

The Notice Board

What's On Locally

Ivy Croft, Leominster, Herefordshire. Garden created since 1997 surrounds C17 cottage (not open) in 4 acres of rich grassland. Plant lovers' garden designed for all-year interest. Raised beds, mixed borders, trees, alpines, troughs, formal vegetable garden framed by trained fruit trees; collections of ferns, willows and snowdrops. Open each Thursday in Feb; (9-4)

Attingham Park, Atcham, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY4 4TP (NT) has lovely displays of snowdrops and is open every day from 9am to 5pm

The Dorothy Clive Garden, Willoughbridge, Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 4EU, is a little further away, but has beautiful grounds and wonderful trees, plus an alpine bed where small saxifrages will already be opening. Open Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th February 2011.

The Dingle, Frochas, nr. Welshpool, SY21 9JD (free to RHS members) has surprising early flowering shrubs and bulbs; Daphne Bholua Jacqueline Postill throws its scent around the terraced grounds. Open Monday to Sunday, 9am to 5pm.

26th February sees a seed swap at Knighton Food and Craft Market - do go along and support your local groups and buy or swap seeds at sensible prices.



February, fill the dyke with what thou
dost like

Thomas Tusser

Meeting report: January 2011

How does Avril do it? In January 2011, we were treated to another lovely annual Christmas meal with wine, which comprised a warming winter vegetable soup; cold cuts of salmon and beef with a really good assortment of salads; trifles, Pavlovas and gateaux to die for; cheese and biscuits; and, to finish, mince pies, tea or coffee and after-dinner mints. This feast cost members just £8.00 and Avril tells me it made a profit. Held over from December 2010 when the weather was so unkind, the meal, quiz, raffle and the two competitions running side by side were all worth waiting for! Presentations were made to Avril, of course, without whom the meal could not have taken place, and to Alan Tippet, our very obliging auditor. There was a good turn-out and the results of the two competitions are as follows:

Summer in My Garden (Photography)

1. Marilyn Price
2. Pat Buckley
3. Audrey Fox

Christmas Table Arrangements

1. Jean Price
2. Marilyn Tippet
3. Diane Francis

The photographs and the table arrangements were a joy to view, adding to what was a sparkling occasion. Avril, her helpers, and the whole Committee did a wonderful job, giving up their own opportunity to relax in order to look after us. Thank you, everyone!

Teme Valley Environment Group have asked us to mention to members their Seed Swap on Sat 26 February, with a Plant and Seedling Swap to follow on 14th May, both to be held at Food and Craft Market in Knighton.

My favourite flower

This month's favourite flower is remembered by our secretary, Avril Hoyle.

My favourite flower evokes lots of memories. Namely a wonderful trip to Bolton Abbey with my parents and their friends. After a walk around the ruins of the Abbey and a look at the river, we carried on further up the road to a village called Appletreewick. There we stopped for our picnic. We never had sandwiches, always afternoon tea with home-cooked ham and salad, and bottled damsons and fresh cream. The damsons were in a very thick, sweet syrup and when the cream went with them you could make pretty patterns in the syrup. We were sat on a bank in front of a bluebell wood, and the perfume coming over was so heady. After tea I was allowed to go and pick armfuls of these bluebells, and somewhere there is a photo of me with these wonderful flowers in both arms.

When we arrived home they were put into four vases and the house smelt wonderful.

Bolton Abbey is near Skipton in Yorkshire, and both places are well worth a visit if you are ever in the area. Sadly, they have built houses on the bluebell woods, so many children will now miss the opportunity to pick these wonderful flowers, and have the memories that will last a lifetime.

Editor's note

Avril clearly has some very happy memories of the bluebell woods of her childhood. She was permitted to pick the wild Yorkshire bluebells, just as I was permitted to search the woods of Westmorland and pick the wild daffodils near to Easter time. Whilst the wild daffodils are definitely endangered now, English bluebells spread very rapidly, as anyone who has tried to eradicate them from their garden will tell you! Are we too precious about preserving the very common wildflowers, allowing no-one to pick even a few, or is this sensible protection which helps to conserve the plants for future generations? Please let us know what you think.

The February garden: tasks and ideas

Last year I reported being impressed by tales of Gardeners' Club members busily tidying up leaves, raking out moss and mulching trees and shrubs. Has anyone managed to get out there and do some of this yet? I am writing this in the first week of the month, and this is the first time since November that my garden has been both unfrozen and dry enough to walk round, so I am rather behind with the last minute clearing up that didn't get done in snowy December. Whilst the ground is unfrozen, check the earth around your smallest plants and make firm any earth that has loosened as a result of the hard frosts. It is also a good time to cut the old leaves from your hellebores, so that their lovely flowers are shown off to best advantage. It is still much too early to decide which of those shrubs that have been damaged by the frosts are

beyond help and need replacing, although since we have had some less hardy shrubs damaged by two very hard winters it is likely that some will not recover this time around. Look on this as an opportunity to try something new, by which I don't mean something new to cultivation, but something new to your garden. Many trees and shrubs are easily raised from seed if you don't mind waiting a while for them to grow, and I have listed a few sources for these seeds in the adjoining column. Many of us will still be looking through the seed catalogues and trying to slim down our list of desirable plants to fit in with the reality of our gardens and budgets. Try and get your orders in soon as the best varieties will be sold out and you will be left with the second choices on your list. Before we know where we are it will be March and the seed-sowing will begin in earnest, and another gardening year begun.

Some seed companies

Here are some seed companies specialising in tree and shrub seeds.

www.nickys-nursery.co.uk has a huge range of tree seed, including many exotics and those suitable for bonsai culture. Telephone 01843 600972

www.forestart.co.uk is a Shrewsbury company specialising in quality tree and shrub seed only. Telephone 1939 210563

www.jungleseeds.co.uk of Oxfordshire are exotic specialists, with seed of bananas, palms and many others. Telephone 01491 614765

www.thompson-morgan.com will be a name known to you all, but they do sell many tree seeds which may come as a surprise. Telephone 0844 2485383

Plant Profile: Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*)

The lotus is an aquatic plant and is one of the world's most celebrated flowers. The flowers have been sacred in Asia and the Middle East for over 5000 years and are very beautiful. A pity then that they are not hardy in the UK, whatever the PR people may say! You can grow them in shallow pots in a heated greenhouse or porch or conservatory but they will not stand temperatures much below freezing. Many people think that this risk is worth it for their stunning flowers, especially the blue-flowered forms.

Lotus seeds are extremely long-lived, and can germinate even after 1000 years. Most of the plant is also edible, and can be roasted, steamed or candied - it is widely used in Asian cuisine. The lotus can be propagated from seed or by cuttings from their rhizomes.

Young plants will need to be kept in a tank or tub and once they have at least five leaves, the plants can be grown in a pond outdoors, provided the roots are at least 30cm below the lowest level of water and the water temperature remains at about 10 degrees. So, not a plant for the faint-hearted, but the beauty of those flowers more than makes up for these problems.

Lotus flowers are mostly in the pink, lilac or white range but there are some blue forms which are especially sought after.

A plant to dream about until you win the lottery?