



NEWSLETTER

January 2020

Dear Members,

A very happy new year to all of you; may you and your gardens bloom all year!

Winter, weather permitting, is a good time to put new plants in the ground. With the increased concern for the environment, more and more gardeners are looking to choose plants that benefit wildlife such as birds and bees. This past summer we had an unusually large number of bee swarms in Brimpsfield, and providing food for bees is something that we should all consider. Many flowers are promoted as 'plants for pollinators', and I can see the wisdom of this; after all, we all like flowers, don't we, so we will be more likely to plant things that look attractive as well as offering sustenance to the bees. However plants don't have to have showy flowers to feed bees; in my garden, some of the plants that buzz most loudly in season are raspberry canes and gooseberry bushes, both of which have flowers that are barely noticeable. These, of course, also offer food for humans, and if you don't care for gooseberries, I can assure you that the local blackbirds will be only too happy to help you out with them (and the raspberries too). Cotoneasters, including the common herringbone cotoneaster, are also full of bees when their tiny flowers are out, and their berries are also much sought after by birds, so again they provide two good reasons for growing them.

Bees also feature in one of our forthcoming talks. We have two meetings in February this year – the first and last days of the month – and **none in March**. On **1st February** we will have a return visit by Julie Dolphin of Miserden Nursery, who will take us through the year on the nursery; and on **29th February** our speaker will be our own Richard Shelley who will tell us about beekeeping – a chance to learn more about this increasingly popular activity. As usual, the kettle will be on and home-made cakes ready from 10.30, with the talk beginning around 11am.

At our recent meetings we have been trialling a 'seed swap' table, and will continue this at the forthcoming meetings. They can be seeds you have collected yourself, or from bought packets; so many seed packets contain hundreds of seeds, and there are only so many that one gardener can use! As the growing season gets under way, surplus seedlings will also be welcome. We only ask that, if you help yourself from the table, you make a small donation to the Society and, if you bring seeds or seedlings that don't find takers, you take them home with you.

As I said, there is no meeting in March, and our next event after that is the **AGM on Saturday 4th April**, which will follow the same pattern as last year: a short business meeting followed by lunch at the Society's expense. **New members of the committee** are always welcome, so please let us know if you're able to help out in that way; it's not onerous, and you don't need to know anything much about gardening! At the AGM we will present to the members the names of three **charities** to which the Society might donate

for the past and coming year, and members will be asked to vote for one of them; as a reminder, this donation is the money raised by the charity auction at the Garden Society Show, not a donation out of the Society's general funds. The committee has some ideas about charities to which we might donate, but we would like members to make suggestions to us; these should be charities with a local remit, and working in the areas of gardens, plants, wildlife or nature. Please pass ideas to us.

We are also always happy to hear members' suggestions about events and talks, especially if you can suggest someone who might offer a talk or demonstration. Our recent willow-weaving demonstration and workshop was a great success; we had tremendous fun and you can see photos of us at work on the Garden Society webpage (go to www.brimpsfieldvillage.org and click on the Garden Society tab at the top of the page). Several members expressed interest in something similar in future, and we are hoping to organise another (different) workshop next winter, but again, please let us know if you have any ideas.

At the AGM the new membership cards will be available with the programme for the 2020-21 season. The **Annual Show** will be on **Saturday 5th September**; there will be some information on the changes to the schedule in the next newsletter, but a lot of the classes do not change from one year to the next, and we have classes covering pretty much any vegetable, fruit or flowers that you are likely to have growing at that time of year, so you can choose your seeds and get growing with confidence! We have had suggestions for a class for honey; at the moment we only have three members expressing interest, and the committee feels that that is rather too few to justify a class at the moment, but if the talk on beekeeping generates more interest we shall consider it for 2021.

A few dates for your diaries: Dundry Nurseries at Staverton are renowned for their **Potato Weekend**, with dozens of varieties available, including as individual tubers to allow you to grow a greater range; this year it is 18th-19th January, but the potatoes themselves are available at the nursery through late winter, so go along later if you can't make those dates. Remember you get a 10% discount at the nursery on presentation of your membership card. And it's time to watch the birdies; the **Big Garden Birdwatch** is on 25th-27th January. Then there's the usual round-up of snowdrop gardens to visit; this part of the country is particularly rich in snowdrops, partly because of the number of breeders and specialists who have been active in this area over the years. The Elwes family at **Colesbourne Park** are especially well known, and the Park is open on weekend afternoons from 25th January to 1st March (plus some special events which you will find on their website), but in former times there was also the Giant Snowdrop Company near Stroud, and the **Stroud Museum in the Park is running a Snowdrop Celebration** on 8th-9th February focussing on them. Their event will also be attended by Miserden Nursery and the bulb specialists Avon Bulbs; the Museum is near the centre of Stroud, by the Leisure Centre where parking is available, and you can find out more on their website. The **Rococo Garden in Painswick** is open every day; **Trench Hill** near Sheepscombe is open for the NGS on Sundays 9th and 16th February; and **Cotswold Farm** just off the A417 near Duntisbourne Abbots is open on Mondays in February, 11-3pm. There should be plenty of opportunity to go garden-visiting if the weather permits; if the weather is uncertain, do check the websites to be sure that the gardens will indeed be open.

Happy gardening!

Frances Ellery