



Epsom Garden Society: August 2023

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Dear Member, if you have any news or garden related small ads that you would like to be included in the Newsletter, please phone me, 01372 724138, or email me, margarethaslam6@gmail.com

Garden and Craft Show on 2nd September! Entries to catherine.flitter2@ntlworld.com. Schedule on website or contact **Cathy** for a copy. Helpers very welcome at 6pm on the Friday.

On the 12th July **Margaret Trepan** ran a workshop '*Arranging with Summer Flowers*'. Seven brave members brought flowers from their gardens and supermarket bunches, and plenty of greenery from shrubs that needed a trim and [think I heard someone say] a local park. **Margaret** demonstrated first by placing pittosporum branches in a triangle shape, which was leaning back slightly so that it wasn't flat at the back, in a putty coloured vase. Everyone was encouraged to use a ball of chicken wire to hold the stems in position. Oasis is rather disliked nowadays as we realise that it is not recyclable. It is a good idea to use a vase that is not too narrow at the top, and to try to get your chicken wire in the top half of it so that the stems are not resting on the base. Watch out that your arrangement is within the allocated space if you are entering the Show.

Everyone got busy making their framework with helpful comments as they worked, such as 'Needs some at the back' and 'Do put some water in your vase so they can have a drink'. Next some speckled tree peony leaves were tucked in to contrast in texture with the small leaves. Using all small leaves is rather hard to focus on. **Margaret's** flowers were some leeks that had gone to seed, but still retained their mauve colours. She had been saving them specially for this occasion. She placed one at the back to give depth when the arrangement was looked through, and cut the others to different heights. Next came some stems with little purple flowers along the sides, not sure what these were, but they were a nice contrast with the round leek shapes. **Margaret** thought they might be Perovskia, which her friend always calls Perestroika. The final touch were some stems of yellow foxgloves. The colour of these was opposite purple on the colour wheel, so **Margaret** knew that they would look good.

When everyone had finished they put the vases on the table for us all to admire. How lovely it would be to have seven entries as beautiful as this in our Show! **Margaret** praised them all, and made some helpful comments. It is a good idea to condition your material by leaving it in a deep bucket of water overnight, then you will know if it is going to flop. If you are using oasis you can arrange it so that it is slightly above the rim of your pot, then you can place stems to come downwards. Otherwise choose a piece that is naturally growing that way. Glass containers are simple to arrange in as you don't need to match the flowers to the vase. White vases are rather tricky as they are too eye catching. You could paint them, or wrap string round to tone them down a bit. People think that colour schemes are personal, but some combinations definitely work better. Don't think you have to use every flower in a supermarket bunch in your arrangement, they are not carefully chosen to give you an artistic effect, rather what is cheapest to make a bunch on the day.

Next **Margaret** showed us an idea to use flowers that didn't fit in to our main arrangement. This was very simple, two long leaves, perhaps phormium or canna, held together, then several flowers, **Margaret** used alstromeria from her garden, spaced along the length, and a few round leaves such as fatshedera, placed just above the rim of the vase, and this all fastened together with a wire tie. This looked really good in a simple high ball glass. Plenty of ideas for us to use!

We are invited to **Keith and Elizabeth Lewis's** garden at 41 Shelveys Way, Tadworth KT20 5QJ, on 11th August at 2.30pm. **Keith** was our Chairman for several years, and a judge at our shows, often a prize winner with his beautifully grown daffodils and tulips, and it will be lovely to see his immaculate garden. The cost will be £8, please have the right change and pay on arrival. They need to know how many people to expect so that they will have enough cake, so if you intend to visit, please will you let **Sue Glover** know: 07810117140, sue.192@live.co.uk and she will tell **Keith**.

Cherrill Sands will be visiting us again on Wednesday August 16th to talk about *Painshill Landscape Garden*, where she has been heavily involved in the research and restoration. Painshill in Surrey was one of the finest landscape gardens of the eighteenth century. It was the vision of **Charles Hamilton**, who created a garden of mood, designed to play on the senses and imagination. During the twentieth century *Painshill* was neglected, the buildings decayed and the garden became overgrown. In 1981 the *Painshill Park Trust* was formed to rescue and restore the garden. 'By using archive research, archaeological excavations and continual physical work, the magic and beauty of *Painshill* has been rediscovered.' To be held in *Epsom Sports Club, Woodcote Road*. Entrance £2 members, £3 visitors, to include raffle, tea and cake. Starting at 10.15 for 10.30am.

If you are a member of the *Open Gardens Group* please make an effort to attend the gardens, it is disappointing when you have worked hard getting ready and few people come.

Cathy and Kim Shrosbree had a lovely time on our behalf recently collecting left over plants from *Hampton Court Flower Show*. Usually these just go in a skip unless the garden is heading for a new life somewhere, but this year they were offered to Societies nearby who could use them. They are going to keep them watered and offer them for sale in our Plant Sale at the Show on September 2nd. **Cathy's** car was stuffed to the roof, and it all felt like being a child in a sweet shop!

Space left so I will tell you about **pineapples**: most gardeners like to please whoever is paying their wages, and none more so than **John Rose**, gardener to **King Charles 11** in 1675. There is a painting of him kneeling before the King offering a curious knobbly fruit, the like of which had scarcely been seen in Europe before. The dandy **King**, with one of his favourite namesake spaniels playing at his feet, doesn't look very excited, but this was something special, an early home-grown pineapple. Discovered by the Spanish when they landed in the Americas, it proved to be as much a delight to the invaders as it was to the indigenous people. The fruit is formed from a conglomeration of a hundred or so individual flowers that coalesce into one giant sugary fruit and it is packed with flavour and vitamins A and C.

It grows easily in a tropical climate, and there is just about sufficient heat in Spain to grow it, but plantations were soon set up in Africa and eventually Malaysia and Australia, and gardeners were keen to find a way to grow it here. Our old friend **John Evelyn**, who often features in this newsletter, gave a lecture about harnessing natural energy to *Charles 11's Royal Society*. His idea was that forcing pits, deep enough for a man to stand in could be dug and filled with steaming horse manure. Then plants grown in portable wooden trays over the pits would thrive with the natural bottom heat. Actually this wasn't a new idea, in the 1000s celebrated Muslim gardeners had advocated using this idea with the extra advice that labourers should be encouraged to urinate on the heap to help matters along.

An extra benefit to bringing back plants from the Americas in the early years was the invention of the Wardian Container. **Nathaniel Basshaw Ward** wanted to invent a moth cage, so that tropical moths could be brought safely home to be studied here, a fashionable pursuit for the Victorians, but the container he came up with turned out to be just the thing for transporting plants. It is a sealed container set in a foldable frame. The plants transpire at night and this condensation waters the soil during the day. Soon the cases were being used to bring back ferns and plants that could be studied and possibly propagated for sale here.

The attempt to grow pineapples here led to another invention as special houses needed to be built to shelter the pineapples, as well as citrus trees, myrtles and pomegranates that people wanted to protect. This meant that famous horticultural architects, **Christopher Wren** and **John Vanbrugh** amongst them, tried their hand at designing Glass Palaces and Pine Houses for the aristocracy. The genius at this turned out to be **Joseph Paxton**, a farmer's boy from Bedfordshire. He knew that ventilation was critical and that white walls would reflect heat and raise the temperature inside, and also that the glass roof should slope at 52 degrees to maximise the effects of the sun. He combined this with an invention of his own, glazing bars outside to channel rainwater away and inside to channel condensation. He thought of the idea by studying the leaf of a giant waterlily. Popularity of conservatories and green houses grew.

Sales of pineapple boomed after a **Mr Dole** of Hawaii mastered the method of canning the fruit. The juice was thought to be good for many folk remedies ranging from removing intestinal worms, mending broken bones, easing the pain of labour and helping with haemorrhoids and sore throats.

'Pineapple' became an adjective, in **Richard Sheridan's** play *'The Rivals'* in 1775, someone is described as 'the very pineapple of politeness.' Seeds in a pineapple are considered detrimental to its quality, so in Hawaii there is a ban on bringing humming birds into the country to prevent pollination. Fancy that!

Best wishes Margaret