

The Notice Board

EMPTY SPACE

This space is empty because your committee receive so little feedback or contributions from members that we rely very heavily on the same few people to write for us and fill up the newsletter with interesting (we hope) and useful information, and occasionally even they feel the strain so we'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who has written anything for us this year. All of this is done voluntarily and happily, but we would like to have a little more engagement with you, dear readers and fellow members of the Gardeners' Club.

This newsletter will only be as good as you make it, so if you have ideas for an article, or even a series of articles, or if you just have something you want to get off your chest (see page 2), then please contact Marilyn Tippett on 01547 528842, email marilynetippett@hotmail.com.



Christmas Party 2009

The December meeting will as usual be given over to our Christmas Party. This year the cost will be £8 per person, and partners are welcome to join us.

Please sign up at this meeting if you wish to come along. This is very important as Avril will need to know the numbers for catering purposes.

Come along and enjoy the chance to chat to friends and potential friends from the Gardeners' Club at this relaxed and relaxing event!



The third day comes a frost, a killing frost.

- William Shakespeare

Vere Cattermole (*Pleasures of a Late Season*), TVGC's speaker on previous occasions and author of humorous asides and anecdotes, never fails to amuse. "We smile all the way through," says Rosemary. Vere regaled everyone this time with the joys of a year winding down after blowzy summer, starting with the less common varieties of plants because Vere's garden is home to these. Members had their own questions. "How can I get my hydrangeas to flower?" was one from the heart. Vere's message as he moved on into late autumn and winter was that all the different berries and tree bark have a beauty of their own, especially, for example, the cotoneaster with its stiff, herringbone branches bearing a profusion of scarlet berries favoured by the birds. In a talk more entertaining than instructive, perhaps, and contrary to received wisdom, Vere surprised members with the number and types of plants he keeps in pots rather than in the garden. Undeterred by the antics of badgers, high winds or unruly pets, he simply clears up the pieces of smashed terracotta and re-pots the plants, which seem none the worse and go on to thrive as before. Mention should be made here of Vere's wife, who remembered the names of all the various plants and birds even if the odd one escaped Vere himself. Congratulations go to Betty Morris, who came first, Brenda Morgan, who came second, and Kath Graham who took third place in the October competition

Guerilla gardening

New to our towns and cities, this is a way of beautifying waste and derelict land across the country. Although still primarily a London phenomenon, other towns are waking up to the potential and a group calling themselves the Incredible Edibles have even grown runner beans around the now-derelict Harold Shipman surgery in Yorkshire. Most of the plants and seeds are donated, and soil or compost is often donated too. Plants grown tend to the edible (courgettes are a big favourite) or decorative (lavender, wildflower meadows) and are often based on bulbs which will appear every year or on annuals that are not as expensive to replace should the local authority strimmers come along and cut off their heads. Guerilla gardening seems to appeal to younger people who perhaps don't have a garden of their own, or to people so passionate about plants that they are unable to see a piece of land go unplanted. Others feel that land is a precious resource which should not be wasted, and so want to encourage local people to take on derelict land and keep it in good heart until development takes place. An enthusiasm for greening their community is what drives on some local guerrillas, and who can deny that a patch of Love in a Mist is a better thing to look at than a piece of broken tarmac, as well as encouraging more biodiversity in our cities.

We are fortunate to live in a beautiful and largely unspoiled piece of the world, but even in Knighton there are places which could do with a little gentle guerilla action; can anyone imagine where I am thinking of?!

My favourite flower. Val Smith

Everyone loves the snowdrop don't they? Who can deny the feeling of joy they bring during the winter, when it seems that they spring up against all the odds. They are so perfect, a miniature gem.

I can recall being newly-married and living in a village in Warwickshire. My husband and I left for work in the dark and arrived home when it was dark; consequently we hardly noticed our snowdrops. One kind elderly neighbour picked some, and put them in a small (2" diameter) pot so that we could enjoy them, and I still try to fill this pot with snowdrops each winter.



Did you know that there are lots of specialist groups dedicated to the snow drop? It is obviously a special flower not just to Val but to many many others, some of who become quite obsessive about even tiny differences in the petals. For more information you could contact the Cottage Garden Society c/o Homewood, 4, Canfield Road, Brighton, Sussex, BN2 4DN. An excellent and relatively local supplier is Judy's Snowdrops, 19, Rugby Road, Long Lawford, Warwickshire CV23 9DS

A Festival of Christmas Trees is being held at St. Edward's Church, Knighton on 11th, 12th and 13th December. All enquiries to 528260 or 528605.



The November garden: tasks and ideas

Now that we have had some real Autumnal weather the leaves are almost all off the trees and shrubs and the clearing up can begin. Recent research has identified the best way to make leafmould (unless that is you happen to have enough room in your garden for some large chicken-wire bins) is to place your leaves on the lawn and mow over them. The resultant shreds should be put into a black plastic sack with holes in it and kept just moist. In 12 months' time it is possible to have well broken-down leafmould for your ericaceous plants using this method. Leafmould is also a valuable addition to compost for potting up plants in the Spring and Summer, so why not have a go this year? The bags can be hidden underneath your hedge if you have one, or at the back of a shed or garage. If you have any lettuce or other soft-tissued vegetable left

in the vegetable garden, now is the time to cover them with fleece to protect them when the frosts arrive as they surely soon will. Fleece is also useful to wrap around the more tender shrubs or perennials that you intend to leave out all Winter. It's often not the frost but the winds that kill off the plants, and the fleece will help to mitigate against this.

Many of us lost dahlia tubers last year despite keeping them upside down in a frost-free place. If you are able to dry off your tubers and store them inside, under a spare bed or in a laundry room, this will increase their chances of coming through the Winter unscathed. They do not need to be warm, indeed this is not a good idea, but they must be completely frost-free and dry. Check the tubers carefully and cut out any rot before storing them, and don't forget to label them as you really won't remember which tuber is which next Spring!

Internet sites for gardeners: part 2

gardenswopshop.co.uk: buy, sell or swap plants, seeds and equipment.

rareplantfair.co.uk: a useful guide to the fairs that take place all around the UK

greatbritishgardens.co.uk : a good guide to the best gardens to visit, and also includes places to stay

gardenorganic.co.uk: very useful if you are a convert, or perhaps converting, to growing organically

allotment.org.uk: as well as information on allotment growing this is a good site for recipes too to deal with the inevitable glut.

plantstuff.com: decorative things including many recycled products for the garden.

Plant Profile: *Iris foetidissima* (the beefsteak, Gladwin or stinking iris)

If ever a plant comes into its own at this tail end of the year it is this iris. Unheralded in the early summer when its flowers are such a pallid grey/blue they can appear and disappear without notice, although it is also available in white and yellow flowered varieties. It is a tough customer, grown mainly for its wonderful seed pods which burst open at this time of year to display wonderfully rich-

pods of bright orange seeds which will last all the winter through and shine out in the snow. *Iris foetidissima* is ever-green, and flowers well once established. It is a very tolerant plant which will enjoy good soil and sun, but will also grow in dry shade beneath trees (if you remember to water until it is established) and even damp places if reasonably well-drained.

The plants can cause skin irritations and allergies in some people so if you have sensitive skin always use gloves when