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St. Stephens Gardening Club



(Formerly St. Stephens Horticultural Society)

NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2023/24

Monday 12 February 2024 at 2.30pm
St Stephens Parish Centre, Bricket Wood

BAKED ALASKA or MEXICAN CHILLY?

Climate change explained

Talk by Nick Cook

followed by

Annual General Meeting

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of 2023 AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of Officers and Committee
7. Appointment of Auditor
8. Resolutions submitted 1 week prior to meeting
9. Any Other Business

Please do your best to attend – it is your opportunity to have your say and make a difference.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As I look out of my window it is raining yet again, but we are told that better weather is on the way so perhaps we can look forward to getting out in the garden. For over 20 years we have had an excellent, friendly relationship with Horticultural Supplies, a family firm based in Suffolk, who have provided us with all our bulk stock items sold in the hut. Sadly, one of the owners died in the autumn and his wife decided to close down the business. Not knowing what the future held (suppliers to Garden Clubs are few and far between) we managed to re-stock the

hut ready for the coming year. Fortunately we have found a new supplier, BHGS, based in Evesham. Although a much larger company than Horticultural Supplies they seem sympathetic to the needs of a smaller organisation like ours. The proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

Another challenge we have to face is the long term future of the club. We are all getting older, our members, helpers and committee and the recruitment of younger members is proving difficult. Our pool of helpers (particularly at the hut) has declined over the years and we are reaching the stage where this could become critical. Our active committee members are also at an all time low. This is not unique to us, other organisations in the Parish are in a similar situation, but we cannot sit back and do nothing. The committee are going to address this issue and hopefully we may have more to say at the AGM.

On a more positive note, attendance at our “Tea and Talks” has been excellent, our annual holiday is very well supported and our day trips remain popular.

The 2023 Annual Show was a “stonking success”. A high number of high quality entries, some new names on the trophies and attendance was higher than anyone could remember. Our move to Greenwood Park has been an undeniable success. A big thank you to all the entrants, helpers, those who donated prizes and especially to **M K Ginder & Sons**, who continue to generously sponsor the show. We are very grateful to every one of you.

A full list of trophy winners is at the end of this newsletter.

HUT OPENING

Saturday 10 February
2.00pm to 4.00pm

For all your garden supplies at competitive prices:

Composts
Manure
Gro-bags
Fertilisers
Weed killers
Bug killers
Bird food
Seed potatoes
Onion sets and Shallots

SEEDS

Unfortunately we will not be offering a discounted seed ordering service this year. With supermarkets and other outlets offering seeds at around £1 to £1.50 we cannot compete. Orders have declined to a level where it is difficult to achieve the minimum order quantity our suppliers demand.

GARDENS OF WORCESTER HOLIDAY - 1st to 5th July

There are a few places remaining on this holiday.

Stay in the four star Worcester Bank House Hotel & Spa. The trip includes:

- 4 nights half board
- All coach travel and driver gratuity
- Entry to all attractions

The cost is £570 per person based on two people sharing a double/twin room. Single occupancy has a supplement of £80. For more details and booking contact Graham Wilson 01727 872718

PAYMENT OF MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees of £3 for 2024 are now due. Please pay by standing order - it only takes a couple of minutes to do. Forms will be available at the AGM, the hut or from Graham Wilson - 01727 872718 or Andrew Keates - 01727 872708. Of course you will still be able to pay by cash, either at the hut or at any of our events.

CARD READER

We have purchased a credit/debit card reader and are now able to take payments by card at the hut.

SEED POTATOES

Our new supplier has not yet given us a delivery date for seed potatoes but we are hoping that they will be available from early February. We will E-mail when they are in stock. **All are certified, high quality, Scottish seed potatoes, free from blackleg, blight and virus diseases.** This year we are offering the following varieties:-

ARRAN PILOT - **first early**. A favourite variety. Excellent taste, high yield, white skinned tuber. Great for boiling. Plant late March, harvest June.

SWIFT - **First early**. Very early. Good in pots, short stems. Good disease resistance, Plant late March, harvest June.

CHARLOTTE - **Salad/Second early.** This French bred, highly popular potato is the salad variety of choice. The smooth skinned tubers have a light yellow flesh which has wonderful flavour and delightful waxy texture. Plant late March, harvest June - Sept.

CARA - **Maincrop.** Red eyed tough guy with high yields. Disease resistant. Plant early April, harvest July/August.

PRICES - £1.30 per Kg.

We do not supply quantities of less than 1kg but in response to members requests we are happy to provide a 1kg mixed bag (£1.50) to customer requirements.

Each Kg will contain approx 12 - 16 tubers (depending on variety).

Plant 10cms/4ins deep; 30cms/12ins to 38cms/15ins apart; 50cms/18ins between rows except for Cara, 68cms/27ins between rows.

Last year we had to throw away a quantity of unsold seed potatoes.

Regretfully, as a result, we have reduced the selection and quantity available this year in a bid to reduce wastage.

ONION SETS AND SHALLOTS

Shallots (Golden Gourmet)- £2.00 per 250g, £3.60 per 500g

Onion sets - (Stuttgarter Giant & Sturon) - £1.20 per 250g

GARDEN FRIEND OR ENEMY

EARTHWORMS - Eat decaying plant material, helping to create healthy soils.

Present in most soils but dislike acidic and waterlogged soil. They do not damage growing plants. Britain has about 16 species of earthworms likely to be found in gardens.

Garden friend

LEATHERJACKETS - the larvae of crane flies (daddy longlegs). Can damage lawns and small plants. Lawns develop yellowish brown dead patches. Flower and vegetable seedlings collapse, their roots having been eaten. Often more numerous after a wet autumn.

Garden enemy

MILLIPEDE/CENTIPEDE - Part of the biodiversity of a healthy garden, feeding mainly on decaying organic matter. They will occasionally damage soft fruit such as strawberries and sometimes the inside of potato tubers and other root vegetables. In their defence, they are only enlarging damage initiated by slugs. Centipedes run

for cover when disturbed, millipedes will curl up into a spiral and remain stationary.

Garden friend

CHAFER GRUBS - Cause problems in lawns, but generally do not cause damage elsewhere. Birds pull up the turf in their search for grubs and the lawns get scruffy.

Lawn enemy

BEE FRIENDLY WINTER PLANTS

These plants will not only provide much needed nectar but also bring some valuable colour to your winter garden.

HELLIBORES - Long lived garden plants, hundreds of varieties and like the shade. Bees love them as long as they are single, rather than doubles. This is a good time of year to buy.

CROCUS - Cheap, pretty and come in a number of colours. They provide lots of nectar and sometimes bumble bees shelter in them overnight. Grow in a sunny spot.

SNOWDROPS & ACONITES - Stars of the winter garden. They will happily spread in a lightly shaded area. Again choose single flowered varieties, *galanthus nivalis* is the ideal snowdrop. This is a great time to buy snowdrops while they are “in the green”.

WINTER FLOWERING CLEMATIS - A useful evergreen climber. *Clematis cirrhosa* “jingle bells” is one of the best. A lovely white, scented and hardy variety with bee friendly flowers.

MAHONIAS - A great bee plant. They flower over many weeks, are easy to grow almost anywhere, even in shady spots and have abundant nectar. Blue tits also love them but will often rip open the flowers to get to the nectar. Nevertheless a worthwhile shrub.

RHS GARDENS - TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE ENTRY

We have an RHS Garden Entry Discount card available for use by our members. With the exception of Flower Shows and Glow Illumination events it offers two adults a 50% discount off entry to any RHS Garden.

Anyone wishing to make use of this card please contact Pat Holland
01727 568057

CUPS & TROPHIES 2023

Section 1: Vegetables

Gladys Yule Challenge Cup	Mark Taylor
Macmillan Trophy (Best Exhibit)	Chris Hollis
Top Trug	Emma Hardy

Section 2: Fruit

J.P. Hall Challenge Cup	Mark Taylor
Bill Stephen Cup (Best Exhibit)	Mark Taylor

Section 3: Rose/Flowers

Barbara Forward Memorial Trophy	Alan Bagguley
Green Man Cottage Trophy (Best Exhibit)	Sheila Webber
The Ginder Cup	Alison Bagguley

Section 4: Dahlias

St Stephen's Trophy	Alan Bagguley
The Rideout Cup (Best Exhibit)	Alan Bagguley

Section 5: Floral Art

G. E. Clark Floral Trophy	Not awarded
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Section 6: Domestic

Greensleeves Trophy	Jan Castle
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Section 7: Children

Bill Whitehead Cup (Best Exhibit)	Sienna Wilson
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Section 8: Inter-School Competition

Mount Pleasant School

Section 9: Novice

Gwen Stephen Trophy	Ailsa Frank
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Section 11: Photography

Betty Weller Trophy	Graham Wilson
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Section 12: Handicrafts

Falconer Cup	Paul Compton
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Highest Points in Section 1 – 5

RHS Banksian Medal	Alan Bagguley
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Highest Points in Show

Joan Ryder Trophy	Alan Bagguley
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