



# Garden Topics

January 2022

**Welcome to the first newsletter of 2022 and a Happy New Year to you all.**

## **Chairman's Report**

Firstly, I would like to thank all the members who attended the AGM and hope you all enjoyed the evening and the quiz, mince pies and wine that followed the formal part of the evening. The adoption of the Annual Accounts was agreed by all those present and all existing members of the committee agreed to stand and were re-elected, namely, Jean Billett as Chairman, Tony Speller as Treasurer, Drostran Stileman as Trading Secretary, Ann Beauchamp, Jo Warner, and Ken Warner. Lynn Postle has agreed to continue as Flower Show Secretary and Madeleine Hern as Flower Show Manager. We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Membership Secretary, Margaret Smith who will be taking over from Julie Alderman shortly. We wish Julie Alderman well in her new home and thank her for all the work she has done, not only as Membership Secretary, but also helping run the teas at the annual Flower Show, manning the cash desk at the Trading Hut on summer evenings and organising our coach trips for many years. Unfortunately, one position we are struggling to fill is that of Secretary, if you would like to discuss the role of Secretary please contact Jean Billett, Tel. 01372465961.

As previously mentioned in our October newsletter we have seen a significant drop in membership. So, our target for 2022 is to rebuild our membership, therefore we need to make ourselves more widely known. One project planned is the planting and maintaining of a small patch of garden at the Co-op car park on Hampton Court Way. This was initially planted with wildflowers and a Bug Hotel. The Thames Ditton Men in Sheds built the Bug Hotel, and the guides and scouts cleared the site and planted the flowers. Unfortunately, over the past two years this site has not been maintained and therefore I have discussed this with the Co-op manager who has agreed that Esher Molesey Garden Society can take the site on. A sign will be erected with the society's name and contact details. This was discussed at the AGM and several members have agreed to help, and as this will be an ongoing project, we welcome any volunteers. (Our garden will also be included in the Secret Gardens Day). If you would be happy to volunteer, please contact Jean Billett [jean.billett@ntlworld.com](mailto:jean.billett@ntlworld.com) with your contact details. We are also planning a leaflet campaign, and again would welcome volunteers if you can help with this, please contact us directly or through our website: [www.emgs.co.uk](http://www.emgs.co.uk).

Thanks to all who have already volunteered after receiving the October newsletter. We would also welcome ideas as to how we can make Esher Molesey Garden Society more appealing to both young and old, so please do not hesitate to contact us with your ideas.

## **Membership**

If you are receiving this newsletter by email, you should have already received your new membership card for 2022 under separate cover, otherwise it is enclosed if we do not have a working email address for you. If you are expecting your new membership card, but have not received it, and your annual subscription is up to date, please call Tony Speller on 020 8398 1774, pending our new Membership Secretary, Margaret Smith, taking

over. If your annual subscription is outstanding, please send to one of the addresses below, or direct to our bank: Santander Sort Code 09-01-51, Account No. 19487306, Account Name: Esher Molesey Garden Society. Memberships can also be renewed when visiting the Trading Hut, but to ease pressure when Drostan is busy, it would be appreciated if you would renew membership prior to visiting the Trading Hut. Annual Membership is £5.00, or £24.00 for 5 years.

Tony Speller, 15 Riverside Avenue, East Molesey, KT8 0AE  
Jean Billett, 75 Douglas Road, Esher, KT10 8BG

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022** Trading Hut will re-open after the Christmas Break

**Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022** – Mr Vincent Gradwell will give a talk on **Gardening for Autumn Colours**, 2p.m. for 2.30p.m. St Nicholas Church Hall, Thames Ditton.

**Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022** - Members Spring Flower Show. Judged by Gerald Smith, just arrive on the day with your exhibits, 2p.m. for 2.30 p.m. St Nicholas Church Hall, Thames Ditton

### **Classes**

1. Vase of cut mixed blooms of flowering bulbs or corms
2. 3 sprays (single or mixed) of any variety flowering shrub or tree
3. Bowl of floating hellebore heads
4. Vase of daffodils 3 blooms any variety
5. Vase of 3 tulips any variety

**April Spring Garden visit 19<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> April date tbc**

**August Summer Garden visit provisional 1<sup>st</sup> August**

**Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022** – Annual Flower Show, St Nicholas Church Hall, Thames Ditton  
The four subjects for the Flower Show Photographic Competition are –

1. On the River
2. Pet Animal
3. Landscape with trees
4. Close up of an insect

## **Plug Plants 2022**

We have ordered a variety of Petunias, Fuchsias, and Geraniums as plug plants again this year, following their popularity in previous years, and expect them to be available in the second or third week of March. For email readers a separate attachment lists and shows a picture of the varieties available, and for non-email readers a pre-season order form is enclosed. To ensure you get the varieties and colours you want please send your order to Tony at [tony\\_speller@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tony_speller@hotmail.co.uk) or by phone or post as per details in the membership section. Unfortunately, prices have been hit by inflation and higher production costs by the growers (heating and distribution especially) and we will have to increase our prices slightly to 70p for petunias, 55p for fuchsias, 30p for geraniums and 45p for Geranium Fire Queen, to cover these increases. We will be growing these plug plants for Molesey Carnival and if you can help, please let Tony know. Thank you.

## **Renovation of the garden at St Nicholas Church Hall**

You may remember from our shows at St Nicholas Church Hall that there is a patio and garden at the back. It has become overgrown in recent years, but the Show Committee have always thought that it would be good to use this area for sitting and for having tea. So, with the Church agreement we started a renovation last autumn.

The site is not the best for a garden. It sits in the shelter of the Hall building and the trees in the churchyard. There is a massive ash tree on the border that throws its canopy over the whole site although sadly this may be on its way out as a result of ash tree die back.

We have now removed all the brambles, ivy, nettles and other weeds. Under all of this there were a few shrubs – a Choisya ‘Aztec Pearl’; a mahonia; some hypericum and a strong climbing rose on the back wall. With everything clear we can see that it’s a big area. We have planted four additional, what will be substantial, shrubs – a Hydrangea quercifolia ‘Snow Queen’; a Viburnum plicatum f. tomentosum ‘Mariesii’ (Japanese snowball); a Sarcococca confusa for winter scent and because it tolerates shade; another Choisya ‘White Dazzler’ which has darker smaller leaves than the ‘Aztec Pearl’ and two Fatsia japonica ‘Spider’s Web’ whose white veined leaves should stand out better in the shade. We will need to put in at least two more shrubs to give the planting body as well as some perennials for the summer. For the spring we have put in a mass of small daffodils along the front and some leucojum at the back for later. We will also need some more climbers to cover the fence at the back. Beside the main border there is discreet shady corner area which was part of the old vicarage garden buildings and is heavily shaded by yew. This has been cleared and planted with bergenia and (hopefully) massed scilla. We have some donated hellebores for this area, but we will need more shade tolerant plants like pulmonaria, brunnera, epimedium and tellima.

As the back garden has come up so well and is appreciated by the hall users, we have also undertaken to improve the planted area at the entrance to the car park. The church was advised that nothing much would grow here because the tree cover is so heavy but as the ivy and the brambles grow so well, we think it cannot be without hope of making it more colourful. A giant bug and beetle tower has been built in the middle so continuing that theme we are going to make this into a garden that has more wildlife friendly planting.

This is something to which the Society and its members can make a special contribution; it gets us known in the area and it makes the area more attractive for us to use for the show.

It would be good if we could put some chairs at the back of the hall so that people using the hall could sit out and appreciate our garden. If any of the members has some garden furniture, they don’t need which we could use for the church garden, could you let us know – we will no doubt have the skills for any repairs and renovation amongst our membership.

Our workday at the church hall is Tuesday which is also the day the food bank uses the hall. This made us think about what we as growers could do to help especially after one of our members, Mick Mallard took the left-over potato stock from the trading hut last year and grew it into 100lbs of potatoes that he took to Epsom foodbank. We were thinking that we could do something similar to help the St Nicholas food bank. In the summer we all often have too much produce which we have to give away but instead we could collect it and make it available to the food bank. The organisers there would be very grateful – they have told me that the fresh vegetable and fruit selection in the boxes is often not very varied or imaginative. The Society and its members and allotment members could make a contribution here. We would have to work out how we organise a collection but if we could, is this something to which members would like to contribute. Could you let us have your thoughts on this?

Lastly, does anyone have a large round pot they don’t need. There is a drain cover in the middle of the big border, and it would be good to cover it with a pot which we could fill with bedding plants in season. Also, if anyone is about to lift and divide their Lily of the Valley, I would welcome any spare plants. Many thanks, Lynn Postle [lynnpostle13@gmail.com](mailto:lynnpostle13@gmail.com)

## **Secret Gardens 2022**

Thames Ditton & Weston Green Residents Association runs a successful ‘Secret Gardens’ Day each year, raising funds for local projects and charities. This year it is the turn of Weston Green. If you live in the Weston Green area (ideally from Esher Station to Imber Court and from Weston Green/Hampton Court Way to Grove Way) and would like to put your garden forward for inclusion in the ‘Secret Gardens’ route in June (t.b.c), please contact Cllr Gill Coates, 07908 922263 / [gcoates@elmburgh.gov.uk](mailto:gcoates@elmburgh.gov.uk). Gardens do not have to be Chelsea perfect! Interesting features, special projects (like a wildlife garden, or dry garden) productive gardens and innovative solutions to challenges (like shade) are very much welcomed!

## Growing Notes for Exhibition Sweet Peas

**Ground Preparation:** Sweet peas are hungry plants so it's good to give them a trench to grow into. For cordons the trench should be 600mm by a spade depth and for wigwams a circle of 750m. Fill the trench with garden compost and dig in 2oz of Vitax Q4 fertiliser (or similar) to every metre

**Sowing:** sow for a succession – first sowing in November for flowers in May; second sowing in early January for flowers mid-June to August and third sowing at the end of January will produce flowers at the end of June to September. You can sow up to March but plants over wintered in a cold frame or cool greenhouse are usually stronger.

**Propagation:** Compost: prepare a mix of 1part perlite to 4 parts multi-purpose compost.

Take a plastic box, place 3 sheets of damp (not soaking) kitchen roll in the bottom. Put the seeds on the paper and place another sheet of damp kitchen paper on the top. Replace the lid and keep somewhere warm inside (airing cupboard). Label to identify the variety. Check the boxes daily and when the seeds have all swollen and sent out white shoots plant into pots of your prepared compost – 2 seeds per 75mm pot. Plant 12mm below the surface and label each pot. Put the pots in a tray and cover with newspaper to keep the light out and the moisture and warmth in. Put the trays of pots in a cool greenhouse, cold frame or on a windowsill of a cool room (no heat required). Keeping the plants cool promotes root growth rather than stem growth. Check daily and when the first white crook appears on the soil remove the paper cover.

**Plant Care:** Water sparingly but do not feed the plants. Keep the pots reasonably dry as too much moisture will damp off the plants. When the plants have grown on and produced two pairs of leaves, pinch out the top of the plant to send out side-shoots – these will be your flowering shoots later on. Put in an open cold frame – only cover in heavy rain, hard frost or snow. By the end of February on the first sowing start to water with feed of Miracle Grow half strength every 2 weeks.

**Preparation for Planting Out:** From early March until planting time, rake over and level the soil to get a fine tilth. The compost can be refreshed with another dressing of something like VitaxQ4, sulphate of potash or chicken pellets.

For a **cordon** set out the row over the trench with a line on either side about 500mm apart. Canes should be 6 to 8ft. Place a cane along the line every 175mm. Try to have the canes running east to west. Link the canes with wire either 1.20m or at the top of the cane, then fix the canes to the wires.

For **bush growing or wigwam**, place the canes 200mm apart with a 400mm diameter plastic plant support at the top of the wigwam.

**Planting Out:** Check that plants are healthy and strong and have at least one strong side shoot; two is better. Remove from the pot and check that roots are filling the pot and are white. Move the compost from around the neck of the plant to check that it is white: if there is any brown discard the plant as it will not survive. For a pot with two plants make a hole in the ground between two canes inside the line of the canes. For a pot with one seedling make the hole on the inside of the cane. Plant in the ground as the same level as the pot and gently firm the soil around the plant. If the plants are more than 100mm tall tie them loosely to the cane. Below this height leave to grow on.

For **cordon** growing, leave plants for 4 to 6 weeks depending on the season, after which reduce the side shoots on each plant to one – select the strongest which may not necessarily be the longest. Remove all other side shoots.

Ring or tape this side shoot to the cane every 150mm. At the height of the growing season the plants will grow 300mm a week. When ringing or taping the plant to the cane, always remove the tendril from the end of the leaves and the side shoots from the axil of the leaf. This will allow all the strength of the plant to go head of the plant and form strong flower stems.

For **wigwam or bush** grown plants where all the side shoots will be allowed to grow on tie the shoots in every 150mm but remove all the tendrils at the end of the leaves to stop them clinging to the flower stems and bending them.

**Feeding:** When plants are 1 metre high start to feed with Tomorite and Miracle Grow at half the recommended strength on alternate weeks. Water the Tomorite into the roots one week and Miracle Grow over the plants on the next week. Water in the evenings.

**Cutting:** keep cutting the flowers and do not allow them to go to seed: this will allow them to flower much longer.

**Watering** – do not let plants dry out.

**Pests** – you can use a systemic insecticide to control greenfly and caterpillars but spray in the evening so as not to scorch the leaves. Greenfly if not controlled will damage the plant and will be infected by a virus which will give the flowers a mosaic appearance. If this happens remove the plant and burn it.

### Flower of the Month



### Snowdrops - *Galanthus nivalis*

Snowdrops are the first of the spring bulbs to flower and as a result attributes such as “Hope”, “Innocence”, “Purity” were given to them by the Victorians. They belong to the Amaryllis family and are indigenous across most of Northern Europe from where they were introduced, so it is believed, to the UK by the Romans.

The last 70 years or so has seen a mania develop and gardeners seek bulbs with often very small variations of colour or shape to add to their collections sometimes spending huge sums to acquire such bulbs. In February 2021 Thompson & Morgan paid £725 for one with a golden ovary and yellow petal markings, but it had taken the breeder 10 years to produce!

Snowdrops prefer semi-shady, moist sites with good drainage and are best planted “in the green” that is as the leaves begin to yellow after flowering split the clumps and replant at the same depth.

They spread naturally, but clumps can be split every 3 years.

### Coach Trips for 2022

#### All aboard for our garden visits in 2022!

After our highly enjoyable day at Hyde Hall last year and following on from the discussion at the recent AGM about possible locations for this year’s visits, I have been making preliminary arrangements for both a spring and summer day out by bus. Fingers crossed that our plans will be able to go ahead and that we have great gardening weather to go with them.

Final details and booking forms for both trips will be circulated very soon. In the meantime, please save the provisional dates of April 23 (or 19) and August 1.

## **APRIL SPRING VISIT**

Our April plans are taking shape and at the time of writing, I am arranging a visit to Great Dixter House, Gardens and Nursery and then another local garden and nursery in the afternoon where we can also have tea before we leave. In both gardens we're hoping for the sight of some beautiful bulb displays to augment the enjoyment of the day.

Located near Northiam, in East Sussex, Great Dixter was the home of visionary gardener and garden writer, Christopher Lloyd. Much of the original garden design was by Lutyens, 'never stodgy' and often transformative. The planting of its many mixed decorative borders was described, without any apology, by Christopher Lloyd as 'high maintenance'. As a result, visitors clearly reap the rewards of his devotion. In 1954, Christopher established the nursery which remains small, personal and professional and which will be open for us to visit while we are there.

For the afternoon I have found a contrasting garden, described as eclectic, which also has its own nursery which I know is of particular interest to many members. There's nothing like returning at the end of the day with a bus full of new plants! We can also have tea there before we leave, and so if we don't get a warm April, there is under cover space at both locations.

The provisional date is April 23 (but may be April 19), includes coach travel, entry to both gardens, nurseries and house at Great Dixter. Provisional cost £47.50, with the possibility of a reduction if our group size is bigger than expected. Non-members welcome for an extra £5.

## **AUGUST SUMMER VISIT**

The popular choice for our August visit is the gardens at Sienna Wood and Durrance Manor which together offer a delightful pairing. Stopping first near East Grinstead, Sienna Wood boasts a lakeside walk, herbaceous borders and a croquet lawn. There is also a formal rose garden, orchard and vegetable garden with a waterfall and exotic border.

After a pub lunch stop, the afternoon visit is to Durrance Manor with beautiful views over a ha-ha to the South Downs, and various garden areas including Japanese inspired beds and a waterlily pond with a Monet style bridge. With afternoon tea before we leave!

The provisional date of August 1 is yet to be confirmed, cost for members approximately £45.

## **Trading Notes**

Having had a very busy year we have been closed over Christmas as usual. But the New Year is here and we are preparing to depot for opening on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

Thank you everyone for using the depot in 2021. We have had our busiest trading year as far back as I have records.

As usual for the New Year opening, we are expecting to have received the seed potatoes that people ordered. If you forgot to order seed potatoes, come and see us as we will have a number of spare bags available.

Following the problems we had last year with bamboo canes, I have been informed that we will be getting our delivery this year, hopefully by the end of February.

We are also expecting delivery of the summer flowering bulbs in January, so come and see what's on offer when we re-open. There are good stocks of composts, manure and fertilisers and now feature peat free compost which is becoming more and more popular for obvious environmental reasons.

Please remember we take both credit and debit cards and there is no minimum purchase necessary or charge for this service.

Don't forget, if there is something that you are looking for and we don't stock it, please let me know and I will try and obtain it for you. We have got several special items for customers recently, so just ask. We want to stock items that you want.

New, and old, members may like to be reminded the EMGS Trading Depot is on the Beauchamp Road Allotment Site (entrance between 104 and 106 Beauchamp Road). A reminder that parking is limited when the depot is open, so please only bring your vehicle on site if you are purchasing anything heavy. Also please remember that there is a site speed limit of 5 mph for obvious reasons.

**We will be open from 9.00 am till 11.00 am every Sunday from 6<sup>th</sup> February 2022 until the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022. We will also be open on Wednesday evenings from 7.00pm till 8.00pm during the months of April, May and June.**