

March 2021

THE GOLD CLUB



The popularity of Houseplants

The popularity of houseplants is firmly on an upward trajectory and showing no signs of slowing. With the 'Stay at home' command, many people looked to greening up their indoor spaces, whether that be home office or living spaces and there's plenty of choice from our growers. Aiding with reducing anxiety and stress levels, having plants around the house is so very beneficial. With more people inside there's a particular focus on plants with air cleansing properties so we've picked out our favourite indoor plants to help cleanse, clarify and beautify your space through the last of those dark months before we all head out a little more into our gardens.....

1. **Sanseveria** - Mother in laws tongue. This is a beautifully structural plant which requires very little from you whilst relieving the air of CO₂, benzene, formaldehyde, xylene, and toluene which are well known cancer causing pollutants. It also produces high levels of oxygen, and by having green plants in your space, it aids concentration.
2. **Chlorophytum** - Spiderplant. This age old classic produces arching leaves which add movement and grace to any interior. A prolific reproducer, within a couple of months you could be the proud owner of not 1 but several babies! Not only is it a good plant for that tricky, hot, sunspot, it also absorbs carbon monoxide and xylene and is also non-toxic to pets.
3. **Gerbera Daisy**. A fun and bright addition to the table, the gerbera is generally short flowering but well worth it for the instant impact. Keep well fed and deadhead regularly to encourage the buds to keep coming. Whilst you sleep away at night, Gerberas will do the hard work for you, absorbing CO₂ and other toxins.
4. **Anthuriums**. Possibly one of the best air-purifying plants available and stunning with it! These plants are fantastic at absorbing ammonia, formaldehyde, toluene and xylene. Their individual flowers last for months at a time and the plants themselves will grow and clump over the years giving you that tropical feeling inside. Especially useful in a home office, they'll provide you with years of enjoyment.
5. **Hedera** - Ivy. Ivy not only removes all the usual toxins from the air including benzene, it also reduce mold particles as well, great for those living in old, character properties. A native to us it really helps to bring the outdoors in and requires very little, particularly over the winter months. Pop in a lightly shaded area and it will happily do it's things for you! Perfect for offices to aid in concentration.
6. **Spathiphyllum** - Peace lily. This is another top cleanser according to NASA. Pop a peace lily in your bathroom or kitchen and it will help to reduce mold and mildew by absorbing the spores into its leaves. Its pretty and pretty low maintenance as well, requiring a lightly shaded place with high humidity. Keep moist and the flowers will continue for months whilst improving your air quality by up to 60%.

Kyla

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, wood products, pots, bird care and seasonal essentials. Free local delivery and 2 year Hardy Plant Guarantee as always....

Anita

Sedgemoor Gardens Club - Zoom meeting

An article written by Sylvia Goodenough

Sedgemoor Gardens Club held a Zoom meeting in November, with Louise Burks from the Gardens Group showing us how to put together beautiful winter hanging baskets. Both Louise and we were slightly nervous about how a demonstration would work on Zoom, as our previous speakers have given presentations using slides or powerpoint, and it was a first for her too. However, a practice run beforehand soon sorted out any niggles and the demonstration went very well. Louise and the Gardens Group staff make up around 200 baskets every year so she knows what she's talking about!

She developed a basket in front of us, using a wire basket and moss to line it with - but not just any moss, they have a supplier who sources really thick, long stranded moss from a secret place! It works really well and looks more attractive and natural than the alternatives. Working from inside the basket she pushed plants through the moss, concentrating them on the front and sides and leaving a space at the back for watering - if that should become necessary over winter! Her range of plants was much wider than the standard pansies and violas, though they were there, but she included the like of primroses, ferns, grasses and miniature daffodils. She gradually built the sides up with more moss to support additional compost and then used the taller plants to increase the height still further, giving the basket a mounded top.

Louise kept up a running commentary and provided us with lots of useful tips as she worked. She answered several questions after her talk and we all closed down our computers feeling inspired to get out there and make our own baskets!

Marnhull Garden Club - Celebrating our 40th Anniversary

An article written by Viv Bruce

Marnhull Garden Club was formed on 16th February 1981. So 2021 seemed the best time to celebrate our 40th birthday - then Covid 19 arrived and with all the restrictions and dangers associated with it, made us rethink our plans.

So here we are 40 years later and still very determined to keep our club going in whatever way we can - we've had daffodil growing competitions, socially distanced plant swaps and just held our first virtual Club meeting after a 10 month gap. Even our Village Hub window has had a celebratory theme added to it.



The Zoom based Club meeting went very well and huge thanks go to Steve Fry from The Gardens Group, for a great presentation on Slightly Naughty Plants. I was skeptical about virtual meetings at first and when I first looked at them last March there was very little on offer.

Now, Covid19 has actually given us access to a whole new exciting range of subjects & speakers. Our choice is no longer limited by geographical boundaries. If we want to book a speaker in The Hebrides or Yorkshire we can. One virtual speaker even told me he was delivering talks to America!

Of course, we desperately want to get back to holding meetings in our wonderful newly extended village hall, but for now the opportunity to engage with technology is too good to miss.

So embrace any opportunity you can to keep your garden club together, as the seeds you set today will soon flourish again, once these trying times are over.

A speaker's view

Presenting a talk through Zoom sounded like a great idea. No different to presenting the same talk to a garden club but without the travelling... 'Yes' I said, 'Sign me up'.

Of course, it is only after committing oneself that the doubts start to creep in. Will the technology work? How well can the audience hear me? What sort of background should I have? Then there is the added complication when realising that the talk subject is one that usually uses a projector – how on earth will that work?

For my first Zoom talk I had to spend some time working out where to place the camera – too close was a very uncomfortable view of my face, too far away would make the sound and facial expressions difficult to project.

I prepared for the meeting in our lovely Butterfly House with the ancient stone wall behind me. I was working with two different laptops on zoom meetings with myself via mobile phone to get comfortable with the various options and to understand what the audience would see when I shared my presentation screen with them. You can be sure I made copious notes so that next time it will be far more relaxed and efficient to prepare.

Starting the meeting was nice and easy, the chairman of the hosting club got the ball rolling and handed over at the right time. I signed in to the meeting on both laptops – it might sound silly but there is a little lag between what I can see on 'my' screen and what the audience can see when sharing a presentation. In order to be talking about what they can see rather than what my laptop was showing I had to run the presentation on my laptop but speak according to the view on the second one.

I think the hardest part for me was the lack of instant feedback. With the whole audience on mute I was telling a story to an empty room and the resounding silence made me doubt how well the message was coming over to the various different living rooms scattered throughout a village 20 miles away. Fairly quickly the garden club host was taken off mute so I could at least hear one appropriate set of noises – the chuckle or groan that I needed to let me know my tale was being well received. After that, it all went to plan – we had some viewers unmute themselves long enough to contribute which was great, then when we got to the end of the presentation we were all able to have a natter about it before drawing the event to a close.

So lots of lessons learnt at this end and plenty of confidence for presenting this way in the future... sign me up!

Steve

Last chance to see?...

It is five years since Rugg Farm Garden in Limington last opened under the National Garden Scheme scheme. We intend to re-open in 2021 for one final time to support the charities that the NGS helps fund, whose income for 2020 will have been so significantly reduced.

We will open by appointment for groups of four or more. We are happy to host a car load or a coach load of interested gardeners.

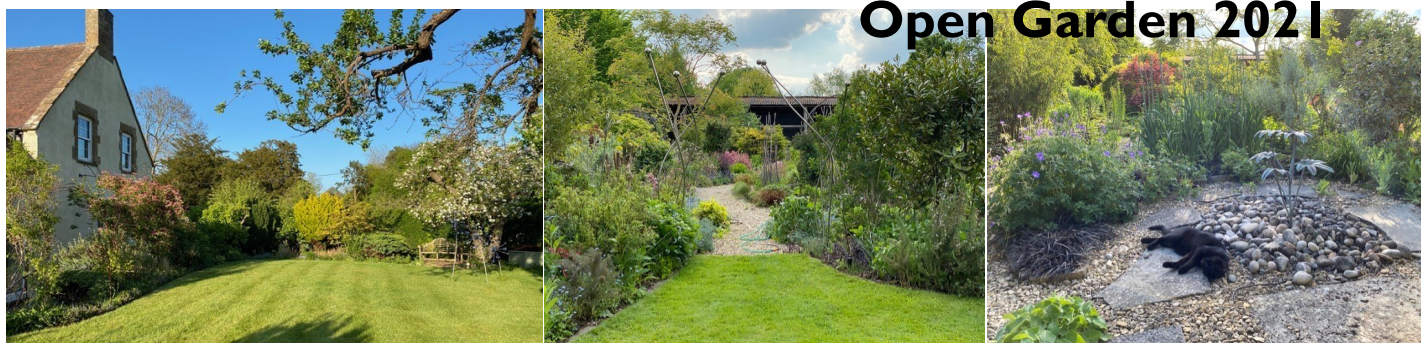
Many garden visitors from Somerset and beyond will have visited in the past and with their support we raised over £13,000. We were privileged to receive visits from groups and individuals and we would welcome returning visitors and garden clubs who would like to see how the garden has evolved.

Beginning in 2007 virtually with a blank canvas, Rugg Farm has developed a series of contrasting spaces over its two acres which are now maturing well. We have planted hundreds of trees and shrubs, mixed with perennials and annuals. We do not employ a gardener but have enjoyed creating the garden ourselves - except for some hard landscaping and fencing. A kitchen garden, small orchard and pond, woodland areas together with more contemporary plantings provide something of interest for everyone.

The garden is designed to attract pollinators and insects throughout the year with densely packed beds and borders. Late May to early July are the most colourful times to visit. We will abide by any social rules that may exist to ensure your visit is safe for everyone. Visits can be arranged to suit group requirements and refreshments can be provided to match the time of day, or evening, of your arrival. More details and to make arrangements contact us on 01935 840503 or email griggsandthomas@btinternet.com

Morene, Peter, Christine and Steve

Open Garden 2021



Tales from the potting shed - by Mike Burks

Here we are, at the time of writing, in Lockdown 3. The good news is that many have now been vaccinated and it looks like I might get mine by the end of May too!

More good news in that garden centres are classed as essential retailers and so we have been open and although very quiet from customers visiting us we have been very busy in other ways. Firstly, we have turned the centres around from how they were in December and we are all set up for the Spring. We have also been enormously busy with all of the orders for compost sent in by our Gold Club members – almost double previous years which suggests that you are all getting ready for a busy gardening year!

Thirdly, we set up a webshop to help us deal with the number of enquiries that we are likely to get if we were locked down again. The webshop is just for customers within our 25 mile radius for free delivery and whereas it doesn't yet have our full range of products it is proving very popular with those who aren't able to, or wanting to, come out at the moment.

Next January our Gold Club members will be able to order compost, seeds etc using the agreed discount but it still will be possible using the existing paper system and a visit is always better in real life!

The drive-thro compost shops so popular last year will be back available in the next few weeks. Those of you who just want compost can drive in and use the tills outside to make a speedy and very safe visit.

One of the big themes for 2021 (and beyond) is that there is a big push to get rid of peat from composts. The reason for this is that peat bogs are not only important sites of scientific interest but that they are also enormously important for soaking up carbon. Harvesting can damage the ecosystems and release the carbon contributing to climate change. The challenge to replace peat is not straightforward and some early attempts weren't great. However, we are now stocking some 5 peat-free multi composts and a dozen other peat-free soil improvers, specialist composts and the like. All of these will be on promotional multi buys and there will be lots of information available to help you in the transition if you haven't already made it. We have been peat free in our own nursery for some time now and so are experienced in how to use these alternative mixes.

In the garden centres to keep everyone safe we have our one-way systems in place. We learnt a lot last year and so have simplified some of these routes where possible especially at Brimsmore. These routes and the precautions with two metre spacings, the screens at the tills, the sanitising of hands and equipment kept us all safe last year so we know that they work.

Sadly, as everywhere, our restaurants are closed although The Engine Room at Poundbury and The Apple Tree at Brimsmore are doing takeaways. At each site one of the chefs have stayed on to make sure the hardworking garden centre teams are looked after at tea breaks and lunchtimes!

We don't yet know when the restaurants will be able to reopen but it certainly will be with the socially distanced table spacing as it was for the most part of 2020.

In the plant departments we are overflowing with a wonderful range of stock. The centres look very exciting and its great to see everything coming to life after what seems like a long winter. This week the young plug plants started arriving and outside there are some fabulous displays of Primroses, Hellebores, Rhododendrons and Camellias to name but a few!

You will notice some changes when you next come in; at Brimsmore the new goods in area at the back of the centre is up and running moving lorry unloading out of the car park, the shop has moved into the greenhouse and the tills are in a new spot compared to last Spring. At Poundbury there are some new automatic doors being installed in the next few weeks and at Castle an extension to the restaurant is being built whilst its quiet! So, we haven't been hibernating during the wet and the cold!

And last but not least it will be Poundbury's 15th birthday this Spring! Where did that time go? We will be celebrating with lots of projects out in the community so keep an eye out for that in the coming weeks.

We could all do with a bit of a celebration couldn't we!

Mike