

SUBURB GARDENING

Wisteria

MARIE-CHRISTINE O'CALLAGHAN

The amazing picture (above, right) shows a wisteria in full bloom at a house in Southway. *Wisteria sinensis* was first introduced to Britain in 1816 by John Reeves an employee of the East India Company who was sent to China in 1812 to work as Assistant Inspector of Tea. He subsequently became Chief Inspector of Tea but devoted his free time to pursuing various branches of science. He was very interested in acquiring natural products, especially those that were likely to be used as ornaments. He returned to England on leave in 1816, bringing back with him a selection of 100 specimens, of which 90 reached London. Among them were two saplings of *Wisteria sinensis*.

One of the saplings was taken to Kew Gardens to be part of the botanical collection but it did not survive. The second one was planted outside what is now the Griffin Brewery in Chiswick. It must have enjoyed its new home because it is still growing beautifully and is the oldest wisteria in Britain (see photo, bottom right).

The wisterias flowered in 1819 and their cuttings sold for about six guineas each. By 1835 wisterias had become so common that they were selling for less than two shillings per plant.

Today, as well as the Chinese *Wisteria sinensis*, the Japanese *Wisteria floribunda* is available. The two species are easy to distinguish; *Wisteria sinensis* has anticlockwise climbing stems while *Wisteria floribunda* has clockwise climbing stems.

Climbing plants native to the northern hemisphere twist in an anti-clockwise direction. As both China and Japan are in the

northern hemisphere both varieties should twist in the same direction. They don't because millions of years ago, Japan was part of the Eurasian continent in the southern hemisphere but as the tectonic plates shifted, Japan sailed north at the speed of two centimetres a year before reaching its present location.

Wisteria floribunda still remembers its southern origins and spins clockwise.

Both wisterias had beautiful cascading waterfalls of flowers last year. Global warming played a part in this. The end of last summer saw plenty of rain which came just as the wisterias were absorbing the nourishment they needed, this was followed by a relatively mild winter with few frosts and so conditions combined to encourage magnificent spring displays. This year, the unusual April frosts did slightly hamper the wisterias but they still managed to put on a display to delight us all.



Horticultural Society update

MARJORIE HARRIS

For the second year running, the Horticultural Society's June Flower Show, scheduled for Saturday 12 June, will be a virtual one due to Covid-19 restrictions. If you have never entered the competitions before, now would be a good time to get your hand in by choosing your favourites out of the competitive classes on offer – from your best roses or sweet peas to a gooey chocolate cake, a photography competition and stuff for children – and photographing them and sending them in for judging by Shelley-Anne, joint editor of Suburb News. Full details will be available soon at www.hortsoc.co.uk or contact David Broome (hgshs.membership@virginmedia.com) before the entry closing date of 8 June.

The good news is that, all being well, the Autumn Show will take place at the Free Church Hall, Northway, from 3-5pm on Saturday 4 September, and we are delighted to announce that there will once again be live band music in the garden from Grimsdyke Brass and home-made teas in the small hall.

And with the weather warming up, how about a spot of garden visiting in and near the Suburb, raising much-needed funds for cash-starved charities. The following gardens will be opening their gates for the National Garden Scheme (but check the NGS website for any Covid-19 pre-booking requirements or other restrictions and the availability of teas): 74 Willifield Way, NW11 20th June, 18 Park Crescent, N3 20th June & 18th July, Oakwood Gardens, NW11 Sunday 4th July (85 Northway, 92 & 94 Oakwood Rd), 86 Willifield Way, NW11 25th July. 79 Church Lane, N2 will be open for the RSPCA on 4th July and for Combat Stress on 1st August.



Horticultural Society Virtual Rose Competition winner, June 2020

Photo: Marjorie Harris



Selling items of value has never been simpler.

WHETHER YOU'RE CLEARING A HOME, MOVING OR REMODELLING, I WILL GET THE BEST PRICES FOR ANY ITEMS OF VALUE YOU'RE LOOKING TO SELL

- I AM AN INDEPENDENT BROKER ACTING SOLELY ON YOUR BEHALF
- I SELL THROUGH MANY DIFFERENT AUCTION HOUSES, HIGH-END DEALERS, COLLECTORS AND PRIVATE CLIENTS
- HAVING BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR OVER 10 YEARS LOOKING AFTER MANY, MANY CLIENTS, YOU WILL ALWAYS RECEIVE MY PERSONAL DISCREET ONE-TO-ONE SERVICE (REFERENCES AVAILABLE)
- THERE IS NO COST OR OBLIGATION MEETING WITH ME AT YOUR HOME OR STORAGE FACILITY
- PROBATE VALUATIONS CARRIED OUT
- CLIENTS IN THE UK AND EUROPE
- BASED IN ST JOHNS WOOD
- DISCRETION ASSURED AT ALL TIMES

Simply Sold

Perry Field | 07802 157500

You can also message me through my website www.simplysold.co.uk