



## Epsom Garden Society: November 2024

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*Dear Member, if you have any news or garden related small ads that you would like to be included in the Newsletter, please phone me, 07761 976764, or email me, [margarethaslam6@gmail.com](mailto:margarethaslam6@gmail.com)*

**Fergus Garrett** from *Great Dixter*, will be talking at the Hardy Plant Society meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January at the Old Barn Hall, 55 Church Rd, Great Bookham, Leatherhead KT23 3PQ. Doors open at 10am for tea/coffee. The meeting will start at about 10.45 after the Plant Sale. His topic is '**Succession Planting for a Long Season**', how to choose the right plants that offer contrasting shapes, textures and foliage from different seasons to produce multi-layers over a long season. Visitors pay £5.

**Seedy Sunday:** At the Open Market in Brighton, Marshalls Row, BN1 4JU, on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025, from 10 – 4pm. Bring seeds if you would like to swap, or make a small donation, seeds are donated from open pollinated stock or bought in from reputable suppliers. There will be seeds for flowers, vegetables and herbs. Also stalls selling plants and food, and speakers on all sorts of growing related topics.

**Invitation to A World of Sweet Peas** on 1<sup>st</sup> December at RHS Wisley. A free event in the Garden Room at Hilltop, open at 10.45am and at 11am a Talk with **Cecilia and Phil Johnson**, '**Why a World of Sweet Peas- how did it happen?**' Find out about the string of unexpected events that lead to their collaboration that led to this wonderful book.

12.30pm Talk '**Growing Sweet Peas the Phil Johnson Way.**' Find out about life at a sweet pea nursery, how **Phil** grows sweet peas and some of his favourite and special varieties. There will be opportunities for questions.

Ending at 2pm after book signing and sales.

Our last meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> September at the Sports Club was our **Autumn Flower Show and Plant Sale**. Fewer people than usual were able to come, maybe people were away, but the Plant Sale was a great success. Thanks to everyone who brought plants, and bought them! It all helps our funds.

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October at 10.15 we have a talk about '**Colour in the Garden**' by Ex-Royal ballet dancer **Simon Horrill**, at the Sports Club. **Simon** will be donating some garden design books to our raffle, but please bring anything you think someone would like.

£2 for members. £3 for visitors, to include a free raffle and tea and biscuits.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> November at 10.15am at the Sports Hall we have our **AGM**,

The business part to discuss is:

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of 2023 AGM minutes [on web-site [e-voice.org.uk/epsomgardensociety/agm-2023-minutes](http://e-voice.org.uk/epsomgardensociety/agm-2023-minutes)]
- 3 Chairman's report
- 4 Treasurer's report and approval of accounts
- 5 Membership fees
- 6 Membership Secretary's report
- 7 Show and Meeting Secretary's report

9 Election of Officers and Committee, please send all nominations for the Committee to our Secretary **Kim Shrosbree**, email: [kimshros@gmail.com](mailto:kimshros@gmail.com) by 1st November.

Please don't bring any raffle prizes for this, we will start with coffee/tea and nice cakes and enjoy a sociable time.

Our Society is affiliated with *Tendershoots*, an online garden club. As part of the conditions for joining we had to pay for an online talk for all the other members to enjoy. We kept our heads down and hoped that no one would notice that we hadn't organised this yet, but they had! **Cathy Flitter** had the genius idea of asking **Olivia Kirk** if she would give a talk. She lives in Herefordshire, so would never travel to Epsom to talk to us but gave us a super talk about '*Healing and low-allergen Gardens*' online when we were all locked down with Covid. It was about gardens she had designed for hospices.

Anyway, the moment arrived last Thursday evening, and **Olivia** gave us all a talk about a renovation project in Herefordshire that she is currently working on. The building is a very old farmhouse, called Notehouse Farm, partly dating back to 1420. The American who has bought the property is very excited by this. The main part is 1600, so **Olivia** was pleased at the thought of an Elizabethan knot garden. 1420 not quite as much, as that would be Plantagenet, and she wasn't quite sure what plants would suit. Luckily the front garden is across the Elizabethan part, and she has extended the garden across both sides of the front and grassed it over to unify the area before she cuts the beds. A new central front door has been built, as the house was recently owned by two brothers who each had their own door.

Typical Elizabethan gardens were very neat, geometric layouts with rectangular beds. Inside the beds would be a range of flowers, fruits and herbs. Herbs in those times really meant any plant that was useful, and this would suit the owner who intends to be able to open his front door and clip a herb to go in his cooking.

**Olivia** has plans to make four rectangular beds, each for one of the four humours that were all the rage at the time. *Yellow Bile* would be flowers for extroverts, *Phlegm* is for the peaceful, *Black Bile* is for the analytic quiet person and *Sanguine* is for the optimistic one. **Olivia** had worked out flowers that would suit each humour and how to put them together without having a spotty, one of each sort effect. **Indy**, the Chairman, was quite excited when she mentioned that peonies would be included in the planting, and told her hints about growing them, such as being careful not to mulch right up to the stem as this would stop the plant flowering. We had had a talk about Peonies lately, and **Indy** remembered the details very well!

The soil is heavy clay, which **Olivia** has been improving with a product called Lakeland gold, that contains sheep's wool and breaks down over two years feeding the plants as it does so. Several members had tried it and agreed that it was good stuff.

The back garden has a steep slope leading up to an old quarry, so they are busy stabilising the slope with jute netting, to leave a level area for the family to park cars.

Both sides of the house have hollies in lollipop shapes centrally in each grassy area. They are supposed to repel evil spirits until the actual planting takes place.

The inside of the house is modern and comfortable, with the old beams and walls kept as they were, with occasional coats of stabilising fluid where needed.

This has been **Olivia's** dream job, and only eight minutes drive from her house!

There were questions about how tree rings are used to date wooden beams, and none of us knew how it worked, but it is a verified system. Strangely, one beam in the barn was found to be much older than the rest of the timber used and was possibly a ship's mast re-purposed as a beam.

Someone wanted to know if there was a pond, and there is, in the quarry at the top of the bank behind the house. Someone else wondered what other countries use instead of peat, and we were told 'well-rotted manure'. **Olivia's** passion for her work came through, and we all left with inspirational ideas.

Tendershoots has many talks, most of which are open to anyone to attend from their website at [tendershoots.uk](http://tendershoots.uk) (details are on their homepage). For closed talks you need to contact [kimshros@gmail.com](mailto:kimshros@gmail.com) when she will add you to our affiliate member list and you can then access the private members areas. If you would like to order anything from **Sutton's seed catalogue** *Tendershoots* has organised a discount of 50 per cent on seeds and 15 per cent on other items, just put the code SUGS189M at the end of your order, and the discount will be applied.

I have been reading '*The Bad tempered Gardener*' by **Anne Wareham**, and she made me laugh: 'The RHS have been terribly keen on getting children interested in gardening, and indeed this is a preoccupation among gardeners and garden professionals. I have absolutely no idea why. It's a hopeless career for all but the totally dedicated. And as a hobby? Whoever pursues that which was shoved at them in youth? And why does it matter whether they do or don't? Plenty of time to discover the delights and horrors of gardens when you are grown up.'

Best wishes Margaret



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