

**MEOPHAM GARDENERS ASSOCIATION FORUM  
MONDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2014**

**Q1 How has the rain affected you?**

**A.** Barbara replied that her garden was a bog and she had not expected to have problems having a site on the side of a hill. She thought that some of the problems could be due to ground compaction.

Caroline Halfpenny agreed that ground compaction could be part of the problem and suggested putting a fork into the ground and wiggling it around a bit. She said that Hadlow had been badly affected.

**Q2 Barbara asked how the bulbs for the Spring Show were getting on.**

She said that she always plunges her hyacinths and has got two pots of three bulbs this year, however 2 in each pot are doing well but the remaining bulbs are only just coming through.

Most of the daffodils are up quite a lot.

Move hyacinths indoors if they are not growing, but make sure you move them in gradually so that they can acclimatise.

**Q3 Which is the best variety of early seed potatoes to grow in bags?**

**A.** Barbara pointed to an article in this month's Garden Magazine which recommended the following to grow in bags:

Earlies : Casablanca, Rocket, Swift, Lady Crystal, Jazzy, Vales Emerald and Charlotte,

... also Golden Nugget, Sharpes Express, Maris Bard.

**Q4 When is a good time to move tree peonies and should you prune them?**

**A.** If they are like regular peonies, they don't like to be moved. Should move it while dormant. Probably won't get any blooms for the first year after moving it. Remove the root ball so that the roots are not disturbed.

**Q5 Any tips on repotting peonies grown in containers?**

**A.** Disturb the root as little as possible and plant it to exactly the same depth as it was previously.

**Q6 I have an Acer and don't know what sort. It comes out in the spring with pink leaves, which get darker, turning green and then fall off. In the spring, it is covered with insects, should I spray it?**

**A.** Caroline thought it was an Acer Platanoides Brilliantissimum.

The bugs should be hosed off with water, not sprayed with insecticide.

(Lorraine has a similar Acer and it had a lot of ants on it one year. She found that by watering it really well the following year, it didn't have any ants.)

**Q7 I have a bay tree in a pot, every year the leaves curl up and there is a white cobweb inside the leaves.**

**A.** Could be some type of caterpillar. Suggested looking online to see if there is any type particularly keen on bay.

**Q8 I have been given a lovely plant pot, guaranteed against frost damage. I want to plant something special that will be interesting in spring and summer/throughout the year.**

**A.** Suggestions were : Pieris Valley Valentine, Hypericum Elstead, Spindle Tree (Euonymus) although this does attract black fly, or a miniature fruit tree such as a cherry or a peach (Crimson Bonfire was recommended).

**Q9 I have a bay tree and keep getting shoots from the bottom of the stem, what should I do with them?**

**A.** Suggest tearing them off rather than cutting them as this should help to prevent new growth. Sometimes if you damage the roots it will stimulate them into activity.

Could try to pot the shoots in a 50:50 mixture of compost and sharp sand as cuttings like good drainage.

**Q10 Should you prune camellias and can you de-bud them, would the remaining buds be more likely to flower? (Hazel asked this question as her camellia was covered in buds but most of them did not flower.)**

Barbara felt it was worth experimenting!

If the buds fall off it is usually because they have had insufficient water in the summer.

(N.B. Plants in pots are best watered regularly rather than letting them dry and then giving them a lot of water.)

**Q11 My Hebe has nice foliage colour but it is very straggly. I've tried pruning it but it just sprouts out again.**

**A.** Barbara - Pruning will encourage new growth, I butchered mine with shears and it recovered.

And finally .....

Box blight - a warning that there is now a caterpillar attacking Box plants which is not affected by insecticide – watch out!