

Weather or not

This time last year, unbelievably, many part of the UK were under hosepipe restrictions. Alas, the weather has made life incredibly difficult to gardeners and brought heartache to those families hit by flooding in some parts of the country, highlighting just how cruel the weather can be.

The unseasonable sunny and hot April brought plants forward not just days but weeks (we suspect up to three weeks in the case of some shrubs such as ceanthus), but this was followed by the damp, miserable and cool months of May and June.

On the positive side, plant growth, especially for newly established shrubs, trees and perennial stock has been brisk and responsive. Less so alas on vegetable crops where growth has been poor as temperatures have slowed down growth to a level we would expect to see in March or October!

Last year, slugs and snails were noticeable by their absence, whereas this season, the battlegrounds have been clearly defined since mid-May! I think the most important aspect when we have a topsy-turvy season such as this is to try and cut your losses. If it means re-sowing a row of a crop then accept this, and act on it. If tomatoes have failed or look sick, it might be worth starting again. Even early July isn't too late to re-plant, re-sow or replace many crops. We gardeners just need to dust down our pride; not everything in the garden has to be a disaster even if it sometimes just feels like it!

Good garden hygiene really does pay off through summers like this, so keep your plants tidy, dead-head flowers to avoid rot and keep the plants clean by removing any yellowing or decayed foliage. Make it part of your routine. Do make sure there is plenty of air circulating around your crops – poor ventilation, even around a single plant, can cause rots, mildews and moulds to take hold.

Be careful on the feeding front; avoid high nitrogenous fertilisers but go for more balanced feeds such as Miracle-Gro, or high potash feeds such as Phostrogen or Tomorite. The high rainfall also means that many plant nutrients will have been washed out of the soil, so consider re-applying granular feeds to help stimulate root growth, often the key to good development.

Spraying for preventable diseases like blight on tomatoes and potatoes, or mildews on honeysuckles and grapevines is worth considering. For blights, Murphy Traditional Copper Fungicide or Bayer Dithane 945 is effective, provided it is applied at first signs of the disease and then every 14 days.

Join us for a visit to Ball Colegrave's Summer Open Evening

Buckingham Garden Centre is organising a visit to Ball Colegrave to see their spectacular trial grounds, colourful gardens, patio displays and possibly the largest display of hanging baskets and containers in the UK! We guarantee you will be inspired by the 4-acre display of horticultural delights and also the chance of a sneak preview of the plant varieties that will be available in garden centres from spring 2008.



July 2007 Newsletter

Weather or not

Ball Colegrave's
Summer Open Evening

Hampton Court
Highlights

Rose Fever

Shop News

Dates for your Diary

Your Most Hated
Garden Object

10 gardening tasks for
July

**Buckingham
Garden Centre**
Tingewick Road
Buckingham
MK18 4AE

Telephone:
01280 822133

Fax:
01280 815491

www.hedging.co.uk

SUMMER OPENING HOURS:

Mon. - Sat.:
8:30am - 6:00pm,

Sunday:
10:30am - 4:30pm
(Open for viewing from 10am).

Chris Day will be your host for the afternoon and he will be providing some facts, trivia and seasonal gardening advice to help your visit as well as running a prize raffle draw.

We are offering tickets for just £6 per person; this includes entrance and return coach travel to Ball Colegrave HQ at West Adderbury in Oxon.

Please note spaces are strictly limited, so book early to avoid disappointment. Closing date for bookings is 1st August.

Here is the itinerary for the afternoon visit on 8th August 2007:

3.00pm Assemble at Buckingham Garden Centre Car Park.

3.10pm Leave by coach for Ball Colegrave in West Adderbury.

4.00pm Arrive at Ball Colegrave. Plenty of time to enjoy the trial grounds, greenhouses, patio displays and hanging baskets.

7.00pm Depart from Ball Colegrave.

7.45pm Arrive back at Buckingham Garden Centre (for onward journey).

* Please note all times are approximate and are subject to alteration.

Useful information: Light refreshments will be available for purchase at Ball Colegrave, but you are welcome to bring your own food and drink if you prefer.

Don't forget to bring your camera and notebook to capture those inspirational plantings and new varieties.

If you live locally to Ball Colegrave and do not need the services of the coach, please contact us and we can organise a ticket for you.

To book, please call Customer Services on 01280 822133 or pop along to the Customer Service Desk. Full payment must be made at time of booking.

Hampton Court Highlights

Just a quick round-up from Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. The gardens and plants were amazing given the challenging build-up to this wonderful Royal Horticultural Society's People's show. The show gardens, some 10 of them achieving Gold Medals, were better than ever, some wonderful themes and the best were those centred around, yes you've guessed it, vegetables and fruit. Many of the smaller gardens caught the spirit of the mixed cropping border, complete with recycled materials set in clever uses of space.

Children played a role with a number of the gardens and their creativity and imagination shines through with elements such as gigantic spider webs, winking scarecrows and pebble mazes.



Garden designer Chris Beardshaw worked with around 500 children from over 30 schools around the country to create The Growing Schools Garden – Learning Outside the Classroom, with the support of the Department for Education and Skills. To enter the garden children walk down a slope where perennial plants tower over them and a raised pond allows them to see water insects at eye level. Some trees are even upside down! The multi-sensory garden boasts a straw wattle and daub nature-viewing hide and next door there are vegetables to eat forever. There is even a giant ant clambering over a roof, lonely cardboard cow, sheep and some chickens in the smallholding next door. Chris's garden collected Gold as well as best Garden in Show.

My favourite, strangely enough this year, featured fantastic waterside and marginal planting in A View Across The Water, designed by Simon Harman. A real dreamer's garden is set around the edge of a small lake, with a small jetty – the perfect viewpoint for the hills in the distance.

For true garden romantics, it was inspiration to see A Midsummer Night's Dream Garden; it captured the spirit and essence of Shakespeare's world. This garden, inspired by one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, summed up the nostalgic element to the show and the crowds loved it. There were a number of gardens which took you back in time, and it really highlighted the different trends in plants from dahlias for cut-flowers to growing vegetables in regimented lines in allotment plots. The modern twists would be, of course, to weave the flowers and vegetables together, normally in raised beds or informal borders.

Hampton Court Flower Show sported a new layout this year, and I suspect it won over new fans, if not for the weather, but for its commitment for great garden ideas and horticultural excellence, as well as offering good value for money to the visitor.

Rose Fever

Staff at the Garden Centre do get out and about from time to time, and in early July we ventured to David Austin Roses' HQ near Wolverhampton, writes Chris Day. Trade days are great opportunities to look behind the scenes and see how our suppliers operate and we certainly were not disappointed by what we saw. First, a whistle-stop tour of David Austin's extensive breeding programme. It takes around 9 years from the seed selection process to launching a new rose variety.

Some 150,000 crosses are made under glass and from these over a quarter of a million seedlings are grown.

The first seedlings will flower after only 6 or 8 weeks. Each rose will be unique. The diversity of roses used in the English Rose breeding pool helps to create great variety in their offspring. A large collection of old roses, species roses and modern roses are used, together with the best parent plants from the English Roses.

As well as beauty and fragrance, the selectors working with David Austin look for an almost indefinable characteristic: grace. This is the special quality that sets the English Roses apart from other roses.

The most outstanding seedlings continue to undergo up to 8 years of trials. The seedlings are budded onto a high quality rootstock and will be assessed over the following season. The ones which show the most promise are multiplied by further budding each year. This means that each potential new variety can be assessed in larger quantities.

In the final year of trials, each seedling will have been transformed into a row of 200 plants and in the trial field these look stunning. It seems amazing that these lovely plants will be reselected until only the very best five or six remain and will be launched at the Chelsea Flower Show. As you can see, a slow yet incredibly rewarding process, which makes the £13 price tag seem rather good value for money!

After the fields, and a chance to observe budding of the stock, it was off to the gardens to see the roses in all their full glory in the garden setting.

After lunch we were shown the business end of David Austin Roses, the hub of processing orders – both bare-rooted plants (for retail customers) and those distinctive green pots sold to garden centres. The whole process was fascinating and showed great professionalism and attention to detail. David Austin is a truly a global brand with budstock being shipped to the United States, Europe, China and even Russia! The market place for roses is, at last, changing and new products are being developed from new varieties to the way stock is grown for us, such as roses grown in larger pots for instant effect. What is obvious is the rose market is definitely redefining itself, which in a world seemingly dominated by plants from the Mediterranean can only be good news for the traditional British gardener and rose lovers alike.



David Austin's technical manager, Michael Marriott talks about roses highlighting many of the cultural do's and don'ts gardeners should follow for success.

Here are a few of his top tips...

- Plant bush, cluster-flowered and English roses, where possible, in groups of 3 or 5, like you would with perennials to create a 'block of colour'. You achieve much better effect than single planting.
- Plant roses deeply, always bury the budding point making sure it is covered with soil.
- Avoid rose disease by selecting good, disease resistant varieties – just check the label for this information. If you have to spray, use organic alternatives and practise good garden hygiene.
- Always prepare your soil well for roses – work good, liberal amounts of well-rotted manure into the soil prior to planting. Roses like moisture around their roots and it is important that they don't become stressed.
- Rose re-plant disease can be avoided by simply double-digging over the site, adding generous quantities of manure and fertiliser such as David Austin Rose Food, which we now stock, and then treating individually the roots of the new rose bushes with RootGrow ®.
- Pruning does not have to be exactly to the book. Reduce the height by half after the first flush to encourage further blooms (on repeat-flowering varieties) and again late October to help prevent root rock. Clean cuts are essential but don't worry too much about getting the cut angled from the bud.
- Try and grow your roses amongst perennials where possible – not only do they look good; it will also mean less likelihood of disease and pests.
- Mulch, mulch, mulch... Maintain moisture around your plants with a generous mulch applied in late winter and again in the autumn.

Shop News

We have decided to take on a **new range of clothing** and this is now appearing in the shop. The quality is good and the prices right, but the weather may not be for the range of shorts and summer shirts and blouses. However, there are also some good padded waxed coats, fleeces, hats and body warmers! We have a half price sale of the Tayberry range so it's worth looking there as well.

For those who enjoy a good walk, either round your garden or out and about we have a range of very attractive, good quality **walking sticks**, or for those who enjoy a good read come and browse round our range of books, not just on gardening but many other interesting subjects. Two of local interest are 'The Checklist of the Plants of Buckinghamshire' by Roy Maycock and Aaron Woods, and 'Castle House' by Julian Hunt and John Clarke. The range changes regularly so it's always worth taking a look when you are in.

Summer should be the time for garden parties, barbecues and generally enjoying the fruits of your labours in your garden. To help you prepare some delicious meals and snacks for your guests there are some **good recipe books** and also a mouth watering range of chutneys, relishes, dips, sauces, biscuits, bruschettines, as well as local honey (so good for hay fever sufferers). Also the old fashioned sweets such as Bulls Eyes, Humbugs and Pear Drops would make a talking point.

Seasonal bargains – on most log cabin sold in July we are offering a 5% discount, so if you have been toying with the idea of treating yourself to that 'extra room' in the garden now is the time to buy. Also we will be introducing a new range of very good quality greenhouses in September so to make space for new show buildings, two of our existing show building are being offered at very good prices.

Seasonal reminders – a good way to eradicate flies and wasps is to use an electronic fly swatter 'tennis racquet' - really effective and satisfying! Or you can set a sweet liquid glass trap either hanging in a tree or free standing. Alongside it is always a good idea to have some citronella candles handy to keep your outside living free from unwanted visitors.

Dates for your Diary

Sunday 15th July – Chenies Manor Plant and Garden Fair from 10 am to 5 pm. A superb setting for this exclusive Fair where there will be rare and exceptional plants, topiary and trees from specialist nurseries. Also pottery, sculpture, antique garden tools, music and children's entertainment. Chenies Manor is off the A404 between Chorleywood and Little Chalfont. Entrance is £5, with children under 15 at half price and this includes entrance to the wonderful Manor Gardens.

Apple Day 2007 at the Garden Centre will be 27th/28th October – a little later than usually but we do not want to clash with the Fair at Stowe the week-end before.

Your Most Hated Garden Object

Back in June we asked you for your most hated garden object. The mail-bag was a little sparse of entries, but we selected Pat McLernon of Winslow, Buckinghamshire and her entry.

Pat's most hated outdoor garden object is those black and white terrier garden ornaments with only their rear-ends exposed and as Pat continues: "Their front-ends being, one hopes, slowly asphyxiated!" Well, Pat nothing beats animals to get tongues wagging!!! Great fun suggestion and a £10 garden voucher is in the post to you. Thanks to everyone who entered.



10 gardening tasks for July

PATIO Place conservatory plants, such as citrus and palms, outside now that it is warm. Do make sure they receive some dappled shade at the start to help acclimatise to the brighter, more intense outdoor light levels. Deadhead bedding plants and repeat-flowering perennials to ensure continuous flowering. Check plants for unwanted insects, especially greenfly, whitefly and lily beetles and use Provado Ultimate Bug Killer if spotted. Do not use Provada on citrus if you intend to eat the fruit.

ROSES As soon as the first flowers have finished, be prepared to lightly prune back the flowered shoots to help encourage replacement growth and hopefully more bloom to develop. You could help this growth along with some Bio Toprose or Vitax Q4 sprinkled around the base of each plant.

SAVE SEED Start collecting seed from plants you want to grow next year, especially annuals such as calendula, poppy and love-in-a-mist. Perennials and biennials can also be grown from seed, but will take a year to flower. F1/F2 hybrids or named varieties that have been propagated by cutting may not come true from seed.

Some seeds are best planted just after collection and others, such as some alpines and trees, may need specific climatic conditions to break dormancy. If unsure, then sow seeds in 'batches', i.e. one immediately after collecting, one in winter, and one in the following spring. Be patient, as seed emergence is often sporadic.

CROPPING MATTERS Continue to peg down strawberry runners if new plants are needed. Continue to tie in and train new blackberry canes. Keep new canes separate from older fruiting canes to ease later pruning. Cut back side-shoots on gooseberries to four or five leaves, or just beyond the fruit clusters. Red and white currants can be pruned in the same way. There should be lots to harvest in the vegetable patch, including spinach, peas, beets, carrots, salads, potatoes and globe artichokes. Shallots and spring-planted garlic may be ready as well. Continuous harvesting will aid healthy development, and help to avoid diseases, disorders and bolting. Remember to catch-crop between slower developing crops or as space is vacated with lettuce, spring onions and radish.

PROPAGATE Take semi-ripe cuttings of shrubs such as Choisya, Hydrangea and Philadelphus. Root them in pots of gritty compost (I prefer a 50:50 mix of Erin Multi-Purpose and coarse horticultural grit) in a cold frame or even with a clear plastic bag tied over them. If you can find non-flowering shoots on pelargoniums and fuchsias, this month is perfect to build up numbers for next year.

DON'T FORGET! Give woodwork (fences, arbours, pergolas and trellis work) a lick of paint or preserver, while the weather is dry. MMC Patio Magic can be used before painting to remove algae and as a fungicidal wash.

WISTERIA WISDOM To encourage flowering spurs to form on established wisteria, cut back all wispy side-shoots to within five or six buds from the main branches. Balance the prune with a generous feed of either Sulphate of Potash fertiliser sprinkled around the base of the plant and along the strip of soil if planted close to the house or fence. Alternatively, you can use Tomorite fertiliser watered around the root zone. You should apply both at least twice over the next couple of months to assist in the formation of flower buds.

HERBS A busy time in the herb garden just now with harvesting of lemon balm, summer savory, hyssop, tarragon, thyme and lavender amongst many. Make sure deadheading is maintained where flowers have faded, unless seed is to be collected. Cut flowers such as lavender and cornflower for drying. There is still time for sowings of herbs such as basil, chervil, parsley and rocket.

ROUTINE Tie in climbers and ramblers as they grow. Prune deciduous magnolias if necessary, but only to shape them. Prune June-flowering shrubs such as Philadelphus and Weigela after flowering. Ensure newly planted trees and shrubs do not dry out, especially plants planted close to walls, fences and established hedges. Despite the high rainfall, plants in rain shadows do need to be checked for watering.

BANISH WEEDS Most perennial weeds are best dealt with in the summer when the weeds are in active growth, or even better if they are flowering. Digging out often works, but applying a weedkiller can be more practical, particularly for large areas. Products containing glyphosate will kill the roots, as well as the top growth. However, glyphosate is non-selective and plants you wish to keep should be protected, either by covering them, or by applying it with a paintbrush on the plants you wish to banish.