



Welwyn Garden City Horticultural Society

www.wgchortsoc.org.uk

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Christmas Celebration

Coming to the end of year, we are happy to be able to say that our talks continue to see large audiences in the hall and that our outings have been well supported. So, a big thank you to all that help make this happen – on the committee and those that support the Society by helping with the tech side of things, setting up and clearing away the hall, organising the raffle and making the teas. It all helps! The meeting on 12 December will be the last before Christmas and, as is traditional, we will be serving wine and mince pies. Come and celebrate! On behalf of the committee, we wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and all the best for a good gardening year.



Alison Ewington Chair

Our December Talk

12 December - History of London Squares - David Marsh

David Marsh is a garden historian, lecturer and writer. He is a Trustee of the Gardens Trust for which he does a weekly blog. Squares are one of the defining features of London. Like other European cities, London has its grand civic spaces – the likes of The Mall and Trafalgar Square, but no other city has developed the garden square in quite the same way. David looks at the rise of the square, and at the threats and challenges they have faced over the past 400 years and at ideas for their future.



Sue Friend and Laurence Bauer

An Unusual Christmas Present – Society Membership

Have you got a friend or family member who is interested in gardening? Perhaps they would like Membership of the Society as a Christmas present? Then they could enjoy:

- 8 fascinating lectures– with tea & coffee provided!
- Access to outings including an annual lunch, day trips and a biennial summer holiday.
- Member plant swaps (usually in May & October)
- Three newsletters and an informative website.

All this for an annual Membership of only £15. Membership Secretary, Denise Madden, would be happy to assist. Contact her at 1 The Glade, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7LG or gladers2@gmail.com

Denise Madden

Our 2024 Speaker Programme

Meetings start at 8pm at St Francis of Assisi Church Hall, Church Road, AL8 6QJ. Tea and coffee are also served at the meetings.

13 February - Extreme Allotmenting - Alan Clark

Alan trained in the 1960s as a horticulturist and nurseryman. With 30 years of gardening, landscaping and exhibition growing experience under his belt, he started his own business in 1996, First Class Gardens. He owns 9 allotments and 2 gardens and aims to provide humorous and informative talks on a wide range of topics.



12 March - Astounding Adaptions - Survival of the Fittest - Anne Luder

Anne has worked as a garden designer for over twenty-five years, designing both public and private gardens; specialising in allergy-free and challenging gardens, and mixing edibles and ornamentals. She was also a lecturer at Capel Manor and facilitated horticultural therapy groups for 20 years. Plants have been around for far longer than man. This presentation looks at the wonderful ways some have adapted to ensure their continuation as well as things we take for granted.



9 April - Pots of Fun - Container Gardening for Seasonal Interest - Tom Cole

Tom was Head of Horticulture at Capel Manor from 1997 to 2009 and more recently specialised in teaching RHS courses. He regularly broadcasted on BBC Radio Essex with Ken Crowther. Aside from teaching, he runs a small, but perfectly formed soft landscape and maintenance business. His presentation covers the use of containers in the home and the garden to display a range of plants for seasonal interest, including ornamentals, edibles and herbs. Effective maintenance regimes will also be explored, especially feeding, pruning and plant health.



14 May - Sherrardspark Wood Wardens – Nikki Edwards



Sherrardspark Wood is one of Hertfordshire's largest and most important oak and hornbeam woodland extending to approximately 80 hectares (200 acres).

Nikki Edwards is part of the Wood Wardens' team who look after Sherrardspark Wood with the aim to keep this Site of Special Scientific Interest in a favourable condition. Her presentation will give a brief history of the woods and its management through time. She will explain different aspects of the Wood Wardens' work

such as active management, plant monitoring and habitat management and creation.

Laurence Bauer and Sue Friend

Our 2024 Outings

Tickets are on sale at our meetings or by sending the completed booking form, as attached to this newsletter, to Jenny Begg and making payment by cheque or BACS.

25 March - Our spring lunch and private tour of Knebworth House and Gardens. £45 including lunch (drinks not included) and private tours. Please arrive at 10.30.

As Knebworth is close by, and to keep costs down, we are asking people to make their own way there. If you can please offer lifts to members who may need one and let Jenny know if you still have a spare seat.

There have been gardens at Knebworth House since at least the 17th century, but the present layout dates largely from the Edwardian era. The architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, simplified the ornate beds and statuary of the Victorian garden with lawns and avenues of pollarded lime trees. The Herb Garden was recreated in 1982 from Gertrude Jekyll's 1907 design. Each generation has enhanced the gardens and the recent wood carvings are particularly interesting. Following

one tour, we have reserved Knebworth Barns for a two course lunch and tea or coffee. Afterwards there will be the second tour before making our way home.



6 June - Coton Manor, Northamptonshire. £43 including coach, gratuities and garden entry. Depart - 9.45 College Way, WGC. Only 30 tickets are available at this discounted price.

We are teaming up with Orange Henn to visit this beautiful house and gardens, stopping on the way for morning refreshments (not included).



Coton Manor is one of our members' favourite gardens and is famous for its early summer rose and peony borders. This beautiful 10 acre garden occupies a hillside position extending down from the 17th century manor house. Its luxuriant borders will delight plant enthusiasts while everyone will enjoy the garden's charm and special atmosphere. The Stableyard Cafe serves homemade lunches and teas. The extensive nursery has over a

thousand varieties of plants, many of which are unusual and are propagated from the garden.

12 September - RHS Wisley, Woking, Surrey. £30 including coach, gratuities, garden entry and a guided tour. Depart - 9.30 College Way, WGC.

We have taken advantage of the Society's RHS membership to get free entry for us on this trip. We have also arranged for a garden tour.

Since we last visited Wisley much has changed – although its most loved features remain, often with a new twist and fresh planting. The atrium at RHS Hilltop has opened with its permanent exhibition. Dramatic showcase displays and interactive exhibits feature the best of the RHS's research and world-class collections. Wisley's famous double Mixed Borders run either side of the Broadwalk, on the slope leading up to Battleston Hill, a 400 foot long horticultural wonder, bringing bold colour and texture from late spring to autumn. The Equinox Border reaches its peak in the early autumn with dahlias, sedums, and salvias blooming abundantly, joined by asters and monkshoods, as well as the grasses with their combination of feathery delicacy and grand stature.

Jenny Begg and Anne Freimanis

Highlights of Our Recent Outings

There are many more photos for you to enjoy on our website, just click the link:

<https://wgchortsoc.co.uk/past-outings/>

If you have any photos that you would like to share with members please send them to

Anne Freimanis: a.freimanis@icloud.com

September Visit – Bressingham Gardens

A day spent admiring the clever plantings in the famous autumn and winter gardens, riding on the trains around the estate and indulging in the nostalgia for the long-gone steam age and the comedy of Dad's Army – what a treat.

Bressingham combines formal planted borders, the softest of grasses swirling in the wind and the grandeur of the mighty 50 year old conifers.

Despite its grand scale, there are planting ideas for gardens of any size, particularly the carefully planted combinations of richly coloured perennials and the greys and pinks and soft greens of the interplanted grasses.

The weather was very kind to us and the journey in the most luxurious coach I'd ever seen, made the travel time fly by.

Anne Freimanis; photos Steve Williams



Adrian de Baat's Update on Howardsgate Borders

Since I reported our work in the Society's Autumn 2021 Newsletter, Ann McDonald (formerly Ecology and Landscape Officer at the Council, pictured) and I have continued to help the Council in the renovation and maintenance of the twin borders that run down the centre of Howardsgate. Although, inevitably, there is always more that could and should be done, Ann and I continue to enjoy the task immensely, and we are reasonably pleased with the progress we have made - given the significant challenges. What makes the work especially appealing is that the Council has given us full control over the planting design and plant choices. Of course, changes to the planting can only be made step-by-step and take some time to make an impact.

Nevertheless, we have been able to introduce a wider range of plants and plant combinations, that hopefully will appeal to the public, and that the gardeners amongst them might use in their own gardens. Importantly, the plants we have chosen are tough and resilient, since I can assure you that for various reasons central Howardsgate can be a pretty hostile environment for plants on occasions! At the same time, aesthetically, we must ensure that there is an integrity to the planting, interest through as much of the year as possible and a consistency of style in the overall appearance of the borders.

The biggest challenge we face is the absence of a convenient water supply. Whilst we expect the established plants in the borders to look after themselves in periods of dry weather, new plants need moisture for a time following planting - which nature does not



always provide. This means that we must judge quite carefully when the soil conditions are suitable for new planting. There have been occasions when we have been caught out and have had to improvise by carrying down plastic cans of water to revive flagging plants and when planting new ones.

A somewhat unexpected but nevertheless rewarding part of the work is the interaction with the passing public. This is always interesting and enjoyable. We get many favourable comments from people about the borders, as well as questions and requests for general advice on anything gardening related. As if we know all the answers - but we try!

As a measure of the progress we have made, last year the Council chose to feature the Howardsgate borders in its Anglia in Bloom submission. This involved Ann and I speaking informally with the judges about what we do, and answering their questions as diplomatically as we felt we should. I am pleased to say the result was that we were given a Silver Gilt Award, which I like to think is a pretty fair reflection of where we are at, at the moment.

To conclude, if you do have any questions or comments whatsoever about the Howardsgate borders, please feel free to contact me at adrian.debaat@ntlworld.com.

Adrian de Baat

All Aboarders

All Aboarders joined the Anglia in Bloom entries for the town centre, and as a Community Project. The judges made some lovely comments, encouraging the group to enter the RHS "It's your neighbourhood" award scheme, which we did.

At the Anglia in Bloom Awards we were pleased to find ourselves in the top 5 for Best Community Garden. We also won a Gold Award as part of the overall Welwyn Hatfield BID entry.

In October our entry to the RHS "It's your neighbourhood" award won Outstanding Level 5 - the highest award! We are delighted by this recognition of our 5+ years of sustained effort to improve and maintain the station for staff & rail users alike. We will soon be adding another five plant troughs and next year will see a new sensory garden. We meet weekly during the spring, summer and autumn. Volunteers can choose when best suits them to attend. We have 15 gardeners and new volunteers are always welcome to join our friendly group!

Please contact us or follow our activities at www.allaboarders.org or on Facebook.

Lynda Cowan



Orange Henn Discount for Our Members - Winchester Christmas Market

Sunday 10th December - £25 (reduced from £38). Depart from the Dutch Nursery, Brookmans Park at 9.30 and return at 19.30.

Please contact Richard Henn richard@orangehenn.co.uk for details.

St Francis Christmas Tree Festival



Alan Pasco – His Gardening Ideas Online

Alan gave a Zoom talk to the Society in September 2020, and a gardening quiz in January 2021. He now has a gardening channel **@Adams-Gardening-Guides** on

<https://www.youtube.com/@Adams-Gardening-Guides>

There's a lovely video on "How To Grow Lilies In Pots" plus plenty more on different plants, seasonal advice, crops and techniques, including a tour of Alan's garden in Peterborough. He says "I'm sure your members would enjoy them ... and do ask them to subscribe to my channel if they do! Thanks again for getting in touch and I wish you all a successful and enjoyable gardening season ahead."

Herts Gardens Trust

The Trust's autumn/winter season of monthly talks starts on 6th November at 2.30pm in Woolmer Green. For details <https://hertsgardenstrust.org.uk/events/>

Tickets are £5.00 for HGT members and £8.00 for non-members. They are only available via Eventbrite and not on the door as capacity is limited.

If you have any news, seen plants in our public spaces or have plants in your garden that you would recommend please let the Editor know: Anne Freimanis, a.freimanis@icloud.com or 01707 323277.