



Abingdon Horticultural Society

2024 Spring Newsletter

Number 123

Chair Report - David Bingley

Mike Matthews has decided to step down as our President. Mike has served as a Committee member, Chairman and President for many years. He continued the Matthews family involvement that helped with the success of our society. The committee have thanked him for his work and support, and we wish him well as he focuses on other priorities.

Picture taken at the Mayor Making May 2022



The Stretton Smith family have very kindly donated the AHS Celia Smith Challenge Cup, this will be presented at the Autumn Show this year for the winner of the Junior classes.

Spring Show Report - Barbara Bingley

Our Spring Show on the 13th April was held on a beautiful, warm, sunny Spring day. It was the perfect weather for exhibitors and visitors alike. It is always appreciated when there is no high wind or rain on a show day!

Despite very unhelpful weather leading up to the show, including so much rain, hail, and blustery winds, members triumphed as usual, and their entries made a lovely colourful display.

33 members & 4 children put in a total of 210 entries. Most popular classes this year were the tulips, flowering plant in a pot, petite Spring flower arrangement, the apricot & marmalade cake & the photography.

My thanks in making the show a success goes, in addition to those who entered, to our judges and everyone who helped on the plant, cakes & produce tables, the raffle & providing refreshments, and all who visited. Also to the "cleanup crew" afterwards!

The mayor, Councillor Gwyneth Lewis, enjoyed her look round the show and later gave out the cups to the following who gained most points in the different sections:

- Janice Stratton-Smith - J & M Barber cup - Flowers & Plants
- Barbara Bingley - Scott Challenge cup - Homecraft - Preserves & Baking
- Angela Arnold - Challenor cup - Homecraft - Handicrafts

Robyn Matthews was most successful in the Junior classes and John Harris in the Photography section.

2024 Spring Show Financial Report – Karen Fisher

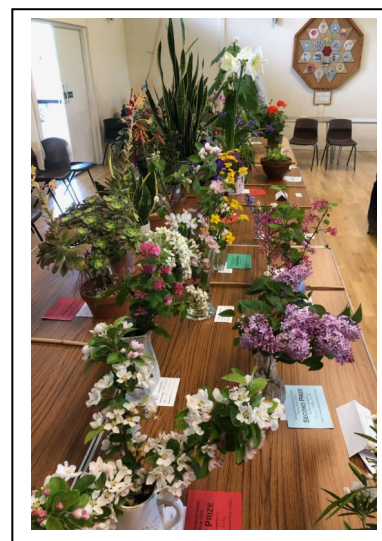
We had 204 entries which gave us £51.00.

Other Income:

• Entries & donation	£52.30
• Money returned to bank	£30.80.
• Door Receipts	£88.00
• Cakes sales	£74.45
• Plant Sales	£119.71
• Raffle	£77.00
• Teas	£37.00

Our expenditure for the show included:

• Prize Money	£69.20
• Junior Prizes	£4.75
• Hire of the Hall	£271.74
• Cash from bank	£150



Please note the hall fees are based on last year's charges as we have not yet received an invoice. Our loss on the show was just over £16.00.



For those that wish to give the Apricot and Marmalade cake a try here is the recipe: -

Apricot & Marmalade Loaf Cake

Ingredients

25g orange marmalade
100g butter
finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
275g self-raising flour
100g soft light brown sugar
1 egg beaten.
100g dried no soak apricots, chopped.
25g dried cranberries

For the topping:

100g icing sugar.
4 teaspoons fresh orange juice
25g chopped apricots and 25g
cranberries to decorate.

Method

Preheat oven to 350°F/180°C/160°C fan/gas 4.
Grease and line a 450g loaf tin.
Melt the marmalade with the butter over a low heat, stirring until the fat melts. Remove from the heat and add the orange juice and zest. Cool for five minutes.
Place all the remaining ingredients except the fruit in a bowl and add the melted mixture. Beat together until smooth, then fold in the fruit. Spoon into the tin and bake for 40 minutes until risen and firm in the centre.
Cool in the tin for five minutes, then turn out to cool and peel away the lining paper. Make the topping by blending the icing sugar with the orange juice to make a smooth icing. Drizzle over the top of the cake, then scatter the centre with chopped apricots and cranberries.

Trips - Robin Carter

The Sir Harold Hillier trip on Thursday, 30th May is going ahead, we still have some seats available but I would like any applications to me by the end of the month or the first week in May, email robin.carter78@yahoo.com

Our next day out to Kew will be on Thursday, 22nd August. The application form with information, prices, times, etc will be out in May.

Holiday - Suzanne Hamblin

Not long to go until our holiday to Colchester, departing on 9th June visiting Myddleton House Gardens, RHS Hyde Hall, Sutton Hoo, time to explore Colchester, Cambridge University Botanic Garden, Anglesey Abbey, Gardens & Lode Mill and Beth Chatto's Plant & Gardens. Thank you to everyone for getting their holiday balances to me in good time. The itinerary and pick up point timings will be sent out shortly.

Plant Sale

The annual plant sale is getting closer and hopefully you are all busy growing, dividing and nurturing plants to be ready for Saturday the 11th May. The sale is from 10:00 to 12:00 in the Northcourt Centre car park (NB cash only!) If you have items but are busy on the 11th then they can be dropped off beforehand at David Bingley's, 69 Radley Road, Abingdon, OX14 3PN Telephone: 01235 521337.

Meeting Dates and speakers

Saturday 11th	May	Plant Sale		Bring and buy
Tuesday 21 st	May	Talk	David Busby	Bees
Saturday 7 th	September	Autumn Show		
Tuesday 15 th	October	Talk	Bryan Hitchman	Bach Flower Remedies The 12 healers.
Tuesday 19th	November	Talk		

News from Members

Blue Sky Eco Café

Susan Hammersley, an AHS committee member, is one of the volunteers who open the Blue Sky Eco Café on the first Tuesday of every month, except January and August, from 12 – 2pm at Long Furlong Community Centre, Abingdon, OX14 1XP. The next dates are May 7th, June 4th and July 6th then closed in August.

They serve organic, seasonal and locally sourced foods which include wholefoods, plant based, vegan and gluten free options. All food is freshly prepared. They are always delighted to receive any surplus garden vegetables to cook with. Contact susanrmd@outlook.com or 07732 561436.

Menus are available on the website: <https://blueskyecocafe.org.uk>.

Trinity College Talks

The final two talks of the winter at Trinity College Oxford, are coming soon, they are being organised by Kate Burtonwood who came to talk to us last year.

1st May: Sustainable Gardening at Trinity <https://www.ticketsoxford.com/events/kate-burtonwood>

15th May: Plants for Wellbeing, Ashley Edwards, Head Gardener, Horatio's Garden <https://www.ticketsoxford.com/events/ashley-edwards>

Following on from our last talk here is an article by Mickfield Hostas

<https://mickfieldhostas.co.uk/>

Inspiring combinations

One of the benefits of exhibiting *Hosta* at shows is to illustrate planting combinations, and how you can create a wonderfully varied border using just one genus.

Hosta borders

Herbaceous borders can take a lot of maintenance to keep them looking lovely. If you grow a lot of *Hosta* together they can look fabulous and, because there isn't the constant shedding of decaying flowers and leaves, they naturally attract less pests. If you place a few jars on their sides with some slug pellets in each, in the darkest recesses of the bed, you will target any snails that do wander into the area. Beer traps work quite well in these conditions but the smell can attract more of a problem, rather like scattering pellets - use the pellets in the jars, it works.



Malvern Spring 2012

Also, if you have no love for the flowers, removing them helps minimise the risk of attracting pests, and it tricks the plants into thinking their season isn't yet over!

Replicating a natural environment

Hosta are woodland plants, naturally found growing on the lower slopes of the mountains where they form the lower layer of vegetation. Above them grow small trees, such as acers. These two images are of *acer* 'Pixie' standing over *Hosta* in our 2012 Malvern Spring display. This choice of red-leaved tree was made to mirror the red stems of *H.* 'Fire

The dappled shade created by maples is excellent for keeping the worse of the weather off your *Hosta*. However, the biggest advantage of growing *Hosta* under trees is the fact that they are constantly shedding decaying material. Woodland floors are constantly littered with debris, which is what pests feed on. It is the converse idea to the one mentioned previously, but if you have too many pests they will also munch your fresh vegetation. The answer to any pest problem is balance, because the garden needs pests, as do the wildlife that predate on them. However, too many pests and you will need to intervene with the little glass jars.

Using similar types of plant

Some combinations work really well because the plants are related. A particularly gratifying branch of the *Hosta* genus to play with is the Tardiana group, which includes such favourites as *H.* 'June' and *H.* 'Touch of Class'. Selecting different branches of the genus to display together is something we like to do in Plant Heritage displays because it helps illustrate the characteristics shared by those plants more closely related to each other.



Two Tardiana Group *Hosta*, *H.* 'Mourning Dove' and *H.* 'El Nino' are planted next to each other for the 2012 Malvern Spring show - complementing each other beautifully



H. 'Midnight at the Oasis' and *H.* 'Spring Fling' planted among others from the *H.* 'Francee' branch of the genus, at Hampton Court 2011

Box Moth – a partial solution? supplied by Peter Girling.

If you have box, *Buxus sempervirens*, it has probably been affected by the box moth, *Cydalima perspectalis*. This medium sized moth originates from eastern Asia and reached the UK in 2008. With no natural predators here, it has spread rapidly and is now found across southern Britain. Box moth can have multiple generations per year, favouring warmer months when its lifecycle is completed in a matter of weeks. This is when most of the damage can be seen. Leaves appear chewed and eaten and the whole plant loses its green sheen. As dead twiggy branches predominate the plant takes on a more skeletal appearance.

The caterpillars are not obvious at first, but closer inspection reveals the leaves woven by silken thread into small envelopes where the larval stage make their home. Leaves can be pale brown due to loss of living tissue. These 'envelopes' can be squeezed by hand and the caterpillars or pupae destroyed. Caterpillars can also be picked off, but this is time consuming and requires good eyesight, patience and time.

However, there is a biological control method, XenTari from Top Buxus, although it is not yet UK registered and only available from Amazon for £19.95. It is mixed with water and sprayed over the foliage. When the box moth larvae eat the treated leaves they stop feeding within one or two hours. This is the key factor about the product because they eat lots of foliage very quickly. Once they stop, they start to die, losing moisture, shrivelling and changing colour.

The treatment is highly specific and does not harm beneficial insects like bees, humans, wildlife or the environment. It can be applied through an ordinary garden sprayer set at a coarse droplet size to minimise spray drift. Three to four applications a year should control predation.



As applications of XenTari biological control are needed several times per year this is only practical where high valued box topiary, hedging and specimen plants are affected. Each gardener will need to make their own decision on whether to treat or remove affected plants. In time the population of box moth should crash as their primary food source becomes scarce.

This abstract is based upon a full account by Nicholas Wray, Curator of The University of Bristol Botanic Garden in their Friends' Newsletter, Winter 2023.

Author: Nick Wray, Curator University of Bristol Botanic Garden, December 2023

Obituaries

John Varley died on 21st December. He was a retired member of the Club but previously went on the outings and holidays with his wife Pat.

Requests

If any members have any useful garden tips, tasty menus they wish to share or any other items of interest they would like to have considered for the next newsletter then please forward these to the secretary, Linda Berry.

Donations for the raffle would be greatly appreciated. Barry and Diana Wiggins, who organise the raffles, would like to thank all those who have already donated this year.



Anyone who has unwanted packets of seeds please bring them along to a talk for us to pass on to members who would like them.

Sponsor

Charlton Park Garden Centre in Wantage sponsors our Society by supplying us with plants for raffles. Their garden centre has an extensive range of quality plants and garden requisites. They also bring a wide range of seasonal plants and bulbs to the Abingdon Market on a Monday. We hope you will continue to support them.

Contacts

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