



## Spring 2018

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2018**  
**Members' Mini-Show and Social Evening**

Our Summer Mini Show is on a smaller scale than the Spring and Autumn Shows, with the winners voted for by those present. There is no charge to members, but for just £2.50 non-members are also welcome to come along and take part in the show and social evening. There is no need to pre-book your entries, just bring them on the evening to exhibit. 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"))**

This year's Social will be a series of short quizzes and games, with small teams circulating around the hall until all the members and visitors have played each other and everyone knows everyone else a bit better! There will be prizes to be won, so bring your clever friends/grandchildren/neighbours!

There will also be a raffle, plant stall and refreshments.



## Forthcoming Events

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June – Summer Mini Show and Social Evening (see above)**

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July - Evening Garden Visit, at the earlier time of 6.30 pm**

(please note that this replaces the Monday meeting and there will be no Members' Show)

**Potash Farm, St Mary's Platt** – Alexander Hunt gave us a very interesting talk on growing Kentish cobnuts and walnuts last May. If you wish to go please contact Gill Carpenter and pay the entry fee of £12.50 in advance, this includes a tour and a talk, refreshments and a goody bag to take home.

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> August – talk by Nigel Gibson from Provender Nurseries**

Members' Show: a) pot of pelargonium b) Members' choice

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> August – Full days' coach trip to Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire**

The cost for the coach and entry to the gardens is £22 per person, this excludes lunch/refreshments. Pick up times around 9.30am. Situated just outside Oxford, Waterperry is eight acres of beautifully landscaped gardens – classical borders, modern planting, secret corners and long vistas.

## Recent Events

**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> February – Gardeners Forum**

The February meeting's Gardeners' Forum inspired some lively discussion on subjects such as the plum moth – Carol suggested pheromone traps, which use the scent of the female moth to trap the male moth, preventing them from mating with the females. Only spray fruit trees when the blossom has finished and prune in June or July.

Elizabeth said her brown fig which was not doing so well since planting it in the ground. It fruits better with a restricted root run, in the pot the roots were contained, but a good root run produces a lot of foliage. Prune half the roots and cut the branches back to five leaves.

Q. Is it possible to grow an apple tree in a pot? Brian answered that there are apple varieties that suit pots, although cross pollinating might be a problem with a single cordon. Pomona Fruits are good for apples, also pears such as Concorde.

Jill wanted to feed her snowdrops – leaves take a long time to compost down, turn them into leaf mould for acid-loving plants in a black bag, spiked with holes to let the water run through. On to our favourite subject, compost! Add well-matured horse manure, mixed with straw is fine, and shredded newspaper (make sure it is wet). Jiggle the compost to aerate it. A wormery provides concentrated liquid manure and is very easy to manage.

Barbara gave us some handy hints on showing flowers, demonstrating how to show daffodils using oasis, sphagnum moss and a knitting needle! We were surprised to learn that daffs need to be out of bud for ten days for the angle of the flower to be just right.

**Seed Swap** – there were some unusual varieties of flower and vegetable seeds on offer and it will be interesting to hear how members got on with them later in the year.



The February meeting was also the time to renew our membership and we are very happy to welcome some new members this year. MGA Membership is good value at £20 per annum for the variety of interesting talks from experts on gardening and related topics, practical demonstrations and other events. Members also receive discount at local garden centres (see Reminders).

## **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March - Victoria Golding from Kent Wildlife Trust: 'Wildlife on your Doorstep'**

The speaker at our March meeting was Victoria Golding from Kent Wildlife Trust. The Adonis Blue (the KWT logo) the Chalkhill Blue, Small Blue and Grizzled Skipper love Kent's chalky grasslands, with up to 50 species of flowering plants per square meter. It was interesting to learn that old ant hills show that land has never been ploughed and for hundreds of years has been calcareous grassland. The Government is less interested these days in SSIs. However, in sixty years KWT have amassed a staggering 85 reserves across Kent in order to protect our 'green lungs' and preserve habitats for birds and waterfowl, small mammals and reptiles.

KWT has reintroduced the cricket and tries to protect endangered species, such as the water vole, by controlling predators like the American non-native mink. Victoria explained that KWT put sheets of corrugated iron out on their reserves in order to provide a safe, dry haven for the adders, grass snakes and slow worms, which love the downs. In order to control invasive plants it also grazes goats and sheep, such as the hardy Herdwicks, on meadows and rough areas, and Highland cattle on marshes and heath land.

## **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> March – Spring Show**

The Spring Show carried on in spite of the incredibly sudden change in the weather. The consistent snowfall did understandably put people off coming out, thankfully not the exhibitors, with 182 entries in all. There was an excellent show of flowers and the domestic crafts and juniors were also well-supported. The fruit and vegetable section was smaller than usual, but a mention has to be given to Lorraine's magnificent parsnips! Many thanks to all who helped to organise and stage the show and the folk who staffed the tearoom, plant stall and raffle.

Congratulations to the cup winners, who are:

<b><i>Chairman's Cup</i></b>	<i>Lesley Foxwell</i>
<b><i>Melliker Cup</i></b>	<i>Moya Church</i>
<b><i>Hasler Vase</i></b>	<i>Barbara Macknish</i>
<b><i>Oldham Goblet</i></b>	<i>Gill Carpenter</i>
<b><i>Diploma</i></b>	<i>Barbara Macknish</i>
<b><i>Harvel Spring Challenge</i></b>	<i>Barbara Macknish</i>
<b><i>Meryl Burgess Salver</i></b>	<i>Enid Lander</i>

Roy Lingham accompanied the main judge around the show and said the overriding comments were on the generally high standard of entries (particularly in view of the poor weather preceding) and presentation! These are just some of the comments Roy noted down, which may prove helpful for future shows:



- 1 hyacinths - presentation dictated 1<sup>st</sup>; 2<sup>nd</sup>. Some not as well planted (spacing)
- 2 daffs - difficult, as some had split multi-blooms. Again, presentation counted
- 8 daffs (other than div. 1 & 6) nothing outstanding
- 12 5 stems under 6"; some very tight to the limit!
- 14 3 trumpet daffs; again, presentation varied. Face forward, mask oasis
- 15 3 daffs, single; yet again, presentation let some entries down, but generally nice blooms
- 18 3 daffs, multi-headed; did well to achieve flowering stage
- 19 3 hellebore; some discounted as too many buds; better cohesion with single variety
- 31 3 stems different flowering shrubs; clarify – different varieties or species
- 33 bowl of alpines; good density for winner

## Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April - talk by Caroline Halfpenny on Monet's Garden

Caroline is a professional gardener and has lived in Meopham for thirty years. The Monet Foundation invited Caroline to volunteer for five weeks in Monet's garden at Giverny, where he lived until 1926.

Monet was obsessed with colour and the five acre garden is an artist's palette, with monochromatic beds and planting which provides unity with the blue roof and pink walls of the house - the Spring beds are always blue, mauve and white. Roses are planted in pots and the delicate fragrance of the pale yellow Rosa Mermaid wafts into the house as it climbs past the open windows.

The gardens and lakes are maintained to look like Monet's paintings, each year a boat is taken on to the lake to cull the water lilies and the willows are cut back to reach the same length over the water. Red flowers at the water's edge are reflected in the lake and the surrounding plants emphasise the colours of the water lilies. Monet played with recessive dark blues and purples, and bi-coloured plants such as rudbeckia, to deliberately move the eye around the garden.

The French gardeners are not college trained, knowledge is passed from generation to generation – nasturtium stems are turned over every day so that more buds grow on the side exposed to the sun; irises are stripped of leaves to shock them into flowering. The garden slopes away from the house, but cleverly, shorter plants at the top graduating to taller plants at the bottom of the beds give the impression that the garden is flat. Bedding plants are discarded after flowering to make way for a second planting and everything is grown from seed in state of the art greenhouses, which react to wind and temperature.



However, hardly any pesticides are used and the garden is riddled with pests and diseases, also, as no organic matter is added to the soil, yellowing leaves show a lack of nitrogen and some beds have parched, bare edges. Caroline's beautifully illustrated talk was filled with many fascinating insights from behind the scenes but sadly, there just isn't room to mention them all.

**Rosa Mermaid**, according to David Austin Roses, is semi-evergreen, climbs up to 9 metres/30 feet, likes full sun and all soil types, attracts bees, is remontant (repeat flowering) and the abundant canary yellow blooms are up to 5 inches across with pronounced sulphur yellow stamens, and it flowers as long as the warm weather lasts – it sounds superb!





## A Few Reminders

**MGA Membership cards** – we will have a card again this year instead of the book - information on shows, show rules, club officers etc. is on the website: [www.meophamgardeners.co.uk](http://www.meophamgardeners.co.uk). However, it is recommended that members keep the book for handy reference.

**Millbrook Garden Centre** – we have been offered 10% discount on all plants so long as your membership card is produced at the till to prove that you are a fully paid up member of Meopham Gardeners. Please note that the discount only applies to plant sales.

More good news - we have been offered 10% discount by **Fairseat Garden Centre** and also **Walnut Hill Nursery** – details on presenting ID to follow.

**Provender Trade Cards** – these are held by Hazel, Barbara, Gail, Roy and Claire. Provender Nurseries is in Leydenhatch Lane, Swanley, BR8 7PS.

**Monthly Raffle** – if you have any gardening-related articles suitable for the raffle, please bring them to any meeting. We will happily accept wine and chocolates too!

**Items for Sale** – if you have any tools or pots in good condition but have no further use for them why not try selling them? Larger items can be advertised on the notice board. If items are sold, all the club asks is for 10% of the sale price.

**Penny Jars** – we raised **£81.50** in just a few months – thank you!

We are going to start saving our pennies again for the **Help Raise the Roof** appeal for Meopham Village Hall as unfortunately the fund still falls short of the total needed – please pick up your jar at the May meeting (or please do recycle your own jar) if you would like to participate.





## In the News

### A Garden for Bees

Nature's Home, the RSPB Magazine, features an article about a garden in Hackney, London that is dedicated to supporting bees of all kinds. The challenge is to provide nectar and pollen even in winter, and there is a reference to the Wildlife Gardening Forum of 2016 where some of the very best flowers for different bees are featured. Large patches of blue flowers serve bees well and perennial wallflowers, Welsh poppy, Echinops, sage, thyme and rosemary are recommended.

### Water Shortages

Which? Gardening for April carries a warning from water companies that ground water levels are low and they are asking people to conserve water and use it carefully.

Which? Recommends carrot-fly resistant varieties which performed better in trials than other means of controlling the pest.

### No Dig Potatoes

Scarlett Penn, writing in the spring issue of Permaculture, places cardboard directly on grass, sets a seed potato on top and then covers it with biomass – anything to hand – grass clippings, dead foliage, compostable sticks. She does not water and needs only to move the composted biomass away to harvest the crop.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrONHXUU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrONHXUU)

In the summer issue, there is an article by Stephanie Hafferty entitled 'No Dig for any Size Garden' which highlights examples of no dig on several scales and discusses plants to grow or forage for home composting.

### Wisley Trees Saved

Highways England will improve the M25/A3 interchange without disturbing 10,000 sq m of ancient woodland at RHS Wisley.

### GMO

Richard John Roberts, a prominent biochemist and molecular biologist on his recent visits to India, he talked about the supposed virtues of genetically modified (GM) food and crops, while attacking people who have valid concerns about the technology. As a Fellow of the Royal Society, Roberts should be aware of the Society's misleading and exaggerated statements that it has used to actively promote genetically modified organisms (GMOs) since the mid-1990s.

Steven Druker argued that the Royal Society has engaged in a campaign of disinformation and the smearing of credible research that has showed firm evidence pointing to health dangers of GM. He added there is not now nor never has been a consensus within the scientific community that GM foods are safe.

In 2015, Steven Druker challenged the Royal Society to justify its outspoken and partisan support of genetically modified (GM) crops and to correct any errors of fact in his book 'Altered Genes, Twisted Truth'. Not long after the book's release, he wrote an open letter to the Society calling on it to acknowledge and correct the misleading and exaggerated statements that it has used to actively promote genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and in effect convey false impressions. Almost three years later the Royal Society has not responded to Druker.

He cited specific instances where members of the Royal Society have made false statements and the Society's actions were not objective or based on scientific reasoning but biased and stridently pro-GMO. He argued that the Royal Society has misrepresented the case for GMOs and has effectively engaged in a campaign of disinformation.

In August 2017, he wrote: "For more than 20 years, many eminent scientists and scientific institutions have routinely claimed that genetically modified foods are safe. And because of the perceived authority of their pronouncements, most government officials and members of the media have believed them. But when the arguments these scientists employ to support their claims are subjected to scrutiny, it becomes clear that important facts have invariably been misrepresented — either deliberately or through substantial negligence. And when these facts are fairly considered, the arguments collapse."

The regulatory system for GMOs (genetically modified organisms) in India is in tatters. So said the Coalition for a GMFree India (CGMFI) in 2017 after media reports about the illegal cultivation of GM soybean in the country. In India, five high-level reports have already advised against the adoption of GM crops. Despite these reports, the drive to get GM mustard commercialised has been relentless. The push for approval is currently being challenged in the Supreme Court, even though, despite serious concerns, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) gave it the nod. GM mustard is being undemocratically forced through with flawed tests (or no testing) and a lack of public scrutiny: in other words, unremitting scientific fraud and outright regulatory delinquency.

<https://www.counterpunch.org/author/colin-todhunter/>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/03/12/offshoring-indian-agriculture-is-india-becoming-a-gmo-trash-can/>

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/05/04/agrochemicals-and-institutional-corruption-pleading-with-the-slave-master-will-not-set-you-free/>

The Web links can be activated by going to [www.meophamgardeners.co.uk](http://www.meophamgardeners.co.uk) and viewing the newsletters.