



Epsom Garden Society: December 2024 and January 2025

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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

Up-coming attractions! 'Christmas Flowers' on Wednesday 11th December, with mulled wine and mince pies. **A flower arranging demonstration with ideas for Christmas displays by Elizabeth Barralet. Arrangements will be raffled at the end, so no need to bring prizes this time**

Quiz and Coffee Morning on Wednesday 22nd January 2025,.

'The Magic of Houseplants' on Wednesday 19th February 2025.

All at Epsom Sports Club, Woodcote Road, **10.15 for 10.30 start.**

Fergus Garrett from *Great Dixter*, will be talking at the Hardy Plant Society meeting on 11th 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 2nd February 2025, from 10 – 4pm. **For more information on this event go to <http://www.bhfood.org.uk/>**

Invitation to A World of Sweet Peas on 1st 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 **AGM** was on the 20th November and the report will be in the next newsletter.

Plenty to tell you about this time, we had a popular talk from **Simon Horrill** and two talks on the internet from Tendershoots gardening club. The first was called **'The Devil's Darning Needle'** all about dragonflies and given by **Keith Reynolds**, who says he is an enthusiast rather than an expert. Probably because of the title he has been approached by, maybe satanic, embroidery groups to give this talk, but it isn't what they would be expecting. Other names for dragonflies are The Devil's Horse/ Spy and Snake's Servant. The darning needle name was because people believed the dragonfly would sew your eye-lids together if you fell asleep by a river.

They were one of the earliest insects, and fossil remains have been found from 300 million years ago. They were huge too, with a wing span of 3' as there was more oxygen in the atmosphere then.

Dragonflies are larger than their close relatives the damsel flies. They are as big as the palm of your hand and rest with their wings straight out, while damsel flies fold their wings behind them, and their eyes are separated, while the dragonflies eyes touch each other.

They are harmless to people, don't sting as they have nothing to sting with.

Most of their life is spent underwater as larvae or nymphs, and they continually have to shed their skin as they grow as it is not elastic. Strangely they breathe through their backside. Quite handy though as they can use this for jet propulsion when threatened by frogs or fish underwater.

For their final moult they climb up vegetation by the pond and emerge by bursting the skin at the back of their head, squeeze out and then wait for their legs to strengthen. Their wing colours develop a day or so

later. Their wings are directly linked to their complicated eyes, and as each wing operates independently they can even fly upside down, or backwards.

They breathe through little holes along their body, and pulsate to pump air.

They eat flies, mosquitos, midges, moths, wasps, butterflies and each other. Nearly all the time they are successful in hunting, and are a top predator! Birds like to eat them though, the Hobby likes to feed her chicks with 70 or so an hour.

They return to water to mate, with rather complicated arrangements meaning that they have to bend their abdomens round, and so make a beautiful heart shape. They lay hundreds of eggs, but most are eaten or parasitized, and all adults die over winter, just leaving larvae in the water. If you want them in your pond, don't include fish, who will eat the eggs. If you become an enthusiast you can join the **British Dragonfly Association**, like the RSPB but not so rich!

In the same week we also had a talk about '**Woodland Gardening**' from **Saul Walker**. The range of plants that you can grow in shade in woodlands is very large, and it is fun to visit gardens and see what grows there. **Beth Chatto's** is a good place to start as she has lots of flower and colour in her woodland. **Kew** has an excellent woodland garden, that most people miss, because it is just next to the **Princess of Wales conservatory**. Turn right instead and you will find it.

Contemporary style with straight concrete paths doesn't really suit a woodland garden, you need winding paths of grass or leaf mould in semi shade, with a layered approach to planting.

Then followed beautiful photographs of various shrubs and flowers that could be included, specially ferns that always seem to suit this situation. I want to find a *Fritillaria Imperialis Rubra* in flower to check, as we were told that it smells of wet socks!

On the 30th October **Simon Horrill** returned to a packed **Epsom Sports Club** to tell us about '**Colour in the Garden.**' Simon told us about his background as a dancer and in theatre before he retrained at the London College of Garden Design at **Kew**. They told him that he excelled at spatial awareness, and he thought perhaps his earlier life helped with this, if you have to run towards twenty-five girls who are also running towards you, being aware of space is very important!

Colours each have their own attributes, blue is the most popular and is thought to lower the heart rate. Green is calming, and hospital patients recover more quickly if they can see the garden outside. Actually we see quite a limited range of colour, while other creatures can see infrared and ultraviolet. Few women are colour blind and actually some have an extra x chromosome which is thought to mean that they can see more colours than the rest of us.

You sometimes have an expectation of colour, **Simon** was in a ballet called '**Danses Concertantes**' where the costumes were orange, then a different production was done with blue costumes and it felt really wrong! **Simon** was amused by the three brothers on Gogglebox who were discussing colour, one said 'do you mean salmon pink?' And his brother replied 'Oh no! Trout pink, quite different!'

Sometimes colour is affected by its surroundings, a black tiled path in an area with overhanging plants could look damp and gloomy, but a small dark pavement in a corner would disguise the edges.

Beige outdoor tiles are particularly good at blending with natural stone walls and wooden fences.

A while ago wearing yellow with grey was the fashion, and **Simon** kept photos of this trend and planned flowering schemes to mirror it. One very successful one included a grey shed next to a short yellow painted wall, with an exciting pop of dark red from a clump of anemones. [The man in the photo had dark red shoes.]

Beware of putting bright red flowers next to a green hedge. **Christopher Lloyd** said this felt like eating raw dough! You can also introduce colour with an object such as a sunshade or a statue.

Nigel Dunnett was in charge of the wild flower meadow planted for the Olympic Games, and was really worried about it flowering at just the right time. He tried several experiments the year before, such as delaying planting, or planting a month early, and finally decided that cutting everything back just before it was planted was the way. Bit nerve-wracking, but it worked! A lovely talk, much enjoyed!

One of our members drove through the alternative Epsom when she was in New Zealand in 2007/8 and says there were few houses and it only took a few minutes to drive through. Hope their open gardens festival went well though.

Small Ad: Assorted items for flower arranging, - free, 07796405752.

Boxed sets of Christmas lights, need testing, one set unused but no diffuser. Free, 07796405752. Herbaceous plants for next year's blooms, Sales, 22 Manor Green Road.

Best wishes Margaret