

South West Shropshire Gardening Club

Newsletter



March 2025

I hope the recent, occasional sunshine has inspired you to rush into your gardens and appreciate the signs of Spring all around us. I am enjoying the tidy-up, weeding and mulching process while recognising old favourites poking their heads through the soil. The hellebores in my front garden don't usually receive the admiration they deserve, so I am keeping a bowl of them in my kitchen. I have been amazed how long they last and delighted by their colours and variety.



Calling vegetable growers!

Sadly, I didn't have any response from members last month, so I am leaving this plea for help in one more time, in the hope that someone will come forward to share their knowledge and help this group get started.

I had an email from Nicola Westwood whose son lives with four other young adults who each have learning and/or physical disabilities, in a property owned and managed by Condover College. There is an area measuring 13x8m which would be great for developing into a vegetable garden, where the young people could learn about vegetables; how to grow them and then cook their own produce. Nicola is seeking advice and maybe help, in getting started as she is "not green fingered at all".

Are there any members who would be willing to take a look at the site near Shrewsbury and offer advice and/or help to get this worthwhile project started? I would be happy to drive a group or individual to visit and find out more details but I am totally ignorant about growing vegetables! Please let me know if you think you could help in any way.

Ikebana Workshop is now full!

Elly (who has organised this event) writes:

“Thank you to all members who are supporting this new venture.

We would like to hear from you if you have suggestions for other topics that we can cover in future workshops. It should be a garden-related practical skill that is suitable for learning in a small classroom style group. Maybe you would be able to demonstrate and teach something yourself? Do let us know.”

Bees

As part of our focus on bees this year, I am writing about different bumblebees each month. This time it is the turn of the **Red-Tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus Lapidarius*)**; one of the most common throughout Central Europe. The females are black with a red/orange tail; the males have a yellow-haired head and collar; a weak yellow midriff-band and a red tail. They emerge in early Spring and can be seen till the Autumn. They usually nest on the ground, often under stones, at the base of dry-stone walls or in old mammal burrows. Their favourite plants are thistles, Bird’s Foot Trefoil and Buddleia. They tend to have medium-sized proboscis which enables them to be good pollinators. They typically eat pollen and nectar but sometimes the workers eat eggs the queen has laid. She tries to defend her eggs by threatening the workers with her mandible or hits them with her head. The colonies are not usually extensive or complex – they tend to have about 100-200 workers. They can be seen in woodlands, gardens and open countryside, sometimes flying over 1500 metres to forage for food.



Pearl Garden

We had a merry band of helpers working on the Pearl Garden this month. Alleyne did a great job installing Everedge which we hope will retain the soil to stop it draining down the hill, leaving bulbs and plants exposed. Committee members Elly, Pauline, Sara, myself and Caroline concentrated on weeding plus Sandy and Catherine. Elly very kindly brought several bags of well-rotted manure which we used as a much-needed mulch and feed. We worked for about two hours, nattering in the sunshine and felt pleased with our efforts at the end of the session. Next, we need to find new plants to plug the gaps and provide all year interest and colour. Many thanks to everyone involved.



Clun Open Gardens weekend; Flowers in St George's Church

28th/29th June

You may remember that Elly and I took part in this exhibition last year with a display honouring Percy Thrower. Members of the club contributed masses of beautiful flowers and foliage for us to arrange which was a real treat. This year the theme is "The Magic of Music" which should enable the creative juices to flow! I am unable to join in this year due to family commitments but would love someone else to have a go. As of 16th March, there are seven contributors signed up so far but it is a big church so more arrangements would be most welcome.

In last month's newsletter I included a list of suggested themes but you can choose your own. If you are interested in representing our club or having a go as an individual, please contact Helen on 01588 641086 or 07817027807 by the end of this month, so that she can proceed with the programme.

Plant Fairs

Plant fairs bring together some of the best independent plant nurseries from across the country with a brilliant choice of plants to delight every gardener. The entrance charges on these special days are such good value, often up to half the standard garden entry price.

The fairs are also valuable fundraisers for our venues and every penny of the entrance fees goes to the venues to help them keep going in these tough times.

When a plant fair takes place within a garden, we arrange a special reduced entry price to the garden. Some gardens on these days are half-price (or better) entry to the garden and entry to the fair is included. Other fairs are free or with a small charge or donation that all goes to maintaining the venue.

Always check event status before travelling at www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk

Sat 29 March Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster DY11 5TB 10am-4pm Plant Fair Free Entry

Sun 30 March Sugnall Walled Garden, Eccleshall ST21 6NF 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £1.00

Sat - Sun 5 - 6 April Weston Park, Shifnal TF11 8LE 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £5.00 **TICKET REQUIRED***

Sun 13 April Middleton Hall, Tamworth B78 2AE 9am-4pm Gardens and Fair £4.00 **TICKET REQUIRED**

Fri 18 April Whittington Castle, Oswestry SY11 4DF 10am-4pm Plant Fair and Grounds **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun - Mon 20 - 21 April Dorothy Clive Garden, Market Drayton TF9 4EU 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Sun 27 April Cholmondeley Castle Gardens, Malpas SY14 8ET 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Wildegooose Nursery, Munslow, will reopen on Thursday 27th March

Westhope College

Three of us attended a course on Vegetable Growing for Beginners earlier this month. Our tutor was extremely knowledgeable and as there were only four of us, we were able to ask lots of questions regarding our individual needs and circumstances. It would have been good to do some practical activity as mentioned in the description of the course but we still learnt a huge amount. Lunch and afternoon tea were delicious! The buildings, grounds and setting are wonderful. There are all sorts of courses available including many creative and craft-based activities. Last tip – don't follow your satnav unless you are happy with narrow, bumpy lanes full of pot holes! There is a far more civilised route going out of Craven Arms on the Corvedale road. There is another course about growing salad crops all year round, on Thursday 27th March.



RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Thursday 8 – Sun 11 May 2025

Floral Marquee - has over 60 of the UK's finest growers' displays, including rare and unusual varieties- shop for plants and get advice from the experts.

Show Gardens - take inspiration from a diverse array of RHS-judged gardens.

New Indoor Plant Gardens – RHS-judged gardens. Shop for plants, pots and gifts.

New Dog Day – dogs are welcome on Sunday only.

Book before 31 March with discount code Malvern10! For £2 off advance tickets (T&Cs apply)

A group of us went to this last year and thoroughly enjoyed the day.

Coffee morning and plant sale, Clunton

Saturday 22nd March, 10.30

£3.50

Plus, bric-a-brac

In aid of Clunton Village Hall

Dates for your diary

Mini trip to Minsterley Meadows and the Bog Visitor's Centre

Wednesday 7th May

I am still in the process of fine-tuning the details of this trip but I can provide an outline so you can decide if you are interested: we hope to leave Bishops Castle at 1.30, travel to the visitor's centre to look at their exhibits, craft stalls and hopefully have refreshments. The centre does not open till April 9th so I hope to confirm more details of cost then. We will then proceed to Minsterley Meadows (two fields) where we will meet Sarah Wallace-Johnson who is the newly appointed Project Coordinator for the Middle Marches Community Land Trust Meadows Project. We are also hoping that Rob Rowe will be available to talk about the botany of the meadows. Return to BC about 5pm.

The cost of the coach will be £13. There are 19 seats available so members will take priority. If there are any spare seats, we will then be able to invite guests/non-members.

You will be able to book a place at our next meeting (March 26th) or by emailing me after that:

angiejsalmon12@gmail.com

Mini evening trip to Sarah Jameson's meadow at New Invention

Wednesday 11th June, 7pm

More details to follow next month. If you would like to find out more, look at sarahnewinvention.wixsite.com

Mini trip to John's Garden and Ashwood Nursery

Monday 7th July, 10.30

More details to follow in May.

Next meeting: Wednesday 26th March

We had another panic this month when the speaker cancelled due to her house move suddenly being speeded up. Mandy sprang into action and has organised a great alternative... (in addition to redesigning the posters, messaging the committee etc. She deserves a medal!)

“No Plot, No Problem – Great fruit, vegetables and salads without a vegetable garden”

A talk by Phillip Aubrey

Philip Aubrey began his career as a student at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens and then studied at Pershore College. On leaving college he held various roles at nurseries and then joined Birmingham City's Parks Department as a lecturer at the Horticultural Training School in 1974 and was promoted to Divisional Parks Manager in 1979, overseeing one third of the City's parks and open spaces. In 1987 he was appointed Director of Birmingham Botanical Gardens where he was responsible for many innovations and improvements. In 2007 he retired which has given him more time to give talks and demonstrations.



In addition to the speaker bringing plants for sale, there will also be a stall run by Rosy Ramsey from Craft Creations in Clun. She will be selling garden and bee-themed items so bring some cash and/or cards if you think you might be tempted (not sure which method of payment will be preferred/available).

Membership

Membership costs £20 to cover attendance to all our meetings for a year (from October); early access to trips and events with subsidised tickets; seed offers and plant sales. We are also affiliated to the RHS so you are able to borrow our discount card which provides 50% discount for two people to any RHS garden. Such a bargain!

Payment can be made with cash, cheque or card at our meetings or by transfer to:

South West Shropshire Gardening Club

sort code 20-53-22

account number 80754803.

Please add your name as reference and email Alleyne to let him know: aandpcopetake@hotmail.com

Flower of the Month

Congratulations to our committee member Pauline, who won the February competition with this beautiful dwarf iris.

Please bring a single bloom or spray from your garden in order to participate. Points are given each month and then an overall winner is announced and rewarded in October.



Please note that to be fair, we can only accept **one** entry from each participant.

I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday 26th March.

Angie Salmon
Chair