

AMERSHAM GARDENING ASSOCIATION MAY 2015 NEWSLETTER



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A warm welcome to this newsletter which sees the long-awaited arrival of Spring to our gardens. As I write this in late April in Penn, clematis armandii is flowering away, sprawled over a lacy leaved viburnum and smelling divine. Every day now sees a subtle change in the garden. And I continue to learn to love ground elder. No more needs to be said.

Our Association also continues to change and grow. Thank you all for your support at the recent AGM. I hope to serve you successfully as your Chairman and our Committee are, as always, extremely hard working in ensuring that this year's programme is exciting, interesting and diverse.

We can only be as good as our support allows, so new ideas, comments on and suggestions for new speakers and outings are really vital to generate an excellent programme for you, our members. Better still, join the Committee as a member or volunteer member and really get involved!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the meetings.

Anna Cherkas

THE MALVERN SHOW AND THE GARDENS OF THE WEST MIDLANDS 6-9 MAY

Forty three of us enjoyed a great variety of gardens and houses over four fascinating days. We came back, as usual, with many, many plants and with happy memories.

Day 1 These tulips in a pleasing combination of colours defied the wind and showers in **Misarden Park Gardens**. It would be good to go back there later in the season when the weather might be better. **Harvington Hall** was an amazing medieval manor house with 7 priest holes. Many original features remained and its history was explained by enthusiastic guides. Outside there was a romantic moat and a knot garden.



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Day 2 At **The Malvern Spring Show** we could indulge our love of buying plants from dozens specialist suppliers. It was pleasant to wander around without crowds and queues so we could admire the exhibits in the floral marquee and look at the show gardens where the standard seemed higher than in the past. The Spanish garden (below right) won 'best in show'.



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For non-plant lovers there were many other attractions including a blacksmith, a classic car show and music.

Day 3 In **Stone House Cottage Garden and Nursery** there were several quirky brick towers and borders where rare plants thrived, some felt it was heaven for plantaholics. **Packwood House** was the life work of Graham Baron Ash who wanted to create a house of Tudor character. He then donated to the National Trust in 1947. Outside there was imaginative planting, amazing topiary, bluebell woods and a lake to explore. The attractive kitchen garden had an auricular theatre shown below.



Day 4 This has been a wonderful year for blossom and at **Birmingham Botanical Gardens** we admired this handkerchief tree where the branches came down far enough to see the individual flowers. There was certainly enough wind to see the 'handkerchiefs' waving about. There was a good display of bonsai trees and some fascinating flowers in the glasshouses but many of us felt that there were too many different areas for the staff to

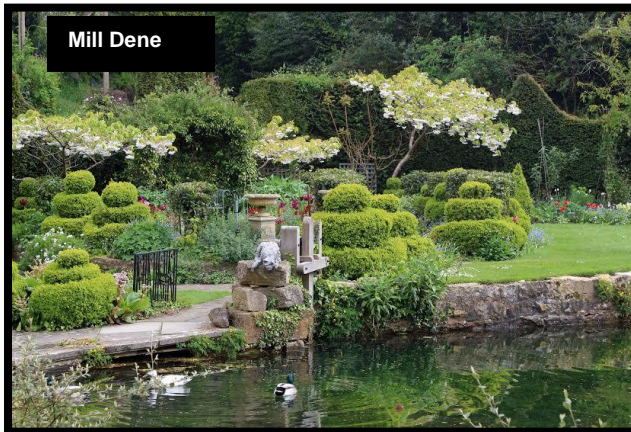


maintain fully. A large colourful Indian wedding party provided a delightful diversion.

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Many people have said that we saved the best for last as **Mill Dene Garden** was a delight and also the tea was superb. It was a garden, or gardens, on many levels with a mill stream rushing through. Fortunately there were many places to sit and enjoy the views.



And lastly a picture of the hotel garden and a few of the people on the trip ready for lunch.
Joan Clark/Frances & John Billington



IN YOUR GARDEN SHED

In this series for our AGA Garden newsletters Kenneth Bodman is presenting a potted history of the tools you may find in your garden shed.

1) The Lawnmower

It was in 1827, while working as an engineer at a woollen mill, that Edwin Beard Budding got the idea from the cloth cutting machines and how the nap was cut and he wondered if the same principle could be applied to cut grass. He thought of it at the time as a form of exercise for the gentleman gardener and for use on sports grounds.

Edwin took out a patent in August 1830 and with his now business partner John Ferrabee manufactured 5,000 machines between then and 1863, ranging in price from £4.00 to £20.00 (£200-1000 in today's money).

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One of the earliest machines was bought by the Regents Park Zoological Gardens; of course the workers who normally cut lawns to a fine sward with their finely honed scythes were not best pleased with this new invention, which would put them out of work and protests were held.

So from the humble push and pull lawn mower, which in some of the earlier versions required two men to use, came a horse drawn version, steam powered, petrol, battery, electric and the hover mower and now the solar powered lawn mower.

The London Science Museum and the Milton Keynes Museum both have an original Budding lawn mower in their collection.

2) The Garden spade

The earliest recorded implement for digging in the ground was in the Neolithic age; a sharp piece of bone from the shoulder blade of an ox was the most commonly used or an antler attached to a wooden handle.

When the Romans invaded Britain and fought off the local population, who tended to cover themselves in woad to look scary, they started to cultivate the land, having brought with them many implements to tend their villas, and of course grow food for their army. The Roman word for a spade was LIGO which was wooden but lined with a metal sheathing.

No one person has ever been credited with inventing the spade, which was made from riven wood before the advent of metal. The most common spade has treads to rest your foot on as you drive it into the ground to break up the soil. This is not to be confused with the shovel, which moves earth and other materials.

Ash was the most common wood used for the handle and shaft, but these days the shaft could be a light aluminium. Stainless steel blades have replaced the heavier iron ones.

The most famous left foot driving a spade into the ground for the Dig for Victory poster in the second world war belonged to Mr McKie, photographed while he was digging in his Acton allotment.

There is an Irish spade, which has a much thinner blade, but there are many varieties available on the market - far too many to mention

3) The Garden Hoe

What did the Romans do for us? Well the hoe came over with them and was called a SARCULUM. But its origins go way back to the fifth millennium when it was probably just a long stick. It has been credited to chief council of the God Enlil in Sumerian mythology, and is also mentioned in the Book of Isaiah.

However back to what we do know for certain that there are two classes: the draw hoe and the Dutch hoe. The draw or pull hoe is used for slicing into the soil for building up around shrubs and creating furrows for sowing seeds. The Dutch or thrust hoe is great for slicing into those devilish weed seedlings, where great satisfaction can be had.

There are many types of hoe head available, such as the onion hoe which is swan necked for hoeing around onions, and the Canterbury hoe, which is ideal for cultivation around vegetables.

Kenneth Bodman

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THREE REASONS WHY HOME_GROWN TASTES BETTER

Achievement. You have nurtured your seedlings and plug plants, protected them from slugs, snails, pigeons, squirrels and perhaps even muntjac, and fed and watered them through the growing season. You are entitled to feel proud of your achievement and enjoy your harvest more than produce bought from the greengrocer or supermarket.

Freshness. You will harvest your crop when it is at its peak, when you want it. You will cook and eat it within a few hours of harvesting. Even the freshest produce at the greengrocer will be several days old by the time you buy it – and you probably only buy once a week. It is a sobering thought that frozen peas are fresher than fresh peas from the greengrocer – they are frozen within an hour or so of harvesting.

Variety. A commercial grower needs a crop that grows and ripens fast and gives a high yield. Very often this is at the expense of flavour. You have a wide choice of seeds and plug plants that are not grown commercially because they have a smaller yield, and may produce fruit of different sizes – a no-no for supermarkets!

David Bender

PLANT FAIR May 30th

There was a good response to the board requesting plants and help for our plant fair. We start setting up at 8am and hope to be selling by 9.30am. If this is too early for some of you just come when you can, we will need plants and help up to 12 noon.

MONTHLY TALKS

On **28 May** our speaker is Leila Jackson. She owns and runs a small family nursery with her father that specialises in abutilons (national collection) and salvias. She is a medal winner at the major RHS shows and last year was interviewed by the BBC in their coverage of Chelsea. She is going to tell us about the '**Versatile world of Salvias**'.

Antony Powell first trained at Hillier Nurseries before completing an HND in amenity horticulture at Askham Bryan College. He has worked in nurseries and gardens here and in France and now manages four gardens in Hampshire and Berkshire. He comes to talk to us on **25 June** about '**The Scented Garden**'.

Our speaker on **23 July** is Edwin Rye – a past winner of BBC Gardener of the Year. He opens his garden each year under the NGS scheme. It is a mass of colour with a range of plants in particular delphiniums (all grown in pots!) and roses. The subject of his talk is '**David Austin roses**' and he will be bringing plants to sell.

Anne Webb

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 25	Versatile World of Salvias – Leila Jackson Monthly Talk
May 30	AGA Plant Sale – St Michael’s forecourt 09.00-12.00
June 6	Garden Party Fundraising for Bradbury House Care Home 14.00-16.30 Craiglea House, Chalfont St Peter, SL9 9DA
June 25	The Scented Garden – Antony Powell Monthly Talk
June 27	Plant Show – King George V playing field 09.00-17.00
June 27&28	Woburn Abbey Garden Show 10.00-17.00
June 30 – July 5	RHS Hampton Court Flower Show
July 15	Chenies Plant Fair
July 22	Wormsley Estate outing 14.00-16.00
July 23	David Austen Roses – Edwin Rye Monthly Talk
Aug 14	Meadow Farm Garden/Coughton Court - Day Trip
Sept 24	The Modern Day Kitchen – Barry Newman Monthly Talk
Nov 26	Pests Recently New to Britain - Andrew Halstead Monthly Talk

COMMITTEE & CONTACT DETAILS

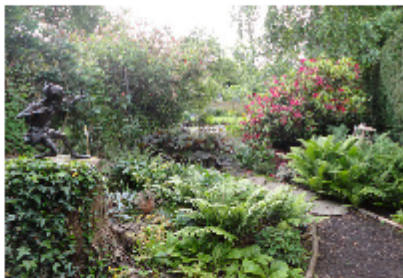
President	Tim Hillier	president@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Chairman	Anna Cherkas	chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Secretary	Jean Bowling	secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Treasurer	David Bender	treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Visits Secretary	Joan Clark	
Show Secretary	vacant	
Membership Sec	Clive Symes	membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Talks Secretary	Anne Webb	
Archivist	Carol Barratt	
Web Coordinator	David Bender	webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Committee Members	Frances Billington Carol Daw Irene Glyn-Jones Liz Moulton	
Newsletter Editor	Neil Watson	newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk



**FUNDRAISING GARDEN
PARTY**
in aid of
Bradbury House Care Home
The Abbeyfield Beaconsfield Society

on Saturday 6th June from 2.00pm until 4.30pm

**Craiglea House, Austenwood Lane,
Chalfont St Peter, SL9 9DA**



Craiglea House has been open under the National Gardens Scheme for several years and is a delightful one acre garden which complements the Arts and Crafts House which it surrounds. The planting ranges from the formal rose garden, lawns, herbaceous borders and pergola, to the natural planting around wildlife ponds, apple trees and along a fairy inhabited fern walk. The garden contains a wide variety of plants, including many hostas, a vegetable garden and many seats affording lovely views of the garden.

Refreshments!

Entry is **free** but **donations** to the Bradbury House Supporting Care Fund will be welcome. Please support the event by bringing along your friends