

Newsletter May 2005



Shop Changes

The dust has settled and the noise has subsided in the shop, the new shelving is up and most of the stock is in its new permanent position. Even we have difficulty in finding things sometimes, so we guess you, our customers, must be really lost, but do go and ask the member of staff on duty at the new Customer Service Desk to direct you to stock. There are also customer service desks in the Aquatics area and in the new Log Cabin in the plants area, so do take advantage of these facilities and bombard us with enquiries!



The expansion of the shop has enabled us to offer some exciting new lines – the card area has expanded to include gift items of stationery, a range of Portmeirion China all beautifully decorated with flowers or plants and a new bookshop is about to be installed.

For the children there are robust toys to play with indoors or in the garden – these have only been out a few days but we have seen many a grandparent going off with something from the stand and a smile of anticipated pleasure on their face.

Furniture

The weather has been so variable this spring and it is difficult to realise that soon we should have warm sunny days when a meal in the garden, or a good book and a glass of wine can be enjoyed. We mentioned garden furniture in the last newsletter but it gets more urgent now, so to encourage you to get organised in good time we still have the promotion of a 10% offer on complete sets of many types of furniture with the added bonus of free delivery for local customers. Hurry though – one early season offer we mentioned has now sold out, but there are plenty of other ranges still available.

One item we have been asked for frequently but recently have not been able to supply is topiary frames. We are delighted to announce that these will shortly be available together with many more interesting items in 'The Potting Shop' collection.

Fencing

As hedging specialists you must all be aware that we have always encouraged people to plant hedges rather than erect fences, but even we have to admit that fences are necessary in certain situations. In the past a fence was either picket, overlap or interwoven, but not now – the choice is endless and so imaginative that a fence can now be an attractive feature of the



garden. As so much more work goes in to making the decorative panels they are more expensive than the mundane old designs, but if you are going to be looking at it every day it is worth investing in a really

good design. If you are thinking of putting up a new fence or replacing an existing one just ask either at the customer service desk or at the outdoors sundries service point and they will show you the brochure illustrating all the designs of fencing and trellis which are available. With a choice of Dandf, which we have stocked for some time, and a wonderful new range from Direct Timber, there is sure to be something ideal for every garden.

Water Gardening

The water is now warm enough to start introducing new bog and pond plants and we have an excellent range of plants available including the early flowering ranunculus aquatilis (water crowfoot), which bears its pure white flowers from April to July, and hippuris vulgaris (mares' tail – not to be confused with the horse-tail a gardener's nightmare weed) with its feathery green foliage and good aerating qualities. Apart from plants it is now time to increase your stock of cold water fish so we would invite you to inspect our range of premium quality fish all of which are guaranteed.

If you have a small garden and do not have space for a pond it is possible to make an eye-catching self-contained water feature. To give you some ideas come and have a look at the display just outside the main shop.



Training successes

In order to provide the best customer service we have been investing in staff training and twelve members have recently studied for and gained Garden Care Certificates of Competence, 3 with distinction, six with credit and three with passes. The subjects covered are pesticides, insect and 'pest' problems, fungal problems, weed problems, lawncare, fertilisers, soils and growing media and integrated garden care. On Tuesday 10th, Mrs.

Gwladys Tonge, whose wonderful garden in Winslow is open by appointment in the National Gardens Scheme, will be opening our new Customer Service Desk and presenting the certificates to the successful trainees.

Spring fever

For many people, the merry month of May is often considered one of the best months in the garden with everything (well, it almost feels like it!) literally burgeoning into growth and bloom, warm sunshine to tempt you outdoors to start planting those favourite pots and hanging baskets with colourful bedding, or simply a good excuse (if you need one of course) to enjoy a good potter in the garden. It is the plants that take centre stage right now and certainly the wonderfully colourful Inkarho rhododendrons will be giving us great value as they burst into colour. As you know (or may be you didn't) this new range of rhododendrons are lime-tolerant so it means you can enjoy these late spring beauties in all soils. Stock has been selling well; so if you fancy giving one a try, don't delay!

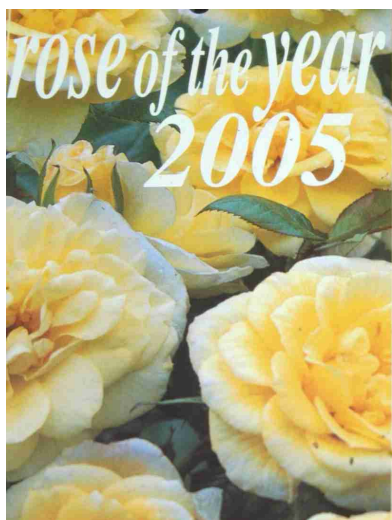


If you have the odd gap to fill (and the spring is the time when gaps tend to appear) then we do have some rather superb herbaceous perennial stock plants just waiting for a new home. These are plants we have nurtured on the nursery and we are clearing our beds to gain more space, so do come and have a browse – you'll find a bargain we guarantee!

Despite last year's lack lustre summer, this spring's trees have been magnificent. Cherries, crab apples, magnolias (especially the variety 'Susan') and the unfurling foliage of the Japanese acers (we've sourced some real beauties from Ireland this season) are just a few which really catch the eye. The popularity of growing Japanese acers in pots is ever-growing but do remember to select a location with dappled shade and plant with generous amounts of ericaceous compost for best results.

New plants & ideas

Quite a few new plants are making their debut this season – more will be released later this month at the world famous Chelsea Flower Show and we'll be telling you more about these next month. But if you simply cannot wait and want something really new, do take a look at this year's Rose of the Year 2005 called,



aply, 'Summertime'. This is a wonderful new patio climbing rose with excellent disease resistance. The informal creamy yellow flowers have a good scent and are produced throughout the summer, and are set off against dense, rich green foliage. It grows to a height of 2.5m (8ft).

Another plant you may well be enthralled by, especially if you like cottage garden plants, is Euphorbia characias 'Silver Swan'. This dazzling silver variegated evergreen perennial produces stunning silver

bracts in the spring. Introduced by the famous Notcutts nurseries a couple of seasons ago, it grows to just 60-90cm high and wide. We always find it a cracking seller and definitely one for your must-have list!

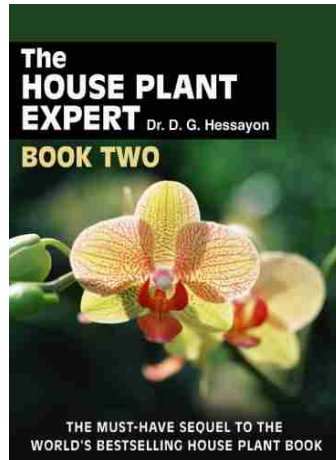
Well before the 'instant garden makeover' and before the Ground Force team became a national treasure; you could always rely on bedding plants to put the word 'instant' in to the world of gardening. We've been using the usual bedding varieties for decades:- white alyssum, blue lobelia and red salvia were the regime for bedding displays in the 1960's, '70's and even the 1980's. Our palette in colour and variety has changed over the years (thank goodness I hear you cry!) and we've become somewhat more selective in our choice of bedding plants, or half-hardy annuals as we should correctly call them.

We all want petunias that cascade, recover after a shower of rain and don't set seed – the Surfinias and Million Bells, marigolds that continue to bloom and don't need deadheading - the triploid forms, and best of all we want diversity and colour-theming when it comes to filling our hanging baskets. Bedding is one of the best success stories in the gardening world – why? Well, basically, like a few well-known pop stars, the range of bedding plants tends to re-invent itself to fit the fashion and trends of us gardeners. So, if you've been scared off by those pillar-box red geraniums (sorry, pelargoniums), then give them a second look – you just might succumb!



Win! Gardening books up for grabs!

Yes, this month we have 5 copies of the latest Expert Book release – The House Plant Expert: Book Two. This long awaited sequel (almost as exciting as the new Star Wars film) was released late last month. The original House Plant Expert, since it was introduced back in 1960, has sold more than 14,000,000 copies!! This new book, which should be used in conjunction with the original book, includes more new plants and there are in-depth features on bonsai, orchids and Roomscaping - that's using houseplants in a room to create drama, effect and elegance.



To enter the draw for a copy of the book, worth £6.99, and we've five copies to give away, simply answer this question;

Monstera deliciosa is the Latin name for which popular houseplant. Is it (A) Rubber Plant, (B) Dragon Tree, (C) Swiss Cheese Plant?

To enter, either e-mail us your answer, A, B or C to: plants@buckingham-nurseries.co.uk or, drop a postcard/sealed down envelope with your name, address, daytime telephone number and answer to our new customer service desk when you next call in.

Alternatively, write in to:
Houseplant Expert Competition,
Buckingham Garden Centre & Nurseries,
Tingewick Road,
Buckingham, MK18 4AE.

The closing date for entries is 13 June 2005. All winners will be notified in writing. The editor's decision is final.

And finally - QUICK TIPS FOR MAY

KEEP on top of preventative spraying. Roses, honeysuckle and grape vines are the three candidates that benefit most from a combined insecticide and fungicide spray – for aphid, mildew and black spot attacks. Spray every 10-14 days for best control and make sure the plants do not become dry and stressed at the roots.

CONTINUE planting out tender vegetables – tomatoes, sweet corn and cucumbers. Offer fleece protection if frost is forecast.

FEEDING is important at this time of the year, especially those early spring flowering shrubs (forsythia, syringa and cytisus) that have flowered well. Boost their growth with a feed of Vitax Q4 or liquid feed with Tomorite. Remember lime-hating plants, such as hydrangea, camellias, pieris and rhododendron will benefit from a specific ericaceous fertiliser. Make sure you apply this feed when the plants are moist at the roots.

GIVE your ornamental grasses a good tidy up to encourage new, strong growth from the centre of the plant. Congested clumps can be split now or in the autumn. Top-dress around your grasses with bark chippings to help conserve moisture and suppress any weed growth.

WHEN making up hanging baskets, do add some water-retention gel to the compost to help hold valuable moisture in the compost. If you are making up a number of baskets, do try to theme your colours for best visual effect – especially if all the baskets can be seen from the front of the property. If you can, once planted, baskets benefit from a spell in a porch, greenhouse or conservatory so the plants' roots can get fully established before being buffeted by the elements.

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SPRING & SUMMER OPENING HOURS

Mon-Thurs: 8:30am to 6pm, Fri-Sat: 8:30am to 7:00pm

Sunday: 10:30am to 4:30pm (open 10am for viewing)