

The Notice Board

What's On locally

Most local and National Trust gardens are now shut until the Spring, but there are still some gardens open for visits & other events taking place.

Wightwick Manor and Gardens, Wightwick Bank, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV6 8EE, are open at weekends only until the 19th December. This is a National Trust property near Wolverhampton

The Centre for Alternative Technology is open daily from 10am to dusk, with lots of inter - active displays relevant to gardening and composting .The CAT Visitor Centre is located just north of Machynlleth in mid-Wales' Dyfi valley

Hampton Court Gardens are now open only on Saturdays and Sundays, 11am- 4pm from the 1st November to the 12th December

Presteigne and Borders Floral Art club has a Christmas demonstration on Wednesday 10th November, 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall Presteigne. Visitors £6, including supper

Have yourself a very Merry Christmas preparation evening at Bucknell on Tuesday 30th November. This flower demonstration by Cynthia Preston-Jones starts at 7pm and costs £5. Refreshments will be available and a donation will be made to the Air Ambulance

Important Club News

*The Christmas supper this year will be on December 13th. There will be a list at the November meeting; please put a tick against your name if you are coming, along (with numbers), and a cross if you do not plan to be there. Committee members will telephone anyone who is not at tonight's meeting. We are planning to run a bigger raffle at the December supper, and would welcome **donated prizes** from members; please see any committee member if you can help. Our speakers next year will be excellent, but our costs are rising and all the raffle money goes towards keeping the quality of speakers high.*

Looking ahead to the New Year, our January meeting on the 10th will be a bring-and-share supper. Please bring along a SMALL plate of food to share with us all.

Members may like to know that Ruby Baker, founder club member, has moved to a nursing home on the North East coast.



No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,
 No comfortable feel in any member -
 No shade, no shine, no butterflies, no bees,
 No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds -
 November!

- Thomas Hood

BOOK REVIEW: The Wild Garden by William Robinson , by Rosemary Naylor

We have all heard of Gertrude Jekyll. Our gardens are greatly influenced by the views she expressed very forcefully during her years of designing gardens for wealthy clients. But I veer towards the views of a marginally older contemporary, William Robinson, even more forthright in his views of how gardening should be conducted.

Robinson was born in Ireland. He travelled widely, particularly in America, but came early to England where he bought Gravetye Manor in West Sussex. Here he put his ideas into practice over a period of fifty years. During that time his estate grew to over 1,000 acres.

The book I review here is a very recent reprint of the 5th edition of The Wild Garden last issued in 1895. I get the impression he was writing for the landed gentry so I am not particularly suggesting you should go out and buy a copy. On the other hand, in the context of the 21st Century, there is much that I can relate to in my own small way. I warmed to him as soon as I read his rant about rabbits.

By "wild gardening" he is thinking of those parts other than the flower border. Wild plants he sees as suitable for less formal places such as woodlands, hedges, ditches, stream sides and pools. One of the pleasures of spring in my garden is seeing the golden flowers of marsh marigolds growing in my water garden. I recall the same plants growing in a natural pond in my grandfather's farmland where I visited as a child. Robinson would have approved. Also, he wants wild honeysuckle in our field boundary hedges. Perhaps if you look around your own gardens you well may already have plants no different from their wild counterparts. Ferns perhaps or winter aconites, scabious, evening primrose, or poet's narcissus.

But many of the wild plants he writes about are those which grow wild in countries beyond our shores which have been brought over by himself and by other plant hunters. My love of growing alpines arose from seeing them growing wild in France. Here in my alpine grit beds many of the Saxifrages are unaltered from their ancestors in the Alps. Admittedly there are also some which are named hybrids but not greatly different from those I came to love in their alpine crevices. This, planting named varieties, Robinson would not have approved of. He was not convinced that plant breeders improved on the material which nature provided.

So you will see on second thoughts that his ideas are not so preposterous. But look away now if you grow lots of bedding plants in regimented rows. "Artificial" shrieks out from these pages. Why grow plants to be pulled out twice a year with bare soil left in between whiles. Why the expense, unless you want a continuous display in municipal flower beds? But referring back to formal flower beds. He deplores the need for staking and the work required for dead-heading and cutting back of end-of-season perennials. What about the birds being allowed to collect the seeds or insects needing somewhere safe to hibernate? Here he is surprisingly in touch with modern thinking for he recognises the need for pollinating insects in orchards etc. So plant lots of trees, widely spaced, and plant your border perennials amongst them, unstaked and untrimmed. They will be in their natural habitat. And meadow flowers .. in meadows of course. And many nowadays will agree with prairie meadow planting in grass cut once yearly for hay.

Wild Gardening is presently published by Timber Press in its original text with its black and white engravings but with five extra chapters added by way of introduction to William Robinson, and to report on the current good state of Gravetye Manor with colour photos.



A glorious morning and we all met up at the coach in Bowling Green Lane. Through nobody's fault (except perhaps the Highways Authority) we had an adventurous journey but it was all worthwhile. At Westonbirt the wonderful sunlight lit the trees and highlighted all the shapes and colours; we were free to explore at will and there was certainly plenty to see.

Because the light was so special we were able to enjoy the magic of the planting as well as the lovely colours. The display of the acers was spectacular and they glowed in the low sunlight. My favourite view was not colours but the wonderful patterns made by the vertical trunks of what I think might have been spruces and some of the beautiful patterns of the bark on individual trees.

Home time and I would like to have been staying overnight to go back the next day. It was magic. Thank you, Avril, for arranging a wonderful trip.



Free muck!

Gardeners' Club members are invited to go along to Dolfor and help themselves to some free horse manure. The Dolfor Garage has a large pile of muck which you are welcome to take bags or a trailer to help yourselves. It doesn't matter if there is no one around, just help yourselves, but if you do see someone, please introduce yourselves as members of the Club, and of course thank them for this kind offer.

We are grateful to the Club members for arranging this offer.

October meeting report by Mary Comer

"Grasses give you movement," said Robin Pearce, our October speaker and a grower of ornamental grasses at the World's End Nursery near Worcester; and an image came to me of a field of barley in Gloucestershire, rippling in the sunshine like a Mexican Wave as a breeze passed over it, glimpsed many years ago and never forgotten. Good for this, Robin told us, is Cortaderia Pategonia Richardii, which, with its upright flowers, moves in the wind to great effect. Briza Media rattles as well as moves. Add a splash of colour with bright red flowering Miscanthus "Morning Light" or stripes, with Miscanthus Sinensis Zebrinus and Miscanthus Sinensis "Giraffe" and you get a superb spectacle. Robin distributed printed lists of the seventy plants featured in his excellent talk with slides, so any exhaustive listing here would be redundant; however, some general tips supplied by Robin are as follows.

Plant grasses in groups of three or four for best effect and think about interspersing them with other plants which they complement. Cut grasses back any time from the end of October/November but try not to cut back too early varieties which still look good on into winter. Robin has found a sort of sickle-like tool with a serrated edge which suits the purpose nicely. Burning them off, of course, is not to be recommended. Grasses are best divided when actively growing, say May through to August; they like fertiliser (March) and damp improves them no end though most grasses will tolerate dry conditions. Reeds and sedges, needless to say, must have wet conditions. Marilyn tells me that some grasses will not favour the heavier soil we have in this region so growing instructions need looking at very carefully. Books which Robin recommends are *The Plant Finder's Guide to Grasses* by Roger Grant and *Grasses*, and the *Encyclopaedia of Ornamental Grasses for Liveable Landscapes* by Rick Dark.

This month Brenda Morgan writes about her favourite flower, the yellow Californian Daisy

This is a plant that is great for near Ludlow, and told to take twelve small cuttings taken in late (or a shed would do) and in the grow, and by early May they are pots.

This plant lights up the garden and by the Autumn are full of friends round Knighton. and this them in 2011!



any garden. I was given the plant by a friend from small cuttings in the Autumn. This is what I did with Autumn. I kept them in a frost-free greenhouse Spring they sprang to life. I repot them as they ready to plant out in the garden, or into larger

from May to the first hard frost. They like water, flowers. I have given many plants of this daisy to year I have taken sixty cuttings, so look out for

The November garden: tasks and ideas

Most of the Autumn leaves are down now and you can safely sweep them up in the knowledge you won't be doing the job twice or more! I tend not to take up all the leaves from the borders as the worms usually do the job for me, but of course the small plants need to be uncovered so that the slugs don't gorge themselves and there is nothing left in the Spring. If I want to make some leafmould, I usually put the damp leaves into black bags put a few holes into the plastic and bung the bags behind a shed for 12-18 months when the leaves have usually rotted down and can be spread into the garden under the shrubs. I'd like to have a large heap, but like most of us don't have the room.

November seems a strange time for sowing seed, but of course sweet peas can be sown and will flower a little earlier next Spring.

You can also sow wild cornflower seed now too; they will make stronger plants next year, whether in the garden or in pots.

Garlic cloves can be sown now, and local gardeners seem to think that Solent White is the best for Mid Wales. Garlic doesn't like ground that is too rich, so don't plant it where you have manured the soil this year. If you have a greenhouse or cold frame, you can sow winter lettuce and it will grow slowly though the winter, although watch out for botrytis - keep the watering to the morning and not at all if it is frosty. Broad beans can be tried in the open garden, although I would give them a little protection by using enviromesh if we get some heavy frosts.

Finally, it's not too late to plant tulips (see RHS), so choose some colour for next Spring, for pots or the open garden.

Wonderful tulip varieties!

Angelique: lovely pink open flowers about 12" tall, flowering in April

Queen of the Night: well-known dark maroon tulip, late flowering in May. About 16", and needs careful placing as it is so late into flower.

Black Parrot: flowering in May, also about 16" tall and a dark red/maroon colour with frilled petals

Crystal Star: plain yellow tulip with frilled edges to the petals. About 20" tall and flowering in April

Pinnocchio: dwarf (gregii) type, very smart with red and white flowers. 6" tall and flowering in April

West Point: A May flowering tulip of the lily-flowered variety, with strongly reflexed petals in a good yellow. 18"

Plant Profile: Elaeagnus

(Oleaster)

The shrubby elaeagnus family have much to recommend them to the gardener, many being evergreen or semi-evergreen and often having scented flowers. One of the surprises of the Autumn garden is the elusive scent, very sweet, drifting over the October air. From where does it come? From elaeagnus ebbingeii, whose small, creamy white flowers are very fragrant, although this is not a shrub often sold as fragrant. Elaeagnus ebbingeii is evergreen, with an attractive silvery sheen to the back of the leaves. It is a strong grower (up to 12') but responds well to pruning, and is often used as an informal hedge.

The variety Gilt Edge is variegated. Another variegated form of this lovely shrub is Limelight, which has a stronger yellow colouration than Gilt Edge.

Elaeagnus Quicksilver is a very pretty small tree or large shrub, growing up to 17' although it can be pruned to a shrubby shape or grown as a standard. It has very scented yellow flowers in July, and is semi-evergreen, losing its leaves in hard winters.

All the elaeagnii tolerate very poor soils and so are excellent for difficult, windy sites and exposed situations, especially if kept small.

Elaeagnus derive from species found mostly in Asia, but also in Europe and North America, and there are about 45 species in all.