

# NEWSLETTER

## LATE SUMMER 2011 EDITION



### All systems go...

#### **Nothing stands still and we are now into the final leg of our major development of the Buckingham Garden Centre site.**

Regular customers will recently have seen the heavy earth moving equipment clearing what was our overflow car park and changing it into a continuation of the existing parking area, but there's still more to do on this project. Elsewhere, the old kitchen has now been dismantled and the area integrated into the shop. The old roof in the main old shop has been replaced and our new Customer Service area, which will be re-located, will be in place by the early autumn.



The new frontage, including the new shop entrance, will follow on from this as the other aforementioned projects are completed. The new Food Hall is our next major project, due for completion later this year or in early 2012.

**As Toby Buckland cut the ribbon on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> June, we entered a new era for** Buckingham Garden Centre and Buckingham Nurseries with exciting times ahead. Marking the special day of the opening of the New Shop, Restaurant, Aquatics & Seasonal Plant Canopy, Peter Brown, the youngest son and a Partner in the family business, spoke of the huge changes the company has seen over the past 65 years, with the latest major investment taking the company into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Retaining the core family business and its values was highlighted by Toby as well as the unusualness of our speciality – selling hedging plants and fruit trees as bare-root plants; almost unique and something we should embrace, said Toby.

Our special day was marked by live music courtesy of The Great Horwood Silver Band, who kept up the tempo throughout the presentation. **We would like to say a big "thank you" to our specially invited guests and many new customers and "old" members of staff** who came along to support us on the day. A special mention has to go to Wayne Wonder, the children's entertainer, who kept the kids amused with balloon sculpting while his assistant offered fun face painting as well.

**We ran a couple of competitions to meet TV's Toby Buckland** and this picture was taken just before Afternoon Tea was about to be served. Pictured from left to right: **BGC's Chris Day, Toby's Agent Lili Panagi, Toby Buckland,** competition winners Mrs & Mr Poole (from Granborough) and Mr & Mrs Williams (from Deanshanger).



The winners **received a signed copy of Toby's latest book, plus an informal chat with our star guest of the day.**

## Learn from other people's gardens

If, like many, you have been holidaying in the UK on a stayvacation so far this summer then one thing which you would have seen, on your travels, is more UK gardens! This year, writes Chris Day, we appear to have fallen back in love with our gardens. Perhaps Alan's recent ITV series Love Your Garden, has done its magic, but I guess it's more to do with our passion for gardens, some rather good British weather and, how can I delicately put this, our nosey curiosity!



I've been out and about in gardens through the summer, mainly in North Wales and The Peak District, both rather different climatically and geographically. Near Conwy, Bodnant Gardens is a real gem. Stretching over some 80-acres, this National Trust garden nestles in a valley just a stone's throw from Snowdonia. There's ample formality as well as organised chaos in this garden, a good rule for all gardens where space allows! Winding pathways take you through the regimented topiary and, at the next turn, explosive borders of colour take you through a series of outdoor rooms.

Ideas to take home from your visit to Bodnant: single variety planted rose beds looked stunning together with the clever use of edging plants around the rose beds. Well groomed **Campanula**, **Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant'** and **Alchemillea mollis** worked neatly.

Blocks of inspired planting too, including, pictured, the bold use of Black Grass (*Ophiopogon planiscarpus nigrescens*) providing the perfect foil for Feather Grass (*Stipa tenuissima*).

Lots of different varieties of clematis planted with neatly controlled climbing (rather than rambling) roses to help extend the floral display of the recently restored walls, lots of use of still water features, which can create amazing reflections (pictured) and finally a herb bed 'wheel' radiating out from a simple, calming water feature. Just so restful.



Elsewhere, in Derbyshire, the soil is thin, the winds howl and gardens flourish, albeit in a week when rain replaced summer. Of all the gardens attached to National Trust properties visited, Hardwick Hall, near Chesterfield, was perhaps the most romantic. Just like Highclere Castle, home of the fictional yet popular TV drama, Downton Abbey, a magnificent stately Cedar of Lebanon tree dominates the front of the property.

The Hall was built by Bess of Hardwick (Elizabethan England's second most powerful and wealthy woman) in the **1580's yet the gardens** – mainly orchard, lawns, borders and herbs are laid out in a style I've not seen since visiting Highgrove a couple of years ago. The grounds provide chunks of quite individual gardens, all interweaved by yew and beech hedging with the odd statue added for drama (see picture), again, a useful do-at-home tip. However, it was the pristine and nurtured walled kitchen garden that provided the take-home ideas, including strong use of fruit trees on archways with apples beautifully trained, a great feature in any garden. Beds of edible flowers were grown alongside cutting patches which provide the cut flowers for the



house, but it is colour, again, that is this garden's winning card.

One of the features of the planting scheme devised by the National Trust is the subtle harmonisation of colours reminiscent of Gertrude Jekyll's gardens, with bright vibrant hues gradually giving way to quieter, softer tones as the visitor progresses along the borders. It **works well and again could be implemented into your own garden. If you don't have a huge garden, the effect can even be created by pots and baskets. Colour takes you on a journey... and you don't need a huge garden to travel to create the effect.**

Finally, even the house we rented for our stay in **Derbyshire didn't disappoint for ideas... in the back garden a huge enamel bath stuffed with ferns and hostas added fun and character to a handkerchief sized garden... and yes, it was another water feature of sorts too!**



REMEMBER: Many gardens open under the National Gardens Scheme offering you a useful opportunity to explore local gardens; especially important if you are moving into a new area and need to get a low-down as to what grows best! To discover more gardens, click on [www.ngs.org.uk/](http://www.ngs.org.uk/)

### **Important news concerning our Plant Guarantee**

As formally announced at our grand opening in late June, our Hardy Plant Guarantee has been upgraded from 1 year to 5 years for Hardy Plants sold in pots 1 litre or larger. Bare-root and ball root plants remain at 1 Year.



A Plant Guarantee Summary is printed on the back of all our Till receipts, and details of those plants not covered by the Guarantee are listed on our website at [www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk/guarantee](http://www.buckingham-nurseries.co.uk/guarantee) If you would like more details on specific plants, please ask at the Plant Information Office.



**As seen on TV** If you prefer to use natural products in your garden, look out for the new Natria range from Bayer in its distinctive green and yellow packaging, which is receiving a fair amount of TV advertising, writes Peter Mason.

We have put all of this range together on the insecticides stand to provide a "one stop shop" for natural products, although we of course have a wide range of other organic and environmentally friendly products elsewhere in the shop. The Natria Ant and Insect Control, Compost Activator and Liquid Fertiliser are new products.

Unfortunately, the Bug Killer, Super Fast Weedkiller and Slug & Snail Control are similar to other products in the Bayer range. This is an inevitable consequence of the great difficulty and expense of obtaining Government approval for new garden pesticides and weedkillers. We try to limit the number of similar products that we stock, to avoid confusing the customer and because shop space is not unlimited - for instance, we could fill the shop with glyphosate based weedkillers. However, we feel that Natria is a useful addition to our range.

### **It's good to talk!**

A reminder that our Garden Talks are **now back and running... the next one is on Wednesday September 14<sup>th</sup>, 10.30am-12noon.** Rob Edwards' talk, Wild at Heart, will be looking at the whole aspect of planting for wildlife, whatever the space you have available, as well as the natural biodiversity it can reward you with. Our new talks room will have a

PA sound system available to all our speakers from September. To book, please visit our **Customer Service Desk** or call **01280 827918**.

## A repeat performance



WHEN LIFTING my radishes I was astounded to pull up this double. Not only were the two radishes linked but the root was over a foot long. It reminded me of my father who loved growing and eating cucumbers but complained that they always repeated on him! Had he still been alive I'd have asked him if radishes repeated on him too? We have no idea what caused this as the soil is a good friable loam and there doesn't appear to be any damage to the root. I think nature sometimes just likes to make us smile!  
Pauline Brown, Buckingham, Bucks

Misshaped vegetables always used to raise a giggle on programmes like **BBC's That's Life** ... so how about this unusual yet fun occurrence in **Pauline Brown's garden** – a **double radish!** So different and 'rare', that a quick photo and a letter were sent to **Amateur Gardening**, the popular weekly gardening magazine. A couple of weeks later voilà!, the picture and story made it to the letters page!

If you have anything to share, like weird odd shaped fruits, flowers or veg, do let us know and maybe we can include it our next newsletter! Pop over a digital picture, your contact

details and some info to [chris@hedging.co.uk](mailto:chris@hedging.co.uk). We'll pop over a £10 Garden Voucher to the most amusing picture (assuming its not too rude to publish!)

**The next big thing...** Technology appears to be moving faster than ever... writes Chris Day, from rechargeable battery technology for our garden equipment, power tools and more recently cars, to the Internet and how information is becoming more accessible for instance with 2D picture barcodes, which when scanned into a smartphone will link directly to a website to access more information.



Horticulture, too, is seeing some massive advancements in plant breeding and growing techniques, yet some areas of development still seem elusive, namely the on-going debacle of finding a suitable alternative to peat.

Now, I suppose we all know the various reasons for this, mainly from the anti-peat lobby, but the news that peat-based products are to be phased out from sale through Garden Centres and DIY stores by 2020 is slightly scary.

We are already seeing products appear where recycled materials are being blended and made useable for plant growing. However, peat-free potting composts contain mixtures of organic materials such as composted bark or coconut fibre (coir) mixed with inorganic materials such as sharp sand and grit. This mix of coarse and fine particles is needed to create a balanced compost containing enough water and air which is essential for root growth.

Good quality, peat-free, growing media are available but require slightly different management than peat, especially greater care with watering. It is important to read and follow any specific instructions on the bag as plants growing in peat-free composts may need slightly different treatment.

One of our suppliers of compost, William Sinclair Horticulture, who produce products including **J Arthur Bower's Composts**, have invested millions of pounds in developing new technology that resolves all the problems of using green compost for peat replacement.

Interestingly, their plant is currently using four million tonnes of civic amenity and garden green waste per annum, so indirectly you may well be fuelling the growth of these composts from your green bins!

## 10 Gardening Tasks

**FRUIT GUIDELINES** Don't be tempted to pick apples and pears too early. The correct time for picking, and storage potential, depend on the fruit and the variety.

To test if an apple is ripe, lift it in the palm of your hand, giving a slight twist. The fruit will part easily from the spur if it is ripe; if the



spur snags, the apple is not yet ready. Pears should not be left to ripen completely on the tree, but need to be picked while still firm. A good indication to when pear fruit is ripe is a slight colour change, to a lighter green in most cases. Autumn fruiting raspberries are coming steadily now and we cannot recommend them too highly. You will pick a bowl full three times a week from a small patch up until the first frost. Continue to harvest an array of fruit and at the same time be thinking of planting and pruning to maximise next year's harvest.

As the evenings shorten, time spent indoors cooking and preserving will ensure you enjoy the fruits of your labour over the winter months too.

**WAR ON WEEDS** Boring but essential. You need to keep on top of weeds in borders, the vegetable garden and all your pots and containers. Little and often is often the best approach, however now is a good time to kill perennial weeds as the plants have now flowered and they are taking their food source (sugars) back to roots.

So, if you apply a weedkiller this will be transported down to the roots where it will kill the weed root system. Wondering what to use? Well, both Roundup and Glyphosate are suitably qualified to control weeds systemically. Remember weeds not only look messy but use valuable moisture in the ground.

The best and simplest way to weed is to use a Dutch hoe which will cut the weeds just below the surface. Weeding on a warm, sunny day will ensure annual weeds left on the surface dry out and die in the warmth. In the case of bindweed growing through your prized bedding plants, try this tip.

Put a twig or cane (as pictured) in the ground. It will soon start to climb up this and then it is much easier to spray or paint weed killer onto it without damaging the other plants.

A day or so after spraying, the bindweed will have started to die back and the weedkiller will have moved down to the roots. The plant can be eventually be removed – but it will take about three weeks for the roots to be completely killed.

Another way to apply weedkiller safely without touching the leaves of plants you do not wish to treat is to use lined household gloves. Mix up the weedkiller then firstly put a thin waterproof protective glove on one hand, then turn a lined waterproof glove inside-out and put it on over the thin glove. Put a waterproof protective glove on the other hand. Dip your hand with the lined glove into the weedkiller making sure the weedkiller is absorbed into the lining of the glove but not dripping. With the hand with the non-lined glove hold the bindweed, or other weed, **proud of any wanted plants and run your 'weedkiller' hand up** the stem of the weed making sure the weedkiller goes over all the leaves. If there are a lot of wanted plants around lay the weed down on some polythene so it does not touch other plants until weedkiller is completely dry, or if possible simply lay back on the soil.



**POND CARE** Late September is a good time to rake out the pond if you are going to put a net over to stop any falling leaves getting into it. Leave any debris on the side of the pond to allow any wildlife to crawl back in, and then pop onto the compost heap after a few days. Netting should be positioned with a clear gap underneath to allow an easy passage for wildlife back to the water.



**TIME TO PROPAGATE** There are plenty of perennials, herbs and shrubs that can be increased this month.

These so-called 'semi-ripe cuttings' can be found on a wide range of plants, including Berberis, Fuchsias, Hebes, Lavenders, Penstemons, Vincas, Kitchen Bay (Laurus nobilis), Sages, Thymes and even Ceanothus.

**Here's the process...** Take a strong, non-flowering shoot

about 5in (12cm) long. Remove the lower leaves, trim to just below a leaf joint. Insert into a pot containing a peat-free, multipurpose compost.

Cover with a milky-white plastic bag (like the one you get with your dry cleaning) supported with a bent wire frame to prevent the cutting touching the sides and rotting. Place the pot out of direct sunlight.

Once rooting has taken place after 3-4 weeks, harden off gradually to acclimatise to reduced humidity and increased light. Pot up the cuttings into a 3½" (9cm) pot using gritty peat-free, multipurpose compost.

**EARLY BULBS** The bulbs season is nearly here... so you will need to be quick to enjoy the autumn crocus, or Colchicums (pictured, the variety 'Waterlily'). These are huge bulbs, which need to be planted as soon as they appear at the Garden Centre. Set them around 5in (12cm) deep, in a sunny location.



They flower a few weeks from planting and often into October – interestingly the leaves appear in the spring, so be careful where you plant them now.

Stock up on your spring bulbs – Crocus, Daffodils and Tulips before they sell out. All bulbs should be planted by the end of November, but Tulips can even go **in later than that as last year's severe winter proved with January and February plantings** still giving terrific results! However, Tulips, like most other bulbs must be stored in a cool, dark location prior to planting.

**PEST HUNT** Keep watching for slugs and snails eating plants and bulbs (especially tulips). Put down environmentally friendly slug pellets or beer traps. If you grow lilies, keep watching out for the bright red lily beetle; they are still around in August.

The most effective way to combat this pest is to pick it off the plants and squash it – horrible, I know, but it will devastate your late-flowering lilies if you don't fight back. If this is all too much, apply Provado Ultimate Bug killer.

Whilst on the subject of Provado, remember that adult vine weevils will be considering laying eggs in composts. Provado Vine Weevil Killer applied as a drench to the surface of the compost should help protect plants and the product can be re-applied every 4 months if required.

***Do check the instructions before using any chemical.***

***Use garden chemicals wisely and always follow the directions on the packaging.***

**VEG HARVESTS** Your maincrop potatoes should be dug up early to mid-autumn or they will be nibbled by keeled slugs and spoiled. Store harvested potatoes in hessian sacks in a cool, dark frost free place. If you don't have hessian sacks (available from the Shop) you could use paper potato sacks from the local chip shop, they will do quite nicely.

Sweetcorn is ripening now but don't pick until the tassels are brown and dry. Whilst the cobs are still on the plant, peel back some of the green husk and gently squeeze a single corn seed between your finger nails and look at the colour of the liquid that comes out. It will be milky when the cob is ripe.



Keep picking beans, the more you pick, the more you get. Some varieties like 'Borlottii' and many French Beans can be left to dry on the plant and the seeds saved to eat as pulses in winter stews. British Runner Bean seeds can be a bit tough and sometimes they don't soften and cook as well as their foreign cousins, but it is well worth giving them a try. Finally, save some seeds for next year, store in a cool dry place and they will romp away when you sow them in early 2012. There is still time to plant Cabbage, Carrots, and Cauliflower, but plug plants are limited, **so if you have gaps to fill, don't delay!**

**BEST PERFORMANCE** You do need to keep on top of a few tasks to keep your displays looking good. Remove dying and dead flower heads daily. Not only will you remove a potential source of disease, but this will encourage many plants to produce a new flush of flowers. Many summer shrubs and climbers will produce strong new flowering shoots if they are deadheaded. Water baskets and containers daily, even during rain!

Water bounces off a leaf canopy, and, even in a downpour, little rain will reach the compost. Water camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas that are in dry locations with stored rain water. Tap water is too limy. A shortage of water at this time of year can cause flower buds to drop, or not even develop properly next spring, before they actually open.

**TIDY HEDGES** To keep evergreen hedges looking good over winter, give them a quick trim now. Over the summer months, Box (Buxus), Privet (Ligustrum), Laurel (Prunus) and other hedging plants will have put on lots of growth, turning a crisp formal outline into a shaggy eyesore. Using a pair of hand shears or powered hedge trimmers, start by cutting the top of hedge to a slight pitch (to help dispel snow) and then trim the sides, ensuring that the top is slightly narrower than the base. Use a string attached to canes as a cutting guide or step back regularly to check your progress.

After pruning, give the entire hedge line a foliar feed (easiest way is through a hose-end dilutor with either Miracle-Gro or Phostrogen) to help encourage growth for next season.

**LAWN CARE** Late September is the perfect time to turn our attention to the lawn. Renovate established lawns by scarifying vigorously to remove debris (sometimes called thatch) and spike to allow air into the soil (known as aeration) and allow surface water to drain away. Apply Evergreen Autumn fertiliser to encourage strong roots which is beneficial for the winter conditions ahead, and mowing can be reduced when the lawn starts to grow at a slower rate, although this really depends on the temperature and rainfall in autumn.



## Local Grapevine Events

**Saturday August 27<sup>th</sup> 2011.** Annual 'Flower & Produce' Show Open to all, at the Community Hall, Ardley Playing Fields, Ardley at 2pm. Show schedules available from Jean McGarry, Secretary, on 01869 345581.

**Saturday August 27<sup>th</sup> 2011.** Tingewick and Water Stratford Horticultural Society 87<sup>th</sup> Summer Show at Tingewick Village Hall, Tingewick, MK18 4NN. Open to the public from 2-4.30 pm. Admission £1 Adults, children no charge. The show is open to members and non-members of the Society. If you grow flowers/vegetables, cook, produce handiwork or take pictures, then have a go, it's fun to see your exhibits and this Show is not just for experts.

Summer shows are a part of the UK's fantastic life styles, come along and enjoy the many great things on display.

Tea/coffee and cakes available. Schedules are now available in the Tingewick Post Office, or by contacting Charles Tanner at the following e-mail address [ctanner.pt@btinternet.com](mailto:ctanner.pt@btinternet.com) or Tel: 01280 847680.

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2011 (11am-5pm).** Canons Ashby House Gardens, Daventry, Northamptonshire, NN11 3SD are open under the National Garden Scheme. Home of the Dryden family since C16. C18 London and Wise style garden enclosed by walls with fine topiary, paths and terraces. Garden restoration project in progress including fernery, reinstated beds and borders to the 1880 designs of Sir Henry Dryden. National Trust shop selling locally grown plants and other garden items. Garden Tearoom. Admission to Gardens £2, Children Free.

Further details at <http://www.ngs.org.uk/gardens/gardenfinder/garden.aspx?id=9236>

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Buckingham Horticultural Society September Show** at Buckingham Community Centre, Cornwalls Meadow, Buckingham, MK18 1RP. This popular

open show is open to everyone. Set-up for exhibitors is between 6-8pm on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September and from 6:30-9:30am on Saturday. Doors open to the public from 12noon on Saturday with Prize Giving at 3:45pm. Admission is free. For further details, contact Terry Bloomfield on Tel: 01280 815336.

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011 (2-6pm).** Tile House Farm, Finmere, MK18 4AS. This ¾ acre farmhouse garden is bursting with colour and interesting ideas. Fun element to the garden planted to encourage birds and wildlife. Raised beds, aviary and hidden features included within pond, kitchen and gravel gardens. Adjacent nursery. Refreshments. Admission £3.50, children free. Further details at

<http://www.ngs.org.uk/gardens/gardenfinder/garden.aspx?id=21418>

**Don't forget... APPLE WEEKEND is being held at BUCKINGHAM GARDEN CENTRE on 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011!**

**Here are FOUR superb offers you cannot afford to miss!**

**1 Litre British-grown Value Shrubs  
£3.99 each – BUY 3 FOR £10!**

**Discount will be taken off at the Till**

Picture is for illustrative purposes only. Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.



**Spring Bulb Bonanza – Premium packs of Crocus, Daffodils, Narcissi, Snowdrops and Tulips  
£5.99 per pack or any 3 for £15!**

Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.



**HEATHERS (Summer and Autumn Flowering Varieties)**

**9cm Pots** £1.99 each, **5 for £9**

**1 Litre Pots:** £3.49 each, **3 for £10**

**2 Litre Pots:** £5.99 each, **2 for £10**

Picture is for illustrative purposes only.

Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer.

**POND FISH: Buy 2 Get the Cheaper one FREE!**

This Mix & Match Offer is available on the following fish: Shubunkins, Banana Goldfish, Blue Orfe, Common/Mirror Carp, Koi Ghost, Ghost Koi, Golden Rudd, Gold/Green Tench, Goldfish (6-7"), Stickleback, Oegon Koi and Koi (6-7", A Grade).

**Discount will be taken off at the Till.**

Offer is subject to availability. Not to be used in conjunction with any other discount/offer. **CLOSING DATE: 30.9.11**



Picture is for illustrative purposes only

## **Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre**

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