



# The Village GARDEN CLUB of Sevenhampton & District



Jul / Aug 2017

## NEXT MEETINGS

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July** - Coach Outing to Stone House Cottage & Witley Court & Gardens

**August** - No Garden Club meeting but ....

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> August** - 'The Show at Brockhampton' 1pm - 4.30 pm

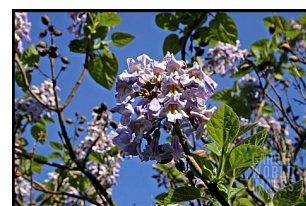


## Weather and Water

Irrigation and irritation co-habit in my garden. My plan was simple and seemed cheap: never buy water for the garden, nature would provide, with the aid of storage tanks to tide me over dry spells. In times of drought I'd give priority to veg and fruit over flowers, and seedlings over mature plants. With apparent climate change we should expect warmer, wetter winters, with hotter, drier summers. Over the past 20 years, I gradually built up my total storage capacity to about 1,500 gallons. Sounds ample, doesn't it?

Since 2007, I've kept records of rainfall in a rough and ready fashion, making guesses for absences away from home. Hours of fun could be had by a devotee of spreadsheets. All I can say is that, where annual totals have been higher (over 43 ins) it's because summers (April - September) have been wetter than winters (October-March); notably so in 2007, 2008 and 2012. However, in 2014 the winter rain was higher than usual and that bumped up the total. The 2016-17 winter was drier than most. The jury is still out on wet vs dry!

I haven't followed local temperatures, but have the strong impression that winters have been warmer, summers much the same, with longer and cooler springs. My winter thermometer is the *Paulownia tomentosa* (Foxglove tree), which this year put on its most spectacular display ever, being spared the freezing winds, which usually kill off its autumn-forming buds. The damson, however, failed for the Nth year in succession to set fruit.



*Paulownia tomentosa*

Back to water storage. Trouble is, Nature is getting fed up with my inefficiency. When I'd overdone the watering, she used to oblige with a thunderstorm right overhead. Nowadays, she tempts forecasters to prophesy rain but fails to deliver. So, it's goodbye seedlings because the last stored drop was poured too soon, after repairs to guttering and clearing of pipes had been neglected or bodged. This year has been worse than usual, but my good intentions are working overtime and Nature is responding in her own mysterious, wonderful way. Absences from home at crucial moments cost me many seeds requiring a cosetted start in life, but, once survivors started to germinate, there has been just enough rain (so far) to keep the plants going. Nevertheless the crops are going to be smaller and later. So it's goodbye prizes at The Show! The question is: how to increase those rainwater reserves? Answers please on the back of a postcard, if you can guess the address.....

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**Factfile:** **LUPINS** are members of the legume family of plants *Fabaceae* and as such are nitrogen fixers. They have a symbiotic relationship with a rhizobium bacteria which enables the plant to use nitrogen from the air and store it in nodules on its roots. There are over 200 species of lupins providing annual and perennial varieties together with some shrubs. They are easy to grow, preferring full sun, but are also popular with aphids and slugs! Lupins will start to flower from late May onwards. The flowers die from the base of the flower spike upwards and the best time to dead-head them is when two thirds of the flower spike (raceme) has died. New, smaller flowers will soon appear extending the flowering season into August.



Lupin seeds have been used as a food since Roman times and are still frequently used throughout the world, including Europe. In agriculture, seeds are used as an alternative to soybeans as a high protein stock feed. Some lupins, however, contain toxic alkaloids causing an allergic response in some people, so **don't be tempted to eat home-grown seeds.**

**U**p to 70% of our water supply can be used in gardens, particularly during hot weather. This increases groundwater and stream extraction by water suppliers, which in turn lowers water table levels. Many local homes rely on private water supplies, taking water directly from springs and boreholes, the availability of which is directly affected by water table levels. Here are **6 ways to minimise your use of water** in the garden:

**1 Look After Your Soil** Adding organic matter to the soil improves its structure, which helps it to retain moisture. Mulching flowerbeds, hanging baskets & pots will trap moisture. Add water-retentive granules/gel to soil in hanging baskets and containers.

**2 Water at the right time** Water plants in the early morning or evening when it's cooler, to reduce evaporation.

**3 Use the right amount of water** Don't irrigate too often or too much. Keeping the soil surface wet encourages the growth of shallow roots & doesn't benefit the plant.

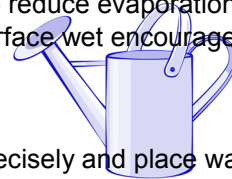
**4 Don't irrigate the lawn** Leave a longer cut and periodically leave clippings as a mulch.

**5 Use the best watering techniques for your plants**

Avoid using sprinklers. Instead use hoses and watering cans to target needy plants more precisely and place water directly onto the surrounding soil. As a bonus weed growth is limited.

**6 Collect rainwater and reuse old water** If every home in the country filled just one water butt a year (160 litres), we would have 4 billion litres of free water for our gardens. Reuse 'grey' water from baths, showers, washing up etc.

•Note: Household soaps & detergents are harmless to plants, but don't use water containing bleach, disinfectant, dishwasher salt or stronger cleaners.



### **TIPS FOR PREPARING GARDEN PRODUCE FOR SHOWING**



**VEGETABLES & FRUIT**—all types should be a similar shape and size.

**Potatoes**—cleaned to remove soil. Skins should be undamaged with no green colouring.

**Carrots/Parsnips/Beetroot**—remove all soil without damaging skin. Leaf stalks cut 1-1½ ins & tied.

**Onions**—should be dry (so don't lift last minute) with unbroken skin. Roots should be trimmed & tops turned & tied. Display on rings (cut toilet roll centre is useful). Display **shallots** on dry sand.

**Tomatoes**—select firm but ripe fruit which should not be polished. The green calyx should be attached.

**Courgettes/ Marrows**—should be cut with a small piece of stem attached. Courgettes can be displayed with flowers still attached.

**Beans**—pick young beans which won't be stringy (judge will snap them to check). Leave a small amount of stalk attached.

**Sweetcorn**—cut leaving a short stalk. Tidy outside leaves, keep fluffy bit!

**Peas**—Select full pods and cut with stem attached, Handle by stem to protect the bloom on the pods.

**Rhubarb**— Select and pull (don't cut) straight stalks. Trim leaves to 3 ins.

**Raspberries, Strawberries, Currants, Blackberries**— should be large, ripe and displayed with stalk attached.

**FLOWERS**—should be shown with straight stems and be of similar size; petals & foliage unblemished. Sweet peas should have 4 or more flowers on each stem; roses shown not in tight bud, nor in full bloom. Check dimensions of arrangements.



**THEFTS** of garden ornaments and tools are becoming increasingly frequent. To reduce vulnerability make sure garden equipment and tools are locked away when not in use. RHS offer the following advice to reduce such crime:

- ♦ Make sure boundaries are secure
- ♦ **Grow thorny climbers up fences**
- ♦ Install security lighting
- ♦ **Mark your property with your postcode**
- ♦ Install CCTV

### **Dates for your Diary**

**Sat. & Sun. 8/9<sup>th</sup> July** 10am-5pm. Art exhibition and open garden with Sally Coelho's *Hadfield Fine Art* at South Paddock, Sevenhampton. Free entry.

**Sun. 9<sup>th</sup> July** 2-5.30 pm. Open Garden, Ablington Manor, Nr Bibury, GL7 5NY. £5 all proceeds to Royal British Legion

**Sun. 23<sup>rd</sup> July** 11am-4pm Rare Plant Fair, Highnam Court, Nr. Gloucester GL2 8DP £5 entry. Proportion of proceeds to Cobalt.

**Sun. 30<sup>th</sup> July** 11am-4pm Rare Plant Fair, Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens, Birmingham B36 9BT £4.50 entry, RHS Members £3.50, Children £1

**Sat 26<sup>th</sup> August** 1—4.30 pm The Show at Brockhampton



Celebrity medic, Dr Michael Moseley, has recently issued a book "The Clever Guts Diet". In it he explores how to keep our gut healthy. One recommendation is to *"get your hands dirty, preferably by gardening. This will connect you with the trillions of (healthy) bacteria that live in the soil. It's also the best way to ensure you get really fresh fruit and vegetables."*  
*Publisher: Short Books Ltd. ISBN : 13:9781780723044*

Have you anything of interest that can be included in the next newsletter? If so please contact Di Cook (editor) at  
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