



The Village

GARDEN CLUB

of Sevenhampton & District

MAY / JUNE 2020



RHUBARB
(Rheum)

NEXT MEETINGS

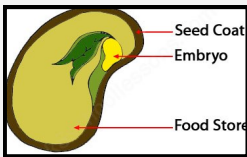
Dear Member

In view of the restrictions due to Covid-19, our club programme will sadly have to be suspended until September at the earliest. As a result, the meeting and AGM scheduled for 16th April, the two trips in May & June and July's meeting will not take place.

Subscriptions, which would normally be collected at the AGM, will now become due when the club reconvenes in the Autumn. These subscriptions will be reduced pro rata. In the meantime the Annual accounts for 2019/20 have been prepared and will be forwarded to you separately.

Although meetings are being adjourned, it is intended to keep the newsletter running throughout this period, with the next issue reaching your screens towards the end of June.

Meanwhile, the committee hope that you are keeping well and safe and that normal service will resume as soon as possible!



"We sow the seed and scatter"

As gardeners, we spend a good deal of time and money buying and sowing seeds. However, I would guess that most of us never give a thought to how this beautiful, yet complex, structure works.

A single seed contains a plant's embryo, the new plant in miniature. It provides a food store to help the seed's growth and the whole is covered by the 'testa' - which protects it from the elements, offers resistance to pathogens (eg bacteria) and in many cases is distasteful to prevent it being eaten.

Seeds vary enormously, some being smaller than a pinhead, others are huge. The largest seed is that of the Coco de Mer which is 15-20 inches in diameter and can weigh 60lbs (27kgs)! Regardless of size, each seed will remain dormant until the conditions for growth are just right. Temperature, water, day length, soil pH and location are factors that have to suit before a seed will germinate and grow.

Some seeds can survive for many years whilst waiting for their best conditions—for example Lotus seeds have survived for hundred of years before growing. Some seeds require periods of cold, an exposure to Winter, before they germinate – such as Cat Mint, Evening Primrose and Fuschia – whilst Ash seeds need periods of cold and heat and only germinate after two years. Perhaps more intriguing are seeds needing exposure to fire, such as the Giant Sequoia & Yellow Pitcher plants. The recent fires in Australia gave the green light to many seeds that had waited decades to start growing.

Plant germination, those biochemical events that result in cell division and growth and in turn produce a new plant, is amazing and it all starts within a 'not so simple' seed. Wow!

Top Tips for germination

- Start with clean pots and seed trays (to avoid fungal problems etc).
- Dampen compost before sowing and keep damp (cling film, a sheet of glass or clear rigid plastic is useful if you have no propagator lid).
- To avoid 'damping off disease' Improve compost drainage with perlite or grit; ensure good ventilation.
- Don't over sow. Don't over water. Keep seeds warm.
- If sowing outdoors ensure a fine tilth: sow into a line of sand or compost on top of heavy soils. Water regularly.
- LABEL – you will easily forget what's what!



[NOTE: Seeds can successfully be kept from one season to the next by storing them in a cool, dry, dark place – an airtight container in the fridge is ideal].



RHUBARB factfile:

Rhubarb is a general name given to cultivars of the *Rheum* genus belonging to the Polygonaceae family. It is a perennial rhizome and will grow in most garden soils. Cultivars *Grandad's Favourite*, *Redd's Early Superb*, *Stein's Champagne* & *Timperley Early* have the RHS 'Award of Garden Merit'. Whilst used frequently in deserts, rhubarb is botanically a vegetable and not a fruit.

Historically its use was medicinal rather than culinary, with it finding its way into the kitchen only two centuries ago. Over 5000 yrs ago, the Chinese were using its dried roots as a laxative, whilst 2000 years ago Greeks and Romans used the roots for a variety of medicines. It wasn't until the 19th Century that the use of rhubarb was recorded in Britain – its stalks popular in deserts and wine making.

Nowadays, with greenhouse production, rhubarb is available throughout much of the year. In the UK, commercially 'forced' rhubarb was harvested by candlelight, in sheds where all other light was excluded; a practice that produces a sweeter, more tender stalk. Many of these sheds are dotted around an area near Wakefield in Yorkshire, the once centre of rhubarb production known as the "[Rhubarb Triangle](#)" (follow link for more info). At one time the sheds covered an area of 30 sq.mls. When harvesting, the stalks should be pulled, not cut, to prevent crown rot. Best to propagate in late Autumn by dividing the crown and replant it straight away. Plants benefit from a mulch of well rotted compost at the year end.

Rhubarb leaves contain poisonous substances, including oxalic acid, and should be avoided as they can cause kidney problems. The edible leaf 'stalks' (leaf petioles) contain malic acid, which contributes to the sour taste. Rhubarb stalks can be eaten raw and young shoots were often dipped in sugar for a childhood treat. Rhubarb is an anti-oxidant and is a good source of Vitamin C and Calcium.



MAIL ORDER

Here are some growers who attend

Specialist Plant Fairs and who will do mail order deliveries:

Clematis Plants, Shrubs & Perennials www.clematisplants.co.uk/

Riverside Bulbs www.riversidebulbs.co.uk

The Botanic Nursery www.thebotanicnursery.co.uk

Special Plants www.specialplants.net

Some local nurseries providing delivery are:

Miserden Nurseries (01285 821638) www.miserdennurseries.co.uk

Dawn Nurseries (01242 862877) www.dawn-nurseries.co.uk

Dundry Nurseries (01452 713124) www.dundrynurseries.co.uk

Tortworth Plants (01454 260020) www.tortworthplants.co.uk

Ireley Nurseries (01242 604160) www.ireleynursery.co.uk

Gotherington Nursery www.gotheringtonnurseries.co.uk
(01242 676722)

Cotswold Garden Flowers www.cotswoldgardenflowers.co.uk
(01386 422829)

Whilst the **CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW** will not be held this year, highlights from the last 10yrs of the festival will be shown by the BBC in May.

BBC 1

Sun. 17 & Sun. 24 May - Two 60 minute programmes presented by Sophie Raworth and Joe Swift

Mon. 18 - Fri. 22 May - 45 minutes a day presented by Nicki Chapman

BBC 2

Mon. 18 - Fri. 22 May - 60 minutes a day presented by Monty Don and Joe Swift

The RHS notes this coming week as *National Garden Week*. So, with good growing weather & time on our hands, here are some **THINGS TO DO** in the garden, now and in the coming months:

STAKE tall/floppy plants or those with big flowers.

HOE regularly to keep on top of weeds.

REPAIR/ re-seed lawn edges and bare patches.

LIFT and divide spring bulbs.

FEED pot plants and re-plant into larger containers if necessary.

WATER morning/evening to avoid the heat of the day. Use rainwater or recycled water whenever possible.

EARTH up potatoes.

PRUNE Plum, cherry trees and other drupes.....

The best time to prune these is late spring/early summer during a dry day. Pruning in winter risks getting silver leaf disease. **See page 3 for general information on pruning.**

WhatsApp

Surplus plants? Need some seeds?

Produce to give away?



In these difficult times, organising your planting may not have gone to plan and you may have found difficulty acquiring seeds, plants etc. The local WhatsApp group have swapped surplus plants and ordered bulk compost deliveries etc. If you think joining this self-help group could be useful : Text Petrina on 07775 617749 or Beth on 07868 704681 or email villagedates@gmail.com

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 or Tel: 01242 821018

How to prune

- Safety first: Wear protective gloves and, if necessary, eye and head protection. If ladders are needed ensure they are stable and have someone with you to 'foot' them.
- Use sharp tools.
- When cutting a stem, cut just above a healthy bud, pair of buds or side shoot. Where possible, cut to an outward-facing bud or branch to avoid congestion and rubbing of branches.
- Make your cut 0.5cm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in) above the bud. Beware cutting too close, as this can induce death of the bud. Beware cutting too far from the bud, as this can result in dieback of the stub, and entry of rots and other infections.
- When removing larger limbs, you need to cut the branch twice. First make an undercut, about 20-30cm (8in-1ft) from the trunk, and follow this with an overcut. This often helps to prevent the bark tearing (but not always – hence 2 cuts). Then remove the stub in a similar way, first making a small undercut just outside of the branch collar (the slight swelling where the branch joins the trunk), followed by an overcut to meet the undercut, angling the cut away from the trunk to produce a slope that sheds rain.
- Avoid cutting flush to the trunk as the collar is the tree's natural protective zone where healing takes place.
- There is no need to use wound paints, as they are not thought to contribute to healing or prevent disease. Some thoughts suggest that, unless they are new, they can introduce spores into the cut.

