



South & South East & London in Bloom

Green Lines May 2021



Are Gardeners ever happy?

Perhaps gardeners are a little like Farmers? It is either too dry, too wet, too cold or too hot. It never seems ideal weather for growing. April was the third coldest April in almost 140 years, with the lowest average minimum temperature since 1922. It also looks as if we are stuck in a weather rut as May followed with a stream of showers, persistent rain, thunderstorms and even hail pummeling our regions almost daily. What makes this all the more infuriating is that May is supposed to be a fairly dry month of the year, giving us gardeners a chance to get out and catch up on much-needed gardening. The drought of April now seems like a long time ago.

Still, the garden is now recovering from the dry April and with all of the recent rain, plants are starting to put on growth, especially the weeds. Looking around everywhere it looks verdant and luscious and the shades of green look better than ever. So, don't be disheartened pick your moments and let's get gardening.

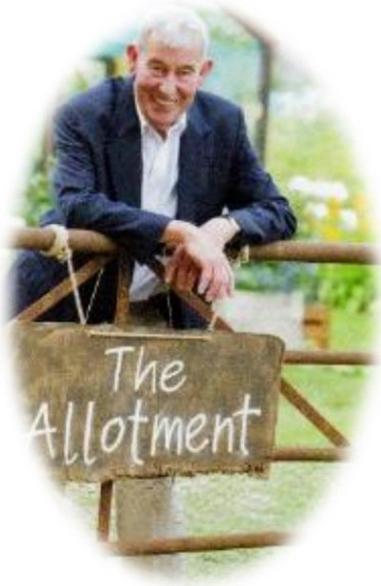
Anne & Kate have now completed the plotting of entries and judges onto maps and have allocated judges to entries so at the time of reading this edition you all should know who your judges, assessors and entries are. As the PM's "Road Map" appears to be holding (fingers crossed) we plan to start Judging on June 14th and hope to conclude by the 16th of July. Well, that's the plan!

As you know we aim to judge in most cases with a single judge this year so when they contact you please make sure you let them know any special arrangements you wish to put in place.

We very much look forward to visiting once again and we wish you all the best for the forthcoming campaign.

Best wishes from the Trustees and Campaign Managers

Jim Buttress VMH – Patron



It is very noticeable that as a result of the pandemic people have discovered new interests to avert boredom during the various stages of lockdown. The Royal Horticultural Society is claiming there are 3 million new gardeners. I believe this is an opportunity for Bloom organisations, Horticultural Societies & Clubs to gain new members.

They offer the chance for these new gardeners to attend interesting talks and visits to members gardens, seek help & advice and the opportunity to purchase plants.

I am encouraged by one society that has been offered a sponsorship deal with a company producing compost. They have decided to ask existing members to find and nominate new members. As a result, all names will be put into a draw to win a quantity of compost.

Allotment Societies are reporting an increase in applications. Even though some still have long waiting lists, they are encouraging people to join and take advantage of their excellent outlets of garden-related items. All three organisations have struggled over the years to attract new members, so let not waste this Golden Opportunity.

I am sure I am not the only person that has been doing a lot of reminiscing particularly as I sort through piles of old correspondence collected over the years and in these strange times of lockdown, I have had no excuse for not tackling the problem. I recently sorted out a cupboard that went back to my childhood!! and found some family photo's which brought back memories of my first flower show.

It was in September 1951. I was six years old, and my father put some entries into the Haywards Heath Autumn Show which is where we lived at the time. The Show organisers had also included a class for children which was any vegetable according to the show schedule.

Dad had given me a corner of his allotment on which I grew some potatoes. Dad and I selected 4 potatoes which I kept polishing and rearranging on a paper plate much to his annoyance. I can still remember the excitement as we arrived on Saturday morning. I was in awe of all the displays of vegetables, fruit and flowers. It seemed like ages before we were allowed back into the marquee.

You can imagine how excited I was to see that my potatoes had received a Highly Commended Certificate. Incidentally, so had all the other children's entries !!!

One of the other highlights of the show which was held in the main Park in the centre of the Town was a display by the local Civil Defence in the main arena followed by a showjumping contest. The Civil Defence display involved people being rescued from a burning building. I can remember a lot of casualties being rescued covered in large quantities of fake blood....

I was equally fascinated by the vehicles that were used in the display. The next day was even better because Dad and I would make various trips to the park with our homemade cart to collect horse manure. We used to get to the park before breakfast as Mum was worried, we would be seen by the "Neighbours". I still have the same excitement when I am asked to judge a societies local Fruit & Vegetable Show.

Everyone is very reluctant to enter their local show. They seem to think they are not good enough and everyone will laugh at their entries. I can assure you that societies and judges only offer encouragement. Remember I got the "Bug" age 6 with a Highly Commended Certificate, far more than I ever received in my school reports.

Keep Safe, Keep Smiling and keep gardening. Jim.

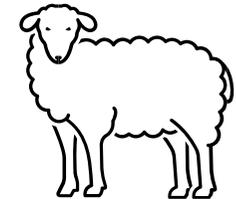
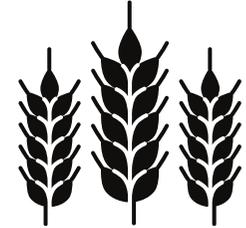
Ed: I have known Jim for over 50 years, and I was pleased to read that we had a similar introduction to Gardening. I fondly remember, being encouraged to enter a Soup Plate of Floating Flowers, a Garden in a seed tray and a pencil drawing on a postcard to support entries in the show. These were great days following my father too and seeing all of his Dahlia, Chrysanthemum, Vegetables and Vegetable collections entries.



The Countryside Code: Relunched

At the end of March, the Countryside Code was relunched by Natural England, with the key message to Respect, Protect and Enjoy the outdoors.

The countryside has been a popular escape from lockdown, a place to walk with friends and family and enjoy the natural world. But it is also a place of work. Our farmers play a vital role in the country's economy and food production industry, and we must respect their working environment – from land to livestock to machinery.



What can be done to prevent these issues?

Close gates

Pick up your rubbish.

Don't light fires or BBQs, especially during dry, hot weather.

Keep dogs under control.

Stick to footpaths – follow signs or use Ordnance Survey maps

The Countryside Code is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

One Time London Centre of Snuff production – Kate Harris -Co-Campaign Manager



Not far from where I live in Croydon, in the neighbouring London Borough of Merton, sits Morden Hall Park, home of a once booming snuff tobacco industry. Whilst this may be a tenuous link to horticulture, it's close enough, so I'll take it and run with it.

Snuff originated in the Americas, with the indigenous population of Brazil being the first documented users of ground tobacco as snuff.

Its journey from the New World to Europe can be traced, from its observed use in the Caribbean during Columbus' second voyage to its arrival to the shores of Spain in 1494. Its documented benefits came to the attention of Catherine de Medici and her Royal Court, who was reportedly so impressed with its treatment of her headaches that she dubbed it 'Herba Regina', the Queens Herb. By 1650, snuff had spread from France to England and was widely used across Europe.

In 1598 a question was put to the House of Lords, requesting that English farmers might be permitted to attempt the growing of tobacco for profit. In 1619 a London merchant purchased land in and around Winchcombe and planted tobacco, however just as his first crop was ready to harvest an Act was passed banning the growth of tobacco in England.

Popular with aristocrats and used in royal courts, snuff was popular with Queen Anne and Queen Charlotte, consort of King George 3rd, who was so keen on sniffing tobacco that she earned the nickname of 'snuffy Charlotte'. Other notable users were Charles Darwin, the Duke of Wellington, Napoleon Bonapart and Lord Nelson.

Physicians claimed it was useful for the treatment of all manner of ailments, from toothaches, headaches, insomnia, to common coughs and colds. It was also recommended as a measure against contagion, gaining further popularity during the Great Plague, claimed to have invaluable medicinal properties.

By around 1700, snuff had become the top choice of tobacco in England. With this further increase in popularity came the building of the Morden Mills, on the banks of the River Wandle. The eastern and western mills were built between 1750 & 1830. These mills ground dried tobacco leaves between two millstones.

At its peak, the owners of the Morden Mills sourced tobacco from their Virginia plantation, with the mills producing roughly 6000 lbs of snuff each month.

By the late 19th century, snuff consumption declined, prices of other tobacco products reduced, and smoking tobacco becomes the fashionable choice of the elite.

These days, whilst the millstones lay silent, the remnants of this once thriving epicentre of the London snuff industry is used as an education centre, proud of its history, its huge waterwheel visible, much to the delight of the visiting school children.

Morden Hall, now in the care of the National Trust, stands amongst 125 acres of historic parkland, the River Wandle snaking through the heart of the park. Home to a wetland with an impressive list of avian residents and seasonal visitors, raptors and often more scarce species, multiple beehives and even migrating eels this is a popular place for nature-minded folk along with families, runners and dog walkers and even Shakespearean actors.

GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR JUNE

Reg Leach, Judge and former Parks Manager

The seasons seem to be romping away this year and it can be difficult to keep up with all the jobs that need doing now. Although Covid-19 is now beginning to be controlled please continue to take precautions when working in groups. Let's continue to be cautious until we've all had our second vaccination!

Hanging Baskets:

These can now be put up provided they have been hardened off (if you've not already done so) and continue to water and feed regularly. To keep bedding plants flowering well and long into the season, deadhead frequently as soon as the flowers start to fade, this avoids the plant using its energy to produce seeds. When hanging up your baskets make sure the brackets and chains are safe and secure and not positioned where someone may knock their head on them! Check the ground beneath the basket, as this is where weeds will thrive - from the dripping basket.

Try watering your baskets at the end of the day or early in the morning so the plants have a chance to benefit before the sun is up. Even if the sun is not out, your baskets can easily dry out if there is a strong breeze, so regular watering is essential.



Containers:

Like hanging baskets, containers can dry out easily, particularly with increasing root growth. Remove fading flowers and water and feed frequently. Small containers will always dry out quicker than the soil in beds and borders so regular checks are essential. Where possible, use rainwater from a nearby water butt.

Bedding plants:

Plant out your bedding plants early this month if you have been holding back because of the risk of frost, or you have been hardening them off.

If you are buying bedding plants, check they are not too pot-bound before buying. Before planting dunk the pots or containers into the water to ensure the roots are wet through before planting and water in well afterwards. If your bed or border is dry it's a good idea to water well the day before planting. If you sowed half-hardy annuals earlier in the year in trays undercover, you could plant them out now.

You may have sown hardy annuals directly into the bed in the last month or so, in which case they may need to be thinned out, planting surplus plants you have lifted, into another area of the garden, or swap with friends or neighbours.

Beds & Borders:

Regular hoeing this time of year is essential to keep annual weeds down. In dry warm weather hoe off the weeds, leaving them on the soil surface, and let the sun dry them up.

When weeding, work your way along the bed or border and then at the far end turn around and work back the other way. It's surprising how many weeds you miss if you don't work in both directions. Also, check out those nooks and crannies for weeds!

If you have a problem with pernicious weeds such as bindweed and ground elder, try to dig the roots out. Although they can be difficult to eradicate it is better than using chemicals. If you do consider chemicals, carefully use a systemic weed killer.

Deadhead early flowering herbaceous and perennial plants as this can help them produce a second flush of flowers later in the season and continue to check stakes and ties to stop them flopping over as they get taller.

Fill in the gaps in shrub borders with bedding plants to give a burst of colour, or sow annuals directly into the soil once prepared as a seedbed.

As suggested last month, try sowing some old favourites in the gaps such as Clarkia, Godetia, Cornflower and Nasturtiums.

Pruning:

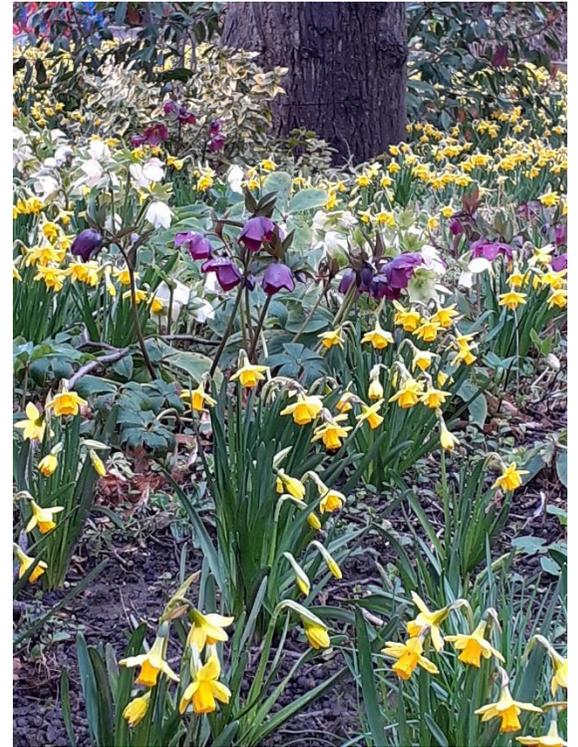
You can now prune back early flowering shrubs such as Weigela and Deutzia as they should have finished flowering, this will encourage new growth for next year's flowers. Cut out some of the oldest wood to ground level to encourage new growth from the base. Pruning shrubs after flowering also helps to control their size, particularly as many of us have small gardens. It's easy to let a few shrubs take over the whole garden if they're not kept in check!

Climbers:

Regularly tie in new shoots of climbing and rambling roses and other rampant growers like honeysuckle to keep them under control. If you want to expand their framework of your climbers, train and tie in new growth into gaps on the wall or fence.

Deadhead roses regularly, to encourage further blooms.

If you never managed it last month, cut back the early flowering clematis species and try to reduce the amount of deadwood from previous years that may have built up underneath.



Lawns:

If you can, mow more formal lawns at least once a week, as lawns respond well to frequent mowing. Box mowing is preferable if possible, to reduce thatch build-up.

Feed with a high nitrogen fertiliser at this time of year to keep the lawn looking green. If there is a weed problem, use a selective weed killer. Check your local garden centre for a combined weed killer and fertiliser.

If you are still suffering from the moss in the lawn it can still be treated, but as the moss dies it will go black and the lawn will look worse before it gets better, so you may want to leave such treatment until later in the year! Trim up the edges to the lawn at the same and frequency as mowing. A neat and tidy lawn always enhances a formal garden.



Wildflower meadows:

If you have a wildflower meadow for a lawn – great for butterflies and other beneficial insects - don't feed the meadow as wildflowers prefer poor soil and don't of course use any weed killer on the meadow!

Don't be put off by replacing the more formal lawn with a wildflower meadow, you can still maintain a regular grass cut around the edges to keep it looking tidy and if you create a larger wildflower meadow you can cut regular footpaths through it. Small children will love it!

Water conservation:

Most of us now have water butts, but if not, do consider installing one to collect rainwater from your house and outbuildings such as garages and sheds. A large building would benefit from linked water butts - as one water butt fills up, it can flow into the next one, if linked by pipes. Rainwater is so much better for plants than tap water. Other ways to conserve water is to line out trickle irrigation hosepipes around the garden. You could also add a timer so that the water only comes on at night – when less water is lost through evaporation. You can use 'grey water' from the house for plants, BUT don't use water that has cleaning chemicals in it. However, you water, make sure you do it often in the hottest weather, best after sundown and remember that with baskets, in particular, the wind will dry them out too. That said don't overwater either!

Bird Feeders:

Having birds visit your garden can be such a pleasure. Hang feeders into trees and other high spots out the way of cats.

Keep them topped up with seed and keep a bowl of water nearby too.

Encouraging birds into your garden brings not just an added interest but they can provide other benefits too – pest control - that may result in less use of chemicals to control aphid, slugs and snails. Since I have put up feeders in the garden, I now have regular pairs of greenfinches and goldfinches visiting all year round, alongside the usual birds.

Checklist:

- Continue weeding beds and borders regularly to prevent emerging weeds from flowering and seeding, especially annuals such as chickweed, shepherds' purse and groundsel.
- Keep hedges in check. BUT always check first for nesting birds and if they are present leave the hedge until the young have fledged.
- Check for aphids, blackfly, black spot and mildew on susceptible plants. Control as necessary.
- Keep a lookout for slugs and snails, giving extra protection to the most susceptible plants such as Hostas. To protect planted pots from slugs and snails stand the pots off the ground on terracotta legs that you have coated with petroleum jelly.
- Keep paths clear of weeds, moss and algae, as they can get slippery.
- If you have to use chemicals in the garden, it should always be as a last result and always read the label before applying. Avoid use in windy weather to prevent drift.

Compass Garden – East Grinstead – Lynda Hordyk



Hello, and welcome to the Compass Garden. 2020 has been a strange year. We are a small band of volunteers, 6 in total on a good day, who have been responsible for the Compass Garden since 2017. Our group mainly consists of the over 60s who are all full of enthusiasm and each bringing their strengths. We meet every Sunday morning, 10.00 – 12.00, more often during the summer when the evenings are warm and sunny. Working with our local pre-school group also requires us to be there some mornings.

We were last judged in July 2019, before Covid-19. Previously we had experienced vandalism in the garden, apple trees damaged, plants up-rooted, gardens trampled and drug paraphernalia everywhere.

The garden itself had been allowed to become overgrown with geraniums over the years. This we tackled, digging them up ensuring all the roots were out and preparing the ground for planting. We managed to borrow a cultivator, which although temperamental, was a great help. At this time, we were offered

plants from the Church of Scientology and Orchard Nursery. These we planted in what we called our nursery garden.

The judges had given us some valuable advice and from this, we composed a list of our priorities for 2019/20

1. Remove large tree/bush and in its place build a composter from pallets and plant in front to hide.
2. For a sick cherry tree – cut back in summer and cut out dead wood, mulch well in winter.
3. Arrange MSDC to check large trees surrounding the garden for any health issues.
4. Supply and place bark on garden
5. Convolvulus – just keep digging up to contain!!

This we did although items 4 and 5 are ongoing.

Sensory Garden

During the summer of 2019, we were visited by a mother whose young son was smelling all the flowers. He came to a group of flowers (cosmos) that looked beautiful but had no smell. He was so disappointed and seeing this made us think about creating a sensory garden where children could smell and touch plants and not be disappointed. We mentioned this to Stephen Witchell, our contact at MSDC who embraced the idea and offered to mark it out for us. This he did and then unfortunately for us left MSDC but not before he passed on our project information to Sorin Caraiman. He came on board and offered to buy the plants and help us plant. And so, our sensory garden began.



Covid-19

Then in March 2020, Covid-19 hit us, and we were told to stay at home. For a while we left the garden due to government regulations; then it became known that if we could walk to the garden we could use working there as our exercise. This my partner Gordon and I did. Our other volunteers needed to drive so were prevented from doing this. Once the regulations relaxed, they joined us. One day we were working in the garden when a police patrol came by looking for people breaking the lockdown regulations. As they passed by, they thanked us for making the garden look so beautiful (breathed a sigh of relief!).

Community

The community support has been amazing – mainly because of posting weekly on the WHiEG Facebook site and from people walking past the garden and seeing us working there. It has become the focus for families during the lockdown. Children have learnt their colours from the beautiful tulips that flower proudly. They love walking around the sensory garden path and peeping into the hedgehog house to see if they can see a hedgehog. We are within an easy walk from care and residential home and retirement flats whose residents can walk up to see us and sit for a while before returning home. We chat with them and make them welcome. Some tell us about the gardens they used to have when they were younger and how they enjoy the Compass Garden. A community garden is more than just a matter of gardening. We have never refused any plants offered and plant everything, as they are being offered by the community for the community to enjoy. Hence, you will notice that our planting.

The future

Because of lockdown, we have not been able to organise the events we had planned for 2020. Previously there has been so much gardening to do and this has kept us busy. However, we are now in the position to organise some local events once the lockdown is lifted.

Images

Please send us images of your activities and projects or information we could use to highlight your community as a Case Study and provide good examples for others to follow. Information about how you got started and what you believe the benefits are would be good to share.

Kent, The Garden of England – Kate Harris Co- Campaign Manager



Rumoured to have been declared The Garden of England by King Henry VIII after he enjoyed a bowl of the finest Kentish cherries, Kent's history with this title spans centuries.

A place of gentle hillsides, beautiful coastline, warm weather, fertile farmlands, oast houses, orchards, vineyards, idyllic villages and stunning castles, Kent sounds like somewhere straight out of the pages of a children's fairytale.

At the start of the 19th century, fruit growing was a relatively small part of Kent's economy. However, by 1900 it had become a major industry. To start with the price of fruit remained high, being a luxury only the upper class could afford. However, higher demand for Kentish fruit caused a chain reaction, the expansion of local fruit production created jobs, which in turn increased the local standard of living. The increasing local population became more urban and industrial, allowing for spending on luxury items like fruit. This teamed with the increase of railways across England meant that produce could be easily and relatively cheaply transported. As incomes continued to increase per capita, so did the demand for Kentish fruit.

Although times are very different now, with fruit being transported from all over the globe, Kentish produce still holds its own. 42 nut varieties, 337 plum varieties, 285 cherry varieties, 2,200 apple varieties, 550 pear varieties are still grown on lush Kentish soil and are home to the National Fruit Collection. Kent still grows 90% of the cherries and 50% of plums grown in England, is home to over 45 vineyards and provides the strawberries eaten whilst watching tennis at Wimbledon. Not only that, Kent is dotted with Hop farms and is home to the Shepherd Neame Brewery, Britain's oldest brewery.

Orchards also provide a vital range of habitats to our native flora and fauna. Modern orchards are low growing, planted close together with short grassland underneath. Traditional orchards were planted at low density, with grassland grazed by livestock. Orchard grassland often included abundant wildflowers, which we know are vital to our bee and insect populations. Orchards are commonly surrounded by hedgerow boundaries, providing yet another vital habitat. Older fruit trees, with their split bark and hollow trunks making ideal homes for invertebrates and fungi. Both new and ageing fruit trees provide refuge for birds, small mammals, mosses and lichens.

"Kent Orchards for Everyone" is a project that recognises the importance of these habitats and the huge impact the loss of these orchards would be on countless species, as well as the cultural impact their loss would create. They work with 15 local communities to support their traditional local orchards to ensure that these important sites are around for the foreseeable future.

I shall leave you with a quote from *The Pickwick Papers*, by Charles Dickens.

"Kent, sir, Everybody knows Kent – apples, cherries, hops and woman.

Whilst I shall not comment on the latter part of the quote, which is far from the subject of this article, it is clear that The Garden of England is an important part of our fantastic horticultural history, as it should very much be part of our future.



We say Goodbye



It is with great regret that we report the untimely death of Daniel Hearsom, who sadly passed away on Wednesday 7th April 2021.

Daniel was our much-respected Patron of London In Bloom, who gave us considerable support over several years often hosting the London in Bloom Awards at Pembroke Lodge. Daniel was a major advocate of Bloom and a huge supporter of a more sustainable and greener capital through horticulture and community engagement.

Daniel was the proprietor of Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park. In 1997 he took on the lease for this historic, Grade II listed, Georgian building and turned it from a run-down catering facility into the very successful business it is today. His renovation of the building itself was done with great attention to detail and craftsmanship. Previous inhabitants of the Lodge included the Countess of Pembroke and Lord John Russel, with much of the original design carried out by Sir John Soane.

Fascinated by the history of the place and Richmond Park itself, Daniel built up an outstanding collection of artefacts and ephemera relating to the history of Richmond Park and other Royal Parks, called the Hearsom Collection. Through his love of the park and dogged determination, he put together what is most certainly the best collection of Royal Parks history ever assembled and generously made available to anyone who wishes to study the collection.

He will be sorely missed by all who knew him, and we offer our sincere condolences and kind thoughts to his wife Jane and family.

Thanks to the Royal Parks Guild, Daniel was a member, for permission to use some of their content.

This month also saw the passing of our dear friend Colin Roome, Colin was a London in Bloom Judge, former Parks Officer and passionate Conservationist.

Colin was a highly respected horticulturist and judge, and he will be a great loss to all who knew him. Our sincere condolences go to Carol and their family.

The Roome Cup; London Borough of Hillingdon in Bloom, is awarded to the garden that is judged to be making the greatest contribution to wildlife conservation and will be an enduring tribute to his love of nature.