

Battisford & District Gardening Club Newsletter

July 2017

Issue 42

10
YEARS



The June meeting was the nearest to the 10th anniversary of the founding of BDGC and to mark the occasion Jenny and Judith (with a little help from Steve) produced a most wonderful, delicious cake. Not just a cake with a number 10 on it but a masterpiece of intricate sugar-craft flowers and vegetables in an overall garden scene. My photographs probably don't do it justice but everyone agreed that it was stunning. This must have taken them many hours of work and we thank them very much.

Bill

P.S. It tasted delicious too!

It seems a shame to cut it!



'Tulips from Amsterdam'

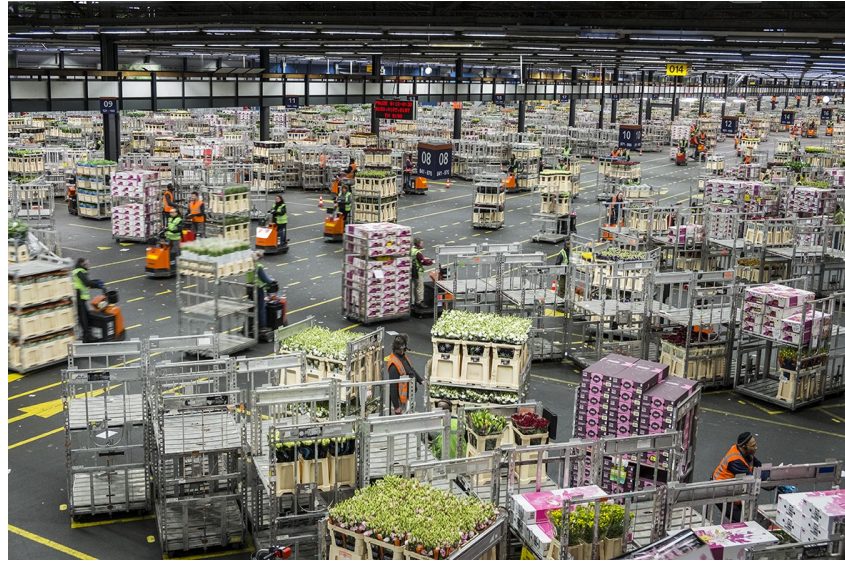
Springtime in Holland, Keukenhof,

Flower auction and much more!

3rd April 2017

Mike Warren

Mike's talk centred around Keukenhof, one of the world's largest flower gardens, and where Mike is a frequent visitor. The gardens comprise over 7 million bulbs with 800 varieties of tulips, and are only open to the public for 8 weeks of the year from mid-March to mid May. He also told us about the amazing flower auction, involving 20 million flowers every day, Crates of flowers are put up for auction from an enormous warehouse. The bidding takes place by computer and by mid afternoon all the flowers are sold



Visit to Steve Pryke's Garden

I Redbricks, World's End

8th May 2017

Steve Pryke's marvellous garden seems to be almost at the world's end in an out of the way location overlooking open countryside in all directions. It was quite a nice May evening and we were able to sit in the garden having tea. However I imagine the wind must howl round your ankles in November.

My dog certainly had a great time playing with Steve's border terrier, Toby

Steve opens his garden for the National Garden Scheme and here's what they have to say about it:

'A distinctive garden of one and a half acres situated in the rolling fields of mid-Suffolk. The garden includes several large perennial beds planted in a naturalistic style, a mature seasonal pond, a newly developed bog garden, and a recently established wildlife pond. Semi-formal gardens to the north and south of the cottage are designed to be low maintenance through the use of drought tolerant new perennial style planting. The garden, which is bordered to the west by a tree belt and to the east by a mixed native hedgerow, is laid out in zones which complement the rural setting. The garden also contains vegetable beds, a greenhouse, summer-house, and a mixed orchard'.

Steve has lived here 15 years and has developed the garden from scratch. When asked why very few weeds could be seen, his answer was that he spent the first 2 years with fallow ground covered in black plastic—so sorry guys there is no easy way!

Steve's garden is open for the NGS on the 17th September. He says then it will be at its best so it will be definitely worth a visit. I for one will be paying a return visit



Photos courtesy of Mike Warren

Growing vegetables in small spaces

Pauline Harper

5th June 2017

Pauline told us that her passion for growing in small spaces had started as a child, when her father gave her a small patch on his allotment and encouraged her to plant vegetables. She, in turn, aims to pass on her enthusiasm to young children by working with 5 to 7 year olds in a local primary school, and she encouraged her audience to involve children wherever possible in their own gardens.

Pauline told us that there was an increasing interest in growing vegetables, and that sales of vegetable seeds had now passed those of flower seeds. And with new houses being built on smaller and smaller plots, the need to make best use of the limited planting areas available was more important than ever.

So, what is a small space? broadly speaking, anything from a single pot to a formal raised bed of about 4 feet by 10 feet (the recommended maximum plot size). Where more space is available, the same principles can still be followed by dividing the area into small beds or by growing in small squares within a larger bed.

Pauline demonstrated her experience and expertise by presenting us with a wealth of common sense advice. For those who didn't take notes, or couldn't be there on the night, here are some of her tips.

First and foremost, grow what you enjoy. You are more likely to eat what you grow yourself. In addition to it tasting better, you will not want to throw away the fruits of your labours.

Don't plant too much at once. If vegetables are not harvested they will go to seed, which is a waste of a space that could have been used for something else. Practice succession growing, with the same vegetable planted at, say, weekly intervals.

Know where your sunlight is coming from. Place tall growing items, such as peas, at the back to avoid shading the plants in front.

Line terracotta pots with polythene to stop the sun and the wind drying them out. Line plastic pots with newspaper to stop the sun burning the roots.

Rather than buy expensive plastic bags for growing things like potatoes, turn compost bags inside out and recycle them. But remember to make drainage holes in the bag.

If growing several vegetables in the same bed, try growing them in squares. But don't grow a mix of vegetables in the same pot or small container.

Look for varieties that have been developed for containers and small spaces. For example, tomatoes for hanging baskets, and varieties of courgettes without the spiky leaves that will scratch your legs if grown in pots.

If growing cucumbers consider the crystal lemon variety, which is round and compact and enough for a meal for two people.

Make sure to keep vegetables in pots and containers well watered. Don't leave it to the rain. A lot of rain water will bounce off the leaves and miss the pot. Add a liquid feed when watering. In particular, vegetables such as spinach or swiss chard must be watered regularly to prevent them from bolting. When it came to choosing which vegetables to grow, Pauline told us there were few limitations. If space is very limited then it is probably best to avoid things like cabbages that need a lot of space or broccoli that has a long growing cycle. On the other hand, kale can be picked a few leaves at a time as needed and will continue to grow throughout the winter months. Red kale can even be grown in the herbaceous border. It is decorative in the winter and seems to be less attractive to pigeons. Oriental salad varieties can also be harvested throughout the winter, for example pakchoi and Chinese radishes. The right choice of compost is important. Remember that multipurpose compost will only feed for 4-6 weeks. So add extra feed when planting or use liquid feed with watering once the plants are growing. Use a soil based compost for runner beans and other tall varieties to act as ballast and improve stability in windy conditions. When using grow bags remember to give them a good pummelling when you get them home, to loosen the compaction and get air back into the compost. After the first crop add more fertiliser or garden compost to the bag and use again.



Pauline also reminded us that growing in small spaces was particularly suitable for people with a disability or reduced mobility. By using, for example, Link-a-Bords to produce a raised bed, or by putting raised beds on legs, they can be made accessible for people in wheel chairs or for anyone who has difficulty bending down or gardening at ground level.

Finally, even the smallest garden has room for a compost bin. It will enable you to recycle your garden and kitchen waste, it will provide a useful soil improver, and it will give you tremendous satisfaction. Having inspired and enthused her audience, Pauline finished by offering a selection of free seeds, courtesy of the seed manufacturers. She assured us that there was still time to plant for this season. With all the good advice she has given us, lack of space is not an excuse. So why not give it a go? Ian Clark

Coach trip to Hyde Hall

17th June 2017

On behalf of the members and guests, a huge thank you to Linda and Ian for organising this years coach trip and well done to us, for our excellent time keeping.

The weather was glorious and it was the hottest day of the year so far. On arrival we were greeted, given information sheets, the sticker that never stays where you stick it and two pounds of ice-cream money, all the ingredients for a proper summer outing. (I know it was a refund, thanks to Linda's sales drive!)

Many of us enjoyed the guided rose walks and later attended the rose growing demonstration. The speaker was Ian Bull, he came to the gardening club in February to talk to us about dry gardens and the design and creation of the one at Hyde Hall. Roses need lots of TLC to help combat disease. They need planting in the correct place, to be fed, watered, dead headed (if you don't want hips in the autumn) and a regular tidy of leaves and weeds from around the plant. I found the information on pruning interesting, this can be started in September depending on the type of rose, and the thought of pruning the bush varieties into a wine glass shape made me smile. I would like to share this photograph of the splendid Rosa Summer Wine 'Korizont' that Steph and I found.



All this talk of wine and not a drop in sight. Today was a celebration of fabulous roses in full bloom, enhancing the summer garden with their charm, colour and fragrance alongside all the other spectacular plants at Hyde Hall. I enjoyed our visit with its colourful customs and traditions, picnics, the strawberry cream tea on the lawn, the gentle sound of the harp, birds singing, panamas and straw hats. I hope you did to. Denise Crozier



Visit to Polstead Mill, Polstead

By kind permission of Lucinda Bartlett

Monday 3rd July 2017

Monday, 3rd July, directly after the Flower Show, saw us in the delightful garden of Lucinda Bartlett at Polstead Mill. One of thousand's of gardens to be found in the Yellow Book, opening for Charity and raising in 2016 the sum of £2.7 million for good causes such as Macmillan, Marie Curie, Perennial and more.

A perfect evening for the visit, the garden had something to interest everyone, water provided by the River Box, a modern productive walled garden, vegetables, fruit including ripe peaches and an oven built into the wall for pizza and roasting the Sunday lunch. Nearby we enjoyed home-cooked refreshments with Tea and Coffee.

As the Sun slowly set we continued our tour, the last rays of sunlight just catching the taller plants around one of the seating areas, no doubt for guests, for I guess the owner has little time to sit and contemplate with so much garden to care for.

Michael Warren.



The productive walled garden with BDGC members attracted to the refreshments on the corner patio.



Last rays of sunlight catching the cardoon LHS and the foliage of an Indian Bean Tree (Catalpa) whilst beyond comfortable seating invites.



River Box, - clear waters slowly flowing

The garden has been developed since 2002, it has formal and informal areas, a wild flower meadow and a large productive kitchen garden. The R Box runs through the garden and there is a mill pond, which gives opportunity for damp gardening, while much of the rest of the garden is arid and is planted to minimise the need for watering.

10th anniversary Show newsletter

I am planning to publish a newsletter in August covering the last ten years of our Gardening Club Show. If you have any memories, comments or photos of the last 10 years that you would like to share I would be delighted to receive them.

Either email: anthej@btinternet.com, deliver or send to my address: Honeysuckle Cottage, Straight Rd, Battsford, IP14 2HP (near the Community Centre) or bring to the next meeting on 7th August. Tx Ant

A trip to Hemingstone Hall (Bill re- visits his roots)

On Saturday 24th June Bill and I had an excellent afternoon at Hemingstone Hall, the place of Bill's birth - well he was actually born just down the road at the appropriately named Brewery Farm, sounds about right!

Anyway, this was opened as part of "The Great Garden Trail" raising funds for St Elizabeth Hospice. We began by following a rocky stream down to a pond full of waterlilies, two deckchairs on some decking and a little rowing boat just asking to be taken out for a row!

The garden consists of many areas including a sunken garden with an ornamental koi pond, walled garden, woodland garden and stunning herbaceous borders full of bees and butterflies and set off by the magnificent red brick hall. This was rounded off by a very welcome cup of tea and slice of cake.

"The Great Garden Trail" began back in April but continues until the end of July with several more gardens opening including St Elizabeth Hospice garden itself.

Check out the website:

stelizabethhospice.org.uk/greatgardentrail

Daphne



Hemingstone Hall is a Dutch gabled, Jacobean country house built in 1620 by William Style. It is a Grade 1 listed building with fine panelled rooms and vivid Jacobean wall paintings. It's grounds are of historic importance and include a listed walled garden by Lanning Roper.

Future events

Monday 7th August, 7.30pm

'The Perennial Mr Potter'

Bryan Thurlow

Monday 4th September, 7.30pm

Mini Show & Social evening

More details to follow

Monday 2nd October, 7.30pm

AGM & talk

"The medicine chest in your garden"

Desiree Shelley Medical Herbalist

Monday 6th November, 7.30pm

"Garden Pests - Cohabit, Conserve or Control?"

Ian Bedford (John Innes)

Monday 4th December, 7pm

Annual Quiz

George Bethell

Date for your 2018 diary

Friday 19th January

Annual meal at The Barn, Alder Carr



Answers to Crossword in last edition

Chelsea Flower Show

A personal opinion

What do people think about Chelsea Flower Show these days? I'm afraid I sound a bit like Victoria Meldrew, but I think it has been taken over by the media & avant-garde designers, becoming, in my opinion, a fantasy show, spectacular to look at but not what gardening is all about. The 'Best in Show' garden looked to me like a neglected grave-yard!

I have a few more moans whilst I'm at it. I feel that there should be a cap on how much is spent on a garden, as designers are now spending thousands of pounds importing mature trees etc. I feel strongly about this as more and more charities are advertising in this way by sponsoring a garden. Not a bad idea, but I object to thousands of pounds of charity donations being spent on a garden and not on research or aid.

I don't even bother to watch much of the Chelsea Flower Show coverage on the television these days, as they are more interested in the 'celebrities' than the flowers. The newspapers had more coverage of what the Duchess of Cambridge was wearing and the fact that she picked up and ate a tomato she had dropped than on the exhibits. To be fair, 'Gardeners World' did visit a number of stands showing the most amazing displays of flowers, and I'm sure the thousands of visitors to the Show had a wonderful time and enjoyed viewing the gardens and stands. I just wish the whole event would stop trying to be too clever and just concentrate on the glorious pastime of gardening.



The M & G garden or the 'neglected grave-yard'

This article was posted through my letterbox with no clue as to who wrote it. I have some sympathy with it but what do other people think?