



Members' Newsletter – April 2020

For the first time in some 48 years, there will be no monthly Gardening Club meetings for some time – nor very sadly a July Summer Show. The unexpected Coronavirus pandemic has changed the world in so many ways, and although the cancellation of meetings, walks, talks, theatres, museums, galleries etc. is sad, it is obviously important that people do not congregate and thereby perhaps spread the virus.

The committee therefore thought it might be helpful to write the occasional Newsletter and circulate it to members, to help keep us close together (*if only "virtually"*), offer some useful horticultural tips, and to encourage us to keep fit and well and enjoy our gardening.

If there is anything you would like to share with other members of the group, please e-mail it to Sue the Secretary – blofieldgardeningclub@outlook.com

One such useful hint has come in from Tony Gould, who has written:

I am starting some seedlings in my conservatory and hope to get them in the ground once the fear of frosts has gone. I have discovered an app. which identifies plants. You may be familiar with it but it is new to me and maybe of use to other club members. I have been round my house and garden with it to get some names to plants we have been unsure of. The app is free and works with an iPad or iPhone. I found the app very useful

PictureThis - Plant Identifier

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/picturethis-plant-identifier/id1252497129>

The Norfolk & Norwich Horticultural Society website <https://www.nnhs.org.uk/> offers the following:

Gardening for Everyone

In April 2019 we launched a new mission – “Gardening for Everyone”. We all know that gardening is good for us and has major benefits:

1. Improves self esteem
2. Reduces Stress
3. Good for Heart health
4. Better quality sleep
5. Improves hand and overall strength
6. Sense of community
7. Home grown Fruit and Vegetables



There are many more benefits we could list. Our goal with our Gardening for Everyone initiative is to make everyone in the community aware of the opportunities and organisations in Norfolk and beyond.

The Royal Horticultural Society website <https://www.rhs.org.uk> has lots of useful information too. We thought you might enjoy their **2019 top garden pests and diseases revealed**.

RHS pest and disease ranking reveals another bad year for box.

Our 24th annual pest and disease ranking reveals new and growing areas of concern for gardeners – as well as underlining the problems posed by perennial pests such as box tree caterpillar.



Very hungry caterpillars

[Box tree caterpillar](#) topped the pest ranking again as it becomes more widespread. 2019 was the third year in a row that it's been at the top of the list, bringing more enquiries than the rest of the top five combined. The continued prevalence of enquiries was matched by the doubling of reports received via the [RHS web survey](#).

However, the [alder leaf beetle](#) is in the top ten for only the second time, becoming the fifth most popular pest enquiry in 2019. Its appearance may be due to range expansion and, while it is unlikely to have a long-term effect on tree health, this blue beetle can cause defoliation of its main host, alder.

Fungi under the spotlight

[Honey fungus](#) also remained the most prominent garden disease – as it has done since the ranking's inception in 1995. However, it dropped from 26% of enquiries in 2018 to 18% in 2019. Increased rainfall in the summer of 2019 compared with 2018 meant that plants were less likely to suffer from drought stress – which can be the final blow to plants that have lost a lot of their root system to honey fungus infection.

[Brown rot of fruit](#), along with [apple and pear scab](#), was of increasing concern to gardeners, taking fifth and seventh spots respectively. The same fungi are responsible for blossom wilt in the spring and then brown rot in summer. The increased prevalence is possibly due the wetter, milder weather.

An unexpected entrant into the top ten was [rose black spot](#), despite many gardeners knowing the signs of this disease and its management. We are investigating the cause of this upsurge in enquiries.

Hit parade of garden nasties

Top pests 2019		Top diseases 2019	
1	Box tree caterpillar	1	Honey fungus
2	Vine weevil	2	Phytophthora root rot
3	Slugs and snails	3	Box blight
4	Fuchsia gall mite	4	Pear rust
5	Alder leaf beetle	5	Brown rot of fruit
6	Woolly aphid	6	Leaf spot and canker of <i>Prunus</i>
7	Rosy apple aphid	7	Apple and pear scab
8	Viburnum beetle	8	Rose black spot
9	Glasshouse red spider mite	9	Blossom wilt of fruit trees
10	Plum leaf-curling aphid	10	Powdery mildew of <i>Prunus</i>

- *Have to confess, in spite of being a vegetarian, I have viciously stamped on first lily beetle of the year today. So satisfying! Sue R*

Researching greener controls

To provide the very latest evidence-based advice to gardeners, RHS Plant Health researchers work across a range of pests and diseases. On box tree caterpillar, investigations are focusing on [biological controls](#) such as the use of nematodes, while work on box blight is engaged in breaking the disease cycle by minimising spore production.

On vine weevil, work is due to start on biological controls in different peat-free growing media. A wide range of [slug](#) and snail research being undertaken as the RHS seeks to understand which species are causing problems in gardens, [how slug fauna is changing](#), and test control methods.

For honey fungus, recently updated advice involves the development of integrated disease management strategies. On [phytophthora root rot](#), diagnostic data is helping to establish a robust ranking of susceptibility or resistance of garden plants as well as investigating factors that contribute to the spread of the disease.

[Matthew Cromey](#), RHS Principal Scientist (Pathology), said: "Pests and diseases are among the main challenges we face as climate change affects our gardens and horticulture more widely. As the UK's gardening knowledge bank, our research will help increase biosecurity and provide best practice. We want to develop a nation of gardeners equipped and motivated to deal with the challenges of our changing world."

Read more about our work [protecting plant health in gardens](#).
<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/articles/2019-pests-and-diseases>

Gardening Club Monthly meeting competitions:

Just because we can't actually bring along our efforts to the Competition Table each month, this does not mean that we should not still exhibit them "virtually".

This is my poor effort for the April competition of "3 spring flowers in a vase". Sue R



If you would like to e-mail in a photograph for the May competition, "**A stem of a spring-flowering shrub**", please send it to the e-mail address below by 30th April. Similarly the June competition should have been "**A posy of herbs**" so please send in your photograph by 31st May. The e mail address is: blofieldgardeningclub@outlook.com

Composting: more on composting in the next Newsletter issue, but please see below how mother blackbird found some of my compost a useful place to feed new fledgling!



Wishing you all a healthy, safe and productive Springtime – and do send in some contributions for future Newsletters.

Your Blofield & District Gardening Club Committee

<http://blofieldgardeningclub.org.uk/>

