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Charlton & Blackheath
Amateur Horticultural Society
Founded 1950

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NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2021
Grow Friends, Grow Fit ... Grow a Garden!

February 15th 2021 would, in normal circumstances, have been our Annual General Meeting. You will by now be aware that we are managing the normal business of the AGM differently this year. The Chair's Report, Treasurer's Report and summary from our President are now posted on our website, along with Kathy's review of the Old Pond Garden Project. I hope you will take a moment to read these. The AGM is also the one meeting in the year when your committee stands for election and we take the opportunity to elect new members. In absence of being able to do this, we are co-opting a new committee member, Lynda Fean, who will help with our website and online activity. Formal elections will now take place in 2022.

Instead, we are very happy to welcome Dr. Catherine Horwood who will talk to us about the life and work of Beth Chatto. Beth Chatto is one of a line of female gardeners and if anyone is interested in reading more about women gardeners, Sue Bennett's book *Five Centuries of Women and Gardens* and Twigs Way's *Virgins, Weeders and Queens. A History of Women in the Garden*, are worth looking at.

Aaron Bertelsen begins his gardening column in the latest issue of *Gardens Illustrated* with 'February is my least favourite month of the year. About the only positive thing I can think to say about it is that it is short'. To a large extent I think I agree with this, especially as it now feels as though we are in lockdown plus, with the bitterly cold weather keeping most of us indoors at this moment. Prior to this, the amount of rain which had fallen was also making gardening difficult. My allotment, on heavy clay, was still holding water on Saturday.



It seems as though 2021 is beginning to challenge us gardeners already!

I have been following Fergus Garrett's gardening lectures on Zoom. I include, below, the way in which they organise their gardening year at Great Dixter. With such a large garden to manage, this is of critical importance, but Fergus' point is that a lot of the rush in the spring can be avoided if, for

example, some sowings of plants can be made earlier. As one of those gardeners who is guilty of ‘the mad spring rush’ when everything seems to need doing, I think I might take a lesson from this.

Month	Task
April	Sow Aquilegia, Digitalis, Campanula pyramidalis, Verbascum etc
May	Sow Lupins, Salvia sclarea and similar
June	Sow Hesperis, Wallflowers
August	Start trimming hedges, take cuttings, save seed, cut meadow areas
September	Take more cuttings, sow seed
October	Take more cuttings, sow seed, get prepared for frost
November	Protect tender plants, start planting bulbs, sow seeds
December	Complete bulb planting, tidy up and cut back so that early bulbs can make a show
January	Start tidying: cut back, weed, split, prune, compost
February	Continue with borders and pruning
March	Complete work on borders, continue pruning, prepare to fill gaps
April	Sow seeds, start taking cannas and dahlias out of storage and focus on summer display

The RHS website also includes a very useful **My Garden: Plan your garden for the year ahead**, which might be particularly useful to those starting out on their gardening journey, as well as the more seasoned gardeners amongst us.

Gardening notes

- **Fergus Garrett** has just produced a book, *Great Dixter: Then and Now*, beautifully illustrated with a section devoted to each area of the garden.
- 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**’.
- **Dulwich Picture Gallery** have a range of online talks with a plant based theme. £10, book online. The first one is on Thursday 4 March, *Unearthed: Photography’s Roots*.
- The **Gardens Trust** lecture series, *Portraits, Politics and Passion* has its third lecture on Winston Churchill’s garden at Chartwell on 16 February and the fourth and last is on Cedric Morris on 23 February, his garden and influence. Tickets £5 must be booked. Check the website for details.
- Twigs Way takes a look at how ruins have been used in gardens in another **Gardens Trust** lecture, *Ruins in the Landscape*, on 23 February. Tickets must be booked. Check the website for details.
- With increased attention being given to houseplants, Penny Sparke has produced a book *Nature Inside: Plants and Flowers in the Modern Interior* which examines the history of how plants have been used in indoor spaces.

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

Pat’s10 jobs for February:

1. As hellebores come into flower make sure that you mark any with coloured thread that you wish to save seed from but do remember that early bees may do their stuff and they may not come true to colour.
2. Prune established wisteria now back to two or three buds to get good flowers later. You can also prune older woody growth to reduce the size or weight of a plant which could overwhelm its support.
3. Prune late summer flowering clematis Group 3 (mostly small flowered viticella types) by reducing all growth back to buds that are 6 to 12 inches above the ground. If you don’t do this you end up with straggly plants only flowering at the top. After pruning give a feed and a mulch.

4. You can start dahlia tubers into growth by potting up in some fresh compost and giving a little water but keep frost free. Check over any stored tubers and discard any that are starting to rot.
5. Make sure you deadhead winter bedding such as pansies, violas and primula to keep your display going and remember that window boxes and pots next to the house become dry and will need a water..
6. Now is a good time to prune roses and then give them a mulch or feed when you've finished.
7. Sow sweet peas on a windowsill or in a cool greenhouse but do watch out for mice which love to steal them from pots!
8. Prune hazel trees or bushes round about now and keep the prunings for growing your peas up later on and they will last you a few years as well as look good in the veg garden.
9. Autumn fruiting raspberries bear fruit on new growth so chop all stems down to the ground now. This is also a good time to plant bare root raspberries such as Autumn Bliss or summer fruiting Glen Prosen.
10. Before thinking about direct sowing vegetable seeds try to warm up the soil by covering with old compost bags to give seeds a good start.

Most of the above will rely on the snow melting and the ground defrosting and make sure you avoid walking on frozen soil which will ruin its structure. Spring is on its way hopefully!

Next month Dr. David Marsh, garden historian, lecturer and writer, will be giving us a talk on “**Elephants in the Garden**”. There have been elephants in gardens since 1255 and this talk considers how menageries of one sort or another became “must have” garden features!

On a final and lighter note, you might want to take a look at the PlantBase Twitter feed, which shows Graham Blunt practicing for Naked Garden Day in May! Viewer you have been warned!

Happy gardening all and take care

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