

February

BDGC Newsletter

2018

Issue 45



*Christmas
Wreath
Workshop
2017*

Saturday 2nd December

Wreath Making Workshop

On 2 December 2017 the Gardening Club held its annual Christmas wreath making workshop at Battsford Village Hall. This is a great way of getting in the mood for Christmas.

This year saw the highest number of attendees, with more than 20 enthusiastic and festive participants, who, buoyed by the sound of Christmas tunes, chose from an array of foliage, baubles and other Christmas decorations brought by Linda Clark and Caroline Wicking

Once everyone was equipped, Jackie Collings did a great job of keeping us on track, showing us how to get started and then providing on-going advice as we made our wreaths.

We were rewarded at half-time with a welcome glass of mulled wine (or coffee) and mince pies, plus the opportunity to purchase festive table decorations and swags made by Jackie who was donating the proceeds to Papworth Hospital.

At the end of the three hours, a variety of different wreaths had been produced, from the herbal wreath created by Desiree Shelley, to the more traditional or rustic variety. Whatever the style, all were impressive and ready to decorate a wall or door.

A really enjoyable morning and a jolly time was had by all -
ho ho ho!
Gabrielle Pirzad

A few words from Jackie: The workshop was brilliantly organised by Caroline & Linda. The wreaths created this year were beautiful and varied. A lot of the greenery came from Barham Hall where I know the gardener. The owner came and asked what we were doing but as the gardener has carte blanche over the whole garden, I was not arrested! Very many thanks for my gift and for the raffle money which was given to me for Papworth Hospital.



Phew

I need a
rest!

Monday 6th November

'Garden bugs - Cohabit, Conserve or Control?'

Dr Ian Bedford, John Innes Centre



They're behind you! No, not the start of the pantomime season, but a talk by Dr. Ian Bedford entitled 'Garden bugs - Cohabit, Conserve or Control?' And a reminder that bugs are all around us. In our homes, our gardens, and even in the hall where we were sitting.

Ian is head of Entomology at the John Innes Centre where he has worked for nearly 40 years. In those early days the research laboratory was little more than a converted greenhouse, but the centre now boasts modern, state of the art facilities. Including sophisticated containment measures to make sure that the insects that Ian and his team are working on do not escape into the local environment, where they could cause serious damage.

Much of his work, he told us is with tropical species that decimate staple crops such as rice and cassava (tapioca) in third world countries. In more recent times, the salad crops grown intensively in Spain have also come under attack, from a species of white fly that carries a virus that can wipe out crops. With supermarkets insisting on the products being free from pesticide residue, the farmers have few defences against the white fly and have turned to Ian and his colleagues for a solution.

Ian told us how his interests in insects and other creepy crawlies started as a child, on his explorations of the South Downs with his two cousins. His enthusiasm was encouraged by the local Doctor, who would take him on insect gathering expeditions. But whereas the good doctor was only interested in collecting specimens, Ian was more interested in the live insects and in their behaviour.

To make sure we were all still awake, Ian started by showing us magnified images of dust mites. They are all around us in their millions, and they are feeding on our skin! But only when we have finished with it and discarded it as tiny scales. He followed this up with a picture of the giant house spider, which can often be seen in the Autumn scurrying across the carpet. Not to worry, Ian assured us. These are the males, who are in search of a mate and only have one thing on their minds. The females on the other hand live indoors all year round, hidden under the sink or secreted away in some dark corner of the house. His message was to let them be, as they do a good job keeping down flies and other insects.



Dust mite

This was a reminder that not all bugs are undesirable. They can often be useful in clearing away debris and rubbish, and in keeping other undesirable creepy crawlies under control. Which brought us back to the focus of Ian's talk. 'Cohabit, Conserve or Control?'

In the garden, as in the house, many insects are beneficial; such as ladybirds that help to keep green fly and black fly under control. Also, ground beetles and centipedes (one pair of legs per segment, apparently), but less so millipedes (two pairs of legs per segment). Wasps too can be of benefit, we were told, attacking the caterpillars of moths and butterflies that could otherwise ravage our gardens. Ian's presentation was not for the squeamish, as he showed us a slide of maggots eating their way out of an unfortunate caterpillar host.

Other insects were less desirable and some form of control was often necessary. The measures available fell into three categories. Chemical, biological and physical. Chemical based remedies were now few in number, with many having been banned for use in the garden. One of the few still available was Provado Ultimate Bug Killer, which contains a neonicotinoid chemical known as thiacloprid. Whilst undoubtedly effective in controlling many of the insects that can attack our gardens, there are also widely publicised concerns about the effect of neonicotinoids on the bee population. Recent studies have found that these insecticides can be long lasting, and they have been found increasingly in garden centre plants, adding to the threat to the bee populations in our gardens.

Biological controls were expensive, and were only really cost effective in the greenhouse, which left us with physical controls, such as netting and trapping, that were often the most effective.

Ian both alarmed and intrigued us with his many examples of insect behaviour. From the leaf chewers and root feeders that attacked our plants, often in ingenious and hard to detect ways, to examples such as the Large Blue Butterfly that tricked ant colonies into caring for its caterpillars.

Ian finished as he had started, with another horror story. If you think we saw off the Spanish invasion when we sank the Armada then think again. And stand by to repel boarders from your borders! The Spanish Slug has arrived in East Anglia. Up to six inches long, and breeding rapidly, it is the stuff of nightmares.

The slugs arrived in Ian's garden in force in 2012, which proves that celebrity and expertise are no defence against nature. This was bad news for Ian, but also perhaps for the slugs who had picked on the wrong man! After some research and collaboration with Dr. Les Noble of Aberdeen University, Ian was able to quickly establish these were Spanish slugs, *Arion vulgaris*, and that this was the first mass observation of this species within the UK. They breed rapidly, and are voracious feeders. The slugs in Ian's garden had decimated his vegetable patch but had also devoured a mouse carcass and even dog poo.

These Spanish Slugs are resistant to slug pellets and can shrug off copious amounts of salt, which makes them difficult to control. Ian's recommended approach for keeping on top of them was to set traps using rabbit flavoured dog food. Then tip the slugs into a bucket of water containing washing up liquid, which makes it difficult for them to climb out of the bucket, where they will eventually drown. Finally, before disposing of them, add bleach to the water to kill off the diseases that they often carry that are a threat to hedgehogs and other wild life.

Ian Clarke



Watch out for the Spanish Invasion!

Monday 4th December
Quiz with George Bethell

Everyone loves a quiz and everyone loves a George quiz even more. This was very evident when 50 members came to enjoy a fun evening with the usual fantastic mix of questions ranging from sport, culture, food and drink all cunningly interconnected, and many of course, with a horticultural slant.

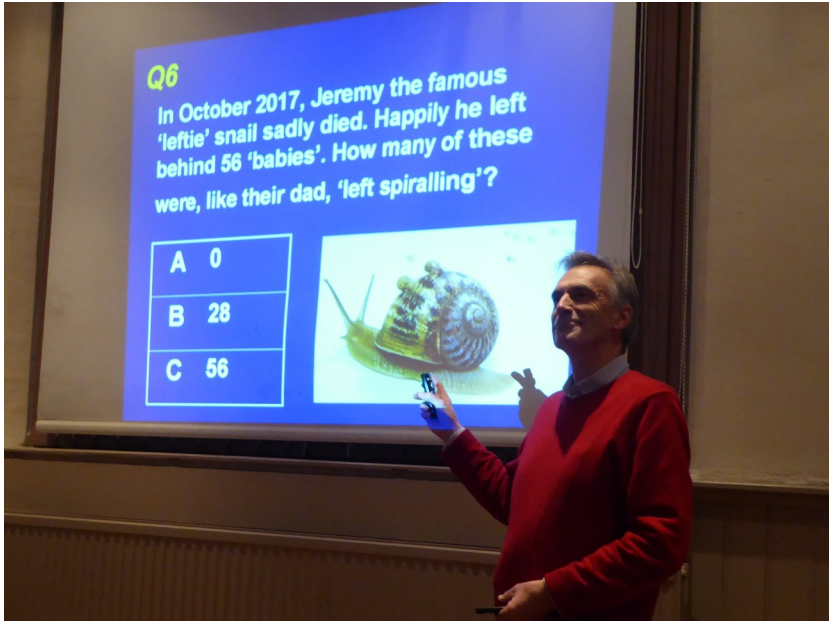
Team names such as Brussel Sprouts, Battisford Buttercups, Evergreens and Little Weeds were invented but a pest came out on top with the Rosemary Beetles just beating Four plus One. George was pleased that after eight years Paul and Mike had managed to find a winning team - ably assisted by Sandra, Jim, Denis and Steve.

Sandra, Jim and Daphne combined to get together a most enjoyable free buffet and were duly thanked for their efforts, but the biggest thanks must go to maestro George for the time and effort that he puts in to produce such a polished and entertaining evening's entertainment. Not only that he provides all the prizes as well - thank you George.

Bill Baldry



The Rosemary beetles triumph



Did you get it right?

Did you know that it means his 'private bits' are on the wrong side so he could only mate with another 'leftie' There are claims that Jeremy is not the father but the result of two other leftie snails, found after a nation wide appeal to be his partner, mated with each other and he was left out in the cold. Perhaps he died of a broken heart!

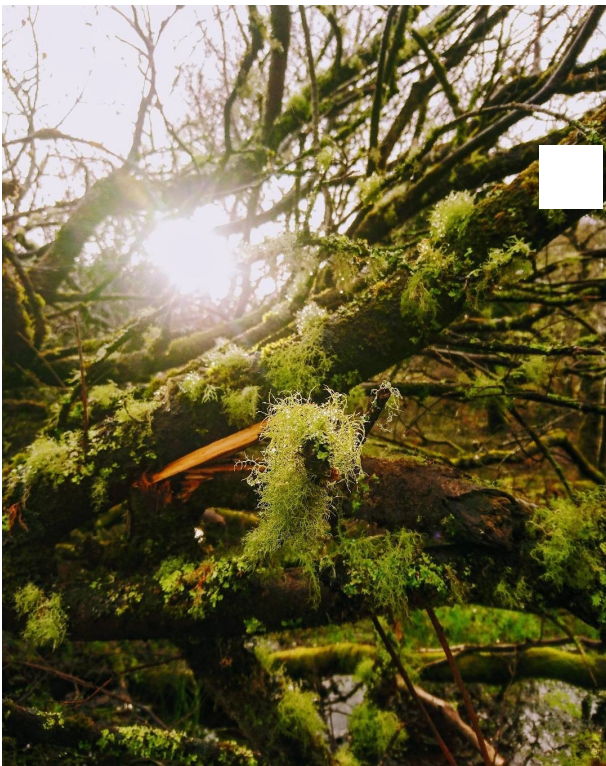


Quizzing is a serious business!

Wabi Sabi

Some of you, including me, will be pleased to hear that this is predicted to take off in 2018.

It is an 'art' practised by the Japanese since the 15th century and involves accepting the natural cycle of growth, decay and death. The key is to balance nature and nurture and enjoy your garden's natural imperfections!



Purple vegetables & fruit

The trend for purple vegetables and fruit is not just one of the latest fads - they contain anthocyanin which it is claimed have many health benefits including improved memory function (especially in the over 70s!), keeping your liver and heart healthy, and the prevention of cancer. They also improve your vision and reduce high cholesterol.



Egg Plant



Cauliflower



Sweet Potato



Pepper



Carrots



Radishes



Strawberries



Raspberries

Gardening Secrets

Water ferns and other acid loving plants such as hydrangea with brewed tea for luscious shiny leaves



Planting Seeds

- Before planting seeds - Microwave or bake the soil
- Sprinkle cinnamon on the soil to prevent fungus
- Rooting in water? - add an aspirin
- Sprinkle flavoured gelatine over seeds sown outdoors

Companion planting

- Morning Glory planted with corn or melon will increase the yield
- Basil planted with tomatoes will repel some pests
- Do not plant peas or beans near garlic, leeks or onions
- Marigolds and monardas protect cucumbers from nematodes
- Plant radishes with cabbage, cauliflower etc. to deter cabbage moths

Keep Aphids off your roses by burying dried or cut up banana skins an inch or two beneath your roses - really??!!



Roses

- The time to prune roses is when your forsythia starts to bloom
- For stronger colour sprinkle Epsom Salts round each plant
- Train climbing roses with mint dental floss - its almost invisible!
- Protect from blackspot by spraying with baking soda and soya

Sprinkle coffee grounds around the base of vegetables to deter rabbits & squirrels



Weed Suppression

Cardboard and newspaper make excellent mulch for weed suppression. Flatten the boxes and use thick piles of newspaper. In the late autumn. wet the ground, cover with the cardboard or newspaper and then wet it. Leave until the following late spring. It will also retain moisture in the soil.



Friday 19th January

Annual Dinner



Outside the evening was cold and frosty, with the bonus of a clear, starry sky, but inside 35 gardening club members shared a warm and happy evening. The food was delicious and the staff were as friendly as ever. Our table enjoyed a wide selection from the menu and the conversation flowed freely. We pulled the crackers and groaned at the jokes, which Joe was so good at guessing we suspect he actually writes them. The only down side was the rather slow food service, but this did give us all time for more talk and drink.

Thank you very much to Debbie for organising the evening and to Daphne for the pretty place cards, which she made out of Thompson & Morgan catalogues. Paul had a bespoke card of himself!

A Happy New Year to everyone and we look forward to another interesting year and friendly company with BDGC.

Jane Pope



'Superb' garden to visit

Ousden House near Newmarket post code CB8 8TN

Open under NGS on April 22nd 2018

Special features include a double crinkle-crankle yew hedge, a clock tower, a moat garden and a pair of amazing sculptured horses made from spare car parts.

Recommended by Jackie Collings



Gardening Club Events 2018

Monday 5th February
Cambridge Colleges and their gardens
Rodney Tibbs

Monday 5th March
A Complete Guide to Clematis
Peter Skeggs-Gooch

Monday 9th April (second Monday)
Bays Farm, Forward Green IP14 5HU
All please arrive at 6pm; £5 Inc. refreshments

Monday 30th April
Introduction to Bosch Home & Garden
with sharing session on garden related topics
Helen Moore, Design Engineer at Bosch

Monday 14th May (second Monday)
Fullers Mill Garden, West Stow, Bury IP28 6HD
All arrive 6.30pm, entrance £6.50, teas £3.50

Monday 4th June
Woolpit Nurseries, Woolpit, IP30 9QS
All arrive 7pm; Free; no refreshments

Saturday 16th June
Coach trip to Peter Beales roses, Attleborough
(includes lunch stop)
Then Sea Mere Gardens, Hingham, Norfolk, NR8 4LP
Details to follow

Monday 2nd July
The Orchard Barn Project - 5 years on
Sarah Partridge

Its Sunbelievable!

Thompson & Morgan is launching its latest world exclusive plant breeding success. Sunbelievable is a truly phenomenal unique sunflower that flowers continuously from June until the first frosts. In trials, plants were still blooming in late November and Incredibly, over 1,000 flowers were produced on each plant during the growing season! Gardening Club members have the opportunity to grow this exciting plant as it is one of the T & M plants for the Show in July (however only the first 30 people will receive plants so make sure you come to the next meeting with £10 to secure yours)



Saturday 7th July, 11th Annual Garden Show
Schedules will be ready in February and T & M plants and potatoes for the March meeting. The T & M plants will be limited to the first 30 people who pay their £10 so pay early to be sure of them.

Future dates:

Monday 6th August - Drinkstone Park (Visit)

Monday 3rd September - Henstead Exotic Garden (talk)

Monday 1st October - AGM

Monday 5th November - Giant Pumpkins

Monday 3rd December - Annual Quiz

If you would like information about Battsford & District Gardening Club please contact Bill Baldry, 12 Tannery Road, Combs, IP14 2EL. 01449 672168

Or go to our website:

www.battsfordgardeningclub.org