



The Notice Board



Fancy a trip out but not sure were to go in December? Why not visit a National Trust property, enjoy a walk and then have tea at Berrington Hall, Brockhampton Estate or Croft Castle? Every tea purchased includes a free tea or coffee in December with a special leaflet available from all tourist information centres and NT shops, and these gardens are open every week-end from the 12th November to the 18th December. And if this is not enough to whet your appetite, at Attingham Park in Shropshire there is a Deer Feeding Event: an opportunity for families to get in touch with their wild side. Experience Attingham's deer herd first hand as you watch the wardens feed the fallow deer. Suitable winter clothing and walking footwear needed. Assistance Dogs only are welcome. Contact the Property Office on 01743 708123 for more information. This event is happening from the 17th December to Sunday 1 January, from 2pm to 3pm. Please note the park is closed on Christmas Day.

And finally, don't forget that the usual Farmers and Craft markets will be happening at the Knighton Community Centre, with plenty of opportunities to buy fresh local produce and gifts ready for Christmas. The carol singing at the Knighton Clock Tower will also take place again this Christmas Eve - see local notices for more details.

January meeting reminder

The January meeting has no speaker but is an enjoyable Bring and Share supper where you can meet old and make new friends over some great food, and talk gardening to our heart's content. What is a Bring and Share Supper? Well, it is a collection of food that members bring along, but each member is expected to bring only one plateful per person attending - any more than that is overwhelming and results in food being wasted or taken home. Do come along and enjoy this sociable start to the new Gardeners' Club year.



*May you have the gladness of
Christmas which is hope;
The spirit of Christmas which is peace;
The heart of Christmas which is love.*

Ada V. Hendricks

At our November meeting, Geoff Duthie finally revealed what he gets up to in his garden shed. According to Geoff, initially, there were two incentives at work: to turn out scores of wooden trugs and make a fortune, and to keep the grandchildren happy with toys on wheels. Of course, one thing leads to another and pretty soon Geoff was a one-man production-line for all his garden paraphernalia, made cheaply and effectively, for example, from discarded pallets, bits of slate, wire, paper and cannibalised plastic flower-pots. In addition to the trugs, he has produced little trolleys and "prams" that can be pushed around the garden, bird boxes, a garden stool which doubles as a kneeler, an all-in-one measuring stick and dibber, notice-boards, signs and planters. Is there no end to this man's inventiveness and recycling?

After Geoff's highly entertaining opening act and thanks to Mary Bufton's clever re-jigging of the programme owing to the withdrawal of our original speaker, we were also treated to some practical demonstrations by Susan Hamer. Susan showed us how to make Christmas wall-hangings and table centre-pieces using, on this occasion, autumn and winter foliage, clusters of berries and seeds, lilies, roses, poinsettias, sprayed poppy heads and candles. Susan made the whole business look very easy; but the quick, confident building and infilling of her various arrangements masked real flair, a great deal of underlying skill, and over a decade of experience.

After their presentations, which contained humour, anecdotes and very useful, practical tips, both Geoff and Susan were most generous in donating their exhibits. Susan's arrangements were offered as raffle prizes and the articles from Geoff's garden shed became the club's own *Garden Shed's* wares to sell in order to boost club funds. Thank you, Geoff, Susan and Mary, for a delightful evening!

Mary Comer

Flora and Fauna by Jean Price

At a recent meeting of the Gardeners' Club, we were treated to a talk entitled "Autumn Fireworks". The talk was accompanied by slides, showing the magnificent colour you can enjoy in the Autumn garden. The speaker was able to give so much advice on suitable plants, shrubs and trees to grow in order to provide interest and colour at this time of the year. The title "Autumn Fireworks" does surely describe what we are so lucky to still enjoy around us now: hues of gold, warm red and burnt orange everywhere. The trees in the woodland around the town seem, to change colour from day to day, providing a tapestry of colour. Along the hedgerows are lots of lovely bright crimson berries, and many garden shrubs are eager to show off long sprays of berries in pink orange and darkest red. It is fantastic to get a shot of fiery colour to brighten the scene; the weather may be getting a bit chillier but there's nothing like a misty morning full of damp earthy scents, with graceful seedheads, quite sculptural on many plants to add further pleasure. Floral art is now more popular than ever, especially contemporary and modern arranging with seedheads being used to provide drama and impact. Many of us enjoy collecting the seed and storing them for next year. It is essential to collect them on a dry day and label them - I have had many a surprise in the past from neglecting this duty! Poppy seedheads are a favourite of mine for Christmas decoration; they can look quite magical sprayed with gold or silver and arranged with red carnations, conifer or holly. The poppy is an ancient plant with a rich history and for centuries the seeds have been used as flavourings in food and the flowers used as a dye. It is an old superstition that poppies should be grown in a cornfield to encourage an abundant harvest. Modern farmers disprove this belief and strive to eliminate the poppy from their crops.

Editor's note: this item was held over due to lack of space in the last issue, but since we have had such a long-running Autumn display this year I thought members would still enjoy reading Jean's thoughts on Autumn.

Edible and Useful Perennials Quiz

Name the perennial described in each question or set of facts. Good luck and have fun!

1. The leaves of this perennial have served as a source of fibers for ropes, bags, and clothing for native Americans, with the terminal thorn of leaves serving as a handy needle. They also ground and used the roots for soap and as a shampoo, as the roots are rich in saponin.
2. The dried root of this perennial, called "orris root", has a delicate violet fragrance and is used in many perfumes as a fixative. The rhizome has been chewed as a breath freshener, but high doses can lead to vomiting and be possibly toxic.
3. This common perennial, originating in East Asia, was named after the Austrian botanist N.T. Host. Young leaves of the species lancifolia were cooked and eaten where this is native.
4. This bulb is used as a food in Asia where it is native. Boiled and then dried, this bulb is a key ingredient in the Japanese "namono" eaten at the Japanese New Year. Pollen of this perennial is eaten or sprinkled over food, being nutritious and with a pleasant taste.
5. The scientific name of this grass, coming from the Latin name for reed, originated in the Old World but is naturalised in the New World, especially in warmer regions. Used as a grain for food, the culms (hollow, jointed stems) have been used for reeds for musical instruments, windbreaks and in hut frames.
6. This yellow-flowered herb from Eurasia escaped from cultivation in America. It repels insects, but is not as effective as pyrethrum. In the 16th and 17th centuries the leaves and leaf sap were used in omelettes which were named after this plant. In high doses it is abortive and toxic.
7. Named for the hero of Homer's Iliad, this perennial has been used in Europe to flavor beers (leaves) and to preserve wine (fruits). There are many nice cultivars currently available.
8. The individual flowers of this perennial were said to resemble the imprint (veronikon or "true image") of Christ's face left on the cloth used to wipe his face on the climb to Calvary.
9. This perennial, whose genus name honours the Greek god of medicine, is attractive to butterflies and lends this fact to its common name. Widely eaten by the native Americans, the shoots and leaves, if not boiled properly, can be toxic.
10. The name for this perennial comes from the Latin for "wolf" because it was erroneously believed to rob the soil of nutrients, when in fact this legume does just the opposite, fixing nitrogen in the soil.
11. There have been many uses of the Eurasian species of this native American perennial genus. Tubers of hexapetala were eaten in Europe in times of famine, and the fragrant flowers of ulmaria are used for flavor in desserts, especially ice cream, and drinks such as teas. The dry plant contains salicylic acid, from which the active ingredient in aspirin is derived. Roots have been used as a detergent. The flowering tops have been used to dye wool black, or when used with alum a greenish-yellow.
12. This low perennial with yellowish flowers, naturalised in Europe, has been used medicinally since antiquity. It has been used to dye wool green, and the young leaves added raw to salads. The dewdrops, so attractive when beaded on the leaves, were called "celestial water" by European alchemists.
13. Leaves of this European species "veris" have a slightly spicy taste and anise smell, and have been used raw in salads or cooked. They contain vitamin C and minerals. The root has been used medicinally, and, dried over time, assumes an oil of wintergreen scent (from methyl salicylate). The early spring flowers have a delicate sweet smell and have been added to fruit salads or made into a mousse and other desserts. Other species such as denticulata and vulgaris have also been used.
14. Some species of this Autumn-flowering perennial genus have been used medicinally, with care and caution, as they can poison cattle. Natives of Kamtchatka in North East Asia used the sap of local species to poison arrows. The name comes from the Greek for wind, referring to the method of seed dispersal.
15. Young shoots of this fern are collected in Japan for eating. There they are called "kusasotetsu" when boiled and fried in butter or soy sauce. Fronds have been reported to cause slightly toxic reactions when undercooked, so should be boiled at least 15 minutes to destroy the potential toxin.

ANSWERS in the January edition of the Notice Board

The December garden: tasks and ideas

Unless we are snowed in this December (not again, surely?), there are still things to get on with in the month of December, including finishing up the collection of leaves which must, nearly, all be down by now and either recycling them at the Knuckles bins or else making your own leafmould if space allows. I usually put some black bin bags with pierced holes under a couple of conifers, ready to take out in 12 or 18 months' time and spread under the shrubs and trees. All your vulnerable shrubs will be nicely wrapped up by now in fleece or bubble wrap, which will help protect against a normal Winter but may not fully guarantee survival if the Winter is very harsh. Try and get pots off the ground to help the plants inside survive the frosts, and move against a house wall if this is practical. On a more decorative note, why not try and have a go at making your own outside Christmas decorations this year from seedheads (alliums are good) in your garden sprayed

silver or gold or white according to your taste? There are plenty of courses around locally showing us how to make a wreath for Christmas, but one very nice idea I picked up locally was to take two lengths of this year's wood from a tallish shrub, tie the ends together, and then shape the lengths to a heart shape, tying again at the bottom. This could be painted or decorated with a bauble or greenery, or simply left plain for an effective, and cost-effective, decoration of whatever size your lengths of shrub allow. It works well in willow too of course. Some of us will be lucky enough to have Christmas Roses (*helleborus niger*) in flower on Christmas Day. If you want to try and encourage your Christmas Rose to flower for this time, give it a good mounding of compost around the base and then put a cloche or sheet of glass about 6" over the top of the whole plant. Oh, and keep your fingers crossed!

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and good gardening in the New Year, Marilyn Tippett

Christmas orange pomander

The Spice Mix

4 tablespoons ground cinnamon
4 tablespoons ground cloves
2 tablespoons ground nutmeg
2 tablespoons ground allspice
1/4 cup orrisroot powder (as preservative)

- Combine the spice mix ingredients.
- Wash oranges.
- Insert cloves into oranges in a decorative pattern (stripes, swirls, whatever strikes your fancy!).
- Roll cloved oranges in the spice mixture within 24 hours and set in a warm place to dry, turning fruit daily.
- Drying takes from two weeks to possibly a month.
- Pomanders are completely dry when they are hard.

Remove pomanders from the spice mix, dust off a little, and tie with decorative ribbons. Set out in a bowl, or you can use as Christmas ornaments.

Speaker's Corner

Competition Results from the November Meeting: a Branch with Berries

We had eleven entries which were judged by Mrs Susan Hamer who was our floral demonstrator for the evening. She found it very difficult to choose between them as they were all of differing species and sizes and with lots of vibrant coloured berries.

1st Place: Margaret Crawley 2nd Place: Diana Francis 3rd Place: Brenda Morgan.

Our January competition will be "Your most useful/useless garden tool with a short written explanation". Can we have more members entering the competition please as we still have three more months to go before the winner of the Rudge Challenge Cup is announced, with a total of between 21 and 30 points per person to be allocated. There is still time and lots of you like to discuss what has been entered, with comments which are helpful and interesting.

The Garden Shed

Five members very generously donated herbaceous plants, shrubs, indoor plants, seeds and miscellaneous gardening items which helped us to attain the sum of £27.20, which is the most we have achieved in a month and being the last one this year made it even more pleasing.

Three members have found certain items in their garden which we are sure you will find interesting and these will be displayed at the February meeting. Any other finds please let us know. Geoff Duthie has also found a gadget/tool and he has no idea what it is used for and would welcome your suggestions; it will be on display at the January meeting.

