

Balsall &
District



Horticultural
Society

January 2021

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

Welcome to a newsletter for 2021! Coronavirus restrictions continue and our face – to face activities remain mothballed, but the monthly speaker meetings re-start on Thursday 28th January via Zoom, thanks to the efforts of Alison Watson and David Ashcroft.

The speaker on January 28th is Duncan Coombs from Pershore College, Worcestershire, where he has lectured for many years and was the RHS Regional Advisor. Incidentally, his other claim to fame is that from 2018 -2019, he was my course lecturer when I did the Pershore Certificate in Gardening! Despite the distance, I always looked forward to my drive across to college each Friday. Duncan has also travelled extensively to the Far East to view plants in their native habitat, as well as leading gardening tours in this country. I've been on tours to Kent and Cornwall with him and really enjoyed them.

Duncan's talk is entitled 'Barks, Stems & Evergreens for the Winter Garden'. Please note; in order to access January's talk, you **MUST** let David Ashcroft know (dja@krystalservices.plus.com) **BEFORE** the meeting that you wish him to send you the Zoom details to log into this meeting. Helen Jones will email members as to when to do this. David has proved very good at teaching members averse to technology on how to log onto Zoom, so don't be afraid to ask and, "go for it", as my teenager would say!

Helen hopes to get this year's membership cards printed shortly, which will contain the list of all the speakers & topics for 2021. In place of the plant pot and flower spike competitions at monthly meetings, your Committee asks that you email ange_shaw@hotmail.co.uk with a photograph of your garden, or one aspect of it, or a houseplant, to go on the BDHS website. These will be judged on a monthly basis instead. Don't forget that there is no membership renewal to pay this year, because last year's activities were curtailed.

The lockdown in 2020 saw me trying out plants that I had either never grown before or hadn't grown for some years. With my husband requiring further cancer treatment, I took over the vegetables around June. Cucumbers, brussels sprouts, purple sprouting broccoli and spring cabbage were all new to me.

MY homegrown sprouts were served on Christmas Day with due ceremony! Thanks to mail order, I purchased a Blueberry 'Bluecrop' from Blackmoor Nurseries in Hampshire, a fruit specialist with whom I have previously had very satisfactory dealings. I had acquired an enormous blue planter at the end of 2019 from a Berkswell Scout Jumble Sale, an event I continue to help at despite my son being too old because one of the scout leaders is a relative. The planter was unsold and destined for the tip. After negotiating a suitable donation, I brought it home with uncertainty as to how I would re - purpose it. Some 8 mths later, an unexpected flash of inspiration made me think of a blueberry. My coal merchant down the road was doing a good sideline in composts and I was easily able to buy the necessary ericaceous compost. The blueberry has been happy in its large pot on the patio, even producing a few berries in its first year. Saving the plastic planter from landfill was an added bonus. Back in the autumn I underplanted the blueberry with an assortment of acid loving, winter heathers (pictures on page 2). It had been years since I had grown chrysanthemums and dahlias, after being put off by disappointing results. Being older and supposedly wiser, I again used mail order to have another go. My report on these plants reads, 'could still do better', but this time I realise where I need to improve for 2021! Gardening will always be a continual learning process.

I will conclude on two positive notes. Firstly, I was very pleased that the Committee has a new member following our AGM on 26.11.20. Like Helen Jones, I've known Wendy Jenkinson for years. Unlike Helen, I wasn't at school with Wendy, but we were in Barston Young Farmers' Club together. It was interesting that two more former Barston YFC members, David & Edward Cotterrell, proposed and seconded her! I'm looking forward to seeing much more of Wendy now that she is back in the area. Secondly, the stork paid a visit to a BDHS member on the day of our AGM. Henry Plumptre joined our society in March 2020, immediately prior to the first lockdown, thus preventing him from attending any BDHS events. He and wife Heather became brand new parents when Helena Jane arrived on 26th November. Her arrival also made the Temple Balsall Church organist, whom some of you will know well, a first - time grandad. I don't think any BDHS Newsletter Editor has announced a birth before – well done Henry & Heather!

With best wishes to all members,
Marion



My blueberry pot with heathers

NOTICEBOARD

- RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch Friday 29th – Sunday 31st January 2021. Spend an hour recording the birds visiting your garden on one of these days and send in your findings to the RSPB. Registration is now open. [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch) for details.
- Our February & March meetings have been swapped round as per request of the speakers.
25.02.2021 Ryton Seedbank
25.03.2021 The Compost King
- It is hoped that our Daffodil Bulb Competition will take place via photographs on Zoom like last year, so please keep looking after them!
- Your Committee has had to cancel our Annual Dinner on 18.03.2021 as this cannot take place via Zoom! All being well, it will be held on 25.11.2021 with a short AGM afterwards.
- A decision will be taken regarding our Annual Show, due to be held on 17.07.2021, by the end of March.
- Jigsaws are available in our sales cupboard at the Village Hall and if anyone wishes to have one to relieve their boredom, Alison Watson would meet you outside to hand one over.
alisonwatson36@outlook.com
- Message from Helen Jones re prospective new members. They should contact Helen in the first instance on helen@manorfarmknowle.co.uk. A trial meeting via Zoom would then be arranged, after which the prospective member would be invited to formally join.

TOPICAL TIPS

JANUARY

- Plan flower and vegetable borders for the forthcoming growing season.
- Seed catalogues are now available so that seeds can be ordered.
- Keep an eye on the greenhouse for blocked guttering, cracked glass, problems with any heating systems, and rodents.
- Get your mower and other mechanical garden equipment serviced. Continue to clean / oil other garden tools.
- Check stored fruit, vegetables and summer bulbs for rot.
- Spring flowering bulbs in pots can be encouraged into flowering by moving them into a cold frame, cold greenhouse or unheated conservatory or porch.
- Force rhubarb for young stalks in 6-8 weeks' time, or plant new rhubarb crowns / divide old ones in open ground.
- Winter prune apple and pear trees, currant and gooseberry bushes, but leave plums and cherries to avoid silver leaf fungal infections.
- Plant bare root deciduous hedging plants and trees whilst the soil is damp, but not waterlogged or frozen.
- Dig over heavy soils and leave in clods for the frost to break down. Other finer soils can be mulched with compost to lock in moisture.
- Sow sweet pea seeds under heat. Those sown in the autumn may be pricked out into separate pots.
- Summer bedding seeds such as antirrhinums, petunias, violas may be sown under glass.
- Keep an eye on the welfare of garden birds and other wildlife in your garden.

JANUARY PUZZLE

Fruit & Veg – the ‘Nonsense’ Way!

I know that my mind works in mysterious ways, thinking up strange puzzles to tease members with! Hidden within odd sentences below are fruit and vegetables, some in plain sight and some present phonetically.

E.g. The cat licked the gargoyle in the park. ANSWER = Garlic

1. You can pull up the app on your phone.
2. The runner was as slim as a beanpole.
3. The age of the cab was very old.
4. “Look out for the barbs, Roo!” said Winnie the Pooh.
5. The gardener dropped the pot on his toe.
6. The itch put the pig in a spin.
7. The parson hid a nip of rum under his cassock to keep him warm.
8. Viewers noticed that Mary Berry had a rasp in her voice.
9. Two items make a pair.
10. The buyer choked when he was told the price of the artwork.
11. The car had rot in its bodywork.
12. Let us hope we can all meet again soon!

Answers to me by 31st January please; marion.keeley@btinternet.com

CROSSWORD SOLUTION FOR MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

ACROSS

1 Caltha 6 Leaves 7 Osmunda 8 Valley 9 Sessile 10 Nantes 12 Adelgid 15 Easter 18 Parlour 20 Oxlip
21 Bone Meal 22 Draw

DOWN

1 Choisya 2 Limes 3 Hanging 4 Saplings 5 Hebe 6 Lavender 11 Eye 13 Dragon 14 Lillies 16 Tilia
17 Ripe 19 Ulex 20 Old

Whilst we are unable to present any prizes during the restrictions, it is worth noting that Wendy Boulton, Mary & Edward Cotterrell, Val & David Cotterrell, David Felthouse, Sandra Heard, Henry Plumptre and Doug & Sue Timmis sent in solutions to this puzzle.

Mostly all correct answers and thank you for taking the trouble to send them to me.