



California Gardeners' Club

Newsletter April 2017

www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk

Last Club Meeting

On April 3rd 61 members came to hear David Fletcher talk about the "Glorious Arctic Tundra". He should know it well as he has spent more than 40 years working there! Tundra is a Sami language word that means "bare treeless waste", and it covers more than 4,400,000 square miles.

It is technically a desert as there is very low precipitation, but it is also very wet in places, as the permafrost and low evaporation mean there is nowhere for the snowmelt to drain away. These pools are a breeding ground for zillions of mosquitos, which in turn feed the many birds that come to the Arctic to breed.

The short summer allows the plants to flower and seed, and nowadays there are tours to see the flowering carpet that appears for the 3 week flowering season. It is a very harsh place for plants with very shallow soils, which regularly moves due to the frost heave of the permafrost, the cold (getting down to - 50 degrees), and wind. There are trees, but they grow sideways just inches above the ground and grow at an extremely slow rate. Lichens and mosses, also very slow growing, thrive there.

There are arctic hares and lemmings, caribou and musk oxen (actually related to mountain goats), and the predators, ravens, skuas, arctic foxes, wolves and bears. Brown bears are beginning to encroach, and even crossbreed with polar bears.

The native people are mostly nomadic herders and hunters, pursuing caribou and sea mammals, though lately more are moving into the towns to work for companies prospecting the area for oil and minerals.

Lynn Potts

Things to remember

1. Next meeting is on 1st May when Ray Broughton will talk about Dianthus and Perennials.
2. Trading hut now open Sundays 10:00 to 12:00
3. The Begonias for the summer challenge will be at the hut on Sunday. Pot, compost and corm for just £2
4. Subs are now due for 2017
5. Read the newsletter for information on this year's outing.
6. See tip on tomatoes in newsletter.

Begonia Growing Competition (Deputy Chairmans Challenge)

Start the corms off during the last week in April by pressing them into the surface of the compost.

Water them initially by putting the pot containing the corm in a bucket containing water and let the water soak into the compost. In this way, the compost becomes wet and the top of the corm remains quite dry.

The shoots will appear and when there is no longer a risk of frost, the pots can be put outside. You may need to top up the compost once growth commences.

For spectacular results, feed every couple of weeks with a high potash feed (such as a tomato fertiliser)

For those who fancy growing two pots, there will be a few remaining at the shed on Sunday morning.

Outing to West Dean Gardens - Tuesday 20th June



Our coach trip will be to one of the greatest restored gardens open to the public. West Dean Gardens has an impressive collection of 13 working Victorian glasshouses, a 300-ft. pergola, an inspiring Victorian walled kitchen garden heaving with fruit, veg and cutting flowers, an award-winning sunken garden, a 49-acre arboretum with breath-taking views and specimen trees e.g. redwoods and tulip trees, ponds, secret walkways, flint bridges, extensive heritage fruit collections, roses, plant sales, restaurant and a photographic exhibition. Renowned horticulturalists Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain have led the garden team for the past 25 years, re-developing the 90 acres of grounds.

The Gardens Restaurant and Shop overlooks the beautiful Lavant valley and West Dean Park. The River Lavant runs alongside.

Bookings available on a first-come, first-served basis from Chris Spinks. Email cspinks41@gmail.com or phone 0118 9781432 to secure places or at the Club meeting or Show. The coach leaves California Ratepayers Hall at 9am on Tuesday 20th June 2017. Extra 'pick-ups' (and 'drop-offs') at 9.10am Rose Street, Wokingham and 9.15am The Three Frogs, London Rd. Luxury coach trip, tip and entrance: £21 for a superb horticultural experience. (See West Dean website too.) Post cheques to 20 Croft Road, Wokingham RG40 3HU or pay at May's Club meetings. Please remember to give names, phone number/s and where you will get on the coach. Enjoy!



If any members, family and friends are thinking about going on our trip to West Dean Gardens, please book soon as possible as we will be opening the trip to other clubs.

Membership

Why not tell your neighbours and friends about us and invite them to a meeting.

Keeping annual membership at £5 makes us a great club to be a member of.
So, don't keep it a secret.

Daffodil Competition

Now the competition is over, leave your daffodils in the pots until the leaves have all died down. This will allow the bulb to draw down all the goodness from the leaves. For really great blooms next year, given the pot a top dressing of 'Fish, blood and bone' which you can buy from the trading hut.

Once the leaves have died, you can either store the pot in a cool dry place until October when you can start watering it again or take the bulb out of the pot and plant it in the garden.

Spring Show

For pictures taken at the Spring Show, go to 'Gallery' in our web site:

www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk

The Spring Show has been judged, by nearly everyone, to have been a great success. Although the committee and myself can organise the event, it is due to all the members who entered that really makes for a good Show.

Therefore, my personal thanks to all of you who entered and with such great quality flowers and other exhibits. The Floral artists amongst you succeed in my challenge to completely fill the side of the hall by the carpark, thus pushing the Treasurer off the end. WELL DONE. Let's do it all again in September.

Vases

On a more sombre note, we ran out of the medium and small green Show Vases, we know there should have been more in the box. It has come to my notice that some members have in the past taken their entries home in them, or taken one home to bring an entry in and then not done it. If any of you have the odd green club vase at home can you please return it. You can leave it at any Monthly meeting or in the Trading Hut. You won't get a "library type late fine". This will save the club some money in purchasing more of them.

Thank you again from Peter Turner

Trading Hut

April and some fantastic Spring weather have arrived together. So, now is the time to get out in the garden and get everything fed. We have everything you need at the Hut for both lawns and borders. On Sunday (9th 10.00 – 12.00) the Hut is being manned by Ian Gillott, our Deputy Chairman. Ian has a wealth of practical experience in the horticultural industry, so if any of you need advice about which products to use, how, where, when etc. then go and have a chat with Ian this Sunday and he'll be able to advise you what you need to buy.

New supplies of Chempak 2, 3 & 4 have now arrived. The new stock was a bit more expensive so I've had to increase our price, but I'm still able to sell it at the Hut at £4.80/pack which is 20% less than the £6/pack the garden centres are asking for. So, if you have any shrubs or small trees that are still looking a bit yellow and 'liverish'(!) then give them a treat with a dose of Chempak 2. We fed our box hedge & ball with Chempak 2 about 3 weeks ago and they are looking great now. Getting box healthy and growing strongly also helps ward off box blight which is unfortunately in our area now!

Happy gardening.

Stuart, Trading Hut Manager

Tomato Plants

For those who bought tomato plants, here is a tip: Don't plant them into the growbags or large pots straight away. Wait till the first truss and flower appears before putting them into your growbag. If you plant them too early, they will concentrate on putting on a lot of green growth before fruiting.

Wisley Ticket

The Wisley ticket is still available from Valerie Pickersgill. It allows two people a 30% discount. If you want the ticket for the day, then give Valerie a ring on 0118-9783647 to let her know when you will need them. Valerie will then let you know how to pick them up.

Monthly Table Competition

As announced at the AGM, there will be a £50 prize for the winner of the 2017 table competition, £25 for 2nd place and £10 for the highest number of average points (minimum 5 entries).

This month's winner was Sylvia Hawes with 25 points and joint second was Hermione Lewis with 24 points and Ann Blakeman with 20 points

Dear Members, the committee urge you PLEASE to support us in our 'target of ten' items each month. We may have to stop holding the event if numbers remain low. On Monday, we were hoping to see lots of exhibits from the show. The scope has been widened to virtually anything! sticks of rhubarb; hanging basket; floral or foliage arrangement; pot plant; fruit; etc. It makes such a good impression to visitors of us as a gardening club when there is a lovely display at the front of the hall.

The subject for May is:

Any plant, flower, vegetable or fruit.

All exhibits must have been in the exhibitor's possession for at least one month.

As there is a cash prize, we will not be giving a free strip of raffle tickets each time you enter.

Chairman: Dick Hawes 0118 979 3730	Hon. Treasurer: Peter Jourdan 01344 304571	Membership: Lynn Potts 0118 977 1852	Committee Member Peter Radband 01344 774310
Deputy Chairman Ian Gillott 0118 9892649	Trading Hut: Stuart Slocombe 0118 9734531	Programmes: Hermione Lewis 0118 989 1671	Co-opted Member Marise Radband 01344 774310
Hon. Secretary: Chris Spinks 0118 978 1432	Show Secretary: Peter Turner 0118 9730424	Committee Member: Judy Thomas 0118 9780108	Co-opted Member Shirley Brown 0118 9734571