 **Epsom Garden Society: November 2022**

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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*

**On the 21st November we will have our AGM at 8pm,** at St Barnabas Church Hall, Temple Road, Epsom. The business part to discuss is:

1. Chairman's Report
2. Treasurer's Report
3. Membership Secretary's Report
4. Show and Meeting Secretary's Report
5. Open Garden Society Report
6. Election of Officers and Committee, please send all nominations for the Committee to our Hon. Chairman **Isabella Glanville-Taylor,** email wgt@gmx.co.uk by 1st November.
7. Any other Business, including membership fees.

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.

In September our talk from **Russell Bowes** had to be cancelled because it was the day of the **Queen's** funeral. Luckily he will be able to come in the new year and tell us about ***' The Devil's Garden'*** then.

I was wondering what to write about here, but this week happens to be National Tree Week, and Epsom Library invited author **Paul Wood** to give a talk about '**Street trees in London.'** Apt name. The history of tree managers goes back further than you might think. The Romans called them 'Arborators', and they organised the planting of trees to shade the armies as they marched. Descendants of the trees planted on the Appian Way are still there, and are ***Stone Pines,*** which won't grow here.

There is a lovely painting from the Netherlands by **Meindert Hobbema** of a country road with tall trees either side, from 1680, that **Paul** had to study at art college as the perspective was so well done. The trees have all their lower branches trimmed off to leave a sort of pom-pom of foliage on the top. This sort of pruning is called 'shredding.' It was only as he was looking at it again in preparing his talk that he noticed a tree nursery in the field at the front right.

When **Haussmann** was re-designing Paris he arranged for plane trees to be planted on Montmartre for shade, and the idea was so successful that plane trees were planted here in Berkeley Square in 1790.

Plane trees are a very good choice as a city tree because their large leaves are good for shade and they absorb pollutants and provide homes for wild-life. They are actually a hybrid between oriental plane trees and a western sycamore, first grown in Spain. Hybrids grow faster and taller than either parent. It is only called London Plane because so many have been planted here. An enormous one is growing in Barnes, over 30 meters tall and affectionately known as 'Barney' by the locals. Possibly London's oldest plane tree is growing on the corner of Cheapside and Wood Street. Buildings next to it have not been rebuilt taller to match their neighbours as the tree is filling the space, and ***Wordsworth*** featured this tree in a poem. **Bazalgette's** Embankment was planted with them when it was first built, and started a craze with builders planting them along the streets in new developments to make them look aspirational. Muswell Hill is famous for this.

Pollarding keeps them in shape and seems to make them live longer, and makes lovely sculptural shapes during the winter. London is really an urban arboretum because the buildings hold the heat of the day overnight and the temperature can be 10% warmer than the suburbs. So unusual trees can be grown such as the ***Nettle Tree.***This won't sting you, it is related to elms, but its nearest relatives grow in the south of France. Actually a member of the audience told us there is one growing in Chadacre Road in Epsom too. Another unusual tree is the ***Judas Tree*** with wonderful purple flowers in the Spring and heart shaped leaves. ***Clerodendron trichotomum*** is growing well in the City and puzzling passers-by with its scent of peanut butter. ***Lime trees*** are out of favour because the sticky honey dew they exude messes up parked cars. ***Handkerchief trees*** can be found, but are uncommon as they are rather expensive. ***Tulip trees*** grow well and are related to magnolias. The flowers smell of American cream soda. ***Gingko*** and ***winter*** ***flowering cherry*** do well. This year they seem to be rather confused as the flowers have opened before the leaves have fallen. They usually open in November.

In 1922 **Ada Salter** was made Mayor of Bermondsey, which was rather a run down slum area at the time. She wanted to cheer the place up and formed the Beautification Committee, who planted seven thousand trees before the second world war. Unfortunately for us the tree they chose was ***Ailanthus altissima, t***he ***Tree-of Heaven,*** which has become very invasive. It spreads by both seeds and suckers. Strangely it doesn't spread in Manchester, where there are also a lot, or in **Ada'**s time. Maybe the warmer temperature in London now has changed it's habit. You can still see where Bermondsey was before it was assimilated into neighbouring boroughs, by the trees growing there.

In 1961 **Harold Dygo** noticed that ***Planes and Horse Chestnuts*** adorned the mansions of the rich, the middling sort enjoyed ***limes, laburnums and acacias,*** while workers could put up with unadorned ***tarmacadam.***

There are some very old oaks in Ealing. One is even growing in the middle of the road, although on its own little island, and with the indignity of white paint on one side to prevent night time collisions. It is named the **Elephant Tree** because back in Victorian times an elephant walking with the Circus to Ealing Common suddenly died and was buried there. The tree apparently was planted to mark the spot. This can't really be true because the tree is much older, but it is a lovely folk memory. Another explanation is that the whole thing was made up by an estate agent who wanted Ealing to sound more interesting.

Our old friend **John Evelyn,** who often seems to appear on this page, wrote in 1700: *'Men seldom Plant trees till they begin to be wise, that is till they grow Old, and find by Experience the Prudence and Necessity of it.'*

Insurers have begun demanding that trees should be removed to prevent subsidence, where often the cause is inadequate foundations on clay soil. ***Epsom Council*** have also got cold feet about this and won't spend money on planting street trees in case they cause the pavement to buckle up or damage property.

***Plane trees*** have been fine over this hot Summer with their deep roots, but native trees such as ***Rowan*** and ***Crab-apple*** have suffered.

A lady asked about ***Monkey-puzzle trees*** which seem to be out of fashion at the moment. Their hey-day was last in Victorian times, and they may be due a come-back. She was advised not to plant one too close to her house.

This was a lovely talk, and I am so pleased to have something to report on!

Several members of the **Tree Warden Group** were at the meeting and asked us to look at their web-site if we want to know more about them. Find them at ***'Surrey Tree Warden Network.'***

**Gardening jobs now:**

Move tender plants, including aquatic ones, into a greenhouse or conservatory.

Cut back perennials that have died down, although you could leave a few stems over winter to provide homes and food for wild-life.

Divide herbaceous perennials.

Divide established rhubarb crowns to create new plants.

Plant out spring cabbages.

Prune climbing roses, and don't be so keen on dead-heading next year as the hips are so beautiful now.

Finish collecting seeds to sow next year.

Mow lawns and trim hedges.

Renovate old lawns or create new grass areas by laying turf.

**Nick Hornby** writes: Two scientists working at ***Exeter University*** studying the mating strategies of crickets have discovered, according to the *Economist,* that 'small males ….could overcome the handicap of their stature and win mates by prodigious chirping.' In other words, being the lead singer works for the nerdy and the disadvantaged in other species, too.

*Best wishes Margaret*