

Special Edition 17

Welcome to our seventeenth special newsletter. Please keep sending items to me at:- Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com.

Despite the chill of April, the garden speeds along with fresh foliage on trees and shrubs joined by an abundance of growth in the flower borders, although the shrivelled hydrangeas and browned magnolia say it all.

It was a joy in April to pay a long overdue visit to East Lambrook Manor; I have never seen it looking so good. Despite a degree of depletion on the nursery sales benches I came home with a small collection of interesting hardy geraniums, an enduring feature of the garden and nursery.

This got me thinking and in the June Hardy Times I plan to feature hardy geraniums, our fabulous favourites and recommendations, good old stalwarts yet to be beaten and the best of the new ones. So please let me know what you love and grow!

We plan to issue the next Hardy Times in early June so let me know as soon as you can.

News from Sapling Cottage & The Museum

Three more ground covers plants



Useful at the bottom of hedges is the neat and tidy growing *Lamium maculatum* 'Beacon Silver' (left), introduced

by Beth Chatto in 1976. Good in part shade with totally silvered leaves apart from a narrow green edging. The occasional pink flowers are of secondary interest.

Another lamium, which I have planted, despite warnings from other gardeners is *Lamium*

galeobdolon, widely known as the wild plant Yellow Dead Nettle (right) or Yellow Archangel of ancient woodlands. I find it lights up the gloomy space with the bluebells under a dull green *Osmanthus delavayi* whilst holding its own against the dreaded ground elder.



One which should come with an invasive warning is *Symphytum ibericum* (left) but is never the less useful for dark, dry corners or under trees where nothing else will thrive. It has coarse dull evergreen leaves and in spring is covered with stems of tubular flowers which change from burnt orange to creamy yellow and are loved by bees. It spreads by underground roots and is easy to control by pulling. Transplants take a while to settle but once they decide to grow can cover a metre square patch in a season! I have a patch planted too near a path which needs attention!

Blackthorn Winter

This April we have experienced a prolonged cold spell after a warm period, which has slowed down our spring sowings and the continual nightly frosts have nipped at young leaves emerging from shrubs and perennials. A cold snap in March or April is traditionally known as a 'Blackthorn Winter' stimulating the blackthorn to produce its distinctive abundant white blossom, often taking on the appearance of great snow drifts in the countryside. Blackthorn is *Prunus spinosa* which gives us sloes in the autumn for homemade sloe gin and an ingredient for hedgerow jelly. The wood of this tree is prized for walking sticks with

smooth bark the colour of horse chestnut conkers and numerous knots from previous side shoots. It was the traditional wood for Irish Shillelaghs.

British gardeners are not the only ones to suffer; you may have seen dramatic photographs in the press such as this from the Sunday Times 18 April.



Vineyards ablaze with flickering candles as wine producers work through the night

to save their vineyards from exceptionally cold late frosts. After a glorious spell in March where some places recorded 20°C, widespread frosts as low as -7°C hit many wine regions in Europe, destroying the new buds and shoots that formed on the vines during the warm weather. Wine prices are set to increase!

Elaine (at home)

Blandford Museum Victoria Garden Wet & Forget®

Would you like an easy way to remove mould, lichen and algae from various hard surfaces in your garden; with No bleach, No water blasting, No caustic materials and No elbow grease?

We have used Wet & Forget® safely for several years at the Museum Garden with great success. Just dilute according to instructions and spray on to the dry surface such as concrete, paving, bricks, decking, canvas or painted surfaces. The canvas gazebo cover is left out all year round and we spray on a cool windless spring day when no rain is forecast for several hours. Results can be seen within days, the surfactants work in conjunction with wind and rain to gently remove contamination from the treated surface. Maintain by reapplication once a year, undiluted product in the original container does not deteriorate.

We've not found a local stockist but it's widely available online from as little as £15 for 2L, which according to the manufacturer is sufficient for 40-120m². Usual safety precautions apply as with all garden products.

Plant Sale and Coffee Morning

The Blandford Town Museum and Victorian Garden are reopening from Tuesday 18th May. To celebrate the reopening after so many months, coffee and homemade cakes and a plant sale will be held in the Victorian Garden on **Saturday 22nd May 10.30am – 1pm**. Lots of plants for sale as the usual May and June events have been cancelled again this year. Plants are for sale at the Museum door on an honesty box basis when the garden is closed. Opening Hours: Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday 10am – 4pm. Free Admission.

Elaine (at the Museum)

Somerset HPS Plant Sale

14 nurseries will be at Lower Severalls, Somerset on **July 4th 10 am to 4 pm**. *Early booking recommended.*

Go to the Somerset HPS website for further details.

Dorset Plant Heritage Plant Sale

Abbotsbury Sub tropical Gardens

Sunday June 13th 10 am -3 pm

Admission bookable on Abbotsbury Garden Website. Nurseries present and members own plants for sale.

Kingston Maurward Animal Park & Gardens

One of our members has been in touch to tell us that KM is now open daily 10am – 4pm, and is completely free to visit, so why not go along and see them. They are able to offer takeaways from their cafe but I guess that may be changing soon as lockdown restrictions lift.

National Plant Shortage

Garden centres and friends in the trade tell me there is a real shortage of plants at the moment, partly due to so many nursery workers being furloughed last year and thus unable to produce many plants as usual. Also bumper online sales have depleted stocks. Importers are struggling with new Brexit systems and paperwork and have had no choice but to hike up plant prices as they are paying premium prices. We are all baulking at Garden Centre prices this year.

Thus local plant sales are essential for those of us wishing to buy plants at reasonable prices.

How good it was to see such fabulous plants on sale at our recent 'Car Boot Plant Sale'

loved by all. Our thanks to the organisers for all their hard work

Even **Thrifty Thursdays at Stewarts** has been affected as demand has outstripped supply so now they will only be held once a fortnight.

The next two dates are May 20th and June 3rd
Please let me know if you hear of any other plant sales coming up.

Barbara's Memorial Garden

Members who helped create Barbara's



Memorial Garden last year will be pleased to see how lovely it looks as it matures. Why not pop along and see it if you can.

Vacancy on the Committee

Hello everyone. We have a vacancy on the committee for a Speaker Secretary and were wondering whether anyone would be interested in joining us. We frequently get suggestions for speakers so you do not have to worry about having to make all the decisions yourself. You would contact the speaker, assess their availability and see if they would be prepared to come and see us. You would be responsible for keeping in touch with the speaker and ensure that they have all they need to give the talk, such as laptop, projector etc, tables to put plants on and so on. You would be their point of contact and welcome them on arrival. So, are you interested? It is such an important job and one which needs to be planned well in advance. If you are interested please call me, email me or make contact via the website.

Membership Renewals

Can I remind everyone that renewal subscriptions were due at the beginning of the year and, as lockdown appears to be lifting gradually, we have all sorts of additional plans in the pipeline during the summer? As we may need to restrict numbers, priority for some events will be given to those members who have already renewed, so don't miss out.

Debbie Steel

Jane's Journal

I have been looking into what seeds would make good flower arranging subjects. I like to

try new ones most years to see how easy or not. I had some old **Amaranth** seeds and looked up about them generally. Firstly I found out if you are suspicious that the seed might be too old try and pre germinate them on wet paper towel in a plastic box near warmth. This was extremely successful and after a day I was carefully picking out small sprouted seeds into compost - most satisfactory. Amaranth is highly recommend for flower arrangers both as a fresh and later dried and apparently keeps its colour well. I then found out that the seeds are fantastically nutritional, at one time being considered in line with maize and beans. The



leaf is also edible. I then had a go at trying **Zinnias** and some old bean seed again with success. I have grown **Statice** which can be used either fresh or

dried off in bunches hung upside down. Chiltern seeds offer *Helichrysum bracteatum* 'Scarlet' and this is described as a beautiful deep red selection that dries well for Christmas decoration (left). I have grown some *Helichrysum* before but not this variety unfortunately, but I will next year.

In professional flower bunches very often *Carex* 'Frosted Curls' is included with its very dainty fronds. This is easy to grow from seed. We have had such late frosts. Unfortunately in a fit of enthusiasm, I have planted out some dahlias and they have been severely frosted. I have more but will look with interest to see what happens and whether they will sprout again. I did take some early cuttings and these are growing on nicely.

I have planted some gladiolas which I sprouted in the greenhouse, but they were planted pretty deep to ensure they stand up.

Jane Norris

A letter to the Editor

Dear Diana,

I thought you might like something on tulips for the Hardy Times.

Continuing the theme of favourites, I am not keen on tulips which look like boiled eggs, so **West Point**, the lovely yellow lily flowered tulip, here in a pot outside the front



porch, Great Dixter style, is a winner (above). It has come up in the borders for several years and I keep adding more.

My other recommendation is a new introduction, **Lady Van Eijk** (right). It is a fantastic sight in the troughs, as you can see. It has a sturdy stem, neat and tidy leaves and the most beautiful colour, described as “deep rose with a hint of lilac”. Finally, to add to its perfection, it is a Darwin tulip, which should flower in the border for many years. Tulips don't flower well in subsequent years if left in pots, so after their starring performance in pots, they go into the borders.



I buy my tulips from Peter Nyssen, www.peternyssen.com. Tel 0161 747 4000, who are excellent and inexpensive, though their catalogue has few pictures, as I mentioned before.

Janice Walters

Tulip Review

This is the time to cast your eye around the beds to assess the part that tulips played in your garden this year. I chose very carefully to have early birds, mainly species, in flower in pots from March onwards and the later varieties are looking their best in late May. By placing pots in shadier places to delay them and by planting late, you can avoid a great April crush.

When I grow tulips in pots, I tend to tip them out when they finish flowering, and dry them in the shed, trying to give the bulbs a good baking in the sunny window. The plumpest of these then get planted out into the garden in November.

Many big gardens simply plant them out in meadows where they shine out like coloured jewels, taking their chance. I plant mine along the edge of raised vegetable beds where dahlias or runner beans and courgettes will follow on.

Growing direct in the border can be quite a challenge if you intend to leave them in situ.



Great Dixter stick to the same tried and true varieties for the border, such as 'Ballerina', (left) a tough, reliable, orange-lily flowered

tulip, and simply leave them in, but top up every year with more of the same.

I like to see different forms and a range of flowering times so, where I leave them in borders, I top up the next autumn with different varieties in colours that blend together well. I am using pinks in the back garden but green streaked white, cream and white in the front where white stemmed birches and an acid green *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' are the main players.

As Janice says, Darwin varieties (and the old 'Cottage' types) are reliable old stalwarts. I inherited big red tulips (probably 'Apeldoorn') in my borders at Welcome Thatch. As an old boy leant over the gate one day and told me that they had been there decades, and they did another 20 years for me! I do not know if they actually set seed and spread that way, as well as dividing themselves up, because I had quite a colour range with odd yellows and oranges popping up some years.

The mysteries of nature!

White Liberstar from Farmer Gracy. They are a fabulous Dutch company, not the cheapest supplier, but they have some real gems.



Plant of the Month

Helleborus HGC Ice n' Roses 'Merlot'

You may wonder why on earth I am recommending a hellebore in May when we are busy going round the garden cutting off the spent flowers of hellebores that are well past their best. Well, this beauty is still going strong having shown its first flowers in early December. I bought it (already blooming) from the plant shop at RHS Wisley in November 2019 and, in that brief time, it has grown to almost shrub like proportions towering over 20 year old plants! There are too many flowering stems to count. What is more surprising is that it is a perfect cut flower, never drooping and looking great with cream tulips and late narcissi. I doubt I shall need to cut it down until late June by which time the bold handsome foliage will have fully developed and it will be surrounded by dahlias to give it a little summer shade.

