

# AMERSHAM GARDENING ASSOCIATION

## JANUARY 2017 NEWSLETTER



### FROM THE SECRETARY

I hope you had a good Christmas and will have a successful gardening year in 2017. The Christmas Social on December 15<sup>th</sup> proved to be a rather unusual event, we had a power cut for most of it! Luckily a number of people had lights on their mobile phones so they could read the quiz questions and see what the cheeses were. The feedback the committee has had was that it was an enjoyable event.

Details of next year's 4 day trip have already been sent out and we hope there will be the usual good response.

At the time of writing this it is snowing, let's hope it doesn't foretell a cold Spring and we can soon see the Spring flowers emerge.

Jean Bowling

### FROM THE TREASURER

The Association continues to be in good financial state, with a total of £11,461 in the bank. To put this in context, our total income in 2016 was £11,131 and total expenditure was £10,573 – a profit on the year of £563. In 2015 it was £1043, but the costs of both the 2015 and 2016 Xmas Socials are included in the 2016 accounts, and the affiliation fee to the RHS for both 2016 and 2017 in the 2016 accounts. In addition, in 2015 we received a refund of £150 from Heyfordian because of the breakdown of the coach on an outing. So, the overall picture is much the same as last year. We have enough money in the bank to run for a year, which is about what is considered to be prudent in case of some horrible fall in our income.

The main sources of income were: subscriptions £1872; profit on outings and the holiday £980 (but there is always the possibility of a large loss on an outing); profit on the raffles £488; profit on the plant sale in May £235. Our main expenses were: speaker fees £1077; room hire at ACC £731, newsletter, postage, publicity and printing £570; social activities £323. Full accounts will be available at the AGM.

As ever, subscriptions account for only just over half of our income, and we are grateful to those who organise the outings and the holiday; Christine and Laura for their indefatigable work on the raffle stall; and those hardy souls who manned the plant stall in May.

We have another plant sale in St Michael's Church forecourt on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May – while you are propagating cuttings and sowing seeds, please try to prepare some extra plants that we can offer for sale, so that we do not rely entirely on buying in plants. Please remember that plants offered for sale should be well-rooted cuttings and decent sized seedlings – and please label them!

### WINTER DELIGHTS IN THE GARDEN

Apart from winter flowering pansies (and how our Canadian friends laughed when we told them we were going to plant them – their garden in Toronto is under several feet of snow and well below freezing all winter), three plants bring joy in the depth of winter.

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Outside the front door we have a *Sarcococca confusa* – a pleasant enough evergreen shrub with insignificant little white flowers in January – February that have a superb scent reminiscent of baked honey that assails our nostrils every time we go to the front door. Further away, and also in the back garden, we have semi-evergreen winter honeysuckle that again scents the whole garden in winter. Then in the back garden we have a *Mahonia media* that has beautiful upright racemes of bright yellow flowers in January – February. If the bullfinches don't eat all the flowers, and if enough bumble bees are around, we will have a crop of blue-grey berries in late summer for the other birds to eat. They have never left enough for us to make jam, or anything else, from what are called Oregon grapes.



*Why are bumble bees able to fly in winter when honey bees cannot?*

Like all insects, bees are cold blooded and can only fly when it is warm enough. However, bumble bees have an odd biochemical adaptation that allows them to metabolise (burn off) sugar to no apparently useful purpose, but just to generate heat. So, on a cold day a bumble bee can warm up enough to fly and take advantage of the nectar in winter and early spring flowers. A honey bee does not have this mechanism, and cannot fly until it gets warm enough. Human beings have a similar biochemical mechanism to raise body temperature when it is cold – and in some people this is especially active at night, so that they become hot and “burn off” the surplus calories they have consumed. These lucky people do not have much of a problem of weight gain.

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### **Glasshouses hot and cold**

Many of us struggle to grow tropical and sub-tropical plants, shifting them in and out of a heated greenhouse depending on the season. When I have been in the tropics, and seen magnificent hedges of bougainvillea and oleander, poinsettias growing and flowering in the open air and other plants we struggle with, I wonder what tropical gardeners grow as a challenge. Perhaps we could sell them small packets of dandelion seeds (under the name of “English lion’s tooth flower”), with a warning that they require cold temperatures to survive and flower.

We have all gone into glasshouses in botanical gardens to warm up on a cold day. We were recently in Singapore and in both the Gardens by the Bay and the National Orchid collection in the botanical gardens we were more than pleased to go into cold (indeed, deliberately cooled) glasshouses to see collections of plants that cannot tolerate high temperatures and humidity. It shouldn’t have surprised me (but it did) that when I came outside again my glasses and the camera lens steamed up – just as it does when going in to a heated glasshouse on a winter’s day. Just once (I forget where, but it was as Wild Fowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve) I found a fan heater at chest height to allow you to demist your glasses, binoculars and camera lenses. I don’t think anyone would install fan heaters outside the cooled glasshouses in Singapore!

### **Just a few miles apart**

I grew up in west London, and one of the pleasures of spring in the 1950s and 1960s was to drive out along the Great West Road (A4) to enjoy the flowering cherry trees that lined the road for several miles – all gone now, along with the iconic art deco industrial buildings. I took my first degree in Birmingham – only 100 miles further north – and had the delight of returning from the Easter vacation (by which time the flowering cherries on the A4 were finishing) to find that in Birmingham they were only just beginning to flower – so a double dose of delight.

Some years ago I had an afternoon free in Sheffield (about 200 miles north of London), so went into the botanical gardens. Just by the entrance was a glasshouse full of plants that we grew in the garden at home, or that grew outdoors in local parks – all labelled as being at or beyond their northern limit for growth outside. Similarly, I recall my uncle in Liverpool (again 200 miles north of London) bemoaning the fact that he could not grow tomatoes outdoors – the summer was too short.

Closer to home, when I used to commute into central London I noticed that the prunus in Devonshire Square by Marylebone station were in flower a good week earlier than those I passed on my walk to Amersham station. This is perhaps less a matter of distance further south than the urban heat effect – Devonshire Square is surrounded by buildings, and so is in effect a walled garden.

David Bender

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### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal was due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. All of you will have received the necessary form either by e-mail or in paper form. Kindly complete the form and send to Clive Symes with your cheque and a stamped, addressed envelope if you want your cards sent to you, if not they can be collected at the next monthly meeting.

### REFRESHMENTS AT MONTHLY MEETINGS

We do need more volunteers to help serve teas & coffees at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting. If you are willing to volunteer please contact Liz Moulton on 01494 784913.

### AGA 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH VISIT TO LONG MARSTON OLD CHURCH COTTAGE

Details/reply slip are included at the back of this newsletter. If there are any members who find walking difficult they can drive to the cottage. Copies of printed reply sheets will be available at the next meeting or they can e-mail Frances Billington ([frances@tricep.co.uk](mailto:frances@tricep.co.uk)).

### AGM 23<sup>rd</sup> MARCH

The AGM will be preceded at **7.45pm** by an EGM to propose a change to the constitution, a copy of which is enclosed with this Newsletter. Please note this earlier starting time.

### RAGLEY HALL & HILLERS GARDEN VISIT 9<sup>th</sup> MAY

A flier and reply slip is included at the back of this newsletter. Cost is £32, departure at 9am from Amersham Community Centre Car Park. Ragley Hall Gardens were originally designed by Capability Brown in the 18th Century, and later redesigned as a pleasure garden by horticulturist Robert Marnock, and today is a traditional garden alongside a wildlife habitat.

### PLANT SALE

Our annual Plant Sale will take place on May 13<sup>th</sup> this year on St Michael's forecourt. As usual we will be looking for contributions. Members are reminded to order half-hardy seeds to plant in Spring and to think about dividing up and potting up overgrown herbaceous plants. A board requesting help on the day will be circulated at a general meeting nearer the time.

### MONTHLY TALKS

On **23 February** our speaker is **Chris Day** from Buckingham Nurseries. He says prevention is often better than cure when it comes to pest and disease control and never has it been more vital now insecticidal and fungal chemicals are less evident on garden centre shelves. He will look at the state of play of chemical and non-chemical organic alternatives as well as tell-tale symptoms of popular (and annoying) garden pests and diseases.

**23 March 2017.** AGM at **7.45pm** followed by a talk on **Snowdrops** by Cambridgeshire nurseryman **Joe Sharman**. A grower and breeder, Joe has spent years developing new cultivars at Monksilver Nursery in Cottenham which he set up in 1989. Despite involvement in events around Europe and his mail order business he is still hybridising snowdrops and is

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often referred to as 'Mr Snowdrop'. He is looking at more yellow seedlings and is attempting to intensify cream and pale orange flower colours. Joe will bring plants to sell.

**Trees for every space and season** is the subject of Nick Dunn's talk on **27 April**. Nick is Managing Director of Frank P Matthews, a family business in Worcestershire started in 1901. They grow over 500,000 trees and all propagation is done on site. Nick is a foremost authority on fruit trees, a member of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee and a trustee of Batsford Arboretum. Almost half of the trees grown in the nursery are supplied to local garden centres. He will cover ornamental trees in his talk, also pruning.

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

#### 2017

Jan	26	Buckingham Palace Gardens – Mark Lane talk
Feb	23	The Good, the Bad and the Bugly – Chris Day talk
<b>Mar</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Long Marston Old Church Cottage - Spring Garden Trip</b>
<b>Mar</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>AGM</b> 19.45hrs Snowdrops – Joe Sharman talk
April	27	Trees for Every Space & Season – Nick Dunn talk
<b>May</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>Radley Hall and Hillier Garden Centre, Warwickshire - Trip</b>
May	25	Clematis through the Seasons – Everett Leeds talk
<b>May</b>	<b>late</b>	<b>Denham Afternoon Trip</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Rockcliffe &amp; Hidcote - Trip</b>
June	22	50 Greys of Shade – Colin Moat talk
<b>June 28-1 July</b>		<b>AGA Holiday Lincolnshire &amp; Yorkshire</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Tom &amp; Kate Stuart-Smith - Serge Hill Garden Outing</b>
July	27	Plain Jane or Supermodel – Bob Brown talk
<b>Aug</b>		<b>Peterley Evening Visit</b>
Sep	28	Good Companions – Glenis Dyer talk
Nov	23	Dan Riddlestone talk TBC

### COMMITTEE & CONTACT DETAILS

President	Tim Hillier	<a href="mailto:president@amersham-gardening.org.uk">president@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Chairman	Colin Ross	<a href="mailto:chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk">chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Secretary	Jean Bowling	<a href="mailto:secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk">secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Treasurer	David Bender	<a href="mailto:treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk">treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Visits Secretary	Joan Clark	
Show Secretary	vacant	
Membership Sec	Clive Symes	<a href="mailto:membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk">membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Talks Secretary	Anne Webb	
Archivist	Carol Barratt	
Web Coordinator	David Bender	<a href="mailto:webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk">webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>
Committee Members	Frances Billington Carol Daw Irene Glyn-Jones Liz Moulton	
Newsletter Editor	Neil Watson	<a href="mailto:newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk">newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk</a>

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### AGA CONSTITUTION AND RULES

1. **Title.** The organisation shall be called the 'AMERSHAM GARDENING ASSOCIATION'.
2. **Objects.** To encourage and promote interest in all branches of horticulture/gardening by all such means as may be deemed by the Committee of the Association to be to the advantage of the Association and its members.
3. **Membership.** Ordinary membership shall be open, on application, to any person over the age of fourteen years. Honorary membership may be conferred on such terms as the Executive Committee may think fit.
4. **Subscriptions**

The annual subscription, payable on the first of January each year, shall be at a rate approved from time to time in Annual General Meeting. Members joining after July 31st shall pay a reduced subscription for that year.

The President, Life Vice-Presidents and Honorary Members shall be exempted from paying any annual subscription.
5. **Officers.** The Officers of the Association shall consist of: President, Chairman, Honorary General Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, Honorary Show Secretary, Honorary Membership Secretary, Honorary Visits Secretary and Honorary Talks Secretary. No person shall simultaneously hold more than two offices.
6. **Life Vice-Presidents.** The Committee shall be empowered to nominate for election at an Annual General Meeting Life Vice-Presidents to be selected either on account of their past services to the Association or on account of their standing in the field of horticulture or public affairs. Such Life Vice-Presidents shall be eligible, subject to election, to serve as Officers or as members of the Committee.
7. **Management.** The management of the Association shall be vested in a Committee comprising the Officers of the Association with not less than three and not more than eight elected members. The attendance of five shall form a quorum. Excepting the President, all Officers, and members of the Committee shall retire annually and shall be eligible for re-election. The Committee shall be empowered to co-opt additional members to the Committee at its discretion and to fill any vacancy(ies) that might occur during the year. The Committee may also delegate to Sub-Committees, particular items of business as may be deemed expedient but, in so doing, shall clearly define the terms of reference of the Sub-Committee. The Committee shall meet at least once per quarter and at such other times as may be deemed necessary for the efficient management of the affairs of the Association.
8. **General Meetings.** An Annual General Meeting, of which at least fourteen days written notice shall be given to all members, shall be held before the end of March each year. The purpose of the meeting shall be to approve the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts (copies of which will be distributed to all members 14 days prior to the meeting), to elect the Officers, an Honorary Auditor, and members of the Committee and for any other business at the discretion of the Chairman.

Special General Meetings may be convened at the discretion of the Committee and shall be convened by the Honorary Secretary upon receipt of a requisition signed by not less than twenty paid-up members of the Association. At least fourteen days written notice of such meetings shall be given to all members stating the business to be transacted. No business other than that specified shall be discussed or transacted at such meetings. At all General Meetings twenty paid-up members shall form a quorum. In cases of equality of voting at any meeting the Chairman shall have the right to exercise a casting vote.

9. **Elections.** Nominations for Officers and members of the Committee shall be submitted to the Honorary General Secretary at least seven days prior to the Annual General Meeting. Each member standing for election shall be nominated and seconded at the meeting. Where the number of candidates for office exceeds the required number the resultant election shall be conducted by ballot among the members present at the meeting.
10. **Cessation of Membership.**
  - a) Membership shall cease on death, resignation or forfeiture.
  - b) Forfeiture of membership shall, without prejudice to reinstatement at the discretion of the Committee, be automatic if the subscription of a member for any year shall remain unpaid by 30th April of that year.
  - c) If a member acts in a manner that brings discredit to the Association, the Committee may require the member to resign forthwith. If the member does not resign forthwith such member shall be deemed to have forfeited his/her membership and his/her name shall be erased from the List of Members. His/her current year's subscription shall be returned. Notice of forfeiture of membership under this sub-clause shall be sent in writing to the member by recorded delivery letter to his/her last known address, and a notice so sent shall be deemed duly served.
11. **Finance.** The funds of the Association shall not be used for any purpose other than the object of the Association as deemed in the Rules. The Committee may grant honoraria.
12. **Amendments.** No new Rule shall be made or existing Rule amended or rescinded except at an Annual General Meeting or at a Special General Meeting convened for the purpose. The notice convening such Meeting shall specify the alterations proposed.
13. **General.**
  - a) Every member of the Association shall be bound by these Rules and by every amendment to or alteration of such Rules.
  - b) Every member of the Association shall be supplied with a copy of these Rules and any subsequent amendments, revisions, additions and deletions. A copy of the Constitution and Rules shall be available for inspection at all meetings.
  - c) The Committee shall be empowered to settle all matters not provided for in these Rules.

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SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2017

## BOOKING FORM for VISIT BY CAR TO LONG MARSTON OLD CHURCH COTTAGE

Old Church Cottage, Chapel Lane, Long Marston, Tring, Herts HP23 4QT Sunday 5th March from 11.30am to 1pm.

Cost £5 per person to go to a charity of the owners choice.

Although this is a small garden it is packed with the spring bulbs and plants we all long to see during the dark days of winter. In raised beds there are many unusual species and varieties of snowdrops together with cyclamen, crocuses, irises and other early spring bulbs. You will also find many spring favourites such as hellebores, witch hazels and daphnes. The garden surrounds a 400 year old thatched cottage which adjoins a disused churchyard with ancient yews and a Norman tower.

The garden is at the end of a very narrow country lane so please park at the village hall which is nearby. There will be a map with your ticket.

On arrival John and Margaret Noakes will offer us cookies and mulled wine or a soft drink. If you would like to have lunch afterwards I have provisionally booked 25 places at a nearby pub, the Half Moon at Wilstone at 1.30pm. As it is a Sunday there will be a traditional carvery on the menu (4 meats - £9.95 large or £5.95 for a small plate) as well as sandwiches.

Please return your slips and cheques made payable to the Amersham Gardening Association to:

Mrs F Billington, Whyteleafe, Westmount Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 0AY

phone 01494 433857

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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BOOKING FORM for Visit by car to Old Church Cottage, Chapel Lane, Long Marston, Tring, Herts HP23 4QT

Please reserve me ..... place(s) at £5 each. I enclose a cheque for £.....

Name ..... Telephone .....

Address .....

e-mail address .....

I would like a lift..... I can offer lifts.....

I / we would like to stay for lunch .....(number)

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TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MAY 2017

## A PRIVATE VISIT TO RAGLEY HALL WARWICKSHIRE & HILLERS GARDEN

Cost £32. Leaving at 9am from Amersham Community Centre Car Park.

Ragley Hall Gardens surround the magnificent Ragley Hall. They were originally designed by Capability Brown in the 18th Century, and were later redesigned as a pleasure garden by the outstanding horticulturist Robert Marnock. The result today is a traditional garden which incorporates and exists alongside valuable wildlife habitat.

We will have a private tour of the garden with the head gardener before lunch. After lunch there is a tour of the house for those who would like to see inside.

At 2:30 we go down the road to Hillers Garden, a two acre garden famous for its roses. The head gardener will give us a tour around the garden and tell us about its history. There is a farm shop, a gift shop, a place to buy plants and a restaurant as well.

Tea and coffee will be provided by Ragley Hall when we arrive, but you will need to bring a packed lunch, as they only have hot drinks and cakes for sale at lunchtime. (The restaurant will not be open for hot food that day because the Hall is not open to the public.) Food is available at Hillers.

Please return your booking slips and cheques, made payable to Amersham Gardening Association to:

Felicity Vickery, Gunwalloe 45 Copperkins Lane,

Amersham HP6 5QP

Tel. 01494 726284

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

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BOOKING FORM for Ragley & Hillers Garden Visit

Please reserve me --- places at £32 per head. I enclose a cheque for £.....

Name

Tel. No.

Address

E mail