

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2010



Down on the plots

Take 5 Gardens... our new Grow Your Own Plots, served with our passion for plants and all things foodie, are now growing well! Come and watch our gardens grow this summer... Laura Donovan, Patrick Dunkley and other members of the Plant Team are working on our themed plots, so do come and talk to them and we'll have regular updates on our FACEBOOK page, so join our online community at www.facebook.com/BuckinghamNurseries

- Mediterranean Garden: A minimal container garden with exotic fruits and vegetables.
- Cottage Potager Garden: Mixing flowers, herbs, vegetables and fruits together.
- Urban Garden: Using your limited space to best effect.
- Traditional Vegetable Plot: Typical area cordoned off from the rest of the garden dedicated to vegetable growing.
- Allotment: The Good Life Garden: Bringing it all together.





Hosta la vista, Veggie!

Top TV Gardener Alys Fowler, famous for her recent series, BBC2 series, *The Edible Garden*, and more recently quoted in *Amateur Gardening* magazine, states: "My new found interest in hostas is about eating them". No, you have read it correctly; she is eating them before the slugs do, writes Pauline Brown.

In Japan they are considered a spring delicacy with the species *Hosta montana* and *Hosta fluctuans* 'Sagae' (RHS AGM) being the best flavour. Alys has been munching through *Hosta fortunei* 'Aureomarginata' and says that it is good. Maybe if all

our readers have a nibble at their hostas and let us know which varieties are the best flavour we can then publish the results and start a new trend in the ornamental garden.

You need a good sized clump to harvest from, where you can break off the emerging spears and treat them like asparagus. Before putting this in the Newsletter I thought we must try some steamed Hosta so I broke some tight spears from *Hosta* 'Grey Cole' and steamed them lightly. The flavour and texture were certainly good, similar to asparagus but the 'Grey Cole' had a very slight added bitterness, but no doubt, this was the variety. If I had lots of hostas in the garden we would certainly be eating more. It would be interesting to know what their nutritional value is. Alys also says they can be nibbled raw, or boiled. A great use of this attractive perennial which thrives in a shady spot in your garden.

Whilst writing about unusual things to eat, here is another one – *Amaranthus*, known in Asian cooking as Chauli (pictured here cooked with rice). The colourful leaves of this attractive plant grown for its foliage and flowers can be cooked like spinach. They reduce in volume like spinach so you will need to grow a lot but it is high in protein, iron and zinc and lysine, an important amino acid. I have yet to eat this but I may give it a spot in the vegetable garden, possibly alongside another which I am trying for the first time this year – Chick Peas. The challenge with these, apart from keeping the mice at bay, will be to get them dried in the autumn if we have wet weather. However, if it is like growing lots of different varieties of haricot beans which I always do, the flavour and cooking quality will be so much better than buying them. Time will tell!



Share your garden?

Do you or someone you know have a garden that is simply too large to handle? Alternatively, do you have some spare ground you would be happy to share with someone who wants to grow a few vegetables? Well, if this strikes a chord, it might be something we can help with, perhaps acting as an information exchange, within our locality.

Allotment waiting lists are at an all-time high. A survey of over 150,000 council plots in England found 91,500 people waiting for an allotment, up from 76,330 last June. The average waiting time for a plot is over 3 years with some gardeners facing waits of up to 40 years!

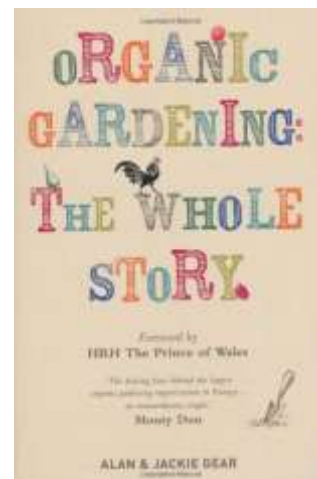


Please let us know your thoughts on this, and once we've assessed the feedback, we'll let you know what you are thinking on this.

Landshare came out of TV's River Cottage and it began when Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall helped some Bristol families grow vegetables on derelict council land. The experience was so inspiring, that River Cottage decided to see if it would work nationwide. Now Landshare is a national movement of more than 47,000 people. For details: <http://www.landshare.net/index/>

Ice, Ice, Maybe!

I have been reading Alan and Jackie Gear's book 'Organic Gardening, The Whole Story', writes Pauline Brown, and I would recommend to anyone interested in gardening to read it. Apart from the history of HDRA, now re-named Garden Organic, the book is full of fascinating facts about methods of growing, composting, diseases, etc. and one point I picked up was their mention of eating unusual plants. The plant in question they simply called 'Ice Plant', which meant I had to contact the advice office of Garden Organic in Ryton to see which 'Ice Plant' was being referred to. Alan and Jackie retired from Garden Organic in 2003, but the answer came back promptly as *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum* (pictured below). It's not surprising they gave the common name in the book!



This is a plant which none of us here at the Garden Centre have grown, but it is a half-hardy annual succulent with a prostrate habit. The leaves



are green with hairs that resemble ice. The leaves can be eaten raw in salads and they have a crisp, crunchy texture and they are said to be similar to watermelon with a good refreshing taste. They are hydrating and can be used to soothe skin and calm redness. In summer they bear typical mesembryanthemum flowers, so should be attractive, if we get any sunshine this year. Apparently the seeds can also be eaten. Altogether fascinating!

If you are getting interested in growing this plant don't come rushing in to us to buy them as at this stage we are trying to obtain some seed to have a go. If we are successful in sourcing seed and it arrives in time you may well see some growing in one of our demonstration gardens later in the year.

The perfect match?

'Coalition plants', that's right, plants that will put up with each other, in beds or pots, are alive and well in a garden near you, writes Chris Day.

Plants, like many of today's politicians, get along with one another in many ways. However, some plant combinations positively thrive; Carrots and Peas grow well together, Marigolds and Cucumbers (pictured) as well as Tomatoes and Parsley. There is nothing scientific here, simply 'trial and error' learned by gardeners over the years to become part of gardening lore.



But some plants can also stop other plants from growing. Black walnuts produce fungi called 'juglone'

on their roots, which effectively poison the soil, thereby making the establishing of shrubs near or under the tree difficult. However, with persistence and the aid of RootGrow ® this is possible.

Growing plants together is often referred to as companion planting. Plants with strong odours, such as herbs and certain flowers (like marigolds), will keep away unwanted insects so they won't harm other plants in the garden. Interestingly, African marigolds exude a protective chemical called thiopene, which repels nematodes, and makes a good plant to grow amongst root crops.

Elsewhere, Marigolds and Garlic have a reputation for repelling a number of insect pests such as aphids and carrot root flies.

Why not encourage beneficial insects in healthy large numbers by planting something which they use as a food nearby? So, attract hoverflies by planting nectar-rich Yarrow, English Lavender, sweet Alyssum and edging Lobelia, and you will find their larvae feed on aphids and they will lay their eggs on plants where these pests are present. Who says politics and gardening cannot mix?

Did you guess right?



Picture puzzler: We hope you solved the plant identification in our last newsletter (pictured to the right); the answer was the berries of the Sweet or Christmas Box (*Sarcococca hookeriana humilis*).

This month's teaser – just for fun – is can you name the plant from this photograph?

Answer in our next newsletter.



Plant of the month: Penstemon

If you like traditional perennial plants to create that idyllic chocolate-box cottage garden then you'll love penstemons. You'll see numerous varieties, which are now firmly established favourites of the summer border, available at the Garden Centre throughout the summer months.

Penstemons are easy to grow and do well in any reasonable well-drained soil, and they will cope with light shade. In our Buckingham clay, work some horticultural grit in to the planting hole together with some well-rotted compost, manure or planting compost.



To create an eye-catching display, set the plants at 18in (45cm) spacings and they will quickly make a vigorous clump.

These plants are very versatile and you can even grow them in containers. Use a multi-purpose compost with lots of grit added (about 10%) to boost drainage. Set the pots on the patio or by the front door to add a splash of exotic colour.



We've plants available in a huge range of colours and sizes – some of the best varieties include 'Blackbird' (deep purple-pink flowers with white striped throat, pictured opposite); 'Flamingo' (large, rich pink flowers with striped white throat); 'Garnet' (deep wine-red flowers with white markings in the throat); 'King George V' (scarlet red

flowers with white centre, pictured left); 'Osprey' (large, white and pink to bright pink flower) and 'Windsor Red' (bright red with streaked throat).

Oh, just one last thing, do look out for the Pensham series of Penstemons; these are becoming increasingly popular due to their wide colour range.



Football's growing home! *Compiled by Chris Day*

How about Three Lions for the garden... go for Lion's ear (*Leonotis leonurus*), Lion's foot (*Alchemilla vulgaris*) and Lion's teeth (*Taraxacum officinale*). Don't let the *Taraxacum* seed or you'll have more than three dande-lions to deal with! Obelisks would make great goal mouth posts with bird protective netting making the perfect net.

The most appropriately named football venues – Burnley play at Turf Moor, Southend United play at Roots Hall, West Bromwich Albion play at The Hawthorns, Macclesfield Town's pitch is called Moss Rose and Forest Green Rovers play at The Lawn.

And what about plants named after football heroes...

Famous footballers: The late Danny Blanchflower and finally the most aptly named footballer for hedge cutting, well, that has to be Alan Shearer, OBE!

- ⚽ *Primula auricula* 'David Beckham', a lovely lavender flower variety
- ⚽ *Rosa* 'Jimmy Greaves' (a pink Hybrid Tea with a sweet fragrance): Named after the famous English football hero.
- ⚽ *Rosa* 'George Best', a lovely red (what else!) patio rose, introduced in 2007; a royalty from each rose sold will benefit the Foundation set up in his name.
- ⚽ *Rosa* 'Bobby Charlton', introduced by Fryers Roses. A Hybrid Tea with deep pink blooms with a silver reverse. Spicy fragrance.
- ⚽ TV sports presenter: 'Des Lynham' has a lovely *Dianthus* named after him.
- ⚽ 'Sir Matt Busby' is a trailing fuchsia with double dark- and pale pink flowers.

If you fancy any of these plants, most are quite rare, but you might be lucky sourcing them through the RHS Plant Finder on-line.

Talks, Open Gardens and Garden Club Visit

July is a busy month for open gardens... Here are just a few...

3rd – 4th July (2-6pm, both days). Pam Rye is opening her garden, 11 The Paddocks, Wendover HP22 6HE in aid of the National Garden Scheme. Admission is £2.50. A small, peaceful garden full of herbaceous perennials and David Austin Roses complete with a white garden and arbour.

25th July (1-5pm) Kathy Brown's Garden at Stevington, Bedfordshire. A wonderful, inspiring garden. Entrance is £4.50. Further details at kathybrownsgarden.homestead.com/Openkathy.html

For more Open Gardens, check out the famous Yellow Book, that's The National Gardens Scheme 2010 book.

Sunday 18th July. Lily Festival at Evenley Woods: Plant, bulb and craft stalls will be in the woodland marquee to celebrate the Evenley Woods Garden's lily collection. They will also be hosting a talk on woodland perennials by RHS Wisley Garden Manager, Colin Crosbie, in Evenley

Village Hall. Tickets for the talk are priced at £8 and include entry to the Lily Festival (standard admission applies). For ticket enquiries, email info@evenleywoodgarden.co.uk or call 07776 307 849. Numbers are limited to 75.

Sunday 18th July. Chenies Manor Plant Fair, 10am-5pm. For full details, check out their website www.cheniesmanorhouse.co.uk

Events at the Garden Centre...

The next Garden Centre Talk is on Wednesday 14th July (10.30am-12noon), and we are welcoming back top local photographer John Credland for one of his photographic workshops. Full details are available at the Customer Service Desk.

Book Now for Our September Garden Visit! We are delighted to announce we are visiting the gardens of Beth Chatto (pictured) on Wednesday 22nd September. For full details and to book please contact the Customer Service Desk.

Extension to Garden Centre Shop

And finally big things are about to happen at the Garden Centre – we have been thinking for some time that our shop, and especially the Restaurant, needed increasing in size, to accommodate more hungry customers and a better range of gardening sundries. The work should begin in July and finish before the mad rush of Spring.

Inevitably there will be some disruption for you our customers, but we will do our best to keep things running smoothly during the works. In the next Newsletter we will set out details of the proposals and the programme of when things should happen. It's all very exciting, and we hope you will all approve of the changes. Watch this space!

10 jobs for June & July

POTTED lilies and summer container containers will be growing quickly now and as their flowers start developing they will need some support. Push several canes into the compost around the edge of the pot, linking them up with string to provide stability.

If border lilies are not supported by neighbouring plants, use stakes around these too. Finally, check all plants for pests, especially aphids and lily beetle, and tackle with Provado Ultimate Bug Killer.

MANY spring-flowering shrubs, such as Exochorda 'The Bride' (pictured), can be pruned as soon as their flowers have started to fade. Any shoots that have carried flowers can be cut back, shortening them to shape the shrub and control its size and vigour. Forsythia can grow large and ungainly if left to its own devices, so prune to give the shrub a definite shape and form.

This and other shrubs, such as Berberis darwinii, a popular hedging subject, can be pruned to give a more formal structure. All the flowering stems of Prunus triloba can be pruned to their woody base, while selective pruning on Philadelphus and Weigela stops them getting large and woody.



MANY greenhouse and conservatory pests will be active during the summer months. Check plants regularly for signs of glasshouse whitefly, leafhopper, glasshouse red spider mite, mealybugs and scale insects. Yellow sticky card traps are a valuable in the Shop (£3.55), a useful low-cost tool for monitoring numbers and types of flying pests in the greenhouse. If large numbers of a particular pest are found, treatment can be instigated. For most sap-sucking pests on ornamental plants, use Provado Ultimate Bug Killer.

SPREAD nets over soft fruit bushes, such as currants, and over strawberries growing in rows or in containers. Once blackbirds and other birds find fruits to their taste they will return again and again and will quickly strip plants of unprotected fruit.

TRAIN bindweed up canes so you then can apply Glyphosate (Round-Up) to the leaves with a targeted sprayer or rubber gloves. If, however, you do not want to use a weedkiller to rid your garden of bindweed, and you are able to rip off or, better still, pull up all emerging shoots as soon as they appear for the whole growing season you should eradicate it. A second season of the same treatment will completely finish it off.

However, you must be persistent and thorough. If you leave it for several weeks or miss some of the growth, the leaves will create enough nutrient to keep the roots alive.

Other weeds needing careful attention include ground elder and its variegated form; dead-head both of these forms, so that at least it can't drop seed and move around the garden further.

ROTATE potted or topiary box and yew, so the sun gets to all sides for even, dense growth. If you have evergreens in pots, give them a feed now with either Vitax Q4 or Osmocote Slow-Release Fertiliser. This should boost growth and improve the health of the plant. Elsewhere, level up pots on sloping surfaces with slips of stone; they look so much better and it improves drainage.

MIND THE GAP Don't let grass grow around the stems and over the roots of young fruit trees (or any other trees for that matter); it seriously reduces their vigour. Clear a 1m (3ft circle) at the base and make sure you keep the soil clear of weeds and you can apply fertiliser into this soil as well.

FEED flowering shrubs like Rhododendrons, Camellias and Azaleas immediately after they have finished flowering with a Rhododendron fertiliser or perhaps Vitax Conifer & Shrub, Azalea and Rhododendron Fertiliser.

Dead head the developing seed pods (pictured) from your Rhododendrons and Azaleas to improve next year's bloom.

Be careful not to damage next year's buds which may be hidden just below the pod.

WATCH for Clematis montana eating its neighbours for dinner! Now is the time to take tough action on over-zealous plants.

Disentangle, peel back and cut off the most wayward stems. More stems will follow, and you can do the same again, as far as September, without any loss of next spring's flowers. Feed with Blood, Fish & Bone to help the climber along.

And finally – sit back and **ENJOY** your garden!



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