



Newsletter December 2021

www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk



Club Meeting

What a great evening. Fifty-four members attended the Christmas party. As you will see from the pictures, many of them wore either red or green which gave the whole event a very jolly atmosphere.



The professional entertainer was excellent. A large number of members commented throughout the evening saying how good he was. It was pleasing to see many people asking for his business card.

Some members were so taken by the music they could not resist finding a free bit of floor area to strut their stuff.



Following are some more pictures of the evening. I have purposely left out the picture of our Chairman as his over all dress was so loud, it might leave people in shock over the Christmas period.

Things to note

1. Our next meeting is on the 3rd January when we will be having Jamie Claxton give us a talk on Tozer's Seeds
This will be in the hall.
2. **Trading Hut** – Now closed for the winter.
3. **Member's articles.** See in newsletter for more details. If you have an interesting story, then send it in for publication.
4. Remember to email Hermione if there is a particular subject you would like a speaker for. Hermione's email is at the end of this newsletter





Congratulations to the winners of the quiz, raffle and door ticket prize.

The evening ended with the traditional singing of 'Auld Lang Syne'.

A BIG thanks to all those who attended was given by the Chairman. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Members email

I recently came across an interesting thing the RHS are doing. It's all about recording, with them, what plants you have in your garden. In return it gives you monthly tips relating to your plants and how to look after them.

Worth a look at?



Help map UK garden plant diversity

Add your garden plants to RHS My Garden online. Together we can help map UK garden plants, helping to conserve and grow this important biodiversity now and for future generations. So far, we have 122,000 users who have added 2.4 million plants consisting of 77,600 different types of cultivated plants.

Get started by clicking on: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/my-account/my-rhs>

Topical Tip –December 2021

- Plant bare-root roses and other deciduous shrubs, plus ornamental trees.
- Hang bird feeders near roses to attract hungry birds that will also pick off any overwintering pests.
- Move plants in pots to a sheltered spot if conditions turn very cold, as their roots are more exposed to the elements.
- Prune climbing roses between now and February.
- Hard prune overgrown shrubs and hedges while they're dormant.
- Protect terracotta pots from cracking in freezing weather by bringing them indoors or wrapping in bubble polythene.
- Rake up accumulated fallen leaves in borders that could be harbouring slugs and other pests.

Greenhouse

- Pick faded leaves and dead flowers regularly from plants overwintering in the greenhouse, such as pelargoniums.
- Pinch out the tips of autumn-sown sweet peas to encourage bushier growth.
- Water plants sparingly to keep the greenhouse as dry as possible, which should reduce outbreaks of disease.
- Check overwintering plants in the greenhouse for red spider mite and other pests, and treat if necessary.

Member's email

Many people have been complaining about squirrels. I read this article in the Telegraph and thought it might help. I didn't know about 'dog hair'.

Five ways to deter squirrels

Plant things they don't like

Snowdrops, daffodils, fritillaria, allium and hyacinths are among the spring bulbs squirrels won't touch

Top pots with chicken wire

Having a pair of wire snips on hand will make re-planting easier

Try dog hair

Tuck it under pots and distribute around the garden



Get an owl-shaped sensor

Squirrels don't mind us but they're terrified of owls. You can get quite realistic-looking scarers. Move them around for novelty

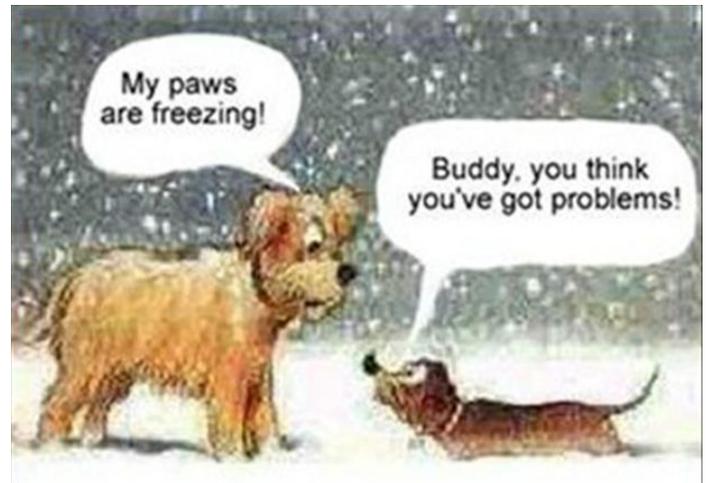
Gravel mulch and chilli powder

Both make it more challenging to get to those delicious bulbs

Free membership this year

Big thank you to all those members who decided to pay their £5 membership fee this year even though it is a free year. 2022 subs are due from the February meeting. They remain at £5 per person per year. A table will be at the January meeting as some members like to renew at the beginning of the year.

From the Committee



Thank you, from the Committee, to all our members who continued to support the club throughout the last year.

We hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas and get to enjoy family and friends.

Member's emails

I was told by a member that a friend had had a big problem with rabbits. His friend had been told that Lion poo was a good deterrent. Away went his friend to the Windsor Safari Park and collected some lion poo which he scattered in the problem area. AND IT WORKED.

So now you know. If you have a rabbit problem, go find a zoo. I am sure they will give you as much as you want.

Ian Gillott

Buying poinsettias

Poinsettias often have a reputation for being a little tricky to care for, but here are some tips and best practices on how to keep your poinsettia in top condition over the Christmas period and beyond.

1. Many supermarkets locate poinsettias with flowers, placing them by the store's front door in the hope customers will be tempted on the way in or out. But, you should never buy a poinsettia sat next to a set of automatic doors that open every 30 seconds because it will have been damaged by those UK winds. Exposure to draught or temperatures below 12°C will cause damage. Although it's not visible at first, it may cause the poinsettia to drop its leaves soon after being brought home.



2. If possible, check the soil before buying. It should be neither dripping wet nor totally dry, and if it is, it's probably not been given proper TLC so might not last in your care.

3. When you've chosen and bought your poinsettia, make sure to wrap it up in paper for the journey home to protect it from draughts and temperatures below 12 degrees Celsius. Poinsettia is a sensitive plant, so taking this extra precaution will protect it from damage that is initially invisible but can lead to premature loss of leaves after a few days.

Watering a poinsettia plant

4. Poinsettias don't like a lot of water. Always remember that the plant's root ball should neither dry out nor be drenched. Overwatering can quickly lead to waterlogging and leave you with a dead houseplant. You should get into habit of inspecting its leaves. If they're turning yellow or falling off, you're probably not watering it right. Much like the case with orchids, many flower enthusiasts mean well but they often overwater poinsettias when they only really need a little.

5. You should water your poinsettia plant when the soil is noticeably dry. This could be every day in the case of a plant near a radiator in a dry room, or only every second or third day in other spots. How to check? Carefully lift up the plant; if it feels light, it's time to water. Mini poinsettias should be checked every day. You can also water these plants by soaking them from below, which saturates the soil more than normal watering (one dip per week should do).

6. Poinsettias prefer room-temperature water, and smaller pots need watering more often than big ones because they dry out faster. For a standard pot with a diameter of 13cm, give it no more than a small glass of water, i.e. around 0.2 litres; this prevents large pores in the soil from clogging up and waterlogging. Mini poinsettias should not be given more than one shot glass of water. Remove any excess water that is still in the planter after 10 minutes.

If in doubt, it's better to keep poinsettias a little drier (rather than too moist) and to water them little and often, rather than rarely but in great quantity.

7. Poinsettias are particularly long-lasting when they are fertilised once a week from about four weeks after purchase, using a commercial liquid fertiliser for flowering houseplants in the dosage indicated on the packaging.

8. Remember, poinsettias like humid conditions, so keep them misted if it's in a room where the central heating is on full blast.

9. Poinsettias need warmth and light. It can be kept close to a radiator **but it must be kept away from draughts** (that means NO fireplaces, open doorways, open windows or breezy hallways). If it's too draughty, this plant may start to lose its leaves. Try to place poinsettias in a sheltered spot. A temperature of between 15 and 22 degrees is ideal, making these poinsettias well suited to bedrooms and living rooms. Sufficient light is important for the plant to grow and thrive (poinsettias prefer a light spot rather than full shade).



RHS card

Our club has a RHS Card.

It enables two people to gain entry to all RHS gardens throughout the country (this includes RHS Bridgewater from Sept).

Presentation of this card will give you and your friend a 30% discount on the entry fee.

You can borrow the card by contacting Chris Spinks (number at the end of newsletter) and arranging to pick it up.

Club's Facebook Group

If you are a member of our Facebook group, don't forget that we want to hear your gardening and wildlife news. What's happening in your garden? What kind of year has it been growing-wise? Do you have any tips to pass on? Do you have any gardening queries that others may be able to answer? Do you have any autumnal photos of your garden or area you could share?

We now have 21 members but the more the merrier! If you would like to join and are new to Facebook, you need to register first to set up an account. Search for Facebook in your browser and use either your mobile phone number or your email address to set up an account. Once you have done that:

- Search either within Facebook for the club's page with this number:207934410581605 or name.
- Or go back to your web browser and type. In :www.facebook.com/groups/207934410581605/
- Or simply go to the club's website and you can click on the link and start from there.

Julia Goodall, Publicity Secretary

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).

Christmas Quiz from Dobies

Christmas Gardens – Inside and Out

1. How are Hellebore seeds spread?
2. When snow settles what effect does it have on the soil below?
3. What Christmas plant grows high up on the branches of a host tree?
4. Which Christmas houseplant is famed for its colourful bracts?
5. English Ivy (*Ilex aquifolium*) is dioecious. What does this mean?

Christmas Food

6. Frost changes the taste of veg such as parsnips and sprouts. In what way?
7. What is the first fully blight resistant tomato, exclusive to Dobies?
8. A red leafed vegetable is perfect for a winter salad, what is it?
9. The Women's Institute may have a link to which winter vegetable?
10. Which purple cauliflower retains its colour when cooked?

Christmas Trees

11. Who made Christmas trees popular in England?
12. What are the 3 main types of real Christmas tree?
13. Can you eat your Christmas tree?
14. Why does Norway gift a Christmas Tree to Britain each year?
15. How old is the average Christmas tree when cut?

Christmas Music

16. According to the well-known folk carol which tree wears the crown?
17. Who wrote In the Bleak Mid-Winter?
18. Who composed the Nutcracker Suite?
19. Where was Chris Rea going to spend Christmas?
20. Originally who was it that went "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"?

Christmas Crackers

21. Where does Santa go when he's feeling poorly?
22. What is the most popular Christmas wine?
23. Why are Christmas trees no good at knitting?
24. Who do MI6 have to look out for at Christmas?
25. Why does Father Christmas need not one, not two but three gardens?

Answers in a few days time

Chairman: Dick Hawes 0118 979 3730	Hon. Treasurer: Peter Radband 07976 640989	Programmes: Hermione Lewis 0118 989 1671	Committee Member:
Deputy Chairman: Ian Gillott 0118 9892649	Trading Hut: Stuart Slocombe 0118 9734531	Membership: Jayne Male 07967639808	Co-opted Member: Marise Radband 01344 774310
Hon. Secretary: Chris Spinks 0118 978 1432	Show Secretaries: Daryl & Katie Phillips 07980 160169	Publicity: Julia Goodall	Table Competition Linda Garrett