



## MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

### January/February NEWSLETTER 2019

[www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk](http://www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk)

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church

#### **JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR . . . .**

We held a successful AGM, our 50th. Last year we had to cancel because the weather was foul. It was attended by a few members and after the business was over, Derek entertained us with a quiz and, as usual, Louise made us a delicious buffet with mulled wine and mulled apple juice.

We have just received our seeds for this year and I look forward to growing them. There is something so satisfying when the seeds start to pop their heads out from their husks. I do the easy work – the seeds and pricking them out, Sean does all the hard work in preparing the soil.

I wish you all a Happy New Year and a fruitful harvest in 2019.

*Ellie Church – Chair*

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2019**

A reminder that subscriptions for 2019 are now due.  
A renewal form can be found at the end of this Newsletter.

#### **Some notes from Derek . . . .**

##### **Poor Old Market Cross**

I'm sure you will all have heard about the serious damage caused to the Market Cross, when it was struck recently by a recycling lorry. The Market Cross was built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and is a grade 1 listed building. I mention this because as it is a listed structure and something we all treat with respect I would like to remind our members that when we hold our Plant Sale under the cross, although we are able to set up over 150 square feet of display space, none of the wooden tops actually rest on the stonework. All the supporting stands sit over the stone work. I feel it's important that we all are aware of this as sometimes ill-informed people are apt to make silly and unkind comments.



##### **Fowls not Moths**



As the November 'Chicken talk' was the day after Remembrance Sunday, I asked our speaker why he hadn't mentioned the chicken which was awarded the VC in WW1 – my story was news to him and he plans to add a chapter to his book!

To discover about the most famous chicken in England during WW1, look up 'VC Cockerel' on Google or just skip to the end of this Newsletter.

*Derek*

## MEETINGS – EVENTS – ACTIVITIES

<p><b>Monday 14 January 2019</b></p> <p>7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>Stumperies, ferns and shady friends</i></p> <p>Andrew Tolman</p> <p>Andrew is a professional gardener and has given us several talks in the past</p>	<p><b>Monday 11th February 2019</b></p> <p>7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>You would be surprised about the poisonous plants you grow in your garden</i></p> <p>Jenny Tidman</p> <p>Jenny Tidman is a plant specialist at Malmesbury Garden Centre</p>
<p><b>Monday 11 March 2019</b></p> <p>7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>A Curious History of Vegetables</i></p> <p>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>	<p><b>Saturday 25 May 2019</b></p> <p>The Market Cross</p> <p><i>Annual Plant Sale</i></p>

### Potato days

**Marshfield Gardening Club**, in conjunction with The Botanic Nursery, is holding a **Potato and Seed Sale** on Saturday 19 January 2019, 10.30am – 1.30pm, at Marshfield Community Centre, near Chippenham SN14 8PG

**Hampshire Potato Day** and sale of plants and seeds is on 26 & 27 January 2019, 10.00am – 3.00pm, at Testbourne Community Centre, Whitchurch RG28 7JF.

### National Garden Scheme (Yellow Book) openings



Open gardens in Wiltshire in 2019 are now shown online via the website [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk).

The *Yellow Book* can be ordered online or look out for it when it is launched at the end of February. The Wiltshire county booklet will be available in various outlets in the county from February or you can send a SAE A5 envelope to Tricia Duncan, Chapel Cottage, Easton Royal, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5LY.

## Tasks for January/February



- Continue to plant roses – weather permitting
- Examine roses for 'wind rock' and firm in
- Continue pruning climbing roses, honeysuckle, summer jasmine etc.
- Cut out canker on fruit trees and paint over with pruning compound
- Prune apple and pear trees, but not if frost persists
- Spray peach and nectarine against leaf curl with copper fungicide
- Continue spraying fruit bushes and trees with a winter wash
- Continue clearing herbaceous plant tops
- Cut down summer flowering clematis in February – check variety first!
- Prune back winter jasmine after flowering
- Examine all stored corms, bulbs and tubers
- Set up early potatoes in trays to sprout
- Sow early broad beans and wrinkled pea varieties
- Sow early carrots and parsley under frames
- Plant shallots in late February



## FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

### **Comments from the garden . . . .**

With so much to go onto the compost heap – leaves, vegetable matter, kitchen waste – and plants to be cut back, softwood prunings and herbaceous border plants, I have increased the size of my compost heap. I now have two compost heaps, one for this year and one for next year, when I will use the one I am making now.

### **Early colour . . . .**

Forgive me for wanting the season of colour to start early, but I spend 95% of my time in the garden and early colour galvanises me into adding even more colour. January can have some plants that you may not have in your garden, even if you might only want to look out of the window because it's too cold outside. The plants in flower now have acclimatised over many years to give you that early colour. One I have come across many times is hellebore or Christmas rose. There are a number of good varieties: *H. argutifolius* has nodding pale green flowers, *H. foetidus* has green edged red flowers and *H. niger* has white flowers which last into the spring.

Most gardens would take a winter flowering tree. Remember you can prune anything to fit the situation. Two medium sized trees spring to mind: the cornelian cherry or *Cornus mas*, which has clusters of small yellow flowers on bare branches in late winter, and *Prunus subhirtella autumnalis* var. *rosea*, which has clusters of pale pink flowers on bare branches from late autumn to early spring.

Another plant I have admired in a lot of gardens, flowering late autumn to spring, is *Viburnum bodnantense* var. *dawn*. Once again, it bears terminal clusters of mid pink blossom all along the bare branches. Another *Viburnum* for late and early colour is *V. tinus* var. *Eve Price*; this is an evergreen variety, its



pink flower buds opening to tiny star shaped white flowers carried on large flat heads from mid winter to spring.

If you need something to give colour on a wall or fence, try *Garrya elliptica*; although a shrub, I have trained this one many times on a wall. It is an evergreen with long silver-grey catkins which dangle from the branches in winter and early spring. *Lonicera fragrantissima* or winter honeysuckle is another I have trained on a wall; its fragrant creamy white flowers are borne in pairs winter to early spring. Don't forget the many bulbs that give early colour – crocus, *Eranthus* (winter aconite), *Galanthus* (snowdrop) and *Muscari* (grape hyacinth) – these bulbs can give many shades of blue, white and yellow amongst trees and shrubs, in the border, on the rockery or naturalised in the grass.

### **Keith's choice plant . . . .**

**Actinidia var. kolomikta:** amazing foliage, young leaves reddish green changing to bright green splotched with white or deep pink. Slightly fragrant small white flowers are produced in late spring early summer.



### **Pests' paradise . . . .**

**Slugs:** friend or foe, for me such a nightmare with salad and many other varieties of vegetable. With many species of slug above ground and below it's hard to think why slugs. I can't find a good thing to say about them. To deter them I have tried soot, sawdust, gravel, eggshell and a slug pub container with beer in. I just end up with a lot of slugs staggering about the garden.

### **Plants to enjoy in January/February**

Hellebores, *Gaultheria* also known as *Pernettya*, *Skimmia*, *Mahonia*, *Daphne mezereum*, *Hamamelis* (witch hazel), *Iris reticulata*, crocus, snowdrop, *Eranthus* (winter aconite).



## FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

### **Comments from the vegetable plot . . . .**

For the first time I am digging some soil improver into my vegetable plot. Yes, it has compost and farmyard manure now and again, but it does not hurt to give it that little bit extra.

### **Decisions, decisions . . . .**

Time to look through those new catalogues. Were you happy with your chosen vegetables last year? When I find a good variety I tend to stick with it for a number of years, but with new varieties available every year in catalogues, some with more protection from disease, it's worth giving new ones a try. A new beetroot variety, for instance, looking good in a salad with colours of blue and pink – this is a new one for me. These seeds have better protection from leaf spot, a fungal disease. Carrots have given us new varieties with more protection from carrot fly, Flyaway f1 and Maestro f1 just to name a few.

Clubroot disease is a big problem with no chemical available on the market, but never fear, varieties have been bred to combat this.



The brassica family covers sprouting green, white and purple broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbages and curly kale, just to name a few. Here are a few

clubroot resistant varieties: calabrese green sprouting var. Komodo f1 and Monclano f1; Brussels sprout Crispus f1 and Brodie f1; cabbage Kilaton f1 and Lodero f1, a red variety; cauliflower Clapton f1 and Sapporo f1. I have yet to have this problem with curly kale, having grown it for nearly fifty years. So you see it's worth changing your varieties for these reasons.

### **Seasonal activities . . . .**

All parts of the garden that had summer crops should now be prepared for the coming season by digging over and adding compost or farmyard manure if available. This should not be attempted if ground is very wet or frozen. Finish pruning all apple and pear trees, place a cover over some of your rhubarb to get those early champagne/pink sticks. If you have frames put the covers on to warm up the ground for early sowings. The same effect can be achieved on open ground by placing a large piece of polythene on an area protected from cold winds, but use something heavy on all corners to keep in place. Black polythene is best as no weeds will grow without light. The worst of the winter weather is at this time of year so check all outside taps and continue to check all stored vegetables.

### **Keith's choice vegetable . . . .**

**Calabrese or green sprouting broccoli var. Monclano f1:** a clubroot resistant variety with good sized heads. It will continue to produce smaller heads when first cut. Mildew resistant. Harvest August-November.

### **No vegetable nightmares . . . .**

**Root aphid:** plants will be slow to grow and will sometimes wilt, a white powdery or fluffy wax is given off by the aphids thereby giving the roots a white coating. If the plant has been affected too much it is best to remove it and give a strong dose of Jeyes fluid to the infected area.

### **Some vegetables to enjoy in Jan/Feb**

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

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## Recipe

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### *Creamy Baked Onions . . . .*

#### **Ingredients**

6 medium onions  
100ml double cream  
3 bay leaves  
25g parmesan, finely grated  
Salt and pepper



#### **Method**

1. Heat the oven to 200°C / fan 180°C / gas 6. Peel and trim the roots of the onions but leave them whole. Cook in a large pan of boiling water for 25 mins until tender, then drain, reserving a little cooking water.
2. Season the cream and mix in 2 tbsp of the onion water. When the onions are cool enough to handle, slice each in half through the root. Lay the onion halves, cut side down, in a large baking dish with the bay leaves. Pour over the cream, scatter with the parmesan, and bake for 25 mins until the cream is bubbling and the onions are just beginning to brown.

Recipe from *BBC Good Food Magazine*.

*Ellie*

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### *Editor's postscript . . . .*

When Derek mentioned the story of 'VC Cockerel' to me after the November meeting, I wasn't sure whether to believe him and had to go and look it up. So, for the benefit of those of you who don't use the internet, here it is.

Frank Fyson of Warboys in Cambridgeshire was too old to fight in the First World War and had no sons to send, but he found a novel way to raise funds for the wounded. He bought a cockerel for 2 shillings at a Red Cross sale and called it 'VC'. He took the cockerel to hundreds of British Farmers' Red Cross Fund sales all over the country, encouraging people to bid for it even though they would not be able to take the bird away with them. By the spring of 1918 'VC' had raised nearly £8000 for the Red Cross, and Frank Fyson was presented with a silver cup for his efforts. A great story!



*Alison*

## SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2019

Subscriptions for 2019 are now due and can be paid at meetings or direct to  
Mr. Sean O'Shea, Redlands, West End, Brinkworth, Chippenham, SN15 5DA or  
The Club Post Box, E & S Hardware, High Street, Malmesbury.

PLEASE SECURE CASH/CHEQUE IN AN ENVELOPE WITH THIS FORM

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Thank you

*Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)*