



# The Village GARDEN CLUB of Sevenhampton & District

JUL / AUG 2020



**Sunflower**

*Helianthus annuus*

**NEXT MEETINGS** These have been postponed until September, at the earliest. All members will be advised when we are able to resume, but until then enjoy your garden and stay safe!



### 3 'STEPPIES' TO GARDENING

Members of the Garden Club back in 2018 may remember that I wrote about my garden in the April edition. Or rather, I wrote about the large-scale model railway, which the previous owners had built there - complete with viaducts, tunnels and a quarry! It had looked wonderful with the trains operating whilst we viewed the house, but the trains have long gone and we needed to tidy things up.



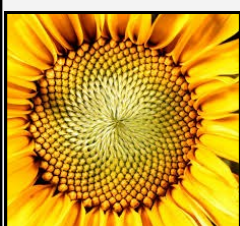
We live in 'The Quarry' and so have no choice but to keep the three different levels that retain the land behind our house. In addition, our garden is bounded on all sides with traditional stone walls, as you would expect with a cottage. First steps were to decide what we wanted to see on level one, outside of our kitchen windows. We both love traditional cottage-garden plants - so roses, lavender, salvias, iris and foxgloves were our starting point, especially as we were keen to attract bees and butterflies. Hornbeam was also added to soften some of those walls.

On the second level, I finally got something I had always wanted – raised vegetable beds. These have provided me valuable gardening lessons, and I am grateful to those people who have shared young plants from their own gardens during lockdown. I have had great success with lettuces, radishes and strawberries, although my French beans are not looking so good!

On to the top level, where the bulk of the railway was, we opted for hard landscaping, with paving, gravel and stones, and a selection of plants to grow through and around. It is stylish and low-maintenance and perfect for this warm, sunny weather we are enjoying, whilst still suited to a cottage garden. The plants are quite new and have some growing to do yet - but there is light at the end of the tunnel !

**SUNFLOWER FACTFILE:** The common name of 'Sunflower' typically refers to the popular annual species of *Helianthus* - *Helianthus annuus*, whose large, yellow, round flower-heads emulate the sun. Their flowers also move to face the sun as it travels across the sky; a process called heliotropism. There are over 70 other species of *Helianthus*. Some can be tall, not all are yellow and many are annuals. However, some are tuberous or rhizomatous perennials, such as the Jerusalem artichoke (*H. tuberosus*). *Helianthus* are native to the Americas and, over 2000 years ago, were first used as a crop in central America (present day Mexico). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they were brought back to Europe.

Their use is not only ornamental as the leaves can be used as fodder, the flowers yield a yellow dye, and the seeds are rich in oil. The oil has a multitude of uses including: culinary purposes (high in Vitamins A, D & E), as an animal feed, in soap & paint manufacturing and as a lubricant. Seeds may be eaten dried, roasted, or ground into a nut butter. They are also common in birdseed mixes.



All *helianthus* are members of the Asteraceae (Compositae) family. These are plants with flower heads composed of many small flowers (florets). Once pollinated, *helianthus* florets produce seeds, which are seen to form perfect spirals. The pattern of a sunflower's seeds demonstrates the mathematical Fibonacci sequence (1,2,3,5,8,13,21 etc), often observed in the natural world. Sunflowers do best planted in full sun, sheltered from winds and in fertile soil. Most varieties will need staking as they are often tall (the highest on record was over 30 feet !).

### Three Sisters Planting

Earlier in June, BBC's *Gardeners' World* featured 'Three Sisters planting'. This is a method devised long ago by Native Americans to grow their staple crops of maize, squash and beans in the limited spaces available to them. The crops were nutritious & easily stored over the winter, once dried. Planting formation of these crops varied, depending on the tradition of the tribes growing them, but the style most used is that of the Iroquois. However, all methods plant the 'sisters' together in clusters rather than single rows. This enables the central tall plants to support the climbing plants, which are then surrounded by the ground cover plants.

If interested in trying this method here are some things to consider:

- Prepare the ground with nutrients (good compost/ well rotted manure etc) before planting
- Ensure tall plants (eg sweetcorn, sunflowers) at the centre of the cluster are at a suitable height before introducing climbers (eg climbing French beans, runner beans).
- Ground cover plants (eg squash, pumpkins, courgettes) should be placed at the edge of the planting so they have enough light.
- Keep the planting compact (or provide access to the centre) to enable watering and regular cropping of the climbers.



### RHS Chelsea Awards

Each year the public are invited to vote for their favourite garden at the Chelsea Flower Show (which was cancelled this year for the first time since WWII). Votes have been scrutinised and the [Garden of the Decade](#) has been awarded to Mark Gregory. His 2018 gold medal display, entitled "Welcome to Yorkshire", held a rustic idyll which included a squeaky garden gate, sheep's wool caught on the wire fencing, traditional stone walling, a stream and flower meadow.



During the long restrictions of 'Lockdown', one of our members discovered some very interesting podcasts on the Dundry Nursery's website. Check them out on:

[www.dundrynurseries.co.uk/event.asp](http://www.dundrynurseries.co.uk/event.asp)

**THE PRODUCE SHOW** will be a "virtual" affair this year. Gardens being judged & various other online competitions involved. Once details are known, info will be sent out.

### GARDEN JOBS FOR JULY & AUGUST

- Deadhead flowering plants regularly
- Pick sweet peas daily to ensure continuous flowering
- Treat apple scab - remove blistered twigs, damaged fruit & fallen leaves
- Clear algae & debris from ponds, ensure water levels are maintained
- Prune wisteria (& again in January), lavender & other shrubs after flowering.
- Collect seeds for next year
- Secure strawberry runners in pots and sever from parent plant once rooted
- Raise blades on mower to avoid drought stress. Cutting lawn frequently enables the cuttings to be left as a mulch

*While you have a well earned rest from all the gardening, why not have a go at the cryptic quiz which accompanies this newsletter? It may be familiar to some of you as it was part of the activities at the Garden Club Social event in January.*

**Answers** will be sent out towards the end of July

### **WATER — that most precious commodity.**

After an unusually dry May, gardens (& water butts) have benefitted from the heavy rains of June. If watering is necessary, it is worth remembering:

- Water at the start or end of the day when temperatures are lower.
- A few drops of detergent in the water will help prevent run-off when a pot's surface soil is dry.
- Terracotta pots lose their moisture more quickly than plastic ones.
- Water plants before transplanting them and afterwards to help the soil settle around the roots.
- Ensure you water leafy vegetables (eg spinach/lettuce/onions) to prevent bolting; also podded veg (eg beans /peas) & potatoes (especially in flower).

August can be a difficult month for water as the water table is often low. Three drought-tolerant, sun-loving plants which perform well are dahlias, salvias and penstemons.



NGS gardens are opening but to visit a **pre-booked ticket is needed**. These are obtained from:

<https://ngs.org.uk/product-category/garden-tickets/>

**Some gardens open locally in July are:**

**Charlton Down House**, Tetbury, GL8 8TZ - Thursdays 2/9/16/23 & 30 July  
**South Lodge**, Church Road, Clearwell, GL16 8LG - Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July  
**Awkward Hill Cottage**, Bibury, GL7 5NH - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July  
**Green Bough**, Greet, Winchcombe, GL54 5BL - Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July  
**20 Forsdene Walk**, Coalway, Coleford, GL16 7JZ - Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July

(\*The NGS website also offers virtual tours of a wide variety of gardens)

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