



MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

November/December NEWSLETTER 2021

www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

After what appeared to be an awful year for my potted plants I am so pleased that, although they were very slow to start, we did have a really good show of flowers, also a few potted strawberries which delighted our grandchildren. The strawberry patch was the first place visited when we arrived with them after school.

I think it is so fortunate that young children can be free to roam and explore the garden. I remember staying with my grandparents who lived on an estate in the middle of nowhere in Scotland. We had a one mile walk down the avenue to the nearest bus stop. I remember the changing seasons and the different flowers that

used to bloom. As children we were free and healthy. I like to think we can share some of that with our children and grandchildren.

We have at last returned to having our own garden club meetings and what a pleasure to see everyone a gain.



Ellie Church – Chairperson



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

8 November 2021

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall
Gardens of Gloucestershire and the Cotswolds
Richard Harvey

Photographer, lecturer and keen chilli grower, Richard has a passion for telling the story of great British Gardens.

13 December 2021

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall
Annual General Meeting
followed by
How to make a Christmas Decoration:
a demonstration by Margaret Bayliss

Margaret is a well-known flower arranger – she will show how you can create your own Christmas decoration



Making a Christmas Decoration

If you have any spare seasonal greenery, pine cones, decorative seed heads etc, please bring them along to our **meeting on 13 December** to share with other members. Inspired by Margaret Bayliss' demonstration, we can all then go home and make our own Christmas decorations

Remembrance – more than poppies. . . .



Whilst the Great War of 1914-8 was taking its terrible toll on the men of the British army, many battle field cemeteries were having to be created and as early as 1916 the assistant director at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew visited 37 such cemeteries and submitted a full report on the different soil and climate conditions and he made recommendations and listed suitable plants to brighten these grim sites. By the autumn of 1917 four nurseries had been established in France and there was a horticultural staff of men classed unfit to be in the army and 30 women from Queen Mary's Auxiliary Army Corps. The army would not pay for any of the work and it was the Red Cross who provided funds for tools, plants and seeds.

The guiding rule for British War graves is uniformity: all the headstones the same size, all ranks mixed, and the same uniformity in cemetery design in both architecture and horticulture all over the world. There is no substantial difference in treatment between a

cemetery in France and one in the Western Desert. Smooth lawns with flower borders along the headstone rows, planting schemes which concentrate on perennials. The dominant border plant is the hardy floribunda rose which blooms almost continually from late spring to autumn in most parts of the world. There is also an economic point – grass is easy to maintain,



flowerbeds protect the headstones from being chipped by the mowing machines and perennials save labour by not needing replacing every year.

Today the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for 2,500 cemeteries in 150 countries and they make a special effort to ensure that the plantings of trees shrubs and flowers are at their best at remembrance time when the relatives of the fallen visit their graves.

Derek Tilney



FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

Comments from the garden

With the milder weather, I have managed to clean up my vegetable plot early before the winter weather starts.

Flowering house plants

Foliage house plants can be attractive with their colours and leaf shapes, but a house plant that flowers has the advantage of giving a little extra. Some easy ones to start with:

- *Cineraria (Senecid cruenlus)*; this one has coarse green leaves and bright daisy-like flowers in many colours. Sow seed in spring or purchase from the garden centre, watch out for white fly and keep moist and fed.
- *Hippeastrum* hybrids (*Amaryllis*); one I've grown for many years. So many new colours have been bred, they will last for a number of years if potted on in March. Keep completely dry after flowering.
- *Kalanchoe bossfeldiana*, also known as Flaming Katy and Tom Thumb. A succulent



with a number of colours. Leaves are deep green and fleshy. One thing, never over-water as the plant will rot. It has a long flowering period. This is one I have bought many times. It likes really bright conditions. Water once or twice during the winter.

- *Catharanthus roseus*, also known as Madagascar Periwinkle, Rose Periwinkle and Old Maid. Leaves are a bright glossy green

with white or pink flowers. Pinch out the growing tips to encourage a bushy plant. Needs a bright position, keep moist and feed with a weak liquid feed at each watering. Best grown from seed each year.

Some moderate easy plants to try:

- *Aphelandra squarrosa* variety *Louisae*, also known as Saffron Spike and Zebra Plant. Leaves are grey-green striped silver, in mid summer a saffron yellow spike with red markings is produced. A vigorous root system means it will need potting on each year using a soil-based potting mixture. Feed every watering to encourage bloom. Place in light shade, rest plant after flowering. Ht 2ft, prune in spring to prevent legginess. Leaf drop is caused by drying out.
- *Clivia miniata*, also known as Kaffir Lily. To encourage these plants to flower keep the



roots in a pot-bound state. Roots are vigorous so not too much of a problem. Thick dark green striped leaves are produced from a bulbous system; it will produce new plants around its base. Flowers are produced on a thick stalk, bell-shaped and orange in colour. Keep slightly moist in winter and out of direct sunlight all of the time.

- *Streptocarpus* hybrids. also known as Cape Primrose or Cape Cowslip. These plants, I think, give a wonderful display of flowers coming in shades of violet, pink, white, red, purple and blue. These plants require a light airy position but not direct sunlight. Feed

weekly during the growing season. Do not over-water, let the plant dry out between watering and give, less water during the winter. Remove seed heads as flowers fade.

If you like a challenge some slightly more difficult plant varieties include:

- *Beloperone guttata*, also known as false hop, Mexican Shrimp Plant and Shrimp Plant. The flowers resemble shrimps, hence the name. Colours include a dullish red and greenish yellow. Do not allow to become pot bound. Feed every watering, give light but not direct sunlight. Pinch out growing tips to give a more bushy plant and prune back by two thirds after flowering.
- *Hoya*, also known as Porcelain Flower and Wax Plant. These come in a number of varieties. *Hoya australis* will trail or climb so give support of a hanging basket or sticks. Remove growing tips to promote bushiness. Tip: prune only once as flowers are produced on older growth rather than new. *Hoya bella*



(miniature wax plant) is best in hanging baskets where clusters of white, flushed pink flowers, looking like exquisitely cut jewels, can be seen better. Leaves are pale green. Do not over-water. *Hoya carnosa* (wax plant) should be trained on a framework. A vigorous variety with dark green leaves. Flowers sprout from the leaf and stem points. Flowers sometimes only appear on mature plants but the clusters of pendulous pink jewels are worth waiting for. Let old

finished flowers fall off from all varieties; also leave the flower stalks, as these are where the following year's flowers will be produced.

Keith's choice plant

Houttuynia cordata (also known as heart-leaved Houttuynia, fish mint, fish leaf rainbow plant, chameleon plant, fish wort and chinese lizard tail): This plant is a good one for semi-shade and full sun, liking both moist and dry soil. Its heart-shaped leaves have splashes of green, gold and red. All summer the plant is covered in pure white small flowers. Ht 1ft (30cm). This plant can be a little invasive sometimes, so best grown in a container.

No disease please

Mahonia rust: Dark brown spore-filled pustules (small bumps) found on the lower leaf surface,



with bright orange spots on the upper surface. Leaves fall early but overall plant health is rarely affected. This normally occurs late spring to early autumn. Dispose of fallen leaves and, if badly affected, spray with a fungicide as directed in early spring.

Plants to enjoy in November/December

Arbutus (strawberry tree), *Nerine bowdenii*, *Cyclamen alpinum*, *Chimonanthus* (winter sweet), *Skimimia japonica*, *Ilex* (holly), *Mahonia*, *Erica* (heather), *Jasminum nudiflorum* (winter jasmine), *Pyracantha* (firethorn).
Some bulbs to enjoy: *Cyclamen alpinum*, *Galanthus* (snow drop), *Nerine bowdenii*, Hyacinths, *Narcissus* varieties Paper White and Soleil d'or.



FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

Comments from the veg plot

It's quiet here at the moment, runner beans have done a runner, squash have stopped screaming, baby carrots have grown up and fled the plot, peace at last! Overall, at this time of year I like to take a break.

Reflections

I so miss the Garden Show: let's hope we continue with this get-together this coming year [we're all going to look a little older!].

Reflecting on the spring and summer growing season, most vegetable crops were very good. I have noticed seeds are getting more expensive and on a lot of varieties they are quoting the amount of seeds in the packet.

Having used an enviromesh to protect the carrots from carrot fly, it has worked a treat. My beetroot over the last year or two have been attacked by birds, so covering them has solved the problem. Again, my curly kale has been infested by whitefly (aphids): I sprayed early with Provado [systemic insecticide]. This is taken in by the leaf and has stopped this problem. As this is a winter vegetable, a second spray was done midsummer.

With two long window boxes, I was able to keep a continuation of cut-and-come-again salad. When one box finished a new sowing was made.

For the first time ever I grew a pumpkin. Last year's compost heap, which will be used this coming spring, was a good place to plant it, (intended for the grandchildren at Halloween). I have three hanging in nets about the size of a football with one early pumpkin weighing 22lbs!



Seasonal activities

It's pruning time for most fruit. Saying that, I prune apples and pears December/January, so there's plenty of time yet. If you have redcurrants, spur prune as they fruit on old wood; remove one or two old growths 2 inches

from the base on old bushes to rejuvenate new growth. Do the same to blackcurrants and whitecurrants. These two will fruit on old and new growth. Prune off any branches that come away from the bush horizontally, these produce fruit and hang on the ground. Aim for an upright bush; thin out branches in the middle of the plant to allow for air circulation. This will help prevent pest problems. Also pay attention to raspberries, tayberries and blackberries, mentioned in the September October Newsletter if not done already. As crops finish continued to clear up: there's nothing worse than the smell of rotting cabbage leaves. Cut back all growths on strawberry plants to get rid of any diseased leaves.

Keith's choice vegetable

Jerusalem artichoke, also known as Sunroot, Sunchoke and Earth Apple: It is a sunflower from



Central America, growing up to 10 feet tall depending on variety, producing a small round smooth root vegetable which is dug up and eaten mostly during the winter. If you want to try this they are best grown, because of the height, on the perimeter of your vegetable plot, as they are also good as a windbreak. They will grow on poor soil but even then they can be invasive, though only if you do not use them. Cut tall growths down late autumn leaving a short length to help with lifting out of the ground when required. Varieties include: A. Dwarf Sunray, with long and smooth-skinned tubers; A. Fuseau, which is large,

smooth and easy to peel, also known as *Helianthus tuberosus*. Where possible grow in full sun. All produce small yellow sunflowers. Old varieties were very nobbly and difficult to deal with in the kitchen. I must say I don't like these. They can be boiled, eaten raw or put into soups and stews – see the recipe below. A lot of people suffer from a trumpet blast when they eat these, so beware!

No vegetable nightmares

Root aphid: this is the only pest I have had on Jerusalem artichokes, though not very often and only on old roots. Plants will be slow to grow and sometimes a white powder or fluffy wax is given

off by the aphids, thereby giving the roots a white coating. The plant should not be affected too much, it's the roots and not the edible tubers that are attacked. The problem only occurs in certain weather conditions.

Some vegetables & fruit to enjoy in November/December

Curly kale, Brussels sprouts, Savoy cabbage, Jerusalem artichokes, parsnips, turnips, swedes, celeriac and leeks.

To store: carrots, onions, potatoes, marrow, beetroot, shallots [carrots and beetroot stored in peat or dry soil].

To freeze: dwarf French beans, peas, runner and climbing French beans.

To bottle: gherkins, beetroot and shallots.



HELP! Your questions answered by resident expert, Keith

Please send your queries and problems to: info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Q *What is the difference between tubers, rhizomes and corms and what is their function?*

A A tuber is a fleshy root or underground stem which serves as a food store and produces shoots. Potatoes are tubers, also dahlias and begonias. A rhizome is a horizontal creeping underground stem which sends out roots and shoots from the nodes (area where buds reside) and also acts as a storage organ and the overwintering organ of perennials. The rhizome is the edible part of the ginger plant. Corms are swollen rounded underground storage organs and the stem of plants such as crocuses and gladioli. Sometimes they are enclosed by a papery skin, such as *Crocodylia* also known as *Antholyza* or *Montbretia*.

Q *What has happened to my Conference pears? A lot of them are banana-shaped and small.*

A Oddly shaped fruits are produced by unfertilised flowers. Conference pears are the only pear variety to produce pears that are misshapen, on other varieties if not fertilised they will produce nothing.

Q *I have some circles of dark green grass in a couple of places on my lawn, will it spread?*

A You have, by the sound of it, fairy rings, a spreading fungus producing one or more rings of lush grass. The area between the rings will not look too good. Eventually the centre could go brown or be quite bare. Slender, pale brown toadstools, being about 4cm (2ins) tall, may develop in summer or autumn on the ring of dark grass. No chemical is available for this problem. The ring of dark grass could produce puffballs, field mushrooms or the Fairy Ring Champignons (forest mushroom). All three help to decompose dead organic matter in the ground which then releases nitrogen which, in turn, makes the grass greener and grow more quickly. If you constantly feed your lawn, so making the grass that much greener, it's a way of hiding the problem. If you really don't want them, sterilising the soil might get rid of the problem. Something I have never tried is to remove the dark circle of grass to a depth of 7 inches, making the width a little more than that of the fairy ring. Fork over the soil and drench with a solution of Jeyes fluid or Armillatox, cover the treated area and leave for about a week. Remove the cover and leave for a further two weeks. Replace with new soil and reseed. I have never had a customer who wanted them removed; they said they liked seeing them. It might be different if you have young children though.

RECIPE

Crispy Jerusalem artichokes with roasted garlic and rosemary

Ingredients

800g Jerusalem artichokes
1 garlic bulb, cut down the middle
1 tbsp rosemary leaves, chopped
3 tbsp rapeseed oil
pinch ground mace
20g butter
2 tsp lemon juice



Method

1. Heat oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4.
2. Soak the artichokes in cold water for 20 mins or so to loosen any dirt, then scrub them with a scourer, being sure to remove any grit. Halve the small ones and quarter the bigger ones, and put them in a roasting tin with the split garlic bulb and rosemary.
3. Coat everything with the oil and season. Roast for 45-50 mins until tender inside and crispy outside.
4. To finish, squeeze the softened garlic cloves from their skins and toss with the roasted artichokes, along with the mace, butter and lemon.

Recipe from *BBC Good Food* (www.bbcgoodfood.com)

Ellie

Editor's postscript

There was a time, not so long ago, when by now we would have been 'putting the garden to bed', giving the grass its last cut of the year, pulling up the last of the annuals, digging over the vegetable patch and preparing for winter. Changing climate is giving us a longer growing season. My grass is still growing, there are still one or two strawberries on my plants, and I have only just cut down the sweet peas. But along with that, we are getting some extreme weather episodes – long hot, dry spells followed by periods of torrential rain and waterlogging – and I am keeping a careful watch on which plants cope best with those conditions. Some successes this year have been *Achillea* 'Terracotta' and bright golden *Rudbeckia* – the seeds came free with a gardening magazine and I just wish I could remember the name of the variety!



Alison