

Horticultural Society flower show

On Saturday September 12, the Horticultural Society put on their 280th flower show at the Free Church Hall, Northway. Despite the awful weather of previous days, they were blessed with blue skies and sunshine for the show, while the ever-popular brass band, Grimsdyke Brass of Harrow, performed in the garden.

Record numbers came to see the array of home-grown produce, cookery, preserves and flowers, to sample the home-made teas, buy their spring bulbs and listen to the band in the garden.

Terry Rand produced the heaviest pumpkin, an enormous beast, and Best in Show certificates were awarded as shown in the panel below.

The society's AGM and Prize-giving will be held on Tuesday November 10 at 7.30pm at Fellowship House. New members of the committee would be very welcome. Please contact Hon Sec Gladys McLeod, 8455 2656 if you would like your name to be included. Committee meetings are held monthly on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm at Fellowship House.

MARJORIE HARRIS

BEST IN SHOW CERTIFICATES

Pot Plant: Diane Berger for a Giant Lily

Vegetable: Ian Davidson for Sweetcorn

Cut Flowers: David White for a Dahlia

Fruit: Ken Murrell for Dessert Apples

Preserving & Cookery: Yvonne Oliver

Horticulture: Chris Page for his Trug of vegetables

Junior Award of Merit: Melissa Redman (12) for Chocolate Cake



NIGEL SUTTON

Suburb rainfall

Wet winter, dry spring, wet summer. Well, it does rather depend when the periods are measured, but that is a sort of overall view of this year's weather. Lengthening spring at both ends to include March and June means that overall there has been less rainfall than usual, 18.3 inches compared with an average of 21 inches. Maybe the gardeners' prayers, mooted in this column in July really worked because the total for that month was nearly 3 inches, compared with an average of 2.3.

Most of the rain came in the second half of the month, with 1.75 inches on a nasty, cold 24th, when it rained all day. To have over an inch of rain in 24 hours is not that common

without a thunderstorm, but it happened again on August 26, when just over an inch fell throughout the day, bringing the month's total to 3.7 inches. Then it happened yet again on September 16, when just over an inch fell on another cold wet day with it not clearing till later at night. To make a miserable summer even worse, there was only one thunderstorm, on July 3 and it was not even a really good one to provide an addict with excitement.

The unpredictable weather may have messed up hopes of picnics and lazing in the garden, but it somehow contributed to wonderful growth in the garden. There were flowers for the Horticultural Show, the roses

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Front gardens



Pittosporum and acer Sango-Kaku

Privet, Box and Beech hedging is synonymous with Hampstead Garden Suburb front gardens. Do they restrict or do they enhance? One sure thing is that behind these signature hedges there is a green space that can be just as attractive and challenging, and mostly private, as its counterpart around the back.

Because of their geometry front gardens tend towards the Formal; green boundaries framing hard landscaping in the form of paths, driveways & raised beds. If you are looking for a labour saving garden, don't be fooled into thinking that turfing your plot is the answer. It's likely that a front lawn will be trampled by high foot traffic, too small to manoeuvre the lawn mower around, have shaggy edges, and end up compacted, weedy and threadbare. Believe it or not flower beds with the right choice of plants will stay looking smart all year round and require a lot less maintenance and grief! Simple designs work best.

First let's deal with borders underneath hedges. They are usually narrow, dry and mostly shady, so your choice of plants is restricted. If you have other flower beds, it's probably better to fill these narrow strips with bark chippings and concentrate on developing your more hospitable borders. However if these are your only planting areas, then go for ground cover,

mostly evergreen for year round interest and weed suppression, focusing on leaf colour and texture rather than flower power. Before planting you will need to improve the soil if anything is to thrive at all: clear weeds and add as much compost and manure as you can without spilling it onto adjacent paths. I favour variegated plants which will contrast with their green backdrop, pachysandra terminalis & vinca minor being two of the best. Hellebore foetidus, lily-of-the-valley, Solomon's Seal and epimediums are tough small flowering plants. Blechnum spicatum and polypodium vulgare are ferns that cope with dry shade. Limit yourself to no more than three different plant varieties, going for repetition to create impact and cohesion. In fact a border comprising entirely of ferns say, or pachysandra, would create a most striking and sophisticated effect. These plants need little water after their initial establishment, and will spread around over a couple of years, knitting together and completely covering the ground.

Borders underneath windows are characteristic of the artisan cottages of the Suburb. Dense evergreen flowering shrubs such as hebes cover all bases; year round foliage, strong structure, easy to keep in shape. Pittosporum comes in several forms – soft green and cream Irene Patterson combined

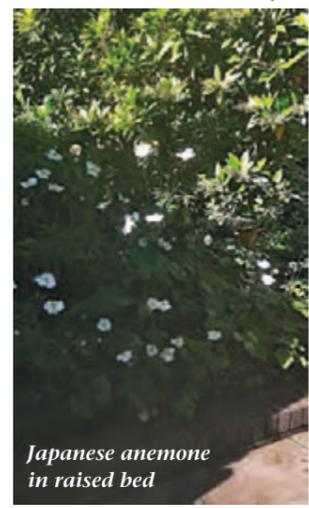
with burgundy Tom Thumb is magic. Daphnes are ideal for more shady aspects, and have the most amazing fragrance. Semi-evergreen abelia grandiflora flowers for months, a real unsung hero. Cotoneaster has white flowers and vibrant berries, with the added advantage of very sharp thorns (I wouldn't try climbing over one!) Camellias, although slightly more lax in habit with their glossy leaves and early flowers, can be loosely pruned to fit their space.

Raised beds make life so easy! You can have Healthy Loam (the holy grail of any garden) as opposed to your indigenous heavy clay. Top soil and manure will create a balanced well drained medium for most types of planting. (If you want to grow rhodos, camellias or azaleas, then you

need ericaceous soil.) Choose a small tree as a central focal point. Acers and magnolias are popular for a very good reason, they work. Acer Sanko-Kaku – the coral bark maple – has magnificent autumn colour and after leaf fall you can marvel at its fiery red stems. Magnolia stellata has white star like flowers, and if underplanted with white flowering plants, will look stunning.

To create a year round impact plant in succession late winter flowering hellebore (Lantern or Christmas Rose), spring flowering silver leaved brunnera Jack Frost and marbled pulmonaria Mageste, summer flowering geranium phaeum Album, and finally for late summer autumn flowering choose the Japanese anemone Honorine Jobert.

CAROLINE BROOME



Japanese anemone in raised bed



Magnolia underplanted with pachysandra

have all bloomed again and the Michaelmas daisies are a real picture. Fruit is prolific and the weeds are having a wonderful time. Climate change, it has

been suggested, may result in cooler, wetter summers, so this may be what we will have to get used to.

DIANA IWI FROM MEADWAY



Rainbow caught on camera on September 2






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