



BENFLEET HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2017

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www.benfleethorticulturalsociety.org.uk

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A facility on the website now is that members can submit their show entries direct to Sue, our Show Secretary. We believe it is easy to follow the instructions, but if anyone has problems, please let us know. We are delighted that gradually the numbers visiting the site are increasing – at the time of writing, the November figure was a record 400 hits! We will work hard to keep this regularly updated for you.

If you have an email address and have not received our news updates, please let us have your email address. You can either bring it to the stores, send it to Terry Babbage at terrybabbage@gmail.com or register it as shown on the home page of the website.

From the chairman

A Happy New year.
Another year. another report, I always start with the weather, last year was good and variable and I hope when you read this you are not covered in snow.

We maintained our membership with lots of new faces. Our value is still incredible £2.50, no other local society offers the value we do.

We were fortunate in purchasing many items for our stores from a Garden Nursery that closed down. So many new items were and are still available all at HALF PRICE, the terracotta pots were brilliant and ending the year with great Christmas lights and decorations.

Our AGM had a change of date due to the Chairman having a double booking for which I apologise. It would be great if we had more members attend this event.

Our three shows have been successful, the afternoon Club Events were all well attended, and as always the Quiz Nights are a sell out.

We provide plants for our local plots ie. Benfleet Library Garden. The Drinking Trough at Cemetery Corner and the border near the Bus stop by the Stores

SHOWS

Thank you to Sue and Bernadette our organisers for the shows. The Spring was early and we all thought the daffodils were past it, but the exhibitors managed to fill the benches, Handicrafts, Cookery and Floral Art also had increased entries which was good.

The Summer Show was low in entries, but quality exhibits were there.

The Autumn Show was excellent with great displays of vegetables and fruit. We still have people saying when they visit "my raspberries are better than those so why not have a go and enter. We are always able to help anyone who has never entered before.

Thanks also to Janet and her helpers in the tea room on show days all those delicious cakes do not make themselves

OUTINGS

Thanks to Hazel for organising the Outings. Borde Hill gardens was excellent, The Wisley trip coincided with an excellent craft fair and is always popular. The final outing was to Ayletts Dahlia Nursery and enjoyed by all who went. These are all well attended so get

your names on the list in the stores.

QUIZ NIGHTS

Thanks to Jenny for organising these and Simon our excellent Quiz Master. Always entertaining and a great evening. So put your names on the list for a table

CLUB EVENTS

These are very well attended with a variety of subjects and speakers. This is a FREE EVENT in the afternoon 5 times in the year so please come along see the separate list of all this years events.

THANKYOU

To all the committee members who give of their time unpaid in the stores and on committee meetings. To Luke our work experience student who has been very helpful.

A special thank you to Bob for managing the stores with Doreen and Peter both excellent helpers. And Thank you to all other helpers who unload soil and serve the members and answer the many questions and gardening queries you bring us.

Peter organised a contractor to replace the floor at the rear of the building and has plans to do the front of the stores as well a solid concrete floor will keep out the water. Peter has also organised a replacement roof for the whole of the building. Thank you very much Peter.

Thank you to Janet and Colin from Rayleigh who steward with the judges at the shows, Colin takes all the photographs, and organises the printing of the Year Book, Newsletters and Posters.

Thank you to Laurence for creating our New E Mail Newsletters, keeping you in touch regularly with events. PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING THESE.

And finally my Thank You to our members for your continuing support.

Terry



CLUB EVENTS FOR 2017



17th MARCH Quiz night

For a great time with our quizmaster

Simon Foxen

held at St Mary's Church Hall,
376 High Road, Benfleet SS7 5HL at 8 pm
Don't forget - Book tables early

**UPCOMING
EVENTS**

BENFLEET HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

SPRING SHOW

Richmond Hall,
Benfleet, SS7 5HA

**Saturday
1st April**

*All members welcome to
exhibit Fruit,
Vegetables, Crafts,
Cakes & Flowers*

*Please help the Show Secretary and have all
your entries with us by Thursday, March
30th midday. As you probably know, this
can be done on our website.*

FREE - NO CHARGE CLUB EVENT

Refreshments will be provided

Mon Feb 13th

Brian Carline

"Allotment - Soil, Sweat and Tears"

Brian was with us last year. He is a retired teacher having done 40 years in the job. The title of his talk relates to a book he wrote on humorous advice for reluctant gardeners. He hopes the talk will make you chuckle and also inform you about certain aspects of gardening.

Mon April 3rd

Neil and Linda Holdaway

"NGS Essex Gardens"

Linda and Neil will give us an illustrated talk on the history of the National Gardens Scheme and the gardens that are open in Essex

Mon June 26 (to be confirmed)

Mon Sept 4th

Alexander Hunt

"We're Crackers about Nuts"

Alexander owns The Walnut Tree Co at St Mary's Platt near Sevonoaks, a specialist and developed cobnut growing business. They are the leading supplier of quality walnut, sweet chestnut almond and Kentish cobnut trees. They produce a number of products which Alexander will have for purchase at his talk. Eg Pecan nuts, Chestnuts, Fudges, Chocolates .biscuits, nutty oils, sauces and preserves.

Mon Oct 9th

Julia Tetley

"Two Tree Island "

Julia spoke to us in 2015 and lives locally, she went to Writtle College and is very knowledgeable on local Essex Wildlife venues

**St Mary's Church Hall, 376 High Road,
Benfleet, SS7 5HL
at 2 p.m.**

'old margarine tub'



January and February are not the most exciting months in the gardening calendar but it is the perfect time to plan ahead to create a garden that is just perfect for you - and that is exciting! Whether it be a garden that is full of colour and flowers, a never ending supply of home grown veggies, or a modern streamline design with a strict colour scheme and structural plants - spending a little time planning can save you a lot of time and money! Changing or adding to existing planting can be expensive but growing your plants from seed could be the answer. Growing from seed does take some organisation but it can repay you with a great sense of satisfaction of having grown and nurtured a plant to maturity. There is no need to buy expensive growing equipment - some of my most successful crops have started life in an old margarine tub with drainage holes, sitting on its own lid to act as a saucer and placed on a warm, light windowsill. So this year why not give it a go and sow some seed. Our range of Mr. Fothergill's seeds have clear instructions on how to sow and grow - and have the added benefit of being quality seed at up to 25% off rrp! And if you need more information on growing from seed just ask one of our helpers at the stores - if they don't know they'll know someone who does.

Gill

NEWS FROM THE STORE

The success of the stores is usually dependant on the weather it is good to report that takings are up despite the fact summer did not start till mid July. Then out came the sun and no rain for weeks. This increase was undoubtedly due to the considerable purchases we made at very competitive prices from a nursery that was closing down. Those who came in at the beginning of the year will know we bought a wide range of decorative pots (£6000 worth at the nursery retail price) We were able to sell them at half price and it is satisfying to report that most of them have sold. At the end of the year they offered us the remainder of their stock, many different lines. So many that we are running out of display space. The main disappointment regarding trading was we had to throw away 6 sacks of seed potatoes. The probable cause being the very wet and cold weather at planting time.

Spring bulbs did not sell too well because of the opposite weather conditions in late summer. Although we stock a large range

of seeds at discounted prices sales are disappointing See Gills article on page 2. I agree wholeheartedly with Gill that annual bedding displays look great.

The storage area at the back of the sales area has long had problems with water rising through the floor. It is now completely dry. A new water proof membrane has been covered with 4 inches (10 cms.) of concrete. And a new roof has been installed. By the time we reopen a new roof will be on the shop.. We are also planning to move the rear wall of the shop into the storage area to provide more display space for our new stock.

Now the stores are dry we must renew the electrics in the coming year. Our "current" thoughts are to include some electric heating in the shop as we all freeze on the cold winter shifts. At the moment if we boil a kettle while the heater is on we blow a fuse, (not the Treasurer the electrics)

At last we have a contact for shrubs so I will be hoping to improve our range of these plants in the new year.

The Stores would not operate without the army of volunteers who work in the shop. My load has been made easier by Peter and Doreen who work tirelessly improving and running of the shop. Hazel who helps with trips to the wholesale nursery for plants, buying the successful range of bird and fish foods also organising the staff who work behind the counter. You might justifiably ask what I do.

THANKS TO ALL THE TEAM. And YOU the members that support us

I look forward to seeing you all on opening day Thursday 2nd February

Bob

DELIVERY

We are only too pleased to deliver to members in the Benfleet area free of charge if they do not have a car. Owing to the increase in petrol prices we have decided we must make a charge to other members. Locally will be £1. Greater distances will be 30p per mile.



Outings 2017

This year we are organising the following outings:

SUNDAY 28th MAY -
HELMINGHAM HALL SPRING PLANT FAIR - £20
STOWMARKET, SUFFOLK



SUNDAY 16th JULY
GREAT DIXTER
HOUSE & GARDENS
£22.50
NORTHAM, KENT



SUNDAY 10th SEPTEMBER
WISLEY GARDENS PLANT SHOW £12.50



PLEASE RESERVE YOUR SEAT FOR ANY OF THE ABOVE OUTINGS AT THE STORE WITH A £5 (non returnable) DEPOSIT.

IN THE GARDEN

The new gardening year begins - the autumn/winter digging complete (I wish!) At the time of writing a cold winter was forecast, so protection of plants is important. Wrap vulnerable plants in fleece to offer some cover. Also the ground can be warmed by covering with fleece or placing cloches where early sowings and planting will be made.

JANUARY:

Flower garden: Prune Wisterias now cutting back summer side shoots to 2 - 3 buds. For early Roses prune now whilst dormant, cut back to just above a bud and remove crossing or dead branches. Cut back the old foliage from ornamental grasses before growth begins. Cut down old stems of perennial plants like Sedum, be careful of new growth. Remove old Hellebore leaves also faded flowers from winter Pansies.

Vegetable garden: For early Peas, put the cloche in place now for a few weeks to warm up the soil. Prune Blackcurrant and Gooseberry bushes to maintain a productive framework. Try forcing Rhubarb by placing an upturned bucket or bin over the crown - tender pink stems will be available

in 8 weeks' time. From the armchair, plan the vegetable plot by browsing the seed catalogues, but of course, wait to buy all your seeds at a discount from your Store opening in February.

FEBRUARY:

Flower garden: Towards the end of the month, prune summer flowering Clematis. Prune overwintered Fuchsias back to one or two buds on each shoot. Lift and divide Snowdrops still in the green if you want to create more plants. Plant bare root Roses, providing there are no frosts.

Vegetable garden: Start chitting the seed Potatoes you have purchased from the Store at bargain prices - I think it is the 5th year at the same price! Start sowing Leek and Onion seed now under cover. Prepare vegetable beds by removing all weeds and forking in plenty of manure. If they need shaping, now is the time to prune Apple and Pear trees. Leave Plum, Cherry and Apricots till summer to avoid silver leaf disease. To give them a good start, I sow some Onion and Shallot sets in a seed tray, transplanting them when the weather warms up.

MARCH:

Flower garden: If the soil is workable, dig in compost or well rotted manure into your beds. You

can also work in pelleted chicken manure or fish, blood and bone - both available in the Store. Plant summer flowering bulbs, Gladiolus, Lillies, etc. Feed your Roses and treat with a fungicide to prevent blackspot. Sow your annual flower seeds - they can be very rewarding as you watch them grow into full bloom.

Vegetable garden: Sow early Broad Beans in a seed tray for transplanting later. Cover seed beds after preparation with black plastic to keep it drier and warmer. Towards the end of the month, plant your seed Potatoes if the ground is suitable. Plant out Onion sets and Shallots and transplant those grown in seed trays. Again, only if the ground is suitable, sow Carrots, Radishes and Lettuce under cloches. Mulch Rhubarb with a thick layer of compost or well rotted manure to keep it healthy and reduce moisture loss, but take care not to cover the crown. In the greenhouse, seed sowing can begin, winter Brassicas, Tomatoes, Lettuce and annual bedding. Keep a diary of what you sowed when and when harvested. This helps so you can ensure your best vegetables are ready for our Shows.

Last year we sold 14 inch Ratten Hanging Baskets for £17 each - they were exceptional with approximately 15 plants in each. Advanced orders would be helpful - so please order in the Stores.

Bob

If you are unable to get to the store to renew your membership for 2017, then complete the form below

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM FOR 2017

Name.....

Address.....
.....

Post Code..... Tel:.....

e-Mail.....

Send this form with a cheque for £2.50 made payable to
"Benfleet Horticultural Society" to:-
The Membership Secretary, Mr R Frith, 57 Cumberland Avenue,
Benfleet, Essex. SS7 5NU

If you require a year book, please enclose a C5 stamped addressed envelope with a 2nd class stamp on it, or bring your new membership card into the store and collect your copy.