



## Epsom Garden Society: April 2024

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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](mailto:margarethaslam6@gmail.com)*

On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April at 10.15am at the Sports Club next to Epsom Hospital, **Barry Newman** is going to give us ideas and advice on '**Vegetable Growing.**' Currently Vice Chairman of the *RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee* and a former Chairman of the *National Vegetable Society*, **Barry** is another return visitor with a wealth of expertise who will be giving us hints and tips to get us all growing vegetables, whether novice or expert.

We will have a raffle this time, so please bring anything that would make a good prize.

The next visit for the Open garden Group is to **Coverwood Lakes** on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April at 2pm. This is at Peaslake Road, Ewhurst, GU8 7NT, 7 miles SW of Dorking. From A25 follow signs for Peaslake, garden half a mile beyond Peaslake on Ewhurst Road. This is a fourteen acre landscaped garden in a stunning position high in the Surrey Hills with four lakes and a bog garden. Extensive rhododendrons, azaleas and fine trees, with a large lakeside arboretum.

Unfortunately dogs are not welcome.

The cost is £15, payable on the day, which includes refreshments.

This is a private visit so if you wish to join this outing please contact **Sue Glover.** [sue.192@live.co.uk] 07810117140.

Sadly the trip to **Timberhill** in February had to be cancelled as it had rained so much that week that the paths were too slippery and dangerous, but hopefully the outing to **Vann** on the 25<sup>th</sup> March will be taking place, and I will report on it here.

Small Ad: Free **Flax plants in pots**, reddish orange flowers. [janhobday@hotmail.com](mailto:janhobday@hotmail.com)

If you receive any letters in large [A4] sized envelopes, please would you open them carefully along the top and save them for Steve and Pat, who use them for distributing the newsletters to road reps.

Your £5 sub is due at the end of March. If you have a road rep they will be calling to collect it and give you a new card. [Please have your £5 ready!] Or you can pay by bank transfer to the EGS account: Lloyds Bank, Epsom Garden Society, sort code 30-93-08, account 00359728.

Please delete the previous Steve Roebuck account ending in 4786. Also, please email **Steve** on [epsomgarden1932@gmail.com](mailto:epsomgarden1932@gmail.com) to let him know that you have paid this way. Your card will be delivered or posted in due course.

Good news! **Cathy Flitter** and **Kim Shrosbree** have agreed to share the Chairman's job between them. They can still do their present jobs for the Society at the same time. Many thanks to them!

When **Steve** heard this he said 'Not so much a Chairman, more a settee!'

Your membership now includes affiliate membership to the **Tender Shoots online gardening club** who offer gardening talks and events during the autumn and winter months via Zoom. Recently, talks have included such subjects as 'Peonies' and 'Snowdrops', and many talks are recorded so members can access them any time. If you would like access to their site, please email [kimshros@gmail.com](mailto:kimshros@gmail.com) and she can add you to our membership.

On Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February **Cherrill Sands** gave us a lovely talk about '**Gertrude Jekyll**'. **Gertrude** was one of six children, sandwiched between two sets of brothers. They were all clever and artistic, and she was a bit of a tomboy and liked to climb trees. Her father was interested in firework construction as a hobby, so **Gertrude** liked to experiment with the gunpowder! She was always making things and excelled at everything she tried. She was allowed to go to Art School where, amongst other things, she studied colour theory, which later was useful in her garden planting designs. She like to collect small items such

as fragments of embroidery for ideas and fruit stones that she would plant and try to grow, such as a particularly tasty date pit.

After her father's death her mother moved to *Munstead House*, which would be eventually inherited by her oldest brother, so they bought *Munstead Wood* for **Gertrude**. At first there was no house there, but happily she met young **Edwyn Lutyens**.

Things didn't go too well at their first meeting as **Gertrude** wore a dark interview type dress and a severe hat and didn't say anything, but on the next occasion she wore a more becoming blue dress that showed her ankles [!], and they chatted away and they became great friends.

**Gertrude's** brother **Herbert** introduced the young architect to lots of his friends who became his first clients, and **Gertrude** asked him to design a house for herself at Munstead Wood. She wanted an owl house to be included in the roof, this was a narrow window slot with a box behind, and she was thrilled when an owl moved in!

The *National Trust* have now bought the property and are preparing to open it. The white lilies have been replaced with white foxgloves due to cost, but the effect is lovely. The very top corner of the wood had already been sold off for housing, but the *Thunder House* is still there, you can see the top of it above the fence. This isn't what you might think, but a structure to shelter you from the rain while you are watching thunder storms.

**Gertrude** always liked to garden at her family's properties, while she was always busy making things. She met **John Ruskin** and **William Morris** who encouraged her to take up embroidery. She was involved in the Women's Suffrage movement and made a beautiful embroidered banner for it when she became Vice-Chairman of the society. This can be seen at *Godalming Museum*.

Encouraged by **Lutyens**, who wanted one for his children, she wrote a book 'Children and Gardens'. This was a surprising success, as although she had never wanted children herself, she remembered what it was like being one, and wrote with a sense of humour, such as 'best place for shoes and stockings is on a bench near where you are playing!'

She and **Lutyens** made a great partnership with him designing the houses and she arranging the gardens. She grew lots of the plants for these herself in greenhouses that **Lutyens** designed and had built for her. Altogether she designed about four hundred gardens, and many of the plans can still be seen at Godalming Museum. Several plants were named after her, amongst them a primrose variety and a white *Nigella* called Miss Jekyll. She also designed a special trough basket for picking long stemmed flowers for arranging so that their stems wouldn't be bent.

There were surprisingly modern features to her house, such as a store room that had a roof garden planted with sedums. [Surreygardenstrust.org.uk](http://Surreygardenstrust.org.uk) have plans of gardens that she made in Surrey. Her house has a long border, 200' in length, starting with pastel colours at each end with complementary colours next to each other, building up to hotter colours in the centre. There is always a little white planted amongst the hotter colours to contrast, as **Gertrude** noticed that this was what **Turner** did in his paintings,

You can still visit a Jekyll garden in Hampshire: *The Manor House, Upton Grey* is the only restored wild garden that she made still existing. There are the same roses growing in the wild section as in the formal garden but pruned differently. The present owner, **Ros Wallinger**, preserves it all and is full of knowledge. She uses the plants from the plan, sometimes descendants of the originals. When she had to move the seats as repairs were made, she found that the original placings of them were exactly the right situation for them. There is also an authentic Jekyll water garden at **Vann** with original plants or descendants of.

Gertrude was pleased to do the planting at the *Phillips Memorial Park* in Godalming. He was the chief telegraph officer on the Titanic, aged only 25, and stayed at his post still transmitting as the ship sank. She probably felt sympathy as one of her brothers also drowned when he was young. From this came work for the war graves commission, where Gertrude designed a strip of planting across the front of the graves so that each soldier would have a little piece of an English garden of their own.

She also designed the garden for Queen Mary's dolls house at Windsor, but by then her eye-sight was failing and someone else actually made it.

There is a painting of **Gertrude** in old age wearing black with a white lace bonnet, but she was so impatient to get on with things that she wouldn't sit still for long, so the artist made another painting of her gardening boots at the same time! *Thanks Cherrill, a lovely talk!*

*Best wishes Margaret*