



## RAMSBURY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

# Spring Newsletter 2009

### TALKS

As most of our members will know, our scheduled first talk of the year 'Travels in search of Remarkable Plants', by Robert Harvey, had to be cancelled and we were not able to rearrange it when more usual weather conditions returned. We shall try to include it in our programme for next year. Our Autumn programme will start with a talk by Bunny Guinness and full details of this will follow later.

### QUIZ versus Lambourn.

We enjoyed a very entertaining quiz night on the 12 March. Our team were hoping that we would win the trophy that we shared with Lambourn, after last year's "honourable draw". A successful evening was concluded with an 87-55 win for our team.

### Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April : SPRING SHOW & BOWLS CLUB FÊTE in the Memorial Hall from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm

Our first major event of the year is the Spring Show and we hope that all members will be able to enter at least two items to help brighten up our show benches. Please study your schedule right away so as to identify what you have coming up in your garden – or what you or your children can do to enter the Home Industries or Children's sections. The bowls club will have a number of stalls that we hope will interest all the family so please make this afternoon a date!

### OUTING: Dep. 11.00 am Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April to Malmesbury Abbey Gardens.

The tremendous informal plantings of tulips in the gardens of Malmesbury Abbey ensure that from April to mid May there are swathes of tulip plantings to enjoy. Other spring flowering delights will be on view throughout the gardens. Our outing will leave the Square at 11.00 am. Cost of transport and entrance will be £18 per person (cheques to be made payable to the society). Please contact Sheila Glass *immediately* on 520409 so that we can select an appropriate coach size.

### TALK: 7.45 pm Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April in the Memorial Hall at 7.45 pm.

Our final talk this spring will be given by Robert Harvey. His talk will be on 'British Wildflowers in Nature and the Garden'

### SPRING PLANT SALE & COFFEE MORNING: Saturday 9th May at Millstream from 10.00 to 11.30 am

With serious work shortly to begin, in earnest, in your gardens the Society would be grateful for any plants you can set aside for our plant sale. Please bring them along before 9.30, if possible, so that they can be priced up. Identification labels would be appreciated for any plants that may be difficult for us to identify. Thanks, also, to the support in the form of superb quality plants provided by Paul New, our plant sale is a "must" for all gardeners needing to plan their gardens for the coming season.

## **OUTING: Dep. 9.00 am Saturday 6 June to Sudeley Castle**

With so much to see and do we could have spent the whole weekend here! The 'Rose Week' begins the following Monday so the collection of roses will be well worth the visit alone. But, as well as the prestigious 'Queens Garden', sited on the original Tudor parterre, there are various themed gardens to stroll around plus a knot garden, a wildflower walk and meadow. There is a plant centre, coffee shop (providing sandwiches, cakes and pastries, coffees, teas, wines, etc.) and a large picnic area. Finally, there will be an exhibition to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the throne. Henry visited Sudeley with Anne Boleyn in 1535. Tickets per person will be £25.00. Information sheets will be available at the Spring Show or apply to Sheila Glass, 18 The Paddocks (telephone 520409), making cheques out to the society. Departure will be from the Square at 9.00 am.

## **TOPICAL TIPS.**

Spring is full of promise and, this year, there is the hope of a proper summer after a couple of cool wet years! However, spring frosts can do a lot of damage to tender plants, certain flower buds, susceptible fruit blossom (peach, apricots, etc.). Horticultural fleece will help to protect in these cases and is also useful where early potatoes are grown.

Anyone with a semi shaded piece of ground might like to consider growing alpine strawberries. Traditionally, these will be remembered as having small fruit but with a distinctive, piquant taste. Each picking would produce a modest quantity but the plants do have a very long fruiting season. I used to grow a Continental variety which seems, sadly, to be no longer available. However, there are now larger fruiting Alpine strawberries available which I shall be trying out: "Golden Alexander" with golden yellow foliage and "Temptation". Seed of these varieties is available from Chiltern Seeds in Ulveston, Cumbria ([chilternseeds.co.uk](http://chilternseeds.co.uk)). All strawberry plants are dear so the alternative of buying and growing from seed, including certain standard varieties, is worth consideration. Germinating the seeds is much like trying to germinate busy lizzies i.e. on top of the compost with a very light covering of compost or, preferably, "Perlite" or similar.

Daffodils are presently a lovely sight but now is the time to plan for next years display. If you have any daffodils in pots, identify where there are gaps in the borders wherein you could plant them after flowering. Marking these gaps by cane for planting up in the autumn with new bulbs would be another possibility. Where bulbs need thinning out, a cane might also be best employed to identify their location for them to be dug up, and spread out, in the autumn - unless you can be sure to do this immediately after their foliage has died down, in mid summer, and before it has disappeared completely.

## **SUMMER SHOW & FÊTE: Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August, Ramsbury Recreation Ground.**

We shall have more to say on the Summer Show & Fête in a future newsletter. But now is the time to sow and plant things out for them to develop for entry in the show. In our marquee there will be more space to fill on the show benches so please try to give some thought as to what you will be able produce to enter.

## **GEOFFREY SMITH**

Anyone who has listened to Geoffrey Smith, in the many years when he broadcast on 'Gardener's Question Time', will be sad to hear the news of his death in February. One of his many amusing comments was on the eating of a lush ripe 'Doyenne du Comice' pear "straight from the tree with the juice running down my face". However, where he had this experience cannot now be recalled. Certainly our recent summer weather would not have been hot enough for this variety, if grown outdoors in England, to have been enjoyed in similar fashion. But, listening to Geoffrey Smith was always a joy and he will be much missed.

## **MEMBERSHIP:**

Would any member who has not received their small yellow membership card please contact Michael Handford.