



Members' Newsletter – December, 2020



Dear All,

Firstly, I'd like to extend season's greetings and best wishes for a safe and healthy New Year to everyone.

Although we have not held club meetings since the AGM, the momentum has been maintained very efficiently by our secretary, Sue Rowe, and my sincere thanks go to her for that. This has meant that at least we've been able to keep in touch digitally. I'm sure she would welcome more contributions for future editions in 2021.

As gardeners we are a resilient lot. We know every year we have highs and lows, some plants delight with their appearance whilst others fail to germinate. We understand disappointment can be overcome and so we know the Club will start again but not until we believe it is safe to do so. In the meantime, enjoy watching the birds in your garden, plan the changes to your plot and the things you will grow, and look for the tell-tale signs of the start of new growth - a sure indication that all will be well, if we're patient.

All the best, Sylvia Nelthorpe, President



Flower Arrangement for blessing of Beighton Church by Rev Alan, Bishop of Thetford in September 2020 using materials from as far as Holkham and my garden. Carolyn Wright

**Wishing all fellow Garden Club members a safe and peaceful Christmas & New Year.
May our sowing, potting, weeding, planting, pruning, composting and harvesting
bring us all much enjoyment in 2021!**

Peter & Valerie



**Wishing all our members a Happy Christmas and a better healthier New Year
when hopefully we will all be able to meet again.**

Till then stay safe.

June and Alan Drake

The Club's Seed Order Scheme

This year's seed order was placed, received AND delivered earlier this month. With 16 participants, after discount of 50%, our payment to Mr Fothergill's was £397. An amazing figure, one of the best ever. My sincere thanks go to all those who ordered.

Hopefully 2021 will reward everyone with a great growing season. Kind regards, Sylvia

**Wishing all members of our Gardening Club a most pleasant Christmas time
and that the year ahead will be full of promise for everyone.**

Celia



Busy Lizzies propagated and saved each year from the previous free club competition plug plants saved over the years.

Propagation is very easy - just break of a shoot from stock plant and suspend stem in water in a glass pot and wait for roots to form see foreground in picture.

Once you see clear roots form transfer cuttings into 3" compost-filled pots and keep warm and moist.

Merry Christmas everyone

Tony Gould

Lingering Leaves

One of my memories from long ago in suburban London was the whiff of leaf-smoke in November. Our street had an avenue of majestic Limes shedding copious quantities of leaves which were swept into piles and set alight on the roadside, certainly to be frowned upon today but I did rather like the smell of the smoke at the time!

Our garden today doesn't have the majestic Limes but we do have a variety of mature trees which give us considerable pleasure, add much to our wildlife but also produce copious quantities of leaves each autumn. In these enlightened times bonfires are not an option so each autumn we simply collect them and let Nature do what she does best.

We do help a little by creating "pens" each year using pallets (more recycling!) and packing the pens with our leaves. The quantities seem daunting at first and we temporarily have to add a second tier of lightweight pallets but within a few months the leaves have decayed to the point where the upper tier can be removed and stored for next year's pen. The decay takes place entirely without intervention from us except an occasional soaking during very dry periods. Bacterial activity is so brisk that on frosty mornings in the winter months the pen can often be seen to be quietly steaming!

Our experience is that the leaf mould is ready to be used just two years later. The photos show the current 2020 pen being filled and alongside is the 2018 pen with a volume reduced by about two thirds now being ready for use around the garden.

I do miss the whiff of lingering smoke from the burning leaves but the benefits of our leaf pens linger a great lot longer! Peter Mackness



***Wishing all members of the Gardening Club
a safe and restful Christmas - and looking
forward to seeing you all back at the Club
in 2021***

Susan and Peter Rowe



Extracts from the Royal Horticultural Society's December 2020 Newsletter

Winter can be a quiet time in the garden, so we've collected our favourite festive activities to keep your gardening club busy. Now is also the perfect time to start planning your garden for next year too.

Need help to plan your garden for 2021? You are invited to attend our exclusive online Q&A event on **27 January, 2021 (4 – 5 pm)**, where you can ask a panel of horticultural experts your gardening questions. Whether you're new to growing or want a bit of inspiration, make sure to book your free place now.

[Sign up now](#)

Natural Tinsel

Decorate your outdoor space with a Bird Feeder Garland. Support local wildlife while food is in short supply!

[Bird Feeder Garland / RHS Campaign for School Gardening](#)

Wreath Making

Get into the festive spirit and make a holiday wreath. Perfect to give as a gift or enjoy at home.

[Spruce up](#)

Beat Blue Monday

January can be a grey month, so why not plan ahead and plant some bulbs now to brighten Blue Monday.

[Beautiful bulbs](#)

Help shape the future

Have your say in how we shape the future of the Campaign for School Gardening by completing this short survey. Your answers will help us to prioritise what's important to you so that we can offer the best support.

[Tell us what you want!](#)

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Surprise discovery of rare plant at Norfolk 'ghost pond'

By Helen Briggs

BBC Environment correspondent

from BBC News: Science and Environment: 28th November, 2020



A rare plant has reappeared after more than a century in hiding.

The pinkish-flowered plant, known as grass-poly, was found growing on the banks of an old farmland pond in Norfolk. The mystery species "came back from the dead" after seeds submerged in the mud were disturbed during work to restore the pond. And scientists say conservation efforts could lead to the return of other long-forgotten botanical gems.

Carl Sayer, a professor at University College London (UCL), stumbled on the plant when he went to survey the pond at Heydon shortly after the first national lockdown ended.

Treasure trove of new plants revealed

Having never seen anything like it before, he quickly snapped a picture, which he sent to local botanist Dr Jo Parmenter. She identified it as grass-poly, one of the rarest plants in the UK. "It's really quite beautiful," says Prof Sayer. "We only found a handful of these plants in the pond but we're hoping to cultivate this population and keep it going and expand it now we know it's there."

Dr Jo Parmenter was thrilled to see the photo of the plant. "I never ever expected to see it in Norfolk; it was quite extraordinary," she says. "I saw a photo and straight away I thought, I know what you are." The last confirmed record for grass-poly (*Lythrum hyssopifolia*) in Norfolk dates to more than a century ago. Elsewhere in the UK, the plant is found in a few isolated populations growing around lakes and on muddy open ground. At Heydon, the seeds of the plant remained buried in the mud, like a "time capsule". When willows were pulled out to restore the pond, this disturbed the soil and let in light, allowing the seeds to germinate.

"There's no oxygen, it's very dark, and it's perfect for preserving seeds," says Prof Sayer, who is part of UCL's Pond Restoration Research Group. The discovery shows plants believed extinct can be brought "back to life" with good conservation, he added. Centuries ago, there were thousands of ponds in Norfolk, but many have been neglected, becoming what are known as "ghost ponds". There may be other populations of the plant in Norfolk that have so far been overlooked, says UCL researcher Helen Greaves. "Could further pond restorations bring back more plants?" she asks. "Either way, finding this elegant little plant may provide an important and unexpected new focus for our Norfolk Ponds Project."

Dr Parmenter says this has been an "amazing" year for plants, with many unusual discoveries. She puts that down partly to the pandemic, with more people going out on local walks. "I think it's taught us to appreciate the things local to us, as well as the glamorous and exotic," she says.

**The next meeting of the Gardening Club is
the Annual General Meeting, planned for
Wednesday evening, 10th March, 2021, at the Margaret Harker Hall.**

I am afraid that at the moment, the Committee is not able to confirm that this meeting will be allowed to take place, but members will be updated by e-mail, printed notices and via local newsletters. It may be that members will be invited to attend virtually for a Zoom meeting, or perhaps the meeting will be postponed until later in the year. With so much uncertainty about the course the virus will take, it is impossible to plan anything, which is such a shame.

Despite all that, the Committee would still like to wish you all as happy a Christmas as possible, and a safe and healthy New Year.

