

Mayfield Horticultural Society

Society News

New Members Welcome! It is not too late to join us this year. Membership runs until March 2018 and costs £5. If you are thinking of buying plants and horticultural products, the cost of membership can quickly be re-couped by showing your membership card at Millbrook Garden Centre (10% discount on some purchases), Heathfield Ironmongers (10% on horticultural products) and Thorpe Garden Centre, Horham (10% discount on weekdays, excluding special offers and multibuys). In addition, all evening talks are free to members (£2 per person to non-members). If you wish to join please e-mail Diane Kirkness at mayfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com or come along to a meeting. For more information about us please see our website www.mhs.mayfieldfiveashes.org.uk. We would love you to come and share in the joy of gardening.

Everyone is Welcome to Our Society Events

The Society has been absolutely thrilled with all the beautiful entries we have had for the flower arranging classes in our Summer Show so I have included some information about a local, Christmas themed, flower demonstration at Crowborough Flower Club that we hope may be of interest. The evening is open to everyone. I have been to the Christmas Demonstration on several occasions with my brother and sister and we have always enjoyed this wonderful, uplifting evening.

Thursday 7th December 2017, Doors Open 7pm - Crowborough Flower Club Christmas Open Evening. Crowborough Community Centre, Pine Grove, Crowborough. Tickets £10 including refreshments available by phoning 07979 815379. Angela Turner, who demonstrates nationally, will be creating some amazing arrangements with the theme 'All is Calm, All is Bright'. There will also be a sales table along with a general raffle and a raffle of the arrangements produced on the night.

Friday 16th February 2018, 7.30pm - 'Plants For Early Spring'. Talk by the extremely knowledgeable and entertaining Stephen Moore, of Rapkyn's Nursery, in the Scout and Guide Hall, Mayfield. Stephen will also be bringing some of his beautiful, high quality plants to sell.

Wednesday 25th April 2018 - Afternoon Minibus Visit to the Fantastic Tulip Festival at Pashley Manor Gardens, Ticehurst. Departure 1.45pm from outside the Middle House, High Street, Mayfield. Cost £14 per person for minibus and entry. For the 23rd year Pashley Manor, in partnership with Bloms Bulbs, will be planting 30,000 tulips of a hundred varieties for this spectacular Tulip Festival. Bloms are winners of 65 Chelsea Gold Medals and will be putting on a wonderful display of 2000 cut tulips in a specially erected marquee. The Gardens offer a sumptuous blend of romantic landscaping, imaginative planting, fine old trees, fountains, springs and large ponds surrounded by beautiful countryside to which the Tulip Festival brings an additional spectacle. The Bluebell Walk is often also in flower at this time. The café will be open for refreshments at additional cost which, weather permitting, can be eaten on the terrace. Please book early by emailing mayfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com.

Rosemary Bayliss

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I was sitting in a friend's sun room looking at their magnificent nerines, of which more later, when I witnessed one of the most extraordinary wild-life encounters I have ever seen. A large rat approached the area under their bird feeders where there were some nuts. The rat picked up a nut and straight away a magpie dived on the rat, talons forward and making vicious pecking motions. Ratty responded by getting up on his hind legs and being equally aggressive. After each round on or other would retreat a few feet, then have another sortie. The whole performance gave the impression of having been choreographed. I don't think the animals ever laid a paw or claw on each other and after about ten minutes both withdrew as if by mutual agreement.

Back to the nerines which were some of the best I have ever seen and yet they were growing in conditions the opposite of what we are told they need which is hot and dry, preferably at the foot of a wall. They seem to be a flower that either likes you or not. I know several people who have tried to grow them several times without success while for others they grow like weeds. The most common fault is planting too deep. They are best planted with a full half of the bulb above ground. They can be slow to flower after planting, more so if the bulbs or offshoots you plant are a bit small. If you are planting during a dry spell water for a while until roots start to grow. They provide a wonderful show of colour in October and November.

I was listening to an "expert" the other day saying that housewives no longer want the Bramley apple preferring other varieties. In my experience anyone who has tried proper Bramley would not agree. The trees can be very vigorous and quite big. If you have an overgrown Bramley (or any other apple) don't do a lot of detailed pruning but take out two or three major branches each year otherwise you will encourage a lot of undesirable "water shoots". I do not fertilise or spray my Bramley at all but it always produces great crops. I do try to thin the fruitlets out in late June, manually on the lower branches and by hitting some of the upper fruit bearing branches with the end of my long pruner. Crude, but it works and one soon learns just where to hit.

We have been visiting gardens to see autumn colour recently. Sheffield Park was great as usual but the outstanding tree, for me, was a golden larch which looked spectacular in Wakehurst. Not a tree for most gardens as it is a quick grower and can reach 80 feet. I am surprised that more people do not grow *clerodendrum trichotomum* for autumn colour. I have just looked at mine (on the 4th November) and they are still covered in steel-blue berries, each in a bright red calyx. From mid-July it bears clusters of slightly fragrant pinkish-white flowers. Some books make it out to be rather difficult but I have not found it so. It does sucker but is easily controllable and it is quite happy to be pruned hard. It is fast growing so you will see some results in a year or two.

Finally a moan! It is quite natural that if you visit a garden and have a camera you will want to take pictures. Furthermore you may find it necessary to stand in the middle of the path to do so. However if a galley-slave is pushing a loaded wheelchair uphill towards you and a harassed mother is trying to come the other way with a buggy there should be a form of etiquette. That or blades fitted to chair and buggy wheels like Boadicea's chariot!

John Logan