

Heady perfumes throughout the year

About seven years ago at the RHS Halls in Victoria, I purchased a very small fuji cherry called kojonomai. It was only nine inches high rather like a bonsai tree. I begrudgingly paid £8 or £9 for it, kept it in the greenhouse over winter and repotted when necessary. As it became larger I left it outside all year round. It is now 3 feet tall with a similar spread, an absolute beauty, covered in delicate pale pink blossoms, it now has pride of place on my porch. The reason I mention it, I have noticed it for sale in more than one garden centre over the last few months. Take my advice and buy one. You won't regret it. I still go regularly to the flower shows in Victoria, a must for the winter months, as it really cheers me up. The spring shrubs are breathtaking and stepping into spring on a miserable February day is so uplifting.

This year I picked up a couple of special shrubs that I

have seen on my travels. A little beauty called stachyurus, first seen a couple of years ago in a front garden on the suburb. Pale yellow flowers hanging in tassle-like pairs along slender branches, a very elegant shrub. My other purchase was edgeworthia chrysantha. A small shrub not dissimilar to a daphne, a perfume to die for with pale butter yellow flowers. This is now in my perfumed front bed rubbing shoulders with sarcococca confusa and hookeriana, trachelospernum jasminoides, daphne bholua, daphne odora and osmanthus burkwoodii, all performing with their heady perfumes at different times of the year. Luckily they don't all flower at the same time otherwise it would probably smell like a tart's boudoir!

We have had a week or more of glorious days in March and things have really come on. Pulmonaria jostling with primroses and tete e tete popping up everywhere. I took advantage of

the good weather and started tidying the herbaceous bed, tying in the clematis, checking for slugs on the new growth and I also fed my roses. I'm giving seeds another whirl, they are currently cooking away upstairs in my propagator. Remembering my struggles last year, I won't be holding my breath this time. Things are popping up but they look so thin and spindly, I cannot believe they will survive. I'm also giving dahlias a go this year but nothing much is happening in that quarter either. As most of you will have gathered by now, I'm not the most patient of gardeners.

I went to the European Orchid Show in March, again held at the halls in Victoria. To be perfectly honest, I have never been to an orchid show nor have I shown much interest. I have always perceived them as rather tricky, what with the controlled temperature, sunlight, humidity, etc. I am now a changed person. The love of my life (this week) has to be the phalenopsis, otherwise known as the moth orchid. At the show they were stunning. I had only ever seen them in lilac or white, however, at the show the colours were far more diverse. Pale lemon to butter yellow, pale terracotta, some even had freckles. I am now the proud owner of phalenopsis Brother Goldsmith – a very pale lemon with a terracotta mouth. There were many varieties but only one with a perfume – a zygopetalum which is not too dissimilar to an iris with two shades of purple and a beautiful perfume. One observation I made at this show, in contrast to the

numerous shows I attend, was that there were more men in attendance than women – quite strange.

I hope you have all bought your London pamphlet of Open Gardens for Charity (the Yellow Book). I still find it fascinating to get out and visit other people's gardens and it's great that those people open their gardens for the pleasure and enjoyment of others. This brings me rather neatly on to the date of the open gardens on the Suburb being July 13. Unfortunately, at the moment, this has all the makings of a non-starter as no one has offered their garden for the day. I am quite disappointed as it really was such a success last year and raised a lot of money for charity. Come on now – I only need five or six of you to join in and make it a great afternoon. After all, this is *Hampstead GARDEN Suburb*.

There are quite a few things to do in May, get plant supports in situ, so much easier when plants are small, give gladiolas a

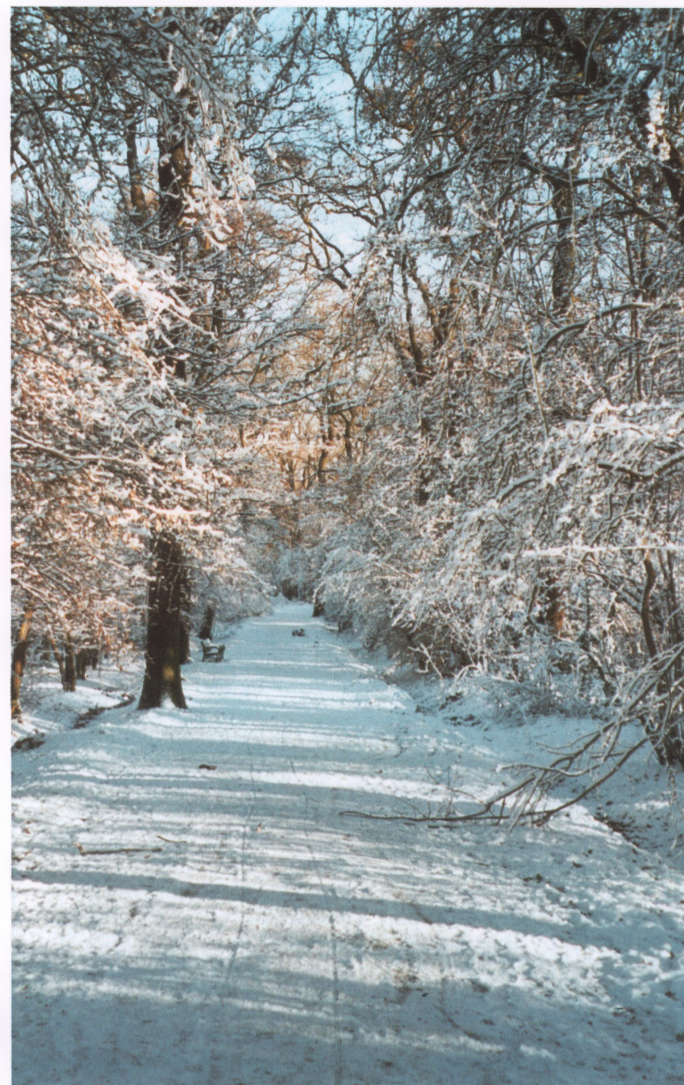
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Suburb rain

At last the weather has dried out, one can walk on the grass on the Heath and take pleasure in the garden. With the sunniest and warmest March for many years, we have been spoiled. Sitting in the garden for lunch does often happen at some time in March, but is not to be taken for granted. It is certainly not to be expected day after day.

The year started wet, however, with 3½in of rainfall in January, well above the average. This, added to the exceptionally wet last three months of 2002, meant soil moisture was very high and everywhere was sodden. So less than an inch in February and only ½in in March has been very welcome. February's total was an inch below average and brings the mean for that month down to just under two inches. March's total was the third lowest for 24 years and brings the mean for that month down to little over two inches. These two months are, on average, the driest of the year but this year has been exceptional. For February and March together, only 1993 has seen a lower rainfall. Anxious gardeners may be pleased to note that the following April had well above average. Those who just enjoy the sun will prefer to realise that weather patterns seem very elusive for an amateur to describe with any confidence.

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BARBARA HONEYBALL



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Winter into Spring – February saw a blanket of snow over the Suburb and a brilliantly sunny March that brought the blossom out early. The scene on Central Square went from snow bound cars trying to get round the jams, to Mothers' Day at St Jude's.



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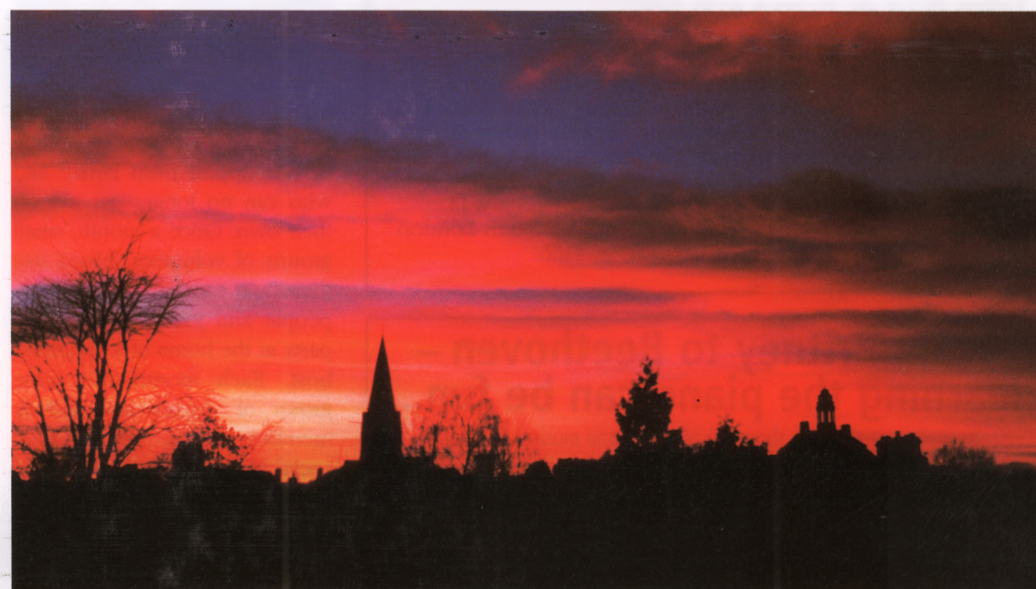
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A spectacular February sunset captured by David Mason from his Meadway Court balcony

News, pictures, articles and letters are welcomed by the Editor, 26 Hampstead Way, NW11 7JL. Deadline for the Spring issue is June 14 for publication July 25 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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