



# MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

## March/April NEWSLETTER 2024

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

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



### JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR . . . .

I think today is the first day in weeks that I have been able to dry my washing in the garden and in the fresh air. What a treat.

I do notice that spring is in the air; we have had snowdrops, beautiful little flowers that seem to appear from nowhere. The sight of them always perks me up. Primroses and catkins I love to see as well, a sign better weather is on the way.

This year I am going to try putting my seeds into rock wool. I have soaked the rock wool cells as advised and will drop the seeds into the cells later today.

We shall be having our own Plant Sale soon. More details will follow later.

Our horticultural Show will follow. We had suggestions to add to the schedule. This has been done and the schedule will be available for you all to peruse well before the Show.

Wishing you good weather and lots of successful planting to enter in the Show.



*Ellie Church – Chairperson*

### **SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER**

*As of 22<sup>nd</sup> February, only 32 subscriptions have been received. This is disappointing. Membership of Malmesbury Garden Club represents excellent value, entitling you to attend our interesting programme of gardening-related talks, 6 copies per year of our Newsletter, and significant discounts on orders of seeds and plants from the Dobies catalogue. Details of how, and where, to pay are contained in the form at the end of this Newsletter.*

*Thank you,  
Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)*



### 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
- 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**

<p><b>Monday 11 March 2024</b> 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>A year in the cutting garden</i> Caroline Sheldrick</p> <p>Caroline is a qualified medical herbalist, she can inspire gardeners to identify, grow and use medicinal herbs in remedies and offers advice on planting and propagation</p>	<p><b>Monday 8 April 2024</b> 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Spring Gardens</i> Catherine Williams</p> <p>Catherine has been interested in gardening and has been a gardener for 30 years and she is also an author</p>
<p><b>Saturday 18 May 2024</b> Malmesbury Market Cross <i>Annual Plant Sale</i></p>	<p><b>Saturday 20 July 2024</b> Charlton Village Hall <i>Annual Show</i></p>
<p><b>Monday 9 September 2024</b> 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>To be arranged</i></p>	<p><b>Monday 14 October 2024</b> 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Gardens of Versailles</i> Nathalie Mignotte</p> <p>Nathalie is a former lecturer at Hartbury College. Her interest lies in the relationship between faiths and gardens</p>
<p><b>Monday 11 November 2024</b> 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>To be arranged</i></p>	<p><b>Monday 9 December</b> 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall <i>Annual General Meeting</i></p>

## **The Garden Club Annual Plant Sale**

**SATURDAY 18 MAY 2024**



The plant sale is the main source of income for the Club and with costs rising I hope members will make an all-out effort to raise Club funds.

Plants that sell well are:

All forms of bedding plants, eg Marigolds, Begonias, Petunias, Antirrhinums, Impatiens.

Vegetables, eg runner beans that are ready to transplant, tomatoes suitable for growing outdoors.

*Graham Rees, Plant Sale Organiser*

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## Reports from recent meetings . . . .

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### Bernie Tidmarsh: The Life of a Farrier



On a dismal January evening threatening snow, 15 members, two visitors and five committee members braved the elements for the evening's gathering. Of special note, two ladies had travelled from the Forest of Dean to hear

Bernie Tidmarsh, a local farrier from Crudwell, deliver his talk on 'The life of a farrier'.

For an hour and a half he had the audience spell-bound as he recounted tales of his early life, his apprenticeship with his father in the local forge, which was then on the main road in Crudwell, then his 62 years working as a farrier. He worked not only locally but travelled to all the big horse events at Burley, Badminton and Gatcombe under Captain Mark Phillips, and beyond, all the while making his own shoes for horses and training 18 apprentices to become qualified

farriers. Bernie himself became a member of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, and met Mary, his wife of 42 years, while working at Highgrove. Princess Anne was once heard to describe Bernie as a 'one-off', while Bernie himself declared his life's work as 'rewarding'.

It also came to light that Bernie is bee-keeper, and can regularly be seen exhibiting in the local garden shows items from his garden, though he freely admitted to 'growing good vegetables badly'.

Bernie brought along to the meeting various memorabilia gathered over the years, together with many of his own hand-made horse shoes, and a prototype of a shoe designed and made by one of his apprentices, providing remedial therapy to injured horses.

Derek gave the vote of thanks, though all present were reluctant to allow the speaker to bring the evening to a close.

### Nicola Hope: Tales from the Potting Shed

Derek welcomed Nicola Hope, our speaker for the February meeting, who presented another of her light-hearted yet informative talks, from one who has an expert knowledge of all things horticultural.

Potting sheds – we all have one in some shape or



form, but not as grand as some of those worked in by Nicola throughout her varied career in

horticulture. This all began by doing work experience at the age of 15 at Highgrove House,

home to our present King Charles III and Queen Camilla. This sparked Nicola's interest in horticulture, though first she attained a degree from Cardiff in Fine Arts and Design, before gaining some years later, a Diploma in Horticulture and Organics at Pershore College.

Holidays from studying saw Nicola return to Highgrove House, before taking up a position

there as Head of Cottage Gardening, where she became responsible for the Wild Flower Meadows and Arboreta. Following this, Nicola spent a year at the Abbey House Gardens in Malmesbury working with Barbara and Ian Pollard in their world-famed garden, sporting a riot of colour each year with its thousands of tulips and roses. Nicola's next potting shed was at Cole Park where she lovingly cared for a garden which was almost completely devoid of colour, but renowned for its pillars of Hornbeam and Catalpa, with straight lines applied throughout the extensive grounds.

Early in her career, Nicola worked for Sting at Lake House in Salisbury, which provided valuable experience, but it was to the Cotswolds that she returned. Hawkesbury Upton House, with its use of patterns and shapes, kept Nicola under its spell for 12½ years. Her degree from the RHS in Horticulture has stood Nicola in good stead, as she now fills her time doing freelance garden design, working for private clients in their gardens, writing articles and delivering talks.

In conclusion, Nicola shared some of her advice with members as follows:

1. Try not to use cheap compost as it is never worth it. Sylvagrow by Melcourt with its traces of NPK [nitrogen/phosphate/potash] was one of Nicola's recommendations.
2. A tip from her time spent working with Sting was the importance of labelling.
3. A litter-picker is an invaluable tool for clearing slugs and snails.
4. Instructions on the application of the bowline knot.

5. Dahlias left in situ over-winter, providing they are thoroughly mulched and covered if necessary.
6. Spent snail shells can be used as cane-toppers.

Derek thanked Nicola as we were left in awe of her potting sheds.

Margaret



## FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

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

Another season approaches. In the winter of 2022/23 my entire clump of red hot pokers (torch lily) were frosted and completely disappeared. During the summer of 2023 the whole plant revived itself and now, February '24 it is looking great. It is best to leave plants that look dead, you never know . . .

### **Hot bed . . . .**

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, I touched on this subject in the Newsletter of September/October 1997. The hot bed consists of spring bulbs, summer flowering plants – herbaceous and annual – also autumn flowering plants, all with colours of red, orange and yellow in various shades. The tall plants were at the back, consisting of dahlias (cactus, decorative and pom-pom varieties), chrysanthemum (spray, double and semi-double); dwarf varieties of both were not included.



*Gladiolus 'Claudia'* was planted. It has a beautiful orange colour which I have been unable to find today, although now there are many other orange colours available. I also added at the time some more

unusual varieties of plants. These were middle and front of borders plants and included, *Schizostylis*, *Ligularia*, bergamot, *Lobelia cardinalis*, coneflower, *Cuphea* (cigar plant) and a *Ricinus* (castor oil plant), with its dark purple-red, deeply cut leaves it added more interest to the border.

### **Herbaceous revival . . . .**

In the last Newsletter I left you with a plant that yet again I only found in one garden, Painter's palette (*Polygonum virginiana* and *Polygonum filiforme*,

formerly *Tovara*). It is one for the front of the border, ornamental with notched edges to the leaves which are light green with white and red v-shaped



central markings. In late spring/early summer small tail-like pink flowers are formed, ht 18ins (45cm).

Another interesting plant I only found in a few gardens was *Aruncus 'Glasnevin'*, also known as goat's beard. This is one for the back of the border. Large white plumes are held high on 4ft (120cm) stems with deeply cut leaves flowering early to late summer.



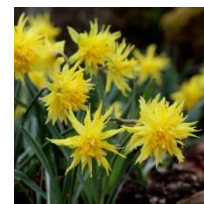
*Dierama pulcherrimum* (angels' fishing rod) is so elegant with long arching stems hung with pink bell-like flowers. A clump forming plant for damp soil, this one I found only around a pond where it looked at home casting a shadow across the water. Because of its height 4ft (120cm) it should be allowed to grow and not be divided; when the wind blows, watch its graceful movement: a beautiful plant.



Ground cover plants are invaluable to place between your taller plants to help keep down the weeds. One such plant I came across was *Tiarella cordifolia* (foam flower); this one prefers the shade which it gets between the taller plants. An evergreen with upright panicles of very small star-shaped flowers, pink in bud opening creamy white, the leaves are soft light green with buff to orange shading turning bronze in autumn; ht 1ft (30cm). Another one for next time is *Sanguisorba*.

### **Keith's choice bulb . . . .**

**Narcissus var. Rip van Winkle:** flowering early to mid spring, leaves are strap-shaped hiding many narrow yellow petals which form double flowers. Ht 9ins (18cm). Perfect for pots.



### **No disease please . . . .**

**Tulip fire:** as the foliage comes through the ground it may be withered, distorted and covered in buff coloured flecks or scorched; it soon becomes covered in grey fungal growth. Bulbs fail to flower or show buds; if buds do appear they may fail to open. Control by removing bulb and foliage. Do not compost, and do not plant bulbs in the same piece of ground again.

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

Hellebore (Lenten rose) in variety, grape hyacinth, crocus in variety, *Pulmonaria* (lungwort), daffodil and narcissi in variety, *Pulsatilla* (pasque flower), tulips in variety, *Bergenia*, *Aquilegia* in variety, *Fritillaria* in variety, *Iberis* (perennial candytuft), *Polygonatum* (Solomon's seal)



## **FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH**

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

So far the winter has been fairly mild, be it a little wet at times. The vegetable plot soil has been workable. It's been a good time to be completely ready for the coming sowing season.

### **Broad beans . . . .**

Many new varieties have appeared in our catalogues over the past six years. I felt it was time for an update.

Broad beans are not everyone's choice, the larger the bean the stronger in taste they are. Last year I tried a new one for me 'De Monica': I will grow this one again. Some of the varieties I will mention you might have already tried, so bear with me. Broad beans can sometimes be the first vegetable of the season you pick, some of you will also grow the same variety each year as I did in the past. I always sow in small pots and plant out, sowing directly into the ground

gave me gaps where they had rotted, or yellow leaves and inferior plants which produced very few beans. Growing in pots and planting out into prepared ground when about four or five inches high has always given me a good crop.

Planting in a block also helps keep them upright. If your garden is open to windy conditions these varieties would be



better for you. Karmazyn and The Sutton Dwarf would be a good choice. Karmazyn beans are a lovely pink colour, ideal in salads with a good taste; height of both varieties 2ft (60cm). An even shorter variety is Robin Hood A.G.M., a very compact variety holding four to six green beans per pod; ht 18ins(45cm). Valenciana is one to sow in spring or autumn, producing eight or nine white beans per pod with a good flavour

ht 3-4ft (90-120cm). Luz de Otono is another one best sown in the autumn, pods contain between five and seven beans, again with good flavour; ht 3ft (90cm). A variety that goes back to the 1950s is Red Epicure. It has a good flavour and the beans are red in colour retaining the colour when steamed, not boiled. Four or five beans per pod; ht 3ft (90cm). For a number of years I grew broad beans in containers with good results, I also grew lettuce between the plants.

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

The growing season begins, weather permitting of course. With a bit of luck we all have our vegetable seeds. A piece of black polythene placed on the area where you are first going to sow your seeds will help to dry out and raise the



temperature of the soil. I have started sowing carrot, beetroot and spring onion in punnets on the bench of my cold greenhouse, this gives me an early start. One thing you must do is place a thin piece of polythene in the bottom of your punnet: cut the strip so that it covers the bottom leaving an inch protruding above the punnet at one end. When your vegetable seedlings are big enough, take out a shallow trench in your vegetable plot, catch hold of the protruding polythene and pull slowly into the shallow trench, this stops any damage being done to the seedlings. Gently firm in both sides.

March is the time I spread my compost, hoeing in where I need firm ground, and digging in for deeper rooted vegetables. A trench will be dug and compost put in for potatoes, circular holes will be dug out and compost put in for climbing beans and also sweet peas. Other areas will



have compost spread on the surface, lightly hoed in for onions, dwarf French beans and broad beans, all of which I will be starting off in pots and planting out when big enough. Larger pots dotted around my vegetable plot which will grow courgettes gherkins and cucumbers will also have some compost dug in. Two to three ounces of general fertiliser per square yard will also be hoed into all areas and pots. When seedlings have germinated thinning out is most important for a good size crop; plants too close together could also develop botrytis blight or grey mould, a fungal disease, caused by poor air circulation. If you have a seed-sized propagator or bigger, now is a good time to sow the seeds of cucumbers, chilli, courgette, peppers, pumpkin, and melon; I also start in small pots cabbage, kale, cauliflower, brussels sprouts and calabrese (green sprouting broccoli). As these varieties germinate they will be pricked out into individual small pots, so do not sow the seed too thickly; they will be eventually planted in the vegetable plot in the ground or in containers.

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

**Asparagus var Connovers Colossal:** great if you have room, although I planted six crowns (roots with growing points) in a half barrel which produced a good crop for a number of years. A good flavoured variety producing good thick spears, a good early variety. If you grow on a raised up bed, cut



the shoots below soil level; if the bed is flat, cut the shoots at soil level. A worthwhile vegetable, however, watch out for your asparagus tops disappearing if you have flower arrangers living nearby.

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

**Broad bean rust:** foliage develops spots on both sides of the leaf with dark brown powdery spores; each spot has a yellow ring around it. Infected leaves will wither and die and in bad cases there will be complete defoliation. This problem is worse in damp and humid weather. The cause is a fungus which can also affect other

plants such as brassicas. This fungus can overwinter on plants and seeds. Control is difficult: pick off infected leaves and any leaves around that look affected, remove all infected plants at the end of the season, do not compost or save any seeds for the next season. There is little prevention other than allowing good air

circulation and never water plants from overhead in dry weather.

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

Perpetual spinach, leeks, Jerusalem artichokes, Swiss chard, swede, parsnips, curly kale, turnips, savoy cabbage, Brussels sprouts. **From storage:** potatoes, onions, shallots, cooking apples, carrot and beetroot (stored in peat or dry soil).



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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 had some irises in my garden for many years. They have been a joy, especially the early ones, but last year and the year before they failed to flower. Is there something wrong?*

**A** There is no problem. The iris splits up into many bulblets which will take a few years to flower, especially the yellow-flowered varieties. Plant the iris of your choice every year for three years in the same area and you should always have flower. The dwarf varieties should be planted a little deeper: this seems to stop the production of too many bulblets.

**Q** *My ornamental maple leaves drop off. Can I do anything to stop this? It is usually the young leaves which turn brown, brittle and papery: is it a disease?*

**A** No, it is not a disease. It is caused by extremes of temperature and is something that is called scorch. This can also affect other trees, such as beeches. Unseasonably cold winds on the young tender leaves can give the tree an autumnal appearance. All you can do, if you can reach them, is remove the affected leaves. This will help stop a disease or fungus gaining a hold on your tree. Alternatively, just allow the new leaves to push off the shrivelled leaves and clear dead leaves up; do not put on compost heap. These and other ornamental trees are best planted in a more sheltered and protected part of the garden



**Q** *Should I remove the flower stalks on my rhubarb?*

**A** It is far better to cut the flower stalks down to the crown of the plant. Goodness is taken from the plant allowing it to grow up three or four feet and produce flower, when the rhubarb should be gaining strength after the picking season. Saying this, it is not essential. Many people leave it on as the flower can be quite attractive.

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## ***Show News, 20 July 2024 . . . .***

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The committee has confirmed that we can find space for the suggestions of members to add all five extra classes to the schedule and to include a small Photographic Section.

So on these miserable days when you can't get outside, why don't you look through your garden photographs?





Printed photographs be 15 cms x 10 cms, mounted on a piece of plain card.

There are three categories:

- Photograph of your own garden, whether it is a border, pot or just a flower.
- Photograph of a garden you have visited.
- Photograph by a junior (under 16 yrs) on a garden-related theme.



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## **Show Memories . . . .**

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Way back In 1966 I had a good year growing early chrysanthemums and I thought I might enter them in the Somerford Show. But I could not understand which class I could enter and so rode my bike over to Somerford to ask Mr Tyzak, the Show Secretary.



In the Schedule was a section restricted to 'Cottage labourers': I had no idea what a 'Cottage labourer' was and was surprised when Mr Tyzak told me I could enter that section. Whilst in his kitchen, he showed me a huge sheet of paper, the size of the table, ruled

in both directions recording all the exhibitors and every class.

I won first prize with my chrysanthems as a 'Cottage labourer' and I also had entered another vase into a class which was open to competitors who employed a gardener. Col. Sir Hugh Brassey's gardener grew his chrysanthemums but he proudly brought them to the show tent! So I beat him AND his gardener!

The prize money was not paid out on the Show Day: the winners had to go to The Volunteer a few days later with their prize cards!

Little was I to know that a few years later Col. Brassey and I would sit together as magistrates in the Malmesbury Petty Sessions Division and we became good friends. I never mentioned chrysanthemums!

*Derek*

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## **The Club's Trophies . . . .**

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### **The Joseph Long Cup**



This 10-inch tall cup is engraved:

*'Malmesbury Garden Club, Joseph Long Memorial Cup'.*

It was given by Miss Hilda Long, a member of our club committee, in memory of her father.

Miss Long's father had no links with the Club.

I have two memories of Miss Long, other than the fact that she had absolutely no sense of humour at all.

She ran the Apostle Spoon Tea Rooms. These tea rooms were in the Market Cross where the Rajah Indian Restaurant is presently gathering cobwebs.

The tea rooms took its name from the popular boxed sets of 12 tea spoons which had the tiny figure of an Apostle on their handles. The tea rooms were very popular and the service was very swift; Miss Long kept her girls on their toes.

My other memory of Miss Long concerns Show Prize Cards. We used to get our Prize Cards supplied free from seed companies and our name and the wording of the class information had to be written on each card. Miss Long offered to write half of the Prize Cards if someone else wrote the other half – and so the schedule was divided, one lady agreeing to write 1-50 and Miss Long writing 51-100. I can still remember Miss Long saying 'Stop fussing'. Just a couple of days before the Show Miss Long brought her cards, all nicely written out but numbered 1-50, the same as the other lady's cards.

*Derek*



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## **RECIPE . . . .**

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### **Lemony Easter chicks**

#### **Ingredients**

2 medium egg whites  
100g golden caster sugar  
½ tsp cornflour  
grated zest 1/2 lemon, plus 1  
tsp juice

yellow food colouring paste  
orange, black and yellow icing  
pen, to decorate



#### **Method**

1. Heat oven to 140°C/120°C fan/gas 1. Line a baking sheet with baking parchment and put a medium-sized plain nozzle on a piping bag.
2. In a clean bowl, whisk the egg whites until they are very stiff. Add half the sugar and continue to whisk until the mixture is becoming firm and shiny.
3. Stir the cornflour into the remaining sugar and add to the meringue, along with the lemon zest and juice, and a smidge of yellow food colouring paste. Whisk again until you have a very thick, firm and glossy pale yellow meringue.
4. Carefully spoon the meringue into the piping bag. Push any air out of the top and tightly twist the opening to seal. Pipe about 25 thumb-sized dollops onto your baking sheet – if possible, try to make them wider at the base than the top, resembling a chick's body and head. Leave a gap between each chick to allow for expanding when cooking.
5. Cook in the oven for 30 mins until they are crisp, firm and come off the baking parchment easily. Leave to cool on a wire rack.
6. To decorate, use the orange icing pen to make a V-shaped beak, and a black icing pen for eyes and feet. The yellow icing pen can be used to decorate fluffy hair on the chick's head and/or wings. Will keep for up to 1 week in an airtight container.

*BBC Good Food*

*Ellie*

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## **Some late winter colour from Keith . . . .**





A GARDEN EVENING  
WITH KEVIN FRANKLIN  
(previously Head Gardener at  
The Abbey Gardens)  
"TOP TIPS AND TRICKS OF  
THE TRADE FOR GARDENERS"

FRIDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2024

6.00 – 8.00 PM

CHARLTON VILLAGE HALL SN16 9DL

Drinks and canapes followed by a talk by Kevin  
and question time.

Tickets: £15.00 each (details for booking on the reverse)

If possible, please pay by Bank Transfer to  
**North Wiltshire Friends of Dorothy House**

Sort Code **20-68-15** Account No. **53232441**

Please use your surname as the reference followed by  
the number of tickets you require (eg Whitworth 2)

If you are paying by cheque please send with your name and  
address and number of tickets

at £15.00 each to

Rebecca Whitworth, Bisley House, Charlton, Malmesbury,  
Wiltshire SN16 9DJ

Email: [gardentalk2024@gmail.com](mailto:gardentalk2024@gmail.com)

Cheques should be made out to

**North Wiltshire Friends of Dorothy House**

and sent to Rebecca Whitworth (address above)

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**Tickets will be held on the door**



## SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2024

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)*