



Epsom Garden Society: February 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

Our **Quiz and Sociable Mulled Wine and Mince Pie** evening last December was created and presented by **Kim Shrosbree**. Many of us were clever enough to know that tulips were first cultivated in Turkey and some of us knew that the role of a drone is to mate with the queen, however we were not so sure that it is pigeon poo that has the highest percentage nitrogen content! The proud joint winners were **Cathy Flitter** and **Eileen Dann**, and we all enjoyed mince pies and mulled wine. Thanks to **Kim**, and **Tom Pope** for his expert technical skills.

On Wednesday 17th January **Emma Ward** came to talk about '**Garden and Nature Photography**'. **Emma** had done a course at Sutton College to acquire formal qualifications for photography, and gave us hints and tips to encourage us to enter the show. She showed us photos that she had taken, a cute harvest mouse and a quizzical fox and some lovely flowers.

A camera can just be your mobile phone, you don't need super-duper equipment, lighting can just be the sun. If you need a tripod to keep your camera steady, they can be bought for mobile phones, but you could possibly use a nearby wall or tree branch. If you have a camera you can buy different lenses for special uses, macro for really close up shots, and telephoto for far away. You will need some means to store and present your photos too.

Emma had ideas for composing pictures, always with the subject in the centre can be rather boring, although good for something like a dahlia with neat petal arrangements. Think about the rule of thirds, which is mentally dividing your frame into nine squares, three across and three down. The intersections of the squares make good focal points. **Emma** showed us a photo of a dog in the bottom two squares on the right with his nose on the focal point, and the wilderness spread out over the rest of the photo, and it certainly was very good, better than if he had just been close up. Another one was a beach scene with the horizon and an island two thirds of the way up the photo, and a little boy playing with his dog in the bottom square on the left. Somehow this showed the huge beach where they were playing better than a close up photo would have done.

Also think about leading lines. A winding path leads your eye into the picture, and a photo of stone steps taken from low down, at Wisley, made you want to know what was at the top.

Framing is another good idea, sometimes you can take a picture through a gap such as a curved branch which will give a natural frame to the subject.

Close-ups, such as a bee on a flower, are better if you can focus on the subject and manage to have the background slightly out of focus so that it doesn't distract. Sometimes though it is interesting to use a long focus, so that you can see the moss on the wall as well as the flowers in the foreground.

Patterns are always interesting, maybe a close up of veins on a leaf rather than the whole shape, and carrots in a bunch with the round shapes of the vegetables contrasting with the ferny tops.

Sometimes including people in your photos will add interest to your garden shots, and it is lovely to see them enjoying it.

Lighting: overcast conditions will give more 'true to life' colours, but you can also take interesting photos at different times of day. Low lying sun will give golden effects, and clouds will give shadows and diffused light. The first hour after sunrise and final hour before sunset have a softer, warmer feel. Emma showed us a lovely photo of Scotney Castle early in the morning with a pale golden sky reflected in the lake, with a slight mist on the water. Also the first hour before sunrise, the blue hour, has its own possibilities, cooler light, stronger lines and darker shadows.

Artificial light? Emma showed us an LED panel that had been her Christmas present. The light was very strong from such a small device, just the size of a mobile phone, and could even be changed to different colours. A picture of toadstools with natural light was perfectly nice and in focus, but the same scene with

LED light to one side was really dramatic. If you are using flash be careful that it doesn't bleach out your subject, and don't use flash to take photos of wild-life or they will be scared away.

Emma had hints about wild-life photography. Get down to your subjects eye-level, and don't use flash, don't put yourself or them at risk. Think about the background and watch out for interesting behaviour, a cat hissing or a bee taking nectar for instance. Most of all, be patient. We asked, what about birds who fly away the moment you have got organised? Maybe take a burst of photos and hope one of them has caught the shot you want, or a sports setting to catch the action. Or even just guess which way they will go and have your camera lined up slightly ahead. Photos through glass are tricky, sometimes cameras focus on the glass rather than the bird feeder on the other side. You could try putting the camera up against the glass and turn off the lights in the room.

Cropping: take the photo to the highest specification you can, and if you are using editing tricks it is a good idea to keep a copy of the original so you can see what you have done, and make notes so that you will remember how you did it! You can sign up for free trials of some editing packages.

If you are taking a photo of a group of friends, have the light at an angle behind you so that they are not screwing up their eyes, and watch out for your shadow spoiling the shot.

The prize winning photo of the dormouse was taken at Lingfield wild-life centre. He sat still for ages! The group of photographers were warned to be ready for him to look up in a moment as he was being fed.

Emma took 200 photos at the time! Foxes are always tricky as they run off when they see you. For brighter colours you are best to get your photos professionally printed.

Thanks **Emma**, we all learnt a lot!

On Wednesday 28th February at 10.15am at the Sports Club **Cherrill Sands**, our favourite garden historian, will be returning to give us an insight into the remarkable **Gertrude Jekyll**. Today we know her mainly as a garden designer and plantswoman, although she was also a talented artist and photographer. As a key figure in the Arts and Craft Movement she also created designs for embroidery, jewellery, ceramics and wallpaper. This talk explores her designs, planting plans and some surviving gardens.

There will be a raffle at this meeting, please bring anything suitable for a prize.

On Wednesday 20th March at 10.15am we will be holding a **Spring Display, Plant Sale and Seed Swap** at the Sports Club next to the Hospital. Please bring along anything you are particularly proud of in the garden, be it a pot of narcissi or some beautiful stems of flowering shrub, or even an arrangement evoking Spring. Also anything for a plant sale and Seed Swap, all contributions very welcome!

No raffle this time.

On Wednesday 17th April at 10.15am **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.

Sue Glover has arranged lots of garden visits for us to enjoy. The first one is on the 22nd February when we are invited to Timberhill, Chertsey Road, Chobham GU24 8JF at 11.30am to admire their snowdrops and crocuses. After a stroll around the 16 acre garden we will enjoy refreshments and a warm fire in the barn. £12 payable on the day including the refreshments. Dogs permitted on leads. Make your own way there, or **Sue** will arrange car sharing if you need or can offer a lift to anyone. Let **Sue** know if you would like to come, sue.192@live.co.uk. 07810117140.

Alert! We have to watch out for Asian Hornets, which are a highly aggressive predator of our native insects, such as honey bees and other pollinators. It has a dark brown or black velvety body, one yellow stripe round the abdomen and legs with yellow tips like stockings. Spreading rapidly in France. **Cathy** was badly stung by one last summer. Don't disturb an active nest, but take a photo and send it online to www.nonnativespecies.org/alerts/asianhornet, or email alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk.

On Saturday 24th February at 2pm Charlie Dimmock, will be giving a talk Banstead Horticultural Society on "Ponds, Water Features and behind the scenes of the TV Shows". The event is at Banstead Community Hall, Park Road, Banstead SM7 3AJ. Tickets are £17.50 from Banstead Library or online at www.bansteadhorticulturalsociety.com. Or email Kim kimshros@gmail.com to arrange tickets for you.

Best wishes Margaret