

Newton-le-Willows Gardeners' Association Spring Newsletter

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Chairman's Report

Well here we are again at the start of another year, I hope you all had a good Christmas and New Year and didn't put on too many unwanted pounds over the festive season. Still even if you did, it is a good excuse to get out into the garden over the coming weeks as the weather begins to warm up and start preparing for the growing season.

I guess I am not the only one, but as soon as January arrives I am eager to start doing something, whether sowing seeds on a warm windowsill or propagator, or preparing the allotment ready for planting at the earliest opportunity. Even with this I still run out of time come May/June when everything should be in and growing. Spending time chatting to people on Saturday/Sunday morning at the sales hut and even at the early talks I find is a great way to exchange ideas and experiences and quite often an incentive to try a different way of doing things. So please do come along during the next few weeks if only for a chat and maybe to stock up on some of the things you will need over the coming weeks.

As ever the committee has been busy organising our schedule of talks, trips and other activities for 2015. Details of dates and venues are available either on our website (nlwgardeners.co.uk) or on the back of your membership card.

Thank you for your continued support

Dave Hemingway

GRAND DAY OUT (Poem)

As we all get on the coach for yet another trip, Arthur with his walking frame and Kenny with new hips.
The painful steps onto the coach we all are glad to take, because the garden centre has lovely chocolate cake.

A merry band of wanderers with pac-a macs in bags, some of us take medication and some of us our fags.
We are the silver army, the done and dusted crew, our hair dye now is honey and not that awful blue.

Sometimes we need a comfort stop while touring in the hills, we know whose fault it is, those wretched water pills.
We are the silver army, with joints that make us groan, some of us are happy, some of just moan.
So to our lovely coach drivers who catch us as we fall, we've really had a lovely day, so thank you one and all.

TRIPS

On the 14th May we are going to France to see the Normandy beach landings of WW2 and also to visit Monet's garden; there are still a few places left if anyone wants to join us.

Staying in Caen on a B&B basis, the cost is £305 each for 2 sharing, with a £95 single supplement. It will include 3 days outings - the first of which is to Monet's Garden with a cider tasting stop on the way back to the hotel.
2nd day to Bayeux (there is also a market here for anyone not wanting to see the tapestry); Pegasus Bridge and Gold Beach.
The last day is Omaha Beach and the Arromanches museum with free time in Caen.

Day trips

Harrogate Spring Show on the 25th April, the cost is £26 inclusive of coach fare and show tickets.

On the 11th July we are going to Harewood House near Leeds, the cost of which is £20 for O/60's and £21 for adults

Some useful facts

Gold is the only metal that doesn't rust, even if it's buried in the ground for thousands of years.

Your tongue is the only muscle in your body that is attached at only one end.

Zero is the only number that cannot be represented by Roman numerals.

Peanut oil is used for cooking in submarines because it doesn't smoke unless it's heated above 450F.

The University of Alaska spans four time zones.

The tooth is the only part of the human body that cannot heal itself.

Warner Communications paid \$28 million for the copyright to the song Happy Birthday.

Intelligent people have more zinc and copper in their hair.

The Swine Flu vaccine in 1976 caused more death and illness than the disease it was intended to prevent.

Caffeine increases the power of aspirin and other painkillers, that is why it is found in some medicines.

If you get into the bottom of a well or a tall chimney and look up, you can see stars, even in the middle of the day.

Strawberries are the only fruits whose seeds grow on the outside.

The moon moves about two inches away from the Earth each year.

The Earth gets 100 tons heavier every day due to falling space dust.

Due to earth's gravity it is impossible for mountains to be higher than 15,000 meters.

Soldiers do not march in step when going across bridges because they could set up a vibration which could be sufficient to make the bridge collapse.

Because there are so many people who don't like sprouts, I thought maybe you would like a recipe that might change your mind.

Braised Brussels Sprouts with maple syrup, pancetta, kale and cranberries (Serves 4)

300g/10 ½ oz Brussels sprouts

100g/3 ½ oz kale

60g/2 oz pancetta

2 shallots

2 tbsp maple syrup

3 tbsp white wine vinegar

Juice of ½ an orange

1 tbsp dried cranberries

2 sprigs thyme

1 knob of butter

Method

1 Finely chop the shallots and the pancetta and fry in the butter until golden brown, remove from pan and set aside

2 Cut the sprouts lengthways and place, cut side down, in the hot pan for 2 or 3 minutes.

3 Meanwhile, mix the maple syrup, orange juice and vinegar, then pour into the sprout pan and mix gently.

4 Now add the kale and thyme sprigs and cook for a further 1-2 minutes.

5 Finally, add the pancetta mixture back into the pan along with the cranberries and heat through for 1 minute.

If you prefer, you can cook the sprouts in a little water for a couple of minutes first, so that they are not too crunchy.

Try growing your carrots in toilet-roll tubes as this helps in transplanting them into the final bed. Sow a pinch of carrot seed (stump rooted carrots are best) in the tubes and place in a cold greenhouse, when growing strongly plant out under a net. It also makes your rows of carrots look very neat as well

2014 Show

Everyone visiting this years' show was bowled over by the quality of the exhibits, from top class dahlias to extraordinary pumpkins! The range was fantastic from Sweetcorn to Beetroot; the photographs were impressive and jam abundant! The quality of the dahlias, and the care taken over their staging left us all astonished again! It's no surprise that the best exhibit in the show was a dahlia – or that the grower was Stephen Burns (the winner of best exhibit for the second year running)!

We had quite a few new exhibitors, including a grower of chrysanthemums who did very well indeed! Check out the show pages on the website, including exhibit photos and winners of main prizes.

I must pass on our thanks for the generous sponsorship for the show from all the individuals who sponsor, to the companies, and the organisations like Rotary who make the show possible. The Rotary President thoroughly enjoyed his day visiting and presenting prizes, as did the Head of Penkford School who was also kind enough to sponsor the children's classes. The staff at Penkford were helpful as usual and very welcoming to us. A special thank you to our visitors who make the show the event it is!

Our tweets about the show were re-tweeted by What's On In St Helens and St Helens Hub Club! We want to attract more new exhibitors to the show next year, including young gardeners. How would you do this? If you have any ideas, please contact me at chantelle.seaborn@gmail.com.

In 2015 we are going to put on some 'master classes' on how to grow and show vegetables; we really hope that you will enjoy these! Look out for dates on our website and hear about them at our talks.

Hope you had a great Christmas looking forward to the new gardening season and all it will bring! **Chantelle**

The categories for 2015 are as follows :-

Photography – Transport, Gardens, A stile

Art – Mountains &/or Moorlands

Cookery - Mincemeat and Marzipan Teabread, Blueberry muffins. Childrens cookery :- peanuts butter biscuits

Floral Art - Golden Wedding

Next years itinerary

22nd January AGM

26th February Marguerite Hughes & Sue Gillon. Seed sowing – for perennials flowering in their first year.

19th March Sue Nicholas. Growing fruit and vegetables in a small garden.

30th April Jacqueline Iddon. In the Shade

28th May Jane Allison. Banquet for bees and butterflies.

29th October Phil Dunnett. Pruning, particularly fruit.

SHOWS

25th May (Monday) Willow Park Rural Craft Display **TBC**

1st August (Saturday) Newton Town Show **TBC**

12th September (Saturday) Flower, Flower & Vegetable Show, Penkford School, Wharf Road

HUT OPENINGS:

Saturdays 3rd January – 31st October 10.30 – 12.00

Sundays 4th January – 1st November 10.30 - 12.00

Wednesdays 1st April – 17th June 7.00 – 8.00

The plot at the side of the hut

BED1 This year we grew potatoes, 4 pink fir apple, yielded 2lbs 3oz. 6 Arran Victory yielded 2lbs 14oz, 6 Cara yielded 2lbs 12oz, 4 Sarpo Mira yielded 3lbs 12oz, 2 Blue Danube yielded 1lb 8oz, and 3 Lady Balfour yielded 6lbs 8oz. They were all planted on 13th April and harvested on 27th September and were distributed amongst helpers at the hut. The worst affected by slug damage was Lady Balfour and the least damaged were Pink Fir Apple and Cara. In my opinion Pink Fir Apple were the best for salad potatoes and are also good for keeping. I didn't rate Arran Victory and Blue Danube for flavour and would give them a wide berth.

BED2 Here we grew our pumpkin, which provided visitors to the hut with a talking point, it weighed 278lbs and was entered into the show as a guess the weight challenge. It raised £37 for Multiple Sclerosis Research and then was taken to Kenyon Hall Farm where it raised money for the charity "Farm Africa", so it was a worthwhile exercise.

BED3 Held a marrow plant that produced 1 fruit weighing 43lbs which was entered into the show but didn't win a prize. It just goes to show that biggest isn't always best, quality matters most, so bring along your produce to the 2015 show and don't worry if it seems a bit small. After the show the marrow was taken to Congleton village fete and then to the ploughing championships where it raised £110 for Cancer Research. Bed 3 also held beetroot and summer cabbages and was used to test the effects of "Biochar", these tests were inconclusive and will not be repeated. Our Asparagus has also grown well in this bed and the fern was cut down at the end of the year enabling us to harvest some Asparagus Spears in 2015.

BED4 We planted all the unsold garlic cloves here and all they produced were given to members making a purchase from the hut.

The far border has blackcurrants and gooseberries, which were put to good use by members and hut helpers. We will prune them in late winter ready for a bumper harvest in early summer.

Brassicas seem to have been affected for 2 years on the trot by whitefly, has anyone got a good way of exterminating the little blighters, they seem resistant to insecticides?

Has anyone got any ideas about what they would like to see on the plot in 2015? I think we will be growing something like a big pumpkin or marrow again to see how much we can raise for charity this time around.

If there is anything you find difficult to grow, let us know and we could trial some for you.

Malcolm

COOKS TIP

For a perfectly separated egg, crack the egg into a bowl then take an empty plastic bottle and squeeze the sides together. Place the neck of the bottle over the yolk and release the pressure. It will draw the yolk up into the bottle leaving only the white in the bowl.
