

The Notice Board

HAPPY NEW YEAR to all our members!

December 2009 meeting cancellation

As you will all have realised, we hope, the December meeting was cancelled at very short notice owing to Avril's fall and broken arm. Had we had a little more time the committee would have pulled together and got your meal onto the table, but with only three days to go to the event and a busy week-end for all in between, the committee decided with great regret that the only sensible way forward was to cancel the meal. We apologise to all of you who were disappointed about this and hope that you will understand our position. If anyone has paid their meal costs please see our Treasurer, Margaret Clugston, at the next meeting and she will reimburse you.

Even more important than our lost meal was the fact of Avril's incapacity, and the pain we know she has been enduring as her broken arm starts to heal. We all wish her well and hope that she will soon be busy again and out and about. We can well imagine that a life of sitting inside and waiting will not suit her in the least!

Coming event

In June 2010 we shall be visiting Sir Roy Strong's garden at Much Birch in Herefordshire, near to Ross on Wye.

The garden has previously only been open to guided tours and has always been over-subscribed, but this year more visits are being permitted and so we have booked a morning and an afternoon visit, which will enable us to fit in a visit to another nearby property on the same day. Avril is organising a coach and more details will be available in due course.

If you have web access and wish to know more about the garden, have a look at www.omyles-lea.com/Laskett.htm for an idea of what you can see.



**"January is here, with eyes that keenly glow,
A frost-mailed warrior
striding a shadowy steed of snow."**

- Edgar Fawcett



My favourite flower : Mary Comer

Evening Primrose – *Oenothera stricta* ‘Sulphurea’

We kept our first ever holiday caravan (sold very cheaply to my father by the gypsies as part-payment for dental work carried out by him) at the Retreat Caravan Site, Burnham on Sea. That was in the fifties and the Retreat was well named, being relatively undeveloped in those days. Our modest, old-fashioned little caravan stood proudly on a grassy, sandy mound in a sheltered nook and backing up against a bank on which grew spiky dune grass and..... evening primroses.

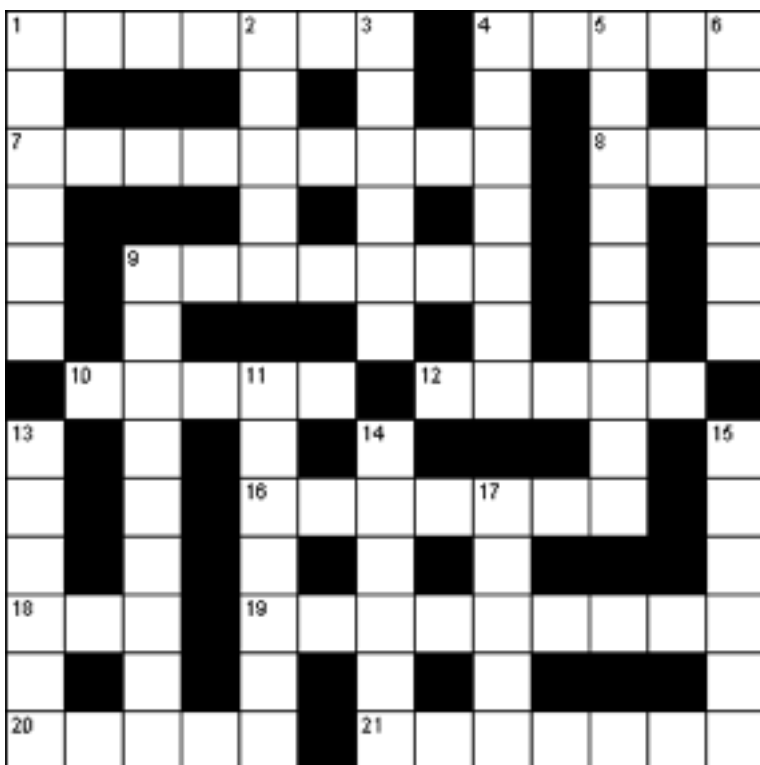
These flowers, with their big, pale, fragrant lemon blooms that open in the cool of the summer evening on slender, erect stems, were my father's favourites and, ever after, mine. Over the years, they have triggered memories, not only of our wonderfully happy holidays at Burnham, but of my father himself, whom my mother and my brothers and I met for the first time on our return from America, my mother's GI marriage having failed. A quiet, dark-haired, serious young man, he had lodgings at my grandmother's house. As a family, we were struggling and he rescued us and enriched all our lives in unnumbered ways until, much later, my grandmother was moved to declare over and over again that she had been entertaining an angel unawares – a description with which no-one who met my father has ever disagreed. Like the flower, he was gentle, shy, honest and upright, and a privilege to know. Unlike my father, the evening primrose is quite a commonly replicated plant and I have seen it on railway embankments and elsewhere in Britain.

In memoriam: Alf Mckay

We have to report with great sadness the death of our former member Alf, husband to Vera (our former Treasurer) and long-time member of the club. As a couple they were active and lively and took part in many Club events, and our memories of Alf are of a vigorous and cheerful man, kind and generous to all friends and acquaintances.

Alf died just before Christmas 2009, and our thoughts are with Vera and family at this most difficult of times.

Flowers word search: words may be horizontal, diagonal or vertical



Clues Across

1. Fruit (7)
4. Rice and raw fish in seaweed (5)
7. Preserve made from citrus fruits (9)
8. Frozen dessert (3)
9. Unfreeze (7)
10. Aroma (5)
12. Edible bulb (5)
16. Pastry (7)
18. Drink made with juniper berries (3)
19. Wine source (9)
20. Sample (5)
21. Vanilla ___ (7)

Clues Down

1. Edible nut (6)
2. Bran (5)
3. Used to brew a beverage (6)
4. Add sugar (7)
5. Sponge cake (5,4)
6. Cooler (6)
9. Servings of boiled or steamed dough (9)
11. Baked pasta dish (7)
13. Chewy confection (6)
14. Fatty oil (6)
15. Dairy product (6)
17. Prepare a turkey (5)

The January garden: tasks and ideas

It's a shame that the last GC newsletter did not reach your hands in time for my advice on tying your shrubs up in fleece to be useful! If you did not do this you will be worrying about what the current low temperatures are doing in your garden. To be honest, even if you did wrap things up in fleece you will still be wondering what is surviving, as I am. There will be some things that survive unexpectedly, but those which will not, like the aloes my daughter had carefully propagated for her grandmother and left in the car overnight; that was the night the temperatures went down to -7 degrees, so we are unlikely to see them survive! Since then we have had temperatures as low as -14 degrees at The Mill, which is a real hardiness test for many herbaceous plants and will certainly test the Mediterranean plants such as rosemary and lavender, especially the French variety of the latter.

So what can we do whilst the weather does its worst? The attraction of sitting next to the woodburner with a cup of tea and the seed catalogues is strong of course, but there are other inside jobs that can be begun. If you don't have any large labels, so useful for the vegetable garden, now is the time to paint some long strips of thinish wood ready for lettering in the Spring. I find longer labels so much more visible (is it just my eyes?) and less likely to be tugged out by the blackbirds. It is also worth having a look at the seed packets from last year and getting rid of any half-empty ones whilst scrutinising the unopened ones for sowing this year. Many seeds will germinate in year two after being packed, but the germination rate will be a little less. Try sowing these a little early and then you have time to get another packet if necessary.

Happy New Year and happy new gardening year to you all.

Places to visit in January

Brobury House, near Bredwardine in Herefordshire, is a Victorian gentleman's country residence set in 8 acres of magnificent gardens. The semi-formal gardens have breathtaking views over the beautiful Wye Valley. There are terraces, herbaceous borders and fine mature trees. Brobury House is set in Kilvert country and the garden is on the Kilvert Trail. Open daily 10-5

The Dingle garden, near Welshpool, is open daily 10-5. An RHS partner garden, and thus free to members, it is full of beautiful things, even in the depth of Winter. Look out for, and keep your nose scenting Daphne Jacqueline Postill, which is on the terraces above the lake.

Plant Profile: Christmas Cactus - Schlumbergera

The genus *Schlumbergera*, is named after Frederick Schlumbergera, a Belgian horticulturist. In the wild, many are epiphytic, perching on trees but not taking sustenance from their host.

Cactus can adapt to low light, but more abundant blooms are produced on plants that have been exposed to high light intensity.

Well-drained soil is a must in proper care for a Christmas cactus. Use a commercially packaged potting mix for succulent plants or mix your own by combining two parts ordinary potting soil with one part clean sand or vermiculite.

Pruning after the cactus finish blooming will encourage the plant to branch out. Remove a few sections of each stem by pinching them off with your fingers or cutting with a sharp knife. These sections can be rooted easily in almost any compost.

Give a cool, fairly dry rest period after flowering. After that feed with half strength liquid feed from spring to late summer. Plants may be left outside in the summer for a short "holiday", but watch out for snails or slugs which love their succulent leaves. Try not to move the plant once its buds have formed or these may fall off.

Colours available are bright pink, red, orange and white.