

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 71

Autumn 2019



Featuring

Where will the next generation of professional gardeners come from? – p.5

The Somerset Gardens Trust



From the Editors

The Summer is slipping away with its succession of flowers and leaves each one replacing the memory of the last, and now we are enjoying the Autumn crops of vegetables and fruit. September is an exciting month – the start of the season to plant bulbs and plants - and to dream of next year. Warm Autumn days encourage us out - we look out of the windows on rainy ones for which this Magazine is designed. This edition has some interesting articles – a stirring call to arms for the young to become professional gardeners, looking into the history of Dutch gardening in the UK, and the modern - looking at the lively Events Programme and at members' gardens. Some articles for everyone to enjoy.

We always welcome feedback and suggestions for articles from members.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond
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From the Chairman

Dear Members,

The Gardens Trust weekend conference was held in Oxford in September this year. We visited some college gardens, St John's where a garden historian explained how the gardens were managed in the C18th and Christ Church where a guide told us about the links with Alice in Wonderland. Their AGM was held on Saturday afternoon, members of Somerset's research group were openly thanked by Philip



White of Hestercombe for volunteering with digitising the Parks and Gardens records. One of the meeting's messages was that more members are needed and they offer a discounted membership of £25 instead of £35 to County Garden Trust members, for those interested in garden history it would be well worth joining. I

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will ask Mary ter Braak to kindly e-mail members with joining details, members not on line may telephone me and I could post them joining details.

It has been a busy Summer with excellent outings arranged by the Events team. One of our plans for next year is a Plant Car Boot Sale at John Townson's Belmont Farm at Hatch Beauchamp in May; it will be to raise funds for our Trust. This will be a good chance to find homes for any spare plants for those, who like me are

compulsive propagators; it should be fun with coffee, teas and bacon buns.

This is my last letter as Chairman as I step down at the AGM on 30 September. I would like to continue working with the Events group and am planning an away visit to gardens in North Wales and Cheshire during the summer of 2021. As I leave I would like to thank our Council members and the Research, Events and Schools Teams for their work and support over the past five years.

Camilla Carter

Somerset Gardens Trust
Gardens Competition 2020
Individual Owned and School Gardens
in Somerset
Open to SGT members
and non-members
see page 16 for details

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Engaging young people in Horticulture

Nigel Cox of Cannington analyses an important question

I have been teaching horticulture students at the Cannington Campus of Bridgwater and Taunton College for some 15 years and before that was a garden design student at the College. During that time I have seen students that I taught go on to find amazing careers in the horticulture world, whether as head gardeners at large country estates or developing and growing their own businesses.

I have always had a passion for horticulture since I was a boy and it is that passion that drives my focus to encourage more young people to go into this industry. I was a career changer and it was my tutors at Cannington that inspired my deeper interest in the subject, so much so that having completed my garden design course here, I stayed on to teach horticulture alongside developing my own consultancy business advising the industry.

“Adult horticulture students in many colleges now outnumber school leavers by some five to one”

Sadly, I have witnessed over that time a steady decline in the number of young people taking up courses in horticulture.

However, at the same time, the number of adult career changers like myself recognising the opportunities that there are in the world of horticulture, has rapidly increased. Adult horticulture students in many colleges now outnumber school leavers by some five to one. Clearly later in life people start to realise just how rewarding a career in horticulture can be. If only this could be the same for young people too!

When I started to think about the issue of engaging young people in horticulture, most

of my thoughts were rather negative. However, last month, I had the pleasure of attending the graduation of the young students who study with RHS Wisley and the other RHS gardens on their School of Horticulture courses and through their apprentice scheme. I teach some of these students at Rosemoor. What I saw there was a group of enthusiastic and driven young horticulturists working in amazing gardens and about to embark on fantastic jobs within the industry, both in the UK and in many far-flung corners of the globe. This is the positive message but it does not paint a picture that is found across the rest of young adult education.



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Students building garden at Bath & West

In Further Education colleges across the UK full time horticulture courses for 16-19 year old school leavers are being abandoned or curtailed because of the difficulty of recruiting school leavers onto the courses. This is not a new problem, but increasingly it reduces the availability of qualified people to work in the wide range of areas that collectively constitute what is called ‘horticulture’.

The question is why do young people shun this career path? It is not only a question asked by curriculum teams in colleges, but has been a constant consideration for the RHS in their wish to encourage and develop skills in young people. Many other organisations, such as the Somerset Garden Trust, are focussed on supporting wherever possible young students with the provision of bursaries and grants.

In primary schools we see young children actively engaging in school garden projects with the support of the RHS and supermarkets such as Morrisons. However, in secondary education, fewer and fewer teenagers are opting to take up the challenge of horticulture.

Part of the problem lies in the perception of horticulture as being something that is only suitable for people who are unable to do anything better. This is a terrible perception, which has been perpetuated over the decades by schools and press. I have heard expressions such as “*horticulture is a job for numpties*” and this fills me with dismay. Schools are the potential breeding ground for the horticulturists of the future, but without the encouragement of the teachers within schools, youngsters will not realise the possibilities. I know that often in schools one teacher can drive garden projects, only then to leave and the project falls away for lack of continuity.

We have lost a heritage of interest in growing plants. When I was a young boy, my Father gave me a small plot of ground

“I have heard expressions such as ‘horticulture is a job for numpties’”

and some seeds and this sparked my interest in plants and how they grew. Regularly he took me to Wisley and

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showed me the different plants and taught me their names and how to grow them well. This developed my own passion for horticulture.

Today the image of gardening is characterised by garden centres selling the same monotonous plants, sold largely because of the immediate pretty flowers, which appeal to the impulse buyer.

Gardening programmes on TV largely focus on the older generations, without producing exciting interesting

programmes that will appeal to young people. It is not 'trendy' enough. There is also no culture amongst many parents of being enthused by gardening and hence the next generation lack that experience that so impacted on me when I was a young boy.

So, we must look at the opportunities available to qualified young people and demonstrate that horticulture is not just about mowing and weeding. Production horticulture feeds us all and the technical detail of successful production requires high levels of skills. The science of plants and soils ensure that plants grow well and the soil is looked after. Reducing the use of

pesticides and developing and working with biological and friendly controls requires a detailed understanding of the lifecycles and metabolism of pests and diseases. New challenges in respect of sustainability and climate change will require new skills and new ways of looking at horticulture, possibly in ways we do not yet even know.

We hear a great deal today about well-being and mindfulness and it has been



Students visiting the bulb fields in Holland

demonstrated that working outdoors with plants aids physical recovery ('Horatio's Garden'), improves mental health and proves therapeutic to older people suffering from Alzheimer's.

Not all jobs in horticulture are low paid and the higher-level skills are in demand and pay will reflect that demand. Brexit

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has already seen the issue of shortages of skilled labour because of the reduction in immigration from Europe, from where we have relied on the skills lacking here to support our industry.

“If more focus was placed on the STEM (Science, technology, engineering and maths) areas of horticulture, then perhaps it would attract more favourable attention”

The opportunities for students to travel and research areas of horticulture are encouraged by organisations such as the Somerset Gardens Trust, the RHS and other garden organisations with the availability of bursaries and scholarships. I know that many of the organisations providing such resources find it hard to disburse the funds. Is this all negative? Well, in percentage terms the number of



young people opting to undertake full time horticulture courses has dropped massively over the last two decades with the number of colleges actually offering courses also dropping as they become financially unviable.

So back to the question... how do we engage young people to work in horticulture? Several years ago I visited colleges in Europe. Horticulture forms part of the green agenda and the take up of courses in this field is huge with full cohorts of students who then drive the horticulture industry in their own countries and in other countries too. It is probably too much to expect that this agenda will be heavily promoted in the UK. Horticulture is not part of the core curriculum within schools and this means that the awareness of the importance of the industry and the needs of that industry and the opportunities available are not made clear to youngsters and result in low application numbers.

Horticulture needs to be seen as a science and not just an art. If more focus was placed on the STEM (Science, technology, engineering and maths) areas of horticulture, then perhaps it would attract more favourable attention. In horticulture production, complex machinery and systems are used, biological pest controls involve the need for understanding of the science behind the pests and the solutions. Very little plant botany is now taught at any level in this Country but we need plant pathologists to help understand and

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counter the threat of new pests and diseases threatening its plant heritage.



Apprenticeships in horticulture attract a large proportion of the funding available for education. However, I have seen that many of the apprentices in the industry are already working for the employer before they start their apprenticeship. This is removing opportunities for young people to take up the apprenticeships; still many employers using the apprenticeship process do not retain the apprentice at the end of their programme.

There is hope that the forthcoming vocational 'T' levels will provide a new opportunity to encourage young people into horticulture, ensuring that they have the correct skills at the end of the course that make them employable. Requiring these students to undertake a large number of hours' work experience with an employer, will give them experience of the real world of horticulture right from the

start.

Here at Bridgwater and Taunton College, based at our Cannington Campus with the superb resource of the Walled Gardens, our horticulture courses are still running. This year we are seeing a record number of youngsters taking up land-based courses including horticulture. We also have an ever-increasing number of adults changing career and taking the RHS courses in preparation for a future working in the industry. Both of these factors lead me to be optimistic that there is still a future for horticulture in our FE colleges.

Once the hurdle of attracting young people to apply for places on our horticulture courses has been overcome, students all thrive and engage enthusiastically in the learning that takes place. They find the opportunities for work placements with local nurseries and landscapers which provide a great opportunity to develop the skills they will need in the workplace.

Interestingly, I have many students at the start of the course saying how they did not enjoy science, but when learning about the



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science of plants and the soil, they suddenly realise how engaging this is. Perhaps their negative perception of science comes from bad experiences at school?

As part of the courses we offer here, the students learn design skills and every year participate in the pop-up gardens competition at the Bath & West Show and get the opportunity to travel abroad on a study tour. All of this gives the students the widest possible experiences of the range of opportunities for a career in horticulture.

I haven't come up with the answer to my question completely, and across the industry many

organisations are keen to support students train to be the horticulturists of the future. I remain optimistic that in ten years' time, horticulture will still feature in the curriculum of Colleges like mine. The future of the World lies in the hands of people who have been taught to look after their environment and what better way than through horticulture. It can help address the issue of climate change, provide therapeutic benefit for people and ensure that where we live is a great place to be.

“when learning about the science of plants and the soil, they suddenly realise how engaging this is”

My Garden

Marion & Andrew Topp enjoy the Garden she created despite the difficulties

A bit of an odd shape and something over $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre, the garden has been ours since 1983. The previous owner said, “*It is easy to maintain, just shrubs and grass*”; or as a neighbour put it, “*There is nothing in your garden*”. Heavy, heavy clay which turns to crevassed concrete in the Summer, where a newly planted shrub spends 3 years sulking, and a vegetable plot from which digging a parsnip became a battle of wills. Oh yes, and honey fungus causing

unexpected and initially unexplained deaths. Unpromising?

There was never a master plan, just a slow transformation on a limited budget; but the planting evolved, and after initial sulking, shrubs romp away, roses love the soil, *Clematis* flower in succession for much of the year, the *Peonies*, such ephemeral flowers, are a delight, and the *Iris* are happy in a place where nothing much else would grow. A silver birch, tiny but free with the childrens' shampoo, is now 40ft high shading my Shepherds Hut during the occasional hot Summer day, as does the walnut though the squirrels have the nuts. The soil has improved over time, raised beds saved the vegetable plot, and we have become fans of 'Strulch' (wheat straw mulch).

“A silver birch, tiny but free with the childrens' shampoo, is now 40ft high shading my Shepherds Hut”

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Though there are no great swathes of flower borders, those that there are contain much of interest. The Delphiniums which were here in 1983 continue to come up each year and are like old friends. Plenty of colour, and here and there some

favourite gems; a species *Hellebore*, a jungle like *Euphorbia* (John Philips) and, after the N.I. trip, a *Banksia Rosa*.

Of disasters, I said to Andrew, look upon them as opportunities. The enormous *Cotoneaster*, which kept its bright cheerful red berries until stripped in a day by the Field Fare, came down in a gale (helped by honey fungus?), to give the area new life and purpose. Similarly the Horse Chestnut (honey fungus coupled with leaf mining moth) died, but no longer drops conkers to disturb an afternoon snooze in the hut. Badgers, deer and rabbits are mostly kept at bay, but a sinking feeling at the occasional intrusion, and the defunct swimming pool yet to become a sunken rose garden – oh for a willing builder!

I just love it.

The Environmental and Research Group

Ian Clark, Chairman, explains one of our recent activities

SGT volunteers continue to work closely with the Parks and Gardens Trust at Hestercombe to develop the database of Historic Parks and Gardens throughout the Country. There is still lots to do but if you haven't visited the website

[Leading resource for UK Parks & Gardens](#) recently, it's worth re-visiting it. I'd be very interested to get your feedback either positive or negative, as we need it to be as robust as possible. Of particular interest is the section on Conservation Management

Plans (CMP), which are held at Hestercombe. The database doesn't yet have digitised copies of the CMPs but there are over 30 Somerset gardens that are included in records. For anyone doing research, they are an invaluable resource. Visits to the records can be accessed by contacting **Ben Whitworth**.



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From the Chairman of the Events Committee

Diana Hebditch writes

Our Events Programme for 2019 has been varied and as ever run by your small but dedicated Committee. We would welcome help with planning events or running an event. As the phrase says “*every little helps*”. Do get in touch if you can, would or could...

How have our 2019 visits gone? For 2019 we started with a little garden history. Rob Wilson-North gave us a very interesting talk on the lost garden of the Knight family at Simonsbath. We are invited back to see the progress and will plan this visit at short notice to get decent weather – either this Autumn or more likely next Spring.

We have been able to visit four beautiful but different gardens in Somerset: a return to Barford Park, after many years, for a plant sale and garden tour; at Lower Shalford, the combination of an arboretum and flower garden; exotics, topiary and drifts of *Ammi* at Yews Farm and *Peonies* at Mallet Court. As I write our September visits are to come. Further afield, we returned to Arne Maynard’s fabulous garden at Allt-y-Bela and then visited the stunning High Glanau in full Summer splendour. The rain did not dampen our delight at seeing the enormous work to bring back the grounds at Chettle House and the new

kitchen garden at Crichel House in Dorset. The delicious pastries with coffee at Chettle were unanimously voted the best SGT had ever been offered. Our annual



Difficult to choose just one photograph of this delightful garden at Malverleys. The hot border was splendid in the sunshine.

coach trip was to Malverleys near Newbury, described as “*that was a wonderful outing. One of the best*”.

We have met some very talented and enthusiastic gardeners who have given us their time and shared their trials and successes and answered our many

“We get together once a year to review how the events have gone and to plan where we think SGT would like to go in the next year. Any ideas?”

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High Glanau

questions with good humour.

What will we do in 2020? We get together once a year to review how the events have gone and to plan where we think SGT would like to go in the next year. Any ideas?

And finally thank you to all who have supported our events. It is reassuring to know we have arranged events to which you would like to come.

Autumn/Winter Planning

Sheila Rabson, Chair of the Education Committee, looks ahead

Schools returning for this term usually spend the first couple of weeks removing all the plants that did not survive the long Summer holidays of inadequate watering. If there is a gardening club, then the vegetable plots may be dug over and possibly compost may be spread over. Leaves might get swept up to make leaf mould and ponds may get some plants cut down or thinned with the possibility of making new plants for sale. Many schools will face Harvest Festivals with shop bought produce as they have not grown things that could be stored e.g. marrows or pumpkins. It is also not likely that they are turning garden produce into jams, jellies or pickles. Some will attempt to make Christmas decorations to sell at a Christmas Fair to make the money needed to garden in the following year.

A school garden has to fulfil many functions. A good teacher should be able to use the area to bring in all the topics raised under the National Curriculum. It can be a beautiful space in which to work quietly or it can be an area for hard physical labour to take the energy out of some extra energetic pupils. Setting some aims for the space is essential, therefore.

More time needs to be given to planning a school, or indeed any, garden. Thought needs to be given as to what you want to achieve, what do I want to grow, what varieties will suit my soil, what grew well last year and what failed. Keeping a school gardening diary will help you start on good planning and provide a resource for each subsequent year. The schools' category for the SGT Gardens Competition (*see page 16*) will require each entrant to submit details of their planning and will form part of the judging to see if they were able to achieve their goals.

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The Year in Figures

Stuart Senior, Hon. Treasurer, describes a good year

The financial outcome for the year ending 31 March 2019 was very much in line with expectations. The Trust recorded a



surplus of £7,088 of which the Herefordshire tour contributed £4,089. Investment markets recovered some of the ground lost in the previous year and so our equity investment showed a gain of £2,864. However, our expenditure on charitable activities (i.e. the awarding of bursaries and grants to schools, students and gardens), was again down on the prior year (£3,625 vs. £4,195) and largely reflects the fact that, as in recent years, there have been, other than within the Schools programme, few requests for grants and bursaries (*See Nigel Cox's article on page 5*).

The Trust's total funds at 31 March were £60,759 (2018: £53,671) and a full set of accounts, which have now been examined and signed off by our accountants (A C Mole & Sons), will be circulated to members prior to the AGM on 30

September.

But, as they say, "*that's history*": what about the current year? The tour of Northern Ireland yielded a surplus of £2,792 and grants to schools are slightly up on last year (£4,400 vs. £3,625). Perhaps surprisingly, given the recent turbulence in global stock markets triggered by trade and currency wars, at the time of writing (8 August) our investment is showing a further gain of £3,764. The fall in sterling is clearly benefitting some of the larger FTSE companies with income streams from abroad but it is unclear whether the cost of a no-deal Brexit is already written into market valuations: we shall soon see!

So, at the moment, taking a pessimistic view of the equity markets, I expect that we will end the year with a modest surplus. But as I've said many times before, it's not our purpose to build up a cash pile. I would again urge members to spread the word that we have monies available for garden restoration and other worthy projects, and for supporting the next generation of gardeners. The Gardens Competition (*see Christopher Bond's article on page 16*), will also help us meet our charitable aims.

“we have monies available for garden restoration and other worthy projects, and for supporting the next generation of gardeners”



An Important Place for Pelargoniums

Margaret Wilkinson of the Somerset Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society, writes

There's a *Pelargonium* for most situations and with some forethought flowers can be had in each month of the year. Nothing gives longer, more vivid colour in Summer containers. I love mixing magenta zonal *Pelargoniums* with big black *Aeonium arboreum* 'Zwartkop'; dainty lime green ivy, *Hedera helix* 'Jake', gives exciting contrast. In a cool area, my Summer pots have white zonal *Pelargoniums* with stellar *Pelargoniums* in pale tones, their starry flowers sparkling in dappled shade; silver *Helichrysum petiolare* adds to the effect. Indoors, dwarf and miniature *Pelargoniums* bloom in jolly rows on windowsills; at Christmas I will find a few red zonal or stellar *Pelargonium* blooms in the greenhouse to bring into the house, in the pot or cut for a vase where they last well. Plants with single flowers are most likely to flower through Winter. Brightly



variegated foliage of fancy-leaf varieties also cheers a winter greenhouse visit.

Other main types of *Pelargonium* are classified as regal, angel, scented-leaf, unique, decorative, species and species hybrid. They have been extensively hybridised since the 18th century when many were brought to the UK from South Africa as precious "discoveries" for grand glasshouses. Sir Richard Colt Hoare (1758-1838) held the World's best collection at NT Stourhead, and you can see a representative collection there today.

Pelargoniums are relatively succulent, making them drought tolerant but also subject to being killed by frost. Keep them above 5 degrees centigrade for overwintering, with minimal watering and low humidity. Keen growers use an electric fan heater with a thermostat, and maybe bubble-wrap insulation, to keep the greenhouse frost-free. They shorten stems

"Keep them above 5 degrees centigrade for overwintering, with minimal watering and low humidity"

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and remove older, larger and lower leaves to ensure good ventilation around the stem bases. Plants can be held in an almost dormant state and will start re-growing when days lengthen. Pruning is also important for managing *Pelargoniums*' shape, vigour, and flowering date. The cut pieces root readily and that's fun too.

To find out more:

Somerset Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society www.somersetfuchsia.org.uk

The Pelargonium and Geranium Society www.thepags.org.uk

and on YouTube.

The Somerset Gardens Trust Gardens Competition 2020

Christopher Bond describes an exciting new venture for the SGT

It was Julian Gibbs who suggested that we should start a Somerset gardens competition to reach beyond SGT members, both to celebrate the wealth of fascinating gardens and passionate owners in Somerset (historic and modern), and to increase the public's awareness of the Trust and its activities. Three of us (Sheila Rabson, Chair of the Education group, Mary ter Braak, Administrator of the website,

and myself, one of the Magazine Editors) have spent much time developing this idea to make it happen. This article describes the result.

- Two categories – school gardens, and individually owned gardens
- Helpful guidance from the Judges and Selectors on how they decide such as the Acid test: would I want to visit it again? Or want to bring a friend?
- The Individual Competition is open to SGT members and non SGT members.
- Prizes of £250 for the winner of the individual competition, £100 for schools.
- Knowledgeable selectors for choosing the shortlist for individually owned gardens.





- Well known Judges for deciding the winners (Alan Power of NT Stourhead and Alan Ketley formerly from Cornwall College)
- Every individually owned garden which enters will be visited, school gardens shortlist selected on detailed information, plans and photos.
- Entry fee of £15 for individual competition – free for schools
- A two stage entry process – an optional non committing Expression of Interest followed by a formal entry form.
- Entries limited to Gardens in Somerset and BANES
- Gardens to be visited and judged from May to July 2020
- The Competitions opened on **16 September 2019** and will close at midnight on **30 April 2020**.

We do not know how many entries to expect. If there are many, we will need to appoint more selectors. We know we will learn much during this first year of the

“Your support this year in entering the Competition, and in encouraging others, and schools you know, to do so, will be invaluable”

Competition; if the Competition is a success, we will consider repeating it. Your support this year in entering the Competition, and in encouraging others, and schools you know, to do so, will be invaluable.

The SGT website has been expanded by adding ‘Competitions’ in the menu on the left side of the homepage. There is much more detail on the Competitions in it. Here is the direct link - www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk/competition/

Do please enter and encourage your friends to do so.

Members Forum

Is weed control possible if glyphosates such as Roundup are banned?

Cicely Taylor

People always admire a weedless border, but I can't see what is so attractive about bare earth. If you cram the beds

“You walk through the nettles and docks, slashing to right and left and the tireder and crosser you get, the more you wallop everything in sight”



with plants you don't notice the weeds until they start smothering everything. Goose grass has been a terrible problem this year, and you just have to keep pulling it out. Creeping buttercups are worse - you can't use Roundup or you will kill everything else, so you have to dig them up with a fork making sure you get all their beastly tendrils.

The wilder parts of the garden need more attention. The strimmer gets rid of long grass, but the jungle knife, with a long blade curved at the end, is more satisfying to use and quieter. You walk through the nettles and docks, slashing to right and left and the tireder and crosser you get, the more you wallop everything in sight.

Neale Hatherell

At the time of writing your scribe has found that Roundup has not yet been banned, but a purchaser does have to declare that a responsible person will be applying it. The powers that be do not appear to investigate this declaration. It's a grey area, but maybe worth stocking up if you need it.



Hot water bath torture!

Philip, the owner of the excellent Ilminster emporium, 'Ilminster Home Hardware', tells me that all weed killers stocked contain a small amount of glyphosate which is the main active ingredient of Roundup. I understand that there are no plans to ban this.

A non-chemical weed killer must be the holy grail for environment-conscious gardeners. Their alternative must be in Kipling's words to spend, not just start, their working lives "*at grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner knives*".

Dilly Bradley

One weed left is seven years weeding – 7 to the power of seven here. Now an army of hogweed faces us. Thriving on our rich loam, it is very resistant to weedkiller and craftily flowers at the busiest time in the garden. With very deep fibrous tap roots it is a challenge to dig out.

Its sap in combination with sunlight blisters badly so cutting requires care. Digging it out is left to wet weather, a strong fork and even stronger arms. On a lucky day my gardening help materialises. "*Wayne, please dig this out.*", "*What sort of root does it have?*" (each root system requires a different angle of attack).

In victory, two pieces of root, top and bottom, are held aloft. "*What about the middle bit?*", "*Let's forget it, it will lift easily when it sprouts.*" And it is on to the next triffid!

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The Dutch garden in England

Anthony Pugh-Thomas researches the seventeenth century phenomenon

In 1793 the first President of the Linnean Society, Sir James E. Smith, writing about his tour of gardens between Rotterdam and Leiden, described the gardens as being “*formal and gaudy..... (with) parterres...composed of either parallel or spiral lines of box...with different coloured earths, as gravel, brick-dust, cola-cinders, or pounded tobacco pipes....and the corners of the beds often stuck with ornaments of wood, gilt*” and he posed the rhetorical question, “*But who does not know what a Dutch garden is?*”

William and Mary came to the throne in 1689 bringing with them the gardening team headed by Willem Bentinck, created Earl of Portland, and the skills they had developed laying out Het Loo and its exotic plant collection, in making intricate wildernesses such as at Ham House and in building Orangeries such as at Hampton Court. A particular feature of ‘Dutch’ gardens in their home country was the use made of their watery landscape with platforms providing views over canals and rivers and the surrounding landscape - the

best known surviving Dutch water garden is at Westbury Court in Gloucestershire, restored by the National Trust.

There were no sweeping vistas as at Vaux le Vicomte; instead there was a tendency to create garden rooms, encouraged by a fondness for high hedges influenced by the fact that many Low Country gardens had been created on town ramparts.

Contemporary writers commented on the neatness and ingenuity of Dutch gardens, avenues leading the eye to the surrounding landscape, topiary, (condemned by playwright Alexander Pope who complained of “*Adam and Eve in yew*” and “*Noah’s Ark in Holly, standing on the Mounⁿ?*”); and also on the iconography of the statues to be found in many gardens – Neptune and Tritons at Hampton Court in Herefordshire reflected the view of William as the second Aeneas whose sea-borne armies were helped by Neptune. William Blathwayt, Secretary to Sir William Temple at the Hague Embassy and a loyal supporter of William and Mary, added a statue of Neptune to the cascade at Dyrham. It was often thought that Dutch gardening was more appropriate to a non-absolutist political system than the larger

“It was often thought that Dutch gardening was more appropriate to a non-absolutist political system than the larger more baroque designs favoured by Louis XIV”

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more baroque designs favoured by Louis XIV.

Trying to respond to Sir James' question would be much easier if more 'Dutch' gardens survived complete – of the great garden laid out at Dyrham, little of the 17th century features remain (*see picture*), and Bishop Law buried the Dutch garden, at the Bishops Palace in Wells, under six foot of Mendip soil in making his idealized landscape in the 1820s. A visitor to Sir William Temple's garden 'Moor Park' in Surrey reported that it was "*small, but convenient with two canals, one inside the gardens flanked by lines of pleached trees, the other formed from the river flowing alongside the garden boundary; a pavilion overlooked one canal, and there was much topiary*". Temple used to boast that his own oranges were as large as any he had seen in Europe "*except some very old ones of the Prince of Orange's*".

So can one recognise any specifically Dutch traits in English gardens after 1688?



Dyrham Park

The answer must be a qualified 'No'; with the exception of the Royal Gardens alone; some academics consider the idea of Dutch gardens in England is a 'myth'. But Lutyens masterwork at Hestercombe argues against this.

If you visit a garden where beauty has been created from a cramped and sometimes unpropitious space with alleys, hedges, figural flower beds, grass plots, statues, topiary, canals and a viewing place – and possibly an Orangery and a Wilderness – then "Dutch" it is.

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WwoOFer Hosting

Carola Campbell explains a innovative approach to help in the garden

I cannot remember where we heard about WwoOFing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms - started in 1971), but someone told me I would one day become a Host! We moved up to Scotland in 1995 to my husband's family home. My parents-in-law were keen gardeners and had established a large informal garden around the house from the 1970s. We inherited a man who worked in the gardens to his own agenda! Eventually in 2013, he could no longer do the heavy work of cutting high hedges, and my husband suggested we sign up to become WwoOFer Hosts. What a great decision that was. The first young man to walk through our door was a delightful, shy Frenchman. His Father had cherry trees and he was very handy with the strimmer, hedge cutter and the rest. The 'WwoOFer' transformation of the gardens began. *Rhododendron ponticum* was the first plant for us to try to bring under control. Pruning saws, loppers, secateurs and chainsaws, saw the bonfires getting bigger and bigger.

WwoOFer volunteers appear all year round. In return for board

“Wwoofer volunteers appear all year round. In return for board and lodging, they do 6 hours work a day, 5 day a week”

and lodging, they do 6 hours work a day, 5 day a week. In the Winter months, we struggle to do the hours outside, but with a bit of imagination indoor jobs appear (jam, jelly making, painting, cooking). This Autumn a polytunnel is on the list of jobs to put up. The majority of our volunteers come from Europe – France, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Finland and Italy to date. USA, Canada, Singapore and Thailand give us a global flavour. The skills they have vary and there is management involved. 'Google translate' is helpful but sometimes working with them is important to give a guiding helping hand and make sure a prized shrub is not mistakenly pruned. The vast majority really are willing workers (work hard, play hard, feed well, is my mantra) and give us an extra dimension to our gardening chores. We get couples and singles coming



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to stay, and during the Summer months we try to get a gang of four to tackle larger jobs.

After one week of producing endless food for 4 hungry boys, I turned the tables on them and asked them to produce their national dish for us. What an hilarious time we had with them all talking to their

Mothers and me buying the precise ingredients for them – the Thai ingredients defeated me.

Walking around the garden on a glorious Summer's evening, remembering all the jobs the WWOOFers have done, puts a smile on my face and I know we will be welcoming volunteers for years to come.

East Lambrook Manor

Jenny and Nick Hawksley describe a pioneer

“At a time when unusual plants were a rare commodity, Mrs Fish was one of the pioneers of the modern specialist plant nursery. She was a kind and generous lady who would gladly dig up her plants directly from the garden for keen and interested visitors. But as her popularity and fame grew, this generosity became unworkable and so she set up a plant nursery, propagating plants from cuttings taken in her garden and selling them to visitors. People would travel from all over the Country to acquire her rare ‘gems’, and some would say that her place in history is most deserved for her work in plant propagation and ‘nurserymanship’ – indeed this work actively spread plants throughout a wide network of gardens and helped to secure the existence of many. This was particularly true for those plants which had lost favour, or were

perceived as weeds or unimportant, many of which she helped to popularise and secure their rightful position in the list of Cottage Garden plants eg. Geraniums, Astrantias, Vincas and Lamiums, to name but a few.”

The Plant Nursery was established around the mid 1950's.

The Nursery evolved slowly. Plant collecting, packing etc. was done in the Malt House. The Garden and Nursery were not open very often in those days, possibly only one or half a day per week. It was sometimes open by appointment. Plants were dug up from the Garden and split for sale in the Nursery.

Some people came to collect their plants but a mail order service was also offered in Spring and Autumn. Labels were given to

“her place in history is most deserved for her work in plant propagation and ‘nurserymanship’ – indeed this work actively spread plants throughout a wide network of gardens”

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order, we have no record of where the plants go to. It's mainly 'souvenir' plants for visitors to the Garden and people rarely buy in any quantity. It's just another way of raising a bit of extra cash to keep the Garden going."

Other information:

The Nursery used to be called the 'Margery Fish Nursery' but at some point this was changed to the Margery Fish Plant Nursery to avoid confusion. People had thought that it sold fish,

Mrs Fish for the plants needed from the garden. Plants were dug up, watered and wrapped and labelled. Boxes were collected locally, often from the Co-operative Shop, and wheeled to the local village Post Office in a wheelbarrow at about 4 pm in time to catch the Post. Plants were mainly sent out in Spring and Autumn but plants were dug up for visitors at other times of the year.

Since Mrs Fish's death in 1969, subsequent owners of the property have continued to run a nursery here. Mike Werkmeister, the current joint owner, offers the following information:

"The Nursery sells primarily Cottage Garden plants and interesting perennials. Most plants are raised here.

We sell principally to visitors to the Garden who can come from anywhere. We don't keep records and, as there is no mail

koi carp etc.! Also the name could suggest it was a children's nursery.

The Nursery was run until recently by Nursery Manager Tom Wild, who has worked at ELMG off and on for many years. Head Gardener, Mark Stainer, also has a good knowledge of nurseries run by previous owners as he has worked here for many years.

Opening times

The Nursery is open from 10am to 5pm when the Garden is open. You can visit the nursery without paying to visit the Garden. When the Garden is closed, or if you want to check if we have a particular plant in stock, please ring 01460 240328 or email nursery@eastlambrook.com. If we have got what you are looking for, you can then arrange a convenient time to collect your purchase. The Nursery does not provide a mail order service.



*Front Cover, Chettle Gardens,
and Back Cover, Wye Valley: courtesy of Diana Hebditch*

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