



ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

NEWSLETTER - JULY/AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020

Thank God the lockdown is hopefully coming to an end and people are able to meet up with friends and family. It has been very difficult for people who live on their own and everyone who has had to self-isolate even with their partners. I have found my allotment a life saver being able to go to London Road nearly every day and it is looking the best it has for about three years. There has been an upsurge in people taking up empty allotments which is good for the continuation of the sites in Salisbury. Also it will make people appreciate the taste of good home grown food instead of the bland taste of supermarket fruit and vegetables.

The Allotment Hut has been open for four weeks, only on a Saturday, opening times 9am to 12.30pm. You can pre-order your requirements on a click and collect basis with the payment being made by cheque (preferred) or cash. You can order by phoning Harry Theobald on 07717 337612 or Keith Lawrence 07860 363028. You are also able to enter the shop but only on a one in one out basis and adhering to social distancing. We will continue with these arrangements unless the Government brings in any changes. Stay safe.

Harry Theobald editor.

14th Summer Horticultural Show

Unfortunately we have had to cancel this year's Show due to the unavailability of the United Reformed Church. We are trying to use our website to organise some form of show. We will let you know as things proceed.

Talks

Due to the fact that we cannot use the United Reformed Church for our talks we are looking to get the speakers to video their talks for September, October and November so we can place them on our website.

Annual Outings

We have decided to cancel our remaining outings for 2020 due to the social-distancing on coaches making the cost of coach travel uneconomical. We will be making plans for 2021 and hope that we will be able to organise some outings.

SNIPPETS

Traditional gardening lectures and courses look like they will be off the cards for a while yet. Great Dixter's head gardener, Fergus Garrett, has got round the problem by giving lectures on Zoom instead. The lectures cost £15 to attend and you can also pay to watch previous lectures that you've missed. For more info visit www.greatdixter.co.uk

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) has warned that the coronavirus pandemic could 'wipe out' the British horticultural industry in a matter of weeks as the value of lost or delayed plant sales in the UK is expected to top £687m by the end of June. Lockdown rules kept plant centre doors closed from mid-March to mid-May. The perishability and seasonality of plants means the sector potentially faces total stock write-off unlike that of any other industry. Despite the closures growers with an online presence have had a valuable line of sales that offers hope for the future bounce-back. Longer term, the HTA is concerned that supply gaps left behind by failing British growers could cause a rise in imported plants. This could increase the risk of plant pests and diseases coming from abroad and undermine efforts to manage the UK's biosecurity strategy.

A new book '*Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life*' looks at the plants and places that inspired the author of the classic children's stories. Written by Marta McDowell and illustrated throughout, it looks at the seasonal changes at Potter's garden at Hill Top in the Lake District and how her enthusiasm for gardening informed her work.

Research shows that more than 65% of allotments have now been lost around the UK since their peak just after the Second World War. Academics from the Institute for Sustainable Food at the University of Sheffield analysed records covering many major cities in England and Scotland to reveal how much land was devoted to allotments between the early 1900s and 2016. Just under half of those allotment sites lost have now been built on; while around a quarter have been converted into public parks and other green spaces. The greatest loss of land is in the most deprived boroughs, with eight times as much allotment space lost in the least well-off areas compared with the wealthiest. The study's authors suggest the allotments that are now green spaces could be turned back to their original use to help improve the country's food security. It would also provide allotments for all those who are currently on waiting lists.

The RHS has cancelled all the shows it had rescheduled for September. These included the July Hampton Court show and the August events at RHS Rosemoor, Devon and RHS Hyde Hall in Essex. The Harrogate Autumn Flower Show scheduled for September 18-20 at the Newby Hall venue in North Yorkshire is the last one remaining, with plans currently being reviewed. Everyone who has bought tickets to affected shows will be contacted by the RHS and offered 2021 show dates, refunds and other options.

A professional gardener in Kent has become so entranced by the humble spider plant (chlorophytum) she founded the first National Plant collection of them for conservation charity Plant Heritage. Plant Heritage has accredited four other Collections: Medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) at Eastgate Larder orchard in Norfolk, a boxwood (*Buxus*) collection in Southampton and tulip tree (*Liriodendron*) and dawn redwood (*metasequoia*) collections at RHS garden Wisley. For more information on collections visit: www.plantheritage.org.uk

For all you budding Long Carrot growers top carrot grower Medwyn Williams has been experimenting with growing his long carrots grown in 15cm (6in) diameter pipes 1.2m (4ft) in length and filled with Canna Coco Professional, a coconut-based growing medium. The foliage was very clean and healthy and was far superior on all counts, particularly on skin finish as it was really smooth compared to long carrots grown in 45 gallon drums filled with sand. You can follow Medwyn on twitter throughout the season as he grows vegetables for his display at Malvern - @medwynsofangles.

Gardens

Visiting gardens open under the National Gardens Scheme is usually one of summer's greatest pleasures, and it raises millions for charity each year. While we may not be able to visit these gardens many owners have filmed virtual garden tours that you can view for a donation. Just go to www.ngs.org.uk/virtual-garden-visits-collection

A new garden in Somerset is cooking up a storm with its ingenious design and hi-tech approach to garden history. Previously known as Hadspen House, one time home of garden writer Penelope Hobhouse, The Newt in Somerset has been transformed into a country house hotel, nationally significant garden and farming complex by its new owners - billionaire South African businessman Koos Bekker and his wife Karen Roos. The latest feature to be unveiled is an interactive exhibit called The Story of Gardening, offering an immersive exploration of the subject via a series of hi-tech exhibits. For more info visit: www.thenewtinsomerset.com

Cornwall's Eden Project is currently investigating the prospect of a new attraction in Dundee, Scotland. The proposal, provisionally dubbed Eden Project Scotland, would form part of Eden's portfolio of projects in Morecombe, Derry-Londonderry and Portland and developments in Australia, New Zealand, China and Costa Rica. The Eden Project has partially reopened its 30 acre outdoor gardens. The Rainforest, Mediterranean Biomes and The Core education centre remain closed until the project can reopen all areas with July 4 set as a provisional date. Anyone wanting to visit will need to pre-book online. For more info visit: www.edenproject.com

Proposals for an astonishing new garden to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022 could be under threat. The Commonwealth themed vision to be staged temporarily in the historic moat of the city's iconic Tower of London was planned to celebrate 70 years of the Queen's reign, but now the proposals are in disarray. Tower Custodians Historic Royal Palaces are predicted to turn over only £14 million instead of a budget of £110 million due to Covid-19. Without funds from Government or sponsors the project is destined to flounder. The intention was to fill the entire moat with the garden which would contain swirling tendrils of clipped evergreen hedging enveloping a kaleidoscope of colourful plantings through which visitors would pass, shaded by a canopy of various trees. For more info visit: www.hrp.org.uk

To celebrate the 20th birthday since the founding of The Alnwick Garden, its creator, the Duchess of Northumberland has launched a new film online, in which she talks candidly about the creation of the much loved 12 acre visitor attraction. The film, the *Making of The Alnwick Garden*, has been made available to watch online on The Alnwick Garden website at www.alnwickgarden.com or at its Facebook page @alnwickgarden.

The National Trust for Scotland is planning a phased reopening of its properties as lockdown begins to ease across the country. For more details visit: www.nts.org.uk

More than 50,000 flowering perennials, shrubs and trees have gone into the ground at Chatsworth in Derbyshire in preparation for the reopening of the world famous 105 acre venue later this year. Currently one of Britain's largest private garden transformations, projects include a remodelled Rock Garden, Maze borders and new Arcadia woodland glades. For more info visit: www.chatsworth.org

Products & Services

Which magazine awarded Dalefoot Wool Compost for Potting a Best Buy in their 2020 compost for containers trial. Since then, Dalefoot has gone from strength to strength. With peat-free compost growing in popularity, Dalefoot sales were

already on the rise before the coronavirus crisis with a 146% increase in garden centre sales. Mail-order sales have now soared by 1,400-1,500%, with sales via online garden retailer Crocus rising by 900%.

More than 400 National Plant Collection holders are offering a mail-order service so gardeners can enjoy the rare varieties they grow. They're also offering specialist advice to help you get great results. It features a wide range of collections so there should be plants to suit everyone's interests. Visit www.plantheritage.org.uk/national-plant-collections

Which Best Buys:

Salad Tomatoes on test: 'Pannovy', 'Red Zebra', 'Shimmer', 'Tigerella'

Zinnias on test: 'Jazzy Mix', 'Solmar Mix', 'Whirligig', 'Zahara Single Mix'.

Growing Bags on test: 'Melcourt SylvaGrow Peat-free Planter', 'Levington Tomorite Giant Tomato Planter'.

Delphiniums on test: 'Faust' (deep blue), 'Flamenco' (pink), 'Galahad' (white), 'Magic Fountains Dark Blue' (dark blue).

Mangetout and Sugar Snap Peas on test: Sugar Snap: 'Cascadia', Mangetout: 'Green Magnolia Snap'. Oregon Sugar Pod', 'Sweet Horizon'.

Impatiens and Downey Mildew on test: 'Beacon'. Where to buy www.brooksidenursery.co.uk

Melons on test: 'Alvaro F1' (yellow with green stripes, orange flesh), 'Antalya F1' (yellow, yellow flesh), 'Diva F1' (green with green stripes, flesh orange), 'Esmerelda F1' (yellow, flesh yellow) 'Outdoor Wonder F1' (yellow, flesh yellow), 'Perseus F1' (green with green stripes, flesh orange).

Dwarf Agapanthus on test: 'Brilliant Blue', 'Lapis Lazuli', 'Twister'.

Latest Cordless Lawnmowers: 'EGO Power+ LM1701E-SP

Bargain Best buy hedge trimmer: Mac Allister EasyCut MHTP520

Science and Research

With garden centres closed due to lockdown, many growers had nowhere to sell their spring plants. Recognising this problem, the SmartPlant app (smartplantapp.com/shop) has set up an online shop where you can buy collections of plants that might otherwise have been thrown away.

A berry that makes sour food taste sweet, a herb that grows only on the rims of volcanoes, and a fungus used to treat arthritis were among more than 100 new plants and at least eight species of fungi first described scientifically in 2019. New 'miracle berry' *Synsepalum Chimanimani* contains a protein, miraculin, that does not taste sweet itself, but binds to the sweetness receptors in human taste buds, so usually-sour foods are perceived as sweet. Perennial herb *Costularia cadetii* is found only on the rims of volcanoes on Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean, and is extremely rare even there. The fungus *Rubroshiraia bambusae*, which grows on bamboo, has been used in Chinese medicine for more than 400 years, but proved to be a new genus and species previously unrecognised by science. Most of the new species are so rare they are already at risk of extinction. The only known colony of one seaweed-resembling shrub, from the *Poidostemaceae* family was discovered on a waterfall in Guinea, West Africa. It is expected to become extinct due to the construction of a new dam. Another 20m (66ft) tall tropical tree *Mischogyne iddii* is perhaps the rarest on the list. Discovered by an international team of botanists in Tanzania, only seven trees are known.

Plant Pests and Diseases

Commercial tomato growers have been battling their own deadly virus this year, with at least five reported outbreaks of tomato brown rugose fruit virus in commercial tomato production sites in England. The virus is related to tobacco mosaic virus, which causes brown wrinkled patches to develop on fruit.

Giant Hogweed has been rapidly spreading across the UK, according to reports by several councils. The plant looks similar to common hogweed or cow parsley, but is much larger and its sap can cause severe skin burns. If you see the plant growing in a public area, report it to the Environment Agency at www.planttracker.org.uk

A British company, Environet, a knotweed eradication outfit, are using detection dogs to precisely identify if knotweed is present all year, even when it's dormant in the ground. Covering a garden or development site in a matter of minutes, the specially trained Labrador retrievers can sense knotweed rhizomes in the ground, indicating it by 'freezing'. If buyers need to carry out their own property checks, detection dogs can help including finding where knotweed has been deliberately concealed. In 2019 Environet also launched a live interactive heat map showing Japanese knotweed sightings across the UK. For more info visit www.environetuk.com

Sweet alyssum is the best plant to grow to beat aphids naturally, reveals gardening charity Garden Organic following recent trials. The flowers of this popular bedding plant attract hoverflies, whose young eat aphids. Other plants such as coriander, buckwheat, phacelia and fennel also scored highly at attracting hoverflies, but bloom later than sweet alyssum, which starts at the beginning of June, making it the most effective. Brassica and lettuce aphids had shown peak populations in June and black bean aphids in July, with aphid numbers falling in August. For more on natural and organic pest control visit: www.gardenorganic.org.uk.

Environment

A government-sponsored programme is planning to plant more than 300,000 more trees in the River Aire catchment area near Leeds. This new woodland will form part of the Northern Forest, which will see 50 million trees being planted across the north of England over the next 25 years.

Conservation charity Plantlife has said that rare wildflowers could start blooming on our roadside verges due to coronavirus lockdown, and help feed declining bee and insect populations. Councils have been leaving roadside verges uncut as they redistribute resources to other services, creating mini-meadows that include more than 700 species of wild flowers, nearly 45% of the UK's total flora.

The Purbeck Heaths in Dorset has been made into the UK's first 'super' nature reserve. Covering 3,331 hectares (8,231 acres), the reserve brings together 11 types of habitat, including lowland heath, woodland, coastal sand dunes, lakes and saltmarsh. The new super National Nature Reserve combines three existing National Nature Reserves and incorporates land owned by seven different organisations, including the National Trust, Natural England, RSPB and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. Rare flowers, birds, lizards and animals, including the sand lizard, the Dartford warbler and the silver-studded blue butterfly, should benefit from the vast joined up habitat.

Wildlife

Wildlife charity, Butterfly Conservation, is asking for help from 'citizen scientists' this year. It has urged people to count and send pictures of insects they spot outside so that butterfly and moth numbers can still be recorded while scientists are unable to do surveys. It has set up an app to help people identify and survey butterfly species. You can download it from www.butterfly-conservation.org

Last year was a good one for butterflies. Latest figures from the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme show that although just under a third of species are showing a significant long-term decline in abundance, 2019 ranked as the 8th best year in the 44 year series. It was also the best year since 1997. Four species even had their best year on record in the UK: the brimstone, chequered skipper, orange-tip and marbled white.

New building developments can be a big problem for hedgehogs as they often require the destruction of the hogs' natural habitat, the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) informs us. But now a PTES licensed research trial has revealed that sniffer dogs can help to save hedgehogs by finding them hiding in their nests before works begin- something that is almost impossible for human searchers to do. Conservation K9 Consultancy trains dogs to detect nesting hedgehogs on potential development sites. When the dog finds a hedgehog it lets its handler know by sitting quietly nearby. For tips on helping protect hogs, go to www.bit.ly/hedgehog-street

Moths could play a crucial role in pollinating many types of flower, British scientists have found. A team from University College London found that moths not only transported pollen from plants visited by bees, butterflies and hoverflies, but also interacted with plants not commonly visited by these insects. The study based around pond margins in agricultural settings in East Anglia, showed that pollen transported on the hairy bodies of the insects, rather than on their proboscis (tongue) while feeding, allowed it to be easily transferred to other plants. Nocturnal moths have an important but overlooked ecological role. They compliment the work of daytime pollinators, helping to keep plant populations diverse and abundant. Concern also focussed on the continued survival of healthy moth populations.

A new partnership project aiming at protecting more than 100 of the UK's key wildlife species from extinction has launched. 'Back from the Brink' is spotlighting threatened wildflowers, fungi, butterflies, birds and other species. By working together at 19 sites from Cornwall to Northumberland hopes to save 20 species from extinction and help more than another 200 under threat species establish a more certain future. The programme is being run by Natural England and the Partnership for Species Conservation - a coalition of the UK's wildlife charities. For more info visit www.plantlife.org.uk and www.naturebftb.co.uk

Dense planting in borders with a bias towards natives, near-natives and some evergreen species is the best combination to support healthy populations of ground dwelling invertebrates. These are essential in the food chain and for helping break down organic matter and returning nutrients to the soil. These conclusions form part of the third paper published by RHS scientists from the four-year Plants for Bugs project. Staged at specially planted plots at Wisely, Surrey, the study set out to establish optimum planting to benefit pollinating, plant-inhabiting and ground living invertebrates. For more info visit www.rhs.org.uk/plants4bugs

You can't have too many woodlice, believes Dave Goulson, Professor of Biology at the University of Sussex. His new report, 'Insect Declines and why they matter', reveals that insects help to break down compost and draws on research that suggests 41 per cent of the world's insects are under threat of extinction. He warns against the use of all unnecessary pesticides to help insects. See more at www.bit.ly/insect-decline