

There's best practice – and then there's reality!

So, having decided to write about winter rose pruning, I thought I'd better get my facts right, and I browsed the internet for some official guidance. (Please be careful what you type into your Search bar; *bush pruning* can bring up some strange results!) Websites of the great and good such as RHS and Gardeners World have a mine of information but, it's all different! And just to complicate matters, because of climate change, what was gospel ten years ago, no longer applies.

In the old days you pruned your climbing roses in mid-winter and your modern bush roses* in mid- to late-February, oh and just to confuse you, your rambling roses after flowering. Don't even get me started on old shrub roses! So, I would prune my climbers religiously in early January, whilst waiting until at least mid-February to prune the bushes. Now however, I find that the experts have broadened their advice, recommending pruning during the dormant season, which for roses can be any time from November to March. Having ascertained that my brother, rose grower extraordinaire of our family, prunes all his in November, I now feel extremely outdone. (A touch of sibling rivalry there, methinks!)

Just how much difference does pruning actually make to the flowering success of the roses? A great deal, in my experience. A rose will grow whatever you do to it. But pruning is a bit like personal grooming: if you have your hair trimmed every six weeks, remove split ends and condition well, it will be in far better condition than if you just left it au naturel. Surely common sense saves the day. If there is a hard frost or it's

snowing, delay until thawed. That way you won't freeze to death, nothing to do with the welfare of the roses. If it's mild in your part of the world and the rose is seriously starting into growth, get on with it pronto.

And then there's technique. Always controversial this one. Some experts swear that you can just take the hedge trimmer to modern bush roses, cutting down to knee height, but I think that's clumsy and not nearly so much fun. (I love



Rosa New Dawn, January 2020 BEFORE

pruning roses, you see, I don't get out much!) There's talk of achieving a bowl shape, tulip shape, cup shape, which means there should be no stems in the middle. Dead stems can be cut away any time and don't leave a stump, it'll only rot and encourage disease. Then cut away thin, wispy stems. You want to end up with a framework of about five pencil thick stems. Cut out any crossing stems means this: if you've got one stem pointing outwards and another



Rosa New Dawn, Summer 2020 AFTER

rubbing up against it facing inwards, remove the inward facing stem, and remove it from its base, where it emerges from its parent stem. The aim is to get all the stems to face outwards. Same goes for your cuts: the instruction to cut to an outward facing bud, used to terrify me! What happens if I cut to an inward facing bud, will I kill the branch? No. Outward facing buds mean new branches will grow outwards, simple really. And what do I do if I can't see any outward facing buds? Decisions, decisions. Just cut that branch down to the same length as the others and in due course a new bud will appear, and you can cut off any remaining stump.

Used to be that you pruned your modern bush roses down to 12" but nowadays there is more flexibility. (Bit of a double-edged sword that one, more choices to be made.) How hard you prune determines how tall your rose bush will be, so if you want a compact bush at the front of your border, go low. If you want your roses to adorn the back of the border above herbaceous perennials, take only about a third off.

It's hard to kill a rose. The most detrimental thing you can do to a modern bush rose is ignore it, hence the sorry sight of tall, leggy specimens with bald calves and sparse flowers flailing about at eye level amongst a thatch of dead stems! They are very accommodating plants so have a go! As they say in the advert, they're worth it!

CAROLINE BROOME

*If you're unsure of what type of rose you have, then Google its name; it'll most likely be a hybrid tea or a floribunda bush rose.

THE GARDEN GIRLS, 79 CHURCH LANE, EAST FINCHLEY, N2 0TH. M:07757 016287, T: 020 8444 2329, EMAIL: C.BROOME.GARDENGIRL@GMAIL.COM. LONDON GARDENS SOCIETY: BEST SMALL BACK GARDEN 2016, 2017 & 2018

Horticultural Society update

At its virtual AGM in November, the Horticultural Society elected Suburb News gardening correspondent Caroline Broome as its new Chairman to take over from Chris Page, who was retiring. Previously Vice-Chair of Hort Soc, Caroline does nothing by halves and left her London County Volunteer role as an Assistant County Organiser for the National Garden Scheme to concentrate on her new post.

In 2017 and 2019 she was the dynamic organising genius

behind the success of the Horticultural Society's charitable open gardens days, where, blessed with good weather on both occasions, they raised more funds for the NGS caring charities in one day than any other London garden owners in those years.

The Society would normally publish a full programme and an annual members' handbook in January, but this year has decided to wait until actual meetings and visits become possible. Any members who paid

their subs last year can renew without charge for 2021, using their 2020 membership card. If you haven't yet joined or re-joined, you can do so by emailing hgshs.membership@virginmedia.com. At the moment it looks as if the June Flower Show at least will be a virtual one, but there is still hope, especially for home-made cake lovers, that perhaps we will all be able to meet at the Autumn Show in the Free Church Hall in September.

MARJORIE HARRIS

Mud, Mud, Inglorious Mud

We are extremely lucky, the Suburb has more than its fair share of green spaces but, and I realise this sounds very ungrateful, I'm loathing the mud. For the last couple of months I've been squelching through claggy clay-based mud on my daily dog walks. The mud is just about everywhere, anywhere there's any grass for sure, and so that's pretty much most of the Suburb. There's no escaping it. The dog and I set out reasonably clean and return looking like we've just come back from Glastonbury. The cleaning process takes forever. My dog is large, furry and very white. I'm somewhat OCD. You get the picture.

As a well-seasoned dog owner, I'm a long term fully paid up member of the "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing" club. I have clothes for a panoply of meteorological scenarios; plastic over-trousers, cagoules, skiwear, fleeces, you name it. And don't get me started on footwear – hiking boots, wellies, snow boots, all robust waterproof and comfy. Basically ugly-wear. Thankfully no one recognises me much when I'm out walking – my ancient weathered baseball cap or my,

once black and now dishwater grey, bobble hat pulled down low renders me pretty much incognito. I like to think of myself as a stylish person – well, I used to be pre-pandemic – but these days leisurewear has taken a terrifying hold on my wardrobe and seemingly on the wardrobes of many others. I know of people who boast they've been wearing the same jogging bottoms since the first Lockdown – every day! They assure me it's rather liberating but I still have my standards thank you.

Anyway, back to the mud. This is the same mud as the Hampstead Garden Suburbites settled upon after that first clod was upturned in Central Square back in 1907. I am quite literally squishing through layers and layers of history. It's all terribly inspiring. Nonetheless, I'm hoping for a decent spell of dry weather, for some terra firma. Don't get me wrong, I love the Suburb with all its steeped history but I really don't need to bring it all back home with me on my boots.

SHELLEY-ANNE SALISBURY



SHELLEY-ANNE SALISBURY

Patience will bear fruit

If anyone had told us a year ago how much lockdown patience we would be able to muster for the personal and common good, we might not have believed it. Of course, patience is also a virtue when it comes to creating community orchards. They are long term projects, keeping in mind that trees will always be planted by one generation to generally be enjoyed by the next. However, in the planning of the

new 'Henrietta Community Fruit Orchard' patience is beginning to bear fruit (even if only metaphorically so far).

This exciting project to enrich both the Suburb's community life and natural amenities was initiated by the HGS Residents' Association. It is now being put into action by the newly founded friends' group for the orchard. We were delighted that several dozen residents as

well as local organisations and schools got in touch to offer their support. In December, some of us came together online to select the heritage fruit tree varieties to be planted in Lyttelton Playing Fields. The selection process was no easy task, considering all the different apples, pears and plums that are still part of our living national orchard tradition.

The chosen varieties are being specially grafted or reserved for us by Grow at Brogdale, home of the National Fruit Collection in Kent. With expert advice, we managed to choose an appealing selection of delicious and interesting fruit varieties suitable to our urban environment as well as for different audiences ranging from school children to heritage fruit traditionalists.

The new trees shall also have historic relevance to Hampstead Garden Suburb itself. We have been able to choose some delightful historic varieties that were either developed during the foundation period of Hampstead Garden Suburb or are representative of Henrietta Barnett's original fruit tree donations to the first householders of the Suburb.

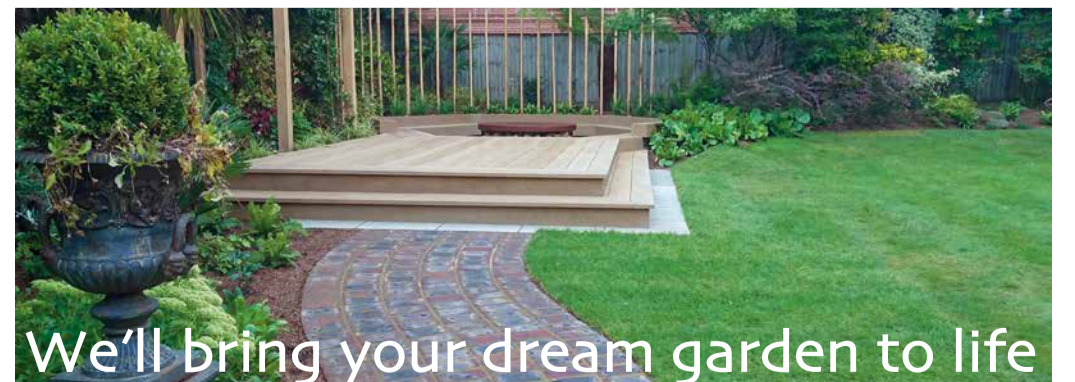
While social activities remain on hold, at least the added wait required until delivery and planting of the orchard trees this coming autumn is mixed with anticipation.

Once restrictions are eased, the Friends of Henrietta's Community Orchard should be able to start organising FoHCO events, such as orchard walks or

workshops. In the meantime, the continuing orchard planning process, like everything else, will be facilitated mainly online! If you want to get involved or join

the Friends of Henrietta's Community Orchard, please email: fruitorchard@hgsra.uk or call 8458 2402!

MARIA SCHLATTER



We'll bring your dream garden to life

Our professional team with seven years experience specialises in all types of garden landscaping including • Fencing • Decking • Driveways & Patios • Turfing • Irrigation. Also monthly garden maintenance undertaken. For further details or a free quotation, contact Noemi: 07718 592955 / 8374 8103 • naomilandscaping@gmail.com or visit our website at: www.naomilandscaping.co.uk

Naomi Landscaping

JOSHUA BERGER
CARPENTRY

For all your professional carpentry needs

I specialise in all domestic and commercial carpentry to the highest possible standards. Professional decorating services also managed with over 10 years of excellence.

Call now for a free quotation

07811 911 389

joshuabergercarpentry.com

Four Seasons GARDEN MAINTENANCE

- Weekly or fortnightly maintenance contract
- Garden clearance
- Lawn care (mowing, turfing, fertilisation etc.)
- Planting
- Weed killing & treatment
- Hedge trimming, tree works
- Patio cleaning
- All general garden services

We offer a professional, reliable service with 10 years of experience at an affordable price. Call Roland or leave a message for a free quote.

07584 574520 • fourseasonsgarden@hotmail.com