

The Gold Club

April 2016



CASTLE | BRISMORE | POUNDBURY

Dates for your diary

Free Talks 2.30pm

Tuesdays @

Brimsmore Gardens

Wednesdays @

Poundbury Gardens

Thursdays @

Castle Gardens

16/17/18/August

The Gardening

Calendar July - December

23/24/25 August

Grow your own

Christmas dinner

30/31/1 August/Sept

Rejuvenating aging

borders

6/7/8 September

Between the roses

13/14/15 September

Butterflies & wild

flowers

20/21/22 September

Autumn bulb planting

www.thegardeneronline.co.uk/events

Where be that blackbird to?



A note from Fran

Dear All,

Well that winter wasn't too bad was it!! I have to say I'd almost rather the freezing cold than what seemed like constant autumnal rain and sloppy mud. My daily dog walk usually ended with me tut tutting at a white dog that invariably looked like a pint of Guinness!

Having missed the last mow of my lawn in the autumn I succumbed and mowed it the week before last, on the highest mower setting obviously. What a mess! From now on I promise you I will practice what I preach and keep to the regimes advised. I am now having to apply lawn sand, scarify, aerate, apply lawn and turf dressing, re-seed and feed my very yellow lawn which wouldn't have been nearly so sorry looking had I done these renovations in the autumn.

On the plus side, my new borders are coming back to life and starting to put on some very pleasing growth – and no losses that I can see! I have a plethora of Narcissi, Crocus, Hellebores and Anemone blanda all busily doing their thing and Pulmonaria and other spring flowering herbaceous perennials planted last year colouring up nicely.

I have therefore decided that SPRING HAS SPRUNG and beautiful it is.

Of course, now is the time for pruning your roses and many of the shrubs we all know and love, so today I attacked my shrubbery with gusto. Armed with sharp secateurs and wet wipes to clean the blade between plants, which stops the spread of diseases, my compost bin and incinerator were soon fit to burst. Happy days!

Fran's rule number 1 - REMEMBER – AFTER YOU PRUNE, FEED

If you have been following the progress of my garden overhaul from aged conifers to mixed borders, which include herbaceous perennials, shrubs and roses, you will be heartened by the latest developments. A blackbird is nesting in the Banksia Lutea rose which climbs up alongside of the dining room window (see picture above). We also have a wren, who fossicks about on the patio generally tidying up for me, a pair of collared doves, a pair of pigeons, a pair of blue tits and a pair of robins all busily making nests using materials foraged from my garden. We do still have our resident flock of house sparrows who nest in the roof and a pair of jackdaws who nest in one of the chimneys, I haven't the heart to block it up! I can't tell you how rewarding all the new visitors are and it makes the hard graft and aching muscles worthwhile. Mind you the bird food bill has gone up exponentially. My next project is rejuvenate or renew the old trellis fencing between our garden and mother's granny bungalow, most of which needs replacing, so I better learn how to use a spirit level, cordless screwdriver and other "manly" tools! Of course, I will then have to buy some climbers to cover it.

The centres are now overflowing with all manner of plants, sundries, furniture, pots and stoneware and we are very pleased with how they are looking. The restaurants are busy with menus and other delicious offerings and it was so good to see the tables and chairs being put outside for customers to use. You must come in and imbibe yourself of tea and cake, even if only to take advantage of the atmosphere, although you know that it is unlikely that you will leave without spending a little (or a lot) on the garden.

Here's to a glorious spring

Fran

We have plenty of events happening, some of which are not included in this newsletter. Watch out for the events leaflets in store, on our website or by email.

Fran Powell, **The Gold Club:** 01935 817747 thegoldclub@thegardensgroup.co.uk

Newsflash!

Illyria Performances 2016 @ Castle Gardens

Roald Dahl's Danny The Champion of The World

Saturday 25th June 6.30pm

Shakespeare's A Midsummer Nights Dream

Tuesday 12th July 6.30pm

Adults £15.00, Concessions £12.50, Children £5.00

Tickets available in store soon

Some events coming up.....

Yeovil Community Art Group

Cake-off & tea party

Guest judge Lesley Waters

@ The Apple Tree Restaurant

Brimsmore Gardens

24th May 2016

Details - 01935 403158

Last Sunday of every month
starting 26th June 2016

Tapas Evening with live entertainment

@ The Engine Room Restaurant

Poundbury Gardens

For details call Rachel on

01305 257251

The Gold Club Summer Party

Thursday 4th August 6.30pm at Castle Gardens

Pimms reception with Illyria's performance of Ruddigore

Although *Ruddigore's* 1887 premiere did not enjoy the same success as its predecessor, *The Mikado* (1885), it is now regarded as one of the gems of the Gilbert and Sullivan canon. A satirical take on the Victorian Melodrama genre, *Ruddigore's* zany plot has it all ghosts, witches, curses, disguises, and even a wicked villain who tries to make off with the fair maiden. The story goes that all of the Baronets of Ruddigore are under a terrible curse cast by a witch long before. Each of the successive Baronets must commit some kind of a crime every single day, or else they will die in terrible agony. *Ruddigore* has a wealth of fun character roles and its plot includes romance, dishonesty and betrayal.

The Gardener's Stock Pot

Steve, our wildlife green champion, has written this newsletters Stock Pot with a wildlife theme.

I often visit groups to talk about wildlife gardening or plants for bees and butterflies, so Fran thought it would be a simple thing for me to scribble down a few notes on the 'quick wins' of wildlife gardening. Well. Where do I start and how many pages can I use?

Let's stick with my top 3 tips shall we?

Wildlife friendly gardening does not demand that you give up on formal beds and borders in favour of rampant jungly growth – it is a myth that needs to be exposed. But a little attention to your hedges can make a big difference so **tip number one** – pay attention to hedges and barriers. These can be corridors along which wildlife can travel, they can be nesting sites, foraging grounds and wonderful sources of nectar, pollen seeds and fruit. If you don't have a hedge then set trellis a little way away from a wall or fence – the gap this creates might just persuade a songbird to make her nest in your garden. If you are lucky enough to have a hedge, aim for as much diversity as possible – the more species that you can include the more benefits your hedge can provide and spread those benefits over as long a season as possible. Also remember not to cut a flat top and sides when you trim your hedge. A wider base than top keeps the foliage growing all the way down to ground level and a curved top will help to shed the rain outside the hedge keeping the inside nice and warm and dry instead of leaving it open to a downpour.

Mention of rain brings me to **tip number two**. It all comes back to water. Providing a bird bath is pleasant but do try to provide water at different heights – including ground level – to please all of the birds. There are a lot more visitors than just the birds however. Escape ramps from ponds can save drowning mammals, while a gravel filled tray will provide essential safe drinking for lots of insects – including honeybees. If you have children or grandchildren with an interest in the natural world you might like to get involved with a citizen science project run by Sussex University's www.buzzclub.uk who are encouraging you to build a hoverfly lagoon this year! Great news for amateur scientists but will real benefits to the gardener and chef as hoverflies are key pollinators for some of our favourite home grown goodies!

Finally, for **my tip number three**, I am reminded that every time I visit a garden to deliver some compost or plant a tree I can't help looking around to make sure that the owner has a place for hedgehogs in their heart. It doesn't take much – some dry leaves left untouched under a shed would be all you need for a snug hedgehog nest but the really important thing is to work out if a hedgehog can easily visit your garden. Some fencing companies and wall builders remember to leave a little gap here and there to make life easy for our prickly friends but all too often we are closing off our gardens too tightly and in a town this may mean a long and dangerous walk on little legs to visit enough gardens to make up a full meal. If you do have a hedgehog space be proud of it – let the world know by registering your gap with hedgehogstreet.org and encourage your neighbours to do the same!

I often say '**if you get it right for the insects and everything else will follow**' – quite often because they either eat the insects or eat the insect eaters! It is difficult to be totally organic in your garden and most of us use the occasional product to control the slugs or beat an invasive weed. The good news is that more and more products are coming available that have been produced with a much more environmentally friendly consumer in mind. Keep your eyes open for brands such as Agralan and Neudorff – you will be seeing more of them from us in the future! Last but not least I wanted to point out that as we steadily review and add to the factsheets on our website (we expect to have over 100 by the end of this year!) we are always looking to include the best advice for wildlife friendly gardeners and environmentally aware customers. Don't be shy about sharing your tips if you think we are missing a trick!

Steve Fry

Don't forget - more gardening advice on our website www.TheGardenerOnline.co.uk

Tales from the Potting Shed

Easter is a crucial time for the garden centre industry and so as ever this year our teams put a huge effort into getting everything ready for the long weekend. Unfortunately after a great Good Friday weather wise the rest of the weekend was a wash out! What doesn't help these days is that because of Sunday trading laws we aren't allowed to open the garden centres on Easter Sunday. I won't get into the politics of this but the law comes from a time when life was very different and the internet with its 24 hour shopping didn't exist. One might think it's nice to have a day off but someone has to water the plants and see to the flow of frustrated customers who haven't realised were not open and drive in and out of the car park. Ho hum!

We always enjoy helping Sherborne Abbey on Maundy Thursday and help dress up the Lady Chapel with large trees and shrubs to represent the Garden of Gethsemane. I can't remember when we first were involved in this but it has come to be a tradition that we really value. It always astonishes me how wonderful Sherborne Abbey is and that we must never forget what a great place we live in.

A few weeks ago we hosted a Forum for garden clubs to discuss the wonderful Flower and Vegetable shows that take place in the region. We were expecting around 80 people but over 125 turned up which demonstrates that the topic is an important one. We had a panel of local experts plus a representative from the RHS who were very keen to support the event and also a lady from a club in Kent who gave a presentation on what their club had done to keep their shows relevant and vibrant. Steve has prepared a whole series of notes that came from the suggestions put forward by the lively audience. We have a follow up event planned for September and we are hoping to make this an annual event with perhaps a different subject in February of 2017.

One of the big issues raised was the need to get younger people involved in the shows. This theme is relevant for the garden centre industry too and whereas we aren't forgetting about our existing and traditional customers we are carrying out a number of exercises to try to engage with potential gardeners. One of these thrusts is that we have at each of the centres novice gardeners (apprentices and other staff who have recently joined or who aren't gardeners yet). So at Castle Gardens we have some raised beds in the car park that Declan, Matt, Jamie and Mark are taking on in which to grow vegetables, at Poundbury Lisa has taken on one of the local allotments and Cath at Brimsmore is going to be growing vegetables in the restaurant gardens. They are going to be reporting their gardening adventure in the modern way through Tweets and Facebook but also with some traditional words alongside their efforts.

We celebrated 10 years at Poundbury earlier in March with 10 days of events starting with cake cutting from the Mayor and including donating 10% of our takings one day to a charity, planting 10 commemorative trees for local groups and ending the week with a party for Poundbury residents. Good fun was had throughout the time and it acted as a taster for larger anniversaries next year when Brimsmore will be 25 years old and Castle Gardens 30 years! Of course not forgetting The Gold Clubs 20th Birthday aswell.

As I write there is a lot of quacking outside the office! Regular visitors to Castle Gardens will know that a robin lives in the Christmas display each year and that a family of ducks (two gents and a lady) are visitors at this time of year. They take up residence in the planteria and car park and assume that we will feed them with bird food if they quack loudly enough.

A round of building work has just been completed at Castle Gardens with an expansion of the shrub area and also the re-roofing of the canopy and the upgrading of the bulb and bird food departments. This meant a detour from the normal routes and a number of customers claimed never to have been to the top of the shop or through the furniture displays. This shows how absorbing the Christmas displays are as it's the same space! We are all enjoying the revamped areas.

At Brimsmore Adam and the team are also enjoying using their newly refurbished space in the furniture department. This worked was carried out last autumn but of course has only just become available for the Spring team to get their teeth into.

In the summer we are upgrading the toilet facilities at the centre and, subject to the builders availability, expanding the space at the till and entrance. More details to follow!

And finally as thoughts turn to the summer and balmy evenings Illyria have launched their 2016 leaflet with dates for their touring open air theatre productions. The early show is Roald Dahl's "Danny, the Champion of the World" which is at Castle Gardens on Saturday 25th June (doors open at 6.30 pm), the Shakespeare is "A Midsummer Night's Dream" on Tuesday 12th July and exclusively for The Gold Club party, another Gilbert and Sullivan – "Ruddigore" which is on Thursday 4th August.

For the Roald Dahl and Shakespeare bring your own chairs and picnic but for the Gilbert and Sullivan we provide everything!

Enjoy the spring!

Mike