

Mayfield Horticultural Society

Society News

Everyone is Welcome to Our Society Events

Friday 8th February 2019 7.30 for 8pm. Please Note The Change Of Date. 'My Life With Plants'. Talk by John Logan. Mayfield Memorial Hall.

Entry free to Members, Visitors £2. Free glass of wine/soft drink and nibbles on arrival. John will already be known to many of you as the writer of the monthly column 'Gardening Tips' in this Newsletter and his involvement in numerous village organisations including his role as President of the Horticultural Society. He is a wonderful story teller; humorous and extremely knowledgeable. This talk is expected to be hugely popular as John has led an interesting life and is such a charming gentleman. Please come and join us for what promises to be a thoroughly entertaining evening. Certainly one not to be missed!

Tuesday 19th March 2018, Mayfield Memorial Hall. Swift AGM Followed By Talk From Gardening Expert Steve Bradley, 'Down To Earth: Getting The Most From Your Soil'. Doors Open 6.45pm for New Members and Membership Renewals, AGM 7.30pm.

Free Entry. Free Glass of Wine/Soft Drink For New Members And Those Renewing Their Membership. Cash Bar. Our speaker Steve Bradley is offering to test soil samples from members' gardens so please bring a sample if you would like your soil tested. Steve is probably best known to us for appearing most Sunday Mornings on either Sussex Radio or Radio Kent answering listeners' gardening questions. He grew up on a nursery, spent over 20 years teaching horticulture at colleges around England and is now a freelance garden writer and broadcaster. He studied horticulture at Writtle, Cannington and Pershore Colleges, achieving the RHS Master of Horticulture Diploma. He appeared in two TV series: Plant Life and Garden Doctors, three official Chelsea Flower Show videos and has made multiple gardening videos. He has written (or co-written) around 50 books on a wide range of topics including pruning, pests & diseases, a revision of the famous Grafters' Handbook and updates of some of the ever-popular 'Expert' books. Since 2002, he has been Gardening Correspondent for the Sun newspaper with wife Val and Peter Seabrook. Quite A CV! Please come and join the Society this year, make new friends and enrich your gardening life.

Rosemary Bayliss

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Gardening Tips

Compared with a lot of areas Wealden soil is low in nutrients usually giving a reading of 0-1 for NPK. A fertile soil will read 1-3 although in the case N (nitrogen) it does not normally remain in the soil for long periods. Whereas phosphate and potash can be built up over a long period. The pH or lime requirement can have a bearing on the availability of nutrients. If the soil is too acid or alkaline nutrients can be locked up so if you lime it should be “not too little, not too much but just right”. Bones started to be used as a fertiliser in 1774 and such was the demand that a German scientist, Baron Liebig accused the British of grave robbing the battlefields of Europe for bones. He discovered that treating the bones with acid doubled the availability of phosphate.

It was an English gentleman farmer, John Bennet Laws, who initiated the famous Rothamsted Experimental Station starting by turning the best bedroom in the family home, Rothamsted Manor, into a laboratory. His first advertisement in the Gardeners Chronicle in 1843 read “J B Laws Patent manures composed of super phosphate of lime, phosphate of ammonia, silicate of potash, etc. Are now for sale at his factory, price 4/6d per bushel”.

As my old chemistry professor used to say “there is no P in pee”. Spent mushroom compost supplies lime and is a good conditioner. Improving the soil has a fertiliser value because a better structured soil helps the plant to access more nutrients. Of course many plants such as established shrubs will seldom, if ever, need fertiliser. As a rough guide the busier a plant is, i.e. the faster it grows and the more it produces, the more it needs feeding. As a general guide (N) produces leafy growth but too much will produce soft growth. Phosphate (P) is essential for root development and most plants take up most of their P in the first few weeks so don't put heavy doses on to mature plants. Potassium (K) is the nutrient most needed for flower and fruit production. This is why bonfire ash is good for fruit bushes. In addition to N.P.K and lime plants need a range of what are known as trace elements which include boron, magnesium, manganese, copper and molybdenum. A common symptom of shortage is chlorosis or yellowing of the leaves. Spraying with a solution of sea weed extract will help.

When I started farm work we used to use some industrial by-products as fertiliser. One of these was basic slag from the steel industry. It came in the form of a fine black powder which got into every part of your clothing and body. Spreading it was the most disliked job on a farm. It was a good source of P but in a slowly released form. On one occasion we had 10 tons, in paper sacks, delivered to a local station in a closed wagon. Every sack, bar three, was split and had to be re-bagged. Not a nice job but people tell me that those were the good old days in farming.