

Somerset Gardens Trust

A member of The Gardens Trust

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SUMMER 2021

Featuring

The Amazing Fern – p.8



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From the Editors

Younger people are gardening and enjoying the landscape! What a benefit from the lockdowns; both vegetables and flowers. A return to the 1950s and further back. All we now need is for new houses to have large enough gardens or for community gardens to be open to all. More good news. Gardening is now officially recognized as benefitting well-being.

This issue has some significant articles on vegetables, on some fine Somerset gardens and on a huge variety of subjects of interest to gardeners – from growing tender plants to making a gravel garden to meet climate change. There are also some light hearted ones such as on garden guiding and how John Evelyn's Diary pages made useful dress patterns. Enjoy, whether you read it through in one, or dip into it on wet days.

Christopher and Lindsay Bond
bondchristopher@btconnect.com



From the Chairman

A big thank you to Camilla and all the Sue's of the Events Committee who have worked hard to get the visits programme together and thank you to all who have applied for tickets. We continue to be dependent upon Covid rules but let's hope we can enjoy our 2021 summer visits. Please do give back and offer to help on the day – it will be appreciated – perhaps offer to give a vote of thanks to the hosts after the visit.

News from the Gardens Trust

The Gardens Trust has launched a project to 'Grow and reach new people' with Lottery funding and this is an extract of their press release.

"The project is designed to grow the GT's resilience for the future, particularly by improving our ability to reach new people from a broad range of cultural backgrounds. We are excited about ensuring that our work can have more impact and on broader foundations.

The Gardens Trust Chairman, Peter Hughes QC, says, 'We are so grateful to Lottery players for this grant, which will enable us to reach more people and become stronger for the future. We are particularly delighted to be able to recruit a new Audience Development and Engagement Officer, and look forward to seeing how we connect with new friends from a range of different backgrounds.'

Dominic Cole CMLI FIOH VMM OBE, President of The Gardens Trust, said, 'I have enjoyed watching The Gardens Trust go from strength to strength, and this is the next exciting stage on our journey. It is crucial that historic

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parks and gardens are enjoyed across our society so that they can survive for future generations, and this project will help us to achieve that goal.

Learning from the project will be shared with volunteers at the affiliated local County Gardens Trusts so that they too can become more sustainably impactful.

You may read it in full on their website where there is a link to apply for the post of part-time Audience Development and Engagement Officer.

Diana Hebditch

Friday 2 July AGM at 4pm and Garden Party

at Belmont Farm,
Hatch Beauchamp, TA3 6AA

by kind permission of
John Townson

No charge for this event but
you must let Sue Hatherell
know you are coming.

01460 52834

suehatherell@btinternet.com

50/50 Plant Sale

Garden and woodland walk

Drinks and Canapés

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Beauty and Utility

Mervyn Wilson explains his love of vegetable growing

To my mind it is odd to have a garden without vegetables. I grew up in the War; everyone who could grew peas, potatoes, beans and greens, not only as a contribution to the war effort, but as a great improvement to the menu. At that time many people had a kitchen garden, usually a designated area, though during the War, lawns and flower beds were converted.

After the War vegetables became cheap, and paid gardeners less common. Many gave up vegetable growing, except perhaps a few early crops, such as spinach and beans. For myself, living in London when first married, a lawn, some shrubs, trees, and flowers were enough. But I had been infected with the vegetable growing tradition, and when the opportunity arose, took an allotment on the Surrey Docks. As a family we came to value the quality of what could be grown, over what our street market provided.

When we moved to the Country, I had taken to heart William Morris' principle that the garden should combine 'beauty and utility'. Among the utilities, growing vegetables and fruit figured. We had plenty of space,

and established a good allotment size area in the old walled kitchen garden; the rest became ornamental, separated by hedges. When the garden was opened, I noted how people enjoyed walking round the vegetable area. At some point we visited the Chateau Villandry, and admired the vegetables grown in decorative rows and patterns in beds contained by low-growing espaliered apples, forming a parterre, overlooked by the tall Chateau. The idea of the decorative growing of fruit and vegetables took hold of me. To some extent we realised it in our rectory garden, with an apple walk, together with a circular way through the kitchen garden.

It was not till we moved to Somerset in



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2003 that I moved on a step. At this time the raised bed was becoming the favoured choice for vegetables, set in a contained area. I see them as a reduced and concentrated successor to the separate kitchen garden. They can be arranged in pleasing ways, be very productive in a small space, and in a neat way contribute to the whole garden effect. Some, a bit differently, have been constructed with the disabled in mind, usually around a building. But that is a subject in itself.

When we came to Fivehead, I started a more extreme project, bringing vegetables centre stage. I dug a circular bed 14m in diameter in the middle of the roughly square 1/3 acre walled garden, setting a paved disc in the centre, a paved path at the perimeter, and floating stone paths as radii. Box bushes marked the five radial divisions. And then I had a tidy



“ But I had been infected with the vegetable growing tradition, and when the opportunity arose, took an allotment on the Surrey Docks”

geometric architectural frame. Brassicas in the Autumn have impressive leaves, but in early Spring topple while the broccoli sprouts. Potatoes look splendid in June, later decayed, and so on. They all have their life cycles – small seedlings, brash healthy young adults, and with fruitfulness, decline. It is not all happening at once, and in our garden, there is a backing of cut grass, shrubs and small trees. Geometry is crucial, and so is the tension between formal pattern and

natural growth.

I am not a purist. This potager continues to be a success, productive and attractive. It is large enough to grow rows and make a succession of brassica, legume, potatoes, roots, bulbs, salad leaves, sweetcorn and squash.

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Overall size is important. Make it too small, and there is not enough room to grow plants successfully. The household appetite needs to be considered, as well as the different ways this can be achieved. A neighbour in Northamptonshire made a nine-fold chequer; eight square beds with concrete paths round a central decorative square.

Borders can also be given a mix of vegetables and flowers: strawberries, sage, salvias, grasses, the odd peony, tomatoes, peppers and much more. It is the principle that counts. Here it is but a step to the cottage garden, where a cultivated bed might lie behind a rose or clematis, where bay is trimmed to a ball and Phlox and Michaelmas daisies pop up; Dahlias take the eye from a decadent bean. Everything

“The idea of the decorative growing of fruit and vegetables took hold of me. To some extent we realised it in our rectory garden, with an apple walk, together with a circular way through the kitchen garden”

depends on the space available, the owner's taste and imagination, and the skilful handling of the area throughout the year.

I have said I am not a purist. And, as at Villandry, there is a separate small area of vegetables for the table outside the celebrated potager, where I still grow some produce without much attention to aesthetic principles. But I do look for ways in which 'beauty and utility' go hand in hand.

The Wonder of Radishes

Jo Webster of Wondergut takes a close look at fermenting this overlooked vegetable

Glut. As a vegetable grower, it is a word I love. And a word I used to hate. It used to mean both success and poor planning, a double-edged sword. But vegetable fermentation, the harnessing of natural microbial activity to preserve food, is a brilliant tool that has forever changed my attitude towards vegetable glut. Not only does fermentation enable us to enjoy vegetables months, even years after harvest, it also adds an extra health dimension to consuming vegetables.

And of course, you don't have to grow your own vegetables to ferment them!

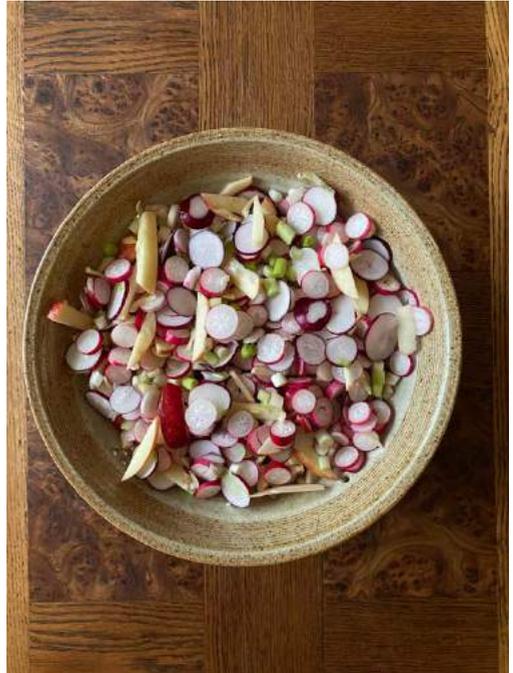
During fermentation, we create the ideal environment for the plethora of microbes on our vegetables to multiply and digest vegetable sugars, producing lactic acid as they do so. The vegetables are miraculously altered in surprising ways; they are more digestible, more delicious and richly populated with lactic acid bacteria, a genus known to support our health. And the

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microbially-produced lactic acid acts to preserve the vegetables. The fermenting possibilities are endless, as is the variety of flavours produced through this incredible process. Flavour is the main consideration, but as a herbalist and nutrition specialist, I also consider the medicinal and nutritional constituents of the herbs and vegetables I ferment.

Radishes will soon be in glut in my garden. The radish is a brassica family member and a good source of vitamin C, folate, phenolic acids, anthocyanins and sulphur-containing glucosinolates. All these constituents have been shown to benefit health. Take the glucosinolates, for example; through chopping and chewing radishes and through microbial digestion, glucosinolates are transformed into isothiocyanates that support anti-oxidant defences and liver detoxification enzymes. Radishes are not only delicious,



“The vegetables are miraculously altered in surprising ways; they are more digestible, more delicious and richly populated with lactic acid bacteria, a genus known to support our health”

but also have hidden health benefits.

I eat radishes straight from the ground and in salads, but I love fermenting them. My

latest recipe involves spring onions, garlic, apple, ginger and chilli (all of which have medicinal qualities). The resulting ferment will delight taste buds and support health for many months to come, not only via the plant constituents the ferment contains, but also through the bacteria that drive the magic. If you would like to ferment some radishes,

find my recipe at <https://www.wondergut.com/ferments-recipes-blog/rejoicetheradish>

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The Wonder of Ferns

Anthony Langdon reveals a lifetime's journey on growing them

Many of us have spent time on solitary or relaxed walks in the last year. Some will have stopped to admire the great beauty of ferns in hedgerows, ditches or clinging precariously in limestone walls. It is perhaps surprising that for the last decades of the 20th century, ferns played so little part in garden designs. Those times are changing, but many of us are unsure as to how to go about including the graceful, intricate, and restful presence of ferns in our own gardens.

Of the thousands of varieties that exist, 75% are native to tropical and sub-tropical regions. It was only in the 18th century, with the increasingly fashionable interest in botany, that botanic gardens and natural history societies started to collect exotic species. Ferns do not reproduce in the way with which we are familiar in garden plants, and it was John Lindsay, with the support of the eminent botanist Sir John Banks, who first reported to the Linnean Society in 1794, an account of raising ferns from spores. Until around the 1830s most

“ Weekend trips to the countryside denuded the woods around railway stations to the alarming extent that native population of ferns were very seriously depleted ”

interest was in exotic collections requiring stove houses, and so only available to public gardens and large estates.

By the start of Victoria's reign, an understanding of the plant world was a valued accomplishment and the upper and middle classes were keen to demonstrate their



Athyrium nipponicum Pictum

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knowledge. It was not until *The Garden Magazine*, in 1834, publicized the use of a closed glass case, originally designed to house the hawk moth chrysalis, for fern propagation, that the passion for ferns took off. Developed by Nathaniel Ward, the Wardian case transformed the ability of people of modest means to propagate ferns in a humid environment protected from the fumes of gas lights, coal fires and industrial pollution. Within a decade the humblest home had its Wardian Case and collections of ferns became a consuming fashion. Weekend trips to the countryside denuded the woods around

“ I grew the Japanese fern, *A. nipponicum* just outside the back door of our last house. It was never in sunshine and I could throw a bucket of water on it quite easily if it suggested it was being neglected ”

railway stations to the alarming extent that native population of ferns were very seriously depleted. The Royal Fern *Osmandus regalis* came close to extinction. It is now a protected species.

For most of us it is the aesthetic beauty of ferns that appeals. They can bring a cool green symmetry, engendering the magic of a sylvan glade, to a quiet corner. And here lies the crux of growing ferns. Most of them need a sheltered, humid atmosphere to thrive. Deep or dappled shade are ideal conditions for the Lady Fern, *Athyrium filix-femina*, which comes in many varieties. With leaves ranging from soft green to silvery purple and stems from yellow to deep magenta, they thrive in moist soil on banks and in ditches. I grew the Japanese fern, *A. nipponicum* just outside the back door of our last house. It was never in sunshine and I could throw a bucket of water on it quite easily if



Part of the fernery

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it suggested it was being neglected. Similar conditions, perhaps not requiring so much moisture, suit *Polystichum setiferum*, the soft shield fern and *Dryopteris dilatata*, the broad buckler fern. For a strong statement *Dryopteris felix-femina* the vigorous male fern can make a clump two to three feet across. In boggy areas *Matteucia struthiopteris*, the shuttlecock fern, may grow to five or even six feet. It is a bit of a spreader but very beautiful. On more stony banks *Polipodium vulgare* will form an evergreen carpet and *Asplenium trichomanes*, common maidenhair

spleenwort, will flourish and will also tolerate sunlight.

There are just too many species and varieties to cover in an article such as this and most of them are not difficult to grow provided that they are given the conditions they crave. If in doubt or lacking a suitable spot, grow them in pots. They will reward you handsomely and it is easy to propagate from a pot in a greenhouse, provided that you have looked up the fern lifecycle and recognise the fern's rather improbable appearance in its early stages of development.

My Garden

Marian Greswell takes well deserved satisfaction in her creation

After nearly 60 years of coping with (and thoroughly enjoying!) a garden of 10 acres (one acre was water), moving to a garden of barely one acre seemed like a dream come true! My late husband, John, and I moved to Combe House in Bicknoller in 2005 and enjoyed a few months of its delights together.

We first saw the house and garden in Winter, saw it in Spring and moved here in August. As a result, we saw many seasonal surprises. The garden stretches almost entirely in front of the house, with a small area of gravel and ancient walls and hedges round the back (where I can

delight in containers and wall plants); the drive is long with a good large space in front of the house – so most of the garden is visible nearly all the time! No hiding secret plots of weeds or other undesirables.....

A stream flows down the lane (Hill Lane) and was partially diverted to make a small

“A stream flows down the lane (Hill Lane) and was partially diverted to make a small pond near the house, which continues as the stream. This of course is a constant joy to all grandchildren (and visiting dogs) and gives me a chance to grow moisture and shade loving plants”

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pond near the house, which continues as the stream. This of course is a constant joy to all grandchildren (and visiting dogs) and gives me a chance to grow moisture and shade loving plants such as *Erythronium* and bamboos; as much of the garden is acid, all ericaceous plants are happy here, and in particular by the water.

Seasonal surprises still spring up, even after 15 years. I was delighted to make the acquaintance of *Camassias*, and to the family's joy, *Cardiocrinum giganteum* has emerged and is gradually multiplying! Three lovely lilacs flourish here, and give their magical scent. The garden contained several large trees, many with TPOs. Permission was granted to fell the less desirable trees (mainly conifers); as a result, a great many interesting plants made their way into the daylight. And a lot of interesting and beautiful trees and shrubs have taken their place – such as *Magnolia*

'Star-Wars', rhododendrons 'King George' (with its rich scent), 'Elizabeth' (never fails to flower), 'Sir Charles Lemon', 'Viking Silver' (with their lovely indumentum), and 'Crest' (the truest yellow of all and transported successfully from Weacombe), to name but a few.

Fruit and vegetables must not be forgotten; thanks to much help from my weekly gardener and my eldest son, the vegetable patch is productive – and

is now fully protected from rabbits, deer and most birds. Raspberries abound, as do gooseberries, redcurrants and some strawberries, rhubarb and apples are there also, and a variety of beans, peas, leeks and other delights. I have always had a herb garden – large at Weacombe, small here, but still interesting and productive.

So, that is a rough guide to this garden. It is a delight to work in, and I only wish I could do more to enhance it further; but old age and much bending and digging do not get on well, I find. I am fortunate indeed to have skilled help, and time (especially during lockdown!) to enjoy it as well as weed, prune and admire! It is many years since the SGT came on a visit, so let us hope that by next spring/summer we can declare the garden open to visitors again – to share its delights with no restrictions.



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Readers Forum – My Favourite Garden Seat

Mary Stirling

My favourite garden seat has large squashy cushions to soften the back and seat, and it dangles in the shade of a vine trellis which puts on vigorous annual growth, shedding pollen or aborted bunches of tiny green grapes in the Summer, and turning scarlet at the approach of Autumn. Getting in and out of this wicker egg can be quite challenging, so I have a long low teak table, both for support and to accommodate my coffee mug, newspaper, or book. Hanging in suspended animation, I can twiddle round when I want a change of view and once I have taken up my position as egg yolk, I can rock gently hoping that I do not face the challenge of hatching out too soon. Every now and then I have to remind myself that

*“Old Adam was a gardener, and gardens are not made
By saying, ‘Oh how beautiful’ and sitting in the shade”.*

Pauline Clark

After many years of family life, the garden seat has now come to my walled garden in Somerton. It stands on a raised terrace, guarded by two stone owls. On each side I have planted *Rosa* ‘Fairy’. My seat has a large *Teucrium* on one side with *Clematis* ‘Montana alba’ and ‘Perle d’Azur’ sprawling over it. *Rosa* ‘Mutabilis’ grows high above, its mixed colours enlivening the red seat. On the other side *Clematis* orientalis ‘Bill MacKenzie’ climbs upwards. Below there are various scented plants, roses, and *Dianthus*...

And so I sit on my favourite garden seat and relax, looking towards the magnificent

tower of Somerton Church.

Neale Hatherell

This chair, one of a pair, together with a table and bench seat, were purchased by my Father in the 1950s for £10 second hand.

They were made from the teak of old Royal Navy ships. The chair bears a metal plate inscribed with the words “*From the teak of HMS Terrible whose guns relieved Ladysmith*”. While the table’s teak was recovered from HMS Ganges “*The last sailing ship to serve as a sea-going flagship*”.

I have been seeking to add to the pair of chairs. I perused the website of a Country Life advertiser with a large range of very sophisticated garden chairs and found a not dissimilar chair to mine. The snag was that a single chair in teak or oak retailed at over £1,000!

I was recommended a local craftsman who measured and photographed our chair. He thinks an Iroko reproduction will cost in the region of £100! Please do not ask me his name as they are unlikely to be ready before summer 2022!

Carolyn de Salis – An evening rest in my garden

The place I love to sit in, (if I sit anywhere), is on the front terrace of our house, where we have lived for 61 years. The best time is early evening when the light is lower and I have finished a busy day. A cup of tea is on hand, and sometimes a large glass of wine.

I look out over the Park; I am now more at

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ease with dandelions as skylarks appear to like them, but later when the hay is being made we have that wonderful smell of fresh grass. The Sunken Garden to the right is either about to blossom out into colour, or is already, and the rose garden to the left is looking promising. I am totally relaxed with my book, Sue Stuart Smith's latest, thinking I must be the luckiest old lady in the World. I drink my tea...

THEN, HORROR STARTS; I spy in the long grass a couple of roe deer, and I know exactly where they are heading. Last year we did not have a single rose in the garden, so shouting and shooing, they disappear. I have a sip of wine to restore my nerves THEN, running across the lawn is a fat rabbit. We all know how many friends and relations they have, so once again I am up. It runs off but not for long. Finally, totally in fighting mode, I stand at the ha-ha and spy large holes dug by badgers. By this time the wine has gone and I am a complete wreck.

John Cryer

England was hot and tiring and our French holiday seemed long overdue. As we both worked from home it was difficult to get away from the stress and strain of our jobs; my wife with the antiques business, me with the advertising consultancy.

We left mid-morning in June and drove towards Portsmouth through Wiltshire into Hampshire where, after a pub lunch, we stopped at Mottisfont Abbey to see the rose garden. It came well up to expectation. The perfumes and colours were magnificent, the heat was intense and there in the middle

of the Garden was a fountain, a pool and a comfortable bench. It was 6 o'clock when we woke up having fallen asleep at about 2.30. For all that time we had propped each other up, a real 'Derby and Joan', hopefully not snoring. How many photographs must have been taken of this dear old couple, away with the Fairies. Thank goodness it was before social media, it could have gone viral.

The Garden was just closing when we tottered back to the car and drove on to Portsmouth to catch the overnight ferry to Le Havre.

Anna-Liisa Blanks-Walden

Every year sees a new list of projects for our garden and the inevitable debate on whether to 'face lift' (i.e. paint) or replace our garden seat. Previously enjoyed by others, and passed to us, you might wonder at the ponderings. But our trusty green bench has one key attribute. It was just the right height for Mum – with her various replacement joints – all 12 in fact. It opened up a world of opportunity and inclusivity. Sitting like pigeons watching village life, as others had from that spot, for some 600 years. Allowing Mum to be involved in family life, watching her grandson, playing around the pond. Offering up the perfect spot for a cuppa, and a catchup in the shade, of a 200 year-old tree. So, whilst other seats are undoubtedly fancier and more photo worthy, our garden seat will always have a very special place, in our hearts.

If you would like to come sit on our bench, please visit our garden 'Sunnymead – Bristol', which is opening through NGS in memory of Marja-Liisa Walden on 4 July.

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Mary Stirling



Carolyn de Salis



Pauline Clark



John Cryer



Neale Hatherell



Anna-Liisa Walden

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The Scattergun Approach to School Gardening

Sheila Rabson has seen it all.....

I have just finished reading June's edition of the RHS magazine which contains some excellent advice for all. One article stands out for relevance to a school's garden, and it is on the three new gardens that have been built at RHS Hilltop – The Home of Gardening Science at RHS Wisley. The three innovative gardens are 1) a Wellbeing Garden, 2) a World Food Garden and 3) a Wildlife Garden. All these ideas have been attempted by various schools over the years that I have been involved with the Education Group. For each of these gardens the RHS outlines the concept behind it, its layout and key plants, the science behind it and special features of the area. Schools have the advantage of many pupils to work the garden but they will need clear direction to be successful.

The Concept behind a garden

Too often schools do not have a clear overall plan of what they want to achieve in the short, medium, and long term. It is fine to aim to create a mini-Kew Gardens or plan to feed the World providing you know how



this will be achieved. Defining the area is a good starting point. The plot should be suitable for what is wanted – too many schools have a garden under the shade of trees or are against a sunless wall. Aim to get a large plot and mark off its boundary. You may only use a small amount of the plot at the beginning but achieving something worthwhile must be the short-term aim. The medium-term aim should be to expand your area with the long-term aim of having a full, flourishing growing area.

The Layout of Gardens and Key Plants

Each school can plan its own layout but it is clearly sensible to have

“ For each of these gardens the RHS outlines the concept behind it, its layout and key plants, the science behind it and special features of the area ”

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the area that will need most water near a suitable source. If a pond is wanted, you need to know what use is going to be made of this resource i.e. is it to attract wildlife, is it for growing water or bog plants or is it a feature that will be shut off in case a child falls in! Too often the list of plants a school wants shows that they use the 'scatter gun approach' i.e. buy one of everything and hope that they will create something harmonious. Buy several of one sort of plant, buy bigger plants for structure and buy more when money is available should be the mantra.

The Science behind the Garden

Curry Mallet School designed and built an excellent bee friendly garden. Every pupil was involved in the project which saw them visiting a honey farm and study the lives of bees. A design was made for the garden and suitable bee friendly plants were chosen. As a result, they made an extremely pretty garden that achieved and fulfilled its aim,

“Curry Mallet School designed and built an excellent bee friendly garden”

gave a good outcome for bees and each child enjoyed 'their garden' and had a sense of achievement.

Special Features

This could incorporate something from another school department e.g. a sculpture from the art students. The garden may provide for a quiet area, a time out or reflective space or even a multi-purpose teaching area for any curriculum subject.

Short term aim means “*Start small = Achievement*”

Medium aim means “*Build and develop further*”

Long term aim means “*Thinking big + Time = Long term satisfaction and a great garden*”.

Working with County Garden Trusts on Planning Applications

Margie Hofnung from The Gardens Trust describes how it works

The Gardens Trust, a statutory consultee, is the only UK national charity dedicated to protecting and conserving our heritage of designed landscapes. We campaign on their behalf, and through County Gardens Trusts (CGTs), and undertake research and conservation work. Every week we receive between 40–60 planning applications

which might affect any grade of registered historic park and garden (RPGs). Some are un-problematic and may even be beneficial, but others require far closer attention and have the potential to be very damaging to the setting and significance of irreplaceable heritage assets.

The GT is hugely fortunate to be able to

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call upon the local knowledge, help and expertise of volunteers from 36 CGTs. Every application is judged on its own merits, so in complex cases where designed views play key roles, local knowledge is invaluable, as online planning documentation will inevitably have been

“The GT is hugely fortunate to be able to call upon the local knowledge, help and expertise of volunteers from 36 CGTs”



Marston House

given the most favourable slant. The possible threats are very varied, ranging from things largely beyond our control (vandalism, climate change, divided ownership) to more concrete proposals which we can consider objectively and comment upon.

The most common types of development include housing schemes; change of use (hotels with associated infrastructure: car parking/extra bedrooms); tourism/hospitality related developments: marquees, glamping tents/pods etc. These proposals are often linked with a promise to restore heritage features

to mitigate resultant harm to heritage assets. A current example is the Grade II RPG at Marston in divided ownership. The estate, totally neglected for a century, sold off the main house. Marston Lake acts as the principal eye-catcher/destination from the elevated position of the house and is the heart of the Gilpin Picturesque landscape. The original owners wish to restore the lake/keeper's cot-

tage/boathouse with funding from a holiday village: holiday lodges/reception/hub/café/bar/restaurant/meeting rooms/spa/gym/car parking around the shoreline/surrounding woodland. Marston House has always looked out over its (unlit) park to an undeveloped 'borrowed view'. There is no need for this permanent, irreversible, detrimental change as funding for restoration was available through Higher Tier Stewardship and the Marston House owners offered to buy the entire site at above market value. Covid has prolonged decision making as Mendip

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District Council wish to discuss it in person.

Deciding if such schemes are acceptable is a finely balanced

judgement and we

rely enormously on the incalculable value of CGT's historical research to inform responses, as well as local site visits when possible.

Additional tools include relevant paragraphs (mostly Nos. 184–196) from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);

Historic England's *The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice*

Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition),

2017; as well as some planning appeal decisions.

A great deal of this, along with details of previous planning applications received,

“ Deciding if such schemes are acceptable is a finely balanced judgement and we rely enormously on the incalculable value of CGT's historical research to inform responses ”

template response letters, training downloads and much more, can be found on the GT's website <https://thegardenstrust.org/conservation/hlp-hub/>

In Somerset, Ian Clark provides us with invaluable local observations which are put into a draft response once I have studied the online documents, and when it has been tweaked to everyone's satisfaction, it is sent to the local authority.

The GT would be lost without the collaborative role of the CGTs and we appreciate it on a daily basis.

Nynehead Court, near Wellington

Ian Clark enjoys its Picturesque Landscape

One of the roles of the SGT Research & Conservation Committee which I chair, is to monitor planning applications as they are received and comment on their potential impacts upon the relevant historic landscapes. Our comments rely upon survey work that has been undertaken since the 1990s as well as information provided by Historic England. Planning applications should be accompanied by Heritage Statements that assess the potential impact

of the proposals on the fabric of the historic landscape. Not all do but from time to time really good submissions contain some valuable sources of new research. One such example is that of the Parklands Consortium Ltd application for works at Nynehead Court in 2005. The works undertaken by Hazel Fryer were commissioned by the developers and the then English Heritage. The following extracts are taken from the report to give a flavour of the information provided as part

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of the planning application.

“Nynehead Court is identified by English Heritage as a designed landscape of exceptional historic interest, Grade II.* The landscape forms the setting for a seventeenth century and later country house, Grade II*

and for the fourteenth century and later parish church, Grade I. The landscape forms the setting for an important late seventeenth century

country house with medieval origins possibly as an open hall house. The landscape is of significance because of the extensive surviving early nineteenth century landscape laid out in picturesque style with further nineteenth century

developments including a formal parterre.

The origins of the gardens and park are unknown but by 1802 a small, informal pleasure ground extended south from the mansion. A small park enclosed this nucleus to the west and

“Nynehead Court is identified by English Heritage as a designed landscape of exceptional historic interest, Grade II”*

south, bounded by the River Tone to the south. The extensive landscape remodelling between c.1800 and 1818, which forms the basis of the current design, was carried out by William Ayshford Sanford (1772–1833), and displays



Nynehead Court

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his skill and understanding of the principles of Picturesque design. The landscape was further developed, particularly the pleasure grounds and southern half of the park, by Edward Ayshford (1794–1871), who enhanced the design to its most developed point, as illustrated in the 1888 OS map.

The design makes use of the rolling topography and geographical features such as the River Tone which was enlarged as the ‘Great River’, and the hill called ‘The Burrows’, in providing a sequence of interesting and attractive ornamental features, scenes and views. Beyond the site the design takes advantage of the panoramic views to distant features including Wellington parish church and the Blackdown Hills beyond.

“a sequence of interesting and attractive ornamental features, scenes and views”

The Court is currently used as a retirement home but informal access is possible by contacting the owners. It is worth a visit not only for the extensive panorama to the south but the Pinetum, restored ice house, ancient Sweet Chestnut avenue and parterre.”

If you are interested in finding out more contact Ian Clark by email: oliveleafdesign@yahoo.com

Ash dieback – can we do anything about it?

Ffion Thomas of the University of Coventry suggests a way forward

In the early 1990’s foresters in Poland began to notice that ash trees, which usually suffered from few pests and diseases, were dying back in worrying numbers. The cause of the wilting leaves, diamond shaped damage on the branches and crown defoliation, were unrecognized. Eventually a tiny fungus was found to be the cause *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* (initially known as *Chalara fraxinea*), which had been accidentally imported on Asian ash trees. European ash had not co-evolved with the fungus and had no defences against it. Spreading on the wind, the disease became rampant across the Continent. In the mid-2000s Ash dieback

arrived on the Norfolk coast, but was also sadly brought into England on ash imported by nurseries.

Ash is a surprisingly common tree, some 90 million grow in UK woodlands, hedgerows, and along rivers and roads. They spread readily, and can be considered a weed, but the onset of ash dieback is now threatening their survival, and that of the species which rely on them.

Fortunately, there are some positive signs. A very small number of ash can tolerate the disease, and can pass this trait on to future generations. In fact, natural selection for ash that can withstand the disease is

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When ash come into leaf, it is easy to see remarkable differences between neighbouring trees, some with severe ash dieback, and others barely affected, this helped researchers realise some trees are more tolerant of the disease, and can pass this trait on to future generations.

Ash tree with ash dieback, and extreme lower trunk damage – ash dieback weakens the tree and secondary pests and diseases take hold – in this case bark beetle.



already happening in areas where the disease has been present the longest. Breeding programmes have been set up to grow the more tolerant ash in Hampshire

(www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-51149350), and I am carrying out research in Sussex (www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2019/managing-ash-dieback-disease/)

looking into the effects of soil health on ash dieback, especially the effects of soil microbial biodiversity on ash dieback disease.

To help save the ash tree, it is really important we retain as many of them as possible, if all ash trees are cut down, we risk losing

“Ash is a surprisingly common tree, some 90 million grow in UK woodlands, hedgerows, and along rivers and roads”

the few resistant trees and with them, the opportunity to save the species, and all the wildlife that relies on the ash.

If ash trees are growing somewhere they could be dangerous, near paths, roads or buildings, it would be sensible to speak to a qualified tree surgeon who can check for safety, and if necessary carefully remove the tree (ash with ash dieback can become very brittle, making removal hazardous). However, for all other ash trees, leaving

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Ffion Thomas mixes up soil, biochar and compost before adding the ash sapling for her pot-based trial at the Centre for Agroecology (based at Ryton Organic Gardens, Warwickshire).

“ if necessary carefully remove the tree (ash with ash dieback can become very brittle, making removal hazardous). However, for all other ash trees, leaving nature take its course is a far better option”



Ash saplings growing with different soil amendments at the Centre for Agroecology (Coventry University), including biochar (charcoal), compost and Comfrey tea to see if soil health, especially soil microbial diversity can help ash trees deal with ash dieback.

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nature take its course is a far better option. In fact, older ash trees tend not to die from ash dieback itself, instead it is other fungi like *Armillaria* (honey fungus) taking advantage of sick trees, which eventually kill them. Researchers have recently suggested that it's useful to check the base of ash trees to see if there is any discolouration or damaged areas (necroses and lesions) on the lower trunk – if there are, this suggests the tree

is unlikely to survive, whereas a healthy base and collar (just above the soil), even with lots of ash dieback symptoms in the crown, means the tree has not yet succumbed, and could go on for many years yet, potentially helping a new generation of resilient ash trees.

Please get in touch if you would like more information on my research thomasf2@uni.coventry.ac.uk

Painting My Garden

Susan Shields, Commissioning Editor of the South West Society of Botanical Artists explains her fascination with botanical painting

My dear friend and neighbour, Lis, says: “*Susan paints her garden.*” By this she does not mean that on a sunny day I can be found sitting on a low stool before my easel, wearing a battered straw hat and painting a garden scene; but rather that I use the garden as a canvas on which to place swathes of colour. These are usually pastel shades complementing each other in a restful way with the occasional deep coloured note to pin the whole thing down.

I prefer a garden which looks as if it has appeared naturally, with roses and clematis scrambling through the larger shrubs and a

“ I use the garden as a canvas on which to place swathes of colour ”

glorious old wisteria around the house, joining another more recently planted around the garage, and down the fence bordering my neighbours' garden, clambering into their holly tree en route.

I have two herbaceous borders, one containing mauve and pink flowers with the occasional deep purple and merging into creamy yellows and whites. The other border has apricot pinks and clearer blue shades. I find it easier to plan colours this way, although I admit that I don't always adhere to my own rules!

Andy, who cuts the lawn dividing these two beds, very carefully mows around the self-seeded primroses and violets and occasional clump of daisies, which makes me long for a flowery mead.

About eight years ago I took up botanical painting. Going to classes every week, I

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picked flowers from my garden to paint. I knew they were subjects that I loved because I only grow things that I love. As anyone who has attempted botanical art knows, it takes hours, days, weeks – sometimes years – to complete a painting, so it is imperative to love the subject otherwise you would get incredibly bored. This luxury is not afforded to professional artists, who have to paint only what they are commissioned to do. Having my models living on the doorstep

“As anyone who has attempted botanical art knows, it takes hours, days, weeks – sometimes years – to complete a painting, so it is imperative to love the subject otherwise you would get incredibly bored”

led me to compile a ‘sketch book’ of every flower in my garden. Even this is still not finished, but it is interesting to look back at how my painting has changed and also to see the month I made the painting, as I date them all, and plants are definitely flowering earlier now. Please don’t come to see my garden. You will be sorely disappointed. These thoughts are only my rose-tinted view and dreams of its neglected state, but I love it and I love painting it, and that is what counts.

The Annual Exhibition of the South West Society of Botanical Artists will be held at Taunton Library, Paul Street, Taunton TA1 3XZ from 20 September – 2 October, 2021 (Covid-19 guidelines permitting).



Rosa ‘Blessings’

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Gardening with P's (Parkinson's)

Mary T'Anson, a long-term P's gardener, explains how to adjust and enjoy.....

I can distinctly remember the *Auriculas* in my Granny's garden. They lined both sides of a straight path and were interspersed with pansies. I fancy I can hear her telling me to look at the beautiful faces of the pansies. Granny was the only grandparent I knew, and although she died when I was only 5, her *Auriculas* and the faces of the pansies down the garden path awoke my love of gardening. One childhood memory is of building a miniature garden from a kit. There were daffodils, tulips, and roses to 'plant' in flower beds, a rockery, straight paths and even a greenhouse! See photo of Lucy's miniature garden.



“ My gardening experience has been considerably enhanced by our purchase of a high-ceilinged accessible greenhouse with a potting bench down one side. Despite being unable to savour the aroma of ripening tomatoes – loss of sense of smell is a P's symptom – it is a great retreat, it lifts my spirits”

I am very lucky to live in beautiful Wells. We have managed to find a house that we love, which ticks almost all our boxes: a level walk into town, a parking space, people passing the door, space in which to accommodate our growing family and entertain our friends and a garden!

I thought it might be useful to share my experience of gardening with P's. I have had professional advice about layout, paths, raised beds etc. My gardening experience has been considerably enhanced by our purchase of a high-ceilinged accessible greenhouse with a potting bench down one side.

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Despite being unable to savour the aroma of ripening tomatoes – loss of sense of smell is a P's symptom – it is a great retreat, it lifts my spirits.

Here are some suggestions that help me and may do so for others with stiffness and physical limitations

- Time your gardening so you are at the optimum stage of your medication.
- When you plan your garden, make sure there are some spots where you can rest.
 - Have several jobs on the go, using different muscles and postures. I find 'a change is as good as a rest'.
 - Make sure you have a phone to communicate and a stick to aid your balance
 - I use my rollator (Captain Tom's 'walker') and I find that handy for carrying things or sitting on if I

need to.

- A sit on/kneel on stool is particularly helpful when you want to be closer to the ground and need support.
- Use your wheelbarrow as it is useful to move things around – plants, pots, water, tools etc. You can lean on it and it can also act as a potting bench.

To conclude, P's symptoms vary from person to person. I do not have a tremor but I do suffer from dyskinesia. Fluctuation in energy levels, (I "conk out" without much warning) and the need to change position, results in a lot of clearing up. Flower beds can be tricky where balance is concerned. Be careful – bending down might result in dizziness! And what a lifesaving passion gardening has been.

Don't do something, just sit there!

Making a Gravel Garden

Neil Bond and Catherine Freeman describe an interesting journey

Trying to define what a gravel garden is has led me down many different paths, no two leading in the same direction. Perhaps this is the point; any garden regardless of the materials used is in the eye of its creator. Gravel gardens exist in many forms from the drought tolerant planting of Beth Chatto's garden planted on a disused car park, the surprise of Derek Jarman's garden in the shingle of Dungeness beach to lesser-known

gardens like the fernery at Kingston Lacey with its twisting gravel paths. None of these sites are alike and the resulting gardens are all very different. What unites them is that they are a response to the environment they find themselves in. They succeed because they embrace their environment rather than imposing upon it.

Over the course of the last year, I have faced the challenge of making my own

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“Over the course of the last year I have faced the challenge of making my own interpretation of a gravel garden through design to installation”

interpretation of a gravel garden through design to installation. Trying to work with the environment I have been presented with, balancing considerations of appearance, maintenance, planting, and materials has led me through a jigsaw of choices. I have also had to confront the myths surrounding gravel gardening.

The first of these is that they are low maintenance. There is no panacea against weeds.

Putting down a membrane can frustrate them, but it also limits the ability of the garden to self-seed and can look unsightly if left visible. Striking the balance between these considerations is a personal choice.

Another myth is that gravel gardens can only be

created in certain places. Looking back on the gardens mentioned earlier, none of them are on similar sites. Through appropriate design no site is unsuitable. Scale is also important. Small elements, such as low planting between broken paving can work just as well as a grand design. An interesting garden doesn't have to have a large budget.

Choosing the materials and considering their environmental impacts has also been part of my process. Gravel has to be the right size to be comfortable to walk on. Limestone chippings lower the PH of the soil. Sourcing heavy materials locally reduces both their cost and carbon footprint.

According to received wisdom there are certain plants that are suitable for a gravel garden. These tend to like good drainage and



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be drought tolerant. If this is the type of garden you are aiming for this is good advice to follow, but don't be afraid to choose a broader range of plants. Given the soil type, PH, light, and climate conditions the choice is wide open.

The one lesson I would take away from my experience is not to be afraid to try something different: there are

“There is no panacea against weeds. Putting down a membrane can frustrate them, but it also limits the ability of the garden to self-seed and can look unsightly if left visible”

no rules when it comes to creating a gravel garden. What to put in it, the site it requires and the scale of it are down to you.

Lilium Regale – The Landslide, the Mule Train, and the Lily

Anthony Pugh Thomas describes a boys' own adventure of discovery

Ernest Henry Wilson, plant collector and writer, was born in Chipping Camden in 1876 and spent many years of his adult life hunting for seeds and plants in the Far East, making the first of his many plant hunting trips to China in 1899 for the Veitch Nursery. Between 1899 and 1911 he wandered through China. He first saw a lily that he named “Regal” in 1903 in the Min River Valley in Sichuan and sent about 300 bulbs to Veitch where they flowered in 1905. He

described its habitat:

“There in narrow, semi-arid valleys down which thunder torrents, and encompassed by mountains, composed of mudshales and granites...In summer the heat is terrific, in winter the cold is intense.... There, in June, by the wayside, in rock-crevices by the torrent's edge.... this lily in full bloom greets the weary wayfarer.....in hundreds, in thousands, aye, in tens of thousands”.

In 1907 Wilson went to the United States and was retained by the Arnold Arboretum, Boston, which, with the financial support of John M Farquhar, whose nursery business of R & J Farquhar & Co was one of the most prominent in America; he went again to China to collect bulbs. He sent 11,000 mixed bulbs back to the USA in January 1908 – only to hear later that

“ He sent 11,000 mixed bulbs back to the USA in January 1908 – only to hear later that not more than four to five hundred, had survived ”

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not more than four to five hundred, had survived. The following year he went again and this time a mixed consignment of nearly 20,000 lilies were delivered safely. He then decided that his travelling days were over, but was persuaded to make one further visit and so, in 1910 he found himself back in the Min Valley searching for *Lilium Regale*.

As he was unwell with dysentery, he was being carried in a sedan chair when a rockslide almost ended his life: he was swept into the river several hundred feet below



“ he was swept into the river several hundred feet below where his leg was shattered ”

where his leg was shattered. As he lay on the narrow path between the cliff face and the torrents below, a mule train approached and the mules had to tread over him. He wrote later: *“How many people know the size of a mule’s hoof? ... Frankly I do not know, but as I lay on the ground and more than forty of these animals stepped over my prostrate form the hoof seemed enormous, blotting out my view of the*

heavens”.

During the next three days Wilson, who used his camera tripod to splint his leg, was carried to Chengdu where doctors were able to save it although he was left with a right leg almost an inch shorter than his left. Whilst he was recuperating, his team dug up almost 6,000 bulbs which were transported *“on men’s backs and by riverway 2,000 miles across China”* whilst he accompanied them on a stretcher or on crutches. They reached Boston in the spring of 1911, flowered in Farquhar’s nursery the following year, and immediately attracted many buyers.

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Wilson was proud of his introduction, writing in his monograph of 1925 on *The Lilies of Eastern Asia* that “in adding it to western gardens the discoverer would proudly rest his reputation with the Regal Lily”.

Patrick Syngé, in *Lilies* (1980. Batsford and the RHS) writes: “Many growers consider that *L. Regale* should take pride of place amongst Chinese lilies suitable for British gardens: in a horticultural sense it is nearly perfect”. It has a strong constitution, is very floriferous, is not fussy about soil, where it is planted or

climate (save frost). It sets seed prolifically that germinates in three of four weeks and it makes a good potted plant. “To that (Syngé wrote) we can add beauty of form and colouring, as well as fragrance”.

Wilson’s reputation flourished with that of the plant. As Mr Farquhar wrote in *The Garden Annual* of 1918, the Lily, collected “in a remote and hitherto unexplored region” is a lasting tribute to “the indefatigable plant collector, Mr E H Wilson”.

Perridge House Garden near Pilton

Louise Alexander describes a hidden wonderland

If you drive down Perridge House Drive you may be forgiven for thinking you are in a scene from Disney’s ‘Bambi’; Deer, Squirrels, rabbits, and birds all scuttle away as you enter. Hidden from the lane by trees and laurel, the drive is surrounded by woodland, its floor covered with beautiful smelling wild garlic, grasses, and daffodils. Drive further and the view changes, and the Parkland opens up, look to your right and the sweeping lawns and arboretum come into view. This was the first scene we saw when we bought Perridge House in 2007, it brings us joy every day.

The garden itself is spilt into many different areas; there is a 70 ft Victorian partially sunk greenhouse

which sits in a half-walled kitchen garden; an ivy-covered Ice house and a rather strange, buried room which we believe to be the original boiler room for the greenhouse. There is an apple orchard and a long kidney shaped pond overwhelmed with blue Iris; from there it leads into the Arboretum with a ha-ha above, looking down to the lawns and house.

The garden isn’t full of flowers and borders, instead it is a well thought out space of shrubs, grasses, and trees. Many of the trees are old but the rarer trees were planted 50

“Hidden from the lane by trees and laurel, the drive is surrounded by woodland, its floor covered with beautiful smelling wild garlic, grasses and daffodils”

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“ However, the king of trees has to be the Cedar of Lebanon planted circa late 1600’s (the first Cedar recorded in the UK was at Wilton House in 1632) which dominates the garden and the view and is home to our dozen or so black shouldered peafowl that shelter in it each night ”

Myrtus Luma (this cinnamon-coloured tree was introduced in UK in 1830’s although the one at Perridge is probably much later). However, the king of trees has to be the Cedar of Lebanon planted circa late 1600’s (the first Cedar recorded in the UK was

years ago by the Calmann family who moved to Perridge House in the 1970’s. Hans Calmann was a successful London art dealer. He and his wife Greta settled in Pilton after years in London, but originally came over from Germany in 1938. Although they wrote that their time at Perridge was a happy one, they encountered tragedies along the way; they left relatives in Germany who didn’t survive the Polish concentration camps and their son, John, who grew up in Perridge, died in 1980. It is the Calmann family who brought Perridge back to its former horticultural glory. They were responsible for planting much of the younger trees. The trees include Maples, Magnolias, Palms, Cedars, Tulip Trees, the Goldenrain Tree, the Japanese Pagoda tree and, *Ginkgo*, Handkerchief, Paper birch, Princess trees and even a gorgeous



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at Wilton House in 1632) which dominates the garden and the view and is home to our dozen or so black shouldered peafowl that shelter in it each night.

Although we have restored the house and

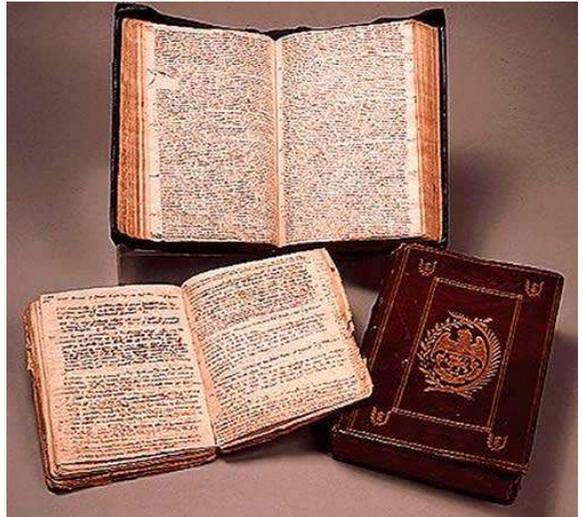
gardens, we realise that we are just 'passing through' and are only guardians; to that end we have stated a programme of tree planting to extend the Parkland for future generations to enjoy.

John Evelyn 1620 – 1706

Elizabeth Winkley, a direct descendant of the famous diarist, describes how his Diaries were saved for us

I was interested to read the article in the Spring edition written by Anthony Pugh-Thomas on my ancestor John Evelyn and his significant contribution to not only gardening, but also his knowledge of trees, all of which is well documented. One small point, The Diaries and other papers are kept by The British Library, and not The Victoria and Albert Museum, unless our family have not been advised of their remove.

The story of the discovery of John Evelyn's Diaries, which could have been so easily lost, is that various scraps of paper comprising the Diaries and letters, were shown, by chance, to a visiting antiquarian, a Mr William Upcolt in 1814. He had been invited to Wotton, the family seat, on a social call by Lady Evelyn, widow of Sir John Evelyn, grandson of the Diarist. Sadly, little respect had been paid to these bundles of letters, notes and other papers as she was using them for dress patterns and



general scrap paper. She is reported to have said "*Bless me if this isn't old Sylva's Diary*" on handing them over.

Beware of these days of lockdown and clearing the attic, what you may find, before sending it to re-cycling!

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Guiding in the Gardens of the Bishops Palace, Wells

Jenny Smith explains why no two tours are alike

I joined Wells Gardening Club in 2007 and in 2008 it was announced at one of our meetings that James Cross, Head Gardener at Wells Bishop's Palace, was keen to begin offering guided tours of the Palace Gardens.

I attended a series of training sessions from the November, accumulating a vast amount of fascinating information about the history of the palace and its gardens. Then in June 2009 I did my first guided tour, taking round a group of ten members of the Gardening Club while being assessed by someone carrying a clip board. I was finally let loose on the public at the end of the month.

No two tours are the same and much

“ No two tours are the same and much depends on the nature of the group”



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depends on the nature of the group. Are they all able bodied or are some wheel chair bound or using walking sticks? Will one of them have to dash off to update their parking ticket fee? How much horticultural knowledge do they have? Is there a 'Mr Know All'? Do they prefer buildings to

“All this (and how I feel on the day) helps me select what to tell them from the vast amount of Palace garden history there is”

gardens? How will they respond when I look at them directly? The tours are interactive, and I learn much from the questions they ask and comments they make. All this (and how I feel on the day) helps me select what to tell them from the vast amount of Palace Garden history there is.

Between 2008 and the present day the gardens have been completely transformed. Where there were previously large areas of grass, these now house a selection of beds containing perennial flowers, shrubs, and trees.

I have now come to appreciate the beauty of our winter landscape.

The views from the Palace ramparts are wonderful; peering through the leafless lacework of the branches of the specimen trees is magical. Then through the crenellations we can look across the

Somerset Levels as far as Glastonbury Tor. To enhance our enjoyment of the season, a couple of years ago James planted the winter garden which is now very well established and a complete joy.

The latest addition to the garden is the area under the large yew tree which will eventually house a stumpery and here James has recently planted a collection of tree ferns and hellebores.

Apart from the glorious gardens, another reason for visiting the palace is that the grounds contain the Wells after which our wonderful mediaeval city is named. Because of the unstoppable flow of water, which comes from various places in the Mendips and ends up in the Bristol Channel, the Bishop's Palace gardens are like no other and offer a brilliant way to spend a couple of hours, no matter the weather or time of year.

And why do I continue as a garden guide 13 years after I started? It is not only the hope that I have given some knowledge and pleasure to many visitors. It is also because human beings are all different and I can vary my tour endlessly.

“A consideration when developing a group of sculptures is how they relate to each other”

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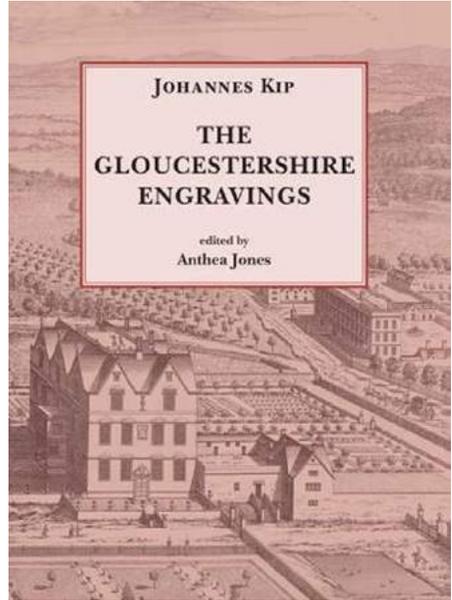


Three hundred years ago, in 1721, the ‘Dutch engraver’ Johannes Kip (or John Kip, his anglicised name) dropped down dead in St John’s Street, Westminster, bringing to a sudden end his career in England of more than thirty years as a renowned printmaker. Gloucestershire owes him a special commemoration in 2021 as the draughtsman and also engraver of sixty-four prints commissioned in the early eighteenth century by Sir Robert Atkyns for *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire*.

This book contains all the engravings with a short commentary on each large-sized reproduction and has pointers to the details and to the history of the house and the family.

Johannes Kip: The Gloucestershire Engravings is a contribution to the history of the county, to knowledge of the gardens, which in so many cases still reflect Kip’s engravings, to the unique history of many of the houses which survive three hundred years later, and to the riches of the Gloucestershire countryside.

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Art in the Garden – “What Matters in Life?”

A collaborative sculpture project between Melanie Deegan (Sculptor) and Bettina Conze

Garden sculpture projects often take time to evolve, an initial idea is discussed in terms of appearance, material, how and where it will be located. Underlying this are less tangible thoughts such as the attitude of the subject, its motivation and the message it conveys. With figurative work these

questions may be more obvious although some aspects still apply with abstract pieces. A consideration when developing a group of sculptures is how they relate to each other. They may be impassive, indifferent to the others presence or it may be an engaged and active conversation between the pieces.

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As a group they may need to work in different combinations and it can be interesting to see how the dynamic between each change depending on their relative positions to each other. In a garden setting this can be made more interesting by incorporating features such as trees or other structures. The creative brief for this project was to develop a group of figures taking into account the diverse and complementary characteristics of female strength: using photographs and the personalities of Bettina and her two daughters as part of the reference material for the project. The sculptures were designed with the intention they would be displayed at the main entrance to the new property either in or beside a reflective pool. In this way even when her girls had moved away from home there would still be an aspect of their presence whenever Bettina departed or arrived back at home. The evolution from ideas to the final sculptures has been a journey of discovery for both of us. The project



“As a group they may need to work in different combinations and it can be interesting to see how the dynamic between each changes depending on their relative positions to each other”

title “*what matters in life?*” helped refine the figures and recognise some personal qualities that became embodied in the sculptures.

Once the nature of each figure had been determined they were created as small maquettes, developing, and refining ideas before work on the full-size sculptures began. Scaling up to life size and working directly into wax the sculptures took shape.

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With Bettina living in Germany many of the conversations about the work took place using video conferencing allowing the sculptures to be viewed from every angle and finer details discussed. On completion the

wax figures were transported to the local foundry so the complex process of casting in bronze could begin. Once finished the sculptures made the long journey to their new home in Bavaria.

A Masterclass in how to grow tender plants

Louise Dowding explains how she protects them over winter

Our south facing terrace here at Yews Farm stages a carefully choreographed rotation of potted tender perennials and bulbs from June to November entertaining with explosions of flower and foliage. They are overwintered in my greenhouse, conservatory, or breeze block barn. The greenhouse is unheated but benefits from the radiated heat of a south facing wall, the barn is frost free with low light levels and the conservatory we dine in year-round.

The *Pelargoniums* are my top pot performers both for their scented leaves and extraordinarily long flowering season.

I have tried a few cultivars, some died others left to die. And how to get *Pelargonium* through the Winter? Sometime ago, I tried overwintering bare rooted plants, the roots washed of all soil, wrapped in newspaper, and stored under the bed, and yes, our bedrooms are sufficiently chilly. The few that survived were wretched. I now cut back in November, remove about a third of the old potting mix, pinch off all the leaves

and re-pot. These are then popped into my greenhouse, the temperature adjusted if too hot by opening the door and to improve air-flow. Fleece is essential for frost protection, sometimes three layers. Lockdown has let me obsess about temperatures and fuss over fleece like never before. There were some losses, particularly the 'Regals'.

A few plants and bulbs are more likely to be killed by excessive winter wet than freezing to death. In late Autumn, I moved my winter-wet sensitive bulbs and

African *Agapanthus* indoors to a frost-free barn. The *Rhodohypoxis* were not watered during the winter months and were bone dry by springtime, perhaps too dry, and moved back outside in March as their green grassy tips began to show.

The *Salvias* are worth their weight in silver valued for their rapid growth, glorious colour, and continuous flower. Cuttings of the hugely admired 'Amistad' were taken

“ Fleece is essential for frost protection, sometimes three layers ”

The Somerset Gardens Trust



“The September Salvia cuttings put on good root growth and were overwintered in my cool greenhouse”

in September. I spied *Salvias* ‘Curviflora’ and ‘Leucantha’ in the Oxford Botanic Garden and have since added these to my collection. *Salvia* ‘Nachtvlinder’ was bought on eBay in January, supplied in a six pack, along with *Salvia* ‘Semiatrata’ which I now read is a beloved of slugs. The September *Salvia* cuttings put on good root growth and were overwintered in my cool greenhouse. The eBay mini plugs were potted on, squeezed onto the windowsills in the warm conservatory and moved to the greenhouse in March. By early May, all the *Salvia* were in flower, even the notably late *Salvia* ‘Leucantha’. The *Salvia* were planted out towards the

end of May. By comparison, the *Salvia* ‘Amistad’ that overwintered in the garden barely shows a pair of leaves, the greenhouse plants are handsome and in flower.

As to their winter survival, it’s a matter of juggling fleecing and watering. An evening forgetting to fleece and all could be lost, and the winter watering is largely guesswork.

NGS OPENING

27 June 2–5pm, 12 September 2–5pm.

Instagram – dowdinglouise





Front Cover courtesy of Anthony Langdon

Back Cover courtesy of Sheila Rabson

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