



## An apple a day...

Don't forget our popular Apple weekend, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> October returns this year. We are delighted to be hosting this free event, 'A celebration of the English apple'. Check posters or our web site ([www.hedging.co.uk/apple\\_day.html](http://www.hedging.co.uk/apple_day.html)) for the full programme, but please do come along, there will be plenty to see for the whole family.

## Welcome

**Michael Easom:** "May I take this opportunity to introduce myself, Michael Easom, as Buckingham Garden Centre's newly appointed Plant Area Manager. I have received a warm and supportive welcome from all my colleagues and customers - thank you."

**About Mike:** A keen gardener from an early age, Mike was taught first by his father and his adopted grandfather, Alf, in the principles of horticulture. After college, Mike worked for Reuben Shaw's Garden Centre (in Nottinghamshire), reaching the role of Assistant Nursery Manager.

A move south to Northampton with his wife, the commute was too much so Mike changed to a growing role with Youngs Nurseries in Blisworth and working as the Assistant Manager outside on the plant area; Mike felt very much at home again.

Mike says: "As a Grower I have experience in plant health and quality and I have learnt that soil preparation, the right balance of soil/compost/organic matter, position, watering, feed and understanding your purchase are the most important principles we should follow."

Mike continues: "Throughout my career I have built and expanded my knowledge through education and experience, which I believe, is important in gaining a good understanding of the plant area and the garden centre business."

**Rachel De Cann:** "I knew when I walked in the front door of Buckingham Garden Centre that this is where I was going to be happy, the team is great and the opportunities for me to develop are fantastic. I look forward to all challenges and hope that we can all be successful together", enthuses new Shop Manager, Rachel De Caan.

About Rachel: After graduating with a HND in Horticulture in 1995 from Askham Bryan Agricultural College she then gained a BSc with Honours in 1996. Shortly after graduation Rachel was offered the role of Plant Manager at William Strikes Garden Centre and after two years, Rachel gained the position of Assistant Manager.

A career change at the age of 26 took Rachel on a journey to a stock controller, a global logistics role. However she soon returned to the fold, where she felt happiest - working with plants, with the position of Garden Centre Manager for CDS superstores, in Doncaster. This she did for over two years before moving south to join Blooms Garden Centre in Bicester. Rachel was involved in the buying and merchandising of the new shop development and continued in this role for over three years before joining us.

## National Conifer Week and Plant of the Month

"Conifers offer such a wide range of colours, forms, structure and shape, it's difficult to see how gardeners cannot live without them in their gardens", says Buckingham Garden Centre's Chris Day.

"They are so versatile, dwarf more compact forms work well with so many shrubs, small trees, grasses and perennials. I feel they are best used in mixed borders where their virtues can be emphasised, drama created and eye-catching displays developed. Conifers,

especially the blue Boulevard, golden Goldcrest and conical Picea albertiana look fantastic in pots, specially when planted with ericas, mini cyclamen and violas," added Chris.

Conifers in all their guises will feature as the Plant of the Month, while National Conifer Week will run from the 3-11 October. At the Garden Centre we shall be demonstrating how best to use conifers in plant associations, so you can easily re-create the display (some or all of it) in your own garden.

For more details on this nationwide event, please go to [www.conifers.org.uk](http://www.conifers.org.uk)

## **Kathy Brown garden visit**

Over 20 Garden Centre customers discovered the treasure-trove garden belonging to Kathy Brown, writes Chris Day.

The sun shone, the birds sung, the plants gently waved in the light breeze and as one customer amusingly suggested, all we need is a murder! Why? Well, we were in a village, not too dissimilar to the one used in the filming of ITV's popular Midsomer Murders and we were at a lovely Manor House set in a fantastic garden. This four and half acre garden is truly stunning and its one you really do need to see as photographs and fancy words cannot give it the full credit it richly deserves.



**Kathy Brown explains the history surrounding the house and garden**

The garden, set in the picturesque village of Stevington, near Bedford, belongs to Kathy and her husband Simon, who between them weed (Kathy's key task), prune, chop and mow to keep the garden pristine. Kathy admits to 'getting some help in' when it comes to new planting projects, but their labour of love delights the thousands of visitors who arrive. The last time I visited was over seven years ago. I was working on a water gardening magazine at the time and we did a whole day's photography using mist machines coupled with Kathy's creative plantings for our cover story.

Today the garden has changed; it's matured and has become more diverse in naturalistic plantings and its

new structure. Art and artists have helped move the garden in different directions with plantings and interpretation working closely together. Modern art is a bit of a 'Marmite' thing, you either love it, or hate it, but in a garden setting it does take a life of its own, especially when you understand the thinking behind it.

There are some 20 areas of interest within this 20 year old garden, including the Hokusai Border, where Kathy has used different layers of spectacular grasses (at our time of visiting in mid-September), in a curved display to create and represent Hokusai's 'great wave'.

Ornamental grasses feature effectively as do traditional shrubs, topiary, wisteria, cottage garden plants, cannas, herbs, eucalyptus, apple orchards, they all work so well together, and I think this is why we all enjoyed the visit. I heard a couple of comments saying how 'do-able' Kathy Brown's garden is, and that I suspect this is why we all can relate to its vastness yet simplicity. This dreamy garden is full of surprises, and we all left energized, enthralled and enthused. Job done!

Kathy's Garden will be open again in 2010, to find



**The graceful movement & sound of grasses adds a new dimension to the landscape**

out more, you can visit her website at [kathybrowns-garden.homestead.com](http://kathybrowns-garden.homestead.com)

## **Hocus pocus conjures free planting service!**

This summer has not been particularly kind to many of our seasonal displays in pots and hanging baskets, especially those unseasonal winds in August. Fear not, we've plenty of plant material to revitalize your displays, including winter hardy and flowering pansies and violas, wallflowers, bellis and Sweet William for early colour next spring. Don't forget the primroses, polyanthus and for short-term injections of colour from ornamental cabbages and kales, Miracle cyclamen and winter berries (solanum).

If you don't want to fuss, then do take advantage of our free-planting service offered at The Potting Bench. Simply bring your containers in, and we'll plant them up and all you do is pay for the plants! The compost and our planting creativity comes free! You may want to create a themed display to link in with Halloween at the end of October then we'll have a colourful display of edible pumpkins and squashes to complete your arrangements. These are great for kids to create a pumpkin lantern as well as the essential winter-warming soup.

## **Our Top 10 plants for colour to plant now**

1. Asters (michaelmas daisies)
2. *Ceratostigma plumbagionoides*  
(hardy blue leadwort, pictured)
3. Cineraria (silver leafed)
4. Cyclamen ('Miracle' and the hardy Cyclamen coum)
5. Chrysanthemum ball
6. *Euonymus alatus*  
(winged spindle, pictured)
7. Malus (fruiting crab apples)
8. Winter-flowering pansies
9. Primroses
10. Wallflowers (bare-rooted)



## **New Mail Order Catalogue**

Our new mail order catalogue is now out. You can pick one up from the shop, download it from our web site ([www.hedging.co.uk/acatalog/catalogue.html](http://www.hedging.co.uk/acatalog/catalogue.html)) or request that one is sent to you in the post by calling 01280 827933.

As hedging specialists for so many years it is difficult to introduce new lines every year but this year we have three new lines, but we must admit that only one of these is truly 'new'.

The 'truly new' is [Golden Japanese Euonymus](#), *Euonymus japonicas* *Ovatus Aureus*. This is a plant which has regularly proved popular as a species evergreen shrub for our Garden Centre customers as they are attracted by its bright golden-yellow leaves which mature to dark green with a broad margin of bright gold. Its vigorous, bushy upright habit means it can add a splash of colour in all positions of the garden except full shade where it will lose its bright golden colouration. However, planted about one and half to two foot apart it will make a superb evergreen hedge from four to seven foot high – ideal for many positions in the garden – a screen for the vegetable area, an edging for a patio, a small screen for a swimming pool or the children's play area or many other positions. We expect this will prove a popular addition to the other lower *Euonymus* hedges.

The [\*\*Box-Leaved Holly\*\*](#), *Ilex crenata* Green Hedge, or Japanese Holly, we have re-introduced as many people are wishing to use this if Box blight is a problem in their area. It is similar to Box with glossy, small, dark green leaves, and also bears small black shiny fruits in the autumn. Once established it can be faster growing than Box putting on up to 8 inches (20 cm) of growth a year.

The last item in the hedging section has been introduced as there has been a failure in crop with Yew Brownii. However, we have been able to substitute this with [\*\*Yew Hillii\*\*](#), *Taxus media* Hillii. It works as a pollinator to Hicksii and probably the only difference you will see is that the new foliage does not have the brownish hue that is a feature of Brownii.

Going into the [\*\*ornamental shrubs\*\*](#) section we have four new lines all of which make interesting additions to the garden. The first is an excellent [\*\*Butterfly Bush, Adonis Blue\*\*](#), which does not get so large as the average Butterfly Bush, in fact it is very bushy and only reaches about 4 to 5 ft high with about the same spread. This will mean that those with smaller gardens can introduce this plant whose dark blue flowers really attract butterflies like moths to a light.

For those who like the early flowering Japanese Quince but prefer softer colours to the more usual bright orange, we have included [\*\*Japanese Quince Pink Lady\*\*](#), an easy to grow shrub with beautiful clear pink flower, followed by fruits which ripen to yellow in the autumn. The fruits are smaller and harder than those on Cido, but nevertheless make really tasty jelly. It makes a good wall plant or free standing shrub, and also can be used to form a low flowering hedge of about five foot high.

Our next introduction is a shrub which is not that well known, but really should be as it is truly beautiful and is easy to grow. This is the [\*\*Pearl Bush\*\*](#), *Exochorda macrantha* The Bride. When customers spot its beautiful pearl-like pure white flower buds they are taken back by its beauty and wonder why they have not spotted it before. These buds open up to long lasting white flowers which festoon the arching branches in late spring. It will grow to about five foot high with a similar spread.

Finally for that section there is [\*\*Photinia Curly Fantasy\*\*](#). We expect most of you are now familiar with Photinia Red Robin, and its smaller relative Photinia Little Red Robin, but Photinia Curly Fantasy is a new unusual variation to these. As its name implies the leaves of this plant have curly edges which give an extra interest to this popular colourful shrub. It has the same qualities with the new leaves being bright red but with the extra interest of the curly effect, these turning to bronze then green. Height wise it is in between Red Robin and Little Red Robin reaching a height of about 5 to 6 feet, and it will make an excellent hedge if planted two foot apart.

Into the [\*\*Fruit Section\*\*](#) we have, as usual made a few changes to give our regular customer some extra choice. In the apples we have added three superb [\*\*apple varieties, Bountiful, Crispin\*\*](#) and [\*\*Kidd's Orange Red\*\*](#). Bountiful is the first new cooking apple for over 50 years. It was raised in Kent 1964 then was introduced in Gloucestershire in 1985. It has good disease resistance. It is dual purpose and when cooked the slices just keep shape and are soft, juicy, light and sweet. In late winter it can be eaten as a dessert apple. It is very heavy cropping with green apples which have a slight flush. Its season is from October to January.

[\*\*Crispin\*\*](#) goes by its name as it is crisp, sweet and juicy, similar to Golden Delicious but with a courser texture. It is one of the best keeping eaters for late spring but it also cooks well, keeping its shape and having a sweet, light flavour. The apples are greenish yellow with a slight brownish flush and grey lenticels. Its period of use is from December through to March.

[Kidd's Orange Red](#) is a dessert apple but it is a heavy regular cropper with yellow, heavily flushed red apples. These have sweet, crisp flesh and are very aromatic, mellowing to a wonderful flowery quality. It is one of finest apples for flavour, and was raised in New Zealand in 1924 and introduced to Britain in about 1932. It was awarded the RHS Award of Merit in 1973. Period of use is from October through to February.

We have also added the [dessert plum Avalon](#) as this is an excellent variety with large, round to oval deep red-purple plums. They have a good flavour and are sweet and juicy. It was raised in Kent in 1985 and is partially self-fertile but will crop better with a pollinator. Best eaten in mid-August.

Last year, those with access to our web-site would have found [Cranberry, Early Black](#) listed and many purchased, and we hope enjoyed, the fruit from this plant. It produces very high quality fruit of dark red colour, high in vitamin C. It makes excellent juices, preserves, jams and chutney. It forms a low spreading bush which needs a pH of less than 4.5, and plenty of water as it naturally grows in peat bogs. As it is an attractive plant it is excellent for planting in containers in lime-free soil. It fruits in August.

Similar to the cranberry in the [Lingonberry, Ida](#) which originates from Scandinavia likes similar growing conditions to the cranberry except it does not need to be so wet. It has a very tasty berry which may be produced up to three times a year and the berries are very attractive whilst ripening. Like cranberries they are self-fertile.

It seems that nearly every year a superb new [Raspberry](#) is released which means there really are so many excellent varieties to choose from. This year we have introduced to our range [Glen Doll](#), which apart from its interesting name, is a highly recommended variety which produces globular, bright red, excellent flavoured, firm, high quality fruit which also freeze well. It is a mid to late season variety and is well worth growing.

The [Sundries](#) section of the catalogue has expanded considerably this year as we have introduced a range of products which relate to the plants offered. There is a selection of fertilisers to help feed your plants and a range of traps and products to protect fruit trees from the various pests which can attack them. There are also various growhouses and tunnels to help with the growing of young plants and vegetables. For general use in the garden are the really useful tip bags for collecting garden debris and the hedge sheet for hedge cuttings. All the items introduced have proved very popular with customers who come and visit the Garden Centre hence us now offering them to those who order their plants via our mail order service as well.

## **Chicken Chat**

Keeping your poultry happy on shorter days is straightforward, says Poultry Manager Laura Donovan

As the nights draw in it's time to think about giving your chickens that bit of extra care and attention they will need to keep them happy during the coming months. Not only will the weather be colder and wetter, but your chickens will be more susceptible to hungry predators, disease and stress.

The first change you will notice will be that any chickens that you have which are over one year old will begin their annual moult. This can make your chickens look less than their best as they lose all their old feathers and grow back new ones. Hens will stop laying during this time as all their energy is put into forming the new feathers. It is a good idea from this time onwards to start supplementing your chickens diet with a vitamin supplement such as Poultry Spice, Net-TEX Mineral Powder. This can be administered as a top dressing on their

daily feed or can be fed as a treat sprinkled on wetted bread. Supplementing your chicken's diet will give their digestive and immune system a boost during the stress of having to re-grow all their feathers and be carried on through the winter to help ward off other health issues associated with lower temperatures.

During the coldest nights, or if you keep less hardy breeds, you may want to consider insulating your hen house. You can do this by covering doors and windows with carpet or sheet plastic as this will help keep draughts at bay. Remember to still keep some ventilation near the roof of the coop so, as the warm damp air rises, it has somewhere to be released.

Predators find it increasingly difficult to find food during the colder months and will see your chickens as an easy meal. Do any repairs to your coop well in advance of deep winter and shut your chickens in well before it is dark outside to have the best chance of avoiding a fox attack.

In icy weather water dispensers can freeze. Chickens need access to fresh clean water daily and can become dehydrated very quickly so keeping their water ice free is important. There are a few steps you can take to help with this problem, adding a few drops of cider vinegar to the water will raise the freezing temperature and help it stay ice-free for longer, also taking the water dispenser into a frost free place overnight (such as the house or greenhouse) will stop the water freezing.

The application of a few preventative measures will help your chickens during the winter so they will be happy and healthy to begin laying well again next spring.

### **Grow Your Own: Three first timers' tips**

1. Still time to fill gaps created where crops have been harvested with onion sets suitable for planting now (overwintering) to give an earlier crop in 2010. Onion varieties available include 'Electric', 'Senshyu Yellow' and 'Radar'; Garlic 'Thermidrome', 'Cristo' and 'Germidour' and Shallots 'Jermor'. All available in the shop.

2. Fallow land can be put to productive use by applying green manure at this time of the year. Sow, grow and dig in before the worst winter weather hits.

3. If you want some late season salad lettuce, pop a few lettuce plugs under Victorian bell cloche (£6.99 for 3) or invest in a cold frame. Watch out for pesky slugs and keep the water flowing if dry.

### **We need you!**

Your feedback is important to us and now is your opportunity to let us know what you think about the Garden Centre and our mail-order department. We are in the process of making changes to our website and in the mid-term planning to develop the garden centre, so your opinions matter to us.

You can contact us through the following e-mail [cf@hedging.co.uk](mailto:cf@hedging.co.uk) or drop us a line at Customer Feedback, Buckingham Garden Centre, Tingewick Road, Buckingham MK18 4AE. Please tell us what you like (or don't like!), what we could improve on, and any suggestions to make the Garden Centre and/or website a better shopping experience.

### **10 tasks for Early Autumn**

1. There is still time to get onions and garlic established before the weather turns. We've still a few lines of vegetable plugs (cabbage, cauliflower, leeks and broccoli) available,

please check availability of these. Harvest sweetcorn as it ripens. Also harvest marrows, pumpkins and squashes which need to be fully ripened before storing.

2. In the fruit garden, continue to harvest autumn-cropping raspberries, and you can also plant the new variety, 'Autumn Treasure' which is available now in a 3-litre pot at £6.50 each or 3+ £6 each. Cut out fruited canes of summer raspberries and make sure you tie-in new canes that will fruit next year. Re-plant strawberry beds which are past their best and prepare the soil, clearing annual and perennial weeds, for establishing new bare-root fruit trees and soft fruit for November plantings.

3. Tidy the garden and especially remove apples, pears and plums affected with brown rot to prevent the problem spreading. Cut out dead, dying and diseased shoots of fruit.

4. Watch the weather and make sure delicate plants are moved into warmth as night frosts threaten. Bring pelargoniums, fuchsias and cannas into a frost-free garage, shed or greenhouse, and make sure they are trimmed back to help them survive the winter months. Give them minimal amounts of water to keep them just moist. Check the soil for vine weevil grubs and apply Provado Vine Weevil Killer<sup>2</sup> as a drench to the pots introduced indoors.

5. Give your garden a clean sweep this autumn and tidy up with our new range of Flymo blowers and shredders. There is still time to give that fence or shed a well-served lick of preservative, check out those Garden Shade colours, before those chilly nights draw in.

6. If you want plenty of colour in your borders next spring, try and get your bare-root wallflowers planted in the ground as soon as possible, and then under plant with a range of taller growing tulips to give useful height to your display. You can edge this display with bellis daisies, forget-me-nots and compact Sweet William plants.

7. Raise the height of the mower as the growth rate of the grass slows down. Continue with your autumn lawn care treatments – scarifying, aerating and top-dressing in that order. An autumn feed (a good product is Evergreen Autumn fertiliser, 3.5kg treats 100m<sup>2</sup>, price £8.99) will harden your turf up for the winter as it contains potassium, but needs to be applied after the lawn has been raked and spiked. If you are planning to lay turf, overseed an existing lawn with grass seed or start a new lawn from seed – now is a good time. We have a Buy 1 Get 1 Free offer on Johnsons Quick Lawn Seed, 500g pack for £7.99.

8. Ponds still need blanket and duckweed removing, using a net, rake or scoop. Remember to pile the weed by the side of the pond for 24 hours to allow pond life to crawl back to the water. Pop the weed onto the compost heap afterwards. You can also divide water lilies and other pond and marginal plants at this time of the year. Do net ponds BEFORE leaves fall and contaminate your water.

9. Late summer is a good time to apply weed killers to perennial weeds as the plants tend to absorb the herbicide better into the root system. Use glyphosate (also sold under the name Round Up) however, this chemical is non-selective as any green leaves it touches it will kill. Treasured plants must be protected with plastic sheeting.

10. Encourage children to sow some hardy annuals such as shaking poppy seeds over bare soil, or arrange on the next country walk to gather seeds from trees such as oaks (acorns) and sycamores (winged helicopters) and sow these in pots for germinating next spring.

## **BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES AND GARDEN CENTRE**

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### **AUTUMN & WINTER OPENING HOURS**

Mon.-Sat.: 8:30am to 5.30pm, Sun.: 10:00am to 4:00pm

(We will be open until 6pm Mon-Fri until 24th October)