



MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

November/December NEWSLETTER 2023

www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

How the weather has changed in the last few weeks. We have had unseasonably scorching hot days to storm Babet. Sadly, many local people have been flooded and roads have become impassable. I find it encouraging that local people have been using Facebook to check the safest way to negotiate flooded roads. Requests for help with a water pump to empty water and sandbags have been offered to name but a few. It proves that we do have a supportive community around us. We are so lucky.

Our garden, although we are on the top of a hill, is now like a bog. Our dog goes into the garden for a run, she not only comes back with wet paws, she also has a wet belly! She does have little, short legs though.

My cactus and succulents have spent the summer in the garden and grown well. They are now in the greenhouse waiting to be potted on, as they will not withstand the freezing weather.

Christmas will be our next celebration to look forward to. We have our AGM in December, and we can look forward to a very short official meeting, followed by a demonstration of Christmas floral art by Margaret Stamford. Most people have to spend mega bucks to see a demonstration of this class but we have included it in with your membership. We would also welcome your friends at the meeting. Guests are asked to pay £2.00 only.

I look forward to seeing you in November.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas.

Ellie Church – Chairperson



Tasks for November/December



- Plant out roses
- Prune climbing roses
- Cut down herbaceous plants – fork in bonemeal
- Plant lilies – place sand beneath and plant at a 45° angle
- Cut down tall bedding roses by ½ to stop wind rock
- Divide herbaceous plants discarding centre
- Lift gladioli and dry off in frost proof place
- Pinch out September grown sweet peas
- Plant fruit trees
- Plant raspberry canes – try autumn fruiting Zeva
- Clear rotting brassica leaves and other rotting vegetable matter
- Dig empty veg. areas and leave rough over winter
- Complete planting of all spring flowering bulbs
- Regularly check stored bulbs and tubers
- Lag all outside taps or turn off where possible.

MEETINGS – EVENTS – ACTIVITIES

13 November 2023

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

Glorious Gardens: a Gardener's Choice
Andrew Tolman

Andrew was formerly Senior Gardener at Highgrove and is now self-employed. He is a popular speaker who has entertained us on many occasions with his beautifully illustrated talks.

11 December 2023

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

Annual General Meeting
To be followed by

Floral Arrangements for Christmas
A demonstration by Margaret Stanford



8 January 2024

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

My life as a farrier
Bernie Tidmarsh

Bernie has a forge in Crudwell and has been shoeing horses all his life

12 February 2024

7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall

Tales from the Potting Shed: a trip around all the gardens I have worked in
Nicola Hope

Nicola has been trained in organic gardening and has worked in public and private gardens

It is time to start planning for next year's growing season, perhaps trying out a new colour combination in the flower bed, growing new varieties of vegetables, or planting a banquet for pollinating insects. The Dobies Seed Catalogue for 2024 is now available and we have copies at our meetings. Alternatively, if you prefer to place your order online, the discount code is **SUGD242X**.



Slide projector



Malmesbury Garden Club owns a 35mm slide projector which it no longer needs and has decided to sell. It is a Kodak Carousel S-AV 1010 projector with two carousels each holding 80 slides, a cable remote control and a long extension remote control cable and a spare bulb. It is in an aluminum carrying case. £40 ono.

Please speak to a member of the committee if you are interested.

Reports from recent meetings

Margie Hoffnung: Rosemary Verey, Her Contribution and Legacy to 20th Century Gardening

Members, visitors and new members were welcomed to the first of the season's talks by Ellie Church, Chairman. She introduced the speaker, Margie Hoffnung, Conservation Officer for the Gardeners' Trust, who was invited to deliver her talk on Rosemary Verey and her contribution and legacy to 20th century gardening.

Rosemary Verey's life spanned from 1918 until her death in 2001. She became a famed gardener throughout the world, was a little-known tennis champion and horsewoman, with a degree from the London School of Economics in Maths and Economics. She also became a great author with 18 garden books to her name. While living in Fairford, the Head Gardener at Quenington House taught Rosemary Verey how to take cuttings from plants. This, in time, spurred her to enrol for an RHS course in Horticulture, something she attended every 2 weeks for some years. Soon after this, she moved to Barnsley House and set about restoring and designing the gardens there. Among her mentors were Russell Page from Sissinghurst; Christopher Lloyd from Great Dixter, who said that 'gardening should be fun'; David Hicks; Hardy Amies, friend and close

neighbour; Roy Strong, who emphasised using 'shapes in garden first and then plants' referring to Rosemary Verey as 'the great encourager'; Jane Fearnley Whittingstall, who designed the garden at Sudeley Castle, was known to call her 'super generous', borne out by Rosemary Verey's donating thyme plants from Barnsley House to Highgrove, which later became the now-famous Thyme Walk.

In her later years, Rosemary Verey was a guest on Desert Island discs, then on her 80th birthday, she was captured stepping from a flight in a biplane to be met and congratulated by the then Prince Charles. Margie concluded her talk by recalling the many happy hours she spent working with Rosemary Verey at Barnsley House, always referring to her as Mrs Verey. Derek gave the vote of thanks in his usual inimitable way, voicing the appreciation of all those present.



Sally Nex: Gardening the Low Carbon Way



Sally Nex was welcomed to the October meeting to enlighten members on 'How to garden the low-carbon way'. Her role as a professional gardener and writer led her quest to endeavour to remove all plastics from her daily and garden use. To

illustrate her point, she divided her talk into 3 distinct categories – 1) Light green 2) Mid green 3) Deep green, all dependent on the individual's enthusiasm, or not, for adhering to the low carbon way of thinking. For example – How green can you go? So for light green, you would not implement any changes, for mid green you would apply more effort, time and money, and the gardeners putting themselves in the dark

green group would implement a complete change of thinking. The illustrated presentation continued in this vein giving members food for thought in planning for the future of their gardens. Do we wish to continue using summer bedding, which is invariably grown in peat, sold in non-recyclable plastic and probably sprayed with insecticides, or do we replace this with long-lasting plants and perennials, or for those following the dark green policy, plant more trees and shrubs, which in turn attract insects, pollinators and wildlife? Quite a conundrum! Do we want to continue mowing our lawns weekly using noisy, polluting petrol mowers, or switch to less frequent mowing using a battery mower? Alternatively, why not do an annual mow, cutting a swathe in the grass, leaving the remainder to re-wild and for the benefit of all insects, seeing just what wildflowers appear? Dig or no-dig, feed with artificial compounds, or use the natural properties of

nettle and comfrey tea (easily made at home), organic seaweed, bonemeal, fish, blood and bone? Why buy compost when all gardeners have an abundant supply in their own gardens, plus adding home-made leaf mould makes for an even richer medium? If this was not an

Malmesbury in Bloom

Derek and Margaret attended this prestigious event in the Town Hall, where Councillor Gavin Grant, in his role as Mayor of Malmesbury, welcomed residents of Malmesbury, fellow Councillors and Piers Lavin from Hortico in Sherston to the annual Malmesbury in Bloom presentation of awards and trophies. The evening was led by Piers in his capacity as judge for all of the various categories. He extolled the virtues of all entrants and in each category showed the winning 3 entries on the big screen. All 3 winners in each of the 10 categories were awarded a certificate with the 1st prize also being presented with a cup. Winner of the Large Garden category was Diana D’Arcy who was presented with the Malmesbury and District Garden Club cup by Derek. Sandy Ponting was awarded 1st prize in the Super Gardener category, and Malmesbury Primary School won prizes in the categories for Vegetable Patch and Wildflower Areas and Sustainable Gardening, an award shared with St Joseph’s Roman Catholic Primary School. Piers was extremely heartened to see the input and enthusiasm exhibited by pupils and staff alike at both of our local primary schools, and hoped to see continued input in the future.

Piers highlighted other areas of interest in the town, namely Michael Thomas with his window boxes in the Triangle, also the floral display by the new ice-cream parlour, residents of the Maltings and St John’s Street, the Old Kit Box,

option, Sally impressed upon us all the importance of purchasing top-quality compost, as cheaper versions were not beneficial for the seeds or plants. Following questions from the floor, Derek thanked Sally for her informative presentation.

Parklands, plus the Grooming Room and the Whole Hog. The overall winner was Michael Thomas for his display on his shop window in the Triangle, who was presented with the Terry Soule Cup by Terry himself. Heartfelt thanks were given to Shane Bleaken for his constant and unerring dedication to the watering and care of all the plants, hanging baskets and containers admired throughout the town, as supplied by Piers and his team at Hortico in Sherston.



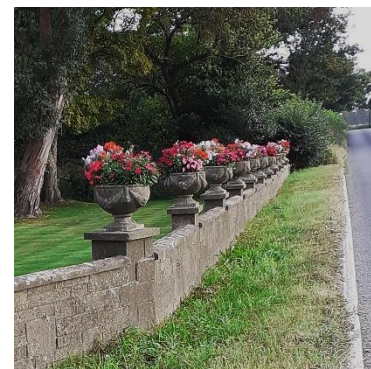
Finally, a new award was given and presented by Councillor Gavin Grant to Piers Lavin himself for his outstanding service to Malmesbury in Bloom, showing dedication and encouragement to all entrants. The evening concluded with the Mayor expressing his personal thanks to Piers, also to his fellow councillors for the excellent refreshments, and to the participants of the competition, hoping for even more entries during the 2024 season.

Margaret

Beversbrook Farm, Hilmarton near Calne

I have not driven past this Farm for years, the twelve or more stone urns always looked a picture in the early spring and they still looked good in the late summer. It costs little to make people smile.

Derek





FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

Comments from the garden

All in all, although it was warm at times then wet, growth on all plants was good. On pruning some of the shrubs such as weigela and *Viburnum opulus*, I was pruning off 5 or 6ft of season's growth to keep shrubs a reasonable size. These shrubs were pruned after flowering.

The joys of Christmas

Bringing the garden into the house during the winter with flowering house plants and bulbs, such as narcissus, poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) and hyacinths, makes those dark and cold winter days feel slightly less harrowing.

The garden does give us a few Christmas plants, such as the *Sarcococca* or Christmas box. This evergreen shrub comes in a number of varieties with small white to pink flowers in the depth of winter which are highly scented, they are followed by red/orange berries. *Heteromeles arbutifolia* or Christmas Berry is a



versatile plant which can be a hedge or small tree if pruned. Its thick leathery leaves give it good winter protection, and in summer, flattened heads of white flowers appear, followed by red berries that are not eaten by birds. *Polystichum acrostichoides* or Christmas fern is an evergreen fern that grows from a tufted crown; it has silvery white fronds at first, maturing to a bright green.

Blandfordia grandiflora or Christmas bells is a grassy plant that throws up stems 3ft (90cm) long topped with several tubular red/pink flowers that are 6ins (15cm) long and splashed yellow at the tips. Grow in moist peaty soils, it is not an easy plant to grow. *Sedum rubrotinctum* or Christmas cheer is a small evergreen plant with yellow winter flowers. It is a spreading plant with bulb-like bunches of leaves that look like grapes, turning red as they mature, ht 10 ins. *Lilium regale* or Christmas lily is one that I have grown for years and one you should grow by your back door in a pot or the ground, because of its highly perfumed

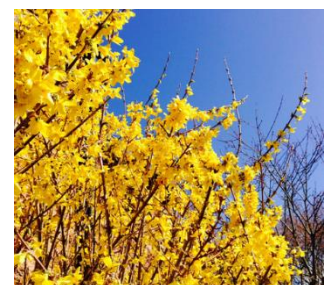
scent. A trumpet form which is white with a yellow centre, flowers are 6ins (15cm) long, arranged in clusters, ht 4ft (120cm).



Let's not forget the indoor plants: *Solanum pseudocapsicum* or Christmas cherry, this is also known as the winter cherry or the Jerusalem cherry. An evergreen pot plant with starry white flowers that are then followed by scarlet berries, a bushy plant but one that is prone to aphids (whitefly). *Ruellia macrantha* or Christmas pride is an indoor pot plant from Brazil. The oblong 6ins (15cm) long leaves have smooth edges surrounding clusters of funnel-shaped deep pink flowers that are 3ins long. Last, but not one we all know is *Schlumbergera* or Christmas cactus: this one offers many hybrids with a variety of coloured flowers. A pot plant that flowers over the Christmas period, buds appear at the leaf tips so do not move or turn at this stage as the buds will drop off.

Keith's choice plant

Jasminum nudiflorum (winter jasmine): a vigorous deciduous rambler bearing, in winter, masses of bright yellow flowers on bare branches, which continue to flower into early spring. Prune after flowering, if necessary; generally trouble free.



Pests' paradise

Mealybugs: cactus and succulents are the main host plants, but greenhouse plants are also prone to attack. Mealybugs are greyish white or pink soft-bodied insects. They secrete a white fluffy wax, hiding themselves and their eggs. Infested plants become

sticky. Mealybugs can also invade the root system. Control is difficult. Spray with an organic insecticide, or for a root infestation, water a systemic insecticide into the root system.

Plants to enjoy in November/December

Bulbs: *Galanthus* (snowdrops), *Nerine bowdenii*, *Schizostylis coccinea* 'crimson flag', *Iris unguicularis* (winter iris), *Cyclamen alpinum*.

Plants: *Cornus kousa*, *Berberis rubrostilla*, *Malus* (crab apple), *Symphoricarpos* (snowberry), *Amelanchier*, *Jasminum nudiflorum* (winter jasmine), *Erica carnea* (heather), *Mahonia*, *Ilex* (holly), *Skimmia japonica*.



FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

Comments from the veg plot

Placing herbs in pots around the vegetable plot helps bring in the pollinators: borage, nasturtium, thyme, sage and oregano, a close relative of marjoram, are just a few.

Savoy cabbage

I do not have room for summer cabbage, but if I did it would be the variety Dutchman F1 AGM (award of garden merit). It is a sweet pointed cabbage with good flavour. A good savoy cabbage for winter use is a plus as far as I am concerned. My favourite is Tundra F1 AGM; it is very hardy with plenty of leaf cover, standing well until April. If you require a large savoy, Mirabel F1 will give you all you need, good leaf cover and flavour, standing well during the winter. If you suffer from club root, the variety Cordoba F1 is for you; it is also resistant to ringspot and white rust, has medium to large heads and good flavour. Not everyone requires a large savoy. Jade F1 will give you a small to medium size savoy with tight heads, standing well in bad weather, with good flavour. Other savoy varieties you could try include, January King 3, Rigoletto and Tourmaline F1.

Kale

Kale is a super food which has nutritional value: it contains vitamins A, B6, C, K and folate, as well as fibre. I always have room for at least half a dozen



kale plants. I start using the leaves when they are young in salad and continue through the summer and winter until they go to seed in April. Varieties I have grown include Dwarf

Green Curled, one to have if your garden is open to windy weather as it is a short variety. A variety which can grow up to 4ft (120cm) is Scarlet; its leaves are very curly and violet green, a very hardy variety, frosty weather intensifies the colour to an eye-catching violet-blue. Emerald Ice has very ruffled leaves and over time it develops sparkling ice white centres, crisp and sweet in flavour. The variety Midnight Sun has vivid bright pink veins, the colour spreads through the frilly green leaves, so brightening up your vegetable plot; it has a good flavour and stands well through the winter, ht 2ft (60cm).

Seasonal activities

Clean up time weather permitting. As I write this, the cat, sat in her basket, just floated past the window – time to sow some rice, I think!



Most of the summer vegetables have finished. I have collected some runner bean seeds for next year. I have also picked the last of the outdoor tomatoes and placed them on the greenhouse bench to ripen with

some fleece available should we get a frost. All vegetable growths can now be cut up into smaller pieces and put on the compost heap, cutting them up into smaller pieces helps them to compost down quicker. Leaves from the curly kale that have gone yellow or have damage from slugs, are also removed and placed on the compost. Some of the vegetables that are still in the ground, such as leeks, beetroot, curly kale, carrots and spinach, need to be kept weed free, and any leaves that have seen better days can be removed and put on the compost.

When vegetable areas are clear, fork over and leave rough; the winter weather will break down the soil. I

will not dig my compost that I made last year into the ground until the spring.

All soft fruit can now be pruned: loganberry, tayberry, gooseberries, red, white and blackcurrants, and blackberries. I would also prune the blueberries, but at the moment they are a lovely red colour so they can wait.

If you have water butts, I find it a good idea to put tennis balls in so if there are a lot of hard frosts the balls will cushion the expansion in the container.

Keith's choice perennial

Rhubarb: Fulton's Strawberry Surprise: voted the best flavoured rhubarb in R.H.S trials. Vivid red strong stems rise up producing a good length. Grow in full sun or part shade in well-drained soil. Rhubarb can also be planted in containers.

No vegetable nightmares

Clubroot in brassicas: sometimes only shows when plants are mature and they collapse; roots become

swollen and distorted, foliage turns pinkish and wilts. Clubroot is a soil-borne disease and can remain in the ground for up to 20 years. It seems all help from the chemical and organic industry has disappeared. Always grow your brassicas on a new piece of ground each year. If the symptoms appear, remove plants immediately, improve soil and drainage, add lime to deter the pathogen (bacteria), remove fallen leaves and raise your own plants when possible.

Produce to enjoy in November/December

From the vegetable plot: Swiss chard, turnips, spinach, curly kale, leeks, swede, Brussels sprouts, Jerusalem artichokes, cabbage (savoy), beetroot, cauliflower, celeriac, carrots. **From storage:** onions, marrow, potatoes, shallots, carrots and beetroot (stored in peat or dry soil). **From frozen:** dwarf French beans, broad beans, peas, climbing French beans, runner beans. **Bottled:** shallots (pickled onions), beetroot, gherkins..

The Club's Trophies

Ron Poole Rose Bowl



Each of our trophies has a little history and I will do my best to share what I know about them all with you.

I start with the **Ron Poole Rose Bowl**. It is in memory of Ron, a well-liked bachelor and a very keen gardener who died in 1986. The bowl has a line from Kipling's poem: *'And the glory of the garden it shall never pass away'*. This is the poem which has the line *'That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees'* – something we can all agree with.

Ron was a very good photographer, and as well as giving our club some fine illustrated talks, he could fill our town hall with his slide shows of Europe. His slides were on two and a quarter inch square glass and of superb quality. A feature of his presentations was that he always had a pre-recorded commentary, his very carefully prepared scripts were spoken by a fellow club member, our then secretary, Pam Hall.

Mr Poole used to erect TV aerials back in the days when you could scramble over the roof without a maze of scaffolding. I remember him telling me how, while he was attaching an aerial to a chimney on a tall house, to his surprise and horror a little two year old's face appeared peeking over the guttering at him having climbed up the ladder!

Derek

A never-ending job



You may not know Shaun but you will certainly have admired the work he does around the town. Shaun is employed by Malmesbury Town Council to water and care for all the beautiful floral displays around our town.

There are tubs at ground level and baskets way up high on street lights, and of course many baskets, such as those fronting the abbey and those on the town bridge, are pretty difficult to reach to receive their daily watering.

The Council usually suggests a general colour scheme: this year the flowers have been predominantly reds, whites and blues, quite a tricky choice when you want the flowers to remain in bloom all the summer. The baskets and troughs are filled by Sherston Nurseries and given an initial supply of long-lasting fertilizer granules and later Shaun adds a liquid fertilizer to the daily watering.

Shaun is at present doing this job on his own – a job he has done for over twenty years. As well as keeping our town looking bright and welcoming, Shaun has several large areas of grass to keep mown and tidy: they include children’s play areas, the Cloister Gardens and Malmesbury Cemetery on Tetbury Hill.



Derek



HELP! Your questions answered by resident expert, Keith

Please send your queries and problems to: info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

- Q** *I have been given some small Phalaenopsis orchids, like the ones I have had for a number of years, different colour flower designs though. These are quite happy in the same pot for many years. However, I was given a Cymbidium orchid many years ago and it is looking worse for wear. How do I repot this, it is a very large plant?*
- A** Good question. Many years ago I worked in a seven acre garden with large greenhouses which had a number of Cymbidium orchids with varying flower colours. I was taken by my employer to a nursery supplying orchids to many parts of the country and was shown how to repot. This takes some believing: the gentleman doing the repotting lifted an enormous Cymbidium onto the potting bench. He tapped the sides of the pot several times and lifted the plant out. The root system was so packed no soil was visible. I thought ‘This will be difficult to divide’. He then laid the plant on its side, picked up a wood saw and cut half of the root system off – ‘Ouch!’ Pulling the orchid apart was then easy, discarding any dead orchid bulbs and leaves. He then spent a good half hour repotting the orchid in bark, not soil, using a short wooden stick, slowly adding bark, ramming it in, turning the pot slowly each time, also adding a sprinkling of orchid fertiliser. This one plant turned into five, all potted in the same way.

Q I recently bought an African violet. There was a label telling me not to propagate. Why?

A Simply put, a plant breeder is granted the exclusive right to propagate commercially a species or variety he has bred. There are many plants with this sort of label on them.

Q My magnolia will not flower. It was planted ten years ago.

A *Magnolia grandiflora*, an evergreen with large leathery leaves, is normally propagated by cuttings or grafting. If your magnolia was raised from seed it will take a lot longer to flower. When it does, fragrant creamy white flowers, several inches across, will appear in summer and autumn. A helping of sulphate of potash in the spring and again in the autumn, applied with a watering can around the root system, should help with flowering. I had a friend who grew a magnolia from seed. It took many years to flower, then only a few flowers appeared each year, eventually it did have more flowers, such a long time to wait though.



Thank you to Keith for more photos of colourful planting ideas



WORD SEARCH

E	L	M	A	G	N	O	L	I	A
G	E	A	N	L	A	P	P	L	E
L	U	I	R	E	M	S	I	A	C
A	O	D	H	C	O	O	H	N	H
B	B	E	E	C	H	A	N	O	E
U	P	N	M	B	O	K	U	D	S
R	E	H	L	A	L	D	E	R	T
N	A	A	O	Y	L	I	M	E	N
U	C	I	C	E	Y	R	R	Y	U
M	H	R	K	W	A	L	N	U	T

Hidden in our grid are the names of twenty common British trees, as well as the native trees there are some common trees that have been introduced into parks and gardens.

Alder – Almond – Apple - Ash – Bay – Beech – Chestnut – Elm – Gean – Hemlock – Holly – Laburnum – Lime – Maidenhair - Magnolia – Oak – Peach – Pine – Walnut – Yew.

RECIPE

Hurricane cocktail

Our tropical, rum-based hurricane cocktail is easy to make and sure to get your party started. Garnish with orange and cocktail cherries for a kitsch touch.

Ingredients

Serves 2

50ml dark rum
50ml white rum
1 passion fruit
1 orange, juiced
1 lemon, juiced

50ml sugar syrup
2 tsp grenadine
To garnish:
4 cocktail cherries
2 orange slices



Method

1. Fill a cocktail shaker with ice then add the rums.
2. Scoop the flesh and seeds from the passion fruit and add to the shaker along with the orange and lemon juices, sugar syrup and grenadine.
3. Shake well until the outside of the cocktail shaker feels icy cold.
4. Fill two hurricane glasses with fresh ice then double strain the drink into the prepared glasses.
5. Garnish each one with an orange slice skewered onto a cocktail stick and a couple of cocktail cherries.

Enjoy!

Recipe by Miriam Nice from *BBC Good Food*

Ellie