

# Amersham Gardening Association

[www.amersham-gardening.org.uk](http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk)

## November 2021 Newsletter

### From the Secretary

It has been a strange year, but the committee are hopeful that things are beginning to get back to normal and that we will be able to meet in person at a December Social – see below. Hopefully you will feel comfortable attending.

We have had some interesting talks via Zoom and also managed to run a number of visits. We had a very successful holiday in Norfolk in June and plan to run another holiday in 2022 – more information on page 3; the booking form is included with this newsletter.

The weather has been very mixed but in general shrubs seemed to have thrived with people reporting that they have had to cut their hedges more frequently. Autumn colours are looking good.

Here's hoping that 2022 will be a good year from the gardening point of view, also healthwise and the chances to meet in person. The committee wish everyone a healthy and happy New Year.

Jean Bowling

### Subscriptions are due for renewal in January

We plan to return to normal indoor meetings from the Xmas social in December – see page 2 for the draft programme for 2022. The subscription remains at £10 for a single member and £17 for a couple at the same address.

Remember that for outings non-members (including partners who are not members) cannot be allocated tickets until all requests from members have been met. The renewal form is included with this newsletter. If you cannot print it out, just write to Clive with the relevant information.

### December Social

We are hoping to hold a social event on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December at 7:30 for 8:00pm (note that this is the third Thursday, not our normal 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday). It will be in the new hall in the Chiltern Lifestyle Centre. We will provide wine and soft drinks, as well as paper plates and serviettes. Please bring your own cutlery and wine glass. If your family name begins with A – F, please bring something sweet for the buffet; if it begins with G – Z, please bring something savoury. In both cases, "finger food" is preferred. As a courtesy to fellow members, and those who will be serving you from the buffet, please wear a mask or other face covering while around the buffet table.

### Plant sale

We plan to run a plant sale in May next year, in the forecourt of St Michael's Church. While you are dividing perennials, taking cuttings and sowing seeds, please think of extras for the stall. Vegetable plants are always popular, so why not sow a few extra beans, tomatoes, etc.



## Forthcoming meetings to be held in the Community Centre

### January 27<sup>th</sup> Pamela Holt, Travels in Bolivia

A horticulturist since leaving school, Pamela has worked variously in private gardens, nurseries, garden centres, the Home Office, horticultural colleges and for local authorities.

She trained at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew with Alan Titchmarsh and when she was a lecturer in Somerset she taught Charlie Dimmock. An intrepid

traveller, Pamela has collected plants in Peru and Bolivia for Kew. Latterly she was a Tree Officer for several London Boroughs, prior to recent retirement. She first went to South America in 1975, visiting Peru for plants, and returned a decade later to Peru and Bolivia.

### February 24<sup>th</sup> Ian Margetts, From mustard to mint

England's reputation for excellence in mint production has been reinstated, thanks in no small way to Sir Michael Colman. His company, Summerdown Mint, is a unique supplier in the UK of pure, single-estate peppermint oil, distilled on his Hampshire farm from his own crop of traditional Black Mitcham peppermint. "My

family had a traditional, farming background. We prided ourselves on taking care of the crop — from the farm to the producer," explains Sir Michael. He worked for many years in the family business, Colman's Mustard, and went on to become chairman of Reckitt and Colman plc. Ian Margetts is the farm manager of Summerdown Mint.

### March 24<sup>th</sup> Paul Barney, 25 years of Edulis Nursery: shipwrecks, buggles and bombs

Edulis is a specialist plant nursery founded by Paul Barney; it is tucked away in a walled garden near Pangbourne, in the Thames Valley. Edulis grows an eclectic mix of rare plants, including a large selection of unusual edible plants as well as many rare shade loving plants. The nursery was inspired by Bill Mollison in the

1980s, with the aim of growing edible forest garden plants. This extended to a large range of rare shady plants. Most plants in the nursery are hardy and relatively easy to grow. Paul has searched and selected a good range of edible plants not seen in garden centres.

### and for the rest of the year:

**April 28<sup>th</sup>** Prof Roderick Floud, Purchasing Paradise: the money that financed great gardens

**May 26<sup>th</sup>** Manoj Malde, Designer's journey to Chelsea

**June 23<sup>rd</sup>** Vanessa Garstin, Restoring Little Heath Farm Nursery

**July 28<sup>th</sup>** Chris Thorne, Ayletts Nurseries: garden centres and their produce – good or not so good, plus sustainability for our future gardens

**September 22<sup>nd</sup>** Dr Catherine Horwood, Beth Chatto

**October 27<sup>th</sup>** David Hurrion, A world of plants in your back garden; where they come from and how that helps us grow them better, and a few tips on pruning

**November 24<sup>th</sup>** Brenda Harold, Flower power: how plants control animals

**December 15<sup>th</sup>** December Social

### Wednesday June 1st Visit to Ordnance and Heale Garden and Nursery

Ordnance House featured in an article in *The Garden* last summer.

Put the date in your diary now; details and the booking form will be in the February newsletter

and more visits to be arranged

## More awards for Amersham in Bloom

There was not the usual Britain in Bloom this year, but the Amersham in Bloom team did us proud again, with splendid displays throughout the town.

They also received two "outstanding" awards from the RHS for:

**Nature-friendly gardening** – gardening in a nature-friendly way to introduce or strengthen habitats for native wildlife.

**Green solutions** - Creating nature-based solutions to combat environmental challenges such as noise and air pollution, heatwaves and flooding.

Details at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/community-gardening/news/articles/rhs-community-awards>

## The holiday 2022

This year the holiday to gardens in north Devon and Somerset is Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June to Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July; it has been organized by members of the visits committee. It will be for 5 days instead of 4, as many hotels in the area are already busy for next year and this is all the hotel could offer us. However, this allows extra free time for those who would like it. We have

### The Northfield Hotel Minehead

The Northfield Hotel in Minehead is located on the lower slopes of Northhill, in nearly 2 acres of landscaped gardens, reputed to have been laid out by Gertrude Jekyll. As it has an elevated position there are wonderful views from the coast to the Quantocks, Brendon hills and indeed Exmoor itself; walking from the hotel you are on Exmoor in only a few minutes.

arranged a flexible program with some gardens near the hotel giving a choice of some half day outings. Details of the hotel and gardens are given below. There is more information and pictures on-line for each venue. We hope you will join us, but single rooms are, as ever, in short supply so please book early. The booking form is included with this newsletter.

Outdoors, the gardens are a pleasure, especially for an evening walk to see the many flowers and mature shrubs that thrive here, overlooking the bay. And for a little more activity you can even try your hand on the putting green, croquet or quoits. There is also an indoor pool, a steam room and a jacuzzi.

Web link <https://www.northfield-hotel.co.uk>

Organiser Joan Clark



### Rooksnest Garden NGS

A ten-acre traditional English Garden mainly designed by Arabella Lennox Boyd, who has won six gold medals at Chelsea Flower Show. Arabella is Italian but now lives in the English Lake District at Gresgarth Hall. It will be interesting to see how her background has influenced the design.

Features are the recently redesigned rose garden and the pond with an unusual fountain. There is plenty more to see, including herbaceous and shrub borders, specimen trees, herbs, fruit and vegetables, a glasshouse and a cutting garden. Coffee or tea and biscuits are included here.

Web link <https://ngs.org.uk/view-garden/11396/>

### Cannington Walled Garden

A garden of just under 2 acres sited in the grounds of a medieval priory. It is part of Bridgewater College which has courses in horticulture and is described as having classic and contemporary features.

Among the many areas are a subtropical walk, a fernery and a greenhouse with arid and tropical plants.

Web link <https://www.btc.ac.uk/the-college/open-to-the-public/the-walled-gardens-of-cannington>

Organiser for both gardens Frances Billington

## Elworthy Cottage Garden and Nursery NGS

A one-acre plantsman's garden in a tranquil setting. It has island beds with scented plants, clematis, unusual perennials and ornamental trees, shrubs provide year-round interest. In spring there are, hellebores, pulmonarias and more than 350 varieties of snowdrop. June is the peak month for geraniums, with over 250 varieties to be seen.

Next door to the garden is the nursery with many plants propagated from the garden including over fifty geraniums. The mail order snowdrop list has about 100 varieties, perhaps galanthophiles could pre-order for collection from the nursery. Coffee/tea and biscuits included.

Web link <http://www.elworthy-cottage.co.uk/>

## Dunster Castle NT

An ancient castle that sits in 15 acres on the top of a steep hill, and also a comfortable home with dramatic vistas, rare shrubs and subtropical plants. There is a working watermill and medieval stables.

There is a fine 17<sup>th</sup> century staircase and plaster ceilings. There is a tea room, pop up café and shop. Dunster village has three pubs and many tourist shops.

The castle has been the family home of the Luttrells for six hundred years and was remodelled a hundred years ago.

Web link <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dunster-castle-and-watermill>



Organiser for both venues Stuart Stanley

## Marwood Hill Gardens

The Garden is owned by John Snowden, and it was his uncle, the late Doctor Jimmy Smart, who created the garden. He was awarded the prestigious Victoria Medal of Honour by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1980.

Marwood Hill Garden is located in a steep valley in North Devon, and contains much to surprise and delight enthusiastic gardeners and casual visitors. It is the home to the national collection of astilbes, tulbaghias and Japanese iris, which hopefully should be in flower when we visit. There are lakes, where kingfishers are regular visitors, and areas of rough grass which provide both food and hibernating sites for the young of many butterflies and moths. Tea or coffee on arrival is included here.



Web link <https://www.marwoodhillgarden.co.uk/>

Organiser Felicity Vickery

## Greencombe Gardens NGS

This garden of 3½ acres is described as a paradise overlooking Porlock Bay. It is a woodland garden extending along tree covered slopes of Exmoor. The garden's moss-covered paths meander through a collection of exceptional flowering plants flourishing beneath a magnificent canopy of oaks, hollies, conifers and sweet chestnuts. Camellias, rhododendrons, azaleas, maples, lilies, roses, clematis, and hydrangeas all flower in turn among ferns, mosses and the garden's four national collections, which include beautiful polystichum ferns and spring-flowering dog's-tooth violets (erythronium). The garden is

home to a champion English holly tree (*Ilex aquifolium*), the largest and oldest in the British Isles.

For over 50 years, Greencombe has thrived using organic gardening methods, with a riot of birds and butterflies all around. Like all good plantsmen's gardens, Greencombe, is full of rare and wonderful plants and has much to interest and delight every visitor.

Homemade teas will be available here.

Web link <https://greencombe.org/>

Organiser Irene Glyn Jones

## Rosemoor RHS

Rosemoor is the RHS flagship garden in the southwest. It is in the Torridge valley, Tarka the Otter country and covers 65 acres. Though it is only a quarter of the size of Wisley it has lots to see. The popular Queen Mother's Rose Garden should be at its best at the end of June. The Cool Garden, in calm colours, is a recent addition, by Jo Thompson, another Chelsea gold medal winner. It is designed to show how a garden can deal with heavy rain and flash flooding. By contrast, nearby is the hot garden.

You will also find a cottage garden, a stumpery, natural flower meadows, carpeted woodlands and lots more. There is also an RHS Plant Centre and book and gift shop. There is a café and restaurant and, if you pre-order, they can also provide picnic bags. This is a very interesting garden to visit and for many, it is their favourite RHS garden.

Web link <https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/rosemoor>

Organiser Jane Jenkins

## Tyntesfield NT

Tyntesfield is a near-complete Victorian Gothic house and estate in 30 acres. It was created for the Gibbs family. The richly decorated house contains over 60,000 of the family's possessions and it is surrounded by flowering terraces. There is also a rose garden and a walled vegetable garden

with an orangery. Near the entrance is the tea room and a bio bus for transport for those who don't want take the rather long walk to the house and walled garden.

Web link <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/tyntesfield>

Organiser Liz Moulton



## Cobbs Farm Shop and Kitchen near Hungerford

A bone fide all rounder. The chic cafe with leafy green plants, caters for all dietary needs. There are pick your own fields and even a vineyard.

For the shoppers amongst us there is a butcher, fishmonger, delicatessen, florist, and a cheese counter. You will also find gorgeous gifts from handmade soap to ceramics.

Web link <https://www.cobbsfarmshops.co.uk/>

Organiser Isabel Wise.

## Plants for free

Anyone can go to a nursery or garden centre to buy plants to fill a garden. Indeed, it is possible to create an instant garden by buying mature plants. However, there is more pleasure in delayed gratification, and propagating your own plants. Some 20 years ago we bought a small hydrangea in Wembley market, and nurtured it in a pot. When we moved to Amersham we brought it with us. It thrived when we planted it in a spot in the back garden near the house, where we think there is a small underground spring. Not only is the original plant over a metre across and tall, and very floriferous, but one of the cuttings, just repotted this autumn, is half a metre tall – it will stay in a pot so that we can keep it blue with aluminium salts – the parent plant has, of course, reverted to pink. We have half a dozen more recent cuttings that stay in small pots and can be used to fill gaps in the border in summer – especially where the centaurea has finished flowering and become straggly.

Shortly after we moved to Amersham, I was discussing with a colleague the large number of hawthorn seedlings I had to pull up around the garden (frequently growing in rows that were aligned with branches of trees above where birds were settling). She asked me to pot them on and give them to her, to create a hedge in her new garden. I duly did so, and took a few into work with me each day for a couple of weeks. Sixteen years later, Carol now tells me she has a splendid hedge. About the same time she was at a plant fair in Enfield and saw an interesting fuchsia, which she bought for me. It was fuchsia satellite. I took cuttings of it each year for several years, and we now have a large hanging basket full outside the front door every summer, as well as a few more in pots. They come into the greenhouse for winter.

Again very soon after moving here we bought a *Sarcococca confusa* to plant by the front door, so that we could enjoy its “burnt honey” scent in winter. Then we had a greenhouse built, with a paved patio as a seating area in front, bordered by a bed of roses. The sarcococca set plentiful berries, quite a few of which I sowed in the greenhouse. We now have a splendid undergrowth of around the roses, so we have scent there not only in summer but also in winter. We may not sit on the patio much in winter, but we do go to the greenhouse often enough to enjoy it. Other plants we have propagated for free include *Buddleja davidii* – while we bin much of the necessary pruning each spring, having left the seed heads for birds over winter, we do strike some cuttings. This year we had a splendid show of lavatera in the front garden, from cuttings of the old plant in the back garden that we took a couple of years ago, before it succumbed to old age.

We have a modest fernery in a shady area between the clematis tunnel and the fence. We bought these plants from garden centres. However, around the pond we have a couple of self-sown ferns (I think asplenium), and this year another has appeared in the gravel

between the wall of the house and the path, where we also have a collection of self-sown yellow meconopsis.

One of the plants we inherited with the garden was a relatively large photinia red robin. For several years we enjoyed its leaves (and cursed the fact that as a semi-evergreen plant it shed leathery leaves that were difficult to compost, more or less all the time). Then a couple of years ago it produced a massive array of flowers, then died. We couldn't dig it out, or cut it completely back to ground level, so trimmed the smaller branches and left the larger ones as a “feature”. We did plant a clematis at the base, and this year for the first time it climbed most of the way up the skeleton of the photinia, and flowered. The skeleton also acquired a (presumably bird-sown) lodger – a dog rose. With judicious use of plant ties, this also clothes the trunk and stems, and most years rewards us with a good display of blossom, then hips in the autumn as bird food (and presumably more dog roses to be sown elsewhere).

Having cut back the dead photinia, we had a gap in the border between it and the yellow-flowered sophora we planted shortly after moving in. Until the neighbours opposite replaced their fence, this gap coincided with a gap under the fence that was a badger run from the street into their garden. Then we saw a small shrub growing in the gap. After a couple of years, it is now a fine hazel bush. Had we planned to buy a hazel, we would probably have chosen one of the contorted varieties, but as it was a gift from the squirrels, we can't complain – even if they do then eat (or at least remove) such nuts as do set.

Further gifts from the birds include a number of holly seedlings – when they are in suitable areas we leave them to develop into bushes. This year we have the first female plant, with berries. Other plants that have grown without our intervention include *Daphne laureola* in shaded areas under the lilac and filling a gap in the rosemary under the dining room window, an interesting small hypericum that does not seem to spread unduly, and this year a couple of plants of a pink mallow in the new border along the front garden. We have collected the seeds, in the hope of having more mallows next year.

Of course, not everything planted by the garden wildlife is welcome. Apart from brambles, we have a constant problem with lime and sycamore seedlings. The lime trees are ours; the sycamores belong to our neighbours, but seed themselves on our side of the fence as well. Then we have horse chestnut seedlings. We know these are planted by the squirrels, because throughout the autumn we see them running madly round the garden with conkers from the trees in the garden of the neighbours on the other side. Some of these are planted in the borders, and more in the pots on the patio. It seems that, to a squirrel, replacing a daffodil bulb with a conker is fair exchange.

David Bender

## Visit to Richard and Jill Jones' garden, August 25<sup>th</sup>

This visit was just before the August newsletter was sent to the printers, and Keith Hoffmeister's photographs of the afternoon were not included. Here they are, as a reminder of late summer.





## 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)

**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  
Van Hage garden centre  
Little Chalfont Library  
Amersham Library

Amersham Community Centre  
Amersham Council Offices  
Coleshill Village Hall  
South Heath Garden Centre

## Committee and Contact Details

|                   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
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## 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>

## Local events

If you know of local garden events, open gardens, etc, please email [newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk) to let us know as early as possible, so that information can go out in the newsletter and on the website

## Photos from outings

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

## See the photos in this issue full size

[Click here](#) to go to the Flickr site containing the photos from this newsletter.

Click the button on the top right of the screen for a slide show; you can scroll through the pictures using the > and < arrows on the right and left of the screen

