

NEWSLETTER

September/October 2012



Our winning ways to great apple crops

For many of us, it's the summer we'd rather forget in the garden, especially if raising fruit and vegetable has been your forte yet it's not all been doom and gloom in the garden, writes Chris Day.

The wettest ever three months (April, May and June) on record, the best Gold Medal haul for Team GB at the London 2012 Olympics, a successful Golden Jubilee, a memorable Torch Relay, The Queen "acting" with James Bond at the Opening Ceremony, you really couldn't make up this year's headlines! However, one milestone we want to celebrate with you is our annual celebration of the apple, which this year takes place over the weekend of the 6th & 7th October (10-4pm) and brings together the best in expert advice with bees and pollination taking centre stage with our bee keeper providing lots of information and advice on making our gardens more bee friendly too!



We're absolutely delighted to have top fruit grower John Edgeley with us again and he will be kept extra busy as he identifies your apple fruits. Do please bring 2-3 fruits of any one variety as this will certainly help John narrow down the field of varieties. It's not a fast process and it does take time as you can imagine. For fruit advice, grafting tips and to learn more about the work of Moulton College we have the highly knowledgeable Fritz De Zutter making a welcome return. Fritz is a master of the grafting



knife, so do have a chat about rootstocks and selecting the right fruit tree for your garden.

We are hoping to stage a good exhibit of apple varieties (crops and weather allowing!), together with some apple fruits for sale, plus plenty of apple trees to buy, including trained forms such as step-overs, espaliers and bushes. New this year we are highlighting the importance of bees and bee keeping for fruit pollination. We'll have some educational displays set up, plus a bee expert too! Also, local wildlife charities, an exhibit of traditional agricultural/horticultural tools, and much more. We look forward to seeing you!

Bee friendly gardens created

As you may recollect (see our last newsletter July/August) we have introduced two bee hives into the Garden Centre and to tie-in with our new buzzing recruits, a couple of our model gardens have taken on a new-look and role for 2012. Pollen friendly plants have been selected to provide a rich source of nectar not only for bees but also for our local butterfly population as well.

As you will see the two plots show how easily you can grow a real mixed bio-diversity of plants together in a relatively small area, 3.5m x 3.5m. Plants used include bergamot, borage, buddleja, cosmos, hebe, lamium, Lavender 'Hidcote', nemesia, nepeta, Nicotiana sylvestris, thymes and roses.

Running up to our two hives; wildflowers have been sown in the beds normally holding our bare-rooted fruit trees through the winter period. The mixture, Rootgrow Mini Wildflower Meadow, consists of numerous species including cornflowers, oxeye daisies, corn marigolds and poppies. The flowers are still looking good as we write this (late August), so we know the bees have already made a beeline for these flowers in recent months!



What's going on with our bees...



Our two hives are continuing to flourish with the first hive proving to be a real 'star' with amazing activity and honey production. In fact, this week two of the 'supers' have been removed and we will be extracting honey very shortly from these. A couple of weeks ago a frame was removed and the honey extracted from it. It was absolutely delicious and so exciting to be eating honey from one's own bees!! Some of the honey from the 'supers' will be on sale with our other local honey in the shop very shortly so for those who suffer from hay fever and live within three miles of

us, Chackmore or Singleborough we would advise you start with a teaspoon of the honey produced nearest to where you live and we are assured that your hay fever will be nowhere near as severe as a result. Some who have done this do not now suffer from hay fever at all.

The weather has been a little kinder to bees, butterflies and other insects recently and it has been fascinating to observe which of the flowering plants are the favourites. The Lime tree, very near to the hives, has been a buzz of insects, especially hover flies, as have many of the herbs and, of course, the buddlejas. It also appears that one particular variety of a plant is more popular, for example the white-flowered buddlejas to the purples. Garden plants and their relationship to insects is something one never ceases to learn more about!

Summer plant clearance offers

As we move up a gear into the autumn planting season, nature's natural planting season as we always say, there's still plenty of offers to tempt you. All our pot-grown roses, camellias, rhododendrons (including



alpine types), azaleas and selected specimen shrubs, topiaries and climbers are currently being offered at 25% off the marked price.

Our new 1-litre ranges are selling well with new varieties being added on each delivery, so it's well worth taking a look at these on your next visit. Finally, we'll be offering a discount on selected fruit trees over the next few weeks, which will be displayed outside the stripy tunnel, just opposite our Plant Information Office.

Shop update

There's plenty of activity in the shop as displays change to reflect the change of season. Of course spring flowering bulbs take centre stage and we've some great bulb offers and promotions to tempt you. These include Classic Combinations (pictured) at £4.99 per pack or 3 for £12, Our Value Range, £5.99 per pack or 3 for £15, and Carry Home Daffodils in 2kg bags for £5.99 each or 3 for £15. Exclusive to Buckingham Garden Centre, we'll have net bags of Narcissi 'Sir Winston Churchill' for only £4.99. For growing prepared hyacinth bulbs we are offering hyacinth vases (normally £1.49), but we have secured them for just 99p each this season.



New for this season is the Colour Harmony Bulb Collection, a bumper pack containing 25 bulbs in various colour combinations (shades of pink, purple, red, white and yellow) for just £2.99. Completing the pre-pack line up we have a full range of onions, shallots and garlic, as well as mushroom kits (white and brown) priced at £7.99 each.

Finally, 2013 diaries and calendars are now on display. This year the range has been extended so we hope you like them!

Launching at Apple Weekend (6th & 7th October):

2 for the price of 1 on day tickets for the Eden Project!*

Suttons Seeds bring a taste of the exotic Eden Project to our gardens.

It's hard to believe that ten years ago The Eden Project was just a hole in a clay pit and now here they are celebrating their 10th Anniversary. Anyone who's been to this UK's top visitor attraction will know Eden is a magical and unforgettable experience and now Buckingham Garden Centre customers can take a little bit of Eden home with them by growing Suttons' exciting range of flowers and vegetables in their own garden!

What's the deal? Each promotional pack includes a 2 for 1 voucher that entitles the bearer to receive 1 FREE day ticket when a full price day ticket is purchased on the same day.



* Selected packs only. Terms and conditions apply.

Potato challenge success

Over 19 schools took part in Buckingham Garden Centre's Potato Challenge this year, despite being one of the most difficult growing seasons in years. The wettest spring

and summer on record didn't dampen spirits for the 13 classes (19 schools) who grew the potato varieties 'Arran Pilot', 'Pentland Javelin' and 'Rocket'.



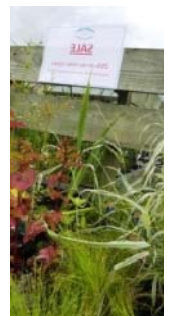
For the competition each school was provided with potato bags, potato tubers, potting compost, fertiliser and instructions on how to grow their spuds from Buckingham Garden Centre. Potato growing advice was sent to each school at regular intervals to help them grow monster potatoes. The results of the potato weigh-in are all in, checked and verified and we are delighted to announce the following results. The heaviest crop from one bag of potatoes was grown by the Helmdon Acorns Pre-School (2-4 year olds) which came in at a staggering 1.304kg. Coming in at a very

respectable second place was Great Horwood School at 1.155kg. In third place was Thornborough Infant School at 910g. Pictured above: (L-R) Chris Day (Buckingham Garden Centre), George Hayle, Harvey Sheppard, Margot Underwood, Sofia Garvin and Anne Somerton (Supervisor Helmdon Acorns Pre-School).

Chris Day, the Garden Centre's Publicity Manager said: "We've had the best entries ever in this competition; despite the awful weather the children and teachers have done a grand job. Even rotting spuds and slug damage didn't deter them! Best of all, the children were able to understand the process of growing and using the potatoes in the kitchen with curries and new potatoes reportedly enjoyed by the schools." The winning entries received Buckingham Garden Centre Vouchers to spend on their school garden projects. Our special thanks to Beachborough School, Marsh Gibbon C of E School, Padbury School, The Buckingham School, Milton Keynes Pre-Preparatory School and Furze Down School in Winslow, who grew some great spuds but didn't quite get the weights this time around. Grenville Combined School and East Claydon School had disappointing results due to the difficult weather conditions.

Aquatics update

All aquatic pond plants now have 25% off, that includes marginals, deep water plants, oxygenators and lilies. The aquatic pond plant sale continues until 30th September, or until stock sells out. Please note: no additional discount can be given, and the 25% off will be taken off at the tills.



The Battle of the Aphids 2012



A couple of months ago, in my garden at least, writes Pauline Brown, the Battle of the Aphids had not yet begun, thanks to the deluges of rain and the low temperatures, but one can never be complacent because as soon as the sun shines it will be, as usual, 'let battle commence!' In fact, having lunch in the garden yesterday with the sun shining down, we watched with great pleasure the House Martins swooping around above us, obviously

filling their tummies with insects, so it is obviously time to check the veggie garden, dahlias and other plants prone to attack and take appropriate action.

We may all curse aphids, but they are all part of the vital ecology, and although they can devastate our well-tended crops, they are a necessary enemy which we must learn to live with and control to our benefit.

If we can do this without resorting to chemical control, so much the better, as chemicals will often kill creatures we should be looking after. Aphids have many natural enemies: ladybirds, larvae of hoverflies and lacewings, several parasitic wasps and in my garden 'fingers and thumbs'. However, there is another very important predator which, with a little enjoyable effort, we can recruit to help us as well – birds. Melanie Orros and her colleagues at the University of Reading have recently carried out a fascinating and detailed experiment to ascertain the results of feeding birds in urban gardens and the effect on the population of pea aphid.

They used pea aphid as it is common and feeds on leguminous (pea family) plants and is known to be widely consumed by many UK bird species. The aphids they used came from a colony kept for over ten years in controlled conditions in Hertfordshire.



A selection of urban gardens were chosen around Reading and these were split into two groups, 19 of which were feeding birds and 19 not. In the 19 feeding gardens each was provided with an identical four port feeder mounted on a 1.2 metre pole and sited within two metres of the boundary of the garden to minimise predation from squirrels or other climbing rodents. Aphid colonies on broad bean plants were added to each garden on a pole of the same height as the feeders, one being caged to prevent avian predation. In the gardens without bird feeders the aphids were added at similar locations to the 'feeding' gardens. They then had the 'fun' of counting the number of aphids from day zero to day twenty one, and two counts were made on each plant to try to minimise errors! The result was that over the three week period the unprotected colonies in the gardens with feeders lost more aphids than caged colonies and were more likely to disappear completely. However, the gardens without bird feeders showed no such differences, which clearly indicates that birds which are attracted to feeders are also foraging for prey on nearby vegetation.



This was only a preliminary study and much more work needs to be done, such as how far away from the feeders the birds are likely to be foraging for insects. Also, it could be that birds attracted to the feeders will also be taking insects which we gardeners are keen to preserve, for example, spiders. Melanie Orros will be setting up further experiments to cover the many other aspects of bird predation in the future, so if you are interested in such data keep a watch on the Reading University web-site where the results will, no doubt, be published. In the meantime, I will continue to feed the birds in the garden and take pleasure not only in seeing them but enjoying the thought that they are also helping to keep the level of aphids down.

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Five minutes with Elaine Loggin –

Customer Service Assistant at the Garden Centre.



You've recently collected a special qualification; please can you tell us more about this? It was a degree in Design Craft and I specialised in hand-printing. I actually started the part-time course 6 years ago at De Montford University and Oxford & Cherwell Valley College.

I've really enjoyed the experience – meeting people, learning new skills (and revisiting many old ones too!), visiting different galleries and attending exhibitions. Pictured is Elaine collecting her degree at Leicester University.

Well done! So, will we see this expertise at the Garden Centre? Garden design perhaps! (laughs). I've certainly got a good eye for colour, but as for garden design, I'd really have to think about that!

Where do you live and perhaps describe your garden? I live in Brackley and the garden is large. Trees and pots form the focal point to one side of the garden as the rest is turfed. At the bottom I've a north-facing fence to cover. I do love containers, which have to be placed carefully in configurations of 3's, together with garden ornaments and of course the famous pig (you'll need to ask Elaine for the full story, very funny).

Your favourite plant... Oh, it has to be geraniums and fuchsias at this time of the year with the hardy fuchsia variety 'Mrs Popple' being my favourite one of all.

Edible... I really enjoy Runner beans, and love eating them young!

Gardening activity... That's got to be pottering in the garden, losing yourself for a couple of hours and I suppose cutting the lawn. It's one of those tasks once completed makes the whole garden instantly looks tidy.

What do you love about your job? Definitely meeting people and helping our customers.

Do you have a gardening tip you would like to share with us? Set up a good compost bin, especially if you are planning to grow fruit and vegetables. Making your garden waste work for you makes good sense.

If you have one Super Power what would it be? I'd love to be able to travel back in time – but I'd like to come back too! I'd just like to observe the family and compare to nowadays, but I wouldn't want to change anything in the past.

Facebook or Twitter? (laughs) Goodness me, I can just about text!! No, seriously I'm considering getting a Facebook account in the near future, so I can keep in touch with the family and friends.

10 TASKS FOR SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

LAWN KICK-START During the early autumn some lawns may attract starlings which feed on leatherjackets near the surface. Leatherjackets are the grubs of the 'daddy-long-legs' and feed on the roots of the grass. In a dry autumn, they can even kill large patches of the grass. If a large number of starlings are gathering on the lawn, it is usually wise to use a lawn pest killer such as Provado Lawn Grub Killer as a precaution. Don't forget to scarify the lawn.



You'll need to rake the lawn now and again to get rid of the old dead grass, moss and rubbish that has collected there during the summer. If allowed to remain, this will quickly form a waterproof thatch on top of the soil that will prevent rain from reaching the roots in the summer. If you have a small lawn then hand-raking will do. This will be much harder work for a larger lawn, where it is best to use an electric scarifier. Following on from this is spiking, or aerating the lawn. Spiking will

correct any compaction in the surface so that water can drain away properly (essential this year!) and air can circulate right down to the roots. It is seldom necessary to spike the whole lawn. A garden fork will do a perfectly adequate job in all but really bad cases of compaction, when a hollow-tine spiker is more appropriate. Aim to spike in rows with holes 10cm (4in) apart and make the holes 10cm (4in) deep. After spiking, the compacted areas will benefit greatly from a top-dressing of Arthur Bower's Lawn Dressing or sifted soil, or soil mixed with fine horticultural sand. Brush it well into the holes and into the sward and apply a low nitrogen fertiliser dressing, such as Doff Autumn Lawn Feed or EverGreen Autumn, to strengthen the grass for the winter.

Finally, moss can be an indication that something is wrong with the lawn and the way it is being looked after. Any number of factors can be responsible for this, such as: poor drainage, starvation, compaction, close mowing, erratic mowing, drought (not this season), and heavy shade to name but a few. Moss can be removed by the application of a proprietary moss killer such as Green Up Mossfree or EverGreen Autumn. A fortnight later, the dead moss can be raked out.

WEEDS If your lawn is like mine and full of seedling dandelions and other obnoxious weeds, you can zap them before they get established with a selective weedkiller, such as Verdone or a combined feed weed and mosskiller such as EverGreen Complete. However, these products need to be applied as soon as possible and definitely by the end of September. Later in the autumn the weedkiller is ineffective and if there is an early hard frost the surge of lush growth created by EverGreen Complete will not have had time to harden off and might be damaged.

If weeds are not a major problem, use Doff Autumn Lawn Feed, which produces less leaf growth, but encourages root growth and hardens off the grass so it will survive the winter and grow better next year. If moss is a problem, use Vitax Green Up

Mossfree, or to kill two birds with one stone use EverGreen Autumn, which is a granular product combining an Autumn fertiliser and mosskiller.

TOADSTOOLS The Government strictly controls the use of chemicals in gardens, which means that there are some problems for which no chemical treatment is available. An example is toadstools in lawns, which often appear in the autumn. Some come from buried roots which can be dug out. For fairy rings it is recommended that you dig out to a depth of at least 30cm (12in) and replace the affected soil and also dig out 30cm (12in) beyond the ring. No comment! In practice, maybe all that you should do is put up with toadstools, and possibly brush them off as they appear to prevent the production of spores.

OVERSEEDING Every year up to a quarter of the average lawn may die. By sowing new lawn seed into an existing lawn, a technique used by professional groundskeepers and known as overseeding, it is possible to rejuvenate your lawn. Overseeding will dramatically improve the appearance of your lawn. New grass will retain its green colour longer in periods of drought and reduce weed invasion. Patches, for instance those caused by raking out dead moss, can be repaired at the same time. Early autumn is an ideal time to sow grass seed. There is an informative poster about overseeding in the shop, by the grass seed, and this is also available as a leaflet at the Customer Service Desk.

PLANTING TIME We are entering a perfect time of the year for planting container-grown shrubs, because the ground is still warm after the summer, but also quite moist, which encourages early root growth and, therefore, quick establishment. Prepare the ground by incorporating well-rotted garden compost, manure or humus, etc., and plant firmly. Trees and taller shrubs will need good support against autumn gales. To provide support, drive a stake in to the windward side and use a proprietary tree tie to secure the plant to the stake. Smaller trees and shrubs can usually be adequately supported using a stout cane or two. Now is also the best time to plant out most trees, shrubs or herbaceous plants that you have been raising from seed.

LAST CALL for hedge cutting. There's no doubt this season has been a good growing season for many hedging plants, some of the more vigorous hedges might be in need of a final light clipping; really just a tidying up. Never make this severe or you could end up with bare patches through the winter. If you are planning to establish a new hedge, take the opportunity now to prepare the strip of ground where the plants will be going by clearing weeds (mechanically or by using a weedkiller such as Roundup). If you plan to set a new hedge near a lawn, make sure you have at least a 90cm of strip of workable soil so you can improve the soil as well as mulch it. All too often hedges that have to compete with lawns suffer major root competition as far as water and nutrients are concerned.



REMOVE debris from garden pools. Make provisions for stretching nets over the pond to prevent autumn leaves from falling in. We stock various sizes starting at £5 for a 2m x 3m net right up to £25 for a 6m x 10m net. Accumulated debris in the pond can



encourage the growth of algae and weeds, which will eventually harm the fish by reducing available oxygen levels. Do top up water levels when necessary, particularly during warmer weather, and continue to remove blanket and duckweed. Now is also a good time to divide waterlilies and other pond plants to increase stocks or control over-vigorous growth. Overgrown marginal plants can just be cut back, if further stocks are not required. A maximum of 50 percent of the water's surface should be taken up with planting. Towards the end of October, remove pumps or fountains and removable lighting systems, clean them, and store over winter in a safe place.

SOWING hardy annuals now means you will have plants in flower at least a month earlier in 2013.

You can sow sweet peas either in a cold frame or the greenhouse for early summer blooms next year. We would recommend sowing the seeds directly into Roottrainer modules where their long tap roots can develop and make for easier transplanting in the early spring (pictured). You can also sow other hardy annuals such as calendula, centaurea, limnanthes, nigella and poppies) in situ. Do check out our range of Kings, Suttons and Thompson & Morgan for other hardy annual suggestions. If you do have a cold frame or an unheated greenhouse you can also sow a few seeds to a cell and grow them really cold under glass for planting out in early March. Again, you'll have plants in bloom weeks before those sown in the spring – perfect for those early active pollinating insects!



HANGING baskets generally haven't disappointed this year, despite the slow start to the season. So, don't neglect hanging basket maintenance - a little deadheading, regular watering and feeding can keep them looking good until mid-autumn. Once they are past their best, re-plant as winter/spring hanging baskets with a grand mixture of spring-flowering bulbs (opt for short-growing forms of tulips, narcissi and crocus), winter heathers, trailing ivies and spring-flowering plants such as winter-hardy pansies, violas, dwarf wallflowers and forget-me-nots.



Foliage wise, why not experiment with the colourful likes of heucheras (pictured), lamiums, thymes and variegated aubrieta. These plants will add a welcome contrast to your display, especially in the depths of winter when the flowers take a break and you need to rely on the foliage elements of your display.



MAKE more plants from cuttings of tender perennials, such as pelargoniums (geraniums) and osteospermum. Generally these plants often do better from new cuttings taken each year. Do not worry if you haven't got a greenhouse, a light windowsill to grow them on will suffice. Just remember to regularly turn the plants and keep them cool. Still on the subject of propagation, now is also a good time to divide any overgrown or tired clumps of alpines and perennials such as crocosmia.

Simply by lifting, dividing and replanting the clumps will invigorate them, and improve flowering for next year. Remember this may be the last opportunity to save seeds from annuals, podded vegetables and perennials before the cold and wet ruins the seed.



PRODUCTIVE pruning now will provide useful growth for next year. Tackle some of the late-summer flowering shrubs such as potentilla. Climbing roses can be pruned once they have finished flowering; side shoots from the main branches can be cut back to a couple of buds. Aim to keep climbers between 4-6ft (1.2-1.8m) as we go into the winter as this makes the process of late winter pruning much simpler and easier. Don't forget any dead, diseased or spindly growth should be cut out and new young shoots tied in to the supports, from the base. If there is an old, thick and woody, unproductive stem, it can be removed from the base of the rose to help stimulate more vigorous growth. Elsewhere, bush roses, if not done already, should be reduced in height to prevent wind rock, especially on taller growing varieties, including David Austin Roses. As we know, these plants can be more shallow-rooted and they can become loose in the soil if hit by strong winds. Those shrubs which are normally pruned hard in the late winter – for example buddleja, Cornus alba and lavatera – can be cut back by half, to help prevent the similar wind rock issue as well as improve the overall shape of the plant.

EDIBLES Apart from planting out a further batch of spring cabbage, the main focus needs to be on harvesting. Crops that will need your attention include apples, grapes, autumn raspberries, nuts and pears. The last of the maincrop potatoes need to be lifted, and carefully dried for storage. Your remaining leafy crops would benefit, if not already done so, from a cover of bird-proof netting to keep unwanted feathered guests hitting your crops.



Tripping the bright fantastic

BGC's Chris Day enjoyed a sneak-peek at the new varieties on offer at Ball-Colegrave Open Day in August.

Just on cue the heavens opened as I reached the HQ of Ball Colegrave Trial Grounds close to the village of West Adderbury. Ball Colegrave are the biggest grower of bedding, they supply (directly and indirectly through growers) over 6,000 plant nurseries and Garden Centres – so they do affect what you and I grow in our gardens! I've been visiting now for over 20 years and each time I'm blown away by the sheer diversity, colour and imagination. This company promotes the best in worldwide horticulture. Being a leading edge company they introduced us years ago to Universal Pansies, the forerunner of the winter flowering pansy we take for granted today. Reading through their seemingly endless list... hybrid dianthus, rain-tolerant petunias and pendulous begonias in colours we could once only dream about. My mission on this visit, however, was simple. To discover the plants that had performed well in what has been the wettest spring and summer ever, together with a wish-list of plants

useful for pollen for our pollinators! The trial grounds are split into four: the main traditional rows of varieties (so you can work through the bedding list alphabetically), informal bed plantings (perfect for the park and gardens professions to see how mass planting works), future plants (pots and baskets intriguingly given code names and numbers that are either experimental or being shown as a frontrunner before introduction) and a large glasshouse sectioned off into specific themes.



Being a bit like a kid in a sweet shop I was drawn to the flowering display beds. Here marigolds (both French and African looked well), blue swathes of ageratum were electric (the variety 'Champion' got my thumbs up!) and Rudbeckia 'Prairie Sun' was one of my favourites. Judging by the number we sell cosmos is a popular, reliable summer flowering plant being predictable yet colourful.

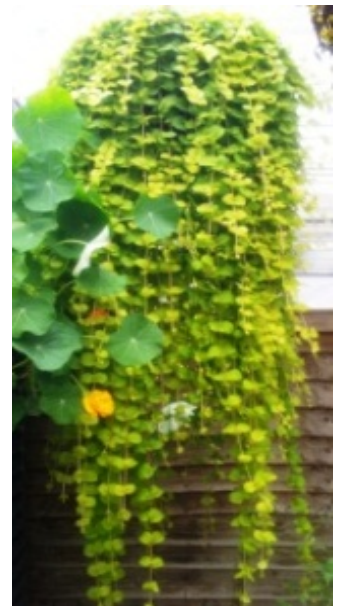
However, Cosmos 'Razzamatazz' is sure to have many followers with its fantastic colouring and relentless vigour. Petunias have proved their worth this summer and certainly the new Wave variety will win over new followers if the displays (both indoors and out) are anything to go by. Their powerful weather tolerance and spreading habits, perfect to fill space fast, was appealing as well as the colours.



In the glasshouse, popular hanging basket varieties were looking gorgeous. Foliage in pots and baskets is really taking off with the likes of coleus, helichrysum, lamium and the Ipomeas ('Blackie' and 'Marguerite', a zingy electric green) looking especially decorative. However, a common garden-plant, that did look stunning in baskets (and also when used in the VertiGarden system) was good old Creeping Jenny, (*Lysimachia nummularia Aurea*). The bright golden foliage is simply stunning as well as the gold flowers produced along the very long stems!

Elsewhere, upright and basket petunias certainly didn't mind the wet after a few warm days of recovery; however the prolific Petunia Wave Series (pictured) really caught the eye and made the ordinary bedding petunias, look frankly ordinary! Perhaps the biggest surprise was the new Begonia 'Whopper', a much bigger version of Begonia semperflorens which in the beds looked amazing; and the basket varieties 'Dragon Wings', 'Million Kisses' and 'Glowing Embers' were as prolific as they were stunning. I had to keep reminding myself 2012 has been the wettest summer ever – yet these plants just got on with it.

My final stopping point at Ball Colegrave's was to admire the fantastic displays of VertiGarden filled with a whole assortment of plants. Now VertiGarden is very close to our heart at the





Garden Centre as many of you will have seen (and read in our last newsletter), we set up a major display of VertiGarden covering a section of our shop frontage earlier in the summer planted with hybrid petunias and the ever flowering Begonia semperflorens. The great advantage of this system is that it is modular, so it's flexible as the picture on right shows. So, just a modest display, say two units together on either side of the patio doors with the water tank, is all you need to create a fantastic, easy to maintain, display. To give you an idea of cost, the set up of 2 modules, plus a water tank would cost £62.47 (excluding plants), but remember these units can be used year-round (so effectively you can enjoy a summer display, May to

September, and a winter display running from October to April) and the units will last many years, given reasonable care. As to what you can successfully grow in the modules, well that's almost limitless. However, when deciding to go for plants that generally are compact in habit, but you don't necessarily need trailing plants to achieve the look.



In picture 2 (left), two modules plus water tank, planted with ivy leaved geraniums, show the mechanics of the VertiGarden set-up. Pictured on the next page: a single module, plus water tank, planted with Viola 'Sorbet' for a colourful winter display.

This set up cost would be £37.48, plus the price of the plug plants. Of course, the water tank could easily be covered, or the system can be set up with an automatic watering unit, making it even easier to maintain.

Our own VertiGarden display is changing soon too, we are keeping the details under wraps but you'll see this on your next visit to us.

For further information about this novel new living wall planting system please ask a member of the plant team at the Garden centre. Units are available for sale in the shop and we can plant the units up for your colour scheme if required. The units can be despatched, unplanted, to customers unable to call at the Garden Centre.



Every little does help!

If you are reading our newsletter for the first time – a very warm welcome to you. If you are, then you might be unaware of our special Garden Club Discount Card, which could potentially save you £££s when shopping with us. To get your own Garden Club Discount Card, simply ask at the Customer Service Desk, pay just £10 (currently a one-off payment) and you can start saving on your purchases of plants, pond plants, seeds and bulbs



straight away. You will receive 10% off plants, pond plants, seeds and bulbs purchased on Wednesdays, and 5% on all other days.

There's never been a better time to join as the new season seeds are now in stock from Thompson & Morgan, Suttons and Kings together with our fantastic range of spring bulbs. What's more, as a Garden Club Discount Card member, we offer other benefits including special open evenings and events, Garden Talks and Offers. Full Terms and Conditions are available on request.

What's on in September & October

We have our next Garden Talk* on Wednesday 12th September (4.30-5.30pm), on The Plight of the Barn Owl and how we can help it in our gardens. The speaker will be Dave Short, Barn Owl Project Officer, from Aylesbury Vale District Council.



On Wednesday 10th October* at 4.30-5.30pm, we welcome Jane Petry from Manor Farm Herbs to give us an insider's guide to growing and using herbs. Jane has been growing and producing herbs commercially for many years, so her expertise and knowledge of this fascinating group of plants will be of great interest.

* Spaces at our talks are limited to 40 people, so be sure to book at the Customer Service Desk or telephone on 01280 822133 to reserve your place.

Our talks programme will resume on Wednesday 13th February and we'll have a taster of what's coming in 2013 in our next newsletter.



Buckingham Nurseries & Garden Centre

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SUMMER OPENING HOURS:

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

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