

Pottering on gently



The longest day came and went without a murmur, we are well into the second half of the year and I'm betting that you are feeling somewhat cheated by the absence of a decent summer.

An optimist will reassure you that good weather can stretch well into October, but with the

roses reduced to a soggy mess and perennials flowering valiantly on without an audience, what can the garden offer you now to make up for Mother Nature's capriciousness?

Well, on the plus side I can't remember a year when growth was so lush and prolific; usually

by now it's looking faded and jaded. The persistent rains will have washed most nutrients out of the soil so it's a good idea to feed the borders and containers, especially clematis and roses, and don't forget to continue deadheading to extend the flowering season.

If you are textbook perfect you will have pruned spring flowering shrubs like philadelphus so the heavy work is done until the autumn. Schools have broken up for the summer, traffic is minimal, bucolic charm pervades the Suburb!

Any sense of urgency experienced during the spring growing season will have faded by now so let the tempo slow and go with the flow. Armed with nothing more than a drink in one hand and secateurs in the other you can potter about aimlessly for ages.

Can't be bothered to mow? Run the mower down the centre of the lawn to create a path, let the grass grow into a meadow. If nothing else, keep the edges trimmed and the garden will always look neat.

Planning for leisure time in your own garden seems to be something that we often forget to do, as the British weather isn't exactly conducive to outdoor living. Make time and create space for you and your friends and family to relax, whatever the weather.

Half the problem is not having a comfortable place to sit for any length of time. Most of us have hard wooden benches or bistro chairs, so add some cushions, or buy a comfy seat. Walk around your garden with a lightweight chair and position yourself in different aspects until you find your ideal

spot to linger; most likely there will be various situations to make the most of different times of the day.

If you have a summer-house, what's the betting it has become a repository for tools, children's toys and sports gear? Now is the time to transform it into a comfortable and practical hideaway – cushions, rugs, lanterns – for you enjoy the garden, even on rainy days.

If not, then it's worth investing in a portable gazebo; they are inexpensive and are easily stored away. If setting up on the lawn laying a tarpaulin down improves insulation.

After a day at work, late afternoon and twilight in the garden can be relaxing and restorative. Night lighting doubles your outdoor time and creates a tranquil and mystical atmosphere to your outside space.

Candles or flares, solar lights, festive lights strung in trees or over pergolas can make you feel like you are on holiday abroad. More permanent systems high-light artwork, paths and plantings.

Enhancing your garden with ornaments and even decorative structures can provide maintenance-free year round interest.

You may also want to place mirrors at the back of borders to create an illusion of space and stained glass panels on fences or trellis can enhance your colour-themed border displays.

Inject humour or whimsy with mythical ornaments. Got a dead tree trunk? Make a feature of it by painting it or lighting it up. Better still use it as a base for insect hotels and bird feeders, then find yourself a secluded position and enjoy the view.

CAROLINE BROOME



HGS Horticultural Society news

The Horticultural Society held its 281st flower show on Saturday, June 11 at the Free Church Hall. Entries for vegetables and soft fruit were down a bit, thanks to the cold Spring. However, the weather seems to have suited the Suburb flower-growers, whose many lovely scented entries, especially the roses, greeted visitors, who included the new Mayor and Mayoress of Barnet, Councillor David Longstaff and his partner Ms Gillian Griffiths.

After opening the show, Councillor Longstaff went on to judge the costumes and present prizes to the young princes and

princesses who paraded round the garden in honour of HM The Queen's 90th birthday and praised the high standard of the delicious cakes for tea.

Several children had made miniature gardens, decorated biscuits 'for a royal occasion' and created beautiful cakes 'for a royal birthday'. In addition some of the Juniors successfully entered the adult classes. Puppeteers Ros and Michael Berg put on a very well-received Punch and Judy Show, a first for the society.

The Autumn Flower Show will take place on September 10, with Grimdyke Brass Band

making a welcome return visit to the Free Church Hall garden in Northway, NW11 6PB. It will

be opened at 3pm by well-known RHS judge and TV gardening personality Jim Buttress.



The society's Suburb in Bloom 'best garden' competition was won this year by David Weinberg of Willifield Way, closely followed by runners-up Chris Page and Yvonne and Peter Oliver. At the AGM on November 8, David will be presented with the Millennium Cup.

Also in July, several members enjoyed a very successful three-day trip to six beautiful gardens, while based near Crewkerne in Somerset.

The talk about entering and judging cookery classes, due to be held on October 13 at Fellowship House, has been cancelled. Instead, well-known senior staff member Denis from Sunshine Nurseries will talk about Putting your garden to bed – jobs for the

Autumn, on Thursday October 6 at Fellowship House, Willifield Way. Full details can be found at www.hortsoc.co.uk/events.

MARJORIE HARRIS



Members on July trip at Hanham Court

MARJORIE HARRIS

Suburb rainfall

The first half of 2016 was grey and damp and therefore seemed most discouraging. Blue patches raced across the screen in the weather forecasts; there were floods and gales in the country, and daily maximum temperatures here were around, or below, the recent average.

However, a look in more detail shows a less gloomy picture. Rainfall for the six months was just over fourteen inches, only marginally over the average for the period. While there have been localised instances of floods nearby, the areas which really suffered were elsewhere, mainly in the north and west of the country.

April was a slightly wetter month than usual, but May, with a total of only an inch and a half of rain was well below the norm of over two inches. June

is, on average, a middling sort of month with six months of the year normally having more rain and five months having less. This year there was half an inch more than usual and the temperatures were down.

This was the month when celebrations were held for the Queen's ninetieth birthday and our own Suburb Party on the Square was held. For the latter, the early showers cleared and some sunshine developed and for the Flower Show on the previous day the rain held off.

Perhaps, a better perspective on the recent weather therefore should be that everything in the garden has grown so much and so well that our roses and flowers have been absolutely splendid and our green bins are overflowing.

DIANA IWI FROM MEADWAY

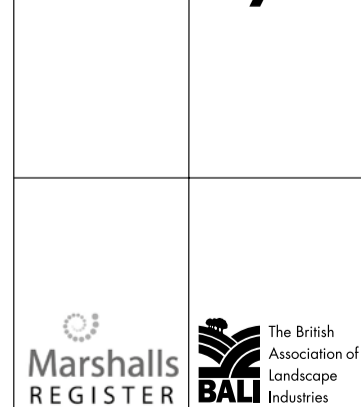
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