

July Newsletter

Cats off

Just a reminder to get your Scardy Cat plants (*Coleus canina*) into key positions. We've found it's best to grow them in pots (rather than directly in the border) and then you have the greater flexibility of moving the plants around to where the offending cat is creating the problem and bother! Ideally, use a well-proportioned pot (6-9in (15-20cm)) in diameter and pot into multi-purpose compost. Plant growth through the summer is rapid and we'd recommend giving the plants a regular liquid feed using Phostrogen or Miracle-Gro.



Remember it is both the leaves and the blue flowers (pictured above right) that produce the pungent oil that the cats react to, so feeding will also encourage plenty of flower as well.

What's new...

If you are looking for a super-fast climber, reaching around 2.5m (8ft) in just one season, then take a



look at a new golden hop (*Humulus*) called 'Golden Tassels'.

What makes this variety special is the abundant crop of hop cones, produced annually, that gives the plant a rather traditional rustic feel. What's more, it's an easy plant to grow and requires no pruning or maintenance, except

cutting back last year's growth before new growth appears in spring. It will quickly cover walls and other screens.

Given the magazine and TV coverage and hype, it is interesting to see that herbaceous clematis are finally being given the necessary lip service they need to become popular and mainstream.

Not quite convinced? To tempt you we have *Clematis recta Warrensii* (creamy white flowers in July-September), *Clematis* x *eriotemon* 'Hendersonii' (nodding purple bells flushed plum, July-October) and *Clematis recta* 'Purpurea' (white scented flowers, July-September, against purple foliage) to whet the appetite and we are convinced



more will follow on the strength of these unique varieties. Herbaceous clematis die back to soil level each autumn, and, more importantly these clematis don't climb, which makes them more appealing compared to their clambering cousins! The other consideration is where to actually grow these plants – they meander through perennials and shrubs. Remember, all these clematis forms benefit from hard pruning in the autumn.

Big plants continue to dominate our sales... including the huge 65-litre Air Pot trees featured in our last newsletter, and new for this season, containerised Box and Yew. We'll have a wide range of ball-rooted stock from November onwards.

Another giant, but not quite on the same scale as the trees and hedging, is a new ornamental grass, purple millet. You may well have seen this on the TV, as it was seen for the first time at the Chelsea Flower Show a few weeks back. Yes, it's a brand new plant (developed in the USA) and has now arrived at Buckingham Garden Centre.



Its name is 'Purple Majesty' (shown left) and the tufts of upright, grassy purple foliage grow to roughly 5ft (1.5m) high and 20in (50cm) wide. During the summer each plant produces several heads similar to the well-

known sprays of budgie seed that you see on sale in pet shops, so it's bound to prove attractive to wild birds such as greenfinches. It isn't a difficult plant to grow, and it's good for beds and borders or containers, but it needs a sunny spot to develop its full colour - in shade it turns more of a bronzy green. What's more, it's worth looking out for as it goes well with all sorts of bedding plants such as *Nicotiana sylvestris*, dahlias or sunflowers – we predict we'll be seeing a lot more of it around before long. Expect to pay £4.99 for a 2-litre pot.

Catch us at Chenies Manor....

Yes, it's coming around to that time of the year again when hoards of keen plant buyers will descend on the Plant & Garden Fair at Chenies Manor, Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire on Sunday 18th July 2004. We shall be doing our bit at this great venue and building on the huge success of past years' shows.

This year's theme to our garden/selling display will be the New Romantic Garden (inspired, in part, by Chenies' own wonderful gardens which we urge you to visit), bringing together popular favourites but with a modern twist. We'll have some great offers on the stand, plus some plant introductions (see *What's New*) as well! We look forward to seeing you at Chenies and do come and say hello!

Tasks for July

SOW TIME Crack on and make a start of sowing some of the popular spring-flowering biennials such as Wallflowers, Sweet Williams, *Mathiola* (Brompton stocks) and *Myosotis* (Forget-me-nots). Either sow them into individual cell trays, or sow thinly into a standard seed tray containing multi-purpose compost. Move them on swiftly as soon as they have germinated. Don't let the seed trays become too hot; a slightly shaded location will yield the strongest seedlings. Do this and you will have robust seedlings ready for planting out in their final quarters by September.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Keep those successional sowings going on the vegetable plot, especially salad crops. Try the 'cut and come again' lettuce varieties if you're looking for something different for late summer salads. Winter brassicas need to be established soonest, so plant plugs or seedlings of Brussels sprouts, Calabrese, Savoy cabbage etc. Also Spring Cabbage should be sown from seed in July and early August.

MORE BERRIES Now is the best time to build up your stocks of strawberries by pegging down some of the vigorous runners and rooting some new plants. All you need is some 9cm (3.5in) pots filled with potting compost (either John Innes No2 or Multi-purpose). Plunge these around your strawberries where the runners would naturally fall. Simply peg down the runners into the pots where they can easily root. Use a u-shaped piece of wire to create the peg and make sure you keep the compost in each of the pots moist, to encourage fast rooting in the runners' new homes. Come September you should be able to lift and detach the runner from the mother plant and plant out a new row of newly rooted strawberries – delicious!

PATH WEED KILLERS If you still have weedy paths we have a 'buy one get one free' on all sizes of Pathclear sachets, while stocks last. Why not take advantage of this unrepeatable offer? This product is being withdrawn, but you have until September 2005 to use it up.



BUILD UP STOCKS July is a great month to take lots of cuttings, including pinks, carnations, and pelargoniums (bedding 'geraniums', (shown left), fuchsias (including hardy types), and penstemons, amongst others. Good gritty compost is what these subjects like, so make sure you add at least 10% horticultural grit to your John Innes Seed & Cutting Compost.

NEW PATIO If you have been busy creating your own patio heaven this year, don't forget to add a few essential magical ingredients to complete the picture. Citronella candles not only illuminate your area but they also help keep away mosquitoes and other uninvited pesky visitors.

Both low-voltage and solar lighting are a worthwhile investment - especially if you need to link your paved or decked area to the garage or other parts of the house.

Finally, don't forget to plant a few highly perfumed subjects to enhance the atmosphere. Consider Lilies, *Nicotiana sylvestris*, Chocolate Plant (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*), Pinks, *Heliotrope* (cherry pie), Patio Roses (miniature) and Ten-week Stocks.

GREEN SWORD Give your lawn a well-earned liquid feed if it's looking tired and parched. Apply it through either a watering can or a hose-end diluter. You will find feed applied in this way is unlikely to scorch the lawn which can be a problem with granular feeds if they are not applied carefully and you over-dose an area. However, now that we have had some rain to get the weeds growing again, it is a good time to apply Evergreen Complete feed, weed and moss killer. If you prefer a liquid formulation try Vitax Green Up Lawn Feed and Weed, but please note that it is now illegal to apply weed killers using a hose end diluter so it is best to use a watering can.

INVASION TACTICS Aphid numbers have been huge this summer, so do keep on top of their control by regular spraying. One of the best products is PBI's Organic Pest Control. It contains organic biodegradable fatty acids and it can be applied to all plants. It works on contact with the pest, so a thorough application is essential to hit the adults. You need to apply this product regularly – around 5-7 days is best.

It is similar in effect to the traditional horticultural soft soap which is sometimes recommended for this purpose. Unfortunately soft soap does not have clearance for use as a garden insecticide (by the government department DEFRA), so its use is actually illegal.

Using washing up liquid as an insecticide is also illegal for the same reason, and it could actually damage the leaves and flowers of your plants if not correctly diluted.

If you want to use something non-organic and more persistent try Ultimate Bug Killer. This effective systemic insecticide will also control difficult to control pests like mealy bug and whitefly.

Specials

Build up your stocks of fabulous fuchsias by taking advantage of our 'buy one get one free' deal on all 8cm and 9cm pots of fuchsias. The offer includes basket, bush and hardy varieties!

You don't have to be Gordon Ramsey (- not that you would!) or Jamie Oliver to enjoy herbs in the kitchen. We've put together a great deal so you can get even better value from our wide range of plants. Buy any 5 herbs for just £6, that's a saving of £1.45 (29p off each plant). Hurry – both of these offers are subject to availability and the selection may vary over the promotional period.

Feeding wild birds in summer

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) recommend that wild birds should be fed throughout the year. Previously it was thought that birds could find enough natural food for their chicks and that artificial food would be harmful. Recent research has shown that this is not the case, provided that certain precautions are taken. Birds will generally find natural food for their offspring where it is available, but artificial food can be invaluable in keeping the adults going.



Peanuts From April until September, whole peanut kernels must only be fed from wire mesh feeders that will not allow sizeable pieces of peanut to be removed, as chicks can choke on whole peanuts or large pieces. Do not use nylon nets, as birds can

catch their feet or tongues in them and be killed or seriously injured.

Suet Based Feeds. These are available in various forms including 'fat balls', blocks, fat filled half coconuts and granular 'treat feasts'. These are high in energy but they include a range of other useful nutrients. They are particularly useful in cold or windy weather when birds use a lot of energy. These foods have been endorsed by the BTO for feeding throughout the year. The RSPB leaflet 'Feeding Garden Birds' says to avoid feeding fat in spring and summer, but this does not apply to commercially produced products of this type from a reputable source. Problems can arise when people feed fats such as dripping or margarine, or make their own blocks from unsuitable ingredients. These can melt and then soil the birds' feathers. Even with suet based products it is wise to put them in a shady place in very hot weather to stop them going rancid. Always remove the nets from fat balls so that the birds cannot trap their feet.

Other Foods. A wide range of other food can be fed in the spring and summer, including mixed bird seed, sunflower seed (black is better than striped), niger seed and various types of fruit. Sunflower seed is an excellent choice as it is nutritious and attractive to the birds, but the husks are not eaten, which can be messy. Why not try 'sunflower hearts' (dehulled sunflower seed) which avoids this problem? The RSPB advises against feeding bread in spring or summer.

Herbaceous Sale

Very soon now, possibly in a about a week's time, we shall be having a sale of stock plants from our herbaceous perennial department. There will be some exciting bargains available, so do come and have a browse if you want some really wonderful plants to fill gaps in your garden.

New Sheds

In the past the sheds we have sold have all been individually made locally which means everyone can have the exact size and design they want, but the downside has been that the waiting time is sometimes as long as five to six weeks in the busy time. To overcome this we have taken on another range supplied by Halls/AGL, our greenhouse suppliers, and these will be delivered within two weeks even in the busiest time. They are standard sizes and designs and cheaper than the bespoke sheds, but the price does not include erection. If you need a shed in a hurry, these are certainly worth

considering, but the individually made ones are still available for our more patient customers.

New StoneFlair Paving and Accessories

We are pleased to announce that we are now stockists of StoneFlair quality paving. StoneFlair is the most exciting, fast growing independent brand name in the decorative landscape products marketplace. Numerous creative design combinations are available. StoneFlair's innovative products have won medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, Hampton Court and BBC Gardeners' World Live. StoneFlair has assembled teams of craftsmen from all over the UK, who have produced quality reproduction paving products from original old masters that have been specially selected for their character and authenticity. The Purestone paving range, which as its name implies is natural quarried stone, has been sourced personally from well-managed resources and has been hand selected for its dimensional consistency and quality.

We are holding in stock the following products in various sizes from the StoneFlair range:

- **Yorkvale paving** (Colours: Cotswold Brown and Weathered Stone)
- **Rivenstone paving** (Colours: Antique Gold and Burnt Sienna)
- **Purestone paving** (Colours: Desert Sand and Greyfell)
- **Patio kits** (from the Rivenstone and Yorkvale ranges)



- **Stonewood** (Sleepers, setts and stepping stones, *pictured above*)
- **Spheres, Millstones and Planters**
- **Stepping Stones and Pathwinders** (Co-ordinating colours)
- **Edging Stones**

- **Moorland Walling** (Colours: Antique Gold and Burnt Sienna)

In addition, we continue to stock a wide range of aggregates, pebbles, cobbles and rockery stones that will complement StoneFlair's extensive range. Should you require further details about the products, please pick up a brochure and price list from the Garden Centre or ask a member of staff for details. Products can be collected at the point of purchase or alternatively delivery can be arranged (standard delivery charges apply and an additional charge may be made to cover difficult sites or additional shifting of stone).

Aquatics

We have just had in a new batch of 5-7cm Japanese Koi, which are really beautiful colours. Possibly the most eye catching are the grey/silver ones with a silver dorsal fin which really appears to flash as they swim around. There are also gold and orange and silver fish – all very colourful and striking in their colours.

Summer is traditionally the season for holidays, but if you have a tank with fish in this can pose a problem for those who do not have family or neighbours who are willing to take over the feeding whilst you are away on holiday. Do not despair, you can go away for up to two weeks, as you can leave your fish with either a 3 day or 7 day pyramid fish feeder, or a mechanical 14 day feeder. These are suitable for tropical, coldwater or marine fish. There is also a 14 day pond fish feeder available.

Just ask anyone in our aquatics department and they will give you advice about holiday care.

One new product we have had in recently which we consider a great new line as far as safety is concerned is a Shatter Proof Aquarium Heater. This will automatically turn off if it is out of water. Anyone who has experienced a heater exploding when accidentally being lifted from water for whatever reason, will realise what an advance this is and for those who have not had this unfortunate experience, by investing a very small amount of extra money, they will never have to!

BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES AND GARDEN CENTRE

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Spring and Summer opening hours:

Mon.-Fri. 8.30am to 6.00pm, Late night opening Thurs. till 7.30pm.

Sat. 9am to 5pm, Sun. 10am to 4pm.