

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

February 2020 Newsletter

From the Treasurer

The final accounts and balance sheet are included in this newsletter. Overall we had an excess of income over expenditure of £1076 in 2019. I am happy to have almost £13,000 in our savings account, because we can expect the cost of the Drake Hall replacement in the new Chiltern Life Centre to be considerably more than we pay now, and it is also possible that we will be asked to make a contribution towards audio-visual equipment for the new hall. Our new speaker secretaries may well

spend more on speakers than Anne Webb has done for the last few years.

During last year, 22 visitors each paid £3 to attend single meetings; several of these subsequently joined, showing that our publicity is important. There is a list on the last page showing where our posters are displayed; if you know of anywhere else, please contact me at david.bender@btinternet.com.

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the AGM of the Association will be held on Thursday 26th March 26th, starting at 7:45, to allow the business to be conducted before Chris Thorne's talk on *News from the Garden Centre Shelves*. The minutes of last year's AGM and reports from the officers are included in this newsletter. The Association does not run itself. We have a small committee that

meets about 6 times a year; offers to join the committee and help are always welcome. Nominations for officers and members of the committee should be sent to the secretary (secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk) by March 17th, although nominations (and indeed self-nomination and volunteers) will be accepted on the night.

From the membership secretary

If you have not yet renewed your subscription, please do so – the cost is just £10 for a single person and £17

for a couple at the same address. A copy of the renewal form is included with this newsletter.

Plant Sale Saturday 16th May

Our annual open air plant sale will be on Saturday 16th May, from 09:00 – 12:00 in the courtyard of St Michael's Church in Amersham. As usual, although we will be buying plants from a wholesaler, we also rely on donations from members, so while you are sowing

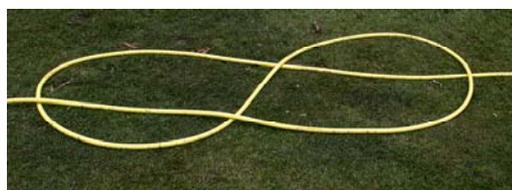
seeds, sow a few more for the plant sale (vegetable plants are always popular) and when you are splitting perennials, save some of them as well. If you are taking cuttings, please make sure they are well rooted before bringing them along!

Saturday 28th March - a date for your diary

Adam Henson, the well known presenter on Countryfile, is coming to Amersham to give a talk on Saturday 28th March at 7:30 pm in the Kings Church, Raans Road, Amersham. He is an excellent and interesting speaker and also appears on a wide range of programmes both for radio and television.

Tickets are available from Waterstones Bookshop (cash) or from Irene Glyn-Jones (01494 727203 or irenecgj@hotmail.com)

Tickets are £20 each and include a glass of wine. This is a charity event and proceeds will go to local charities supported by the Rotary Club of Amersham.



Outings to book now

The booking forms for these three outings are included with this newsletter

Friday 1st May, Alswick Hall and Daisy Roots (organised by Liz Mouton)

Alswick Hall, Buntingford: The gardens surround a house built in the 16th century (not open to the public) which was a favourite haunt of Elizabeth 1st. The gardens were developed in the 18th century. This 5 acre garden is particularly noted as a spring garden with the parterre filled with tulips and banks of daffodils leading to fields beyond.

There is a woodland walk, a rose pagoda, a 40m herbaceous border, and a 3 acre wildflower meadow. There is a lily pond with a waterfall at one end. The owner, Annie Johnson will welcome us with a talk,

coffee and biscuits. More information at <https://www.alswickhall.com>.

Daisy Roots is a small, independently run nursery, near Hertford, growing perennials and grasses. There will be a talk and opportunity to buy plants. They were Gold medal winners at RHS Chelsea flower show 2018 and 2019. All the plants are grown in Hertfordshire. More information at <https://www.daisyroots.com>.

Cost £23, leaving Amersham Community Centre at 9:30.

Wednesday 13th May, Afternoon visit to Huntsmoor, Bovingdon (organised by Irene Glyn-Jones)

This two acre garden has year round interest and is highly recommended by those who have visited it. It contains many special trees and shrubs. A large lawn with herbaceous border gives way to a formal rose garden and on to a central Koi pond with waterfall and rockery. A walk through the specimen trees, past a wildlife pond and bog garden brings you to a newly formed border, a log cabin and a spectacular view of rolling English countryside. We visited the garden in September a few years ago and it was suggested we return to see it in the spring.

More details at <https://ngs.org.uk/view-garden/29754/>

Travel on your own or share cars. There are a few parking places in the drive, for those with limited mobility, and there is more parking in a nearby field. Access into the garden is easy and there are plenty of places to sit.

Cost £7.50 to include refreshments, all proceeds to Cure Parkinsons.

Wednesday 1st July, Evening visit to Beech House in Jordans (organised by Jane Jenkins)

Two of our member Sue and Ray Edwards open their lovely garden in Jordans for the National Gardens Scheme every year, so we have arranged an evening visit in high summer. Please join us to see the garden and enjoy a glass of wine or a soft drink and nibbles.

feature is the large wildflower meadow which should be at its peak for our visit. If we are lucky we will find some native orchids in bloom. You can park right outside and the garden is on level ground with some seating, but you might like to bring a chair.

This is a 2 acre plantsman's garden with a wide range of plants aimed at providing year round colour. You will find many shrubs, roses, perennials and also trees, planted for foliage and ornamental bark. A particular

Travel on your own or share cars. The cost is £6 per person, to include a glass of wine or soft drink, and nibbles.

A weed from Hell?

The January issue of *The Garden* tell us that Japanese knotweed does not set seed, and all plants in Britain are clones of one plant imported in the 1850s. It spreads (widely and almost uncontrollably) from fragments of rhizomes, stems or leaves. However, seeds of a cross between Japanese knotweed and the related (and similarly rampant) Russian vine have been found in

areas that had been cleared of knotweed. Fortunately, they do not seem to germinate in the wild – our winters are too cold and wet. However, climate change could lead to these seeds germinating. This would indeed be a weed from Hell.

Annual General Meeting, March 26th 2020, starting at 19:45

Agenda:

- 1) Welcome
- 2) Apologies for absence
- 3) Minutes of the previous AGM held on 28th March 2019 (see below)
- 4) Matters arising
- 5) Officers' reports (see below)
- 6) Treasurer's report and annual accounts
- 7) President's comments
- 8) Election of officers. The following have declared themselves willing to stand for election:

Hon Chairman	Colin Ross
Hon Secretary	Jean Bowling
Hon Treasurer	David Bender
Hon Membership Secretary	Clive Symes
Hon Social Secretary (visits)	Joan Clark
Hon Social Secretary (talks)	Sue Edwards and Julie Burton
Hon Archivist	Carol Barratt
- 9) Election of committee members. The following have declared themselves willing to stand for re-election:
Frances Billington, Carol Daw, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton.
- 10) Election of independent examiner for the accounts: Mrs Sue Humble is willing to act for another year.

Following the AGM there will be refreshments, the sale of plants and a talk by Chris Thorne on *News from the garden centre shelves*.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28th March 2019

Present: Tim Hillier, President; Clive Symes, Membership Secretary; Jean Bowling, Secretary; Joan Clark, Visits Secretary; David Bender, Treasurer, Anne Webb; Talks Secretary; Liz Moulton, Carol Barratt, Irene Glyn-Jones. In total 60 members were present.

Welcome: The President, Tim Hillier welcomed members.

Apologies for absence: These had been received from Colin Ross, Janet Philpott, Graham & Carol Daw, Jim & Betty Campbell, Valerie Barratt, Therese Harvard

Minutes of the previous AGM held on 22nd March 2018 had been published in the February Newsletter. Acceptance was proposed by Irene Glyn-Jones and seconded by Joan Clark and carried.

Matters arising. Nothing was raised.

Officers Reports. These had also been published in the February Newsletter. The Membership Secretary advised that he had several membership cards for people who had requested to collect them at a meeting. The Talks Secretary stated that 2020 would be her last year and is looking for someone to take over. The Visits Secretary also stated that this will be her last year and she needs someone to replace her. The role is to co-ordinate the members of her committee who actually organise the trips.

Chairman's comments. The Chairman's report was published in the Newsletter. He was unable to attend the AGM and nothing was raised.

Treasurer's Report: The inspected accounts had been circulated by e-mail, and printed copies were available.. The balance carried forward was £13064.10. The accounts were proposed for acceptance by Susan Jeffrey and seconded by Carol Barratt. David thanked Susan Humble who had acted as the examiner and expressed the hope that she would do the same next year.

President's Comments. The President explained that we need a healthy balance as we do not know what expenses we might have when the new Community Centre is built. He thanked the committee for their hard work and said what a good committee it is but we would welcome some new members.

Election of Officers:

Chairman. The President explained that Colin Ross is temporarily unavailable for health reasons but will remain as Chairman with members of the committee taking over some of the roles.

The rest of the officers who were willing to stand again were proposed by the President and seconded by Tony Glyn-Jones. These were returned en block.

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

Election of Committee

The following members of the committee were also proposed by the President and seconded by Tony Glyn-Jones and were returned en block

Carol Daw, Frances Billington, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton

12. Election of Auditor. Susan Humble was willing to act again.

13. Any Other Business. Nothing was raised.

Following the AGM refreshments were served after we had a very interesting and amusing talk by Andrew Brogan. He talked about building his garden in East Anglia where he is able to grow hardy exotic plants. He showed pictures of some impressive ferns and palms. Some of the humour of his talk arose from the letters he had received from children who had visited his garden. He also talked about some of the shows he goes to.

Officers' reports for the 2020 AGM

Talks Secretary – Anne Webb

This year I retire from the position of Speaker Secretary.

I would like to thank the committee and members who have given help and support with ideas, feedback and attendance of monthly meetings during my 8 year stint. I was a real novice at the start. Although keen on gardening not only was I a very new member of AGA but working full time for over 30 years, I had hardly ever visited a garden or listened to a talk on the subject. Fortunately, Graham and Carol Daw gave me a copy of the RHS list of speakers – I did not know it existed! Graham also provided a historical list of speakers. Both so useful in getting me started!

A few comments on this year's speakers. I am grateful to Brian Fisher who stood in at very short notice in January to share his enthusiasm for the gardens in Madeira. I also appreciate those speakers who are so passionate about their subject that they are prepared to drive 100 miles to reach us and then travel back after. Rob Potterton and Nigel Hopes both travelled from Birmingham! Talk titles often belie the content. Permaculture may not have appeared an appealing topic but we all know a little bit more! The 'coffee' story proved fascinating. Colin Smith comprehensively covered the processes that occur between harvesting the bean, roasting and grinding. High hopes for Nick Bailey were overshadowed by his poor images which were merely photos of pages from his book. It can never be assumed that more well-known speakers

My personal goals were to invite speakers who had not previously visited, and to aim for quality with a view to increasing attendance at our monthly meetings. I hope I went some way to achieving both. Another aim was a varied programme with a good mix of subjects. Although it took a while to come to fruition, I was also instrumental in introducing use of the large screen at the stage end of Drake Hall. This displays images so much better and means people at the back have a good view. Very important as we often have 80-90 attendees. In January we had over 100!

come suitably equipped! More expensive does not necessarily mean better.

Once again I thank David Bender and Ken Bodman who help me with setting up the hall each month and to David for lending his projector and laptop for speakers without their own equipment. A big thank you to Alan Jarvis for guiding us on the purchase and setting up of our own microphone equipment. What a stress reliever! No squeaks or squeals to anticipate! Also, an enormous thank you to Clive Symes who this year has had virtually solo responsibility for bringing the audio equipment and setting up the speaker at each meeting. This is on top of his role as Membership Secretary! Is there anyone out there willing to learn and help with the microphones?

Moving forward, we are extremely fortunate that two of our newer members - Sue Edwards and Jules Burton – have volunteered to take on the Speaker Secretary role. This will bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm and I know

we can look forward to an interesting and stimulating programme in the future. Good luck to both of them.

Membership Secretary – Clive Symes

The membership as at 31st December 2019 was 185, with 23 new members joining during the year.

Subscription rates will continue as before, £10 single and £17 per couple at the same address. Please remember that renewal subscriptions become due on 1st January, and it would be most helpful if our members could renew early in the year.

It should be noted that the major part of our activities, being speaker's fees and expenses together with the monthly hall rental, are funded from the annual membership subscriptions.

May I remind you that several of the smaller local nurseries will give you a 10% discount on your purchases upon production of your A.G.A. Membership Card, effectively abating the cost of membership

Visits Secretary – Joan Clark

April - Hole Park and King John's Lodge

We started our year with a visit to Kent. The day dawned bright and sunny, and despite the cold wind, the sunshine stayed with us for the day.

Hole Park has been in the same family since 1911, and boasts formal areas, with close clipped yew trees, a walled garden, and a woodland area that was alive with blossom and spring flowers.

King John's Nursery was very different. It has a small formal garden in front of the house, and a number of fine gnarled and lichen encrusted apple trees. There are several areas where projects were under way, but not yet completed. The nursery area was small, but many of us found something to buy, including some hardy gladioli, dog's tooth violets and white dicentra.

May - Capel Manor and Theobalds Farm

Capel Manor was an enjoyable visit with wisteria and rhododendrons in full bloom and much else to enjoy. In addition to the themed gardens, Chelsea style, there is an interesting display of fake ruins and follies.

Theobalds Farmhouse was a short drive away. On arrival the heavens opened and we rushed in. We were warmly welcomed by Alison Green, who gave us a talk about the making of her four acre garden, which was started in 1999. Our tour of the garden started and the rain stopped. Colour is central to the design, all garden

rooms and borders have their own colour scheme; form and texture are fundamental to plant selection. Alison always plants with insects and wildlife in mind and where possible plants with the cycles of the moon, (the rationale is that as the new moon waxes it draws the water to the surface of the earth to sustain new planting) the borders are predominantly filled with perennial plants with structure provided with trees, shrubs, topiary and evergreens. Around 5000 bulbs are planted every autumn to add to the display.

June - John Massey's Garden and Winterbourne House

John Massey's Garden is wonderful and runs round a curve of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal. It's a plantsman's garden made up of many contrasting beds and borders, carefully thought out to be of interest all the year. We were lucky to be given our guided tour by John Massey himself. We were amazed by his knowledge of plants and grateful for the many

gardening tips he gave us that were interspersed with amusing anecdotes. The garden is immaculately maintained and clever pruning gives each plant space and allows us to look through to the garden beyond. Winterbourne House has been fully restored to its Edwardian Arts and Craft splendour. We found many unusual plants in the garden and greenhouses.

July - Hill Close Gardens and The Mill

Hill Close Gardens were the pleasure gardens of prominent tradesmen who lived above their premises in Warwick and wanted a space in which to entertain. These are the only examples left in the country. We were given a guided tour of the twelve existing gardens.

August - Castle Ashby Gardens and Cramden Nursery

Castle Ashby Gardens

A beautiful morning greeted us for our trip to Northamptonshire. We were taken on a guided tour of the extensive gardens, which cover 35 acres of the 10,000 acre estate. Castle Ashby itself has been the ancestral home to the family of Marquess of Northampton since 16th century. In 1760 Capability Brown altered the formal Dutch approach to the Castle replacing four avenues with one main approach planted

The Mill lies under the walls of Warwick Castle. The garden is small but perfectly formed and runs alongside the River Avon. The Russells, being plant specialists, have packed the space with interesting specimens.

with clumps of mixed trees. He also developed the ponds into two large lakes.

Cramden Nursery is a small, privately owned specialist grower of geraniums and pelargoniums. There was a wonderful selection of these plants which many of our members could not resist. The result was some healthy and well-priced specimens were purchased and brought home.

September - The Plant Specialist

Locally based in Great Missenden, we found this visit very interesting. We were given a talk about the history of the nursery and how it was originally allotments which had fallen out of use. The present owners have created

a display garden with some truly spectacular grasses and prairie plants.

June – AGA 4 Day Trip to Somerset

As in previous years the plan was to visit 8 gardens in 4 days, this time exploring the gardens of a county that is bounded by the Mendip, Quantock and Blackdown Hills.

Day 1: Dyrham Park was our first stop and is a National Trust property in South Gloucestershire. The distant views of the Welsh hills contrasted with the formality of some of the planting and the tranquillity of the gardens around the lake.

South Kelding is a new 7 acre garden. For some, this sloping site was a challenge but, to compensate, there were stunning views from the upper levels. We were led down through prairie style scree beds to the lower levels planted with many trees.

Day 2: Cothay Manor was one of the most popular gardens we saw, a plantsman's paradise. It was laid out in the 1920s and replanted in the 1990s.

Hestercombe was our next treat and has been described as one of the great British gardens. It is a 50 acre Georgian landscape garden with stunning views and a Lutyens/Jekyll formal area. There are woodland walks, pergolas, lakes and cascades. The house contained some fascinating portraits.

Day 3: Montacute House is an Elizabethan House with a contemporary garden layout. The 'Wibbly Wobbly' hedge of yew formed an interesting boundary. The informal planting of the borders and the old roses made for a good contrast with the House.

Yews Farm is a one acre garden, converted from a farmyard. Fergus introduced how the garden was formed and Louise (a garden designer) joined us later. There were mixed reactions to this visit.

Day 4: Bishop's Palace & Garden dates from the 1200s. Highlights included The Quiet Garden, The Community Garden and the wildlife from the Palace swans to kingfishers. This visit had the most positive feedback of all the gardens.

Kilvercourt Gardens which was created in the 1800s and restored in the early 1960s by the Showering family, the design won a gold medal at Chelsea. The Grade II listed viaduct forms an amazing backdrop to the garden which includes a millpond, herbaceous borders. Kilvercourt was a good end to our tour as the variety of the gardens and the wonderful Somerset countryside gave all of us some good memories and lots to talk about!

2020 Programme

The team have already been hard at work planning our visits for 2020 and booking forms for the first three are included with this newsletter.

Finally, I wish to thank all of the Visits Group for their continued support and hard work and look forward to another year of interesting garden visits.

Chairman – Colin Ross

Yet another highly successful year for our Gardening Association! The monthly talks continue to be very well attended – thanks to Anne Webb for finding more varied and interesting speakers, and for making all the necessary arrangements month by month.

The trips, both the many day trips and the holiday to Somerset were excellent, giving members the opportunity to visit beautiful gardens and to socialise with other members of the Association. Thanks to Joan Clark and the Visits Team for all their hard work to make the visits possible.

The Plant Sale was a success and raised a significant amount of money for the Association's funds - it also raises our profile in Amersham, which in turn can bring in new members. There is a lot involved in preparing for the sale, so if you think you could help in any way, please let Janet Philpott or any Committee member know. As always, a special thanks to Janet Philpott for co-ordinating everything.

None of the above would be possible without the hard work of the Committee and sub groups. I therefore ask you to help them where possible and to suggest ways the high standards of the Association can be maintained or even improved. I would like to add a special thank you to all the Committee members for acting as Chairman when I was out of action.

We need to get more members taking an active role in the running of the AGA and it would be great to have some new blood in the Committee to ensure that it reflects the current membership. If you would like to help in any way please let one of the Committee members know.

I am pleased to report that two of our members, Sue Edwards and Julie Burton, have offered to take on the role of Speaker Secretary when Anne Webb steps down after many years in the post. This will, of course, be subject to approval of the AGA membership at our next Annual General Meeting, which I hope will be given.

Forthcoming meetings in the Drake Hall

27th February Carole Petipher: Monet's paradise on earth

Carole was brought up in the Chilterns and initially embarked on a career in French steel. Becoming fed up with the fast lane of corporate life, she applied to take a sabbatical and found herself a passage on a French barge. She fell in love with the lifestyle and France and retrained as a guide and lecturer in French history and has worked in this field ever since.

She is an accredited lecturer for the Arts Society (specialising in impressionists) and divides her time between leading tours abroad and lecturing in the UK.

She has gained detailed knowledge of the gardens at Giverny having taken tours there over 15 years or more. Her talk focuses on how Monet became interested in gardens and how he then managed to create his garden from scratch with no previous knowledge of gardening. The area of the Vexin in the Seine valley is very similar geologically to the Chilterns. An English Head Gardener now maintains Monet's dream to create an artists's garden, but with a few twists.

26th March Chris Thorne: News from the garden centre shelves (following the AGM)

For over 20 years Chris managed a small garden centre in Cambridgeshire. He is now Retail Manager at Aylett Nurseries where he has worked for 18 years. He has been the Garden Expert on Radio Cambridge and written articles for local newspapers.

He says that products available to home gardeners are reducing in number all the time. He will update us on the latest situation and says that members can lead him up any garden path they like!

23rd April Paul Barney: 25 years of Edulis Nursery: shipwrecks, buggles & bombs

Paul's research into organic farming systems at Aberystwyth University coupled with courses in permaculture and volunteer work for the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales, (an educational charity committed to the research of solutions for sustainability) stimulated him to set up his own landscape company in Wales. While doing his masters

in landscape design at Sheffield University he developed his knowledge in edible landscaping and ecological sewage systems. Thereafter he returned to Berkshire to set up a new nursery specialising in edible plants.

Many of you will know Paul as we visited Edulis Nursery a few years ago.

Amersham Gardening Association
Income and expenditure account
for the year ending 31st December 2019

	2019			2018		
	income	expenditure	balance	income	expenditure	balance
Subscriptions	1714.00		1714.00	1796.00		1796.00
Deposit account interest	116.35		116.35	17.84		17.84
Visitors and miscellaneous	66.00		66.00	1856.00		1856.00
Plant sales at meetings	140.00		140.00	100.00		100.00
Social activities (incl tea)	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00
Activities and fundraising						
Outings	25221.40	-23625.75	1595.65	22339.50	-21795.65	543.85
Raffle (and tombola in 2019)	566.00	-338.54	227.46	993.20	-441.27	551.93
Quiz night	0.00	0.00	0.00	1148.80	-1131.11	17.69
Plant sales outside	1163.73	-518.28	645.45	886.25	-312.25	573.97
Other expenditure						
Speaker fees		-1957.10	-1957.10		-1209.40	-1209.40
Room hire ACC		-1058.10	-1058.10		-408.25	-408.25
Venue hire (other)		-40.00	-40.00		-30.00	-30.00
Newsletter and postage		-98.71	-98.71		-131.96	-131.96
Administration and publicity		-432.00	-432.00		-2087.60	-2087.60
Social activities		-213.88	-213.88		-165.34	-165.34
miscellaneous						
shows		0.00				
total	28987.48	-28282.36	705.12	29137.59	-27712.83	1424.73

Amersham Gardening Association
Balance sheet as at 31st December 2019

	2019	2018
Current assets		
Cash in hand	£8.61	£8.61
Cash at bank (current account)	£1,166.74	£2,206.79
Cash at bank (savings account)	£12,965.05	£10,848.70
Total	£14,140.40	£13,064.10
Balance brought forward	£13,064.10	£12,050.60
surplus for the year	£1,076.30	£1,013.50
Balance carried forward	£14,140.40	£13,064.10

Signed

Tim Hillier (President)

dated

David Bender (Treasurer)

dated

Independent Examiner's report

I have examined the above balance sheet and attached income and expenditure account with the books and vouchers, and, in my opinion, they present a fair view of the financial position of the Association as at 31st December 2019

Susan Humble
Hon. Independent Examiner

Susan Humble
03.02.20

dated

That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet

Some years ago, the late Ben Oser, who ran a laboratory specialising in food analysis, asked me if I could suggest a test that would detect adulteration of beef burgers with (cheaper) vegetable sources of protein, such as soya beans. At the time I could only answer “no”, but I could suggest a test for adulteration of vege-burgers with meat, based on the presence of

compounds such as creatine and creatinine in that are found in meat, but not plants. Nowadays he would not need to ask me the question at all – he would simply run a DNA fingerprint analysis. Not only would this detect plant material in the beef burgers, it would also show whether or not all the meat was beef – remember the scandal of horse meat in “beef” products.



Horticulture and plant science have similarly benefitted from modern DNA analysis. Since the 18th century, when Linnaeus developed the binomial system of nomenclature for plants and animals (a genus and a species name), plants hunters have used the appearance of newly discovered plants, and their similarity to known plants, to classify their findings, preserving specimens in herbaria for future reference. No longer is this how plants are classified, rather their DNA can be compared with that of other plants. This has led to the reclassification of several well-known plants. Rosemary is no longer *Rosmarinus officinalis*, but has been transferred to the genus *Salvia*, as *Salvia rosmarinus*. At the same time, Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) has also joined the genus *Salvia*, as *Salvia yangii*.

In the kitchen, I will continue to use *Salvia officinalis* (sage) with pork, and the renamed *Salvia rosmarinus* with lamb

The December issue of *The Garden* explains why this change in nomenclature is relevant. If plants are known to be related, it is possible to have an idea of pests and diseases that they will have in common, and therefore how they may be protected. The article also explains why *R.officinalis* and *P.atriplicifolia* were moved into *Salvia*, and not the other way round. There were already some 700 species of *Salvia*, which would have had to be renamed, but only some 15 plants were affected by the name change to *Salvia*.



At the same time, the African violet (*Saintpaulia*, above left) has been moved into the genus *Streptocarpus*, (the Cape primrose (above right)).

It is perhaps noteworthy that *Saintpaulia* looks nothing like a violet, and neither does *Streptocarpus* resemble a primrose, suggesting that early plant hunters and nursery people had great imagination in creating common names for their discoveries.

Until now, the only common features of these groups of plants were that both came originally from southern Africa, and both have similar growing requirements in the conservatory or greenhouse – otherwise they appear to be totally different – just compare the long strap-like leaves and tubular flowers of *Streptocarpus* with the round leaves and open-faced flowers of *Saintpaulia*.

However, DNA analysis reveals that they are indeed closely related. A note in the December issue of *The Garden* tells us that Dibleys nurseries sell some 500 cultivars and species of African violet, and 250 – 300 Cape primroses. It will take some time for the Latin names on the plant labels to change, because Dibleys (and presumably other nurseries) have a stock of labels printed, and it would not make sense to throw these away and have replacements printed.

For those of us who grow both African violets and Cape primroses, it is reassuring to be told that the plants formerly known as *Saintpaulia* will now be known as *Streptocarpus* with the suffix “AV” to make identification easier. This is perhaps important for home propagation – I use whole leaves of African violet as cuttings, but slices of Cape primrose leaves.

David Bender

Dates for your diary from the RHS

Tickets for the following RHS shows are available from www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events



Cardiff flower show: April 17 – 19
Malvern spring show: May 7 – 10
Chelsea flower show: May 19 – 23
Chatsworth flower show: June 11 – 14
Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival: July 6 – 12
Tatton Park flower show: July 22 – 26



Collecting seeds and biosecurity

There is a note in the autumn issue of *Grass Roots* (the RHS magazine for Community groups) about the potential dangers of collecting seeds abroad. A recent report on imported tree seeds found that about 30% were infested with insect larvae and many were contaminated with potential fungal pathogens. We were not told whether these were commercially imported seeds or those collected in the wild by people like us on holiday.

My late father was an avid collector of seeds when he travelled. On one occasion he collected the seeds of an interesting flower from the roof garden of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome. He labelled these as *Faoroofia ignorensis*, thus naming the site he had collected the seeds from and the fact that he did not know what they were! This was an improvement – many of his seed trays were simply labelled “unknown”. We later discovered that *F. ignorensis* was in fact *Cleome spinosa*, the seeds of which are readily available in packets at home.

I too must confess to having imported a tree seed some years ago. I was in the arboretum in Accra in Ghana, and saw this tennis ball-sized seed under a very large tree, labelled as *Joannesia princeps*, a native of Brazil. It came home in my suitcase, germinated, and grew well on my windowsill. When it hit the ceiling of my flat I realised how stupid I had been to collect and grow the seed of a tree that grows to 20m tall.

I have been less successful with seeds from the Canary Islands dragon tree, *Dracaena draco*. Several times now I have brought seeds home from shops on visits to the Canaries and Madeira, but they have never germinated. Unlike my *J. princeps*, it is unlikely that even had they germinated they would pose much of a problem in the conservatory or greenhouse. It takes about 8 to 10 years for the slow-growing tree to reach 0.5 to 1 metre high, and 30 years for it to reach maturity.

My father never really forgave me for the seeds I brought back from a trip to the Burren in Ireland. It looked like a very interesting plant, with purple flowers. It was the rampant purple vetch (*Vicia sativa*) – and now



we have a problem with it in our garden in Amersham – not that we have sown it, but it comes up everywhere, and is almost impossible to eradicate. At least I know not to put the plants in the compost heap, but put them in the green bin for hot composting. The real

problem with vetch is that its seeds ripen fast and are shot explosively from the plant, landing everywhere. I note that several companies sell vetch seeds. They are beautiful (in the right place), and as members of the pea family they have some potential use in the garden, since like other legumes they have root nodules that host nitrogen-fixing bacteria

The note in *Grass Roots* also warns us not to grow plants from purchased food or from bird seed. I am less sure about the possible biosecurity risks of this. Sometimes (not often) the supermarket tomatoes have a better flavour than those we grow in the garden. However, I agree that it is unlikely that commercially grown varieties, probably grown hydroponically in Dutch glass houses will produce well in my garden or greenhouse. I can recall the pleasure of growing a small grove of tangerine seedlings in the windowsill as a child. They never grew large enough to cause any possible problem.

I also have a problem with the advice not to grow plants from bird seed. I do not sow it deliberately, but there is often a reasonable crop of wheat growing through the gravel path under the bird feeder. I put this down to the birds following the RHS advice to “grow your own”.



David Bender

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

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Discounts for members – remember to take your membership card to claim your discount

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

Gardening and outdoor ropes, buy online from <http://www.buyrope.co.uk>, and use the code Amersham10 at checkout for a 10% discount.

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>