

The Notice Board

Number 59



April will see the election of a new committee for the club, and as always there is room for new ideas and new volunteers. So don't be shy, fill in a form at the next club meeting and help to shape the future of the club. The committee do many things, from choosing the speakers and the competition categories to arranging special events, visits to gardens and the month-by-month raffles, plant stalls and seed exchange. If you feel you want to know more about what this not-too-onerous job entails, talk to any committee member. We're a nice bunch of people, so why not come and help make this the best Gardeners' Club this side of the border?

Feedback....Feedback....Feedback

We asked you what you thought of the new look newsletter last edition, and you responded in your....well, let's just say that a couple of people told me that they liked the new look and the different articles, and as yet, no-one has passed on any other views. So if you hate the new look, it's not too late to say so. Just talk to a committee member or to Marilyn at any club meeting and tell us what you want to see in future editions.

Otherwise, we will continue experimenting with layout and articles until we feel we have got it about right.

There will be a committee meeting soon when the new look will be discussed - any findings will be discussed in our next issue.



Just because you've only got houseplants doesn't mean you don't have the gardening spirit - I look upon myself as an indoor gardener. Sara Moss-Wolfe

Meeting report: January 2009

One little hellebore sitting all alone...that was the story of our January 2009 competition! All the other hellebores, people said, were still in bud, refusing to come out because it was too cold. Marilyn Tippettt deservedly took first and only place. Unlike the hellebores, about 25 of us did come out, braving the wind and rain, and enjoyed a varied and delicious 'bring and share' supper (the spiced chicken was pretty darned good!) and a lively social evening. Jean's list of apologies reflected the high number of flu victims and cold sufferers who, unfortunately, could not join us.

Early conversation turned on the weather (of course!) and the state of the ground. Some hardy souls had been spotted turning over earth... Moles came in for some scathing remarks. Ann Harroway said she used to "stamp around and tell them to go away" but she has since picked up some useful tips from a mole-catcher. She had heard that it is not possible to relocate moles: they never survive the shock. "Pity!" I said to myself, thinking of Wind in the Willows and "a particular friend of Mr Rat." I know moles tend to undermine one's best efforts, but still....

Marilyn's garden quiz tantalised us with its 42 cryptic clues until we felt ready for service at Bletchley Park. My table won it with a score of 29 but we could all have done with more time. The raffle prizes were a handsome begonia and a lovely calendar to focus the mind on the new gardening year – what will it bring?

Mary Comer

Note: March's speaker will be Jim Almond, speaking on climbers & other favourite garden plants.

Following on from Rosemary's slug tips (or maybe anti-slug tips), has anyone had dealings with the "little gentleman in the black velvet waistcoat" that they would like to report for us? Please send or give any contributions to me, Marilyn Tippettt, at metippettt@btinternet.com, or by 'phone on 01547 528842. I have personally had to use a mole trap once in my garden-a great sadness and something I would prefer to avoid in the future if at all possible.

Please also respond to Rosemary's call for help with her tamarisk (see following page)

A little taster of the joys in store for those of you who are going to Giverny later on in the year.

Monet at Giverny

Claude Monet noticed the village of Giverny while looking out of the window on a train journey.

He made up his mind to move there and rented a house and the area surrounding it. In 1890 he had enough money to buy the house and land outright and set out to create the magnificent gardens he wanted to paint. Some of his most famous paintings, Japanese bridge paintings, were of his garden in Giverny. Monet lived in Giverny from 1883 until his death in 1926. Monet, and many members of his family, are interred in the cemetery.



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Tussles with a tamarisk

by Rosemary Naylor

What am I to do with a cantankerous tamarisk which is even more wily than I, reputedly, am?*

The plant in question came to me as a sad-looking shrub in a large plantpot. I was determined to give it a better life than it had had up to that time. It had been given to my late mother and had been left standing on her yard for some considerable time. She had been unable to plant it out and the wind had regularly blown it over until eventually it was left lying on its side. The poor plant continued to grow but by then did not know up from down. I took pity on it.

When it moved with me to Llanfair, eleven years ago, I promised it a better life and planted it centrally in my new red/pink/white border. From there I allowed it to take on whatever shape it desired, except that I constructed a wooden support structure around the base of the trunk to help it regain an upright stature.

Some years later it had still not resumed a heaven-ward direction of growth but having demolished the support structure I had so kindly afforded it was growing horizontally towards the path which fronted the border. It was now swiping me in the face each time I used the path. So I cut off one offending branch just as it tried to cross the path. That was a mistake for I now found a was being stabbed in the face whenever I walked that way.

My next move was to embark on a major redesign of the garden so that the paths would take me around the tamarisk without risking my getting a poke in the eye. I duly dug up the existing path adding more width to the border. I introduced good new soil, lots of bulbs, and completed the underplanting with lowgrowing rockery plants including snow-in-summer, arabis and so on. The Tamarix was by now established on a very strong trunk, as thick as my arm, but still growing horizontally just two feet above soil level, though seemingly healthy enough. However, its branches, instead of the normal horizontal growth one might expect, reach upwards and downwards, mainly in the latter direction.

But I had still not appeased said plant nearly enough. After a period of very strong winds last year I discovered that its downward growing branches had been sweeping backwards and forwards across the soil below clearing the ground quite bare. How ungrateful can a shrub be? Of the lowgrowing groundcover there was no sign, and I am wondering if the bulbs will dare to show their heads above ground level.

The Tamarix, when it comes into leaf, disguises some of its inner anguish. In May when it comes into flower it is a lovely haze of pink which is most attractive. My daughter-in-law when in France had three tamarisks, two of them showing a mound shaped habit but one a fine upright tree which when in flower was really camera-worthy.

Now I am coming to suspect that my specimen has decided to reproduce itself by layering its downward pointing branches into the soil it has so effectively cleared. In fact before I cut the offending branches short, one had already got its tip nestling into the soil. Should I accept a whole grove of them? Or should I take the wily old parent to feed Dr Ackermann's shredder? My patience is being tested to the limit. What should I do next?

*see ref to self in Notice Board No. 58

The February garden: tasks and ideas

I have been very impressed this month by tales of Gardeners' Club members who are out there in their gardens busily tidying up leaves, raking out moss and mulching trees and shrubs. All good jobs to do in the cool and damp days of February. As I write this, more snow is forecast for February, and if it falls heavily, don't forget to go out once it has stopped and brush it gently off your evergreens. If left, and the snow is followed by a freeze, it will be harder to remove and you may damage branches when you try to move it; I speak here from hard experience! Whilst the ground is unfrozen, it is a good time to check that the earth around your smallest bulbs is in good order so as to show them off against the bare earth, especially the snowdrops and smallest iris and crocus. It is also a good time to cut the older and tattier of last year's leaves

from your hellebores so that their lovely flowers show to best advantage. There are many new cultivars of hellebore being propagated now, including some doubles & some very different colours, including the lovely yellow ones. Many of them are protected by plant breeders rights so don't forget that even propagating these for friends and fellow Gardeners' Club members is illegal and takes funding away from future research and development. Many of us will still be looking through the seed catalogues (see panel on the right for some good companies), and trying to slim down our list of desirable plants to fit in with the reality of our gardens and budgets. I always like to try at least one or two new varieties every year, which keeps me interested and curious through the gardening year, but must say that in terms of vegetables I often find that the older varieties have stood the test of time. What do others think?

Some seed companies

These are some alternatives to the usual companies, all of whom still good value.

Chilterns seeds (01229 581137)

No pictures but lots and lots of unusual varieties

Nickys seeds (01843 600972)

Especially good for vegetables & has pages of tomatoes

Plants of Distinction (01449 721720)

Did very well in terms of germination in the recent Which? tests

Kings Seeds (01376 570000)

Very good for vegetable seed at reasonable prices. Also scored well in the Which? germination tests. Good for sweet peas too

Seeds of Italy (0208 427 5020)

Wonderful Italian varieties, and there are many more seeds in the packs than UK gardeners are used to!

South Devon Chilli Farm (01548 550782)

The name says it all. Every pepper you could ever want to grow, and some you couldn't eat even if you grew them!

Plant Profile: Hyacinth

The word hyacinth comes from the Greek Hyakinthos, a handsome young man who in Greek mythology was loved by the sun god Apollo. One day they were practicing throwing the discus but the jealous god of the West Wind, who was also in love with Hyakinthos, blew the discus back and it fatally wounded him. From his blood grew a flower which the god Apollo named after him. Hyacinths were originally cultivated in Europe by the ancient Greeks and Romans before spreading across the rest of Western Europe.

This early hyacinth, *H. orientalis*, was a simple species valued only for its scent. This, however, was enough to ensure that when introduced into 17th-century Holland the bulbs were hugely expensive and only available to the wealthiest flower collectors.

The hyacinth was so popular in the 18th century that more than 2,000 cultivars were developed, producing plants with large, fragrant flower spikes in shades of red, blue, white, pink and yellow. All hyacinths found in the modern garden are a result of this process. The bulbs are grown today mostly in Holland and Great Britain.

Hyacinths can be grown in the garden, where they enjoy a sheltered spot or in bowls (with water or compost) for us to enjoy inside. If you want to grow the more unusual colours look for specialist growers rather than picking them up from the garden centre display. Consider 'Anna Marie', a pale pink, or 'Ostara', a violet-blue, for a change, and don't forget that if they grow too tall you can cut them off just above the bulb and put them in a vase, where they will last for many days and fill the house with perfume (which some people find a little bit too much of a good thing).