



# MALMESBURY GARDEN CLUB

January *NEWSLETTER* 2009

[www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk](http://www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk)

Chairman - Ron Peel

Secretary - Susan Mellowes

## *Jottings From The Chair*

Thirty three members attended the AGM. Business was dealt with quickly, and we were then able to enjoy refreshments and pleasant social chat. Derek once again organised a light-hearted quiz, and I am sure that everybody enjoyed the evening.



Due to ill-health and family commitments Norah Caudell has resigned from the Committee after many years organising the refreshments at the monthly meetings, plant sale and annual show. It was a pleasure to present her with a bouquet in recognition of her service on behalf of the members. It was agreed that Norah be made a Life Member.

To help reduce expenditure it was decided to dispense with the services of a professional auditor, and Pam Lucas agreed to undertake this duty.

Thank you for sending Dobies orders in on time. This year forty five members used this opportunity, an increase on last year; and as a result we will benefit from a very good discount.

May I wish members an enjoyable and successful gardening New Year.

*Ron Peel*

### **Allotments—Feast or Famine?**



The history of allotment usage in the UK has seen dramatic swings in the popularity of the lowly plot of land. Our neighbouring village, Great Somerford, has the honour of being the first village to pass an Enclosure Act, back in 1806, thereby offering land for the labouring poor. Since that time, various events in history have dramatically influenced the need for allotments. During the Great War (1914-1918) the German blockade created a food shortage that precipitated the need for more land to grow food. In those days a prime supplier of land was the railroad companies who offered some of their land to their workers. This is why so many allotments can still be found along the railway lines.

After the war the need to use land for building housing was paramount and the number of allotments declined. This all turned around once more in the Second World War when blockades, food shortages and the 'Dig for Victory' campaign was needed to save space on ships for war materials, not imported food. Britain needed to be self-sufficient. The number of allotment provisions grew to over 1,400,000 in 1943 and fell back after the war, when housing was again a priority and food from abroad became more plentiful. In the early 1970s allotment provisions fell to near 500,000. Another surge of interest came in 1975-1978 as the popular show 'The Good Life' renewed an interest in self sufficiency. However, as the value of land increased and housing prices rose, the allotment provisions fell to below 300,000. A small but steady increase in demand has been seen recently as concern over genetically modified foods, the possibility of chemical pollution and contamination from the overuse of pesticides raised alarm bells in many British kitchens.

Today we are sitting at the beginning of a new and potentially very large surge in need for allotments. Many current events are transpiring to effect this surge.

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# MEETINGS-EVENTS-ACTIVITIES

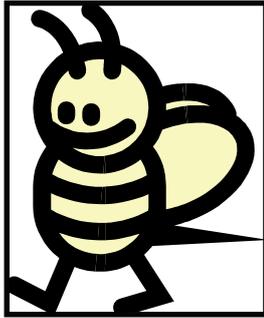
## January Meeting

Monday 12th January

7:30 pm in the Malmesbury Town Hall

“Beekeeping for the Gardener”  
MALCOLM JAGO

Details on the talk are unavailable for publication.



## February Meeting

Monday 9th February

7:30 pm in the Malmesbury Town Hall

"Bonsai - Talk and Demo"  
JOHN CLEGG



John has run the Bonsai World of Cheltenham for 19 years. This is a big nursery which specialises in everything connected with bonsai. He promises a fun talk with plenty of stories. He will bring plants and accessories.

For more information on Bonsai World follow this link:

[www.bonsai-world.co.uk](http://www.bonsai-world.co.uk)

## Previews for the 2008-2009 Monthly Meeting Schedule

- March 9th—GEORGE HARGREAVES “Camellias, Magnolias and Rhododendrons”
- April 20th—TBA



## Bulletin Board



### SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

Annual subscriptions are now due. **The cost has again been held at £5 per member.**

With this Newsletter is a renewal slip which I request that you use if possible. There is an addition to the form this year in that there is space for an email address should you wish to receive your newsletter (in colour) by email.

Club membership is currently 200. It is inevitable that, for a variety of reasons, not all of these will renew in 2009. **I would therefore request that you all encourage potential new members to join.** A membership of 300 would greatly enhance all aspects of the club.

Thank you

*Sean O'Shea*

Would you like to receive your Newsletter via Email?



Just email me at  
[info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk](mailto:info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk)  
and I will add your name to the mailing list.

*editor*

### Holfords of Westonbirt Trust Established

As reported in the RHS Garden Magazine, Country Life Magazine, etc., the Holfords of Westonbirt Trust has been established to help preserve the Westonbirt Estate and Pleasure Gardens which they intend to re-open to the public. The trust was established by Lady Bland, a former student at the school. Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall are presidents for the trust.

A £2.7 million fund raising programme has been launched to support the effort. For more information you can visit [www.holfordtrust.com](http://www.holfordtrust.com).



# Gardening Ideas for 2009

By Keith

## Comments from the garden....

**2009:** Hopefully you were all able to have a restful time over the Christmas period. Time to reflect on the previous seasons in the garden and look ahead to perhaps adding something new or bringing back some old favourites you grew years ago. For this newsletter I will explore a few ideas, including some fruity ones.

### Scattering Seeds

Some simple but effective ideas for 2009 include stock and the poached egg plant. Night scented stock seed just needs to be scattered into soil and then raked over. Plant along pathways, by doorways and around patio areas where you will frequently walk. It will fill the evening air with scent and an added bonus is that it will self seed for next year.

*Limnanthes douglasii*, (the poached egg plant) is also a talking point. Although not scented, its deeply cut leaves and its 8" high white/yellow flowers will brighten any corner. It will even germinate in gravel, and will also self seed for next year.

### Fruity Ideas

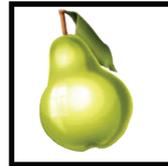
So many to choose from, "but have I got space", I hear you say. This is the time of year to order and so many types of fruit trees or soft fruit bushes exist now. Apples and pears on dwarf rootstock (no need for ladders), espalier or fan trained for training along fencing or against a wall. Growing in tubs can be an advantage, especially blueberries, as they need lime free soil. Thornless loganberries and blackberries so no nasty thorns, and why not try something different: a fig, mulberry, cranberry or even a kiwi fruit.



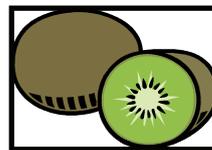
For planting blueberries out of a pot, line a hole in the ground with plastic and then pierce for drainage. Add ericaceous compost (lime free) and feed once a month with ericaceous fertilizer.

Plant 2 varieties for good pollination. Good varieties include; **Earliblue**, with large light blue berries and good flavour, **Bluecrop**, a heavy cropper with large berries and excellent flavour and **Sunshine Blue** with bushy medium size berries having good flavour and it is self fertile All of these plants have amazing autumn foliage.

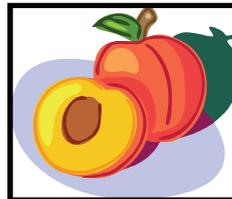
Duo-Minarette apple and pear trees are becoming popular as the ultimate space saving fruit trees. With two varieties of fruit on one tree, they can be planted



two feet apart. Good apple combinations include; **Greensleeves** (midseason, good flavour) and **Red Devil** (late cropper also with good flavour). Also cropping well together; **Herefordshire Russet** (late, good flavour) and **James Grieve** (early, large fruit, excellent flavour). A new variety of Duo pears this year is **Conference** (late, large fruit, good flavour) and **Onward** (early, good flavour). Both of these varieties store well.



The Kiwi fruit or (Chinese gooseberry) is a twining climber that requires a sheltered wall or fence. The variety **Jenny** is self fertile with good large fruit and flavour. As I mentioned earlier, the thornless blackberry is a must if you have the apples to go with them, the variety **Oregon** is a heavy cropper with good flavour.



For some years now, 26 to be precise, I have worked in a garden with a greenhouse growing peach trees. The variety **Peregrine** cropped well for many years, but a new variety we tried has excelled in every way. The peach **Saturn** (the Chinese Peento peach), has fruit that is flat with a honey taste and sweet white flesh.

### Keith's Choice Plants

#### *Mahonia x media* 'Charity'

A very hardy variety, its thick green, glossy leaves are deeply cut and evergreen. Eight inch long yellow flower spikes in clusters appear from November onwards. It has a good scent.

### Pests Paradise

**Fungus gnats** can be prevented with good hygiene. They are mostly a problem in greenhouses and conservatories The small flies lay eggs which hatch into larvae which in turn feed on decaying matter such as dead roots. They can also damage seedlings and soft cuttings. Adult flies can be trapped at soil level by hanging sticky traps. A weak solution of jeyes fluid watered into the pots will also help.

## No Disease Please

**Brassica Bacterial Soft Rot:** Patches towards the centre and stem base of the plant discolour; rotting of the plant soon follows. Bacteria usually gain entry through a damaged part of the plant caused by slugs, snails or caterpillars. Saving a badly damaged plant is difficult as it is difficult to see the damage. Prompt removal of damaged areas is the best remedy.

### Plants to enjoy in January/February

Snowdrops, Grape hyacinths, *Daphne*, *Garrya Elliptica*, *Jasminum nudiflorum*, *Iris reticulata*, *Helleborus* (Christmas rose) *Mahonia*.

### .....Tasks for January/February.....

- Continue to plant roses—weather permitting
- Examine roses for ‘wind rock’ and firm in
- Continue pruning climbing roses, honeysuckle, summer jasmine etc.
- Cut out canker on fruit trees and paint over with pruning compound
- Prune apple and pear trees, but not if frost persists
- Spray peach and nectarine against leaf curl with copper fungicide
- Continue spraying fruit bushes and trees with a winter wash
- Continue clearing herbaceous plant tops
- Cut down summer flowering clematis in February - check variety first!
- Prune back winter jasmine after flowering
- Examine all stored corms, bulbs and tubers
- Set up early potatoes in trays to sprout
- Sow early broad beans and wrinkled pea varieties
- Sow early carrots and parsley under frames
- Plant shallots late February

### Reminder! Potato Day—31st of January

Green Seeds is announcing the first Malmesbury Potato Day that will be held on the 31st of January, from 10am to 4pm in the Malmesbury Town Hall. Admission will be 50p for adults, children free.



Over 50 varieties of seed potatoes, including 10 organic varieties, will be available along with a free variety and planting guide. Onion sets and organic vegetable and herb packets will also be on sale from £1 per packet. Visit [www.greenseeds.org.uk](http://www.greenseeds.org.uk) for more information on the event.

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Concern over food miles, particularly air miles, was initially raised due to the carbon footprint of such a transport method. This became an even more acute concern as petrol prices rose to dramatic heights this past summer. The current decline in petrol prices is expected to be short lived, and most believe that the cost of importing food will be a major issue going forward. Our nation is fed on an oil based food economy that includes import costs, local transport costs and even the cost of getting us to a supermarket in a car. This chain is in jeopardy as oil becomes a scarce commodity.

Since we import so much of our food (over 50%) we are at the mercy of climate change induced agricultural tragedies around the world. We saw the cost of our rice rise dramatically last year as cyclones wiped out many Asian rice fields and much of the remaining crop was held back to feed the local populations. Water shortages is another major issue. Yes, we have plenty of water, but, as noted above, most of our food comes from abroad and most of that from countries that do have water problems, for example Kenya. Look at the labels in the store when you buy your fruit and veg to see where it is imported from and keep in mind that in addition to paying more to get it here, any climate, political, etc problem there will impact what we can put on our tables here. On top of all this we are facing what many believe to be a major recession that will cause economic hardships across the land. All of this could and most likely will feed a major resurgence in the need for allotments and this time it may not be a temporary surge.

As gardeners we can play a major role in helping to adjust to new methods of food production. Many young people have lost touch with how their food is produced. They will need to learn the secrets of getting food from the land, and we can help them by sharing our knowledge.