

Your Mooli success

Around this time last year our good friends at Thompson & Morgan gave us some packets of Mooli seeds for our customers to try and give a go. Chris Day has caught up with some of our customers to see how they got along.



Frank Richards, from Bicester, said he had a good result from the seeds although he'd never grown them before. They were quick to come through, despite the wet growing conditions, and he liked the faint peppery bite of the Mooli. He described the plants like overgrown carrots when whole, although the leaves and stems more closely resemble that of a radish, which he grows plenty of.



Mr Catlin, from Buckingham, said he'd originally come in to buy some perpetual spinach from us but we'd sold out! "Anyway, you kindly offered me some free Mooli seeds on my visit and, a few months on, this is the result and I've got a whole row of them!" He brought one of his lifted roots for us to see (see photo), and mighty impressive it was too!

Charles Tanner, from Tingewick & Water Stratford Horticultural Society, said his Mooli crop grew well, if not a little too quickly. He also said the flavour was not as we have found in the supermarket varieties, but put this down to the way they grew as they tasted a little bitter.

Cooking or eating your Mooli

There are plenty of options – grate into salads, gorgeous raw dipped into houmous, plus there are plenty of Indian recipes featuring Mooli, so, if you've grown them, here are a few suggestions on how to use them in the kitchen....

- You can eat Mooli in both raw and cooked form, and it is suitable in a dizzying array of dishes from salads to stir fries. Pictured Punjabi Chicken Tikka served with Mooli. Our thanks to Joginder's Supperclub Blog for the image.
- Just grate it up and add some grated carrots (matchstick size), chopped lettuce (a Romaine variety is a pretty good choice), tomatoes and some sweet peppers (like red and green).
- Use Mooli as you would a turnip. Boil it, sliced with carrot then mash with butter, salt and pepper. Nice that it is possible to grow it so it is available when turnips are out of season.
- It works well with Thai-style recipes, such as those containing spring onion, soy sauce, sesame and ginger.



Did you know? Mooli is rich in folic acid, a mineral needed for healthy red blood cells. A 100-gram serving contains only 90 kilojoules or 22 Calories (6 Cal/oz), but provides 34 percent of the RDA for vitamin C.

Potato Weekend round up

Glorious February sunshine shone on our Potato Weekend and brought customers flocking in, writes Chris Day. You certainly kept our vegetable experts T&M Seeds' Colin Randel and King's Seeds' Jason Breed busy, together with members of the National Vegetable Society Bucks Branch. Apple grafting with Fritz De Zutter from Moulton College proved equally as popular with a number of customers determined to have a go, one even taking away some 20 rootstocks, the longest strip of grafting tape we've ever seen and Fritz's wisdom too! We also launched the Puzzle Centre Potato Challenge and Marrow Competition with plenty of interest expressed.



Over the weekend the atmosphere was filled with the aroma of Pastilla pies and pasties, specialist breads from Luton's Caked in Bread, Rapeseed Oil products from Cotswold Gold, Eddie and Jill from Buckingham Brewery (yes, Buckingham does have its very own micro-brewery) and A Bit Chilli brought along some amazing chutneys to sample and buy.



Our special congratulations to the two winners of The Puzzle Centre Raffle - Maggie Hicks (from Evenley) and Sue Willis (from Bletchley), who both won signed copies of James Wong's book, *The Homegrown Revolution*. The Puzzle Centre raised over £250 during the Weekend – thanks again for supporting this great local charity.

Spring into action

We will be having a major re-stock of our plant display benches after the winter with fresh deliveries of alpines, shrubs, potted roses, climbers, ornamental trees, perennials and herbs. A timely reminder, also, don't delay in planting your bare-root hedging plants, fruit trees and bushes as well as root-wrapped roses because the season comes to an end soon (normally mid to the end of April, weather allowing). Remember, too, the weather can be highly unpredictable, so do take care if purchasing half-hardy plants, they need to be kept frost-free and hardened off (the process of gradual acclimatisation to cooler growing conditions) before planting out in the open garden. It's worth having some horticultural fleece handy to cover over vulnerable plants as you don't want to be caught out on frosty nights.



The banned 5 pond weeds



Five species of invasive non-native aquatic plants are to be banned from sale, the UK government has announced. In the first ban of its kind, officials hope the move will save money and help protect vulnerable habitats. The plants to be banned from April 2014 are water fern, parrot's feather, floating pennywort, water primrose and Australian swamp stonecrop.

Carrie Hume, head of conservation policy for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust said: "Thankfully, some of the most destructive non-native plants will no longer be on sale in our garden centres. This is the right move - the environmental and economic cost of dealing with this problem is already huge and dealing with it now is a great saving for the future. The ban means that all retailers will now have to stop selling these plants or face a fine of up to

£5,000 and possibly up to six months in prison. Although details of the ban have been announced now, it will not come into force until next spring to give retailers enough notice to conform to the new measures and identify and stock alternative plants.



10 tasks for March/April

FINISH planting bare-root hedges, ornamental trees, fruit trees and soft fruit bushes.

Prepare the soil for establishing new strawberry rows in March for planting from April onwards – strawberries establish much better in warmer soils.

If not already done, mulch around tree, bush and cane fruit with some garden compost or well-rotted manure, keeping it away from the stems, to speed active growth. All currants would benefit from a feed with a high nitrogen fertiliser such as Sulphate of Ammonia. Check over established plants and cut back any winter damaged shoots as well as any dead, diseased or damaged stems.



THERE is still time to prune late flowering woody plants that bloom on this season's growth like Trumpet Vine (Campsis), Abelia, Butterfly Bush, Californian Lilac (Ceanothus), Hardy Fuchsias and Hydrangeas. You can remove weak growth of Magnolia grandiflora, Euonymus, Viburnum and evergreen Olearia now. Also give straggly Lavenders a quick haircut. Remember all pruning should be balanced with a dressing of fertiliser such as Vitax Q4.

AQUATICS Algae may be making an appearance even now! Use a proprietary treatment such as Pondcare Algae Preventer to keep this under control and prevent a major problem later. Preventatively, if blanket weed is a known issue, then Blagdon Blanket Weed Buster, a probiotic product that adds beneficial bacteria to the water that multiply to remove the blanket weed, helps and it will also clear green water algae and pond sludge. Do check the instructions of both of these products before use. Now is the ideal time to reinstate the pump and or filter. If the weather is still likely to turn cool then keep the pump shallow in the pond moving it to deeper water later. Tree blossom looks wonderful on trees but can do harm if it decays in the water. Any landing on the water should be removed promptly.



TIME to plan for your summer bulb display. Lilies, Dahlias and Gladioli are the most popular. However, if you have faded clumps of Snowdrops and Leucojeums, or the Snowflake Flower, they both need similar treatment in that they are best transplanted (and divided) after flowering. As soon as the flowers fade, lift the clumps and if necessary divide them carefully. Re-establish them in a well prepared rich soil and water well until fully established. You could dip the bulbs in Rootgrow to help the faster establishment of the bulbs too!



DIVISION This is a good time to divide late-flowering perennials such as Aster, Rudbeckia, Veronicas and Eupatorium. Lift and separate into good-sized pieces, discarding any congested, woody centres. Replant in good soil with well-rotted compost and a dressing of bonemeal.

VEG TASKS Plant Asparagus crowns (good varieties include 'Gijnlim', F1,

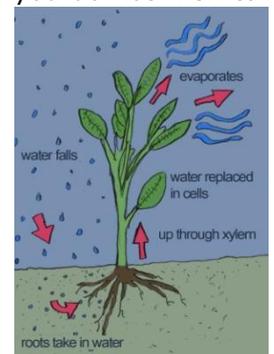
'Connover's Colossal' and 'Pacific Purple'), Shallots, Onion sets and harden off greenhouse raised Lettuce, Onions and Leeks in to forked, firmed and fertilised soil. Sow Beetroot, Leaf Beets, Broad Beans, Lettuce, Leeks, Onions, Parsley, Peas, Radishes, Shallots, summer Spinach and Turnips in well-prepared soil, enriched with a balanced granular fertiliser such as Vitax Q4 or Growmore. Under glass, sow greenhouse crops – Tomatoes, Peppers, Cucumbers, Aubergines and Melons. Mark rows of slow germinating Parsnips by intersowing with Radishes. Pull them before they crowd out the Parsnips. Boost spring Cabbages by sprinkling the root area with dried blood fertiliser. Continue "chitting" Potatoes to encourage strong growth before planting out in pots in early April. Traditionally Good Friday is when we start planting spuds in the open soil.

PLUG into seasonal colour and plan now for your displays this summer. Just as Easter eggs follow Christmas, so does the month of March for plug plants. The sight of young vigorous seedlings and cuttings (pictured) gets even the lacklustre gardeners ever so excited at the prospect of growing these on for that better-than-last-summer's display. Last year, we got all patriotic with our colours; we suspect single colours or bold pastel mixtures may follow the trend in 2013. Once you have decided on what to grow and selected the plants the net pots should be moved into 9cm (3½in) pots quickly so to allow the plants to grow on. Use multi-purpose compost for growing plug plants and aim to keep them in a light location and frost free, so a windowsill is okay. However, remember how much space the plants are likely to take!



CONSIDER what climbers you need to establish for this season. Climbing and rambling roses benefit from early planting, especially if you are looking for maximum coverage against walls, fences and archways. Early flowering Montana Clematis will benefit from a feed as they run into flower so apply Blood, Fish & Bone or Vitax Q4 to promote strong growth and if you are planning to establish a new Montana, this is a good time to check out the best varieties to plant. There is still time to sow sweet peas in Root Trainers, however newly planted seedlings need protecting from birds and slugs immediately after planting – you may regret any delay! Sweet peas do need a well-prepared soil, so work some compost in as you plant and start liquid feeding with Phostrogen as soon as the flower buds develop later.

LAWNS The high rainfall throughout last year and the winter may have resulted in a major moss problem which needs to be actioned as soon as possible. You can apply just moss killers such as Vitax Green Up Moss Free (soluble moss killer), or opt for a mosskiller plus fertiliser such as Scotts Lawn Builder Lawn Food plus Lawn Control and Maxicrop Moss Killer & Lawn Tonic (natural organic seaweed base) or a multi-action product such as Evergreen Complete 4 in 1 that controls moss, kills weeds, feeds the turf and also improves water absorption. Whatever moss killer you have used, within a fortnight the moss will have turned black and died. Use a plastic or wire-tined rake or, over larger areas a powered scarifier can be hired to tease out the moss. This action also removes clogging thatch which in turn helps the grass breathe. If you do not wish to use chemicals to tackle the problem, either use a scarifier or rake the mossy areas brutally to remove the moss. When finished it will look a mess, but only for a relatively short time. Spike the area thoroughly, adding horticultural grit if the drainage is bad, then rough the surface before applying some compost, if necessary, and re-seeding.



FOLKLORE The old adage 'April showers bring May flowers' stands to reason because over these two months is when water matters a great deal in your new planting establishment regime. Warmer weather means a greater rate of transpiration - don't let young or new plants wilt as this has a knock-on effect in later months. If water conservation is a problem on light or fast-draining soils, you could also incorporate some Broadleaf P4 granules into your planting holes to help retain valuable moisture around the roots and help promote stronger root growth too!

A round-up of new Hozelock products The Growbag Waterer is a clever bit of kit and features a large capacity 15 litre reservoir (1) that will keep plants watered for up to 14 days, so perfect for holiday breaks.

Water is delivered directly to the plants roots through unique capillary watering spikes (2) that help prevent plants from drought and minimise water wastage. The kit includes the water reservoir, a convenient indicator (3) to monitor water level and cane holders (4) to provide a solid base for plant support. Price: £19.99. Choose your own favourite cropping bag to complete the kit.



Hozelock's **Flexi Spray** is a new product and is ideal if you are looking for an innovative multi-purpose hose end attachment designed to be effortlessly moulded into an array of shapes to perform a wide range of watering functions. If you have wall planters and hanging baskets, this is going to save you time and you will have no "water down the arm" scenarios! Simply plug it on to your existing hose system, bend it into the desired shape and water away! Price: £29.99.

'Apps' and the gardener

The World these days seems to revolve around Facebook, Twitter and other social media – you cannot get away from it, writes Trevor Bradley, our IT expert! You can feel a little left behind if you don't subscribe to one or all of these services. Indeed, here at the Garden Centre we have our own Facebook page which is regularly updated with news, stories, offers and other information and is a great way to communicate with our customers as it is very 'real time' - we can tell you on a daily (or even hourly!) basis what is happening at the Garden Centre. This can prove to be a very valuable resource, like, for example, during the recent bad weather we were able to inform customers if and when the Garden Centre was open.



But how has the world of gardening kept a pace with other technological developments? If you need information on a plant while you are out at the Garden Centre or need to look up a pest or disease while you are out in the garden or just generally keep track of what needs to be done then you don't really want to be carrying your laptop around or walking through your lounge to your PC with your muddy boots on!

So what can you do? Well many of us carry phones these days and it is estimated that 2/3rds of phones currently purchased are Smartphones - Smartphones being just like mini-computers that can receive e-mails and view web pages, connecting to the internet just like our home PCs which, in turn, enables them to access a world of information.

You can browse plant websites and resources just as if you were using a laptop or PC. In fact, these days many websites are 'mobile' enabled, meaning they have a version especially adapted for viewing on a mobile phone.

But gardening has also kept up with other new technologies too. The first of these technologies that we saw introduced at the Garden Centre were something called QR codes. QR codes are like the bar codes you find on your tin of beans at the supermarket, but slightly more complex and square in shape. Any Smartphone can easily read these barcodes using a barcode reading application (which most phones will have built in). On scanning the code, you will be taken to a website with further, useful information about the plant without having to type in any of these long, complex website addresses or the plant name. Scan the above QR code and let's see where it takes us! Although most of the important information is included on the plant label, this extra information can prove most useful and may often have extra pictures of the plant so you can see what it will be like as it matures.



Then, of course, there are 'apps'. Anyone with a Smartphone would have heard of iTunes or the Android market and the hundreds of thousands of 'apps' available. 'Apps' are how you can enhance the phone above the standard features installed when you bought the phone. 'Apps' are like programs you would run on your home PC or laptop except they are designed to run on small screen Smartphones. But how can these help in our gardens? Well there are actually some very good free or inexpensive 'apps' that can run on Smartphones that are very useful for use while out in the garden. The Royal Horticultural Society, for example, has created its own gardening 'app' for the iPhone. The 'app' is designed to help both new and seasoned gardeners alike. The free version of the 'app' is a good resource for anyone looking to start growing their own vegetables or starting a flower garden. This free 'app' has information on around 20 of the most common fruit and vegetables. And then you can purchase, for a small fee, extra information packs depending on what your gardening interests are. Information is given for each plant and it should help you decide what to grow, based on your level of experience and the space you have. There are similar 'apps' on the Android market too. A quick search reveals 'apps' for iPhones and Android Smartphones that can interrogate plant, disease and pest databases for example providing huge amounts of information at your fingertips.

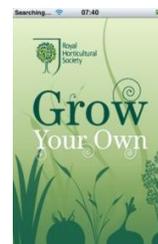
There are other 'apps' for tracking what you grow in your garden and can create diaries to remind you when to feed and when to water as well as being able to record what you grow and how successful it





was. This can become a great personal resource the following years when you are browsing the seed catalogues for what to buy and helps prevent those 'now what was that I grew last year' moments!

Here at the Garden Centre we like to embrace the latest technologies and so we will try to regularly post on our Facebook page any 'apps' we come across that we feel might be useful to our customers. Finally, please do share with us any 'apps' that you have used that you find useful and we can pass those on too.



You'll find some useful android apps here: <http://www.androidauthority.com/best-android-apps-for-gardening-and-landscaping-35343/>

A couple you may find useful are the National Garden Scheme (NGS) Garden Finder, makes garden finding – there are 3800 gardens included - and visiting even easier, and Plant Base Online Viewer, which gives you instant plant information to 1,000s of plants.

If you are looking for top gardening apps for the iPhone, including the RHS app, then it might be worth checking out these 5 useful sites. <http://mashable.com/2012/06/24/gardening-apps/>

So, you can keep up to date with us by downloading Facebook to your phone and check out our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BuckinghamNurseries

Chicken Coop Chat

It's the start of the season and if you are keeping poultry, Kate Williams, our Poultry Manager, gives us a few tips on what we need to be thinking about now...

With spring just around the corner and full on egg production on the way it's a good time to start thinking about those little jobs that need doing around the chicken coop.

To start with spring is a good time to get on top of nasty parasites, such as red mite, by giving your hen house a thorough deep clean. The use of red mite killing products, such as Poultry Shield, when you wash out the hen house will help to kill any mites that are hiding in the nooks and crannies.



When you have got your hen house nice and clean it is also a good idea to treat the wood with a wood preservative such as Cuprinol Timber Care (water-based, 6litre, £9.99).

Oil based products, such as Creoseal Plus Wood Treatment (oil based, 4-litre, £8.99), are also very good at killing mites.



However, with this product you must ensure that all surfaces inside the hen house are fully dry and that there are no fumes lingering, as the fumes produced by it are toxic until it is completely dry. The best preservatives to use if you just want to protect the wood of hen house are any water-based products but again you must make sure everything is completely dry before re-introducing the chickens back into the coop. Please do take care when using any preservative products, always reading the manufacturer's label and wearing suitable protective clothing and gloves.

At this time of year it is also worth while giving your hens a full MOT. This can include worming, although this should be done throughout the year on a monthly basis (dependent on the type of wormer used) because after a winter of mud and churning up the ground your birds can pick up internal parasites, and once the weather warms up the breeding season and worm cycle will start.

As the temperature warms up and the day light hours increase the older birds will have finished their moult and are ready to start the new laying period so it can be a good idea to give them a tonic or feed supplement which will give them a boost. Do not worry if the first few eggs are small or soft shelled as this may happen as your girls get back into their egg laying routine. It is also a good time to check your chickens for mites and lice that may be on their bodies. The most common places to find them are around the vent area and under the wings.

There are many products out there to deal with this: two of the best are Total Mite Kill Powder and Diatom, both of these products can be used on the chickens themselves and in the coop as a residual killer for any mites that drop off the birds or are hiding in the coop. Please do not let children handle the chickens just after dusting them, as these products, although natural, can be an irritant to the human respiratory system. As always and with all the products mentioned here, do carefully follow the instructions on the packaging.

Now is the time to enjoy your chickens after the hard work of winter. Hopefully you will get plenty of eggs and have fun watching your folk running around the garden in the long lazy days of summer.

Wednesday Garden Talks

On **Wednesday 13th March**, we introduce top grower and breeder John Gibson and his aptly timed presentation on Growing & Showing Daffodils.

On **Wednesday 10th April**, Fuchsias are the flavour of the month when top expert, Malcolm Beerman, looks at their care and cultivation.

On **Wednesday 8th May** we welcome Barry Smith, the Head Gardener at Stowe, as he gives us a fascinating insight to "Stowe Landscape Gardens - The Garden Restoration and The Ongoing Story".

All talks run from 4:30-5:30pm in our Talks Room within the Restaurant. To book, contact our Customer Service Desk.

We're off to the **MALVERN SPRING GARDENING SHOW** on Friday 10th May. Cost £45. Here's a great opportunity to visit one of the finest spring flower shows in the UK, a pre-cursor to the Chelsea Flower Show in fact. We'll see great show gardens, top exhibitors, experts, including Carol Klein, talks and demonstrations and much, more more, all in the beautiful surroundings of the Malvern Hills.

6th & 7th April: Alex Stanyer's Spring Garden is open 2-5pm, both days. All proceeds in aid of The Puzzle Centre. Located at Deveron House, Horn Street, Winslow, Bucks. MK18 3AP. Teas with home-made cakes. Tickets cost £4, available on the door.



TV Gardening: Gardeners' World returns to our screens on Friday 8th March (8:30pm, BBC2 and BBC HD) and The Beechgrove Garden, the popular Scottish magazine programme is on air nationally from Sunday 7th April, BBC2. Check TV listings for times.

A date for your diary: Buckingham Garden Centre's Apple & Chilli Weekend over the weekend of 21st & 22nd September 2013.

STOP PRESS: Professional lawn care advice

TruGreen will be at the Garden Centre for two weekends from Monday 18th March until Monday 1st April (Bank Holiday Monday).

With grass springing back to life come along on and meet Karen Burdett, a lawncare professional from TruGreen, on Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th March and Easter weekend (not Sunday as we are closed but Saturday and Monday) who will be on hand to discuss all things grass related. With record rainfalls last year and the wet winter your lawn is probably in need of some tender love and care. Karen will be here to answer your questions and offer advice, plus all Buckingham Garden Centre customers are being offered a FREE 14 point lawn analysis with no obligations - plus a half price Aeration if you go on to sign up to a treatment plan.

On Saturday 23rd March, Karen will be also joined by Turf Industry guru, Steve Welch, who was Groundsman at Wembley, Leicester and Nottingham Forest Football Clubs and will share his knowledge and expertise with you.



Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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Clocks go forward 1 hour at 1am on 31st March.

SUMMER OPENING HOURS COMMENCE from Monday 1st April (Bank Holiday) Mon.-Sat: 8:30am-6:00pm, Sun: 10am-4pm.

Easter, Good Friday and Easter Bank Holiday Monday: 8:30-6pm.

Please note that due to Sunday trading restrictions we shall be CLOSED on Easter Sunday 31st March.

