



Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

Issue 73

SPRING 2020

Featuring

Why gardening is good for mental health – p.5

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From the Editors

Welcome to the Spring edition of the SGT Magazine.

The days are lengthening, it's stopped raining every day and the Spring flower cycle has started with January snowdrops, aconites and daffodils. Warnings that we need to finish preparing the garden before other plants start their Spring spurt.

This edition has a wide variety of articles starting with the health benefits of gardening through some fascinating Somerset gardens, nurseries and landscapes and how newly discovered plants were transported from Asia in good health in the past, to what our present-day environmental group is doing.

Sit back, turn off the radio and television, and enjoy the read.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond

We always welcome feedback and suggestions for articles from members.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond
bondchristopher@btconnect.com



From the Chairman

Dear Members,

My first Chairman's piece for the Magazine – but not my first Events one. I hope you will enjoy the Events Programme which is enclosed with this Edition of the Magazine and find something that you would like to support. Trish Gibson is our social media guru and so if you have a quote about a visit or a photograph please do pass it on to her.

As the gardening year starts in earnest, we gardeners get much pleasure from our gardens whether we produce a good environment for family and friends from the animal world or to feed ourselves and perhaps the Parish (courgettes come to mind). We know how gardening benefits us and I would recommend you read the article on the Wild Roots growing project (page 5) as to how gardening can bring great benefits. Through the work of Sheila and her Education Committee, your SGT promotes gardening in schools and this is something close to my heart. It encourages knowing where our food comes from and, perhaps, some school children will be future members of SGT.

With best wishes for a good gardening year.

Diana Hebditch



**The Trust welcomes the following
New Members**

Mrs Serena Beckwith, Luccombe, Minehead
David & Lucy Croxton, Bicknoller
Dr Susanna Davidson & Mr Nicholas Browne, Castle Cary
Mrs Penelope Ellis, Long Sutton, Langport
Mr & Mrs D Fowler, Stonegallows, Taunton
Mr & Mrs M Franklin, Westholme, Pilton (LIFE)
Mrs Dawn Gormley, Hambridge, Langport
Mrs Vicky Hemming, Four Forks, Spaxton
Dr & Mrs Tim Hooker, Henton, Wells
Mrs Sue Irwin, Barrington, Ilminster
Dr & Mrs J R Jelly, Oldford, Frome
Mrs Patricia Macneal, Blackford, Yeovil
Ms Lavinia Mansel, Yeovil
Mrs Anne Pilditch, North Cadbury
Mrs Susie Pisani, Sutton Bingham
Mr & Mrs T.F. Robinson, South Petherton
Mrs W.E. Tolson, Wincanton
Mrs Sally Twiss, Honiton
Mrs Sarah Walters, Fivehead

Visit to Thenford

On June 30th 2020 our Trust has an invitation for a private visit to Thenford House. Charles Quest-Ritson in March 2019 *Country Life* wrote "*Lord and Lady Heseltine have created a garden of major importance at Thenford, one of the most impressive, varied and fascinating to have been made over the last forty years*".

Do join us.

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THE SOMERSET GARDENS TRUST

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CONTENTS

WILD ROOTS GROWING

Deb Millar describes an exciting project

MY GARDEN

Lucy Nelson has ambitious ideas.....

THE GLORY OF WALLED GARDENS

Ian Clark travels Somerset

THE WARDIAN CASE

Anthony Pugh-Thomas on a revolutionary invention

MEMBERS FORUM

The Birds in Members' gardens

DO YOU DO SOCIAL MEDIA?

Trish Gibson gives a crash course

THE SGT SOMERSET GARDENS 2020 COMPETITION

Christopher Bond and Sheila Rabson give a progress report

WOODLAND STORY

Dawn Adams shows what can be done in a neglected wood

TEACHING GARDENING IN SCHOOLS

Sheila Rabson on lessons learned from experience

THE WONDER OF SCOTTS NURSERY

Jenny Hawksley uncovers an important story

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH PLASTIC FLOWERPOTS?

Sally Nex on environmentally friendly solutions

IS HESTERCOMBE A 'DUTCH' GARDEN?

Anthony Pugh-Thomas investigates

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The Wild Roots Growing Project

Deb Millar, Volunteer, describes a happy journey

The Wild Roots Growing Project started almost accidentally. We needed to find an alternative venue to our forest school site at short notice, providing post 16 support to a young man through our educational charity 'Wilder Woods'. We took him to our neglected 3-acre smallholding near Baltonsborough. A local poultry breeder was also looking for space to keep her chickens and ducks – and somewhere for an absconding Shetland pony. Slowly we started to restore the growing areas – a couple of people wanted to keep bee hives there; and parents of other young adults who had struggled with College and were mostly at home doing nothing, asked to come. 'The Field' became a hub serving the mixed needs of a variety of people and animals.

“We also worked hard on the vegetable growing, using two contrasting methods, no-dig and dig - I'm not quite sure which method won, but the fresh produce was wonderful.”

In March 2017, we collaborated with 'Growing Roots' a Community Interest Company, specializing in horticultural therapy, to run a community project to

support young adults, not in education, employment or training, to build skills and reduce their isolation. A polytunnel was installed and real head way was made with the growing area. The young men who



courtesy of Jenny Cater

came were especially interested in woodland management so the woodland (planted as whips in 2005) was managed and thinned. More fruit trees were planted. We also worked hard on the vegetable growing, using two contrasting methods, no-dig and dig - I'm not quite sure which method won, but the fresh produce was wonderful.

We were keen to continue when the 'Growing Roots' project ended. So much had been achieved and our regular

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courtesy of Jenny Cater

participants had become very dependent on the provision. So, in June 2018, another project began, through ‘Awards for All’, this time with wider links including to nearby ‘Plot Gate’ a Community Supported Agriculture scheme. Two of the original beneficiaries increased their roles. We welcomed people from the local community for Well Being sessions. We supported other young adults with learning disabilities with regular work experience, referrals come through MIND and through Health Connections; and we recruited volunteers to help with gardening, infrastructure projects and mentoring. Stalls at the Bath and West Show, Baltonsborough Show and the Oak Fair helped spread the word. The project is thriving.

Having some paid gardeners to keep on top of the practical and urgent tasks, is vital when running a horticultural therapy

project. If the basic jobs are well in hand, everything a participant can offer is a bonus, so there is no pressure. There is also nothing so demoralizing as finding out that seeds you planted have died because they weren’t watered. Equally if there is a skeleton paid team, others will step forward to volunteer, so the benefits are magnified. It is very hard to run these projects effectively without any funding. Yet they are so valuable and needed because of the huge gaps in services for the vulnerable, which have followed years of cuts to youth and health provision.

The Field has been transformed, we are growing high quality produce and flowers to sell on our roadside cart. Biodiversity has improved, it is a haven for bees and butterflies, birds. The trees are in good health and help with local flood control. We have also found otter spraint near the stream. Over the years, so many people

“Having some paid gardeners to keep on top of the practical and urgent tasks, is vital when running a horticultural therapy project”

struggling for various reasons, feeling isolated, or in recovery from mental health

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difficulties, have come and found health and healing. One wrote *“Thank you, I have benefited so much from having this project as a reason to get up in the morning, to feel purposeful, to feel needed and at the end of it to take home fresh produce to make a healthy meal with”*. An example of our achievement is one young adult with high functioning autism, who after 5 years

being out of education, employment and training, is now enrolled on a course at Bridgwater College. He completes his work experience hours through our project. We are so proud of him.

We welcome interest, volunteers, funding and support of any sort. For further information www.wilderwoods.org or email deb@wilderwoods.org

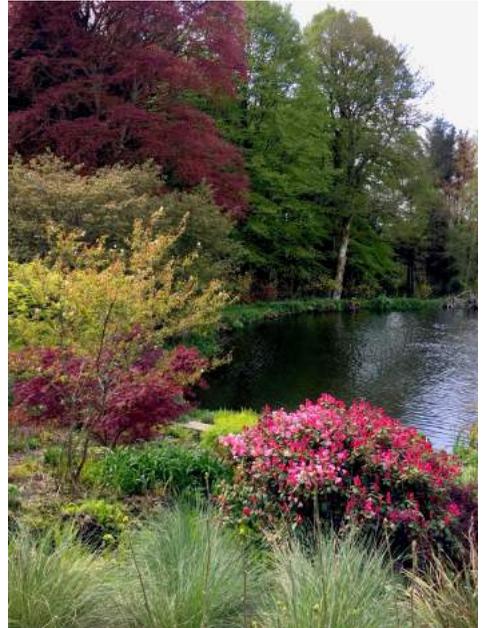
Creating a garden at Forest Lodge, Penselwood

Lucy Nelson describes an exciting journey

None of the previous owners of Forest Lodge were particularly interested in the garden, despite having the 3 magical S's - south facing, sloping and sunny and the lucky 'w' for naturally occurring water. I found we were on the same spit of acid greensand that Stourhead benefits from and we could create a garden that would have something flowering every month of the year. Badgers, rabbits and deer were all regular visitors to the garden. A deer fence was my first extravagance. We also enlarged the puddle to a lake. This is fed

“the 3 magical S's - south facing, sloping and sunny and the lucky 'w' for naturally occurring water”

by natural springs which as long as they are encouraged in the right direction are a delight. As I write in November, already we have *Camellia saasanqua* flowering. I particularly love one that is named most unfortunately 'Gay Sue' but it is white and



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double and much more enchanting than it sounds. I also have the last of the gorgeous *Salvia* 'leucantha' which is really irritating as it only just gets into it rhythm in October and then is cut down by the frost. At the front of the house I have just put in a bed of mad hot coloured *Salvias*, Red Bumble, *Cerro Potosi* and *Confertiflora* which set

"I suspect Brother Cadfael might have walked up the lane from my neighbour Cameron Mackintosh's Stavordale Priory"

thin sand and thank heavens for an endless supply of wellrotted horse manure. My

I had a brief flirtation with ducks. I bought a whole selection one year at the Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show. I thought they would love my lake and I moved an old hen house near the water. The dozen I bought dwindled fast to half a dozen. I put up a wire enclosure up round the house. Somehow Charles James Fox knew that I had bought the most delicious ducks and the more I replaced them, the quicker he came over the deer fence for his regular duck take-away. So, after a Winter of death and devastation, I admitted defeat and removed the duck/hen house.

favourite is 'Compassion' and I have just cut a gorgeous November bunch. The strongest rose is 'Brother Cadfael', named after a fictional Benedictine monk. Ellis Peters wrote some grisly tales about him in her murder mysteries, with wonderful titles like

off the holly berries on the bush just behind them. They look gorgeous and have been flowering since May. My best flowering friends have to be more like 3 day event horses than 5 furlong racehorses, they must be hardy, multi talented and stay the distance. My Mother lives in Albrington which is the village where David Austin Roses have their rose nursery. We struggled for a few years and a few stalwarts have managed to learn to love our



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‘*A morbid taste for bones*’. The lane at the back of our garden is called Steels Lane and is mentioned in the Domesday book. I suspect Brother Cadfael might have walked up the lane from my neighbour Cameron Mackintosh’s Stavordale Priory up to the church on the hill in Penselwood. Around the house we have box or yew edged fairly formal planting of roses and my favourite salvias from Derry Watkins. I adore flowering trees and my favourite month is May when we have our *Davidia involucrata* flowering and all the wonderful *Cornus* with silly names like

‘Kenwyn Clapp’ and ‘Norman Hadden’, and when my overplanted orchard is full of the blowsy blossom from the *Malus hupehensis* which I adore. I am not really a gardener. I am a planner and a plant enthusiast and my gardener, Amanda Fowler, and her stalwart companion, Oliver Downing, are the heroes. They do all the work and I come out and make silly suggestions but somehow we contrive to have created a garden which gives me a huge amount of pleasure. Do come and see us. (lucillanelson@gmail.com)

Walled and Kitchen Gardens of Somerset

Ian Clark discovers lots of them.....

The Research and Conservation Committee have been undertaking a desk top survey of the walled and kitchen gardens of Somerset. The project has so far identified 63 potential sites but I’m sure there are more. Of the 63 sites 25 are in Somerset West and Taunton, 21 in South Somerset, 11 in Mendip and 6 in Sedgemoor Districts.

Walled and kitchen gardens vary tremendously in layout and construction but are all designed to take maximum benefit from the sun in helping to grow and produce fruit, vegetables and cut flowers. Their orientation and slope are therefore critical and south facing and sloping sites offer the best opportunities for capturing the sun’s energy. Not all sites have the best

natural orientation or slope to benefit from ideal conditions but are most successful when they do. The project is at an early stage where survey data, maps and listings are the first



Barrington Court

sources of information. The next stage will be to start visiting sites to carry out surveys of their features and condition.

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“The aim of the project is to map all of the walled and kitchen gardens in Somerset but also to find the best and rarest examples”

This walled garden is unusual in that it is constructed from cob and faced with brick with tiled coping stones. It's now in a poor condition but with many of the historic features still discernible.

The aim of the project is to map all of the walled and kitchen gardens in Somerset but also to find the best and rarest examples. For example, over 20 years ago the Trust, working with the Otterhead Estates Trust, commissioned Dr Susan Campbell to undertake a survey of the walled garden at Otterhead Lakes. The walled garden lies close to the lakes, owned by Wessex Water, in the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

When the project is more advanced we intend to create a network of Somerset walled garden owners and provide them with advice on the maintenance, management and where necessary restoration of these essential garden features. If you know of an owner who would like to be involved or if you would like to help with the research work please contact Ian Clark at oliveleafdesign@yahoo.com.

Wardian Cases

Anthony Pugh-Thomas revives an important horticultural discovery

A ‘Wardian Case’ is no more than a sealed glass case which allows the constant recycling of water by absorption and transpiration. So why was it revolutionary? Until the early 19th century plants being sent back to England frequently died during the long sea voyages from exposure to salt water and lack of light and fresh water. In 1819 John Livingstone, wrote to The Royal Horticultural Society from Macao, estimating that only one in one thousand plants survived the journey to Great Britain. John Lindley, of the Horticultural Society, commented: “The idea which seems to exist, that to tear a plant from its native soil, to plant it in fresh

earth, to fasten it in a wooden case, and to put it on board a vessel.... has led to the most ruinous consequences”.

The solution was to design a better type of case to contain them and the designer was Dr Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward (1791-1868), medical physician, botanist and inventor. Fascinated by insects as well as plants, in 1829 he put a moth chrysalis on to some earth in a glass bottle with a lid so that when it hatched he would have a perfect specimen. “After a time, a speck or two of vegetation appeared on the surface of the mould, and turned out to be Fern and a Grass”, and so the Wardian Case was born.

Growing plants, and even shipping plants, under glass was not new, but Ward's observation of the tightly sealed environment, kept independent from

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©Economic Botany Collection, Kew Gardens

surrounding atmospheric conditions, was a breakthrough. He realized that the conditions inside a sealed case could withstand extreme changes of temperature and did not need watering. They were ideal

“He realized that the conditions inside a sealed case could withstand extreme changes of temperature and did not need watering”

for the growth and safe transportation of plants.

In June 1833, working with the celebrated commercial nursery Loddiges in Hackney, Ward obtained a wide range of plants, and, as he explained in a letter to William Hooker, Director of Kew in 1837, “filled two cases with Ferns, Grasses etc. and sent them to Sydney” where everything arrived alive and well. The case was refilled with

Australian ferns and grasses and sent back. The cases left Australia in a temperature of around 100F, rounded Cape Horn at 20F, crossed the Equator at 120F and reached Britain in November when the temperature was just above freezing. The plants were not watered during the voyage and received no extra protection. They were taken out of the cases by Loddiges “in the most healthy and vigorous condition”.

There were huge economic consequences of his invention. Joseph Hooker used them to send back plant material from New Zealand in 1841 (and Kew continued using them until 1962); in 1848 Robert Fortune, the plant explorer, used Wardian Cases to move tea plants from China to India, forming the foundations of the Assam and Sikkim tea industry in India;

the Cinchona tree, whose bark was used in quinine-based antimalarial drugs to save many lives, was moved in secret from Bolivia to Java and India; the rubber tree was taken from its native South

America and transplanted, via Kew, to the Malay and Ceylon regions. Ward realised that such cases could also be applied to other uses and created a suitable case for keeping small animals – the ‘vivarium’.

For more details, refer to David Marsh’s Gardens Trust biography – “The Strange Case of Doctor Ward”.



Members Forum – The Birds in my Garden

Mary Hadow

Pigeons excepted, the birds in our edge of village garden are mostly welcome – particularly in Winter when they provide a vibrant sense of life and purpose.

We are lucky with our birds. Blackbirds work hard on cotoneaster berries, crab apples (yellow before red); tits and finches, in their great variety, feed intensively as dusk approaches; woodpeckers – green and greater spotted - are very visible amongst the muted colours of winter vegetation; flocks of starlings, heading for the Levels, rest in the oak tree; fieldfares work their way through the cider apple orchard; buzzards swoop in; owls are more often heard than seen; wrens dart engagingly amongst the surviving herbaceous plants and robins too seem ever present.

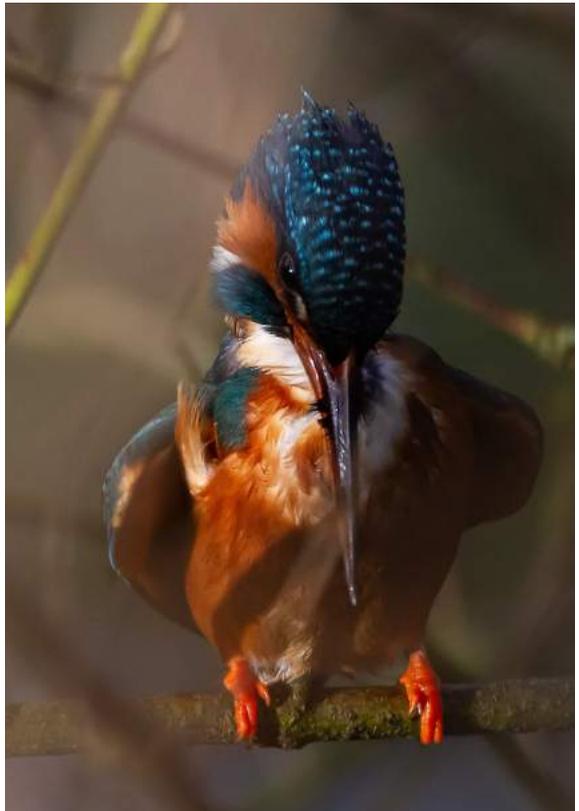
We look forward to the Summer visitors – thrushes, house martins et al – and hope one day

to see the kingfisher that our neighbour assures us visits the orchard stream!

Helena Young

My garden in West Hatch lies between agricultural land and woodland, containing a wildflower meadow, a small orchard and surrounded by a hedge of mixed

native woodland species. It is home to robins, wrens, a pair of nuthatch, blackbirds, a thrush, many blue tits; is regularly visited by greater spotted woodpeckers, green woodpeckers, magpies, hedge sparrows, goldfinch, chaffinch, bullfinch, long tailed tits, crows, wood pigeon, tawny owl (mostly heard but not seen, though a young one once came down the chimney); house martins nest in



© Sam Chislett

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the eaves of the garage thatch; swifts skim the pool, but there is never a swallow; flocks of redwing strip the holly berries; sparrow-hawks divebomb the blue tits; a little owl sits on the wooden fence; buzzards fly aloft; pheasants strut; and in January there was a male black cap on the bird feeder.

In the late 1980s nightingales sang thrillingly in the adjacent wood but, since a wildlife trust coppiced it to concentrate on conserving dormice, alas no more. This year we thrillingly heard several cuckoos calling nearby.

John Cryer

At this time of year with soil warming and plants stirring, so too are the garden birds. If it has been a hard Winter, they will have had a difficult time of it and the regulars may have been joined by some more exotic strangers, waxwings and redstarts from Scandinavia; even the omnipresent starlings may have come over from the Continent to compete with local sparrows, tits, robins and finches on the feeders. Soon they will be off, to leave the locals to pairing and nesting. Now is the time to provide nesting sites and materials for the Summer's broods.

We spend so long in our gardens looking down at the soil and the plants that we forget the sky above especially in the Winter. Buzzards, gulls, ravens and raptors are hardly garden birds but do provide a thrill as they fly over and, in May, what can be better than those energetic acrobats, the swallows and swifts arriving from the

South each year? Perhaps they enjoy our gardens as much as we do.

Robin Ray

Much fun can be had if official 'given' names are abandoned for garden birds and traditional regional and dialect names adopted instead. How many can you spot?

For instance, in one short spell I recorded some ox-eyes, a nun, a coal mouse and a sudden influx of a dozen or so bum towels. Ah, yes, bum towels. Probably better to revert to another name - how about mumruffins? There was, too, a female pink twink and at least two hedge bettys alongside a couple of dishwashers that fly in regularly from a neighbouring garden; these were briefly joined by five or six proud tailors flaunting their finery. As usual there were rather too many caddys but not sufficient to deter the ruddocks, scuttys and zulus that are always nearby. The expected yappingdale flew in search of emmets while a too-zoo watched mournfully from the old plum tree. I always hope a trush drush will be among visitors but these days it's rare. Also temporarily missing, was the rain pie which, I have noticed, now takes advantage of fat balls as well as peanuts.

Lee Hooker

Lapwings, reed warblers and snipe exert avian rights to be habitat-picky, selecting the peaty, reed-fringed Somerset wetlands. Regrettably, nary a one seeks domiciliary bliss in my moorland garden just above them; too high, too dry.

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It passes muster for the green woodpecker, silently troughing the grass for insect goodies whilst lesser-spotted relatives head-bang away dementedly like punk rockers. Carefree crows sway noisily in ash trees just for the heck of it; collared doves peck warily on the terrace as rare, shy, dunnocks dart deftly between pots, content with the wee'est of morsels.

Guarding against invasion by other tweeting species is the robin's sweet song but... ornithological spoiler... its cadences are freighted with abuse, essentially, 'Get orf my patch!' Charles Darwin's claim that all such musical outpourings are fundamentally useless cleverly anticipated the very vexatious vanguard of Twitter blogging. Leave tweets to the birds!

SGT gets sociable on Twitter

Trish Gibson explains all

'Social media' - it'll either be second nature to you, or you'll hate it and believe it's not for you, thank you. But actually both the 'apps' known as Twitter and Instagram (either on your computer or smartphone) can be really useful to the SGT - and here's why.

Basically they're ways of publicising what we're doing - and right now that's a growing amount - and we want the wider world to know about it.

Fortunately when I took this on I already used both Twitter and Instagram and enjoyed a lot of what I found on them. So, SGT now has its own Twitter account - @SomersetGTrust - as well as a presence on Instagram - go to [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com) or the app and search for [somersetgardenstrust](https://www.instagram.com/somersetgardenstrust)

To a certain extent, both work on a sort of 'scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' basis. When I put up a new post (Tweet or Instagram picture - say about our new competitions), I can link it to bring it to the attention of anyone else. If

I 'follow' someone, hopefully they'll follow me back and maybe even 'like' my post. And then their followers will see that post they've liked and might start following me ... and so on and on.



On Twitter, you are limited to 280 characters per tweet but that's really not a hardship; the key is to find the right people to link to. Good pictures help too.

"It's early days yet but we already have a number of like-minded popular groups following us"

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It's early days yet but we already have a number of like-minded popular groups following us, for instance Garden Media Guild, Hardy Plant Society, CPRE Somerset, Somerset Wildlife Trust, other Gardens Trusts, National Garden Scheme, National Trust etc. And anytime I do a new post, they'll all get to see it.

On an Instagram post about our Competition, for example, I can use #gardendesign, a hashtag that has been used over 2 million times and one that many, many people follow, searching for inspirational ideas – and hey presto, they see details of our new competition. Just what we want.

wider, possibly younger audience. When we go garden visiting, it will be very useful to publicise attractive pictures of where we're going and where we've been (owners allowing, of course). No word limit here and the possibility of reaching more people through the use of hashtags – a method of searching for huge numbers of people who might be attracted to your picture; they might even make comments, and want to know more. That way could lie new members.

Instagram is really about the pictures but similarly enables us to spread the word about the Trust to a

Equally to the point, you can keep in touch with all we're doing by following us too!

SGT Garden Competition

Christopher Bond and Sheila Rabson report on progress

Readers will know about the Somerset Gardens Trust Gardens Competition 2020 from the last edition of this Magazine. It is to find the most inspiring school and individually owned gardens in the County. There is lots of information about what the Judge and Selectors are looking for, the prizes and entry process on the SGT website (www.somersetgardenstrust.org.uk). Here is a progress report –

- The Competition is now open. Entries close on 22 May for both individually owned gardens and schools.

- Anyone can enter, very much including members of the Trust
- The criteria focus on quality and interest rather than on size – smaller gardens have as good a chance as larger ones to win a prize.
- First prize in both categories is £250 and a special prize for the runner up in the individual category
- There is a small entry fee – free for schools, £5 for smaller gardens (up to 50 square yards) and £15 for larger ones.
- Have a look at the criteria on the website. They are based on RHS approaches to judging. Every individually owned garden will be

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CALL FOR ENTRIES

Somerset Gardens Competition 2020
 £250 top prize – £15 per entry – Free for Schools



INDIVIDUAL OWNED GARDENS Competition
 Judge – Alan Power, NT Stourhead
 Selectors – Nigel Cox, Paul Cumbleton,
 Lucy Nelson and Libby Russell

The two competitions celebrate the wealth and diversity of historic and modern gardens in Somerset, and the remarkable passion of school volunteers and garden owners

Competitions Open – 15/9/2019
 Competitions Close – 22/5/2020
 Visiting and Judging – May to July 2020



SCHOOLS Competition
 Judge – Alcn Kelley, former Head of Horticultural Studies, Cornwall College

Go to www.somersetgardentrust.org.uk/competition/ for more information

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- We are also alerting Somerset Gardening Clubs and Schools to the Competition
- We have raised significant sponsorship for the Competition.

The organizers are very keen to encourage Trust members to enter. One benefit is that you will receive a visit and feedback from the selectors even if you do not win. As mentioned earlier, it is a new competition so no one knows about it. That is why we would very much like to enter your garden in it. You will

“Do please enter – and enjoy yourself.”

- visited by at least 2 selectors in late May or June.
- The selectors and judges are all professional skilled gardeners (the judge is Alan Power, head gardener at NT Stourhead, and the Selectors are described in detail on the website.)
 - Since this is a new Competition, we have a substantial traditional and social media campaign, for example you may have seen the extensive write up in the January edition of *Somerset Life*.
 - We have a reciprocal promotion with the NGS

never have a better chance of winning as in future years the entries increase and competition hots up!

You will find the Competition entry form on the website. Do please enter – and enjoy yourself.

We bought a wood.....

Dawn Watts describes a long and good journey

Our eldest son rang: “I’ve been talking to a man in the pub ...” who wanted to buy part of a wood - and was looking for someone to buy the rest. So, about six months later, our family became the owners of a 5.5-acre piece of woodland

near Chipstable in Somerset, on a 999-year lease, with a rent of 65p per annum. The Wood was part of a post-War Forestry Commission plantation of Beech and Scots pine, planted following wartime shortages, that had been abandoned when globalisation and increasing imports made it uneconomic. The trees were very tall as they had been grown for straight timber, and it was quite difficult to move around

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between them as the saplings had been planted on ridges, and not thinned. There are some old and very beautiful Beech trees on the roadside edge of the Wood that were planted as part of an avenue by the current leaseholder's Great-Grandfather.



We decided to manage the woodland to encourage much wider diversity and to provide the family with firewood and possibly some building timber.

The closeness of planting and the density of beech canopy meant that it was heavily shaded under the trees. There was little plant life other than moss, ferns (Bracken, Hart's Tongue and Male Fern) and ivy, along with a few small holly and beech. These were dwarfed by lack of light, with, on the Southern edge of the Wood where there was

more light, saplings of Ash, Oak, Rowan and Elder, and a few other bits and bobs including Wortleberry, Bluebell, Primrose and Foxglove. Animal life was limited although there was ample evidence of bark damage by Grey Squirrels. We were also visited by the occasional Roe and Muntjac

Deer and Hedgehogs.

There was little evidence of insect or bird life although Woodpigeons and Magpies were spotted as well as pheasants.

One Winter's day, with the help of family and friends, we did our first planting of 100 whips of native British trees and shrubs, mostly around the edge where we thought there would be

enough light: about a third of these whips still survive 5 years later. Many simply didn't have sufficient light to grow – a warning for patience for any future planting schemes: first clear space!

“Many simply didn't have sufficient light to grow – a warning for patience for any future planting schemes: first clear space!”

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The next project was clearing an area in the centre of the Wood to use as our camping and picnic area. Two years later we felled a lot of trees in the top third of the Wood, to allow in light and to encourage small mammals, insects and birds as the area matures.

Our friends now offer us trees as presents to gradually diversify the planting – but it is something of a battle to stop the deer eating the tops of the young trees as they emerge from the tree guards!

Our woodland has given us so much already – we love it and have a grand time with family and friends.

Teaching Gardening in Schools

Sheila Rabson wonders about school gardeners.....

People involved in running the school garden come in three varieties. We can compare these garden types by how they came into being and by comparing them to our own garden's content. The Education Group has visited many schools in the County and we have seen how the gardens are run and organised by all the types described below.

Firstly, there is the very knowledgeable, capable, willing volunteer. These people give up their own time to run the school garden either by coming in during the school day or to do the after-school club. They may be one of the current pupil's parents. In at least one case, these parents have carried on even when the pupil has moved on to the next school. In at least two schools we have seen parents go on to qualify in horticulture. Ideas for the garden will come easily to them and they will react well with all the children,

whatever the season and weather. These are the stars of the school garden and can appear in any form within it. They can be the knock out plant, the blazing border or the giant marrow and will always have a point of interest to show any visitor.

Secondly, there are the teachers who have had garden duties allocated to them by virtue of being the latest member of staff at the school or they have taken on a previous teacher's duties.



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Gardening has been thrust upon them and they will often start with great trepidation and be fairly reluctant to do much without support. However, they should not be disparaged as often they come up with imaginative and creative ideas as to how to use what the garden can offer. Literacy and poetry, mathematics, art, history, geography, religion etc. can all be used within the garden setting to give children imaginative lessons as well as an outdoor experience. The gardens here may be a little unkempt but the children will be keen to get outside and will tackle even the most mundane jobs with enthusiasm. They can be likened to trees that burst with new leaves, followed by showy flowers and good coloured leaves in the autumn.

Lastly, we have the truly reluctant gardener. These tend to run a wild garden i.e. not a wildlife garden. Some effort might be put in to creating a pond but it

“Gardening has been thrust upon them and they will often start with great trepidation and be fairly reluctant to do much without support”

will then be surrounded with a fence on the grounds of “*dangerous water*”. These teachers may not realise that maintenance will be essential to keep a pond in good condition. The plant selection will be poor and may contain plants that will take over the area. The pond will be built far too small to attract any interesting creatures. These teachers are a little bit like thuggish plants or weeds as that will multiply rapidly and soon outgrow any usefulness they may have had. Fortunately, we have not seen any of these recently although the minute pond does still exist in some schools.

John Scott of Merriott (c.1807–1886)

Jenny Hawksley revives an important Somerset gardener

Scotts
NURSERIES

The village of Merriott in Somerset has a history of cultivation and is believed to have housed nurseries

for plants for monasteries in medieval times. Market gardening has also been an important activity.

The Nursery at Merriott was established in 1728 on a plot, which itself dates back to the 14th century. The largest nursery was owned in 1831 by John Webber, and then by his son WW Webber in 1846. The Webbers were bought out in 1852 by John Scott, who originally came from Perth in Scotland. He became an expert, both nationally and internationally, on the

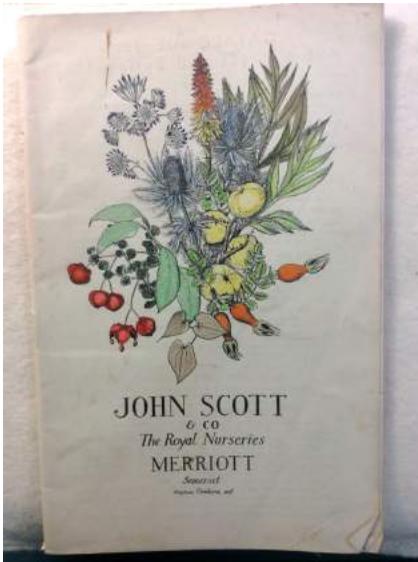
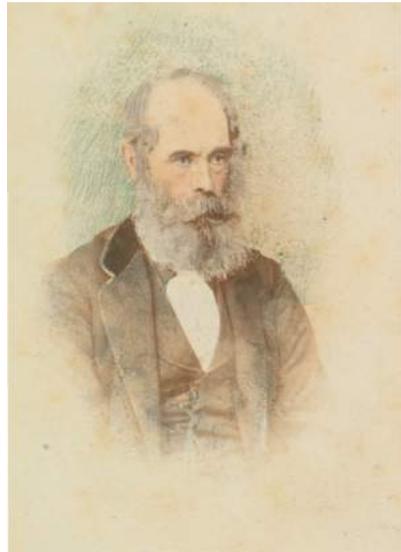
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growing of fruit trees. Scotts were renowned for their quality and choice. In 1870 he published a book *The Orchardist*, a catalogue of fruits cultivated and sold. However, his work was contested by Robert Hogg who had produced *the Fruit Manual*. In 1873 Scott issued a second, enlarged edition under the title *Scott's Orchardist*. There were to be no further editions, because Hogg sued Scott for plagiarism.

Scotts published a variety of catalogues including *Seeds and Sundries*, *Hardy Trees and Shrubs*, *Herbaceous Plants*, *Rock and Alpine Plants*, *Garden Roses*, *Hardy Fruits*, *Spring Bargains* and *Spring Bedding*. Sundries included Genuine

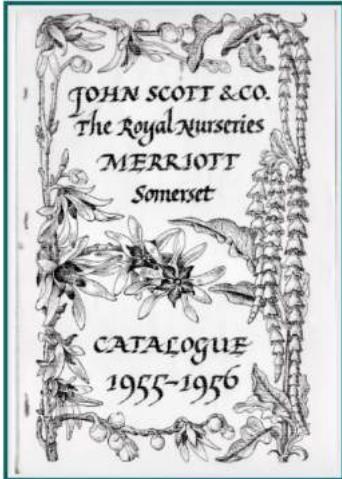
Scotch Oatmeal, Peas, Superfine Durham Mustard Flour Per lb, 2s; per oz, 2d, Phosphatic Yeast Substitute, 2d per pkt, or 6d per bottle, Mushroom Ketchup, 1s 3d and 2s 6d each, Dried Herbs, Bird Seed, Wasp Destroying Mixture and a variety of Garden Cutlery and Tools as well as Hyacinth Glasses and Etruscan Vases.



Before Scott's death the business fell into financial difficulties and was taken over by his mortgagees. Its fortunes had been restored by 1923 when it was sold to Robert J. Wallis, and continued as 'John Scott and Company.'

It remained in the hands of several generations of the Wallis family. For many years, Scott's Nurseries traded successfully, with a nationwide, perhaps

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“For many years, Scott’s Nurseries traded successfully, with a nationwide, perhaps worldwide, reputation for quality, service and expertise”

worldwide, reputation for quality, service and expertise. It was once commonplace to see Scotts recommended in the gardening

sections of the quality newspapers and magazines by journalists who were expert in their field. Sadly, the business went into liquidation in 2009 after the sudden death of John Wallis.

Scott’s catalogues of the past will be remembered also for the beautiful line drawings of Robin Tanner, the artist, engraver and print maker; seen here in the cover for 1955-56.

Plastic pots: to recycle, or not to recycle?

Sally Nex tackles an unpopular problem

How many plastic plant pots are kicking about in your shed?

British gardeners get through 500 million new plant pots every year. Disposing of this mountain responsibly is a real headache: most goes to landfill or incineration, but some washes into our oceans and even our soil. Scientists recently found earthworms are losing weight because of microplastics.

Recycling might seem the obvious answer. But 87% of councils don’t collect plant

pots. The Horticultural Trades Association produced ‘taupe’ pots after it emerged that recycling machines don’t recognise black plastic, but councils won’t take them either, saying the plastic is too low-grade to recycle profitably.

Your local garden centre may have a pot swap scheme, but check for a stated commitment to recycle any unwanted pots left over. School and community gardens sometimes welcome free pots, too.

But the best solution to your plastic pot problem is not to recycle them at all. Keep them in use and out of landfill for as long as you can: and in the meantime, choke off the flow of plastic coming into your garden so the problem doesn’t get worse.

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Buy plants bare-root, or raise your own from seeds or cuttings, so you aren't lumbered with yet another plastic pot from the garden centre. And switch to biodegradable pots: beautiful old terracotta, Vipots, made of rice hulls, or fibre pots (pulped cardboard), buried with the plant.

Meanwhile I've stacked all my unwanted plastic pots in

my shed until local recycling facilities catch up. My only problem now is where to put my tools...



courtesy of The Daily Telegraph

IS HESTERCOMBE A "DUTCH" GARDEN?

Anthony Pugh-Thomas investigates

The comment at the end of the article in the last issue on Dutch gardens in England "*some academics consider the idea of Dutch gardens in England is a 'myth'. But Lutyens masterwork at Hestercombe argues against this*" was an editorial insertion and, when I queried that comment, the Editor told me that he considered that the design showed Lutyens being influenced by the Dutch canal idea and the Persian water garden. As

that insertion prompted some members to query that comment I carried out basic research in published works and with the help of Philip White and Kim Legate, the archivist at Hestercombe.

There is some evidence that Lutyens had Italian influence at Hestercombe. Jane

"the rills at Hestercombe may have been influenced by Persian gardens and the pools, water masks, elaborate paving mill stones and symmetrical layout influenced by Dutch gardens"

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were “very unlike anything that ever was in Holland...”

Of course, both Lutyens and Miss Jekyll travelled widely and completed commissions in other countries and would certainly have been aware, of foreign influences: the rills at Hestercombe may have been

Brown in “*Lutyens and the Edwardians*” states that Lady Alice Hylton at Amerdown, who loved all things Italian, introduced Lutyens to Mrs Portman. Mrs Portman may also have been influenced by the gardens designed by Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll at Abbeyleix in Ireland, that are known locally as ‘*The Italian Gardens*,’ and consist of formal gardens, lakes, woodland and architectural features.

The second contract that Lutyens made with the Portmans was to create the Orangery and what was shown on the designs as the Terrace Garden, which later became known as the “*Dutch garden*”. Lutyens had earlier designed gardens at Munstead Corner and at Orchards in Surrey that he labelled as “*Dutch*”, but as Avery Tipping in *Country Life* wrote, they

influenced by Persian gardens and the pools, water masks, elaborate paving mill stones and symmetrical layout influenced by Dutch gardens although such elements are common to many formal gardens. Jane Ridley comments in “*The Letters of Edwin Lutyens*” that “*1903-08 were years of transition, when Lutyens experimented with a wide variety of styles, combining classicism with Tudor, Jacobean and English Georgian. ... the excitement of these houses derives from Lutyens’s extraordinary ability to distill the essence of a style ...*”

So maybe we can accept the Editor’s view and apply that fluid description, “*Dutch Garden*”, to Hestercombe!



*Front Cover courtesy of Dawn Adams,
and Back Cover courtesy of Diana Hebditch*

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