

Buckingham

Garden Centre



'Passionate about gardening'

NEWSLETTER



LET THE NEW SEASON BEGIN
TIPS & ADVICE TO BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

Photo credit: Sir Harold Hillier Gardens ©

**LATE JANUARY/
FEBRUARY
2015 ISSUE**

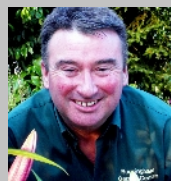
**WHAT'S
INSIDE**

Predictions for 2015, Our Plants of the Moment, The Big 'Career in Horticulture' Debate, New Products, Bee update, PACE Charity, Potato Weekend, Top 10 Tasks for Late January/February and much more...

A couple of our preoccupations at this time of the year usually involves what the weather is going to be up to and how quickly we can get back into gardening mode after the glitz and sparkle of the festive season. A visit to the Garden Centre in winter whether to look at the seeds, summer bulbs, a much deserved refuel in the Restaurant or a potter around the plants, so the planning begins. Let's make no mistake those TV executives really helped us with this start of the New Year with a cornucopia of great inspirational, practical and colourful TV gardening programmes to start the process along.

However, wet, windy and unseasonably milder temperatures have already made this winter a challenge. Extremes of weather seem to be the order of the day, so planning has never been more down to "working with the weather". So, we'll gently ease you back as our annual Potato Weekend gets us united in growing and looking forward to a great gardening year, no doubt full of challenges, but hey we wouldn't want anything else! We look forward to welcoming you to our kick-start to growing over the 7th & 8th February, 10am-4pm each day.

May we wish all our customers a happy, fun and productive 2015 growing season.



Chris

PREDICTIONS FOR 2015

Fashions, trends and fads usually get a mention in the first couple of months of a new year, so here are few we've heard on the virtual grapevine...

Grow Your Own continues to excite and stimulate us, so seed companies and young plant vegetable growers look set to introduce us to new varieties across the board.

Our tip: Look out for the new black Tomato, 'Indigo Rose' (pictured right), part of the James Wong Seed Collection from Suttons Seeds.



Top colour in the garden this year? Well, purple and orange are being touted by some garden trade insiders, however, at the Garden Centre we've always taken these speculations with a great big pinch of slug-killing salt!

Our tip: Colour and beauty is really in the eye of the beholder! Plant the colours that please your eye and work well in your borders, hanging baskets or pots. However, expect to see plenty of magnificent Sunflowers which will be around more than usual this summer as 2015 has been designated by Fleuroselect's Home Garden Association 'The Year of The Sunflower'.



Enjoying our gardens more is definitely on the agenda, so look out for the latest garden furniture, garden accessories, solar lights and BBQs! 2014 broke new records - the hottest since 1910, and not surprisingly the fourth wettest on record. The average temperature for the year was 9.9°C, some 1.1°C above the long term average, and making it warmer than the previous record year of 2006.

The figures for 2014 mean that eight of the UK's top 10 warmest years have occurred since 2002, according to the Met Office. Early predictions suggest this summer looks set to be warm and settled, but before we get too excited, we've not seen it on the front page of The Daily Express yet! However, at least we can say we've had a winter this year unlike the wet and miserable winter of 2013!



Our tip: Before you put away your winter attire, don't tempt fate, let the sun cream wait!

2014 - An UnBEElievable Year!

May was the beginning of an eventful year with our Bees when our two hives buzzed into life. By the end of the season we had six hives – but what an eventful June made this possible. The warm May and hot June with an abundance of blossom on the fruit trees, in the hedgerows and from flowers in bloom in the Garden Centre gave our bees plenty of nectar and pollen. With this they worked as 'busy bees' producing masses of new workers and plenty of honey, but also as bees do when conditions are good, new queen cells and an urge to swarm. June was frantic with every day seeming to bring a new drama!

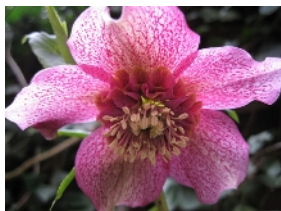
To cut a long saga short, we gathered a swarm which had settled in a tree in Buckingham, took queen cells from our hives plus workers to get two new hives started, thus filling our five hives --- but we then also had three swarms to deal with from our hives and no empty hives to house them. However, beekeepers are a friendly helpful race, and two hives were lent to tide us over until our ordered, but not delivered, spare hives arrived – but still a spare swarm! This was duly collected by another beekeeper with room for expansion, so after a hectic few weeks all started to settle down, and all has been calm since then.

Our hives were all inspected by our local bee inspector and declared free of disease, and on checking at the end of the season only one hive, the one collected from Buckingham, needed treating for varroa mite. So we now hope that with the extra wind break protective netting around the hives they will all emerge again in spring to keep us entertained next year. In the meantime we are still selling the honey extracted from them from the Garden Centre shop, but if you want to try it you'd better hurry as there are not many jars left!



OUR PLANTS OF THE MOMENT

If it's January it's got to be Hellebores otherwise known as Lenten Rose – there we've said it! Look out for these stunners - Helleborus 'Walberton's Rosemary' (pictured right), 'Tutu' (pictured left) and the 'Red and Penny's Pink forms', all burgeoning with bud and perfect for borders and larger pots too!



The month of February bursts into

late winter colour with primulas in a myriad of colours and varieties. Growers have been busy developing new strains with a much greater range of colours, including bi-colours, splashes and flecks, all guaranteed to provide some cheer on damp, chilly days.



A few to give mention to include Primula 'Miss Indigo' (pictured left), features beautiful double deep

purple flowers; 'Ember Glow', a great combination of fiery colours – oranges to reds - held well above the foliage; 'Zebra Blue' (pictured above), featuring stunning blue, striped with white, centred with an attractive golden eye flower combo and 'Candy', a riotous mixture of pink shades and hues.



"GET A CAREER IN HORTICULTURE", SAYS RHS

A new survey from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) reveals that more than three quarters of Britons garden and 82 per cent of those say gardening makes them feel happier. It also revealed that 70 per cent of the 2,053 people who responded to the Censuswide survey would gladly spend their working day in a garden given the chance.

Now the RHS is encouraging more people to consider a career in horticulture, backed by a series of short films featuring people who have made the switch.

These include a former bank manager, paralegal and finance workers as well as creative types such as a chef and a TV costume designer.

The survey found that even in January, 80 per cent enjoyed "getting outside and being active in the garden" and 72 per cent said they enjoyed "the satisfaction of growing something".

With these stats showing that most people feel happy gardening, the RHS would love to encourage more people to try getting outside to appreciate the great outdoors.



Londoners and young people aged 16 to 24 came out top of the happiness index, with 88 per cent of both groups saying gardening made them happier.

Men and women also had rather different preferences with double the number of men saying they were happiest in the garden when mowing the lawn compared to women, who preferred planting and weeding.

"With these stats showing that most people feel happy gardening, the



RHS would love to encourage more people to try getting outside to garden away those winter blues," said Guy Barter, RHS Chief Advisor.

"Obviously January isn't a typical time you'd think about gardening, but there's lots you can do to start getting your plot

in shape for spring like digging up beds and lugging about pots, all of which are also great for releasing endorphins and cheaper than the gym!

What we say: A career that brings a seamless link to Nature, the great outdoors, to plants in all shapes, variations and sizes, gardening really cannot be beaten. In the age of food development, massive technological breakthroughs in horticulture, gardening is at a great hub of potential. From hand-on practical stuff to research, development, design, conservation and retailing and advising on the use of decorative and edible plants, horticulture now covers all bases.

What's more, gardening also offers great creativity, from garden planning and design, to projects which may seem outlandish and sublime, for instance the garden bridge over the Thames, there's so much in the way of opportunities to be had.



NEW PRODUCTS AVAILABLE IN-STORE

There is a new solution available to beat the dreaded box blight, which has been on the increase right across the UK over the past few years – Fungus Fighter Plus and Fungus Fighter Concentrate from Bayer Garden, writes Chris Day.

As Monty Don found to his great cost, Box blight is a fungal disease that causes leaves to brown and fall, resulting in bare patches (shown right). The spores spread quickly and easily and a plant can be destroyed in just a few days, with the worst damage often appearing in the late summer and early autumn, although at the Garden Centre we've heard of cases throughout the year.



"Box blight can be devastating as many people have discovered in 2014," explained Alison Mulvaney, Product Manager at Bayer Garden. "Containing our own active ingredients, which are proven to be highly effective, Fungus Fighter Plus and Fungus Fighter Concentrate are easy to use and have a broad spectrum of control."

Fungus Fighter Plus, a ready to use formulation, controls all major diseases of roses and ornamental plants including Blackspot, Mildew, Rust and Leaf Spot. It contains the Bayer active ingredients Trifloxystrobin and Tebuconazole and so protects, controls and eradicates a broad spectrum of diseases. The combination of these active ingredients also means Fungus Fighter Plus has both a contact



and systemic action, so it is fast-acting and gives protection of up to three weeks. It can be used indoors and out, in the garden, greenhouse, conservatory and home.



Fungus Fighter Concentrate is an advanced systemic fungicide in a super concentrated form that controls the major leaf diseases of Roses and ornamental plants such as Asters, Hollyhocks, Snapdragons and Box. It controls Blackspot and Leafspot, Mildew and Rust on Roses, and also Box Blight. It is available in Bayer unique touch-free easy dose bottle. Fungus Fighter Plus is the new formulation designed to replace Fungus Fighter and Fungus Fighter Concentrate is the new formulation designed to replace Systhane Fungus Fighter. For reference the older fungicides will be withdrawn later in the year.

10 TASKS FOR LATE JANUARY / FEBRUARY

START chitting your first early potatoes by placing them in a cool, bright but frost-free place. But just a minute, what does 'chitting' mean? Chitting is basically another word for sprouting. What you do when you chit your seed potatoes is basically to speed up the ageing process of the potato, by exposing it to light and, more importantly, a bit of warmth. This will cause the eyes of the seed potato to start sprouting. The sprouts should be small, knobbly, and green/purple in colour. If you end up with long, white coloured sprouts, it means there's not enough light, or you're sprouting potatoes sold for consumption.



So, why do we chit potatoes? The reason for chitting potatoes is that you start the growing process off before planting your seed potatoes, so once you do plant them out in the soil, you've given them a head start. In an ideal world, this also means that you will get an earlier harvest and a slightly better crop as well.

To find out more about growing potatoes in containers or in the ground please come along to our Potato Weekend over the 7th & 8th February, 10am-4pm each day.

Colin Randel from Thompson & Morgan, Jason Breed from Kings Seeds and Fritz De Zutter, fruit grafting expert will be joining us. We're also delighted that the Tingewick & Water Stratford Horticultural Society and the members of the National Vegetable Society will be giving advice as well. We have a comprehensive range of First, Second Earlies and Main crop varieties. To find out more, check our listing on our website at the following link.

http://www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk/acatalog/Index_Seed_Potatoes.html



FORCE rhubarb plants by covering the crown with a bucket or maybe an ornate forcing pot. This will produce tender pink stems ready for eating in about eight weeks time. Divide and lift old clumps. Elsewhere on the veggie plot, pre-warm the soil by covering with landscape fabric, sheets of black plastic or maybe some carpet underlay you may have lying around, especially if you like to follow the advice from BBC Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time's Bob Flowerdew! Get this in position several weeks before sowing. Single stretches of soil can be warmed by setting up a polythene tunnel

cloche and once you have them they can be used to protect crops when flowering (Strawberries) or by changing the cover to netting will help to keep the Cabbage White Butterfly caterpillar at bay too! Take time to check through any vegetables and fruit that were stored in the autumn, such as Carrots, Onions, Shallots, Swedes, Turnips, Potatoes and apples, because they can easily become infested with pests or become rotten or harbour mould that can spread to the rest of the stored crop.



RE-VAMP and energise your containers with some early spring bulb colour with the likes of Winter Aconite, early Narcissus 'Tête-à-Tête' (in 6-packs), Snowdrops (including elwesii, 'Flore Pleno' and nivalis) and Tulip 'Red Riding Hood' amongst others. We'll have small 9cm pots (£1.99 each or 3 for £5.00) as well as instant 1-litre pots (£3.99 each / 3 for £10.00) available from mid-January onwards. You can easily add further seasonal colour with the likes of Winter Pansies and hardy Violas together with Primulas (both Polyanthus and Primroses in a wide range of varieties and colours).



ADD some welcome early spring flowering plants over the next few weeks. For example bushy stock of Prunus 'Kojo-no-mai' in 2-litre pots which normally sell at £12.99 but will be on offer at just £8.99. The same Prunus, but as a highly attractive mini standard in 3-litre pots, offer particularly good value at £18.99 each, normally £23.99. Early February will also see new stocks of 3-litre Magnolias in a good range of varieties, including 'Leonard Messel', 'Stellata' and 'Susan'. Later in February look out for Spring Tip Callunas, always good value where foliage colour is required. Oh, and a real treat, the amazing alpine, Saxifraga kabashiana will be available as well (pictured above the name variety 'Love Me'). This relatively new form of Saxifraga, made up of a number of named varieties, was thought to be lost in cultivation but has been re-introduced from the Czech Republic. This Saxifraga produces masses of flowers in a wide range of pink shades in early spring which can completely smother the hard mounds of spiny leaves. It prefer a sunny or lightly shaded position in a gritty soil. It is best grown in a rockery, or in troughs or pots.



NO sooner we are thinking of what seeds to sow than the timely arrival of summer flowering bulbs makes their appearance at the Garden Centre. It's a good idea to start planning your pots and beds and where possible, secure stock before many of the good reliable varieties sell out. This especially applies to Lilies, Dahlias, Tuberous Begonias and the more choice bulbs such as, Crinum (pictured left), Eucomis, Nerines and Zantedeschia.

VISIT inspirational winter gardens to get both plant ideas and effective planting combinations for your own plot including the delightful and relatively local Evenley Woods for its spectacular Snowdrop Weekends throughout February and into early March www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk. The Sir Harold Hillier Arboreteum Winter Garden in Hampshire covers some 4-acres and is the largest winter garden in Europe

with over 100 genera and includes some 14 National plant collections including Witch Hazel and Dogwoods. Some of the show stopping plants featured in the grounds include Acers, especially the snake bark varieties and Prunus serrula. For more details about the garden, including opening times, visit www3.hants.gov.uk/hilliergardens

DESPITE the low temperatures and short daylight hours, there are some useful tasks that can be done. If the weather is mild, you can still plant roses and bare rooted hedges, shrubs, soft fruit bushes and fruit trees. If you have planted any trees or shrubs during the winter months, check that they haven't been lifted by frost. Regularly check any bulbs or corms that have been stored away for winter and make sure that they are not going rotten or showing signs of mould. Cut off any damaged tubers from dahlias. Ensure they have sufficient protection by recovering them with dry compost or straw.



LAWNS Now is an ideal opportunity to take petrol mowers in to be serviced and have the blades sharpened. Mowers will need to be in good working order before you start the new season's mowing. The main job in winter is to ensure that leaves and other debris do not remain on the lawn. Brushing them off will also remove any worm casts, thereby reducing the risk of weeds and prevent invading moss from gaining a foothold. Try not to walk on the lawn when it is frosty. This will crush the blades of grass, and result in them going dark and some of the grass may even be killed.

SCREEN out unwanted eyesores and buildings with an ornamental tree or two. Good screening trees which help provide a privacy barrier include Betulas (Birches), Malus (Crab apples), Sorbus aucuparia (Mountain Ash), and Holm Oak to name just a few. It's always a good idea to have a chat with the neighbours before planting any tall growing trees or a new hedge line so it's amicable from the beginning. Remember to position the trees at least 1m (3ft) away from fence and boundary lines. You will need to improve the soil well when digging out the planting hole and remember to improve the soil you remove with some well-rotted manure, garden compost or Tree, Shrub & Rose Planting Compost adding a handful of Bonemeal in as well. The tree roots can also be treated with some friendly-fungi RootGrow just prior to planting to give your tree the best possible start. Any plant growing relatively close to a fence potentially will be in a rain shadow, so do mulch around the base of your plants with a generous layer of mulch of compost or composted bark to help retain moisture around the tree's roots. We also have a great tree offer with our £39.99 each range now in a Two for £65 deal, saving £14.98. Trees included in this offer include Acer 'Flamingo', Cercis 'Forest Pansy' (pictured above), Pyrus salicifolia 'Pendula', Sorbus 'Pink Pagoda' and Prunus 'Kanzan'. All stock subject to availability.



ROUTINE If the surface of water features or a pond has frozen solid, and particularly if it contains fish, melt the ice with care. If the pond is stocked with fish and it does



freeze over, melt the ice by placing a hot pan on the surface, or install a pond heater (available in our Aquatic Department) or a water feature to prevent freezing occurring. Floating a ball on the water in cold weather can also delay freezing. However, never smash the ice, as the shock waves can harm fish. It is worth checking to see if any unwanted leaf debris, twigs and other material has been blown into the water and if necessary fish it out! If you are in a rural location do keep a wary eye out for

unwanted visitors such as Herons and cats.



FIVE MINUTES WITH MICK COLLINS (SUNDRIES SUPERVISOR)

Where do you live and perhaps describe your garden? In Buckingham. The garden has to be practical due to the kids; we have enough space for a much used trampoline, a shed for the bikes and a playhouse. This year (2014) I've incorporated some raised beds and borders, so I'm constantly looking for new plants.



This past year's favourite has been a fig tree (Ficus 'Brown Turkey'). I also love patio containers too!



Your favourite plant(s)? Fuchsias, Hydrangeas (pictured below right). Hydrangea 'Hot Chocolate' caused quite a stir in 2014) and the stunning foliage of Hostas.

Your favourite gardening activity? All of it, especially selecting plants for the borders and the pots.

What do you love about your job? Our customers, they've always got something interesting to ask.

Do you have a gardening tip you would like to share with us? Take a lesson from what didn't grow so well last year – I always do.



Your favourite edible? The good old fashioned potato.

If you have one Super Power what would it be? To make it rain when it's required and for the sun to shine when it's needed!



Facebook or Twitter? Twitter.

SUPPORT OUR CHOSEN CHARITY FOR 2015 - PACE

Buckingham Garden Centre's chosen charity for 2015 is PACE which this year celebrates 25 years of transforming lives. We hope all our customers can lend some support for this Aylesbury-based charity. PACE's journey began in 1990 in a small, rented cottage in Cuddington, near Aylesbury with three staff and four children. 25 years later, PACE is now a leading charity with an innovative and intensive programme of education and therapy that has transformed the lives of hundreds of children and young people with cerebral palsy and related motor disorders.



- **PACE** provides services support more than 100 young people from the age of 0-18, from baby massage to primary and secondary school places, from feeding and sleeping clinics to outreach services and family support. PACE's new Early Intervention & Independence Centre is a model of excellence that is setting new standards for intervention and support for very young children (aged 0-5) with motor disorders such as cerebral palsy. Early intervention and support is critical for children in their first years to ensure the best possible outcomes.
- **PACE** relies heavily on the generosity of donors and supporters to sustain their services. In 2013, 58% of PACE's income came from charitable donors.

Join the PACE BIG Walk! Saturday 9th May 2015

Lace up your walking boots and bring friends and family to have a wonderful day in the Buckinghamshire countryside and raise funds to support our vital services. This year's 20-mile walk will visit many of the Rothschild family properties in the Aylesbury Vale area. (A 10-mile option is also available).

Your support will transform lives and you'll have a great time with PACE too!



Visit the PACE BIG Walk webpage <http://bit.ly/PACEBigWalk>

To sign up, or if you have any questions, please contact the PACE Fundraising Team at info@thepacecentre.org or 01296 614287. You can also find out more about the charity's full programme on their website: www.thepacecentre.org



NEW CHICKEN HOUSES ON THE BLOCK



Check out for our new range of cosy, comfortable and high quality chicken coops in our Poultry Department at the Garden Centre. All models feature 3mm welded fox-proof wire. The range (pictured left to right) includes The Tingewick (£120), The Mayfair (£155) and The Gawcott (£138) and The Gawcott Run also costs £138. The houses and run are sold flat-packed but are pretty straightforward to assemble.



Remember we offer a full range of poultry accessories and care products, including competitively priced Layer Mash Feed and Layer Pellets. We also have bedding - straw and wood chips - suitable for rabbits and hamsters too! We'll also be stocking a new range of live chickens from mid February onwards.

Don't forget we can offer excellent advice on all aspects of poultry keeping so do please ask for information if you need it!

OUR GARDEN VISITS WILL INSPIRE AND ENTERTAIN

Our Garden visits always prove very popular and this year we have some very interesting venues lined up for you. However, we need a minimum of 20 people per visit so at the moment we need you to express your interest! Here's the list and the proposed times of visits. Once sufficient numbers have been reached then a date and price will be announced and customers registering will be advised accordingly.

- Beth Chatto Garden, Essex (summer).
- Barnsdale Gardens, Rutland (late spring).
- The Shrewsbury Flower Show (Friday 14th August).
- Highgrove (May/June).
- Steane Park Gardens (Self drive in late spring).
- Thenford Arboretum (Self drive in June).
- RHS Hyde Hall Essex (April).
- Buckingham Palace State Rooms and Garden Highlights (September).
- Hidcote Manor & Kiftsgate Manor (June/July). Two centre.
- Batsford Arboretum / Mill Dean Garden (two centre) Late September/October for early autumn colour.
- The Oxford Botanical Gardens / Harcourt Arboretum (guided tour) Late September. Two centre.
- Bransford Webbs Nursery (behind the scenes tour) and Webbs of Wychbold Garden Centre (April/May). Two centre.



WHAT'S ON

EVERY SUNDAY Enjoy the benefits of fresh fruit and vegetables as Aston Clinton-based L. W. Smith join us between 10am-4pm every Sunday.

SATURDAY 24th – SUNDAY 25th JANUARY THE BIG BIRD WATCH Bird populations are a great indicator of the health of the countryside. That's why it's so important to take part in surveys like Big Garden Birdwatch to keep an eye on the ups and downs of the wildlife where we live. Full details can be found at www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/



SATURDAY 7th – SUNDAY 8th FEBRUARY POTATO WEEKEND

If you need advice on any aspect of vegetable growing and fruit tree grafting then this weekend is for you. Our experts include Colin Randel, top potato expert from Thompson & Morgan Seeds and Jason Breed, veg expert from Kings Seeds. If you fancy seeing a fruit tree grafted then fruit expert Fritz De Zutter will be on hand to provide some practical guidance and a chance to have a go yourself. Free event. 10am-4pm each day.

WEDNESDAY 11th FEBRUARY Garden Centre Talk BGC's Chris Day looks at all aspects of Successional Planting. Usual venue in the Talks Room within the Restaurant from 4:30pm with the talk lasting approximately 60 minutes with time for questions. To book, please contact the Customer Service Desk, but there may be seats available on the day. Entry is free to Garden Club Members. £3 for non-members.



AND FINALLY CONGRATULATIONS TO EMILY...



As we announced in our last newsletter, Emily Wright, aged 10 from Padbury, won a national competition to design a Christmas card for the Horticultural Trade Association (HTA). She won £1,000 of HTA vouchers for her school, St James & St John Church of England School in Chackmore near Buckingham. Emily was presented with the prize for her school together with a large print of her winning design as well as a book on the artist Monet from the Garden Centre.

Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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Winter Opening Times: Mon-Sat: 8:30am-5:30pm, Sun: 10:00am-4:00pm