



Members' Newsletter – August, 2020

Welcome to the August edition of the Blofield & District Gardening Club Newsletter.

**STOP PRESS: Plant Sale on Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th August
between 11.00 am and 4.00 pm at "The Bird in Hand", 80 Mill Road, Blofield Heath NR13 4QS
Free admission. Covid 19 rules will apply.**

We have put together some information from the RHS and the NNHS as well as one or two other articles and some lovely photographs from club members, to try to cheer you up in these very uncertain times.

If you have come across something that you think fellow members would like to see, please send it in to us : Blofieldgardeningclub@outlook.com

Firstly the bad news: the committee feels that in the current uncertain circumstances, the Gardening Club **will NOT meet again in 2020**. This is of course very disappointing and a break in nearly 50 years of tradition – and a contravention of our Constitution, which will now have to be amended! That is the least of our concerns of course, as meeting friends, gaining advice about growing plants and vegetables, and being able to buy some stunning plants at usually very competitive prices are the main benefits of the Club and sadly missed by many. The Annual Show would have been a riot of colour and good nutrition this year, as some of the photographs sent in confirm.

We are of course not the only society cancelling face to face meetings this year. **The NNHS** committee has considered the latest Covid-19 guidance and, after a lot of thought, has decided to cancel all remaining events and shows for 2020. This includes the Annual General Meeting, which has been deferred until March 2021.

Royal Horticultural Society **Blooming Brilliant News: Issue 6**



As you may have noticed we've not sent one of these in a little while, the Blooming Brilliant News will now be delivered monthly as we start to spend more time getting other areas of our work back up and running.

We've been so happy to see more groups getting back out into communities and sometimes you wouldn't even know there had been a pandemic if you just looked at the photos of beautiful gardens, beds and planters still being lovingly tended to. This picture is of the garden at The Mission to Seafarers Centre in Falmouth. The Centre is still closed but the garden is still being looked after and looks wonderful. There's also a theme to a few of the following stories which is 'digital'! It's been brilliant seeing many groups embracing online shows and competitions to help keep communities connected and more importantly, to continue celebrating their hard work. Read on to see just a few of the brilliant examples we've been sent.

You can keep sharing your stories with us via email us at communities@rhs.org.uk for future issues and you can also find more content over on our Community Gardening [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

As always, you can send this email on to your fellow volunteers, colleagues and friends and they can sign up at the bottom to be added to the mailing list.

The 'new normal'

With restrictions easing up across the UK, groups are having to figure out new ways of growing together in a safe but enjoyable and productive way. A member of Kirkstall's Bloom group told us "*we are promoting a questionnaire to see how our volunteers want to work, with a few suggestions to indicate how they'd like to approach it in the future*" and a member of a group in Uttoxeter said, "*we have risk assessment in place and are COVID safe, keeping 2 metres apart. Hand gel is available - people wear gloves and we track and trace through a WhatsApp group as to who is in the garden.*"

We'd love to hear how you plan to adjust to what is being called the 'new normal'. Do you have any creative ways for continuing to bloom in your area? Let us know by joining in the conversation on [Facebook here](#) or by emailing us [here](#).

3 minutes with...

We spoke to Kathy who works for Canterbury Business Improvement District (BID) to find out how people in the city have continued to bloom.

"Bloom continues this year, despite the challenging Covid restrictions. We are thrilled that so many organisations and groups have not stopped all their efforts – the beautiful city centre hanging baskets are evidence of this and have lifted shoppers' spirits as they begin to return."

Read more about what the city has been up to [here](#).



Tatton Park at Home

Following the success of 'Virtual Chelsea', we now bring you a digital Tatton Park Flower Show! Head over to the [Tatton Park at Home web page](#) today (Wed 22nd July) to find exclusive content including videos from some of the up and coming talent discovered through the RHS Young Designer of the Year competition.

The Show's iconic 'Back to Back gardens' will also take the digital stage this year with lots of inspiration around designing small gardens. And you'll also be able to find advice from many of the nurseries who have exhibited year on year at the Show.

Conserving water in the summer



Some of you may have spotted our RHS Water Management Specialist, Janet Manning, on BBC's Gardener's World a couple of weeks ago. Janet's job is to look closely at how people use water and also provide advice on the ways we can use water in a more sustainable way. This is especially important during the summer months. [Click here](#) to read Janet's latest advice on reducing water usage and wastage. And you can also watch a clip of her 'self-watering pot' from Gardener's World [here](#)

Blooming Chesham



Residents in Chesham, Buckinghamshire were treated to a brilliant socially distant, swap shop, held in the town centre last month. Organised by the local Extinction Rebellion group, local residents were invited to swap their spare seeds and plants and even some fab home-made bee hotels!

Pupils at the local school, Brushwood Junior, have also been busy growing and recently pulled up some rhubarb and cooked it into a crumble. A teacher at the school said "*out of the 12 children in that day, only 1 child did not like it and half of them had never tried rhubarb till then!*" You can find out more about Chesham in Bloom [here](#).

Warwick goes digital

Warwick in Bloom has gone online with its competition this year, ensuring they can continue celebrating the work that people put into making the town look blooming brilliant.

Cllr Richard Eddy, Chair of Community Culture at Warwick Town Council said: "*Warwick in Bloom is an event that our green-fingered community looks forward to every year...and so, for 2020, we've switched to an email-based submission and judging format, so we can see and understand what everyone's green fingers have worked on during lockdown.*"

Entries have now closed and we look forward to seeing the results! Have you managed to continue your local competitions? [Let us know](#).





Hampstead's virtual show

Another group using digital tools to celebrate people's hard work was Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society in London.

The group's annual Summer Flower Show took place online last month with the usual 70 classes shrunk down to 17. 75 entries were submitted with the rose classes proving to be the most popular and the hotly contested 'Grow a Potato in a Bag' competition! Caroline, Vice-Chair of the Society said, "*Needless to say, nothing can beat the real thing when it comes to Flower Shows however...I would say that the Virtual Flower Show proved to be a positive distraction.*" See more about the virtual show [here](#).

Lockdown photo diary

When the pandemic forced UK gardens to close their gates, Head Gardener at Durham Botanic Garden, Mike Hughes, created a blog to continue sharing the flora and fauna with the public. Since 23rd March, when the UK lockdown began, Mike has posted on his blog every day to share photos of plants coming to life, wildlife enjoying the quiet, and images of what life has been like in the empty gardens. His blog has even featured on the BBC news.

Check out Mike's photo diary [here](#) and read his commentary on some of the sights. Have you done anything similar? [Let us know!](#)

Literary trail

The blooming brilliant residents of Spofforth in North Yorkshire turned the village into a wonderful exhibition to keep the community smiling.

Residents were invited to make a scarecrow, picture or sculpture based on a book title ready for the summer solstice weekend. With social distancing in place, 500 residents followed the trail over the course of the weekend, seeing the creations and voting for their favourite.

Exhibits included Mr Men, Peter Rabbit's Garden and the winning entry, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas. Check out [Spofforth Village Facebook page](#) for more.



Summer holiday fun

While restrictions are easing, many families may choose to spend more time at home, in the garden or walking in local green spaces. Over on the [Campaign for School Gardening website](#), there are lots of great activities to help keep young people occupied while also getting closer to nature, which in turn is great for their wellbeing. Here are some of our favourites:

[Go on a rainbow scavenger hunt](#) [Make some bubbly magical potions](#) [Go out flower spotting](#)



The Big Soup Share

Every October we run the RHS Big Soup Share - an initiative celebrating the joy of harvesting your home grown veg and getting together with others over a nice hot bowl of soup. This year, events will need to be a bit different but we are working on a host of ideas and tips to help you run your Soup Share in a socially distant way or even online. We are also working on some great recipes and videos to keep you entertained throughout the Soup Share week.

To be the first to hear about all things soup and to access exclusive content, register your interest for the Big Soup Share [here](#)

Contributions received from Club members – thank you very much

Thank you to the Club's seed scheme! - from Peter Mackness

Seed potatoes have long been part of the club's discount seed scheme and Charlotte Second Earlies have been our regular favourite. This year they seemed to have done better than ever – perhaps on account of the undivided attention they have received during the lockdown! Planted on April 21st two seed potatoes per bag in former compost bags (remember to pierce the sacks for drainage!) we harvested our first Charlottes on July 20th, two and a half pounds of delicious new potatoes – and there are ten more bags to come. We moved to growing-in-bags following frequent bouts of potato blight on the vegetable patch; our preferred “mix” is half garden-soil and half garden-compost, and apart placing them in a sunny position and providing regular watering they have required little attention.



Charming Chard!

Chard is a simple-to-grow vegetable that is rarely available in shops. A member of the Beet family it has seeds that are easy to handle and, in my experience, are the most successful seed of all for germination. This year, with so much time on our hands and out of pure curiosity we sowed Chard seeds from packets dated 2016 and 2017 all of which germinated well. The vegetable's soft stem and green leaf when young, can be treated like Spinach, or it can be cut later with firmer stems which are ideal for stir-fries or in dishes like a Chard & Potato bake. With careful harvesting it is quite possible to have Chard well into the winter. For an easy-to-grow vegetable that is almost certain to succeed, consider sowing some Chard next year!

Unexpected surprise!

Thought this was a thistle weed and I was threatening to eliminate it on my next weeding session - then this happened!

Tony Gould



Reckon Sylvia and Mike would have done very well had the Annual Show taken place this year!



And as Sarah Tetlow remarked: How lucky to live in Norfolk!





Composting Know-how - Topic 4: how to compost weeds and poisonous plants

Extra care needs to be taken when composting weeds and certain poisonous plants. Here are some tips to help:

Annuals: you can compost annuals before they go to seed (otherwise the seeds may survive in the compost). These include chickweed and speedwell. If they have gone to seed, treat in the same way as perennials below.

Perennials: are more persistent and can regrow from sections of roots in your compost. These include bindweed, ivy, dandelions, couch grass, thistles and mare's tail. Chop up and put these in a bin liner with no holes, tie a knot in the bag and leave in the sun to get hot and rot down until they go brown and sludgy. Alternatively you can put them in a bucket of water with a lid on. Then add them to the compost bin when they are thoroughly decomposed. Another option is to put them in your green waste bin for kerbside collection if your local council offers this service.

Poisonous plants: rhubarb leaves: although poisonous when growing, plant leaves such as rhubarb can be composted. The toxins present will break down during the composting process. Privet, laurel and yew: large quantities of evergreen clippings take much longer to break down than other compostable items, so are best composted separately.

- To speed up the composting process, large or thick prunings are best shredded.
- Heap them up and water well, mixing in some green materials such as grass clippings to speed up the composting process.
- Leave the compost bin for 6 – 12 months after which the material can be used as a mulch around established trees and shrubs.
- Care should be taken when shredding these materials. They must be shredded outside or in a very well ventilated area. Wear gloves and stand upwind whilst shredding.

Next Newsletter composting topic : how to make leaf mould

<https://www.norfolkrecycles.com/reduce-my-rubbish/compost/>

Stop press: Norfolk County Council are offering subsidised compost and Bokashi bins through GetComposting.com, which now has the new reduced prices live on its website. A 220 L black compost bin now costs £10, with a 2nd bin for £5 offer, and a Bokashi bin twin pack for £15 (there is a £6 delivery charge on each order). Please promote this wherever you can!

If you have any composting queries, useful suggestions about composting, or any photographs that would be helpful in this series, please contact your composting agony aunt Sue on Blotfieldgardeningclub@outlook.com

