



Hydrangea macrophylla 'Hopcorn'

**HOORAY FOR HYDRANGEAS
THE MUST-HAVE SHRUB FOR THE SUMMER**

**JULY/AUGUST
2014 ISSUE**

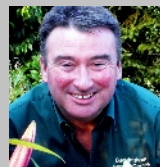
**WHAT'S
INSIDE**

Keeping ponds crystal clear, Five Minutes with The One Show's Christine Walkden, Stunning Steane Park Gardens, Grow your own spuds for Christmas, Top 10 tasks for July/August and much more...

Gardens mean different things to different people. Gardens may be about beauty, relaxation, to produce food and a place to entertain. For many they are a natural escape and a connection with nature and this is essential in our ever-busy, digital, fast-moving, smartphone world. However, what's clear is our next generation of gardeners – our children – appear to be getting the message that growing plants, sowing seeds, cultivating some veggies and engaging with nature is actually 'cool'! At the Garden Centre we certainly connect with schools; from our Potato Challenge Competition to encouraging local school visits where children can see and get some hands-on experience at the Garden Centre, its sensory plants, a chance to handle seeds and plant some, discovering the world of fish and water gardening as well as seeing where eggs come from in our Poultry department. We've welcomed a fair few schools this year and you'll see some of the results of our Garden In A Seed Tray Competition in this newsletter.

So, as the summer holidays progress do try and connect with your children and grandchildren in the garden, they'll like you all the better for it in the future, I promise you. So, whatever the weather, enjoy your garden.

Chris



STEANE PARK GARDENS REVEALED

Over twenty Garden Centre customers enjoyed a delightful afternoon visit to Steane Park Gardens, just over the border in Northamptonshire.

Despite a rather showery week, we were lucky with the weather as we arrived at Steane Park in bright sunshine, writes Chris Day. Maps were given out and a short background potted history was given by Steane Park's Head Gardener, Tony Bloomfield. We walked through the field and onto the front lawn of the house where we were welcomed by Lady Connell, who explained the history of the present 17th century house, built for Sir Thomas Crewe, then Speaker of the House of Commons. Lady Connell also told us that when she and Sir Michael moved into Steane Park in 1990 the garden was in an extremely dilapidated and overgrown state; this is very far from its present condition.



We were then taken on a tour of the garden by Tony, beginning with the mixed border and a newly designed and planted rose and lavender knot garden set in the well manicured lawns. This features standard roses 'Iceberg' and the compact and floriferous shrub rose 'Little White Pet' and lavender *L. augustifolia* 'Little Lady'. As well as plant interest, the garden has interesting buildings and structures. Set away from the main house is the

delightful Chapel of St Peter built by Sir Thomas Crewe in 1620 in memory of his wife.

The garden tour took us on a good 80 minute journey. Highlights included a new meadow roof on one of the outbuildings, the lake (with the essential duckhouse) and fishponds as well as the 'Monet bridge', and jetty with attractive seating. There is a Moon Gate, a Folly built by Sir Michael and Lady Connell, a newly renovated 17th century vegetable garden featuring raised beds, all this apart from trees and wildflowers and some attractive herbaceous borders to the front of the house. The



extensive tunnel of the hornbeam arbour was stunning as was the Hosta-filled bog garden. Elsewhere in the garden, Tony has been developing new areas and these include a stumpery as well as an avenue of Betula (Silver Birch).

Our tour concluded with afternoon tea in the Chapel of St Peter, and some of us were lucky enough to purchase Steane Park jam made by Tony, the Head Gardener who is doing so much to help recapture the original glory and spirit of Steane Park's garden.

This is a lovely tranquil garden, full of surprises and picturesque landscapes. It has a great sense of history and romance, yet under the watchful eye of Lady Connell, Tony and his small team, the garden is forward looking, is truly diverse and everyone agreed - stunning. I'm sure we'll be making a return visit in 2015. If you would like to join us then contact the Customer Service Desk and we'll pop you down on the list!

PLANTS OF THE MOMENT

In July the ever versatile perennial Salvia is given the thumbs up by top gardening writer Pippa Greenwood from Gardeners' World magazine.

In August musician and singer Katie Melua (pictured) endorses everyone's favourite (certainly this year!) the bold and beautiful Hydrangea in all its amazing guises – mopheads, lacecaps and paniculatas amongst others.



OUR WEEKEND - GRITTY, FUN AND DOWN-TO-EARTH...

... HOW GARDENING SHOULD BE!

Perhaps it was a good job Blue Peter gardener Chris Collins and Christine Walkden, the One Show's TV gardener, didn't actually meet head-to-head at our Festival of Fun in late June, writes Chris Day. A clash of the north-south divide, another war of the roses? No - simply brilliant advice you didn't want to miss! Both TV gardeners, in their unique styles, delivered great gardening advice in a way they only could, passionate, down-to-earth, fun, and understandable and above all, delving into the wisdom of their experience. You certainly enjoyed their banter and delivery, although sometimes the enthusiasm did get a bit too much for some!

On the Saturday, Chris demonstrated how to plant a hanging basket for both beauty and food production, something parents and their children could easily do. He talked on all aspects from composts, to best plants and how to keep them looking great. He also judged our very first Garden in a Seed Tray Competition, generously sponsored by Buckingham Table, as

well as meeting customers at book signings. Chris continues promoting gardening at schools up and down the UK (he'd visited 47 in a month!) and he is now the ambassador for Schools Horticulture at the Royal Horticultural Society. In his unique style, he certainly enthuses with everyone and connects to the subject and he champions to all schools to do their bit in teaching food growing.

"There's now't wrong with recycling your sphagnum moss!" proclaimed Christine Walkden to the audience in her container presentations on the Sunday. Her approach is no-nonsense, hands-on, sometimes its about thriftiness (save a few bob and you can spend it on some more plants!). Her ethos, just do it and not worry if you make a mistake "there's always another time. If you don't try you

don't know!" You have to smile at Christine's delivery because it connects you straight to the subject with ease and you come away all the wiser. Throughout the day Christine enjoyed meeting many of you at the signing sessions and in between presentations.

We were delighted to help celebrate 90 glorious years with members of the Tingewick & Water Stratford Horticultural Society. The society hits this monumental milestone this year and Barbara Prideaux and her team brought along a wonderful selection of old documents, artefacts, show schedules, posters, old black & white photographs and newspaper clippings highlighting graphically the journey the Society has taken. What's more the Society is evolving and as visitors could see its certainly changing with the times.





Regular visitors to our events will be familiar with the husband and wife team of Phil (the magician) and Lin (the face painter) and on Saturday we were in for a treat with a couple of amazing magic shows.

To complete the weekend, volunteers from Breast Cancer Care and local The Wildlife Trust were on hand to chat to everyone to promote their important messages.



CONNECTING WITH YOUNGER GARDENERS

Our Garden in A Seed Tray Competition, kindly supported and sponsored by Buckingham Table, was judged by Blue Peter gardener Chris Collins. Linking in with the Blue Peter theme props such as aluminum foil and cardboard boxes were used,

however no sticky-back plastic was seen! The schools certainly grasped the challenge with their clever and innovative displays with plenty of creative and fun ideas (Penne pasta for pathways!) used within the dimensions of a standard seed tray!



Thornborough Primary School brought a great crop of entries including five year old Zachary Bailey (pictured with Chris Collins) with Evelyn Andrews and Joshua Cox. Brother and sister Johnny and Isabella Brown from St James & St John Church of England School in Chackmore brought us a couple of vegetable themed trays whilst 1st Prize winner, Bessy Davidson (pictured),

created a miniature secret garden complete with handcrafted props. Both schools benefited from the £150 prize fund for all their creativity and hard work!



GET SET FOR CHRISTMAS SPUDS

We know many of you are rallying to the challenge of successfully cropping delicious new potatoes in bags and pots. Our annual School Potato Challenge proves each year the ease of producing tasty new potatoes in a relatively small container. So, with this in mind, if you fancy the prospect of harvesting a modest crop of delicious new spuds for December, you need to be organising yourself now.

First, don't bother to chit/sprout the potatoes, the warm temperature makes that unnecessary. Simply plant them in containers (at least 30cm/12in in diameter and 45cm/18in in depth) at the end of August as normal. Use any Multi-Purpose Compost or even Grow Bag compost will suffice, however you need to commence feeding with a High Potash fertiliser, such as Tomorite or Phostrogen, around 6 weeks after planting and then feed once a week. The "earthing up" process (the equivalent to simply adding more compost as the plant stems grow taller in the pot) within the pot increases the number of potatoes grown from each tuber and the additional compost protects them from sun exposure, which would turn them green.



When shoots are showing 10cm (4in) above the soil or compost, cover them with compost leaving 4cm (1½in) shoots showing at the tip. Continue to 'earth up' each time the shoots are 10cm above the compost until you are 5cm (2in) from the rim of the container.

Potatoes will rot if they are over watered but they do require a constant supply of water, especially when they are flowering and potatoes are forming.

If they get tall, offer some support to the stems. Check your potatoes for harvesting around early November. Continue harvesting as and when you need them. They will keep in the compost of the container far better than in your kitchen so only harvest as needed.

If a frost threatens, simply move the container to a frost free position until the danger of frost has passed before returning it back into the open again.

Our autumn planting potatoes have arrived and the varieties this season are 'Duke of York', 'Charlotte', 'Maris Peer', 'Pentland Javelin' and 'Red Duke of York'. There are 9 seed potatoes per pack priced at £2.99.

GOING GREENER WITH SOLAR PANELS

No doubt you may have seen the scaffolding around the Shop through last month and we're pleased to report our new solar roof is now fully installed and producing electricity. Installed by the Solar specialists Beba Energy, it is hoped the panels should produce about one-third of our electricity which should (long term) save us money as well as doing our bit to help the environment.



FIVE MINUTES WITH CHRISTINE WALKDEN

We all know Christine from the popular BBC's One Show, but when she's not chatting with Alex and Matt on the sofa, Christine is a regular on the Chelsea Flower Show coverage as well as The Great British Garden Revival. A new series is planned for later in the year and the wonderful Dianthus family look set to be passionately revived by Christine too!

Where do you live and perhaps describe your garden?

I live in Hertfordshire and my garden is a plantsman's garden and I grow all my own vegetables.



Your favourite edible and why?

Runner beans. I just love the taste.

Your favourite gardening activity and why?

Watering as I find this very relaxing.

What do you love about your job? The variety and being outside.

We know this is going to be a difficult one, but if you were stranded on that castaway island, which plant would you like to take with you?

Soldanella alpina, commonly called the Alpine Snow Bell (pictured right).

And least favourite and why?

Ground elder as it is such a problem.

Do you have a gardening tip you would like to share with us?

If you fail, try and try again. Move things about until they work.

If you have one Super Power what would it be?
A passion for gardening.

Facebook or Twitter? Yes, I am on Twitter
@ChristineWalkd



Pauline Brown introduces trainee Medical Detection Dog 'Barton' to Christine Walkden



INDEPENDENT FAMILY GARDEN CENTRE



In many of our publicity documents we state that we are an independent family run Garden Centre because we believe that the public often prefer to do business with such a company rather than a garden centre run by one of the 'chains'.

I was thinking about this and a thought struck me that the centre is not only run by four members of the second and third generation of the same family who started the

business over 60 years ago, but amongst our staff we have and have had many other 'family ties'.

Ten members of our staff have met and have married or become partner to another member of staff and in some cases both parties have carried on working with us. We have also had the spouse of a member of staff joining the staff two times.

We currently have three mothers and daughters on the staff, and one member has both her children on our week-end staff. We have two brothers and sisters here and temporarily we had a father and son, a father and son-in-law and another mother and daughter here.

These are just the family ties which spring to mind, but I am sure there have been many more over the years, so it can be said that we are truly a 'family business'!

A RIGHT PEA-SOUPER!

The big question: How do I stop my pond water from going green?

You get green water in a pond for two reasons, too much light and lots of food for the single celled green algae that creates green water, says Paul Barnes.

Now too much light can be difficult to control, a little shade definitely helps but what you really have to do is cut out the food supply for the algae.

The two basic food supplies for algae are nitrates and phosphates, and you get these as a result of fish waste in your pond (it can't be broken down with a standard filter system) and also



because tap water often has a high nitrate content so when you are changing the water in your pond unless you know the nitrate content of the pond water and the tap water you don't know if you are helping or hindering the growth of algae. Simply adding too much fish feed can upset the nutrients levels and in fact overfeeding is as bad as providing too much light or too little filtration.

In fact you should never ever change all the water in a pond unless something has gone terribly wrong, it screws up your filter and it's no good for the fish to completely change their environment every week/month.

If you have a filter you could add an Ultra Violet (UV) light system to it which will help but only if you are running a filter in conjunction with your pump. Also we would say two-thirds of the pond's surface should be covered with vegetation if no filter is present, and around 50% if there is a filter and UV light.

Ideally in an unfiltered pond, marginals, lilies, and floating pond plants should cover two-thirds of the surface, which if no fish are present should keep the algae under control and the water quality very good. If a few fish are present then ideally a small bi-weekly water change of around 25% of the water should be carried out as well.

Adding large volumes of tap water will affect the nutrient balance. That said, running a little water into the pond to freshen it up once every couple of weeks is worthwhile, especially if you have no real filter system. Just run a hose in there and flood it out a little, but don't go mad otherwise you will end up replacing all of the water in your pond.

So one of the best solutions is to cut out that nitrate/phosphate supply for the algae and to do this you need to add plants to the pond. Plants, including the oxygenators, marginals (see list below) and floaters, are a lot more efficient in taking nitrates out of the water and if you have a good growth of plants in the pond they will starve the algae in there.

Our recommended half dozen marginals for coverage...



Myosotis scorpioides
(Water Forget-Me-Not)



Lysimachia nummularia
(Creeping Jenny)



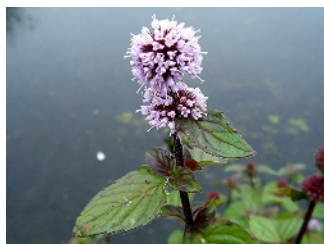
Hydrocotyle vulgaris
(Marsh Pennywort)



Hippuris vulgaris
(Common Mare's Tails)



Veronica beccabunga
(European Speedwell)



Mentha aquatica
(Water Mint)

Here are our best suggestions for reducing green water in ponds. Start by getting the right mix of plants in place. Now is a good time to establish new stock and the choice is often greater at the start of the planting season. The good rule of feeding is what fish will eat in 60 seconds, so clearing any excess will impact on reducing additional nutrients into the water. Adding barley straw to the pond is another good option. The Royal Horticultural Society recommends floating a mesh bag of barley straw on the pond – about 50g of straw per sq m (1½ oz per sq yd) of water surface area is ideal. Add the straw in spring and remove it when it has turned black (usually about six months later). Sometimes lavender is added to the barley straw for additional effectiveness.

Finally, opting for a more effective filtration with Ultra Violet light system may be the final and more expensive option. However, we do need to be patient in getting the right balance in the pond so by adding a few fast growing plants these should eventually take care of that nitrate/phosphates problem and the algae for you. As so often is the case the natural solution is sometimes the best. Take a walk to a natural pond one day, plenty of plants, no green water!

10 TASKS FOR JULY/AUGUST

LAWNS Care of the lawn in July and August very much depends on the state of the weather. If it has been hot and dry, there won't be much new growth, so set the mower blades high and leave the clippings to act as a mulch to preserve what little moisture there is. If the weather has been wet and growth generally lush, lower the blades and collect the clippings. Be on the look out for weeds, especially in wet weather and remove them as soon as you can identify them. There is still time to apply a selective lawn weedkiller such as Verdone Extra to eradicate difficult to control weeds such as Dandelion, Plantain and Self-heal.



POTS Continue to water and feed containers and hanging baskets regularly to help maintain steady growth and encourage further flowers. Switching feeds is a good idea too. High nitrogen fertilisers such as Miracle-Gro can be alternated with High Potassium feeds such as Phostrogen or any of the specific Tomato fertilisers on the shelf. By doing this you will help to encourage a further flurry of leafy growth which in turn will mean more stems and shoots to carry additional blooms later in the summer. Remember plants are just like us, a change in food doesn't do any harm and it can be beneficial in the long term!

FRUIT Tidy up your strawberry plants and remove any straw surrounding them. This will help prevent pests and diseases building up. Cut back any fruited summer raspberry canes. The new green canes should be left and then tied in to a support for fruiting next year.

VEG PLOT Watch out for the leaves of garlic, onions and maincrop potatoes turning yellow - this means they are ready to harvest! There is still time for sowing quick growing crops that can be harvested in the next couple of months, and those that will carry on over winter to provide vegetables next spring. Lettuce sown now will provide crops in mid-to-late autumn, but you should be ready to provide cloche protection when the night temperatures drop. Choose a sheltered spot for sowing Japanese onions and spring onions, in rows 23cm (9in) apart. Both winter and summer radishes can be sown now, but give summer radishes a partially shady spot or they may bolt. Winter radishes will remain happily in the ground until you are ready to lift them for cold-weather



salads, and can also be lifted in late autumn and stored, like other root vegetables, until needed. Make final sowings of stump-rooted carrots and turnips, together with spring cabbage.

PROBLEMS Earwigs can prove to be a nuisance in August, especially amongst the Dahlias, as they eat the young shoots and leaves at night and may even attack other plants such as Delphiniums and Asters. A traditional method of trapping them is to place a flower pot, filled with straw, moss or grass, upside down on top of a stake near the plants at risk. The earwigs will collect inside the pot, as they hide from the light. Simply remove the pot each morning and dispose of the contents – hot water usually does the trick! Then refill with straw or grass and set the trap again for the next evening.

In dry weather powdery mildew can play havoc with plants such as Clematis, Roses and Lonicera. Apply Myclobutanil (Bayer Garden Systhane Fungus Fighter concentrate) on ornamentals as well as on Apples, Pears, Gooseberries and Blackcurrants. Small holes and tears in new foliage of ornamentals such as Caryopteris, Fuchsia and Dahlia are most likely caused by capsid bug damage. Ideally inspect the shoot tips of susceptible plants regularly, treat with an insecticide if signs of damage are seen. Ornamentals can be sprayed with thiacloprid* (found in Bayer Provado Ultimate Bug Killer 2, Bayer Provado Ultimate Bug Killer Ready to Use), deltamethrin* (found in Bayer Sprayday Greenfly Killer, Bayer Provado Ultimate Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer). *Use chemicals wisely. Always follow the instructions on the packaging carefully.

ROUTINE Prune your Lavender plants, Helianthemum and other summer-flowering shrubs after they have finished blooming. Keep feeding your fruit trees, soft fruits and vegetable plants in containers every two weeks for continued healthy growth and cropping. Use a high potash fertiliser, such as tomato feed, for fruits and fruiting vegetables (peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers) to encourage good cropping. Leafy vegetables benefit from a basic balanced fertiliser, or one that is high in nitrogen.

MUST-DO Stake any tall or top-heavy Dahlias and Lilies to protect them from the wind and rain. Even without winds, the weight of the flowers can easily snap the stems. There is still time to prune your Wisteria (pictured) by cutting all the whippy side-shoots back to five leaves from the main stem. Now is a good time to spray ground elder (and other perennial weeds) with a glyphosate-based weedkiller as the plant has lots of leaf surface area with which to absorb it.



ROSES Prune your climbing and rambling roses as soon as they have finished flowering, but if they are repeat-flowering roses they produce a much better show through their second flush if they are pruned back a little, cutting back the stems that carried the first flush of flowers. Do make sure all pruned roses are given a generous granular feed such as Toprose or Vitax Q4. Apply this as soon as the plants are pruned and you should find strong replacement growth quickly develops and after a few weeks a further flush of flower buds will be formed.

HERBS Cut back herbs now to encourage a new flush of tasty leaves you can harvest before the frost. If you have the likes of Sage, Lemon Verbena, Rosemary, Thyme and Lavender then now is the time to take semi-ripe cuttings.

FLOWERS It may seem a long way off but now is the time to think about spring bulbs. The new season stock arrives in the Shop from mid August onwards, so be prepared! Keep cutting sweet peas to fill your house with scent and to keep the flowers coming on the plants. Remember they will benefit from a general plant feed applied along the row or at the base of the wigwam every 7-10 days.

HONEY BEE COMPETITION WINNER



In our May/June Newsletter we invited you to search for the bee within the pages. A good number of you spotted it on page 9, however the first name to be drawn out of the hat was Frances Denley from Tingewick. Frances, your £10 Garden Voucher will be with you shortly.

WHAT'S ON

The Trials Grounds of Ball Colegrave will be opening its gates to the public once again on Wednesday 23rd July between 4:00-8:00pm.

This will be the only opportunity during the year to enjoy these spectacular trial grounds, colourful gardens, patio displays and possibly the largest display of hanging baskets and containers in the country and to preview new plant introductions to be released in Garden Centres from Spring 2015.

Light refreshments are available for purchase, although you are welcome to bring your own food and drink if you prefer.

The entrance charge on the day is £2.50 and no advance bookings will be required this year. Children under the age of 12 are admitted free.

Ball Colegrave is located on Milton Road, West Adderbury, Banbury OX17 3EY.
Tel: 01295 810632.

Tingewick & Water Stratford Horticultural Society Summer Show. Saturday 23rd August, 2:00-4:00pm Tingewick Village Hall. For more details contact Pat Swinburne 01280 847764.

Winslow & District Summer Show. Saturday 30th August. Staging 8-10am. Open to visitors 2-4pm. Venue: St Laurence Room, Market Square, Winslow. Details from Liz van de Poll (Show Sec) on 01296 713112 or e-mail lizmvandpoll@aol.com



Advance Garden Centre notices: Wednesday 10th September Orchid Day with top specialist and expert Peter White. Orchid Clinic 10am-4pm (except 13:00-13:30 and during talks, 11:00-11:40 and 14:00-14:40 on Orchid Care and Repotting Demonstration).

Our annual Apple Weekend will be over the weekend of Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th September, 10-4pm

both days. Our special guest this year will be top RHS Fruit Advisor, Gerry Edwards. No matter what type of question you may have - growing, pruning, selecting the best varieties and apple identification Gerry will be on hand throughout the weekend.



Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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Summer Opening Times: Mon-Sat: 8:30am-6:00pm, Sun: 10:00am-4:00pm