

The Notice Board



What's on in December

December 14th Gardeners' Club Christmas supper, with quiz

Until January 6th (except Christmas Day) Abbey Cwm Hir Hall. 52 rooms open and fully (and we mean fully!) decorated for Christmas. A real experience, but there are lots of stairs. £13 per person, £11 for groups.

December 16th - The Old House, Hereford. Jacobean themed evening opening up to 8pm. Free event

December 18th , 7.30pm. Llanymynech village hall Fleur-de-Lys present a celebration of Marches medieval music and dance for Christmas. Entry includes mulled wine and a mince pie. £8 per person



*The President,
Chairman and
committee wish you
all a very*

*Merry
Christmas*

*whether you are
staying at home or
venturing far away,
and look forward to
seeing you again in
January at our bring
and share supper*

*Please only bring
enough for you and your
partner to eat-there will
still be plenty*

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY
THEIR OLD FAMILIAR CAROLS PLAY,
AND WILD AND SWEET THE WORDS REPEAT
OF PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD-WILL TO MEN

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW



November meeting notes

Richard Fishbourne: Bringing the garden alive

On a cold Autumn night Richard Fishbourne certainly brought Knucklas community centre to life, although from the title of this month's talk you might have been hard-pressed to know that we were in for a talk which focussed mainly onworms! Yes, those lowly creatures whose work is so important for gardeners, and whose amazing characteristics Richard ably brought to life. This was an informative, amusing and at times gripping talk which was very interactive from the start, causing many of us to try and dredge our memories of long-forgotten earthworm facts. Did you know the following facts for example (for I certainly did not) ? Worms have 5 hearts, they cannot re-grow if chopped in two (but can regenerate a little bit of their heads or tails), they have brains, and can turn one of their genes on or off to avoid arsenic poisoning. Quite an amazing list for a humble creature Richard talked about the wormery he had brought along to show us, and about the joys of the compost heap, which in his garden is not just a home for clippings and shreadings but also for slow worms and other creatures. His talk touched on bumblebees, hornets ("the gentleman of the insect world") the creativity needed to catch rats, voles nesting in his compost heap, owls eating the voles, the art of making hedgehogs from teasels and map pins, and moles. Finally, we enjoyed a short excursion into the the realms of worm charming. In case you need to know, the best worm charming method is to stick one's fork into the ground and wiggle it about a bit. Stamping on the ground (or on the worms) is definitely not recommended!

This month's competition for a seedhead was won by Marilyn Tippet with the sputnik-like head of an allium schubertii, second place went to Kath Graham for her acanthus (bear's britches) and third place to Jean Price for some lovely skeletonised physalis.



Bad Christmas
joke warning!

Why does Father Christmas like to work in the garden?

Because he likes to hoe, hoe, hoe!



This month Rosemary Naylor writes about the memories which
rudbekias bring

The Reds and Golds of Autumn

I was born in mid-October so that made me an Autumn baby. Now in the autumn of my life I resort to memories of the past, as my Mother did in her last years, rather than look ahead to what the future may hold for me.

Looking now through my kitchen window across the garden (mid-October) I see the Rudbeckias still in flower as they have been for many weeks. They bring back troublesome memories which I am only now putting to rest.

Many years ago at an earlier address in Derbyshire, a friend of a friend gave me some Rudbeckia seedlings she had grown. I knew very little about this woman except that she was young and succumbing to cancer (this was the 1970's) and hadn't long to live. I carefully nurtured these Rudbeckias and in the summer had a good display. Overwinter they died. I was mortified. It was no consolation to discover that 'my friend's friend' was no longer alive to hear of my apparent failure. Years later I discovered that they may well have been annuals. For a long time I planned to let my children know that when the time came I wanted them to plant Rudbeckias on my grave.

Well, life moved on. A few years ago at this address in Llanfair I bought a packet of Rudbeckia Goldsturm seeds. They germinated well and in due course were planted out. Then the trouble began. Rabbits love Rudbeckias. As soon as the first growth of the spring emerged they nibbled them down. Then when fresh shoots emerged the rabbits were back for more. I sprinkled curry powder around them but they had already learned where to find their favourite plant. Then I rabbit-proofed the whole garden.

Since then the Rudbeckias have shown their gratitude and grown from strength to strength to establish clumps in all parts of the garden and give me great joy at last.

The backdrop to my garden at the moment (October) is a sea of golds and yellows as the trees are changing colour. In front of them I see Rudbeckias, Pot Marigolds, the last of the Bidens and Californian Poppies with their oranges and yellows lighting up my view. There are the blues of Michaelmas Daisies and the pinks of Sedums and Cranesbills too. But what shouts out to me is the sunshine of the Rudbeckias.

I cannot offer Rudbeckias as my favourite flower. They have brought me too much sadness as well as joy. But so long as they can enjoy a place in my garden I can feel contented that they may share a few more years to come on my patch of Earth.

As a child my Mother taught us a song which went something like:

“Come little leaves said the wind one day
come o'er the meadows with me and play
put on your jackets of red and gold
for summer is gone and the days grow cold.”
Does anyone recognise it? She too was an autumn child.

And as for a favourite flower - if one of our readers were to write about violas and pansies I should likely nod my head in agreement.

The December garden: tasks and ideas

Is December Autumn or Winter? I ask because of the confusion that rests in many people's minds about this time of the year. The end of a year inevitably feels like Winter, even if it does not officially begin until the 21st December, but in my garden it is definitely still Autumn, with lots of leaves still hanging on and some odd rays of sunshine from cyclamen, marigolds and daisies which have not yet succumbed to frost or wind. We have a choice at this point in the year; whether to remove all dead and dying material or whether to leave it for a Spring clear-up. If your garden suffers from strong winds I think it is better to have a clean sweep at the end of the year and "put the garden to bed". If not, then seedheads can be most decorative on frosty mornings and deserve a longer stay, especially as beneficial insects need homes in hollow stems as last month's

speaker reminded us. Getting damp leaves off paths is a safety issue, but if you are happy to leave them under the hedge then hedgehogs will make use of them and the worms will drag them down to enrich the soil and feed the hedge over Winter.

Although it has been rather wet of late, there has been little frost as I write this and so salads in the vegetable garden have lasted well, especially if covered with fleece. Fleece is useful for any shrub or potted plant that you intend to keep outside all Winter. If well wound around the plant (not too tightly) and secured with string it will be a good protection against wind as well as frost damage. If your plant is in the ground, a layer of bracken over it will help keep off the frost, and if the shrub is large then stakes around the plant and fleece around the stakes is good, even stuffing bracken into the gap like a cosy Winter eiderdown for plants!

What is on my gardening Christmas list this year

This year I want some very good basics. The sort of things I am always running out of just when I am head down in the border, or wrist deep in the compost. So my list this year is severely practical, and includes: large wooden labels for the vegetable garden; basic plastic labels with a hole at one end; 2 bundles of raffia (so soft for tender stems) to see me through the season as I always run out; green string as I don't like the plastic ties (even if they are practical); some waterproof and thorn-proof gloves that may last more than one season and finally a service for my trusted Felco secateurs. Not too much to ask Santa for, is it? *Marilyn Tippett*

Plant Profile: Mistletoe (*viscum album*)

The familiar European mistletoe is a mysterious plant. Parasitic, it sits on the higher branches of trees and extracts essential nutrients and water by sending roots into the bark.

The most popular host is the apple tree, although it can also be found on lime, oak ash, hawthorn and other trees with soft or fissured bark. It has a complex folklore, and, perhaps, serious potential in medicine. *Viscum album* is just one of many hundreds of other mistletoes worldwide, including the American Christmas mistletoe: they number over 1000. The earliest references to medicinal use of European mistletoe are Roman accounts of the Druids; they called it by a name translated as 'All-Heal' and believed it to possess great medicinal power. For the Druids, it had to grow on oak trees to be useful in their rituals. Lindow Man, otherwise



known as the "bog man", had mistletoe residue in his stomach. This was possibly due to ritual use, but the plant may also have been ingested in tea. Today it is thought that mistletoe tea may have a positive effect on hypertension (but please don't try this at home!). Trying to get mistletoe to "take" can be difficult, but soak the berries overnight then squeeze them into the young bark of apples, hawthorn, willows and poplars for preference. February is the best month for this, and about 20 should be stuck to the side or underside of a branch, about 20mm in diameter. Mistletoes are male or female, and so you will need the berries from at least two to ensure berries in the future on your tree. They will take up to 6 years to produce berries, although they start to germinate relatively quickly, so plant now if you don't want to wait too long for your kisses!