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Charlton & Blackheath
Amateur Horticultural Society
Founded 1950

www.cabahs.wordpress.com

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2021

Grow Friends, Grow Fit ... Grow a Garden!

Back in the previous January we had eleven live events planned for 2020, most of us had never heard of Zoom and we were deliberating the management of our online presence. How things changed! Ever since then, like most organisations, we have been scrambling to keep up. Our slogan for 2020 *Grow Friends, Grow Fit ... Grow a Garden!* couldn't have been more appropriate.

We know that this year's festive season and the start of 2021 has been a challenging and unusual time for everyone and are pleased that the benefits of outdoor and green spaces have been acknowledged by the Government, and that parks and gardens remain open throughout London. Even in a dim January it is worth wrapping up and getting outside – observing social distancing and the government guidelines of course. Some of our members have done just that.

Anna wrote:

"I am taking advantage of a gloriously sunny but cold day on Thursday 7th January and enjoying the splendours of Hall Place.

The sun is filtering through the two London Plane trees, allowing their magnificence to shine and 'lord it' over the estate.

The grounds are maintained to a very high standard, with flowering pansies flanking the south wall of the Hall. Along the upper walkway flanked by herbaceous borders, a mature climber/rambler rose Seagull is displaying a few clusters of creamy- white flowers peeking above the old brick wall. Further along the wall is draped a large, lemon-green Clematis cirrhosa, absolutely smothered in masses of a delicate curtain of bell-shaped flowers, highlighted by its fresh green foliage. I think I want one of these!



Beneath is a cluster of pale grey-green Sisyrinchium and dotted around are pale pink Kaffir lilies still flowering happily.

Further along I enter another long double border ready for spring, with the fig tree enjoying the sun and protection of the wall. On the shady side stand six rose obelisks, their pale green paintwork creating

an architectural feature against the backdrop of the dark green, clipped yew hedging. I had never noticed these before. Three of the roses are in flower, one of which is a beautiful deep velvet shade. Opposite is a lemon-yellow South African daisy in flower, planted with more *Sisyrinchium*. I enter the Elizabethan Garden, a north-south enclosure edged with two serpentine lines of box separated by a wide strip of grass, with twelve hedge rooms, six on either side. The notice board advises that there are proposals to redesign the planting which is exciting news. At the moment these rooms are planted up with a mixture of herbaceous and shrubs but there is a small-leaved mock orange in flower that stands out and a small, clipped Kowhai tree from New Zealand. The grounds are looking magnificent and the trees really do stand out on a day like today. The white-barked birch, *Betula jacquemontii* in particular looks stunning against the blue sky. These grounds are open to us all and I, for one, will be visiting on a regular basis throughout the year, restrictions permitting. But I need to finish now, as my fingers are starting to sting with the cold!"

January is a time for planning and the seed catalogues are dropping through our letterboxes. When the RHS magazine 'The Garden', my monthly copy of 'Gardens Illustrated' and two seed catalogues arrived all on the same day, I thought that Christmas had come again!

But what food to grow in your vegetable patch? It's a hard question when you are first starting out and you can be tempted to grow all the vegetables you've ever seen, as a friend of mine did last year with varied success. The easy generous performers will reap rewards, but then there are some where there's not much difference in taste whether bought or home-grown and others which take up too much time and space to really earn their keep. If you are new to growing vegetables, don't hesitate to contact one of our committee and we can talk you through.

With millions finding peace in gardening over the past year, the positive impact of plants on our health and well-being is a constant theme. RHS Chelsea Flower Show celebrates this with a new garden category, Sanctuary Gardens (replacing Urban Gardens). One of these will be an NHS tribute garden 'Finding our Way'. I am sure this is something close to our hearts.

Finding our way: an NHS tribute garden <https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chelsea-flower-show/gardens>

Many are aware of the worrying decline in bee populations over the last few years. This has been attributed largely due to the use of certain pesticides, in particular Neonicotinoids. In a worrying move some countries, including the UK, are planning to allow their use again. This is in direct contrast to the RHS who are encouraging more bees into their gardens and a Healthy Bees Plan published by the Welsh government. For those of you concerned about this, the petition on banning Neonicotinoids is here:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/563943>

In terms of garden trends, Pinterest gives an interesting glimpse into what people were looking at in 2020:

- a 90% increase in 'front door planters'
- a 75% increase in 'bedroom plant décor'
- a 65% increase in 'plant shelves'
- a 60% increase in 'living room plants'
- a 60% increase in 'bathroom plant ideas'
- a 55% increase in 'Zen garden design' suggesting that people are looking to their gardens for peace and tranquillity.

It remains to be seen whether these will continue into 2021.

Gardening notes

- Plant fanatics Ellen Mary and Michael Perry offer a podcast, available on YouTube which gives short snappy films on houseplant trends, patio planting and much more. Search '**Plant Based Podcast TV**'.
- The **Garden Masterclass** continue to offer a range of talks from Piet Oudolf to Dan Pearson on their website.

- The **London Gardens Trust** also has a series of lectures on specific gardens. *Unforgettable Gardens - Burghley Walled Garden* takes place on 20 January. Tickets (£5) must be booked. Check the website for details.
- The **London Gardens Trust** has a lecture *The Integration of Derek Jarman's Garden* by Professor Michael Charlesworth on 25 January. Check their website for details.
- On [rhs.org.uk/digital-collections](https://www.rhs.org.uk/digital-collections) you can explore the varied forms of dahlias, illustrated with botanical images from the Lindley Library.

Do check out our website for further activities to get involved in.

Pat's 10 jobs for January

1. Cut back some of the foliage on *Iris unguicularis* to reveal the blooms which are scented
2. Now is a good time to prune deciduous trees but not magnolia or flowering cherries plums or almonds which are better pruned in summer
3. Try some hardwood cuttings from roses and shrubs by using cuttings 6 to 12 inches long and cutting below a bud at the base and making a slanted cut at the top. Plant either in the soil by making a slit trench with a spade or placing in pots of good garden compost and leaving outside in a sheltered spot.
4. Remove old leaves from hellebores to avoid overwintering fungal leaf spot and do not add to the compost heap either. This also applies to pansies and violas.
5. Spread some of your homemade compost around shrubs and plants but if you have enough cover the soil too. I never have enough despite the fact I have five compost bins between the garden and the allotment.
6. Check that the contents of your compost bins are neither too dry or too wet but damp by adding some water if necessary and mixing the contents.. This time of year we have a lot of dry woody material and if there's too much the bin will not rot down.
7. Prune established gooseberries and white and redcurrants now by removing dead wood and low lying branches and pruning side shoots back to two buds from the base. Shorten main branches to one quarter and mulch to retain moisture and to feed.
8. Prune apples and pears grown as bushes or standards.
9. Keep birdbaths from freezing over in very cold weather by floating a ball on the surface and melting with a little warm water. You can float a ball on a pond too.
- 10 Encouraging birds in the garden by using a variety of feeders will help with pest control but feeders must be washed regularly to avoid spreading disease to other birds.

We start the new year with a talk from Graham Blunt of Plantbase on exotic plants, online at 7.30pm.

Quote of the month: Never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden.

Happy gardening all and take care!

Contact us on: cabahshortisoc@gmail.com