



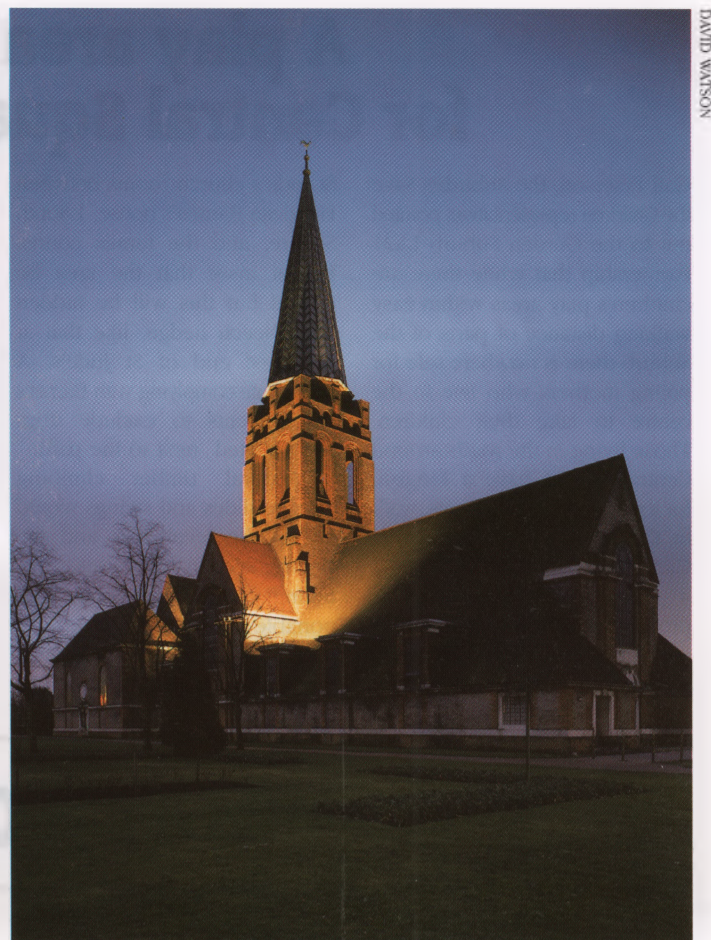
St Jude's nativity play on Christmas Eve, a magical production by young church members



Emma and Anastasia - the producers



Veteran David Gregson calms a young angel's first night nerves



St Jude's was floodlit for the festivities

DAVID WATSON

I have a very large oak tree on the boundary of my garden and clearing the leathery leaves has always been an annual chore.

Normally the leaves hang on until January but because of strong winds in December, mine was bare by Christmas.

I decided to treat myself to a new rake, the old one had lost a few spokes over the years which rendered it quite useless. The thin wiry spokes sometimes used to damage the foliage of the plants but I spotted a new design in B&Q. These spokes were made of thin flat metal with a spring

action and a wide span. Because it was quite bouncy I zipped over the garden and caused very little damage to the new foliage of foxgloves, Pulmonaria and forget-me-not seedlings. In just a couple of hours I was done and dusted, seven sacks of leaves for the bin men (if they ever call again?), my back wrecked in my enthusiasm and all for £13.49 from good old B&Q.

I am now ordering my mulch for spring from Thompsons (020

8363 1383). If you order more than thirty sacks they will deliver. If this quantity is too much for one person, share a delivery with your neighbours, you can then have as many sacks as you need. I will be mulching now, weather permitting and will be ahead of those very early weeds.

Things start to happen in February; it's time to hard prune summer flowering Clematis. I always keep the label but if you are in any doubt as to the pruning time

of your variety just check in a Clematis book to be on the safe side. I also find this quite a good time to trim a few shrubs especially if they are deciduous. I have a large Corylus Contorti which needed reducing in height, quite impossible when she is fully clothed but so much easier when she is naked.

It's nice to see the snow-drops again and planted with Bergenis makes a wonderful example of plant association. There are many plants that work well together, for example the vibrant yellow of Solidago 'Goldenmosa' planted with the strong purple of Verbena Rigida is quite

stunning and the greeny blue grass Helictotrichon sempervirens works well with the lemon yellow of Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'.

Creeping into March plants begin to awake and I like to give them a helping hand of general fertiliser worked into the top of the soil. It also helps to feed the spring bulbs after they have finished flowering. If you have not moved perennials or divided them this can still be done now.

Do buy the booklet of the local gardens for the National Garden Scheme. I visited a garden in Muswell Hill last year and spotted a beautiful Pelargonium in a deep purple maroon called

'Lord Bute' and another little beauty of a similar hue called 'Tom Cat'. Keep a look out for them when planning your summer containers and baskets; Tom Cat, by the way is a trailing Pelargonium.

Last year I had a strange experience; I planted my winter containers with purple Cyclamen and to my horror within a couple of days the plants had literally just fallen over! I could not believe it so I poked around in the soil and discovered white maggoty things, alas Weevil! I have never had this before so I dumped the plants and left the container empty until I had investigated this problem.

Bio have introduced *Provado Vine Weevil Killer*. They are granules that dissolve in water enabling you to drench the soil and give protection for up to six months.

Levingtons have a special protection compost that we can use in our containers so keep a look out for that before you do your summer tubs.

In the past I have always made my own hanging baskets, quite a fiddly job and it takes about six weeks for them to look anything, but now I cheat. Finchley Nurseries make to order and because they bring them on in the poly tunnel they are stunning from the day you have them. I chose deep purple and plum colours last year and Tom Cat was used in the arrangement, but another little beauty to look out for is the trailing purple bell vine 'Rhodochiton'. Go on, spoil yourselves.

Good gardening.

DIANE BERGER

Beating weeds and weevils



After the wet August and September reported in my last column, October and November were well under average, with November not much more than half the mean for the 1990s. However, December saw 3.6 ins, well above average although nothing like the amounts seen in some parts of the country. There is always a worry as to whether the aquifers will fill during the winter months but the current

Suburb rainfall

weather patterns do not seem too problematic, especially when one remembers that our water comes from the Thames and its tributaries from the Chilterns and Cotswolds. Here rainfall has been considerably higher.

Another year with well above average rainfall in the Suburb (32 ins) has helped to drag the annual mean in North London to 29 ins. This is around 5 ins higher than the figure for London from

the days of my long lost youth. As a rule climate averages are worked out over a period of 30 or 35 years as series of wet or dry years are a fairly frequent occurrence. However, there is nothing to stop us noting that the mean for 1990 to 1999 is two inches higher than that for 1980 to 1989. This is not what the experts predict, so I shall certainly be trying to find what has happened. Watch this space!

DIANA IWI

News, pictures, articles and letters are welcomed by the Editor, 26 Hampstead Way, NW11 7JL. Deadline for the Spring issue is March 18 for publication April 29. Views expressed in Suburb News are those of the authors and not necessarily of the publishers, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association.

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