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Charlton & Blackheath
Amateur Horticultural Society
Founded 1950

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NEWSLETTER MAY 2021

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

April has come and gone and here, in England, it was the driest and frostiest since records began and now there is a lot of expectation for the month of May to warm up so that we can all get on with the garden jobs we have been putting off! Fingers crossed.

For our talk this month we welcome Joe Beale, who will be telling us about the changing management of the local area, including Charlton, Greenwich Park and Blackheath and the impact this is having on local plants, as well as lichens and animals.

With the rather tentative approach of spring, the quotation below from Elizabeth von Arnim's *Elizabeth and her German Garden*, seems appropriate:



Each month the Garden Masterclass website holds a Q&A with one of their helpers. This month it was the turn of their Dutch representative. I was quite engaged by some of her answers:

Q: Which famous garden would you most like to be trapped in overnight?

A: Monet's Garden in Giverny, France.

Q: What garden task do you like best?

A: Deadheading my tulips, because it feels like saying goodbye to spring.

Gardening notes

With the current and proposed relaxation of restrictions, there are a huge number of activities to choose from. The list below is just a small selection.

- **The Garden Museum** has a range of talks beginning with the Lunchtime Talk this week on Coton Manor, the nation's favourite garden, 20 May. This is at the Museum itself but also livestreamed. Tickets £10. Check out their website for everything else they have on offer.

- Also on **May 20th** but closer to home - the **Charlton Community Gardens annual plant sale** from 5.30pm. Flyer is on our website and theirs, plants will be on sale outside member's homes in the Charlton area. So, a healthy walk too!
- For those of you interested in flower arranging, **The Garden Museum's** exhibition on Constance Spry begins on 17th May.
- Our very own **CABAHS Plant Sale and Community Day** is on Sunday May 30th, 11am. We are so pleased to include other organisations this year - the WI with a cake stall, the Toy Library making floral art, the Charlton Society, Community Gardens, Friends of Charlton Park. There will also be children's events including a Discovery Trail. See website for more details.
- **The London Gardens Trust** is holding its annual open gardens event online for the second year, 5.30-7.00 on Saturday 12 June (and then on demand). This proved extremely popular last year and is worth checking their website for further details.
- I recommended the free online talks by **Gresham College** some time ago, but was recently reminded that it is worth drawing attention to these again. They are very wide ranging and there is probably a subject to suit every taste.
- **Sussex Prairie Garden** is holding its Summer Plant Fair on 6 June, noon to 5.00. Booking essential. In my diary!
- Do continue to check **RHS** podcasts, The **London Gardens Trust** lecture series and Garden Masterclass.

Pat's 10 jobs for May:

1. Pot-grown dahlias and cannas can be hardened off ready for planting outside when risk of frost has passed.
2. Spring flowering shrubs such as Exochorda and Spiraea are best pruned as soon as they finish flowering, by cutting back one in three stems down to the ground and cutting back flowering shoots to a side shoot - but do watch out for nesting birds.
3. Lift and divide overcrowded daffodil clumps by separating offsets from the main bulbs and replanting immediately and then giving them a feed.
4. Carry out the Chelsea Chop at the end of the month on late flowering herbaceous perennials to extend the flowering period. I do about half the stems on Phlox, Penstemons and Asters by cutting half way down, above a leaf node.
5. Put plant supports in for tall growing perennials now before they flop when growth takes off.
6. Regularly tie in sweet pea shoots to their supports as they can easily snap in the wind.
7. Earth up potatoes by drawing up soil around the stems to prevent tubers becoming green and then harmful if eaten.
8. Sow French and runner beans under glass or indoors now, keep warm and then plant out next month. Our allotments have a number of plots with beans that have suffered frost damage over the past few weeks which in turn sets them back.
9. If growing courgettes and marrows ensure you keep them covered with a cloche or keep under cover before planting out at the end of the month.
10. Top up birdfeeders, but try to avoid using whole peanuts which can choke nesting baby birds.

Kathy's Old Pond Garden Update:

The volunteers have been incredible this month, I keep expecting them to find other things to do as restrictions start lifting, but they keep turning up even in the recent cold and rain! **Thank you to you all.** The garden is coming to life now that it is open to the public again (Mon-Fri, 10-4). It seems to be a "thing" to have a Covid jab in the library and then visit the walled gardens as a treat afterwards! So many new visitors finding the garden, it's lovely.

The planting is about 80% complete in the Old Pond Garden, and someone asked me what will happen when we have "finished" it. Finished a garden?! What an idea! Lots still to do - the baby weeds are coming back with a vengeance now, and probably will for the next seven years according to the old adage. Wood Avens, Ragwort and Sticky Willy are trying to rule again, but never fear, the Volunteers

won't let them! There are plenty of other jobs to do in the Long Borders, Rockery, and Peace Garden too, so if you are at a loose end do come along! (Tues 2-4, Thurs 10-12).

No Mow May

Are you trying this? PlantLife, the RHS and a lot of other groups are advocating not mowing for a month in order to help wildlife and increase biodiversity. But don't expect an instant meadow! The RSPB has a very practical page about why lawns make great habitats (search "Lawns for Wildlife" on the RSPB site), and it's worth remembering it is not only plants and insects which thrive in longer grass areas but also the bigger wildlife like birds, hedgehogs etc.

You can even do "No Mow May", "Let it Bloom June" and "Knee High July"... although you may need a scythe to get through the lawn by then!

And finally, a few reminders:

- We would like to encourage all those members who have not yet paid their £10 subscription to do so by the end of May please (or you can pay at the 30 May plant sale membership table).
- If you live in Greenwich, please vote for the CABAHS Long Border project! Details on the website on the Old Pond Garden page.
- If you are able to donate plants on 30 May for our plant sale, please let us know if you need a collection, or can drop off at the garden the week before.

CABAHS Chair

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