



## Epsom Garden Society: June 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](mailto:margarethaslam6@gmail.com)*

**Sue Glover** has organised an outing to **Hampton Court** to see the greenhouses behind the scenes where all their plants for the Palace are propagated. This will be on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June, at 10.30 am. The Head Gardener, **Martin**, will meet us at the main gate and take us through. The cost will be £15, which he would like us to pay directly to '**Perennial**', the gardeners' charity. The best way to do this would be to pay the money into our bank account, with your surname as a reference, with HAM after that, so we know what it is for. The Bank details are Lloyds Bank, 30-93-08, 00359728.

Please let **Sue** know you have done this on [outings.egs@gmail.com](mailto:outings.egs@gmail.com) or 07810 117140. There is parking on site but with a charge, and the cafe will be open for fortifying ourselves later.

Everyone who went enjoyed our visit to **Ramster gardens, Chiddingfold, GU8 4SN** on Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup>. There was a main path that looped round on itself and lots of little paths that you could take if the mood took you, leading to such places as Ant Wood, where the hardy hybrid Rhododendrons lived, a Magnolia Glade, a Grouse Hole and a Japanese Red Bridge leading to the Valley of the Giants. All very exciting! In 2022 the family were celebrating their family having lived there for 100 years. The garden had been laid out in 1890 by a well-known local nursery, **Gauntletts of Chiddingfold**, who created them out of the oak woodland. They were very interested in Japanese plants and ornaments which were all the rage at the time. Hence the Red Bridge, which did look very beautiful from the seat that I was enjoying.

In 1922 **Sir Henry and Lady Norman** bought **Ramster**, the Great Grandparents of the current owners. **Lady Norman** greatly added to the gardens and introduced many of the Rhododendrons and Azaleas for which Ramster has become famous. Some were grown from seed brought back by the great plant collectors, and others she grew from her own crosses. Many of these have reached maturity and are over 20 metres high, and making a spectacular display for our visit.

No good garden stands still, and gardeners were busy weeding and planting as we walked by.

One lovely seat was a huge carved wooden dragon, with his carved body making the backrest and his head and coiled tail rearing up a few feet away at either end. This was installed to celebrate their centenary. To add further interest **The Surrey Sculpture Society** had an exhibition throughout the garden. This was quite handy as a way to check where you were because each sculpture was numbered and the numbers were on the map.

We are invited to **Keith and Elizabeth Lewis'** garden at **41 Shelveys Way, Tadworth KT20 5QJ**, on 11<sup>th</sup> August, at 2.30pm. Teas to be provided by TWOAT. There will be choice perennials together with colourful annuals. **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.

We are planning a **Summer Coffee Morning and Plant Sale** on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June, 10 – 12 at Epsom Sports Club, Woodcote Road, Epsom. If you would like to bring any plant that you are particularly pleased with, or Flower Arrangement for everyone to enjoy, please do, we will have a display table. There will be a small **Plant Sale** outside, so please bring anything you can spare for this, and bags in case you find a treasure! Please don't bring raffle prizes for this one. Hoping to see lots of members there.

On June 21st at this same venue, at 10.15 for 10.30am start **Barry Newman** is coming to give us an expert talk about '**Vegetable Growing.**'

On the 17<sup>th</sup> May **Keith Hine** gave us a really inspiring talk about '**Plants for Free**'. He is a very enthusiastic gardener with two greenhouses and three allotments, one for dahlias, one for vegetables and the last for fruit and anything else. He is also a Judge at Flower Shows and is part of the RHS trials Committee for Fruit and Vegetables. Nothing wrong with Garden Centres, but **Keith** wanted to encourage

us to produce as much as we could ourselves. Did we remember the programme on television with Harry Dodson back in the 60s? A lovely slide of beautifully grown vegetables arranged on a Show bench reminded us.

**Keith** pointed out that we really don't need expensive equipment to get our plants started. His son gave him a soil block maker for Father's Day one year. It was fun compressing compost into neat little blocks and cuttings grew well, but it does seem to live on the shelf in the shed now. Just re-use seed trays and pots, although a wash at the start of the season will get rid of bugs. You can also use yogurt pots with drainage holes poked in the base and plastic grape boxes make fine propagators. Root training pots are lovely for sweet peas, but soon crack, you could always line them with cardboard toilet roll centres and get more use out of them. Fibre pots are useful as you can plant them out directly and not disturb your plant's roots. It is a good idea to plant a few seeds at a time, or they are bound to all come up and be difficult to separate. Taking time to spread them out individually across the seed tray makes things easier later. Even so occasionally **Keith** has too many to deal with at once and spreads them out across the drive, hoping he remembers to bring them in before his wife drives back and sometimes runs over them.

Sometimes the seed packets do this for you, **Keith** told us about some very expensive heritage tomato seeds that cost £10 a packet and only had about six seeds in, and the germination was very poor and he only ended up with five plants from two packets. On the other hand carrots were just 99p a pack, so he sprinkled them liberally, and every one grew and were too close to separate.

Heating has been so expensive this year that he tried to just keep his greenhouse frost free, but it wasn't enough and he lost 90% of his Dahlia tubers. He used to use Grow Lights to get his tomatoes a few weeks earlier, but might save the cost and just enjoy them later. People seem to be turning on their heated propagating benches in February now, rather than using them all winter.

A useful talk about peat-free compost followed compared to peat compost. It looks drier on top, although seems to be damp lower down in the pot. It also doesn't seem to hold the nutrients as well. **Keith** uses quarter strength seaweed food at every watering, and won't buy any compost using garden waste as one of the ingredients. He also sieves it to get rid of twigs and adds perlite or vermiculite to open it out.

We all enjoyed hearing about **Keith's mother**, who had very green fingers. Once he was pushing her round *Rosemoor* in her wheelchair when they passed a gardener dead heading poppies. She stopped **Keith** and asked the man if she could please have some, and surprised them both by opening her hand bag to reveal secateurs and plant labels all ready for business! The poppies looked beautiful in their garden for years afterwards.

Don't forget to label the paper bag when you save seed. **Keith** can forget what they are after a short walk indoors for something. Also if you save F1 hybrid seed the plants won't be the same as the ones you collected the seed from because F1 seed has been carefully produced by crossing two parent plants. You will get something, but be careful labelling it. Also, collect seeds when they are ready, if you go back when you have time tomorrow they will be spread all over the ground. Seeds sometimes have their own ideas, **Keith** has a lovely dark red Acer by his front door and has been carefully planting the best looking seeds for years, but only one ever germinated. However, underneath the tree growing in the gravel are many seedlings, so he kindly potted them up and brought them for us to take away one each.

A good idea with Peppers, Chillis and Tomatoes is to buy a good looking one from the supermarket, take out the seeds and dry them on kitchen towel, and then plant a day or two later. You may have amazing results. You can also use the side shoots of Tomatoes as cuttings once you have removed them. Cuttings seem to fruit lower down too. Root them in water to get them going. For these seedlings he feeds them with tomato food, although Comfrey tea is good too.

You can buy a Hydropod rooting machine that heats the cutting while watering the base. Even tricky shrubs will root with this. More expense with electricity though. Quite fun to try are just cuttings from hard wood when you are pruning in autumn, just open a trench with the edge of your spade and line the cuttings along it, roses, viburnums etc. close the trench and just leave them for a year and most will root.

You can easily make more plants by dividing them with two forks, give them some fresh compost and food and they will soon grow away. Root cuttings are fun for tricky plants like oriental poppies, just lay sections of root in a tray of gritty compost and give them time!

*A wonderful, inspiring talk! Thank you Keith.*

*Best wishes Margaret*