



RAMSBURY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Autumn Newsletter 2009

AN INDIAN SUMMER?

I had thought that this term related to British experiences in India but American friends of ours have pointed out that it originated in North America as far back as the 1770's and has reference to the natives there and hard winter weather being preceded by a short interval of mild climate. However, we seem scarcely to have had any summer, yet autumn is already here! But, as this is being written, there seems still some hope ahead for a (brief?) pleasant season. Meanwhile, there are some interesting events to look forward to.

OUTING TO MALVERN SHOW

Saturday 26 September leaving the 'Square' at 9.00 am

Having consulted with our members we are booked to go to the Malvern Show. There is much to see and it is intended that we shall depart from Malvern at 5.00 pm.

BUNNY GUINNESS LECTURE

Wednesday 7th October in the Memorial Hall, at 7.45 pm

As advised previously, this special lecture 'Transforming Your Garden', will be a ticketed event. Most people who follow BBC gardening programmes, and/or who read certain gardening sections in the press, will know of Bunny and of her special interest in garden design and of her extensive plant knowledge. Since there are hall limits we would recommend anyone who would like to attend to apply immediately for tickets (£7.00 each) from the Post Office or to email us at hortsoc@ramsbury.org. Wine, and other drinks, will be available from 7.00 pm onwards.

AUTUMN SHOW

Saturday 10th October at 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm in the Memorial Hall

In a departure from past autumn shows *please note* that this event is being held in the afternoon! Both the entry and the staging of exhibits will take place between 9.00 am and 10.00 am in the Memorial Hall. All exhibitors must vacate the hall at 10.00 am sharp! The W.I. will be running a food stall and Pre School will be providing the teas and refreshments. We have extended the number of classes in the vegetables, fruit and flowers sections and a new trophy – yet to be named – will be awarded to the best vegetable exhibit. So, whilst the extent of the show will not, quite, be back to the halcyon days of 1981 we are hoping that the steadily, mounting interest and support of our members will help us retain this show and even to improve on it! If you have any problems in obtaining a schedule please contact Di Barnett on 521363 or Allan Davison on 520591.

TALKS

Monday 9th November in the Memorial Hall, at 7.45 pm

Jenny Whitham will be giving our final talk this year on the 'Gardens of Florence and the Italian Lakes'. It sounds a comfortingly warm prospect which we might well need in November!

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Saturday 12th December in the Memorial Hall, at 7.00 pm

Finally, our year ends with our usual Christmas Party – with good wine and good food. Tickets will be on sale in the Post Office from November – the precise date will be advised in the Diary and in the 'Whitton Ways' magazine.

THE ROBIN RISSONE LITERARY PRIZE

The winning entry for the above (Class 93 in the Summer Show) was Rosalie Winter. Her entry is printed below:

A DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF (GARDENING) FASHION

You'd like to see the garden? Of course, come in through the side gate. It's changed a lot over the years – in the 1950's it was just a lawn, a flowerbed for a few annuals and my vegetable plot at the bottom. But once we started getting ideas off the telly I put in a bed of hybrid tea roses, and turned one end of the vegetable plot into a rockery with little conifer trees all over it. We covered over half the lawn with a patio made of different coloured concrete slabs – looked a treat.

Then Geoff Hamilton came along and I felt guilty about my rockery – I couldn't face making rocks from a mould and painting them with yoghurt, so we turned it into a raised bed made from old railway sleepers. The coloured slabs had to go, and we tried a gravel garden – but the neighbours' cats thought we'd done it for their benefit! But I learned a lot about gardening from old Geoff – he really knew what he was doing.

The missus went wild for anything that Alan Titchmarsh suggested – everything was painted blue, the gravel garden was covered in decking, our old dressing table mirror was propped up in one corner and in the other we had a water feature made from a pump and half a barrel. The last bit of my vegetable patch disappeared under what she called "prairie planting" – looked one up from weeds to me.

I thought things couldn't get any worse, but I got back one day to a row of aluminium boxes planted with black grass! Then she made me dig up the rose bed and plant a load of exotic stuff – cannas, yuccas, and even those tree fern things from New Zealand. I used to spend September going round with bubble wrap and coconut matting tying everything up.

But I'm pleased to say that things are easier now – we ripped up the decking and sent the mirror and water feature to the dump. I've got a bigger vegetable patch and I'm trying to get the lawn back into some sort of order. Most of the exotics died anyway, and the missus now says she wants a "cutting garden" – not sure what this is, but she's planting a lot of old favourites like godetia and antirrhinums. She never wears trousers in the garden now – goes about in a skirt and an old corduroy coat – seems very impractical to me.

Her latest thing is that we've got to have a "living roof" on my old garden shed! I keep telling her that it won't stand the weight – and how am I going to weed and mow it? I was in the garden last night, taking root cuttings off the oriental poppies – useful thing I learned off Carol Klein – when the missus came running down with our alarm clock and said, "This is your thirty minute challenge!" Sometimes I think all this excitement has just been too much for her!

TOPICAL TIP

Our wet season has resulted in higher amount of disease and any affected plants and diseased crops must be removed and disposed of but NOT, of course, put in the compost heap and not left on the ground from where, next season, they will more easily be able to re-infect the garden. Plums and other stone fruits are particularly susceptible to becoming re-infected.

Looking forward to next spring, you may be thinking of planting some new bulbs but are unable to find what you want in local garden centres etc. One interesting nursery I have come across is Bloms Bulbs located at Primrose Nurseries, Melchbourne, Bedfordshire, MK44 1ZZ - tel. no. 01234 709099 (web site www.blomsbulbs.com) who will do mail order. I was particularly taken by their double daffodil 'Magellan' which is yellow, interspersed with tangerine, orange petaloides – not cheap at 3 for £4.45 but your stock will increase year upon year. They also do some fine tulips of which I was much taken by the May flowering classically shaped 'Twister' of which the lower half is red, with purple "feathering" into the upper part of citron yellow. This variety costs £8.30 for 10. You may not be able to fill your flowers beds with these varieties but perhaps for a special pot they might be a consideration and a talking point.