



ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

NEWSLETTER - APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2020

What a year so far after all the optimism of a new growing season, shows and gardens to visit and holidays planned to lockdown on my birthday. I have been lucky as all my family are well including my two stepdaughters working in Intensive Care in Salisbury and Brighton and I have been able to spend nearly every day on the allotment, but not before decorating the bedroom. We will be giving out information on any Association activities through our website and emails whilst the pandemic continues. Please stay safe and keep social distancing.

Harry Theobald editor.

14th Summer Horticultural Show

We have not cancelled the Show yet but will base our decision on availability of the United Reformed Church and the Government's distancing requirements. You will be kept informed of any decision we make.

The Schedule for this year's Show on 22nd August is now in the trading hut and can be downloaded from the Association website along with the entry form and colouring sheet.

Talks

The following talks have been organised for seasons 2020/21

17/09/20 Coping with the UK weather in the garden (including shift in the season) Ray Broughton

15/10/20 Plants for Winter interest-illustrated with photographs and plants Marcus Dancer

12/11/20 Preparing Garden For Wildlife. Alan Edmondson

21/01/21 Talk on raised beds, no dig method of composting and information on tools which can be used with one hand Elizabeth Waterman.

18/02/21 Growing in containers Barry Newman.

18/03/21 All about herbs illustrated with plants Robert Biggs

15/04/21 to be announced

We will speak with the United Reformed Church our usual venue and also follow Government's social distancing requirements before we make any decisions.

SAA Annual Outing

This year's two remaining outings will go ahead subject to Government guidelines.

SNIPPETS

Later in the year it is hoped the following RHS Shows may continue, but they will keep following Government advice and update members of any changes

RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival (formerly 7-12 July) rescheduled for 9-15 September

RHS Garden Hyde Hall Flower Show, 5-9 August

RHS Garden Rosemoor Flower Show, 14-16 August

RHS Garden Wisely Flower Show, 8-13 September

Scone Palace near Perth is to launch The Scottish Garden Show in 2021. The inaugural event, organised in-house by the Scone Palace team, will be held in the 100-acre grounds of Scone Palace on June 5 and 6. They hope to include flower shows, classes, trade exhibitors, food and drink stalls, nurseries selling products, flower arranging and garden tours. For more info visit www.scottishgardenshow.com

Most gardeners might not consider growing their own peanuts, but nursery Lubera now offers five 'monkey nuts' cultivars (*Arachis hypogaea*) in assorted colours which it said, are easy to grow in the UK. It suggests planting in May for a September or October harvest (when half of the leaves have died down). Plants are £4.50 in a 1.3L pot from www.lubera.co.uk

Struggling garden centres and nurseries have been given a much needed shot in the arm by new initiatives aimed at finding new ways to sell and promote plants and products that might otherwise have to be scrapped. The Horticultural Trades Association has launched the Plants Near Me (www.plantsnearme.hta.org.uk) scheme which helps people to find local growers and garden centres that are now offering home deliveries in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. The RHS has launched a dedicated webpage www.rhs.org.uk/supportournurseries listing award winning growers and their contact details to enable gardeners to seek out and order plants online from exhibitors usually seen at RHS Shows. *Candide*, the online gardening information app, has also offered its technical resources to help independent nurseries growers and gardeners to promote their services, opening a free Marketplace enabling 550 nurseries with websites to sell directly to gardeners. Download the app at www.candidegardening.com. *GrowNation* is a new marketplace platform built to support the garden centre and horticultural industry by making online sales a reality. The online platform enable garden centres to create their own unique address and storefront upload their range of products for sale onto the website so the general public can continue to make secure payments by credit or debit card. Info on www.grownation.co.uk. The Horticultural Trades Association has produced a safe trading guide for its members covering what can and can't be sold as well as advice on adhering to social distancing queuing and dealing with checkout procedures. The new procedures take into account that gardening customers like to browse and often make impulse purchases. The sign up process will be managed via the HTA website www.plantsnearme.hta.org.uk where the public can also see which businesses are following HTA advice. The National Farmers Union and HTA are making a case for the UK Government to adopt a 'plant scrappage scheme' to help the ornamentals flower industry which could lose around £687 million to the end of June.

Gardens

London's Natural History Museum is set to transform its five-acre gardens into a national centre for urban wildlife research, conservation and awareness-with the aim of initiating a national drive to re-engage people with the natural world and urban diversity. Due for completion in 2023, NHM's Urban Nature Project will develop and deliver online, onsite and national monitoring programmes and will include an onsite education centre and a scientific 'living lab' where scientists, volunteers and the public can study changes in urban nature. For more info visit www.nhm.ac.uk

Prospect Cottage, the seaside refuge of film maker and artist Derek Jarman has been saved for the nation after an appeal raised over £3m from over 8,000 pledges supported by grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund and Linbury Trust and private donations. Located on shingle in sight of the power station in Dungeness, Kent, the old fisherman's hut Jarman bought in 1986 soon became well known in fashion and gardening books after he created the distinctive colour scheme and developed the garden by collecting and arranging found objects and combining native maritime plants with colourful exotics.

A new online competition to find the nation's best gardens and plants while helping horticulturists facing hardship during the pandemic has been launched by horticultural charity Perennial. The Hortaid-20 gardening competition has 10 categories from best garden to best vegetable, including a children's section with each entry costing just £5. The overall winner will receive a £250 gardening hamper from Suttons, while all category winners will win a certificate signed by Alan Titmarsh and Jim Buttress and a chance to meet one of the judges. Closing date is August 15, 2020 with photos submitted by email to gardeningcompetition@perennial.org.uk. Entry details are at www.perennial.org.uk

Products & Services

London residents and visitors alike will enjoy this illustrated map of London's plant related destinations, from gardens to nurseries and florists. *A London Floral* costs £8.50 and is published by Finch Publishing. Website at www.finchpublishing.co.uk

For the first time the *RHS Plant Finder* lists increasingly popular cacti to help reflect the trend for growing more diverse plants both indoors and out. As well as a new feature on new plant highlights, the book also updates gardeners on the results of the RHS Plants for Bugs project that studied the best plant mixes to encourage invertebrates into gardens. The book retails at £14.99 or if purchased from the RHS online shop at www.rhsshop.co.uk costs £12.99.

Which Best Buys: **Best buy compost for patio pots:** (peat-based) Thompson & Morgan Incredicompost, Bord Na Mona Growise Pro 5 All Purpose. (peat-free) Sainsbury's Peat Free Multi-Purpose Compost, Dalefoot Wood Compost for potting.

Best buy controlled-release feeds: Chempak Yearlong Fertiliser, Miracle-Gro All Purpose Continuous Release Plant Food, Osmocote Controlled Release Plant Food.

Best buy Beetroots: 'Chioggia', 'Red Ace', 'Bona', 'Red Hawk', 'Red River'.

Best buy Camellias: 'Jill Totty' (White), 'Free Spirit' (Dark red), 'Kitty Berry' (Peach pink), 'St Ewe' (Bright pink), 'Black Lace' (Dark red), 'Spring Fling' (Red), 'Elizabeth Hawkins' (Bright red).

Best buy baking-potato varieties: 'Winston', 'Stemster'.

Best buy Deciduous Azaleas: 'Anneke' (great autumn colour), 'Canon's Double' (double flowers), 'Golden Eagle' (handsome autumn leaves), 'Daviesii' (neat compact plants), 'Klondyke' (huge flowers), 'Niamh' (three seasons of leaf cover), 'Whitethroat' (good for containers), 'Narcissiflorum' (great for scent).

Best buy 'Natural' Feeds: Plant Grow Natural Fertiliser (pungent aroma), Liquid Gold Leaf (unique ingredients)

Best buy Dwarf French Beans: 'Aquilon', 'Golddukat', 'Mistik', 'Maxi', 'Purple Teepee', 'Rondo', 'Yin Yang'.

The RHS has unveiled plans for the first ever 'virtual' RHS Chelsea Flower Show as a result of the coronavirus crisis. The online show will take place during the usual Chelsea week May 18-23. The RHS website will host an online platform sharing an array of free inspiring and innovative content spanning the spectrum of the gardening world. The BBC is also producing a special series of programmes celebrating the show which will air throughout 'virtual' show week on BBC One and Two. Each day from Sunday 24 May the BBC will broadcast new footage from show presenters Sophie Rayworth, Joe Swft, Nicki Chapman and Monty Don, while showcasing a compilation of Chelsea clips from the past decade.

Science and Research

University College London is inviting gardeners to take part in its study of compostable plastic items and how well they break down in home compost bins. Go to www.bigcompostexperiment.org.uk to take part.

Plant Pests and Diseases

Ash Archive, the pioneering project to tackle ash-dieback disease, has completed the planting of 3,000 ash trees in Hampshire, with the final planting marking the launch of the International Year of Plant Health in the UK. The Ash Archive consists of trees that showed high tolerance to ash dieback, grafted onto ash rootstocks. The trees will be monitored in order to detect further tolerance to the disease and maintain healthy ash trees in the landscape.

Tomato 'Rubylicious' is a new late blight resistant cultivar which produces 12 cherry sized orangey red fruits per truss which have combined sweet and tangy flavours. Plug plants are available from Thompson & Morgan from May at www.thompson-morgan.com

Environment

Pesticide Action Network UK is campaigning to remove pesticides from supermarket shelves in the bid to halt the decline in native species in gardens. The drive is backed by Garden Organic and asks the public to email supermarkets using the template available at <https://bit.ly/39qhRYN>

A miniature forest the size of a tennis court, recently planted in an Oxfordshire town before the restrictions could become a template for others in the UK. The project in Witney is the first of 100 such ventures environmental charity Earthwatch want to establish in towns and cities across England to help with wildlife loss and address climate change. The charities scientific modelling is based on forest management methods developed in Japan in the 1970's. In just four years the miniature woodland grows up to five times faster and absorbs 30 times more carbon compared to traditional monoculture tree-planting schemes. For more information visit www.earthwatch.org.uk/component/k2/tiny-forest

Residents and workers occupying new apartments and businesses planned for the centre of Swansea won't have far to go for their fresh fruit and vegetables, as these will be growing right above their heads. Pioneering, four-story 'vertical farms' housed in rooftop greenhouses on top of Picton Yard, formerly a Woolworths store, will supply salads, herbs and vegetables as part of a 'biophilic project aiming to reconnect city dwellers with the natural world. A community garden and balcony planters for each apartment will allow tenants and building users to grow vegetables and plants together. Meanwhile, tanks within the building will house fish and plants grown in an aquaponics system run by the Swansea University Centre for Aquatic Research. The project also features living green walls and a new public square. The project will take two years to complete.

Harnessing spare land to grow food crops could help feed thousands of city residents and improve food security, two major studies have found. The first study in Sheffield found growing fruit and vegetables in just 10 per cent of a city's gardens and other urban green spaces could provide 15 per cent of the local population with sufficient fresh food to meet daily needs. The study also investigated the potential for soil free farming on flat roofs, covering 79 acres of land in Sheffield, using methods such as hydroponics and aquaponics. This resonates with a recent study for the city of Leicester, where allotments formed 1.5 per cent of available land. If just 13 per cent of currently uncultivated plots were used it would feed 10,000 people. Researchers urged policy makers to protect allotments within cities and embed them in urban agricultural land to improve local food security. The Sheffield study suggests that with careful management of green spaces and technology to create distribution networks, we could see the rise of 'smart food cities', where growers can support communities with fresh, sustainable food to cut down on our dependence on complex international supply chains.

US government regulators have said that widely used weedkiller glyphosate, is safe to use, In an interim decision based on an expert review over a 10-year period, the US Environmental Protection Agency said there are no concerns of risk to human health when glyphosate is used according to the label. It also said that it isn't a carcinogen.

National Trust property Knightshayes in Devon is doing its bit to reduce plastic use. The kitchen garden team has grown loofahs for us as washing-up sponges by staff and volunteers on the state. Many people think loofahs are sea sponges, but they're actually the dried fibrous skeleton of the fruits of *Luffa cylindrica*, vine related to cucumbers.

Peat use in gardens will be gone inside 10 years as an increasing range of alternatives are brought to market for consumers and the nursery trade to switch to peat-free composts says a top industry expert. The Growing Media Association (GMA) said the sea change by manufacturers is being ushered in by the international groundswell of environmental concerns about the ecological value of wetlands where peat is traditionally harvested and its value in locking away atmospheric carbon. The issue has been ongoing for more than 20 years with the governments voluntary 2020 target date to phase out peat for amateur gardeners missed. With its innate ability to sustain a wide range of plants, consistency of supply and relative cheapness to harvest and manufacture, peat has proved challenging to substitute. Unfit for purpose peat free or low peat products introduced by some manufacturers over a decade ago severely damaged consumer confidence. Rebuilding that confidence and trust of home gardeners is key that is why the GMA has established a mechanism to impartially evaluate raw materials used in compost formulations. They have introduced a Responsible Sourcing Scheme which will scrutinise seven environmental credentials of each product. The visible outcome for gardeners from spring 2021 will be improved labelling on bags of new compost products or point of sale stands. Raw ingredients will be listed according to priority such as that on food packaging. There will also be an environmental assessment ranked A-G, rather like the traffic light system used for energy or fuel suppliers...

The seven criteria being used are:

- **Energy** - all the energy used to extract, transport and produce raw materials.
- **Water** - amount of natural, processed or recycled water used in each material.
- **Social Compliance** - integrity of labour use in countries in the supply chain.
- **Habitat and Biodiversity** - issues associated with land management and land use changes.
- **Pollution** - pollution created by products during manufacturing process
- **Renewability** - ease by which raw materials can be replenished
- **Resource Use Efficiency** - use of recycled materials or by-products rather than virgin material

The RSS system should enable manufacturers to blend suitable products together, tailoring them for a variety of purposes, while monitoring their environmental impact and ultimately enabling gardeners to make an informed choice. For more info about the GMA visit: www.growingmedia.co.uk

Debunking the peat myth: Gardeners haven't always used peat, they always used to make their own compost and you can make your own using well-rotted, home-made compost, leaf mould and sand or grit. In the 1930s standardised proprietary composts were created by John Innes Institute from loam, peat and sand but since the 1970s peat has been used more extensively. Gardeners don't need to use peat now-neither expert growers at the RHS, the National Trust nor Kew Gardens use peat based composts. The vast majority of our plants don't actually need peat just the properties that peat offers, which can be found by other means.

Best peat-free composts on the market: [Westland New Horizon](#) from www.diy.com [Happy Compost](#) from Notcutts or www.thecompostshop.co.uk [Homebase peat-free](#) from www.homebase.co.uk. [Sylvagrow](#) from garden centres or www.crocus.co.uk. [Dalefoot](#) from www.dalefootcomposts.co.uk. [Veggie Gold Compost](#) from www.compostdirect.com.

In January, Dobbies Garden Centres announced it planned to remove all peat-based composts for sale from 2021. However it has now decided to wait for Defra advice on peat, which is expected later this year. Dobbies currently only sells New Horizon peat free compost but is planning to launch its own brand peat free compost in April.

Wildlife

Bumblebees are facing mass extinction in Europe and North America due to climate change. Researchers at University College London and Ottawa University looked at the population numbers and geographical ranges of 66 species of bumblebees from data collected between 1900 and 2015. It found a marked decline in numbers in places where temperatures had risen. Temperature rises and increased rainfall often result in bumblebees dying or being unable to reproduce. The study found many species currently live in areas that already are as warm as the bees can tolerate, so any further rises could mean the loss of significant numbers. It's hoped the research will lead to better conservation measures.

A new report by the Wildlife Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and WWF Wildlife, warns that British wildlife is at risk due to big gaps in environmental protections because of loss of regulations, following the UK's departure from the EU. An agricultural bill that will see farmers receive payments to protect wildlife, improve the environment and manage carbon storage is set to replace the EU regulations. While broadly welcomed by campaigners, they fear the new bill doesn't go far enough.