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Spring 2021**



Editor's Musings

Hello to everyone, Wow, its been a difficult period. I must confess that even though my birthday, and those of most of my family are in January and February it is not a period of the year I find enjoyable. The dark nights and cold grey and damp weather never put me in the best of spirits and I always start looking for signs of spring and taking pleasure as soon as I see them. I have had a good show of snow-

drops, some decent hellebores and the species crocus have put on a good display. Then just when it is beginning to drag unbearably the evenings starts to get brighter March comes marching over the hill waving daffodils for St David and dragging April behind it and lo it starts again. Our gardens and allotments are truly a great source of enjoyment in these difficult times and I count myself lucky to have access to all this nature right on my doorstep. It is looking as if once again we may be able to meet one or two people in our garden in the not too distant future. So maybe, just maybe we are seeing things get back to a sort of normal. Perhaps with proper precautions we can start to meet again, I'm sure we have to be very cautious but the committee are looking at when this could be possible and will let you know as soon as a decision is reached.

This months front cover is one of my favourite small trees. It is a *Prunus Cerasifera Nigra*. It produces lovely pink flowers at a time when colour in the garden is in short supply. It hangs on to its flowers for quite a few weeks (contrast that to the later flowering ones on Locking Rd) and then has lovely dark red / burgundy leaves which last well into Autumn. A real treasure

Apology

I am only too well aware that this issue is rather late but I and the committee have been holding back trying to get a clearer picture of what we might be able to do in the near future.

After several meetings recently we have reluctantly taken the decision to cancel this year's flower show in the Winter Gardens. Despite things beginning to look better the response from our usual exhibitors and the trade is that members are reluctant to commit to the necessary meetings and organisational work beforehand which is required for a successful show. Our booking fee will be held over once more.

This is of course a big disappointment for many and does remove the showcase which many members enjoy for their prized vegetables and flowers. We will therefore once again be holding a virtual show. This time we will attempt to give more structured advice on the quality of images which will be required as well as the format and the classes available. It was difficult last year as the quality of images was so variable and some good entries may have suffered because of the quality of the photos. All the details when finalised will be available on the website.



For those looking for a trip out, this looks like a good one . Please notice you do have to book. But for those wishing to sing something whilst they stay at home and dig their garden John has sent me this Hymn

to be sung to the tune of All Things Bright And Beautiful. There are a few more verses but I do hope no one is using paraquat!



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY
Gardening with hardy perennials

HPS Somerset Group
Summer

PLANT FAIR

Sunday, 4 July 2021
10:00 am – 4:00 pm
at Lower Severalls
Crewkerne, Somerset
TA18 7NX

14 of the South West's top nurseries, plus other stalls, will be attending. Admission charge will be £4. (£3.50 for RHS & HPS members.)

Booking is essential - visit somersesthps.com

Lower Severalls
Gardens and Nursery

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

*But what we never mention though gardeners know it's true,
Is when he made the goodies, He made the baddies too.*

**All things spray and swattable,
Disasters great and small,
All things paraquatable,
The Lord God made them all.**

*The green fly on the roses, the maggots on the peas,
Manure that fills our noses, He also gave us these.*

All things spray and swattable etc
*The fungus on the goose-gogs, the club root on the greens,
The slugs that eat the lettuce and chew the aubergines.*

All things spray and swattable etc
*The drought that kills the fuchsias, the frost that nips the buds,
The rain that drowns the seedlings, the blight that kills the spuds.*

All things spray and swattable etc
*The midges and mosquitoes, the nettles and the weeds,
The pigeons in the green stuff, the sparrows on the seeds.*

All things spray and swattable etc.
*The fly that gets the carrots, the wasp that eats the plums,
How black the gardener's outlook, though green may be his thumbs.*

All things spray and swattable etc.
*But still the gardeners labour midst vegetables and flowers,
And pray what hits our neighbours will somehow bypass ours.*

All things spray and swattable etc.

It is also our intention to hold a garden competition, provided access to the garden is safe for the judges and separate from the house. Once again when all details are finalised they will be published on the website. This competition will be open to all residents and publicised in the Mercury and other similar News outlets.



We have also decided that we cannot contemplate meetings in the Hall before October. We are not sure how we or the hall management team stand in relation to Covid cleansing and isolating and insurance etc. etc. so we feel the need to wait and see before we can start to encourage folks back. We anticipate it will take quite a while before people feel confident about meeting in the old way so the format of meetings is likely to change. Let's all hope that spring and summer will lift our spirits and give us the boost we need.

Getting Ready for the New Year

Those of you who have heard me going on about whether to dig up my dahlias, as I have always done, and which most books recommend even in these days of warmer winters, may be interested to know that I have finally decided to cut the haulms down and leave them in the ground. Then chuck some compost over the top and plant wallflowers in between . They are looking quite good and seem to have survived the transport from the allotment to my garden. I have disturbed a few bulbs in the process but I think they will recover.

Over-Wintering Dahlias

Opinions are mixed as to which is the best method for over-wintering dahlias... leave them in the garden, or dig them up and store in a shed? I grow about twenty dahlias in the garden for their colour and stature, (with also a hope that they may bring me some glory at the WHS Flower Show. This unfortunately has not yet happened to me, but it could lead to further articles by the dedicated dahlia exhibitors within our society!)

So, back to storing my dahlias. I dig the dahlia tubers up towards the end of November. The books refer to waiting until the first frost, but this does not always occur in Weston until after Christmas.

I cut back all the foliage to 3 inches long, dig up the tuber, shake off the remaining soil and wash the tuber. Stand the tuber upside down in the greenhouse for a couple of days to dry out.

I then store the dahlia in a plastic bag filled with dry compost up to the top of the tuber. I also mix an eggcup full of chicken manure pellets with the compost which starts off the feeding in the spring.

I have a large shed where the tubers are stored through the winter. In mid-March I give the tubers a watering,(all the bags should have drainage holes cut ,or it will be death by drowning for the dahlia) and bring the bags out of the shed at the start of April. Small shoots appear during April and by mid May the shoots can be up to 18 inches tall. I water the plants as necessary, and plant the dahlias in the garden at this time in mid May. I try to incorporate plenty of well-rotted compost and chicken manure pellets in the soil surrounding the tubers.

To support the dahlia I use a circular mesh basket. The height of the mesh depends on the height of the fully-grown dahlia, minus 18 inches. The system of supporting the dahlia looks a bit messy for 3 weeks, but after that time the dahlia grows up and through the mesh, supporting it for the rest of the year.

By using this method the dahlia will start flowering in June which gives a 4 week start on the dahlias that have been left in the ground. John Chapman

Contact points for your Committee

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