

OXENHOPE GARDENING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2008

Tonight we welcome Judith Briggs The Gardening Year

Pam's Gardening Diary

Spring is bursting out all over and here it begins near the front door where the soil is slightly acidic and shady in early spring. All the little gems can be seen from each back window, the front door, and outside. I started this bed with rhododendrons and camellias followed by bulbs and unusual deciduous plants coming up for only 2 to 3 months of the year. *Cornus Kousa* and *Malus* gorgeous have just been removed as they got too large. I never feel sorry when they have gone to good homes. More are always waiting in the wings. Snowdrops are bulking up. *Galanthus* "Hill Poe", "Desdemona" and "Wendy's Gold" are three I recognise. The snowflakes *Leucojum vernum* show their green or yellow spots at the side of the camellia. *Eranthis* "hyemalis" or Winter Aconite has naturalised and made good yellow patches. These seed as the tiny brown leaves and stems go underground for another year. If you want to keep them PLEASE label at this early season. *Iris* "Winogradowii" has only a solitary flower of primrose yellow. This bulb is difficult to grow it is a parent of *Iris* "Katharine Hodgkin" which is easy to grow. Delicate species crocus are a waste of time in wind and rain. Mine are planted in front of the privet hedge giving full sun and protection against the elements. *Corydalis malkensis* started flowering in January in shelter and shade. *Hacquetia epipactis* "Thor" has been dormant since last summer. Now, the variegated leaves and flowers are pushing through to reach the ultimate height of two inches. Most of the tiny plants in this garden do not hang about. I used to think they had died. Their most important job is to come up, flower, seed and die down as leaves grow on the trees, creating shade for the later plants. The trough on the side of the porch is full of *Kasbia saxifragas* and *soldanellas*. The saxifragas are the very early ones enjoying shade. They are also bright green with what I think is sphagnum moss. If this job needs doing the best time is NOW. A kitchen fork or large tweezers will sort the moss from the plants.

Hellebores prosper in this garden yet they are acknowledged to grow best on alkaline soil I have chosen favourites and kept their seedlings to grow on. Do you remember the one emasculated by John Massey and I at an evening meeting. The plant has flowered on and off all winter- it is double creamy white.

By the way have you cut off all the dead flowers yet? They go in the green bag as composting is a waste of time unless you wish to introduce slugs and fungal spores.

The apple green hellebore from Elizabeth Strangman will not split having been depleted over the years of selling to the club. Potted is one large beautiful pink. Most are purple seedlings selling at this February meeting. Dark hellebores are sumptuous if carefully sited in front of taller daffodils or *corylopsis* "paucifolia". *Narcissus* "minor" is ideal for growing through them.

Viburnum bodnantense "Charles Lamont" has jumped into the space of Cornus Kousa. The scent from the flowers is precious at this time of year.

Pam Greenwood.

Advance Notification of Summer Outing

As you are aware the summer outing this year is on Sunday 6th July and the itinerary is that we leave Oxenhope at 8.00am and travel to Bluebell Cottage Gardens, Dutton, Cheshire. We look to arrive between 9.30 and 10am where on arrival we will be served with hot and cold drinks and home made cakes.

After our morning visit we travel to Arley Hall near Northwich in Cheshire where we will be able to have a hot or cold meal or eat packed meals that we have taken ourselves. I will obtain a menu when the grounds open and discuss catering arrangements at that time so as to avoid last years queuing. Details will be circulated prior to the trip.

There seemed to be a lack of information last year relating to costs, together with problems re the catering for those who wanted to purchase meals. I also felt that a number of you thought that I had disappeared with the entry fees to Wentworth Castle Gardens but the delay in getting sorted was due to a number of reasons out of my control. It was quite a walk to the reception area, the tills weren't operating correctly, and other minor problems. Hopefully, there will be no such problems this year.

The Costs

Coach £420. This is a 53 seater coach as before so the fuller it is the cheaper it is for members.

Bluebell Cottage Gardens - I have negotiated a discount price of £4 per person (instead of the normal entry price of £4.50). This price relates to everyone whether an RHS member or not. Also there are no other reductions relating to age. I realise that the negotiated reduction is not great but it includes the aforementioned refreshments. Sue Beesley (our April speaker) and/or her head gardener on hand throughout, and a 10% discount for any plant purchases.

Arley Hall and Gardens - The group rates are:-

- **Gardens only** – adults £5.00, senior citizens £4.50, RHS members free.
- **Hall and Gardens** – adults £6.50, senior citizens £5.75, RHS members £2.50 and RHS senior citizens £2.00. This cost covers an entrance fee to the hall.

More information when it becomes available.

Nigel Sutcliffe.

Poetry Please

Breezes share the Winter's bite
As young buds shiver still.
But I see sunlight flicker
On struggling daffodils.

They sway as if to music
And rustle in the breeze.
There can be none so graceful
Or beautiful as these.

And daisies in their hundreds
Lie white upon the grass
Inviting every butterfly
To linger when they pass.
I hear Winter weeping as
The swollen buds break free;
And roses sweetly blushing
As they were meant to be.

These flowers are His treasures
His footprints leave a train
Of beauty and of wonder,
We see time and time again.

Grey days are surely over,
Now new life can begin,
Look up and see the sunshine.
And feel the breath of Spring.

Snowdrops

Every year without fail, in the cold dark days of January, a quiet miracle takes place. In the garden, at the foot of tall trees or in forgotten corners, a small white flower emerges from the hard and often frozen earth. Like a secret long hidden in the dark, the snowdrop emerges without fuss or fanfare; a little white flower who's presence in these wintery days draws an "Aah" from even the bleakest soil.

Shortly afterwards the crocus comes, then daffodils, narcissi and all the wonderful flowers of spring. But it is the little snowdrop that first breaches the bleakness, that gently and silently hints of something beyond the deepest darkness, who would have thought so delicate and seemingly frail a flower, with bowed head on so slender a stem could withstand the cold of January and February, who could have imagined that the darkness held so precious a treasure.

Lesley Brodrick

Snowdrops are much loved "milk flowers" bridging the gap between seasons. They are associated with both the Virgin Mary and Eve. Legend says that when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden, Eve cried tears of repentance in the wilderness. An angel, seeing them fall to the barren ground, pitied her and turned them into snowdrops. Candlemas Day, February 2nd, has long honoured the Virgin Mary. Candles are lit and snowdrops, the "Fair Maids of February", symbolic of purity, decorate churches. This explains these old names for snowdrops – Mary's Tapers and Candlemas Bells.

Lynda Yewdall

Should I Weed the Lawn or say it's a Garden?

So what is a garden? A well tended collection of plants? Sir Walter Scott commented "Nothing is more the child of art than a garden".

Rudyard Kipling – Our England is a garden

that is full of stately views
of borders beds and shrubberies
and leaves and avenues

Indeed "Our England is a garden and such gardens are not made
By singing Oh how beautiful and sitting in the shade".

Monty Don has been asking himself this question as he went "Around the World in 80 Gardens". The Brazilian designer Roberto Burle Marx's definition "A garden is nature organised by man for the benefit of man" may be the answer.

So which gardens have inspired you?

It's several years since we visited Gresgarth – Arabella Lennox Boyd's garden near Lancaster, and we now visit at least once a year, and time permitting would go every month. Many gardens are very seasonal but Gresgarth looks stunning whatever time of year, rain or shine. It's a place to soak up the atmosphere as well as admiring the design, delighting in the planting or appreciating the vistas. "For me, the most important garden is my own in Lancashire" says Arabella.

Rosemoor the RHS garden in Devon is another special place. It was the home of Lady Anne Berry, set in several acres of choice planting. Now extended even further by the RHS there is an enormous amount to see but my favourite time is in the spring when the grassy area beside the small lake looks absolutely idyllic, naturalised with fritillaria meleagris, narcissus bulbocodium and primroses.

Many years ago we visited Wollerton Old Hall in Shropshire. It was indeed inspirational with colour co-ordinated garden rooms full of herbaceous planting but especially striking to us were the enormous blocks of Nicotiana Sylvestris on either side of the gateway – the first time we had seen it and now we always try to have some growing. I believe Wollerton is one of Chris Beardshaw's favourites.

Four years ago in April we visited for the first time the garden of Helen Dillon in Dublin. We looked over the garden gate and Wow... what a garden! A splendid Georgian House with a garden to linger in, plenty to see at any time and a garden that constantly changes. Helen doesn't think twice about making radical changes but then she is a garden designer and this is her palette. "The wonder of gardening is that you can be sure perfection will be tantalisingly near but never quite attainable" says Helen. Once of my favourite corners best seen in mid summer, is a garden room at the bottom of her garden overhanging with white Dieramas (angels fishing rods) and underplanted in the gravel with erigeron karvinskianus an idea I plan to copy.

There are more I could mention but have you some special gardens you could write about? Invariably we find the really special gardens still have the owner working in them as Monty Don commented "Having made this incredible journey I remain more convinced than ever that the most interesting thing to be found in any garden is the person that made it.

Anne Collinson

Members Please Make a Note -

There are 2 errors on the membership card:

April should read April 17th December should read December 18th