

AHS Newsletter No. 115 April 2022

Founded 1885

<https://www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk>

WI trip

AHS members are invited to join a North Abingdon WI outing to Wisley on Wednesday 18th May. The cost is £16 for the coach. Entry to Wisley is £13 or free for you & a friend if you are a member of the RHS. The coach leaves Christ Church, Northcourt Road at 10am.

Please contact Ann Murdoch on 07775 039 094 or by email mummmaannie2@gmail.com if interested.

Spring Show

Barbara Bingley

After two years without a Spring Show it was good to be greeted by a very sunny, if cool, day for this year's show. I wondered if any flower exhibits had survived the strong blustery winds on Thursday.

The number of exhibitors and entries was slightly down on 2019 but the tables were still full of colourful and high-quality exhibits. There were entries in every flower and plant class with tulip entries most numerous. The floral arrangements were beautiful. There were fewer entries in the domestic classes but the handicraft classes were very well supported this time. The judge had a very difficult job as the standard was so high. The display of photographs was popular with members and visitors.

The cups were presented by our recently retired secretary, Angela Hughes.

Victoria Middleton won the J & M Barber cup for most points in the Flowers and Plants section. Suzanne Hamblin won the Challenor Cup for Handicrafts. Victoria had an equal number of points but Suzanne had two 1st placed entries.

Ron Hamblin won the Best Spring Garden Cup.

Diana Wiggins won the Scott Challenge Cup for Domestic classes.

Edna Hole's flower arrangement was placed first. Eileen Bontempelli was awarded first prize for her photograph and nine-year-old Phoebe gained most points in the junior classes. It is always good to see the high standard of entries in this section. Prizes were seeds & a chocolate orange. Congratulations to all exhibitors. Each & every entry contributes to making the show a success.

Barbara Bingley
Show Secretary

Spring Show accounts

Karen Fisher

Spring Show

2022

Expenditure

Prizes	£114.00
Children	£6.00
Photos	£2.08
Refreshments	£8.10
Bouquet for prize giver	£5.00
Hall Hire	£200.00

TOTAL £335.18

Profit £24.92

Income

Entries	£57.50
Door	£77.00
Raffle	£90.10
Plants	£44.00
Teas	£19.40
Donations	£3.50
Cash Return	£28.60
Float Return	£40.00

TOTAL £360.10

Program

The details about talks, shows, trips etc are on our web site.

<https://www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk/events>

If anyone needs a printed copy please contact membership@abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk

Membership

Many thanks to all those members who have sent in their subscriptions so promptly. We still have a long list of recent members who have not sent in their subscriptions for 2022. We really don't want to lose you, so please send as soon as possible. In due course we will need to remove non-paying members from our mailing list.

Our intention is that you will receive a personal reminder about the subscriptions. We are now using our new database for this. Members who resign or leave for any reason will be automatically removed from the membership list 4 months after the resignation.

Application forms for new members, and information about subscriptions can be found on our web site at:

<https://www.abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk/downloads/membership-form.pdf>

Any problems you have please contact membership@abingdon-hort-soc.org.uk

Minutes of meetings will also be placed on the web site when they are available.

Future Programme

Thursday 12th May Visit to Exbury Gardens and Railway

Saturday 14th May Plant Sale 10am to 12noon Northcourt Centre car park

Tuesday 17th May A Wild Goose Chase – Jack Willgoss

(A follow up to Jack's first visit to Abingdon)

Thursday 7th July Mottisfont Abbey and Gardens. Mottisfont is a National Trust property with riverside gardens, a walled garden, kitchen garden etc with cafe and loos. The society last went there about 7 years ago.

Tuesday 6th September RHS Wisley with its extensive grounds, huge glass house and, new for this year, Hill Top home of gardening science. The date was chosen as it is the first day of the Annual Flower Show.

Application forms for these trips will be sent out later.

Saturday 10th September Autumn Show

Tuesday 18th October Winter Containers - Paul Williams

Tuesday 15th November Floriade - David Bingley

December Christmas Lunch (TBC)

Tuesday 17 January 2023 AGM followed by a Quiz

FREE TOURS AT OXFORD BOTANIC GARDEN AND ARBORETUM

Peter Girling, Volunteer Guide Coordinator, OBGA

During 2020 and 2021 lockdowns encouraged local people to visit the Oxford Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum (OBGA) in large numbers when each reopened. It also encouraged the garden to offer free tours on a trial basis.

These free Thursday tours proved very popular, and they will be resumed on 12th May starting at 11.30 am and 2.30 pm. Visitors only need to register their interest in attending on arrival. I do hope that more AHS members will take this opportunity to learn how the garden has been changing to make it even more interesting and relevant to gardeners and to the public.

Later in the year the delayed celebrations of the garden's 400th anniversary will resume during the 3rd and 4th weeks of July. A series of special events are being held and these will be set out on the OBGA web site (<https://www.obga.ox.ac.uk>). Those scheduled for the second week from Monday 25th to Saturday 30th July will be of general public interest. During that week, even more free garden tours will be available each day starting at 11 am, 1.30 pm and 3 pm.

Finally, can I alert members to the Spring Fair being held at Harcourt Arboretum on Saturday 14th May. Unfortunately, this event overlaps with the AHS plant sale that morning, but the arboretum will also offer free introductory tours starting at 11 am, 12 noon, 2 and 3 pm.

Growbags and Composts

I wrote this note in 2006. Some of the facts will be out of date, but the sentiments seem to have changed very little in 16 Years.

Many of you will have purchased grow bags. But do you know what is inside them? In these times of peat conservation and enthusiasm for organic gardening, it is interesting to find out. Some of the well-known proprietary products (eg Levington, Westland, J Arthur Bower, etc.) might be labelled with the contents. But what about B & Q or Homebase?

Homebase ' 85% peat, 15% composted bark. A slightly coarser grade of peat is used as this allows better drainage and air movement. A high potassium fertiliser is used (no quantities specified) as potassium plays an important part in flower and fruit production, especially tomatoes' 'Homebase peat free. '90% composted bark, 10% sterilised loam. Due to the nature of the bark, this compost is slightly more open in structure, and the loam acts as a fertiliser buffer' (I don't know what that means. I would be interested to hear from anyone who does).

B&Q bags are described as having at least 20% alternative sustainable ingredients (?), and, presumably, 80% peat (with a policy of long term reduction). Nutrients are also added. The 'enriched peat free' grow bags (they don't seem to be available in Abingdon) are only described as having 'slow release plant food'.

I find that the peat free bags dry out much more quickly than the peat based types. There is a huge range of other composts, including the multipurpose and John Innes types. Many of them consist of various mixtures of peat, composted bark, loam, water storage crystals, perlite , nutrients etc. The use of composted waste seems to be minimal.

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