



Mr N H Anglo judges the roses (Photo: Marjorie Harris)

HortSoc back to normal

MARJORIE HARRIS

Held on 11 June in the Free Church Hall, Northway, the Horticultural Society's 289th Flower Show was the first live show to be held for two years, thanks to Covid. It was wonderful to be back, with committee members setting up and preparing the small hall for teas and watching the judges doing their stuff. The number of classes had been pared down deliberately to make a smaller show after such a long gap, but the hall looked and smelled delightful, with roses taking centre stage. The crowds came back and the home-made teas were very popular. Sadly, there were no entries for the scarecrow competition. Let Hort Soc know what kind of competitions you and your children would like to see next year.

The milestone 290th Flower Show will take place on Saturday 10 September (details: www.hortsoc.co.uk). Grimsdyke Brass will play in the garden (indoors if wet), so please come and support the Horticultural Society and the Band. There will be three junior classes at the show for children under 12: Something you have grown yourself; Your favourite character on a boiled egg; Your best friend's face on a biscuit!

Seven gardens and one allotment opened to the public on 17 July with the object (successful) of raising several thousand pounds for The North London Hospice and Combat Stress, the Forces' mental health charity. The weather was hot, but the first visitor arrived at Fellowship House as the ticket office opened in time for the 11.30 start. A steady stream of visitors followed, all determined to enjoy the award winning gardens and allotment site despite the heat. For those who chose to start with something to eat, Ruth Smith and her volunteer team were offering mouth-watering savouries, with the promise of tea and cake later on – all profits from their hard work going to Combat Stress. *Please note: the talk by Ann Jones, The Medicine Chest in your Garden, scheduled for 20 October, will now take place the following Tuesday, 27 October, at 7.30pm in Fellowship House.*

Quieter and greener gardening

LAURENCE WOLFF

For those fortunate enough to live in the Suburb, many say that the peace and quiet of the area are a major attraction.

Gardens need tending. The problem is that garden machinery can make a great deal of noise. Just as the work has finished in a neighbouring garden, the roar starts in another, and then another. The opportunity to enjoy one's garden in peace is reduced, with all the benefits to our mental health that come with it.

There are four main types of garden machinery – lawnmowers, hedge cutters, leaf blowers and trimmers. If they have a petrol engine, they are likely to be noisy and sometimes extremely noisy – so noisy that they are actually deafening. Because decibels operate on a logarithmic scale, 100 decibels is twice as loud as 90 decibels, and four times as loud as 80 decibels. Garden machinery makes noise at these levels. I spoke to an experienced commercial gardener who told me it was too late for him. He had gone deaf in one ear. Not only that, he had been breathing in the fumes from the petrol engines powering his

machinery all his working life. The weight and vibrations of the machines also damage the body.

I have talked to many gardeners and a landscape and arborist supplier regarding the case for battery powered equipment. Electric machinery is much quieter. It is generally lighter and requires less maintenance. It produces no polluting fumes. For individuals doing their own gardening, all four categories of machinery mentioned can be electric/cordless without reservation. For commercial gardeners, the problems are to do with the expense of changing over, battery power and lawnmowers not having enough 'grunt' to deal with bigger gardens. On the last point, the technology is improving. One gardener showed me sockets for batteries he had installed inside the doors of his van that recharge when he is moving between jobs. Another said that he asks his clients to allow him to recharge batteries while he is working.

The noise from petrol leaf blowers can be well over 100 decibels. Hearing loss can occur with relatively short exposure to such levels of noise. On the day of writing this article, I met the gardener in the photograph and

asked him to turn his cordless model on full power. Even in close proximity, it was not too noisy. My own Stihl cordless hedge cutter is very quiet and does not have the revving sound characteristic of a petrol engine. It is just on or off.

There are substantial ethical issues about the sourcing of the raw materials for batteries, particularly lithium. Nobel prizes to the scientists who can make a leap forward in battery technology would be richly deserved. Nevertheless, my view is that we should do all we can to accelerate the switchover to cordless garden machinery. Finally, for those who use hand mowers, shears and rakes, your virtue is undoubted!



A cordless leaf blower (Photo: Laurence Wolff)

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