

Buckingham

Garden Centre



'Passionate about gardening'

NEWSLETTER

LATE SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2019 ISSUE



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The Garden Centre industry came under close scrutiny in the summer when an ITV news special, *The Trouble with Garden Centres*, looked at plastic and peat usage. As an independent garden centre we have reacted and continue to react to this challenge on a daily basis tackling our own green recycling as a matter of priority and care. The gardening trade, especially UK growers, are generally looking to change to 'taupe' pots which can be recycled at kerbside collection. Let's hope our European neighbours can embrace this post-Brexit. We still have much work to do, and as gardeners we need to be more pro-active in our own use of plastic at home. Re-using our plant pots, trays and propagating cells simply by washing them is just one way we can help in the process.

The use of peat reduced composts now accounts for around 90% of sales and with the likes of the National Trust and Kew Gardens going totally peat-free with their pot grown plants there is more pressure than ever to reduce peat usage. The idea of a total peat ban in 2020 is still on the cards for the UK, however with the political uncertainty one wonders if this is going to be practical. However, in the world of compost there is always the option to produce your own and thinking about it now is as good as time as ever to do just that!

So, compost bins at the ready - whatever the weather. **Chris**



SHOP NEWS: COVER UP AND WINTER STORAGE OPTIONS

As autumn approaches our thoughts begin to turn to safeguarding our garden tools and other outdoor essentials



such as barbecues and garden furniture. If you don't have a garden shed you may want to consider one of the popular storage trunks such as the Keter Hudson Bench which provides a comfortable

seating option for two adults. The innovative wood look and feel technology provides all the stylish benefits of wooden furniture with none of the maintenance drawbacks. Attractive and low-maintenance, thanks to its durable and weather resistant resin material, which prevents rust, rot, decay and other forms of damage. This storage bench will keep contents dry and is well ventilated. It is easy to



assemble without requiring the use of any extra tools. Do check out our other Keter storage options which include garden boxes and sheds. These are on display in an area close to our outdoor pot displays.



For garden furniture and BBQs the use of protective covers is a simple yet effective way of keeping them safe from the worst of the weather, while leaving them in situ rather than finding them a new home for the winter. Garland offer an excellent range of premium polyester covers with a 7 year guarantee for Bistro sets, Kettle and Standard BBQs, Parasols, Stacking Chairs, Garden Benches as well as round and rectangular Furniture Sets. Also available for Stacking Chairs, Parasols and Benches are super-tough polyethylene covers with a 5 year guarantee. Check the range which is on display in the shop, but please ask for details on sizes if you are unsure.



Keeping your plants safe and snug through the winter is essential, especially if you plan to over-winter tender perennial plants or to start off pots of bulbs and you don't have a greenhouse or conservatory. A practical option to consider would be the relatively inexpensive tiered grow house, with a heavy duty plastic cover, costing only £29.99. We also stock the replacement covers for these.

We do have a more robust wooden grow house available, normally £129.99 but currently £99.99. This model is glazed in robust clear twin wall polycarbonate with opening doors to the front as well as a hinged roof.

Both fit into a relatively small space.

It's always wise to have some horticultural fleece handy to help provide a useful duvet covering to your over-wintering mature and young plants in spells of extreme cold. Remember you can use this in the greenhouse, over raised outdoor beds and in cold frames. We also stock a range of Haxnicks Easy Tunnels for protecting your vegetable crops through the winter and these are available in mesh, net and polythene, depending on what you are protecting against. You'll find all these products on display in our Seasonal Tunnel.



EXCITING NEW PLANTS IN OUR MAIL-ORDER CATALOGUE



We have now completed our new mail-order catalogue for Autumn 2019 - Summer 2020. There are plenty of new Heuchera and Heucherella varieties available this season including 'Fleur', 'Glitter', 'Happy Hour Lime', 'Onyx', 'Plum Cascade' and 'Silver Celebration' (pictured left). All of these bring much colour and texture to the garden border. However, the variety we are rather excited about is 'Plum Cascade', see page 10 for more details.

A couple of new Hostas to tempt you with this season - Hosta 'Remember Me', begins bright yellow in spring, with a narrow green edge. By summer the leaf centre is snow-white with a streaky blue green margin. Pale lilac flowers appear in July. Hosta 'Thunderbolt' (listed on website only) produces big, heart-shaped blue-green leaves with a dramatic creamy-yellow centre, and stems of white flowers in midsummer. It is said to be slug resistant!

From late October we will be delighted to be offering as a root-wrapped rose the 2020 Rose of the Year, Rosa 'Sweet Honey' (pictured right). This modern bush rose produces high centred honey coloured blooms that form in clusters. It has a good fragrance and outstanding disease resistance. It repeats well throughout the season and is good for cutting. Do keep an eye out for the other root-wrapped roses, including climbers, ramblers, bush and groundcover roses in the next few weeks.



THE GENTLE ART OF HOME PRESERVING



This autumn, as gardens and hedgerows swell with fruits and berries, we are extending our Kilner range to offer everything you need for jam making and preserving.

Making your own jam is a great way of ensuring none of the season's delectable harvest goes to waste whilst giving you the satisfaction of eating something you have picked and

produced yourself. Home made jams also make lovely gifts for friends and family.

If you are new to jam making, don't be intimidated. Pick up a free mini guide in-store and have a go. We stock everything to get you started, from stainless steel preserving pans, funnels, thermometers, muslin, and jar tongs, to replacement seals, lids and screw bands.



Even if pickling and preserving isn't for you, Kilner's great range of products may still have something of interest. Their popular drinks dispenser is great for parties. Just fill it up and let people help themselves! Or have a look at their spaghetti store jar. It has a nifty little feature that lifts the spaghetti up and fans it out, so you no longer need to tip the whole jar upside down to get to the pasta. And of course, their wide variety of jars come in different sizes and styles that are functional, stylish and can be used for storing all sorts of things around the home.

If you are new to preserving or simply a seasoned preserve enthusiast, here are few tips to help you along your way

STERILISE Always sterilise your equipment and jars to avoid introducing bacteria or wild yeasts that can spoil your preserves. Wash jars and lids in hot soapy water, rinse, then sterilise in a low oven for 10 minutes before use. Pop seals in a bowl and cover with freshly boiled water.

PERFECT PRODUCE Pickling and jam-making require perfect produce so that they won't spoil - if your fruit or vegetables are slightly past their best, then use them for chutney instead.

WHAT PAN? A wide pan is best for jam and chutney-making, as evaporation and cooking times are quicker, delivering a fresher flavour.

SAFETY FIRST Remember that sugar gets very hot, so use a long-handled spoon when making chutneys and jams, and protect your hand with a cloth or oven glove when stirring.

BUY SPARES For acidic preserves such as pickles and chutneys, metal jar lids need to have a plastic-coated lining. If you're using proper preserving jars, the seal element is a single-use component, so make sure you have spares.



CREATE A VACUUM After filling your jars with hot jam, chutney or pickle and adding lids, a vacuum will form as the preserves cool. Re-tighten the lids once cool, to ensure a complete seal.

WHICH VINEGAR? For home-made pickles, you need at least 6% acidity - so use wine or malt vinegar, not cider vinegar which is milder and lower in acidity.

NO TABLE SALT Use coarse salt for clarity in pickling; table salt contains anti-caking agent, which can make the pickle cloudy.

COOL PROPERLY Wait until your preserves are completely cold before labelling, as the labels won't stick properly on hot jars.

HOW LONG WILL THEY KEEP? Unopened pickles and preserves can be kept for several months or longer in a cool dark place, but, once open, store them in the fridge and eat within a month.



WHAT'S NEW IN THE FOOD HALL?

It's always exciting at this time of the year as the season moves on so does the range of new tempting and delicious food items increases. Here are just a few to whet your appetite:

- Buttery nibbles such as Cheese Straws and Twists are on a special Two for £5.50 offer from Cottage Delight.
- Delicious Cottage Delight duos (packs of two) including mini preserves, chutneys and curds at a special price of 2 for £7.50.
- Classic hamper sets, including Cheese Board, Sweet Treats and Perfect Pâté normally retail at £16.99 but we have them on a special price at £13.50. They would make a perfect gift, especially with Christmas just around the corner.

Look out for our new range of tableware from Mason Cash. It is a range of white and grey plates, bowls, serving dishes etc. with a slight ribbed effect. As we're amidst The Great British Bake Off, do take a look at our range of essential baking accessories including baking tins, wooden utensils, specialist flours and other kitchen essentials.



New in the Food Hall alongside the honey are Wendy's Pure Beeswax Handcrafted Candles which are made locally in Tingewick. They are 100% pure beeswax (no paraffin), nothing more. They are all wonderful works of art and will give you a bright flame, and burn with a lovely natural honey scent for a long time.



GET INSPIRATION BY VISITING LOCAL GARDENS

We gardeners are a canny lot. We endeavour to grow the best plants for our gardens. However sharing useful practical information of what plants perform best in various soils and locations sometimes isn't as easy as it should be, writes Chris Day. So, the opportunity to have a look and nose around other people's gardens is a good way to see what's doing well (and not so well!)

There are several ways of doing this, one being visiting gardens open under the The National Garden Scheme (NGS). This was established back in 1927, and actively encourages "the opening of gardens of quality, character and interest to the public for charity". It has been very popular and £50 million has been raised for charity since its beginning and many keen gardeners have gained inspiration from looking at the very varied gardens.

Every other year Winslow has its popular 'in Bloom' open gardens event giving the opportunity to delve into people's front and back gardens. Even more local to the Garden Centre, Tingewick and Water Stratford Horticultural Society invite their members to open their gardens for judging.

Over the years I have been fortunate to be able to help in judging some local gardens and also I have spent many a happy day visiting many of the wonderful local gardens open with the NGS scheme. Over the years trends have changed but recently I have found that raised borders for vegetables are now a popular choice and practical too. Also raised beds are good for growing ornamentals, including shrubs. It's good to see local gardeners planting for climate change, especially using prairie style plantings and using such plants as Salvias, Verbena bonariensis, Monarda, Erigeron and a wealth of grasses including Monty Don's favourites, Stipa tenuissima and Stipa gigantea, Feather Grass and Giant Feather Grass.

As we tend to use our gardens as fun and versatile outdoor entertainment areas, there's plenty of scope to marry contemporary with traditional ideas to create a very personal space. From re-imagining what to grow on a pergola to making a wonderful statement with champagne bottles inset into a beautifully curved tiered paved patio, there's lots of ideas

you can bring to your plot. The attention to detail of these interesting bespoke home projects is something I tend to marvel at, with the true passion of the gardener that really shines through.

Gardens really do say an awful lot about their owners, their characters, their passion, idiosyncrasies, and most of all their endeavour to make their garden special.

Make sure you take advantage of visiting gardens to be inspired.



GET INSPIRATION BY VISITING THE GARDEN CENTRE



FEED THE BIRDS. Pop along to the Garden Centre and browse amongst the choice of bird feeders, bird houses, bird tables and different types of bird food. In the dreary days of winter nothing gives more pleasure than watching birds coming near your window to feed, or bathe. If you put the food out at a regular time it is amazing how the birds know this and await their 'free' meal. If you have friends it's good to invite them in for a cup of tea when you know your birds will visit as you can enjoy them together. Also if you have grandchildren, get a simple bird identification book, get them in and soon they will be learning the names of the different species. They may even get more enthusiastic

and want a pair of binoculars to see with. (An idea for a Christmas present!) It is fun to find which food the birds prefer so that you know which to buy. From loose mixed seed at £1.05 a kg, 99p for 3+ kg or £12.99 for a 20kg sack, to sunflower seed at £1.99 a kilo, £1.75 per kg for 3+kg or £14.99 for a 12.75kg sack, or fat balls at £6.99 for 50 or £12.00 for 100 and so much more. The choice is yours when you have found what your birds prefer.

PLANT BULBS IN ANTICIPATION OF SPRING. Now is the time to get outside when the weather is still pleasant and warm and get loads of bulbs planted. You can then sit back and enjoy cozy evenings by the fire (if you have one!) knowing that you will have a blaze of colour in the spring. The choice of bulbs is vast and if you need advice as to what to plant where, just come in to the plant information office and ask. You can't go wrong with daffodils and narcissi and named varieties will cost £5.99 for 2kg, or £12.99 for 7kg. If more are needed a 20kg sack of mixed daffodils and narcissi are £34.99. If you want less height, the ever popular Tête à Tête cost £2.99 for 8 or £6.99 for 20 and we have 60 named varieties of specie crocus and 15 varieties of dwarf iris. If you really don't know what to choose why not simply buy a pack aptly named '150 days of Colour Collection' where you will have 50 bulbs for £9.99. Just come in, choose, then plant with the anticipation of colour in spring.



TAKE TIME TO DIGEST ALL YOU HAVE SEEN! Recently we have been delighted to be able to welcome people into our newly extended restaurant. Gone are those annoying lunchtime queues as you can now sit in the comfortable, brightly decorated, new area, or the original. In both you will receive the normal cheerful, efficient waitress service and be able to choose from the same menu. The long bench across the back of the new area is proving popular with large parties or for families with children.

A new extra from the chefs in the kitchen is their home produced plum jam and apple sauce which are served with the appropriate meals or can be purchased from the Food Hall.

APPLE NAMING AND THE MID SHIRE ORCHARD NEEDS YOU!

Good friend of the Garden Centre, Gerry Edwards, will be once again joining for our Apple & Honey Show Weekend over the 28th and 29th September. Gerry, as you probably know, is our popular apple identification expert, Royal Horticultural Society judge and top fruit grower. He will be here to help you identify those apples from trees that over the years may have lost their label or maybe a tree you have inherited and are keen to learn about the variety. Gerry asks if you can bring along at least 2 or 3 ripened fruits from the tree together with some foliage and tell him the provenance as that will assist him greatly. The process of identification is a complex one and isn't just a matter of taste and texture of the fruit. Over the years Gerry has identified in excess of 400 varieties so we look forward to seeing you with your mystery apples. The service is free, however we do limit it to no more than three different apples per person and we also ask for a small donation for our chosen charity, Lindengate.



We have been working with the voluntary group, Mid Shires Orchard Group, for many years now as we are wholeheartedly behind their ethos of saving local orchards, increasing knowledge of old and new varieties of apples in particular but also other fruits, saving old varieties, propagating new trees, running entertaining Apple Days and so much more.

Their presence is very obvious at Apple Days and Graft and Grow Days, as can be seen by the number of visitors attending when we run events here, but what is not so obvious, is the tremendous fun, comradery, outdoor exercise and learning which can be had at their 'Afternoon in the Orchard' events which are held once a month between 1pm and 5 or 6pm at Woughton-on-the-Green Orchard, Milton Keynes. You don't have to come for the whole time, have any knowledge or equipment – just sensible clothes and shoes, a love of the outside and willingness to lend a hand for a while or even just look on. Tasks undertaken are summer or winter pruning of the vast number of old and large trees or more newly



planted ones, picking fruit in season, cutting and raking grass, clearing and restoring an old plum hedge, plus much more. Instructions will be given if needed. If you have young or older (well behaved!) children they are very welcome as there is plenty of space to run around, play hide and seek, throw balls and often there are dogs there to play with.

Tea and coffee are brewed up, and members are sometimes treated to freshly baked cakes (often apple!), but this is a good time for a chat, or if wanted one can wander down the road to indulge in a drink at the nearby pub at the end of the session! Visit their web site www.msog.btck.co.uk or Facebook @midshireorchardgroup or give the Garden Centre a ring for further details.

JUNIOR GARDENING CLUB GROWING PLANTS FROM PIPS

There is something quite magical about growing a tropical fruit from a pip or a stone, the name we give to these types of seeds. Pips from the citrus family which includes Lemons, Limes and Grapefruit behave in the same way as apple pips. The resulting young plants may not be the same as the original fruit due to cross pollination. One of the best fun-to-grow fruits you can easily grow is the avocado, pictured right. Its stone grows into a beautiful indoor evergreen houseplant, which is easy to care for!



- 1 Holding the stone (often referred to as a 'pit') with its narrow- or pointed-side up, stick four toothpicks into the middle section at even intervals. They should go in to the stone to a depth of about $\frac{1}{4}$ in (6mm).
- 2 Add water to a small glass until it reaches the rim. Sit your avocado stone over the glass; the toothpicks should sit on the rim of the glass, leaving the rounded base of the stone under in the water. Put on a north-facing windowsill.
- 3 Change the water every other day so that the base of the stone is always submerged in clean water (otherwise the rooting process is hindered). After 3-4 weeks, a tap root should emerge, followed by fibrous roots.



- 4 Soon, the avocado will sprout at the top, with one or two leaves. Remove it from the glass, and gently take out each toothpick. Use a small pot filled with houseplant or multi-purpose compost. Bed in the roots and half-bury the stone. Firm and lightly water the plant in.



- 5 Place the potted avocado back on to a well-lit windowsill. Water enough to keep the soil moist: if leaves turn brown at the tips the plant needs more water; if they turn yellow it is getting too much water and needs to dry out for a day or two. Pinch out to promote bushiness. From March-September feed with Baby Bio or Phostrogen.



Our special thanks to *Amateur Gardening* magazine for the use of these step-by-step photographs.

CHANGING SEASONS: AUTUMN COLOUR TO TEMPT YOU

As we prepare for the winter, we have to look to the spring for our inspiration when it comes to planning and planting. As the bulb planting season is in full flow, we need to introduce other plants to the party to help complement the colour they bring. We have a number of new Heucherella to tempt you with in our new mail-order catalogue and on our website. The variety which is so different from the rest of the pack is *Heucherella* 'Plum Cascade' (pictured right). Its colour is pretty unique, however the plant has an excellent trailing habit which is perfect for growing in hanging baskets, pots and window boxes,



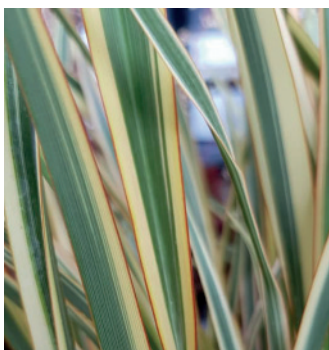
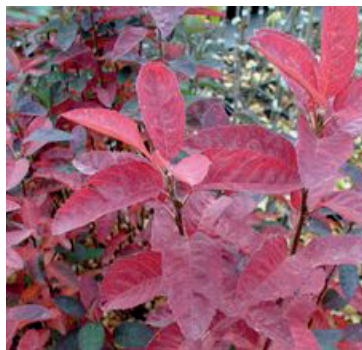
where its fantastic plum-purple colour with a silver sheen can be enjoyed. It prefers shade or part shady locations for the colour to shine. This variety flowers profusely in the early summer with sprays of pale pink flowers. You can view a wide range of other Heucherella and Heuchera varieties online at www.hedging.co.uk/acatalog/Index_Heuchera.html



Wallflowers provide staple colour in the early spring and usually well into May. Traditionally bare-root plants would be lifted and planted to give drifts of colour to borders and containers. Bare-root wallflowers do have a very short shelf life and over the years we have found the plants don't fair too well in our milder autumns in their plastic sleeves. So, this year for the very first time we are going to offer wallflower seedlings in 2.5-litre pots instead. The plants will be a good size just ready for transplanting into their final planting locations. A pot will contain around 9 plants and will cost £3.49, or three pots for £9. There will be a good range of single and mixed colours available.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE GARDEN CARD HOLDER'S PLANTS

Over the next few months we'll have a range of plants with special prices for Garden Card Holders. Starting in October will be the columnar *Amelanchier canadensis* 'Rainbow Pillar' ® at £9.99 (normally £14.99, pictured below left). Then in November the evergreen and robust *Phormium* 'Gold Ray' at £10.99 (normally £15.99, pictured below centre). The intriguing foliage of *Heuchera* 'Walnut' £12.99 (normally £16.99, pictured below right) features in December.



LINDENGATE: SOCIAL AND THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE

You will see from the Lindengate map (below), that Lindengate has a diverse and varied 5-acre site which provides a stunning, calm and safe environment for their Gardeners (service users) who present with a variety of mental health needs from the age of 16 upwards, writes Anne Mills of Lindengate.

Our Horticultural and Site team will be creating an accessible community nature reserve with its own entrance and education centre for school groups to use and learn about nature. We will inform visitors how nature and the outdoors support those with mental health needs in the recovery process.

Amongst our ongoing projects is the work planned for the one and half acre nature reserve. Until now this space has been mowed once a year, with the cuttings raked and removed and is now busy with a considerable collection of butterflies, bees and grass hoppers. Plans to increase accessibility and biodiversity in this area will include the following:

An accessible bird hide will allow visitors to use a selection of binoculars and have close access to wild life and the opportunity to learn from our interpretation boards. A pond will be created close to the bird hide to increase the opportunity to see birds and small mammals, view the bird feeding station and wild flower bank.

The rest of the nature reserve will be accessible via a recycled plastic board walk with seating areas along the route. Each seating area will have a point of interest to look at. Two more ponds visible to visitors will be created, one of which will have seating.

Our perimeter hedging includes scrub patches of Blackthorn and brambles and we have Lesser and Common Whitethroats (pictured right) and Yellow Hammers nesting. We will rejuvenate the hedgerow by laying sections and planting with native species to encourage more birds, small mammals and bats. Creation of basking areas for reptiles and amphibians will hopefully encourage new species and add to the biodiversity of the site.



We will be planting many of the wild flowers such as Devils Bit Scabious, Cowslips and Horseshoe Vetch that we grow at Lindengate for Butterfly Conservation and RSPB to support endangered butterflies. The Black Poplar is an indigenous tree of Buckinghamshire and is in serious decline; Lindengate has grown 80% of the UK Black Poplar stock and will plant a few of these trees in the nature reserve for the future. Joining them are Cherries and a Willow Wind Screen.

We plan to open the nature reserve for guided tours in the future when it is established and these opportunities will be advertised on our website, but in the meantime we hold “Drop Ins” and the next one is on Sat. 26th October at anytime between 10am and 12 noon. Further details at www.lindengate.org.uk



WHAT'S ON THIS EARLY AUTUMN?



SATURDAY 28th & SUNDAY 29th SEPTEMBER - APPLE & HONEY SHOW WEEKEND, 10am-4pm. Join us as we celebrate everything great and good about the Apple. We'll have top fruit expert Gerry Edwards providing his identification skills, plus The Mid-Shire Orchard Group who will be demonstrating apple juice making and providing plenty of practical advice for all gardeners. On Sunday we will be hosting The North Bucks and Buckingham Beekeepers Honey Show. Do come along and chat with the bee-keepers from around the local area and see the products of their bees' work which will be up for judging. The Honey Show awards will be presented at around 3.30pm. Also Jeremy Turner, a local woodcarver, will be with us on the Saturday. Local author and conservationist Christopher Hayes-Brown will be book signing and talking stick insects and orchids on Saturday.

FRIDAY 4th OCTOBER - AUTUMN TASKS WORKSHOP, 10.00am-1.00pm. Clare Price will provide topical advice on getting the best from your garden at this time of the year and will cover topics including propagation, planting and pruning. There are only 15 places available, so it will be on a first come first served basis. The cost to our Garden Card holders is £19.99 and to others £24.99. The price includes tea or filter coffee. Booking is essential at the Customer Service Desk or call us.



WEDNESDAY 9th OCTOBER, 10am-4pm We are delighted to welcome back Charles Ross Auctioneers, from Woburn, who will be offering their free valuation services on jewellery and antiques to our customers throughout the day. No booking is required - simply pop along any time through the day between 10am and 4pm.

At 4.00pm BGC's Chris Day will be giving a talk on **Gardening: A Step Back in Time**. Chris will highlight how gardening has changed, including the equipment used and the evolution of the plants grown through the ages and the practices employed.

FRIDAY 18th OCTOBER Wear It Pink Day We encourage everyone to wear pink, raise money and help make life-saving breast cancer research and life-changing care happen in aid of the Breast Cancer Now charity. www.wearitpink.org

Would you interested in a Christmas wreath making workshop? Please let us know and if we receive sufficient numbers we propose to run one on Wednesday 13th November. There would be a charge for the workshop, however whatever you create you get to take home! Please contact the Customer Service Desk or call 01280 822133 to register your interest.



Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

Tingewick Road, Buckingham, MK18 4AE. Tel: 01280 822133

E-Mail: enquiries@hedging.co.uk, Web: www.buckinghamgardencentre.co.uk

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