

AMERSHAM GARDENING ASSOCIATION MAY 2014 NEWSLETTER



COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We have had new members joining our committee and have the following changes. David Bender will also take on the role of website controller. Jean Bowling is our new secretary, and will also co-ordinate our newsletter with Neil Watson who has taken on its production. We will send it out by email to all people that can receive this way and hard copies will be provided for those without computers. Carol Barratt is our new archivist. Liz Moulton has joined the committee and will be responsible for planning forthcoming events.

This is a time of change and we hope you will support us in all we do, to keep the club running smoothly and successfully. Please support our plant sales, raffles and also our shows, as quite a lot of work goes into these events. Any ideas people may have to help the smooth running of the club will be most welcome.

Getting interesting speakers and co-ordinating their needs is quite a task for Anne Webb and we congratulate her on how well she has succeeded up to now.

May I wish you all success in your gardening this year and hope to see you all at our meetings and visits.

VISIT TO PYT HOUSE, EDULIS RARE PLANT NURSERY & ENGLEFIELD HOUSE

We had a very enjoyable day visiting three very different Berkshire gardens on 23rd April.

Pyt House was a private 4 acre garden designed 8 years ago by the owner Virginia Von Celsing. She has achieved a great deal of structure using yew, hornbeam and beech hedges, also an arched tunnel of apple and wisteria. The garden had a wonderful view across the valley. There was also a very productive vegetable garden and two ponds which added to the interest.



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The second stop was at Edulis nursery, where there were many rare plants from various countries and a considerable number of purchases were made.

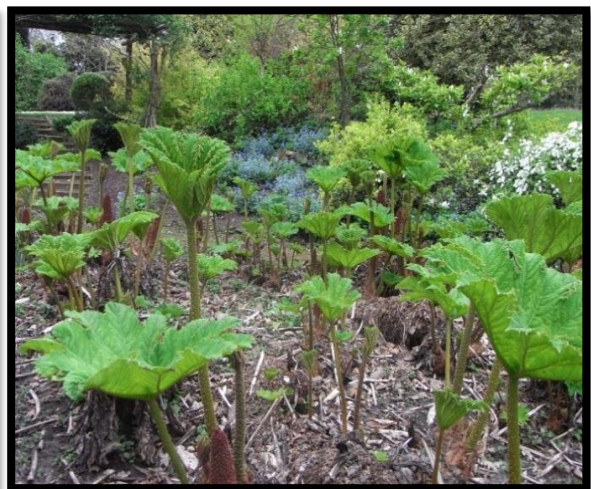


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Our final venue was the beautiful Englefield House. It is set in a stunning landscape overlooking the deer park with the river in the distance. Lady Benyon walked us around the woodland garden which has many magnificent trees and shrubs, including a huge handkerchief tree which was looking its best.

There was an intriguing grotto with a fir cone studded interior, a round pebble garden and a yellow and blue garden enclosed in clipped yew. We were also shown the walled vegetable garden, which has the advantage of having a supply of manure from the adjacent stables!



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Many of us visited the ancient church on the estate which houses the tombs of the Benyon family. It was a varied and enjoyable day greatly enhanced by the hospitality we received.
Felicity Vickery

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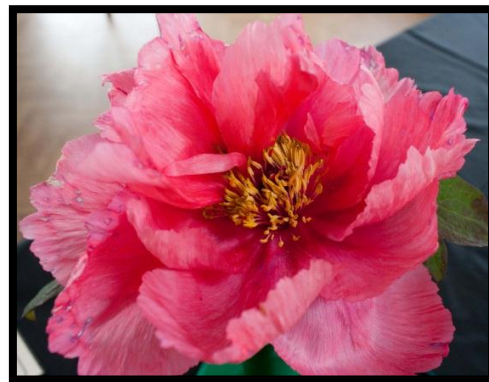
SPRING SHOW

The new show format was voted much more interesting than the old Daffodil show so we will do it again next year, but hopefully earlier in April to catch Hellebores and Camellias and may be few daffodils. I must admit, looking around my garden for items I could enter, I found plants that I had ignored for years. Plants that don't require any special treatment, flower away and quietly die, so it is good to have to search for something new.

We had some lovely entries in the flowering shrubs and shrubs for foliage. How many of you have ever seen a Pittisporum in flower? We had 82 entries by just 16 people. The winner of the most points overall was Sylvia Parrott, who had phoned me earlier to say she was no gardener but would have a go. We'll done Sylvia, I wish we had more like you. She wins the Association Challenge Award.



Joan Clark was amazed to find her vase of Princess Irene tulips won not only their class but was the best out of all blooms exhibited and also best in show. Joan wins the F.J. Ruck Challenge Award and the President's Award. Terrific work Joan, sales of Princess Irene will soar in Amersham this autumn.



The domestic classes were well supported as always. We have some good cooks in the club and hurrah-hurrah! we had a man entering AND he won two prizes. Good work Mr Booth, but the overall winner was Susan Jeffery. I am sad to have to say that we got just one entry in each of the photographic classes. Time was when we had up to 10 per class. It is sounding the death knell for photographs at a time when they are easier and easier to take with all the modern cameras/phones.

My grateful thanks to the club members who came to set up and clear up the hall. The show is very much a team effort. Why not add your presence and discover how entertaining and

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rewarding showing can be? It's a great buzz when you see a red card by you entry. Think about it for September.

Susan Jeffery

MONTHLY TALKS MAY –JULY

John Baker comes to speak about **hostas** on **Thursday 22 May**. His own garden in Hampshire has over 2000 plants including a collection of over 1300 hosta cultivars, one of the largest in England. A novel feature is the hanging hostas displayed at eye level! He will describe their discovery and development, where to use them in the garden and the most appropriate companion plants. He will show us photos of his own hostas plus some from gardens in America. He and his wife open their garden 'Hanging Hostas' each July through the National Garden Scheme.

Thursday 26 June brings **Margaret Easter** to tell us about **garden herbs**. Her talk will cover what we can grow in the garden and introduce us to new cultivars. She holds the National Thymus Collection and has studied this herb for 20 years. She also holds smaller National Collections of Savory and Hyssops. She has gardened organically for over 20 years and is an experienced garden photographer. Her garden in Hertfordshire with its back garden nursery is a paradise for bees and other wildlife that can be appreciated at one of her garden Open Days.

Nigel Philips trained at Merrist Wood College and has been practising landscape and garden design professionally since 1981. He teaches garden design and garden design history at Plumpton College in Sussex. He has also led garden tours across Europe including Italy, France and Spain. On **Thursday 24 July** he will give us an insight into the **gardens of Sussex and Kent**.

Anne Webb

SOIL-FREE GROWING FOR POND PLANTS

Moving the heavy pots of marginal plants from our garden pond was a back-breaking task, with the ever-present danger of falling in while bending down to lift them. Even worse was the problem of a pot falling from the ledge into the pond – harder to rescue the pots, and the problem of soil spilling out and muddying the water.

Last year I had the idea of trying soilless growing – if you commercial growers can grow tomatoes and other vegetables hydroponically, why not pond plants? There are plenty of nutrients in the pond water from the fish, and anyway pond plant compost is more or less free from nutrients. Rather than looking for hydroponic growing medium (which I assumed would be available only in commercial quantities) I remembered my old pillow (discarded because it had lost its bounce). It is made from terylene fibre, which does not rot.

I filled the 12" pots with the contents of a pillow, put the plants in, and then covered the top of each pot with a shallow layer of gravel (to stop the birds from taking the fibre as nesting material). It seems to have worked. The plants all grew well last year, have over-wintered safely, and show good new growth this season.

David Bender

PLANTSMAN'S DAY AT BURY COURT

Last year many of us enjoyed the talk by Marina Christopher the owner of Phoenix Perennial Plants. She shared her compost 'recipe' and said if we treat them 'mean', then we would get healthy plants!

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This led me to take myself off to one of the Plantsman's Days that she organises at Bury Court in Bentley which is very near Farnham in Surrey. I had a really enjoyable day. I arrived early so chose to get my newspaper at the local shop in Bentley and have a coffee in the pub next door. Bentley is very small so neither can be missed and people were very chatty and friendly. I then drove the short distance along a rather narrow road to Bury Court.

It was sunny so around 25 of us sat outside. For about an hour Marina told us about many of the perennials from the garden at Bury Court. The format of her talks followed the same lines as the one she gave to us, but the plants she discusses change with the seasons. Again her information delivery was interesting and very relaxed so there was plenty of opportunity to ask questions (and stroke the cats!). We were then free to roam the small gardens before having lunch – all homemade. After lunch Marina guided us round the inner walled garden. This was the first naturalistic garden designed by Piet Oudolf in Britain. Christopher Bradley-Hole designed the front garden which is predominantly grasses.

Plantsman's Days for 2014 are to be held on the last Wednesday of each month starting 30 April and finishing 24 September. To get further information or book contact Marina on 01420 560695 or email marina@phoenixperennialplants.co.uk. Lunch must be pre-booked and costs £15. Unusual perennials from Marina's nursery were on sale and quickly snapped up. Overall it was a good day out.

Anne Webb

NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS

For some years the AGA website has been managed by Janet Tweedy, who has now resigned from the committee. For various complex reasons, moving the website to another host has necessitated a change of address. The new web address is <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk>.

CHARGE FOR TEA & COFFEE AT MEETINGS

With regret, we have decided to charge 20p for tea and coffee at meetings. The decision was not taken lightly, but was the result of discovering how much the disposable paper cups now cost – not to mention the cost of the tea, coffee, milk and biscuits. We hope that members will understand and put 20p in the dish when they have a cuppa (and a biscuit). Thinking of tea and coffee at meetings, we need volunteers to give up a few minutes to prepare and serve the beverages. The greeters at the door will have a list of which dates you can volunteer for. If no-one offers to make tea and coffee, there will be none.

2015 OPEN GARDEN IN AID OF THE AIR AMBULANCE

Marian Hoffmeister is looking for an Amersham based neighbour garden who, in conjunction with her, would like to open their gardens next year in aid of The Air Ambulance. Date can be chosen to suit, and The AA do all the advertising AND teas! If anyone is interested please contact her on 01494 766990.

Marian would like to thank, on behalf of "Smile", those who bought her snowdrops in March. She was able to send a cheque to them for £60.00.

BOOKING FORMS

For all future requests for mailed tickets or trip information please provide a stamped addressed **A5 envelope**, as we have incurred extra postage charges for those who included too small envelopes. In future we will be doing as much communication as possible on line to save money.

Joan Clark

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May	8–11	RHS Show Malvern	
	11	Ashridge NT Plant Fair, Ashridge Estate Visitor Centre	
	15	'Flowers for Small Gardens' Edwin Rye White Hill Chesham 8pm	
	16	Plant Sale & Coffee 10.30-13.00hrs, Caracol Youth Community Dev. 12 Lye Green Road, Chesham HP5 3LN	
	20–24	RHS Chelsea	
	22	'Heavenly Hostas' John Baker Monthly Talk	
June	11-15	BBC Gardeners World Live Show	
	12	BBC Gardeners World Live Trip, NEC Birmingham	AC
	14	Chesham Bois Fete Plant Sale	
	17-20	4 day Trip to East Anglia	JC
	19	'Sunnyside Trust' Maggie Grand White Hill Chesham 20.00hrs	
	26	Mary Berry's Garden Visit, Penn 14.00hrs	LM
	26	'Herbs in the Garden' Margaret Easter Monthly Talk	
July	17	'Grasses' Brian Fisher White Hill Chesham 20.00hrs	
	18	Chivel Farm Oxfordshire & Upton House Visit	MH
	20	Chenies Plant Fair 10am-5pm	
	24	Gardens of Sussex & Kent" Nigel Philips Monthly Talk	
Sept	11	Ulting Wick, Maldon & Marks Hall, Coggeshall, Essex Visit	IGJ

COMMITTEE 2014

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Visits	Margaret Hillier		
Raffle	Christine Prizeman & Laura Bennett		
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