

August 2021



CASTLE | BRIMSMORE | POUNDBURY

THE GOLD CLUB



Don't miss the
Gold Club
Summer Party

26th August 2021
6.30pm

with another
performance by
our old favourites
Illyria and their
adaptation of

HMS Pinafore

Tickets available now!

Shopping with us this Spring

It's good news! We are able to allow clubs to go ahead with their discount shopping visits if they are happy to do so, subject to current restrictions of course. Sadly, as part of our rigorous Covid19 prevention measures we will not, for the time being, be able to include the traditional talk and tea/coffee during the your visit.

Don't forget to visit our new online store within our website where you can buy plants, bulbs, seeds, seed potatoes, compost and mulch, fertiliser, pest control, gifts and gift vouchers, pots, wood products, bird care and seasonal essentials.

Our **free local delivery** service and **2 Year Hardy Plant Guarantee** apply as always....

We fully appreciate that some of you may not be having meetings at the moment. We have therefore made the decision not to post out the bulb discount vouchers. If you would like some bulb vouchers for your club, please contact me with a rough idea of how many you will need. They will be for collection only from either Castle Gardens, Brimsmore Gardens or Poundbury Gardens. Remember to allow a few days for your vouchers to reach Brimsmore Gardens or Poundbury Gardens.

Anita

Plan ahead for spring

Oh no I hear you say, it's only July and you're talking about autumn planting bulbs. Whilst we all enjoy hearing the buzz of bees and other pollinating insects on a warm summers evening what about when they emerge in the late winter / early spring looking for food. We can all help them by planning ahead and planting some spring flowering bulbs to help in that quest.

The spring flowering bulbs are all on order and will start to arrive (depending on the weather conditions, lifting and drying and packaging) from around mid-August onwards. Look for those packets that have the *RHS plant for pollinators* bee logo on them as these have been selected as ideal bulbs for our friends in flight as well as providing a welcome splash of spring colour. Many of them are also ideal for 'naturalising' (planting them in an area of grassland or other natural situations, letting them establish and grow without interference, as they would naturally).

I have listed below a few of the varieties we expect in over the coming months:-

Species crocus (named varieties which include Blue Pearl, Barr's Purple and Goldilocks), attaining a height of 3" / 75mm - who can resist seeing swathes of these in the spring? Look for the 'tommasinianus' varieties (Ruby Giant, Whitewell Purple) for early flowering and excellent 'naturalising' qualities.

Single snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*), one of our very first bulbs to flower, sending delicate white nodding flowers up through often frozen soil to bring some cheer following dark winter days.

Alliums (a member of the onion family) with a range of heights, colours and flower sizes, (they remind me of exploding fireworks) these make ideal subjects for a sunny well drained border, with varieties flowering from April through to June.

Don't forget **autumn flowering crocus**, which are generally one of the first bulbs to arrive. They do the reverse to many bulbs by flowering first after about 6-8 weeks in the ground and then sending up leaves in the spring ! Good for pollinators to have a food source well into the autumn and a good companion for under autumn flowering shrubs.

With a range of various heights, flower shapes and colours, flowers from early February through to June, there really is a spring flowering bulb for both pollinators and us to look forward to in 2022.

Brian

Christmas opening days

Poundbury Gardens - 30 September

Brimsmore Gardens - 7 October

Castle Gardens - 15 October

Water butts

There are many benefits to installing a water butt, the obvious and important environmental benefits, and money saving but to mention a few!

According to the Consumer Council for Water, the average house roof in the UK collects enough rain water to fill about 450 water butts. Watering using a hosepipe or sprinkler can cost £1.50 per hour, or 50p per hour whilst watering by watering can.

Here at the Gardens Group we have a good selection of sizes and shapes ranging from 100 to 250 litres, plus all of the attachments you might require to connect to your downpipe. If you already have one, why not use a linking kit to add an additional water butt to improve your capture?

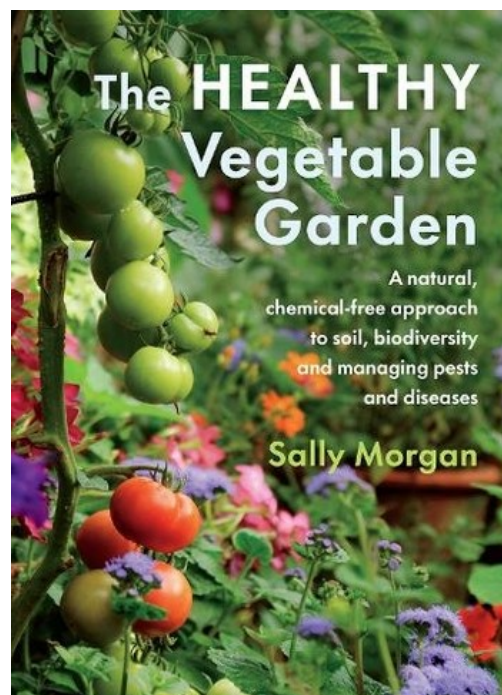
In my own experience, you'd be surprised just how far the water goes. There is nothing more satisfying than collection your own!

Remember, we can deliver free within 25 miles. Our friendly drivers can get your new water butt out to you within three working days. You'll be up and running in no time!

Matthew

Book launch

Thursday 2nd September



The healthy vegetable garden

by Sally Morgan

The Butterfly House, Castle Gardens

6.30pm - 9.00pm

Delving into natural, chemical free approaches to soil, biodiversity and managing pests and diseases, this **free author event** will give vegetable growers of all abilities an opportunity to learn how to maintain healthy and productive fruit and vegetable crops year after year.

Please let us know if you would like to attend - you can contact us by email or telephone

Tales from the potting shed - by Mike Burks

We have just started another chapter in the covid story and whereas it feels like we may be getting to the latter stages there may well still be lots of twists and turns to come. We viewed the relaxation on the 19th July with mixed emotions. Following consultation with the team and also listening to feedback from customers we have kept most of the covid precautions in place with sanitisation of trollies and hands, the one-way systems, screens at the tills and masks in the buildings. We decided to invite customers to follow the mask rules but we aren't enforcing it and the reality is that at the time of writing the vast majority of visitors to the centres are keeping their masks on when inside. In the planteria and restaurant gardens masks are off and that's just fine.

One of the issues which isn't understood by some of our visitors is that whereas the covid rules have been relaxed we still have a duty of care to our teams and to customers under health and safety law and this combined with a nervousness by many people of the current strain has meant that we have kept our covid safe systems in place.

We do get some who are out for a fight and these tend to be the covid sceptics and conspiracy theorists and its not pleasant when our staff are on the receiving end which is why we have made it voluntary which, thankfully, most people respect.

We have to anticipate that there will be another wave and so will be constructing our Christmas displays in the autumn so that there is plenty of space for everyone to shop safely should there be an increase in covid levels at that time. As ever we'll make

it easy for you to get to plants and gardening very quickly if you aren't interested in the Christmas display!

We have been very busy since March with many spending lots of time in their gardens. Its been challenging because the supply chain has been under pressure and this has made everything hard work as a result. Sometimes products aren't available because of raw material shortages, sometimes it's a shortage of packaging, then there won't be a lorry available and, even if there were, there may not be a driver for that lorry! So, it's been erratic but we have made it through to the start of another season.

We will be stockpiling vital products through the autumn so that we don't run out next spring which is completely different to the normal "just in time" systems that we are used to but this will be a feature until covid is under control across the world.

However, as an industry we have been very lucky and so we aren't complaining – it's much worse for lots of other businesses and we do realise that.

We have been working hard on environmental matters as always. The biggest of these at the moment is the use of peat in amateur gardening being banned by the end of the current parliament - so 2024. The challenge for the industry is finding some 2 million cubic metres of good quality alternative to the peat that is currently used. "What's wrong with peat?" I hear some of you ask and the answer is that peat bogs store huge volumes of carbon are harvesting releases this carbon so contributing to climate change.

At the Gardens Group we have been

reducing the levels of peat in our compost mixes for a number of years and have been peat free ourselves in our nursery for a couple of years now. Our policy has always been to gently wean ourselves and our customers off peat and this year across our range of bagged composts we are close to 80% peat free by volume. This will increase again next year.

Lots of help is at hand and we will keep you up to date not least because of my role on the industry Growing Media Task Force which has been very useful.

We have been promoting the use of chemical free pest and disease control for years too and we are delighted to be hosting the launch of a new book on the subject on Thursday 2nd September 7.30 pm at Castle Gardens. The author is Sally Morgan and the book is "The Healthy Vegetable Garden". Tickets will be available soon.

This indicates that we are starting to get some normality and we hope that garden clubs will be coming back to life in the next few weeks.

Mike

Plastic Pot Recycling

Have you used one of our plastic pot recycling boxes at the garden centres? Feel free to drop off any unwanted pots or collect more for re-use at home!

At Castle Gardens we have already rescued and re-used 15,000 plastic plant pots in the nursery so far this year.