



## Epsom Garden Society: August and September 2024

Newsletter: Margaret Haslam 07761 976764, 3 Elm Grove Epsom KT18 7LZ  
Membership Secretary and Newsletter Distribution: Steve Roebuck 0208 394 2168

*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)*

If you usually receive a paper copy of the newsletter and would like a paper copy of the Show Schedule, please let **Steve** know and he will print one for you, 0208 394 2168. That will save printing lots of them if they are not needed. It is also on our website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/epsomgardensociety/>

**On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup>** August we will be holding our annual **Garden and Craft Show** at St Martin's Junior School from 2 -4pm. Do have a look at the new schedule which you will find on our website. There are a wide selection of categories to choose from, Flowers, Fruit, Vegetables, Photography, Craft, Cookery and Flower Arranging. Hopefully you will find something that appeals to you, and there is no need to be an expert to have a go. Entries are just 20p per category and should be sent [preferably by email [catherine.flitter2@ntlworld.com](mailto:catherine.flitter2@ntlworld.com) or message 07821277708] to Cathy by 6pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August. Cathy will acknowledge all entries with further information on how to enter, but if you want more advice please do not hesitate to ask.

Even if you don't enter, please do support us by lending a hand on Friday from 6pm to set up, or on Saturday to clear up. We also need volunteers to help with various roles on the day. The Show will open at 2pm, so please come along to admire the exhibits and enjoy the excellent refreshments. There will also be a raffle and a plant stall.

On July 20<sup>th</sup> **Margaret Trepant** gave us another expert flower arranging session. Oasis foam has suddenly fallen out of favour as it never breaks down. **Margaret** had an interesting flower holder that was five pieces of wire fixed in a circle on a base, with each one finished with a little spiral at the top where the flower could fit. Probably dating from the 1920s and found in a charity shop.

**Margaret** had lots of ideas of other ways of supporting flowers which were tried out. Sellotape simply criss-crossed on top of the container was easy, but the flowers might slip sideways at first until more go in and the stems lock together. For a small container you can just put a scrunched up ball of sellotape in the top, and arrange the flowers around it.

A substitute for oasis has been invented called Agrowool. This is made of rock and will eventually crumble into soil. To stop it doing this before you want it to, it has to be bound round with string, and even then it can irritate your skin and make you cough.

**Margaret** likes to use chicken wire. Everyone was trying the technique, which is to cut the wire one and a half times the height of your container, roll into a cylinder and then fold both ends over. Fit this inside your vase. Remove any leaves that would be below water level as they will rot, and make sure that all the stems are in the water. If you want a piece to overhang the edge choose one that is naturally bent, because it will quickly die if the end isn't in the water.

**Margaret's** arrangement was a triangular shape of purple leaves, with smaller pieces filling in at the back so it looked nice and full, and then beautiful orange roses with their stems cut at an angle amongst them. The angle cut is so that they can draw up the water, even if they are touching the bottom of the vase. Some one asked if they should bash the stems, but this might cause disease. Best to put the first few stems round the edge, if they are crossed in the middle it is hard to fit later ones in. She added some sprays of small white flowers, *Stephanandra*, and some *Alstromeria* with flowers that were orange and red.

Everyone who was going to make an arrangement started cutting chicken wire and getting ready, and conversations broke out all over the hall, so I couldn't hear the words of advice and encouragement that **Margaret** was giving everyone. Finally seven lovely arrangements were produced, and the people who had made them stood behind each one for a photo. *That was a very jolly morning.*

On Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> July we are having our **Summer Display and Plant Sale**, from 10.30am, please bring along anything from your garden that you are particularly proud of to 'display' and any plants for the sale table would be welcomed. An opportunity for a nice social time.

On August 21<sup>st</sup> **Paul Patton** will be giving ideas to extend the flowering season with '**Autumn Aspirations- planning for the Autumn Garden.**' £2 for members, £3 for non-members. Free raffle, tea and biscuits. 10.15am at Epsom Sports Club, KT18 7QN, raffle prizes please.

September 25<sup>th</sup> we will have our **Autumn Display and Plant Sale** from 10.30am.

I have been reading a fascinating book by **Bob Gilbert** about '*The Missing Musk*'. All the mimulus plants in the world used so smell so beautifully that one pot would scent a whole room, and it was given the name *Mimulus moschatus* because of this. But nowadays it doesn't smell of anything at all and has completely gone out of favour. **Bob** wondered what had happened to the fragrance suddenly back in 1913. He checked in all his plant books and they all had descriptions of its once vaunted fragrance, followed by the puzzling word 'former'.

The seeds were introduced by **David Douglas**, who had been travelling in remote, rugged regions of North West America. During the three years he spent there he coped with the constant presence of bears, with hunger and cold, occasional hostility of the native peoples, with icy winds and freezing rivers that he sometimes had to swim to cross.

Rather hard to think where some of our plants have come from when we are contemplating our cosy contemporary gardens with shrubs and summer bedding and neatly mown lawns, while sitting in comfy garden chairs listening to '*Gardeners Question Time*'. This all makes it hard for us to imagine the courage of the early plant collectors.

**Douglas** brought back 254 new plants to this country, amongst them *Garrya elliptica*, with its long silver catkins, the flowering currant, the snowberry [wish he hadn't] yellow stemmed dogwood, also *Nemophila*, [baby blue eyes], **Bob** was given a packet of seeds for these at a Christening, also trees, Douglas Fir, named after himself. Amongst all these, almost overlooked, were the *Mimulus* seeds. He said he had enjoyed a most gratifying trip.

Unfortunately on his next trip, to Hawaii, he fell into an animal trap where a bullock had already fallen, and was gored to death before anyone heard his cries, [or was murdered and pushed in by a jealous husband in love rivalry, because his collecting bag was some distance away, and the bullock's horns were old and blunt, although it was true he had been trampled.]

By 1898 people began to notice that the plant had lost its scent and seedlings raised from seed were completely scentless. There were letters to the newspapers. This was gradually happening over a thirty year period, but it seemed more dramatic to tie it in with the war.

**Bob** thought he would grow some for himself, and sent away to China for seeds on ebay. The packet looked amazing with not only the red spotted yellow flowers but other really bright improbable colours with peculiar colour combinations for the dots. The packet seemed to be empty, but **Bob** sprinkled it over a pot of compost hopefully, but nothing came up. The Chinese had hedged their bets with the instructions: 'Perennial herb, annual biannual herb, 25/35 cm height, caudex sturdy, funnel form, suitable to garden, resistant cool weather but can not be freezing injury. Like moist, sunny.' That should cover everything!

Next **Bob** thought he would find other plants with *moschata* in their name so that he could find out what the lovely scent was supposed to be like. One is a rose, and Kew have a wonderful rose garden behind their Palm House, all beautifully labelled, so he went there and studied every one until he found it in bed 171-12, the very last bed he came to. Rather an unassuming plant with five white single petals to each flower, and yellow projecting stamens in a bunch in the centre. It smelt lovely, tangy and spicy with a hint of cinnamon and nutmeg.

As an experiment he thought he would ask the next ten passers-by to smell the rose and give their own description. What this confirmed was that the general public were perfectly willing to take part in eccentric activities requested by a complete stranger! However nobody really took off on a flight of descriptive fantasy, most just said 'Nice' or 'Pleasant', one slightly more imaginative said 'Citrusy' and 'Sandalwood' but no-one said musky. Eventually experts surmised that the original plant as collected was unscented, but from the seeds grown on an unusual aberrant scented form arose, and as these died off their seedlings were unscented. *Good Book!*

Small Ad.: **Honda Rotary petrol Mower HR173** to give away. Unused for eighteen years, but regularly serviced up until then. New owner to collect. [cjstein17@gmail.com](mailto:cjstein17@gmail.com). *Best wishes Margaret*