



Photo: Jo Latimer

## Summer 2019

### AUTUMN SHOW

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2019**

Make sure you keep precisely to the 2019 schedule on the MGA website. Your entry details may be emailed to our Show Secretary, Jill Pask, before 6pm on the Thursday prior to the show. The entry form is available on the Shows part of the website - please follow the instructions there.

Last year's cups need to be returned (polished and gleaming!) to Jill prior to the show. We would also welcome donated raffle prizes, items for the plant stall and homemade cakes for the tea room.

Please come and help with the setting up if you can on the Friday evening. Exhibits may be staged between 8.30 and 9pm on Friday, and between 10am and 12:45pm on the day of the show.

**NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED**

The doors open at 3pm and admission to the show is free. Bring your friends, family and neighbours and treat yourself to a nice cup of tea and a piece of cake before the prize giving at about 4:15pm.

If you enter something in the show, please help to clear up afterwards and take your own entries home with you. Even if you can only spare ten minutes at the end of the show, we never turn away volunteers!

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



## Forthcoming Events

**Monday September 9<sup>th</sup> Companion Planting - Vanessa Jones**

**Saturday September 21<sup>st</sup> Autumn Show**

**Monday October 14<sup>th</sup> Harvest Supper Social Evening**

**Monday November 11<sup>th</sup> Making Full Use of the Small Greenhouse – Hilary Newman**

## Recent Events

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May Primula Auriculas – Their History, Cultivation and Categories**

Rachael Castle began by telling us that not only was there a Tulip Mania and an Orchid Mania, there were other floral manias, such as galanthas (snowdrops), ferns, and primula auriculas. Rachael's history of primula auriculas included a rather gory account of 50,000 Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in France and arriving in Kent, settling in Sandwich and Canterbury. The Huguenots were weavers, but they were also horticulturalists and held auricula feasts with competitions – prizes could be one guinea or a copper kettle!

Alpine auriculas from the Dolomites and the Pyrenees love the cold, rooting themselves into crevasses and thriving on the minerals in the rocks. The attractive farinaceous auriculas have a gentle dusting of powder. Cultivation and careful crossing of the original auriculas has produced 150 varieties, with rich jewel colours, white or gold centres, a honey scent, and the lacey effect of green, grey or white edged petals. Primulas show well in individual terracotta flower pots in an 'auricula theatre', which can be made from an old bookcase.

Rachael's cottage garden nursery, Swallowfields, in Elmsted, grows unusual hardy perennials and shrubs, which do well in Kentish clay and are hardy enough to cope with fairly windy conditions. Rachael brought us a lovely selection of plants, including early shrubby pink salvias, rich wine-coloured anemones and a tall blue corydalis.

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June Summer Social**

Our June Mini Show included a fantastic display of amazingly powerfully scented roses in a variety of beautiful colours. Congratulations to the winners in the various classes, which were judged by the members in accordance with tradition. For the Summer Social part of the evening, Brian, our Treasurer, had compiled a tricky garden related quiz for us. We were also lucky to have persuaded Barbara Macknish, our Former Chairman, to give a talk on showing flowers and vegetables. This included lots of useful tips and advice for our Autumn Show and Barbara reminded us that oasis, which is pretty much indestructible, is no longer 'PC' – newspaper or moss should be used instead.

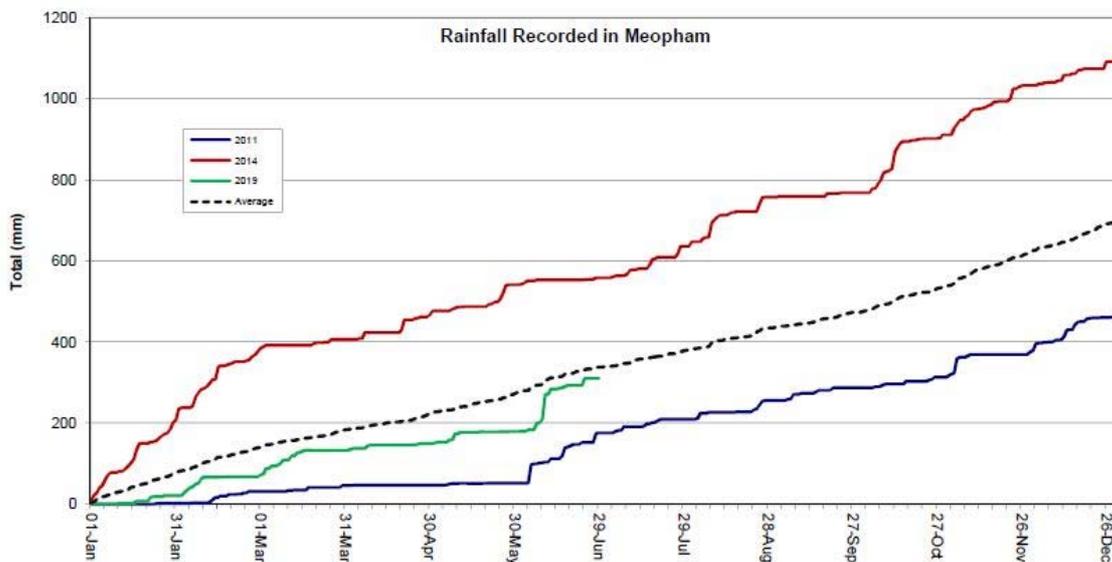
**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July Visit to a Member's Garden**

Jo Armstrong kindly hosted our July garden visit. In the 1960s, Jo and her husband bought the big Victorian laundry which originally served the Nurstead Estate - an album of old photos and newspaper clippings documents their progress in restoring it to a very attractive cottage-style home, full of character and wooden beams. In the extensive garden, surrounded by fields, we found chickens, a gigantic pond and - we were all a little envious - a huge polytunnel containing Sunflowers with blooms the size of dinner plates. The pond looks natural but actually took over three days to fill, prompting the water board to knock at all the houses along the road looking for a water leak!

Jo maintains a wildlife friendly garden and we were treated to a visit from Judith Hathrill of Kent Wildlife Trust - we happily talked hedgehogs, bats and dragonflies over cups of tea and biscuits in Jo's cosy kitchen. Eventually, reluctant to leave this enchanting place, we collected our plants purchased on arrival from Jo's neighbour (who put on a terrific plant stall with a stunning selection of flowers) and trundled home. Huge thanks to Jo for an amazing evening and also to Nurstead Court, who very kindly allowed us to use their car park.

## Climate Summary January – June 2019

This graph shows the cumulative rainfall from January 1st to June 30th 2019 along with the average and extreme rainfall for the previous 9 years. The total rainfall to the end of June was 310mm (12.2"). During the meteorological Winter (Dec - Feb) 129mm (5.1") of rainfall were recorded and we had 112.5mm (4.4") this Spring (Mar-May).



Both January and February were amongst the driest we've recorded in the last 10 years. The coldest part of the winter was in early February when approximately 70mm (3") of snow fell (2nd). The first part of March was fairly wet with rain most days until the 20th. The rest of the month was dry.

April was generally cool but dry with just 16mm of rain recorded. May was also mostly dry and this continued into the early part of June. However the 8-13th June was particularly wet with 61mm of rain falling in a short time on June 10th.

The above graph shows that so far 2019 is drier than our recent average but not as dry as 2011.

(Source: locally recorded rainfall)

## In the News

There is a body of evidence to support claims that the regulatory agencies governing the use of herbicides and pesticides in the UK, the EU and even more so, the USA, are controlled by the companies that make these chemicals. Regulations are minimal, implementation lax and there is much evidence that the dangers are not taken seriously. Perhaps we gardeners should grow much of our own food without these dangerous materials.

Author Andre Leu has outlined major deficiencies in pesticide safety protocols. He offers this appraisal:

"... it is a gross misrepresentation to say that any of the current published toxicology studies can be used to claim that any of the thousands of pesticide products used in the world do not cause cancer or other diseases... **there is no evidence that pesticides are safe.**"

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Dr Judy Hoy and her colleagues have shown that birth defects in animals in Montana correlates with glyphosate usage on crops **and with birth defects in humans**. They found alarming increases in congenital malformations in wildlife in Montana that Hoy has been documenting for the past 19 years. Similar birth defects have occurred in humans in the USA. They conclude that:

“Something is causing alarming increases in diseases and birth defects in wildlife. Something is causing alarming increases in diseases and birth defects in humans. Our graphs illustrating human disease patterns over the twelve-year period correlate remarkably well with the rate of glyphosate usage on corn, soy and wheat crops and indicate that glyphosate is likely a major factor in the increase in the serious issues with human health. Our over-reliance on chemicals in agriculture is causing irreparable harm to all beings on this planet, including the planet herself. Most of these chemicals are known to cause illness, and they have likely been causing illnesses for many years. But until recently, the herbicides have never been sprayed directly on food crops, and never in this massive quantity. We must find another way.”

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283462726> *The High Cost of Pesticides Human and Animal Diseases*

Dr Rosemary Mason argues that the European Commission has consistently bowed to the demands of the pesticide lobby. She notes the fraudulent nature of the assessment of glyphosate which led to its relicensing in Europe and thus the continued use of Monsanto's herbicide Roundup. This ongoing support for the pesticide lobby flies in the face of so much evidence pointing to the detrimental effects of Roundup and other agrochemicals on the environment, living organisms, soil, water and human health.

These chemicals have become integral to an increasingly globalised process of agro-industrialisation. Mason discusses the nature of modern farming by referring to the endless cornfields of Iowa. One hundred years ago, these fields were home to 300 species of plants, 60 mammals, 300 birds and thousands of insects. Now, there is almost literally nothing – except corn – in what amounts to a biological desert. The birds, bees and insects have gone.

It's a type of farming where so much toxic agrochemicals are used that they have ended up in soils and sediment, ditches and drains, precipitation, rivers and streams and even in seas, lakes, ponds, wetlands and groundwater. A type of agriculture that is responsible for undermining essential biodiversity, human health and diverse, nutritious diets.

<https://off-guardian.org/2019/07/04/from-the-green-revolution-to-gmos-toxic-agriculture-is-the-problem-not-the-solution/>

While touting the supposed virtues of GM agriculture, lobbyists also promote the Green Revolution to justify the roll-out of GM seeds and associated herbicides. But academic research indicates that the Green Revolution in India did next to nothing in terms of increasing productivity, despite the well-perpetuated myth that it saved lives and helped avert famine. In fact, in Punjab, the cradle of the Green Revolution in India, this 'green dream' has turned into a toxic environmental and human health nightmare.

India produces enough food to feed its population. It does so without GM and could do so agroecologically without synthetic chemicals – without 'nuking' nature and without destroying human health. However, the agrochemical lobby continues to spin the message that India and the world need its proprietary inputs to feed the world and eradicate hunger. The reality is that UN experts have long denounced this claim and shown that pesticides have “catastrophic impacts on the environment, human health and society as a whole”.

[http://pages.wustl.edu/files/pages/imce/stone/stone\\_2019\\_green\\_rev.pdf](http://pages.wustl.edu/files/pages/imce/stone/stone_2019_green_rev.pdf)

Effects of different concentrations of glyphosate (Roundup 360®) on earthworms in vineyards in the North-East of Italy (Stellin et al. 2018) “Earthworms in untreated terraria were found all alive, while specimens exposed to glyphosate showed a decreasing survival rate and a sharp decline in the number of cocoons.” Despite the occurrence of some resistance by earthworms exposed to glyphosate for at least three decades, the impact is still serious (up to 26% of mortality) especially on the deep-burrowing earthworm species.

<https://environmentpapers.wordpress.com/2019/03/15/glyphosate-effects-on-earthworms/>

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