

# May 2019

*Battisford & District*

*Gardening Club*

*Newsletter*

Issue 49



Everyone knows that butterflies love Buddleia but who does not like it and has given it a black mark?

Answer: Defra, who have called the plant 'an invasive alien' that has spread too widely, out competing native vegetation and reducing biodiversity. It is also accused of damaging buildings and railway lines. They recommend we cut off the seed heads to stop it spreading

However the humble Buddleia has its champions. Although not a UK native, it was brought from China in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, The RHS recommends it as a desirable shrub. Nature conservation societies, although acknowledging its invasiveness also recognise its huge value to the environment.

The Butterfly Conservation Charity says it is an important nectar source in both town and country and of course it is paradise for butterflies, numbers of which have declined in the UK by 70% since 1976.

So come on Defra, leave our buddleias alone and concentrate on much more dangerous alien invaders. However we gardeners are a law abiding lot so we will cut off the seed heads as requested – in fact if you do this you are likely to encourage more flowers.

A report on Ian Bedford's talk on 'Butterfly gardening' can be found later in the newsletter and yes he did recommend buddleia (though apparently butterflies don't like the orange one)

Friday 18th January

BDGC Annual Dinner

After a number of years at Alder Carr Barn Restaurant, we chose a new venue and the meal was held at Stowmarket Golf Club. 46 people met there for their two or three course choices. The food on our table was well received, being tasty and well presented. The portions were very good, although the vegetarian dish led to speculation over whether it should be eaten or climbed, on account of its considerable size. It was apparently very tasty. Our table was relieved when the lights were brightened and we could see both the food and each other.

The serving staff were very friendly and helpful and did an excellent job. One or two of us were quite chilly for most of the evening, which may have been where we were seated. Some people felt the ambience was a bit lacking compared to previous venues, but the food and staff were very good.

We pulled our Christmas crackers and soon discovered we all had the same joke. So that those who did not attend don't feel they missed out, this was:

Q: What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney?

A: Claustrophobia!

Ho ho ho! Maybe having one joke was the joke or perhaps we were just over thinking it! We all had a happy and companionable evening and it was a good start to the Gardening Club year. Jane Pope

Monday 4th February

Auriculas

Lucy Skinner

Wootens of Wenhaston (between Halesworth and Blythburgh) specialise in Bearded Iris, Hemerocallis (Day Lily), Pelargoniums, Hardy Geraniums and Auriculas. Lucy spoke about Auriculas, their history and care. Auriculas today have been bred over 300 years from plants found wild in the Alps; *Primula Auricula*, *P. Hirsuta* and *P. Pubescens*. These three species have been intensively bred to perfection by 'florists', for many years always men, from the time they were brought in to Britain in the C17th by Flemish weavers and they have been popular here ever since. Gradually the breeding became competitive and the Victorians designed Auricula Theatres. At times the demand for Auriculas was as intense as tulip mania. The impact of the Great War led to a lull in breeding and showing Auriculas, but from the 1950s onwards they have become popular again.

Lucy described the 7 different types of flower or 'pips'. The Sells, one colour and can be difficult to grow, the Alpines, strong plants and a range of colours, the Stripes, also not so easy, the Doubles, with subtle shades and very vigorous and strong, the Edges, with a green edge to the flower, which is a mutation and is actually leaf tissue around the outside, the Fancies with pointed petals and the Borders, similar to the Hirsuta.

Moving on to their care, Lucy was adamant that Auriculas are easy to grow. You just have to mimic their natural growing environment. Despite our distinct lack of Alpine ranges in Suffolk, just keep them dry in winter, protect from rain and snow and maximise their light levels. They are happy in below zero temperatures but need good ventilation. Water them weekly with a potassium feed in the spring and enjoy their beautiful flowers. Keep them out of the rain. From June to August, neglect is the key. They should be kept in the shade and left alone apart from twice weekly watering.



Late summer is the time to collect seed and from September to November you can begin dividing or repotting. Check for vine weevil. Lucy said it is easy to breed Auriculas. It should take 2 to 3 years from seed to flower.

Lucy gave out Auricula care sheets and noted the Wootens Auricula Open day on 27<sup>th</sup> April. They also have a propagation course in August. Don't forget, if you do not have any Auriculas in your garden, we have had primulas here since Anglo Saxon times and we can take pleasure in the Cowslip, Oxslip and primrose on the banks around Battsford and in our gardens. Jane Pope

### The Auriculum Theatre

The Auriculum Theatre was invented in the 17th century as a means of protecting them from wet weather and this has become the traditional way of displaying the plants. The plants are arranged in rows against a black cloth background



# Monday 4th March

## Spring planting for summer colour

### Matthew Long

### Riverside Bulbs

#### Bulbs galore!

On 4th March a packed hall of gardening club members was treated to an extensive slide show of summer flowers. The talk included plants from bulbs, rhizomes, corms and tubers. They were considered in alphabetical order. Matthew was obviously familiar with many of the varieties and commented on both the colour variations and scent. He explained which were suitable for flower arranging and even included a few foliage plants.

To achieve good results most 'bulbs' need feeding with potash, such as half strength tomato food to promote flowering. Knowing the natural environment of the plants and trying to mimic it is always a good strategy. However, many of the more tender plants were recommended for use as annuals. Apparently the Dutch buy, plant and enjoy them for a season before discarding them. Matthew suggested we might like to adopt the same strategy!

This was an ambitious talk given that there were over 400 varieties to choose from. There were many beautiful slides but the format could have been more varied. Rather than rush through such a vast collection, information about a selection of fewer plants would have been easier to listen to. Clearer recommendations of plants suitable for our local conditions and just a few of his favourites would have been welcome! It was a pity Matthew was unable to bring bulbs for sale as taking home unusual plants from such talks is always a bonus.

Stella Zethraeus

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Matthew Long at Riverside Bulbs , Brent Eleigh has over 450 bulbs available and describes himself as 'specialising in bulbs for the keen gardener and those with a larger garden who want something different as well as reliable'. He is happy to advise anyone on the most suitable bulbs for their particular needs. Matthew has a selection of more unusual plants as well as different varieties of the more familiar.



One of Matthew's more unusual plants is this Taiwan Cobra Lily (*Arisaema concinnum*) and it is well named! It flowers in late spring and grows to about 36"



Matthew can't understand the decline in popularity of the gladiolus- is it anything to do with a certain well known Dame? Grandiflorus 'Green Star' is this unusual green variety

### Moist Soil?

Many of Matthew's plants seem to require 'moist well drained humus rich soil'

But how do we achieve this? As you can imagine there are many 'expert' opinions to advise us.

One simple definition is that it is 'soil that does not dry out between watering' But how much watering and how often?

We are told that to achieve the ideal balance the soil should be 25% percent air and 25% water but we are not told how you measure it.

We are told that good soil has the right nutrients for feeding the plants, a texture that holds the water long enough for the plant roots to access it, but well draining enough that the plant roots are not sitting in water.

The best soil texture for growing plants is 'loam' and loam is equal amounts of sand, silt, and a little clay. Sand provides good aeration and drainage, silt helps with water retention and clay holds more nutrients.

There is a consensus among all experts that to maintain the quality of your loam soil you need to add organic matter, such as compost or rotted manure., every year .This is an ongoing process because organic matter breaks down in the soil quite quickly.

If you currently have clay soil it may take 4 years adding organic matter to improve your soil though you can speed this process by also adding coarse materials such as perlite, lava rock, fine gravel, coarse sand, and wood chips. Good luck!

Monday 1st April

## 'Butterfly Gardening'

Dr Ian Bedford

John Innes Institute

At the well-attended April meeting, members welcomed back Dr. Ian Bedford, an eminent research entomologist from the John Innes Centre, where he has worked for the past 42 years. His subject this time was butterflies (his great love) and during his interesting talk he explained the difference between butterflies and moths and described the butterfly's amazing metamorphosis from a caterpillar to a beautiful butterfly.

He explained that due to loss of habitat and climate change the butterfly population was decreasing in many cases, but it's not all bad news as some migratory butterflies were now establishing themselves permanently in the U.K.

He suggested ways in which we could encourage them into our gardens by growing the plants they feed on that have high nectar content. He also suggested having a large bed of nettles but I'm afraid I'm not going down that route! Sadly our use of pesticides in our gardens and on farms pollutes the earth and rivers, then enters the food chain poisoning the insects. Most of the members present agreed to change their gardening habits to encourage butterflies into their gardens.

Bill thanked Ian for his very interesting talk. Bill had also asked Ian to try out a new microphone system the club had invested in, but after problems with interference Ian abandoned it

Jackie Collings

Attracting butterflies to your garden whilst also creating an attractive colourful garden is not too challenging. Plants such as valerian, verbena, sedum, erysimum, lavender and of course shrubs such as buddleia, hebe and honeysuckle are all attractive to butterflies and look good in your garden.

However some butterflies also like ivy, privet, common knapweed and field scabious which some of us may not value quite so much.

Then of course there would be no butterflies without caterpillars and apparently caterpillars are quite fussy eaters. They like holly, ivy, brambles, wild grasses, wild flowers such as lady's smock and wild garlic and of course nettles which not many of us welcome into our gardens. They also like your vegetable garden particularly the brassicas. I read a comment from caterpillar supporter that if you find caterpillars on your cabbages don't squash them, just move them to your nasturtiums! Mmm I'm not sure.

Of course if you have room for it a wild flower meadow that is ideal. Editor



Above: Peacock butterfly

Below: Peacock butterfly caterpillar loves nettles!



## Punchbowl tidy-up

A small number of Garden Club stalwarts met at the Punchbowl recently to tidy up the back garden. As it has become a 'play area' for children during the summer it was decided to weed and tidy up the plants that are already there rather than compete with Wisley. From late spring to autumn Bill organises a watering rota to maintain all the pots at the pub in good order. If you are able to volunteer to help this year please let Bill know 01449 672168 - and he will sort out a rota to fit everyone in. Many thanks to everyone who has helped support our local community pub over the past few years.

The main 'decorative' area provided by the Club are the pots and tubs at the front. Well done to those who came and helped.



## Plants for Charity & Open Garden

As many of you will know Jackie Collings has the most beautiful garden in Combs. Her grandson has been working hard potting up plants to sell for Papworth Hospital in memory of Jackie's husband and former BDGC member, Stuart. Call in at her house, Woodstock, on Park Rd, Combs, IP14 2JS (on L. hand side just past Jacks Lane )and view the selection. If she is out please put the money in the envelope provided and post through her letterbox

Jackie is opening her lovely garden for Papworth on Sunday July 14th 11am—5pm. Plants for sale, tea & cakes and her collection of doll's houses to view. Jackie would love to see you there.

## The Story of "Cherry" Ingram

Every cloud has a silver lining, so the saying goes. Wiped out by the vicious cough so many have suffered recently, I was listening to various radio programmes on BBCiplayer and I stumbled across the omnibus reading of a book called "Cherry" Ingram: The Englishman who saved Japan's blossoms". Written by the Japanese author, Naoko Abe, it tells the story of Collingwood Ingram, (1880 to 1980), whose passion for cherry trees began after he visited Japan in 1902 and 1907. He found two cherry trees in his own garden in Beneden in Kent in 1919 and he fell in love with cherry blossoms or sakura.

On a return visit to Japan in 1926 he was shocked to see the loss of diversity of the native cherries and saw that a cloned cherry was taking over everywhere. Ingram knew he had a 'Taihaku', a brilliant 'great white' cherry tree in his garden. He swore to return it to Japan and eventually succeeded. Over the rest of his long life, Ingram became a leading world expert on cherry trees. "Cherry" Ingram is a fascinating portrait of the man, sakura and their status in Japan. Published by Random House or listen on Iplayer where it is still available .

Jane Pope.



Taihaku—The Great White Cherry Tree

The Rotary Club of Ipswich, my Rotary Club (one of four in Ipswich) has a short break away each year for interested members. France has been the destination in previous years but this year a five day trip to Benalmadena, Costa del Sol was organised by a member Karen Jones who works for Travel Quest, part of the Fred Olsen organisation. As you can I imagine, my interest was not on the surfing, Mountain Chair Lift or the Bird of Prey demonstration but the plants! The first unusual tree I spotted on the transfer from Malaga Airport was *Erythrina cafra*, a native from South Eastern Africa. More specimens came within reach of my camera later. On a day tour to Monte up in the mountains, bright yellow flowering shrubs adorned the hillside. At the coffee stop I discovered it to be Gorse, *Ulex europaeus* but with very silvery stems and thorns, a different form to our own version. Remember 'when Gorse is out of bloom, kissing is out of tune' (it never is ! ). White and pink flowered *Cistus*, typical of the Mediterranean region were around and in Monte the largest Judas Trees I have ever seen (*Cercis siliquastrum*) were well able to support Judas if he choose to hang himself on one. My other mystery shrub making a bold statement by a roadside turned out to be *Wigandia caracasana*, large heads of mauve/blue flowers and for the first time a Japanese Umbrella tree *Brassaia actinophylla* actually in flower. I was well please with my new collection of photos and the fact the visit was out of the holiday season, to say the area adjoining Torremelinos was 'built up' would be an understatement!

Michael Warren



Erythrina



Brassaia



Wigandia

### Garden Open

BDGC member Alison Clark is opening her 'developing' garden for the Great Garden Trail for St Elizabeth Hospice Started last August when she moved to Stowmarket it is 1000 sqm with a flower garden, woodland garden, raised vegetable bed & embryonic shrubbery.

Alison's garden at 27 Temple Rd, Stowmarket, IP14 1AT is open on 2nd June 10am—6pm.

Alison is going to write an article in our August newsletter about how she started this garden from scratch and her ongoing plans. Please go and visit her garden for this good cause.

[www.stelizabethhospice.org.uk/great-garden-trail](http://www.stelizabethhospice.org.uk/great-garden-trail).

## Future Events

Monday 13th May

Visit to Otley Hall Gardens

Hall Lane, Otley IP6 9PA

All arrive for 7pm, £7.25 + £2 for refreshments

Park in marked gravel car park and walk up drive

Monday 3rd June

Moat House, Little Saxham, IP29 5LE

Arrive for 6.30, £8 inc tea with home made scones

Park on grass next to barn

Monday 1st July

Larks' Hill, Clopton Rd, Tuddenham, IP6 9BY

Arrive for 7pm, £7.25 + £2 refreshments

\*\*Car park 150 yards up road, **not open until 6.45.**

Saturday 6th July

12th Annual Show

Battisford Village Green

The Show goes ahead as normal, you will be able to drive in **just** to drop off for your entries, then park and return to arrange them. There is local parking. Set up strictly 10—11.30 . **NO LATE ENTRIES**

As ever we would like more children's entries and children will be able to enter on the day. Any child who lives in the area, who is related to someone who lives in the area or a BDGC member may enter.

Please come and support the Fete and the Show in its new venue

If you would like information about Battisford & District Gardening Club please contact Bill Baldry

12 Tannery Road, Combs, IP14 2EL. 01449 672168

Or go to our website:

[www.battisfordgardeningclub.org.uk](http://www.battisfordgardeningclub.org.uk)



Otley Hall Gardens



Moat House Gardens

### Name Quiz—all answers are flowers

1. Kitchen maid in Downton Abbey
2. Jamie Oliver's eldest daughter
3. Ex Chancellor's daughter
4. Mrs Bucket
5. Ena Sharples
6. Won an Oscar for 'The Piano'
7. 2015 Cinderella
8. UK wars 1455—1485
9. The Voice of M People
10. UK author who was made a Dame in 1987

- February Answers.** 1. Watering Can 2. Garden hose 3. Garden Fork 4. Sweet Potato 5. Brussels Sprout 6. Asparagus 7. Sweetcorn 8. Crocus 9. Gardenia 10. Horticultural 11. Seed Potato 12. Sweet Pea 13. Green house 14. Wheelbarrow 15. Lawnmower

