

GLYNNEATH & DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB



Members' newsletter

July 2016

Hello everyone,

We were all very sorry to hear recently that Graham has decided to step down from the committee and his position as Programme Secretary. He has worked so hard for the Club since it first began and will be sorely missed. Carol Williams has kindly offered to be responsible for obtaining speakers in the future, and we also welcome back Margaret Walters and Margot Hollyer to the committee.

The year marches on, but we still have two more trips to enjoy this year. The first is to Hampton Court near Hereford on Saturday 30th July. This is a beautiful garden, and it's also possible to go round the castle now. In September we have a return trip to the Malvern Show. If you would like to come on these trips then do get in touch with John whose telephone number is 01639 721234.

We are very keen to attract more members to the Club so please try to persuade a friend to come along to the meetings or on the trips, and give us a try.

Margaret.

Our website address is: www.glynneathgardeningclub.com

Dates for
your Diary



**July -
September
2016**

Friday 22nd July
1 pm
Training Centre.

MARK ASHTON, Dahlia grower and exhibitor from Port Talbot, will give a talk and slideshow on the new types, varieties and colours that are now available.

Saturday 30 July

TRIP TO HAMPTON COURT CASTLE & GARDEN, Nr Hereford
Leaving Glynneath at 9 am.

Friday 26 August
1 pm, Training Centre.

We welcome back **DYLYS AYLING,** a very popular speaker, who will be advising on what shrubs to grow for year round interest.

Saturday 3 Sept.

THE ANNUAL HORTICULTURAL SHOW in the Town Hall, Glynneath. Show opens at 2 pm.

Saturday 24 Sept.

TRIP TO THE RHS AUTUMN SHOW at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern.
Leaving Glynneath at 9 am.

SAVE OUR LIBRARY!

This is a call ringing around the country now as libraries are being closed. Is it really lack of money or is it lack of insight?



Libraries have been the mainstay of communities, both urban and rural, providing a source of knowledge, learning and pleasure for people of all ages and in all walks of life. These invaluable book sources have encouraged children to read and find enjoyment in the written word, later becoming an endless source of information. A lifelong love of books has been instilled.

The Gardening Club has a library too. Well over a hundred books covering every aspect of gardening you can think of, be it herbs on a windowsill, flower and vegetable growing, even landscaping. It is all there and looking for readers, or browsers, to find their way through the many colourful pages.

When you come to the meetings at the Training Centre, you can take out a book for a month, then exchange it, or extend the loan if you are still finding it interesting or informative.

You don't need to want to know technicalities such as the PH of your soil, although that's there too, just enjoy what you see. Beautiful photographs of thousands of plants and flowers and glimpses into other people's gardens to inspire you.

We all love our gardening trips, so why not think of dipping into the library as a back-up? Maybe as an inspiration for your next gardening project.



Margaret Walters

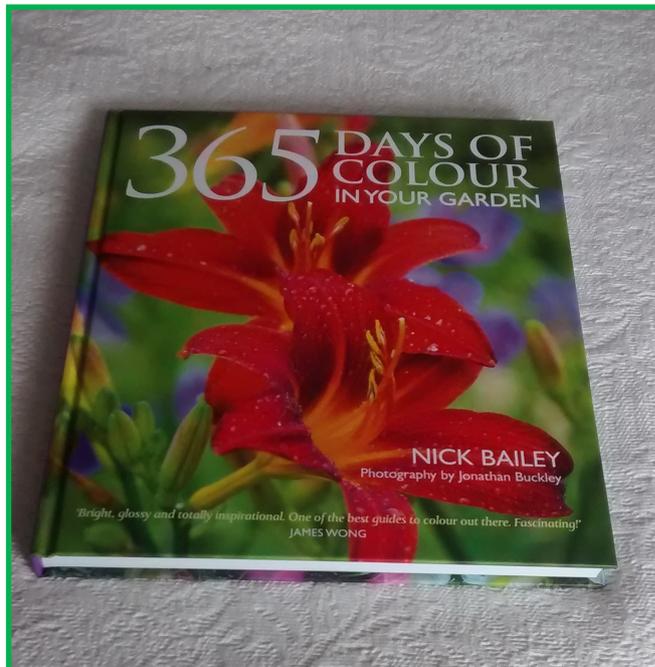
Do you know where this is?

Answers on the back page.



All my gardening books were at least ten years old and although I dip into them now and again I thought I'd see what was new on Amazon.

I found a book which was published last year and cost £25. By now it was down to a fiver so it had to come my way. Let's hope the author made enough in the first year for it to be worth his time and research. It's called "365 Days of Colour in your garden" by Nick Bailey.



It's a most enjoyable dip-into book. It's divided into seasons and gives examples of different coloured plants for every kind of soil and situation. It gives suggestions for perennials, shrubs and foliage with planting and management advice included.

Nick Bailey also suggests how to extend the flowering period for instance with the "Chelsea Chop". He itemises plants, for instance "10 early summer plants", midsummer and late summer.

There's a whole chapter on the longest flowering plants and has a list of plants which flower for up to six months. He itemises which varieties flower early, mid season and late and which pairs go together well, for instance lily of the valley and cyclamen. In fact he provides numerous lists which are all helpful and are a quick way to get information.

If you are thinking of adding a book to your library, this is a good one!

Isobel Carter

I WAS THERE

I always watch the programmes about the Chelsea Flower Show, and more or less assumed I would never go there. However, I can tick it off my bucket list now, because this year my son and his wife took me there as a special Mother's Day present.

When you watch the Show on TV you do wonder how much of it you will actually see, because they show the crowds in the main avenue and you think you will never be able to get close enough to the show gardens to appreciate them. I also had the wrong impression that there would be a long row of show gardens, one after the other, but they are actually interspersed with some stunning trade stands. The workmanship in some of the statues and garden furniture is quite incredible. They used to say that if you have to ask the price, then you can't afford it, but you can of course dream.

It is astounding that the gardens are newly made. They show the preparation on the tv programmes but they look so beautiful and well established, as if they have always been there. We saw Diurmid Gavin in his garden but it was quite late in the afternoon and by then his trees were not whizzing round. Andrew reckoned that his batteries had run out.

The archway in honour of the Queen's 90th birthday was lovely, but I thought the most striking exhibit of all was the one just inside the main entrance, with the animals made from driftwood.

We went on the Saturday, the final day, when the countdown takes place at 4 pm, and the rush to collect the plants begins. It was fascinating to see the plants and trees being forced into the waiting taxis outside. One lady had a huge armful of white tulips. I hope the petals lasted until she got them home. It was quite sad to see the exhibits being taken apart at the end of the afternoon, and it never occurred to me that they had to bag up the gravel from the garden paths.

I know that this is the most over-used word there is these days, but I can truly say that the Chelsea Flower Show was absolutely "amazing".



Margaret C.

Lest we forget

One of the most unforgettable sights was the display of poppies in the grounds of the Royal Hospital. The designer was Phillip Johnson who collaborated with the 5000 Poppies Project which put on a display in Melbourne Federal Square on Anzac Day 2015.

The creators of the project were Lynn Berry and Margaret Knight who initially set out to crochet 120 poppies to honour their fathers who both fought in the Second World War.



This escalated into a final total of over a quarter of a million poppies, knitted or crocheted by an estimated 50,00 contributors, of all ages and from all over the world, as a special tribute to those who served.

A NEW GARDEN: START AGAIN TIME

When we moved to Cardiff in 2014 and looked for somewhere to live, we needed a house within a price range and in a certain area. The gardens were small and narrow so there was not a lot of choice. Eventually we found something we could afford and was close to family. The house has a bigger than average garden with a good layout consisting of mainly raised beds most of which were laid down to gravel or artificial grass. So while we were making the house habitable, the garden at least was tidy.

When we eventually got down to the garden, the first priority was to create a pond. Although it has now been built for less than a year, it is full of wildlife. The kingcups came out well and the candelabra primroses are already spreading. I will soon be giving things away at the gate.



Only three tadpoles survived the cold weather after the spawn was laid but they are now enormous great beefy things as there is so much food available.

When I was a child, we used to feed tadpoles pieces of liver on string, once they'd developed legs (a trick my mother taught me) but this year they have ignored our tempting offers.

We also bought only native weed and that has exploded into a great forest which we can see at the bottom of the very clear water, so there are plenty of hiding places for the newt to lay her eggs. She has been coming up to the pond shelf every afternoon when the sun shines on it.

Male and female newts mate later than frogs and toads. The male releases a sperm sac onto a leaf. The female then manoeuvres herself into a position where she can grasp the capsule and fertilises the eggs inside her (no pelvic floor problems here!) and over the season lays about 400 eggs at a rate of 7 to 12 a day each individually wrapped in a leaf. Thus a newtlet laid at the beginning of the season looks bigger and more mature than one laid at the end. If the later births are not ready to leave the water before the winter they remain as newtlets until the following spring. And all this is happening in the middle of town!

We also removed an area of paving, painted the fences and backed them with trellis. The result is a small area of jungle which will more than likely be expanded over time. We got rid of some of the artificial grass and gravel and planted herbs and a couple of asparagus plants which I offered to share with family. There was some contempt for my efforts "what - you are offering us 20 spears between five - and that, not for another two years!" Oh well, maybe it was a bit ridiculous but I believe in starting small! We also planted an artichoke which looks well so far. No comment yet on this.

Despite its proximity to major roads, its limited size, the dry, compacted soil and mounds of hard core, the garden is in a mini-climate of its own and once the beds are dug out and filled with manure and compost, we are optimistic that things will thrive. There are lots of plants in a small space so they make an impact and whereas last year we saw not a bird or a bee, this year we have had starlings, sparrows, a blackbird, lots of insects and even a wren singing on someone's washing line. So bring on the Prosecco and we look forward to next year.



Isobel

Creating a Mini Wildflower Meadow

(from an original article by Elaine Parry)

Many of us will have been delighted in recent years by the sight of swathes of wild flowers growing on grass verges and on roundabouts in nearby towns. As we have marvelled at the array of colours and congratulated the town councils involved for such initiatives which promote a positive environment for a wide range of insects, perhaps we have wondered whether it is possible to create such an area in our own patch. Not only would we be doing another bit for wildlife and the environment, but it would look so pretty too.

It must be easy: a box or a couple of packets of wildflower seed mix scattered over a patch of ground that is not doing much, then sit back and wait. Alas, like much else in gardening, it is not quite so simple and a successful wildflower patch will depend on some planning and preparation.

Wildflower seeds cannot compete with established grasses. For best results it is important to remove all existing vegetation and sow seed on to bare soil. No need for fertiliser – in fact, low fertility favours many kinds of wildflower. With the seed mixed with sand so that one can see the area covered, a light rake over and a firming down and then one can sit back and wait.

Well, maybe not quite! Perhaps the planning comes before the preparation. What kind of wildflower meadow is wanted? A “*spring lawn*” which features an area of short grass that favours low growing flowers such as daisy, cat’s ear, speedwell and self heal? A “*summer meadow*” which might contain plants such as lady’s smock, bugle, cowslip, yellow rattle, lesser stitchwort and orchids? Or perhaps a “*late summer/ butterfly meadow*” in order to attract butterflies? This would provide a suitable habitat for those butterflies which feed on and pupate in grass and where tall-growing flowers can thrive, flowers such as greater and common knapweed, lady’s bedstraw, sheep and common sorrel, field scabious, ox-eye daisy, meadow buttercup, yarrow, musk mallow, goatsbeard and harebell. The names alone seem to send one back to a simpler, more idyllic time.

What we have been seeing on the roundabouts and alongside the roads in recent years are probably “*mini cornfields*” with their vibrantly coloured flowers with names that seem more familiar: corn poppy, lesser snapdragon, cornflower, corn marigold, corn cockle and corn chamomile. The preparation for such a patch is the same: the ground needs to be cleared for the seeds to germinate in bare soil and this needs to be turned over each autumn to remove such intruders as docks, bindweed, thistles and couch grass. Sowing the seeds is best in autumn for flowers such as poppies and corn cockle which need the frost in order to germinate.



Well, I’ve identified a suitable patch in full sun, acquired plenty of packets of wildflower mix, and begun the slow process of removing the existing vegetation. Autumn will tell if this enthusiasm is sustained. In the meantime there are always the stunning sites of the verges and roundabouts (and others’ hard work) to admire!



The Horticultural Show this year
is on Saturday 3rd September
in Glynneath Town Hall



Please try and enter something to ensure its continuing success. The schedule of classes is enclosed with this newsletter, and is also available on the website. Entry is open to all, regardless of where you live. There are classes for flowers, vegetables, cookery, a children’s section and a photographic competition.

Also enclosed with the newsletter are some raffle tickets. Could you please try and sell them (or buy them yourselves) for a chance to win £100.

The Show opens at 2 pm, so do come along for a cuppa and a chat, and a chance to see what we have managed to produce again this year.

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**GLYNNEATH & CWMGWRACH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

The season begins at 7 pm
on Wednesday 7th September
in Glynneath Training Centre

The speaker will be
MRS LYNDA BRYANT
"The Mackworths of Neath"

Membership is just £7 per year.
More details on the website:
www.glynneathhistory.co.uk

How does YOUR garden grow?



Very well, if the progress in the Glynneath allotments is anything to go by.
A combination of the westerly wet and warmth?

Somebody has a knack with
broad beans and beetroot.



And the potatoes in tubs are doing well.



A neat and methodical
approach also seems
to be producing the
goods.

If in doubt, the experts are on hand for advice.

The allotment shop is open:

Wednesdays: 2 to 3 pm
Saturdays: 10 to 11 am.

Next year will mark the centenary of the allotments
in Glynneath which were started in 1917.
Does anyone have any suggestions about how this
milestone might be marked?



Did you recognise the bridges?

The arched bridge is at Bosherton in Pembrokeshire.

The humpback bridge is Pontygwaith Bridge at Pontygwaith Farm, near Edwardsville, Merthyr Tydfil. In 1811 this bridge over the river Taff replaced a wooden bridge built originally for 16th century iron workers. It is now a Taff Trail heritage site.