



MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

September/October NEWSLETTER 2023

www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

We had a very successful Show in July. We did not have as many exhibits as we usually do but the tables were still full of prize vegetables and beautiful flowers. I would like to thank Derek who organised it so well. It ran smoothly. Thanks also to all of those who played any part in helping with preparing and running it. Special thanks to Margaret who set out the tables on Friday evening in preparation for Saturday. Thank also to the exhibitors without whom there would be no show. Also, last but not least, Louise for baking the delicious cakes for our refreshments.

I expect as you read this Autumn will be creeping in. The trees changing their leaves to beautiful autumnal shades.

We are already harvesting blackberries and plums.

Soon we shall be round the hedgerows looking for sloes and elderberries. Sloe gin is delicious, but we must remember it is alcoholic!

I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting in September.



Ellie Church – Chairperson



Please note: Sean and Ellie have a new telephone number

You must include the dialling code **01666** as well as the number **510490**.

They have switched from BT to VOIP (voice over internet protocol) which means telephone calls share the fibre optic cable with the internet.



Tasks for September/October



- Take hybrid tea & floribunda rose cuttings
- Prepare ground for new rose beds
- Continue to dead head perennial plants
- Prune back flowering shrubs i.e., Weigela, Philadelphus, Senecio etc.
- Sow Sweet Peas in pots and place in frame
- Sow hardy annuals—Nigella, Godetia, Candytuft
- Place prepared Hyacinths in bowls for Christmas
- Sprinkle 2oz per sq yard of bone meal around perennials and shrubs
- Plant Wallflowers, Polyanthus, Bellis and Pansies for spring flowering
- Sow lettuces—Arctic King or Winter Density
- Plant out spring cabbage plants
- Store main carrot crops
- Order fruit trees and bushes
- Cut out old fruiting raspberry canes
- Prune blackcurrant bushes
- Pick apples and pears for storing

MEETINGS – EVENTS – ACTIVITIES

11 September 2023

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

Rosemary Verey
Margie Hoffnung

Margie has a horticulture degree and an MSc in the Conservation of Historic Gardens & Cultural Landscapes. She has worked at Westonbirt Arboretum and Highgrove, and with Rosemary Verey and Mary Keen.

9 October 2023

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

How to Garden the Low Carbon Way
Sally Nex

Professional gardener and garden writer, Sally is passionate about growing her own food. She writes regularly for the RHS magazine, The Garden and for BBC Gardeners' World magazine.

13 November 2023

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

Glorious Gardens: a Gardener's Choice
Andrew Tolman

Andrew was formerly Senior Gardener at Highgrove and is now self-employed. He is a popular speaker who has entertained us on many occasions with his beautifully illustrated talks.

11 December 2023

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

Annual General Meeting

Some thoughts from the Show

Lost property

This pretty Portmeirion stem vase was left behind after the Show in July. Please could the owner contact Margaret Medland (margaret.a.medland@gmail.com) so that you can be reunited with your vase at our next meeting.



From Derek: My thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the Show – we never know what entries we are going to get – the arrangements, printing of Prize cards, benching cards and certificates and all the other forms we need, and the stewards and judges are there prepared for everything but our British weather!

From Keith: Good show everyone! It never ceases to amaze me the quality of flowers, fruit and vegetables each year, especially with the weather causing problems. We all have something in our house or garden that we could exhibit. Even a tiny cactus would give interest. Well done all!

From Margaret: The array of garden tools, pots & other garden sundries, as supplied by Dick & Julie Jowett as part of their house clearance, raised over £40.00 which was donated to the Malmesbury & District Food Bank – something we considered very worthwhile.



FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

Comments from the garden

Another summer season over for me. Many shrubs and herbaceous plants gave a good show, not all though. I walk around my garden every day, sometimes several times (mostly with boots and umbrella): you always see something you missed.

Heathers

These plants I have used in many gardens, the lime-hating heathers, such as the *Calluna* genus, and the scotch heather or bell heather, I grow in pots with ericaceous (lime-free) compost. There are many varieties to choose from, flowering from July to October.

Here are some *Calluna* varieties I have tried. Spring Cream: leaves are tipped cream with white flowers, ht 18" (45cm); Joy Vanstone: foliage turns orange in winter with pink flowers; Kerstin has foliage that turns deep lilac grey in winter, then cream to red in spring with mauve flowers, ht 18" (45cm); Orange Queen: foliage is golden yellow in summer, turning to deep burnt orange in winter, with single pink flowers.

Some bell heather varieties include Crimson King with red flowers and Kerry Cherry with deep pink flowers, both 12"-18" (30-45cm) in height.

Erica (heath) has many species. The only two I have grown are *E. carnea* and *E. darleyensis*, of which there are many varieties. All they need is a trim when they



finish flowering to stop them from becoming woody. Again, some varieties I have used in gardens many times include *E. darleyensis* George Rendull which has purplish pink flowers, Darleydale which has pink/white flowers and Epe which has white flowers tinged pink. *E. carnea* is the one I have planted

the most. Some good varieties include Ruby Glow with deep rose red flowers, December Red with purplish red flowers and Springwood Pink which is trailing in habit with rose pink flowers. There are many other species of heathers, some growing to 20ft, such as *E. arborea* (tree heath), growing mostly from the Canary Islands through Portugal and through the high mountains of Arabia Ethiopia and equatorial Africa, where it grows into forests 20ft (6m) in height with stout trunks. It

produces clouds of small white flowers in spring. Other species growing to about 6ft (180cm) include *E. x veitchii* (Veitch's heath). This one has small white scented flowers. *E. lusitanica* (Portuguese heath or Spanish heath) has mid-green foliage with dull pink flowers in bud, opening to white flushed pale pink. *E. perspicua* (Prince of Wales heath) has tubular flowers protruding from the branches; there are mixed colours of white, pink, deep mauve or red and white, flowering in the autumn and early winter. Other



species growing to about 2ft include *E. vagans* (Cornish heath); this has bell-shaped pink, mauve or white flowers in summer and early autumn. Lastly, *E. cerinthoides* (scarlet heath or fire heath) which has a brilliant visual effect with bright orange-scarlet flowers clustered at the ends of straight branches, flowering winter and spring.

No disease please

Bacteria: there are a number of bacterial diseases, such as bacterial canker, bacterial soft rot, brassica bacterial soft rot and bacterial leaf spot. There are also many bacterial species involved in general infections. The causes can be varied and spread not by you but by insects or birds, even animals. Bacterial infections can enter through wounds to the plant's leaf, stem or branch. Leaves usually become spotted with a yellow halo around edge. Bulbs, rhizomes, tubers and roots can disintegrate rapidly, becoming slimy with unpleasant odours. The only control is prompt removal of all infected areas of plant and root system. Do not plant in the same place again and do not place any material on the compost heap.

Keith's choice plant

Callicarpa girdiana: a deciduous shrub (loses its leaves in winter). Small pink flowers appear in July followed by masses of bead-like violet berries with rosy violet-tinted leaves in autumn. It is said you need more than one plant to



produce berries: I have planted only one and still get berries. Height depends on variety, but if pruned after flowering, a general height should be 4-6ft (120-180cm). Pruning will create a more bushy shrub.

Plants to enjoy in September/October

Callicarpa, Cornus kousa, Rhus (stags horn sumach), *Solidago* (golden rod), *Pyracantha* (firethorn), *Viburnum*, *Nerine* in variety, *Cortaderia* (pampas grass), *Amaryllis belladonna* (belladonna lily).



FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

Comments from the veg plot

Being on the short side, I stand here between my dwarf french beans, which have given a good crop, as have most of the vegetables this year. If you also have a vegetable plot, I hope you have also had good results.

Leeks

Not everyone's choice, I grow about 50 each year. They will stand until April. when they will go to seed if their are any left. I do not plant in long rows, I always plant in a block, five rows, ten per row, usually next to the carrots. It might help to deter carrot fly. This year I have planted a new variety to me, Blue Solaise, a french variety which is very hardy, reputed to stand until May. It has deep blue-purple leaves and medium length thick white shanks (stems). My favourite dish is leeks with ham wrapped around them, then covered with cheese



sauce. If you like a slim leek, the variety Longbow A.G.M. is the one for you. It has long shanks which stand well through the winter. It has good resistance and the flavour is not too strong. In the past I have tried many varieties

including Lyon, Oarsman, Elefant, Porbella, Autumn Mammoth, Crusader and Musselburgh, all giving good results. Most stood until April – there were a few that did not because I ate them all. There are a few diseases, I have not had any pests though. In the past I have had a disease problem in the early stages of growth, but I stopped this from happening again by spraying with a safer fungus fighter. I always start my seed off in pots, potting them on when large enough into small single pots before planting them out. This way I can give each leek a good feed when watering. There is a leek moth, which can also affect

onions, which shows as whitish brown patches on the leaves; cut leeks down to almost ground level, they will rapidly grow back.

Seasonal activities

The beginning of a quieter time, although the storage of the season's vegetables can now begin, if not already started, with the onions. If you grow early potatoes like I do, they have probably already been used, but the main crop potatoes can now be lifted. If you suffer with potato blight there is a good blight resistant variety called Sarpo: here are some of their varieties. Sarpo Blue Danube and Sarpo Kifli



are both early varieties, Sarpo Una is a second early and Sarpo Axona and Mira are main crop. Dry off the potatoes thoroughly when

lifted and use any that are damaged before bagging as these will rot and spread through the bag. Keep your remaining vegetables weed free, remove any yellowing brassica leaves and compost. Continue to sow cut-and-come-again lettuce. About this time I start to sow a number of varieties in single small pots, transferring them when big enough into a trough and putting it on the cold greenhouse bench. In the past I have been cutting lettuce well beyond Christmas. Continue to pick dwarf french beans and runner beans for the freezer, also if you are a beetroot fan like me, put some in jars for winter use, also shallots if you like pickled onions. I always leave some beetroot in the ground. It's possible the winter will be mild, although last winter was too hard and I lost all I had left in the ground. Most of my soft fruit are over but the thornless blackberry is cropping well at the moment. If you grow leeks and want longer white shanks (stems) earth some soil up around them.

Keith's choice vegetable

Sweet corn var. Incredible F1: a really amazing variety I have grown for a number of years. This is one vegetable you must grow in a block, short rows next to each other, so as to help with pollination. This variety has a sweet flavour and produces a heavy crop, generally three or four cobs per plant.

No vegetable nightmares

Leek rust: shows as bright orange raised pustules (bumps). These erupt and leaves turn yellow and die back; mostly affecting outer leaves, caused by a fungus. This disease also affects garlic, onions, chives, alliums and shallots. Control by removing affected leaves, plant with good distance between plants to allow good air circulation, avoid use of high

nitrogen fertilisers as soft growth will result and be more susceptible. Grow on a new piece of ground the following year, also choose a leek that is more resistant to this disease.



Some produce to enjoy in Sept/Oct

Dwarf french beans, beetroot, cabbage, salad leaves, cauliflower, cucumber, early Brussels sprouts, spinach, runner beans, courgettes, carrots, radish, gherkins (wallies), Swiss chard, squash, curly kale, fennel (bulb).

From store: onions, potatoes..

Food Fashion



I noticed some nice little carrots at our show and recalled what the RHS set as their 'Judging standard' in their Show Handbook. There is no doubt that we are seeing fruit and vegetables changing – can it just be a fashion? I have noticed when eating out, my vegetarian (and vegan) friends don't just eat basic salads which I remember were the norm a few years ago, but there seem to be colours in the vegetables which were never there a few years ago.

My little trips around the Aldi store are full of surprises: baby potatoes – I would have cried if I dug potatoes up that small! Baby carrots, baby beetroots, baby sweet corn, baby lettuce, baby cucumbers: four in a sealed pack! Baby corn on the cob, again in packs! I suppose I might excuse 'Button Mushrooms'. Just when I think there are no more surprises I see bunches of 'Jumbo Spring Onions'!

Derek



HELP! Your questions answered by resident expert, Keith

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

Q *I have some crocus that flower in September but every year there seem to be fewer. What's happening?*

A The bulbs of the autumn crocus (*Colchicum*) are rotting below ground. The cause might be grey bulb rot, a fungus which attacks many bulbs. Growths in the autumn are distorted, wither and die off, bulbs in the ground will turn grey and dry as they rot. There is no cure other than removing and disposing of affected foliage. Do not compost. If you enjoy colchicums choose another place in the garden to plant, well away from the bad area. There are a number of varieties available today with some amazing colours: they will be just as happy in pots as in the grass.

Q *I have grown cucumbers for many years but this year they are not well. They have black spots, the fruits do not grow but split.*

A You have a bad infection of cucumber gummosis (scab). This shows as sunken grey-black spots, sometimes with a furry grey fungal growth, which develops on the fruit. The cause is a fungus, encouraged by cool damp conditions. Dispose of entire plant and compost if grown in a pot. Grow varieties less susceptible to the disease, such as Femspot, Emilie, Tyria, Marketmore, Honey Plus F1.



Q *I keep some of my beans for planting next year. On looking at them, some have gone black instead of pinky-brown. Are they bad?*

A No, the pollinators are to blame, transferring pollen from one flower to another and other beans in nearby gardens. You now have a new variety. Don't get excited, they will probably not crop any more than others, however it will be interesting to see how they perform against your usual varieties.

Thank you to Keith for these photos of attractive planting ideas



RECIPE

Toffee Apple Bread and Butter Pudding

Ingredients

3 red dessert apples	3 eggs
Juice 1/2 lemon	400ml full-fat milk
4 tbsp golden caster sugar	200ml double cream
397g can caramel condensed milk	1 tsp vanilla extract
6 brioche finger rolls, sliced into rounds	ice cream, to serve (optional)



Method

1. Core the apples, then slice into rings about as thick as a 50p piece. Toss through the lemon juice and 2 tbsp sugar. Spread about 2/3 of the caramel over the base of a large baking dish (ours was 20 x 30cm).
2. Layer the brioche and apple rings in the dish in overlapping lines. Dot spoonful's of the leftover caramel here and there, leaving bits of apple poking out. In a jug, whisk the eggs, milk, cream, vanilla extract and 1 tbsp sugar. Pour the mixture over the brioche and apples, making sure it's all well covered, then wrap in cling film. Set aside for at least 30 mins, or overnight, in the fridge.
3. Heat oven to 170C/150C fan/gas 3. Uncover the pudding and scatter with the remaining 1 tbsp sugar. Bake for 45-50 mins until the top is golden and the custard has set. The caramel should be bubbling around the edges and the pudding puffed up. Serve with vanilla ice cream, if you like.

Recipe from *BBC Good Food*

Ellie

Editor's Postscript

Tomato surprises

When my usual Apero tomatoes flopped and died soon after germination, I was very pleased to obtain a packet of Brandysweet Plum tomato seeds, the variety recommended in Nicola Hope's talk to the Club. They grew well and I eagerly awaited my crop of lovely, sweet, cherry plum tomatoes. Imagine, then, how surprised I was when some of them produced these whoppers! Others gave me smallish, crimson pink tomatoes with a tendency to split.



Did someone collect seed from last year's fruit without realising that Brandysweet Plum is an F1 hybrid and won't always come true from seed? (I have made the same mistake myself!) However, if the flavour is good, what's in a name? Sadly, though, when it came to the taste test, although these are OK they have nothing like the rich flavour of Apero.

Alison