

NEWSLETTER

January/February 2010



TIME FOR SPUDS AND SCIONS!

We're delighted to be hosting our Potato Weekend and Apple Scion Exchange over the weekend of February 6th and 7th from 10am-4pm each day. This year National Potato Day falls on the 3rd February, and we are celebrating the humble spud and his green pals over a weekend packed with events. We'll have around 50 varieties of potato tubers to purchase as well. Our full range of seed potatoes is now available to [buy online](#).

Colin Randel, vegetable expert from top seed merchant Thompson & Morgan, will be joining us once again and will be on hand to give his wealth of potato and vegetable growing expertise. Local grower, Bernard Stopps, will also be available to answer your questions, and to provide growing advice and information as well as demonstrating growing spuds in bags, which proved hugely popular last year.



On the fruit front, apple experts **Marcus Roberts** and **Andy Howard** from the **Midshire Orchard Group** will be here to present their second Apple Scion Wood Exchange, where you can come along and see how apple trees are grafted as well as having the opportunity of grafting your own tree. We are hoping for a vast array of varieties (scion wood) over the weekend too.



We'll have potato-themed cookery with Going Green guru **Alli Templeton**, plus a chance to taste test some new varieties of potatoes. Our School's Challenge is being launched over this weekend, so please come along and ask how your local school can get involved in this year's Competition.

Plus, we'll have special in-store offers, and a free prize draw to win some Grow Your Own goodies. Our Plant Team will, as usual, be there to answer all your gardening questions and give advice on bare-root fruit, hedging and much, much more.

BEGINNERS' GROW YOUR OWN TALKS

NEW FOR 2010: Due to the popularity of Grow Your Own, this year on Wednesday 3rd February we are also offering "Beginners' Grow Your Own" talks (morning and afternoon) covering vegetable and fruit growing. The two talks will last around 1 hour 30 minutes each and your speaker, Chris Day, will be covering both topics with the beginner firmly in mind. Seating is limited, so please book early through our Customer Service Desk either in person or by telephone on 01280 822133. Please note that these talks are subject to change, depending on customer uptake.

Wednesday 3rd Feb., 10.30am-12noon, "Vegetable Growing" with Chris Day, 2-3.30pm "Fruit Growing" with Chris Day.

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th Feb., Colin Randel "Time to Get Growing", Bernard Stopps "Allotment Gardening". (Times TBA).

EXTERMINATE YOUR TRIFFIDS!



Many of you will have watched, and no doubt enjoyed, the latest BBC showing of "The Day of the Triffids" over the Christmas holidays with those carnivorous plants terrorizing the planet Earth, writes *Chris Day*, but one question that did arise from this excellent drama was which other plants should gardeners definitely avoid in their plots? Well, unsurprisingly there are quite a few plants which should be weeded out should they appear, or at least contained if they become overzealous from the roots upwards!

Here's our top half-dozen hit list:

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*): We have to thank the Victorians for introducing this plant originally as a groundcover. It is now Public Enemy No1 with its power to grow through Tarmac. The plant's ability to grow from just a small piece of root means it will re-grow again even if you think you have dug out all its roots. Weed killers, including glyphosate, are your best line of attack, but you must repeat spray to completely kill off the rhizome root system, or simply move house if you have this plant in your garden!

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*): In the 1970s the press dubbed this the true 'Triffid' as several children were hospitalised by using the stalks as blow-pipes. The plant grows huge – 3.5m (11ft) is not unusual and it is the sap that makes the skin hypersensitive. Destroy by using glyphosate.

Greater Duckweed (*Lemna polyrrhiza*): This innocuous-looking oxygenating plant will rapidly clog up your garden pond and choke the water surface. Can sometimes piggy-back other plants and get into your pond that way, so check your new pond additions carefully! If you do get a covering of this weed simply clear this by hand – an old sieve is very useful for this task.

Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*): The name really says it all. The parsley-like leaves are the give-away, but one to be aware of and destroy (with glyphosate) with gusto before your property becomes the set for the next Midsomer Murders and you become a victim!

Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*): Although belonging to the Busy Lizzy family, this exotic-looking plant will take over your garden, your neighbours' gardens and beyond. The exploding seed heads mean that this plant can travel far and wide. Don't let it set seed, or give it to someone who has a small stream running through their garden as the plants will love this and will go everywhere at speed.

Russian Vine (*Fallopia baldschuanica*): A very attractive climber with white flowers in late summer, and grows up to 40ft (12m) in a year, so donate one of these to a friend who wants their shed hidden quickly but not to your neighbour whose likes a tidy, well-groomed garden!!!

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS!

Oh, and what about those carnivorous antics we often hear about? Scientists from the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens now suggest carnivorous behaviour in plants is far more widespread than previously thought. As well as the well-known species – sundews, pitcher plants and Venus fly traps – many common plants, are part way to being 'meat eaters'. For instance petunias and potatoes have sticky hairs that capture unlucky insects and digestive enzymes which can absorb their remains.

Before you panic and rush off to convert your garden into a Japanese art form of stones and water, keep things in perspective. Research has shown the risk of harm from plant poisons is low - less than one in 10 million but I bet you will never look at a petunia or potato plant in the same way again!



The **Aquatics Department** has recently expanded its marine livestock selection and now has seven tanks of marine fish and invertebrates. Stock includes many of the most popular marine fish and corals as well as several rarer Australian corals.

The range of marine dry goods has been extensively updated and now popular items such as Deltec's Rowaphos (a professional product for removing Phosphate and Silicate) and Deltec's excellent H²O salt are amongst many other essential items.

On the tropical and coldwater side we now have 20 additional tanks hosting a wide variety of tropical and temperate fish to suit various tank set-ups.

As ever we are always available to give the best possible advice, whether starting off with your first goldfish tank or embarking on a large reef tank.



Special congratulations to the winners of our Aquatics Christmas prize draw - Richard Field from Great Horwood was the overall winner, bagging the top prize of the Red Sea Max Marine Tank, worth £650. Our second prize winner, Neil Hopkins from Brackley, won a River Reef 130 Marine/Tropical Tank, worth £250. Mrs Webster from Buckingham scooped the third prize of Pond Products worth £200.

A 'big thank' you to all of you who entered and we wish everyone a Happy New Year and Happy Fishkeeping.

STOP PRESS!! The Aquatics Department are offering 5-15% discount on selected fish tanks through the month of January. Please ask in-store for details.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK & TWITTER

We are now on Facebook and Twitter, so please come and join us in our on-line community. We'll keep you up-to-the-minute with information on what's coming into the Garden Centre over all departments, timely advice, topical information, advice on Grow Your Own, as well general chit-chat in the world of gardening locally and globally. Whether you are a seasoned gardener or just starting off, we'll help you out where we can... just search Buckingham Garden Centre on Facebook, or click on the following links.

facebook.com/BuckinghamNurseries

twitter.com/buckinghamgc

JOIN US FOR A TALK?

Book for our February talk "Bulbs for the Garden" is the subject to be covered by Tim Whiteley from Evenley Gardens. The date is Wednesday 10th February, from 10.30-12noon and tickets are limited, so contact Customer Services in person or by telephone on (01280) 822133, or via our website www.hedging.co.uk/talks

Advance notice: Our March 10th talk will be looking at "Growing Gladioli from Corm to Flower" with Trevor Fawcett, a local exhibitor and grower of Gladioli.

COMPETITION WINNERS



Congratulations to Margaret Dudley (pictured left) from Stoke Lyne, who won the Toronto 4-Seater Aluminium garden furniture set with glass table from our Christmas Garden Club Draw.

Well done to Anne Mallett from Buckingham who bagged the lovely festive planted container drawn for our Special Christmas Open Day in early December.

EXTENDING THE RANGE

New plant introductions are always sought after, and we are looking to offer a much wider range of new varieties and garden centre promotion plants to all our customers, whether local or national, through our website in 2010. Please check out our

[Home page](#), or join our [Facebook](#) page for details of what's new.

Why are we doing this? Well, why not! After all, we send out hundreds of thousands of plants each year, so offering larger plants is a natural progression for us. But cherry-picking the best of what's new is a great way for you, as keen gardeners, to stay ahead of the game and get hold of the latest plants as soon as they arrive at the Garden Centre. However, many of the plants will be limited in numbers, so you'll need to be quick or you may miss out!

A great example of a plant that received huge amounts of worthy publicity last year at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show was the new, innovative shrub [Cornus 'Venus'](#). We were able to respond to requests for this superb plant and give our mail-order customers as well as Garden Centre visitors the opportunity to purchase it without any hassle.



In January, look out for our patio Terrace fruit range; including peach, pear and nectarine, absolutely perfect for the patio. The Plant of the Month will be Hellebore, a plant which can give so much pleasure at this time of the year when beautiful flowers are not so abundant. As they flower so early they are especially useful for those difficult-to-fill-spots under deciduous trees. Elsewhere, we'll have a wonderful range of potted bulbs and early primroses to tempt you back into the garden after the cold invigorating weather of December. We are hoping that January, February and March won't be so cold and invigorating, but so far our hopes are not being fulfilled!

10 JOBS FOR JANUARY

HOUSEPLANTS Go easy on the watering this month, especially with the likes of foliage indoor plants and specimens. Allow the compost to dry out a little between watering if you can, so allowing oxygen to penetrate through and down into the soil. You can feed with Baby Bio fortnightly to help encourage new growth, but don't overdo it! There is a specific winter feed for citrus plants.

LAWNS Sounds crazy, but if the weather turns mild and no frost is expected the lawn may need a cut, with the blades at the highest setting. Obviously you should only cut when the grass is reasonably dry, but nonetheless it should be cut, even if some of those gardening books suggest differently.

PLANTERS Good drainage is the key to successful plant growth in pots. Make sure your containers are not becoming too waterlogged; the drainage holes must not become clogged up otherwise problems will occur. Lifting the base of the pot onto pottery feet should help; alternatively stand the pot on gravel or shingle.

GO GYO Make a resolution to grow your own vegetables in 2010 and if it's your second season, throw down the gauntlet and grow even more varieties this year! Start the ball rolling by securing your seed potatoes over the next few weeks. Demand is likely to be even higher than last year, so do your homework, plan and buy as soon as possible. Some varieties of potatoes have still not arrived due to the weather conditions in Scotland and by the look of things they will not be here for a while. The weather must clear soon! When you have purchased your seed place them in a light, cool, frost-free position in seed trays. You need to stand them with the so-called 'rose end' upwards. This is the end of the potato with most eyes and from where they will sprout.

SAVED SEED You really need to check the viability of your home-saved seeds before the seed-sowing season commences, to make sure that they will germinate successfully. A good test is to sow 10 seeds on some moistened thick absorbent kitchen towel (or a pot containing some multi-purpose compost) and place on a warm, sunny windowsill, around 70-75°F (20-24°C). Label, with date and name of the seed. Depending on which specific plant you are testing, the seeds may begin to sprout in a day or two or may take several weeks to begin. Usually the majority will sprout within a few days of each other. When germination stops and no more seeds have sprouted for several days, you will know what approximate germination rate to expect from that batch of seeds. You are looking for a minimum germination rate of around 70%, so at least 7 seeds should have germinated from the 10 you have set.

FRUIT There is still time to give apples and pears their winter prune, but complete it by the end of the month. Plant new soft fruit bushes and canes if weather and soil conditions allow. If not already done, shorten back the past season's growth of [gooseberries](#) and [red currants](#) by one-third. Cut cropped summer-fruiting raspberry canes back to 23cm (9in) just above a bud, but do leave last year's new canes intact as these will crop in summer. All autumn-cropping raspberry canes can be cut back to 23cm (9in) just above a bud as these flower and crop on wood produced in the growing season. Mortegg tar oil is no longer available, but overwintering insect eggs can be killed using Growing Success Winter Tree Wash. There is now no chemical to control lichen and algae on fruit trees or bushes, which some people find unsightly, but they are not harmful.

PONDS In view of the recent weather conditions, keep a small area ice-free ideally with an electric pond heater. This will allow the escape of gases (the result of the breakdown of vegetation on the floor of the pool), which, if trapped, may asphyxiate your fish. Even a rubber ball placed in your pond will keep a small area free of ice unless it is very cold.

ROUTINE Protect recently planted and vulnerable evergreens from chill winds. [Protective fleece](#) or [windbreak netting](#) supported by [stakes](#) or [canes](#) is ideal. Get busy in the kitchen (or potting shed) and wash/disinfect any pots or seed trays that you are intending to use through the coming season. If the weather is mild then make, or at least plan, any structural changes to the garden, including new beds, re-aligning paths, erecting trellis/fencing panels and garden buildings.

UNDERCOVER Unless you have a frost-free heated greenhouse, avoid sowings until late February or early March. However, we've some great deals on packet seeds in the shop at the moment – buy any three packs of seed and get the cheapest free. This offer includes Duchy Originals Organic Seed, Kings Seeds, Suffolk Herb Seeds, Sutton Seeds, The Taste of Italy and Thompson & Morgan. The offer is limited, possibly to the end of

January or to Potato Weekend in February, so please see in-store for details. A propagator is a great investment as it means sowings can take place earlier and under more controlled conditions in the home. Opt for one with a heated base and invest in a soil thermometer to check on the root-level temperature to see the 'lift' of heat achieved. Start sowing slow to develop plants such as begonias, lobelia and aubergines, but remember to think what happens next to these plants once they are ready for potting on!

**Buy any 3 packets of seeds in
Jan. & get the cheapest free**

BE ENTERTAINED Why not treat yourself to a visit to the Garden Museum this month and catch the exhibition 'The Good Life... 100 Years of Growing Your Own'? The event is being held at the Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB and runs until 7th March 2010. As well as the thought-provoking exhibition charting the history of WWII's "Dig For Victory", to the Self-Sufficiency Movement through to credit-crunch Britain where people are re-discovering the joys of Growing Your Own, there's plenty to see and get involved in. Admission charges (includes garden and museum) are £6 for adults, £5 for Senior Citizens. Concessions apply. www.museumgardenhistory.org.uk

Tip-toe through the snowdrops: visit some snowdrop displays this winter

Snowdrop Days at **Evenley Woods** - Saturday & Sunday February 13th & 14th and Saturday & Sunday 20th & 21st February. Admission prices: £5 for adults; Concessions £4 and £1 for children.

Venue: Evenley Woods, Evenley, Northamptonshire NN13 5SH. Tel: 07776 307849
www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk

Snowdrop Weekends at **Waterperry Gardens**: 6th & 7th February and 12th & 13th February 2010. Admission prices: £5.90 for adults – guided tours available at 11am and 2pm. (Note: visit on 7th February and the gardens are open as part of the National Gardens Scheme (NGS) so all entrance money will be donated to nursing, caring and gardening charities chosen by the NGS.

Venue: Waterperry Gardens, Waterperry, Oxford OX33 1JZ. Tel: 01844 337264
www.waterperrygardens.co.uk

Snowdrop season at **Anglesey Abbey** Gardens between 19 January–21 February 2010 (closed Mondays). Admission details: see website details (below).

Venue: Anglesey Abbey Gardens, Quy Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB25 9EJ. Tel: 01223 810080 and choose the option 1 for opening times and the snowdrop update.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/angleseyabbey/

Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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

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

WINTER OPENING HOURS
Mon.-Sat.: 8:30am to 5.30pm,
Sun.: 10:00am to 4:00pm