



Winter at East Malling Research

Photo: Jo Latimer

## Winter 2016

### Spring Show 19 March 2016

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 2016 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. You may also e-mail your entries to the shows email address using the entry form available from the Shows part of the website 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.

**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.*



## Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

- February 8 Gardener's Forum and Seed Swap  
February 21 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 14 10 Best Plants for Summer Colour Jeanette from Wheelgate Nursery  
March 19 Spring Show Doors open at 3pm  
April 11 Growing Iris for Chelsea Sue Marshall  
April 22 Coach outing to the Tulip Festival at Pashley Manor  
May 9 Gardening More Impact Less Effort Alison Marsden

Looking further ahead, here are our planned outings for the rest of the year:

- June 13 Evening visit to Peter Cox Roses at Hoo (this is our June meeting)  
July 15 Afternoon visit to Wheelgate Nursery & Garden in Marden  
September 9 Runnymede Boat Trip & The Savill Gardens, Windsor Great Park

## Recent Events

- November 9 60 Years in Horticulture Jim Buttress

Jim entertained us with many anecdotes about his long career in gardening.

- December 14 Christmas Social & AGM

The AGM was held at the start of the evening. Afterwards we enjoyed homemade warm mince pies and mulled punch. There was also a quick presentation of the design concept for the Village Hall garden.

## Members' Show

The Members' Show starts at the February meeting and details of the classes can be found with the Monthly Programme in the 2016 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.

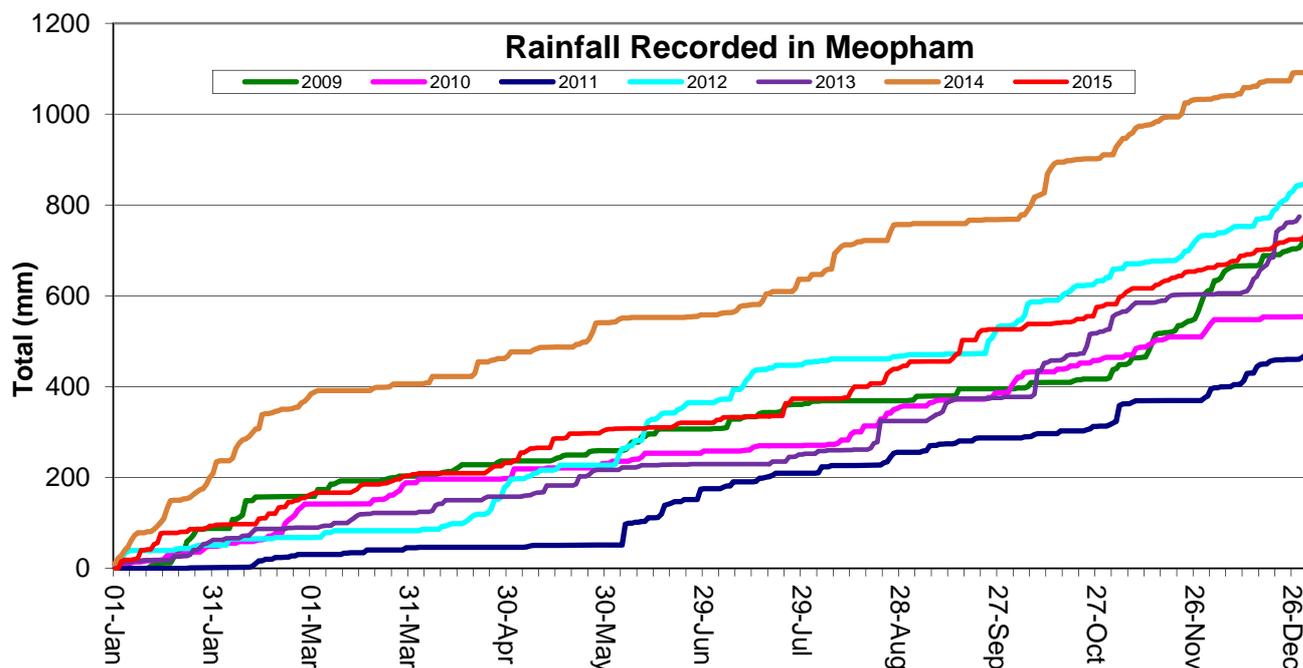
## Plant Stall

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 their sale. It is your responsibility to take any that have not sold away with you at the end of the meeting. 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.

## The Climate in 2015

The graph overleaf displays the cumulative rainfall over the last 7 years. The total rainfall recorded for 2015 was 736mm (29").

The following statistics are from the Met Office and the averaging period referred to is 1981–2010.



It was a stormy, mild start to the year but the second half of January and early February were cold. The heavy rain and strong winds returned for the second half February. Mean temperatures were just below average and it was wetter than normal in Kent although overall sunshine levels were well above average. Despite an unsettled beginning and end, March was drier and sunnier than average for us. Warm, still conditions early in April gave very poor air quality. A high of 25.6°C was recorded at Faversham on the 15<sup>th</sup>, but the end of April was cold with some sharp frosts. May was provisionally the coldest since 1996. It was also substantially wetter than average. June began wet with unseasonably strong winds and continued rather cool but dry and bright. It was the sixth month out of the last seven to be sunnier than average for the UK. A developing heatwave saw Heathrow record 32.5°C on June 30<sup>th</sup> and the hottest July day on record with 36.7°C on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Despite hot start, July was fairly cool and wet with about average sunshine. Strong winds and heavy rain on the 24<sup>th</sup> caused flooding on the London Underground. August was cool and provisionally our wettest August since 1977. A maximum temperature of 30.9°C was recorded at Kew Gardens and Gravesend on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Although a fairly sunny month, September was the coolest since 1994. Much of the country enjoyed clear skies for the supermoon lunar eclipse overnight 27 - 28 September. The minimum (-1.3°C) and maximum (24°C) temperatures for the month were both recorded at Braemar on the 30<sup>th</sup>. October was fairly settled and mild. It was also the driest October since 2007. Again Braemar recorded both the minimum (-5.0°C on the 17<sup>th</sup>) and maximum (22.7°C on the 1<sup>st</sup>) temperatures. It was another very mild Halloween.

In contrast to the generally settled weather of the previous two months, November was notably unsettled. The arrival of the season's first three named storms, Abigail, Barney and Clodagh, brought strong winds and heavy rain. Of the three, Barney affected southern England the most. Apart from a brief cold snap 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>, when we even had a little snow fall in Meopham, there was a notable absence of frost. The 22.4°C recorded at Trawsgoed (Ceredigion) on the 1<sup>st</sup>, was a new UK record for November. The mean temperature for November was provisionally 2.4 °C above average, making it the third warmest November in a series from 1910. It was a generally wet month and provisionally the equal dullest November since records began in 1929.

More records were broken with December being the warmest December on record with temperatures in excess of 17°C recorded. Our mean temperatures were 5-6°C above the average and it felt more like May. However with storms Desmond, Eva and Frank it was provisionally our wettest December and UK calendar month with widespread severe flooding. 341.4mm (almost 13.5") of rain fell at Honister Pass in Cumbria in 24 hours to 1800 GMT on the 5<sup>th</sup>, a new UK record rainfall for *any* 24 hours. It was also the dullest December since 1989.

## In the News

### Bees

Jonathan Lundgren, a top federal scientist from South Dakota says he's being punished for publicizing work on pesticides and pollinators. He found that bees and monarch butterflies can be harmed by a widely used class of insecticides. Once he started publishing this work, he went from golden boy to pariah. Lundgren's 11-year career at USDA appeared stellar. He had excellent performance reviews. USDA even named him its Outstanding Early Career Research Scientist in 2011. That all changed when Lundgren began to study how neonicotinoid insecticides affect bees and other beneficial insects. His research and work travel fell under intense scrutiny and he was suspended for violating agency protocols. In a complaint to a federal whistleblower protection board, his lawyer contends that pressure from the pesticide industry has led USDA to stifle scientists like Lundgren. The UK government is also gagging its advisors.

<http://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/10/28/bee-expert>

<http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2015/11/30/sd-researcher-receive-civic-courage-award/76562320/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jul/17/government-gags-pesticide-advisers-refusal-support-bee-harming-neonicotinoids>

### Agriculture

A new study has concluded that the Trans Atlantic Trade & Investment Agreement (TTIP) threatens to completely change the way small and medium sized farms operate, through the use of more genetic engineering and more hormone-treated meat. Europe's farmers are in the midst of a crisis, with milk prices at rock-bottom, continuing EU sanctions against Russia and smallholders going under. But the knockout punch could still be yet to come, with the looming behemoth of TTIP, the planned free trade agreement between the EU and USA, on the horizon. If, as intended by negotiators on both sides of the Atlantic, standards in the agri-food industry are harmonised between the two trading blocs, then entire sectors of European agriculture could be endangered.

Recently, 23,000 farmers and consumers protested in Berlin against the agro-industry's efforts to lobby their wish list for more GMO food, less regulations on chemicals, and easing of food safety standards into TTIP. In the United Kingdom, a new campaign "Business Against TTIP" has been launched to defend the interests of small and medium sized enterprises – joining the coalition of over 4,000 entrepreneurs from Germany and Austria that have already been raising their voices against the proposed EU-US free trade agreement.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/01/19/the-ttip-and-the-downfall-of-european-agriculture/>

Stop TTIP [info@stop-ttip.org]

[https://secure.avaaz.org/en/monsanto\\_dont\\_silence\\_science\\_eu\\_rb2/?b|znEib&v=67651](https://secure.avaaz.org/en/monsanto_dont_silence_science_eu_rb2/?b|znEib&v=67651)

### GM, Chemicals and Hunger

Corporate interests in the West have condemned tens of millions to hardship. In collusion with the World Bank, IMF and WTO, agriculture has for many decades been an important means by which US foreign policy has created dependence and subservience. The current global system of unsustainable chemical-industrial agriculture (which GMOs form part of) and World Trade Organisation rules that agritech companies helped draw up for their benefit to get their products into countries are a major cause of structural hunger and poverty and environmental destruction.

The pro-GMO lobby has a history of engaging in abuse, emotional blackmail and the smearing of critics. Anyone who opposes GM crops or food is painted as an enemy of the poor because they take food from their bellies or are even "murdering bastards," according to Evans's colleague Patrick Moore (he of 'I'll drink a quart of glyphosate' fame, before hurling abuse at the interviewer as he stormed out of the interview).

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/01/28/the-seeds-of-spin-decoding-pro-gmo-lies-and-falsehoods/>

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/11/13/unmasking-the-gmo-humanitarian-narrative/>

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/11/11/who-granted-the-gmo-evangelists-the-monopoly-on-compassion/>

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

at [www.meophamgardeners.co.uk](http://www.meophamgardeners.co.uk)