

November Newsletter

Eden Found



Our Plant Manager Chris Day recently returned to the Eden Project have another look behind the scenes.

The Eden Project, located in Cornwall, is a must-see horticultural wonder. Inspired and developed by entrepreneur and ex-record producer Tim Smit (who also did a rather nifty job restoring The Lost Gardens of Heligan), Eden offers all gardeners an awesome view of plants and how they provide that essential link, a thread if you like, to the well-being of our planet.

There's lots of educational stuff to be learned and it would be all too easy to say this alone is the gimmick, but it is not. Essentially, the two biomes (huge glasshouses made of a special foil, not glass), provide the space-age design. Incredible, when I first saw the Eden Project back in March 2000, the former 15-acre and 60-metre deep former china clay pit was just that, apart from the Meccano-like construction going on. These geometric Tardis-like structures have to be seen to be believed and from the outside look deceptively small, but hey, walk in and you'll be blown away by the sheer size and what each of these biomes contains. These biomes, if you didn't know, are already in the record books as the biggest conservatories in the world.

Nearly four years on and everything has taken shape. The smaller of the biomes contains plants from the Mediterranean, South America and California and is full of wonders. The other biome, at 50-metres tall, and large enough to

house the Tower of London, recreates the magical effect of the humid tropics, with plants from Amazonia, West Africa, Malaysia and the Oceanic Islands. Bold landscaping includes a dramatic waterfall that adds even more moisture to the atmosphere and elsewhere you see misting units showering the foliage (not the visitors) with life promoting H₂O.

Logistically, you really need to get to the Eden Project early to avoid the queues otherwise you might be confused for a crowd of worker ants as you criss-cross the pathways!

The plants are fantastic and even when you've seen fruiting bananas, breadfruits or 40ft high (and wide) bamboo plants, this is only part of the wonder. Cropping cotton plants caught my eye, as did fruiting coffee, pineapples and cocoa beans. Everywhere you look, information is available and all is clearly labelled – it's the sheer spectacle that will have you stopping to pinch yourself, just in case it's a dream!

Like my last visit, I had a chance to look behind the scenes at the nursery that grows all the plants for Eden. This nursery, about 5 miles away from the Eden Project, was up and running a whole year before Eden was started. All on view is incredibly fascinating, but the talk at the moment is the possible development of a third biome - the Dry Tropics Biome. Although still in its planning stage, this biome could be the most interesting yet, as it will be a celebration of how people and plants work together in desert environments and overcome the challenges presented. But before this ambitious project can start, Tim Smit may need to use the famous Sir Bob Geldof words, "We need your money - now!" We'll have to wait and see when this is likely to happen, but my guess is, given the number of visitors so far is excess of 7 million, it will happen sooner rather than later.

Unlike that other Dome in London, Tim Smit's vision has been an amazing success, and he has had funding to the tune of £43 million from the Millennium Commission. Tourism in Cornwall is booming, according to official figures and isn't it heartening that this success story is down to plants and our incredible appetite to enjoy them?

You can find more information on the Eden Project at <http://www.edenproject.co.uk/>

Topical Tips

THE dry late autumn has been excellent for autumnal colour on a wide range of trees and shrubs and, what's more, it's good the recent wet weather is making those all-important plantings possible. Don't be fooled when it comes to new plantings – give your plants a good drink to help settle them in and re-apply water as required to settle those roots.

GET a move on if you've still got bulbs to plant, especially tulips and daffodils. Remember to plant correctly – the general rule is to dig a hole for the bulb that is at least two and a half times the diameter of the bulb. If you plant too shallow you'll get poor flowering in years to come as the bulbs often turn blind producing foliage at the expense of flowers.

MANY tender perennials benefit from a cosy duvet for the winter period. If you've a gunnera (giant rhubarb) for example, why not use its leaves (before they completely go brown) to create a wig-wam structure over its crown – it'll keep out the excessive cold.

Other prone plants can be cosseted using a few layers of horticultural fleece over the plant. Never insulate or cover with plastic, as this will cause the plants to sweat and in turn freeze resulting in cell damage.

CREATE a welcome late show of colour by adding winter-flowering pansies and violas to edge bold groupings of ornamental (sometimes referred to as flowering) cabbage and kales, heathers and the richly-flowering skimmias.

LEAVE on the seed heads on perennials and shrubs to help feed the birds through the winter. Whilst it may look tidy to trim off all the spent blooms, left in place they will provide a useful and rich resource for a whole host of wildlife visitors.

COLOUR your winter with one of the superb winter-flowering clematis now becoming available. Select from the green-yellow blooms of *Clematis cirrhosa* to the flamboyant, creamy white bell flowers of 'Wisley Cream'. Combine these with brightly splashed small-leaved hederia (ivy) and you'll be on to a winning combination.

Sunny Sulgrave

A big thank you for all your support at the recent Apple Day event at Sulgrave Manor last month. It was good to see so many of you – enjoying the whole event (lots of tasting in the cider tent

noted!) on what was a splendid, if slightly chilly weekend.

According to the organisers attendance figures were well up on previous years so let's hope this annual event celebrating the apple in all its forms continues to gather strength and support.



Our display garden at Sulgrave Manor Apple Day.

Guess the Seed Competition

Now here's a puzzler! Can you put a name to the mystery seed pictured below? There are no clues to help, apart from the fact the seeds have come from the oldest 'plant' in the UK. There's a stonking hybrid cyclamen prize up for grabs this time around, so if you know the answer, do please e-mail us with the solution! The answer will appear in our next newsletter – promise!



Christmas

Have you been puzzling to think of an interesting idea for a Christmas present for a keen gardener. We have two relatively new Dandf products which may fit the bill. There is a tool store (which looks rather like a century box!) but is really useful for a small garden. It is only 600mm wide, 600mm deep (2ft x 2ft) and 1850mm high with half shelves and room for tools. With a 20 year warranty it sells at £175. Also a very

attractive wooden mini greenhouse with a 15 year warranty, 750mm wide by 635mm deep selling again at £175.

As our regular customers know we do not turn our shop into a Christmas Grotto, but only devote a small area to Christmas decorations and cards, but those we do have are very unusual and most attractive. Best to come and have a browse.



Christmas Trees

Christmas Trees are expected to be arriving at the end of next week. This year we will be stocking:

Fraser Fir. *Abies fraseri* has attractive soft green needles, which it retains well, and is the up-and-coming tree choice. New this season as a cut tree.

Lodgepole Pine. *Pinus contorta* comes from British Columbia and Alaska and has twisted, yellow-green needles. Excellent needle retention. New for this season as a cut tree.

Emerald nobilis. Originally from South Russia, the *Abies nordmanniana* fir as it's often called has light green floppy leaves. It is the most popular needle-retaining tree on the Christmas tree market. It has a great shape and is always bushy – perfect for decorating!

Tip: Use a Christmas stand that features a water reservoir – even good needle retention trees, like

the Emerald nobilis, will keep fresher if they are kept moist at the cut stem. Remember to regularly top up the reservoir right through the festive period.

Norway Spruce (potted). A containerised *Picea abies* is a traditional tree from Europe and is indigenous to Scotland. Very popular and being potted will retain needles over a longer period of time.

Tip: Needs acclimatisation if you intend to plant it out in the garden in the New Year. Water regularly and place the tree on a sufficiently sized saucer to catch the water.

Abies Nordmanianna (potted living tree). Excellent shaped potted Christmas tree with good needle retention.

Tips: Keep trees cool and avoid any direct heat source (radiators, open fires etc) to help extend the life of the tree. Like the potted Norway spruce, if you intend to plant the tree outdoors it's wise to delay this until the spring, when the soil is warmer. Ideally, keep the potted tree in a cool greenhouse, porch or well-lit garage to acclimatise it for the outdoors. Even horticultural fleece placed over the tree will help this process. Do make sure the potted tree is kept moist, even through the winter months.

Other tips: To assist in needle retention, spray the tree, *before* bringing into the house, with Vitax Christmas Tree Spray 'n' Save (aerosol, £1.99). You can successfully spray even when the tree is in its net.

Holly, wreathes and mistletoe will be available from early December onwards.



Saturday Opening

Since the business was founded on its site in Buckingham in 1970 the proprietors, Richard and Pauline Brown have always kept the business closed on the old Christian Sabbath, that is on Saturday. This they know was annoying for some customers and lost them sales, but despite this the business has thrived.

Now 33 years later they are hoping to pull back a little and get some more time for holidays before they are too old to enjoy hobbies such as mountain walking, searching for interesting flora and fauna or just exploring old beautiful cities and villages.

Their two sons David and Peter are now in the business and a General Manager, Steve has been appointed, and these three are keen to open seven days a week. Many existing staff wish to continue with their present six days working contracts, but some are happy to change and new staff have been taken on board. Training of new staff is now to the level that we are happy to announce that from November 14th the business will be open seven days a week.

The big advantage will be that the Sunday rush will now be spread over two days so hopefully we

shall be giving a better service to our customers. If you do want to see either Richard or Pauline they will not be there on Saturdays, but will leave it to their able team.

Bare Root Plants

The season for bare root plants is now upon us and we are busy filling up the selling area and the field with thousands of bare root hedging plants, soft fruit, fruit trees, ornamental and forest trees. Some varieties are not yet available so do give us a ring before making a special journey.

The quality of stock seems very good this year and despite the weather most plants have come well up to their anticipated height.

We have made further improvements in the area where the bare root and pot grown hedging is sold, by building a 'grand stand' at the base of the hedging area to contain all the pot grown hedging plus the ornamental shrubs and climbers listed in the catalogue. We shall be interested to hear any comments from you on the new lay-out.

The paths in the bare root area do still get muddy so do be careful when it is wet or raining!

BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES AND GARDEN CENTRE

Tingewick Road, Buckingham, MK18 4AE Tel 01280 822133, Fax 01280 815491

E-Mail: enquiries@buckingham-nurseries.co.uk Web: www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk

Winter opening hours: Mon-Fri. 8.30am to 6.00pm, Late night opening Thurs. till 7.30pm.
Sat. 9am to 5pm, Sun. 10am to 4pm.

SATURDAY VOUCHER

Valid for any Saturday in November 2003

ROSES REALLY CAN GROW ON YOU!

Buy any three potted bush roses (priced at £5.95) or miniature climbing roses (priced at £7.99) for just **£9.99 for 3**

(While Stocks Last)



SATURDAY VOUCHER

Valid for any Saturday in November 2003

INSTANT HEDGING THUJA

(approx. 3ft high) Buy 10 or more Thuja plicata atrovirens at a special price of **£5.50 each** (normally £5.99)

(While Stocks Last)



SATURDAY VOUCHER

Valid for any Saturday in November 2003

GREAT VALUE HEBES

including 'Golden Dome', 'Buxifolia', 'Cob Valley' and 'Vernicosa' normally £2.99 each. **3 for just £6.**

(While Stocks Last)



SATURDAY VOUCHER

Valid for any Saturday in November 2003

20% OFF WHEATGERM FISH FOOD

Tetra and Nishi Koi Wheatgerm food. The best food for feeding pond fish during winter months.

(While Stocks Last)

