



# Newsletter March 2022

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



## March meeting

John Trim, frvs, Head Gardener and Show Judge, with Fifty Years of gardening experience was invited to give a talk to a very enthusiastic audience on Show Craft. This consisted of 'tips' on how to improve the chance of winning a prize when exhibiting Vegetables, Fruit, and Flowers in a Show. He maintained that if you grow good quality vegetables, fruit, or flowers, why not show them off.

His talk included many 'tips', here are some that could help to impress the Judges.



To Show Vegetables, for example Carrots, these must be shown in a set of three, of uniform size, with three centimetres of carrot tops left. They must also have the feeder hairs removed and exhibited attractively on a black background. To show beetroot, treatment with saline solution and Epsom salts improve the red colour by causing them to bleed.

The appearance of Courgettes can be improved by removing the flowers as their presence harbour moisture. However, when showing Marrows, they are best shown as a pair from the same plant. To do this, when the most mature of the marrows reaches the desired size, remove and place in the refrigerator until a smaller chosen marrow matches the size and weight of its big brother.

John recommends that onions should be grown in a good seed compost and when grown to the desired size tied up in raffia. Potatoes need to be grown in inert compost, and displayed with the eyes outermost. The 'tip' for showing pears is to exhibit them when still immature.



When showing Dahlias and Sweet-peas, these are exhibited in a container/ vase of three blooms of equal size and of the same colour and arranged to give the best effect. Gladioli, should be exhibited when a third of the plant is in full bloom. Finally, when displaying flowers of different colours in a well matched display, the colours should complement each other.

John Trim, ended his fascinating talk by saying that at the end of the day, it all comes down to the choice of the Judges.

Maureen Boyington

## Things to note

1. **Our next meeting** is on the 4<sup>th</sup> April. **Blackwater Valley Conservation Trust** by Bernard Baverstock
2. **Time to renew your membership.** You can find details on how to do this in this newsletter.
3. **Spring Show** on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Lots to choose from to enter. Have a look at our website for all the classes you can enter.
4. **Trading Hut:** now open every Sunday 10:00 to 12:00
5. **Member's articles.** See newsletter for more details. If you have an interesting story, send it in.
6. **Remember to:** call Hermione if there is a particular subject you would like a speaker for. Hermione's number is at the end of this newsletter

## **TESCO TESCO TESCO TESCO TESCO**

Please remember: if you shop at Tesco, take a few blue discs and pop them into the box with our clubs name on it. The checkout staff do not automatically offer the discs but they do have a container full of them at each till. You can help yourself. The more discs we get in our box the more money Tesco will grant us towards speakers in the coming year.

### **Members emails**

Now that the club's trading hut has opened, many of our members will be looking to stock up with potting compost.

The decision will be as to whether to use a peat-based compost or a non-peat based compost. Horticulturalist, Bunny Guinness, has entered the debate recently by writing an article in the national press on the use of peat in horticulture.

Bunny reminds us that only 0.053% of available peat in the UK is used in horticulture. She also believes that peat has unrivalled property for holding water.

Going peat-free is a worry for the Plant Manager of a local garden centre who is concerned whether or not he can maintain the quality of his bedding plants as his company has decided to go peat-free for the coming season.

Many feel that the quality of the peat substitutes available are not up to the standard of a peat-based compost. Bunny Guinness reminds us that one of the peat substitutes, coir, has to be imported from South East Asia. Also, that other substitutes which may be used have high plastic contamination - so how environmental is that?

It is worth remembering that Bunny Guinness is a trained horticulturalist – she graduated in horticulture from Reading University – and not one of these so-called celebrities who are so fond of expressing opinions without any real depth of knowledge on the subject they are expounding on!

The good news is that Stuart Slocombe, our Plant Manager of the trading hut, tells me that he has ample stocks of both peat and non-peat compost. The choice is yours.

### **Spring Show**

On Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> April we will be holding our Spring Show. There will be lots of email to you during the run up to the event but for now, go to <https://www.californiagardenersclub.co.uk/spring-show-schedule.html> and have look at the classes you can enter. There is a good variety of things ranging from flowers, baking, handicraft, vegetables and much much more.

### **Topical Tip – March 2022**

- Mow lawns once they start back into growth, and re-cut the edges with a half-moon edging tool. Mid March, start to think about feeding the lawn and applying moss killer.
- Top dress containers with fresh compost.
- Roses can be pruned this month. Severe pruning results in nicer long stemmed flowers and more compact bushes. The guide is to prune back to the height of your knees. Begin to spray roses for blackspot. Feed roses.
- Weeding. Get the hoe out and weed. It will stop them from growing and setting seeds.
- Protect new green shoots from slugs.

## Tomatoes

Did you ever wonder why we pinch out side shoots from our tomato plants? A test has been run to see if we should let them grow how they want or control them by pinching out the side shoots.

Here are the results of the test. Anyone who has grown tomatoes will be familiar with the idea of growing them as a single stem with all the side-shoots removed as they appear. Side-shoots have the potential to grow into 'branches', so they are taken out to channel the plant's energy into producing fruit and keeping it tidy, but what happens if you don't remove them?

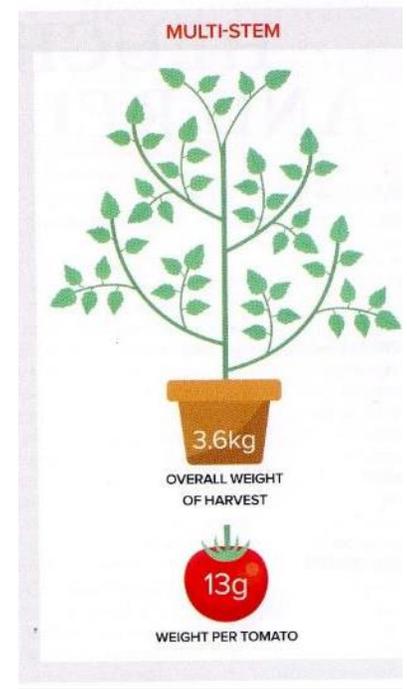
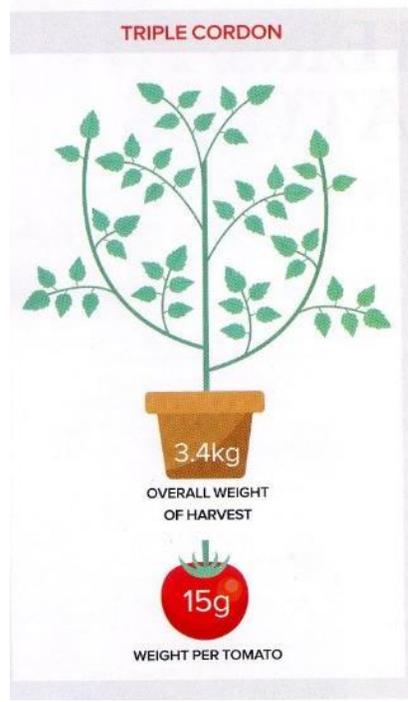


How you prune and train your tomato plants will have an effect on:

- the crop
- the size of the fruits
- the amount of fruit that grows on each truss.
- and how long they continue to crop.

But does it necessarily follow that if you train a tomato plant to have more than one stem, would each stem grow as many tomatoes as on a single stem tomato plant?

Below is the results of some tests that were conducted.



So now you know and it's up to you. What do you prefer: large or lots.

## **Facebook Group News**

You are most welcome to join the club Facebook group. It is a private group which means that only club members can join and post. You can join it at: [www.facebook.com/groups/207934410581605/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/207934410581605/)

You will need to first read and agree to the group guidelines. We really would like more members in this group to make it a lively forum. We are looking for gardening related posts and club news.

## **Covid**

For those of you who were at the meeting, you would have heard one member having a good cough during the talk.

I am pleased to report that she had tested before the meeting, the day after the meeting and a few days later. All tests were negative.

Whilst I am on the subject, watch out for the scam texts telling you that you have been in the vicinity of someone with Covid. These texts look like they have come from the NHS Covid app / Track and Trace. If you do catch Covid and it is within a few days of one of our meetings, please let the committee know so we can alert everyone.

## **Membership this year**

2022 subs are now due. They remain at £5 per person per year. You can either pay at the March club meeting or at the hut on a Sunday morning.

If you would like to pay now, you can do so through BACS. Sort Code: 40-47-09,  
Account Number 71301608.

**Please use your full name as the reference.**

Once you have paid by BACS, please go to the membership page on our web site and record that you have paid (you will find the form at the bottom of the membership page).

## **Tool Sharpening**

Last Sunday, we held our tool sharpening event and are pleased to report that 65 tools were sharpened. This helped our club funds with £130. Thanks to all those who used the service.

## **Sad news**

It is with regret that I must inform you that Pat Bell passed away two weeks ago aged 99. She was a member of the club for many years and regularly attended meetings up to 4 years ago.

## **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.

**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: Yvonne Hedley 0118 973 3852	Programmes: Hermione Lewis 0118 989 1671	Committee Member: Peter Radband 07976 640989
Deputy Chairman: Ian Gillott 0118 989 2649	Trading Officer: Stuart Slocombe 0118 973 4531	Membership: Jayne Male 07967 639808	Co-opted Member: Marise Radband 01344 774310
Hon. Secretary: Chris Spinks 0118 978 1432	Show Officers: Daryl & Katie Phillips 07980 160169	Publicity: Maureen Boyington 07919 522379	Table Competition Linda Garrett