



MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

January/February NEWSLETTER 2025

www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Christmas is over and I haven't heard that Father Christmas was jammed in a chimney so he will be back again next year. I look forward to January and in a corner of the garden the first snowdrop pops out its little head. A promise of spring.

Have you noticed the price of vegetables and fruit these days? Cabbages for example, with the exception of the white ones, have become rare. I believe all were spoilt by the year's flooding. I have declared that we

shall grow a variety of them this year. Soon it will be time to put the seeds in.

Let us all hope the weather is kinder to us this year and no one is flooded, and that we all have success in our gardens.

On behalf of the committee, I wish you all a Happy New Year.



Ellie Church – Chairperson

SUBSCRIPTION TIME

Subscriptions are now due for 2025. They remain fixed at £7 for individual members and £10 for joint members in the same household. We have a full programme of talks and events for the coming year, and I think you will agree that this represents extremely good value for your subscription.

Details of how to pay and an application form are at the end of this Newsletter.

Thank you,

Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)



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

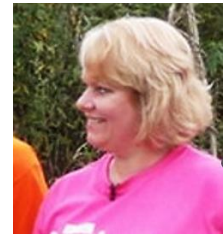
MEETINGS – EVENTS – ACTIVITIES

<p style="text-align: center;">Monday 13th January 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>A Year in the Life of a Nurseryman</i> Mike Hinwood</p> <p>Mike runs Foxley Road Nurseries, along with his wife Carol. He will be talking about the history of the nursery and the year-round challenges of running it</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Monday 10 February 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p><i>Please note, this is a change to the original programme</i></p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Annual General Meeting</i> <i>to be followed by</i> <i>Non-peat Growing Materials</i> Victoria Wright</p> <p>Victoria Wright is from Melcourt, our local and industry-leading supplier of composts and her talk will be on the benefits of peat-free composts and mulches</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Monday 10 March 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Garden Heaven</i> Vanessa Berridge</p> <p>Vanessa is founding editor of The English Garden magazine and author of multiple gardening books. Her talk is entitled "Garden Heaven", also the subject of her latest book</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Monday 14 April 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>The Secrets of Successful Water Gardening</i> James Allison</p> <p>James is Principal of Water Garden Solutions based in Cheltenham. He lectures in this country and abroad and is an award-winning writer</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Saturday 26 April 2025 The Market Cross, Malmesbury <i>Annual Plant Sale</i></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Please note the earlier date</p> </div>	<p style="text-align: center;">Saturday 26 July 2025 Charlton Village Hall <i>Annual Show</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Monday 8 September 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Bees in Gardening</i> Richard Ricketts</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Monday 13 October 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Clematis</i> Andy Jeanes</p>

Reports from recent meetings

Katherine Crouch: New Tricks for Old Gardeners

Katherine Crouch our speaker for the November meeting came with a string of titles to her name: BBC Gardener of the Decade 2008, Chelsea Gold Medal winner in 2013, prior to this being BBC Gardener of the year in 1999. So we were expecting a speaker with a wealth of knowledge, both in her role as a Garden Designer and as a grounded gardener, always working sustainably and with wildlife habitat in mind. She came from a long line of gardeners, with both parents, aunt and grandmother all having lovely gardens, and an enthusiasm passed down the generations to Katherine.



In Katherine's own words, in the late 1970s, garden design was not yet a popular career, so she studied Product Design, graduating in 1981.

Having excavated and built a garden from scratch behind her bungalow, she and her husband opened their garden for the National Garden Scheme from 1996 to 2000 which was enormous fun. Katherine continues to live and work in Somerset, it being 'one of the best places in the world to have a garden'. This must have influenced her desire to set up Katherine Crouch Garden Design in early 2000 and she has since been designing gardens all over the south west and beyond. Her garden design projects range from tiny to large private gardens and always with sustainability and wildlife habitat in mind. Her knowledge of wild and cultivated plants for British gardens helps her to introduce more bugs, birds and pollinators to the garden, while avoiding planting tasty snacks attractive to rabbits, deer and other large salad lovers.

Katherine continued her talk by emphasising that we must all take care of our bodies while working in the garden, warm up beforehand, bend and stretch sensibly, then exercise as a cooling down session, all good Pilates' techniques.

In concluding her talk, she showed members some of her favourite garden tools, including a stainless steel transplanting spade, garden fork (a different weight for different jobs in the garden), short-handled loppers for pruning roses, a 3-cornered hoe which she found invaluable in the vegetable garden, also a small trowel produced by Heirloom Tools and available from 'Made in Stroud', with several members already owning one such tool.

Jim Thomas, in giving his vote of thanks, invited members to raise any issues or questions to Katherine, before she disappeared on her journey back to South Somerset.

Liz Gilder: Christmas decorations from the garden



In the absence of Ellie and Sean, our committee member Jim welcomed our speaker for the December meeting, Liz Gilder who, in a very relaxed way, demonstrated the art of making Christmas wreaths, table decorations and swags, using all natural materials collected that day from her own garden. She made everything look so easy, bringing to the fore her training in Botany, Horticulture and Floristry at Lackham College. Using nothing artificial, she added ivy, conifers and moss to the frame for a wreath, or hand-tied, hand-wired sprigs for a swag or table decoration and always including a sprig or two of rosemary for scent, dried orange and lime slices, also cinnamon sticks for perfume, with a judicious spray of gold or silver as necessary, and maybe some coloured ribbon. The completed swag was entered into the raffle which was won by Helen Mabey. Jim gave the vote of thanks for Liz, who kindly waived her fee in lieu of a donation to her favoured charity, Cancer Research.

It was good to have Derek with us for the evening as we all shared in the festive refreshments with mulled wine and mulled apple juice prepared by Louise and helped by Pam.

Margaret Medland



FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

Comments from the garden

Flowering wall

You may remember that in the Newsletter for March/April 2023, I wrote about flowering walls that I had worked on over the years. I had created one so as not to lose the view across a large field. It has now, after four years, matured with wisteria, honeysuckle, *Clematis montana*, rambling rose and a vine, *Vinifera purpurea*. This vine produces small grapes but they are a little bitter. It has beautiful purple foliage and contrasts well with other plants. All these

climbing plants have been trained on the framework I erected from four 8 ft poles with galvanised wire threaded through them, 30 ft (10m) in length. It needed all growths as they grew trained along all the wires, removing all the growths that grew away from the wires. It also needed pruning back to a few buds from the main growth as each variety finished flowering.

I now have a colourful boundary wall which still gives me views across the fields (see below).



Exotic houseplants

Let's come indoors. *Anthurium*, or lace leaf, comes in a number of varieties and colours. A 'purple flamingo' has dark green heart-shaped leaves. It is an evergreen variety which helps to improve indoor air quality by removing harmful pollutants in the air. Other colourful varieties include white, red and pinks.

Bromeliads include *Tillandsia cyanea* or the pink quill fan flower or blue flowered torch, which is



an evergreen with rosettes of narrow dark green leaves. It produces bright pink fan shaped bracts from

which violet blue flowers form, a fairly easy houseplant if kept out of direct sunlight.

Spathiphyllum or peace lily is another fairly easy houseplant. There are a number of varieties. The more you dead head, the more flowers you will receive. Allow the plant to dry out completely before watering again (plant will begin to droop when drying out), apply a mist spray now and again.

Two indoor plants I have had in the past were *Beloperone*, otherwise known as the shrimp plant, and *Aphelandra*, the zebra plant: both were fairly easy to look after. First the shrimp plant, so called because of the red/pink drooping flowers

resembling a shrimp.

Again, allow this to dry out and place out of direct sunlight: a monthly feed



would be beneficial. Standing in water will cause the plant to rot; it will first show as yellowing leaves. The zebra plant can tolerate a few hours of direct sunlight but no more or the leaves will scorch, otherwise give good light and apply a liquid feed monthly. Brown tips on the variegated leaves can mean too much water; the yellow flower heads can be cut off when finished. It is a very colourful plant.

Sansevieria, is commonly known as mother-in-law's tongue, also snake plant, viper's bowstring and African spear plant, which is where the plant originates. I have had one for more years than I can remember, a rather neglected pot plant of mine but it seems to thrive on neglect. It has long spears of yellow-green leaves; as yet I have not had a flower, however the variety *S. ebracteata* does produce a long flower spike with delicate white spider-like flowers all along the stem.

Herbaceous revival

Golden banner (*Thermopsis*) or false lupin exists in a number of varieties. It is a lupin-like plant found in the wild from Alaska to Siberia, so is fully hardy, ht 3ft (90cm). *T. montana* is a suckering herbaceous perennial with silvery blue-green leaves and spikes of yellow broom-like flowers in early summer. *T. lanceolata* again has very good yellow lupin-like flowers on upright stems in late spring, ht 3ft (90cm). The corn lily, or *Ixia*, is a bulb which comes in a number of colours and is well worth having in the herbaceous border. It produces star shaped flowers on 40cm (18") stems, flowering in autumn or spring, depending when planted.

Sisyrinchium striatum 'Quaint and Queer', is a clump forming plant with iris-like green leaves. The flowers are yellow, appearing along 2ft (60cm) stems in June and July. Other varieties of this plant include *S.* 'Californian Skies', also clump forming



with sky blue six-petaled flowers with a yellow eye; this one only grows to about 8" (20cm) high, ideal for the front of your border, flowering June to August. *S. augustifolium album* has white flowers; again for the front of the border, ht 8" (20cm).

Erigeron or Mexican fleabane is a plant I just had to have. *E. speciosus* variety 'Azure Fairy' has sky blue to light purple flowers, ht 50cm (18"), flowering May to September. There are a number of varieties with various colours.

One for next time is Coral Bells.

Keith's choice bulb

Nectaroscordum (Allium) siculum bulgaricum (Sicilian honey garlic or ornamental onions): a really attractive allium with beautiful broad bell-shaped greenish-white flowers, broadly striped dark brown-red on outside. Twenty to thirty flowers are borne on 3ft (90cm) stalks during June and July. Grow through sticks to give support.



Pests' paradise

Hemispherical scale: mostly found indoors and in greenhouses on ornamental plants which are susceptible to this pest. This shows as dark brown

round convex scale insects up to 4mm in diameter. Found on stems and leaves, producing honeydew secretions. This pest breeds throughout the year. Remove by hand or spray with a safer insecticide or soap solution, a number of sprays will be needed to break the insect's life cycle; a systemic insecticide would be better as this is taken in by the leaves, only a couple of sprays of this early in the year should be enough.

Plants to enjoy in January/February

Helleborus niger (Christmas rose), *Pyracantha* in variety, *Daphne mezereum*, *Garrya elliptica*, *Jasminum nudiflorum* (winter jasmine), *Sempervivum* (house leek), *Mahonia*, *Chimonanthus* (winter sweet), *Lonicera fragrantissima*.
Bulbs: *Crocus*, *Galanthus* (snowdrop), *Iris reticulata*, *Muscari* (grape hyacinth), *Eranthus* (winter aconite), *Chionodoxa*.



FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

Comments from the veg plot

All put to bed and under water at the moment. This is why I do not put the compost on the vegetable plot until March, all the goodness will have washed away.

Savoy cabbage

I can hear you saying, I touched on this variety of vegetable in the November/December Newsletter in 2023. Yes, I did, but there are a number of very good winter savoy cabbages I did not mention. Refreshing your memory, the variety Cordoba F1, is a clubroot resistant variety. Not every one has this problem, but I have worked in a lot of gardens where I grew vegetables and I think at least half of them had it. The clubroot organism prefers acid soil so raising the PH to 7.2 by adding lime will help to reduce the disease. Kilaton F1 also Cordesa F1 are two good clubroot resistant varieties, both of which stand well during the winter, with good leaf cover. The Dobies seed catalogue has a good selection of savoy cabbages. January King 3 is a well tested variety with good size and flavour. Vertus

is an organic variety, standing well in severe weather; harvest December to March.

I cannot finish this topic without mentioning the variety Tundra F1. I grew this variety in many gardens and was asked to grow again; a good size savoy with excellent flavour and very tight growth, standing well in very bad weather.



Seasonal activities

I think this is a time we can all have a break from the vegetable plot, especially if it's under water, frosted or covered in snow. This is a good time to look through the new seed catalogues and get ahead of the game. I mentioned frosts: this does however bring out the flavour of Brussels sprouts and leeks if you grow them.

In February it's a good idea to cover your rhubarb so getting an early crop of pale pink

champagne sticks, delicious if cooked with apple in a crumble. Over the years many new varieties have been bred: here are just a few. Timperley Early, a good forcing variety for an early crop; Poultons Pride, a long cropping variety with rosy red stems; Fultons Strawberry Surprise, very good flavour, holds RHS award and AGM award of garden merit, a vigorous variety; Victoria, good flavour ,sweet rosy stalks, early cropping variety.

Keith's choice vegetable

Parsnip variety Countess F1: this has a yellow/orange skin with a sweet taste, a good size parsnip with good resistance to canker (brown indentations on mature growth), thinning out seedlings early will help prevent this problem.

Pests paradise

Cabbage moth: all varieties of brassica are damaged during the summer by yellowish brown or green caterpillars, eating leaves especially the heart of the plant. Cabbage moth caterpillars also damage onion leaves causing them to flop over. Remove caterpillars by hand or spray early with a safer contact insecticide, a second spray may be needed a few weeks later.

Produce to enjoy in January/February

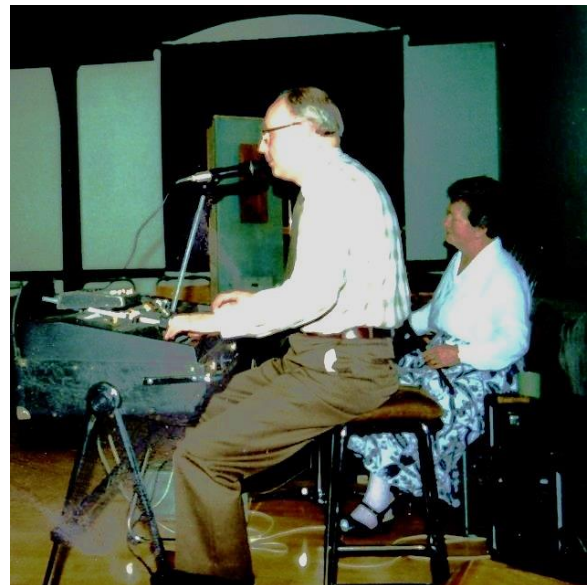
Curly kale, savoy cabbage, leeks, Jerusalem artichokes, perpetual spinach, turnips, swede, parsnips, Brussels sprouts, celeriac, early winter cauliflower, late sown carrots.
From store: onions, carrots, shallots, cooking apples, potatoes.

Weitzel Awards



Stan Weitzel was the secretary of the Garden Club for many years. This was at a time before we had garden centres and we had a 'Hut' at Stan's large garden where he organized bulk buying of garden supplies delivered to his

home in Baskerville. A small gang of our members would gather on Saturday mornings where, with the aid of an old cement mixer, they would mix peat and chemicals in measured quantities and bag up a range of composts – we also had a set of scales in the hut where fertilizers were weighed up and bagged and labeled for a steady stream of customers! As a result our membership rocketed!



My picture is of Stan and Lilly Weitzel, Stan on the 'keys' and Lilly tapping out on the drum, as they provided the music for a Barn Dance for our members. They were very popular around the villages for Barn Dances.

Derek



HELP! Your questions answered by resident expert, Keith

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

Q *Are gherkins simply baby cucumbers?*

A Not at all. A gherkin is a type of cucumber, its short bumpy fruits are perfect for pickling. Also known as wallies, they are best picked when all the same length. They are best harvested when 3 or 4 ins (8-10cm) long. Grow as a ridge cucumber outdoors or in a tub or large pot. The variety Viridis Hortus will produce good gherkins without removing the male flowers, if not removed gherkins could be bitter; this one when in flower will attract pollinators and is an old heirloom variety. There are, however, a number of varieties to choose from: Diamant F1 will produce a great number of fruits perfect for pickling; Partner F1 and Bohemia F1 are similar varieties.

Q *I plant a lot of bulbs in the autumn, the tulips especially give a wonderful show. However, after flowering can I cut them back as they look very unsightly?*

A Only the flower head should be removed to prevent precious energy being taken from the bulb for seed production; leaving the foliage on does the opposite. The stems and foliage put power back into the bulb as they die off, helping the bulb to give a good show next year. If bulbs are planted amongst summer flowering herbaceous plants which start growing when bulbs are at their end, the bulb foliage will be smothered by the plants' growth – problem solved. Having said this, I grow a lot of tulips and daffodils in pots and when they have all finished, I remove them from the pots and dry them off; this does not stop them from giving a good show the following spring. All the daffodils I have planted in the garden are dead headed and the foliage tied in a knot, this tidies them up.

Q *I love to have cut anemone flowers in a vase, but they take so long for the flower to open that, the foliage is already beginning to yellow. This especially happens when I buy them in tight bud. Is there anything I can do to make them bloom sooner?*

A Yes. Anemones do not like being put in cold water. Trim the stalk ends and put them in tepid water instead of cold, this will make them flower sooner. This also applies to other cut flowers.



RECIPE

No-cook orange cheesecake

Ingredients

- 16 digestive biscuits
- 6 tablespoons melted butter
- 400g cream cheese
- Grated zest of 3 oranges – keep oranges for topping
- 200g mascarpone cheese
- 100g caster sugar
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 184mls double cream



Method

1. Crush all the biscuits finely and mix with the melted butter
2. Line a 23cm round tin with the butter and biscuit mixture to form a base: put it in the fridge to set for about half an hour
3. Whisk together the cream cheese, mascarpone, sugar, milk and orange zest
4. Put the cream in a separate bowl and whisk to a thick custard consistency
5. Combine the cream and the cheese mixture and mix thoroughly. Spread evenly over the biscuit base and decorate with orange segments
6. Chill for 5 hours – enjoy!

Ellie

And finally . . .

Some more colourful photographs from Keith



Euonymus alatus



Dwarf chrysanthemum



Michaelmas daisies



Dwarf chrysanthemum

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2025

Subscriptions for 2025 are now due. They remain the same as previous years, that is: £7.00 for single membership and £10.00 for couples.

I would be grateful to receive your subscriptions as soon as possible. They may be paid:

- at the monthly meetings
- by post to me, Sean O'Shea, at Redlands, West End, Brinkworth, Chippenham, SN15 5DA
- by using the Club Post Box at E & S Hardware Store, High Street, Malmesbury
- by Bank transfer to Lloyds Bank PLC; sort code 30 91 99; account 02440789; put your name as the reference so I can track your payment.

PLEASE SECURE CASH/CHEQUE IN AN ENVELOPE WITH THIS FORM

Enclosed £7.00 single membership £10.00 double membership

1. (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): Membership No.

2. (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): Membership No.

Tel. No.

Address:

.....

Email address.....

GDPR Declaration:

- I authorise Malmesbury & District Garden Club to hold records of my personal details as necessary for the efficient running of the club. These details include:
 - name and address
 - landline and mobile telephone numbers
 - email address (if disclosed)
 - application/renewal form
 - record of subscription payments
- I am happy for Malmesbury & District Garden Club to communicate with me by email, by post and by telephone.
- I am aware that I can request a copy of the details of my record and that I can ask for any inaccuracies to be amended or for records to be deleted. I am also aware that I can refer complaints to the Information Commissioner if I am not satisfied with the way my complaint has been dealt with.

For further details contact Mr. Sean O'Shea at the address above.

Signed: (1) **(2)**

Thank you

Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)