



Marjorie Harris, Diane Berger, Bob Flowerdew and Anne Crawley.

Put back the enjoyment says Bob

Bob Flowerdew entertained an enthusiastic audience of Suburb gardeners in the Free Church Hall on 9 October. The Theme of Bob's talk was how to save time and trouble in your garden and put back the enjoyment. First and foremost, only grow what you want; beware neighbours bearing gifts – more often than not you finish up with a garden full of mint and marguerites as no-one gives away their precious rarities. Linked to this is the advice to buy only good quality plants so that as the years pass you can enjoy the beauty of something really worthwhile.

As a strictly organic gardener, Bob suggested throwing out pesticides and chemicals (which don't work long-term anyway), betting going with the hoe and pheromones or using companion gardening: onions or chives planted beneath an apple tree will reduce attack from scab and other

fungal diseases. Camomile helps nearby plants to resist disease.

Gardening experts expect us to spend unnecessary hours pruning and digging. Don't do it! Trenching the vegetable plot each winter ruins the soil structure – far better to work the top few inches and mulch well with home-made compost or grass clippings. Even the National Rose Society sometimes uses a hedge trimmer to give roses a short back and sides with good results.

Why do Horticultural Shows place such emphasis on size rather than flavour in the vegetables? Only grow what you like to eat. If you sow more selectively you have less work cultivating food you really enjoy and there is less waste.

At the end of the talk, Bob answered questions and his advice was sought on how to eliminate slugs and snails. He pointed out that you need some of them, as

they provide food for birds and eat debris, but he has invented the Snailcatraz: throw the snails into a laundry basket standing in water (so they can't escape) and feed with shredded lettuce or other juicy morsels. The birds get a takeaway service and the water can be used as liquid manure. Bob aims to encourage predators, so grass is allowed to grow long, underplanted with bulbs, and he uses bark mulches everywhere. The odd Muscovy duck helps as they love slugs.

The Horticultural Society's AGM will be on 20 November in Fellowship House when awards and prizes for this year's shows will be presented. In honour of their late chairman, Norman Wheatley, the Sweet Pea Cup will be re-named the Norman Wheatley Sweet Pea Cup and presented to the winner by a member of his family.

ANNE CRAWLEY



Allotments Chairman David Rapson with David Walden and his wife Siriwan, winner of the Phyllis Young Memorial Trophy for the best kept allotment as judged by a panel headed this year by Alan Coben Chairman of the HGS Synagogue.

Gardening chat

My garden this year has been quite good, a few things did not behave but overall a pretty good year and because of all the rain earlier, everything looked very lush well into October. I have, however, had a couple of tragedies and I really do not know why. The centrepiece of my garden was a ceanothus which I had trimmed into a small shrub-like tree about nine feet high and with a canopy of about eight feet in diameter. I was concerned in early spring because it looked rather 'behind' and a little sickly. She managed her best for when my garden was open in May but three weeks later every leaf just dropped off like a mass of dandruff and she just died.

My beautiful laburnum had died in the winter, that I think was due to water-logging. My friend Stephen at Winfield House had also lost a number of trees due to this problem, so if it can happen to an expert like him it can happen to anybody!

In July I noticed my 20 year old wisteria looked a little odd. The leaves were twisted and distorted. Again, a new days later every leaf fell off and I am left with stems beautifully tied on to wires on one side of my house and they all look horribly dead. I dug up some roots and sent them to Wisley to be analysed, someone had told me that wisteria and privet suffer with honey fungus. Anyway, the report came back saying they were unable to detect anything in the roots but sometimes if a wisteria has been grafted badly this can take up to 20 years to appear and the plant dies. I think I will leave it until spring, just in case.

It is so sad when very large specimens die and it can take so long to replace them. I think I

might have a cornus kousa where the ceanothus was. These are quite delightful trees and greatly overlooked by a lot of us. There was a very interesting article in 'The Garden' magazine, May 2001 issue, which has inspired me and you can buy mature trees from the specialist nursery mentioned in the article.

We had a wonderful trip to Wisley in August and I would like to thank those of you who came and gave me support and I am now in the process of picking places to visit next year. So, if you are a member of the H.G.S. Horticultural Society just watch the newsletters and you will be advised accordingly.

The four gardens open to the public in May proved to be so successful that the Horticultural Society is thinking of having a Garden Suburb open weekend. If any of you out there would like to open your garden, please give me a call on 8455 0455. It doesn't matter if your garden is small, most of us are fascinated and quite like poking around in other people's gardens.

Do you remember me telling you that I had created a hot corner of reds and oranges? Well, it is now a 15 ft border. Yes I have gone quite over the top. Heleniums, crocosmia, kniphofia, grasses, you name it and I've got it. I went to my super-hero's nursery in August, Graham Gough of Marchants Hardy Plants. His nursery is like a drug to me – grasses, agapanthus, heleniums, all growing in situ. He has such a flair for plant association. A few varieties to look out for are helenium 'Moerheim Beauty', Sahins Early' and the beautiful 'Rubinzweg', shades of deep gold copper and burnt amber. Crocosmia mix very well with these, try 'Warburton Yellow'. 'Gerbe D'or' or a beautiful tomato red called Mrs Geoffrey Howard. I have also popped in kniphofia, 'John Benary', 'Percy's Pride' or 'Wrexham Beauty' and, last but not least, Achillea 'Terracotta' and 'Walter Funke'.

My border is nearly complete and as most of these don't start appearing until June I have stuffed all the gaps with orange and yellow wallflowers.

November is a good time to move shrubs around if they are in the wrong place. Pick off leaves from roses if they have black spot and clear the ground of infected foliage. If you really have nothing better to do you can fork over your lawn with a hollow tine aerator, sweep in sand and have a fantastic lawn next year. Or, if you are like me, be content with a not-so-perfect lawn and watch a good movie on TV.

It is not too late in December to plant new rose beds or climbing roses for pergolas, and another little chore is to keep sweeping the leaves and worm casts from the lawn. A witch's broom is ideal for this job and, in fact, they make a great gift. So, if you know any old witches you can give them a broom for Christmas!

Good Gardening.

DIANE BERGER



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Suburb rainfall

The three months of July, August and September have not continued the drier pattern set in May and June, but it was only August that had above average rainfall. July's rainfall, at 2.2 in, was average, as was September's at 2.5 in. August, however, had 3.7 in. Compared with an average of 2.2 in. This so raised the total that, if May to September can be considered the summer months, 2001 had a completely average total for the summer.

From a gardener's point of view, of course, a total taken

over several months, or weeks, may disguise some very difficult shorter periods within the whole. From August 20th to September 28th no more than 1.7 in. fell. This, in a period of 5½ weeks, meant the ground became very dry. Similarly, the later part of July saw 10 days with no rain but with temperatures in the eighties on several days so, again, plants wilted. There was one good fall of an inch of rain on August 9, but no really good storm which rumbles round for

an hour or two. These are fairly rare in this area, perhaps thankfully for many people.

The first four months of this year were so wet that the total to September at over 28 in. is nearly equal to the average yearly total of 29.6 in. Unless we have little more than an inch of rain in the next three months, another wet year will have been recorded and the average will be dragged even further up. We really do seem to be getting wetter.

DIANA IWI

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