



HARDINGTON GARDEN CLUB

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2023

CLUB NEWS

Thank you to everyone who came to last month's talk given by Steve Fry our Gold Club speaker. Steve's topic was a change from the publicised "Roses" and was on "Alternative plants, alternative places" which from the feedback from members was greatly enjoyed.

Our meeting this week: Wednesday 26th April.

Hardington Village Hall 7.30pm

Kingston Lacy through the seasons by Garden project manager Andrew Hunt

Kingston Lacy is an impressive country house close to Wimborne in Dorset, set in the middle of 40 acres of formal gardens. Andrew Hunt has spent over 20 years working there, from apprentice to Head Gardener, and for the past decade has supervised their transformation.

Refreshments: Sue Phillips and Jo Szmaj

Raffle: Irene Tizard



Bulb Growing Competition

At this month's meeting we will be judging our Gold Club bulbs. If you planted some of the Narcissus Camelot bulbs given to the club by the Gold Club last autumn please bring them along to be judged. A £5 gift voucher will be awarded to the winner.

Plug plants

We still have a number of Gold club plug plants available to collect. This year you will be able to choose one of two plants, a Fuchsia "Koralle" an unusual "tube" flower with bronzed foliage or Geranium (pelargonium) "New Century Apple Blossom" which has flowers of a delicate shade of soft pink.

These can be grown on and entered into the correct category at the flower and craft show in August. Details of the schedule attached to this newsletter. We will also have a Garden club competition to choose the best plant with a gift voucher presented as a prize for the winner of each category at the September meeting.

If you would like to enter and haven't already collected yours please do so this month.

Don't forget we always have at least two £10 garden gift vouchers as prizes in the raffle each month.

Next month's events:

13th May: PLANT SALE

11am - 2pm at Hardington House, weather permitting, or Hardington Village Hall.

Our annual plant sale is fast approaching and this year we have a change of format 'weather permitting'.

Karen and Simon Paxton have kindly offered Hardington House garden as the venue for this year's sale.

Please also note the change of time from the Garden Club programme as Karen and Simon will have bacon baps for sale as part of the refreshments.

2023 PLANT SALE CHARITY
MIND (Somerset)
as voted for by club members

The committee are now in the process of planning our annual plant sale if you are planning on donating any plants, seedlings or garden ephemera please can you contact Andy and Kate so we can arrange either delivery or collection in time for the sale.

17th May: DISCOUNT SHOPPING EVENING

Starts 6pm at Castle Gardens, Sherborne.

You are very welcome to go in before 6pm to shop but please could you go through the tills after 6pm.

*** **SAVE THE DATE: 15th June** ***

A board will be available to sign at this month's meeting if you wish to join us on either or both parts of this forthcoming visit. Parking will be limited so please car share or contact Kate and Andy to arrange transport.

15th June: GARDEN CLUB VISIT - 11am **Glenholme Herbs**

Penmore Road
Sandford Orcas
Sherborne
Dorset

A family of growers; Alison and Alan, their daughter Maxine and her husband Rob run this small plant nursery. Together they love growing and nurturing plants to help customers create beautiful wildlife friendly gardens with interesting and useful plants. Specialising in Herbs and an ever growing collection of Pelargoniums, they grow over 250 different varieties of herbs, ranging from culinary and medicinal, to salads and native wild flowers.

Please type 'Glenholme Herbs' into Google maps to find them, the postcode will take you to the wrong place!



Afterwards those of you who wish can have lunch at The Story Pig, Lavender Keepers Café run by James & Charlotte who are farmers, growers and butchers.

A beautiful tipi is the venue where you can enjoy a selection of homemade sausage rolls, scotch eggs, focaccias, quiches, salads and sweet treats available straight from the farm's kitchen. Hot and cold drinks are also available.

There is a garden to peruse, a lavender field, Martha and her piglets to entertain you and 8 Indian runner ducks that roam everywhere looking for tasty morsels.



Kate and Andy

BEST BUY COMPOSTS

Gardening Which? trial results show that the upcoming ban on peat compost will not affect your success with summer pots. The tests were to grow Pelargoniums and Potatoes in containers. (See the March newsletter for the Best Compost for Sowing Seeds and Raising Young plants).

Best Buy for 'Containers'

- ✿ 'YouGarden Peat Free Multipurpose Compost' - score 86%
£14.99 for 40L = 37p per litre
- ✿ 'Melcourt Sylvagrow Tub and Basket Compost' - score 82%
£9.99 for 40L = 25p per litre
- ✿ 'Moorland Gold Multi Purpose Compost' – score 81%
£24.99 for 40L = 62p per litre
- ✿ 'Melcourt Sylvagrow Multipurpose Compost' - score 78%
£8.99 for 40L = 22p per litre
- ✿ 'Fertile Fibre Original Multipurpose Compost' - score 76%
£24 for 60L including delivery = 40p per litre

Results for other, generally available peat-free composts

- ✿ 'Thompson & Morgan IncrediPeatFree' - score 72%
£19.99 for 70L = 29p per litre
- ✿ 'Melcourt Sylvagrow with added John Innes' - score 65%
£9.99 for 40L = 25p per litre
- ✿ 'Homebase Peat Free Multipurpose Compost' - score 62%
£7 for 50L = 14p per litre
- ✿ 'Miracle-Gro Premium Peat Free All Purpose Compost' - score 54%
£7.99 for 40 litres = 20p per litre
- ✿ 'B&Q Verve Peat-Free Multi-purpose Compost' - score 53%
£7 for 50 litres = 14p per litre

Don't Buy

- ✿ 'Levington Peat Free Multi Purpose Compost with added John Innes' - score 36%
£7.99 for 50L = 16p per litre

Fertilisers

Many peat free composts have a base fertiliser that will provide enough feed for growth for the first four to six weeks. You will need to add a controlled-release feed (unless the compost has its own), which should last several months. When the plants show signs of slowing growth or yellowing leaves it is time to liquid feed.

Price Changes – Inflation!

Some products have already increased in price since the report in March. e.g. Fertile Fibre Original Multipurpose Compost (£24 up from £22 for 60L), Moorland Gold Multi Purpose (£24.99 up from £12.99 for 40L), Thompson & Morgan IncrediPeatFree (£19.99 up from £17.99 for 70L).

Summary - to buy just one compost for sowing, growing on and for containers?

This updates the list I gave last month, adding the Best Buy results for containers.

- ✿ Fertile Fibre Multipurpose
(Best Buy for seeds 83%, 77% for growing on, 76% for containers).
£24 for 60L including delivery = 40p per litre. Only available from fertilefibre.com
- ✿ Moorland Gold Multi Purpose
(seeds 69%, young plants 77%, 81% for containers).
£24.99 for 40L = 62p per litre. Available from allgrowsupplies.co.uk .
- ✿ Melcourt Sylvagrow Multi Purpose Compost
(seeds 63%, young plants 92%, 78% for containers).
£8.99 for 40L = 22p per litre.
- ✿ YouGarden Peat Free Multipurpose Compost
(seeds 65%, young plants 90%, 86% for containers).
£14.99 for 40L = 37p per litre. Available from yougarden.com

Reformulated Composts

Products which have changed components since the test composts were purchased and therefore could not be included in the results include those from Westland, Wilko and RocketGro.

WHICH COMPOST? – DO YOU CARE?

I have put the results of the Gardening Which? compost trials in our newsletter every year and often wonder whether any member finds them useful! It would be interesting to hear your compost-buying preferences.

Do you always buy - the same make, or the cheapest, or the Which? Best Buy, or use the club discount at the Gardens Group? Perhaps you use your own compost for potting?

I recently bought Westland Multipurpose Peat Free with added John Innes which was on "2 for 1" offer at Mole Valley Farmers. This compost appears to be full of shredded bark in a sandy looking mixture. It seems to drain and dry out very quickly. The bag does not state the ingredients except to say it has "loam for perfect nutrient and moisture retention" and "sand and grit for excellent drainage". Also, it is "enriched with BIO3 to boost plant growth" – but they warn it "may not be suitable for small, fine and difficult to germinate seeds"! Hence it is advisable to study the information on the bag carefully when buying compost!

I plan to combine the Westland Multipurpose with my own home-made compost (a concoction created from my compost heap, my wormery and leaf mould) which I reserved when winter-

mulching the borders. I will add slow-release fertiliser and experiment with this for pots and for my tomatoes, and not buy grow-bags for once.

I will report back but would like to know if any members are trying different growing media in 2023.

Rosie

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR GREENHOUSE SPACE

A greenhouse is a great addition to any garden if you have space and Lucy finds this an absolute must to grow a variety of plants that she puts in pots and in the flower and vegetable beds throughout the gardening year. But we have made even better use of our greenhouse by utilising guttering fixed to the vertical bars with the some nuts and bolts that we used when the greenhouse was assembled.



They slot into the grooves and when turned they don't fall out. Two brackets are then fixed at an appropriate distance, depending on how far apart the vertical bars are. The gutters are generally about 1.2 metres long. Not only does this make them manageable but 2 will nicely fit into our raised bed on our vegetable patch. The gutters are filled with a compost medium, either from the garden centre or our own compost bin. Lucy usually plants peas and beans in ours which works really well.

This is a great way to save bench space in particular. She also transplants salad crops after initial sowing in a seed tray so when they have grown on the roots are not disturbed again when they are planted out.

When it's the right time to plant them out they can be easily transferred directly into the final planting place for them to grow on. We make a shallow trench in our soil; wet the planted gutter to make the soil and plants slide out easily. They might need a little shove but you'll soon get the feel of it. The main thing is that the seedlings are not disturbed and so the growth is not checked in the same way that can happen when transplanting individual seedlings. If plants are tender and the weather might be frosty overnight they can be covered with a tunnel cloche. Or you can use plastic bottles cut in half to make mini individual cloches. These are also brilliant at keeping the slugs, snails and birds of our juicy new plants.



Growing on hanging baskets takes a lot of space and they never sit flat on our work benches. So we use the roof space in the potting shed to screw cup hooks into the roof bars. That way we can easily water and feed them until they are ready to go outside. They can easily be turned round if they start to grow towards the light although that job of turning around is usually left to me as they can be quite heavy.



Happy gardening!

Jim and Lucy

SWIMMING POND WISHES

If like me you are a keen gardener, wildlife enthusiast and all year round swimmer, then high on your list of dreams is probably a swimming pond! The main drawback to the plan is lack of space and lack of money. Those of us who visited Ryewater nursery last year will remember their circular swimming pond which was under construction and like me felt a touch of envy. For the those who are not sure what I am talking about; a swimming pond is a relatively large area of fresh water which is ideally one third pond, containing water plants such as reeds, water lillies and water irises. These plants are growing in a relatively shallow area of the pond which is partially attached to the main deeper area of the pond which is designed for swimming. The idea is that the water plants keep the water clean, fresh and oxygenated as well as attracting wildlife which removes the need for chemicals and provides a very attractive swimming environment. These ponds have become very popular in recent years and since the pandemic have become much sought after. The visit we are having later in the year to Glenholme herbs will provide you with a lovely example of such a pond in its early stages of development.

So if you have a spare half acre and a spare £100,000 or more, build yourself one and I will be happy to come round and swim in it!

Ali Trickett

BE ON YOUR GUARD!

During March I was astounded to find a red lily beetle – indoors! To my knowledge I don't have any indoor plants that these pests live on. Being a lover of lilies, I spend a lot of time waging war on these pests during the summer months and have become less squeamish in picking them off and disposing of them – under my foot! I did not expect to have worry about them indoors. Has anyone else been unlucky to find such a beetle indoors?



Sue Phillips

SNOWDROPS IN THE GREEN

We are in the process of creating what I hope will be a heart stopping, beautiful glade beyond the vegetable garden wall. We have planted the trees, predominately silver birch (*Betula jacquemontii* Snow Queen), a variety of cherry trees and some maples such as October Glory,

for an autumn firework show. In waves underneath we have planted 6,000 bluebells. Next up, during March we have been planting snowdrops in the green.

I thoroughly enjoyed the snowdrop talk by our February Garden Club speaker from Avon Bulbs who not only gave us a wonderful glimpse into the many varieties of snowdrop but also brought along some unnamed snowdrops for us to buy. I did buy one for £5 with the tempting label, "This plant might be a new variety". Who knows! But it does have a lovely smell. I have planted this little snowdrop with its three flowers at the entrance to the glade under a cherry tree. My hope is that it will drop its seed and before long there will be a carpet of scent there.

My plan for the rest of the glade was to buy in a mixture of single and double varieties and plant them in rhythmic patterns under the trees. Snowdrops in the green come with their green spear like leaves attached to a bulb with a bit of a root system. By making 4" deep slits with a spade about five can be planted at a time. Back fill the slit with good quality soil and firm the bulbs into place. This might sound laborious but you would be surprised at how efficient a method it is, particularly if you can persuade someone to make the slits ahead of you! This task is now complete and has in fact been a bit of instant gardening as many of the snowdrops were still in flower.

In my old garden I had planted 3 bulbs of a variety called 'Hippolyta', which is a tall and beautiful double snowdrop. They cost me £3 each which was an extravagance that I can only justify by the pleasure they gave me in the spring when I walked down the garden path. 'Hippolyta' did not appear in Avon Bulbs catalogue this year and I have been searching for it elsewhere with no luck.

On the very evening after I came home from the talk, I picked up an email from Bath Chatto's nursery telling me that they had just got some to sell. It was fate and I dealt! These bulbs, also in the green, are now planted at the entrance of the glade opposite my single scented fellow. This is the stuff of making a garden personal to you by populating it with the characters who will be your long term friends.

Sally Thompson



Galanthus Hippolyta

RECIPE CORNER

Cleavers

Sometimes known as Sticky Willy or Sweethearts. It's also known as Goose grass, referring to the fact that geese love this plant, or Everlasting Friendship. I wonder is this because it clings to you and never lets you go! When you look closely you can see that the stalks and leaves are covered in little hooked bristles.

In old herbals Cleavers was extolled as a purifier of the blood and modern day herbalists still value this herb in the treatment of skin complaints.

Cleavers is primarily used for lymphatic congestion and is very useful where the glands are inflamed. It also has strong affinities to the kidneys.



Pick fresh shoots and add to pre-prepared smoothies or juices.
Or here is an idea for a...

Springtime Smoothie

One cup of cleavers roughly chopped
One cup of chopped pineapple
One cup of chopped cucumber
One cup of mango
Apple juice to loosen or cold green tea
Blend everything until smooth

Cleavers Infusion

Add a handful of washed (if necessary) freshly chopped cleavers herb to a clean jar or jug. Cover in fresh boiled water and leave to cool. Strain and sweeten with honey or a squeeze of lemon to taste. It will keep for 24hrs in the fridge.

Rowena Murray

Thank you to all this month's contributors. We kindly ask for your stories, plans or anything garden related for next month's Newsletter.

Please send to Alice Manning - hgcnewsletter21@gmail.com by **Friday 22nd May.**

