

South & South East & London in Bloom

Christmas Edition 2021

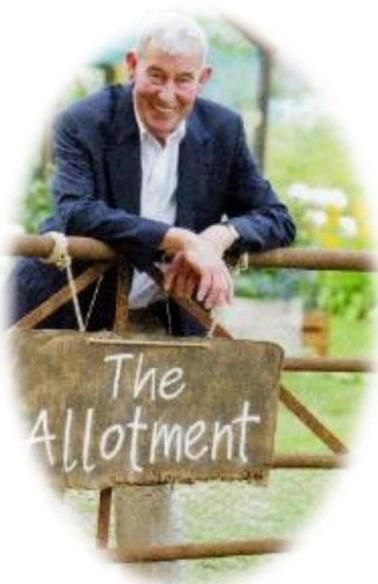


Best wishes for the Season from Trustees, Campaign Managers & Ambassadors

See you next year!



Jim Buttress VMH – Patron South & South East in Bloom & London in Bloom



When I was in charge of Greenwich Park, I received a telephone call from Bob Manning, Superintendent of Parks and Open Spaces for the London Borough of Greenwich. He asked if I would like to be a panel member for a gardener's question time which he was organising to raise funds for a garden charity. Naturally, I agreed to participate, and 38 years later, I am still involved with the charity.

The Gardener's Royal Benevolent Society was founded in 1839 at a literary lunch in London. The guest speaker was Charles Dickens, who finished his speech with the following statement "why is it that all the people who provide so much beauty finish in poverty". Of course, he was referring to all of the Head Gardeners and Private Gardens Staff who managed estates throughout the country for wealthy landowners. A condition of their employment was that they were provided with either rent-free or minimal rent, a house on the estate during their employment and to continue in the property upon their retirement. Unfortunately, when the wealthy landowner passed on the estate to their next of kin, they invariably required the properties, which left the occupants homeless.

Following the question time, Bob Mannings asked me if I would volunteer to serve on the Committee he chaired for Society. I thought this was an opportunity to get something back to horticulture, which has been very good to me.

In those days, the Welfare Committee met four times a year and cases were collated by a welfare officer. The requests were varied from requests for clothing, insufficient funds to pay rent, health bills etc. The Committee comprised of fellow horticulturists who made the necessary recommendations to assist the client. I eventually took over as Chairman and it was becoming very noticeable that the same type of request would appear at each meeting. I had also become a trustee.

The previous Chairman, Ian Flanigan, had outlined a major review of the Society. All the trustees were in agreement that we needed to provide a service that covered every aspect of horticulture and not just gardeners. It was also decided to employ caseworkers who could provide professional advice on a one-to-one basis with the client.

On January 1, 2014, the Charity converted from its previous status as an Industrial & Providence Society with exempt charitable status to a company limited by guarantee. At the same time, I was Chairman of another garden charity called the Gardeners Royal Orphan Society, whose remit was to help children who had sadly lost a parent and were being denied further education, the opportunity to develop individual skills or training towards work placement. After several meetings, it was agreed to incorporate the Gardeners Royal Orphan Society into their now renamed society "**Perennial**", who could now provide for gardeners from the cradle to the grave.

Perennial supports everyone who professionally looks after Gardens Sports grounds, woodlands and other green spaces. If people work with plants, trees or grass Perennial can assist people facing overwhelming challenges, an unexpected crises or life-changing events at any stage of life, including through retirement. Due to some very generous legacies, we have acquired some incredible gardens.

During the early part of 2022, I will take you on a horticultural journey to these gardens. Maybe you could organise a fundraising event or become a perennial partner or volunteer.

Further information. Contact (0800) 093 8543 or www.perennial.org.uk

Keep safe, keep smiling, keep gardening.

Jim's Christmas and New Year quiz.



1. What is the star sign for someone who has been born on Christmas Day.
2. A European Economic Community vegetable.
3. What animal will represent the Chinese New Year for 2022
4. What is the bestselling Christmas single of all time.
5. Christmas Island is in which ocean.
6. What are the Bourbon reds and Norfolk Blacks
7. Unkempt symbol of Christmas (flower).
8. Astronauts broadcast which Christmas song from space in 1965.
9. How many ghosts revealed themselves to Scrooge in a Christmas Carol.
10. The snowman was shown on T.V. for the first time on Boxing Day in which year. 1980, 1982 or 1985



Good luck: answers will be in the January newsletter.

Last month, we asked what a famous Actor said: "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow".

Audrey Hepburn

GARDENING TIPS & TASKS

Reg Leach, S&SEIB Judge and former Parks Manager – retired.

Welcome to this month's Bulletin. However, instead of providing the usual list of jobs to do, I will refer you back to last October and November's bulletins (for November & December Tips & Tasks), as you may still be in the process of completing them; all!

Instead, I wish you all a restful and relaxing Christmas, and let's all look forward to a New Year that brings back some normality.

Both 2020 and 2021 have been difficult times for us all. However, despite the Covid-19 restrictions, which has been with us for so long now, you have all excelled in your unwavering determination to continue with your work, to improve your environment for all and in the process, helping to put a smile on everyone's face - residents and visitors alike, during these difficult times.

Thank you all for your hard work, and I hope in some way the monthly 'Tips and Tasks' help you in your work programming and in drawing up a calendar of activities for the year.

I shall be raising a festive toast to all our 'Bloom Communities' this Christmas, both in London and in the South & South East.

I'll be back in the New Year.

Keep safe and healthy.

Reg Leach.

P.S. Please keep those bird feeders topped up during the winter months and have a trawl through those seed and plant catalogues to get inspired for next year!



Andy Newman



Andy Newman was the coordinator of The Gardens Community Garden in Harringay, North London. Sadly he passed away suddenly on October 24, 2021. His family and many people in the local community hugely miss him.

He was the driving force behind the Gardens Community Garden, which was created, from a piece of problematic (anti-social behaviour, dumped rubbish) derelict land alongside the railway that runs between Gospel Oak and Barking in London.

Together with his partner Karen Clark and other residents from The Gardens Residents Association GRA, Andy spearheaded the Garden design and consulted with residents developing a green space that became a "community centre with a roof", a phrase coined by Andy himself. The Garden is accessible to all with raised beds and a space for events. The Garden opened in 2002 with a beautiful event attended by more than a thousand residents.

The Garden is now in its 20th year. Before Covid 19, it was a place for regular community events such as Seed planting, festivals, outdoor film nights, Halloween parties and carols by candlelight at Christmas, not to mention the regular gardening mornings. The Garden became a focal point for neighbours to organise events and meet together, promoting community spirit. During Covid, it became a haven for locals needing an outdoor space to sit in the fresh air surrounded by nature.

The Gardens Community Garden is a multi-award-winning Garden, and Andy was a great supporter of London In Bloom. The Garden won Best Community Garden In London in 2007, of which Andy was very proud.

His legacy lives on through the Community Garden and his community activism, working with other local people to improve their neighbourhoods and develop green spaces. He was a force of nature.



Ed: a sad loss of a true community champion

The Bexhill- on- Sea Flyer



"I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow". – David Hobson

Ruth's Christmas Quiz 2021



1. Who is the patron saint of gardeners?
2. What is the Latin name of the Christmas Rose?
3. To which plant family do Poinsettias belong?
4. What colour are poinsettia flowers?
5. And where do Poinsettias originate?
6. Why doesn't Elton John like Iceberg Lettuce?
7. What are Frankincense and Myrrh made from?
8. Why are Christmas trees no good at knitting?
9. Which country donates a Christmas tree to stand in London's Trafalgar Square each year?
10. And who made Christmas trees popular in England?
11. What parasitic Christmas plant grows high up on the branches of a host tree?
12. English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) is dioecious. What does this mean?
13. Which vitamin can be obtained from pine needles?
14. The white flowers of which plant changed colour when the Virgin Mary spread her cloak over it?
15. A flower with a charming name makes you think of Christmas and the Three Wise Men. However, it doesn't bloom in winter. What is it?
16. What's an acorns favourite Christmas Carol?
17. What commonly used food flavouring comes from an Orchid?
18. Watson asked Sherlock Holmes what he was planting in his Garden - What was Holmes' response?
19. What do vegetables wish for more than anything else in the whole world?
20. Why does Father Christmas need not one, not two, but three gardens?

Plants that shaped Christmas

Kate Harris – Co – Campaign Manager

It's the time of holiday cheer, exchanging gifts and, for some of us, dragging a large tree into our house and decorating it with all manner of trinkets and baubles. A time for kisses under the Mistletoe (or not due to social distancing, masks, and other pandemic related restrictions), wreaths on doors and all manner of other 'traditional' decorations that have been passed down through the generations. But have you ever stopped to wonder where these traditions come from? I, for one, have so decided to do some research and find out a little more.



So, let's start with the Poinsettia; this time of year, garden centres and even your local grocery stores are full of them. I will have to be honest here and possibly a little controversial, but I don't get it; I fail to see the attraction. I mean, have them in your house, no judgement from me, but they are categorically banned from entering the threshold of my house!! But why do we associate these with Christmas? These plants hailed from Mexico and were used by the Aztecs for clothes dye, and their sap was used as medicine. The first Ambassador from the USA to Mexico saw these, brought them back to South Carolina, and began growing them and gifting friends and family. There is more to their journey, but they have become more popular over time. The shape is said to represent the Star of David and the red colour to represent the colour of Jesus' blood, and the white to represent his purity. Though I'm sure that many may enjoy them for their religious connotations, the colour red is as festive as you can get, and they have found themselves a household Christmas staple.

Another traditional Christmas decoration with strong religious links is the wreath. Said to represent the crown of thorns worn on the cross, the berries representing the blood of Christ and the evergreen branches used to represent eternal life. However, others link them to German folklore, used to represent sustained life and a symbol of continuity in the bleak months of winter.





How can I write about the traditional Christmas foliage without mentioning Mistletoe? The use of Mistletoe dates way back into history. The Greeks used it to heal a multitude of ailments, including spleen disorders; the Romans also used its properties, with balms being used to cure epilepsy, ulcers, and poisons. However, the Celtic Druids are linked to their more romantic connotations. They bloomed even during the harsh winters, making them a symbol of vivacity, and was given to both humans and animals to help restore fertility. Its uses for vitality and fertility continued into the Middle Ages and by the 18TH century had managed to become widely incorporated into Christmas traditions.

Holly and Ivy are linked not only by a particular catchy Christmas song. The combination of these two plants dates back to the Winter Solstice, where they were used to ward off evil spirits and celebrate new growth.



The main event for most is our Christmas Tree. With its roots (pardon the pun) hailing back to 16th century Germany, where they were brought into homes to be decorated, although not how we do today. The tradition found its way to late Georgian Britain. It became popular a decade later when Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert, displayed a tree at Windsor Castle.

Whether you celebrate Christmas for the fun of it, for its traditional values or not at all, I hope that even in this current climate, you can spend some time with those you care about, be it, friends, or family. So, all that is left to say is Season Greetings to you all, our Bloom family.

“I’m dreaming of a white Christmas,
Just like the ones I used to know”
But if I should run out of the white
I will gladly drink the red though.

-Paul Curtis