

There is life after July and my garden is living proof. A lot of people tell me that once July and the roses have gone it's more or less all over. Not so say I, it is now almost the end of September and my garden is still looking lush and full (bit like me). Helleniums and crocosmias, slightly scruffy (again a bit like me) still have colour, the grasses look fantastic and the odd phlox with a second flush is doing its bit combining with the verbena boneriensis. Do you remember me wittering on about a plant I had spotted at Great Dixter and that I tracked down the seed from Secret Seeds, well two years and five wispy plants later my *Patrinia Scabiosa Folia* looks great. They have turned into 3ft. high yellow frothy beauties, and are doing their stuff as I write – whether they will be there next year is another story.

This is a good time to start dividing larger clumps of perennials or moving things around if they have not performed quite to your liking. As usual with the onset of autumn I shall be making a few changes. I have decided that a bit more lawn can go and I am changing paths and directions.

This summer I did my porch pots with purple tradescantia and the silver leaf of *Plectranthus Argentatus*. I liked the overall effect but the tradescantia didn't quite hit the spot so next year I will use purple petunias with the



## Is there life after July?

plectranthus. One thing I won't be using is osteospermums. My goodness me they are quite expensive and labour intensive I spent most of the summer dead heading and still didn't get the effect I was after.

Another momentous event – I changed my mower last month. For twenty years I have had a Suffolk Punch petrol mower. Servicing was always pricey but now Lawnmower Man has gone from the top of Ossulton Way it has become astronomical. I have also found the weight of the machine slowly getting the better of me. I have gone for a hover its supposed to be a lot less bovver. I don't get quite the effect of the Suffolk but my back and wallet are better off.

This year has been the year of the hedge for me. With the

co-operation of my neighbours Susie and Dix we decided to remove a large section of ivy posing as privet. It was a really big decision as it was the section closest to the houses on our terrace which left us both quite exposed – luckily I'm quite broad-minded. We did this in March/April and replanted with 3ft high plants, we were all astounded as to how quickly it grew and now six months down the line the hedge is really great and we are still good neighbours. As you all know the hedges on the suburb have been around for eighty or so years and all we do is cut them a few times a year and just expect them to go on and on sooner or later they need mending or replacing. The most important thing is to discuss this with your neighbours.

I hope you are all planting your pots for autumn colour. Don't forget to cover with chicken wire as all the squirrels are watching and probably rubbing their little claws with glee. The lovely cyclamens are available in the shops now, shades of red, purple, pink and white these little beauties will give months of colour, and if planted with heuchera Plum pudding or Palace purple will look fantastic. I also think wallflowers underplanted with tulips look great especially if you colour coordinate. Just a thought, maybe the squirrels would leave the tulip bulbs alone if the pots were stuffed with wallflowers, it may just fool them.

I went to the Great Autumn Show at the RHS Halls in September. The first few steps into the hall I

find quite emotional, so much beauty stuffed in the two halls almost takes away the depressing thought of the onset of winter and that clock changing business. I was very pleased to see Geoff Hamilton's son had a stand under the heading of Barnsdale Gardens – the display was wonderful. I spotted a couple of heuchera there, which I hadn't seen before. Amber Wave and Purple Petticoat, this one had a quite stunning frilly edge like something from a can-can. I'm sure Geoff would have been happy at Victoria last week.

Another stand I spotted was selling gardening gloves and my goodness me they were fantastic, different styles for different uses, an everyday pair made from black fabric, and a heavy duty rose pruning pair made from soft yellow leather. I couldn't resist,

no more smelly rubber for me. If any of you out there are interested they are called Tough Touch gardening gloves and are available from the Wisley shop or from Jayco, 10 Old Bridge Close, Bursledon, Southampton. They would make a fabulous Christmas Gift for even the most casual gardener.

An update on the allotment. Apparently my patch was second in the Allotment Challenge which on my understanding of the rules qualifies me for a trip to the Bahamas. Vincent's potatoes were of a high standard for a beginner and certainly very edible, the only problem being the sink and drains being clogged up with mud! The tomatoes got off to a slow start but gradually came round (not as good as last year) my little round carrots were again my favourite. The first sweetcorns I harvested were so tasty as to be eaten raw. The next day I went to pick more – to my astonishment they had all gone the plants stripped of their bounty and who was to blame, the squirrels. I hate squirrels. I can't feel that it was just me, they stripped the whole site, they knew it was ripe for the taking.

I am organising loads of things for next years Hort. Soc. trips/talks – so keep a lookout to avoid disappointment. In the meantime have a jolly old Christmas and Good Gardening.

DIANE BERGER

## HGS rainwatch

Everyone knows that it has been a dreadful wet summer with wind and rain and floods – or do they? Over much of Britain this may be true. Certainly, the people of Boscastle in Cornwall will not want another summer's rain like this one. On the Suburb, however, things have been rather different.

The rather dry June was followed by a rather dry July with 1½ ins compared with the average of just over 2. Gales at the end of the first week accompanied the rain and more leaves came down, but it was not till 3 August that the rain really came, over an inch in one

day. So gardeners were pleased to see it. Nearly 5½ ins fell during the month which was almost double the normal, and almost 1½ ins more than the previous wettest, in 1999.

There was obviously much disappointment among those who had organised outdoor

events. Thunderstorms added to this as thunder occurred on six days, compared with an average of about 2 in August for this part of England. Weatherwise, it was an exciting month.

September was dry again, with only an inch of rain against a mean of over 2¼ ins. So again,

by the end of the month in places the soil was crying out for water. On the whole, the summer months of June to August had a total markedly above average but, if September is considered part of summer, then the 2004 total was very much in line with the norm. The same applies to the

first 9 months of the year when just under 20¼ ins were recorded with an average of 20 ins. This leads to the conclusion that our perceptions of weather are very much influenced by particular weather 'events' rather than by rather dry facts and figures.

DIANA IWI

**Point**, v. to finish or repair the joints of (brickwork, masonry, etc.) with mortar or cement. Sp. in **Hampstead Garden Suburb** - only to be undertaken with tlc and after unbiased advice.

## Is there any point in repointing?

Very often the answer is - probably not. Surveyors automatically suggest it, builders love to charge you for it, but the fact is most Suburb houses are built with fine handmade bricks, well laid by craftsmen. The mortar, usually made with lime is there to keep the bricks apart - not to stick them together.

Pointing may be needed on chimney stacks, exposed corners or water damaged walls. Lime mortar should be used.

It is flexible, moves with the house and if it cracks, will seal itself again, looking just right.

Any alterations to houses on the Suburb must be approved by the Trust and Barnet. Pointing needs Trust consent and we are happy to give impartial advice, free.



(Unpointed wall) Soft lime mortar weathers naturally, doesn't damage the bricks and has an open texture that allows them to dry out after rain.



(Badly pointed wall) Modern cement is stronger and rigid, cannot be removed without damaging the bricks and causes frost damage.



(Unpointed wall) Soft mortar encourages drying out, enhances the beauty of the bricks and makes them less liable to damage when a wet wall freezes.

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