

# The Notice Board

## What's On locally

- Bryan's Ground Garden opens from the 23rd April-18th July, on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays from 2-5 p.m. Admission: £5.00, concessions: £4.50, children: £2.00
- On April 28th (check this date before setting out!) Eastnor Castle near Ledbury hosts the Red Cross Plant Fair. A must for all gardening enthusiasts, the event features more than 80 quality stalls representing a host of specialist garden nurseries selling a wide range of plants from the traditional to the highly unusual. Open 10.30am - 4.20pm. Admission is £7.50 per person or £5.50 per person (afternoon only - 1pm-4pm)
- Three of Welshpool's Secret Gardens are open on April 24th and 25th for the NGS (yellow book) scheme. Situated off the A458 in Welshpool, admission is £4, and children go free
- Whimble Nursery and gardens re-open on 7th April 2011. Opening times in 2011 from April to end of September are from 10.30am to 5.30pm on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays



A big THANK-YOU to everyone who has written for the newsletter this month-it makes for a much easier job for the editor! If your article does not appear this month, don't worry, as it will appear at a later date.

### My favourite Flower

This month Betty Morris tells us about primroses.

My favourite flower has to be the primrose. Almost the first sign of Spring as banks and hedges are alive with colour and the little violets just mixed in. It's Springtime. I have always lived in the country and had to walk two miles to school every day. We all knew the names of the wildflowers. We learnt so much in school. I remember my mother telling me she was to get married on Primrose Day (April the 19th), but my Dad was called up for the army. She had a lovely primrose dress, and I still have the hat which has been restyled. Mother got married the same year (7th October 1910) and wore her dress. I have lovely memories of the primrose.

**Primrose Day** is the anniversary of the death of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield, on the 19th April 1881. The primrose was his favourite flower and Queen Victoria would often send home bunches of them from Windsor and Osborne House. She sent a wreath of primroses to his funeral, and on this day his statue in parliament Square in London is decorated with primroses, as is his grave in Hughenden, Buckinghamshire.

## Meeting report for March 2011

For every gardening pioneer who brings a bare piece of land to life or rescues a derelict garden, there ought to be a medal – or some such distinguished award for services to nature, anyhow. Just such a task, the Whiteheads set themselves at Aulden Farm, the old farmhouse dating back to the 1600s. From a bare site in 1997, except for a few old cider apple trees, they have filled their three-acre garden with plants, whilst keeping to an informal design and encouraging all sorts of wildlife. Hemerocallis is a favourite and over a hundred plants are in co-ordinated stock areas.

Irises, of course, are their passion (there's an iris in flower for nearly every month of the year) and the Whiteheads hold the National Collection of Siberian Iris, planted in chronological order starting with the Snow Queen from 1900 and continuing up to the present day. PCI's Pacific Coast iris fascinate them but beware, these do not take kindly to being transplanted so it is best to grow them from seed in compost covered with ½ inch of fine grit. From potting on, they take roughly thirteen months to flower, the blooms standing about a foot tall. These plants enjoy a woodland environment and should be planted, wherever possible, under deciduous trees. Good, illustrated talk by expert growers!

Mary Comer (from notes by Mary Bufton)

### Terrace Terrors by Hannah Taylor

Once upon a time there was a steep grassy south facing bank, a recently planted east facing bank and a woman with big ideas and imagination to transform the bank into a three level terrace. On the bottom would be a long deep pond, filled with irises, reeds and the sound of frogs croaking; in the middle would be a paved area with wild thyme and chamomile growing between the cracks and a bench to watch the water rippling below and the damselflies dancing merrily. The third level was to be a heather bed to attract bees for our soft fruit bushes. The heather bed is finished!

The first job was to mark out a straight line to dig along the sheer curving slope and if you've ever tried that, you'll know it's like using a snake as a tape measure – once the measurements have been “added” on. I have Hampton Court tastes (Herefordshire one, not the other) and back yard concrete slab money, so the next part wasn't in the original idea. The wall up to the next level was imagined to be made of stone from the garden, built up in a wall similar to the bottom one. It wasn't. Metal spikes and wooden posts were driven in and a wooden wall was hammered into place. The pond was dug out and..... a year and a bit later underlay was put down (old blankets and towels), pond liner kindly given to us by our neighbours and the news that our garden would be open for the first ever Llanfair Waterdine Arts and Garden Festival. \*\*\*\*! Oh dear. Plants were bought, pond was lined, slabs were placed on brown muddy area and water entered the pond. All within days of the opening.

As the water crept its way to the pinnacle of the pond hours before opening, it reached the top at last. And leaked through the stones lining the wall edge, made beautiful rainbows as waterfalls streamed down the stones and cascaded across the path. There was no time to build a bridge to cross it. Wellies were provided for those brave enough to walk past it and I looked after my daughters. Away from the pond.

The level continued to sink, but I knew where the leak was. Following a trip to Hereford and numerous searches online, I had the means to stop the water escaping. It did for a while. After I resorted to concreting over the join, painting over with sealant and just for good measure adding a strip of gaffer tape, because as everyone knows gaffer tape mends everything and sticks everything together. For a period of about a fortnight the level remained the same. It had been raining, so that must have accounted for it. Because once it stopped raining, the pond resorted to being a muddy puddle, but that was fine – by this time I had had an ingenious idea to use hessian sacks to make planting pouches for the wall of the pond.

The pond is 32' long and ranges between 6" and 5' wide; and 1' and 6' deep. Actually, the deepest is 3', but the walls extend a further 3' above the surface of the water and are covered in black liner, hence the ingenious idea of using hessian sacks for planting pouches against the wall.

One trip to Hereford (more plants), two bins of water, two boxes of sludge, five frogs, two newts and a shopping trolley later – the pond was emptied. It was cleaned. The sacks were nailed into place and planted. The leaks were sealed up and water, and frogs (no newts, they'd run off,) filled the hole and we had a beautiful glistening lake complete with a pebbled beach, irises, fritillaria and primulas. A joy to behold!

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH!**

## **The monthly competition**

Mary Bufton give us this up-date, and a reminder of how the competition is organised for those of you who may not be sure how things work! The monthly competition is a friendly affair, and all of us enjoy seeing what others have brought, so do have a go if you can.

Every month, the allocated points are as follows:

First place: 10 points

Second place: nine points

Third place: eight points

Every entry receives seven points, so you can add to your points score even if you are not a monthly winner.

Please also remember that only one entry per member is accepted, and that entering more than one may result in all your entries being disqualified to be fair to other members. Exhibits must be displayed by 7.25 pm as the speaker for that evening will judge the entries. If there is no speaker, then a substitute will be chosen by the committee.

### **March competition results: an arrangement of Spring flowers in a cup**

First: Rose Morris

Second: Margaret Brick

Third: Jacquie Farmer

There were twelve entries and they made a beautiful and varied display with the added delight of a scent of Spring. Thanks to everyone who entered.

The May competition is for a wallflower. As it is also our Annual General Meeting and supper, lots of entries would be welcome, as the competition always generates lots of comments and adds to the fun and enjoyment of Avril's popular supper. It is also the start of a new year for the Rudge Cup, awarded to the member with the most points from the competition during the year. In 2009/10, the winner was Kath Graham with a total of 74 points, with second place going to Marilyn Tippett with 69 points and third place to Brenda Morgan with 53 points.

Mary Bufton has taken on the job of organising our speakers from Audrey Fox, who has done such a wonderful job for so many years. If you know of any speakers you might like to hear, or have heard a good speaker elsewhere, Mary would love to hear from you. Travelling expenses are very high now, so mileage is of course a key factor. You can contact Mary at the meeting, or telephone her on 01547 510285

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### **Responses to Rosemary Naylor's thoughts on mint in the March issue of The Noticeboard**

**From Marilyn T;** move them regularly, that's the only answer. Cutting the bottom out of a large pot works for about a year, and then the roots get everywhere just as before, Mint doesn't like its roots being limited in this way, and may develop rust. I like apple mint, and think it best for flavour.

**From Mary B;** from my experience mint does much prefer the open ground and the most tasty I have picked are the sprigs growing between the paving stones on the path around the garden after I have been trying to keep it under control. It does have many uses, including acting as a skin cleanser, helping with weak digestions and, best of all, having a calming effect on the nerves. Sweeten your mint tea with honey, and afterwards, instead of straining the leaves away, chew them as a breath freshener. In October you can always plant a few roots in a box about 2" deep, and place them in your greenhouse to force them for use in Winter.

The most damaging disease is mint rust, whose symptoms are orange-coloured patches on the leaves and stems, and distortion, It is important to find out which fungus is causing the problem. Plants with mint rust are best dug up and a new plant set elsewhere in the garden.

A friend of mine plants her mint in between the plants in her window box and separates them with a piece of wood or roof tile to check the runners.

As Rosemary quite rightly says, what better way to eat your new potatoes?

## The April garden: tasks and ideas

Spring seems to have sprung at last, so now there is no excuse to prevent us getting out into the garden. The grass is growing quite strongly now, and would benefit from a quick rake-over to remove some of the moss, followed by a lawn feed. Keep on dead-heading any spent bulbs to prevent them setting seed. A general fertiliser will help them build up a good bulb that will flower well next year.

Many of us have plants in pots, and if yours have survived the Winter cold, scrape off the top layer of any permanent planting and give them a feed and a top up of soil or compost. If your pots have lost their plants, use this opportunity to give them a really good clean inside (you might like to leave the patina on the outside which softens new pots) ready for their new occupants. And do perhaps think about buying some pot feet to help them avoid the cold

next Winter.

Many shrubs and perennial plants may not have survived this Winter, but it is too soon to call it a day and take them out. Leave them at least another month before carefully digging around them to see if there are any new shoots. If not, then you can take it out with a clear conscience and go out and buy a new one, or beg one from a friend!

The greenhouse should be in full swing now with your vegetable and flower seedlings coming on well. Don't overwater them, as this can cause death by damping off if the weather is at all gloomy and damp. Frost at night is still a possibility, so have some fleece on hand to cover them when it threatens. An old lace curtain or light tablecloth also does the job well.

And finally, please remember to bring surplus seedlings to the club plant stall so we can all share in your success.

## May AGM

*May sees the beginning of a new Gardeners' Club year, and you are reminded that we need your support in not only renewing your subscriptions at the May meeting, but also in thinking about what you can do for your club. New committee members are needed this year, as several long-standing committee members are standing down. You don't need to worry about lots of boring meetings-we don't have too many meetings and they are never boring! If you think you could help, why not talk to a committee member at this meeting, or call Avril Hoyle (01547 529244) for more information?*

### *Plant Profile for April:*

#### *Forsythia*

The forsythia shrub is a very common sight in gardens all over the world, a very hardy shrub and will stand almost total neglect but will reward those taking a little care by flowering almost non-stop in March and April. It is named after William Forsyth, a Scottish botanist of the C19. Forsythias are members of the olive family, and there are about 11 species, mostly native to eastern Asia, but one native to southeastern Europe. They are deciduous shrubs typically growing to a height of 1–3 m (3–9 ft.) and, rarely, up to 6 m (18 ft.), with rough grey-brown bark. Two species of forsythia are at the heart of the selected forms and garden hybrids: forsythia suspensa and forsythia viridissima.

Forsythia × intermedia, is a hybrid of F. suspensa and F. viridissima, introduced into Europe about 1880. 'Spectabilis' is a popular and vigorous selection that can reach 10 feet tall and wide. Another popular choice is a selection of 'Spectabilis', a plant known as 'Lynwood'. Others include 'Mead-owlark', ( 8-10 feet tall and up to 15 feet wide); 'Northern Gold', ( 6-8 feet tall and 5-7 feet wide); and 'Sunrise', (compact at 4-6 feet tall with a spread of only 3-5 feet). 'Fiesta' is a fantastic variegated variety and viridissima 'Weber's Bronx', is an attractive dwarf plant that flowers well into April. F. ovata 'Paulina' is a compact cultivar that reaches only 30-45cm, making it ideal for a rock garden, and finally F. suspensa f. atrocaulis has pale lemon-yellow flowers, standing out to great effect against its young purple stems and leaves.

Who knew there could be so many different hybrids of this common garden shrub?