

October Newsletter

New Catalogue

Our 2006-2007 Catalogue was published last month. It has a silver/grey cover which we thought the most appropriate colour to have for our Diamond Jubilee year. On the centre page you can read a brief history of how we have got to where we are today. We are proud of what the family has achieved, with the help of a splendid team of staff, and we look forward to continuing to improve our services in the future.



The first new item in our catalogue came almost by mistake! Last season a batch of 'Berberis darwinii' arrived on the nursery and immediately we knew there was an error. 'Berberis darwinii compacta' had been sent in by mistake but straight away we realised that we should be offering this gem of

a plant for a dwarf hedge. It has all the properties of its larger 'relative' Berberis darwinii but as it is even denser and only grows to about three feet (one metre). It makes a superb dwarf, prickly, evergreen hedge. We did not need to complain but rather to thank the nursery for this error, and this year we have included it in the catalogue as well as on the web site.

Another dwarf hedge new for this season is Nepeta Six Hills Giant. This upright form of catmint makes an informal evergreen hedge between two and three feet high. Like other catmints the foliage is heavily perfumed and it has the added advantage of whorls of scented lavender blue flowers all through the summer.

For years now we have been asked for Griselinia, especially by customers living near the sea, but have only supplied them as 'special orders'. Now the winters are so much milder, even in our exposed site in North Buckinghamshire, we feel that Griselinia will now happily survive the winter. We expect this handsome evergreen will mainly be purchased by customers in a maritime position, but it would be suitable for sites sheltered from cold, drying winds. It certainly is worth planting and there is a beautiful specimen living very happily very near the nursery.

For those wanting a dense evergreen, fast growing, thick hedge with subtle and unusual variegation, then Marbled White Laurel could be their answer. The leaves are large and deep green with white variegation which gives a marbled appearance, and the plant produces spikes of scented



white flowers in the spring.

Five new trees have been added, two for smaller gardens and the others for those with more space. By popular request we have added Cotoneaster Rothschildianus, a most attractive evergreen tree which only reaches about 15ft when mature. With white flowers in spring and yellow berries in autumn this makes an ideal screening tree for small gardens. The Contorted Willow responds well to being cut back hard and if treated in this way it will make an unusual dome of twisting yellow stems which are superb for flower arrangers. If left untrimmed it will grow to about 20ft x 20ft.

For those with more space there are the Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera), Claret Ash (Fraxinus angustifolia Raywood) and the Bastard Service Tree (Sorbus thuringiaca). The Tulip Tree has the most wonderful foliage which turns from rich-green in summer to clear yellow in autumn. It makes a splendid specimen tree eventually reaching 100ft in height. The Claret Ash has been given its common name due to its breathtaking autumn colouring on the leaves. It also bears pendant fruit clusters which provide good bird food for spring. The Bastard Service Tree is a naturally occurring hybrid between Whitebeam and Mountain Ash taking the good qualities of both parents. The white flowers contrast well against the dark green leaves, and in the autumn the tree will be colourful with its arching clusters of red berries.

For those wishing to plant some native hedging 'out of season' we have now introduced cell packs of native hedging with five different species of plants in each pack of ten plants.

In the ornamental shrub section we have introduced four new varieties of Butterfly Bush (Buddleja): Black Knight, Empire Blue, Royal Red and White Profusion. All are excellent varieties. Gardeners who already know the wonderful qualities of the Corkscrew Hazel are bound to be tempted with the Red Majestic Corkscrew Hazel with its eye-catching new purple foliage, and the purple nuts in autumn. Another eye catching foliage shrub is the Mexican Orange Blossom, Goldfinger. This has striking fragrant bright yellow finger-shaped foliage, plus the bonus of the fragrant star-shaped flowers which appear in late spring and again in autumn.

We have incorporated the ferns with the ground cover and perennial section this year and have added some interesting new plants to this section. Crocosmia Emily McKenzie and Lucifer never fail to give a real show of vibrant colour for a long period from mid to late summer; Emily McKenzie with bright orange and Lucifer with bright red flowers. Dianthus has proved to be a very useful plant recently as it is very drought tolerant. We have added four different varieties with



colours going from pure white through to carmine red, all heavily perfumed.

Euphorbias are always good structural perennials so we have added three really good clump forming varieties as well as offering the spreading variety, *Robbiaea*. Blackbird, as one would imagine from its name, has spectacular deep purple foliage, Redwing has foliage which opens green tinged red, then turns to blue-green, and Silver Swan with foliage grey with bright cream variegation and edged creamy-yellow.

Pink Day Lilies (*Hemerocallis*) do not seem so popular at the moment so we have taken out Pink Damask and added Sammy Russell with its brick-red flowers with a deep orange throat.

There are some wonderful new varieties of *Heuchera* available now so we have added four of these to our catalogue range. Amber Wave has really eye-catching yellow to amber foliage, Blackbird with dark brown ruffled leaves, Chocolate Ruffles with deeply cut mahogany-red leaves and Silver Scrolls with its foliage silver above and purple underneath. As these are evergreen they are most attractive all year round.

Finally in the ground cover section we have made a change in the Lesser Periwinkle varieties by taking out the Silver Variegated and putting in Gertrude Jekyll, with its neat compact habit and starry white flowers over green foliage.

In the Fruit Section we have some very interesting new varieties. A new cherry Vega produces cherries which ripen to white so the birds do not take them so readily. The compact Apricot Tomcot is a very ornamental tree which has the bonus of producing superb juicy fruits in late summer. As it is better to have two different varieties of almond for pollination we have added the Almond Ingrid, which is a very reliable cropper producing well flavoured good quality nuts.

Blueberries continue to be very popular, possibly because they are very ornamental shrubs and the fruit is so tasty. We are now offering four varieties, Patriot being the new introduction as this is tolerant of heavier wetter soils and colder weather.

We are sure the three new Hinnomaki Gooseberries will be popular as they are very vigorous and resistant to mildew. The Green and Yellow are for cooking only, but the Red is a dual purpose gooseberry.

Finally, a Walnut tree for the smaller garden. Rita is not cheap, but it produces excellent crops of delicious walnuts on a tree which only reaches about 25ft. With its deep green leaves, catkins in spring and fruit in the autumn it will make an attractive and productive garden tree.

An ideal food for all of the new and existing varieties is the new product Rootgrow Rootfood. Many of our customers have already discovered the advantage of planting with Rootgrow and this new Rootfood is the ideal compliment. It is one hundred percent natural, bioactive humate fertiliser and soil conditioner which will release nutrients in the soil to your plants.

Throughout the year we will have a range of internet specials and seasonal promotional offers - keep looking at the web site for the latest offers! We currently have The Easy Gardening Collection: Shrubs, Herbaceous, Climbers & Alpines, Grasses and Ferns.

These are great value plants supplied in 2 or 3 litre pots at £5.99 each (or £4.99 if collected).



Grab a bargain

Just a reminder, Buckingham Garden Centre offers discounted sale plants as and when available. These plants, often end of promotional lines, are always good value and useful if you have the odd gap to fill in beds and borders.

Special order requests - and big trees!

After a dry summer, tree planting has been delayed in many parts of the Beds, Herts and Bucks region due to the extended drought and Thames Water hose-pipe restrictions. Fortunately Mother Nature is taking care of the irrigation of our gardens so now is a good opportunity to consider any major plantings.

We are currently taking orders for larger trees (both 65-litre and large girth bare-rooted material). Do please come and have a chat with the Plant Information team as we can offer guidance and prices for a wide range of tree and special plant request stock for the new autumn-winter season.

Seeds

Again it does seem early to mention seeds, but like Christmas many gardeners do like to get organised early and all the next season's range is now in stock. This year we have the complete Thompson and Morgan range, plus a choice from Kings, Suttons and the Italian Franchi, so as usual we have the best range for miles around. For those who cannot visit the shop the Thompson and Morgan and Franchi seeds can be ordered on line. Visit the web site www.hedging.co.uk to make your choice.

We are also pleased to be stocking the Suttons award winning 'Wildlife Collection' which is a very attractive pack of five varieties of seed to grow to attract birds and other wildlife to the garden. It has Lavender Provence Blue which is aromatic and produces lots of nectar, Honesty (*Lunaria annuus*) with attractive flowers followed by silvery seed pods, Sweet Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) another nectar producing variety, Single Asters which attract butterflies and beautiful insects to its sweet nectar and Tall Yellow Sunflowers which will produce large seed heads which can either be left in situ, or cut and hung out later when food is scarcer. For every packet sold Suttons will donate 5p to the RSPB.

Christmas

It seems much too early to start mentioning Christmas, but people do like to get organised early so we thought we should give you a few ideas. Since last year those who have visited the shop will know we have extended our floor space and created a giftware area. This is geared towards the 'gardener' but does have some exceptions so it is well worth having a browse around. Very popular ranges there are the Town and Country footwear range including cloggies and wellies, Tayberry clothing and outdoor thermometers, clocks etc.

For Christmas gifts we have a range of hyacinths with glass planters, and amaryllis in gift packs, but also we have 26 different varieties of amaryllis available in non-gift packs with prices ranging from £4.99. Amongst these are mini varieties, hybrids and doubles. Amaryllis are such good bulbs to grow and they will flower year after year as long as you remember to feed them!

Apple Day - 21st/22nd October

For the third year running Buckingham Garden Centre will be putting on an APPLE DAY weekend where their customers will be able to celebrate the English Apple.

Central to the week-end will be the two apple experts who will be bringing lots of samples of wonderful, diverse varieties of English Apples, many of these a lot of us will not have even heard of and certainly not tasted. They will be handing out samples for people to taste and everyone will be encouraged to plant fruit trees in their gardens if they have room. There will, of course, be pot grown apple trees available for sale on the day, or there will be details available of bare root trees which will be ready when they are dormant later in the autumn.

People with unknown varieties of apples will be able to bring them along and try to match them to the many samples on display or the experts may be able to help identify them. There will, of course, be lots of good varieties of apples and fruit juices to purchase.

Apart from this there will be a Falconry Display and this is always of particular interest to children as some will be able to have the thrill of handling the birds themselves. Linked to this the RSPB will be there to talk to visitors about the wild birds in our gardens and how we can encourage and help them, and also BBOWT to talk about other wild life.

Members of the Drunken Monk Tavern will have their superb range of ciders and meads on sale (giving the Garden Centre staff a chance to do their annual stock up!). There will be an expert on pruning to give advice on the way to prune and the best tools to use for the job. Members of staff will be around to answer questions all week-end.

There will be a local artist in to show you how to paint your own personal piece of pottery, mainly mugs or

plates. Apples will be the theme for the week-end, and anyone will be able to try their hand at decorating, then the piece will be taken away for glazing and firing to be collected later. We will also have demonstrations of 'chain saw' carving, with the resulting ornaments and furniture for sale. Amongst the ornaments should be some carved apple cores!

On the Sunday only there will be representatives of the Buckingham Society present to talk to everyone about their exciting projects and a local bee keeper with his award winning honey and pure bees wax candles, plus his wealth of knowledge about bees and 'bee products' and their health giving properties. His enthusiasm for his hobby is wonderful to listen to.

Also on the Sunday for doggy lovers there will be the chance to bring their dogs in for a bath and groom and all profits will be donated to Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. Watching the dogs enjoying their 'beauty therapy' is entertainment in itself!

There will be a competition open to everyone and we are expecting the results of our challenge at Potato Day earlier this year. We are hoping for lots of 'Ugly, Funny or Enormous Potatoes' to come in for judging. We will be encouraging as many entries as possible as the more will definitely be the merrier.

As usual there is no entry fee so a good event to bring all the family to. There is wheelchair access to all of the events, and there will be special dishes on the menu in the restaurant to compliment the event.

Autumn bedding ideas

The balmy autumnal weather has resulted in a final flurry of bedding colour – dahlias, asters and pelargoniums are looking particular fine. As soon as these flowers fade, pots, beds and planters will benefit from a fresh splash of winter and spring bedding colour. We've a fine range of violas and pansies (winter-hardy), forget-me-nots, wallflowers (bare-rooted and cell-pack grown) and silver-leafed cineraria available.

Do pop in some dwarf bulbs to complete the picture. Grape hyacinths, tulips, February Gold narcissi amongst others are good contenders. You can successfully multi-layer your bulbs to help extend the display. Start by adding a few tulips on the first layer, cover with some potting compost and add another layer of narcissi followed by a final layer, around two-thirds to the top of the pot to add a few filler bulbs like grape hyacinths, winter aconites or crocus. Make sure the bulbs are spaced equally on each layer. The top planting can consist of a centre plant such as a conifer or skimmia, surround this with the likes of ornamental cabbage/kale, thymes, ajuga and add colourful pansies and violas to inject seasonal colour. Ivies can be used to cascade around the brim of the pot and flow over the sides.

If you are feeling lazy about pots, why not check out The Potting Bench display for inspirational planted

ready-to-go pots, or bring your empty pots or baskets in and we can re-set them for you. You'll also find a great range of colourful pumpkins (for carving and kitchen) and gourds as we run up to Halloween at the end of the month.

10 gardening tasks for October

1 - Plant for autumn colour. The hot weather of the summer may feel like a dim and distant memory but now is the time to make sure your beds and borders are prepared to give you colour and interest over the next few months. There are plenty hardy plants to select to do just that, perhaps a new tree such as Amelanchier, Liquidamber or Fraxinus. Shrub-wise don't miss out on the coloured foliage of Nandina domestica, Cotinus, Japanese Acers and Rhus Tiger Eyes. Autumnal border gap-fillers include the floriferous Japanese anemones, rich coloured foliage of the Heuchera family as well as late colour from Crocosmia and Geranium macrorrhizum Album.

2 – Daddy long legs invasion. The humble daddy long legs made the news the other day with huge numbers being reported across the UK. According to Dr Kevin Moffat, an expert in insect behaviour at the University of Warwick, "This is peak daddy long-legs season when they hatch into adults. They don't feed and they don't bite but what they are doing at the moment is mating and laying eggs."

Daddy long legs are the leatherjacket adult and each female may lay several hundred eggs from June onwards and these take a fortnight to hatch. The grubs feed through autumn, winter and spring as leatherjackets - or larvae. The insects don't feed as adults, surviving on what they've already stored.

So, if your lawn is full of nasty brown patches, it could well be the effect of these and chafer grubs feeding on your lawn roots. Help is at hand for gardeners with the recent launch of Provado Lawn Grub Killer, a chemical based on the chemical found in Pravado Ultimate Bug Killer, so it's going to be effective at control. You do need to apply at first signs of damage and you do need to follow the instructions carefully to achieve the desired results.

3 - Gathering fruit. Check if early-ripening apples are ready for harvesting by cupping them in your hand and gently lifting them upwards to see if the fruit comes away easily. If not, leave it to ripen further on the tree. Most early-ripening apples need eating straight away, as they do not store well. Remember if you need further apple advice pop along to our Apple Weekend 21-22nd October.

4 - Potty time. Empty pots and baskets of summer bedding material and plant up with a new selection to

provide colour and interest right through autumn and into spring. Use one or two small evergreen shrubs, such as skimmia or dwarf conifers, as structural features within the pot, filling in around them with seasonal bedding and dwarf bulbs to provide flowers during mild spells and into the early spring.

5 - Prepare your Mediterranean plants for winter. Temperatures are falling as we head towards winter, so it is time to wrap up and pamper your tender tribe of exotic plants before the cold weather hits them for six. If you have olives trees and hardy palms outside, it is best to move them to a protected corner of the garden, out of the winds, perhaps close to house, but somewhere you can keep a close eye on them. Plants such as Bougainvillea, Oleander, Tender Palms and Bananas should be given light, frost-free conditions throughout the winter.

6 - Bulbs to go. Continue planting bulbs for spring-flowering displays. Give priority to daffodils, crocuses, hyacinths, fritillarias, erythroniums, irises and small bulbs in rock gardens. Tulips can be kept back for planting later this month and even into early November.

7 – Dahlias. Lift and store dahlia tubers as soon as their foliage has been blackened by the first frost. Cut the hollow stems back down to about 10cm (4in) above the tuber. The tuber should then be stood upside down to allow any water to drain out, then stored in a dry, cool but frost free position

8 - Prepare for big moves. Autumn is a good time to move established conifers and evergreen shrubs. Dig them up with the largest root-ball you can manage. Prepare the new planting site well and keep them well watered until they have re-established. Protect sensitive varieties from drying winds by surrounding with a netting wind-break. Apply Rootgrow ® to the immediate soil area making sure the friendly-fungi granules are in intimate contact with the roots of the plant being transplanted.

9 - Compost it! During October and November the garden often produces more waste than you can cope with, so now is the time to consider investing in a shredder and additional compost bins. Recycling organic material by composting it is always preferable to having bonfires, as any neighbour will remind you!

10 - Down on the plot. Hardy varieties of peas and broad beans can be sown now. Most benefit from cloche protection in winter, especially in very cold areas. And, finally, plan now for autumn and winter fruit planting, by ordering new varieties of fruit trees, bushes and cane fruits. Reminder: our fruit (both top and soft) becomes available bare-rooted from the latter end of November.

BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES AND GARDEN CENTRE

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SPRING & SUMMER OPENING HOURS

Monday-Saturday: 8:30am to 6.00pm, Sunday: 10:30am to 4:30pm (open 10am for viewing)