12>

### 2012: The Year We Did Our Best to Abandon the Natural World

Emissions are rising, ice is melting and yet the response of governments is simply to pretend that none of it is happening

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/01/01>

### What India Taught Me About How to End Hunger

Back in the 1960s, Frances Moore Lappé realized that hunger is caused by a scarcity of democracy, not food. At root, the problem is one of concentrations of social power so extreme that, from far-flung fields to the global supermarket, people are deprived not only of food, but of dignity and of confidence in their own proven capacities. Then, a collective of courageous women farmers showed her how things had changed.

"Twenty years ago we were so poor that in the rainy season our hut floors would turn to mud and we had to pile up branches to sleep on. We were always hungry. We depended on government ration cards. Sometimes the big landowner would pay us for a job with some grains and that would be the only food for



## Meopham Garden Association

our children. We were so poor we had only one sari—not even a second one to change into when we bathe. Our life was dictated by bigger people. We had to suffer, even if they beat us. It was a dark time."

"We started meeting, talking. Every week now, at nine in the evening our sanghams [groups of women] come together and make decisions together. We tell each other our problems. If someone has been abused, all of us go together to confront the abuser. And now if there is a conflict in our village, they call on us. Through our sanghams we've reclaimed the land. We don't use any chemicals. We grow as many as 25 crops on an acre or two. Every family has food security now."

<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/02/03-1>

### **GM Crops**

Anyone who knows of the modus operandi of the agro chemical industry will recognise that a couple of articles in the Telegraph warn of a campaign to soften up the people to accept the cultivation of GM crops. There is far too much damning evidence that it should be clear to any sentient being that GM food crops should never be acceptable in this country - or, indeed, Europe.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/9734528/European-Union-should-speed-up-relaxation-on-rules-governing-GM-crops-says-Downing-Street.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/9778705/Celebrities-GM-crusade-stops-science-feeding-the-poor-says-campaigner.html>

### **"In 2013, Our Fight Against GMO Food Continues"**

Last year Californians almost passed the first state wide mandatory labelling law for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) despite being outspent by a margin of 6 to 1 during the campaign. Proposition 37 was a citizens' ballot initiative that would have required the mandatory labelling of genetically engineered (GE) foods and put an end to the industry practice of fraudulently marketing GE-tainted foods as "natural" or "all natural". The industry is now likely to face similar ballots in other states and is unlikely to be able to continue funding opposition campaigns in them all. When one state eventually passes the initiative, then it is likely that all Americans will be able to learn what they are eating.

However, the food industry is working towards a Federal law on GM labelling that could undermine any state laws that might be passed.

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/01/03-9>

### **GM Salmon** (Not gardening, of course, but, supposedly, food)

On December 21, the Food and drug Administration announced that AquaBounty's genetically engineered salmon had cleared the final hurdle before clinching approval. Despite insufficient testing and widespread consumer opposition, AquaBounty's food experiment is dangerously close to becoming the first genetically engineered animal produced for human consumption. Not only does this ignore our fundamental right to know what we are putting on our plates, it's also a bad business decision. It's entirely possible that many Americans will avoid purchasing any salmon for fear it is genetically engineered.

AquaBounty used its own data to convince the FDA that it is safe to eat. But their profits are inextricably linked to approval of this salmon. It's outrageous that the FDA would take AquaBounty's word over that of dozens of lawmakers and scientists, including experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Fish and Wildlife Service, not to mention thousands of concerned consumers.

It is a difficult task to protect consumer safety, but it's hard to take the FDA seriously when it comes to genetically engineered salmon. So far, they've failed to conduct the appropriate studies to determine if the fish is safe to eat. Independent scientists have skewered the FDA's process, noting that serious environmental concerns have not been examined while food safety issues related to hormone levels and allergies have been glossed over.

Even AquaBounty's claim of faster growth rates is suspect. The company hasn't yet demonstrated that its transgenic salmon can grow any faster than salmon without its new traits but that's the reason they say it should be approved. SalmoBreed AS, a Norwegian company specializing in the selective breeding of Atlantic salmon, has directly challenged AquaBounty on this point.

<https://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/01/30-8>

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# Meopham Garden Association

If you happen to come across items that you think would be of interest to members and could be included in the newsletter, please contact Mike Hughes or speak to a committee member. Alternatively e-mail [news@meophamgardeners.co.uk](mailto:news@meophamgardeners.co.uk). The newsletter is published in February, May, August and November.

## **Members' Show**

The Members' Show starts at the February meeting and details of the classes can be found with the Monthly Programme in the 2013 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. The points are totalled at the end of the year and the entrants with the most points from each class 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.

## **Village Hall**

Members of the Village Hall Committee were looking into the possibility of installing a pull down screen on the stage. After much research, unfortunately it seems there is nowhere that would be suitable.

## **Other Local Events**

### **Meadow Room Events in Cobham**

#### **20<sup>th</sup> April                      St. George's Day Dinner / Dance**

Tickets, menu and discounted wine order are now available from the website link below or ring Mat on 01474 390054. During the dinner there will be a cabaret with local singer Alex Tomkin followed by the opportunity to have a dance.

<http://themeadowrooms.weebly.com/st-georges-day-dinner-dance.html>

#### **4<sup>th</sup> May                              Munchies on the Meadow**

A celebration of local food and drink from local producers. Local clubs and societies will also be present with a series of informative displays such as a cookery demonstration, hanging basket construction from our very own Liz Jardine and more. Live music from Clare & Co.

If you or an organisation you belong to would like to take part please use the contact page within the Meadow Room website

<http://themeadowrooms.weebly.com/munchies-on-the-meadow-2013.html>

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