

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

February 2018 Newsletter

From the Treasurer

The full signed accounts will be available at the AGM, but a first glance shows that we made a profit of somewhat over £900 in 2017 – with a total turnover of £20,000. The main contributions to our profit were the plant sale (profit £587), the raffles (profit £478, and outings (profit £100). Subscriptions (£1884) barely cover the cost of speakers (£1072) and hire of the Drake

Hall (£745) – and last year we had one speaker who cancelled at short notice and another who could not get to us because of a traffic jam on the motorway, both saving us money.

So, we are in a healthy position, with some £1400 at the end of the year in our current account, and reserves of £10,830 in a savings account.

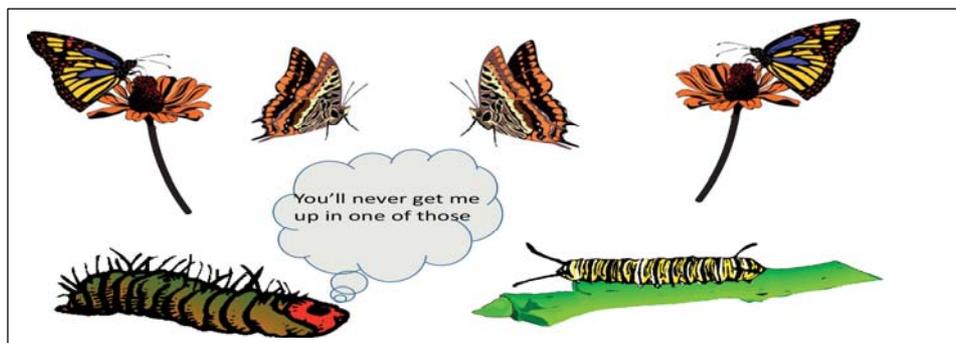
Annual General Meeting, March 22nd

Notice is hereby given that the 2018 Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday March 22nd, **starting earlier than usual, at 19:45**. Nominations for officers and members of the committee must be sent to the secretary, Jean Bowling (secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk) by March 8th. Minutes of the 2017 AGM are on page 2 of this newsletter.

After the formal business, Claire Brown will talk about *Flower Farming Then and Now*. Claire is a member of

the Flowers from the Farm network of pioneers involved in reviving the cut flower business in the UK. After a period of decline in the domestic industry it seems that flower farming in the UK is now becoming a growth industry.

Following 12 years in garden centre management, five at the Plant Centre, RHS Wisley, Claire set up Plantpassion (<http://www.plantpassion.co.uk>) in 2012 and grows up to 260 varieties, mainly annuals, in the Surrey Hills.



Your data privacy and protection

New General Data Protection Regulations come into force from May 25th 2018. We hold a secure database containing your name, address, email address and telephone number; information that is used solely for the purposes of running the Association, and will not be released to any third party under any conditions. New members will be asked to sign to accept that we hold this information in a database, and next year's renewal form will ask you to sign to allow us to maintain your

contact information in the database. If you wish your contact information to be removed from the database, please contact the membership secretary, Clive Symes (membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk), but if you do not wish your contact information to be held in the database, you will not be able to receive the newsletter, booking forms for outings or other communications from the Association.

Subscription reminder – you should have renewed your subscription at the end of December. If you have not yet done so, please use the renewal form included with this newsletter

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 23rd March 2017 in the Drake Hall, Amersham

1) Present: **Tim Hillier**, President; Colin Ross, Chairman; Clive Symes, Membership Secretary; Jean Bowling, Secretary; Joan Clark, Visits Secretary; Anne Webb; Talks Secretary; Liz Moulton, Carol Daw, Carol Barratt, Irene Glyn-Jones. In total 79 members were present.

2) Welcome: The Chairman, Colin Ross, welcomed members.

3) Apologies for absence: were received from Isobel Wise and Georgina Lomnitz

4) Extraordinary General Meeting to approve changes to the Constitution (circulated in the January Newsletter). This matter was dealt with as part of the AGM. Susan Jeffery noted that nominations for Officers and members of the committee (item 9 in the constitution) should be circulated to members in advance of the meeting. It was agreed to change item 9 to read "nominations should be made to the Honorary Secretary 14 days before the AGM, and be notified to all members". It was further agreed to amend item 9 to state that "Nominations for vacant posts may be made at the AGM".

5) Minutes of the previous AGM held on 24th March 2016 had been circulated before the meeting. These were accepted with the amendment that the Officers had not been elected but had been returned unopposed.

6) Matters arising. There were no matters arising

7) Chairman's report: This had been circulated prior to the meeting and he had nothing to add.

8) Officers' Reports. These had also been circulated beforehand and nothing was raised on these.

9) Treasurer's Report: This had been circulated before the meeting and he had nothing to add. He asked approval to correct the date on the auditor's report and for the audited accounts to be approved. This was proposed by Jim Campbell and seconded by Liz Moulton. It was suggested that as we had a good balance in the account we might consider purchasing a new microphone system. This will be raised again at committee.

10) President's Comments. The President thanked the committee for their hard work and dedication to ensure the smooth running of the Association activities. The trips and talks had been successful in raising funds as well as being enjoyable.

12) Election of Honorary Officers:

Chairman. Colin Ross was proposed by Tim Hillier and seconded by Frances Billington. This was accepted. The rest of the committee were proposed by Jim Campbell and seconded by Brian Moulton. This was accepted.

| | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Secretary | Jean Bowling |
| Treasurer | David Bender |
| Membership Secretary | Clive Symes |
| Talks Secretary | Anne Webb |
| Visits Secretary | Joan Clark |
| Archivist | Carol Barratt |
| Show Secretary | vacant |

13) Election of Committee.

The following members of the committee were returned en block proposed by Anne Webb and seconded by Margaret Hillier: Carol Daw, Frances Billington, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton.

14) Election of Independent Examiner. Mr Patrick Arbuthnot is willing to act for another year.

15) Any Other Business. Nothing was raised.



Following the AGM refreshments were served after we had a very interesting talk by Joe Sharman on snowdrops. He started his talk with an explanation of the different parts of the plant and how they differed in different varieties.

He then showed slides of a wide variety of snowdrops which many of us have never seen.



Outings to book now:

Cerney garden and Rodmarton garden and house, Wednesday April 25th

Leaving Amersham Community Centre at 09:00.

In the morning we will visit Cerney House, near Cirencester. This is a very pretty romantic garden based round an 18th century mansion house. It has a working kitchen garden and orchard, culinary and medicinal herb garden, wildflower bank and 40 acres of woodlands and parkland.

Afterwards we go on to Rodmarton Manor and its Arts and Crafts garden of outdoor rooms, topiary, high brick walls and 'tapestry-style' planting. We can also visit the Manor which was built and furnished in the old

traditional style where everything was done by hand with local stone and timber.

Cost to include tea/coffee/cake at Cerney. £33:50

Please bring a packed lunch.

To book a place on this outing, please see the booking form included with this newsletter. If you cannot print out the form, then just write to Felicity including the relevant information.

Upton Grey Manor House and Farley Hill Place, Thursday May 17th

Continuing our Jeekyll Jaunt.

Leaving Amersham Community Centre at 09.00, arriving back approximately 17.00.

Morning at Upton Grey Manor House Garden owned by Mrs Rosamund Wallinger who will give us an introductory talk. The garden has been restored from an unkempt jungle to the current garden which was originally designed by Gertrude Jekyll, now recreated by the owners into what is believed to be to be the most complete & authentic Jekyll Garden in existence. There is a formal garden surrounded by yew hedging, a pergola, rose garden, wild garden & pond. Coffee/teas included

Lunch and afternoon at Farley Hill Place Gardens owned by Mrs Margaret Finch who will give us a short talk on the Garden's history. This is a 4acre 18th century cottage garden with a 1 ½ acre walled garden, vegetable areas with a herb garden & cutting flower beds & a Victorian glasshouse.

Lunch: either bring your own packed lunch or order a Ploughmans & a drink from Margaret at Farley Hill for £10. A mug of tea or coffee for £1.50 can be purchased at Farley Hill.

To book a place on this outing, please see the booking form included with this newsletter. If you cannot print out the form, then just write to Liz including the relevant information.

Malverleys and Hardy's Plants, Monday June 11th

Leaving Amersham Community Centre at 09:00

Malverleys, is a new English Flower garden set within the ground of a country estate near Newbury. Begun in 2010, the 10 acre gardens have been designed by head gardener Matt Reese in conjunction with the owners. The garden includes abundantly planted terraces and long borders; a stumpery with ferns and unusual shade plants, and a topiary meadow. Tall Yew hedges form themed rooms including, a cool garden, a hot garden, a rose-clad cloister garden, and a large pond garden that reflects the dynamic planting on all sides. The walled garden contains areas for fruit, vegetables and cut flowers, alongside a white garden with four small fountains.

We lunch in the Watership Down Inn, (**not** included in price), a short distance from Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants. Rosy and Rob Hardy offer 1400 varieties of plants from proven favourites to the unfamiliar and noteworthy, all grown outside in 100% peat free media on their 13 acre traditional nursery site set in the beautiful North west Hampshire countryside.

Cost to include guided garden tour of garden, and tea/coffee & cake at Malverleys. Guide and tea/coffee at Hardy's Plants £30.00.

To book a place on this outing, please see the booking form included with this newsletter. If you cannot print out the form, then just write to Althea including the relevant information.

Waltham Palace, Tuesday July 17th, and Huntsmoor, Wednesday September 5th

Details of these two outings and the booking forms will be in the May newsletter.

Dig deep and manure well

This was the oft-repeated advice in one of the gardening books in the house when I was a child. I took it to heart and have always dug over the vegetable patch and annual borders each year, although I never went as far as double digging – a single spit down was enough, leaving clods of (mainly) clay to be broken down by frost. When we moved to Amersham we inherited 13 tall lime trees and the “benefit” of our neighbour’s four mature sycamores. These produce vast numbers of leaves in autumn. For the first year I kept most of them bagged up at the end of the garden to make leaf mould, but also trenched in a good 4 – 6 inches of leaves when I dug over the border.



Now it seems that I have been doing it all wrong. The November issue of *The Garden* reminds me that “RHS Advice (July p37 and Sept p31) suggested that planting anything green can help capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and that the best way to ensure carbon captured stays in the soil is to **mulch with organic matter, and avoid digging soils**”. So, now I have a valid excuse for leaving leaves on the undug borders and letting the worms do the work for me. I must admit that I have also foregone making my own leaf mould. A few leaves go into the compost bins, but the rest go down to garden waste at the recycling centre on London Road – four or more trips each autumn, in addition to what goes into the green bin every other week.

Coffee grounds – a win-win

I empty the filter coffee maker into the compost bin – grounds and paper filter, and I calculate that this gives me some 2 kg of (dry) organic matter each year, in addition to all the usual kitchen and garden waste. Some of my friends empty the cafetière straight onto the borders, letting the worms do the work. But, see below, they are probably wrong

Recently I saw in the coffee shop at a motorway service station a brilliant idea – bags of used coffee grounds offered free of charge to gardeners – and the used coffee was in the (non-recyclable) bags that the coffee beans arrived in. Not only a gift for gardeners, but also a saving for the coffee shop; they don’t have to pay a company to take away their waste.



This website <http://www.myearthgarden.com/2012/02/the-truth-about-coffee-grounds-in-your-garden/> tells us about the value of coffee grounds:

“Coffee grounds are an excellent addition to your gardening routines. By volume they are about 2% nitrogen and they are noted as a good source of nitrogen for composting, given that they have the same basic carbon to nitrogen ratio as manure (20:1). The addition of coffee grounds to compost helps to raise and maintain a higher temperature in the compost pile for a longer period of time, which aids in killing pathogens that may be present.

Contrary to what some garden experts say, you might want to resist the urge to add the grounds directly to your garden though, unless you are using a nitrogen-rich fertilizer as well. In short, you can add coffee

grounds to your compost to increase the nitrogen content, but when adding grounds directly to the soil, a nitrogen-rich fertilizer must also be added. This is because the grounds encourage microbial growth in the soil, and those tiny microbes are nitrogen-hungry wee beasties that will deplete the existing nitrogen.

Here’s what you need to know: The truth is that many experts have been mistaken for years about the use of coffee grounds in the garden. Coffee grounds are *not* terribly acidic and they are *not* a good direct soil additive without additional fertilizers. Coffee grounds are however a great addition to compost, where their nitrogen content can be fully realized and used.”

Dates for your diary

May 19th Amersham Gardening Association plant sale in St Michael's Church forecourt

May 23 – 27th RHS Chelsea Flower Show

June 7 – 11th RHS Chatsworth Flower Show. Chatsworth Estate, near Bakewell, Derbyshire.

June 23 – 25th RHS Garden Harlow Carr Flower Show. Harrogate, N Yorkshire

July 4 – 9th RHS Hampton Court Flower Show

July 12 – 13th RHS Summer Urban Show, new this year. RHS Lawrence Hall, Westminster, London.

July 15th Chenies plant fair

July 19 – 23rd RHS Flower Show Tatton Park. Tatton Park, Knutsford, Cheshire.

August 3 – 6th RHS Garden Hyde Hall Flower Show, Chelmsford, Essex.

August 18 – 20th RHS Garden Rosemoor Flower Show, Great Torrington, Devon.

September 5 – 10th RHS Garden Wisley Flower Show, Woking, Surrey.

September 23 – 24th Malvern Autumn Show, Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire.

October 25 – 26th RHS Autumn Garden Show, RHS Lindley and Lawrence Halls, Westminster, London.

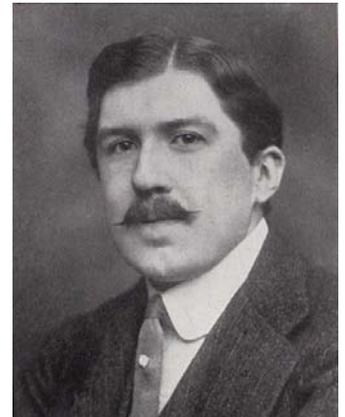
For details of all RHS shows go to www.rhs.org.uk/shows

For information about the RHS gardens go to www.rhs.org.uk/gardens

How to plant a rock garden in true Edwardian style

The Edwardian plant hunter, Reginald Farrer (1880 – 1920), created a rock garden near Clapham, North Yorkshire, containing many plants that had not been seen outside Asia before. Legend has it that in an effort to replicate the local flora he had encountered during an expedition to Ceylon, he decided to create a cliff garden on a gorge. He rowed a small boat into the middle of a lake, loaded a shotgun filled with seeds collected in Ceylon, and fired it into the rock face – a true scatter-gun approach to naturalistic planting. His experiment turned out to be a success as the plants flourished at the time and were acknowledged to be the only true natural rock garden in the country. Sadly, the cliff face rock garden no longer exists, but there is a spectacular display of plants from the Himalayas, growing today in a wild display around Ingleborough, one of the three peaks of the Yorkshire dales, and other Asian plants still flourish in the village of Clapham. There is a Reginald Farrer collection at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh. The catalogue and a brief biography can be downloaded from the RBGE at

www.rbge.org.uk/assets/files/science/Library%20.../GB235RJF_ReginaldJFarrer.pdf



AGA's Christmas tree



Our Christmas tree in St Michael's Church showcased gardening superbly, decorated with small plant pots, plant labels, miniature watering cans and small garden tools. The display of 12 trees in the Church was a fundraising exercise for local charities. Although we use the forecourt of the church for our annual plant sale (and make a donation to the Church for use of their premises), it was decided that it would not be appropriate to use the Association's funds to make the minimum donation of £15 to sponsor our tree. Therefore, at the November meeting we had a collection and raised £35, which has been passed on to the Church to divide among the local charities. Thanks to all who donated, and especially to Colin and Felicity who decorated the tree.



Forthcoming meetings in the Drake Hall

February 22nd Lessons from great gardeners by Matthew Biggs

Matthew Biggs probably needs no introduction. He trained at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He has presented numerous television programmes, notably Channel 4's *Garden Club*, stepped behind the camera to direct Meridian Television's popular gardening series *Grass Roots* and worked as Horticultural Consultant for a garden design series on Channel 5.

He has written several books including the recently revised *Matthew Biggs's Complete Book of Vegetables* which has been translated into five languages. He has also contributed to two Gardeners' Question Time books, *Plant Chooser*

and *Gardening Techniques & Tips*, and was commissioned by the Eden Project to write *Gardening at Eden and how to do it at home*. Matthew contributes to several magazines, including the Royal Horticultural Society Journal, *The Garden*, *BBC Gardeners' World*, *Countryfile* and *Gardens Illustrated* and leads gardening tours worldwide. He lectures at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Oxford University Botanic Gardens, the Cookery School of Michelin starred chef Jean-Christophe Novelli and is course director of the Plants and Plantsmanship course at the English Gardening School. He is also a regular panellist on BBC Radio 4's *Gardener's Question Time*.

March 22nd Flower farming then and now by Claire Brown

See page 1 for details. **Note that this meeting starts with the AGM at 7:45.**

April 26th Gardens and climate change by Michael Keith-Lucas

Dr Michael Keith-Lucas is retired from his position as senior tutor in plant sciences at Reading University. He is now an honorary fellow and continues to act as a consultant. His specialties include plant ecology and woodland and tropical rainforest ecology.

He has visited us previously when he spoke about the pollination of plants and how bees and other insects achieve this across the different flower forms. His interest in pollen extends to the study of pollen grains in

archaeological and geological deposits. This is used in carbon dating and gives a historical record of plant colonisation for studying past climates and environments. In forensics pollen on clothing has been used to identify the location of an incident.

He will talk about the effect of climate change on the plants in our garden and how it is affecting agriculture and wild species throughout the year. He has made an in-depth study of this topic over many years.

May 24th The good, the bad and the bugly by Chris Day

Chris Day has been a keen gardener since childhood when he helped his father grow fruit, veg and flowers. He started his career as an apprentice trainee at Rochfords Houseplants in Hertfordshire, and later gained an NDH in Amenity Horticulture from Myerscroft College of Agriculture and Horticulture. By this time he was a regular contributor to *Amateur Gardening* and local BBC radio programmes. He spent 12 years as general horticulture manager in a garden centre in Manchester.

His career then changed focus to a full time job as sub-editor on *Amateur Gardening*. He completed his IPC

media and journalistic training, and worked on other gardening magazines, including *Your Garden*, *The Gardener* and *Country Life*. Chris returned to garden centre retail work in 2003 at Buckingham Garden Centre, where he holds the position of Publicity Manager. He continues his writing and broadcasting activities.

We are all aware of the reduction in the availability of insecticidal and fungal chemicals. His talk will look at the state of play of chemical and non-chemical alternatives, as well as the tell-tale symptoms of common garden pests and diseases.

June 28th Plants of the season by Paul Green

Paul Green is a nurseryman who runs Green's Leaves in Newent, Glos, which was set up in 1994. He specialises in the rare and unusual plants from around the world which are suitable for growing in the UK. He is a regular contributor at Chenies Manor Plant Fair. This evening will be a practical session focussing on the

plants that he believes are good, and are good value for our gardens. He will include new and rare varieties.

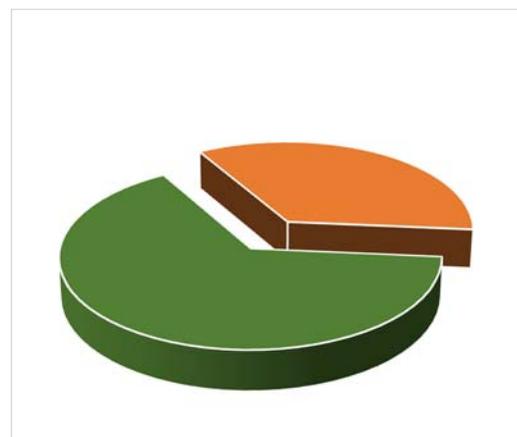
Paul will bring along a range of plants to showcase and illustrate his talk. There will be plants for sale. Paul was due to come last year – let's hope he does not get stuck on the M40 this year!

What do the adverts tell us about gardeners?

Reading *The Garden*, I was struck by how many of the adverts are nothing to do with gardening, but presumably reflect the demographic of gardeners. So, I did what I was trained to do – collect data and think about it. Ignoring the loose pages of adverts that fall out of the magazine when I open the wrapper (do you also open magazine wrappers over the recycling bin?), and

counting only full or half page adverts, not the classifieds, this is what I have found from 458 advertisements in 12 months' worth of *The Garden* (starred items have no obvious connection with gardening). I ignored advertisements for RHS shows and events.

| Type of advert | number |
|--|--------|
| Garden holidays | 51 |
| *General travel, no mention of gardens | 77 |
| Greenhouses and sheds | 56 |
| Conservatories and loggias | 30 |
| Conservatory heating, shading and cleaning | 15 |
| Plants and trees, tree services | 27 |
| Compost bins | 10 |
| Garden ornaments, statues, lights | 22 |
| Edging, fencing, arches | 20 |
| Bird feeders, bug hotels | 8 |
| Garden tools, machinery, gloves | 22 |
| Garden furniture | 22 |
| Compost, fertilisers, chemicals | 9 |
| Specialist plant societies | 7 |
| *Outdoor and general clothing | 10 |
| *Bespoke furniture, staircases, kitchens | 29 |
| *General magazines | 6 |
| *Investment | 7 |
| *Miscellaneous non gardening | 30 |



Overall, just about two-thirds of the adverts were garden-related – better than my first impression. The investment adverts (1.5%) were for organisations that sponsor RHS shows, so are perhaps fair game.

Of course, we all know that we can find garden interest wherever we travel, so perhaps the 16.8% of adverts for non-garden travel are also fair game. However, the overall impression is that gardeners have sufficient disposable income and leisure to travel a great deal, and want, and can afford, home improvements such as bespoke furniture, staircases and kitchens.

At least there were no advertisements for stair lifts and walk-in baths, so we can assume that gardeners in general are fit! Some of the garden furniture advertised would grace a dining or living room (and indeed may cost more than our dining table) – like the barbecues on display at Chelsea and elsewhere, that are larger than most people's kitchen stoves (and more expensive).

Perhaps the big surprise was the small number of advertisements for plants – but then plant, bulb and seed catalogues and RHS plant sales leaflets are included in the paper that falls out when the magazine wrapper is opened.



The garden in winter

The Gardener's Year by Karel Čapek

The Gardener's Year arose out of a series of newspaper articles, and was first published as a book (in Czech) in 1929. I read an English translation many years ago, and recently came across a new (2003) translation by Geoffrey Newsome. It still makes delightful reading, with the dry wit I have always associated with columnists like Michael Frayn and others. Each month of the gardening year has a chapter, and in between are chapters on *How gardens are laid out*, *How a gardener comes into being*, *On the art of gardening*, *Seeds*, *Buds*, *Blessed rain*, etc.

On watering the garden

“One would think that watering a garden was an absolutely simple affair, especially if one has a hose. It soon becomes apparent that, until it has been domesticated, a hose is an uncommonly wily, dangerous creature. It writhes, jumps, springs, makes lots of water underneath itself and plunges lustily into the mud which it has created; whereupon it hurls itself at the person who is intending to do the watering and entwines itself round his legs. You have to tread on it and then it rears up and twists itself round your waist and neck ... You have to seize it by the head vigorously and stretch it as long as possible. The beast rages with pain and starts spraying water not from the head but from the hydrant and from somewhere in the middle of its body. AT the first attempt you need three people to restrain it to any degree. All three then leave the scene of battle smeared up to the ears in mud and amply watered. As for the garden, in some places it has changed into greasy pools whereas in others it is cracking with thirst.”

On sowing seeds

“On the first day, nothing yields and the waiting person tosses and turns in his bed at night, unable to wait till morning. On the second day the mysterious soil reveals a wisp of mould. The waiting person rejoices that this is the first sign of life. On the third day something creeps up on a long white leg and grows like crazy. The waiting person almost exults out loud ... and tends the first seedling as though it were the apple of his eye. On the fourth day, when the shoot has now protruded to an impossible length, a worry rises in the waiting person that it might be a weed. ... The first long thin thing which grows in a flowerpot is always a weed. Evidently it is some sort of law of nature.”

The gardener's February

“Neighbours are ... an unmistakable sign of spring. As soon as they turn out in their gardens with spades, hoes, shears... and all sorts of powders for the soil, the experienced gardener recognises that spring is approaching, and he will put on some old trousers and turn out in the garden with a spade and a hoe so that his own neighbours will recognise that spring is approaching.”

On the art of gardening

“A true amateur gardener is not someone who cultivates flowers; he is a man who cultivates soil. He is a creature who digs his hands into the earth. ... After death, the gardening enthusiast does not become a butterfly, drunk on the fragrances of flowers, but an earthworm

sampling all the dark nitrogenous and spicy delights of the soil”

The gardener's March

“We must carefully distinguish two things: a) what the gardener should and wants to do, and b) what he really does. ... He just wants to ... uncover the plants, dig, manure, make ditches, hoe, dig over, loosen, rake, propagate, take cuttings, prune, plant, transplant, tie back, spray, fertilise ... sniff the soil, unearth buds with his fingers, rejoice at the flowering snowdrops, wipe off sweat, straighten his back ... cultivate the first spring calluses and blisters and generally live the gardener's life. Instead he curses because the soil is still frozen, or has frozen again, rages in the house like a captive lion when his garden gets snowed up, sits by the stove with a cold ... persecuted by all sorts of bad weather, blows of fate ... which as luck would have it crowd in on him. ... For, as you know, *March is the busiest month in the garden, which has to be prepared for the arrival of spring.*”

The gardener's April

“April is the gardener's true blessed month. Let lovers go hang with their exaltation of May; in May trees and flowers only blossom and bloom, but in April they sprout. You should know that this sprouting and germination, these shoots, buds and sprouts are the greatest wonder of nature. ... Squat down and rake with nothing but a finger in the loose earth, holding your breath because your said finger is touching a fragile full shoot. ... Apart from germination, April is also the month for planting. With enthusiasm, wild enthusiasm and impatience, you have ordered seedlings from the nurseryman ... you have promised all your gardening friends that you will come to them for cuttings; never, I say, do you have enough with what you already have. And so, one day, some hundred and seventy seedlings congregate at your house which need to be planted; at that moment you look round your little garden and find with overwhelming certainty that you have nowhere to put them.”

Gardening man

Gardening man certainly originated by culture and not by natural evolution. If he had originated naturally, he would look different; he would have legs like a beetle so that he would not need to squat, and he would have wings ... so that he could hover over his borders. Those who have not tried can have no conception of how legs get in a person's way when you have nothing to stand on, how unnecessarily long they are when you need to fold them under you and poke a finger in the soil; how

impossible short they are when you need to reach the other side of a flower bed without treading on a pillow of pyrethrum or a budding columbine.”

“A name is a name, and we gardeners set great store by good names. For this reason we also hate children and blackbirds, because they pull out and mix up our label pegs; then we happen to point out with surprise *Look, this laburnum here is flowering just like an edelweiss – maybe it’s some sort of local variation, and it’s definitely a laburnum because there’s my label next to it.*”

The gardener’s May

“Every gardening manual will tell you that it is best to grow seedlings from seed. But they do not tell you that, as far as seeds are concerned, nature has its own special customs. It is a law of nature that either not one of the seeds which you have sown will sprout, or that they will all sprout indiscriminately. You say to yourself *here some sort of ornamental thistle would do nicely ...* and you buy a packet of seeds, sowing and rejoicing at the thought of how beautifully the seeds will sprout. After a time you have to prick them out, and the gardener is pleased to have a hundred and sixty pots full of wanton seedlings. ... And then the seedlings are ready to go into the soil. But what is a person to do with a hundred and sixty thistles? He has already stuck them wherever there was at least an inch of soil and he has still got over a hundred and thirty left. ... Praise God, the neighbour has taken thirty seedlings with which he is now running about the garden bemusedly, trying to find somewhere to stick them. Then there is always the neighbour further down and across the road. God help them when these grow into six foot ornamental thistles.”

The gardener’s June

“June is the very month for destroying aphids. There are all sorts of powders, preparations, tinctures, concoctions and stenches, arsenic [this was written in 1929], tobacco, soft soap and other poisons for the purpose, which the gardener tries one after the other as soon as he discovers that green, plumply soaked aphids are multiplying alarmingly on his roses. If you use these products with a certain caution and in right measure, you will find that your roses sometimes survive this destruction of the aphids without injury, except that it rather singes their leaves and buds. As for the aphids, they thrive during this destruction to an extraordinary extent, so that they cover the rose sprigs like thick embroidery. Afterwards, it is possible – with load protestations of disgust, to squash them a sprig at a time. This, then, is how aphids are destroyed, but for a long time afterwards, the gardener will reek of tobacco and soft soap.”

“The day after [a massive storm] the newspapers write about the calamitous cloudburst which caused awful damage, particularly to the new crops, but they do not write that it caused terrible damage particularly to the lillies or that it has especially ruined the oriental poppies. We gardeners are always overlooked.”

On vegetable growers

“I too held sway over several patches of carrots and savoy, cabbages and lettuces and kohlrabi ... in due course it became apparent that I was going to have to munch a hundred and twenty radishes a day because no-one else in the house would eat them anymore, after which came the orgies on kohlrabi, even quite tough ones. There were weeks when I had to chew lettuce three times a day rather than throw it out. I do not mean to spoil the pleasure of vegetable growers in any way, but what they have grown, so must they eat.”

The gardener’s July

“With a hydrant and a hose it is, of course, possible to water faster and somewhat *en masse*; in a relatively short time we can spray not only the flowerbeds, but the turf, a neighbouring family having tea, pedestrians in the street, the inside of the house, all the members of our family and, most of all, ourselves. Spraying from a hydrant is amazingly potent ... in an instant you can hollow out a crater in the earth, mow down perennials and tear the tops off trees.”

“The gardener finds that he ought to loosen the flattened, solid-baked soil in the flowerbed again. This is done about six times a year, and each time the gardener pulls an incredible quantity of stones and other rubbish out of the soil. Evidently, stones are produced by some sort of seeds or eggs, or continuously loom out of the mysterious bowels of the earth; perhaps the earth somehow sweats them.”

On soil

“If you cannot appreciate this singular beauty [of a rich garden soil] the may fate bestow on you a few square yards of clay as a punishment, clay like tin, substantial primeval clay from which a coldness oozes, which will warp under your spade like chewing gum, bake solid in the sun and turn acid in the shade; a clay which is maleficent, unyielding, greasy and kiln ready, as slippery as a snake and as dry as a brick, as airtight as sheet metal and as heavy as lead.

The gardener’s October

“In autumn transplanting of flowers is carried out. Every year the gardener carries his little perennials round like as cat her kittens, and every year he says to himself with satisfaction *There, now I’ve got everything planted and in order.* The following year he will sigh again with the same satisfaction. A garden is never finished.”

The gardener’s December

The gardener himself hibernates under glass in a heated room, tucked up to the neck not in manure or brushwood, but in gardening price lists and brochures, books and pamphlets, from which he learns that the most prized, rewarding and utterly indispensable plants are those he has not yet got in his garden, and that everything which he has got is ‘rather delicate’ and ‘apt to die from frost’

Some requests for help

We always need people to meet and greet members and visitors at our meetings.

If you can help, please contact Felicity Vickery Tel: 01494 726284, email felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk

We need people to help with the tea and coffee at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting.

If you can help, please contact Liz Moulton Tel: 014494 784913, email libbym6740@gmail.com

Please remember the raffle at each meeting. The profit on the raffles makes a very useful contribution to our expenses; subscriptions alone do not cover the cost of meetings and speakers.

Publicity. If you know where you could put a publicity poster please contact david.bender@btinternet.com

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham
Robertson's butcher, Chenies parade
Van Hage garden centre
Little Chalfont Library
Amersham Library
Amersham Community Centre

Amersham Council Offices
Amersham Station
Coleshill Village Hall
South Heath Garden Centre
Bevan's Greengrocer

Committee and Contact Details

| | | |
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| President | Tim Hillier | president@amersham-gardening.org.uk |
| Chairman | Colin Ross | chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk |
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| Visits Secretary | Joan Clark | |
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| Membership Sec | Clive Symes | membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk |
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| Committee Members | Frances Billington Carol Daw Irene Glyn-Jones Liz Moulton | |
| Newsletter Editor | David Bender | newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk |

Discounts for members

[East Building & Timber Supplies](#), 43 - 47 Chiltern Ave, offer a 10% discount on compost, gravel and pebbles, etc to AGA members.

[South Heath Garden Centre](#), Meadow Lane, South Heath, Great Missenden, HP16 9SH, offer a 10% discount on some items.

Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

Local events

If you know of local garden events, open gardens, etc, please email newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk to let us know as early as possible, so that information can go out in the newsletter and on the website

Photos from outings

You can see lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>