

Spring in Suburb gardens



Spring has to be my favourite season and this is reflected in my garden. I am so pleased that I took notice of all my good advice in the previous issue, the weeding, mulching and re-arranging have certainly paid off one hundred fold.

I have a very large oak tree on the boundary of my garden and this makes for a difficult corner. It's fine in spring before the leaves appear but after that it is a total disaster area. I decided to concentrate on spring plants so last autumn I planted the area with muscari, snowdrops, bluebells and primroses, topped off with a good mulch and it was very successful. It will be a

bit dreary in high summer but hopefully the rest of the garden will come into its own and this spot won't be too noticeable.

There really is such a lot going on in May. Now is the time for planting your hanging baskets and tubs. Don't forget to use osmocote granules as a food source; then you can forget feeding them for the whole of the summer, but don't forget to water. If you are going on holiday, ask a neighbour to water for you, it's such a shame to lose them from neglect.

Fuchsias look very good in containers and this year is the Fuchsia Society's Diamond Jubilee so you will be seeing lots of

fuchsias for sale. Personally I am not too keen on them. I find the flowers a bit too large and blowsy so I am going to stick with a combination of plants which I used last year. *Convolvulus Sabatius*, a little trailing lobelia and *bacopa snowflake*.

You can still plant perennials; do try to plant in groups, the effect is far greater than solitary plants dotted all over the place. If you see *Veronica Gentianoides* "Tissington White" for sale anywhere, just grab it, you won't be disappointed. Gentle spires of white and tucked in near delphiniums will look stunning, trust me... Don't forget to stake perennials before they get out of

control Remember my *Zantedeschias* last year (winter issue) and continue deadheading as this will lengthen the flowering period.

I mentioned last time my new love, ornamental grasses. Last year I decided to make a larger pond in my garden. I cut out the shape, lifted the turf and started to excavate. Well this very nearly killed me so I changed my mind, filled it in, and planted it with ornamental grasses instead. The cats were disappointed, they were looking forward to more fish... The centre piece in the bed is "*Stipa Gigantica*" tall plumes about three feet high (nothing like pampas grass) and around this I have planted *Stipa Tenuifolia*, much shorter with soft wispy fronds, rather like a horse's tail, and it shimmers in a light breeze. A smaller *Helictotrichon* which is pale blue and three *Carex*, orange, bronze and green. As the bed is new it doesn't look much at the moment but in a few months time it should look quite good. If not, I can always go back to the pond idea!!!

On the first episode of 'Gardeners World' this year, Alan Titchmarsh showed us a plot of land behind a hut in his garden. He then announced that he was going to make a new bed of ornamental grasses. Isn't that a coincidence or do you think he has been creeping around the twittens and spotted mine. I wonder!!!

Do try and visit gardens that are open to the public, it really is a great way to get inspired. If anybody would like a copy of the 'London Gardens Open for Charity' pamphlet, please let me know as I do have a few copies to spare and they are 30p each.

Keep checking roses for pests and diseases and spray when necessary. *Rose Clear* is back on the market in a new safe form until somebody drinks it and it will be withdrawn again! The grass at the front of my house is a little worse for wear and so I am going to re-seed a small area. I saw an advertisement for a new type of grass seed which is only available from mail order and it is supposed to be tough and strong, and they guarantee a



lush green lawn for all four seasons. It is Canada Green not to be confused with Canada Dry! And I shall watch this with great interest.

On a very sunny day in late January I decided to go to Wisley. I like to go regularly as there is always so much to see all through the seasons of the year. This particular day was glorious, cold but sunny. Trees can look so different without their leaves, the shapes and structures are quite amazing. I made a beeline for the *Hamamelis* (*Witch Hazel*) a favourite of mine in January. They have quite a few varieties at Wisley but the best by far is *Hamamelis 'Pallida'*. This particular tree is in the rockery garden and it really was a beautiful sight. There she was in all her glory, the most amazing perfume and planted underneath were the largest snowdrops I have ever seen. Unless you make an effort to go in the winter some of these sights are missed because in the summer the tree really doesn't look that great. January is a very good month for perfumed shrubs as I found out that day.

I poked my nose into most of them. *Lonicera Fragrantissima* is a honeysuckle but not the climbing variety. It makes quite a large shrub of pale lemon flowers and again a perfume to die for. Another beauty is *Chimonanthus Praecox*, a shrub of pale yellow flowers which have a maroon centre, quite small but again that perfume. I won't bore you much more with perfumed shrubs but another little beauty was *Sarcococa Confusa*. This could be grown in a tub as it is much smaller than the others, and let's not forget *Daphne*. If I could bottle the perfume I would make a fortune. One of the good things about Wisley is that the plants are available in the plant shop and if not they will order them for you.

Keep trimming the grass but be gentle, better a neat clip than a close shave! Have a good summer in your garden, do try and sit and enjoy it. I read somewhere that "Heaven was a Garden" - I think I can agree with that.

Good Gardening.

DIANE BERGER

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Hidden treasures behind familiar facades

Several residents of Hampstead Garden Suburb open their gardens under the National Gardens Scheme, and the summer calendar can be a voyage of horticultural delights in this area. Kicking off the season, the Bristows open on *Sunday, 10th May, 2-6 pm*, at 11 Hampstead Way. Opening at this time can be a nightmare, depending on the vagaries of the weather. Will anything be open on the day, or will all the spring interest be over? The secret is to have a good spread of flowering times and enough star turns to be sure that some of them will be in good form on

the day. Good teas and plants for sale can be useful secondary attractions. If the weather is kind, Dick and Elisabeth Bristows' garden is a good place to sit and relax whilst enjoying your tea, soothed by the sound of water and intrigued by interesting plants.

Next to open is Vivien Gear at 3 Wellgarth Road, 2-6 pm on *Sunday, 14th June*. Vivien's garden shows what flair and imagination can achieve in a fairly small garden and by June it should be in full glory.

On *Sunday 12th July* from 2-7pm Dr McLean opens his garden at 10 Wildwood Road,

where one can see a miraculous show of delphiniums amongst other delights.

The National Gardens Scheme has for the past 70 years been raising money for nursing charities, especially connected with cancer relief, and gardening charities, including the Garden Fund of the National Trust. The full list of gardens open under the scheme is in the Yellow Book now on sale in bookshops for £4.50, or booklets of London open gardens can be purchased at the Bristows' garden for 30p on 10th May.

ELISABETH BRISTOW

What's happened to What's On?

What's On is published every month in Suburb News or, between issues, as a separate leaflet.

Elizabeth Gundry compiles it so let her know what events you are organising in plenty of time. The typesetting is done by RA

Council member David Lewis and his wife Susan and the printing is generously sponsored by Godfrey and Barr. Other organisations are welcome to take advantage of the distribution throughout the Suburb by supplying their leaflets to be

delivered at modest cost with the paper or What's On. Contact Peter Ayers on 458 2969. To give more space to What's On and to respond to readers who have been suffering eye strain, What's On now occupies more space on page 6.