



Photo: Jo Latimer

Spring 2016

July 11th 2016

Members' Mini-Show and Social Evening

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 bowl or pot of sweet peas grown from association seeds
2. A flowering pot plant (pot no larger than 20cm (8"))
3. A vase of garden flowers (Association vases will be provided)

Recent Events

February 8th Member's Forum & Seed Swap

We discussed what to do with daffodils after showing and what to feed them in summer – Jim Buttress, who entertained us last November with anecdotes from his long and distinguished gardening career, recommends potash. There were some interesting tips and comments on pruning fruit trees, the problem of buds drying and falling off, and some members reported that their ponds already had an excess of duckweed due to the mild winter. The seed swap included the sweet peas from autumn's "Guess the number of seeds in the jar" - our Vice-Chairman, Roy Lingham, guessed 8,200 - an amazing 58 short of the total!

February 21st Snowdrops & Hellebores at Meadow View, Hodsall Street

Once again Barbara Macknish opened her garden to the public to view her magnificent snowdrops and hellebores which looked stunning in spite of the dull day. The opening and subsequent sales of snowdrops has raised over £700 for the Eleanor Foundation.

March 14th 10 Best Plants for Summer Colour Jeanette Lerwill

Jeanette specialises in hardy perennials and ornamental grasses and offers advice on border design and planting. She talked to us about her top ten herbaceous perennials for summer colour, her criteria being low maintenance, easy to propagate, long flowering period and attractive to insects, her favourite being Bee Balm (Jeanette is also a beekeeper). We are now looking forward to a visit we have scheduled to her nursery and garden in July (Jeanette opens for the NGS every year).

March 19th Spring Show

An improved number of visitors attended the 2016 Spring Show on March 19th. They were greeted by the full colour and fragrance of spring, which filled Meopham Village Hall. The event was very well supported with over 210 entries received from 22 competitors, including two new exhibitors. We had another pleasing group of entries from 15 children for the drawing of "Peter Rabbit's garden" and 2 older entrants to the junior cooking class. Can I take this opportunity to remind members that show classes must be notified to us on the Thursday before the show, and also remind members to allow enough time for setting up on the Saturday.

Congratulations to the award winners. The Diploma for Best Bloom went to Claire Williams. Barbara Macknish won the Melliker Cup, the Hasler Vase and the Harvel Spring Challenge. Marian Rolt won the Oldham Goblet. The Meryl Burgess Salver was won by Enid Lander. I was very pleased to win the Chairman's Cup.

Thanks are due to all those who helped setting up on Friday night. Thanks also to those who were judges' stewards, those who donated lovely cakes and helped to run the tearoom, and those who worked on the plant stall and the raffle. Income from the show this Spring was greatly improved due to all the helpers and a real push on publicity. We must remember to continue this effort for the Autumn Show as this is traditionally when more people are away. Thanks particularly to Claire and to all the exhibitors who made the show possible.

Sharon Sperling

April 11th

Growing Iris for Chelsea

Sue Marshall

We were entertained at our April meeting by down to earth Sue Marshall, who started her talk from her decision to grow irises in pots in an ordinary back garden, when Sue and husband Harry lived opposite the castle in Sissinghurst. A year later, Sue was approached by a French grower, asking her to bring on some irises for Chelsea. Sue describes exhibiting at Chelsea as 'pleasure and pain' but she did pull off a Silver Gilt – a relationship was forged and Sue is sought out by other growers for insets in their show gardens. Sue is also involved in the Dyslexia and Demelza House charities' gardens. Last year Sue achieved a Gold medal for her own display.

April 22nd

Coach outing to King John's Nursery & Pashley Manor Tulip Festival



The old Orchard at King John's Nursery and some of the tulips at Pashley Manor

Photos: Jo Latimer

In the News

GLYPHOSATE

Jordans - maker of breakfast cereals and cereal snack bars - is reviewing its farming methods after tests carried out by the Government's official Pesticides Residues Monitoring Programme revealed that some of its products were found to contain residues of glyphosate, a powerful weedkiller. Warburtons bread also contained similar residues. The residues were well below the permitted EU maximum levels. However, glyphosate is found in sugar, corn, soy and wheat and has the effect of inhibiting a crucial action of a key enzyme, cytochrome P450, which detoxifies xenobiotics and thus enhances damage caused by other toxins. The effects are insidious and can lead to gastrointestinal disorders, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression, autism, infertility, cancer and Alzheimer's disease. In the United States the Food and Drug Administration has recently undertaken to test foods for residue. The agency has never tested for glyphosate, despite its status as the most heavily-used herbicide ever and a 'probable carcinogen'.

http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2217533/harmful_weedkiller_in_your_bread_and_cereal_bars.html
<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/02/17/about-time-fda-will-begin-testing-foods-toxic-weedkiller-residue>

AGRIBUSINESS VERSUS SELF SUFFICIENCY

In 2007, the UN FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) noted advantages of organic agriculture as fossil-fuel free and using locally available assets. Organic models work with natural processes, increase cost-effectiveness and show resilience in the face of climatic stress. The FAO concluded that using crop rotations and mixed cropping, organic farmers intensify production in a sustainable way and that organic agriculture could remove indebtedness for agricultural inputs that often leads farmers to suicide.

Colin Todhunter says that food and agriculture is in crisis worldwide. Food is becoming denutriented, unhealthy, poisoned with chemicals and diets are becoming less diverse. There is a loss of plant and insect diversity, which threatens food security, soils are being degraded, water tables polluted and depleted and smallholder farmers, so vital to global food production, are being squeezed off their land and out of farming. In contrast, a minority of the global population has access to so much food that it can afford to waste much of it, while food poverty and inequality have become a fact of life for hundreds of millions.

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

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk



This crisis stems from food and agriculture being wedded to power structures that serve the interests of the powerful agribusiness corporations in the Western countries, especially the US. Over the last 60 years or so, Washington's plan has been to restructure indigenous agriculture across the world. And this plan has been geopolitical in nature: subjugating nations by getting them to rely more on US imports and to grow less of their own food. This is what happened when NAFTA came into force in Mexico under the banner of 'free trade'.

Agriculture and food production and distribution have become globalised and tied to an international system of trade based on export-oriented mono-cropping, commodity production for the international market, indebtedness to international financial institutions (IMF/World Bank) and the need for nations to boost foreign exchange (US dollar) reserves to repay debt (which neatly boosts demand for the dollar, the lynch pin of US global dominance). This has resulted in food surplus and food deficit areas, of which the latter have become dependent on (US) agricultural imports and strings-attached aid. Food deficits in the global South mirror food surpluses in the West.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/03/07/poisoned-marginalised-bankrupt-and-dead/>

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/04/11/capitalism-and-global-agribusiness-from-ford-to-monsanto-its-for-your-own-good/>

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/03/29/global-agribusiness-dependency-and-the-marginalisation-of-self-sufficiency-organic-farming-and-agroecology/>

BEES

Minnesota has compensated two beekeepers who say their hives were damaged by a controversial strain of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, in the first test of a ground breaking 2014 state law. "This is the first action of any state, a finding of fact, that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees," state Sen. Rick Hansen, a co-sponsor of the 2014 bill, told the *Star Tribune*. "Once you have a state compensating people for a loss, it's real." The state Department of Agriculture confirmed that these pesticides, which are in widespread use throughout the country, are harmful to bees even when used properly.

<http://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/03/21/first-use-landmark-law-minnesota-confirms-neonics-harm-bees>

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/20/pesticides-neonicotinoids-linked-bee-decline-first-time-large-scale-field-study>

GM

GMO Myths and Truths: A Citizen's Guide to the Evidence on the Safety and Efficacy of Genetically Modified Crops and Foods, 3rd Edition, by Claire Robinson Mphil, Michael Antoniou PhD and John Fagan PhD

"Many who defend the use of GMO crops and foods claim that there is no evidence that any GMO is harmful to health or the environment. But this is wrong. There is plenty of sound empirical evidence of such harm, presented by qualified scientists in peer-reviewed literature. This book is a succinct summary and documentation of that evidence." – Richard Jennings, PhD, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge, UK.

A report by US Right to Know ('Seedy Business: What Big Food is Hiding with Its Slick PR Campaign on GMOs'), outlines how agrichemical firms have spent more than \$100 million since 2012 on political and PR campaigns to shift the media narrative on GMOs. The non-profit food research group is now calling on media to accurately report that the science on GMOs contradicts the narrative that has been controlled by corporations that profit from GMO seeds and the pesticides that go with them.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/03/02/an-essential-citizens-guide-to-the-truth-about-gm-crops-and-food/>

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/big-food-corporate-power-grab-gmos-are-safe-the-propaganda-spin-of-the-pro-gmo-lobby/5432777>

SLUGS

Last year's wet summer, followed by one of the warmest winters on record, has helped to create a generation of sleepless slugs, wildlife experts have warned. It has not been cold enough to send the creatures into hibernation and a decline in populations of many of the slugs' predators, such as amphibians and hedgehogs, was also a factor.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-36166774>

CARBON DIOXIDE

A new study has found that carbon dioxide emissions have driven a huge growth in trees and other plants. Climate sceptics argue that the extra CO2 benefits the planet. However the effect diminishes over time and is outweighed by the life-threatening negatives such as sea level rise, ocean acidification and the increased severity of floods, droughts, wildfires and storms.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-36130346>

<http://www.permaculture.co.uk/> is often a source of interesting ideas.

The Web links can be activated by going to www.meophamgardeners.co.uk and viewing the newsletters.