



# The Village GARDEN CLUB

of Sevenhampton & District

(See Factfile below)



MAY / JUNE 2017

## NEXT MEETINGS

- Tuesday 23rd May — Evening visit to Cerney Gardens (GL7 7BX) & Pub Supper.  
Own / shared transport. Meet at Gardens at 4.30pm
- Wednesday 21st June — Roger Umpelby. X-rated invertebrates :Savagery & Sex in the Garden

## COMPOST

**W**hy does that word fill me with a feeling of failure? Easy to explain - I've never, ever made compost which could be described as acceptable. Monty Don and Carol Klein go on about putting things on their compost heaps and after hardly any time at all they are using the compost to sow seeds in! I have a lot of compost bins in keeping with my large garden. Some of them contain sticks, some contain a mixture of weeds & other dead plants and some contain grass cuttings. None are in the Goldilocks zone of containing friable, sweet-smelling, homogeneous compost full of nutrients, friendly bacteria & worms. The ones with sticks in are too dry, the weedy ones are slowly rotting down but ... will contain millions of weed seeds ready to burst into life once spread upon soil and overwhelm all my precious seedlings. The ones with grass cuttings in are the worst, they are slimy and foul smelling and host to huge nettles.

Why don't I just give up and succumb to a CDC green bin? Well, I am mean and love a challenge. In fact I have found something which does produce small amounts of wonderful, sweet smelling, compost, but at a price. It is called a HotBin and it is a vastly over-priced expanded polypropylene insulated dustbin. It does work though and after 2 or so months produces compost with no weed seeds in it at all. The key is that it gets hot enough to kill all the weed seeds (makers say 60°C, but I have only achieved around 45°C). The instructions say that everything



HotBin Composter

needs to be chopped into 3cm long pieces, but it seems to work well enough without that, adding twiggly bits or bark to produce air gaps and shredded paper to ensure it doesn't get too soggy seems to work. I am sure that any faintly competent DIYer could build one using insulation board painted black, but I am not that person!

My large compost bins do make compost, but they take 3 years and contain weed seeds from plants I never even put in the bins! However, I am determined to do better - I am told that putting soil into a compost bin slows down rotting thereby reducing the temperature, so I am now trying to remove as much earth from the weeds I put into the bins as I can. Also turning the heap is, I fear, the real key, mixing the ingredients speeds up decomposition and hence produces heat, which will kill weed seeds. Only time will tell whether my back and I can be bothered to do that on a regular basis!

**BLUEBELL FACTFILE:** The common bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is a native bulbous plant, flowering in the Spring from April onwards on fluorescences with up to 20 scented, 6-petaled flowers. It doesn't compete well with other species & thus favours deciduous woodland, where most plant species are excluded due to low light levels. It grows rapidly in the Spring, flowering before the tree canopies re-establish & further reduced light levels become intolerable for it. However, *H. non-scripta* is now seen as a threatened species, due to the planting of Spanish Bluebells (*H. hispanica*). This non-native garden plant has very vigorous growth and is quick to establish. Its unscented, paler flowers are held on shorter, straight stems & it has broader leaves. When cross-pollination occurs with the common bluebell, the resulting hybrid plants dominate & will rapidly take over a woodland environment. Gardeners, particularly those in rural areas, are being encouraged to remove these invasive garden 'thugs', which normally won't be killed by composting and should be burned, municipally composted or consigned to a black plastic sack and left for a year before home composting — such is their vigour!

## CONSIDERING LIVING WALLS

There are a number of reasons to plant vertically, for example —

- ♦ Small garden and running out of space.
- ♦ Need to disguise an ugly wall
- ♦ Unable to easily bend down to ground level.
- ♦ Desire to provide wildlife habitats

Whatever the reason, vertical gardening is becoming more popular (and necessary) and there are many wall planters on the market to help accomplish this. Alternatively, a series of rainwater guttering with stop-ends and drilled drain holes can be used. Either method will need regular watering & would benefit from an irrigation system.



Super Tree Grove, Singapore

Living walls can be planted with herbs, alpines, annuals, perennials, salad crops or smaller fruits eg strawberries, tumbler tomatoes. The best time of year to plant is spring and early summer, using plugs so the plants can establish themselves in the available space. Plants should be compact or able to take regular pruning.

On a commercial level, living walls are now being used extensively - as illustrated by London's [Sky Garden](#) (free entry) and Singapore's *Super Tree Grove*, featured on Attenborough's *Planet Earth II*



Suburban Vertical Garden

As well as being used for vertical walls, rainwater gutters are useful in the greenhouse for planting veg-garden seeds eg peas. They're particularly useful if you lose directly sown seeds to pests (eg mice) & will minimise root disturbance. Seeds can be germinated in a controlled environment and easily transplanted by placing the gutter on the planting site and sliding the soil off it directly into position. As a bonus you also achieve nice straight lines!

**ROCKET** is a popular and easy to grow salad crop which has a distinctive peppery flavour. High in Vitamins and trace elements such as folic acid & calcium, it has been grown since Elizabethan times. Planting in semi-shaded areas can reduce the risk of bolting in summer but if some plants do bolt, the flowers are also edible and provide decorative salads.

### For those who have log fires .....

Did you know that wood ash has a high potash content? As such it is beneficial when applied around fruit bushes & trees; root vegetables and potatoes will also profit. Take care though as potash is alkaline, so use cautiously if your soil pH is 7.5 or above.

### Bee Creative in the Garden

The Wildlife Trusts & RHS are urging gardeners to help protect bees, which are in decline, mainly due to a dramatic loss of habitat. Nectar and pollen rich plants can help our pollinators with the following plants being recommended:

*Caryopteris* × *clandonensis* (Caryopteris)  
*Dianthus barbatus* (Sweet william)  
*Erysimum* (Wallflower)  
*Hesperis matronalis* (Dame's violet)  
*Hyssopus officinalis* (Hyssop)  
*Jasminum officinale* (Common jasmine)  
*Lavandula angustifolia* (English lavender)  
*Lonicera periclymenum* (Honeysuckle)  
*Lychnis coronaria* (Rose campion)  
*Monarda didyma* (Bergamot or bee balm)  
*Verbena bonariensis* (Purple top)  
*Weigela florida* (Weigela)

Remember to NEVER use pesticides on plants that are in flower. For more info visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/science](http://www.rhs.org.uk/science)



### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**11-14<sup>th</sup> May** - Malvern Spring Festival. Advance tickets £18  
**14<sup>th</sup> May** - Rare Plant Fair Winterbourne House & Gardens, Birmingham B15 2RT 11am-4pm (£6)

**28<sup>th</sup> May** - Rare Plant Fair at Kingston Bagpuize House, Abingdon, Oxon OX13 5AX Gardens open 11am-4pm (£5), House and gardens (1pm-4pm) £7.50

**3<sup>rd</sup> June** - Lechlade open gardens. £5 roving ticket from their local Post Office. Proceeds to St Lawrence Church & British Heart Foundation

**10/11<sup>th</sup> June** - Ashton-under-Hill open gardens (1-6pm) £6  
 For more info ctrl/click on [www.ashtonopengardens.co.uk](http://www.ashtonopengardens.co.uk)

**11<sup>th</sup> June** - Winchcombe open gardens (2-6pm). Map & tickets £5 from Tourist Information Office or any participating garden.

**11<sup>th</sup> June-2<sup>nd</sup> July** - Fresh Air Sculpture Show at The Old Rectory, Quenington, GL7 5BN (10-5pm) £5, children free

**17-18<sup>th</sup> June** - Chipping Campden open gardens (2-6pm). Tickets £7.50 at Tourist Information Office. Refreshments and Plants for sale. See [www.chippingcampdenonline.org](http://www.chippingcampdenonline.org)

Have you anything of interest that can be included in the next newsletter? If so please contact Di Cook (editor) at [ditex.cook@btinternet.com](mailto:ditex.cook@btinternet.com) or Tel: 01242 821018