



Photo: Mike Hughes

Autumn 2019

AGM & Christmas Social

We will be holding our AGM on Monday 9th December. The business part of the evening includes the Chairman's report and nominations for new committee members, then we will have a chance to have a catch up over festive refreshments.

The committee meets at Meopham Village Hall on the first Monday of the month from February to December at 8pm, for about an hour.



Forthcoming Events

December 9: AGM and Christmas Social

There is no meeting in January, we will be back with our Gardeners Forum & Seed Swap in February.

Recent Events

August 12: Alpines for Beginners - John Hughes

John, a well-travelled alpinist expert, described alpinists as plants of the mountains growing in poor conditions, coping with tough winters and often hot summers. They typically have a short growing season, with an explosion of colour in Spring. They can be tiny, growing in crevasses in rocks, so in the garden they would be suitable for growing in cracks in a wall. If grown in pots, the soil type can be matched to the plant - they need good drainage and a low nitrogen content. Alpines in woodland settings, such as hellebores and fritillaria, like a peaty soil. Many people will have alpinists in the garden - aubretia, heathers, phlox, candytuft and crocus are alpinists, also dianthus, cyclamen, primroses, iris reticulata, saxifrage and many more.

September 9: Companion Planting - Vanessa Jones

Vanessa Jones' talk in September on 'Companion Planting' promoted organic gardening. Mulching saves evaporation, suppresses weeds and warms the soil - grow flowering herbs, pot marigolds and pungent garlic between vegetables, and make nettle tea (it's as good as tomato!) Plant crocus's - an early food source for bees and other beneficial insects (wasps eat masses of aphids – it's only later in the year they develop a sweet tooth). Tall plants and trees provide shelter from wind and full sun, the pea family fixes nitrogen in the soil. Get rid of the baddies: dandelions exude ethylene gas, inhibiting growth of surrounding plants, grass roots stunt growth in fruit trees, and buttercups suppress clover.

September 21: Autumn Show

Our Autumn Show was a great success, with a high standard of entries in the main show and photographic competition. Cup winners are listed on our website. We loved the winning junior entry - a butterfly with seed heads for antennae!

The winning photograph from local amateur photographer, Simon Finch, is featured here – Simon's friends found a 'ball of twine' in their garden, inside was a hibernating dormouse – after the photocall they replaced it and thankfully it survived!

Shows require an incredible amount of work – huge thanks to Show Secretary Jill Pask and team, who baked cakes, served refreshments, ran the plant stall, raffle and tombola, set up, cleared away - also the stewards, judges and of course the exhibitors – the list is endless. If you missed it, we promise you'll enjoy our Spring Show next March!



Photo: Simon Finch

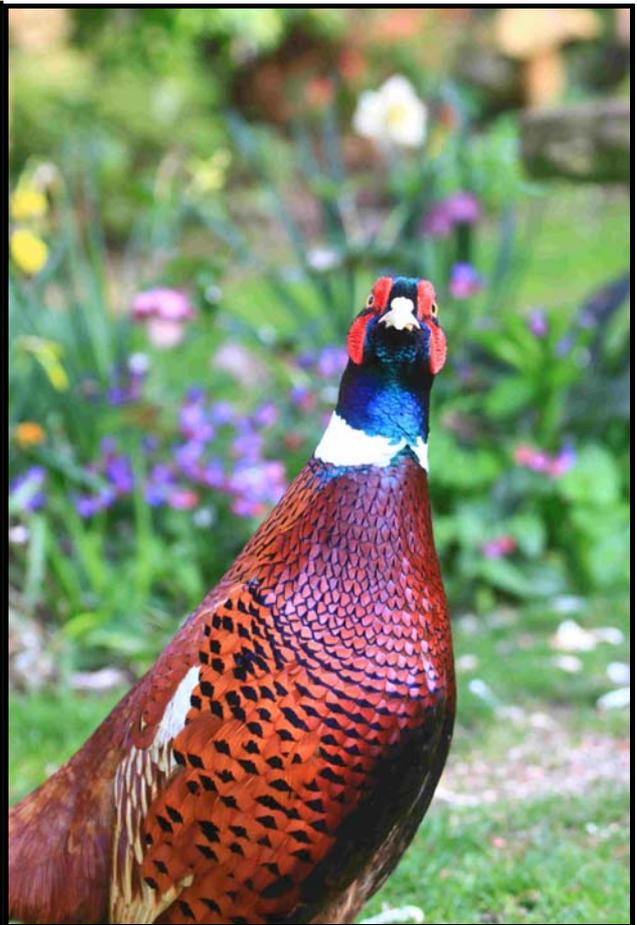


Photo: Janet Oxford

Above: Dormouse and Pheasant. Two winning pictures from recent shows.



Photo: Firethorn and Kniphofia. Mike Hughes



In the News

Goats

The Times included an article last Thursday (7th November) highlighting the fact that goats had saved the Ronald Reagan Library in California. The wildfires were blazing in the neighbourhood, but ceased to make progress where goats had been browsing the scrub surrounding the library.

Why is life expectancy faltering?

The Observer newspaper on 23 June 2019 noted that for the first time in 100 years, Britons are dying earlier. The UK now has the worst health trends in Western Europe. There has also been a worrying increase in infant mortality rates. A number of possible causes (the effects of austerity, for instance) were cited. However, Dr Rosemary Mason has produced a new report says that the article avoids the effects of farm chemicals. *"We are being poisoned by weedkiller and other pesticides in our food and weedkiller sprayed indiscriminately on our communities. The media remain silent."* Yet we are still being subjected to an unregulated cocktail of agrochemicals. Regulatory agencies and governments appear to work hand in glove with the agrochemical sector. [Why is life expectancy faltering: The British Government has worked with Monsanto and Bayer since 1949.](#)

Feeding Soil with Milk and Molasses

An article in the magazine Permaculture features a piece from Mother Earth News extolling the value of Milk and Molasses applied to compost, crops, gardens and even pastures. In compost and on the garden, it nurtures healthy communities of microbes, fungi and beneficial bacteria. Raw milk is best, but any milk will provide nutrition and benefits. Dr. Wagner Bettiol found milk was effective in the treatment of powdery mildew on zucchini. New Zealand melon growers found that milk out-performed against the leading chemical fungicide and that it also worked as a foliar feed. David Wetzel, a Nebraska farmer applied milk at different rates to his pastures, and recorded the results with the help of the local Agricultural Extension agent Terry Gompert, a university soil specialist, a weed specialist and an insect researcher. Amongst the results it was found that grass production was drastically increased; soil porosity or ability to absorb air and water doubled; microbe activity and populations increased; cows were healthier and produced more milk on treated pastures. Molasses is a source of calcium, magnesium, potassium, and iron.

A spray for the garden 1 cup of milk to 4 cups of water. For a molasses spray, add 1/4 to 1 cup to a gallon of water. A milk and molasses mixture is a biologically friendly weed control.

<http://www.agrar.de/agenda/bettiol.htm>

<http://www.underwoodgardens.com/soil-building/compost-nourishing-your-garden-soil/#.Uw-w6oXpaqY>

Heating a Greenhouse with Compost and Manure

Maddy Harland, co-founder and editor of Permaculture Magazine, visited Charles Dowding's no-dig market garden and was inspired by his use of compost to create hot beds. In one corner of his greenhouse he uses bits of plywood or other waste board secured with fencing pins tied together, then fills the structure with fresh manure, and adds a wooden pallet on the top. As the Victorian gardeners well knew, decomposing manure provides heat to bring on seedlings and grow out-of-season salads. Maddy moved her well-insulated "Hotbin" into her small greenhouse. To the garden and vegetable scraps from the kitchen she added some shovelfuls from a Christmas present of a couple of bags of fresh horse manure. The hot bin reached 40C and kept her greenhouse frost-free for the winter.

<https://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/heating-greenhouse-compost-and-manure>

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



Addendum – Awards Presented at the Autumn Show

Trophy	Description	Winner
Goodwin Cup	Best Exhibit in Class 1-4 (Dahlias)	Barbara Macknish
Stevens Cup	Best Exhibit in Class 5-28	Marion Johnson
Hills Cup	Best Exhibit in Section 4 (Floral Art)	Marion Rolt
Coronation Cup	Most Points in Section 5 (Domestic)	Sue Adams
Harvel Floral Cup	First in Class 15 (Roses)	Janet Oxford
Garden News	Most Points in Section 2 (Class 29-46)	Moya Church
National Vegetable Society Medal	Most Meritorious Exhibit in Class 29-50	Lesley Foxwell
Bill Roberts Bowl	Most points in section 3 (fruit)	Moya Church
Trophies for both shows		
Championship Cup	Most Firsts Flower & Veg	Barbara Macknish
Townsend Vase	Most Firsts - Domestic	Gill Carpenter
The Douglas Nicholson Award	Most Points Veg	Moya Church