

Oxenhope Gardening Club Newsletter

February 2010

TONIGHT WE WELCOME LIZ JOICE

Thoughts From (Arm) Chair

I got out into the garden the other day. I did that bit of tidying up that I didn't get round to at the end of last year. I was getting quite excited about being out in the garden and doing some more jobs, then, low and behold the cold came back. The ground is rock hard again. I keep looking for the snowdrops, we have put quite a few in over the last couple of years but there does not seem to be so many showing through. Anyway, it is half term this week so we are away on holiday, we will be at Wisley tomorrow to see the garden. We had planned to go just before Christmas but were beaten by the weather.

Talking of visiting gardens. Please think now about the two trips which are planned for this year, they are Gresgarth, Lancaster on Sunday 13th June. We are still looking at where else to go on that date so if you can think of anywhere in the Lancaster, Kendal area that you would like to visit please can you speak to Nigel tonight. The other trip will be Harlow Carr on the afternoon of Thursday 22nd July, there will be a list for people to put their names on nearer the time, but please put these dates in your diaries now. Nigel puts a lot of time and effort into arranging visits on our behalf.

Richard.

MY GARDEN

I have been a member of the gardening club for two years and live in Saltaire. I have a small back garden in Saltaire but my garden is in France where I live from the end of March until late October. However, I return to Saltaire every three or four weeks during the summer, which I endeavour to ensure coincides with the club meetings!

In 2000, my late husband David and I bought nearly two acres of land in a small village near the town of Aubusson, which is in the Creuse region of the Limousin. We chose this area as it was where my sister-in-law, who lives in Paris, has a holiday home. David and I wanted a place where all the extended family and its growing number of children could meet in the holidays and, just as importantly, enough land to make a large garden. After many years of living in London with only a small front garden to indulge my passion for gardening, I longed for enough space to create a garden large enough to contain all the plants, trees and shrubs I had coveted over the years of garden visiting.

The land we bought is on a sloping site running down from north to south. It is sheltered at the north end on the western boundary by mature trees on a neighbouring piece of land. The eastern boundary falls away to views of the 14th century château and lake in the adjoining valley. For many years the land had been a field used for grazing horses (I still let the farmer use the bottom section) and contained only three old apple trees. At the top northern boundary is a small copse of hazel trees (to which I have given the grand title of a wood!) which in the past had been coppiced. As soon as we bought the land, and at least a year before construction of the house started, I began planning the garden and started to plant those areas of the garden that were accessible. This confined planting to a mixed shelter belt of trees and shrubs along the western boundary where the existing shelter finished and starting work on the woodland garden. This meant clearing out the tangle of undergrowth and brambles, thinning out trees and marking out paths to make a circular walk around the wood.

A huge influence on the development of the garden has been Beth Chatto's garden which I have visited many times over the last twenty years and the influence on wood is no exception. The wood in Beth Chatto's book 'The Shade Garden' has been my bible in choosing the trees, shrubs and plants for the wood. However, some plants have been chosen for sentimental reasons either because they are reminders of people or of places.

The soil in the wood is, like the rest of the garden, a light, sandy loam and is acid but not heavily so. This means I can grow all the wonderful acid loving shrubs like camellias (although the camellias are limited to the most hardy species and even then find it difficult to become established), azaleas, rhododendrons and viburnums. I can also grow shade tolerating hostas as I have no slugs anywhere in the garden and very few snails. I think this because of the large population of toads I have living in holes around the garden! Inspired by the descriptions in 'The Shade Garden' I have replaced some of the hazels with specimen trees such as the Snake-Bark maple, *Acer Grosseri* and *Cornus Eddies White Wonder* and *Cornus Florida Cherokee*. (The Dogwoods are there because they are reminders of a friend's garden I planted in the foothills of the Blue Ridge mountains in Georgia.) But in general, I have left the original hazels, just thinning out the old coppiced branches to leave one or two to grow to full height. (I have also used the trees to provide support for climbing roses-Bobbie James and Sanders White and the honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* Graham Thomas.) To replace the thinned out trees, I have concentrated on planting under-story trees and shrubs and, wherever possible, I have chosen trees and shrubs that are scented. So, of the two magnolias I have planted, one is *Magnolia Denudata*, which has lovely fragrant white flowers, the other is *Magnolia stellata*. Of the three viburnums I have planted, two are scented, *Viburnum x carlcephalum* and *Viburnum Bodantense*. The third viburnum, *Viburnum Plicatum Mariessi*, is a great favourite of mine and appears elsewhere in the garden. I love its wide-spreading, tiered branches and large lace cap heads of white flowers and it is another reminder of the garden in Georgia. A number of rhododendrons are spread around the wood, including the scented *Rhododendron luteum* and *Rhododendron decorum*, which has lovely, pink-flushed, white scented flowers. The only daphne I have been successful in growing has been in the wood where *Daphne Laureola* thrives (visiting deer seem to love all the other daphne I have planted!) This daphne has a honeyed scent which seems to deepen by afternoon and peak at dusk. It is not at all showy, but is compact and evergreen and seems to thrive in areas in the wood of deep shade and dryish conditions.

Although not scented, I love the hydrangea *Hydrangea aspera subsp. Sargentiana*. I first admired it in the walled garden at Newby Hall and tried unsuccessfully to grow it in other, more exposed areas but since planting it in a sheltered but sunny part of the wood, it has survived now for three years. I like its purple blue flowers and especially like its furry leaves and peeling bark. Other scented shrubs that have thrived in the wood are *Hamamelis v. Sandra* (not the best hamamelis for scent, but a birthday present from my son!) and *Osmanthus Delavayi* for its evergreen foliage and deeply scented flowers.

At ground level, my planting has also been guided by the plants described in Beth Chatto's book as my wood has virtually the same conditions, although I think her wood is more heavily mulched than mine (and is much larger!) The plants I have chosen are mostly shade loving and in many places, drought tolerant plants and bulbs. These include epimediums, sweet woodruff (for its delicate white flowers, its wonderful ground covering properties and of course, its sweet perfume). Other ground covering plants I find successful are, *Vinca major* and *minor*, *Geranium macrorrhizum* l (which has spread to nearly every part of the wood) *Lamiums* and *Pulmonarias* which grow wild in the local woods. I have also planted a number of *Trilliums*, only three of which have survived. I think they struggle because the soil isn't moist enough, but I persist with them having seen them growing in their hundreds in woodlands in Georgia on a particularly lovely day. A plant I especially admired in Beth Chatto's wood is *euphorbia amagdyloides v. robbiae*. I bought two plants from Beth Chatto's nursery and over the years this evergreen plant, which in spring has wonderful acid green flowers has spread to form drifts which look wonderful in spring with the bluebells growing through them. Ah, the bluebells! One of the first things I planted in the wood when it was cleared was twenty bluebell plants bought in-the-green. I had this vision of my wood in spring misted with blue and scented with drifts of bluebells. However, the reality was that year after year only the same, original plants came up, albeit with a small increase, but definitely not drifts! Then three years ago, I noticed what looked like clumps of new grass growing around the original bluebells. I dared to hope they were bluebell seedlings but it was only when they flowered in the following year that I could believe it was true! Last year, I got my drifts. Not covering large areas of the wood, but I can see that one day they will. Heaven!

Since the house has been completed, I have been able to concentrate on other areas of the garden, and as a result, the wood got a little left behind. I would walk around seeing things that weren't doing so well and others that were. I would note plants that I could introduce but somehow I didn't manage to get round to doing anything about it. However, last year I was able to give the wood a bit more TLC and after referring again to my garden bible, I left last October with my wish list of plants and some of them I have already ordered!

I buy almost all of my trees, shrubs and plants from nurseries in the UK (latterly from Yorkshire!) as in the part of France where I live there are no good nurseries providing the range and varieties we are able to get in the UK.

Leading down from the wood into the rest of the garden is a bank and here I have used an idea that I found in reading Dan Pearson's book, 'A Year at Home Farm'. In the book, he describes his wish to make a liaison between a wood and the rest of the garden. To achieve this, he planted a number of shrubs which complemented the shrubs in the wood and that also led the eye down to the rest of the garden. I have followed this idea and have echoed the hazels in the wood by planting two purple hazels, *Corylus maxima* 'Purpurea'. The dark purple colour of their leaves provide a contrast to the wood behind and go well with the pink flowered deutzia (whose name I don't know but could be *Deutzia Elegantissima Rosealind*) that is in front of it. The scented theme used in the wood continues in the planting scheme of the bank, with more scented azaleas, viburnums and a shrub rose which has small, white scented flowers in early summer and forms a dense bush with a somewhat weeping habit (Unfortunately this was planted in the early days so I don't know what variety it is!)

There is a bench on the bank and right by it is a small shrub lilac which I think is *Syringa pubescens* Subsp. *Microphylla Superba*, whose heavy, intense scent drifts far down the garden on a warm day. It is on this bench, that at the end of a gardening day in early summer, I like to sit to enjoy the scents from the wood and the view down the garden. But then I find myself thinking, now what if I just enlarged that bed a little and then... But the rest of the garden is another story.

Sandra Angadi. February 2010

Can You Help?

Could you spare some snowdrops for members of the Oxenhope Conservation Initiative (OCI) to plant at Marsh Common?

OCI is hoping to increase the flora on Marsh Common by planting wild flowers and bulbs there during the course of this year.

We will be starting this process in the Spring by planting snowdrops on the bank adjacent to Marsh Lane and wondered whether members of the Gardening Club could help by donating plants "in the green" after this years flowering.

If you do have plants which you would be prepared to donate to OCI please contact Chris Coupland on 01535 643244 (wycken@btinternet.com) to arrange collection. We would be willing to lift, split and replant if this would help. We are particularly keen to plant single flowered types such as *galanthus nivalis* or the like.

All offers gratefully received though!

Chris Coupland