

NEWSLETTER

LATE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010



Savvy Christmas Savings Can Be Made!



Come and join us for our special 10% OFF CHRISTMAS EVENT on Thursday 25th November 2010 from 8.30am until 8pm. Please pick up a coupon in-store to redeem your 10% discount on the 25th November. We've lots of new lines available in-store this year, including non-alcoholic cordials and pressés, Yankee Candles and decorations. We've themed areas within our Christmas display to make selection of decorations easier.

You can enter our free raffle draw with 10 prizes up for grabs, enjoy a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie (limited to one per customer), select from our wide range of Christmas Trees (real and artificial), Wreaths, Christmas Decorations, Seasonal potted hollies and ivies as well as an opportunity to buy your Christmas presents, too!

Apple Day Competition Winners: Congratulations to Mr Mathews, from Akeley Wood, Buckingham, who won the Weber One BBQ and Alexander Blakeley from Calvert Green, who won a £20 Garden Voucher in the Apple Weekend Treasure Hunt.

Re-development Update

As regular customers will have noted, our big build is moving ever onwards and upwards! Our new Warehouse, Goods-Inward Building and the shell of the new shop and restaurant is evolving with the new Checkout Hall and seasonal canopy being the next area to be constructed. We do apologise again for any undue noise and disruption which may have occurred on your recent visits, but as you can appreciate we have to continue to trade, more or less in our usual manner, whilst the building work is in progress. We thank for your patience and understanding.

Beth's En-Chatto'd Gardens!

Blessed with pleasant warm late summer sunshine, our visit to Beth Chatto's garden in Essex turned out to be a fantastic occasion. We struck lucky as a gardening magazine was holding one of their 'reader's days' on our visit, so many of us in the 30-strong group had the opportunity to see and chat with the great gardener herself, Beth Chatto, together with Head Gardener of Great Dixter, Fergus Garrett and top garden designer, Dan Pearson.

For many of our group, this was a first visit and they were in for a treat. Beth's garden is, in fact, a series of gardens





demonstrating what you can do successfully, over the course of nearly 50 years on overgrown wasteland, set between two farms, which has now been transformed into gardens of renowned quality. The tour, lasting well over one hour, gave us a glimpse of how this transformation happened, starting with what was the old car park to the gardens, but now a wonderful gravel garden peppered with plants from all climes. The gardens have never been watered we were told, yet the fast-draining soil (this part of Essex only

receives 50cm (20inches) of rainfall per annum) was home to a huge range of species such as Cistus and Sedums. The path continues past a huge old oak tree and you enter a totally different scene featuring water, dappled shade and ribbons of plantings. We loved the Rudbeckias, Gunneras and Astilbes, and one of the best lawns you are likely to walk across!! Moisture-loving plants abound and everything is well-groomed, precise and perfect to look at. Although it was mid September, there was plenty of perennial colour to enjoy as well as pockets of colchicums springing up everywhere.

The gardens became increasingly green as we walked through the shady quarter, created by oak trees, of this Tardis-like 5-acre garden. This is a late winter-spring garden, yet the evergreen ground canopy was full of surprises with cyclamen adding welcome splashes of colour.

With the clever planting, the maturity of the layout and the ecological gardening stance, Beth Chatto demonstrates what you can do, and yes, it can become a bit experimental yet still work!

As we reached the top of the site, the garden's fully operating Nursery can be seen. Rows of asters, crocosmia and blooming pampas grass flank this huge site which is an important aspect of the business.



We walked further and finished the tour around Beth Chatto's bungalow and in the courtyard there was a wonderful display of cacti and succulents in all shapes, colours and sizes imaginable. Beth is a passionate collector of plants, and this area shows some of her amazing selection of the unusual, beautiful and rare.



After our tour there was time to gather our thoughts, grab some lunch and then go to explore individually. Yes, the nursery is a treasure-trove of everything good in plants, and I know many were tempted with the range, where over 90% of the plants sold are grown on the site.

This is a reflective garden, it makes you think about how a garden should function on all levels: there is lots of

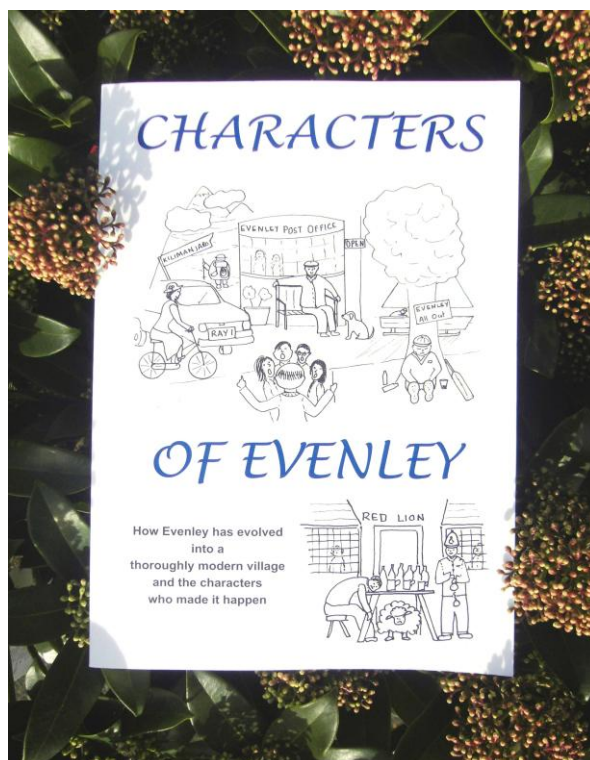
groundcover planting for easy management, there are beautiful shrubs, like Sambucus 'Black Lace' fully mature and you have levels of other plants, perennials and grasses mainly, that keep the display alive and just waiting to shine.

Chatting to our group on our homeward drive around the M25, it was obvious this garden is a real gem, a place you just want to return to in different seasons, and above all, a testament to the visionary qualities Beth Chatto and her loyal team of gardeners have created. This is a garden of triumph over adversity and if you haven't been before, please visit in 2011.

Learn about the "Characters of Evenley"

We are always keen to mention local community news items, gardens and gardening related news in the newsletter, so we were delighted to hear of a new book, "Characters of Evenley", writes Chris Day. A paperback, 128 pages in length with 90 photographs, is hot off the press, which promises and delivers a look at how the lovely village of Evenley has evolved into a thoroughly modern village and the characters who made it happen. Now, as far as gardening, Evenley is a rich source of horticultural excellence. Two gardens and their respective gardeners have put the village on the map – Janet and Bob Cropley's garden at Hill Grounds and the 60-acre Evenley Wood, which has been turned into an amazing garden by Tim Whiteley.

In the book you can read how these gardens developed together with a look at the overall flora and fauna of the area. There is a rich seam of local community in this village, and the book is full of wonderful, heart-warming tales. If you like local history and what makes a local community tick, then this is a book you can dip in and out of, a perfect read, just in time for Christmas perhaps?



The book is available from the Evenley Village Shop, the Red Lion Pub in Evenley or the Old Bookshop in Brackley and it costs £7.95.

Catch BGC's Chris Day on BBC Three Counties Radio. "The Greenhouse" goes out live from 11am to 2pm every Saturday and you can listen to Chris on the following dates: 27th November and 11th December.

Mystery Fruit November and December: Was your guess right?



Picture puzzler: We hope you solved the plant identification in our last newsletter (pictured to the left); the answer is the seed head of the Paeonia 'Bowl of Beauty'. This month's teaser – just for fun – this impressive seed pod belongs to a popular species, but which one? Answer in our next newsletter.



New Plants and Products for 2011 season

A complete list of all the [new items](#) in our mail order range was sent out recently by e-mail but as it is a five page document we thought a synopsis (the second part to follow in the next Newsletter) would be better for this Newsletter!

[Broadleaf](#) is a great product, writes Pauline Brown, to use when planting as it retains a supply of water around the roots of newly planted stock, thus making the task of keeping plants moist in times of drought much easier. It works well alongside [Rootgrow](#) and is active for up to five years by which time plants will be well and truly established.

There are so many beautiful ornamental trees available and we have chosen six new ones to introduce into our bare-root range – [Ermanii Birch](#), Crab Apples '[Gorgeous](#)' and '[Wedding Bouquet](#)' the [Handkerchief Tree](#), [Princeton Gold Maple](#) and [Crimson Cloud Thorn](#).



The [Birch](#) has outstanding white peeling bark, tinged with a glint of pale pink and cream and is almost luminescent in winter light. Crab Apple '[Gorgeous](#)' is a small tree with semi-arching branches which are festooned with soft pink blossom in spring then bright red, large crab apples in autumn. '[Wedding Bouquet](#)' produces shell-shaped, ivory-white, scented flowers in spring which any bride would be

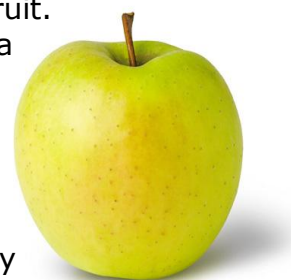
pleased to carry in her bouquet. In autumn the tree will be a picture with its small, translucent, dark red crab apples, and these will last well into December. The [Handkerchief Tree](#) (Dove Tree) is outstanding for those with a large garden as its eventual height is about 50ft. The large, white, leafy bracts are spectacular in late spring, these being followed by round pendent fruits which ripen to purple-brown. The [Princeton Gold Maple](#) is unusual as its bright golden-green leaves do not scorch in the sun, and the dense habit of the tree make it good for screening. The [Crimson Cloud Thorn](#), like all the thorn family, is tough, dependable and easy to grow, with a neat rounded habit and healthy green foliage. In spring it will be laden with fragrant, rich red flowers with white eyes then in autumn bunches of shiny red haws will remain on the tree after the leaves have fallen.

With the continual interest in 'grow your own' we wish to offer more fruit.

Firstly a selection of 6 different [Cider Apples](#) to enable you to produce a cider to your taste. We have re-introduced the dessert apple '[Golden Delicious](#)' which produces a really tasty apple if grown in this country and picked ripe from the tree. Next a pear with a difference – '[Humbug](#)'.



This new variety produces large, really eye-catching, ornamental pears which are boldly striped green, yellow and pink and these are also excellent to eat, being very sweet and juicy. For those who love [blueberries](#) but do not have the required acid soil to grow them in, [Honeyberry](#) could be the answer for you as they thrive in any good fertile soil. The berries are similar to blueberries but with an aftertaste of honey. One downside, two bushes should be planted for good pollination – but then two plants give more



delicious fruit than one! And just to give regular customers a change we have added [Strawberry](#), '[Red Gauntlet](#)' to our range of excellent strawberry varieties.

Finally, after introducing a few [root-wrapped roses](#) last year, we saw that these were very popular as they are a good way of purchasing top quality roses at a more economical price than pot grown plants.

We now have listed 26 varieties of [climbers and ramblers](#), 21 varieties of [large flowered \(hybrid tea\)](#), 32 varieties of [cluster flowered \(floribunda\)](#), 10 [patio roses](#) and 4 [ground cover roses](#). We hope to have these available until about March next year, but we would advise ordering early to be sure to get the varieties you want.

More new plants, in detail, will follow in our January/February Newsletter.

All I want for Christmas is....

The question Chris Day will be asking the Garden Centre & Nurseries Teams is for their gift ideas this season. We'll kick start the list here... but over the next few weeks, more staff will be selecting their dream garden-related gift ideas through our FACEBOOK page, so please become a fan and find out more at <http://www.facebook.com/BuckinghamNurseries>

Pam Dearing, on our Plant Team, fancies some greenhouse hanging shelving for her new greenhouse – so more space for those overwintering plants and autumn-planted seedlings.



Gill Delaney, who looks after our Plant Goods-inward department, is keen to do more home preserving and wine making, and Gill tells us she has some fine sloe gin on the go at the moment.

Gill would like: "Jelly bag, strainer, preserving pan and winemaking equipment – maybe we should sell wine/jam/chutney making utensils?" Good idea Gill - over to the management with that one!



Berried Treasures

If you are a recent convert to wildlife gardening then you will soon realise the value of plants rich in berries as a perfect food source for our wildlife. So, what's available in the pecking order of berry cuisine? A new super evergreen, Skimmia 'Obsession' ® is a cross between the form reevesiana (self-fertile and berrying) and 'Rubella' (free flowering), so you get the best of both worlds, lovely berries and buds in autumn and winter with the promise of white flowers in 2-3 months' time, a real beauty.

No garden is complete without a holly, but if you have space for only one make sure it is the variety [Ilex 'J C van Tol'](#), a self-fertile green-leaved form which guarantees berries. Remember hollies make fantastic security hedges, prickles and all, but you have to be patient in getting them established. Berries at soil level are available and Gaultheria procumbens makes a lovely mat of bright evergreen foliage and rounded berries as does the soil-hugging [Cotoneaster dammeri Major](#), a wildlife friendly, ground covering, marvel, that does exactly what is says on the tin, masses of bee-friendly flowers followed by a carpet of scarlet-red berries.

Jobs for Late November & December

BEST START The bare-root planting season is now upon us and its timely to get planning those new hedge and fruit garden projects before the distraction of Christmas and the weather interrupts the flow. Do come and ask advice on specific locations in your garden,

or if you have existing areas you need to develop, perhaps jot down what is already there and bring this information along with a digital or printed picture as this does make it easier for us to offer suggestions.

LEAF WATCH Fallen leaves within plants provide great hiding places for slugs, snails and earwigs – so if you don't want your plants eaten by these critters, remove those leaves from the plant border or pots. If you have roses which have had black spot, remember these fallen leaves are best burned or disposed of, but not placed on the compost heap as they can contaminate your compost.



TIME TO PROPAGATE? Well, yes as you can take hardwood cuttings from the likes of [Buddleja](#), [Cornus \(dogwoods\)](#), [Forsythia](#), [grape vines](#), [Ribes](#), and [shrub roses](#). Basically, select vigorous, healthy shoots that have grown in the current year. Cut these into sections 15-30cm (6-12 inches) long, cutting cleanly above a bud at the top, with a sloping cut to shed water and as a reminder which end is the top. Cut straight across at the base below a bud or pair of buds and dip the lower cut end in a hormone rooting powder (this promotes root formation, and also contains a fungicide which protects against rotting). Prepare a trench outdoors in a sheltered site with well-drained soil. Dig in a bucketful of garden compost or other organic matter to every square metre or yard. Insert the cuttings into the ground with two-thirds of the cutting below the surface, with a layer of sand in the base. If you have no spare ground, the cuttings can be inserted into pots filled with a good compost. The roots will form along the stem. The few buds which remain above the ground will allow the plant to grow away in spring. Cuttings should be left in place until the following autumn ensuring that they do not dry out in dry periods in summer.

POND OWNERS If you have a pond, remember to cover it with a net to prevent falling leaves polluting the water, and if it has fish in ensure it never freezes completely to enable them to breathe. A good way of doing this is to put a child's ball on top of the water. When the pond freezes, just lift off the ball and you have a ready-made hole.

WINTER CARE Garden furniture benefits from being protected through the winter to extend its life. Either store in a garage or shed, or better still, it can be covered in situ with easily removable patio set covers for chairs, benches and tables from Gardman.

READY FOR THE CHOP? Apple and pear trees should be pruned every winter to ensure a good crop of fruit the following season. Trees that are not pruned become less productive and congested with old branches. Pruning is not difficult and the aim is to create an open goblet shape with a framework of about five main branches. Three things to consider: 1. Always use a clean, sharp pair of secateurs, loppers or a pruning saw. 2. Start by removing crossing, rubbing, weak, dead, diseased, damaged and dying branches. 3. Keep the centre of the tree open by removing larger branches with a clean, sharp, pruning saw. If several large branches need to be removed, spread the work over two or three winters as very hard pruning encourages even more vigorous growth.



SPRING PLANNING There's still plenty of time to get your spring bulbs, especially tulips, planted, even up to the end of December without impacting on flowering. Also one can establish new winter bedding as Wallflowers, Forget-me-nots, Bellis, Primula, Viola (winter pansies) and other spring bedding plants are all available. Or how about heathers and trailing ivy for winter colour? Plant them into well-prepared ground or pots

filled with suitable multi-purpose compost. Whilst working with the compost, don't forget to keep a careful look out for vine weevil grubs, especially if you have been growing fuchsias in your pots.

If vine weevils are seen, treat the soil with a drench of Provado Vine Weevil Killer, which will provide up to four month's protection against vine weevil. Glazed pots should be lifted onto terracotta feet to help drainage.

EASY DOES IT Go easy with the watering of plants indoors on the windowsill, in the conservatory and in the greenhouse. Remember overwatering can encourage fungal diseases, especially with plants which naturally finish flowering through the summer such as gloxinia, streptocarpus and coleus. Most indoors plants should be allowed to dry out a little between waterings as this allows oxygen to get to the roots. However, there are exceptions, such as azaleas which need to be kept moist all the time. Always use tepid water and if your plants are in decorative pot covers, do check that they are not sitting in water.

DO NOW Prevent winter moth damage to your fruit trees in spring by intercepting the female caterpillar now so she doesn't lay her eggs on your trees. The Shop stocks ready-prepared [strips](#) for tying around the trunk, or [grease](#) which you can apply straight on to the bark.

Sow fast-growing vegetables:- mixed salad leaves and Mizuna, or even bean sprouts, to raise on the windowsill – these are fast-maturing and will provide useful crops around the festive season. Hellebores rarely flower naturally by Christmas, despite their common name of Christmas Rose. They can be encouraged to flower a little earlier, if you want, by covering them with cloches (the preferred option) or potting them up and placing them on a cool and well-lit windowsill inside the house. Prepare for winter by protecting your plants from the cold weather. Wrap half-hardy palms, ginger lilies and cannas in fleece and straw if they grow in sheltered positions.



Alternatively lift the plants, pot or crate them up and bring into a frost-free location (such as the greenhouse, conservatory or shed) to plant outdoors again next season.

FINALLY, you can sow Sweet Peas and Broad Beans now so you have strong plants for next year.

Sow them directly into Rootainers, newspaper tubes or empty loo roll tubes as these leguminous plants have long tap roots and benefit from the extra depth of compost. Grow them cool and in a well-lit location – these plants will flower/crop at least four weeks earlier than spring-sown plants.

Christmas and New Year Opening Times:

24th December (Christmas Eve): 8.30-4pm, Closed 25th, 26th & 27th; Between 28th – 31st December open 10am-4pm, Closed 1st January 2011, Re-open 2nd January 10am-4pm, 3rd January onwards normal winter hours resume.

Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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WINTER OPENING HOURS:

Mon.-Sat: 8:30am to 5.30pm, Sun: 10am to 4pm

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