

# Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

## November 2024 Newsletter

### From the Secretary

Many of you will, I expect, have had the same problem as I have had. Rain in the spring meant the shrubs produced lots of growth and it was difficult to plan when to work on them, one just had to take the opportunity on a dry day. The chance to carry out essential gardening seems to have been a rather hit or miss situation all year. Let's hope we have a reasonable winter. [Ed notes that the garden sunloungers and gazebo have, for the second year in succession, remained in the shed.]

Elsewhere in this Newsletter are details of next year's holiday and the booking form. The holiday is always enjoyable and everyone is welcome to come.

The committee hope you will enjoy the new style Christmas party on December 19<sup>th</sup>. Details have already been sent to members, and all 100 tickets have now been allocated. A full programme of talks for 2025 has been organized and also several visits.

Meanwhile we wish you all a successful gardening year in 2025 and health to enjoy all the Association activities.  
Jean Bowling

### A plea from the treasurer

If you are paying for the visit to Hollydyke House for snowdrops in February and / or renewing your subscription by bank transfer, please make sure that I know who you are and what you have paid for by using the reference surname-snow or surname-subs. This is especially important for these two payments, since the snowdrops outing costs the same £10 as a single subscription.

To try to keep my life simple, as I get used to tracing multiple lines of the bank statement for payments, we ask you to pay your deposit for the holiday by cheque sent to Stuart Stanley in the usual way, so that Stuart know who has paid.

If you wish, you can renew your membership using a card a meeting, when Annie will have the membership list and card reader available.



### With this newsletter:

The booking form for the holiday (see page 7 onwards)

The booking form for a visit to Hollydyke House for snowdrops (see page 5)

The fom to renew your membership (renewals are due by the end of December)

## Visit to Turn End Garden 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024

[Turn End](#) is an RIBA award-winning group of three postwar houses and a garden in Haddenham, Bucks, designed by architect Peter Aldington. Turn End's listed garden was created in conjunction with Turn End House as an expression of Peter's belief that architecture and landscape design are an indivisible whole. Turn End is the only postwar listed project where house and garden were created by the same hand.

Members of Amersham Gardening Association had a pleasant and extremely interesting visit to the garden led by gardener Jackie Hunt, whose clear voice and wide knowledge about the history of the house and garden resulted in a most enjoyable afternoon for us all.

We only had glimpses of the three houses, The Turn, Middle Turn and Turn End, which were designed and built in the 1960s by Peter Aldington and his wife Margaret doing much of the building work themselves.



The weather might have been a problem but as the rain started and then huge hailstones fell we all managed to stay dry in a tiled shelter surrounded by bunches of dried flowers and herbs while Jackie told us even more interesting facts about the garden where she is a full-time employee.

We then enjoyed tea, coffee and biscuits in a local artist's studio adjoining the garden where we were able to ask Jackie even more questions, look at photos and watch delightful videos of the gardens before we left for home.

Photos by Liz Moulton



# An appeal from your Vice President regarding the plant sale next year, Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2025.

No, please don't switch off, this involves all of us.

As experienced gardeners you must be aware that now is the perfect time to take softwood and semi-hardwood cuttings. They are so easy to do and once rooted, in around 4 weeks, and potted up, they need very little attention in a sheltered part of your garden or a cold greenhouse until next March or April, and then it's only a bit of feed and watering.

It is also the best time to lift and divide any herbaceous perennials that have got a bit overgrown. Please don't compost the parts you no longer want, or worse, take them to the dump; pot up and grow on ready for selling come May. Have you ever had a go at root cuttings? It's like magic – nothing to be seen then up pop small plants from all the nodes.



Anyway, apart from the plants you all donate, for many years we have bought in plants from a local nursery. Unbeknown to many people Liz and Brian Moulton have visited the nursery a few weeks before the sale and have potted up plants to grow on. They are in the enviable position of having two greenhouses which they would fill and a kind neighbour who would water the plants if they were away. Sadly this is coming to an end; in their mid 80s they have decided to hang up their trowels. So we need some of you from the younger generation to step up and take over. It doesn't have to be couple, just some friends or a team. Anyone who has half a day to go to the nursery, anyone who can do some potting up (I'm jolly sure we can raise some pots between us all) and anyone who can say "my greenhouse/conservatory is empty and I could do some nurturing." But we do need a leader who could price up the plants.

I appreciate this is a long time in advance but it gives you time to think about "actually, yes I could help"  
For the next few meetings I will be nagging and have a clipboard where I can record

Yes I can go to the nursery

Yes I can do some potting up

Yes I can look after some plants.

Yes, I can help to set up tables and / or clear away

See you all at the plant sale, on the first Saturday in May 2025

Susan Jeffery

## Some plant notes

**Fossils of horsetails (*Equisetum* spp.)** make up much of coal; modern horsetails have extremely rough stems, containing silica (= sand), and were once used for household scrubbing and scouring, and are still sometimes used by cabinet makers in place of sandpaper. It is difficult to control in the garden; repeated mowing and liming may take several years to eradicate it. The fast growing rhizomes are invasive and it can grow through concrete and tarmac.

### **The dog's tooth violet (*Erythronium dens-canis*)**

is thoroughly misnamed; it is not a violet, but a member of the liliaceae family, and the name is for the bulb, which resembles a dog's tooth. The leaves and bulbs are edible, and bulbs are a source of starch that can be

used to make vermicelli and cakes. Cutting the leaves to eat will weaken the plant for future years, and in any case our few plants do not seem to have multiplied at all over several years, so we do not have enough bulbs to harvest.

***Fritillaria meleagris*, the snake's head fritillary** is also known as the guinea hen flower, because its checkered flowers looks like the checkered feathers over the wings and breast of the guinea fowl (*Flos meleagris*). This, of course, does not apply to the white variant. Both the checkered and white variants will naturalise and spread quite readily. We certainly have some that have appeared where we know we did not plant them, although others have disappeared from where we know they were planted. Is this self-seeding or have our bushy-tailed friends been moving the bulbs?

## The gift for someone who has everything

Ignore the old student joke about “what do you give someone who has everything?” (answer = penicillin). When people have two of most things, have often given the third away, and are thinking about decluttering, what can you buy them? There are only so many pairs of novelty socks or amusing-shirts you can buy them (my sock and T-shirt drawers are full to overflowing). You could buy a plant – after all, there is always space somewhere for a plant – even if it is on the patio or next to the front door (in which case you could also buy a new container as well).

You could also buy something for some-one else, so that your gift is really the warm glow that comes to the recipient from giving to a worthy cause. Over the years we have received, and sometimes given, toilets, wells and goats in developing countries through Oxfam. You could also plant one or more trees, eg through the

Woodland Trust. One year I “received” two trees, one in UK (a beech in a woodland near Darlington), twinned with a *Grevilla robusta* (silk oak) in Samburu, Kenya, through the tree twinning initiative of Tree Appeal ([www.treeappeal.com](http://www.treeappeal.com)).

Perhaps more unusually, I have “adopted” three endangered animals through the Peoples’ Trust for Endangered Species (available from [Gift Republic](http://Gift Republic)). In 2021 it was a penguin, then in 2022 a sea turtle – both animals I have seen in the wild. However, apart from a certificate of adoption (more correctly short-term fostering, since the “adoption” only lasts for one year), neither of my adoptees has sent me any kind of update. Oxfam does occasionally send me notes about what good my donations in general are doing, with personalised stories, and while a goat may last for only a few years, a toilet or well is there in perpetuity.



My gift in 2023 was adoption of a bee. It is probably a coincidence, but one warm day in February, while I was sitting in the conservatory looking at the work that needed to be done in the garden, a honey bee came and seemed to be looking at me through the window – it stayed there for some time before realising that the hyacinths indoors were not accessible, while the mahonia at the end of the garden was in full, nectar- and pollen-rich flower, as was the bed of highly scented sarcococa.

## On garden escapes

I have written before about various plants that have moved around our garden, including *Iris foetidissima*, snake’s head fritillary and cyclamen. OK, most have been moved, perhaps by birds, squirrels, mice or voles, although some may have moved by spreading seeds of their own volition; these are plants that we have planted somewhere, and then more appear elsewhere. We have also acquired a number of plants, brought in by wind, birds, squirrels, etc, including a rather pleasant miniature hypericum, a hazel bush, several holly bushes (including one with yellow berries), a small yew (it grows slowly, and it will be many years before it is ready for topiary) and a couple of plants of *Daphne laureola* (spurge laurel) in shaded areas, not to mention wild oregano and primroses that have colonised our gravel garden.

An article by Alex Law in the August 2024 issue of *The Garden* considers the opposite problem – the escape of garden plants into the wild. Just over half of the 3445 wild-growing plants recorded in Britain and Ireland are now non-native species. Part of this may be due to loss of native plants due to climate change, but most are due to escape from gardens. Some, of course, are well known invasive thugs, such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed; others are mainly benign, and add to biodiversity in our wild areas, although escape of Spanish bluebells that hybridise with native bluebells must be considered undesirable. Law says that of more than 70,000 (mostly non-native) plants on sale in garden centres and nurseries, probably 2.5% have escaped from gardens and established wild populations. What we cannot predict, of course, is what will be the future invasive garden escapes.



## No female liberation for our blackbird

We are used to male robins starting multiple nests in the hope of attracting a female, and wildlife programmes show us the beautiful arrangements made by the male bower bird to attract a female. However, the message has not got through to at least one pair of blackbirds in our garden. We have been amused to see the female fluttering around the palm tree to gather some of the fibre for nest building, while the male follows her into the garden and perches on the clematis arch to watch her at work – or is he pretending to protect her from others who might steal some of the plentiful palm fibres?

## An outing to book now

### Snowdrop visit - February 12<sup>th</sup> 12 noon



We are in for a special treat this year. A visit has been arranged to Hollydyke House in Little Missenden to see the snowdrops. The garden extends to three acres and in February we can admire thousands of snowdrops as well as hellebores and crocus. In winter there is structure from trees, colourful barks, seed heads and grasses.

The cost is £10 per head which includes hot soup and crumble.

This is a self-drive visit, so please car share if you can. Please park sensibly in the road.

Address: Hollydyke House, Little Missenden, HP7 0RD.

Coming from Amersham on the A413, take the first turning into Little Missenden on the left and Hollydyke House is two doors past the Crown Pub. It has a long holly hedge bordering the road.

There is a toilet.

If you have any food allergies then please let me know email: [irenecgj@hotmail.com](mailto:irenecgj@hotmail.com). ☎ 01494 727203

The booking form is with this newsletter.

## Forthcoming meetings in the Drake Hall

### November 28<sup>th</sup> Amber Hine. Naturalistic planting

Amber Hine is a professionally trained garden designer based in Bedfordshire. Working on gardens from smaller courtyard size projects to larger landscapes. Previously of the technical theatre industry, Amber brings drama and innovation to her designs, incorporating her theatrical lighting flare to gardens. Whether you are looking for retreat, expression or a social space, Amber combines horticultural knowledge with ergonomics and aesthetics giving you a space to live in.

Page 5

### Meanwhile on the seed and nut feeders.

Almost all the visitors to our bird feeders feed upright, as you would expect. Even the squirrels, which may hang downwards to gather bits of nut and seed, then return “the right way up” to eat. Not the nuthatches. They always hang downwards to peck at the food and swallow it. Apparently a most uncomfortable way of feeding; do they have especially muscular gullets to allow them to swallow upwards?

Amber [writes](#) “I am a garden and landscape designer based in Bedfordshire. I work on projects large and compact across the UK. I also embrace the importance of communication and education, providing public speaking on the subject of horticulture, and its neighbours, as well as writing for local publications on the subject.

Having worked in theatre and events on, amongst other things, lighting, I bring a strong sense of artistic space creation, with an emphasis on lighting the space for character, atmosphere and extending the useful time of your outdoor space.”

## December 19<sup>th</sup> (note this is not our usual 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday evening) Christmas party

All tickets for the party have now been allocated, and there is a waiting list

## January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025 Michael Harrison. How to create a wild-life pond and wild-life hedge



Work on the garden only started some 5 years ago; when Michael and Jeanne moved in it was just lawn sloping steeply down from the house. The only help they had was from a builder to level the slope for what is now the upper lawn, and to assemble the greenhouse (for which Michael laid the foundations). All of the design work as Jeanne's, and they did all the work themselves, creating a circular lawn with a circular pond, raised beds and borders, etc.

The lower part of the garden and a part to one side were still a work in progress when we visited in July 2023, with a circular bed partly completed (and a water feature to be added), and new trees planted, but with areas that were still undeveloped.

Michael told us that he dug down 1 m to put in good soil for the silver birches. You come into the garden down steps from the patio to a purple border with (in July) seedheads of alliums among lavender, purple statice and geraniums. This leads you along the curved path under the pergola (the Gertrude Jekyll roses were more or less over when we visited) alongside a curved raised bed on the left and the circular lawn on the right, to the

circular pond. Further on we looked down onto the work in progress that will be a circular white garden and water feature (partly completed), and through to the hedge, beyond which is a wildlife area. One notable and novel feature of the pond is that where it is bounded by the lawn rather than the path, the grass has been left some 6 – 8 inches tall, to provide an interesting wild-life friendly boundary between the lawn and the pond.

## February 27<sup>th</sup> Grahame Austen: Delphiniums at Home Farm Plants

[Home Farm Plants](#) is a small traditional family run nursery in Bovingdon, growing and specialising in elatum delphiniums. They also grow a wide range of perennials. Nothing is grown under false conditions, everything is hardened off or grown in natural conditions before being sold. They grow all of the plants available in the nursery and have over 30 years horticultural experience behind them, in both the nursery trade and garden maintenance; they are able to give you reliable advice and this is freely given at *Home Farm, Shantock Lane, Bovingdon, Herts, HP3 0NG*



At Home Farm Plants they are passionate about *delphiniums* and have built up a specialist delphinium section of the elatum species which are tough, hardy perennials. They can withstand very cold winter temperatures and are reliable garden perennials.

They not only have the traditional blues, but different shades of pinks, purples, white and cream, all flowering from the end of May through to September, on the nursery for you to see. Named varieties are taken from cuttings from January/February onwards and are available from the nursery from June onwards.

## March 27<sup>th</sup> AGM at 7:45 then Carolyn Foster: the evolution of the perennial border

Carolyn Foster's beautiful, well-established garden in Altwood Close has been developed over 40 years as the family has grown up. It is now a much loved plantaholic's cottage-style, wildlife-friendly garden, providing year round colour and interest as well as having a very productive vegetable patch, and greenhouses for indoor crops.

Mixed borders overflow with perennials and shrubs, and there is also a terrace with a small raised pond, a pergola and a gravel garden.



## AGA Holiday in South Wales 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025

The holiday includes coach travel from Amersham, 3 nights accommodation, with breakfast and dinner, at the Mercure Hotel Swansea and entrance fees to all gardens except National Trust gardens. Teas, coffees and lunches are not included except where stated.

If you would like to book a mobility scooter, or wheelchair, where available, please contact the gardens as soon as possible

[Mercure Hotel Swansea](#), Phoenix Way, Llamslet, Swansea SA7 9EG, ☎01792 626371



We will be staying at the 4-star Mercure hotel Swansea. Three miles from Swansea city centre, the hotel is set among landscaped gardens and tranquil lake views. There is no lift but half the rooms are on the ground floor. Each room with attached bathroom has a flat-screen TV, coffee / tea making equipment and free internet access. Some have views over the grounds and lake.

The bar has a fireplace and offers snacks. The Brasserie restaurant serves internationally inspired food and seasonal Welsh dishes, with the stunning views of the surrounding area. We have requested that dinner is served (not a buffet). 24-hour room service is available. The hotel also has a gym.

### DAY 1: Sunday 11th May, leave Amersham 8.30 am outside the Lifestyle Centre

Morning: [Bowood Woodland Gardens](#), Calne SN11 9GP, Frances Billington



This garden is a separate attraction on the Bowood Estate, only open for 6 weeks during the flowering season. Covering over 30 acres, this garden is an oasis of bluebells, azaleas, magnolias, and rhododendrons.

Considered to be one of the most exciting gardens of its type in the country with over 30 hardy hybrids, which were thought to be extinct. A spectacular attraction offering breathtaking vistas of colour and beauty.

There is a tea and coffee stall, but drinks are not included in the cost.

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> May: afternoon [Dyffryn Gardens, CF5 6FZ](#), Joan Clark**



The National Trust's Dyffryn Gardens is an Edwardian garden in restoration with an ever-changing seasonal landscape. Located in a peaceful oasis on the outskirts of Cardiff, Dyffryn has something new to discover on every visit, from intricate themed garden rooms to sweeping formal lawns and from productive kitchen gardens to a large arboretum. The gardens host a number of different styles inspired by countries from all over the world, from a recognisable Italian influence in

the Pompeiian Garden to the rainforest-like quality of the plants in the Exotics Garden. With a café, shop, picnic tables and second-hand bookshop, there is a lot to see and do on a visit to Dyffryn.

Wheelchairs and mobility scooters are available for hire.

Non NT members pay on entry, currently £12.

**DAY 2: Monday 12 May, all day The [National Botanical Garden Wales SA32 8HN](#), Felicity Vickery**



The National Botanical Garden of Wales is located in Carmarthenshire. It is both a visitor attraction and a centre for botanical research and conservation and features the world's largest single span glass house, measuring 110 m long by 60 m wide. It is a place of international significance dedicated to conservation,

horticulture, science, education, leisure and the arts. Different areas encompass slate beds, prairie planting and a beautiful lakeside walk.

Wheelchairs are available and there is a regular shuttle buggy to most parts of the garden

**DAY 3: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May, morning [Aberglasney Gardens SA32 8QH, Jane Jenkins](#)**



Aberglasney is one of Wales' finest gardens. Close to the Bandau Brychieniog National Park and overlooking the Towy valley it is a large site, 10 acres, containing over 20 different garden styles. These range from an Elizabethan cloister garden, historic kitchen garden, tropical garden, walled garden, stream garden, Asian garden and many more. The featured wisteria will be flowering in May, we hope.

There are traditional tea rooms serving a wide variety of lunches and snacks.

Wheelchairs are available and an access route. In some areas there is a distinct slope.

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May: afternoon [Clyne Garden SA3 5BD, Val Cannon](#)**



Originally established as private gardens by the owners of Clyne Castle in the 19th century, the magnificent gardens now cover 50 acres sweeping downwards in a sheltered valley to Swansea Bay. Successive owners of the castle at this time were keen plant collectors and it became home to a nationally renowned collection of rhododendrons, azaleas, pieris, enkianthus and wonderful specimen trees. Historical features built in 1920s include the red Japanese bridge and the

Admiral's tower originally designed by the Admiral to survey the planting of the valley but now overshadowed by the high canopy. In 1954 the castle and gardens were separated - the castle was sold to the University as a hall of residence and subsequently for private housing - the gardens became an exceptional public park owned and maintained by the Borough Council.

They do not provide wheelchairs or motorised scooters.

**Day 4 Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May morning: [Slade, Southerndown](#) CF32 0RP, Liz Moulton**



Slade, is a private garden owned by the NGS county organiser for Glamorgan. Hidden away, it is an unexpected jewel to discover next to the sea with views overlooking the Bristol Channel. In front of the house are delightful formal areas a rose and clematis pergola and

herbaceous borders. Behind the house the garden tumbles down a valley protected by a belt of woodland. From terraced lawns great sweeps of grass stretch down the hill enlivened by spring bulbs and fritillaries. Here coffee or tea and cake are included.

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May afternoon: [Studley Grange Garden Centre](#), Swindon SN4 9Q**



Our last stop will be at this large garden centre close to the M4. It says it has all the essentials for making your garden look its very best, plants, bulbs, seeds, accessories, ornaments, lawn care, furniture, BBQs, expert advice - and so much more.

There is a café, a restaurant and a food hall. For an extra charge you can also visit 'butterfly world', and the zoo and farm park!

**We expect to be back in Amersham by 6pm**

## Some requests for help

We always need people to meet and greet members and visitors at our meetings.

If you can help, please contact Felicity Vickery Tel: 01494 726284, email [felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk)

We need people to help with the tea and coffee at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting. If you can help, please contact Liz Moulton Tel: 01494 784913, email [libbym6740@gmail.com](mailto:libbym6740@gmail.com)

As ever, it will be much appreciated if some members could arrive about 7 pm to help put out chairs and tables; they do not put themselves out!

**Please remember the raffle at each meeting.** The profit on the raffles makes a very useful contribution to our expenses; subscriptions alone do not cover the cost of meetings and speakers.

**Publicity.** If you know where you could put a publicity poster please contact [david.bender@btinternet.com](mailto:david.bender@btinternet.com)

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham; Blue Diamond (formerly Van Hage) garden centre; Little Chalfont Library; Amersham Library; Chesham Library; Coleshill Village Hall; Amersham Community Centre

## Committee and Contact Details

President	Tim Hillier	<a href="mailto:president@amersham-gardening.org.uk">president@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Vice-President	Susan Jeffery	
Chairman	Colin Ross	<a href="mailto:chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk">chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Secretary	Jean Bowling	<a href="mailto:secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk">secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Treasurer	David Bender	<a href="mailto:treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk">treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Visits Secretary	Liz Moulton	
Membership Sec	Annie Jardine	<a href="mailto:membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk">membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Talks Secretary	Julie Burton and Sue Edwards	<a href="mailto:speakersec@amersham-gardening.org.uk">speakersec@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Archivist	Carol Barratt	
Web Coordinator	David Bender	<a href="mailto:webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk">webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Committee Members	Frances Billington; Joan Clark; Carol Daw; Irene Glyn-Jones; Jill Harris; Clive Symes; Anne Webb	
Newsletter Editor	David Bender	<a href="mailto:newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk">newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>

## Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at

<http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

## Photos from outings

You can see links to lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>

## Half price entry to RHS gardens

We are affiliated to the RHS, and one of the benefits is a card allowing two AGA members at a time to visit one of the RHS gardens at half price. If you want to borrow the card, please contact Jean Bowling ([secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk](mailto:secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk))

## We are not psychic

If you change your email address (or indeed your postal address) please email [membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk](mailto:membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk) and / or [newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk), so that we can keep the records up to date and make sure you receive the newsletter and booking forms for outings.