

# The Notice Board

## What's on locally

Bryans Ground near Presteigne re-opens this April after several years when it has not been open to the public.

Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays from 2-5pm.

Hellen's Garden, Much Marcle opens again for the season on April 4th

28th April. Eastnor Castle near Ledbury

Red Cross Plant sale. 10.30am to 4.30pm. Can be muddy-be warned!

On the 28th April the South West Shropshire Gardening Club have Ingrid Millington from Hillview Hardy plants, a previous speaker at the TVGC This event at Clunton village hall, commencing 7.30pm

24th April, Knighton Farmers Market. A plant and seedling swap/buy

### *New committee members wanted!*

*Several of the current committee have served their 3 years (and more in some cases) and are leaving the committee this year. In order for us to continue to function as a club we will need to replace these members, and ask you to think about offering yourself as a committee member. The duties are not onerous, and we currently meet in our secretary's home with tea and cake to help the debates! Meetings are not even monthly, so if you think you might be able to help, please see any committee member for more information, and fill in a proposal form which will be available at this meeting.*

*Remember, any club is only as good as its members want it to be, so help make **your** club an even better one for the future.*

**The sun was warm but the wind was chill,  
You know how it is with an April day.  
When the sun is out and the wind is still,  
You're one month on in the middle of May.  
But if you so much as dare to speak,  
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,  
And wind comes off a frozen peak,  
And you're two months back in the middle of  
March.** Robert Frost



## March meeting report: Mary Comer

Pam Pittwood made the case admirably for the less well-known plant varieties whose special requirements of light, shade, moisture, dryness, and particular soil types ought not to put us off growing them. Amongst the plants mentioned – and Pam's talk was extremely wide-ranging – was viburnum. Pam recommends xanthocarpus, for example, with its yellow ovoid berries as a pleasant change from the brilliant red berried variety. Of the genus hypericum (St John's Wort), hypericum elatum, Elstead is a useful variety, growing to knee height and very striking; it likes moisture. Berberis, with its racemes of bright yellow flowers, likes the best of both worlds, that is, part-shady and part-sunny conditions, and a soil which is well-drained. Parahebe liola has beautiful early summer flowers and is a good space-filler for heathers and conifers. Primroses, including Blair-Scythe Yellow and particularly the auricula-type of primroses with their blue, mauve flowers and ear-like leaves, are always a joy to grow. The varieties of hardy geranium which have blue flowers are eternal favourites but Kashmir White is well worth trying, though Pam warns against giving it too heavy a soil or too much sun. It goes dormant in July, so it's a good idea to have it growing near ferns and hosta which will take over when it comes to an end. Of the saxifrages, good for pots, walls and troughs, Tumbling Waters is a lovely variety and its name says it all! The list of varieties of pulmonaria Pam likes to grow seemed endless and she was enthusiastic about Azurit, Mrs Kittle, Blue Ensign, Bertram Anderson and David Ward. These look good in shade – in full sun, they are susceptible to mildew, though they recover well. Pam found out, almost by accident, that these plants don't like windy conditions so thought needs to be given to where they are sited. Needless to say, this report hardly does justice to Pam's talk, which, like the pulmonaria of which she is so fond, covered a lot of ground. It was meticulous in its attention to detail, illustrated by some very handsome slides and so useful in giving practical pointers to those keen to have a go at growing these less obvious plants. Proceeds from the sale of plants, books and cards went to Pam's two designated charities: the Langley House Trust and Tree Aid.

### Josephine Brick's lilac - a TVGC member responds

Having read Josephine's interesting article on lilacs in the last issue of the Notice Board, I wondered if she might be referring to, not to a lilac but to a caryopteris, of which the most common is of course called Heavenly Blue? Although not fragrant, it is a lovely plant for a sunny spot, with narrow, feathery, dark green leaves, slightly glaucous in character on the reverse. If this is the plant Josephine remembers it is certainly commonly available at any good nursery.

## MARY MORGAN'S FAVOURITE FLOWER

When Marilyn asked me to write about my favourite flower I thought what a difficult task that was when I like all flowers. But I chose the primrose.

Many, many years ago as a child, I walked about two miles to school (no transport in those days), and what a thrill it was to find the first bunch of primroses. The bright little faces stood proud in the grass, and many were picked to take home to Mum. Years later, when arranging our wedding, Llewellyn and I chose April 19th; Primrose Day. There was an abundance of primroses and at the reception we had arrangements of primroses on the tables, gathered from our own land of course. For our silver wedding, I could find only six blooms, and yet for our golden wedding the primroses were nearly over. How the seasons change.

Cultivated primroses are now available in a wide range of colours, but the yellow primrose growing along the grass verges are still my favourite, and a sure sign that Spring is on its way.

*Marilyn writes*

*Mary's lovely writing about primroses reminded me of talking with my mother at Easter this year. She told me that the snowdrop is her favourite because it blooms near her birthday in February - usually the only flower around at that time in the Lake District. It is also her favourite because she, like Mary, lived on a farm and every February there would be a bunch of snowdrops in a china mug brought to her and her twin sister for their birthday. These were protected with straw by her mother so that whatever the winter weather, there would always be snowdrops in bloom for their birthday.*

### A generous offer

Mr David Gavin, who lives at Felindre, is creating coppice woodland from older woods which have been neglected for some time. He is happy for Gardeners' Club members needing bean and pea sticks to go along and cut them from the older hazel trees. Please ring first (01547 510637) to make sure he is in and mention that you are Gardeners' Club members. The garden is up a steep hill, although there is level access from the foot of the drive. You would be responsible for all cutting and taking way of course.

### DAY OUT

**Radnor Valley Gardening Club** are organising a coach trip to **Coughton Court**, a National Trust property, on **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2010**. The cost of the coach will be £10 and the cost of the entrance to the House and Gardens £7.45 (National Trust members £1). There will be a pickup at approximately 9.0'clock (to be confirmed), in Bowling Green Lane, Knighton. Anyone interested in joining this outing, please contact Secretary Mrs. Jill Martin (01544 350363) to book your place and arrange **payment in advance**. Her address is Preston, Broad Street, New Radnor, Presteigne LD8 2SN.

## The April garden: tasks and ideas

April is an excellent time to split up some of your herbaceous perennials which have got too large and perhaps do not flower as well as they once did. The old method of putting 2 border forks back to back and then pulling apart still is the best method, or you can use a very strong knife or saw to get through things like hostas. Replant pieces from the outside of the clump, and remember to pot up some of the pieces you don't need for the Garden Club plant stall in May. By now you will probably have got round the garden and forked over the soil and tidied things up ready for Easter. As soon as we have some dampness in the soil (March has been truly dry), then you can put compost or mulches down around your plants to suppress the weeds and feed the soil. Try and keep the mulches away from the crowns of plants

and the trunks of newish trees and shrubs to avoid rot setting in. One new idea that I am keen to try this year is the trimming of evergreen hedges such as yew in April, ideally once the likelihood of frosts is gone. In my garden this would enable me to avoid trampling on the precious flowering perennials at the usual time of pruning in the summer months and may be worth it for that reason alone. I know I should have allowed a greater gap between hedge planting and flowers, but that is a rule more often broken than obeyed I find unless you can have a border 4 feet wide.

The grass has taken a real hammering this Winter and looks brown and burned as if it is mid summer in my garden. Why not give it a boost with a lawn feed in April? This is not something I do regularly, but this year I may make an exception to try and green-up the lawn.

## New bulbs to try for 2010

### Dierama Guinevere

Beautiful white hanging bells. Lovely near water.

### Agapanthus Aimee

Launched at Tatton, blue and white alternating petals. A good replacement for any you lost this Winter.

### Asarum splendens

A curiosity. Heart-shaped leaves with small brown and white flowers at ground level. Not showy but interesting!

### Arisaema candidissimum

Broadly striped, spathe-shaped, hooded flowers of pink and white. An AGM winner.

### Lilium nepalense

Small trumpet flowers of green/maroon stripes. Likes partial shade and damp ground so suits this part of the world.

## *Plant Profile: Scilla sibirica* (also known as the Siberian squill)

A member of the liliaceae family, the scilla comes to us from Eastern Europe and is a hardy bulb, approximately 4-6 inches in height and fully hardy. The name scilla is often mis-connected with bluebells, and although there is the deep blue colour in some hybrids and the species in common, they are not the same at all.

Several hybrids have been bred from the common scilla, which naturalises well under trees and shrubs and can be easily controlled if it proves too comfortable in the garden!

Spring Beauty has intensely blue, nodding flowers and is commonly available, and there is a white variety (scilla sibirica var. alba) if you prefer cooler tones.

If you would like to try something a little different, then Scilla mischtschenkoana has very pale blue flowers and is slightly taller than sibirica. It blends well with snowdrops and is quite early, doing well under hedges and trees. Another beauty is Scilla Peruviana, which has giant blue flowers; once seen, never forgotten, but it is not entirely hardy in my garden in Wales.