



Big prize for Big Wood - Big Wood came first in its category in the Britain in Bloom competition winning the Worshipful Company of Gardeners trophy, Georgina Malcolm and Susan Osborn, RA Trees and Open Spaces Committee, with Mel Lloyd, Barnet's Countryside Officer, showing the silver cup and certificate which had been presented at Plaisters Hall in September.



25 visitors from the Brentham Society, who live in the garden suburb of Brentham which predates our suburb having been founded in 1901, enjoyed a tour of the Suburb led by Michael Rowley and were entertained to tea by the Residents Association in September. Seen here Brentham Society Chairman Heather Moore presents a photograph of the building of Brentham to Michael Rowley with Léonie Stephen (left) and Wendy Sender (right) from Brentham looking on.

Gardening - never a dull moment

Overall I think it has been a good year in the garden. Plenty of summer days, a mini heat-wave in September and then just as things were looking dry and tired we had rain.

Not just ordinary rain but tropical rain storms with amazing thunder and lightning, not a dull moment in this country! Luckily for me I had just completed my 3rd and final hedge trim of the year and with this chore under my belt I could watch the storms without cursing.

My garden always used to look its best in June, but after trashing

the entire garden last year and moving my herbaceous bed to a different site, it was glorious until the end of September.

I found my autumn trip to Great Dixter last year very informative Christo's hot border was a riot of colour so I copied some of his plantings in my new bed. Lythrams, Thalictrum and plenty of Phlox. For height I used Eupatorium and good old golden rod. The maroon heads of eupatorium mixed with the yellow golden rod and a smattering of vierbena bonariensis was quite delightful and paradise for bees

and butterflies.

Don't be afraid to change or remove plants if you are tired of them. I am parting company with my golden hop after seven years and will be planting a vine in its place. Vitis coignetiae is truly amazing but too big for my purpose so I am using something similar but a little smaller, vitis amurensis. It has the same foliage in autumn but will be better for my garden because of its size.

Do make a point of going to the RHS shows in Victoria where you can pick up so many good plants and ideas from the

specialist plants people who exhibit there.

Forgive me if I sound naïve but I have found the perfect bedding plant which I have never used before but will now for the rest of my life.

'Cosmos'. What an obliging plant, it flowered for ever, wasn't eaten by anything and all I had to do was dead head on a regular basis. The colours were perfect, purples pinks and whites and mixed with the rest of my herbaceous plantings really were the icing on the cake.

Colours and toning shades that are easy on the eye are very important and unfortunately this cannot be said of the planting scheme used this summer in

Central Square. I cannot be the only person who winced at the red salvia's, yellow marigolds and kochia.

The colours were really quite dreadful together, have you ever seen a woman wearing a red skirt with a yellow blouse topped off with a lime green hat? Hopefully not, so why put plants together in that way! On quite a different note, well more of a warning, my son came into contact with Rue, Jackmans Blue to be precise and developed Phyto Dermatitis! This particular plant is activated by sun light and initially caused redness on his hand and upper arm but within two days these areas were covered with large water

blisters, both uncomfortable and painful. It eventually cleared up but the moral is Rues are best avoided.

I am sure you have finished all the jobs, lifting, dividing, planting bulbs etc. so now you can take a well-earned break and think about Christmas and gifts. The ideal gift would be a years subscription to Gardeners World magazine. It really is such a good read and so full of good ideas even if you never carry them out. For the more practical of you I have found that fabric gloves with leather palms a must and would be an ideal alternative present. Have a good Christmas and good gardening.

DIANE BERGER



Suburb rainfall

The summer has been wet, with 13.74ins, nearly half an average year's rain, falling in the four months of June to September. For the same period the north London average would be 9.36ins. As in Britain as a whole, in this area we enjoy a climate with rain all the year round, with rather more in the four months from October to January, rather less in February to May and more or less exactly a third in the summer months. This summer was the third wettest in the past twenty years and compares with

4.28ins in 1983, the driest in the same period.

The past three years have seen wetter than average summers, while 1994-1996 were drier than average. However, in the past twenty years the wetter than average summers have only lasted three years in a row while, apart from 1987, summers were drier than average from 1983 to 1990. Could this mean next year will herald a series of dry summers?

Despite the overall high rainfall, there were times when

we were reaching for the hosepipe. In July from the 3rd to the 30th there was only just over 0.1ins. Also, although August, with nearly 4ins, was wet, from August 26 to September 12 a miserable 0.05ins on one day should not stop the period being described as a drought, even if not an official one. Certainly temperatures were high enough to combine with lack of rain to make cutting the lawn unnecessary, watering the beans essential and sitting lazily in the garden very pleasant.

DIANA IWI

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