

# Rich golds, reds and purples



Once again, autumn arrived in all her glory. Those wonderful colours which never cease to amaze me: rich golds, reds and purples seemed to cover all the trees... and it's all free!

As I gazed out of my window (I only have one) I also felt quite sad as I knew that in a few weeks it would all be gone and then we are left with what I find the most depressing time: Winter. I know I've said it before, but I don't do Winter very well. I think a lot of gardeners feel like that, especially the Donmeister.

Then something very strange happened: I popped into the kitchen to make a cup of tea and went back to my window and all the leaves had fallen! I had never known an autumn all over, done and dusted, by the end of December. Even the oak tree at the bottom of next door had chucked its leaves in my garden, whereas in previous years they would still be hanging on in mid-Feb. The liquidamber in the orchard looked stunning and then ten minutes later, John the gardener was busy raking up the leaves. I suppose gardening is a bit like that: Never exactly the same twice (except Ken's dahlias).

When I was a child (during the First World War), gardens were pretty bleak in mid-Winter.

Nowadays, however, thanks to climate change, there is really no excuse. Just strolling around the Suburb, one can see mahonias, viburnum, hollies, pyracanthus and malus – all of them bursting with flowers and berries. There is also a new kid on the block which I've spotted in a few gardens and better garden centres: Callicarpa bodinieri, a deciduous bushy shrub reaching 8-10ft, oval dark green leaves, tiny star shaped flowers in summer followed by dense clusters of fruits in Winter. The berries are unusual as they are a bright mauve – the colour my father used to refer to as the colour of a tart's bathroom. I'm not quite sure how he knew that!

Now that February is here, and if the weather permits, you must start clearing away the last of the leaves, and really a general tidying up wouldn't go amiss. When clearing the herbaceous beds, be careful not to damage any new growth that might be poking through; it's so easy just to stomp over everything.

Trees and shrubs can be planted now if the ground isn't frozen and in March you can move things around if you're not too happy with their positions. Cut back summer flowering clematis to a pair of new shoots low down, and cut down the

dead stems on some grasses such as Miscanthus and Hakonechloa. Prune buddleias and dogwoods. Dahlias can be planted in pots to stimulate growth for cuttings, or, if you're like me, chuck 'em in the ground later in the year.

Before you know where you are, April is upon us and you can really get stuck in. Finish dividing large clumps of perennials, keep tying side-shoots of clematis (you'll regret it later if you don't). Give roses a good feed if you want to win Ruta's rose cup at the June show, and keep a look out for slugs as they just love all this fresh juicy new growth. The list is really endless: the lawn needs a trim, then the hedges, seeds need to be sown (not by me), and then the problem of which colours to use in containers this season. I haven't decided yet, so I'll just have to be inspired when I visit the garden centres.

The Horticultural Society have a very good programme this year (thanks to yours truly). In March there is a talk by Marney Hall about designing a garden for Chelsea called 'Going for Gold,' and in April we are having our very own version of Question Time, when a few of us will try and answer any question or problems (not matrimonial) that you might have. And in May, our usual plant sale, followed by a flower-arranging evening with audience participation. And yet another popular garden stroll with some new gardens and some old favourites. Watch out for the posters which will be scattered around the suburb with all the relevant information, or why don't you join the society

***You've cut my best jokes!** This has been Diane Berger's anguished cry to the editor (first world war indeed) a good many times in the nine years that she has been enlivening our pages with her trenchant observations and timely advice. I doubt any would agree, but Diane feels, after 31 issues, it is time for a change and has persuaded Anne Crawley to take over the task of inspiring Suburb gardeners. Welcome Anne. Our thanks to Diane - it's been fun. Ed.*

# Wine, women and song

Suburb resident, Valerie Cowan, is known for her wine courses and wine club at the Institute. However, Valerie joined Memory Lane Singing Club in Finchley Central. "I hadn't sung for 20 years and I was quite apprehensive," says Valerie. "I was made very welcome and soon discovered that I could sing in tune. We rehearse every Friday and I really look forward to it. We perform for the residents of nursing homes or retirement homes like Hammerson House and they love it."

This year the club has been singing songs from shows such as My Fair Lady, Oklahoma and Sound of Music. Everyone is welcome and you don't have to be a singer. "Idit Gold, our musical director, says everyone has the potential to sing. Not only that, but singing enhances



confidence, releases stress, lifts your spirits and is a great way to make friends. I can vouch for all of those," claims Valerie.

If you would like details about joining Memory Lane Singing Club, please call Valerie (third from left) on 8458 4508.

## Amadeus - a triumph

The choice of Peter Shaffer's 'Amadeus' for their October production was a very audacious act by the Hampstead Garden Suburb theatre. It is a play full of difficulties, especially on the technical side, and it needs two good actors able to sustain and fill out the taxing roles of Salieri and Mozart. In Richard Kinder and newcomer Laurence Summers, they found them. Kinder, as Salieri, was superb. Historically, Salieri was Mozart's senior by six years and was court composer when Mozart arrived on the scene.

Shaffer's play shows that Mozart was the superior musician and Salieri was consumed with envy, hatred and also reluctant admiration. It is a huge role, with the actor almost always on the stage, and Kinder's portrayal encompassed it all and was ultimately very moving.

Summers, a drama teacher by profession, was also outstanding, revealing Mozart's famous mix of prankster and musical genius.

This duo were well supported by Andrew Craze as the impressive Emperor Joseph and Rosie Nicchitta as Mozart's wife, Constanze. Rusty Ashman, Tony Newton and Jeremy Thompson stood out from a large cast as members of the Emperor's court circle.

Praise should also go to Tim Solomons for imaginative directing and to Diana Bromley for a simple setting which allowed this play of many scenes to flow easily.

The costumes were of the same consistently high standard achieved in recent productions by Diana Darrer, Frances Musker and Jeanne Solomons. Full marks should also go to the technicians for ensuring the smooth flow of not just lights but the many musical sequences.

All in all, an ambitious project triumphantly realised, and a production of which the Hampstead Garden Suburb Theatre can be very proud.

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