

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2011



OUR APPLE WEEKEND IM-PRESSES EVERYONE!

APPLE WEEKEND (22nd & 23rd October) proved incredibly popular once again this year with our largest ever display of apples and crab apples drawing lots of attention, writes Chris Day. Our event was much larger this year and it was staged in our newly-extended Shop for the first time.



New this year was a working exhibit of Apple Juice making equipment: a Vigo Apple Mill, a machine to crush the apples to a fine pulp, a process necessary before they are pressed; a well-crafted home-made press, named the 'Farthinghoe Apple Press', and a pasteurising unit for the final part of the process. All this equipment was fully explained to the crowds by Marcus Roberts (pictured left) from the Mid-Shires Orchard Group. Marcus tells us he used nearly half a ton of apples throughout the weekend and customers could observe the whole process and sample (and purchase) fresh apple juice produced too!

help identify and preserve apple varieties, including Heritage ones, in the community whether in an orchard, trees growing in large estates or in your back garden!

On the Saturday Pershore-based John Edgeley (pictured right), our guest fruit identification expert, and acknowledged as one of the best in the UK, was kept busy all day with an interesting array of fruit samples. He tells us 'Howgate Wonder' was one of the most popular varieties he came across for identification through the day.



Coincidentally, we were also selling loose apples from New Creation Farm and included in the ten varieties for sale was, 'Howgate Wonder'. This variety is famed for its great cooking ability and when we were setting up the display Pauline Brown (pictured below) discovered a couple of corking specimens in the wooden crate, amazingly the two fruits between them weighed well over 2lbs! Pauline christened these "HOW GreATE WONDER!" and you can see why in the photo! So, big fruits, and a popular fruit to boot, 'Howgate Wonder' certainly takes on the first class status we've always said in our Mail Order catalogue!



Apple identification with Ruth Ward on Sunday was busy with many samples being brought in for close inspection and scrutiny. Ruth tells us that a number of customers wanted to familiarise themselves with varieties from the past, so the big display of apples staged made this much easier than simply looking through apple guide books! Ruth was also signing copies of her book, *A Harvest of Apples*.



Popular expert Fritz Du Zutter from Moulton College in Northamptonshire was kept on his toes answering questions on growing apples, tackling rootstock queries as well as explaining the different apple trained forms available to buy at the Garden Centre.

Elsewhere, two and four legged friends proved a huge attraction with two lovely young male Alpacas (called Czar and Beckham) wooing the crowd. Our thanks to Angela from Pet Alpacas for arranging this for us on Saturday.



On Sunday, Susan Welch, one of our members of staff, who keeps and raises rare breed sheep and goats at their farm in South Northamptonshire, brought along sheep including Kerry Hill, Jacob, Herdwick, Hebridean and Soay; together with a Pygmy Goat with the cutest two kids you have ever seen, they were undoubtedly the star of Sunday!



Chicks just a few days old were a crowd pleaser over the entire weekend too as Alan Ogg of Country Poultry, our main supplier of poultry birds, brought these in, under warmth, and children (pictured young Alfie Budd has a first encounter with a chick!) were able to learn more about them as well as hold the chicks too!



Our Apple Weekend was very much a family event with the children enjoying the animals as well as a conjuring tricks and balloon modelling from magician Phil Banks. Parents were also baffled by some of Phil's card and rope tricks! Lots of children, and again a few grown-ups, took advantage of face painting with Lynn Banks. Apparently butterflies, scars (the bloodier the better for the boys!) and sunsets were popular throughout the two days. Many staff showed off tiny apples on their cheeks too!

Our special thanks to the following for helping make the weekend so memorable: Gary Paris from Wobbly Bottom Farm Cheeses, Rare Breeds Society, Reece Hetherington from Caked in Bread (apple themed cakes and bread), Joy Crussell from The Wildlife Trust, Barry Smith Head Gardener from Stowe Gardens, Neil Cook, Head Gardener at Hanbury Hall, Bernard Stopps and the Team from Buckingham Horticultural Society and John Branham and his Team from The Buckinghamshire Branch of the National Vegetable Society.



Our raffle raised over £350 for our chosen charity, Air Ambulance Berks, Oxon & Bucks. All winners have been contacted.

Finally, thank you for joining in our weekend... it was great to see so many familiar faces and a fair few new ones as well. A note then for your 2012 diary - our next major event will be Potato Weekend over the 11th & 12th February 2012. Regular customer Doris Whitehead (pictured left) brought in a huge 'Picasso' potato she had grown from a tuber purchased from us earlier this year, proof, if it were needed, that we all should try to grow some spuds!

For more photos of our Apple Weekend, visit: <http://www.facebook.com/BuckinghamNurseries?sk=photos>

The bare root season cometh

The new gardening season traditionally starts in the autumn and at Buckingham Nurseries we herald and celebrate it with the publication of our 2012 Mail Order Catalogue.

So, what's new and exciting for this season, asks Chris Day? Well, for starters, let's begin in the fruit department. Last year there was lots of interest in a new red-fleshed apple being promoted in the gardening press.

Well this year we have a new exciting variety with an unusual, attractive pink speckled 'rosette' pattern deep in the flesh that's called, strangely enough, 'Rosette' (pictured right). This apple produces delicious, crisp and juicy red



fruits in August on a compact tree, which is perfect for the smaller garden.

We also have apple 'Christmas Pippin' (pictured right), a much improved 'Cox' type apple maturing later in the season with a lovely sweet flavour and pleasant honey aftertaste.



This year has been superb for soft fruits – especially the likes of strawberries and raspberries, so we have a couple of new varieties to tempt you with. Raspberry 'Cascade Delight' (pictured left) is perfect if you have heavy soils where raspberry crops have been difficult to grow as this variety tolerates much more moisture and is resistant to root rot. It produces handsome crops of very large conical fruits with a lovely sweet flavour. It crops late season.

The other new variety, 'Sugana', which like other autumn raspberries will crop on the new season's growth from August to October, but you should leave these stems to re-crop the following June, whilst training the new stems in for the following autumn's crop. The fruits are delicious and are larger than traditional autumn croppers, and best of all this variety is perfectly suited to growing in large pots on the patio!

We love our trees and it appears we are planting more of them, which is great for the environment as well as the landscape, especially if the tree keeps to a manageable size. We have added a named variety of the spindle tree, *Euonymus* 'Red Cascade' (pictured right) this year as it grows to around 10ft (3m) and makes a lovely compact tree, famed for its unusual rosy-pink fruits which look spectacular through the winter as well as the amazing autumn colour from the foliage. Our other new tree for a larger garden is the weeping purple beech. This makes a spectacular tree in time, a real head-turner with its deep purple foliage which later turns copper in winter on a weeping structure that literally cascades. A class-act tree, give it centre stage in your garden and you will not be disappointed!



Our hedging range continues to offer the wide and varied palette of native, evergreen, deciduous and ornamental hedges we are famous for, and this year we've added a couple of collections. Our Horse Friendly Hedging basically offers a selection of mainly native species that are safe to horses (should they graze on them) but still require some protection from horses to get them fully established. Please see the catalogue or website for the full listing of plants that make up the collection.

Our Butterfly and Bee Collection is a direct response from our customers wanting to encourage more butterfly and bee activity in the garden in the wake of declining numbers. This collection will certainly help increase and expand the variety of the fauna that is likely to visit your garden



and of course these plants attract perfect pollinators if you have a new or an established orchard or fruit or vegetables planted nearby. Plants featured in this collection include Buddleja, *Cotoneaster lacteus*, Lavender 'Hidcote', Marjoram and Sedum.

Finally, the beautiful bearded iris, perfect for that hot, sunny border where others things sadly wither and fail. We've two new additions to our iris range. The first variety is 'Amorpha', a dwarf white flowered form with gold edging, its stature makes a perfect variety for front of borders and rockeries. The variety 'Grape Adventure' (pictured left) rounds off our review of new varieties. This highly attractive purple flowered iris has white veining and an orange throat together with a delicate fragrance set on tall 60-75cm (24-30in) stems.

Shop transformation

We don't need to be reminded how close Christmas is, so no annoying countdown numbers! Yet, it's just around the corner and Rachel and her Team have been busy getting out our biggest ever spring bulb display, and now quickly following our Christmas displays. This year these have four specific themes – Peacock, a lovely combination of decorations in Blues, Greens, Pinks; Gold and Emerald, a rich colour combo; Red and Silver, very traditional colours but now back in vogue,

and Woodland, a colour combination of White, Champagne, Beige and rustic woodland effect decorations with white porcelain.

We've also joined these colours with our popular Christmas floristry range, so all the colour inspiration you are likely to need is located within the individual colour displays. These themes link to our range of Christmas trees (artificial and the real cut and potted trees from late November), lights, including the latest LED and low-voltage, wreaths, swags and garlands.

What was our old aquatics department (pictured right) has undergone a major transformation by the Shop Team into our Fragrance (Yankee Candles), Toiletries (Bromley, RHS Range, Cotswold Lavender & Cath Kidston), Kitchenware (Denby Accessories, placemats, coasters and laptrays, Elite Gift Boxes from Emma Bridgewater & Madeleine Floyd and Stow Green Crockery) and Laundry accessories department.



Why we love our gardens!



You can always rely on BBC Top Gear's Jeremy Clarkson to spark some kind of controversy ... ramblers, Reliant Robin drivers and Caravan owners to name just a few to succumb to his jibes; and this time it's our hobby he's having a right dig at, writes Chris Day. An advertisement poster to promote Jeremy's new book says: "Dads, gardening is a pointless way of passing the time until you die." The gardening trade was quick to comment. The Horticultural Trades Association, of which we are members, said: "Twenty million gardeners in the UK would disagree. And Jeremy might want to consider the benefits of gardening to his own health and well-being, before it's too late!"

Clarkson writes a weekly column in The Sunday Times, and going back through the archives, to May 2001 may offer some sort of clue to why the Top Gear star is anti-gardening. Clarkson wrote: "I want to be a gardener. I want a shed and some secateurs. I want *Homes & Gardens* magazine to profile my work, but all I can do is cut grass. Everything else turns to disaster." Perhaps it's time he listened to eco-friendly head gardeners instead!

To matters more normal... As we have discovered, Grow Your Own, certainly is encouraging more people to take the plunge into gardening and reap the benefits of growing fresh fruit and vegetables. Yes, you will save some money, have some trials and tribulations along the way, but it's also being in touch with nature, the soil and enjoying a healthy pursuit outdoors. Chatting to customers, it's apparent there is much skill transfer going on up and down the country's UK allotments.

Gardeners generally are savvier; information is available from so many forms these days – television, magazines, books, radio and through the Internet, especially with the surge of interest in social networking sites where interaction and garden gossip can be exchanged quickly. That said, reliability of the advice given can be, shall we say, variable in places! We like to keep our customers informed through Facebook and Twitter, and if you haven't already joined us, please do soon, we would love to have you along! Details can be found the end of this newsletter.

Development update

The Garden Centre's new frontage now has a new entrance/exit foyer and changes within the entrance and the Customer Service Desk are developing well. A new tower at the end of the building will house our signage (pictured far right), plus the construction will also house a "green wall" which will be planted with living plant material. Watch the wall to see how this develops over the next few months! You will be pleased to hear the new car park area is now fully operational, so allowing for ease of parking as we get busier with the bare-root season and the run up to Christmas.





Our staff gardens are bloomin' marvellous! A 'Highly Commended' in Buckingham in Bloom, part of the national Britain In Bloom competition, was awarded to Kay Musgrave (pictured left). Funnily enough Kay hadn't even realised her garden had been judged! When the certificate arrived, Kay's husband, Peter, was the name on the certificate. Kay laughs, "The cheek of it ... Peter only cuts the grass - I'm the gardener! I 'phoned the Council and they kindly sent out another certificate for me! At least Peter has a certificate for cutting the lawn!" Shop manager, Rachel De Cann, however had entered her garden and scooped the Gold Award for the Best Kept Front Garden (under 5 Years Old), but was "absolutely gobsmacked" when she realised she had won this category in the Bicester In Bloom Competition. Well Done to Kay & Rachel. So how did you get on this

year, any Britain In Bloom Award Winners reading this Newsletter? Please let us know and we can share your success!

Hold the bus! We were recently approached by a regular customer to our restaurant to see if we could organise a 'pick-up service', maybe once a month, to bring people to the Garden Centre then take them home again, giving time for a leisurely lunch and maybe time to look around the Garden Centre as well.



We have approached the organisers of The Winslow Community Bus and they also think this would be a good service to offer and are prepared to provide the transport with a charge of £3.50 per head for the return journey. The proposed pick up points would be addresses in Winslow, The Claydons, Padbury and Buckingham, then possibly dropping folks from those places at the Garden Centre, then going on to pick up from Tingewick, Water Stratford and Gawcott.

Those coming would be given a ticket which could be redeemed for a complimentary cup of tea or coffee on arrival, then a 10% discount on any lunch they choose from the restaurant. We would aim to get folks to the Garden Centre by about 11am, then pick up for the return journey at 1.30pm or 2.00pm. If we had folks wanting to come from Tingewick, Water Stratford and Gawcott their time at the Garden Centre would be slightly shorter.

We aim to launch this 'service' on the second Monday of November, the 14th, so that it can be advertised in the list of excursions The Winslow Community Bus are running for that month, then run the service once a month thereafter.

To book for November please telephone Sue at the Winslow Community Bus on 01296 715786 or e-mail wdcbenquiries@btconnect.com www.winslowbus.com Sue will then take bookings and arrange the route and timing and the fares will be taken on the bus.

10 Tasks for November/December



TIDY UP On a dry still day rake up fallen leaves as left on the lawn they'll rot down encouraging the spread of moss. Don't put them on the compost heap, as leaves break down in a cold process, whereas a traditional compost heap breaks down organic matter in a warm/hot process. Put them into a leaf composter, or make leafmould. Here's how to make leafmould:- pile them into black bin liners, add some water and after tying the tops of the bags, poke some holes in the side with a garden fork and store them in a secluded part of your garden. By next summer, depending on the variety of leaf, you should have some nice leafmould, which makes a great soil conditioner.

SEASONAL CHANGEOVER Empty hanging baskets that are past their best, and replant with winter flowering Pansies, variegated Ivy, Primulas and Polyanthus, to create a winter show of flowers. Try to keep hanging basket chains as short as possible in the winter to prevent the basket being blown about. Older, rusty chains may need replacing so do this now before you forget!

Elsewhere, replace summer bedding in borders with winter flowering Pansies, Polyanthus, Wallflowers, Myosotis (Forget-me-nots), together with Tulip, Muscari (Grape Hyacinths) and Daffodil bulbs.

PREPARE FOR WINTER Listen to the weather forecasts and if frost is due cover sensitive plants with horticultural fleece or fleece jackets. Protect half-hardy perennials from frost with straw, newspaper or netting. Frosts are likely, so bring house plants such as Citrus indoors and move tender plants under cover. Keep picking dahlia flowers; don't dig up the tuber until the first frost has turned the leaves black then select a day that is sunny, preferably with a slight breeze, a day that you would select to lift your main crop of potatoes. Cut the stems back to around 15cm (6in) from the ground and with a fork or spade carefully lift the tuber out. Carefully remove all the soil around the tubers and leave on the ground to allow drying of the surfaces. Remove to greenhouse staging or a shed, turning them upside down to allow water to drain from the stem. The length of stem can now be cut back to around an inch long. Before placing into final storage make sure that all the surfaces are free from any moisture. After a dusting of Yellow Sulphur has been applied, place in boxes of either dry peat, Vermiculite, Perlite, or newspaper should be placed around them. Dahlia tubers contain around 95% water and the ideal place for storage is where it cool but it can be assured that it will be frost free.



IF WEATHER IS MILD aerate, scarify and top dress lawns, to remove moss, dead grass and encourage healthy grass next season. Cut lawns and trim edges for the last time of the growing season. Brush the lawnmower down after the final mowing, removing any grass (pictured). Remember to avoid walking across lawns in frosty mornings as you can easily damage the turf and be left with brown footprints later on!

PLANT A HEDGEROW! Well, now is a good a time as any, especially if you need to remove a tired, aged one, or a hedge that has failed from last winter, such as Leylandii. Remove as much of the old plants as you can, and you may need to use a stump grinder to deal with the roots. Improve the soil with planting compost, home-made compost or Tree, Shrub & Rose Compost to help replenish the nutrients in the soil and improve the structure of the soil. For hedging suggestions, do come and have a chat with us or click onto our website, www.hedging.co.uk If you are in the process of moving into a new property, remember hedges, like trees, should be the first things you plant as they take the longest time to fully establish. Do chat with your neighbours if the hedges are going to be shared featured between properties. It's usually best to discuss the project in the early stage to keep the status quo.

HOUSEPLANTS Winter heating dries the air out in your home considerably. Help your houseplants survive by misting them or placing the pots on a pebble filled tray of water to ensure adequate humidity and moisture, such as this Peace lily (pictured). Continue to watch for insects, especially red spider mite and aphids, or disease damage and take the necessary steps to control the problem. Please ask in the Plant Info Office for necessary products to deal with the specific problem. It's getting a bit late to re-pot foliage houseplants, so as a temporary measure you can top dress the pot with some multi-purpose compost to help it through the next few months. Remember to turn your plants regularly once a week to help encourage balanced growth, so avoiding the leaning Tower of Pisa effect!



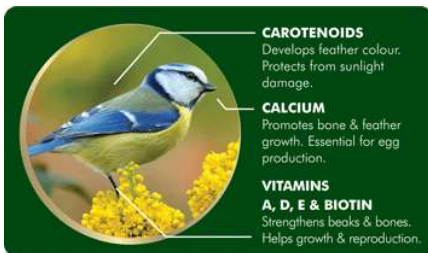
CHRISTMAS TREES Cut and potted trees arrive from mid November onwards. After you have bought your cut tree it should be kept

outside in a cool shaded place, preferably with the cut trunk standing in water, until it is required indoors. Before bringing the tree indoors it is an advantage if about half an inch is cut off the trunk in order to open up the pores of the tree. Mount it in a water-holding stand and place it away from direct heat. Keep the container topped up with water every day; you will be surprised how much it needs! Potted trees need to be kept moist. These trees will last longer if they are kept away from direct heat when they are brought indoors – so well away from radiators. There is a slight chance that these trees will survive if planted out after Christmas, but they would need to be hardened off. They should be watered regularly.

ESSENTIALS Clear shed, greenhouse and house gutters and put chicken wire over the top of them to stop them getting clogged up with leaves. Cover ponds with netting to prevent leaves dropping or blowing into the water. Remove dead leaves from Water-lilies and cut back dying pond marginals. It's still not too late to establish bulbs of Daffodils and Tulips; you need to work with the weather and soil conditions, but for short-term storage keep the bulbs cool, dark and dry.

Autumn damp can quickly cause moss growth over paths, so to avoid slippery and hazardous conditions, either power wash the surface and/or apply Jeyes Fluid Path, Patio and Drive Cleaner. Take hard wood cuttings of a wide range of plants including Cornus, Forsythia, Philadelphus, Ribes, Gooseberries, Blackcurrants and Whitecurrants. Continue winter digging of borders and vegetable patches if the soil is still workable.

TAKE CARE of our feathered friends! Keep your bird feeder filled, especially when there is snow/hard frost on the ground. Make sure the birds have access to fresh water too.



For the birds we have a couple of lovely offers: Tub of 50 No-Net Fat Balls, £8.99 each or 2 for £15.99, and new-this-season, Peckish Complete 5 in 1 Bird Food and Peckish Winter Warmer Seed Mix, both in 2kg bags, at £4.99 each. Both of these products are enriched with Natural Calvita (R) Essential Nutrients for Birds.

and mice? Do you feed the birds but, whatever you do, the ever ingenious squirrels get the lion's share and often damage the feeders into the bargain? The answer is Squirrel Ban "the bird food that squirrels won't eat". It is a premium seed mix that has been treated with Chillimega. This is a blend of nutritional oils and chilli extracts. It is packed with vitamins and omega goodness but most important, rats, mice and squirrels leave it alone because, like humans, they have a receptor that tells them that chilli is "hot".



Birds do not have this receptor so they eat Squirrel Ban normally without sensing the burning effect of the chilli. Squirrel Ban is £7.99 for a 1.5Kg bag or £6.99 each for two or more bags. This is a bit more expensive than normal bird seed, but it can still be a bargain if it eliminates waste of food and damage to feeders.



GARDEN GRABBING keeps hitting the headlines, that's when part of large gardens are sold off to allow property developers to build further houses/flats. The consequence of this usually results in existing properties being overlooked with windows suddenly invading areas of privacy, whether that is the garden or home. The need to block this line of sight using trees and hedges has become a regular question asked in our Plant Info Office and we usually recommend larger specimen plants, either ball-rooted for the likes of evergreens such as Laurels, Yew and Thuja, or larger girthed bare-root trees such as white-stemmed Birch or Amelanchier. The season for ordering these is now upon us and it's a timely reminder if you are looking for this size of tree as we can order them for you.

MORE SPACE TO TALK! Our Talks Season is well under way after the break through the Garden Centre re-development and we are now in the new Meeting Room set within our Restaurant. We have more space, around 40 seats, for holding our popular talks, so do please do come along. Talks start at 10:30am prompt and finish at around 12noon. Here's what is coming up over the next three months ... Wednesday 9th November 'Composting & Compost Teas' (speaker Rob

Weston, pictured above); Wednesday 14th December: 'Growing Orchids & Christmas Houseplants' (speaker Peter White) and the first talk in 2012 will be held on Wednesday 11th January: 'Creating a community Orchard and the Heritage apple varieties to grow in it' (speaker Marcus Roberts). Talks are free to Garden Club Members, £3 for Guests. Please contact our Customer Service Desk for further details or to book a seat!

We've got Christmas ALL wrapped up! DON'T MISS OUR 10% Off CHRISTMAS EVENT on



Thursday 24th November between 8:30am and 6pm. Do please pop along to this special 10% Off CHRISTMAS EVENT when we will be offering a 10% discount off all "Christmas products". You will also be able to view our New-look shop, our themed Christmas displays, enjoy freshly prepared food in our Restaurant, meet Santa as well as enjoying a free mince pie and a glass of mulled wine (limited one per customer). The discount on Christmas products is ONLY available on Thursday 24th November. Starting on the 5th December and running through until the 24th December, Christmas Eve, we will be offering a Christmas Dinner on our restaurant menu. A Two Course Christmas Dinner consisting of a starter

and main course will be £9.50, or a main course Christmas Dinner will be £7.20. For parties of over 6 people, please pre-book on 01280 827907.

Hoe! Hoe! & Hoe!, well we are a Garden Centre after all! Please make sure you pop along to see Santa at the Garden Centre from 10am-3pm over the following weekends: 3rd/4th December, 10th/11th December & 17th & 18th December.

What's happening locally... Just a reminder on Sunday 4th December, Buckingham is holding a French Christmas Market Fair from 10am-4pm, so why not combine this event when you shop with us! The event includes the town crier, bagpiper, church and school choirs, Ceroc, Zumba and Line Dancing and much, much more. The event is organised by the Buckingham Traders Association.

Catch BGC's Chris Day on BBC 3CR on Sunday 18th December between 3-4pm on "The Gardening Phone-In" with a Christmas theme one suspects, with Ernie Almond.



Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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