



# MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

## March/April NEWSLETTER 2023

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

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



### JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR . . . .

How lovely to see the snowdrops in the garden bringing the promise of spring. The lighter nights always lift my heart too. Ever hopeful, my chickens may start to lay eggs to pay for their keep.

At the committee meetings we have been planning the Plant Sale and the Show. I would like to appeal for help at both of these events. An hour or two would be a great help to us. Also we would like any plants that are surplus to your requirements to sell at the Plant Sale.



Last year we had a table at the meeting where members brought spare plants to give away or swap. We intend to repeat this again.

We have some excellent speakers again this year, as you will read about in the Newsletter. Don't forget, non-members are welcome to come to our meetings, so why not invite some of your friends to come.

Happy planting!

*Ellie Church – Chairperson*

### **Subscriptions for 2023 are now due**

An application form and details of how to pay are included at the end of this Newsletter.

### **ANNUAL PLANT SALE**

**Saturday 20 May 2023**  
in Malmesbury Market Cross



This is our Club's main fund-raising activity, so we hope you will all be able to support the sale. We will do our best to sell any plants you can donate. There is always a good demand for bedding plants.

Also, if anyone can lend a hand on the day it would be very much appreciated.

Remember our motto: *“If you can grow it, we can sell it.”*

*Graham Rees, Plant Sale Organiser*  
01666 823093



## Tasks for March/April



- Plant out early sown sweet peas
- Cut back winter flowering heathers
- Cut back autumn flowering shrubs, fuchsias, buddleias, etc.
- Sow half hardy annuals
- Prune bedding roses, hybrid teas and floribundas
- Spray roses against black spot
- Spray fruit trees with spring spray
- Put slug bait around tender plants, delphiniums etc.
- Complete planting of lilies
- Apply general fertilizer to the borders
- Sow under cloches early carrots and lettuce
- Sow herbs under glass: basil, coriander, etc.
- Plant onion sets, potatoes
- Sow wrinkled peas
- Sow late summer cabbage and leeks
- For April: sow Brussels sprouts, kale, etc.

### MEETINGS – EVENTS – ACTIVITIES

**13 March 2023**

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

*A topical talk by a popular speaker*

Jenny Tidman

Jenny worked at Kew Gardens and is now the plant expert at Malmesbury Garden Centre. She has given us many talks in the past

**17 April 2023**

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

*Cultivation and Uses of Unusual Herbs*

Caroline Pakenham

Caroline Pakenham has been collecting and cooking wild produce for many years and through her small business, Green Man, she has sold fresh herbs and jellies

**20 May 2023**

Malmesbury Market Cross

*Annual Plant Sale*

**22 July 2023**

Charlton Village Hall

*Annual Show*

**11 September 2023**

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

*To be confirmed*

**9 October 2023**

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

*How to Garden the Low Carbon Way*

Sally Nex

Professional gardener and garden writer, Sally is passionate about growing her own food. She writes regularly for the RHS magazine, The Garden and for BBC Gardeners' World magazine

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## **Tomatoes and our AGM . . . .**

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The January meeting incorporated the Club's AGM, cancelled from December because of heavy snow and freezing temperatures, together with a return visit from Nicola Hope who lives in Malmesbury, giving a talk on Tomatoes.

Ellie Church, Chairperson, welcomed all members to the first meeting of the year. Apologies were received from 3 members, who also tendered their resignation from the Club following many years of loyal support. Ellie thanked all Committee members for their various roles, especially Louise Williams for providing monthly refreshments, also those for the Annual Show in July, Alison Goodall for her role as editor of the Club's newsletter, George Guest for booking all speakers, Graham Rees for his Publicity and PR role, Margaret for all aspects relating to the village hall, and Gail for co-ordinating the Dobies' orders.

Sean O'Shea as Treasurer, presented the accounts, which showed a sum of £947.00 in the current account, made up of proceeds from the Plant Sale and annual subscriptions. He recommended that it was not necessary to increase subscriptions for the coming year, thus a single membership remained at £7.00 and a couple at £10.00, with donations required for refreshments. Sean concluded his report by expressing his thanks to Pam Lucas for examining the accounts, also offering to do so for next year.

All committee members agreed to be re-elected as there were no nominations from the floor.

Under AOB, Liz Lewin asked if member benefits were still available at Malmesbury Garden Centre, E & S Hardware, and Persephone Violet, the High Street florist, but the 2020 Pandemic caused these benefits to cease, and not to be reinstated.

Ellie concluded the business part of the meeting by requesting that members submit a picture of their gardens to Alison for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

Nicola Hope was introduced to give her talk on tomatoes. Having recently resigned from her role as Head Gardener at Hawkesbury Upton, she is now able to give more time to her garden designs and to growing even more different varieties of

tomato. Lots of wonderful pictures appeared of tomatoes taking over the house, the garden, also a friend's garden. Nicola stressed the importance of sowing seeds early into peat-free compost, placing in a heated propagator before pricking out to individual pots and then planting out into their final position in the greenhouse. Useful tips included under-planting with basil, covering plants with fleece to protect from early seasonal cold and frosts, also training tomatoes up twine supported on the top rail of the greenhouse then underneath the root ball of the plant. Nicola stressed the importance of regular watering and feeding of your plants, not forgetting to remove the side shoots on cordon varieties. This allows better air flow, also provides free plants to grow on. Removal of all lower leaves when the fruits have set allows for better air circulation, also if space permits, allows upper trusses to set giving more tomatoes later in the season. Nicola had many favourites from which to choose, also suppliers, but her all-round choice was Brandy Sweet Plum with its large leaves, and San Marzano, a popular small plum tomato.

Derek Tilney gave Nicola a very enthusiastic Vote of Thanks.

The evening rounded off with a wonderful buffet provided by Louise Williams, helped by Pam Lucas.

*Margaret Medland*





## FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

### **Comments from the garden . . . .**

Now that we have moved into the spring, I have found that I have lost a number of small shrubs and a lot of spring bedding in pots, such as pansies and polyanthus due to the winter.

### **Flowering wall . . . .**

A good topic to write about. What do I mean? I suppose a rose, clematis, vine or honeysuckle trained on a trellis or wall could be classed as a flowering wall. You're right, but over the years I have come across a number of different ways to create a flowering wall. On visiting a new garden I found at the back of the garden, some 100 feet from the house, a towering cliff some 30 feet high with a field above. Planted in every crevice and crack were many perennial trailing plants, flowering at various times of the year. A ladder was needed to weed and trim the plants once over, but it was a very colourful wall. In another garden the people had travelled a lot and every time they visited



another country they purchased a clay or ceramic hanging pot. These had been hung on a wooden structure some ten feet long. They were filled during the summer with many different summer shiners, and the pots themselves were also very colourful: there were at least thirty pots. Another flowering wall, actually a very steep bank, was planted up with small shrubs, perennial plants, summer shiners and many different bulbs, the whole slope then had forest bark placed around every plant: this kept the weeds down but the bulbs easily pushed through the bark. A brilliant idea, otherwise what would you do with a steep bank which was too steep to mow?

My neighbour has a ten foot high conifer hedge between him and a 20 acre field. What a shame. The view across the field and beyond is worth seeing. I did not want to put up a hedge, although it would keep

the wind out of the garden. However, I had four 12 foot poles left over from a large swing my daughters played on when young doing nothing. My view across the field measures 30 feet and I did not want to lose it. Placing the poles seven feet apart, drilling six holes in each from top to bottom at equal distances, gave me my flowering wall. I now only had to thread galvanised wire through each hole, giving me six layers to grow climbers on. This I did four years ago. I now have a rambling Kiftsgate rose which produces clusters of small white roses during the summer, a white *Clematis montana alba*, which flowers in the spring, a *Jasminum nudiflorum* which has yellow flowers on bare branches during the winter, and lastly a blue wisteria which has been slow to grow: I think it might be the cold situation (it catches the west wind), it has put on growth which has been trained between the other climbers. This has created a colourful wall which I can still see through.

### **Pests' paradise . . . .**

**Leaf miner:** generally found in spring and early summer. Transparent larvae can be easily spotted – they will be carrying a torch and wearing a helmet! Infestations are generally slight, they burrow tunnels through leaves on many plants. The pest does not generally affect the plant's growth or flowering. If the infestation is bad remove the worst of the leaves and place in a coal bucket.

### **Keith's choice plant . . . .**

**Delphinium variety Astolat:** flowering June/July, this one is a pacific giant hybrid variety with dusky pink flowers on long stems. Ht 1.5m.



### **Plants to enjoy in March/April**

Bulbs: *Crocus*, *Galanthus* (snowdrops), *Erythronium* (dog tooth violet), hyacinths, *Muscari* (grape hyacinth), *Narcissus* in variety, tulips in variety, *Scilla* (bluebell), *Iris danfordiae* (dwarf iris), *Eranthus* (winter aconite), *Chionodoxa* (glory of the snow), *Convallaria* (lily of the valley).  
Plants: *Ribes* (flowering currant), *Amelanchier* (juneberry), camellias in variety, *Forsythia* in variety, *Magnolia*, *Spiraea arguta*, *Dicentra* (bleeding heart), *Primula* in variety, *Prunus* 'Kanzan' (ornamental cherry), *Doronicum* (leopards bane).



## FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

### **Comments from the veg plot . . . .**

A new growing season gains momentum both in the vegetable plot, greenhouse and garden frames. I hope you are going to try a few new varieties, if only in pots.

### **Herbs . . . .**

Have herbs close to the house: mine are in pots outside the back door, very convenient. The shrub types, such as rosemary and sage, are re-potted every two years. Both long growths and half the root system are cut off and re-potted into the same pot. Trimming other herbs, such as thyme, is done in early spring to stop them getting woody. Mint, marjoram, lovage, tarragon and fennel are cut down at the end of the winter. Annual herbs, such as basil, coriander and dill, I find are best started off in pots and transplanted into larger pots or the herb garden. Other herbs I have in pots include chives, garlic chives, parsley, borage and parcel (leaf celery).



Many of us have some of the above herbs, either in pots or planted in the garden. The herb family is vast. Looking them up, I find ajuga, *Anthemis tinctoria* (dyers chamomile), elecampane (wild sunflower, *Inula helenium*), meadowsweet (queen of the meadow), marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), marsh mallow (sweet weed), *Alchemilla mollis* (lady's mantle) all come under the herb section, just to name a few.

Many years ago I created a number of herb gardens, one was separated by box hedging, one was created in an old sink and one created in the centre of a stable yard with four pathways to a sundial in the middle. This design was also edged with box hedging, creating four separate herb areas.

Bay needs to be planted in the ground, it has a fairly large root system. In one garden a bay tree had been

surrounded by a Cotswold stone wall about five foot square; the bay tree was at least twelve foot tall.

### **Seasonal activities . . . .**

If you have frames, a number of vegetable seeds can be sown, such as beetroot, salad leaves, spring onion, carrots and radish; should the weather be mild you could sow into the vegetable plot. If you have no frames, weather permitting, all the above can be sown, although I prefer to wait until April. A piece of plastic placed over the area where you want to sow your first seeds will warm up the soil a few degrees.

Early potatoes can be set up in trays in the dark. This will encourage them to produce shoots. I will plant these in early April, as it is always possible we will still get frosts. When planted, the potatoes will be a few weeks before they show their haulms (top growth). If frosts are about, earth up some soil over them.

Cover some of your rhubarb, if not already done, to produce those early pink champagne sticks (old dustbins are perfect for this).

I have a small propagator, the size of a seed tray, which will hold at least 12 small pots. I sow all the seeds that need an early start: tomato, courgette, cucumber, melon, salad leaves, parsley, parcel (leaf celery) and dwarf French beans, which will be pricked out into separate pots and grown on before planting out.

If you produce your own compost, March is the best time to spread it over your vegetable plot. Some of the compost will be placed in trenches before planting the potatoes. Areas where deeper growing vegetables are to be planted, such as leeks and carrots, will be dug deep: areas for sowing salad leaves, beetroot, spring onion, dwarf French beans, fennel and broad beans, will have the compost spread over with a little fertiliser and lightly hoed in.

### **Keith's choice vegetable . . . .**

#### **Radish variety White Icicle:**

this variety produces long, slender, tapered, snow white radishes, about 15cm (6") long. A crisp and tender mild flavour, this variety is tolerant of summer heat and radishes do not go woody and pithy.



## ***No vegetable nightmares . . . .***

**Big bud mite:** blackcurrant buds become swollen over the winter months, resulting in loss of plant vigour. The large swollen buds can be rubbed off in early spring, even if it is nearly all the fruiting buds. You might not get any fruit this year but the buds next year might not be as bad. The buds are infected by microscopic, elongated white mites. If not

removed, it will cause the spread of a virus-like disease called currant reversion. The variety Ben Hope is resistant to bud mite.

## ***Some vegetables to enjoy in March/April***

Jerusalem artichokes, savoy cabbage, leeks, Brussels sprouts, parsnips, curly kale, spinach, swede, celeriac.

From store: potatoes, onions, shallots, (carrots and beetroot stored in boxes of peat or dry soil).

## ***Dobies seed catalogue***

It's not too late to order from the Dobies Seed Catalogue.

Garden Club members get a discount of 45% on all seeds and 10% on all other *live* products (potatoes, garlic, onions, plants, bulbs and fruit), not garden equipment.

The discount code is **SUGD182K** and this can also be used for orders placed online. Just enter the code in the box when you complete your online order.



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## **Malmesbury Community Day, Saturday 15 April 2023**



Malmesbury Town Council are organising an event to support local organisations and clubs by holding a one day event on **Saturday 15 April 2023 from 10am to 4pm in the Town Hall and in the Abbey.**

We are pleased to report that the **Garden Club** will be represented at this event.

We plan to have a stall with information about our Club and our events. It will be an opportunity for us to raise awareness of our Club's activities and, we hope, enrol some new members.

If you feel you might wish to help please contact our chair Ellie on 01666 510490.



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## **HELP! Your questions answered by resident expert, Keith**

Please send your queries and problems to: [info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk](mailto:info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk)

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- Q** *I have a problem with an enormous number of worm casts on my lawn. Is there anything I can do to eradicate the problem?*
- A** There is no chemical to deal with the problem, not that you would want to harm the worms. I have come across this problem in a number of gardens, mainly in lawns, although worms will push up through the soil anywhere. Worms are generally beneficial to the soil: they improve drainage and aerate when they burrow through the soil, they also incorporate organic matter by pulling dead leaves into the soil. Worms are generally active in the autumn and spring when they excrete mounds of soil (worm casts). Walking on them and mowing the lawn will flatten them, making the lawn muddy and slippery. Deal with the worm casts when they are dry using a besom (a stiff brush with many twigs attached to the handle) or an ordinary stiff brush; this will disperse the worm casts. It will need to be done again while the worms are active. (Should you be a fisherman, problem solved!)
- Q** *I have inherited a very vigorous rose. Can I prune it hard and when?*
- A** It sounds as if you have a rambling rose or one that has not been pruned for a number of years. A rambling rose needs to be pruned after flowering, whereas a climbing rose is pruned during the winter or dormant period. Aim for a framework of horizontal branches, sap will rise slower which will give you more flowers. Upright growth will generally shoot out at the top, still giving you flowers though. As this rose has been neglected, remove some of the thicker growth at the base, this will encourage new growths; also remove all dead wood. It would have been better to prune during the winter but March will still give you good results. It's possible you do not know the name of the rose: if it is salmon in colour it could be Albertine, a rambling rose. This rose is not recurrent, which means it only flowers once and not at various times through the summer. This rose I once pruned very hard. It looked perfect when pruned and trained on a wall. It died completely! To this day I do not know why. All the Albertine roses I pruned after this were not pruned hard.
- Q** *My tomatoes last year were not good, unlike other years. I went away and left the watering to a neighbour. What went wrong?*
- A** From what you told me, irregular watering seems to have been the problem, also over feeding and not following the instructions on the label of your feed. You said some of your fruit looked good but then they rotted at the flower end. This is known as blossom end rot, caused by the plant drying out when in flower. There is a solution – don't go away!

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### **Greenhouse labels . . . .**

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Several years ago, I was in the greenhouse pricking out a variety of small plants. I labelled them as I went along. Beside me was my young granddaughter who was aged about two and a half.

Like most small children she was asking me all sorts of questions. 'What are you doing that for Nana?' 'What is that plant called?' 'Can you eat them?' 'What are the sticks for?' 'Can I water it now?' We had quite a pleasant afternoon together.

I looked around at my array of seedlings, that I had potted on. I felt very pleased with myself at my success.

Suddenly I saw my granddaughter holding a stick and a pen. I also noticed several sticks on the ground. I asked her what she was doing. 'I am helping you Nana, I made my sticks to help you.'



It then dawned on me that she had removed all of my sticks and replaced them with her own sticks, with a pretend writing on them. I had no idea from that day onwards which kind of tomatoes, cabbage, beans or any other plant I had grown, apart from guesswork!

She is a big girl now and we were chatting about the greenhouse, and I reminded her what she had done. we both had a good chuckle about it.

Ellie

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## **Rose's garden . . . .**

### ***A cautionary tale from Derek***

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A word of caution – If anyone has been advised by their doctor to take up gardening to calm their nerves and has been taken off medication, do NOT read this article.



I used to work with my friend Rose; she was a very good gardener and a member of our Club before retiring to Dorset to create yet another garden. Included in her Christmas message to me was how in April her garden was given an instant 'make-over'.

The bottom part of Rose's garden was dominated by her neighbours' massive Cypress tree, its trunk was right up against Rose's fence and half of the tree's dense canopy was over her garden, cutting out the light. In April it all changed. A large part of the tree, including part of the trunk, crashed into Rose's garden, demolishing her fence and totally destroying plants and shrubs. And so the neighbours decided it was time to take down the rest of the tree. This involved a lot more of the neighbour's tree ending up in Rose's lovely garden.

In her letter, Rose refers to the characters who cut the tree down as 'tree surgeons' – well these *tree surgeons* cut through her garden power line and made such a pathetic job of 'repairing' her fence that she had to pay to have their work removed and the fence restored to its original state.

*To be continued in the next Newsletter.*



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## ***Members' gardens . . . .***

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At the AGM in January, Derek asked for members to send in photographs of their own gardens. I think everyone felt a little bit reticent about this . . . well, let's face it, whose garden looks at its best in February! However, Gillian Kelly has taken up the challenge and sent this picture of her very pretty garden, taken last May.



And here are a couple of pictures of my own garden, again, taken when it looked a lot better than it does now.



Please do send me photos of your gardens, or of your favourite plants, or even of any spectacular gardening disasters (I'm sure many of us have had some of those)! It all adds to the local interest of this Newsletter.

*Alison*

## Derek has sent this little Quiz to test your 'Genera knowledge'

Answers at the bottom of page 11.

1. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Brassica* genus ?  
a) Turnip   b) Cauliflower   c) Carrot   d) Swede
2. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Artemisia* genus ?  
a) Sagebrush   b) Wormwood   c) Tarragon   d) Rosemary
3. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Prunus* genus ?  
a) Peach   b) Almond   c) Quince   d) Plum
4. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Rubus* genus ?  
a) Blackberry   b) Strawberry   c) Raspberry   d) Dewberry
5. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Narcissus* genus ?  
a) Jonquil   b) Primrose   c) Daffodil   d) Paperwhite
6. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Ranunculus* genus ?  
a) Campion   b) Crowfoot   c) Buttercup   d) Celandine
7. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Dianthus* genus ?  
a) Carnation   b) Sweet William   c) Pink   d) Candytuft
8. Which of these plants does not belong to the *Solanum* genus ?  
a) Potato   b) Chicory   c) Aubergine   d) Woody nightshade

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## RECIPE . . . .

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### ***Parsnip crumble***

#### **Ingredients**

6 parsnips, peeled, topped & tailed  
4 slices of bread  
6 oz cheddar cheese

Knob of butter  
Salt & pepper

#### **Method**

1. Chop the parsnips into chunks and boil in unsalted water until tender.
2. Make the bread into crumbs.
3. Grate the cheese and mix 5 oz of it into the bread crumbs.
4. Mash the parsnips, adding a knob of butter and season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Put the mashed parsnips into an ovenproof dish and level off. Sprinkle with the bread crumbs and cheese, and sprinkle the remaining cheese on top.
6. Place in an oven preheated to 180oC for about 15 minutes, until the cheese is golden and bubbling. Enjoy!

*Ellie*

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**HELLEBORES**  
— GARDEN OPEN DAY —

SUNDAYS 5<sup>TH</sup> & 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023, 2-4PM  
AT KAPUNDA, SOUTHSTOKE, BA2 5SH

A stunning display as seen on BBC Gardeners World with plants for sale

Entry £5 • Tea and homemade cakes

[www.kapundaplants.co.uk](http://www.kapundaplants.co.uk)

Supporting Dorothy House Hospice Care & The Wessex MS Therapy Centre

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Answers to Quiz on p.10: 1 c, 2 d, 3 c, 4 b, 5 b, 6 a, 7 d, 8 b.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2023

Subscriptions for 2023 are now due. They remain the same as previous years, that is: £7.00 for single membership and £10.00 for couples.

I would be grateful to receive your subscriptions as soon as possible. They may be paid:

- at the monthly meetings
- by post to me, Sean O'Shea, at Redlands, West End, Brinkworth, Chippenham, SN15 5DA
- by using the Club Post Box at E & S Hardware Store, High Street, Malmesbury
- by Bank transfer to Lloyds Bank PLC; sort code 30 91 99; account 02440789; put your name as the reference so I can track your payment.

### PLEASE SECURE CASH/CHEQUE IN AN ENVELOPE WITH THIS FORM

Enclosed £7.00 single membership       £10.00 double membership

1. (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): ..... Membership No. ....

2. (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): ..... Membership No. ....

Tel. No. ....

Address: .....

.....

Email address.....

#### GDPR Declaration:

- I authorise Malmesbury & District Garden Club to hold records of my personal details as necessary for the efficient running of the club. These details include:
  - name and address
  - landline and mobile telephone numbers
  - email address (if disclosed)
  - application/renewal form
  - record of subscription payments
- I am happy for Malmesbury & District Garden Club to communicate with me by email, by post and by telephone.
- I am aware that I can request a copy of the details of my record and that I can ask for any inaccuracies to be amended or for records to be deleted. I am also aware that I can refer complaints to the Information Commissioner if I am not satisfied with the way my complaint has been dealt with.

For further details contact Mr. Sean O'Shea at the address above.

**Signed: (1)** ..... **(2)** .....

Thank you

*Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)*