

# NEWSLETTER

## APRIL & EARLY MAY 2011



Picture credit: Jason Ingram

**Advance notice: Come and Celebrate Buckingham Garden Centre's Major Development with TV Gardener Toby Buckland. He'll be cutting the ribbon to open the new development as well as Book Signing and he will be available to answer your gardening questions.**

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June is going to be a special day in the on-going development and evolution of Buckingham Garden Centre.

As many of you will have seen, over the years, the Garden Centre has grown from strength to strength and our latest re-development of providing a larger, purpose-built Shop, Restaurant, Food Hall, New Pets & Aquatics Centre, Seasonal Covered Plant Area, etc., has been on-going since late summer 2010. Well, we are getting there and what better way to celebrate then waving our own flag, welcoming a top gardener along for the day and inviting our loyal customers to participate in our special week of celebrations, plus we'll have plenty of in-store offers to tempt you as well!

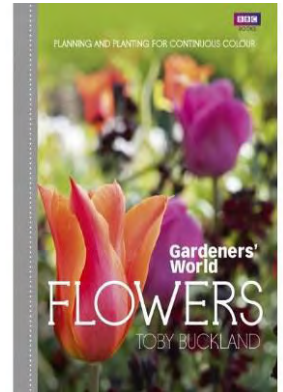
The programme of the day will be available shortly, on-line, through Facebook events, on posters advertised in the Shop as well as through our various advertising channels.

**YOUR CHANCE TO MEET THE BUCKMEISTER...** Yes, how would you like to spend half an hour chatting to Toby Buckland over a luxurious Cream Tea? You will also receive a signed copy of Toby's latest BBC book "Flowers: Planning and Planting for Continuous Colour". To enter, simply answer the following question:

Name the TV garden created by Toby Buckland for Gardeners' World between 2008-2010?

- A. Berryfields                      B. Barleywood                      C. Greenacres

Pop your answer A, B or C together with your name and address to: [competition@buckingham-nurseries.co.uk](mailto:competition@buckingham-nurseries.co.uk) or by post to: Toby Buckland Competition, Buckingham Garden Centre, Buckingham MK18 4AE. The closing date for entries is 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011. The prize is non-transferable.



**About Toby** Toby Buckland is a qualified horticulturist, TV broadcaster and a lifelong gardener. Known for his earthy, hands-on style, Toby is an acknowledged all-rounder with that rare ability to make gardening accessible to all.

His career has taken him from Devon nurseryman, to professional gardener and on to presenting numerous TV shows, including BBC Gardeners' World. He is an award-winning garden designer, taking RHS Gold and Best in Show at BBC Gardeners' World Live in 2008. He also lectures and writes for a variety of horticultural journals and newspapers, including Amateur Gardening, The English Garden, Gardeners' World Magazine, The Telegraph, The Guardian, The Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday. He is the author of five gardening books, including his latest BBC book, "[Flowers: Planning and Planting for Continuous Colour](#)", published in April 2011.

### A right Royal riot of colour



Back in 1977 for the Queen's Silver Jubilee, writes Chris Day, I remember the concise instructions my parents fondly gave me. "Let's have a red, white and blue theme this year!". Well, my teenage heart sunk as I'd always avoided setting bedding plants out in regimented rows, just like the local parks department did.

I'd always, when allowed to "bed out" set the bedding in distinct ribbons or blocks. Still, the vibrant red Salvia and Geraniums ('Sprinter' was the variety), white Alyssum and blue Lobelia did the trick, and all the neighbours loved it when we had the much-talked about "Avenue Party" in June 1977.

Well, the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton is on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April, and I'm sure many people will use it as an excuse to celebrate and inject their garden with masses of colour, but I think the mood has changed from the traditional colour fair. Sure, include some patriotic colours - red, white and blue, but tailor it,

embellish it and **accessorise it to your garden style**, so it doesn't stick out like a sore thumb through the summer! Remember hot colours can be toned down by using grey and silver-leaved plants.

Summer seasonal plants, the new name for bedding plants, have been revolutionised by plant growers in recent years, who seem to know the combinations that excite the eye and create a mood. Vibrant colours, pastel shades and individual colours of bedding are all available, but its how you use them to best effect really makes all the difference – happy Royal planting!

### Here are a few suggestions for your pots and border:

**Red Flowers:** Pansies, Salvia, Poppies, Zinnia, Petunia, Hydrangea.

**White Flowers:** Pansies, Shasta daisy, Alyssum, Petunia, Hydrangea.

**Blue Flowers:** Pansies, Lobelia, English Bluebells, Hydrangea.

Fancy celebrating by simply planting a royal-themed flower? Well, you could choose from – Clematis 'Wedding Day' (£9.99, 2.5L pot), Sweet Pea 'Royal Wedding' (£1.49, 9cm pot) and Papaver 'Royal Wedding' (£5.99, 2.5L pot).



### Top potato gurus at our Potato Weekend



We had a fantastic turnout for our sixth Potato Weekend in February. The weather was kind for once and so many of you took advantage of our vegetable expert line-up – Buckingham's allotmenteer Bernard Stopps (pictured left) and Colin Randel (right), from Thomson & Morgan and members from the Buckinghamshire National Vegetable Society.

Plenty of questions were answered, practical demos given, plus hands-on fruit tree grafting with Moulton College's Fritz De Zutter, who was kept incredible busy with scion wood grafting. Thanks to everyone for your comments and feedback and we look forward to doing it all again in 2012.

### Let's get physical!

With the prospect of spring soil preparation, pruning and timber preserving, Pauline Brown offers some topical advice on limbering up before the work-out in the garden gym.

With the light warm mornings it is tempting to leap out of bed with enthusiasm to pop out into the garden for a quick quarter of an hours' work before coming in to clean up before a day in the office or workplace. I always imagined that after a relaxing night's sleep the muscles would be in good shape for a good spurt of activity to get one off to a good start, but I have been informed by a good source that it is very important to 'warm up' well before that enthusiastic burst of activity to make sure the blood is circulating well and bringing oxygen to the muscles - otherwise, especially for those advancing in years, damage can be done!



A few simple exercises can make all the difference. Firstly give the lower region of the back a good rub to get the circulation going: secondly grab a small towel or tea towel and holding it in both hands hold it behind the head putting gentle tension on the towel. Lower one hand to shoulder height still pulling gently on the towel, and hold in that position for a few seconds. Repeat with other hand then repeat a few times for both shoulders.

Next to stretch the leg muscles, grab one foot with both hands and pull the leg gently upwards and backwards (trying not to wobble and fall over!). Repeat with other leg, then a few more times.

Lastly, lay on your back (don't forget that the grass is often wet with dew even in the summer, so indoors may be better even though the grass smells so good first thing in the morning) with legs bent and feet on the ground. Let the legs flop gently to one side and the head to the opposite, hold for up to half a minute and repeat going the opposite way. After these few warm ups, which will not take too long, your body will be ready to tackle a good spurt of gardening.

One further warning, if one of the tasks is to fill the watering cans up to give those thirsty vegetables their early morning drink, don't forget to lift the can carefully, knees bent, back straight, legs apart with feet under the shoulders, and lifting using your leg muscles and holding the cans close to your body.

(Did you know that the watering cans cause more accidents than any other garden implement?). Bearing this advice in mind you should be able to enjoy those early morning tasks and arrive in the office in good spirit to tackle the day's work.



## A show first for edibles!

The very first "Edible Garden Show" was launched earlier in March at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. Any new show launch is a gamble in the present economic climate, but on our visit on the first day (Friday, but it ran over three days including a weekend), there was a buoyant buzz of optimism prevailing in the staging hall. This was a carefully honed show covering all aspects of The Good Life – vegetables, fruits, herbs, poultry, bee keeping and even rare-breed pigs and goats were featured. Home skills such as bread making, wine making, together with a WI Cookery Theatre, all bases were covered. There was certainly plenty of inspiration around, good, sensible practical ideas and products (raised beds, vertical gardening ideas, grow frames and special pots for crops in full evidence) on display with generally enthusiastic people manning the various stands.



Celebrity speakers included TV Gardener Diarmuid Gavin, plant expert James Wong and top entomologist Pippa Greenwood. STOP PRESS: Over 10,000 attended the show over the three-day event!

**MARGINAL NEWCOMERS:** Now is the perfect time to look at the planting in and around your garden pond and deciding if new plants are required, or if existing ones can be honed back. We've a grand selection including Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*), Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudoacorus* 'Berlin Tiger'), Corkscrew Rush (*Juncus* 'Spiralis'), Water Forget-me-nots (*Myosotis scorpiodes*), and Equisetum japonicum (Horsetail Rush, pictured). Water lilies and floating plants are due in from mid-April onwards.

## Mulching matters

The old adage 'April showers brings May flowers' stands because this is a month in which water matters a great deal. Warmer weather means a greater rate of transpiration – don't let young or new plants wilt as this has a knock-on effect in later months. Mulches, however, might be answer to your soil moisture retention problems and most of us know that applying 'mulch' is good but have you ever thought in depth why? Pauline Brown has brought together some interesting facts for you to consider.

So, let's start by answering the question, why is mulching a good thing to do in the garden...

- Mulch minimises fluctuations in soil temperature and moisture.
- Mulch enhances root vigour.
- Mulch suppresses weeds.
- Mulch enriches the soil with nutrients.
- Mulch prevents soil erosion from excess rain.
- Mulch regulates soil pH.
- Mulch suppresses soil and root borne pathogens.
- Mulch induces soil microbial activity and improves soil aeration.
- Mulch can help prevent mower and strimmer damage to tree trunks.
- Mulch can act as a buffer in preventing excess de-icing salts from percolation into the soil around the root zone.



Over the past few years experiments with mulch have been carried out at R A Bartlett Tree Laboratory which is based at the University of Reading. The experiments were carried out both with container planted and field grown [Beech \(\*Fagus sylvatica\*\)](#) and [Hawthorn/Quickthorn \(\*Crataegus\*\)](#). These two species were chosen as Beech is notoriously difficult to transplant whereas Hawthorn is the opposite. **When we buy 'mulch' at a Garden Centre it is nearly always made from a mixture of types of wood, but when they conducted their experiments they used a mixed 'mulch' and also one made from pure Hawthorn, one from pure Cherry and one from pure Beech and the results were interesting.**

- Pure mulch from Hawthorn or Cherry proved to be the most effective.
- Pure mulch from Beech was the least effective but even this increased crown volume growth by 20%. This is against a figure of 100-150% with Hawthorn. When applied to fruit trees the fruit yields increased by 50% when pure Hawthorn was applied.
- Using a mixed mulch is not as effective as pure Hawthorn or Cherry, but results were far better than when no mulch was used.

Applying the mulch correctly is important. This should ideally be done immediately after planting but definitely before break of dormancy in Spring to be most effective. If you have not applied the mulch at the correct time, it would be better to do it late than not at all. Also if you are planting container grown stock in the growing season apply a mulch as soon as you have finished planting. Make sure you get the soil thoroughly soaked, then apply the mulch on the moist soil.

The mulch should be applied to a width of a minimum of 0.3 m for small trees, 1m for medium trees and 3m for large specimens. Ideally it should be as far as the drip line of the overhanging branches to the trunk. It should be between 5 and 10cm thick, and then renewed to this depth on an annual basis. The mulch should not be piled against the actual trunk, but as near as possible without covering the trunk. So if you have done any recent planting we would strongly recommend using a mulch, even if it is the mixed mulch which is readily available. This with [Rootgrow](#) and [Broadleaf](#), if your soil is free draining, should give you wonderful results!

## Edible of the month: Beetroot – A Superfood?

Beetroot is a form of maritime sea beet, which over the centuries, has been selected for its edible root, writes Pauline Brown. It was grown in Assyrian times, was highly esteemed by ancient Greeks who considered it good enough to use it as an offering to Apollo!

Recipes for its use are found in Roman times and can be found in England in the fourteenth-century. One wonders whether our ancestors were aware of the benefits of eating the humble beetroot, except, of course, for its delicious flavour. The rich red colour of beetroot is due to pigments called betalains and these possess potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. They also contain nitrate which recently has been found to have a beneficial effect on the cardiovascular system. Other studies **have also demonstrated the beetroot's** ability to increase levels of important antioxidant enzymes.



Apart from being a rich source of antioxidants, this humble vegetable also contains good levels of folic acid, vitamin B6, fibre, manganese, potassium, vitamin C and iron. It is, as a result, a traditional home remedy for iron-deficiency. Beetroots are also a source of betaine (as against betalain), a substance known for its ability to lower homocysteine (an amino acid produced in animal metabolism which appears to be associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease if occurring at high levels in the blood – in case you did not know!). The betaine, therefore, supports cardiovascular and cognitive health. And finally the fibre found in beets has been shown to support healthy cholesterol levels. With all these qualities I hope you will all be rushing out to get some seed planted!

However, germination is slow and erratic with soil temperatures below **7°C (45°F)**, so if you want to get an early harvest and have a greenhouse or a sunny windowsill sow some seed in Roottrainers or small pots – one **seed per unit as the 'seed' is in fact a corky fruit containing two or three seeds.** When the seedlings germinate, thin out the weaker plants leaving just one per unit. When these are well developed they can be planted out into an open site with well-drained light soil which should have a pH of 6.5 to 7.5, so if your soil is acid it will need liming.

## Beetroot Growing tips

Like many vegetables it is advisable to sow small numbers regularly so you have a continuous crop of succulent new beets. As soon as the weather and soil warm up they are best sown direct in the soil. They take between 60 to 90 days to mature depending on the weather. They are best harvested quite small, 5-6cm or even smaller, as they will be tender and sweet. If you want larger beets, harvest every other beet **when they are small, leaving the others to grow to 'cricket ball' size.** They can then be used in salads, roasted, steamed or microwaved and served hot with a white sauce, juiced or even baked to make beetroot cakes or muffins. In mid-autumn, it is best to lift and store any remaining crop as they are prone to attack by slugs when the weather gets cool and wet. They need lifting carefully and the leaves twisted off, not cut otherwise they will bleed, then stored in moist sand or sawdust, leaving a space between each beet. They should keep to mid-spring but check regularly and throw out any which are deteriorating.

**Good varieties to grow include: 'Bolthardy' (a bolt resistant variety, so slow to run to seed), 'Cylindra' (a longer rooted beetroot – ideal for salads and pickling), 'Moneta' (a new variety that requires less seedling thinning) and 'Pablo' (a fast-maturing F1 hybrid you can grow in containers).** All varieties available from the Shop. Veg plugs are normally available in spring and summer, but if you are wanting to grow large quantities, this can prove an expensive method of growing them, so better grab some seed!

## Re-development update



The new shop is now being kitted out – new aquatic tanks are expected to be installed shortly, and our much anticipated new clothing department is now up and running. We are featuring Tigi-Wear and Stormafit clothing ranges. Tigi-Wear is a casual clothing label designed for leisure, and a relaxed lifestyle, with an emphasis on comfort, easy care and value for money. Stormafit are well-known for their Country Wear Collection, including waxed jackets, body warmers and hats.

Elsewhere, BBQ's have their own dedicated display area featuring a wide range of the latest Weber BBQ's models and Accessories.

Garden furniture has been built and is currently displayed in the new Restaurant area whilst we wait for the new kitchen to be custom built. The plan through the summer is for the garden furniture to be displayed across the old shop. In the current Restaurant, along the back wall we have a fantastic range of Hampers, so plenty of inspirational ideas with the warmer weather just around the corner. Bird Food and Bird Care is now located in the New Shop, allowing us to merchandise Greetings Cards and Giftware, including Yankee Candles, Books, Portmeiron Pottery and Cath Kidston's Churchill China Cups, Teapots and Boxed Mugs.



**The current customer flow means you'll pass this new area as your walk through the Old Shop down the ramp or steps into the New Shop.** On-going is the new restaurant, including a new kitchen and toilet block. This is currently being fitted out and this is taking shape. The new Plant Selling Area, accessed from the New Shop features seasonal plants, spring bedding, alpines and spring bulbs. The Poultry Department is also in its new home, and the area is also home to glazed and terracotta pots together with bagged composts and aggregates.

You'll notice major works being carried out as we enter the second phase of the re-development with work on-going as the old buildings have been demolished to allow the new Seasonal Plants Canopy, Shop and Till Hall to develop. Hopefully this should be completed over the next 6 weeks. This new part of the build effectively links the old shop with the new restaurant to complete the north side of the development.

**Again, we do thank you for your patience and understanding as our new-build becomes reality.**



### **Did you guess correctly?**

Picture puzzler: We hope you solved the plant identification in our last newsletter. It was, of course, the seedhead of evening primrose, *Oenothera biennis*, the popular bi-annual.

### **Good news on the Scotts Fertilisers and Chemicals front**

Despite the increase in VAT and general inflationary pressure, we have been able to hold the prices of many of the Scotts range of fertilisers and chemicals and to reduce the price of others. We have kept our promotional prices of £7.99 for 2½ litre Tomorite concentrate, £39.99 for 1 litre Roundup Ultra which goes three times as far as normal Roundup concentrate, £9.99 for Verdane Concentrate 1 litre lawn weedkiller and £19.99 for Evergreen Complete 400m<sup>2</sup> lawn feed, weed and moss killer.

We still stock the old favourite slow release fertiliser Osmocote, and offer as an alternative Miracle-Gro slow release in three "flavours" - All Purpose, Azalea Camellia & Rhododendron, and Rose & Shrub. We have reduced these from £4.99 to £3.99 for 1Kg. Patch Magic 750g lawn patching mix is reduced from £9.99 to £8.99. Patio Magic 5 litre green mould, algae and moss killer for outdoor hard surfaces is reduced from £17.99 to £15.99. Roundup Tree Stump & Rootkiller is reduced from £11.99 to £9.99. There are many other price reductions and bargains. Because of the building works, we cannot display them as prominently as we would like, so it is well worth having a good look at our standard displays.

### **Garden Visit: The Gardens of Lamport and Kelmars (in Northamptonshire) Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011**



Cost: £47 (inclusive of coach travel, admission to both gardens, Tea/coffee on arrival at Lamport, Lunch at Lamport - filled roll, scone with jam and fresh cream, tea/coffee and talk/guided tour at each Garden). Tea at Kelmars is extra - details will be on the Booking Form. Distance: 65 miles round trip, time approximately 1 hour each way. We are delighted to be visiting two distinct gardens - Lamport has tranquil gardens and includes a rockery, Italian Garden and the first recorded appearance of gnomes in a garden. Kelmars is set in a landscape park and features yew hedges, clipped box, rose and walled gardens, herbaceous borders and a working vegetable garden. We will be joined by Andrew Mikolajski, who will be our guide for both gardens for the day.

## Running Order of the Lamport/Kelmarsh Gardens Day

- 8.45am: Assemble at Buckingham Garden Centre Car Park  
9am: Leave for Lamport on Motts Travel Coach.  
10am: Tea/coffee on arrival at Lamport (in the Old Laundry).  
Introductory talk: Gardens of Lamport and Kelmarsh.  
11am: Garden walk (guided).  
12.30: Lunch in the hall  
1.45am: Arrive at Kelmarsh Garden walk (guided).  
3.15pm: Tea (optional)  
4pm: Depart from Kelmarsh.  
5pm: Arrive at Buckingham Garden Centre.

Please note: All timings are approximate and subject to change

## Garden TV gossip...

'Monty Don's Italian Gardens' starts on Wednesday 13th April on BBC2 at 9pm. This new four part series sees Monty journeying from the south of Italy to the north, visiting some of the country's most beautiful, impressive and interesting gardens along the way.

Alan Titchmarsh returns to gardening on ITV in a new series on a Friday evening from early June. The new show, as yet untitled, is said to be a mix of gardening and lifestyle and will be shown at 8pm, just 30 minutes before BBC Gardeners' World.

## Easter Gardening on BBC Three Counties Radio!

You can catch BGC's Chris Day on Easter Sunday, between 3-4pm on The Gardening Phone-In with Ernie Almond. So, as the Garden Centre cannot trade due to Easter Sunday Trading Restrictions why not tune in, whilst pottering in the garden, to BBC Three Counties Radio is on 95.5FM, 103.8FM & 104.5FM and on-line at [www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties](http://www.bbc.co.uk/threecounties).

## Gardening Tasks for April & early May

**APRIL** is an excellent month to establish flowering cherry trees and ornamental malus as you generally can see the plant in bloom at the Garden Centre before making your purchase rather than relying on photographs and descriptions. Both of these trees are perfect for smaller gardens, but it is still advisable to plant around **40-50ft away from your property, so roots don't create problems later on. Give your tree space** – especially near fences, and if you can plant 6ft (1.8m) from the boundary so the tree can grow unhindered, so much the better.

**JACK FROST** Never underestimate the British weather, despite the recent mild March, do keep some horticultural fleece handy as the next few weeks can be difficult as the **risk of night frosts continue. Don't put tender plants out unless they have been fully hardened off** and temporary protection is available.

**LILY BEETLES** Despite the cold winter, these orange crawling horrors are once again on the move, coming to a lily stem near you! Be one step ahead and apply Provado Ultimate Bug Killer to help reduce the damage. Remember this insecticide is systemic and stays active within the plant for up to 6 weeks.



**DEADHEAD** spring bulbs on a regular basis as the flowers fade – **you don't want the bulb to produce seeds** (pictured). Remember to feed your bulbs as well to help increase flowering for next year. Apply any good granular fertiliser, such as Vitax Q4, Sulphate of Potash or Blood, Fish and Bone to help stimulate growth. You need to do this before the leaves disappear!

**ROSE CARE:** Complete last-minute pruning and tidying of climbers and ramblers, especially if die-back is evident. About a year ago our newsletter warned that Roseclear 3, a combined insecticide and fungicide for roses, was being withdrawn and that the replacements were less effective, advising you to buy Roseclear 3 while stocks lasted. The response was amazing: it is gratifying that not all recipients of this newsletter delete it or throw it away unread, but Roseclear 3 sold out very quickly and many were disappointed. We now have in stock Roseclear Ultra which like Roseclear 3 is an excellent combined insecticide and fungicide, but the active ingredients are different. The 1-litre ready to use gun is £4.99 and the 200ml concentrate is £7.99.



We have limited stocks of the temporary replacements: Roseclear 4 gun 800ml at £2.99, which is an excellent natural fatty acid based insecticide but of limited use as a fungicide; and Roseclear for Bugs 200ml concentrate at £4.99, which is an excellent wide spectrum insecticide for ornamentals - similar to Bugclear. It is unfortunate that Scotts the manufacturer had to introduce these temporary replacements, but the government is a lot quicker banning products than approving new ones.

**CLOCHE** protect your strawberries at night and then remove during the day to help stimulate flower growth and fruit production. Apply Sulphate of Potash or a liquid Tomato food to enthuse the plants to bear more fruit this season. New strawberry plants can also be established now the soil is warmer.

**GREEN VELVET LAWN SEED:** For many years we have been strongly recommending the use of Rootgrow mycorrhizal fungi when planting shrubs, trees and hedging plants. This makes the roots work far more effectively, and the plants establish and grow much better. Grass plants also benefit from mycorrhizal fungi and we are very pleased to be able to offer the new Green Velvet Lawn Seed with Rootgrow (pictured), which is endorsed by the Royal Horticultural Society. It comes in a 1Kg bag for £9.99; this covers 35m<sup>2</sup> when patching, repairing or overseeding or 25m<sup>2</sup> when sowing a new lawn. The grass seed is a good general purpose mixture of dwarf leafed ryegrass and creeping red fescue and is easy to establish, hard wearing and of good appearance. We have a wide range of other grass seeds, but Green Velvet is the ideal choice in many situations.



**BULK** up your plants from cuttings taken from the likes of fuchsias (pictured, rooted and ready to pot), geraniums and other seasonal bedding plants that you may have overwintered underglass. Cuttings root quickly with a bit of bottom heat, so use a lidded propagator to get the best results. Make sure you have stocked up on your young Baby Plants (in net pots and seedlings) if you want to get a head start on your hanging baskets and summer planters.



**SOW** Broad Beans, Runner and French Beans, salad crops (Beetroot, Lettuce, Tomatoes, Salad Onions, Radish), Sweet Corn, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Brussels Sprouts, Marrows, Pumpkins and Melons. You can start seeds off in Roottrainers or in individual Cells, ideally with a clear propagator lid to help germination, in a Multi-purpose compost.



## Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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

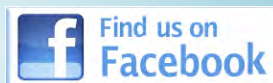
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### SPRING & SUMMER OPENING HOURS:

Mon.-Sat: 8:30am to 6.00pm, Sun: 10am to 4pm

**NOTE: DUE TO SUNDAY TRADING RESTRICTIONS**

**WE WILL BE CLOSED ON EASTER SUNDAY**



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