



# California Gardeners' Club

## Newsletter August 2020

[www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk](http://www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk)

### Pests on the Plot

Don't get me wrong, I love nature and wild flowers, the birds and wild animals and I would love to work in harmony with nature so this may be an appeal to those wiser than I for advice.

I suppose the year started with my over-wintered broad beans, yes, you got it, blackfly! Before you ask, I did pinch out the young tips so that they were not so appealing to the aphids. I've been quite lucky with green and white-fly – they seem to have left me alone this year despite my lack of companion planting.



That wasn't the end of the broad bean carnage, next came the birds! Allegedly it was the jays but it could have been magpies, blackbirds or parrots for all I know; all I saw were the decimated empty pods.



Then came the plague of mice which spent all their waking hours nibbling off my unripe strawberries and piling them up in inedible heaps! Why do they do that? Sorry to say that they will never eat a strawberry again, except in mouse heaven.

It must have been too hot and dry for the slugs this year as they seem to have done little damage other than to a few lettuces or maybe it is the proliferation of toads and frogs which seem to be hiding under every stone, bucket and planter. Apparently they can eat up to 30 slugs a night!



Then came apple wars! I have four apple trees but it was only my Falstaff apples that came under attack; was that blackbirds again? I netted the tree but to no avail, it was once again carnage! Next I saw those pesky squirrels hanging around and I thought – 'they are after my sweetcorn'. So I netted them and so far, so good!

### Things to remember

1. Our next meeting scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> September is **cancelled**.
2. Trading Hut - will be opening again, after the usual August closure, on the 6<sup>th</sup> September.
3. **Virtual Summer Show starts this Monday. See this newsletter for details.**
4. Did you know you can renew electronically now? See newsletter for details.

## **Pests on the plot; continued**

But then it came! The monster from the undergrowth! The muntjac deer! Devourer of whatever it fancied! French beans, runner beans, strawberry runners, beetroot tops and other peoples' sweetcorn but not mine! I forgot to mention rosebuds: it ate those too! So my plot has more netting than a French trawler in British waters. This makes picking a job for a lithesome contortionist but at least there are crops to harvest behind the barriers



So what about our animal friends? I've already mentioned the frogs and toads and although not as prolific, the snakes and slow worms do their bit. Old Mrs Fox has her work cut out chasing off the attack from the sky, even occasionally securing herself lunch if an unwary pigeon has its back turned at the wrong moment.

So why do we bother? Hey, because we enjoy the challenge and when we win the battle, we can eat carrots that taste of carrots, cucumbers that are crunchy and not wrapped in plastic, new potatoes that last fresh until Christmas and so much more. Not to mention the friendship and camaraderie of other folk down on the plot.

Long live British allotments!  
Peter Radband

## **Spring Bulbs**

I know that you have been in lockdown for some time and as such you have been accumulating a lot of money. Well here is your chance to spend some of those millions. Spring bulbs will be here soon and we will, as usual, be selling them at the Trading Hut at below retail prices. I know you can purchase them at the garden centres but do you want to pay a lot more? As soon as they are in (hopefully for the opening of the hut on the 6<sup>th</sup> September), we will send out pictures of what we have.

## **Topical Tip – September 2020**



A number of herbaceous plants have suffered as a result of the recent very hot, dry weather. However, one group which has prospered in these conditions has been the lavenders.

Sadly, most lavenders are coming to the end of flowering, so now is the time to give the plants a bit of a 'hair cut' to prepare them for next year's flowering.

The old flowering stems should be cut back to just above where the plants have made the new seasons growth. It is also an ideal time to take cuttings of this delightful plant. Cut around 8-9 cm of the new growth, strip a few bottom leaves and after dipping in some rooting compound, place in some gritty compost. By doing this, you will increase the number of plants available for next year.

## Virtual Summer Show

As there is a lot of work managing a virtual show, we decided there should only be five classes:

1. Five tomatoes (any size and **must have the calyx still attached**)
2. Any three different vegetables (one of each)
3. A vase of summer flowers
4. Three dahlias (Any type)
5. Six fuchsia florets

Submissions to the virtual show will be exactly as with the rose and sweet pea; take your pictures and send them the clubs email address ([californiagardenersclub@gmail.com](mailto:californiagardenersclub@gmail.com)).

You will be able to log on to the club's web site <http://www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk/> and see the entries as they arrive throughout the week.

**Rules:** Where possible, please photograph your exhibit with a ruler next to it (class 1, 2 and 4) this will help club members when they are judging. Apart from that, there are no rules.

**Timing:** Submit your pictures during the week 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> August. Club members will be asked to judge on the Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> with results out soon after.

Katie Bailey/Daryl Phillips

Show Secretaries

## A Garden to visit

Have you ever visited Sussex Prairie Gardens, near Henfield in Sussex? It is not your typical English cottage garden but very different. As the name suggests, this beautiful garden is planted in a naturalistic style, with grasses and perennials in deep, swirling borders. Paths meander through the plantings, so that you can really immerse yourself in the flowers and grasses.

Various events are organised through the open season. At the moment, there is an Indian Bazaar, selling a range of ethically sourced clothes, gifts, homeware and jewellery from India.

Picnics are welcome. Gardens close on 11th October.

Check the website [sussexprairies.co.uk](http://sussexprairies.co.uk) to book.

## Thank you from one of our members

A nice email from one of our members:

*Hello Peter*

*I would like to thank you for the lettuce seedlings and tomato plant you shared, we have been enjoying the lettuce and cherry tomatoes, they are still growing! It's been our first experience growing any fruit/veg, we are learning every day.*

*Thanks and regards*

*Girish*

That's what we are here for Girish.

## Membership

***Did you know you can renew electronically?***

Just transfer your £5 (£10 for a couple) to the clubs account giving your surname and initials as the reference. Your membership card will then be waiting for you at the next meeting.

**Clubs account number is – 71301608 & sort code – 404709**

## Monthly talks

**This is a call to all members:** if you have any ideas/requests for the subjects of the monthly talks, please let us know. Either reply to this email or give Hermione a ring (number below).

Chairman: Dick Hawes 0118 979 3730	Hon. Treasurer: Peter Radband 07976 640989	Programmes: Hermione Lewis 0118 989 1671	Committee Member: Jayne Male
Deputy Chairman: Ian Gillott 0118 9892649	Trading Hut: Stuart Slocombe 0118 9734531	Membership: Kerry Eaton 07736 022361	Co-opted Member: Marise Radband 01344 774310
Hon. Secretary: Chris Spinks 0118 978 1432	Show Secretary: Peter Turner 0118 9730424	Publicity: Julia Goodall 07814 747198	Ass Show Secretaries: Daryl & Katie Phillips