



Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society 'Buddy', John Cassels



Deborah Warland

Suburb Style editor Deborah Warland, talks to residents about some of their favourite things

SUBURB

Gardener

featuring John Cassels

Style's editor, Deborah Warland praises her horticultural 'Buddy', John Cassels.

In the Autumn issue of Suburb News my attention was caught by the headline 'Could a Buddy help?'. As a fairly new member of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural society I felt I should try out their new initiative which sounded very interesting. The scheme works like this: You ring the extremely helpful Sonia Mathias (whose brainchild the scheme is) and she arranges for an experienced member of the Society to contact you to arrange a visit. The 'Buddy' then advises you on any particular problems or gardening interests you might wish to pursue and together you come up with a plan of action. You do not have to be a member of the Society to avail yourself of this free service but you must be prepared to do all the work yourself!

We had never met John Cassels before but, within minutes his calm, assured and likeable manner persuaded us that this was a man whose advice we could trust and learn from. We had asked for help regarding shrub pruning and as John took us round our garden he gave us really useful information on what to do and when. He answered our questions on what feeds to give, how far to cut back, which plants needed to be moved and what we could put into various beds that would give us some year round colour. In fact, when we finished, it felt like we had received an all round gardening masterclass. However, one of John's greatest assets is that you can ask the most naïve questions and he never makes you feel as if you should have known better! It was only after we completed the session that we learned the truth (which we should have guessed) that John is a semi-retired professional gardener.

John and his wife Frances have lived on the Suburb for over 30 years and have two children, Theo and Lauren. He was trained as a teacher and taught sociology but found it rather frustrating, in that a lesson of '40 minutes was never enough'. He then had the opportunity to team up with an old friend who was looking after some local gardens (this was long before the current trend of half a dozen garden maintenance vans being parked in your road at any one time!). When the friend decided to call it a day, John took over and developed the business. He had no formal training in horticulture but is a great believer that, if you are fortunate and you are prepared to study books, it comes to you intuitively. Certainly there are countless people on the Suburb who can bear witness to John's abilities over the last three decades. He has not only helped individuals with their garden design and maintenance, but he has also had a long business relationship with the Suburb Trust from which he only retired last year. He still looks after The Orchard gardens and was involved with the Suburb's Centenary display on Willifield Way.

I asked John about any of today's Suburb pros and cons. For the latter, he thinks that there are just too many cars now (if pushed I think he would prefer it to be one large totally pedestrianised zone!) and is genuinely worried that the cementing over of so many Suburb driveways will lead to problems for our flora and fauna. However, these can be forgotten when he sits at 'sunshine corner' overlooking the Heath Extension, or in the Spring when the glorious cherry blossoms of Asmunds Hill are in full bloom and he knows that his favourite months of the gardening year are just arriving.

I am sure that all the Suburb Horticultural Society 'Buddies' are excellent and would really recommend that you use this unique facility, though I warn you that your secateurs will never sleep again! If you would like to ring Sonia her number is 8455 7334 or you can email buddies@hortsoc.co.uk.

SUBURB

Recipes

featuring Dr Susan Cohen



and Co. (famous for their tea shops and 'Nippy' waitresses) she was commissioned to write the book 'Where to Take Tea' which recommends over 50 of the nicest places to take tea, from grand hotels to Victorian tearooms, including 2 venues in Hampstead. Here is a scone recipe which she loves.

Susan's book is now in its 2nd edition and is published by New Holland. It is available at Joseph's Bookstore at 1257 Finchley Road, Temple Fortune.

DEVONSHIRE SCONES

Ingredients:

225g self-raising flour · 40g butter · 150ml milk
1 level tbsp caster sugar · pinch of salt

Pre-heat oven to gas mark 7 (425°F or 220 °C)

Method:

Rub the butter into the flour, then stir in the sugar and salt. Add the milk slowly, mixing with a palette knife, and when it is all added, knead with floured hands, adding a little more milk if needed. You want to have a soft, but not sticky dough. Turn onto a lightly floured surface, roll to about 2 cm thick, then use a 2" (4.5cm) round cutter to press out scones (or cut into triangle shapes). Re-roll remainder of dough and repeat. Makes about 10 scones. Place on greased tray, dust with flour, bake near the top of the oven for 10-12 minutes until risen and golden brown. Serve warm with clotted cream and strawberry preserve.

Dr Susan Cohen and her husband Andrew have lived on the Suburb for the last 5 years. They have a son, Charles and he and his wife, Susannah also reside on the Suburb with their two daughters, Cecily and Poppy.

Susan is an author and historian with a special interest in Edwardian and Victorian social history and therefore is extremely interested in Dame Henrietta and Canon Barnett. She says, "Although today's residents may not be quite the social mix Dame Henrietta had intended, I feel very privileged to live in the beautiful conservation area which she helped create." She is a strong believer in heritage and adds, "I feel very strongly that the unique character of the Suburb should be preserved for future generations to enjoy."

Afternoon tea is Susan's favourite meal and chancing on an encounter with the fascinating archives of J Lyons

For Art Lovers in Hampstead Garden Suburb

BROWN HILL
insurance group

Insuring homes in Hampstead Garden Suburb for over 20 years

2nd Floor | Kent House | 41 East Street | Bromley | Kent BR1 1QQ
T 020 8658 4334 F 020 8650 5065 E info@brownhillgroup.co.uk
www.brownhillgroup.co.uk