

Kingswood, Walton and Tadworth Horticultural Society

Late Summer 2023
Newsletter



Chairman's Jottings

Welcome to the last newsletter for 2023.

I hope you have all your treasured plants and bulbs protected for the coming winter period. Here are Peter Seabook's views on sphagnum moss which I found very interesting and whole heartedly agree with.

As 90% of gardeners we are not happy with the compost – peat free, as Peter Seabrook explains the human race is releasing too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and consuming too much of earth's finite natural resources, putting it bluntly there are too many humans demanding too much and yet we never hear, see or read this case being put so bluntly, now is the time for New Years resolutions. One should endeavour to be more environmentally friendly and use less. What about wearing more clothes in winter so the heating can be turned down; a five – degree drop can halve the cost of heating a greenhouse? Do we buy too many new clothes when old ones can be made to last longer? Why do people comment when I wear a shirt with a worn collar and frayed cuffs, then laugh to hear I darn holes in socks and wash polythene bags to reuse? I am tempted to ask whether they have a washing line to dry their clothes outside, rather than use an electric power dryer, and should we have fewer cats and dogs eating meat?

There are many ways to redress the balance. Home gardeners are the true greens: we stay at home and garden, growing some of our own to achieve zero food miles and zero packaging material. When peat compost grown plants are set out in the soil carbon content is increased – never mind the carbon trapped in the woody plant growth. When we dig out an old or ailing conifer you will often see the original root ball and surrounding peat compost in a similar condition to the original at planting time, so how could that peat have decomposed to release CO₂? Why are we only told one side of any climate change story? When are the “greens” and sustainability pundits going to come clean and admit that cut away raised peat bogs can be re-flooded so sphagnum regrows at 2 – 3 ins a year and is an excellent co₂ absorber?

Just a footnote I would like to thank our great team of helpers and any others that are willing to help set up and dismantle our shows, this is a great help to the committee.

Also, a great thankyou to those that I asked to make a cake for the afternoon teas, I really appreciate this. I only try to ask once a year apart from the regulars, this is a fantastic support to the show and others to get together to have a chat and a cupper.

Happy gardening, hope this winter is not as cold as last, dress your beds with compost.

Graeme - Chairman

Dates for your 2024 Diary

Discussion led by Sylvia Pocock

10th February

Talk by Dan Cooper

2nd March

Spring Show

13th April

Early Summer Show

29th June

Annual General Meeting

14th August

Late Summer Show

24th August

Talk by Steve Edney

28th September

Visit to Munstead Wood

At the end of May, 20 of us visited Munstead Wood near Godalming, for a private tour of the garden. Here we had two tours with head gardener, Annabelle. This is what one of our group reported back to KWTHS.

Thank you for arranging the Munstead Wood visit, I'm a seasoned old garden visitor, but as the Americans would say "its mind blowing". I stand completely in awe of Annabelle and her now redundant team, of the time, experience, persistence, effort and academic knowledge that has been put into the recreation of the Jekyll Garden.

The results are stupendous - it's given me lots of ideas, but the combination of the house and the

living history of the garden are unsurpassed to my mind anywhere in the UK.

I was relieved to hear the National Trust has taken it on, as the house needs a lot of restoration, but unfortunately the mystic atmosphere will be deflated by the volumes of visitors that will come.

I feel very privileged to have seen it yesterday which will stay long in the memory. It's like seeing Angkor Wat, or the Trevi Fountain before mass tourism.

It may be restored and maintained to an even higher standard but the magic will be chased away.

Trip to RHS HYDE HALL 13/07/2023 - (See the March RHS Garden magazines - a great article on Hyde Hall)

34 of us travelled to Essex to see the wonderful gardens at Hyde Hall which surpassed our expectations with numerous areas to explore many in full flower. The Gods were smiling on us, with no rain, a little sunshine, but a comfortable temperature to wander and sit and enjoy the vistas, and even better no delays on the M25. Add in time for a little retail therapy and who could ask for more.

Set in the heart of rural Essex, and enjoying stunning panoramic views of the surrounding countryside, RHS Garden Hyde Hall is one of the finest gardens in the East of England. This 365-acre site is a haven of peace and tranquillity, encompassing a diverse mix of garden styles from traditional to modern. Highlights include the Dry Garden with its fantastic range of drought-resistant plants and the Hilltop Garden with its roses and herbaceous borders. There's also a Global Growth Vegetable Garden, which showcases vegetables from around the world, together with a hidden garden in full colour showing annuals.

Early Summer Show

Some statistics to start. 81 Visitors including 44 non-members. £140.50 raised for Royal Marsden from the sale of plants and sundries.

Winners of the trophies were:

Copping Memorial Cup - Dot Carter

Garden News Shield - Margaret Haslam

Bonsor Cup and Duke Cup - John Barlow and Linda Rowles

Kemp Sweet Pea Cup and Bernard Caswell Trophy - Keith Lewis

Scholey Floral Cup - Virginia Perkins

Beatrice French Memorial Cup - Jeanette Walls

Spring Show 2024 (please note)

The nominated daffodils for next year's show will Sealing Wax and Tahiti. Both of these are available at Buckland Nursery. If you show your membership card you will get 10% discount.

The Sociable Gardeners Group 2023

We have had an enjoyable year with a total of thirteen members gardens to visit from the beginning of May through to the middle of September. Thank you to all of you who kindly invited members of the group to your garden and generously provided refreshments.

At the beginning of March, we had an Afternoon Quiz, with three teams competing, followed by tea and cake.

For the first time we had private visits to local NGS gardens, Ashcombe Westhumble in June and two neighbouring cottage gardens in Nutfield in July. On both occasions we had lovely, sunny afternoons.

During the winter & spring we started to meet occasionally for coffee at local pubs, this has proved popular.

Thanks to all for taking part.

If you are interested in joining this group, please contact me 01737 814291
jasmine.heath@btinternet.com.

Next year's programme will be published in February 2024.

Late Summer Show

On the afternoon of 26th August 2023, we held our last show which was attended by 53 members and 52 non-members.

Winners as follows

Bonsor Summer Cup - Graeme Boast

William Fitch Cup - Linda Rowles and John Barlow

Songhurst Cup - David Peterken

Corfield Cup - Keith Lewis

Sam McGready Plaque - Jean Bye

St James Cup - Graeme Boast

Ruthleven Bowl - John Ross

Allnutt Cup - Virginia Perkins

Strachan Cup - Felicity Hook

Annual Prizes 2023

Chinthurst Cup - Tom and Ella Pitman

William T Smith Cup- David Peterken

Fawcett Cup - Virginia Perkins

The Domestic Cup - Janette Walls

Joan Clover Photography Cup - Jill Double

Self-drive visit to Heathside in Cobham 25 July 2023

22 of us visited on a bright and sunny day (a pleasant change this summer) and had a wonderful time

The owners of Heathside do all the gardening without extra help and clearly have to work very hard to produce such a colourful and vibrant display. Colourful well-established trees, both evergreen and deciduous: and shrubs formed the structure of the centre of the garden; these are supplemented by herbaceous plants (and the odd interesting topiary) with a colourful display of annuals in the patio beds and pots. The Monkey Puzzle Tree is outstanding and even had cones, something I have never seen before.

A number of water features added interest. Beyond some huge pots dividing the end section of the garden from the rest, we came across a beautiful Victorian style glasshouse. Inside the wide door were display benches with collections of succulents. Around every corner in this pretty garden, one was met with plants of interest with even the smallest space put to good use. Plenty of ideas for one's own garden.

The refreshments were lovely and the shortbread and flapjacks outstanding.

Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the 2023 AGM are held on the website under past events.

Anne Bance

This year the Committee said goodbye to Anne who has stepped down due to health reasons. Anne had been a committee member for many years and was our stalwart in the kitchen serving teas and coffees along with her many helpers.

Future Talks – dates for your diary (full details on the website)

Jacqueline Aviolet talk Saturday 2 December 2023 Brussel Sprouts to Tangerines 10.30 Meeting Room

A pre-Christmas talk by long-time nurserywoman and public speaker Jacqueline, encouraging horticultural things with humour. Jacqueline runs her own nursery (www.rosiesgardenplants.com). Check out her web site for details of the plants that she grows.

Jacqueline is hoping to include cuttings and plants for sale.

Book your slot by e mailing us as the meeting room has a limited capacity of 30. There will be a small charge of £3.00 members and £4.00 non-members and includes your refreshments - Mince pies.

Saturday 10th February 2024 – A discussion led by Sylvia Pocock (one of our show judges) @ 10.30am in the meeting room.

Calling all exhibitors and those thinking that they may wish to exhibit at this year's shows. Sylvia, a RHS Judge has generously offered to run an informal chat and workshop for us in February.

Please book your space by contacting David and Cathy. Sorry members only.

There will be no charge for this session but it is hoped that the morning will help those members who already enter or are thinking of entering items at this year's shows as Sylvia will be able to point out what the Judge looks for when walking around.

Refreshments available, including cake.

Saturday 2 March 2024 - A Talk by Dan Cooper @ 2.30 Main Hall

Dan Cooper AKA 'The Frustrated Gardener' will talk about container gardening. Dan is a plantsman, presenter and publisher of a 'blog'. The Frustrated Gardener (take a look as it makes a good read) and also opens his sub-tropical garden for NGS. He also runs Dan Cooper Garden – selling the 'finest' garden products which he will bring for us to see and buy on 2nd March.

As we are in the main Hall so no need to pre-book but please let us know if you are interested in attending due to catering. Members £3 and non-members £4. Refreshments and raffle.

Saturday 28 September 2024 at 10.30 Main Hall Steve Edney - topic to be confirmed

Did you watch Gardeners' World on 20th October?

Steve Edney and Louise Dowle created the No Name Nursery out of a desire to share great garden plants with fellow garden lovers, both Lou and Steve are professional gardeners with Steve having been the head gardener at the award-winning Salutation gardens in Sandwich for 17 years. The new venture is set on a 3-acre site which is designed as a plant playground for growing and testing plants with the aim of sharing these plants for sale in a sustainable manner by growing on site ourselves.

They don't want to be Pidgeon-holed into one group of plants but they have a real love of perennials and exotics so you'll always see those on their display table plus all sorts of special plants to suit a range of situations.

They hold 4 national collections of plants. *Persicaria virginiana* cv's, dark leaved dahlia's, *pseudopanax* cv's and *plectranthus*.

Membership

We are pleased to tell you that there are currently 238 members of the Society.

We are still on the look out for more volunteers to assist with the Shows **and especially a Show Captain.**

Make Your Own Potting Compost to save a few pennies

When you are thinking about saving money you should think of potting compost. It's so expensive.

But before we begin let's explain what potting compost is and why you need it. It's a light, well-draining growing medium that's good for plants grown in pots and trays. You can buy special types depending on how you are going to use it: For seeds, for young plants (potting on) and for established plants. But whichever you buy, the gist is that it's very different from regular compost or garden soil which is too heavy and dense for most young pot plants.

So, it's definitely worth having, but with so many container plants, you will spend a small fortune on potting compost. And the stuff has gone through the roof price-wise. A couple of years ago you could get three bags for £10 deals. Now, a single bag is often £10. And if you go for something a tiny bit cheaper it's absolute rubbish.

So here are some recipes for making your own potting compost next year.

Seed compost

First up let's look at seed compost. Seeds don't really need nutrients to get going, they just need moisture retention. And leaf mould is perfect for that. So, the recipe for seed compost couldn't be easier, simply sieve leaf mould, that's it!

Now you don't need to buy leaf mould, make it yourself. It's so easy peasy. The short explanation is sticking fallen leaves from your trees in a large polythene bag, put in a bit of water - not too much, puncture the bag so air can get in and store the bag for a year. You go from scruffy sacks of leaves to this beautifully crumbly stuff in a year or so! Sorted.

Young Plants - Potting On

Here are two recipes for young plants.

Option 1 - Collect some garden soil - do this from around the garden so you don't create a massive hole somewhere. Sieve it to remove

stones, lumps, and of course weeds. The last thing you want is weedy potting compost.

Then get organic matter (homemade compost or leaf mould) and again sieve it to remove lumps.

Mix the two together at a ratio of 70% soil, 30% organic matter. If your soil is very heavy you might want to lighten up your potting compost mix up and improve its drainage by adding some horticultural grit, perlite or coarse sand. If you do this, these elements want to amount to about 10% of the total mixture.

Option 2 - Simply mix together 1/3 sieved leaf mould, 1/3 sieved garden compost and 1/3 sieved soil.

Established Plants

Garden soil is too heavy to use on its own in a container. In my experience you will want to mix it with something else to lighten it up as otherwise your pots may become waterlogged.

So, mix 50% soil with 50% sieved homemade compost. There's less need to sieve the garden soil as the established plants should be able to cope with the odd lump or bump.

The homemade compost added to the soil not only lightens the mixture but adds nutrition to it. But the goodness won't last forever. During the growing season the plant will use it up after six weeks. So, for your established plants kept in containers feed them. You can use slow-release fertiliser which you add to the mixture when planting or a liquid feed. I tend to do a bit of both.

Let us know how you get on.

Cold weather

Protecting plants from frost damage is crucial to ensure their survival during the spring season. Frost can occur unexpectedly (I know it's a stretch to suggest it's unexpected in January and

February) and can cause significant damage to newly established plants.

However, there are several preventative measures that can be taken to protect your plants such as providing insulation with frost blankets or mulch and positioning plants in protected areas. Learn more about how to protect your garden plants from frost damage.

The cold, cloudless evenings of winter, spring and autumn may be hazardous to the health of your plants. During the day, your plants and the soil absorb and store heat from the sun. As the day turns into night, your plants quickly begin to lose all of their stored heat. Clouds will help to insulate and slow the loss of heat, but a cloudless, wind-free night will afford no protection at all. The temperature within the soil and in the plant's cells may even drop to a few degrees colder than the air. As the temperature drops, the moisture in the air condenses into dew which then freezes when the temperature reaches 32°Fahrenheit on the plant surfaces. At 32° degrees, damage to most plants may be minimal and only affect a leaf or two. However, if the temperature drops far enough for the plant cells to freeze, non-hardy plants will die.

Helping your garden survive a frost

The best way to avoid frost damage to your plants is to grow plants that can withstand the frost. The term 'frost hardy' is often misleading because of the degrees of frost (*i.e.*, *light frost vs hard killing frost*). It is a good idea to ask an expert at your nearest nursery what is suitable to grow in your area. Even better, look around your own neighbourhood and see what survives and thrives in other gardens.

Plant varieties of plants that flower late, in areas where late spring frosts may occur. Often a plant will survive frost on the foliage, but the same

frost would kill any flower buds that have emerged.

Because cold air, being denser than warm air, sinks, low-lying areas of the garden can be several degrees colder. Consequently, frost may occur in these areas when there is no frost evident anywhere else in the garden. Plant tender species on higher ground or on slopes where the cold air will flow past the plants as it moves to the low point. Any sloping area is less prone to frost because the cold air can't settle there as easily.

Precondition your plants to withstand cold temperatures by discontinuing fertilising in early September so that no new foliage is on the plant when cold temperatures arrive. Older leaves are much tougher and more able to withstand a frost.

Improvised cover: Use polythene, cardboard or old bed sheets as cover from frost.

When cold weather is forecast

When the inevitable occurs and a frost is predicted, there are several things that you can do to protect your plants.

Water the garden a day before predicted cold weather. The soil will release moisture into the air around your plants during the night, keeping the air somewhat warmer.

Even a slight breeze will prevent cold air from settling near the ground during the night. You can help keep frost from forming by providing this breeze artificially with a solar-powered fan or windmill. Energy stored through the day will be expended through the night to keep the air moving around your plants.

Cover up before dusk! By the time it gets dark much of the stored heat in the garden has already been lost. If you have time, build a simple frame around the plant, or row of plants. (Even a single stake can be used in many cases.) Then drape a cover of newspaper, cardboard, plastic tarps, bed sheeting or any other lightweight material over the frame to create a tent. If you don't have time to create a frame, lay the protective cover directly onto the plant. This will help to slow the loss of heat rising from the foliage and the ground. Remove the covers in the morning, once the frost has thawed, to let the light and fresh air back in, and to prevent overheating by the sun.

You can collect heat during the day by using empty plastic milk containers – paint them black and fill with water. Place them around your plants where they will collect heat during the day. Water loses heat more slowly than either soil or air. This collected heat will radiate out throughout the night.

Protecting potted plants

Potted plants are particularly susceptible to frosts because the roots are also unprotected. If you are unable to move your container plants indoors or under cover, remember to also wrap the pot in burlap or bubble wrap, or simply bury the pot in soil in addition to protecting the foliage.

If your efforts were too late, or too little to protect your plants from a frost resist the urge to cut off the damaged parts of the plants. To a certain extent, these dead leaves and stems will provide limited insulation from further frost damage. You will have to go back and re-prune your plants in spring anyway.

Gardening tip

Little tip to give plants a boost, banana skins don't throw them put some in a watering can fill with water over night and water your plants. Lots of potassium in the skins that make more blooms.

Do your roses look tired?

As the leaves start to drop off, clear them away from around the base of the plant. Diseases like Blackspot will transfer to the soil and overwinter there.

Trim off any brown dead wood, while the plant is still active you can easily see the difference between the live and dead wood. If the wood is dry and brown, cut it off.

Stop feeding your roses! You don't want them putting on new growth and wasting their energy to produce flowers. Try to coax them into dormancy by stopping feeding now.

This edition's poem

The Missus seems to think it fun
To work from dawn to set of sun

She never seems to sleep a wink
And never stops to have a drink

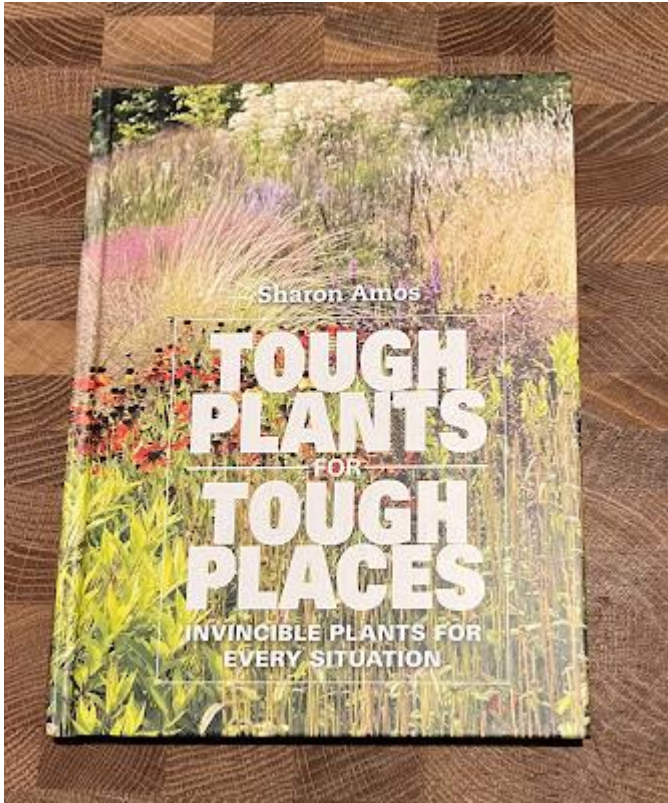
She scrabbles round the place all day
And never gets a penny pay

Which means that she is out to rob
Some honest gardener of a job

The Master, you can bet your hat
Would never do a thing like that.

Book Review

Tough Plants for Tough Places by Sharon Amos



We all have those parts of our gardens that are more difficult to garden than others. That shady dry bit, that blisteringly hot sunny bit, that soggy bit that chalk-soiled bit, if we are lucky, we only have one problem spot; if we are less lucky our whole garden is a problem spot. This new book from Sharon Amos helps with all these troublesome areas. This is not just a plant catalogue; Sharon starts by helping us understand our gardens starting with the basics of knowing what type of soil we have. If we understand our conditions then that will help us not make choices that make gardening difficult for us.

Gardens also have microclimates and Sharon explains these to us. Depending on the aspect of our gardens will depend on where the sun shines and shade falls. We might be in a windy spot; we might have a frost pocket. Sharon talks

us through various issues and how we can work with them and where possible improve them.

The remainder of the book is a plant directory that is in sections of sun, shade, dry, damp, exposed and seaside. It is not just about which plant, but how to position it and care for it.

The advice in the book is good and understandable. The choices of plants suggested are guaranteed to inspire.

2023/4 Committee

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