



Cllr Jasmin Nagbar admires Diane Berger's lilies at the HGS Horticultural Society's Flower Show on June 29.



No more tennis this summer for Lorna page, seen here at the plant stall with Sam Westman, his sister Sophie and her son Ben.



Some of the impressive collection of cups awarded annually to Suburb gardeners.

Summer gardening

I was always led to believe that gardening is very good for one's well being, relaxing, therapeutic and stress free. This year has been for me so stressful I cannot tell you, but I'm going to anyway. Spring came really early and the tulips were over weeks before their time was up. We then had the most dreadful winds for days on end. I just looked out of the windows and watched my gardening dreams dissolve before my very eyes. I had tied and staked my plants and shrubs as the weathermen had warned us of these high winds but my garden was still battered and wrecked. After that we had rain and days of grey cloudy skies. Even as I am writing the weather forecast is dreadful and we are in July! The snails and slugs have had a field day and, because our winters are so mild they really are not being killed off, instead they multiply and eat. I sometimes wonder how farmers ever make a living at growing anything. I am sure there must be a high suicide rate.

I have just come back from a holiday in the Tarn district of France (the south-east) and it was really delightful. Just two hours flying time and the temperature soars, amazing. I was fascinated at the fields of sunflowers. How do they do that? I planted a packet of seeds and out of 25 little plants only three survived, the rest were lunch, dinner and supper to Mr and Mrs Slug, their family and

friends. One of my fondest memories of the trip was the number and size of the flowering lime trees. The little Town Square was full of them, the perfume filling the air. There was one incredibly large tree near our house, which was host to thousands of bees, which had their hives nearby. I really can't recall seeing so many lime trees in this country, maybe they like the warmer weather.

Another memory I shall keep is the prickly heat rash which covered by neck, shoulders and arms with warty like bumps, something else which likes the warmer weather, mmm nice!

On returning from my trip I am always a little nervous as my son is left in charge of the garden and the cats. The cats were alive, as were the contents of the pots and containers. Also alive however were many lily beetles and their black slime-covered babies. I spent some time squashing the black sticky lumps between sheets of kitchen papers, after thirty or more I really did feel queasy. I can't think of anything else quite so disgusting. Maybe next year my son will have progressed to spotting lily beetle before they reek havoc!

The horticultural society had a good trip in June to Pashley Manor and Merriments garden, two very different gardens. Pashley is a very elegant garden with a small lake and woodland walk, vistas over the surrounding countryside and an enclosed walled garden with herbaceous

and vegetables. There were wonderful sculptures placed around the garden a number of which were for sale. The restaurant offered a delightful selection of food and a good time was had by all. Merriments was quite different, an explosion of colour co-ordinated beds and a very interesting range of plants, many of which were available in a very large nursery. I purchased a plant for my newly formed hot bed, its' an Arctotis 'Red Devil' rather like a big daisy, which opens in full sun and closes when it is dull. It is deep terracotta in colour. I have put it next to Achillea 'Walter Funke' where they clash beautifully! We then had time for cream tea before the trip back to London, all in all a very satisfactory day.

Browsing through the Garden Magazine I came across an article about seeds being imported into the USA. They have tightened up the law on plants which come under the heading of 'Draft Action Plan For Noxious Weeds Program'. I was fascinated to read that one of the invasive aliens is Lythrum Salicaria. I have had this plant in my garden for about three years; in fact I have a couple of varieties - Lythrum Salicaria 'Blush' and Lythrum virgatum 'Dropmore Purple'. Every year I gaze at them to see how they are performing and they are as thin and spindly now as they were three years ago and its hard to believe they are trouble. I would be quite happy if they invaded a little more into my herbaceous bed.

Chelsea was much better this year. The bandstand and picnic area were back where they used to be in the good old days and there were many more small gardens to see and less of the big buck corporate sponsored gardens. My girlfriend and I were strolling around and one garden in particular caught my eye. It was just a mesh of weeds and wild flowers and I mentioned to her that I thought it needed a good trim. I then discovered it was designed by the Prince of Wales - no wonder his mother looked a little dismayed when he was showing her around. I can only assume he was brought up in such a formal way that he had just let rip in this garden.

Plant life in The Suburb has had a wonderful first half of the year as far as rainfall is concerned. True, there was a long spell of almost four weeks from mid March to mid April with no rain at all. However, this was not really a problem as the ground was already thoroughly wet, the sun's strength to evaporate was less strong, and there was far less growth to draw on soil water than there would be later on in the year. April had a total of less than 2ins, rather under average and falling mostly in the last week. May's total of nearly

In August you can deadhead roses and perennial plants and with any luck you might get a second flush (not a hot one!) Another little job is to take cuttings of perennials. I have my eye on a purple penstemon in next door's garden. Don't forget the Flower Show on 14 September, which now includes the very popular Plant Sale. If you have any plants that you wish to part with, pot them up and bring them along. I'm sure somebody would be very happy to have them, one man's meat etc. I haven't any tips for the kitchen gardener mine, as most of you know, is in Marks and Spencers.

Autumn bulb catalogues will be arriving soon and you can browse through and order for next year. I have ordered my tulips already (from Chelsea). Next year I am going for fringed varieties. They were fantastic this year and so I'm having more of the same. If you are planting new roses October is the time. I have decided to plant a rose at the front of the house to replace the Wysteria which died last year. I'm going for Rosa Banksiae. I saw a specimen in a garden I visited in the Yellow Book scheme. I'm not really a yellow rose person but this is a rather pale yellow and not at all egg-yolkly if you get my drift.

Don't forget Stephen Crisp's visit on 15 October. He is going to talk us through flower arranging, showing slides of his amazing arrangements which he does for the American Ambassador's wife. I believe she is very fond of cut flowers. It promises to be a good evening.

Until then, enjoy your garden.

DIANE BERGER

Weather watch

3ins was somewhat over average and well distributed. June's total of 2.8ins was again rather over average. It arrived predominantly in the first half of the month as was well used. Never have the gooseberries been so big or the flowers grown so tall.

Of course this is rainfall in The Suburb, which is not necessarily at all the same as in other parts of the country. For instance, the May average throughout the country was 51% above normal while in our area it was only 21% above. Much of

our rain comes in showers so there could be a sharp shower at the Temple Fortune post office while the junction of Meadway and Hampstead Way was completely dry. A different type of rainfall is that which fell on 5 June when there was over an inch in 24 hours. The rain fell all day and totals in surrounding areas would not have varied much. It was also very cold.

Perhaps one can now look forward to the warmer, if more erratic, rain of the summer thunderstorms.

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