

COTSWOLD GROUP COTTAGE GARDEN SOCIETY MAY 2023



NATIONAL GARDENING WEEK

The 1st to the 7th May is designated National Gardening Week by the RHS. I think most of us are 52 week gardeners! However, although 87% of UK households have a garden, the number of active gardeners remains disproportionately low. The idea of the week is to encourage more folk to have a go and get the habit.

The RHS say: “The theme for National Gardening Week in 2023 is ‘create your coronation container’ to celebrate His Majesty King Charles III and his love of horticulture. The King is known as a champion of the environment and a supporter of the nation’s passion for gardening, so we are inviting people to produce jubilant planting schemes to mark the beginning of his reign.”

The RHS invites you to join the celebrations on their social media channels: Twitter, Facebook **and** Instagram with images of your creations that capture the coronation spirit, using the hashtag #nationalgardeningweek.

VALE OF EVESHAM SPRING BLOSSOM TRAIL

Don’t forget that this is also the time to wander the Blossom Trail, now celebrating its 40th anniversary. See www.valeandspa.co.uk/blossom for details.

APRIL MEETING:

There was no shortage of enthusiasm at our April meeting where David Cropp gave us a demonstration of how to divide an old plant and plant up the resulting new ones. He was an engaging enthusiast who spoke from years of experience as well as RHS training.

David used an ornamental grass, *Imperata Cylindrica* 'Red Baron' (Japanese Blood Grass), as an example (and gave everyone a free potted-up plant at the end of the session.)

David started by pulling the parent plant clump apart carefully and trimming the new plants to reduce stress on them. If the old roots were very long, he advised trimming those too.

David stressed that you needed 5 things to pot up successfully:

- ✓ Two different composts, as different commercial makes will have different constituents. He warned us not to be snooty about compost sold at Lidl and Aldi which was well worth buying.
- ✓ The next essential was potting grit or sharp sand to give good drainage.
- ✓ The fourth was water and here David suggested using up opened bottles of drinking water, as these contain useful salts and minerals.
- ✓ Finally, David said it was important to include compost or soil from the original, parent plant as the plant had been growing successfully in that. He carefully teased away the compost from the roots of the original plant to mix with the other ingredients.

While demonstrating the process, David ranged over a number of topics, including his childhood memories of enjoying his grandad's fan-trained peaches from the warmth of a muck heap; his own 3 allotments; his passion for heritage varieties; and how he came later in life to train at Pershore.

A Man of Opinions!

Reviews of David's talks elsewhere had described him as a man of strong opinions. This was borne out by his clear views on subjects ranging from stones in soil, and slugs and snails, to gardening magazines with their 'time to do this advice' – leave them all alone! Re-homing the creatures to a compost heap was, however, allowed.

In response to questions, he advised putting a leaf layer down on top of dense clay to improve its texture; and tolerating less vigorous weeds, as plants were used to competition; groundcover was beneficial and helped prevent top soil run off; and some weeds were pretty!

The Lost Gardener

As well as a teacher and RHS-trained gardener, David is an author. He researched the extraordinary achievements of a gardener from his own village, Martley in Worcestershire, who went from an unskilled, scarcely literate lad to become a formidable gardener with experience at Versailles and in major gardens in England, before taking up a role developing the first amateur gardening magazine, becoming not just a renowned gardener, but author and editor too. David's book 'The Lost Gardener' tells the extraordinary life and achievements of Thomas Sanders. Having whetted our interests in TW Sanders, David gave us each a free copy of the book.

It was a lively, practical and entertaining session with lots of opportunities to ask questions. It is tempting to invite David back in the autumn when his heritage Worcestershire apple varieties are ripe and he is into juice production!

NEXT PRACTICAL SESSION

Seed Saving – a “How To” session with local seed savers and an introduction to the Cottage Garden Society Seed Swap.

Free seeds available and plants for sale.

4pm Thursday 6th July in the Sudeley Room, Abbeyfields Community Centre, Back Lane, Winchcombe GL54 5QJ

£1 members; £2 visitors, including refreshments.

OUR SMALL GROUP GARDEN VISITS

Tuesday 16th May 3 pm 11 Hatherley Court Rd, Cheltenham GL51 3AQ £5 garden entry. Refreshments also available.

An informal nature lover's garden within town, with herbaceous border, pond, wildflowers, and a silver birch copse.

Friday 2nd June 3pm Keens Cottage, Lower Chedworth GL54 4AN - £15 per head for a private tour & refreshments.

This is a small tranquil cottage garden nestled on the side of a peaceful valley. Home to Garden Designer Sue Bradbury, it features topiary, a rose arch walk, dividing formal garden from the orchard, which is home to chickens, with spring flowering bulbs and wildflowers. The garden is a haven for wildlife and pollinators. A fernery is

planted around the facade of a bothy and Scottish stone recreated from Sue's 'Highland Retreat' award-winning design at RHS Chelsea 2006.

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

Cobblers Cottage next door will also be included.

Friday 30th June 3.00 pm Westaway, Stockwell Lane, Cleeve Hill GL52 3PU £5 including tea and cake.

This is a hillside garden of 1 ½ acres, with spectacular views. It has mixed shrub and herbaceous borders, bog garden, an orchard, small arboretum, and wildflower areas.

Please book your place with Natalie so we can confirm numbers in advance with the garden owner. Email: natalie@lestones.plus.com or telephone 01242 602384.

Friends and visitors are welcome at all events.

SOME LOCAL NGS GARDENS OPEN TO PUBLIC IN MAY

Trench Hill, Sheepscombe, Gloucestershire, GL6 6TZ

Approx 3 acres set in small woodland with panoramic views. Variety of herbaceous and mixed borders, rose garden, extensive vegetable plots, wildflower areas, plantings of spring bulbs with thousands of snowdrops and hellebores, woodland walk, two small ponds, waterfall and larger conservation pond. Interesting wooden sculptures, many within the garden. Cultivated using organic principles.

Sunday 7th May 11-6 £5 Adult; child free. Home-made teas

Charingworth Court, Broadway Rd., Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, GL54 5JN

1½ acre garden around restored Georgian/Tudor house (not open). Relaxed country style with Japanese influences, large pond, sculpture and walled vegetable/flower garden, created over 25 yrs from a blank canvas. Lovely trees including mature copper beech, Cedar of Lebanon and Wellingtonia; and younger trees replacing an earlier excess of Cupressus leylandii.

Saturday and Sunday 20th and 21st May 11 – 5.30 Adult £5; child free. Light refreshments in aid of The Children's Society.

Little Orchard, Slad, Stroud, Gloucestershire, GL6 7QD

One acre garden created from wilderness on a challenging, steeply sloping site using many reclaimed materials, stonework and statuary. Multiple terraces and

garden 'rooms' enhanced with different planting styles and water features to complement the natural surroundings. Many seating areas with stunning views. Children's Trail. Exhibition and sale of local artists' work.

Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th May 10.30 – 5 Adult £5; child free. Homemade teas - and cider tasting from the Cidery available.

CATCH A COACH!

If you don't drive, it can still be possible to travel further afield to gardens and shows. Local coach firms such as Marchants offer trips to the RHS show at Malvern in May <http://www.marchants-coaches.com/Tour/Three-Counties-Show-Malvern-Showground/DepartureDates>. You will find visits to Chelsea as well as Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival, Shrewsbury Flower Show, Kew and Waterperry Gardens. See, for example, www.marchants-coaches.com or call them on 01242 257714.

