



Abingdon Horticultural Society

2024 Winter Newsletter

Number 126

Welcome to the Winter newsletter.

Chair Report - David Bingley

Happy New Year everyone.

After a very successful year for the Society, it was good to be able to share Christmas lunch with 48 members at The Coseners House on 12th December. The chef and staff looked after us very well and our thanks to Linda for organising the lunch. I look forward to seeing you all again as the 2025 meetings start with our AGM on the 21st January. The AGM is a meeting where discussion can affect the direction our society moves in the future.

Jobs for the early weeks of the year:

- Seed orders from Dobies can still be made using the code **SUGD120M** for the full 50% discount.
- Chillies, aubergines and peppers benefit from an early sowing to get the longest possible growing season and highest yields. However, my early tomato sowings normally result in leggy plants before it is warm enough to plant them out - I will delay sowing them this year! 2024 was a very good year for tomatoes on the allotment.
- If you didn't plant your sweet peas in the Autumn they may be sown in the first three months of the year in the cold frame or propagator.
- There is still time to prune your climbing roses, apple and pear trees. Hard wood cuttings can be taken while the wood is dormant, Weigela, Forsythia as well as Red and Black Currants are all good candidates.
- Don't forget to keep the bird feeders clean and well stocked - regular visitors to the feeders are always good to see in the garden.

Treasurer - Karen Fisher

Polite reminder that annual subs are due from 1st January 2025 - £18 family, £11 single, payment by BACS, cheque or cash. A reminder will be sent by email on 8th January.

Show 2025 – Barbara Bingley

This year's shows are on 29th March and 6th September. The schedules are on our website. The major changes for this year (& 2026) will be that entries for all classes are free and there will be no prize money. You will still need to submit your entries as usual, and I look forward to a bumper number of exhibitors & exhibits.

Several members asked what the judges look for when they judge the entries so the following guides may be helpful.

David Hastings has been a steward for the Flowers & Plants and Fruit & Vegetable sections for many years as well as being a very successful exhibitor.

Exhibiting at a Horticultural show – David Hastings 2024

1. Remember the old axiom that Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.
2. Do your research. Visit AHS and other shows to see what the standard is like in the classes you are thinking of entering.
3. When the schedules for the next shows are published (usually in January), make sure that the classes you want to enter are actually on the schedule.
4. You don't want bad weather or pests to damage the flowers, fruit or veg you want to enter, so make sure you grow enough plants so that some losses can be tolerated.
5. Put the dates of the shows, and the dates by which entries must be received, in your calendar.
6. Read the show rules.
7. Read the entry requirements for each class you wish to enter. To avoid the dreaded 'NAS' (not as schedule) on your entry, make sure you follow them.

Common mistakes are not entering the correct number of stems in flower classes; entering a Trumpet Daffodil class with blooms which do not have the trumpet at least as long as the outer petals; not entering the correct number of items in fruit and veg classes; using containers that are too big; not putting water in vases or other containers.

8. How an exhibit is displayed is important – you want to catch the judge's eye.

Narcissi

If you are exhibiting Narcissi, don't just plonk five stems in a jam jar. Use a proper vase. If leaves are allowed, use them. Arrange the stems so that all the blooms face forward. Moss can be used to hold the stems in place. Narcissi can be picked in bud a few days before the show. Keep them in a cool place and the blooms should open in time for the show (don't do this for tulips, though).

Onions/Shallots

If the schedule says that onions or shallots must be 'dressed', this means folding over the tops and binding them with raffia. Soaking raffia in water makes it much easier to work with. If the tops are crispy and liable to crack, as shallots often are, wrap the tops in a damp kitchen cloth for a bit before you bind them. Get a loo roll tube and cut it into 1-inch rings. These make good stands for onions.

Tomatoes/Garlic

Small items like garlic and tomatoes can be exhibited in a saucer of horticultural sand. This stops them falling over.

Foliage/Flowering plants

If you are entering a plant, make sure that any dead leaves/flowers are removed.

Classes with more than one item

If a class requires more than one item, make sure they are all the same size and shape.

9. Make sure that entries are with the Show Secretary by the specified date & time (usually 9pm on the Wednesday before the show).
10. 'Staging' means putting an exhibit in the right place on the table and putting the correct entry card on it. You can put the variety name (if known) on the card if you like. The stewards use the entry cards to tie exhibitor numbers to actual exhibitors. This is so that names of exhibitors aren't visible to the judges.
11. On the show day, get there as soon as staging opens (for the Autumn Show, exhibits can be staged on the Friday evening). The Show Secretary will give you the cards for your exhibits.
12. If you can't provide an exhibit for a class on the day, let the Show Secretary know.
13. If you are aiming to win a trophy, the way to do it is to enter as many of the classes which relate to the trophy as you can. Firsts are nice to get, but seconds and thirds also pick up points, and it is the total number of points that matters.
14. Be present when the awards are presented.
15. Remember to take away all plants, containers etc at the end of the show.

Guide to Showing in the Spring Show - Barbara Bingley

This should be read along with the hints in the schedule. In all classes check that your entry matches the description in the relevant class.

Homecraft - Preserves

Classes, 29-32

The judges will mark the following:

Container, cover, label and appearance.

Internal colour, consistency, texture & quantity.

Flavour and aroma.

Classes 29 & 30

Jars of marmalade should be filled to within 3 mm (1/8 of an inch) of top. Fill to top and allow for shrinkage. Colour should be bright, even and characteristic of the fruit.

Flavour should be true of the fruit, full, fresh and well balanced.

Peel in marmalade should be sliced rather than minced, be tender and evenly distributed.

Class 31 - Citrus curd

Use wax disc & cellophane cover.

Bright colour, spreadable smooth consistency. No egg spots, peel, scum, sugar crystals or air bubbles. Fresh well-balanced flavour & no greasy taste.

Class 32 - Chutneys

Should be filled to 12 mm (half an inch).

Bright and even colour, not muddy.

Reasonably firm and uniform consistency, with no large pieces of onion, skin, cores or

stones. No air bubbles or free vinegar. Mature flavour (made at least three months before show).

Class 33 – Hot cross buns.

Judges look at the external appearance. internal condition – texture and distribution of ingredients. Good balance of flavours – use fresh spices.

Class 34 – have fun decorating a cake you will enjoy eating.

Class 35 – Orange sponge sandwich cake - recipe is given. Even though all exhibitors use the same recipe, there is usually a wide range in how the cakes look.

Cakes should be well risen and even in shape and baking. Smooth sides indicate a well-lined tin. Use fresh orange and marmalade. Add juice to the icing sugar slowly, as icing can quickly become too runny!

Classes 39 and 40 - Photography

While out and about look for interesting scenes for possible pictures to enter winter and spring photos.

Judge will look for originality, in focus, well composed with emphasis on main subject.

Homecraft - Handicrafts

Classes 41 - 47

All items should be fit for purpose, safe & easy to use and pleasing to look at & handle.

Aspects considered, depending on the class, will be shape, scale, balance, space, colour, texture, proportion, form, variety & harmony.

The WI book 'On with the Show' has been used to summarise the showing pointers for the classes.

If you have any queries/questions regarding a show entry/class, please contact Barbara Bingley and she will try to find the answer.

Trips 2025 - Robin Carter

I am proposing two trips next year, please put the provisional dates in your diaries. The dates are "not confirmed" yet as I cannot get a quote or check availability from the coach company until January 2025.

Hopefully, the first will be on Thursday, 8th May 2025 and will be to Exbury Gardens near Southampton. We have been before and the gardens during May are spectacular with azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias. More information and an application form and costs to follow.

The second is to Bledlow Manor Gardens near Princess Risborough on Thursday, 24th July 2025. As the journey is not too far and the gardens are not too large, I propose we leave an hour later, around 10 am and return at 3 pm. I will go and check out the gardens first before timings are confirmed. As with the first trip, application forms, etc., will be sent out nearer the time.

Holiday - Suzanne Hamblin

There are 30 people who are booked for the holiday to North Devon visiting the houses and gardens of the region, including RHS Rosemoor - 21st to 26th September 2025. The deposit has been paid to Just Go.

Itinerary:

- The University of Bristol Botanic Garden, Bristol BS9 1JG - on our way - half day
- RHS Rosemoor, Torrington - full day
- Marwood Hill Gardens, Guineaford, Barnstaple EX31 4EA - full day
- Arlington Court (National Trust), Barnstaple EX31 4LP - full day
- Hartland Abbey, Nr Bideford EX39 6DT - full day
- Knightshayes (National Trust) Tiverton EX16 7RG - on our return journey - half day

We will be staying at The Dilkhusa Hotel, Wilder Road, Ilfracombe EX34 9AH on a Dinner Bed & Breakfast basis. The Dilkhusa Hotel has a unique story behind it; originally bought by a Raj as a gift for his wife, it was named as 'Dilkhusa,' meaning 'House of the Happy Heart' in Hindustani. Situated in a great seafront location in Ilfracombe, the hotel is across the road from the wonderful Jubilee Gardens which contain the fascinating Ilfracombe Museum and the Landmark theatre, and it is just a short walk to the attractive working harbour and town centre.

Anyone who is attending and has not yet arranged holiday insurance, please make sure that you make arrangements to do so. The balance of the holiday will be due at the beginning of July 2025 and Suzanne will send a reminder near to the time.

All of the single rooms have been taken for the holiday but there are twin and double rooms available if anyone else is interested in joining the holiday, please contact Suzanne Hamblin either by email suzanneis@hotmail.co.uk or 07490 581673.

Clubs and Societies Day – Linda Berry

This year Abingdon Town Council are holding a Clubs and Societies day in the Guildhall on Saturday 1st March, 10:30am to 2pm. The committee are arranging a stand. Please come along and show your support.

Dates for the diary

Tuesday	21 st January	AGM	
Tuesday	18 th February	Talk	David Marsh – How Plants Grow
Saturday	1 st March	10:30am to 2pm	Clubs and Societies day
Tuesday	18 th March	Talk	Ray Martin – Top Ten Tips for growing healthy roses
Friday	28 th March	Show set up	
Saturday	29 th March	Spring Show	
Tuesday	15 th April	Talk	John Nicholas – British Fuchsia Society
Saturday	10 th May	Plant Sale	
Tuesday	20 th May	Talk	Russell Attwood – Soil more than dirt

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.

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>.

ABA Association of Botanical Artists

A couple of the members of the club belong to ABA Association of Botanical Artists. Members contribute art to a themed online Gallery. There are many lovely plants painted by 90 members from around the world. When you click on an image you will be able to magnify the artwork to see some of the finer detail and read about why the artist thought the plant dramatic.

Website: <https://www.assocbotanicalartists.com>

Hanney Gardening Club

This year Hanney Gardening Club are hosting BBC Radio 4 Gardeners Question Time at the HWM Hall on Tuesday 21st January 2025 5-8pm. Tickets priced at £4. For more information please email Mary on: timandmaryhoyle@dunelm.org.uk

Obituaries

We have received the sad news that Hilary Henwood passed away in early November and our thoughts go to her family and many friends. Hilary was an active member of our society and joined in with the meetings, holidays and many trips.

David Mazey died in the summer, his widow Barbara was an active member but had a fall and has spent a number of weeks in a care home recovering. Our thoughts go to Barbara and her family.

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. Please ensure that food and drink items are unused and within date.

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

There are spaces on the committee for new members, especially as some members are considering stepping down, please consider joining the team who work hard to keep the club alive.

Sponsor

Charlton Park Garden Centre - 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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