

JUNE & JULY NEWSLETTER 2011

SEE YOU ON SATURDAY 25th JUNE!



We are looking forward to seeing you for our special day, Saturday 25th June from 12 noon when **TV gardener, Toby Buckland**, will be doing the ceremonial ribbon-cutting for the formal opening of our larger, purpose-built Shop, Restaurant, and **Seasonal Covered Plant Canopy**. We'll have other people for you to meet including **Peter White, President of The British Orchid Association**, on hand for orchid advice and orchid culture talks and demos throughout the morning and at 1pm, 3pm and 4pm. The Buckinghamshire branch of the **National Vegetable Society** will be on hand for top veggie growing advice and **The Wildlife Trust** will be available to offer topical advice. For the children, **we have a special treat – Wayne Wonder's Balloon Sculpting and Face Painting**, throughout the day.

As far as the progress of our re-development, it should have all been finished back in March but due to bad weather during the winter and normal building niggles we could see that the finish date was going to later than that. We spoke in length to the designer and builders and it was decided that all would definitely be finished well in time for an opening in late June, so with that in mind Toby was booked. HOW WRONG WE ALL WERE!

That said, a lot will be finished, the new larger restaurant and coffee area will be up and running but you will have to bear with us a little longer to get the finishing touches completed – the car park, the new frontage put on etc. By the 25th June you will all be able to see what we are trying to achieve and from the positive comments we are receiving, most of you really appreciate our efforts.

The next big project which we are working on and will be incorporated in the New Shop is our Food Hall. Approach has already been made to many local producers of food, and very soon we hope to get started on this new project which we are really excited about. Any ideas you may have for this do please let us know as we are sure there are producers out there that we do not know of yet, so we shall look forward to hearing from you.

In our April/Early May Newsletter we ran a competition to meet Toby Buckland and as you can imagine we had plenty of entries but alas there can only be one winner. So, Cherry Lynn from Bicester will be joining Toby for a chat and afternoon tea on June 25th as well as receiving a signed copy of Toby's latest book.

Plants are the STARS at Chelsea

Apart from Diarmuid Gavin's attention-grabbing Avatar-inspired Pod suspended over SW3 which was inspired by sitting down to dinner whilst suspended from the arm of a crane, and B&Q with its multi-storey veg block, this year's Chelsea stars were the plants, writes Chris Day.



I love flower shows – local, regional or the big RHS guns blazing extravaganzas. Why? Well, of course to see the plants, the latest design ideas and the fads and fashions which go along with them. However, this year with the early spring,



Photo Credit: Chris Day

the dryness and hot temperatures, it was the growers who pulled out all the stops to make this year's show plant-inspired and memorable.

Usually steel blue grasses, Papaver 'Patty's Plum' and alliums are prevalent in many of the Chelsea Gardens, but this year it was colourful perennials and shrubs we normally see in flower in late June or July. So this year, Achillea, Astrantia, Dianthus, Delphiniums Bronze-leaved Fennel, Foxgloves, Geums and Knautia, amongst others, were in good prominence, but I expected to see more roses to be honest, but a fair few growers had used specie roses such as Rosa glauca.



Fantastic to view and almost to eat - edibles such as citrus, herbs, fruits and vegetables - looked fantastic with two of the gardens making this their main theme, brave you may say, yet the crowds obviously enjoyed viewing.

Hedges for structure, namely Hornbeam and Yew, lovely clipped pyramidal Hornbeam, house-sized Thuja, Box and pleached trees were used as great scene setters. There was lots of water, still pools, over 20 in one garden alone (yes, Diarmuid again!), but these **couldn't be viewed by the visitor only from the air! Straight and curvy rills, two swimming pools** (in The Principality of Monaco garden and the Homebase Cornish Memories Garden), rocks pools (with Japanese acers) and water flowing down walls all featured too.

Plants from the 1980's, rhododendrons, including the lime-tolerant Inkarkhos, were used on two displays. Vintage displays of indoor plants, including Poinsettias in May were a nostalgic flashback to Chelsea in the 1970s, featured on the City of Birmingham Stand. Raymond Evison demonstrated the power of patio clematis, certainly

this century's plant, on his biggest ever stand, together with his latest introduction, 'Abilene' (evipo027, pictured), a patio type, which we are now stocking. The pink flowers have contrasting yellow anthers and as the flower fades a central, deep stripe becomes more prominent.

So, the winners, well The Daily Telegraph Garden ticked all the boxes and picked up the top accolade as it mixed traditional (Cotswold stone) and contemporary (Pillars from Roman ruins in Libya) in one space. Interesting for the very first time The



Times had its own garden, created by designer Marcus Barnet. Developed in association with Kew Gardens, this garden, for me, epitomizes the reason for Chelsea. The Designer took his inspiration from plant cells to create a series of paths mimicking nature with masses of these naturalistic plantings – it looked stunning.

Elsewhere around the Show props included a large waterwheel; masses of reclaimed materials on the Artisan Gardens and red stepping stones over water to represent red corpuscles on The British Heart Foundation Garden. This garden featured different shades of green foliage plants and the odd red paeony.



So then, was it an outstanding Chelsea? This show was inspirational and I would say, yes, **it was. It's not about looking at the show gardens, and feeling: "I can't achieve that in my back garden". Surely these are stage set pieces but from these everyone should be able to take home with them some new idea or ideas to improve their garden, and knowing the thousands of gardeners who visit Chelsea, that must be good.**



As well as absorbing the tasteful and the traditional, which was in full evidence this year, it's also about embracing the spectacle and having fun with the playfulness of Chelsea's smoke, frames and mirrors. This year, it was the plants that made top billing!

- You can listen to Chris on BBC Three Counties Radio (95.5FM, 103.8FM & 104.5FM) on Sunday 19th June and Sunday 3rd July with Ernie Almond on The Gardening Phone-In between 3-

Coral snatcher in deep water

A few weeks ago a customer was observed behaving in a suspicious manner and due to quick thinking staff, a CCTV system and good work by the local police officers the thief was tracked down and has been made to pay for his stolen goods, a beautiful piece of coral from our Aquatics Department.



Unfortunately there are dishonest people who presumably think nothing of attacking and stealing or simply stealing from local businesses, but two recent incidences at Buckingham Garden Centre have resulted in the thieves being caught. The first incident occurred when three masked men undertook an aggravated attack on two members of staff, forcing one to open the safe, so a large sum of money could be taken. However, unknown to them, an observant neighbouring farmer had observed their get-away car hidden on his land and had alerted the police. The three thieves took the keys of the car of one of their victims in **order to get to their own hidden vehicle with the intention of transferring their 'booty' into their own vehicle.** However, a police officer arrived just at the right moment and was able to arrest the three. This resulted in them being prosecuted and sentenced for the crime. We must applaud the officer who confronted the thieves single-handed. The police sometimes get a bad press and do not often enough get credit for their good work.

Our popular talks slot returns

Our monthly Garden Club Talks re-start on Wednesday 10th August at 10.30am in our new talk's area in the Restaurant. BGC's own Chris Day kicks off the new season with a talk on the latest trend in gardening, "Cut Your Own". This is a bookable event, free to Garden Club Members, £3 to non-members and guests. Spaces are limited, so do book early. Please visit our Customer Service Desk or telephone 01280 822133 to book.

New faces on Team BGC

We would like to introduce a new member of staff in our Aquatics Department, Danielle 'Dan' Homewood. Globetrotting former Scuba Driving Instructor Dan is well-verses in marine fish and other creatures as she has had the unique opportunity to get up close and personal with them in her marine environment. Although relatively new to the aquatics business, in her new role Dan is learning quickly about all aspects of cold water (pond), tropical and marine fish alongside our aquatics expert, Paul Barnes. So, if you are planning to set up a tank, or need advice on fish, do please ask the aquatics team. You will also notice the new tanks are in place in one of the New Shop areas and these are currently 'water maturing' in readiness for the fish being moved over the next few weeks into their new homes. We'll have more information on this in our next newsletter.



Katharine 'Kate' Williams is already a popular member of our Customer Services team, but we are delighted to announce Kate has taken up her new role as Poultry Manager with great enthusiasm. Kate has been keeping poultry for over 6 years and has some 19 hens and one cockerel at home, so she knows these birds well! Kate said: "Three of the hens were raised from chicks which was really satisfying". Kate reminds us that now is the time to spray/powder your birds fortnightly against red mite. Kate also suggests that providing an area is available that can be enclosed and secure; it is good to allow your chickens some freedom outdoors from their usual domain, especially through the summer.

As you are probably aware we've been doing some radical re-arrangements of areas within the new development and the poultry department has a new prominent location, through the New Shop area, down the steps/ramp and the hen houses and products chalet is located on the right-hand side.

Garden Centre assistant Coley Jolliff, who has recently joined the Team, is new to gardening yet is passionate about colour and what gardeners can do with it! Coley's background is in catering, but decided a change of direction working with plants and her passion for colour would make a great combination. Keen Coley said, "It's all about colour co-ordination and getting the right plants to look good together. Don't just rely on bedding for colour; check out the specific colour of plant varieties for your themed displays." Coley will be colour focused as she, with the rest of the Plant Team, ensure impulse colour sales look good under our new Seasonal Plant Canopy over the coming months.



What's hardy, what's not?



"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times... it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair..."

Literature scholars will recognise this as the introduction to Charles Dickens' classic "A Tale of Two Cities" set in 19th century London and Paris. For the rest of us, it sounds a lot like an introduction to the here and now.

Yet the coldest winter in 100 years has lead to speculation in the Garden Centre trade that we may see a change over to the promotion

of autumn planting (traditionally nature's natural time), so allowing plants the opportunity to establish before the arrival of cold weather, writes Plant Area Manager, Mike Easom. This campaign, spearheaded by The Horticultural Trades Association, last occurred in the early 1980s, again after a succession of severe winters which saw a wide range of plants killed through tough winters, including the famous Torbay Palms in Torquay. So, those plants considered to be hardy, tender, half-hardy, etc. are now being scrutinised so a full

assessment of our Plant Guarantee can take place. We have been listening to your plant loss stories, to enable us to get a full picture of the severity of the **problem**. **We'll keep you updated on this issue, including an important announcement shortly, as this will have an impact on what is and isn't covered under our Plant Guarantee. But more importantly, you will see clearly those plants requiring special treatment through the winter months.** This will allow you to make a more informed decision on your plant purchasing in the future.

Edible of the month: Peas - Fit for a President? 'Come tonight, the peas are ready'.

If you were a friend of Thomas Jefferson, 3rd President of the United States, and received this message you would know that you had lost the annual competition he set to produce the earliest peas and to celebrate by hosting a special dinner, writes Pauline Brown.

This challenge was set by the vegetable loving President and would be a wonderful idea for a group of allotment holders or simply friends – how about it folks!



The earliest finds of the Garden Pea, *Pisum sativum* (pictured in flower), were the smooth skinned types from Mediterranean excavations from about 5,000 B.C. They were very popular with the Greeks and Romans and it is thought that the Romans brought them to Britain. Their English name comes from Greek 'Pison' which was translated to English 'peason' changing to 'pease' then in the eighteenth century to 'pea'. Peas were eaten dried until the sixteenth century, hence pease pudding, but Italian gardeners then developed the tender varieties which could be eaten fresh. However, it took a century until these became fashionable in England.

All vegetables are good for us, but here I should say vegetables and fruit for peas are botanically a fruit as they are pods containing seeds developed from the ovary of the flower. When cooking they are considered as a vegetable. It is said (by whom I do not know!) that peas are able to help prevent appendicitis, reduce fertility, and like beetroot, to lower blood cholesterol and also to help control blood sugar levels. Whether these well versed claims are true or not peas are definitely high in vitamins A and C and the B vitamins and lutein, so will benefit the eyes, the skin and help keep the arteries healthy. As peas fresh from the garden are delicious to eat both raw and cooked these health benefits are an added bonus.

What's available?

There are many varieties of peas available but most of the commonly sold ones are modern low growing varieties. These are convenient as only a little support or none at all is necessary to grow a bumper harvest, but a few people struggle to get a good result from these however they have great success with the older tall growing varieties such as '**Gladstone**', '**Magnum Bonham**' and '**Duke of Albany**', which as they grow to 5ft or even more, need to be treated more like runner beans. Like any vegetable growing, if you have success continue with what does well, but if you have failure try a different variety.



One type which has taken on increasing popularity in recent years has been the Mangetout Pea (pictured), possibly because more cooks are taking to stir fry cooking methods for which Mangetout Peas are suited. They are equally good steamed, or sliced and eaten raw in salads.

Closely related is the Green Chick Pea, *Cicer arietinum* (pictured, Thompson & Morgan, £1.99 a packet), which, like the Garden Pea, is part of the leguminosae family. This Asian vegetable has attractive green foliage with



purple flowers – but here is the downside, they set plenty of peas but these are carried only one to a pod!

If you have plenty of space they are fun to grow, possibly in the herb bed or even in an ornamental border. If you do manage to harvest sufficient you can either dry them to use as chick peas in the winter stews, or they are the vital ingredient of houmous, or ground into flour they are used in poppadoms. They have been used by man for thousands of years as discovered in archaeological finds from the Mediterranean, Ethiopia and India back from 5000 to 2000 B.C.

Yet another Pea is the Asparagus Pea, *Tetragonolobus purpureus*, which is a native of southern Europe. Seed is available in the shop from Kings Seeds, £1.65 a packet. This is an interesting pea to grow as they develop attractive red flowers which then set winged pods which when harvested young are delicious. If left on the plant too long they quickly develop a harsh, unpalatable inner parchment. If you try these and find you do not have enough in one picking for a cooking, just pop them into a polythene bag in the vegetable compartment of the fridge, and continue harvesting over a few days until you have enough. A definite talking point for a meal shared with friends.

And finally Pea-jacket – no not a pea baked in its jacket – but a heavy outercoat originally worn by sailors, the pea in this case coming from a Dutch word ‘pij’ referring to the coarse twilled blue cloth with a nap on one side. Definitely not edible like all those other delicious peas!

If you are one of those keen growers you will already have a good row of peas growing well and possibly in flower, but if you have not, it is not too late as peas sown now will give an excellent crop. If you know you have trouble with field mice, either sow in modules well-protected in a cold frame, or soak the seed (for just 10 minutes) in paraffin before sowing direct – that will put the mice off but will not be detrimental to the germination.

LOCAL EVENTS & GOSSIP

From Friday 10th June, 8pm for 8 weeks: The nation's favourite gardener is set to bring his unique horticultural skills to ITV1 for the first time - in a new peak time gardening series. 'Love Your Garden' will see writer, broadcaster and TV personality, Alan Titchmarsh travel the country with a team of esteemed experts to find some of Britain's most beautiful domestic gardens and show viewers how to create the look themselves - with minimal fuss. A bit of healthy competition for Gardeners' World then on a Friday night!

Sunday 19th June: Open gardens, 2-6pm, Fritwell, North Oxfordshire. The Manor Gardens and 10 additional gardens incl. plant sales. Refreshments, cake sale, raffle in village hall. All proceeds to St Olave's Church Fund. Entry £4, children free. Tel: 01869 345223.

Saturday 25th June: Open gardens, 2-5pm, Hillesden House, Buckinghamshire MK14 4DB. By superb church 'Cathedral in the Fields'. Carp lakes, fountains and waterfalls. Mature trees and large conservatory. Rose, alpine, foliage and herbaceous gardens. 5 acre formal area surrounded by about 100 acres of deer park, wild flower areas and extensive lakes developed by owner. Admission £4, children free. Home-made teas. Tel: 01296 730451.

Sunday 17th July, 10am-5pm. Plant Fair at Chenies Manor, Bucks WD3 6ER. Cost of entry covers entry to the Plant Fair and gardens. Tickets cost £6 for adults and £3 for children under 14 years. Further details at http://www.cheniesmanorhouse.co.uk/plant_fair.htm

Top value for lawns and tomatoes

Late spring is the normal time for feeding and weed treating lawns, writes Peter Mason, but the drought conditions this year made it very difficult. Fortunately, once we get some significant rain, the job can still be done: the sooner the better, but you may have to wait until early September.





We have a wide range of suitable products, including Verdone Lawn Weedkiller, 1-litre to treat 667m² on offer at £9.99, and Evergreen Complete 4 in 1 Granular Feed, Weed and Mosskiller 400m² at £19.99 each or £36 for 2.

It is still possible to sow grass seed, if you have some patches, but once the seed has germinated, you need to keep watering it if it does not rain. If this is not possible it is best to wait until September when there should be dews in the morning to keep the seedlings moist.

Inflation has been cured! Well not quite, but we are pleased to announce a major price reduction on Doff Liquid Tomato Feed 1 litre, reduced from £2.99 to £2.25. The 2½ litre size is £4.99. This is a top quality product with a higher nutrient content than Tomorite the brand leader. Doff Liquid Tomato Feed is high in potash, and can be used to encourage flowering and fruiting on a wide range of ornamental and food plants. It is of course ideal for use on tomatoes. It is usually recommended that you start feeding tomatoes under glass when the first truss has set, and outdoors when the second truss has set. If you need to feed before this stage it is better to use a balanced feed such as Doff Liquid Growmore, but it generally won't be necessary.



10 GARDENING TASKS

PEST WATCH Look out for the usual suspects – greenfly, whitefly, blackfly and slugs. You can ward off carrot fly by covering plants with fine mesh such as Enviromesh. Netting fruit from birds, especially the likes of cherries and strawberries, is essential.

Pinching out the top of broad beans, once the lowest flowers have set, will help prevent aphid attack. Prevention is better than cure with powdery mildew, which tends to affect Grapes (*Vitis*), Honeysuckle and Roses. Be one step ahead and apply Difenoconazole (Westland Plant Rescue Control concentrate) on ornamentals, pome fruits and grape vines.

FEED ME NOW! The prolonged dry weather has put much more pressure on plants as far as plant growth, so it is essential that all plants, especially newly planted or recently potted receive adequate nutrients. Remember potting composts provide just six weeks of nutrients, thereafter supplement your plants with a soluble plant feed such as Phostrogen, Liquid Growmore or Miracle-Gro. Apply every 7-10 days, but do make sure the compost is sufficiently moist before you feed. This is important for those patio roses that are grown in pots (such as these new Coronation Street Roses, pictured). In the open border, again, you can apply liquid feeds directly into the root zone, but do make sure the plant is moist before you apply the fertiliser. It's very important at this time of year to water and feed your Camellias if you wish for them to produce a good show of flowers next year.



CONTAINERS planted with summer colour can now be safely positioned in their final locations for the summer. Just a couple of things... if you plant your containers to be viewed at all angles, do make sure the container is turned by 180 degrees (a half turn) each week to ensure balanced and even growth. Be prepared to remove any spent flowers by regular deadheading the plants at least once a week as you want the plants to divert their energy into new replacement blooms rather than setting seeds.



KEEP SOWING the likes of salad crops such as Beetroot, Lettuce, Radish and Spring Onions. The secret is continuity with these crops so sowing "little and often" needs to be the rule. Set young veg plugs of winter Kale, Brussels sprouts, Peas, late Cauliflower and Leeks. There's still time to plant outdoor Tomatoes, Ridge Cucumbers, Marrows, Courgettes and Pumpkins. Do offer them a sheltered site and the soil needs to be prepared well. Work in plenty of organic matter as well as some fertiliser such as Blood, Fish & Bone (if you

are organic) or Vitax Q4 (for non-organic gardeners).

ROUTINE TASKS Spread perennial weeds out to dry on paths - once they are shrivelled and thoroughly dry they can safely be added to the compost heap. Sow green manure in empty beds in your vegetable garden.

Cut back any long laterals that have grown on wisteria since flowering. This allows sunlight to ripen the wood and encourages bud formation for the next year. Pick sweet peas regularly to encourage continued flowering. Water the garden in the evening, preferably using a hand-held hose rather than a sprinkler, which is much more wasteful of water.

EXTEND THE SHOW If you have a pergola or arch with a rose growing over it, why not consider planting a lovely summer flowering clematis to help extend the colour and to utilise the structure once the rose fades? If you are planning to do this, its best to pop into the Garden Centre and select the clematis with a bloom of the rose in hand, so you can find something to compliment the rose should the rose flower longer or the clematis bloom earlier... so avoiding any nasty colour clashes!



REVITALISE your range of herbs by making more sowing of Basil (all types), Calendula, Coriander, Dill, Nasturtiums and Rocket. A pinch of seed in a small pot containing a Multi-Purpose Compost will give you plenty of young seedlings, pot them up quickly as they grow and set them in a warm, sunny spot to grow on.

LET'S ENTERTAIN Remember if you are entertaining in the garden until late into the evening have Citronella Candles and Torches set up to keep the midges and mossies at bay. These also give a lovely glow to the chilled atmosphere. If you are planning some background music, here are some themed tunes for your evening. For your sophisticated garden soiree, how about Dean Martin (Cha Cha Cha), Nat King Cole (Straighten Up & Fly Right), Glenn Miller (In The Mood) and Andrea Bocelli (Canto Della Terra). For a more upbeat taste of summer, then perhaps a bit of ELO and Mr Blue Sky, Brian Adams and the Summer of 69, Summer Nights from Grease or The Eagles and Tequila Sunrise. Thanks to Cuprinol for their ideas on the music front.

POND REMINDERS Clear algae, blanket weeds and debris from ponds, and keep them topped up. Any pumps on water features should be left on during sultry nights, as oxygen levels are lower in such conditions. Remove dead foliage and blooms from water lilies and other aquatic plants. Cover ponds, or use safety grills, in gardens where young children play.



UNDERCOVER TASKS Water plants regularly and keep a check for unwanted insects. Water houseplants freely, and feed as necessary (often weekly or fortnightly). Water plants in early morning or late evening to avoid the risk of leaf scorch on hot days. Damp down greenhouses on hot days. Air circulation is crucial even on cloudy overcast days so make sure the vents and door are open to keep the air flowing.

Cuttings can be taken and grown on in the glasshouse. Take half-ripe cuttings of shrubs such as Hydrangeas, Lavatera, Viburnum and Cistus. Carry on pricking out any seedlings sown earlier in the season. Young plants, already pricked out, may be ready for transplanting to larger pots.

Here are FOUR superb offers you cannot afford to miss!



Herbaceous Perennials (1-litre pots only) 3 for £8

Discount will be taken off at the Till

Picture is for illustrative purposes only. Offer is subject to availability.
Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.



Traditional Potting Compost (60 Ltr bags ONLY) Buy one, Get one FREE

Discount will be taken off at the Till

Picture is for illustrative purposes only. Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.

Foliage Houseplants (13cm Pots) £4.99 each – BUY 3 FOR £12.00

Discount will be taken off at the Till

Picture is for illustrative purposes only. Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.



Chickens £19.99 each BUY 2 (for company!) FOR £35.00

Discount will be taken off at the Till

Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.



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