

# APPLETON & EATON GARDENING CLUB

Newsletter

January 2010



## Chairman's Bit

A Good New Year to one and all, and may your gardens reflect the same.

Are netting manufacturers and Winter in league? The number of mangled fruit cages on the Netherton Road allotments would suggest an affirmative answer. Thankfully, I paid heed to the dire forecast on Tuesday 5th January and managed to furl most of my netting as the first flakes were beginning to fall. Having lost a great many poles under last year's snow, I am relieved to report no untoward damage as yet. Unfortunately the local pigeon population has been deprived of its usual fare and has discovered I have [had] some fine broccoli and kale plants. Win some, lose some.... 'twas ever thus. Although there has been an unusual depth of snow, it has seemed to me that it has not had the weight our snow so often has, so I hope broken limbs have not been a feature for your garden. We are certainly a great deal more fortunate than a number of farmers on our Eastern fringes,

It was wonderful to see so many of you at our Christmas meeting. You obviously all knew just how good the supper was going to be! My sincere thanks to your committee and to all of you who contributed both to the table and to the raffle to help make the Social so enjoyable.

And now to more serious matters. Seed Orders should have arrived – thank you yet again Charles, and Monica is about to head east in search of your potato order. Spring really cannot be too far away – but are you ready?

John Page

## Future Meetings

For our meeting on Wednesday 13th January, **Eva Rogers will be giving a talk on 'Growing Vegetables for an All-Year Round Supply'**. This is a change to the programme originally distributed with membership cards. Eva is a very knowledgeable gardener and an excellent speaker. On the **10th February Tony Clear will give a talk on 'Patio and Container Gardening'**, and if you haven't tried growing **Dahlias, Keith Perrin's talk on the 10th March** might just get you planting those tubers for a fabulous display. All talks are in Appleton School at 7.30pm. Admission is free to members, £2 for non-members, Everyone's welcome, and refreshments are free.

## Suttons Seed Order

A successful year, in that we easily exceeded the order size required to achieve a 50% discount on seeds. The seeds should have arrived, though certain non-seed items, as well as onion sets and chitted seeds, will arrive later. A profit of nearly £60 for the Club, as 10% of the 50% discount is retained. If anyone has not yet had their seeds, please let me know.

Charles Moorley

## VILLAGE SHOW photography classes

The classes for the photography section of the Village Show to be held on 5th September 2010 will be:

Animal Wildlife  
Spire/s  
Springtime  
Silhouette  
Action!  
Three of a kind

## Meetings Past

Our talks this year have attracted excellent audiences, and we welcomed a number of new members. Our new Chairman has applied considerable rigour and head-masterly leadership in getting meetings started, well, *almost* on time! The first talk of the year was not one for any arachnophobic members of the audience. Some years ago, wildlife conservation officer Lawrence Bee chose 'spiders' as his specialist subject and he's now a respected authority on our British eight-legged friends. He introduced us to all the different families of spiders, the webs they build in our homes and gardens, and their remarkably varied lifestyles and habits - quite an eye-opener, but not in a scary way!

Jane Warr came to tell us about some University Gardens in November. She started her talk with a brief history of college garden designs from medieval times when the gardens were used to supply food, fragrant and medicinal herbs, and space for students to engage in recreations such as tennis and bowls. The time trail took us from knot gardens and topiary, to 18th century picturesque gardens such as Worcester College's, the geometric bedding schemes of the Victorians, the Arts and Crafts movement

as at Rhodes House, where garden materials reflected the fabric of the buildings, and the more naturalistic influence of designer Gertrude Jekyll. Finally she spoke about St Catherine's, an example of a modern garden which get much less visited.

Then came the slides, nearly all taken in the early spring 'to better show the bare bones' of the gardens. Personally I'd love her to come back and give us another talk when she'd got some photographs of college gardens in all their spectacular summer glory, not to mention the wonderful autumn trees!

A change in the programme meant we had the talk from our January speaker, Dudley Iles, on 'A naturalist in the Spice Isles', brought forward to December. A short talk was promised to allow plenty of time for Christmas food, drink and chat. Well we heard *much* about the intricacies of doing VSO post-retirement, and indeed the intricacies of his time in Zanzibar... as to where the spice came into it, well that remains a mystery. The buffet was indeed delicious, and the raffle had prizes for most it seemed!

Monica Price

## Summer Outings

There's a great programme of outings planned for the summer, in conjunction once more with Cumnor. Provisional details are below so put the dates in your diary now! We will be sending out booking forms later.

**Saturday 17th April – Afternoon visit to Lord Heseltine's garden/arboretum at Thenford, near Banbury** (it's in Northants, but not a long journey). 65 acres of trees with over 4,000 specimens, with ornamental gardens with water features and sculptures. Only opened four times a year, and then only for garden clubs, this is a rare opportunity. Unless the present weather lasts into April, the magnolias should be in their prime. Coach leaving Appleton about 2.00 pm (to be confirmed), total cost including the £10 admission (which goes to charity) is £18. (organised by Cumnor)

**Saturday 22nd May – all day trip to Stourhead and Avebury.** Stourhead is a National Trust property – the 18th-century landscape garden is accepted as one of the finest in the world. The Palladian mansion contains a unique collection of Chippendale furniture, as well as paintings and a superb Regency library.

On the way back we shall stop for an hour or so at Avebury, where there is a Neolithic stone circle. Not as splendid as Stonehenge, but it is at least free and completely accessible – you can touch the stones! There's a National Trust museum, or you could just look at the stone circle and go to the tea-shop. Or you could walk a couple of hundred yards and see the gardens of Avebury Manor, also NT.

Coach leaves Appleton 8.15 (to be confirmed). Total cost in the region of £23 (but only £12.50 if you're a National Trust member), though the entry to the Avebury NT museum or Avebury Manor is not included. (organised by Appleton)

**Tuesday 29th June - a self-drive evening visit to Woolstone Mill House, near Faringdon.** This is a private 1½ acre garden with stream, large mixed herbaceous and shrub circular border bounded by yew hedges, small gravel, cutting, kitchen and bog gardens, with topiary, medlars and old-fashioned roses. Tree house with spectacular views of Uffington White Horse and White Horse hill. Cost of visit is £5 per person. The owners will show us round at 6.15, and the visit should take about an hour. We will then repair to the White Horse at Woolstone for a pub supper. (organised by Appleton – limited numbers. Car-share will be arranged where necessary)

**Wednesday 21st July – Whole day trip to Fiveways Cottage and Upton House.** Fiveways Cottage is at Shutford, near Banbury, and was the subject of an article by Bunny Guinness in the July 2009 edition of the RHS's 'The Garden'. A small but densely planted garden, it does look quite superb, and contains amongst many other species over a hundred varieties of clematis.

Upton House is a National Trust property - the house has all the elements of a millionaire's home (it was owned by a Chairman of Shell), and contains an extensive art collection. Outside, sweeping lawns lead to dramatic terraces and herbaceous borders, with kitchen and water gardens. Upton houses the National Collection of asters.

Coach leaves Appleton 10.00 am. It will arrive at Upton (following Fiveways Cottage) in time for lunch. Price will be £14.50 for National Trust members, £21.35 for non-members, but reduced to £18.45 if you don't want to see the house at Upton. (Organised by Cumnor)

## Seed Potatoes - a bit of an experiment

Yes, the time has come for the annual 'spud run' when we head off to Buckingham Nurseries to buy as many or as few seed potatoes as you all want. I tried seven different varieties last year, growing them all in either blue IKEA bags (at 50p a throw) or in old 80 litre compost bags turned inside out (a bit tidier). Now for the confessions bit. I left my seed spuds chitting far too long, so they got planted rather late. They were planted in a mixture of leftovers from bags of potting compost (some rather historic), earth from turned out flowerpots, and garden compost. I only got round to earthing them up once, even though having planted them in only half-full bags, there was plenty of space to have done it again. I rarely gave them any water, they really had to fend for themselves. I must say I was surprised how well they did under such adverse circumstances!

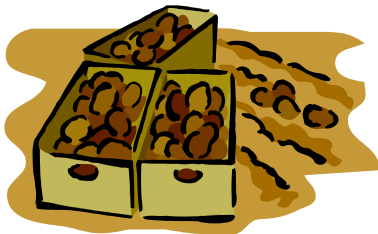
I planted 3 tubers in an IKEA bag, 2 in a compost bag, and weighed my resulting crop. It is easy to remove a few spuds as and when needed, allowing the plants to continue growing. The tubers were also clean, and almost entirely free of scab and other undesirables. Yields from IKEA bags turned out to be slightly better than those from compost bags. Winston gave me an excellent crop. The flavour was not quite as good as Charlotte, which also did very well. Vivaldi produced lots of good clean but fairly small tubers. The only total disaster was Mimi, which despite the RHS website promise of masses of cherry-sized salad spuds when container grown, gave a pathetic crop. My father had a similar experience with Mimi. He grew Charlotte and Sarpo Mira as well. Charlotte was excellent, and Sarpo Mira certainly remained blight-free as it was supposed to do. When it comes to cooking though, it would break up hopelessly - lovely for mash but no good for our Christmas roasties.

So far, everyone I've spoken to who bought seed potatoes through the club has reported good crops; Sutton's Foremost, Arran Pilot, Rooster and Picasso were all mentioned as doing very well. John Page tells you below about the varieties he grew, many of which were/are available to buy and taste at the Appleton Market. Charlotte gets an all-round thumbs-up. Perhaps the surprise star performer was one that Chris Jones also singled out for special mention. Pink Fir Apple came out tops in my container-grown experiment. I'd planted a single left-over tuber in a small (John Innes size) compost bag, and when I harvested the remaining spuds in early September, it was the only variety with good green healthy foliage. It also cropped better than any of the others.

So what am I growing this year? I want to try Lady Christl which had sold out last year, and maybe British Queen, a heritage variety said to have excellent flavour. Yes, I'll have Charlotte again, and I'm sure I'll grow at least a couple of tubers of those ridiculously knobbly Pink Fir Apple.

If you are wanting seed potatoes, even just a handful to grow in a pot or bag, do send me your order [by 22 January](#). Note that I will not be supplying any for the Appleton Market this year because the rules are a bit too complicated.

Monica Price



### Seed Potatoes - grown properly!

I planted the following: *First Earlies*: Swift; Suttons Foremost; Charlotte; *Second Earlies*: Kestrel; Anya; Maxine; Roseval; Belle de Fontenay; *Main Crop*: Cara; Rooster; Pink Fir; Arran Victory; Sarpo Mira

**Swift:** Quite as early as it claims to be. I was harvesting by early June – by which time tubers were already larger than conventional 'new potatoes'. Gave a good yield of clean, white potatoes with adequate flavour.

**Sutton's Foremost:** Highly productive but not quite as early as Swift. It proved a good successor as it is a tastier potato. Yield was high while tubers were even in size and with almost no damage.

**Charlotte:** Massive crop of regular oval shaped slightly yellow waxy tubers. Insignificant levels of damage. I lifted mine during July by which time some would say the tubers were over-large. They have stored well and retain texture and taste.

**Maxine:** An enormous crop of large, round, pinkish-red tubers which apart from a little scab had few other problems. Attention was needed to ensure that earthing up was done as the crop matured. Tubers tended to push their way out of their ridge and go green. This is a versatile potato of moderate taste. It bakes quite well.

**Belle de Fontenay:** An old French favourite which claims to have the taste of new potatoes long after 'new potatoes' have finished. It gave a moderate crop of medium to small oval tubers. While agreeing with the taste claim, I found the smallish tubers a fiddle long after the time when I don't mind eating them skin and all. It had significant Blight susceptibility.

**Anya:** First time I have grown this one. Yield was relatively light as the tubers are not large but what you lose in volume you make up in quality. This is a really tasty salad potato which I plan to grow in at least double the quantity next year. It appears to store quite well. I put a few kilos aside at the time of harvesting. They were fine in November.

**Kestrel and Roseval** were grown from my own saved seed. Neither did well. I know I did not give Roseval adequate space. Stupid because it is a delicious, waxy red which has cropped well for me previously.

**Cara:** Attractive in name looks and performance. Highly productive round tubers with pink eyes. Some susceptibility to slug damage but a really versatile, tasty potato – particularly good for baking. Tubers showed good Blight resistance.

**Rooster:** The discovery of the year. No wonder it is a top seller in Ireland. Heavy crop of medium sized, round, red tubers with low susceptibility to slug damage. This is the potato to mash and it has good taste. I think it a great all-rounder and it

showed good resistance to tuber Blight.

**Pink Fir:** This is potentially a heavy yielding variety but it's a bit of a nuisance that an excellent salad potato is coming into its own when the salad season is waning. This is another variety that needs regular attention to earthing up the ridges. The long pointed tubers tend to push through the surface which not only greens them but advertises to mice what a tasty crop lies just below. This variety suffered significant Blight damage.

**Sarpo Mira:** Can produce enormous saucer shaped red tubers which have a high resistance to slug attack and were effectively immune to Blight. It is a long lived plant for a potato. I have had to stop it growing in October in order to give skins time to harden. I lifted some in December. They were perfect except for mouse gnawing. Tubers are adequately tasty and versatile. I suspect this potato would yield prodigiously if given the space it wants. Under conventional main crop spacing it merely crops heavily.

### A blight[ed] report...

Blight was reported on adjacent allotments in mid July. I checked my haulms at the time and saw no evidence of attack. During mid August, we had heavy rain on a warm day. On visiting my plot the following day, my potato patch looked as though the crop had been scorched. The transition from seeming full health to total destruction had taken two days.

Following advice, I set to and cut down all the affected haulms and removed them [It took me weeks to burn them as also advised]. I then did not touch the now exposed ridges for at least a fortnight. This apparently is meant to allow the Blight spores to be washed down into the furrows. It was with considerable trepidation that I dug up the first roots of an affected row. I could easily have lost everything as the unfortunate Irish did in 1845. Clearly the advice I received was better than anything they got as I would estimate my losses at no more than 10% of the remaining crop.

The following varieties were in full growth when the Blight struck. Belle de Fontenay, Cara, Rooster, Pink Fir, Arran Victory and Sarpo Mira. Sarpo Mira was simply unaffected. There were significant losses from Belle de Fontenay and Pink Fir. Cara, Rooster and Arran Victory had an occasional stinking, slimy horror but the infection did not seem to spread and they have stored well so far.

John Page

## APPLETON SHOW 2010

As you will have read above, the Show this year will be on Sunday 5th September. The full schedule will be published in our next Newsletter, but there are few small changes to the horticultural classes (the cookery, flower arranging, etc, will of course be changed completely).

Minor points – the leek class will now require two specimens rather than three. People do find digging up half a row to achieve three matching roots very wasteful! The tomato class will now include all colours, so tigerella growers can put their fruit in. And we are changing the 'Box of vegetables' class to a trug of vegetables. The boxes were not attractive, and it sometimes seemed that the entries were judged as much on the quality of the lining material as on the actual vegetables. So we are buying a supply of Sussex trugs, slightly smaller than the plastic boxes, which will be lent to exhibitors, and which need not be lined! The loan will be free, though we may ask non-members for a deposit as the trugs are quite expensive.

We are dropping the pot leek class, which has not been well supported – generally speaking, only two of our members seem to grow them. We are putting in two new classes – a pair of peppers, and two cobs of sweetcorn. We have tried peppers before, but there seem to be more people growing them these days. As far as we know, sweetcorn has never figured in our schedule.

Nor has celery, though this is one of the few vegetables eligible for 20 points in the RHS schedule followed by our judge – useful to know perhaps if you want to gain some points in Class 1 or Class 2. Should we include celery as a class? We don't get much feedback from exhibitors or would-be exhibitors on what classes they might like to be introduced – and we can only judge what should be dropped by the sparsity of entries.

Such a case is chrysanthemums! Time was we had four chrysanthemum classes, but when Mick Rose stopped exhibiting entries dried up – we reduced to three classes, then two, and last year one. No entries! So we are dropping the class altogether. If anyone wants to grow exhibition chrysanthus, let us know, and we can reinstate it.

In the meantime we are putting in *Six Fuchsia flowers mounted on card* – a very popular class in RHS and other shows. Full details in the schedule when it appears. We are also making a minor change to the annual flower vase (two each of three varieties rather than one each of five). And bringing back the longest runner bean, as a fun class.

We haven't gone to press on these changes yet, so any comments from members would be welcome.

Charles Moorley

# Appleton & Eaton Gardening Club's Annual Great Spud Run

Dear all

Once again we are organising a group purchase of seed potatoes from Buckingham Nurseries and all members are invited to join in. The choice is bigger than ever. It doesn't matter whether you want enough to fill an allotment or just a few to grow in a pot, we can get as many as you want.

Overleaf are seed potato prices for 2010. The prices are per kilo and as you can see, depend on how large a total weight we order for each variety. As usual, please can you let me know **HOW MANY TUBERS** you require, and any substitutes you'd like if a variety is not available - it rarely happens, but just in case.

We'll buy the seed potatoes towards the end of January ready to get 'chitting' (otherwise known as putting in an egg box on a cool bright windowsill, and leaving to sprout, ready to plant out when the weather warms up). I work out the price per tuber for each variety and multiply by the number of tubers you ordered - it works out just a few pence per tuber, not a bad bargain when you think each tuber can yield at least 1 kg of potatoes.

All orders, **GIVING NUMBER OF TUBERS** (not weights) should be sent to me **by 22nd January at the latest**. E-mail orders are easiest, just make sure you send the same information as in the form below. If you have any queries or want any recommendations for varieties, get in touch with me.

Monica Price,

12 Park Lane; tel. 863665  
e-mail [monica.price@oum.ox.ac.uk](mailto:monica.price@oum.ox.ac.uk)

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Name

Address

Telephone

E-mail

Variety\_\_\_\_\_ No of tubers \_\_\_\_\_ (Substitute \_\_\_\_\_)

Variety\_\_\_\_\_ No of tubers \_\_\_\_\_ (Substitute \_\_\_\_\_)

Variety\_\_\_\_\_ No of tubers \_\_\_\_\_ (Substitute \_\_\_\_\_)

Variety\_\_\_\_\_ No of tubers \_\_\_\_\_ (Substitute \_\_\_\_\_)

Variety\_\_\_\_\_ No of tubers \_\_\_\_\_ (Substitute \_\_\_\_\_)

Note: If you only want 3 or 4 tubers, that's no problem but if you are the only person wanting that variety, you will have to pay the minimum half kg price (between 63p and £1.20, depending on variety).

## Loose Seed Potato Prices per kg

### *First Early*

Accord	£1.50	Pentland Javelin	£1.25
Arran Pilot	£1.25	Red Duke of York	£1.25
Duke of York	£1.25	Rocket	£1.25
Dunluce	£1.25	Sharpes Express	£1.25
Epicure	£1.50	Suttons Foremost	£1.25
Home Guard	£1.25	Swift	£1.25
International Kidney	£1.25	Vanessa	£2.40
Lady Christl	£1.25	Winston	£1.25
Maris Bard	£1.25		

### *Second Early*

Anya	£2.40	Nadine	£1.25
British Queen	£2.00	Nicola	£1.25
Charlotte	£1.25	Osprey	£1.25
Estima	£1.25	Saxon	£1.25
Kestrel	£1.25	Vivaldi	£2.40
Maris Peer	£1.25	Wilja	£1.25
Maxine	£1.25	Yukon Gold	£2.40

### *Main Crop*

Belle de Fontenay	£2.40	Picasso	£1.25
Cara	£1.25	Pink Fir Apple	£1.50
Desiree	£1.25	Romano	£1.25
Golden Wonder	£1.25	Rooster	£1.25
Kerr's Pink	£1.25	Sante	£1.25
King Edward	£1.25	Sarpo Axona	£2.00
Majestic	£1.50	Sarpo Mira	£2.00
Maris Piper	£1.25	Valor	£1.25

Volumes over 6kg should be a little bit cheaper still, and for the serious growers, 25kg sacks are available. Contact me if you want prices, but I would need help with lifting and carrying!