



# BENFLEET HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2018

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[www.benfleethorticulturalsociety.org.uk](http://www.benfleethorticulturalsociety.org.uk)

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## 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.



## NEWS UPDATES

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, or send it to Terry Babbage at [terrybabbage@gmail.com](mailto:terrybabbage@gmail.com) or register it as shown on the home page of the website.

## From the chairman

A very Happy New Year to you all I hope 2017 was a good gardening year for you.

The Society is going from strength to strength with a good membership of 555. We appreciate the help all our volunteers give us in running our stores on the four days a week we are open, also for the regular helpers who unload the bags of soil we get through each year.

Hazel and Bob have been active getting a good supply of weekly bedding plants for you to purchase. The perennial supplier who is Essex based have done us proud with excellent values. Also our alpines and hanging basket supplier has been appreciated by members.

### STORES

Doreen and Peter have excelled with the presentation and re-stocking of the shelves, also getting the back of the stores a new floor, a new carpet, a new roof and plans to update our electricity system. A new kitchen is planned and maybe a toilet later next year.

Our sales have been good Bob and Hazel visit our nurseries each week to top up our selection of plants. Sales of potatoes have declined again and someone ordered too many spring bulbs.

But its been a good year and a happy one many members popping in each week for a chat and to supply us with biscuits (thanks Jim). Thank you to all the weekly volunteers who help run the stores.

### SHOWS

Three good shows well attended with a regular number of exhibitors. Spring and Autumn are always the strongest, but the number of exhibits for the Autumn show is getting to maximum, so you need to get your entry forms in by Thursday (those turning up on the day may not be accepted)

Thanks to Sue and Bernadette our show secretaries. Thank you to Janet who cooks all those homemade cakes.



### OUTINGS

Thank you Hazel for organising our outings a

good variety. Wisley is always a sell out on the first day we open in February.) thank Leigh on Sea society for allowing us to use their RHS number to enable us to run 2 coaches. Wisley also was holding their flower show with NAFAS having a marquee of flower arrangements and The National Dahlia Show and many specialist nurseries.

We also visited Helmingham Hall Spring Plant Fair and, Great Dixter. We are also linking in with Castle Point Probus club with additional outings. One a tour of Suffolk and a Visit to the Geffrye Museum and Christmas lights.

### QUIZNIGHTS

Thanks to Jenny three sell out events. Simon is a master Quiz master and we are grateful to him for his humour and organisational ability.

### CLUB EVENTS

Five Events held with a good mixture of subjects.

We now get 50 to 60 members attending (there is room for more)it is a free event with refreshments Brian Carline spoke on Allotment Soil Sweat And Tears. Neil and Linda Holdaway on NGS (yellow book) Essex Gardens Michael Sullivan on Alpines, Alexander Hunt on We're crackers about nuts. Finishing with Julia Tetley on Two Tree Island. A good choice is arranged for you this year.

A very big thank you to all my committee members who meet regularly to manage the affairs of the Society. A great team.

### Email /Newsletters

We have reduced the number of hard copies of our newsletters we issue and replaced with our more frequent emails. Thank you to Laurence for producing these, So if we don't have your email address you will not be able to receive them.

A hard copy will be available for you to collect if you don't have a computer. May I wish you all a very happy and successful gardening year in 2018.

Terry

# CLUB EVENTS FOR 2018



## 23rd 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  
7th 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, April 5th  
midday. As you probably know, this can be  
done on our website.*

## FREE - NO CHARGE CLUB EVENT 2018

*Refreshments will be provided*

**Mon Feb 12**

**Darren Lerigo "What Do I Do With This Space" Garden Ideas From Around The World**

Darren travels the UK making topiaries with the wonderful Charlotte Molesworth. He is particularly interested in plants that Help The Honeybee and is currently researching and writing a book on this subject for Northern Bee Books. His talk looks at the fascinating ways people garden around the world, and asks if we can steal any ideas for our own patch at home.

**Mon April 9**

**Nick Dobson**

**"International Flowers"**

Nick is now a freelance events organiser and speaker having been Principal Librarian for Redbridge, He has been a keen gardener for more than 40 years and is a former National Fuchsia Champion.

**Mon July 2**

**Maz Morgan**

**"Spring Time in Japan"**

Maz is one of our members and a member of the Royal Horticultural Society and gives an excellent illustrated talk on her visit to Japan.

**Mon Sept 10**

**Alison Marsden GbD**

**"Right Place ,Right Plant**

Alison combines horticultural knowledge with practical experience to explain the Why as well as the How of gardening. Advising gardeners since 2004 and tutoring for Kent Adult Education since 2010 with courses ranging from GYO to design and propagation. Qualified RHS L3 and more recently in Social Therapeutic Horticulture.

**Mon Oct 15**

**John Hewson**

**" Growing Sweet Peas"**

John trained at Portsmouth Parks and Oaklands College of Horticulture at St Albans. For 21 years he was Grounds Officer for H.M. Forces in Plymouth, Lakenheath and Colchester. John has grown Sweet Peas specialising in the scented varieties, since coming to East Anglia in 1983 although introduced to them by his parents in Yorkshire as a school boy.

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

# Crafts

**PARENTS -  
GRANDPARENTS  
- CHILDREN**

**W**e have 3 very successful shows each year and at our Autumn show we had over 500 entries, but no entries in the children's classes. We want to encourage children to leave the computer occasionally and do something creative, SO PLEASE show them the classes in your year book for our 3 shows. There is a trophy for the child with the most points and a small prize for every entry.

Listed below is a selection of the classes for 2018, complete details are in your year book-

*A Daffodil in a vase - An Easter Card - Grow a Potato Challenge - A Drawing of your pet - Any vegetable grown by the exhibitor - A collage of sweet wrappers*

*So why not have a go!*

# NEWS FROM THE STORE

## The Stores Managers Report 2017

When is the weather right for gardeners? If trade in the Stores is the yardstick, this Spring was good, summer not perfect but autumn very good. That has reflected our takings throughout the year. Overall takings are up and that is with membership remaining almost the same as in 2016.

I am sure you have all noticed the increase in the size of the shop, and the carpet, which are agreeable features. There really is no need to remove your shoes to walk on the carpet. Thanks to Peter and Doreen for all they do in the shop.

Gill provides us with an excellent range of seeds and there was a good take up particularly in vegetables. The old tradition of summer bedding seems to be out of fashion, but there is little more satisfying in gardening than producing all those colourful summer plants from seed. So come in in early spring and browse the flower seeds. If you are new to gardening and not sure where to start, please ask. Thanks Gill.

It is intended to have the complete renewal of the electrics carried out during January when we are closed. This is very necessary to bring our antiquated system up to modern and safe standards. We propose to use modern efficient LE.D lighting and provide more power points around the stores. Also we are considering

specialist horticultural lighting above the area where we keep plants inside.

It is impossible to run a shop like ours without incurring losses. Should we under order and then sell out of potatoes, bulbs, etc and keep apologising for having sold out, or over order and accept the losses when not sold? We try to keep our mark up very low to be competitive for you but all unsold perishable products use up the working profits. We welcome feedback from you, our members, so if you have thoughts on the shop, please do not hesitate to say.

Because our supplier of compost had run out of our usual brand we will start the new year with a 50 litre bag which will sell at the same price as our normal larger bag. However it is a very good compost. I would like early feedback on whether we should continue to stock it when our usual one is available

The success of our society is dependent on the success of the stores and the stores are successful because of all the support received during the year." In no particular order" as they say on Strictly" I would like to thank.

The team I call on when I have a delivery coming in. Dan, Peter, Peter, John, Chris and Mick. If they have a phone that displays the callers name, I am surprised but pleased if they answer when it is me.

Peter and Doreen manage the stores, they are so committed in everything

they do from ordering, to keeping all the displays clean and tidy, and organising all the work that was needed to keep the shop dry, and more. Hazel has introduced and developed our bird feed sales. These are an added bonus because when you come in for bird food you rarely leave without a plant. She also organises all the staffing of the stores and helps buying plants.

The volunteers who staff the shop, Alice, Bernadette, Doreen, Hazel, June, Kathy, Laurence, Lyn, Neville, Peter and Terry (when he has a spare moment) not forgetting our very energetic and keen work experience lad, Michael. The shop would not open without all your time and effort.

As I have said before I am not sure what I do. Stores Manager ????? Some say talk too much. Some say delegate too much.

However, we could stand in the shop all day, but without YOU, our members supporting us we would fail so THANKS to YOU ALL

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.

*I look forward to seeing you all on opening day Thursday 1st February*

Bob

## Outings 2018

This year we are organising the following outings:



**SUNDAY MAY 27th**

DODDINGTON PLACE GARDENS - Cost £21 - to include Coffee & Biscuits on arrival.

**SUNDAY JULY 22nd**

WISLEY GARDENS £13 - Coach only as Admission free.



**SUNDAY SEPT 2nd**

SUSSEX PRAIRIES - UNUSUAL PLANT & GARDEN FAIR Cost - £20



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 6th year at the same price! Start sowing Leek and Onion seed now under cover with heat. 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.

Bob

If you are unable to get to the store to renew your membership for 2018, then complete the form below

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM FOR 2018

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.