

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

May 2017 Newsletter

From the Secretary

At the time of writing this the sun is shining and there are spring flowers giving colour everywhere. Let's hope it is a foretaste of things to come. In late June there is the 4 day trip to Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. These are always very enjoyable trips and we welcome our new organiser, Jeanne Harrison, for this year.

We welcome any articles or photos that members would like included in the Newsletter. So far few people have responded to this but it is your Newsletter and we would like your contributions.

Jean Bowling

From the Editor

We are immensely grateful to Neil Watson, who has edited the newsletter since 2014. One problem that he had was that the committee tends to meet just before the deadline for the newsletter, and it was not always easy to get information to him in time. As I am a committee member, and anyway deal with the printing and distribution of the newsletter, I have taken over from Neil as editor. Please continue to send notes, articles and photos for publication to: newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk

David Bender

Quiz night

Mark October 26th in your diary now – it is our annual quiz evening. The booking form will be sent out with the next newsletter.

Peterley Corner Cottage – Thursday 6th July, 7 – 9 pm

Some of you will remember a visit we made to Dawn Philipps' garden in Perks Lane, Great Missenden some years ago. Dawn has offered to open her ever changing garden again for us. It is a 3 acre mature garden, including an acre of wild flowers and indigenous trees. There are many specimen trees and mature roses, a large herbaceous border, a heather border, shrubs and now a potager. It is well worth a return visit to this wonderful garden, so many of us enjoyed the evening last time.

The booking form went out some time ago, but lest you have mislaid it, a copy is included with this newsletter. As usual, if you cannot print out the form, don't worry, just send Irene a letter with the relevant information.

Chenies Manor plant fair

Alays a chance to buy unusual plants, the annual plant fair at Chenies Manor will be on Sunday July 16th. More details at <http://www.cheniesmanorhouse.co.uk/the-plant-fair/>

Visit to Old Church Cottage, 4th March



The day dawned windy and wet but by 10am the rain stopped and the sun even came out briefly. We were given a warm welcome and muffins and glasses of mulled wine by the owners, John and Margaret Noakes.

Old Church Cottage is a garden designed to brighten the end of winter with displays of snowdrops, cyclamen and other spring bulbs and shrubs. I can imagine how it would lift the heart on a dull winter morning to look out and see sheets of flowers, and then know that there are rare and interesting snowdrops to go and see. The flowers grow in good drifts and the impact is stunning. It is quite a small garden but there are many paths through the displays to allow better views of everything. Sheltered seats gave us a chance to see the flowers more closely. All the money raised went to the NGS charity



After the visit 26 of us enjoyed lunch at the Half Moon at Wilstone. Most people chose the carvery with a choice of 4 meats and 8 freshly cooked vegetables

Old Church Cottage often opens at the end of February for the NGS Hertfordshire snowdrop festival. If you missed this year's visit, look out for snowdrop days next year.

Frances Billington



Forthcoming meetings

May 25th Clematis through the seasons by Everett Leeds

Everett Leeds has been involved with clematis for many years. He is a member of the International Clematis Society and has four times been Chairman of the British Clematis Society. He has written many articles on clematis and clematarians and he co-authored *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Clematis* and the *Pocket Guide to Clematis* (both Timber Press) with Mary Toomey and Charles Chesshire.

There is a great deal of information about clematis on his website at:

<http://www.clematis.hull.ac.uk/new-clemnamedetail.cfm?dbkey=20>

June 22nd 50 greys of shade by Colin Moat

Colin & Cindy Moat run Pineview Plants (<http://www.pineviewplants.co.uk/>). The nursery offers a wide range of perennial plants ranging from rare, new or unusual, to easy, interesting and reliable. These have been selected over many years and are all good garden plants ranging from named varieties to plants of species raised from seed. The wide range primarily reflects plants that are of interest to us and that we believe to be of outstanding garden merit. These include mainly herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses, which complement them.

July 27th Plain Jane or super model by Bob Brown

Bob Brown is a renowned plantsman, speaker and garden writer who owns Cotswold Garden Flowers (<http://www.cgf.net/>). The specialist nursery based in Evesham stocks a huge range of unusual perennials. His website includes a very comprehensive encyclopaedia of plants

(<http://www.cgf.net/encyclopedia.aspx?id=6&hid=6>)

Discounts for members

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.

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

Overheard during a garden visit

"I only know two plants, strelitzia and the other one (I've forgotten its name)"

From the RHS

Photo competition for best veg

Are you a veg grower? This summer send images (1mb minimum) of any veg you have grown that you are particularly proud of or maybe it's something unusual you have never grown before and it has done especially

well. Send a short review with your images so we can share with our Grass Roots readers. All those we print will receive an RHS book on growing on an allotment. Send to affiliated@rhs.org.uk

The changing face of produce gardening

The way we garden and grow food has changed dramatically over the years. Does your community garden have a long and interesting history? Maybe your allotment has been passed down through the generations, or helped feed hungry mouths in war times and now helps bring different cultures together.

We would love to hear how your garden and gardeners have changed through time. Please send a short summary (no more than 100 words) of the history of your group and the ways in which it has changed, with a high resolution image to affiliated@rhs.org.uk

How much food do you grow?

The RHS and a University of Sheffield researcher have launched a project to ask gardeners and allotment holders to provide information on the space given to food production and the yields. This will provide valuable information to determine how much allotment and garden space is needed. Take part at <http://www.myharvest.org.uk>

In your garden shed no.9: Garden shears and secateurs

Cutting tools for gardening date back to time immemorial. The Romans cut and shaped their shrubs into what we know as topiary; the Chinese called it tray landscape; and the Japanese had special scissors for their bonsai.



Shears are two blades that can pivot, and are basically large scissors useful for cutting hedges, lawn edging and a variety of pruning uses. They come short- and long-handled.

Secateurs ideal for cutting flower stems and light pruning. They can be used one handed. The invention of this most useful of tools has been credited to the French aristocrat Antoine Francois Bertrand de Molleville in 1819, and by the 1890s they were being sold all over Europe and North America.

Secateurs have a spring between a cutting blade and a static edge and can also come with two moving blades like a pair of scissors; they are also available for left and right handed use.

Kenneth Bodman

In your garden shed no. 10: The strimmer

George Ballas, a businessman from Houston Texas, had an idea while watching the brushes revolving in his local carwash in 1971, and his first prototype was a tin can, some nylon fishing line and a rotary from his lawn edger, all mounted on a long pole. Working on the principle of a nylon line held out from its housing and turning fast enough, using centrifugal force, so that the faster the reel of line moves it is able to slice through weeds and grass.

George Ballas at first called it a weed eater and it was also called a whipper snapper or edge trimmer eventually to be known as the strimmer today, and by 1977 sales of the strimmer had topped \$80 million.

Kenneth Bodman



Around your garden shed no.1: The wheelbarrow



Most of us use a wheelbarrow and keep it near our garden shed, but a fold up version is available. James Dyson reinvented the wheelbarrow with a ball instead of a wheel; his claim was that heavy loads would not get bogged down in soft ground.

The wheelbarrow has been around a long time, paintings of a man using a similar vehicle have been found on tombs dating around the 2nd century in the Han Dynasty. However credit for its invention goes to Prime Minister Zhuge Liang (181-234 AD) who developed the vehicle for carrying military supplies but it had an axis with a central wheel. This was a rather large wooden structure and had shafts so that it could be drawn by an ox.

The wheelbarrow that we know today can be dated to the years between 1170-1250; these medieval wheelbarrows had an iron wheel at the front – now we have a rubber wheel.

Kenneth Bodman

Benefits of trees and pot plants

In the summer issue of the RSPB *Nature's Home* magazine, Simon Barnes extols the benefits of nature, and quotes two experiments. In one, the group of judges whose view was of skyscrapers were harsher in judgement of offenders than those whose view was of trees. In the second experiment, people in a room in which there were just three pot plants said that what mattered in life was “family and friends”, while those in the room without plants said it was “fame and wealth”.

I wonder what this says about your editor – as I sit in my study I can see 10 tall trees out of the window, and a grape ivy plant (or is it a kangaroo vine?) on the windowsill.

Of course, to make it a valid experiment, both groups of people should have been exposed, at different times, to both environments. In the case of the judges, was it simply that those who worked in a city centre were harsher?

Around your garden shed no. 2: The greenhouse

The Roman Emperor Tiberius was advised by his medical people to eat a cucumber-like vegetable every day, but growing this vegetable caused problems, so someone came up with the idea of a structure so that the plants could be grown in a controllable environment; this structure was made from oil cloth or selenite, a mineral with a crystalline structure. Active greenhouses with a form of temperature control were written about by the Korean cook Sanga Yorok in 1450.

Greenhouses as a structure for general use appeared first in the Netherlands and then England in the 17th century but early attempts to open and close the ventilation was very labour intensive. The French botanist Charles Lucien Bonaparte is credited with building the first practical working greenhouse, as technology by then was producing better glass.



Kenneth Bodman

You have been warned



Having seen the wonderful wild flower beds at Wormsley Park on the AGA visit, I bought a packet of seeds labelled 'cornfield annuals mix', from a very well known supplier. I prepared the ground carefully, digging and removing all the old plants. Next I drew out drills and watered the rows before I planted the seeds.

Then I read the packet.

Imagine my horror, when, after a list of desirable flowers there was a section called grasses, all of which were perennial ones.

No mention of the grasses had been made in the catalogue. I didn't give them any more water, thinking they wouldn't germinate, but they have and so far they all look like flowers. I did phone the supplier in the hope that they won't do this again. They apologised profusely and sent me a few packets of seeds. Whether the original packet did contain grass seeds or whether it was mislabelled I still don't know, but if I had read the information first I wouldn't have sown the seeds.

Frances Billington

Visit to Ragley Hall and Hillers Garden, May 9th

The comfortable two hour journey to Ragley Hall was well worth the effort. Despite the BBC forecast, the weather got better and better. We drove up the long driveway into the Ragley Hall estate and it led us to the beautiful house set on top of the hill overlooking stunning parklands and a lake.

We were greeted on our private visit with tea and coffee before being guided around the impressive gardens.



A steep gravel path led us down to a stumpery and a formal circular area that had once been walled. Large hazel and metal tunnels had been prepared for the growing and training up of gourds and squashes later in the year. Nearby was an area of wildlife ponds with statues of the Marquess of Hertford's children informally placed among the wild flowers. Walking back towards the house revealed fine views of an avenue of mature trees on the opposite hill and their spring colours were stunning. The large formal rose garden was growing well but the tulips were past their best, however looking back from the terrace, where we ate our picnic lunch, the scale and potential of the Rose Garden was clear to see.

After lunch we had a most informative tour of the house which helped piece together the history of the estate.

We then visited Hillers nursery and farm shop and many of us found some plants to buy and cake to eat!

It was a lovely day and hopefully we will revisit in the future and see the gardens later in the summer.

Felicity Vickery



Bright colours in the garden (left) and (right) a pale blue camassia - the bulbs were an important food for native Americans.



Below, the panoramic view from the terrace at lunchtime



Topiary and sculpture in the Ragley Hall gardens



Plant sale, May 13th

The much needed rain for our gardens held off (apart from a little light drizzle), and although it was cold and windy, the plant sale must be considered a success – we sold all but a few of the bought in plants, and almost all of those donated by members, and made a profit of £600.40 – very much better than the last few years.

Many thanks to Janet Philpott for the organisation, her stalwart band of helpers, and all those members who donated three full tables of plants (plus more that started out under the tables).

Christmas Social – we want your views

Our regular meetings are on the fourth Thursday of each month, and this means that the Christmas Social is very close to Christmas – some say too close, even if we can manage to book the third Thursday instead. This year the Social will go ahead as usual on Thursday 21st December. However, we have to plan for 2018 (and indeed already have made bookings for the Drake Hall and many of the speakers for the year). In 2018 we have the Hall booked for December 20th, but it would not be too late to cancel, depending on what members think. We cannot have an earlier date because other groups have standing bookings.

The committee has come up with a number of possibilities – please vote for which option you favour for 2018. You may either vote on-line at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/7WTDJ8Q> or email your preference to webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk – or by post to David Bender, 8 Eagle Close, Amersham, HP6 6TD. The committee will discuss the outcome and decide on the most favoured option.

Which one of the following options do you favour for 2018 and later years?

- 1) Have the Christmas Social as at present, even if it is very close to Christmas.
- 2) No meeting at all in December, but add in a meeting in August, when we do not usually meet.
- 3) No meeting at all in December, but add in a meeting in August, when we do not usually meet, plus wine and cheese before the November meeting.
- 4) A December meeting with a speaker (assuming that a speaker will be willing to come to us so close to Christmas), but no social (perhaps wine and cheese before the speaker)
- 5) A social event and no speaker at the Annual General Meeting in March.

If you have any other ideas, please let us know.

For the 2017 Christmas Social on Thursday 21st December, would you prefer:

- 1) As in recent years, the committee provide wine, soft drinks, bread and cheese from the Association's funds.
- 2) As we used to do, pot luck, when members bring along dishes (savoury or sweet, depending on which half of the alphabet your name falls in) – again the wine and soft drinks will come from the Association's funds.

At the Social on December 21st 2017 there will be a tombola, so please give your offerings to Irene Glyn-Jones at meetings in the autumn.

Committee and Contact Details

President	Tim Hillier	president@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Chairman	Colin Ross	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	David Bender	newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk