



The Village

GARDEN CLUB

of Sevenhampton & District

MAR / APR 2021



Primrose
Primula vulgaris

Next Meetings

Wednesday **24th March**

(This will be a 'Zoom' meeting)

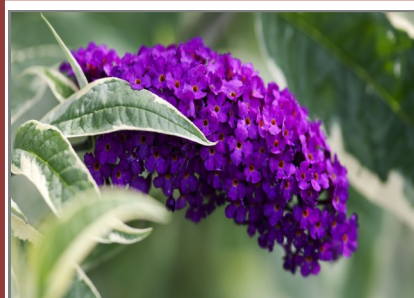
"Lawn Maintenance"

Mike Simmonds (Trugreen)

Thursday **22nd April**

(Format of meeting to be advised)

AGM & "The National Garden Scheme" Vanessa Berridge



Buddleia davidii

NOW IS THE TIME

Many years ago, I took a cutting from a buddleia bush which was in a friend's garden. Buddleia are often considered a nuisance, readily re-seeding without invitation in the most inhospitable of places, such as railway lines, bridges, gutters of buildings etc. etc. However, my friend's buddleia had dainty blooms of the deepest, brightest purple imaginable which produced the headiest of scents. Thus, although they can be problematic I thought it a risk worth taking - and I wasn't disappointed!

Placed at the back of my border, it provides other, more delicate plants some shelter from the winds and its colour complements nearby perennials such as delphiniums (*Delphinium elatum*) and Virginia spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*). And then the butterflies - inevitably attracted to the buddleia (also known as the Butterfly Bush) - also enhance the scene. Splendid!

I'm reminded of all this as *now* (late winter/early spring) is the time to prune buddleias. Flowers are borne on the current season's growth, so pruning should take place before the new buds start to swell. The aim is to produce sturdy new shoots arising from a permanent woody framework. Better find my secateurs (and wellies!).

PRIMROSE FACTFILE:

Primula vulgaris is the wild primrose, indigenous to the south west of Europe. It is a member of the family Primulaceae. Its flowers are pale yellow, although a dusty pink form is sometimes seen, which may be a genetic variant rather than a garden primula escape. It has crinkly, broad leaves, is low growing and prefers light shade; thus it is often found in hedgerows and at the edges of woodland. Nationally wild primroses are becoming rare and the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#) prohibits the picking or removal of wild primroses. Plants are pollinated by a variety of insects, which include beetles and ants, and they are an important source of nectar for early butterflies such as brimstone and tortoiseshell.

Numerous primula cultivars and hybrids have been selected for garden planting and are available in a wide range of colours. These often have an extended flowering season well beyond the typical spring time of the wild primrose (note from Ed: mine have been in continuous flower since last summer!). Primula, all of which are perennial, enjoy a moist soil and benefit from a mulch of organic matter or leaf mould.

All parts of the plant are edible. The leaves can be used in salads, soups and for tea; young flowers can be used for making wine. The roots were considered to have analgesic (pain-reducing), diuretic and expectorant properties. The leaves are rich in Vitamin C.

Primrose Day is the anniversary of the death of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield, on 19 April 1881. The primrose was his favourite flower and Queen Victoria would often send him bunches of them from Osborne House. She also sent a wreath of primroses to his funeral. Italy has a primrose as the symbol of its COVID-19 vaccination campaign.





Narcissus, daffodil and jonquil all belong to the genus *Narcissus*. These flowers are often associated with March and are a welcome sight in Springtime. Narcissus is named after the self adoring boy in Greek mythology, who was changed into a flower by the gods. Daffodils are also called Lent Lilies because they bloom throughout Lent, their flowers often fading before Easter. The wild daffodil (*N. pseudonarcissus*) is Gloucestershire's county flower.

Narcissus are generally low maintenance once the bulbs have been planted (at least 4 ins. deep) in the Autumn. In Spring, after flowering, allow the leaves to die back sufficiently before 'tidying up'. Don't be tempted to tie the leaves together or cut them down too soon, as they need to remain intact in order to absorb enough energy for their bulbs in readiness for flowering again next year.



WORLD WATER DAY - 22nd **MARCH**

Although it's difficult to imagine, given the amount of rain that's fallen in recent months, the need to conserve water and use it carefully as a valuable resource is greater than ever.

Water is only useful to plants if it reaches their deepest roots. Too little water just wets the soil surface, encouraging the plant to develop weak and shallow roots. Too much water will waterlog the soil causing root rot, as well as being wasteful.

With this in mind, it is important to manage water in your garden to provide an optimal amount all year round.

TOP TIPS ARE:

- **Install a water butt** - free water without tap water's chemicals
- **Water in the mornings** - ensuring plants have access to water before the day's heat causes evaporation
- **Don't water your lawn** - grass will become more resilient if left alone. Water droplets, lying on the lawn surface, act as magnifiers for the sun's rays and can scorch the grass.
- **Use watering cans instead of hoses** - using a hose for 1 hour is equivalent to the amount of water used by a family of 4 for two days. Watering cans reach specific plants that need the water.
- **Use 'grey' water** - use water from baths, sinks etc to subsidise the collection of rain water during dry weather.

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Although numbers were lower than hoped for, January's **Zoom Garden Club Quiz** went well with question-master Tex Cook keeping proceedings in order. Seven rounds (which included picture and music rounds) were contested and the overall winners were Robert & Lynne Jackson.

**Well done to the Manor Farm team!**

**D**ue to the Covid pandemic, the RHS has postponed their RHS Chelsea Flower Show for the first time since it started 108 years ago. Usually taking place mid-May, it has now been moved to  
21st - 26th September.

For the meanwhile, visits to local RHS and National Trust Gardens remain a possibility for exercise purposes only. Visits must be pre-booked on-line via their websites.



### **PLANT BRITAIN project**

BBC's Countryfile have launched a 2-year project to encourage everyone to 'do their bit' to tackle climate change, help wildlife and increase people's well being. People are being urged to get planting not just trees but all other plants including flowers, fruit and vegetables. They are asking people to record all of their plantings, including any seeds, on this [interactive map](#) (click on the link!). At the time of writing Gloucestershire has

### **EGGSTRADINARY**



The weather has been extremely variable in recent weeks and it seems too early to be planting seeds outside. Eggshells are perfect small 'pots' for starting seedlings off indoors. A free waste product, they are full of calcium and can be planted out crushed but intact, directly into the garden. Similarly, egg boxes can be used for growing seedlings. Crushed egg shells around plants provide calcium and deter pests such as slugs. They also provide a source of calcium for birds, particularly important during egg-laying time in the Spring.

- \*Prune bush and climbing roses
- \*Help Garden Birds by providing a nest box
- \*Remove early weeds before they get established
- \*Cut back perennials and provide them with a mulch; lift and divide if necessary.

### **THINGS TO DO**

- \*Top dress containers with fresh compost
- \*Plant shallots, onions & early potatoes
- \*Feed hungry shrubs and roses
- \*Sow new lawns and repair bare patches

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

On February 25<sup>th</sup> the Club welcomed our first speaker of the year. Here is a summary of

ELAINE SHEARS talking about ORGANIC GARDENING.

Elaine has been gardening organically for nearly 40 years. Being keen on wildlife, she feels that organic gardening is perfect for creating an environment which supports creatures large and small, as well as providing an abundance of flowers and vegetable crops. Key to organic gardening is good soil fertility created naturally and without the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides. This can be achieved by:

#### **FERTILISERS and COMPOST**

Use natural fertilisers / green manures eg comfrey / nettle liquid / phacelia

Build up the humus in the soil by adding compost / leafmould / farmyard manure (all of which *must* be well rotted for it to be effective). NOTE Humus in the soil will help to retain moisture for the plant as well as providing a *slow nutrient release*, achieved by bacterial and fungal activity in the soil.

#### **CROP ROTATION**

#### **PEST MANAGEMENT**

Create a barrier to protect crops using things like bottle cloche; horticultural fleece; fruit cages; slug collars; fine netting eg. Enviromesh

Encourage wildlife – toads, hedgehogs, birds by providing ponds, hedges & bird boxes etc.

Grow plants which deter pests eg French marigolds deter whitefly

#### **BIOLOGICAL CONTROL**

Moth traps, nematodes, parasitic wasps (the latter is often used in commercial greenhouses)

#### **MANAGING DISEASES**

Grow disease resistant crops

Exercise good husbandry – destroy diseased plants, don't add them to your compost

Provide the right plant with the right place, such as shade or full sun

#### **USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Green Gardener (Pest Control Catalogue) [www.greengardener.co.uk](http://www.greengardener.co.uk)

Garden Organic [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

Soil Association [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)

Gloucestershire Organic Gardening Group [www.gogg.uk](http://www.gogg.uk)

Gloucestershire Master Composters (Facebook page)

The Organic Gardening Catalogue [www.organiccatalogue.com](http://www.organiccatalogue.com)

Garden Organic Guide Books & Factsheets (See above for website)

**The Club's next talk will be on lawn management and with the grass beginning to grow once more, what could be more pertinent? As we are still coping with Covid, the talk will be via Zoom and hopefully many members will be joining in to find lots of information from guest speaker Mike Simmonds**

**AND FINALLY:** Henry Coelho is asking for SPARE FLOWERPOTS as he has 100's of seedlings that he needs to pot on for his Prairie Pollinator Friendly Garden. Contact him directly on 01242 821251 or email: [henryjw.coelho@gmail.com](mailto:henryjw.coelho@gmail.com) if you can help. Thank you.