

Newsletter Autumn 2009



Ho! Ho! Ho! 10% off almost everything day

We've a special treat lined up on Thursday 3rd December for all Buckingham Garden Centre customers, that's our 10% off* Christmas. We'll be open from 8.30am until 8pm and we've loads of ideas for you on how to decorate your home, office or workplace this Christmas. Simply pop in to see us and be inspired. From real and artificial trees to lights and gifts: we've got it covered. Also for anyone lacking gift ideas why not take advantage of our new range of ready-made hampers. For a small charge of £2.50 we can even make you a personalized hamper whilst you wait.

For those who love plants we have traditional favourites such as English grown Poinsettias and Orchids, Cyclamen along with Christmas cacti and Belgium azaleas. Why not pick up a pre-planted arrangement, which will also make a wonderful gift?

Elsewhere, the outdoor Roundel display area will be a hive of activity featuring, throughout December, seasonal evergreens (holly, ivy and Christmas Box) and hellebores centred around a twist on the nativity. Sounds interesting? The Potting Bench will have plenty of seasonal colour in pots, sprigs of holly and conifer foliage, mistletoe and natural wreaths, perfect gift ideas and for adding that finishing touch to your front door. Also we will have a superb range of Christmas wreaths to make your house even more inviting during the festive season (our range of real Christmas wreaths are available to order throughout the UK [online](#)).



**Offer excludes gift vouchers, sheds, greenhouses, food and beverages in the coffee shop, catalogue products, Calor Gas, special order items and items already on offer. Items must be collected from the Garden Centre on 3rd December.*

Apples draw the crowds

Despite the wet and windy weather, our Apple Weekend brought in the crowds in early October and proved as popular as ever for fruit advice, apple identification as well as a celebration of local produce, including orchard apples, cheeses and other tasty offerings from the surrounding area.

Top fruit expert Will Sibley joined us on the Sunday, and Mid-Shires Heritage apple gurus Marcus Roberts and Andy Howard were on hand to help our customers with fruit identification. Our local celebrity 'Going Green' cook Alli Templeton provided some tasty apple dishes and we had a wide range of local wildlife charities on hand to give practical advice.

The fruit we ran in our "Name the Mystery Fruit" Competition stumped lots of you, but it was actually [Akebia quinata](#), the aptly named chocolate vine (pictured right).



Events for your Diary Next Year

Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th February 2010 will be our **Potato and Apple Scion Wood Exchange Weekend**. Thomson & Morgan's Vegetable Expert Colin Randel and local vegetable grower Bernard Stopps will be on hand to give advice on vegetable growing and potato queries over the weekend. You'll also have a chance to buy (for a nominal fee) rare apple varieties through the exchange of scion apple wood. Marcus Roberts and Andy Howard

will be available for grafting as well as giving advice on apple growing, storage, varieties to choose plus pruning and growing trees from young maiden stock. The Garden Centre will have a fantastic range of [fruit trees](#) and [seed potatoes](#) to buy as well.

Just along to road from here just before you get to Winslow, LILI (Low-Impact Living Initiative) will be running a week-end course on [Pruning and Care of Old Fruit Trees](#). The course will be run by Bryn Thomas, an experienced trainer. The course will be of interest to both experienced gardeners and novices, and it will be very practical so participants will have to consider themselves physically able to 'have a go'. By the end of the course participants should have the practical skills necessary to carry out renovative pruning of old fruit trees without supervision.

It is a residential course with participants sharing 3 to 4 people in single sex rooms, but non residents are welcome. The course starts at 6.30p.m. on Friday 5th February and ends after lunch on Sunday 7th at a cost of £190 high-waged, £160 waged or £130 for students or unwaged, with a reduction of £10 for non-residential. Sounds a good week-end, and after lunch on the Sunday you will have time to come to the Garden Centre for our Potato and Apple Scion Wood Exchange event and then and go home thoroughly stuffed with knowledge!

2010 Garden Club Talks

These are held on the second Wednesday every month. We've some great speakers lined up for next year and subjects to be covered include Vegetable Growing (January), Bulbs (February), gladioli (March) and hellebores (April). All talks' details will be posted at our Customer Service Desk. To book, call on 01280 822133 or via our website www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk/talks

Treemendous! Get involved in the Tree O'Clock Tree Plant

The BBC in conjunction with the Horticultural Trades Association is getting together with Garden Centres around the country, including Buckingham Garden Centre in a bid to gain a new Guinness World Record.



The event, part of National Tree Week, is called BBC Tree O'Clock and takes place between 11am-12noon on Saturday 5th December. It involves two record breaking attempts, firstly the largest number of trees planted in one location in one hour and secondly the largest number of trees planted in multiple locations in one hour. We are getting involved with this and will be planting trees at various venues on the day. However, if you would also like to get involved, visit the BBC Breathing Places website at bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/treeoclock/

To claim a free tree, first pledge your planting intentions on the above website and then pop into the Garden Centre to select the tree. You will need to take away information about planting and how to record your planting (simply take a digital photo of the planting your tree leaving the date and time facility on to record the planting time) and then register your planting for the World Record.

Don't forget, December is the month for trees and hedges in all their guises, as part of the HTA Plant For Life campaign, so there's no excuse not to get planting!

"Tree O'Clock is an amazing opportunity for one nation to seize one hour, one moment, and to break a World Record by everyone just planting one tree. Come on, get involved!"

5 must-have plants for December

Mahonia: Normally mahonias are looking their best in late January and into February, but this season's odd weather has seen plants in flower much earlier than usual, hence the inclusion in this list. The best variety is undoubtedly 'Charity' (pictured right) for size of flowers and it can be kept in check as far as size by pruning it back by up to a half directly after flowering. [Click here](#) for more information or to order Mahonia Charity.



Helleborus niger ([Christmas Rose](#)) and the new introduction [Helleborus 'Rosemary'](#) are guaranteed to provide a welcome wealth of winter colour, and when the hellebores are at their peak, you know spring isn't far away.

Tip: Protect [Christmas Roses](#) from weather damage by putting dry compost around the base of the plants and covering them with cloches.

Holly: You don't need lots of space to grow traditional hollies – [green](#), [blue](#) and [variegated](#) – as they can be grown as a hedge line, as specimen trees (why not plant one for the BBC Tree O'Clock world record?), or as specimen lollipops to stand near your front door. They are invaluable for attracting our feathered friends into the garden and not forgetting the legendary use of their foliage and berries for decoration. [Click here](#) for more information or to order Hollies.

Poinsettia: The true star of the Christmas table, but it now has strong competition from the likes of azalea, cyclamen and orchids. Treat your poinsettia well by keeping it warm and light, but don't overwater. Allow the plants to dry a little between watering if you can. Plants are best discarded once the bracts (the red leaves) fall, although the green-fingered amongst us might want to keep the plant and coax it into producing colourful bracts again next year – it's tricky but many say it's a great horticultural challenge!

Christmas Box: A great evergreen favourite, and a plant that should be planted or placed (if grown in a pot) close to a door or window where the fragrance can be enjoyed. It is compact enough to mix with other plants in displays, and best of all it's incredibly easy to grow. [Click here](#) for more information or to order Christmas Box.

Finally, there are plenty of roses to plant at this time of the year. We've introduced a new 'Special Occasion Roses' section at the Garden Centre as well as the new, range of Mattocks Roses in bio-degradable pots. These new biodegradable pots are brilliant! Called 'naturepots' they are made out of rice husks and once planted they will decompose into a natural soil improver. We've some 80 varieties of [root-wrapped roses](#) as well, so there are masses to choose from. *Root-wrapped roses can be ordered online by clicking [here](#).*

Barry's top camera shot!

Congratulations to Barry McKay of Syresham, who won our recent Kathy Brown Photo Competition. His montage photo showed the colourful diversity of this stunning Bedfordshire Garden, which some Garden Club members enjoyed back in August. Thanks for everyone who took part in this competition - sorry but there can only be one winner!



10 jobs for December

1. **ILLUMINATE** your garden with beautiful berry-forming treasure plants such as pyracantha to add colour and encourage wildlife into your garden. We've some inexpensive hedging plants perfect for providing a wealth of berries including blackthorn, cotoneasters, hollies, quickthorn, roses (for the hips) and the snowberry. If you've a gap to fill then these are the plants to opt for!
2. **DON'T DELAY** if you haven't had a chance yet, as now is the last opportunity to complete your spring-colour plantings with the likes of last-minute spring bulbs such as tulips, specie narcissi and hardy bedding pansies and violas. If you are creating a new border, remember to plant and establish the potted and bare-root plants BEFORE the bulbs, otherwise you are likely to harpoon the bulbs with your fork or trowel! Don't forget to apply a little [RootGrow](#) around your bedding and bulbs to get them off to a flying start.

3. **TRADITIONALLY** this is the start of the gardening year and planting plays a major role – so bare-rooted [hedging](#), [fruit](#) and [shrubs](#) are best planted whilst there is some warmth left in the soil but can continue until late winter. Rainfall has been favourable this autumn but if your soil is becoming too wet and you want to plant a little later, it's often a good idea to throw down some polythene sheeting in order to keep the rain off and allow the soil to dry out prior to planting.
4. **CONTINUE** to remove fallen leaves from lawns before they block out light and moisture to the grass. Repair damaged lawn edges or patches with turves cut from other areas of the garden. Avoid walking on lawns on frosty mornings as it can damage the grass and often leads to brown footprint-shaped marks. Watch your lawn for signs of water-logging as the weather gets wetter. You may be able to remedy this with some maintenance – spiking will help - either now, next spring, or the following autumn.
5. **PRUNE** apple and pear trees as this helps maintain healthy growth and improves cropping. Make sure your secateurs and pruning saws are clean and sharp so you don't introduce diseases to the cuts that you make. How to prune depends on the variety of tree that you have, and whether you want to rejuvenate an old tree or curb a vigorous one. Aim for a tree with an open centre, like a wine goblet. Espalier and cordon trees are best pruned through the summer months.
6. **BUY** your fresh Christmas tree in good time – if choosing a cut tree make sure that it looks nice and green – give it a shake and avoid any that lose a lot of needles. There are many different types of tree available but they fall into two main categories – non-drop (Nordmann Fir, Noble Fir, Fraser Fir) and the more traditional (Norway Spruce, Blue Spruce). Whatever you choose cut an inch off the base of the trunk and stand your cut tree outside in a deep bucket of water for at least 24 hours before bringing it into the house. Try and find a cool spot in the house for the tree (avoid radiators!) and make sure it sits in a reservoir of water which is topped up regularly – treat the tree like a cut flower! Christmas trees are now in stock at the Garden Centre.
7. **FEED** the birds and continue to provide fresh food and water for them. Thoroughly clean bird tables, baths and feeders once a month to prevent the build-up of harmful bacteria that can make birds ill. Use a weak bleach solution and rinse off well. This month is perfect for putting up nest boxes so check our range in the Shop.
8. **MUST-DO'S** Prune acers (but not Japanese types), birches and grape vines before Christmas to avoid sap bleeding. Check tree stakes and ties, adjust and/or replace where necessary. Take hardwood cuttings of cornus, lonicera fragrantissima, ribes and salix. Digging-over in winter exposes soil pests to frost and bird predators. Remember to not overdo it, pace yourself and think about your back!
9. **PROTECT** plants and pots from frost by placing inside (in a porch or a well-lit shed) or wrapping with [horticultural fleece](#). Long-leaved cordylines may benefit from one of the Easy Fleece Jackets, effectively lagging the foliage against those icy winds.
10. **GARDEN SECURITY** A timely reminder that many hedging plants have vicious thorns and make excellent barriers against unwanted garden visitors. Remember that 85% of all thefts are committed by opportunists, so using the likes of berberis, blackthorn, gorse, holly, quickthorn, many roses including dog and rugosa varieties and rubus, as security hedges will surely deter potential burglars. Please pick up a copy of the booklet, A Security Guide for Sheds and Outbuilding (Thames Valley Police) at our Customer Services for more information or download from www.thamesvalley.police.uk/shed.pdf

Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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WINTER OPENING HOURS

Mon.-Sat.: 8:30am to 5.30pm, Sun.: 10:00am to 4:00pm
Open late Thurs. 3rd December until 8pm