



MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

November/December NEWSLETTER 2018

www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

This summer we have had glorious weather, but for the lawn a disaster. We have cracks in the lawn so deep a little wiggler might see us down in Australia.

I acquired some bantams – just three. When we got the birds we lost all three trying to get them into the coop. Sean and I must have looked like Tom and Jerry in our attempt to catch them. The last one flew to the top of a tree and stayed overnight but we caught it the following day. They are Lemon Sablepoots officially, but Max, Rosie and Lily are the names chosen by small grandchildren.

Ellie Church – Chair

A GREAT SHOW

This year we have seen a really good display of flower baskets and tubs around the town. The baskets around the town bridge have been especially colourful and the tubs in front of the town hall are lovely – the choice of trailing plants which completely hide the tubs and spread out on the pavement is excellent. The choice of plants, which have lasted so long, is a tribute to Hortico who supply the plants, but as gardeners we are fully aware of the constant daily attention that Sean and Graham from the Council have to give these displays. The flowers really brighten up the town for our visitors and residents.



Tasks for November/December



- Plant out roses
- Prune climbing roses
- Cut down herbaceous plants – fork in bonemeal
- Plant lilies – place sand beneath and plant at a 45° angle
- Cut down tall bedding roses by ½ to stop wind rock
- Divide herbaceous plants discarding centre
- Spray chrysanthemums against mildew
- Lift gladioli and dry off in frost proof place
- Pinch out September grown sweet peas
- Plant fruit trees
- Spray all fruit trees with winter wash
- Plant raspberry canes – try autumn fruiting Zeva
- Clear rotting brassica leaves and other rotting vegetable matter
- Dig empty veg. areas and leave rough over winter
- Complete planting of all spring flowering bulbs
- Regularly check stored bulbs and tubers
- Place mouse bait where necessary – protect from domestic animals
- Lag all outside taps or turn off where possible.

MEETINGS – EVENTS – ACTIVITIES

<p>Monday 12 November 2018 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Marvellous Moths</i> Bob Smith</p> <p>Bob is enthusiastic about moths which he studies in his garden near Stroud</p>	<p>Monday 10 December 2018 7.00 for 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Annual General Meeting</i></p>
<p>Monday 14 January 2019 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Stumperies, ferns and shady friends</i> Andrew Tolman</p> <p>Andrew is a professional gardener and has given us several talks in the past</p>	<p>Monday 11th February 2019 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>A fascination for Fowl</i> John Smith</p> <p>A talk on the domestication of chickens. John is chairman of the Cotswold pheasant and poultry club. He has written a book about poultry, and will be bringing some unusual chickens to the talk.</p>
<p>Monday 11 March 2019 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>A Curious History of Vegetables</i> Bill Lawes</p> <p>Bill is an author from Hereford. He has written several books, one of which is <i>A Curious History of Vegetables</i></p>	

OBITUARY

Mike Lynch

It is with great sadness that we report the death of our friend and member, Mike. We offer our deepest sympathy to Jean and the family and hope that Jean will continue to share our company at the club's events. Mike was a very keen gardener. His working background included many types of farming, both here and in Canada. He had travelled far and wide – South America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia – then like most of us got washed ashore in Malmesbury. His work with the Abbey as verger, serving three vicars, enabled him to meet visitors from all over the world and they appreciated his kindness and enthusiasm for the Abbey when he showed them around. Until quite recently he relaxed by working on his allotment. We will miss his infectious laughter.

Derek



FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

Reflections

We all must all have enjoyed the summer and autumn of warm sunny weather, many evenings sat outside enjoying the garden's colourful flowers and scents. I must have walked around my garden more times than I ever have. In doing so I noticed things that might have gone unseen. One evening on rounding a corner I came face to face with a muntjac, also known as the barking deer, a short legged version of the deer; he was gone in a flash. I was half expecting some hornets but none appeared. I did however have a visit from the humming bird hawk moth on several occasions.

Watering began once the sun had gone down every evening. I have quite a lot of



herbaceous perennials which I only watered when the leaves began to wilt, and only two gave me concern – *Alchemilla mollis* or lady's mantle and the hardy geranium or cranesbill. The deeper the rootstock on plants the better they were able to cope with the dry weather. One thing I noticed was that, with it being so hot, all the flowers went over quite quickly. Roses, being deep rooted, gave a wonderful show, especially the bedding roses, the hybrid

teas and floribundas. The dahlias are still flowering now in mid-October; the few early frosts have not yet blackened the foliage. Many of the annual seeds I sowed, clarkia, godetia and night scented stock, germinated very badly. Even so, give me good weather during the summer any year.

Keith's choice plant



Hibiscus var. syriacus (blue hibiscus or rose of Sharon):

A deciduous small shrub with single violet blue flowers with red centres flowering late summer-early autumn.

Pests' paradise

Narcissus bulb fly: bulbs fail to grow or produce only a few thin leaves in spring. If the bulb is cut in half, the centre can be seen to have been eaten away leaving a muddy brown excrement. A large maggot will be present, 11mm long and of a dirty brown colour. Chemical control is ineffective. Plant in shade, not in exposed sites; valuable bulbs can be protected by placing horticultural fleece over them in the early stages of their growth.

Plants to enjoy in November/December

Pyracantha, *Iris unguicularis*, *Arbutus unedo* (strawberry tree), *Ilex* (holly), *Erica* (heather), *Jasminum nudiflorum* (yellow winter flowering jasmine), *Mahonia*, *Chimonanthus* (winter sweet).

FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH



Reflections

A different season, a summer we have always wanted, but so difficult if you are growing a wide selection of vegetables. At one point I pushed the spade all the way into the ground and there was not a sign of moisture at least one foot deep. To begin with, germination in the open ground meant wetting the ground before sowing and continuing to water over the seedlings because of flea beetle. If you did not do this you lost all your seedlings no matter what variety (hundreds of holes on the leaves of the seedlings). Where possible I found sowing in small pots was much easier, then planting out when a good size. I did many varieties of vegetables this way. All the brassica family were planted and soil ridged



up around the plant so when watering the water did not run off and went straight to the roots of the plant. I did the same with long rows of salads, parsnips, carrots, French beans, beetroot and peas. Long ridges were raised up each side of the row so that, again, water went where it was needed. Newspaper was used in the ground when I grew runner beans and sweet peas to conserve moisture. A lot of time was spent watering. I do not like sprinklers as this encourages weeds everywhere. The potatoes, with the help of watering between the rows, produced a good crop, the haulms (foliage) protecting the ground from the sun.

Seasonal activities

Most vegetables for storing should now be complete. The cooking apples were of a good size: last years stored cooking apples lasted

until early April. Most ground that had summer crops can now be dug over for the winter. I always leave the ground rough as



the winter weather always seems to break it down. Remove fallen leaves of brassicas; there is nothing worse than the smell of rotting cabbage leaves. Remove weeds from between leeks, parsnips, turnips, swede and celeriac. Check all stored vegetables at regular intervals: if you string your onions it only takes one to start them all rotting. So long as carrots and beetroot were stored not touching each other they should be OK.

This is a good time to look through the new seed catalogue.



Keith's choice vegetable

Parsnip var. Gladiator: a vigorous variety with smooth-skinned roots and a sweet flavour, resistant to canker: highly recommended.

No vegetable nightmares

Parsnip Canker: areas of the parsnip are covered by orange/brown or reddish/brown patches. A soil-borne fungus is the cause and sometimes damage by insects. By sowing late spring and having smaller roots the problem is less likely to occur.

Some vegetables to enjoy in Nov/Dec

Leeks, Brussels sprouts, savoy cabbage, Jerusalem artichokes, curly kale, parsnips, swede, spinach, turnips.
From store: carrots, onions, shallots, potatoes, marrow.

Recipe

Caramel Vodka

Ingredients

1 litre of vodka

200g of brittle caramel or butterscotch crushed to small fragments with a hammer, rolling pin or food processor



Method

1. Divide the litre of vodka between two 75ml bottles that you can secure with a lid
2. Put 100g of the crumbled caramel into each of the bottles
3. Secure the lids then shake the mixture twice daily until the toffee has dissolved
4. After one week the drink will be ready

It is best served chilled as a drink or poured over ice cream. It is also good to give as a present.

Ellie

Editor's postscript

As a bit of a 'plant-oholic' and a self-confessed impulse shopper, one of the things I enjoy about the Garden Club is when our speakers bring plants to sell from their own nurseries. It is a chance to buy things that I might not have otherwise considered, or wouldn't find in a garden centre. Sometimes they disappear without trace in my garden, other times they establish themselves slowly and bring joy for many years. Amongst the successes have been a winter-flowering *Clematis cirrhosa*, which is coming into flower now, and a dainty little *Kniphofia*. I don't normally like red hot pokers, but this one is a little jewel, with flowers of firecracker apricot-orange. I hope it will continue to grow and flourish.

