



Photo: Jo Latimer

Spring 2017

June 12th 2017

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 need to pre-book your entries, just bring them along on the evening and exhibit. There is no charge to members but for £2.50 non-members will also be welcome to come along and take part.

The classes are as follows:

1. A single cut rose for fragrance
2. A vase of garden flowers (Association vases will be provided))
3. A flowering pot plant (pot no larger than 20cm (8"))



Forthcoming Events

May 8th All Things Nutty **Alexander Hunt**
Members' Show: a) 3 stems of rhubarb b) Members' choice

Friday June 9th Coach Outing to West Dean, Chichester

Botanical gardens, restored Victorian glasshouses, pergola and walled kitchen garden – coach and entrance £19. Pick up from three points in Meopham from 9.15 am. We have room for visitors and friends. Bring a packed lunch and have more time to peruse the plants for sale and take home lots of goodies.

June 12th MGA Members' Summer Mini Show - Social evening & Slide Show
See front page of newsletter for details

July 10th Evening Visit to Meadow View, Hodsoll Street, TN15 7LA
Note the earlier start time of 7pm. No Members' Show

August 14th History of Millbrook **Tammy Woodhouse**
Members' Show: a) pot of pelargonium b) Members' choice

The programme for 2017 and can also be found on our website: www.meophamgardeners.co.uk, which includes news of our various activities in 2017 and also previous years.

Please remember to check the tea rota if you have volunteered this year.

Recent Events

February 13th Gardeners' Forum (chaired by Barbara Macknish and Hazel Borrow)

2017 kicked off with a lively debate on what not to put in a new pond. Barbara said the yellow Iris Pseudacorus grows to 5ft tall and is very vigorous. Keep to the smaller varieties of water lilies and wash all plants before placing in the pond to rid them of duckweed.

Q. "Why do young cucumbers go yellow and drop?" Fred replied that the plant is telling you it has too many fruits, take the flowers off the main stem and also thin the horizontal flowers.

Janet's tip: "Check your over-wintered pot plants, even if they look healthy, the pots might be inhabited by Vine Weevil grubs". Tip out the plant and, if you find any, dispose of the soil – your resident Robin will eat the grubs. Mike Hughes suggested Nematodes, or plunge the pots into water for a few days to drown the grubs.

Seed Swap - Members had been collecting and donating seeds for the seed swap and further contributions were brought to the meeting. Unfinished packets of shop-bought seed also added to the variety available.

The February meeting was also the time to renew our membership for the year and we were glad to see some new members joining us. Membership is now £20 per annum and this is still good value for the variety of interesting talks from experts on gardening and related topics, practical demonstrations and other events.

MGA Membership cards –we have a card this year instead of the usual book. Information on shows, show rules, club officers etc. previously provided by the book is now on the website. However, it is recommended that members keep last year's book as it is a handy reference.

Provender Trade Cards - these give members a discount and are held by Hazel, Barbara, Gail, Roy and Claire. Provender Nursery also held an open day on the last Saturday in February.



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

The garden opening was well supported by the local community and it raised £500 for the Ellenor Lions Hospices and £65 for the Village Hall Roof Fund. By 11 o'clock the sun was shining and the snowdrops, hellebores, crocus and primroses that everyone had come to see carpeting the ground were opening their flowers. Winter flowering shrubs scented the still, warm air with their fragrance and much interest was shown in the living sculpture fashioned from a dwarf red willow. The tea-room and plant stalls were busy with visitors taking advantage of the bargains to be had among the pots of snowdrop cultivars on offer.

Barbara Macknish would like to thank everyone who supported this event and her small team of helpers for their hard work on the day.

March 13th Film Night

Gail previewed the planned film on British Flowers and decided to opt instead for a video of the National Trust's 'finest gardens through the year', which went behind the scenes for fascinating conversations with the Head Gardeners at our Sissinghurst, Knightshayes Court in Devon, Biddulph Grange in Stoke and Powys Castle. It was an insight into the jobs carried out each season, including teams of volunteers tying in massive walls of arching climbing roses and staking staggering numbers of dahlias.

March 18th Spring Show

The attendance was good and there was an abundance of flowers. The judges all commented on the quality of the exhibits. The deep purple hyacinths and the Dutch Master daffodils selected last Autumn especially for the show produced magnificent blooms in spite of the cold winter and their unmistakable scent filled the hall.

Congratulations to the award winners. The Diploma for Best Bloom went to Barbara Macknish. Elizabeth Thomas won the Melliker Cup and the Chairman's Cup. Enid Lander won the Hasler Vase and the Meryl Burgess Salver. The Harvel Spring Challenge was won by Lorraine Halls and the Oldham Goblet was won by Gill Carpenter.

Our thanks to the people who made it happen: Claire, Jill and Sharon, show organisers, Elizabeth, Janet and co in the tearoom, Joan and Rosemary with the raffle, Moya, Lesley and the team on the plant stall, the stewards, everyone who worked so hard setting up and clearing away and, of course, the Judges.

April 10th Growing Sweet Peas

Caroline Halfpenny

Caroline replaced our advertised speaker and in spite of technical difficulties leaving her without her Power-point presentation, delivered an absorbing talk on growing sweet peas and other flowers for cutting. Caroline is a former lecturer at Hadlow College and members took advantage of her extensive knowledge turning the evening into a mini Question Time. Amongst other things, we now know to cut off the tendrils on Sweet Peas and tie in the climbing stems instead, which will conserve the plant's energy for flowering, and to ensure that the plants have a horizontal root run, which they prefer. We are hoping to invite Caroline for another talk at a later date.

South Eastern Railways

If you're interested in getting involved with a gardening project at your local station then visit southeasternrailway.co.uk/contact-us and get in touch.



Did you know?

Hedgehogs are great swimmers. However, they can struggle to get out of steep-sided ponds, so provide them with a ramp from a plank wrapped in chicken wire, or create shallow areas at the edge so they can scramble out (Devon Wildlife Trust). The spiny mammal roots through hedges and other undergrowth in search of food, emitting pig-like grunts, hence the name Hedgehog.

There are more than 650 species of **Spider** in the UK, most are harmless (Arachnophobes please look away now) and only a few larger species have fangs that can pierce human skin. Even the noble false widow, which arrived from the Canary Islands and spread through Southern England, has a bite no worse than a bee or wasp sting (RHS). It is dark in colour and looks as though it has a white skull on its back. Our black and yellow garden spider is distinguished by a spotty cross on its back. They feed on flying insects and, unfortunately for gardeners, tend to ignore greenflies. In May, huge numbers of tiny golden spiderlings hatch in a streaming mass from a silk cocoon and literally glow in the sunlight - it can be quite a spectacular sight.



Photo: False Widow *Steatoda nobilis* (by Brian Smith) www.uksafari.com



www.alamy.com - EJX5GH



In the News

EU Fertiliser Ban

The March issue of Gardening Which carries a short announcement that the EU proposes to ban polymers used in controlled release fertilisers. The reason for the ban is that these polymers are not biodegradable and can cause environmental damage. So if this ban comes into force, there will be a period of several years until biodegradable coatings are developed during which gardeners will need to monitor and control the feeding of their plants.

Weedkiller Damage

Also in the March issue, there is a report that in 2016 two types of growing bags from Levington contained weedkiller and caused distortion of the top growth of tomatoes that were on trial. The same formulation will not be available this year so, although it is always worthwhile being alert to this problem, it is very unlikely that this problem will recur.

Fungicide Threat to Bees

In the April issue of Gardening Which there is a report on research from the University of Illinois implicating the fungicide myclobutanil in the decline of bee numbers. Traces of the fungicide in pollen that bees feed on apparently causes them to have less energy and thus limits their foraging range.

European Parliament Votes to Ban most uses of Glyphosate

The European Parliament voted 374 to 225 to adopt a resolution on 13 April 2017 strongly opposing the Commission's proposal to reapprove the controversial weedkiller glyphosate for use in Europe for 15 years. Unfortunately, this resolution is not binding on the Commission, but calls for strong criticism of the Commission on a number of grounds. Pesticides campaigner Georgina Downs points out that even if the Parliament's position was adopted by EU Governments, millions of rural residents would still be at risk from agricultural use of glyphosate. Health impacts of Glyphosate include: reproductive effects, endocrine disruption, carcinogenicity, genotoxicity, neurotoxicity, internal organ toxicity together with adverse environmental and agronomic effects.

http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_round_up/2987554/european_parliament_votes_to_ban_most_uses_of_glyphosate.html
http://www.i-sis.org.uk/Why_Glyphosate_Should_be_Banned.php

Genetically Modified Organisms

Colin Todhunter, in Counterpunch, points out that campaigner, Rosemary Mason, has grave concerns that the UK "Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations" (OMC) has allegiances with various global corporations that could undermine the neutrality and credibility of the commission and went on to name certain individuals and noted their links to corporate power.

For example, there is Sir John Beddington, Professor of Natural Resources Management for the OMC, and his position on the debate about genetically modified (GM) food and crops. Beddington was made Chief Scientific Adviser to the British Government in 2007. In 2012, he declared his faith in GM technology. Mason quotes him as saying, "And among those scientific wonders, the use of genetically modified crops has a particularly rich potential... Just look at the problems that the world faces: water shortages and salination of existing water supplies, for example. GM crops should be able to deal with that."

Scientists are fond of telling everyone that GM technology can fix the world food problem. This assumes there is a 'problem' as they define it (food shortage); but any problem that does exist has less to do with the world's inability to feed itself and more to do with political issues related to food distribution, access to land, inequality and so on as well as inappropriate models of economic and social development that have adversely impacted indigenous agriculture and regional food security.

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2017/02/15/pro-gmo-scientists-blinded-by-technology-and-wedded-to-ideology/>



Meopham Garden Association

Spring at Great Comp and Hole Park



Photos: Jo Latimer

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

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk