



Epsom Garden Society: October 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, 07761 976764, or email me, margarethaslam6@gmail.com

On Monday 20th November we will have our AGM at 7.30pm at St Barnabas Church Hall, Temple Road, Epsom. The business part to discuss is:

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of 2022 AGM minutes [on website e-voice.org.uk/epsomgardensociety/agm-2022-minutes]
- 3 Chairman's Report
- 4 Treasurer's Report and approval of accounts
- 5 Membership fees
- 6 Membership Secretary's Report
- 7 Show and Meeting Secretary's Report
- 8 Open Garden Society Report
- 9 Election of Officers and Committee, please send all nominations for the Committee to our Secretary **Kim Shrosbree**, email: kimshros@gmail.com by 1st November.

Please don't bring any raffle prizes for this: we will finish with our usual fancy cheese and wine refreshments and enjoy a sociable time.

Our meeting in October had to be changed at the last minute due to an unexpected funeral. Too late to report here this time. Earlier in the year the U3A arranged an excellent talk at Bourne Hall by **Andrew Babioz**, called '*Great Gardens of Great Britain*'. Luckily I took notes just in case they came in useful for this sort of occasion.

Andrew worked at **Wisley, Kew and Hampton Court**. His apprenticeship was with the **National Trust**, and at the end his fellow students were off plant hunting in Nepal and China, but he found himself working for the Council in Croydon.

He enjoyed broadcasting a gardening slot on local radio in Brentwood, and has interviewed most of the famous gardeners that we see on television.

He likes gardens where he is inspired to take an idea to use in his own garden. Every RHS garden does trials of various plants. Look out for 'Award of Merit' for the best ones. Do ask the gardeners questions – they know a lot!

At one of his gardens the students were all impressed by **Miss Grainger**, Secretary to the Director. She raised the lid on her desk and moved something inside and suddenly seemed to have mind control of the Head Gardeners, to the extent that one would be walking towards you and suddenly completely change direction.

Andrew was interviewed by **Chris Brickell** for the post at Kew. The first question was 'What is your favourite flower colour?' to which he said 'Blue', followed by 'Name ten trees or shrubs with blue flowers.' When he was young his brain worked quickly and he was able to do this, but now he is older the answer doesn't always pop into his head, and he sometimes forgets the name of the flower on his own slides. The way round this is to say 'Can anyone tell me what this is?' Of course this brought the house down when he had to say it a few slides further on.

Then followed some lovely slides of gardens open to the public.

Anglesey Abbey, near Cambridge, is famous for its winter garden group of white stemmed trees with purple bergenia underneath. They use a pressure hose to keep them so white if you were wondering.

Benmore, six hundred miles away, west of Glasgow, is famous for sequoias. But also biting midges. Don't kill one or a thousand will rush to its funeral. The only relief is to smoke a pipe or go out to sea. The SAS apply *Avon 'Skin So Soft'* when on manoeuvres up here, as that seems to keep them off, but stock up before you go as it is double the price in Scotland. **Harlow Carr** has beautiful stone troughs with alpine planting. Also possibly the best catering of all the RHS gardens as the cafe is run by Betty's tearoom. Usually everyone is in the cafe and the garden is nearly empty.

Hyde Hall is the nearest garden to **Andrew's** house, so of course he mostly goes to **Wisley**. **Hyde Hall** is on the top of a hill, and can be very cold in the winter. They do have an excellent new winter garden though. There are also good coloured borders between hedges, plenty of ideas for planting for your own garden. The dry garden is interesting, also crab apple trees to compare. Crab Apple Jelly made from these is good with cheese.

Inverewe is frost free because of the Gulf Stream, even though it is so far north, also protected with a canopy of trees. Don't think that this keeps the sea warm for swimming though! Here they use composted seaweed to feed the garden. *Rhododendron ponticum* is becoming invasive and they are wondering whether to remove it.

Levens Hall has been famous for its topiary since 1700s. People enjoy puzzling what the shapes can be. It is a very popular venue for weddings. Pruning is continuous throughout the year. Mini-Gunnera grows here and is hardy to -10 degrees.

Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, **Andrew** loved studying here and was homesick when he left for Croydon. The soil is shingle so they have to topdress it. There are a lot of hops in Edinburgh, a by-product of the brewing industry, so they compost them. There is a very wide and long herbaceous border with a high hedge behind it. The students are sent to trim this hedge with no protective equipment [students are cheap!], but luckily the herbaceous border is a fairly soft landing. There is an excellent Chinese garden here as Edinburgh and China are horticultural allies. In fact many plants that came from China are being used to restock there as the original plants in China are being lost to pollution.

Nearly every RHS garden has a weather station and sends in reports for the evening news. That's why odd places are mentioned, such as 'Eskdale'.

Kew Gardens, with the 's' because several gardens have been amalgamated. This is very noisy as it is on popular flight paths. There is a tree top walk with a lift to get up to it. Arboriculturalists use drones nowadays to check on tree health. **Andrew** rather disapproves of the winter display of lights and would rather people just went to see the gardens.

The RHS have sold their Horticultural Hall in London and used the money to improve all their gardens. People wonder why plant names have changed? Advances in DNA testing means the plants can now be reassigned to the correct family. The handkerchief tree might have to change as young people don't know what these are anymore. "Tissue Tree?" *A lovely informative talk. Glad I went.*

Just thought you might like to hear about rainbows. I have been reading **Peter Moore's** book called '**The Weather Experiment**', about weather forecast pioneers.

'Largest raindrops fall fastest, colliding and splintering as they go. We sometimes notice these, the outriders, splashing on the pavement, acting as a warning sign before the bulk of a shower arrives.

The size of a raindrop varies. The smallest can be just a fraction of a millimetre in diameter, the biggest are juggernauts of five millimetres that fall at speeds of nine metres a second.

As the raindrops fall they may pass through a shaft of sunlight, refracting it, and on the ground someone standing with their back to the sun looks up at an angle of 42° and they see a rainbow.

No two people see the same rainbow. Each one is dynamic and unique to the viewer, while its colours, like the blue of the sky, are an ephemeral blend governed by the size of the raindrops that the light passes through. No pure rainbow has ever comprised the seven celebrated colours, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet; instead blends of colour are seen and rainbows can change as you watch them.

Large raindrops of 1-2mm make rainbows with very bright and vivid greens, vibrant reds but hardly any blue. Average sized raindrops of 0.5mm produce bows with less red but greater pinks, while tiny raindrops of 0.08mm create broad bows with hardly any colouration. These are called White Rainbows and are rarely noticed.

A second bow is almost always visible over the primary rainbow, much fainter, the colours in a secondary bow are in reverse sequence to the first, beginning with violet on the outside and progressing to red.

Once, looking at a rainbow during a storm, a man saw that the boundaries of the colours disappeared every time it thundered, as if the rainbow was being rattled. Perhaps the vibrations caused the raindrops to coalesce for a split second and destroy the atmospheric palette.'