



# Newsletter

Summer 2007  
Issue 61

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## **Letter from the Chair**

Dear Members,

I often prepare my letter to you after a show and today is no exception. I have just returned from the Spring Show and have put all our entries back in their place, and as I took time to have a cup of tea I reflected on the day. If you were like me and thought that most of the blooms would be past their best, then we were in for a treat. As exhibitors started to drift in and stage their exhibits it was clear that we were going to have a bumper show. By the time judging commenced the floral tables were brimming with a wonderful, colourful and varied display of spring flowers. The other classes were also well represented, especially the Children's and Domestic classes. I would still, however, ask members to consider swelling the numbers in both the Floral Art and Handicraft classes. The standard was high but, as I'm sure the exhibitors would agree, it would be good to see more competition. Included in this mailing is a Show Schedule for the Lambeth Country Show, so please consider putting an entry in and make it a bumper show. Whether you are able to exhibit or not, perhaps you might like to consider helping for a couple of hours over the weekend. If you can offer some time please let me know at the Trading Hut, monthly talks or by phone. Many thanks.

I would like to welcome any new members who have joined since the last mailing; we look forward to a long association. At our recent AGM we welcomed a new Treasurer, Karina Reed, who takes on the helm from our retiring Treasurer Dot Yates. Dot has been our Treasurer for fourteen years but had decided she would like to pass the ledger on. On behalf of all of us I would like to thank Dot for her time and commitment to this important post. I'm pleased to report that Dot is going to stay with us as a committee member. Also moving on due to other commitments is our Editor, Helena Kowalska. Again I would on your behalf like to thank her for her input to our Society. We wish her well in the future and hope that she will keep in touch. Val Hunn, our Assistant Editor, has kindly stepped up to the plate and has become our Editor. As well as the remaining officers and committee members we welcome two new committee members, Brenda Selwyn and Annie James, who I'm sure will be a great asset to the Society.

I wonder if any members came across an article in the press recently which stated that 70% of the public say they have no links to a local organisation? This figure rose to 80% amongst the 18 to 24 year olds. Whilst many blame time constraints, the real reason seems to be the modern curse of apathy. The Scouts, the Guides, the WI, the Church, and even the Labour and Conservative Parties have seen a downturn in membership. However, we have seen an increase in the popularity of allotments and the growing of vegetables. More and more people are seeing the benefits of growing their own food. More and more people are seeing the benefits of gardening. In fact it has been proved scientifically that gardening is good for you both physically and mentally. Researchers found that gardening even weeding can

lower blood pressure, increase brain activity and produce a general upbeat feeling. So influential are its benefits that it has been acknowledged with an appropriate name - horticultural therapy. It certainly makes interesting reading, although not that surprising, and something we have known for many years, but my point is that we are very fortunate to have an active and hardworking committee and many volunteers who help whenever they can to ensure that we provide a very comprehensive array of services and benefits.

If you think you can get a little more involved to get in touch with me, Rhiannon or one of the other members of the committee. Members are always welcome to attend our monthly committee meetings held in Nettlefold Hall on every second Wednesday of the month. So let us buck the trend and continue to thrive.

I seem to have had some time on my hands as I found myself flicking through some of our old newsletters the other day, and I started to read about some entertainment that was provided by one of our

members at a Social Evening. Ken Pye was a keen self-taught keyboard player and he was persuaded by me to play some of his tunes. They went down very well, a welcome interlude between the presentation of our cups and awards and the refreshments. As well as Ken's contribution we have sometimes had a quiz or a Floral Art demonstration, but I thought that if we could get 4 or 5 members who have musical skills and could sing or play a piece around a horticultural theme it would make a nice change. I know the social is a long way off, but if you are able to offer your services please let me know.

I do hope you visit the Trading Hut and have a look at the extensive range of bedding, patio and trailing plants that we will be stocking during the month of May.

Happy Gardening!

*Tony Pizzoferro*

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## EDITORIAL



Well – you will see from our Chairman's letter that our Editor, Helena Kowalska, has decided to concentrate on her MSc and attendant exams, and has passed on the baton to me. I'm sure you will join me in wishing her well for her studies, and let's hope she has a bit of time to spare for her garden as well!

Luckily she is staying available for consultation in case I get stuck in the complications of word-processing, but from now on the mistakes are all mine.

How are your gardens coping with the sudden, very hot, onset of spring this year? In this issue you will find some practical advice about making the best use of water, a perennial problem these days.



We hope you will take advantage of the **BEDDING PLANT SALE** at The Hut, which runs on weekends from **May 5/6<sup>th</sup> to 26/27<sup>th</sup> inclusive**. The details are in The Hut section on the back page. Watch those late frosts – don't be tempted to put the plants out too early!

We had a really super Spring Show, and gained some new members - we have also recruited new members through the Website, which is still being developed. Have a look at it – the more hits it gets, the easier it is to access. [www.lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](http://www.lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk)



The deadline for the next issue is **21<sup>st</sup> July** – but you don't have to wait till then! – and will be accompanied by the Summer Show Schedule. If you don't receive it by late August, please contact our Secretary. Enjoy your summer!

*Val Hunn*

## COACH OUTING: MYDDLETON HOUSE and CAPEL MANOR GARDENS Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2007

We had the warmest day yet of the year for our trip. **Myddleton House** in Enfield was built in 1814 by the great-grandfather of E A Bowles. EAB lived there from his birth in 1865 until his death in 1954. He was a famous plantsman and Vice-President of the RHS, holding their Victorian Medal of Honour. A keen entomologist and a skilled artist, he was also a plant breeder, known as the "Crocus King" - many crocuses and other plants are still grown today, and many bear his name.

The garden, neglected after his death, was taken over by the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority, who use the house as their headquarters. Garden restoration has been ongoing since 1984.

The Head Gardener, Christine Murphy, gave us a guided tour, showing her detailed knowledge of the garden's contents and history. Near the house were the impressive *Lavatera arborea* "Variegata", a tall mallow with green leaves blotched with cream, and the lime-green *Smyrniium perfoliatum*, at first glance looking like a euphorbia, with a Glastonbury Thorn behind. Wandering past beds of Scilla and primroses, Corkscrew hazel *Corylus avellana* "Contorta", *Sylibum marianum* (Milk Thistle), and scented *Viburnum* "Ann Russell", we reached Tom Tiddler's Ground, an area EAB planted with variegated and purple-leaved plants. Nearby were a *Viburnum Farreri*, over 100 years old, but now, sadly, suffering from honey fungus; and three different elderberries - red-leaved, fern-leaf and upright. The garden is managed to be wildlife-friendly, and supports over 60 species of birds. Where possible, trees are left where they fall to provide a haven for insects.

A huge Wisteria, grown from seed in 1903, grows up and through a 400-year old yew tree, and cascades down its far side. Beside the filled-in bed of the New River is the Tulip Terrace, the bulbs grown in beds edged in box. Unfortunately, they are often eaten by Muntjac deer! Behind the wall here is the old kitchen garden, a 2-acre site still waiting to be reclaimed - as there are only two gardeners, this could be a long way off. Opposite are the famous beds of dwarf bearded iris, a treat a little later in the year. Behind here is the Rose Garden, edged by wooden pergolas supporting climbers, such as the wonderfully-scented *Akebia quinata* with its insignificant brown-red flowers. The centrepiece of the Rose Garden is the old stone market cross from Enfield, surrounded by geometric box-edged beds of tree peonies, and old rose varieties good for their

perfume and autumn hips of assorted colours and shapes. We returned to the house past the lake, originally of puddle clay but now lined with butyl sheet, a home to very active carp, geese, waterfowl, water lilies and *Gunnera*.. Overlooking the lake, the terrace, with stone urns and planters, houses succulents and cacti in the summer.

After the tour, we had a short time to get a drink or buy a plant before leaving on our next leg to Capel Manor Gardens, a few minutes down the road.

**Capel Manor** is a specialist college training 16-60+ year olds in careers in horticulture, floristry, garden design, arboriculture, animal care and countryside studies. The grounds cover 30 acres, with permanent features, and today there was also the Spring Gardening Show. I lost my way quite early on - everywhere were plants to see, and gardening ideas and styles to remember.

The many and very varied demonstration gardens included: a stark modern design, lots of paving, with sculptured box, and decorative stone balls on a bed of slate chippings; gravel paths, brick pillars, terracotta pots; a dog-leg stone path, evergreen shrubs, euphorbias, tall box, and silver cardoon; a pool, backed by stone steps leading to a raised arbour with decorative ironwork.

In the glasshouses, bright red amaryllis, white chrysanthemums, vivid blue tall salvia; large colourful coleus, spider plants, begonias, Christmas cactus, dark tradescantia, and money plants. We wandered past beds of primulas in mixed colours under white-barked birch trees; a Judas tree, its cerise flowers springing directly from the bark; a tall conifer trimmed to a spiral shape; and many other fascinating and exotic plants.

Finally, after visiting the stables with the wonderful Shire horses, I found the Garden Show. Housed in two marquees were a large display of over 20 bonsai trees, put on by Capel Manor Bonsai Group, sweet peas in their pastel colours, roses, perennials, topiary, pelargoniums, cacti, succulents, alpines and a range of crafts - something of interest for everybody.

On a huge grassy area were many different horticultural pitches, selling garden ornaments, tools, and of course plants, which were reasonably priced and of good quality. And so back to the coach, past the calm Japanese garden, with waterfalls and raked gravel, and in contrast, Kim Wilde's fun Jungle Gym garden for children, with flying waterspouts!

Betty Cox

## GNOMES – GARDEN AND OTHERWISE

A year or so ago, a BBC programme, in frolicsome mood, attempted to take a garden gnome into the Chelsea Flower Show. Permission was refused by a slightly affronted official; just not on; garden gnomes were *persona non grata*. I was not surprised. Garden gnomes are considered naff, below flamingos, or signs that read “You don’t have to be mad to enter but it helps”.

This judgement I consider to be unfair. Gnomes have a long and involved history, and have introduced the word “gnomic” into the language. A gnostic statement is a moral aphorism – in popular form, a proverb. But what have flamingos done except advertise Florida? Apart from its gaudy colouring, the flamingo is an overrated bird. Watch a group of them; continue to watch; then, just as you have decided they are artificial, one will actually move, gawky as well as gaudy. Like panda bears, they lack animation.

The gnome is inanimate, of course, but he represents man’s attempt to understand and order the world around, and a moral code by which to live. The gnome is prevalent in European folklore, especially Greece. The gnome’s pointed cap is suggestive of Phrygian headwear, and the name Greek-derived. Also, a tentative suggestion, the Chorus of a Greek tragedy, with its comment on character and action, is of a gnostic nature.

Paracelsus’ 16<sup>th</sup> century treatise identifies the four elements as represented by nymphs (water), sylphs (air), salamanders (fire) and our particular interest, gnomes (earth). Living under the earth, realistically he is seen as bearded, bent, ugly - and who would not be, living under the earth – even if, as once believed, he is guarding buried treasure. However, the contemporary gnome is much changed. In Disney’s “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” – a variant in name only – they are miners, and decent enough to take to a garden party. Sir Charles Isham, owner of Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire, completed the process of domestication. In the 1850s, much taken by porcelain gnomes made in Germany, he took them into his home and heart. Soon they spread outwards into the gardens of his estate, and were much admired.

Today’s gnome invariably wears a genial expression, is pink-cheeked; only the cap and tunic are unchanged. A well-known garden catalogue offers one seated on a bench made of twigs, clutching a pair of squirrels. I await further developments, such as gnomes taking baths, or holding a notice inscribed “Keep off the Grass”. If you are not wholly dedicated to a few structural plants separated by rock and gravel, wisely since some structural plants look aggressive enough attack one another, consider the gnome. My version of an acceptable gnome would be carved from stone, say serpentine, be seen emerging from a miniature tunnel, spaded by you, and chomping on a pair of squirrels!

*Georgina Stanning*

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Just as you receive this Newsletter, our Secretary, Rhiannon Harlow Smith, will have started off the **LHS Open Gardens Season** by opening her garden on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May.

There are eight Open Garden events this year, covering eleven gardens, all described in the brochure which accompanied your Spring 2007 Newsletter. If you have mislaid this, please contact Rhiannon, by phone, at The Hut or at one of our monthly talks. The Open Gardens have proved to be a relaxing and sociable way to spend a Sunday afternoon – people even look at the plants!

Please remember that at least one person in every visiting group **must be a current member**, and show their membership card.

In this issue you can read about our first **Coach Outing**, four of which have been arranged this year by our Outings Organiser, Brendan Byrne. These are always great fun and very well-subscribed, but inevitably people do drop out at the last minute. If you have not booked, but would like to come on an outing, please get in touch with Brendan and get onto the reserve list.

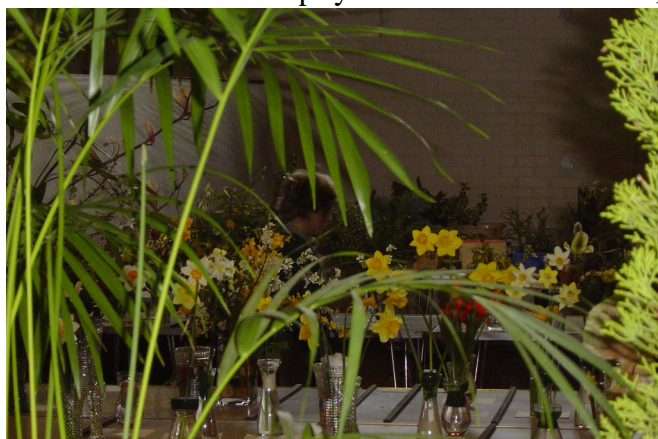
Contact details for Society Officers are on the back page.

## LHS SPRING SHOW: Saturday March 31<sup>st</sup> 2007

Saturday morning dawned bright and dry, which was good news for all the members who were squelching round their gardens with secateurs, hoping to find something to show that had not already gone over, or been battered by the recent rain.

Once everything was displayed in the Nettlefold Hall, however, it became evident that despite global warming, our gardens are producing a stunning variety of spring plants.

There was a terrific display of daffodils and narcissi, a number of early tulips to make up for the lack



of hyacinths, and an expansive selection of pot plants and troughs. Most impressive was the colour and variety of the foliage vases – one of which won the shield for best horticultural exhibit. The Floral Art section was better subscribed this year, and there were some intriguing interpretations of popular song titles. As usual, the Domestic classes were bursting with jams, jellies, marmalades, baps, loaves, scones and biscuits. People had obviously been busy with handicrafts over the winter, and it was gratifying to see the Children's classes

well-entered this year – amazing how many things you can do with a loo-roll tube!

In all, there were 52 entrants who showed 262 exhibits.

### TROPHIES AWARDED

**Shield for the Best Horticultural Exhibit** – Robert McConnell for his vase of mixed flowering shrubs, including forsythia, camellia, magnolia, cherry, mahonia and spirea.

**Joan Axon Shield for the Best Floral Art Exhibit** – Mrs D Woodeson for “Tie a Yellow Ribbon” – 12 yellow roses on an upright bough, which was encircled by a yellow ribbon.

**Cheviot Gardens Award for the Best Domestic Exhibit** – Louise Jackson for her 5 cheese scones.

**Lily Jeal Plate for Most Points in the Domestic Section** – Agnès Geoghegan

**Cup for the Best Handicrafts Exhibit** - Mrs D Woodeson for her Millennium 2000 needlecraft sampler, 16 panels depicting historic scenes from 1066 to the Columbia space shuttle in 1981.

**Cup for the Best Children's Exhibit** – Maeve Fennelly for her painting “Tree of Dreams”, with branches to chocolate world, playland, free shoes, angel land and fairy land.

Merchandise from The Hut was on sale – plenty of opportunity to buy things for the garden at lower prices – and there was plenty of time to chat over a cup of tea and a cake, and perhaps win something in the raffle. As always, we had a very enjoyable and social day.

Perhaps you would like to enter something in the next shows? Bring your entries to the Lambeth Country Show in July, or the LHS Summer Show in early September – details available from the Secretary (see back page) or our website,

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



**Doris Woodeson receives the Joan Axon Shield from Show Secretary Bob Tydeman**

## TO BEE, OR NOT TO BEE?

In this lovely spring weather, with early flowers and fruit trees in bloom, bumble bees (*Bombus*, 26 species) are the earliest bees to appear.

Overwintering queens wake up and search for nest sites – usually in grassy tussocks, under hedges, holes in walls or their preferred site – old mouse nests. Once established, they start to collect nectar and pollen and in doing so pollinate many plants and flowers. The queen lays eggs and rears a colony. The first workers emerge around May, depending on the species, and continue to forage for nectar and pollen. Honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) emerge from their hives as the weather warms up; a few are in my garden now, in April. Everyone is familiar with their life-cycle, as they are the most social of bees, living in highly-organised colonies of thousands, and travelling quite a distance for their favoured nectar and pollen sources. Again, as they visit flowers, they transfer pollen and fertilise the plant. They are the only bees to produce honey – this is to feed their own offspring, but luckily for us, they make an excess.

Around the middle of April, solitary Red Mason bees (*Osmia rufa*) emerge. The adults have spent the winter in a nest in a hole in a piece of rotten wood, or a hollow plant stalk. They will mate within a few days of emerging, and then the females set about finding their own nest site, laying eggs and sealing them in compartments with mud (hence “mason”). Each bee works alone – they are not organised. As they forage for nectar and pollen to feed on and equip their offspring’s nest, they pollinate early plants and flowers, especially fruit trees, raspberries, and early strawberries. Later other solitary bees, such as the Blue Mason bee, leafcutter bees, and wool-carder bees emerge.

Between them, bumble, honey and solitary bees pollinate practically every plant that needs insect pollination – garden plants, food crops, wild flowers – and without them, the world would soon be very short of food. Does it surprise you, then, to hear that all these bees are under threat?

Bees have hitherto been rather taken for granted. Honeybees have had well-publicised problems in recent years, particularly from

tracheal and varroa mites. Mite infestations can seriously damage a hive, as so many bees are living so close together. In Britain, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) runs the Honeybee Health Programme, employing 40 bee inspectors who monitor hives and other habitats in order to spot problems early and prevent disasters. In 2005 Defra threatened to cut the number of inspectors, but after protests by beekeepers they have dropped this plan. You may have read earlier this year that honeybees in the USA are suffering from the mysterious “Colony Collapse Disorder” (CCD). This is characterised by sudden colony death with a lack of adult bees, and has reduced the USA’s commercial bee population by about 60%. The cause is unknown and it appears to be spreading to Europe. Only this week, *The Daily Mail* (16/4/07) reported that new research implicates mobile phone radiation in the disappearance of whole populations of honeybees in the UK. Possibly the signals interfere with the bees’ natural radar, and they become lost.

The poor honeybee is having a hard time, so – thank Heavens for the bumbles and solitaires, or we’d be on course for nutritional disaster! Not so simple, I’m afraid – these bees are also declining, mainly due to loss of habitat. If farmers and gardeners tidy up their land too much, they remove those corners where bees love to nest. In Kent, rare carder bumblebees are endangered because brownfield sites, such as old quarries, defunct railway lines, and road embankments are being cleared. These habitats of flower-rich grassland exist because they have not been subject to intensive agriculture, with pesticides and nitrogen-rich fertilisers. (*Kent on Sunday*, 25/6/06) This situation is replicated over the whole UK.

Mason and other solitary bees suffer from a similar habitat loss, as gardens are tidied up, paved over or built on, compost and leaf heaps are not made, orchards are grubbed up and built on, hedges are removed, and the native wild flowers which the bees prefer become rarer. What can we, as gardeners, do to help? Quite a lot. We can support Garden Organic’s fight against the classification of gardens as brownfield sites (see elsewhere in this issue); protest at the closure of local allotment sites; not

be too tidy in our gardens; grow simple, possibly native flowers which attract the bees, such as old-fashioned cottage garden perennials. Bumblebees love lavender, lupins, *Aquilegia*, sage, foxgloves, native blue bells, viper's bugloss, comfrey, sain foin, tufted vetch, bird's-foot trefoil, teasel and knapweed; solitary bees are partial to cranesbills, geraniums, stonecrops, sage, lavender, lambs' ears, borage, alkanet, feverfew, and comfrey. In my garden they love purple toadflax and yellow loosestrife, which are pretty but can get out of hand!

We can also provide nesting sites for the bees. Not many of us wish to keep honeybees, although some of our members do, with great success. Fortnum and Mason are planning to keep honeybees on their roof in central London, to take advantage of all the local park and garden flowers (including Buckingham Palace) and have had some especially elegant hives designed. The honey will be sold for £10 for a half-pound jar!

Ready-made bumblebee nest boxes are available, but it is difficult to get the bees to use them. I read recently it is better to dig a football-sized hole, and cover it with a slab, leaving several entrance holes round the edge. Cheap and easy! Solitary bees, on the other hand, will readily nest in man-made homes. The easiest is a wooden box or bit of plastic drainpipe, stuffed

with hollow bamboo canes of various diameters, hung about 3 feet off the ground, in a sunny spot. Red Mason bees will colonise first, followed by Blue Masons, then *Osmia leiana*, which seals its nest with chewed leaves, and then the leafcutter bees. Proprietary Mason Bee nests and nest tubes are available, and well worth having. The tubes can be bought separately and used in plastic drainpipe to save money! Currently, about 100 tubes are busily producing bees in my garden – this has built up from only five two years ago. They are fascinating to watch, will not attack you or sting (unless you attack them), will pollinate your flowers and fruit, and may well save the world!

*Val Hunn*

*(Mason bee nesting cylinders and tubes, and books on Mason bees and bumblebees, can be obtained from C J Wildlife (very competitive prices and swift, cheap delivery) – freephone: 0800 731 2820, website: [www.birdfood.co.uk](http://www.birdfood.co.uk) or Wiggly Wigglers, 01981 500391, [www.wigglywigglers.co.uk](http://www.wigglywigglers.co.uk)*

*To find out more or become a bumblebee recorder, contact:*

*The Bumblebee Conservation Trust, School of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA  
[www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk](http://www.bumblebeeconservationtrust.co.uk)*

## ROOTS and SHOOTS EVENTS 2007

Saturday June 16 <sup>th</sup> & Sunday June 17 <sup>th</sup> (11am-4pm)	NGS weekend
Sunday June 17 <sup>th</sup> (11am-4pm)	Summer market
Wednesday July 4 <sup>th</sup> (6.30pm-8.30pm)	Open evening
Sunday October 14 <sup>th</sup> (11am-4pm)	Apple Day and Autumn market
Sunday December 9 <sup>th</sup> (11am-4pm)	Christmas market

Plant sales all year Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm  
(Please telephone beforehand)

**Roots and Shoots, Fitzalan Street, London SE11 6DN**      **020 7587 1131**  
**email: [admin@rootsandshoots.org.uk](mailto:admin@rootsandshoots.org.uk)**      **website [www.roots-and-shoots.org](http://www.roots-and-shoots.org)**

(Linda Philips will be talking about Roots and Shoots at our talk on November 28<sup>th</sup>)

**Talk: FLOWERS AND FRUIT – AN  
ARTIST’S VIEW, by Audrey Hammond.  
22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006**

We had the most visually-rewarding talk, one most difficult to put into words. Audrey is a professional artist whose work is highly prized. It varies from scenes around her home, of local streets, shops, gardens and views of Crystal Palace, to wonderful still lives of flowers and fruit, and garden scenes. Some of the subjects illustrated were:

In France, a small family vineyard surrounded by trees, with a view leading down a slope and across to hills; a cottage scene with red orchard and sunflowers reaching up to the roof; a long low house, the garden full of plants – red tulips, wisteria and magnolia; a Cotswold stone house, the beds full of cottage garden plants, including foxglove, acanthus and evening primrose.

In the still life paintings, the flowers were often placed on a table covered with striped tea towels. Green and blue glass vases contained vivid nasturtiums in scarlet, orange and yellow. Alternate pots of pink and white cyclamen were fronted by pretty cups and saucers. Ten pots of pansies were placed on pretty plates upon a lace-edged tablecloth. Auriculas in pots and vases on decorative plates were standing on a green and pink-striped tea towel. Pink cosmos in a multicoloured vase was placed on a yellow plate. A deep pink rose appeared in seven different glass vases – this was the same rose painted over several days in different positions. Sunflowers in a pale blue jug, in front of a blue and white plate; a white dish of apples, behind this a shelf of curios; on a green check tea towel, flints and plums. There were many, many more wonderful slides covering a wide range of flowers in different containers and settings, interiors looking out onto gardens, and of course gardens themselves. The depiction of flowers and foliage was so accurate that every plant could be named.

Audrey told us she started painting when three years old. When her children were young she had borrowed their paints. She had been painting for seventy-one years, leaving us to work out her age. We were left wanting more, but very privileged that Audrey had been able to share her work with us.

*Betty Cox*



**GARDEN GRABBING**

You are probably aware that a loophole in the law, which sees gardens defined as brownfield sites, allows developers to snap up houses with large gardens, demolish them and squeeze several new homes onto the same plot. The result is, of course, less and less land devoted to gardens and green spaces and all the biodiversity, recreation and water catchment that they provide.

Caroline Spelman, MP for Meriden and Shadow Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government, is taking forward a Private Members’ Bill called “Land Use (Gardens Protection etc) Bill”. The aim of the Bill is to “make provision for the protection of gardens and urban green space”, and to give more power back to local authorities in the matter of housing density and residential building.

The Bill is being supported by Garden Organic (HDRA). If you wish to protest yourself, the Save Our Gardens petition is at [www.gardenorganic.org.uk/saveourgardens](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/saveourgardens), or write to your MP.

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**CONDUCTED TOUR OF DULWICH AND  
SYDENHAM**

Christopher Metcalfe, an accredited London tour guide, has asked us to advertise this local walk which he will lead on **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2007**.

**“THE GEMS OF DULWICH AND  
SYDENHAM – HISTORIES AND  
HORTICULTURE”**

Meet outside West Dulwich national rail station at 1.00pm, for a sharp 1.20pm departure.

Bus No. 3 runs close to the station.

All are welcome – come and enjoy the tour!

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**PRIZE CODEWORD PUZZLE WINNER**

We would like to congratulate Mr A Greenacre of Thornton Heath, who is the winner of the Spring 2007 Prize Codeword Puzzle.

A £5 Hut Voucher will be winging its way to you!

Many thanks to all who entered.

## CREATIVE BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP AT WISLEY

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March I attended the above workshop with horticulturist and photographer Nick Sutton at the Hillside Centre. His background was fascinating. He turned to gardening after his early career in the film industry faltered. He had worked with prototype computer-generated film imagery, akin to the "Star Wars" type films, until the industry laid off people in the early 90's recession. Turning to gardening, his obvious talents led to him eventually becoming the head gardener of Rotherfield Park in Hampshire. He regretted he did not have as much time to continue with his photography, but clearly lecturing was his forte.

This was the last workshop for the month of March, to coincide with the Annual Garden Photography exhibition. The teacher wanted to explore the creative image of various black and white films, including infrared. The workshop would also include a demonstration of digital images on the computer. As a traditional film user I found the first half of the day fascinating, with a teacher very attentive to students' questions. The opportunity to go on location with him was very rewarding. He encouraged us to consider light and shadow when photographing trees, and encouraged us to shoot against the light, for startling, ethereal effects. The other five students used comprehensive photographic equipment, and clearly had top gear Digital SLRs, with suitable sized tripods, something I must address if I want to increase my photographic mobility! A Benbo Trekker was suggested, but he highlighted that the head would cost extra. I used a standard 50mm lens with my Olympus OM1MD (1974) camera. He suggested using a 50mm macro lens, to continue normal photography, with the possibility of close ups. Mushroom stools, here I come!

After, a delightful lunch, with sandwiches provided by the Restaurant, we attentively watched his manipulation of images using Photoshop, turning scanned film and digital photographic images into black and white, and then transforming them into infrared images. The teacher's enthusiasm clearly showed from his film industry past, when he altered the colour casts to manipulate the tonal reproduction of the images

However, his love of gardening clearly showed with his slide show in the morning. His Ilford slides showed his photographic interests, particularly close ups, with a Nikon 55mm Micro lens, of tree trunks with their abundant rings of texture. His infra-red photography was inspiring, with abundant stretches of vegetation turned ghostly white. His tips on composition, and visualising in tones, were well received. He explained how his 13 year old son had been mistaken for a professional photographer in Paris, using his father's Nikon SLR Camera. Such is his love of photography that he passes it on to all those interested, and I liked the way he individually focussed on the individual needs of his students, who in this instance were fortunate to be able to participate in the class, as it was under-subscribed. He plans to have a more creative class next year, but I do not know what element of this would alter, traditional or digital, such as the changing of the times.

*Antony Glaser*

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Antony is interested in starting a **Photography Group** if there are any like-minded people out there! Meetings could be arranged for practical sessions at suitable venues, and perhaps some tuition could be arranged.

If you are interested, please get in touch with Antony on email: [aglaser@onetele.com](mailto:aglaser@onetele.com) or telephone: 020 8686 3874.

## WATER SPOUT

After the wet winter and spring, reservoirs are high and aquifers well-filled, so, predictably, water rates are going up. In the Thames Water region, water and sewerage rates are increasing by 6%, despite Thames Water losing the equivalent of 244 litres per person, per day, mostly through its ailing network of Victorian pipes under London.

Hosepipe bans are not threatened this year – but it seems inevitable that, with the present climate changes, they will come again – and new legislation will ensure that next time the use of power washers and the filling of ponds and pools will be included. Another scorching summer is forecast. We can't start splashing water about with gay abandon again – those days are gone. For those of us who, during last year's drought, rediscovered the almost-forgotten virtue of self-denial (in my young day it was called "necessity") and are still saving water, this will not be a problem. For others, all the good advice we published last year about reducing water wastage in the home and garden still holds good. There are also some interesting new ideas appearing in the press.

According to the director of the Hillier Garden Centres, gardeners are forsaking traditional garden flowers and lawns in favour of Mediterranean-style planting and gravel, particularly in the south of England. The "Save our British Gardens" campaign is anxious to prevent the loss of native plants and the subsequent effect on the diversity of other species which depend on them. The campaign's founder, Paul Patton, is advising gardeners "to take a step back in time, and revive the lost arts of soil preparation and mulching that would have been commonplace in our grandparents' day". These principles are key in advice given by Garden Organic (HDRA) who say that the most important place to store water is *in the soil*. This may seem a strange idea, but the purpose of incorporating organic matter (low-fertility soil conditioners, leafmould or sparing use of garden compost), using water-retaining gels or crystals, digging as little as possible to reduce evaporation, and mulching after a wet period, preferably in spring, with anything you can lay your hands on – shredded prunings, leaf mould, bark chips, newspaper, black plastic, straw etc – are all ways to keep water where it is needed – in the soil. Everyone needs a compost heap! Well-structured soil is better able to hold on to water and nutrients, and to make them available to plants. Such soil will also have good drainage, and be able to cope with a rainy season as well as a drought. A

good mulch will protect the soil surface from compaction or washing-away by heavy rainfall. Water collection to reduce waste is also crucial – install a lidded water butt under every rooftop, garage, shed or greenhouse downpipe possible; collect and reuse waste water from the kitchen sink; use grey water (after you have washed or bathed in it) to flush your lavatory – its use in the garden, particularly on vegetables, is not recommended, except on ornamental areas and top fruit; don't water the lawn – oversow with a clover mix to keep it green.

Other suggestions from Garden Organic and Waterwise include: water thoroughly or not at all – better a good soak once a fortnight than a daily dribble; remove weeds – these compete for water, food, light and nutrients; water early morning or evening to reduce evaporation; water the soil, not the foliage; prioritise – water annual vegetables and flowers, and any new plantings, rather than established perennials, lawns and trees; use windbreaks and temporary shades (fleece and wire netting are very useful here) to protect vulnerable plants from the drying effects of sun and wind; keep the soil covered – Christopher Lloyd said, "No bare soil after May" – plant densely to reduce evaporation.

Water only at critical times – Garden Organic suggest: peas and beans as the flowers open and as the pods swell; leafy vegetable from 2 weeks before they are to be cut; tomatoes twice weekly from flowering; onions and leeks only as they are getting established; sweet corn benefits most when it flowers.

In the greenhouse, use gravel trays or capillary matting to ensure that no water is lost when watering. Put up shading, and consider an automatic watering system – those connecting to a water butt are now available, and have the advantage of being legal during a hosepipe ban. Water butt-connected systems are also suitable for the garden.

Jacob Tompkins from Waterwise (an independent body advising the Government on how to use water more efficiently) sums it all up nicely: "Country gardens are an important part of Britain's biodiversity. Good planting, garden care and efficient watering can produce climate-proof, drought-resistant gardens without us losing the traditional British garden".

Which, I'm sure, is what we would all wish for.

*Val Hunn*

*(If anyone would like to install a water butt, but lacks the necessary technology, I will gladly help if I can – please ring me. Number on back page.)*

## Dates for 2007

- May 23<sup>rd</sup>            Talk: Green woodworking and the Windsor Chair Industry  
David Wheeler.  
*David is Senior Instructor on the Fine Woodwork Diploma Course at BCC Building Crafts College, Stratford East, London.*
- June 27<sup>th</sup>            Talk: The walk to Platform 2  
Vincent O'Connell  
*Vincent, an ex-probation officer and horticulturalist, is working with a group of youngsters to create a garden on derelict land at West Dulwich Station.*
- July 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>        **Lambeth Country Show**
- July 25<sup>th</sup>            Talk: Travels in Thailand  
Michael Penney  
*A member and judge from the Orchid Society of Great Britain, Michael will speak on his recent experiences travelling in Thailand.*
- August 22<sup>nd</sup>        Talk: The birds around us  
Roger Tomlinson (RSPB Speaker)  
*A chance to hear one of the RSPB's own expert speakers on the birds we might expect to see in our gardens or on our holidays.*
- September 1<sup>st</sup>        **LHS Summer Show**
- September 26<sup>th</sup>     Talk: "Bug eats bug"  
Steve Bradley  
*Steve is the Gardening Correspondent of The Sun newspaper, and has a wide interest in horticulture and biodiversity.*
- October 24<sup>th</sup>        **LHS Prize-Giving and Social**
- November 28<sup>th</sup>     Talk: Roots and Shoots  
Linda Philips  
*Much work has been done, on the buildings and in the gardens, at Roots and Shoots over the last two years. Manager Linda will be bringing us up to date on the happenings at this very well-regarded establishment.*

**All talks take place in the Nettlefold Hall at the West Norwood Library Centre  
at 8.00pm (doors open 7.30pm)**

**Entry is free and non-members are welcome!**

## TRADING HUT

The TRADING HUT has lots of new stock and interesting goodies - prices are competitive and the advice is free!

Cedar Tree Close (off Lakeview Road,) Knights Hill, London SE27

### Opening Times:

Saturday: 2.00 pm - 4.30 pm

Sunday: 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

*Please note: there are no May evening openings*

***Please remember to show your membership card***

## BEDDING PLANTS SALE

The **ANNUAL SALE of BEDDING PLANTS** will take place at The Hut on the following weekends.

**Saturday/Sunday 5-6 May, 12-13 May, 19-20 May and 26-27 May.**

An amazing range of pots of tender perennials will be available, as well as patio plants, vegetables, roses, and hanging basket materials.

If you wish to order anything in advance, please contact Tony at The Hut.

## BRING & BUY SALE

The Bring & Buy sale this year will start on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April and run for two weekends, ie Saturday/Sunday 28-29 April, and 5-6 May.

## GOING POTTY OVER POTS

We have a large stock of used plastic flower pots so, if you are potting-on seedlings, taking cuttings, or dividing perennials come to the Trading Hut and help yourself. Most of us keep some plastic pots, hoping to use them in the future, but like Topsy it can get out of control.

There should be a recycling facility for pots. They could be returned to the Garden Centre, and returned to the grower who then reuses them, or they could be returned to a recycling centre which passes them onto the wholesaler, or lastly ensure that all pots are made from biodegradable material. Gardeners should be at the cutting edge to recycle as much as possible and flower pots seem to be a good example. We also recycle terracotta pots but these are more scarce and fewer are available, so we make a small charge for them.

*Tony Pizzoferro*

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