

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2012



2012: A YEAR OF CELEBRATION, CROPS & COLOUR!

Will you be growing for gold in 2012?

Double-dip recessions, the state of the Euro, more repeats on the TV, thank goodness we have our gardens, says Chris Day.

In a recent National Trust survey of around 1,000 people, some 70% of those questioned think that spending time in gardens is important for their quality of life. Given the choice, many would rather spend time in their gardens than in front of the television or shopping – are you listening Mr Titchmarsh! Well, I suppose we knew that already, however, there's a busy year ahead with the London 2012 Games and The Queen's Diamond Jubilee so how will your garden reflect this? Do you fancy a change of direction altogether – a new feature, a garden pond, archways, a coppice, a potager or simply to grow new and different plants in 2012? Some TV gardening pundits suggested last year that the massive resurgence of Grow Your Own was on the wane, but as we have seen this is simply not true for us.



Encouragingly more and more of our customers are raising vegetable and fruit crops whether they have a small space, perhaps space for a few pots, a cropping bag or kitchen garden within the garden, potager or an allotment plot. The idea of growing cut flowers, or Cut Your Own has already caught the imagination of the nursery trade with a couple of growers offering plants for purely cut flower production, and this looks set to increase this year.

Fruit trees and soft fruit remain popular, surely on the back of those gardeners who have decided to migrate from purely veg growing or those simply wishing to expand their range of growing expertise and invest in maiden trees and bushes.

Spud-u-delicious

Our Potato Weekend, **Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th February** is the kick-start to the Grow Your Own Year. We will have on display over 40 varieties of loose seed potatoes as well as 18 Heritage varieties available in pre-packs (10 tubers per pack). We are pleased to announce the following experts who will be attending at our event: Thompson & Morgan's top potato and vegetable guru Colin Randel will offer specific potato and vegetable growing advice and help visitors select the best varieties for the garden (and the kitchen).

Local allotmenteer and popular local character Bernard Stopps will demonstrate just how easy it is to grow a crop of potatoes in a bag and prove you don't need masses of land to grow a bumper crop.

New this year we have gardening expert and local BBC Three Counties Radio gardener Jason Breed from Kings Seeds to impart his knowledge on all things seed raised. As we enter a busy seed sowing period undercover and outdoors, Jason can point you in the right direction with his topical advice.

We are also delighted to introduce members of the Buckinghamshire Branch of the National Vegetable Society to help and advise if you are Growing Your Own on a bigger scale! Local Gardening Societies from Tingewick & Buckingham will also be on hand to promote their work in the local community.

Finally, top grafting expert, Fritz De Zutter, from Moulton College in Northamptonshire will be sharing his skills of apple grafting, so if you have ever wanted to graft your own apple tree, here's the golden opportunity to try your hand, albeit a steady hand! Rootstocks will be available to buy and visitors are welcome to bring their own scion wood (variety) for grafting.

Plus to make it an event for all the family to enjoy we'll have Phil Banks who will offer great fun with his world of magic, whilst his wife, Lin, will be painting the faces both young and the young at heart. There will be also a number of specialty food stalls as well as some potato-themed dishes in the Restaurant.



What a year ahead!

We all know gardening is as much about planning as the doing, so before we even have time to pop down to the January Sales, or break that well intentioned New Year Resolution, just look at some of the highlights gardeners and gardening will be celebrating in the first half of 2012!

February Wednesday 8th BGC Gardening Talk: Janet Cropley talks Winter Garden Plants. New start time: 10-11.30am.

February 11th & 12th Potato Weekend, 10am-4pm each day.

March Tuesday 13th - First ever Garden Re-Leaf Day! The Gardening Trades answer to Comic Relief.

March Wednesday 14th BGC Garden Talk: Create The Gardens at Coton Manor with Garden Designer Caroline Tait. New start time: 10-11.30am.

April Wednesday 11th BGC Garden Talk The All-New Year Round Container Gardener with Chris Day. New start time: 10-11.30am.

May Wednesday 9th May BGC Garden Talk: The Making of the Hill House Garden in Buckingham and a Little of What Went Before with garden owner, Léonie Thorogood. New start time: 10-11.30am.

June 2-5th The Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

July & August London 2012 Olympic Games & Paralympics.

On the plant area

Despite the very mixed winter weather of late 2011, the start to the New Year is heralded by our potted bulb event; featuring bulbs grown in both smaller 9cm and chunky 1-litre pots. Bulbs include Galanthus (Snowdrops), Iris reticulata, Narcissi, Tulips and Daffodils amongst others. Later in February young plug plants; including vegetables and hanging baskets plants and favourites like Pelargoniums and Fuchsias come on stream, giving you a good opportunity to make an early start in the greenhouse, cold frame or windowsill. However, it's the stunning Hellebores namely 'Walberton's Rosemary' (pictured right, 3-litre, £16.99) and 'Ivory Prince' which take centre stage together with many of the colourful hybrids, like 'Joy Hybrids' and 'Pink Beauty', which are already available.



Roses continue to prove popular, whether you are planting a rose hedge using bare-root plants or creating a new rose border from our fantastic root-wrapped range of varieties. However, we are excited about the Rose of the Year 2012 'Moment in Time' (Korcastrav, pictured left). A floribunda repeat-flowering fragrant rose with ruby-red petals and dark glossy leaves, it's compact in habit and makes an ideal container rose as well as a rose for the border.

Other new roses to look out for include the aptly named 'Olympic Spirit'.

This isn't a new rose – it was actually introduced back in 1988, but with the Olympic Games coming to London this year will bring it back into the public eye. An attractive floribunda rose with clusters of orange-blend blooms which are striking in colour. Nice healthy foliage and good disease resistance and with a fruity fragrance.

Finally, bare-root hedging plants have benefited from the more "normal" winter and you have been getting your plants in quickly and efficiently as the need to "work with the weather" has become essential after last winter! However, there's still time to plant, the soil conditions are now much more favourable, but do make sure the soil is improved to the best you can – adding home-made compost, well-rotted manure, planting compost, plus bone meal incorporated into the soil too.



Pesticide update

If your trees suffer from peach leaf curl, remember to treat them in February. Dithane is no longer available, but Bayer Fruit & Vegetable Disease Control is equally effective. Be proactive! A horrible word, but apt. If you wait until the symptoms appear, it is too late.

Pesticides are constantly being withdrawn, and it is good to be able to report a useful new product. Look out for Bayer Ultimate Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer as a concentrate or as a ready to use trigger spray (pictured). Unfortunately there are now no products that treat "everything on everything" but this product gives good control of a wide range of pests on many edible crops and on ornamental plants. We hope to be able to include more information about pesticides in a later newsletter, once the nasties have started to emerge.



The government has withdrawn approval for the use of Vitax Yellow Sulphur as a fungicide. However, it may still be used as a plant nutrient to treat sulphur deficiency, one of the symptoms of which is greater susceptibility to fungal diseases such as powdery mildew and black spot. It is now almost certainly illegal to dust bulbs, corms or tubers with sulphur to prevent storage rots. Possible alternatives such as Bayer Systhane Fungus Fighter or Westland Plant Rescue Fungus Control are not very satisfactory as they are liquids. Sulphur may also still be used to reduce the pH of soil, i.e. to increase its acidity or to reduce its alkalinity.

The introduction of stricter pollution controls, and the closure of industrial sites such as Calvert brickworks have caused a reduction in the amount of sulphur in the air. This can lead to sulphur deficiency in plants and soils so there is more need to use sulphur than in the past.

Get growin' with Buckingham Garden Centre!



So, you want to grow some veg? Where do you start? Well, first thing get yourself along to our Potato Weekend and have a chat with the experts in the first instance. Our Plant Info Team will be able to point you in the right direction. Next, invest in a good book or two, perhaps *The Vegetable & Herb Expert* by Dr David Hessayon (£7.99), *The Kitchen Gardener* by Alan Titchmarsh (£20) and maybe *BBC/RHS Grow Your Own Veg* by Carol Klein (£16.99). If you don't want to spend money on books, pop into your local library as there is usually a good selection of grow your own books available.

Lastly, list what you want to grow and more to the point what you want to eat. Be realistic in the space and time you can provide for the veg you intend to grow and get the rest of the family involved. From preparing the soil to seed sowing, planting, watering, harvesting, it should involve everyone – just make sure they know what they are doing!

So, what can I sow/plant now...

It's a bit early to sow outdoors, however, if you have cloches, then you could start even now with Lettuce, Carrots, Radish, Rocket, Baby Beetroot, Spinach, Salad Onions, Peas (Mangetout and Sugar Snap are best) and Turnips. Once the soil has warmed up, sow directly Broad beans (go for the varieties 'Aquadulce Claudia' and 'The Sutton') and Parsnips, such as Albion (F1) and 'White Gem'. However, Garlic, Shallots and Jerusalem Artichokes can be planted directly into the soil now.

Indoor sowings of Tomatoes, Aubergines and Peppers should be carried out, leaving them on a windowsill to germinate. These seedlings will need plenty of light otherwise they will become drawn and weak. You could even sow Kohlrabi, early Cabbage and early Cauliflower, Spring Onions in cell modules and Broad beans in Rootainers to start them off indoors and then harden off in March for planting out.

Vegetable focus: Charmed by the Mooli

A few years ago I spotted an unknown vegetable to me on a stall on the Buckingham Market and always keen to try something new I purchased one and on eating it I was determined to add it to the vegetables I grow myself, writes Pauline Brown. This vegetable is Mooli (or daikon) (*Raphanus sativus* var. *Longipinnatus*) a white radish, but a radish with a difference. As you can see from the photo of one I lifted in the snow this morning, it is big, giving some 9 inches, 22cm of edible root. The end of the root broke off and as it was cold and snowing hard I decided that this would have to make do for the photo shoot later in the dry, warm office! To eat, one just needs to wash the mooli and scrunch into its delicious, moist flesh which does not have the normal hot bite of the 'common' radish (*Raphanus sativus*). At this time of the year when they have been in the ground longer it is advisable to peel the mooli before eating.



Mooli has several attributes which make it a very versatile vegetable, it can be eaten from 'normal' radish size or left in the ground to take on the giant length and girth at maturity. We have enjoyed them when nearly a foot long, 30cm, and a good 2 inches, 5cm across, and this is possible as they do not go woody. They can be sown from Spring right through to the end of September, but they do prefer cool temperatures and short day lengths to flourish. They are delicious raw, can be used in stir fries, or can be used in casseroles or curries. In Japan they are shredded and served as an accompaniment to sashimi (raw fish) and are eaten with sushi.

Radish is thought to be native to Asia but they have been cultivated for centuries and have become very popular. They were depicted in the pyramid of Cheops and cultivated by the Egyptians in 2789 BC and Herodotus noted that the labourers who were working on the pyramids received 'radishes, onions and garlic' as their rations. Then by 500 BC the humble radish was recorded as growing in China, then it reached Japan some 200 years later. In England John Evelyn (1620-1706) wrote 'Radishes are eaten alone with salt only, as conveying their pepper in them'. The sensation of 'pepper' in the radish is due to the presence of mustard oil, which some people find too strong, but with mooli the mustard oil must be present in smaller quantities as their flavour is very mild. For those who are not familiar with mooli, I would strongly recommend adding it to your list of vegetables to grow this year. We have three varieties in stock at the moment, T&M's 'Neptune' (F1 hybrid) for early sowing, and T&M's 'Tsukushi Spring Cross' (F1 hybrid) for mid-summer sowing and 'Minowase Summer' for summer to autumn sowing.

NOW TURN THE PAGE for your pull-out & keep A-Z Vegetable Sowing Guide, courtesy of Thompson & Morgan. Retain for future reference.

Chicken chat

It's the start of the year and if you are keeping poultry, Kate Williams, our Poultry Manager, gives us a few tips on what we need to be thinking about now...



1. Forget the traditional spring clean; January is a great time, provided its dry and mild, to treat the timber of your chicken house with Creoseal Plus Wood Treatment (oil based, 4-litre, £7.99) or Cuprinol Timber Care (water-based, 6-litre, £9.99). This is a great help with reducing red mite infestations which can build up through the year.
2. Follow the instructions carefully on the product and make sure the wood is totally dry and the fumes have gone completely before re-introducing the birds to the house.
3. Now we are in the depths of winter, it would be beneficial to increase the amount of corn in their feeding regime – perhaps by just a couple of handfuls per hen per day as a guide would be beneficial.
4. During fine spells of weather, re-arrange your chicken runs in the garden to help the area from becoming overly wet and muddy. Moving the run to a new strip of land will keep your hens cleaner, especially over grass.

Boost your chickens well-being with the addition of a tonic or mineral supplement such as Bio Link Poultry Tonic (1-litre, £10.99) and Poultry Spice (450g, £5.90). Please follow manufacturers guidelines as this can vary from product to product. You will find this improves the well-being of the birds as well as yolk colour and the shell quality of the eggs.



5. During very cold weather, do check for frost bite as this can affect the comb and wattles of your hens and cockerels. To help prevent this you can use Battles Poultry Comb & Wattle Protector, £6.99 for 175g.
6. Listen out for coughs and sneezes and keep an eye on the overall conditions of your chickens such as weight loss and overall demeanour. If you notice any problems which don't improve in a couple of days we would suggest contacting your Vet.

Snowdrop watch: Here's our pick of three of the best.

Anglesey Abbey Gardens Snowdrop season 23rd January-26 February 2012.

Anglesey Abbey Gardens, Quy Road, Lode, Cambridge CB25 9EJ Tel: 01223 810 080

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-angleseyabbeyandgardenandlodemill.htm> The National Trust page details admission prices. When visiting, don't miss their famous Winter Garden, which contains over 250 different species.

Snowdrops at Bennington Lordship Gardens, 4th-26th February 2012, 12-4pm. Over 100 varieties of naturalised snowdrops over the moat and grounds, plus Hellebores, Dogwoods and other winter interest plants.

Bennington Lordship Gardens, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 7BS Tel: (08701) 261 709 www.benningtonlordship.co.uk
Admission: Adults £5, Concessions £4 (not on Sundays), Children under 16's £2.

Evenley Wood Gardens Snowdrop Weekends: Saturday & Sunday: February - 11th & 12th

Evenley Wood Gardens, Evenley, NN13 5SH

Tel: 07776 307849 <http://www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk/contact.html>

Admission charges: Adult £5, Children £1, Concessions £4.



Visit the following link to explore more snowdrop gardens and walks...

<http://www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/snowdrops.htm>

Ticket to ride

The Winslow Community Bus run was a great success in November running nearly full from Winslow and going on to collect more from Tingewick. For unforeseen reasons the run had to be cancelled for December, and Sue who runs the bus, may not do the runs in January and February as she thinks that there may not be enough brave souls who will risk being out in the cold then.

However, if you would like to come for those months give Sue a ring on 01296 715786 or e-mail wdcbenquiries@btconnect.com, as if there are enough enquiries she may run the service. The service will be running again on the second Monday of the month from March onwards as we hope the worst of the winter will be over by then.

New Time for Garden Talks

From **FEBRUARY**, our popular second Wednesday of the month Garden Talks will be starting at **10am**, rather than 10.30am. We are finding the Restaurant is getting busier earlier for lunchtime service, so we hope the slightly earlier start will help reduce any delays in tables and seats becoming available. We thank you for your understanding in this matter.

Our speaker on Wednesday 8th February is passionate local gardener and garden designer, Janet Cropley, who will be speaking on favourite Winter Garden plants. As many of you may know, Janet opens her garden, Hill Grounds over in Evenley, through the National Gardens Scheme and she has a great eye for plants and plant associations, so we look forward to her unique presentation. Starts 10am prompt- 11.30am finish. Talk is free to Garden Club Members, £3 for non-members. Booking is essential, visit the Customer Service Desk or call 01280 822133.



10 TASKS FOR JANUARY/FEBRUARY

DIG up and divide rhubarb crowns whilst they are still dormant. The outer sections tend to be the most vigorous and these need to be retained whereas the older centre section is best discarded. The newly planted crowns must be left to grow on for two years before they are cropped.

You can force one or two mature plants this month for a Feb/March crop – you need to cover each crown in early January with an upturned bucket, or rhubarb forcer (pictured). The forced sticks should be ready in about 6 weeks – remember do not force these plants again for at least 2 years.



PROTECT frost prone shrubs and plants with horticultural fleece. Vulnerable pots should be encased in bubble wrap insulation, however do make sure the drainage holes are not covered. Cloche vulnerable winter crops and cover soil toward the end of the month with a temporary covering of polythene to help keep the soil dry in preparation of any early outdoor seed sowings you may be planning.

APPLY organic material such as well-rotted farmyard manure, garden compost or Tree, Shrub & Rose Planting Compost generously around the base of fruit bushes, including Gooseberries, Currants and fruit trees. Well established plants can also be fed with Vitax Q4 to help encourage strong spring growth. Still on fruit trees, check that grease bands are still in good condition, replacing them if necessary.

LAST opportunity to prune and shape apple and pear trees before they come into growth. Remember to follow the 3-D's regime – cut out the dead, diseased and damaged wood, plus any crossing branches which may be hindering growth. You are aiming at a wine-goblet shaped tree with an open centre. The great advantage of doing your pruning now is you can see exactly where the stems are in relation to one another. Apply a winter wash, such as Vitax Organic Winter Tree Wash (500ml, £11.99) to help control overwintering pests such as greenfly, blackfly and whitefly and other insects on most fruit trees and bushes as well as grape vines under glass.



CONTINUE establishing new hedges as the bare-root season continues. Work with the weather as preparing the soil in advance of planting helps, especially if the weather becomes extremely frosty or we see further snow fall. Covering the soil with polythene, landscape fabric or even some carpet underlay will help when it comes to planting. Remember if you cannot plant the young transplants straight away, you can place them in a temporary trench where you would 'heel' them in. That is, simply planting them to the same depth they were in at the nursery in a temporary trench in the garden, perhaps in a vegetable plot or border.

TAKE Pelargonium, Fuchsia and Perpetual Carnation cuttings in the greenhouse or conservatory if you are overwintering them in warmth. In a cooler section of an unheated greenhouse or cold frame, you can also sow Sweet Peas and easy to flower perennials such as Aquilegia and Hollyhocks.





FORWARD planning is the key especially if major planting is going to happen this year. Ground clearance, weed control, lifting and moving of existing plants can be carried out now if the weather is kind and the soil workable. However, avoid walking on the soil if wet as you will spoil the structure of the soil. New garden soils would benefit from a soil test (pictured left, Nortene Kit, £19.99) to determine the levels of acidity or alkalinity, especially important for your shrub border or new vegetable plot.

KEEP indoor plants warm and free-draught free. Avoid overwatering at this time of the year; remember more houseplants are generally killed by kindness than anything else! Foliage plants such as palms, ivies and other larger-leaved specimen plants would benefit from mist spraying over the foliage to help improve the humidity. Make sure the hand sprayer is kept at room temperature and if you can, spray the foliage in the morning so giving sufficient time to dry before light levels drop.

LAWNS tend to be no-go areas in the winter – avoid walking on them in frosty weather, otherwise you will leave 'dead' footprints! Why? When a lawn is frosted, the grass blades are literally frozen. Any activity on the lawn while it is frosty, like walking on it or mowing/raking it will "break" the grass blade and damage the lawn. It will recover eventually, but it may not fully bounce back until the following spring. One activity, which still needs to be done and completed, is the removal of leaves from lawns – left they will smother the lawn and this weakens the grass, and they can provide shelter for unwelcome garden pests.

CLEAN and sharpen garden tools in the shed and garage before you need to use them! It's a good opportunity to check over the lawn mower - if it requires a service then get it booked now before the grass starts growing again! Back to the tools - clean off all the soil with wire wool or a scraper, then rub household oil into all the metal parts (pictured). Wooden handles, if not painted, should be rubbed with linseed oil to preserve them. If they have become a little rough - if, for example, you forgot them overnight and dew or rain opened up the woodgrain - sand them down with fine sandpaper first. Hang them up in the shed - the best way is to make a shadow board with nails hammered into a piece of block board and the outline of the tool that's supposed to hang from it drawn on with a magic marker. This stops you having to remember what goes where and is the simplest and most effective method.



Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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WINTER OPENING HOURS:

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

