

Spring 2023

Over The Fence

The West Malvern Garden & Nature Club News Letter





Here we are, a new year and soon another Spring. We hope that you have coped with the snow and that you are looking forward to lighter days and the chance to spend more time out of doors. Are you ready for this year's Annual Show? We hope that you have planned to bring lots of fruit, vegetables and flowers as well as the things you crafted during the winter! Later in the magazine there will be information about the changes to this year's schedule, which we hope will encourage you to take part.

Last year sadly saw the passing of our queen, Elizabeth, and as a mark of respect we cancelled the September meeting. Our speaker was Chris Hall and he was hoping to speak about the Animals of Central and South America in January 2023 instead. Unfortunately the Christmas Party was postponed because of the ice and snow so Chris kindly offered to give up the January date for a reorganised Christmas Party. However, the January date had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, the refurbishment of the village hall! So, we are hopeful that this year we will be able to have our party and be able to catch up with Chris Hall's talk, which will be well worth waiting for!

Our new club year began in October, membership is not large but we hope that people have encouraged their friends to join and raised the membership by the time of the A.G.M. It has been a difficult 3 years as the Committee was elected in 2019 and we have tried to keep the club going during difficult times, not just national ones but personal ones as well. **The Committee needs new people, younger ones if possible!** New ideas and energy are always welcomed. We have kept the membership and entry fees the same for over 15 years but with cost of speakers going up we cannot offer the standard of speaker or the advantages membership (e.g. entry to the RHS Show) brings if we do not have a healthy membership and people attending club nights. So please support us and get your friends and neighbours to join!

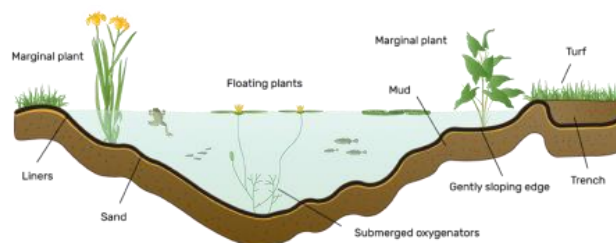
Our October speaker was the photographer Helen Mugridge who lives in the Forest of Dean near Blakeney. In 1998 Helen and her husband decided to start changing their third of an acre of 'ramshackle garden', as she called it, into a haven for wildlife.

Helen started by mapping her garden and planning beds with a grass pathway between them.

She and her husband started one bed with a small crab apple tree at its centre surrounded by shrubs such as a potentilla. Each bed was designated a theme, cottage garden, wild meadow etc. The grass on the paths was allowed to grow with just a small mown track through it. This means less water is needed and insects can thrive .

The garden had to be fenced as rabbits and sheep would graze and eat all the new shoots and planting. Now there are wild boar to contain as well.

They reclaimed the hedges, by getting an expert hedge layer to work on it over several years. This contained it and allowed wildlife to shelter and for native plants to thrive.



Helen feels a pond is essential for wildlife, they decided that it was for wildlife and not fish. A rubber liner was used and hessian mats placed over the turf at the edges. Different depths are necessary for the different plants and for the wildlife, especially for animals, such as hedgehogs to escape, if they fall in. One section needed to be three feet deep to leave a space for creatures should the pond freeze in winter.

Helen was an engaging and interesting speaker. There were lots of suggestions for plants, tips for maintaining the pond and encouragement to allow plants to die back and seed . She illustrated her talk with some excellent photographs, and a video of a rare water shrew swimming in the pond. We hope that we can invite her to return in the future.



In November our speaker was also a photographer, Richard Harvey, his interests lay in photographing plants and nature in established well known gardens and parks. He led us through a tour of 10 of his favourites sharing the history about the people who planted them and the plant collections they created. This was an encouragement to all of us to plan those visits in 2023. His photographs covered all the seasons and he encouraged us to go and visit and take our own photographs. Have you visited any interesting gardens? Please send me your photos and a short description of the place and your impressions. Here is one of ours of Sezincote.



Sezincote is unique, in the Cotswolds, a 200-year-old ‘Mogul Indian palace’ reminiscent of the Taj Mahal, with a landscape of temples, grottoes, waterfalls and canals. The gardens were designed with the help of Humphrey Repton who is credited with influencing the design of the Brighton pavilion after a visit by The Prince Regent in 1807. Part of the house was open to the public as well, but my overriding memory was of a delicious Earl Grey sponge eaten in the Orangery Café (no picture available, sorry!)

February brought Gary Farmer raising awareness for The Vale Heritage Society. There was a mix up in communication and we had expected the Vale Wildlife Hospital. Fortunately Gary was an excellent and entertaining speaker, and the audience were happy to hear him. He drew our attention to the disappearance of the fruit orchards in Worcestershire, especially Evesham where The Blossom Trail, a famous attraction is now diminished. Large areas of orchard have just disappeared. The Heritage volunteers are reclaiming orchard sites which they replant and are able to harvest old varieties of plums that the area was famous for. These sites encourage the wildlife and birds, flowers and insects are returning. He also told us about ‘ovels, sheds which were used for a variety of activities and came in all shapes and sizes. Well worth looking up the Heritage site for more information. (We had some donations on club night for the Wildlife Hospital and Gary kindly delivered them for us, which was much appreciated.)

A big thank you to Hilary Ward for this contribution to the magazine. Hilary’s contributions are not only interesting but informative (please look back at the Ghost Orchid items in the previous O.T.F.)

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Get Creative

Hilary Ward

The photos below might give you inspiration to sharpen your shears/secateurs and “have a go”. Some of you will recognise the first picture if you have visited our garden at Harcourt Barn. Following heavy snow a few years ago the bush split apart and inspired me to create this abstract form. It is trimmed once a year in the autumn so gets rather ‘shaggy’. We prefer to leave it undisturbed during the summer as it has, in the past, been used as a nest site by harvest mice. We hope they might return.

The other photos show more sophisticated efforts.



Affectionately
known as Mr
Blobby

Oxleaze Farm near
Eastleach, Glos.

Lots of ideas in one
corner of the garden.





Hill Top Farm,
Eckington

Thuja hedge planted
for shelter with
arches to allow views
of the scenery.

Nanhoron Garden, Lleyn
Peninsula

A simple ivy frame around
the old door is very
effective.





Nanhoron Garden.

A crab apple arch.
Summer pruning is essential to achieve this.

Other fruits would also work well.



Plas Cadnant Garden,
Anglesey.

Red currant in the centre and pears are used here. Could be done on a framework if a wall is not available.

Plas Cadnant Garden.

Yew peacocks.

When you have practised for many years, you might get to this level.



Something to think about for those unruly or neglected hedges trees and shrubs! Have you had similar ideas in your garden? Why not send us some photos to share and inspire us. Hilary has added some links for further research.

LINKS

<https://www.oxleaze.co.uk/oxleaze-garden/>

http://www.eckington.info/flower_fest.html

<https://www.nanhoronestate.co.uk/>

<http://www.plascadnant.co.uk/>

This year's Annual Show will be Saturday 2nd September



We were down on the number of entries last year, our first show for three years and two heatwaves probably didn't encourage people to take part. If you think that, "The same people win," it isn't true. If the same people take part it doesn't provide as much competition, that's true, but everyone can enter at least one thing in the show. So, please take part! Here are some of the changes we propose for the next show.

People taking part may now enter up to two entries per class, more details to follow.

Photography

Photography – 1. The Sky, 2. Wild Flowers 3. Vegetable/ Vegetables 4. Street Furniture

Cookery –

M1 Sweet biscuits

M5 Orange Marmalade

M6 Strawberry Jam.

M3 and M4 stay the same.

M2 The Garden Challenge to be decided later along with any changes needed for Fruit/Veg/Ornamental because the show will be later than usual.

FUTURE DATES

11th April Dave Taft ‘Wildlife in the Malverns’.

9th May Terry Green ‘Hedgehogs and their Welfare’.

20th May (Saturday) Seed and Plant Swap starts at 10am. Hopefully cake, tea and coffee as well. Details to follow.

RHS Spring Show Creche Friday 12th May and Sunday 14th May Helpers needed!

Don't forget to contribute to the ‘Over the Fence’!

Carole Houghton