

The Gold Club

May 2017



CASTLE | BRIMSMORE | POUNDBURY

Spring is here!

Dates for your diary

Where it all

Began

6 July

at Castle Gardens

Mike Burks talks about setting up Castle Gardens 30 years ago as well as delving a little deeper into the history of the site before it became a garden centre

Brimsmore,

Castle and

Poundbury

14 May

Somerset Garden Day

17 August

**Children's Summer
Fancy Dress Party**

A note from Nicky

Welcome to you all on my first newsletter edition since taking over from Fran. As you know, Fran left Castle Gardens in November 2016 and is now having a lovely time re-designing her garden. We have seen her a few times buying some wonderful plants here at Castle Gardens. We wish her all the best in her new life.

As some of you may know, my role does not only include looking after the Gold Club membership with Anita, and being Duty Manager, but I am also on the hardy plants team with the responsibility of buying some of the stock we sell in the centre. I have to say, at this time of year, it is a pure joy being able to have the choice in what to buy, hoping you, our customers, also like them enough to buy them! In carrying out our roles, we are privileged team members in being allowed to visit nurseries all over the UK and abroad (90% of our plants are bought from UK nurseries) to learn and select plants from the growers. As a result of this, our plant range is expanding and hopefully becoming more interesting to tempt you. However, if we don't have a plant you require, just ask us and we may be able to source it for you.

2017 is a year of celebrations for The Gardens Group! Brimsmore Garden Centre turned 25 years old in March and Castle Gardens was 30 years old in April. What a wonderful achievement for Mike and Louise and is testimony to their hard work and determination over the years to continually provide us with 3 great and varied Garden Centres; Castle, Brimsmore and Poundbury, places we all want to visit on a regular basis...whether it's for plants, garden accessories, the Christmas display or just to meet your friends and family for a cup of tea in our restaurants.

So enough of me....we wish you all well for this spring and summer and fingers crossed for continuing favourable gardening weather!

Forthcoming Events!

At Brimsmore

Thursday 20 July

A morning with GBBO's Val
Stones

Tuesday 8 August

Bugfest

Saturday 12 August

Birds of Prey

At Castle Gardens

**Monday 22 May-Thursday 25
May**

Art Exhibition

Saturday 24 June-Sunday 2 July

Art Exhibition by Horizon Painters

Wednesday 19 July

Wildlife Friendly Gardening Awards

Saturday 22 July-Monday 31 July

Music in the Walled Garden

Tuesday 23 July

Sherborne Town band

At Poundbury

Thursday 1 June -

Sunday 2 July

Open Studios ART WEEKs

Sunday 11 June

Poundbury Open Gardens

Saturday 22 July

Summer BBQ

The Gold Club Summer Party

Friday 21 July 6.30pm at Castle Gardens

This year we will be holding our exclusive Gold Club Summer Party on Friday 21st July. You can expect quick costume changes, action and a Pimms reception with Illyria's performance of Pride and Prejudice. We will be sending booking forms with this newsletter.

We provide food and chairs but please bring a rug and warm clothing

Other Illyria Performances

Castle Gardens Gates Open at 6.30pm

The Emperor's New Clothes—Saturday 3 June

The Lost World—Tuesday 11 July

Mikado—Wednesday 2 August

Comedy of Errors—Thursday 10 August

Adults £15.00, Concessions £13.00, Children £5.00

Tickets available in store. Please bring your own seating/rug, warm clothes and picnic.

The Gardener's Stock Pot

By Victoria McManus, Hardy Plant Team Member at Castle Gardens

One of the most satisfying aspects of working here at Castle Gardens, is the help we can give to new gardeners – and it is lovely to see how that moment, choosing those first few plants, could lead to lifelong passion.

My passion for gardening started when I was a toddler, being trundled about in a wheelbarrow by my grandfather, who worked at Hadsden and was later head gardener at the American Museum near Bath. He loved his veggies, and I have inherited this interest, so when I was asked to help restore a large vegetable garden near Wincanton earlier this year it was a dream project for me.

The old Victorian greenhouse needed a good clean, so we set about washing the glass and making it all shipshape. Meanwhile, the ground outside was rotavated and we inspected the existing produce – a large patch of rhubarb and a lone tayberry. We also had to reduce a large hedge that was stealing light from the plot.

The next step was to get a list of what the family like best to eat – one of the most important aspects when planning your vegetable garden. We added lots of compost and farmyard manure, and to date I have put in potatoes, leeks, garlic and red onions on one side of the path. The other side has had to be protected from the abundant rabbits with a low electric fence, and into here I have planted a strawberry patch, complete with home-made wooden frame to protect it from the birds, and sowed spinach, kale, carrots and peas.

The greenhouse is now looking splendid, with tomatoes and lettuce coming on, and trays of cucumbers, squash and French beans all poking their little heads out of the soil. We have also filled the large pots inside and out with culinary herbs and blueberries.

The whole garden is going to be organic, so we have used mesh tunnels for the broccoli and companion planting principles, such as tagetes in the greenhouse to protect the tomatoes from whitefly. It's such a pleasure to help bring this old vegetable garden back to life and we are all eagerly anticipating the moment of harvest!

An update will be available in the next newsletter!

Victoria

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

Tales from The Potting Shed

It has been a very busy start to 2017. In March we celebrated Brimsmore's 25th birthday with cake and champagne and 10 days of events. A month later and the champagne was flowing at Castle Gardens as part of the 30th birthday celebrations!

As part of the birthdays we offered trees and vouchers to schools and local organisations. At Brimsmore this included the team heading out to plant trees at a number of local schools.

At Castle there were a number of displays to mark the occasion including photographs from the early years which drew lots of comment. These photos proved useful as we discovered that we had a major water leak that wasn't showing above ground. The pictures gave clues as to where the water supply went and then with the help of Cyril Young, who installed the water supply in 1987, we were able to trace the pipe and track down the fault.

Unfortunately, whilst this was going on, we found the gas supply too which hastily needed turning off. Luckily a quick phone call to a very good friend of mine, Steve Devoto, (who again installed the supply in 1987), told me who to contact to solve the problem and within an hour, British Gas had sent a team to fix it! Excellent service! Steve has recently set up his own business "The Local Boiler Company" and you may see his vans around the area.

The atmosphere at our birthday events and also these two incidents demonstrated to me how important our ethos of creating long term relationships is on both a business and a personal level. We really value it.

I had the May Day Bank holiday off and was hoping to have a complete break from even thinking about garden centres when Radio 4 "You and Yours" came on. It was featuring garden centres and interviewed 3 people, two of whom I know very well, from centres around the UK. This somewhat brought me back to reality! The third contributor was Nicholas Marshall, the former CEO of Wyevale Garden Centres, who is now with Dobbies. Again this took me back 30 years as his parents then lived in Chetnole and were very regular customers!

It's been very good weather for gardening so far this year. Other than a lack of rain in the last few weeks, the weather has been fairly steady allowing gardeners to get stuck into their plots and to get on with projects. This has kept us very busy and the weeks have 'whooshed' by. Some, especially keen novice gardeners, are a bit ahead and persuading them that there is still the chance of frost until June isn't easy. The record was broken this year as I had a complaint from a customer that we didn't have summer hanging baskets ready on Mother's Day!

We took the plunge and decided to tarmac the car park at Castle Gardens earlier in the spring. This was a nerve wracking experience as, of course, as we had to stay open whilst it took place. The contractors were excellent and said that the whole process would take 6 days but actually finished in 5! I spent quite a bit of time out in the car park directing traffic whilst it happened which was an eye opener. One thing we realised was that the standard spacing of 2.4 metres would be too tight so we expanded each space to 2.5 meters when the marking out took place. We also have increased the number of disabled spaces and have introduced pedestrian walkways.

In Poundbury's car park, we have installed a charging point for electric cars. If successful, we will do the same at Castle and Brimsmore. I have noticed many more electric and hybrid cars recently. Its amazing how quiet they are which is a good thing apart from the safety point of view. As a result I am thinking of producing sound effects for such cars to alert pedestrians of their presence. This could include formula one sound effects, old banger noises, steam engine or even horse hoof effects!

Mike