

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

November 2018 Newsletter

From the Secretary

As I write this the sun is shining but many of the leaves are off the trees and winter is definitely approaching. You probably don't want reminding that Christmas is also approaching. The committee will again be organising a Christmas Social on December 20th. Food arrangements are mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter and the Association provides the drinks. Do support this event, members on their own are welcome and one of the committee will find a table for you to join.

We received some very sad news recently that one of our long serving members had died. Beryl Lant had been a member for 23 years, attending outings and

willingly helping with refreshments at the monthly meeting. She will be missed by many members.

A full programme of events has been arranged for next year and the programme will be available when you renew your membership.

Details of next year's holiday are with this Newsletter. These holidays are always very enjoyable, if you have not been on one do give it a go this year. Meanwhile the committee wish you a very happy Christmas and all the best for 2019.

Jean Bowling

Quiz evening

Although our plants had suffered, the abundance of Vitamin D resulting from the exceptional weather had clearly worked its magic on the 70 members and friends who competed for the right to be named AGA Quiz champions -2018.

Our congratulations to Table 3 - David Bender's team (Ken, Jean, Colin, Jim, Betty, Susan and Johnathon) – worthy winners after a close fought contest.

Thanks to Carole Thurston and her helpers who again provided a really enjoyable supper.

This year a special note of appreciation to Anne Webb for beautifully presented raffle prizes and to Janet

Philpott (a last minute volunteer) for the excellent ticket sales which followed.

Last but very definitely not least – a heartfelt note of thanks to Tim and Margaret – without whom we could not deliver a successful and enjoyable event. Where do they manage to find the questions? Professional, well researched – always challenging.

No quiz next year – allowing our Quiz Masters to spend more time with their beloved Wanderers but thank you both. You may confound most of us - especially those who believe that St Louis, Missouri is called "Gateway to the West" for good reason - but you made certain that we had an evening to remember.

Carol Barratt

And many thanks for Carol for all her hard work in organising the evening.

Your subscription for next year is now due, and a renewal form is included with this newsletter.

Also with this newsletter is the booking form for next year's 4 day garden holiday in Somerset, 4th – 6th June

Afternoon Visit to Cedar House, Wendover.

On Wednesday 15th August, 28 of us visited the lovely garden belonging to one of our members, Sarah Nicolson.

It is a chalk garden with a gently sloping lawn which, thanks to a watering system, was amazingly green, unlike most of our lawns which are depressingly brown due to the chronic lack of rain.

Sarah gave us a conducted tour giving us advice and naming the wonderful range of unusual plants. Shaped borders hold a great variety of trees, shrubs and perennials. The wild area, near the natural swimming pond, she will cut in September.

We had tea and delicious cakes on the terrace and admired the many pots, especially those containing magnificent Agapanthus. The terrace also offered beautiful views of the surrounding countryside. There were also plants to buy.



Our thanks to Sarah for allowing us to see her lovely garden which she opens to groups for the National Garden Scheme.

Irene Glyn-Jones

Photos by Frances Billington

Huntsmoor, Wednesday 5th September

Huntsmoor is an immaculately maintained garden divided into different areas and everywhere there are interesting and unusual plants to see. In the front garden the leaves on a pot of *Cornus rainbow* were turning strawberry pink.



Behind the house on the large sunny lawn there were plants and cards for sale, this took some time! On the other side there was a colorful herbaceous border which looked fresh and bright despite the heatwave.



The roses surrounding a circular lawn were underplanted with a low growing catmint to great effect and beyond it a pond containing huge koi carp. Then a path took us by a wildlife area and through woodland to the log cabin and a large deck with a spectacular view over the valley beyond.



On the way back a break for tea and delicious cake gave us a chance to admire the trees and see more unusual plants, including this *Fuchsia procumbens* with small green and yellow flowers.

This garden visit raised £300 for Cure Parkinson's

Frances Billington



Amersham in Bloom



More Gold in 2018



Congratulations to all concerned for an excellent outcome for Amersham in Britain in Bloom 2018, as well as thanks for brightening up the town for residents and visitors.

We won gold (again), as well as being named as the best town in the region for the third successive year, as well as:

- National Certificate of Destination for Parks for the Memorial Gardens display (the best overall park),
- Gold award for the Memorial Gardens
- Regional award for (best) horticulture
- Chestnut Lane School was named the best school in the region, receiving the Mark Mattock School Challenge Award
- Regional award for involving children and young people, thanks to the working partnership with Stony Dean School



Forthcoming meetings

22nd November: Dr Sandy Primrose, GM crops, Saints or Satan?

Sandy Primrose is a scientist and author. His professional life started in academia and then within pharmaceutical, diagnostic and life science companies. He advises government on matters such as detection of food fraud and the safety of novel and genetically engineered foods. He also works as a consultant helping early stage companies in the healthcare field and helping venture capital groups with due diligence. Sandy is a very keen gardener and lectures extensively on plants, horticulture and gardening. He is passionate

about teaching and has written an 'easy to understand' book which describes the principles of gene manipulation and genomics. His talk will update us on the current status of genetic manipulation in our everyday foods. I remember reading in The Garden last year that genetically engineered orange flowered petunias were on sale illegally in garden centres in the UK – perhaps he can shed light on how this should have been prevented.

December 20th Xmas Social

This is your chance to socialise with fellow members, and for new members to meet and talk to other members. As usual, wine and soft drinks will be provided from the Association's funds, and the food will be "pot luck" - members whose surname begins with A – K are asked to bring along a sweet dish or fruit, and those whose surnames begin with letters L – Z a savoury dish. We will provide plates and plastic cutlery,

but if you can, please bring "finger food". If you are bringing paté or cheese, please also bring bread and / or biscuits.

Please bring food along at 7:45 for an 8:00 pm start to the evening

There will be a table quiz, entertainment and a raffle.

January 24th

Barbara Lydiatt has been forced to cancel all engagements because her husband is seriously ill; a replacement speaker will be booked, and members will be notified in due course.

February 28th Nick Bailey: 365 Days of colour in your garden

Nick needs little introduction as many of us will be familiar with him not only in relation to his high visibility in the media but also in his previous role as Head Gardener at Chelsea Physic Garden. Now he describes himself as a freelance horticulturalist, best-selling author, award winning TV presenter, garden designer and speaker. His first book was Chelsea Physic Garden – A Companion Guide published in 2014 and more followed.

After studying horticulture at Hadlow College and achieving a 1st class honours degree in Landscape Design from Greenwich University, Nick has worked across many sectors of horticulture over the past 25 years, including nursery stock production, garden management, garden design, teaching, public speaking, writing and broadcasting. His talk will cover plants, techniques and innovative associations to guarantee year-round colour.



Clive Symes sent these three pictures of little owls in his garden



4-day visit to Somerset

Monday 3rd to Thursday 6th June 2019

Monday 3rd June

Dyrham Park.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dyrham-park

17th Century Mansion with formal gardens on the west side. Herbaceous borders, fine yew hedges, ponds and a cascade. Historic Pear orchard. Continuing projects to refresh new areas. Visit will include a short guided tour.

Tuesday 4th June

Cothay Manor www.cothaymanor.co.uk

12 acres of romantic garden surrounding one of the finest medieval manor houses in England. Plantsman's paradise. Many garden rooms, each a garden in itself, are set off a 200 yard yew walk. In addition, fine trees, cottage garden, courtyards, and a river walk.

Hestercombe Gardens www.hestercombe.com

Georgian landscape garden designed by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde and a stunning Edwardian Lutyens/Jekyll formal garden, one of the finest in the country plus 50 acres of woodland

Wednesday 5th June

Montacute House

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/montacute-house

Elizabethan House with a contemporary garden layout with informally planted mixed borders. The North Garden has a sunken garden and fountain. The Cedar Lawn has a pair of magnificent Cedars and the Yew tree hedges are said to be 150 years old.

Thursday 6th June

The Bishop's Palace & Gardens

www.bishopspalace.org.uk 14 acres of garden located in the heart of the City of Wells. Formal Dutch Gardens and fine specimen trees with diverse and luxuriant borders. Be inspired by the new Garden of Reflection and impressed by the Community Garden.

We will stay at the Windford Manor Hotel, which lies south of Bristol and is set within seven acres of parkland. Another garden to explore! There is a limited number of rooms available, so they will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. There will also be a waiting list in case there are any cancellations. www.winfordmanor.co.uk/our-hotel/grounds

The booking form is included with this newsletter

South Kelding

www.ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/garden/32156/

7 acre hillside garden with panoramic views. Herbaceous and shrub beds, prairie style scree beds. Orchard, native copses and small arboretum grouped by continents. Large wildlife pond, boundary stream and wooded area featuring shade and moisture loving plants.

walks, temples, terraces, pergolas, lakes and cascades

The Walled Gardens of Cannington

www.canningtonwalledgardens.org.uk An RHS partner garden including a 'hot' herbaceous border, sub-tropical walk and a national collection of *Deschampsia* and *Santolina*. A botanical glasshouse featuring hundreds of different species and an aquaponics system. Specialist plant nursery.

Yews Farm

www.ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/garden/14635/

1 acre theatrical planting in a large walled garden. Outsized plants in a jungle garden. Self seeded gravel garden, box and bay ball border, eclectic cloud pruning. Working organic kitchen garden. Hens, pigs orchard and active cider barn. Visitors may throw Beauty of Bath apples to the pigs!

Kilver Court

www.kilvercourt.com Owned by Roger Saul, former fashion designer at Mulberry, the 3.5 acre garden is set against a 19th century viaduct, with a rockery, formal parterre, millpond and a stunning new 100 metre herbaceous border. There is also a plant nursery.

Plants with sentimental value

We have a few plants with considerable sentimental value.

The oldest of these is a cactus that has relatively strappy leaves with vicious spines, but large attractive red bell-like flowers. We do not know its name, but the original plant was a gift from a friend, John Holland, to David's late father in the early 1960s, so it has always been known as "the John Holland plant". When we built our first lean to conservatory in our house in Kenton, David's father gave us a cutting he had rooted. It flourished, and we took more cuttings, which grew and flowered well; we brought them with us to Amersham in 2004. When the plants became too large to handle, not least because of their vicious spines, we cut them back quite hard. This time we put the prunings in the green bin, rather than take more cuttings – we certainly did not want the large spines or the small irritating hairs in our compost. The plants live at the back of the greenhouse, and continue to flower well, and remind us of a departed friend.



When David was chairman of the Selborne Society (which owns and manages Perivale Wood Nature Reserve) in the early 1980s he bought a small plant of pelargonium Lensdorf at the plant sale on the Society's open day. He introduced himself to Frank and Molly Hutton, the donors of the plant, and was surprised when they said they knew him well – they lived near his childhood home, and had watched him go to school every day! Lensdorf is one of the classical pelargoniums grown in window boxes in Germany and Austria, with copious small bright red flowers. For many years the plant and its cuttings flourished indoors in his flat in Hanwell, then indoors and in the conservatory in Kenton. More cuttings followed us to Amersham, and we can boast several window boxes and planters full around the porch. Some plants are over-wintered in the greenhouse in their planters, and we take more cuttings each year.



When Ken's late mother moved into sheltered accommodation, we inherited a venerable Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera*), which lived in a hanging container in our porch in Kenton. Obviously it came with us to Amersham, and was in desperate need of a trim. We did not waste the trimmings, but rooted a number of cuttings. Some of these we gave to Ken's nephew, to remember his grandmother, and four of them live in our conservatory. Again we have had to trim them back – after all, we do like to be able to get into the conservatory ourselves). This time we decided we had enough plants, and again the trimmings went into the green bin. They are undemanding plants, and flower reliably in late winter. However, they have one requirement – they do not like being moved in such a way as to change the way they are exposed to light, and if they are rotated they respond by shedding flower buds. There is a simple answer to this – they live in pots on hangers on the wall of the conservatory, so that they are never moved.



David Bender and Ken Bodman



Two "ornaments" at Keukenhof in 2018



Reflections on successes and failures in a year of a difficult weather

The extreme cold in the winter and early spring did less damage to our garden than might be expected. In autumn 2017 I decided to try putting some of our hedichium (ginger lilies) in the soil, as they had outgrown, and were splitting, their pots. I split the tubers. Some went into a relatively sheltered position more or less under trees; two were in a more exposed border. I gave them a reasonable mulch of garden compost, and they all seem to have survived. They did not flower in 2018, but neither did the plants that were overwintered in the greenhouse; perhaps I overdid the

Another success was our collection of *Iris germanica*. We moved them a couple of years ago, and in 2017 they produced only a couple of flower spikes. In 2018 we had 15. Have they now bedded in properly, or was the cold weather a spur to flowering? Our lime trees (a dozen at the bottom of the garden that overtop the house) also seem to have relished the cold winter. There were many more buckets of flower remnants and seeds than we have seen in the last 14 years – less of a cause for celebration, since we have to keep cleaning them from the patio, lawns and gutters.



On the downside, our sweet peas were a complete failure, with the seedlings only about 6 inches tall in August, and no sign of them doing anything useful. The ipomea (morning glory) in a pot with a trellis grew well, and reached up into the palm tree behind – but no sign of any flowers at all. Similarly, the passion flower planted in 2017 grew well up its trellis against the wall, but no sign of any flowers. The hot weather did not suit our Japanese anemones, which I had thought were indestructible, and self seed well around the garden. Despite watering, they withered and produced few flowers.

We have lily beetle in quite a big way. In 2017 we managed to keep it more or less under control, picking off the bright red adults and squashing them, and washing the larvae off with a high pressure hose. In 2018 we took our eyes off the lilies for just too long, and the leaves were more or less completely shredded; the plants were no thing of beauty, despite a few brave flowers. This coming year we must be more vigilant.

division of the tubers – all have produced suitably tropical-looking foliage.

The only other apparent damage from the winter was to a small indigofera in the front garden. When everything else was showing green shoots, it looked completely dead. Masterly inaction was called for, and I left it alone. Just before I thought I would have to dig up this eyesore, it produced small green leaves, then showed signs of complete recovery, and rewarded us with flowers for the first time.



Some years ago we were given a cutting of satellite, a delightful trailing fuchsia. It has propagated well from cuttings, and we had a splendid display in the hanging basket outside the front door.

We replaced the arches that form a short clematis tunnel in 2017 (we had to, the main support was coming from one vigorous *C. montana*, and most of the arches had rusted away). Some of the original plants were OK, but we took the opportunity to cut the over-vigorous *montana* back hard (it sprouted new growth very well, as we were confident it would), and had to cut back quite a lot of the *Akebia quinata*, which responded well, grew with great gusto, and flowered well. We bought four new clematis plants, which started off well, and produced some excellent flowers, but they seem to not have appreciated the hot weather, despite copious watering. Again masterly inactivity, followed by some hard pruning in late winter or early spring seems to be called for.

The runner beans were also a disappointment, growing long and leggy up their arches before producing any flowers, and the overall yield was negligible – although last year in the same position and the same containers (but with fresh compost) we had an excellent crop. At least we had our first crop of gooseberries– all half

dozen fruits were delicious, and we await proper growth of what are at present very small plants.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment was the tray of calibrachoa we bought in Amersham market to fill gaps in a small terraced bed that has a few alpinas, and a splendid spring display of bulbs. The day after planting them, and watering them in, there was nothing left apart from a few stems, which have since disappeared. All of the leaves and flowers had been eaten overnight. Perhaps this explains why 2018 was a very good year

So, like all gardeners who say either “you should have been here last week” or “if you were coming next week...”, we can say that “perhaps next year will be better”, and at least we have enjoyed what has done well this year.

Odd tracks along the lawn

I was accused of pushing a laden wheelbarrow across the front lawn, and shown a depression across the lawn in a straight line. I denied the accusation, and looked at the depression again. There was a clear groove in a straight line from the fence between us and our next door neighbour, through a border where plants had

Shortly after we moved to Amersham, we dug a circular bed in the middle of the front lawn, and filled it with tulips. This was a mistake. I had not realised that the space between the neighbour’s laurel hedge and fence was a deer run, from the field behind us. As each of our tulips came into bud, it was eaten – as far as the deer were concerned, it was rather like having a sweet shop opposite a school. We have now replaced the tulips with a witch hazel, surrounded by (mainly) self-seeded wild oregano – a splendid plant for pollinators, and useful in the kitchen as well, although we missed a couple of tulip bulbs, which still manage to flower. Perhaps the oregano puts the deer off.

We confirmed the use of the pathway by deer when it snowed and there were clear hoof prints along the same line. However, it may also be a badger run, as I have seen the unmistakable back end of a badger in that area when coming home late at night, and have a (not too

for butterflies, with many whites, orange tips, brimstones, peacocks and speckled woods not only in the garden but also in the conservatory, where we now keep a small net, since they cannot seem to find the windows that are open, and we don’t want them to die when we close up for the night.

been trampled, then across the lawn. On their side of the fence, our next door neighbours have a row of laurel bushes. On the other side of the road was another trampled area, leading to a depression under the fence into the garden opposite. Obviously animals, not a wheelbarrow.



good) photo of a badger in our garden, taken using a motion-activated night camera. That explains the digging that has been going on in our back garden, and also the mysterious holes that appeared in our border and behind the trees at the bottom of the back garden.

A possible use for non-recyclable plastic?

Many years ago, when disposable plastic petri dishes were coming into use in laboratories to replace the old glass ones, A seminar speaker was asked what they did with the dishes when they had been used. He replied that they melted them down by heating them, to form odd-shaped blocks of plastic. He then noted that he and all of his colleagues now had rockeries in their gardens, and wondered what they would do with them in future.



The recent discussion about plastic waste, and especially that which cannot be recycled, has reminded me of this discussion. Like many people, I generate quite a lot of plastic waste, some of it

laminated plastic and aluminium film, some of it polythene bags, some of it surplus plastic plant pots (a sad reminder of how many plants we seem to buy each year that somehow disappear from the garden). I don’t know much about plastic technology, but could this non-recyclable plastic be melted down to form small beads, say about 10mm diameter. I could then buy these beads instead of pea shingle to act as a mulch on the top of pots, etc. Not only would this mean less plastic waste going to landfill, it would also save extracting gravel, transporting it (packed in non-recyclable plastic bags), and would be lighter to carry than gravel

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

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: 014494 784913, email 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

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham
Robertson's butcher, Chenies parade
Van Hage garden centre
Little Chalfont Library
Amersham Library

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

Committee and Contact Details

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Discounts for members – remember to take your membership card to claim your discount

[East Building & Timber Supplies](#), 43 - 47 Chiltern Ave, offer a 10% discount on compost, gravel and pebbles, etc to AGA members.

[South Heath Garden Centre](#), Meadow Lane, South Heath, Great Missenden, HP16 9SH, offer a 10% discount on some items.

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