



Epsom Garden Society: June 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

On the 15th June at 2pm **Sue Glover** had arranged a visit to **Hinton Ampner**, near Alresford, but unfortunately this trip has had to be cancelled as not enough people were keen to go. However, don't forget we have a trip to Margaret Arnott's Heathside garden in Cobham on 19th June - lifts are available if you don't drive but you must tell Sue Glover (sue.192@live.co.uk) if you wish to go.

On Tuesday 11th June we are invited to buy a ticket for £25 to attend a **Bonsai Demonstration** and enjoy a **Traditional Afternoon Tea** in aid of St Catherine's Hospice. This will be held at Herons Bonsai Nursery, Wire Mill Lane, Newchapel, Felbridge RH7 6HJ. Tickets from **Christine**, 01342 842764. christine@themankelows.co.uk.

On the 19th June our meeting at Epsom Sports Club at 10.15am will be a **Flower Arranging Workshop** with **Margaret Trepant**, our Show judge. More wonderful ideas for simple flower arrangements with big impact. A number of people entered the Show for the first time after her inspiring workshop last year. If you want to join the workshop please tell **Cathy**, 07821 277708, or catherine.flitter2@ntlworld.com. If not, please just come along to watch. **Margaret** is kindly donating her arrangements as raffle prizes.

Guildford in Bloom are holding their **Blooming Picnic** on Saturday 1st June in Guildford Castle grounds. Gates open at 12noon and there will be live music until 4pm. Bring your own picnic, but there will be tea, coffee, cakes, ice cream and Pimm's to purchase. Bring chairs or a rug, but no tables or gazebos please. There will be various stalls too. Dogs on leads welcome, but it might be a bit noisy for them.

Bookham and **Shere** are both organising open gardens on Sunday 23rd June, for information email www.bookhamopengardens.co.uk, and Shere is from 2pm until 6, free parking and I am sure it will be signposted.

On Wednesday 24th April the **Open Gardens Group** visited **Coverwood Lakes** in Peaslake. Despite not all the rhododendrons being in full bloom the gardens looked really beautiful. We spent quite a long time meandering round the landscaped lakes, enjoyed a cake break, and then walked around the garden area which had interesting trees. The handkerchief tree was just starting to flutter its handkerchiefs, and there was a redwood and lots of spring shrubs. We were all pleased to recognise erythroniums, and told each other what they were. **Sara** was very generous with her cakes as there had been lots left from the cold weekend just before, when fewer visitors than expected turned up. We were encouraged to help ourselves to seconds and to take some home for those who couldn't come. One gentleman was heard to say that it was the best cake he had been to! My favourite part was at the end when we watched the lambs skipping about in the field, and **Sara** showed us their cows. One had just had twins, a boy and a girl, and we all thought that sounded lovely, but were told no, as the female had been exposed to male hormones in the womb she would not develop properly and would be infertile, called a freemartin. She would not be able to join the herd. None of us had heard of this before and were very interested. It doesn't happen with sheep, or people, thank goodness.

Back on 17th April **Barry Newman** gave us an expert talk about '**Veg Growing, Ideas and Advice.**' He really knew all about it, and is the Vice Chair of the RHS Fruit and Veg panel and a Britain in Bloom judge. He recommends new seed each year, essential for parsnips as they don't keep. But he couldn't recommend a variety of peat free compost as they seem to keep changing their formulation. Pots with cells are good because you don't disturb the roots when you tip the seedlings out to plant. Root training pots are great for sweet peas, runner beans and bigger seeds, **Barry** asks for those for a present now if anyone wonders what he would like.

Aquadulce used to be the favoured broad bean variety that you planted in Autumn. This just meant that they were decimated by mice and knocked over by strong winds, so advice has changed. **Imperial Long Pod** or **Masterpiece** are recommended, plant in Spring, with the seeds pushed down on their edge, so they don't rot. Heating a greenhouse is very expensive, but to start a few special tomatoes you could use a polystyrene box to even out the heat, and this would be clean enough to go in the airing cupboard. Do keep checking if they have started growing though.

Barry has given up on wooden borders for his raised beds, they seem to rot after just a few years. Now he has replaced them with concrete gravel boards, and thinks they will see him out. Keep any lengths of drain pipes to cover rows of planted seeds. This will keep the soil moist and the temperature even. For **carrots** and **parsnips** he pushes a broom handle in 4/5 inches, then refills the hole with sieved soil, and pushes two seeds in each one. Don't pull out the spare one or you will disturb the roots of the one you want to keep, just cut through the stem with scissors.

Ideally, cover quarter of your plot with organic matter before Christmas, ¾ " deep, and cover with weed suppression. Garden Centres don't look after vegetables very well, so best to buy them when they newly come in and look after them yourself, if you have room, before they suffer from neglect. **Brussels Sprouts** are on sale now, but you won't need them for two months. Look after them yourself and plant on firmly at the right time with a boot print to stop them rocking about, and to act as a water reservoir. They will need a stake.

Barry grows **perpetual beet spinach** rather than actual spinach which is inclined to run to seed. The perpetual one can be used and cut back about three times, after a nitrogen feed. We were all surprised to hear that **Gardeners Delight Tomatoes** have lost their RHS recommendation. Apparently the seed companies were not being vigilant about the quality. **Barry** likes **Sungold**. **Beetroot** is a swollen stem rather than a root crop, so you can transplant it. Harvest half at ping pong ball size for salads and leave the rest to grow to tennis ball size for pickling. You can earth these up to keep the tops tender.

Plant **leeks** in a pot and pot on into a 6x4" seed tray. When you are ready to plant out, hold them in a bunch and cut off the roots 1" from the base and the tops 6" long. Sounds odd, but this increases their vigour. Drop them into a 6" hole and water them so that the soil will fall in around them.

For **shallots 'Hatif de Noir'** is good. Plant in plastic egg trays in November, plant on into 4" pots in a cold greenhouse and then plant out your beautiful shallots in March, every one sprouting and none pulled out by blackbirds.

Barry grows his potatoes in bags standing in a trench. Just re-uses soil, and only one potato per bag. The trench keeps them cooler, above 65 degrees you will get just leaves instead of tubers. At harvest time he just lifts his bags and the potatoes are clean inside. Growing **courgettes** vertically is a good idea. They need 6' to 8' tree stakes banged in, **Venus** and **Defender** are good subjects. As soon as they start to run, gently tie to the stake. Lower leaves might go a bit yellow, but just cut them off. Keep water off the leaves to avoid mildew. Keeps the slugs off too.

Last year **Barry** grew **Oregon sugar snap peas** with white flowers and **Shiraz**, that has dark pods and purple flowers, both together in his herbaceous border, and they looked lovely.

Hannamex tunnels keep out wind and sun, cats and dogs, but to keep out caterpillars you need butterfly mesh. Enviromesh thermal blankets can be kept pristine if you put them through the washing machine [when your wife is out]. Vitax Q4 is good fertiliser, but get the powdered one, 'prilled' needs rain to break it down. Comfrey was used as a border for all allotments as it makes excellent liquid food. **Barry** says better to feed dilute feed every watering rather than too much every now and then. *Now we know how the expert does it!*

Still enjoying old newsletters, back in 1997 we were all worried because *Seymours Garden Centre* was closing. I remember us all waiting in the queue to pay wondering when the bargains would start. The lady behind the till laughed and said '**Mr Seymour** has never given anybody anything in his whole life, he is not going to start now!'

Canon Ellacombe, always full of sound advice, must have been enjoying a good lunch with a bowl of roses on his dining table back in June 1871 when he wrote 'is there any other month in the year that can show such a delightful triplet as we have now - roses, strawberries and green peas?'

Best wishes Margaret