



## South & South East in Bloom & London in Bloom

Green Lines

February 2023



As I write, the weather is finally calming down, and we can start considering the garden and South & South East & London in Bloom. Our closing date is looming, and we would not wish any of our fantastic participants to miss out, so if you are going to enter this year, please let us know as soon as possible.

We appreciate for many smaller voluntary gardening groups; the cost of living situation has made it difficult, so please don't think that if you cannot do much, you should not enter this year. Several groups seem concerned that entering and being assessed is stressful, and many fear dropping a grade; please don't fear. Our assessors are very understanding, and even if you have only managed to keep it going this year, that will be more than enough. I also understand that several community groups are planning a renovation of beds and borders, and they are worried that the standard won't be as planned. Again don't worry, as assessors and judges we love to see change and gardens evolve, and we welcome change even if it is incomplete, so please don't fret.

Gardening, by its very nature, is evolutionary; plants die (especially after the hardest winter); plants outgrow their space or are no longer in keeping with what you wish to achieve.

The Its Your Neighbourhood scheme, by its very definition, is about neighbours and friends working together to improve their local environment. The assessor's scoring sheet has been deliberately designed so that community and environmental elements has greater value. Therefore, if you have been able to keep your community together and still show care for the environment then you are on a winner. It's not all about horticultural evidence. It is much more about endeavour and achieving what you can within your available resources. So please don't step out with worries about standards and achievement; we do understand.

We appreciate that we are all in very challenging times, but every step we can take to mitigate climate change will help considerably. Try planting more sustainable (herbaceous) plants with hairy or narrow leaves; remember, silver plants are more tolerant of dry conditions. If you can, consider planting flowering plants with open centres, so invertebrates such as Bees & Hover Flies can access the nectaries. Encourage native plants and flowers where you can and do what you can to encourage wildlife and give it the support they need.

On a visit to RHS Wisley recently, I saw a sign that said:

***"Gardeners are agents for positive change. From our gardens, we can help tackle climate change, safeguard threatened wildlife, protect against pests and look after our planet's precious resources".***

Happy gardening. Ed.

## Caring for Orchids - Jean Griffin – Deputy Chair, Trustee & Judge



Phalaenopsis or The Moth Orchid has become a very popular plant, out selling most of its rivals. There is a variety of colour but do not be seduced by the violent blue flowers seen in many super markets, they have been dyed !

Always water your Orchids early in the day allowing the plant to dry out a little before the cooler night temperatures.

The Phalaenopsis prefers a warm bright position away from draughts. Don't forget to occasionally wipe the leaves with a damp cloth, removing any dust.

When the flowers have faded and start dropping off, cut the stem back to just above the second V shaped bump ( a node ) at the base. To encourage repeat flowering lower the temperature for three to four weeks.

In the growing season, use an Orchid feed , a specially formulated Orchid Mist is a good way to ensure the plant is being fed properly Do not spray the flowers, just the roots some of which grow outside the pot. These roots, usually green are essential for absorbing moisture and nutrients from the air .

Do not feed in the winter months.

## Daffodils Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager

- Daffodils originally come from Greece and were first cultivated between 200-300BC
- Romans first brought Daffodils to Britain, and they believed the sap could heal wounds.
- Daffodils given in bunches are said to ensure happiness and represent good fortune.
- A single gifted Daffodil is said to predict misfortune.
- Narciclasine, a substance isolated from the bulb is being looked at for its potential in the fight with breast cancer.
- During Victorian times they were seen as a symbol of chivalry.
- Highborn ladies used them to dye their hair and eyebrows during medieval times.
- They are the national flower of Wales.
- There is an estimated 25 species and around 13000 hybrids.
- The correct term for trumpet of a daffodil is a corona.

## FLOWERS OF IMPORTANCE FOR LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH - Molly White – Trustee & Judge

It is remarked that certain industries attract creative types and the floristry industry, perhaps one of the most creative, is and has been largely made of gay men. So is it any wonder that there is a historical connection between some of our most well-known flowers and the LGBTQ+ movement.

In 1970 at the Stonewall riot's anniversary people carried flowers in solidarity, marched through Greenwich Village in the first pride march, it was this movement led to the first rainbow flag. It was created by Gilbert Baker where every colour was said to represent something. Red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, blue for harmony and purple for spirit. I think these representations can be echoed in our horticultural work.



This month, the stories of five flowers have come to light, they are said to have defined the history of the LGBTQ+ movement. They are the Carnation, the Violet, the Pansy, the Rose and Lavender.

The green Carnation, this was popularised by Oscar Wilde after he wore one and encouraged others to do the same to the opening of Lady Windermere's fan. It became a symbol of same sex male relationships.

The purple violet. Sappho a Greek poet wrote often of female love and violets were referenced in the pantheon. There was even a scandal in 1926 when a female character in the play 'The Captive' sent a bunch of violets to another female character. It was reported in the National Women's Studies Association Journal that there was a theme of lesbianism in the play which led to an uproar and calls for censorship. In 1927 the New York City district attorney's office shut down the production.

The sales of the flowers also plummeted as a result of this association. Somewhat surprisingly though Tennessee Williams used his play 'Suddenly Last Summer' to weave violets and its symbolism into the plot by naming a character Mrs. Violet Venable. It's also why purple is in the rainbow flag.





The pansy, this word has had many negative connotations in the history of gay men, so much so that you'd be forgiven for forgetting it is a beautiful flower. In Christopher Looby's book 'Flowers of Manhood' those dressed flamboyantly are named as pansies, perhaps due to the bold colours of the popular bedding plant. The term stuck and throughout history there have been many bars with Pansy in their title.

Roses, these are a flower often used as a symbol for the trans community. Due to the high suicide rate in trans and gender non-conforming people, there is a phrase that says, 'Give us our roses while we are still here,' Roses are often the flower placed on a grave or at a funeral. Giving a rose in life is said to share that message that you are loved and there is so much beauty inside. I also love that an established rose bush can flower for many months and live for many decades, showing its resilience and strength.

Lavender, perhaps known best for its incredible scent, or its versatile uses or that striking colour that fills the fields in Summer, but it's also been long associated with both gay men and gay women. Perhaps negativity to suggest if a man is not masculine enough, that he must have a streak of Lavender in him and for women, if they wanted to be involved in lesbian movements, lavender was that flower of support.





It has been suggested that the purple Lavender flower we know so well is culturally connected to both boys and girls, a boy's colour is said to be blue and a girl's is said to be pink, therefore joining together and creating purple. I like this analogy and fluidity, if we look at gender as a spectrum and we take away these rigid labels of sex and those societal expectations, we can purely enjoy the colours because we like them.

The connections between flowers and people extends far beyond that of the LGBTQ+ movement, we are definitely not exclusive to these stories, but I enjoy researching these links between my self-expression and my industry. Flowers have always brought me so much joy and when I'm working in the garden I am able to process my thoughts and feel more able and resilient to challenge the issues still being fought within the LGBTQ+ community.

Seeing flowers used as signs of hope, strength and unity is truly beautiful and empowering.

### Tulip Facts! Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager

- Despite their link to Holland, Tulips originated in Asia & Turkey and are linked to the Ottoman Empire.
- There are around 150 species and over 3000 varieties.
- They are part of the Lily family.
- Reaffirming their origin, the name Tulip came from the Turkish word for Turban.
- Holland is the largest producer of Tulips in the world.
- Tulip petals are edible.
- Tulips, like most plants grow towards the light, but these continue to do so in your vase at home.
- White tulips symbolise forgiveness, purple is for royalty, pink is for happiness and confidence and yellow for cheerful thoughts.
- Tulip bulbs are often cheap to buy and planted in Autumn provide a beautiful spring display.

- In 1634 During the Dutch Golden age, Tulips became a fashion statement and prices for bulbs and individual flower skyrocketed followed by a crash in prices by 1637. This was the first recorded 'asset bubble' and the term Tulip Mania is still used to describe a large economic bubble of pricing.

### Jim Buttress VMH – Patron

Reviewing the Daily Telegraph Television supplement, I saw a programme advertised on BBC4 Winter watch 1963 the Big Freeze!

It was a documentary from the BBC archive that takes a look at the worst British Winter of the 20th century.

I immediately started to reminisce on my own experiences. I had been working at W. Fuller and Sons for 18 months and the leadup to Christmas was a very busy time at the Nursery. Starting in October we were busy lifting roses trees shrubs and herbaceous plants which had been ordered during the summer season and were now ready to be dispatched to our customers. We would lift all of the orders during the day and in the evening get them ready for delivery the next day. The overtime payment was very welcome as well as the hot snacks provided by Bill's wife. We also grew about 750 pot grown chrysanthemums in large clay pots, incurve and reflex disbudded chrysanthemums for sale to local florists and customers leading up to Christmas. All the disbudded varieties were grown outside until the end of September, when each pot was carried into the greenhouses. Each week we would spend time removing sideshoots and when the time was ready very carefully disbudding each stem to leave one main bud.

I can still remember varieties like Friendly Rival, Rivals Rival and Collections of favourites produced by Shoemaker and Balcombe. We also grew a large quantity of American spray chrysanthemums which had only recently started to become popular. We purchased the rooted cuttings from Rowes in Somerset which were then planted into the main beds in the greenhouses following the tomato crop. Again varieties spring to mind like red / yellow Galaxy and Long Island beauty.

Myself, Roy and Vic would finish work at lunchtime on Christmas Eve when Bill and his brother Cyril would take us down the pub in Woodmansterne for our Christmas party!! When we return to the Nursery, we would be paid our wages and Christmas bonus.

The snow started to fall on Boxing Day. The following day I had to walk 4 miles to work as it was impossible to use my bicycle. At times the snow was so deep it reached the top of my wellingtons. It was a week before I could cycle to work. For the first week we were busy removing all of the chrysanthmums from the pots and cutting down all the foliage. We used to retain some stools which we packed into recycled fish boxes. These would provide the cuttings for the next Christmas. We lifted all of the spray varieties which we discarded. We managed to bring all of the frame covers into the only greenhouse that was being heated by the coke boiler. All the panes of glass were removed, the frames primed and repainted. All the glass which had been cleaned was then reinstated.

Bill managed to acquire cut-to-measure lengths of timber, which we put together to make all the seed trays we required for the summer bedding. We normally obtained the readymade product. Once again this was another enterprising move by the timber merchants who also needed to provide income during the big freeze. I was also given the job of repainting and printing the names on all of the wooden rose labels for the coming season. By the end of January there was no sign of a thaw and we were beginning to run out of work.

Early in February Bill said that he needed to have a chat with us. We were convinced that he was going to lay us off, particularly as no money was being taken. We were therefore so surprised to hear him say that due to his financial situation, would we be prepared to go out and clear snow from people paths and driveways. Bill's brother Cyril added chains to the rear tyres of the lorry which proved invaluable on many of the side roads. The two brothers had also acquired a pallet of industrial salt!! [ask no

questions]. To give us a head start, Bill contacted many of his wealthy, loyal customers who readily accepted his offer. Once we started clearing customers drives and pathways we were approached by neighbours. This continued right up until the thaw which set in which I think was towards the end of March. It provided Bill with a steady income and kept the three of us in work.

If it happened now think of all the money we would have earned from all the people who pave over their front gardens!!

Finally can you imagine what the heating costs would have been on today's prices.

The other thing I remember very clearly about the winter of 1963 was the football team I captained were top of the league. We never played another game. The League Management Committee as a token gesture presented all of the teams who were top at the time with the equivalent of an egg cup!!

Several years later when I was involved with privatisation in the Royal Parks, contractors would not hesitate to lay off staff if the weather was not suitable for the staff to work in the parks.

Bill never considered that an option for one moment.

Keep safe, keep smiling and keep gardening

Jim Buttress

### Bluebells Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager

- Bluebells are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and anyone caught digging wild Bluebells up can be prosecuted.
- Ants are a big part of the spreading of Bluebell seeds.
- It takes years for a Bluebell seed to grow into a bulb and go on to flower.
- The gum from the roots was used for gluing feathers to arrows and for binding books.
- The Spanish Bluebell is an invasive species that poses a threat to our native species. It was introduced by plant hunters in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The two species are able to hybridize making it hard to tell apart.
- Bluebells can symbolize constancy, humility and gratitude.
- Almost half the world's species of Bluebells are found in the UK.
- In folklore it was believed that anyone that wander into a Bluebell ring will fall under a fairy enchantment.
- 13<sup>th</sup> century Monks reportedly used them to treat snake bites and leprosy.
- It is said that Bluebells grow best in ancient woodlands and there is an easy way to identify ancient woodlands.



material is a satisfying if strenuous task.

Collecting the grass clippings helps to reduce the thatch problem and, if distributed thinly in the compost heap, it adds to the heat needed to break down the green matter BUT that is for another day.. **Watch this space !!!**

## QUICK AND EASY LAWN CARE

Jean Griffin – Deputy Chair, Trustee & Judge

### THE LAWN

Once a status symbol of the aristocracy who could afford to keep parts of the garden not used for producing food, we now either love or hate it.

### DO YOU LIKE THE STRIPEY LOOK OR IS IT A WEEKEND CHORE ?

During the growing season allow the grass to keep a good length. Do not scalp it as this weakens the grass over time.

Be sure to feed the grass with a proprietary lawn feed in Spring

Improve the drainage in Autumn preferably using a hollow tine aerator

Scarify springy turf to remove thatch ( a particular problem if using a hover mower ) and use a spring tine lawn rake to remove any moss and dead

## Snowdrops Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager

I have said before that maybe Autumn is my favourite season but, how can you really have a favourite? After the cold stark days of winter, I long for the warmth of spring, the odd sunny day we have had recently acting as a teaser of those longer, warmer days to come. At this time of year, the signs of new life are all around us. Buds suddenly in view, flowers appearing on trees and shrubs and bulbs pushing their way through the soil. These little signs can make all the difference and lift our mood.

If you have been reading my articles for a while, you may get the gist that the smallest thing can spark my curiosity. I love spring flowers and have a soft spot for Snowdrops. I love to turn the little cups up to see the beauty of the different varieties. They are so simple and yet so stunning. And so, I decided to find out a little more about these little gems.



Despite being a common spring sight in the UK, Snowdrops are not a native species. They originated in Europe and the first recorded cultivation dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, however it is believed that they were brought to Britain even earlier, by Norman Monks. They were grown in monasteries and abbeys and used as a medicinal treatment for 'Mal au Tete' which translates to 'problems of the head' including its use as a painkiller for headaches. In fact the chemical found in snowdrops, 'Galanthamine' is now used in the treatment of Alzheimer's. They were also grown in churchyards for use in 'Candlemas', which is held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

Their botanical name is *Galanthus nivalis*. *Galanthus* derived from the Greek words for milk and flower and *nivalis* from the Latin word for snow.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a surge in their popularity, both in the botanical field, but also as a floral symbol of hope and purity, pushing through the dark and cold of winter. Even though to most, they are a symbol of hope, they also have a dark superstition linked to them due the fact they often grew in large swathes in graveyards during the Victorian era. They are also seen a harbinger of death and impending doom in many countries if they are cut and brought home.

There are now an estimated 1800 cultivars that have originated from just 20 species, ranging from cheap and cheerful common varieties to eyewatering prices for rare bulbs. This year a bidding war ended in Thomson & Morgan (sourced from their website) paying £725 for the World's most expensive snowdrop, *Galanthus woronowii* Elizabeth Harrison with its striking yellow ovary and yellow petal markings. But worry not, us common or garden folk can pick up the more standard varieties for much cheaper and due to the fact that they spread by bulb division, they will start to slowly grow into the larger, stunning groups of colour that return each year.

So while you are out and about make sure you try and spot these stunning flowers as they break the cold winter ground along with other spring bulbs and use them as a reminder of how warmer days are not too far away.

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London in Bloom is grateful for the continuing support of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, which has provided a grant to London in Bloom for 2022. MPGA is a long-established Charity that has played a vital role in preserving and improving countless gardens, neglected sites, and green open spaces across London. We provide modest grants to those who share with us a desire to improve the environment and, thus, the quality of life for the local community. Our work brings us into contact with various groups, including local councils, schools, hospitals, hospices, museums, voluntary organizations, and community groups.

The Worshipful Company of Gardeners, first mentioned in City Corporation records in 1345, is a survivor of the medieval craft guilds which exercised control over the practice of their crafts and ensured proper training through the system of apprenticeship. The Company is a "living" guild, and the numbers of its members are both professionals and amateurs actively involved in the craft. A common bond of horticulture and gardens unites all.



The Royal Parks Guild is a voluntary Partner Organization of The Royal Parks who are responsible for managing and preserving over 5,000 acres of historic parkland across London. Our aim is a serious one – championing The Royal Parks by promoting their qualities, including horticultural excellence and historical significance, whilst offering practical support where appropriate. Allied to this is the service to its members through the provision and development of a broad range of social activities and keeping members abreast of current and past news of The Royal Parks.

The Royal Parks has worked with London in Bloom since its inception in 1967.

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