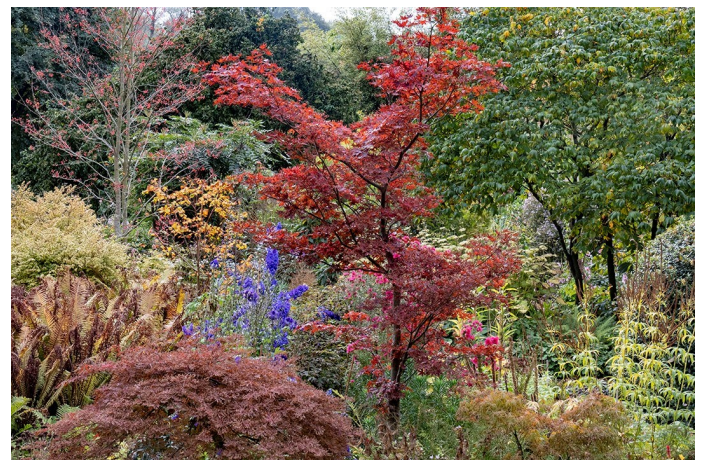
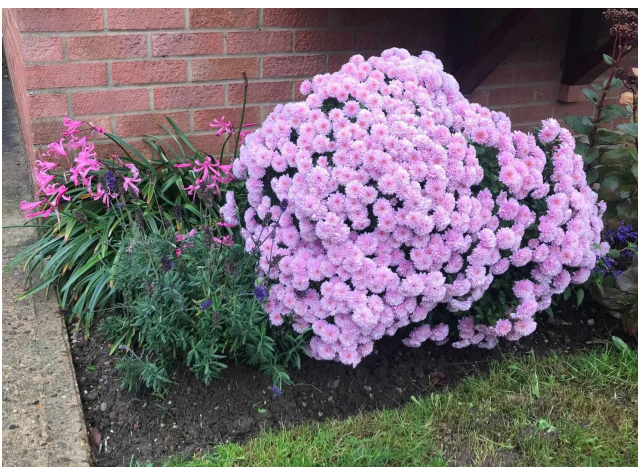
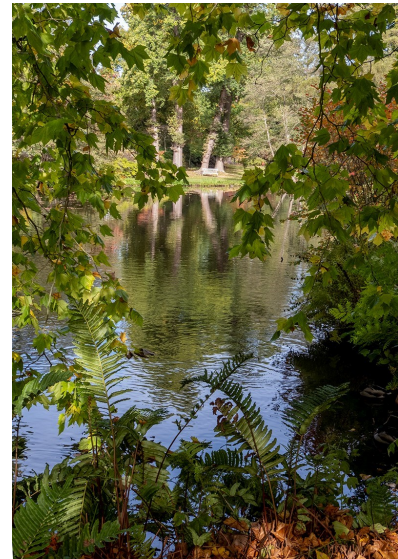


# Battisford & District Gardening Club

November 2022

Issue 57

## Out and about with Club members



Thanks to Mike, Daphne, Denise & Jane

## Paul's open garden 7th August 2022

On a very warm Sunday in August, Paul opened his 'trial' garden in aid of Cancer Research and was delighted that so many people came and with the £1,035 raised for the charity. He and Ruth had worked hard to prepare the garden and keep up the constant watering.

Paul trialed 34 different peat free composts, and also petunias, begonias, lilies and of course tomatoes. The small compact variety petunias and Semperflorens Begonias were particularly successful, grown in Paul's Early grow compost. He emphasised that although this compost is more expensive the yield from the plants is much higher.



Paul's lilies had finished flowering in August but Linda Clark kindly lent hers having received the bulbs from Paul earlier in the year. The most spectacular and her favourite was the double flowered, scented Accolade.



Paul will have some lily bulbs next year so contact him if you are interested.



On 5th September Paul held an entertaining tomato tasting session. Having been given over 50 varieties to trial we got to try the majority and give each our score regarding taste, skin thickness, sweetness etc.

The clear winner was Sungold Bush a variety of his favourite success Sungold with not only the best taste and quality but the best yield.





# BATTISFORD AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

## 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2022.

Denis gave the Chair's report, noting the interesting talks given by local speakers since December 2021, including running an orchard, snowdrops and running a vineyard. After the April talk on vegetables, the members enjoyed outings in May and June to The Place for Plants and Hillside Garden at Semer. The show at the fete in July was a great success with 450 entries, 300 from BDGC members. Two members opened their gardens in July and August and raised funds for their charities. Many thanks to all volunteers who helped at these events. The September meeting had two elements, a tour around the vineyard and a tomato tasting at Paul's trial garden.

There are currently 65 members. The annual fees will need to be £15 from the AGM, to help towards increased costs. The fees are still great value for money, with all the talks and outings arranged, plus the show and annual plants offered at low cost.

The Combs and Battisford fete will not be held next year. The Fete committee would be grateful for more volunteers to ensure the fete continues. There may be a small BDGC show in the village hall if there is support from members.

The Treasurer's report noted there had been no income from fees for two years because of the pandemic. Speakers cost £240 this year. Two speakers did not charge. The show cost £605. The closing balance in the account was £6,434.72. The raffles and wreath making were the only income over the year.

Anthea was thanked for her continuing work on the newsletter. **An assistant or someone to take over and contributions of photos and or text would be welcomed.**

Paul is organising the 2023 programme, which will be available soon. He is suggesting we may be more adventurous with our speakers in order to expand the range of interesting topics available. **Please send him any ideas for talks or visits.**

The committee was re-elected as follows:

Chair: Denis Wicking

Treasurer: Jeanne Lynch-Aird

Minutes Secretary: Jane Pope

Sheila Baldwin, Denise Crozier, Paul Hansord, Anthea Howard, Caroline Wicking.

**Next AGM: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 Battisford Village Hall**

## Monday 3rd October— Sweet Peas—Chris Riley

Chris Wiley is a local horticulturalist who owns Sow Successful, a plant trial ground at Harkstead, where he grows several species, including Sweet Peas. Chris gave a very interesting talk about his commercial Sweet Pea production, focusing on the new variety he launched this year at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Chris took his precious Sweet Peas to London on the train in a First Class carriage, which was filled with its perfume. The Peter Seabrook Sweet Pea won best new plant at the Gardener's World plant awards this year.

Peter Seabrook spotted this new Sweet Pea at the Sow Successful trial ground in 2021 and recognised its potential. He was extremely enthusiastic about it from the start, so when Peter died in January 2022, the naming of the new variety was the perfect tribute. The late Queen Elizabeth was also presented with a posy of Chris' sweet pea when she visited the Show



Chris gave the members some practical and encouraging advice on growing Sweet Peas in your garden. Sweet pea seeds last up to 5 years. They are best sown in October and can be grown cold inside in a cold greenhouse, a cold frame or outside as they are fully winter hardy up to -10/-15c. Chris sows 1000s each year in modular trays and he recommended Bloomin' Amazing compost, but he said they actually do best in the ground, so could also be direct sown into the ground in February. He made a point that sweet peas do not need deep pots or trays and advised not to water too much early on as they can damp off. Another threat can be the mice, who love sweet pea seeds. In mid to late January, he plants the seedlings out into beds in the greenhouses. They can be 2.5 to 3 metres tall and he plants them tightly at 5 or 6 to a metre, tying them to bamboo canes as they grow.

Chris does not pinch them out; he said it was a waste of time trimming them at the three leaf stage. Flowering starts in May. He grows the Spencer variety, which is very fragrant and has longer stems. He described the heirloom grandiflora (the first variety to be bred in the early 20th century.) particularly 3 Times as Sweet, a tricolour variety. When the seed pods are ready, they are picked by hand. Harvesting is done quickly to keep each variety isolated. The seed production was down this year because of the unusually hot conditions. The Peter Seabrook sweet pea will be sold through Mr Fothergill's in 2023. Chris sells direct to the consumer through Sustainable Plant Store.com.

Jane Pope

# Monday 7th November— Conservation Farming

## Chris Knock

Chris Knock is a local farmer whose family have lived and farmed in Battisford for many generations. Manor Farm comprises 250 acres of arable, wood and hedges and is farmed in collaboration with the Scarffs, who are also local farmers.

Chris spoke about the family commitment to conservation and sustainable food production. The farm won County Conservation awards in 2013 & 2017.

Chris practices conservation farming which promotes minimal soil disturbance, increasing diversification of crops for example by planting spring crops and the use of cover crops whose roots capture nutrients in the soil that might otherwise be lost. The land had not been ploughed from 2010 and yields have not been affected.

In the 1960s and 70s the Government wished to increase food production, fields were drained and many ancient hedges were removed to create larger fields. By the 1980s there was realization of the environmental effect this was having and conservation schemes were started. In 1983 Manor Farm began to restore the farm's hedges and Sapporo elms were also planted a few years later. The grass margins next to hedges and other conservation strips provide an area for many invertebrates and an area for small mammals. We have run conservation schemes on the farm for nearly 40 years now, and the abundant wildlife is testament to the success of those schemes.

There are 5 miles of hedges on the farm and two woods with 30 species of tree and shrub. Hedge copping is an ancient practice. On Manor Farm the hedges are managed with wildlife in mind, the areas providing food and protection for small birds. Hedges are left with bushy bottoms as shelter and are only trimmed every two or three years as the most berries are produced in the second year growth. The farm coppices 200 meters a year for firewood, which in turn provides a variety of habitats for wildlife.

In recent years disease has affected some of our English trees, like Dutch Elm Disease and more recently ash dieback. It is now recommended to plant a wider variety of trees particularly European species more adapted to drought and heat. More of these trees are planted every winter but with the dramatic increase in wild deer they need protection and a green alternative is needed to plastic tubes. It is good to see the appointment of local tree wardens to monitor trees and educate the public.

Soil health is a vital aspect of modern farming. In the past the living organisms in our soil have been affected by the use of pesticides and fertilisers and we are now taking far more interest in soil health. The ideal soil by volume is 45% mineral, 25% water, 25% air and 5% organic matter. Most UK soils are 2-3%. Manor farm is currently 3% and we aim to achieve over 4% by 2030. This is to be achieved by comprehensive use of cover crops, green manuring and spreading compost. The roots of cash crops such as beans and peas nourish the soil by fixing nitrogen from the air which helps with carbon sequestration by adding carbon to the soil.

The future context for food production is we cannot separate it from its impact on the environment.



## The Robinson Window, Somersham Church



On entering Somersham Church your eyes would be undoubtedly caught by the stained glass window in the upper part of a former doorway.

This was given by Lois Warren in 1997 in memory of her maternal and paternal grandparents. Harry and Ada Robinson had the Post Office and General Stores and Albert (born 1874& Olive Robinson (died 1964) were farmers in Somersham. Also commemorates her parents Philip and Alice Robinson (1912 – 1992) who were market gardeners.

The design for the window is by Rowland and Surinder Warboys and was made using traditional stained glass techniques of painting, staining and etching, as appropriate to the design, in hand made glass.

The window makes reference to the circle of life and contains symbols of a cross, salver and ewer. These could be interpreted as references to the Crucifixion, the Last Supper and the first miracle of the Marriage of Caanan.

With respect to the occupations of her parents and grandparents, the window displays the fecundity of nature. The inclusion of sweet peas is a special reference to Mr & Mrs .P. Robinson as it was a significant flower in their occupation as Market Gardeners.

The other flowers depicted are Lily of the Valley, Solomons Seal & the Star of Bethlehem

Song of Solomon, ch.2 verse 1. 'I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys'

The above is a summary of the notice displayed with the window.

Lois the wife of our own Mike Warren, sadly died earlier this year

Thanks to Mike for the information

# Winter Gardening

Your garden in winter does not have to be boring or devoid of colour or interest. Ornamental grasses add form and shape your garden any time of the year. Choose those that develop winter colour. Your perennials don't all have to be cut to the ground after flowering. Leave those with the most attractive shape and cut them down in the early spring when the spring bulbs start to appear. If you have planned ahead and planted acer or cornus these can add fantastic colour with their winter coats. Of course a winter garden looks most attractive if there is a frost, the gardeners enemy!



Cornus



Acers



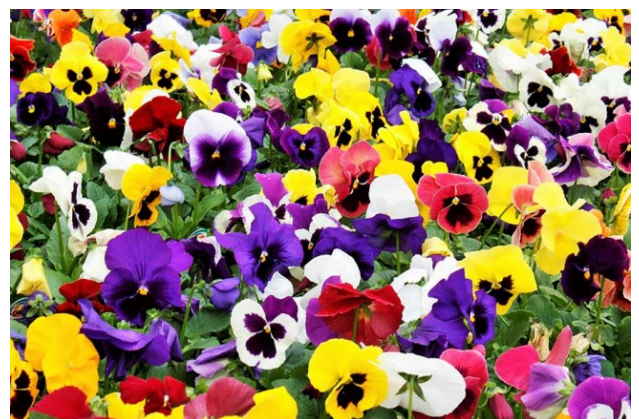
## Plants that flower in winter



Hellebores



Winter Aconites



Winter pansies & violas

## Future Club Events—2023

### JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2023

There are no events currently arranged for January or February — await further communication via email. If you are not on email you will be contacted by telephone

Monday 6th March 2023

Lucy Skellorn

Cedric Morris & the garden at Benton End

Monday 3rd April

Charlie Haylock

Advising on the film 'The Dig'



Thanks to Jane Pope for this photo showing the sunset from her garden.

If you would like information about Battsford and District Gardening Club contact the Chairman, Denis Wicking on 07796 336578

## Mobile Post Office



A mobile Post Office will be at the Punchbowl car park from 12.45—13.34 every Friday.

It can provide all the facilities of a General Post Office.

## Mobile Library



The Mobile Library will be visiting Battsford every 4 weeks on a Thursday from 11.35—13.45. It will be parked at St Mary's Church, Church Rd.

Battsford. The next date is 29th December