

# AHS Newsletter No. 112 January 2021

## Chairman David Bingley

Welcome to the latest Society Newsletter.

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well during what continues to be a very difficult time. I think the days when we have some late winter sun gives us all hope of better times to come.

The ongoing pandemic continues to affect our program but I'm sure one day we will meet as before. In the meantime I am pleased to say we have a zoom meeting planned for the 20th of April - Gardens of Japan. More details will follow next month.

Covid restrictions permitting we hope to organise another plant sale during May, so please keep this in mind when preparing for the coming growing season. Beyond that we hope the ongoing vaccinations will allow a late summer and autumn program to continue as planned, starting with our Autumn Show. I hope you appreciate it is still far too early to be positive about the planned August vacation and autumn program but we have to keep our fingers crossed.

It is always good to share a few words with members while we are out and about but it is not always easy to recognise everyone behind their masks!

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this months Newsletter.

## Secretary Angela Hughes

2020 has been the most difficult year, not just for the Society but for the whole country, since the society was founded in 1885.

In January we had a very well attended Annual General Meeting when three new members came forward to stand on the committee after the meeting. Our February meeting was an excellent talk by Ian Thwait's on Cacti and Succulents and Ian brought a selection of his collection for members to see.

Then unfortunately the news of the Coronavirus spreading forced us to cancel our March meeting and the Spring Show. We were then placed in full lock down so it was obvious that after a lot of deliberations we were going to have to postpone our programme until the summer. Fortunately the spring weather was good and we had our gardens to keep us busy. One respite was that on 13th May the Garden Centres were able to open again and so we were able to join the socially distanced queues and buy our compost and plants ready for the summer.

Although the infection rates dipped it was obvious that a new wave was on the horizon and so the committee had the difficult decision to make to cancel the programme for the rest of the year. It proved to be the right decision when the second lockdown came into place and Oxfordshire was raised into Tier 2. We were, however, able to hold a very successful plant sale in the car park of the Northcourt Centre in September, on the day which should have been our Autumn Show, which raised some much needed revenue for the Society. Not helped by the council deciding to close Northcourt Road for roadworks on the very day we were holding the sale.

Now the anti-Covid vaccine is becoming available it is hoped that things may be easier by the middle of 2021 when our position will be reviewed again.

We were deeply saddened to learn of the deaths of our members Michael Carr, Celia Phelps, Keith Wakefield, Jean Hawtin, John Needham and Tom Chamberlain. Our sincere sympathies go to their families.

2020 was my last year as Secretary of the Society and I will be standing down when we can hold an AGM. I would like to thank everyone for the help and support you have all given me during my time in office, particularly with the outings and holidays that we have enjoyed together. I would also like to thank all our members for your patience and understanding in this very difficult time. I send you all my best wishes for a safe and healthy future, keep gardening.

## Show Secretary Barbara Bingley

Sadly there were no shows in 2020. Members were instead encouraged to submit photographs in various categories to our website.

The Spring show 2021 has already been cancelled but fingers crossed for the autumn one. The show schedule for this year has been kept the same, as far as is possible, as the one for 2020, so please keep for reference. The updated one can be viewed on the AHS website.

2021 is (according to Fleuroselect) the year of the courgette and the calendula so Class 7 is now: one vase, five stems, one or more calendula cultivars.

Overcrowding of exhibits in the autumn show was discussed at the AGM. The show is a local event and the hall has a finite exhibition space. It was agreed that entries in the shows should be restricted to local members and this has been defined as living within a 10 mile radius of the show venue.

Show or not, I am sure you will carry on growing, baking and making during 2021. We will arrange further photo galleries and it would be lovely if even more members sent in entries.

If you are a member who still has a cup won in 2019 please telephone me on 01235 521 337 to arrange its return. Many thanks

## Treasurer Karen Fisher

Accounts for this year show a good balance of £12423.27 in total.

Our bank account stands @£5383.09 and the National Savings @£5616.18. The bank account includes the deposits for the postponed holiday, £1817.25, and we hope to be able to use this in 2021. Also included in this account is the balance of the Muriel Welch Legacy of £831.82.

We withdrew £1000 from the National Savings in January to boost our bank account but did not need to use it this year.

We have maintained our affiliation with the Royal Horticultural Society and the National Vegetable Society.

Our plant sale was a success, despite the road closure, raising £179.94.

The 2020 accounts have now been approved by our external Examiner.

## Membership Ian Shepherd

The club has remained static for the last year as you would expect. The essential thing is for us to keep the contacts going so that the structure is still in place for the time when we can all be active again. Approximate numbers on our list are currently 84 single and 58 family. The term family basically means people all at one address. Newsletters are circulated by email but 20 members still receive printed copies. We encourage as many of those members to set up email addresses if they possibly can, it not only potentially saves a lot of postage money (although we shall use volunteers where possible), but in the future other documentation such as subscription renewals will be expedited on line. We are always pleased to hear from you if you would like to send in comments.

## Web Site David Hastings

Webmaster David has been working hard on our web site, many thanks for that David. Check out progress at <https://www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk/>

The original membership list held on a spread sheet has been moved into a proper database. The installation of this has required data encryption to prevent random access and to satisfy the requirements of the AHS Data Protection Policy. Please check this out on the web site under the heading 'Membership'.

We hope that the Autumn 2021 Show will go ahead, so to give you some planning time you will find the schedule on the web site at:  
[https://www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk/show\\_schedules](https://www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk/show_schedules)

This schedule is very similar to the original printed one for Autumn 2020, so you can use that if you wish, **but please check the rules and note that the dates will be incorrect.** We have a few printed 2020 schedules if you need one, but it will be first come first served. You can download and print your own 2021 schedule from the above link.

*Please send us any feedback / comments. ieshepherd1941@gmail.com*

## Dobies Seeds

A reminder that you can still purchase seeds at 50% discount using the printed catalogue or on line. Use the code GD1223G.

## Recipe Linda Berry

### Marzipan Apples

#### Ingredients

4 large cooking apples

Juice of 1 lemon

2oz/50g melted butter

4oz/100g marzipan

1 dessertspoon of brandy

12 blanched almonds roughly chopped or use flaked almonds

Optional 150 ml of apple juice

Cream or custard to serve

Oven 200 C/400 F/ Gas Mark 6

#### Method

Peel the apples and cut out the cores

Brush first with lemon juice, then with melted butter – inside and out.

Arrange in a buttered, ovenproof dish

Knead the marzipan with the brandy until pliable.

Stuff the marzipan down the centre of the apples and place any surplus on top.

Sprinkle with the almonds

Add the apple juice to the dish, if using

Bake for 25 minutes or until the apple is cooked and the marzipan is golden.

## Healthy soil and biological symbiosis Bryan Hitchman

Having a garden or allotment is mainly fun!, despite the pesky pests and inclement weather with the cadence of the seasons upset by mankind footprint, leading to environmental changes.

Everything we grow and cherish needs a firm foundation, particular soil, where their roots need to produce the vibrancy of its bounty. When we look at the biosphere of earth, the growing medium of productive soil is made up of these main types:- clay, sandy, silt, loam and chalky. Each presenting it problems for maintain health plants.

There are also two other important elements, water and sunshine, which all help in keeping the vibrance of the soil to propagate healthy plants. In addition, a subject that has fascinated me for many years since I was involved in the production of Homeopathic and Bach Remedies, is energy transference.

The earth is bathed in energy every day in the form of Electromagnetic radiation (EMR), an essential source that is used by plant leaves and soil underground. There is not enough space to explain the complex relationship, such as the energy flow between the soil and the plant. We already know that, if we take sweet corn as an example, picked and cooked in under an hour, it tastes so much better than shop bought ones. This is because the energy and vibrancy dissipates when it is pulled from the soil.

On My Christmas list last year was a book by **Nigel Palmer *The Regenerative Growers guide to Garden Amendments***. This will give you all the knowhow and technical detail in improving your soil. It is in two main parts, ***Nourishment from the Ground up and Making Mineral and Biological Amendments***.

The first part deals with the old plant model that, as gardeners we have been following for decades. A one way system of nutrient from the soil into the plant, with no biological importance involved . We use only fertilizers and sprays to kill pests. The new model in this book lays out a road map which give us an understanding of the model of symbiosis – the biological interaction, recognizing that plants can be grown without the need of artificial fertilizers or pesticides.

By using local materials such as nettles and even the weeds!, this simple process, on nurturing the soil ecosystem diversity and moving the mineral proportions of the soil balance by using crushed rocks etc., will facilitate a better energy flow from soil to plant. Built around these three strategies :-

1. Build healthy Soil
2. Correcting deficiencies and excesses of mineral nutrients.
3. Supplying the short term needs of the plant.
- 4.

Section 2 of the book is like a gardener's cook book. A lot of us, I expect will have used comfrey extracts etc. but this book provides 70 pages of extraction amendments and methods. Some examples :-Organic brown sugar and plant waste used for encouraging plant growth and Fermented Fish used as foliage spray.

There are also many other useful mineral reference tables showing what you will get out of these amendments and a useful guide to what we can expect if we use single plants such as Dandelions which has one of the highest concentration of (CL) chlorine . Who knew that? The book goes into a lot of detail and gives you a great stepping stone to other books. I can not wait to get the allotment home brew on. The proof as they say is in the eating.

## OBITUARIES

### John Needham

It was with great sorrow that we learnt that John had lost his fight with cancer on the 1st January. Our sincere condolences go out to Ann and their son Michael. John had been associated with the Society both as a member and with his support of Ann who had served on our committee for many years and was our Vice Chairman up until her retirement last year. Both John and Ann enjoyed the outings and the holidays together. He will be greatly missed.

### Tom Chamberlain

We were saddened to learn of the death of our long standing member Tom Chamberlain on 6th January. We will all miss him at our meetings and send our sincere condolences to his family.