

# **SCOTTISH GARDENERS' FORUM**

**Newsletter**

**Vol 8: Issue 4**



**Winter 2010**



**[www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk](http://www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk)**

# WINTER 2010

**EDITORIAL**

**DECEMBER 2010**

Dear Fellow Gardeners,

**A**fter a prolific summer – from the point of view of growing, at least – we have been treated to the most glorious display of rich colour during this long and lingering Autumn. It was an outburst of exuberance, a sort of ‘thank you’ for the year, and perhaps a parting gift in preparation for what many feel to be a hard winter in the coming.

Whatever 2011 brings, we will learn from the patience and wisdom of our natural world and find the right path through the undergrowth.

Happy Christmas, Happy New year and Happy Gardening!

*Christopher Davies (Editor)*

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The Scottish Gardeners’ Forum exists to provide the communication link between Scotland’s many horticulturally-oriented organisations. The Council (see back cover) meets regularly to discuss matters of interest, either to horticulture as a whole, or members in particular. One of our concerns is that individual clubs should flourish in their local context, benefiting from the experience of the SGF as a whole, and in turn responding to the requests for information from other members. We invite you to send your questions to the Secretary (or to any Council Member listed): Alex Rutherford, Flat 1/1 21 Highburgh Rd, Dowanhill, Glasgow G12 9YG: 0141 334 6523,

email [secretary@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk](mailto:secretary@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk)

*Our cover picture is one of Charles Jencks’ art-installations. This one is at Jupiter Artland at Calder, West of Edinburgh. Jencks, an architect by profession, expresses the rhythms and proportions of nature in his work, thus producing an eloquent symbiosis of the man-made and the natural.*

## OUR CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends

On the 30<sup>th</sup> October we had our 10<sup>th</sup> AGM and what a fantastic day it turned out to be. It was great to see so many of our members and to catch up on what has been happening all over Scotland this year. The event continues to provide an excellent platform for us to share ideas, catch up with old friends and to establish new contacts.

I would like to warmly welcome our two newly elected council members Mike Gourlay from Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society and Margaret Drummond from Penicuik Horticultural Society. They both bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the SGF and will be a great asset to our team.

We also announced three grant awards of £250 each to Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society, Kilmacolm Horticultural Society and Moray Rock Garden Club to be spent on community projects. We wish them all the success with their ventures. We will be updating you all on these projects in future newsletters, so watch this space.

We were also very lucky this year to have two fantastic speakers Jim Jermyn and Jim McColl. Their talks were very enlightening and entertaining and were thoroughly enjoyed by all.

If you haven't been to our AGM before please come and join us in 2011.

In my last report I mentioned how disappointing it was not to see more of our members take part in our Pallet Garden Challenge at Gardening Scotland. I would like to put out a plea to you all for 2011. Please try and support your event by putting together an entry - its fun honestly! All the pallet information is on our website or please feel free to contact me directly.

I hope to see you at Gardening Scotland 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

It just leaves me, on behalf of myself, the Executive and the Council, to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year,

*Jim*

## **THE SGF IN ACTION.....**

### **MEMBERSHIP & BENEFITS**

The SGF membership is uniquely focused on Societies rather than individuals – the latter focus which RCHS (“The Caley”) already manages with excellence. The Forum’s objectives as expressed in its Constitution are:

- to advance education in the knowledge and best practice of all aspects of gardening and horticulture for the public benefit in Scotland.
- to foster co-operation among general and specialist Horticultural and Gardening Societies/ Clubs/ Associations/ Branches for their mutual benefit.
- to encourage the retention and development of existing and new Societies.
- to provide a voice for the non-professional sector of gardening in Scotland

Membership of the Scottish Gardeners’ Forum includes: -

- Register of Judges – updated regularly
- Register of Speakers – updated regularly
- Register of Societies
- Access to Public Liability Insurance
- A Quarterly Newsletter
- Access to a nationwide network of like minded enthusiasts

## SGF WEBSITE

Our website has been redesigned and is being kept regularly up to date, so that it is an efficient source of information, not only for members, but for anyone enquiring about the SGF.

Our intention in redesigning the website was to make it easy to access and navigate and to give you the basic information you are looking for, including details of SGF events, downloadable application forms, who's who and contact addresses, current and back numbers of newsletters and photographs of recent events, for example, the pallet gardens competition. Do make use of this website and let us know how you experience it. If you yourselves do not have a website and are thinking of establishing one, and would like to tap our brains, please get in touch with me: [editor@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk](mailto:editor@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk)

Please inform your members about the availability of this site and encourage them to visit it.

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

## SGF NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is published four times per year, in March, May, September and December. We are taking care to make it topical, easy to read and entertaining. We would like the circulation to be as wide as possible.

You can help in three ways:

**Firstly:** contact us, give us feedback, reactions and comments so that we can gear the content to your expectations, avoid “dead wood” and encourage fresh growth.

**Secondly:** we want the Newsletter to be a forum for the exchange of information and a bridge between the community of gardening clubs (our members) in Scotland. Please let us have relevant details of your events, topical stories of human or gardening interest, club happenings, articles on aspects of gardening in Scotland: basically, things you would like to share with others. The Newsletter is a resource at your disposal! Use it!

**Thirdly:** help us with distribution, that is by circulating the printed copies, or better still making your members aware that they can read the Newsletters on line.

Finally, we are introducing the facility for you to receive the Newsletter by email (as a pdf file, which the majority of computers will be able to download and print out if you wish). At this point in time we do not have a full list of members' email addresses, so we have to ask you to notify us.

Please email our secretary, Alex, on:

**secretary@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk**

and we will put you on our mailing list.

For the time being, at least, our Newsletter will continue to be sent to member organisations as a printed version in 'hard copy'.

Items for the Newsletter (quarterly: March/May/September/December) are welcome and should be sent to the Editor: Christopher Davies, 7 West Carnethy Avenue, Edinburgh EH13 0ED: Tel 0131 441 2152,

Email: **editor@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk**

## SGF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER



The **Tenth Annual General Meeting of the SGF** was held at Oatridge College on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2010, a glorious Autumn morning. Members came from far and wide to take part and to share news and ideas, and were welcomed by Jim Dickson, the Chairman. In his report, Jim said the Forum was in good heart, was living up to its reputation as the co-ordinating body for Gardening and Horticultural Clubs in Scotland and was playing an active role on the Board and organisation of Gardening Scotland. The Treasurer, Shiona Mackie, presented the accounts which showed a healthy balance – a good situation in times of uncertainty. She referred in particular to the provision of Public Liability Insurance for members.

Ann Burns was elected to the Executive as Vice Chairman, as was Mike Rossi as Membership Secretary (a new position). Margaret Drummond and Mike Gourlay were elected to the Council. The Chairman wished these members well in their new roles.

Under AOB, there was a vigorous discussion about flower shows and whether there was any benefit in combining local shows into larger events on a more regional basis. It was noted that the smaller shows are often more community based and by joining up they might lose their local support. The Chairman noted that he was very much for member societies working directly with their local primary school. It was likely that the best solution would depend very much on individual circumstances.

Jim Dickson urged members to do all they could to participate in the Pallet Gardens Challenge at Gardening Scotland. There was strong support from schools, less so from Clubs. However the event was a firm favourite with the public.

Insurance for Club Trophies – some now quite valuable – was discussed. The SGF will speak with a broker in order to clarify the issues and options.

Newsletter – Christopher Davies asked societies to send in their news and articles. Tom Mabbott paid a tribute to the quality of the newsletter and its value to the SGF and members.

Following the formal AGM, Jim Jermyn gave us a most interesting and brilliantly illustrated presentation on “Walking in the Alps” in which he skillfully combined holiday reminiscences with expert knowledge on local flora.

After lunch, ably provided by the catering staff at Oatridge, and during which the buzz and flow of conversation never faltered, Jim McColl spoke on developments in Gardening. His conversational style guaranteed a stimulating hour and covered a wide range of topics.

The following “Question Time” with the panel of Ann Burns, Jim McColl and Jim Jermyn, chaired by Alex Rutherford, provided a relaxed and unscripted session, enjoyed both by questioners, audience and panel and appropriately rounded off a most instructive and entertaining day.

The Chairman thanked all participants, all those attending and those at Oatridge College for providing venue and hospitality.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting will take place on Saturday 29 October 2011, venue to be confirmed. Please make a note of this in your diaries and tell your friends.

*Christopher Davies*

*NB: this report does not represent the formal minutes of the AGM which will be distributed separately in due time.*

## JIM McCOLL's TALK TO THE AGM

*Jim writes:*

**M**y chosen topic was rather daunting – to examine the changes to gardening and gardening practices over the last 60 years!



First up was the appearance of polythene in all its guises from plant labels to polytunnels. Coupled with that has been the improvement in glasshouses and the accompanying heating, ventilating and watering materials.

There is a huge range of garden tools around, many are well designed and serviceable, tops for me has been my Felco secateurs. Sadly there are many badly designed tools and pieces of kit available that have never been consumer tested, that's for sure

I am delighted that another off shoot of the plastics story – packaging, has led to the regeneration of the mail order business giving a huge boost to the trade in young plants in particular. This particularly helps specialist growers.

The compost story is a cracker – from John Innes to soil-less, mainly using peat to the present time when peat-free is the aim. These composts are coming on but they still lack consistency and I for one don't trust them – yet.

Re-cycling, Organic gardening, plant breeding, genetic modification, pest and disease controls and the growing influence of the Multiples all came in for scrutiny and comment, not to mention a wee update on "The Calyx." \*

*Jim McColl*

*\*"The Calyx": a development project in SW Edinburgh for which the Scotsman wrote on 26 October: "WORK to transform part of Edinburgh's green belt into a new "garden district" - featuring a major new sports stadium, a huge horticultural visitor attraction and 3,500 new homes - is hoped to start within three years....." – a possible subject for a forthcoming SGF Newsletter?*

## **PUBLIC LIABILITY AND “RISK ASSESSMENTS”**

*As part of their membership benefits, members of the SGF can participate in the SGF Public Liability Insurance Scheme. In this article, Mike Cavanagh draws attention to the need for PLI and also for Clubs to carry out a regular “Risk Assessment” as an agenda item at Committee Meetings. (See the article “In Search of a Risk Assessment” in the SGF Newsletter Winter 2009 and Spring 2010).*

In this day and age most of us will be aware of the so called “Claims Culture” which is prevalent in society and we will all have heard a scare story of injured parties receiving large amounts of compensation for injuries suffered, sometimes for incidents where you would not expect a claim to exist. Two examples of compensation being paid under circumstances where most people would not expect it are:

The burglar who broke into a house and injured himself whilst ransacking his way through it, and secondly the driver who bought a cup of coffee from a takeaway coffee shop and was burnt when he spilt the hot coffee over himself whilst driving. As can be seen from this, Public Liability insurance is an important cover to have for individuals, companies and groups as anyone could find themselves liable to pay thousands of pounds to another person.

A Public Liability policy will cover the policyholder or anyone acting on behalf of the policyholder, such as an employee or member, in respect of a claim made against them by a member of the public in respect of accidental bodily injury suffered by them or damage to their property caused by negligence on the part of the insured person.

As a Gardening Society, this cover is required as members of the public could attend meetings held by the group and cover would be

required if the group was attending any shows or events. If, for example a member of the public injured themselves on the stand, possibly by cutting themselves on a sharp edge or tripping over an item lying at the stand injuring themselves, they could well have a legitimate claim against the person responsible and, depending on the severity of the injury, the cost of this, including legal costs, could run into thousands of pounds. There could also be situations where several people suffered an injury as a result of the same incident, such as a stand collapsing, and it is easy to see how the cost of claims can mount up.

As well as having insurance for when things do go wrong there are precautions that can be taken to minimise the chance of an incident occurring. Carrying out a risk assessment is the most obvious and the simple approach to this comprises the following five steps:

- 1) Identify the hazards
- 2) Decide who might be harmed and how
- 3) Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions and controls
- 4) Implement the controls and record your findings and actions
- 5) Review your assessments regularly or when there is a significant change in the risk and update as necessary.

If the worst happens and you do find yourself the subject of a claim it is important to note down the circumstances of the incident involved along with details of any witnesses. The matter should then be reported as soon as possible to the insurance company and you should avoid becoming involved in any discussion regarding the circumstances of the incident with the claimant or their representatives to avoid prejudicing the insurer's position in the matter.

*Mike Cavanagh*

Mike Cavanagh is Commercial Manager at Edinburgh Risk Management (General) Ltd, Insurance Brokers.

## THE NATIONAL BONSAI COLLECTION OF SCOTLAND HAS A NEW HOME

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2010 marked the pinnacle and end of three years of planning, budgeting, preparation and construction of a new home at Suntrap Garden Centre of Life Long Learning in Gogar, Edinburgh. The home consists of a Japanese-style construction, named the Jimmy Russell Pavilion which contains a Japanese-style garden. Jimmy Russell was a pioneer of Scottish Bonsai and the bulk of the funding of the Pavilion came from his estate through the extreme generosity of his partner Frances. The garden was funded by a grant from the Japanese Embassy in London to create a permanent garden to celebrate 150 years of Japanese-Scottish links in trade and culture.

The highlight of our Open Day was the (eventual) formal cutting of the tartan ribbon across the access path by Consul General Tarahara of Japan and the National Collection President pictured. (The scissors, in spite of our joint effort, didn't cut the first time) Mr Tarahara, accompanied by his wife, just couldn't contain their pleasure and admiration of the completed project, whose progress they had followed on a number of visits. He was fascinated to learn that the whole enterprise had been undertaken solely by the Board of Trustees and their many carers and volunteers. A set of acknowledgements of these folk will be on permanent display at a later date.



Exactly the same enthusiastic praise came from Lord Provost George and Lady Provost Elizabeth Grubb when they later arrived hot foot from a reception at the City Chambers.

The purpose of the National Bonsai Collection of Scotland is to chart, through real trees, the development of Bonsai in Scotland since its beginnings in the 1950s. It is displayed in a unique setting providing both educational and artistic opportunities for the further development of Bonsai in Scotland.

Many SGF members will be aware of the current confusion over the present and future ownership of Suntrap Garden and the existence of a group dedicated to saving it. The National Bonsai Collection of Scotland cannot afford to risk either its valuable trees or its newly completed site and although we have high hopes for the saving the Garden we must consider in the longer term an alternative location. Any suggestions?

*Alistair Simpson*

## **MUSSELBURGH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY ANNUAL SHOW SATURDAY 28 AUGUST 2010**

2010 was to prove one of the most challenging years for the Committee of Musselburgh Horticultural Society.

The Brunton Hall, our show venue for many years, was scheduled for refurbishment and we had to find a new hall as the works would not be completed in time. Our capable Show Secretary, Mrs Helen Elliott was given this unenviable task and after a trawl round all the local church halls, school halls and community places she reported back to Committee that, in her opinion, our best bet was Our Lady of Loretto Church Hall in Newbiggin in Musselburgh.

A Committee meeting there later in the month confirmed this and a Show Focus Group was put in place to organise everything.

The biggest plus with the new hall was that it was at ground level unlike Brunton which had several long staircases not good for us or our exhibitors, and there was adequate parking. The biggest minus was that our Schedule of Classes would have to be drastically reduced to be accommodated in the new space.

After many meetings and much discussion the Schedule was prepared and went to print and in what seemed no time at all the week of the Show was upon us.

In common with many garden clubs most of our Committee members are not in their first flush of youth and although the staging was delivered by the Council it was with dismay that I, and my colleagues all stared at the mountains of



shelving heaped on the floor waiting to be erected. Just as we began to heave the wood around, our Treasurer's 'boys', in the shape of the Sea Cadets arrived. What a welcome sight they were and in no time at all the staging was set up and looking ship-shape!

The day dawned bright and sunny and although many exhibits arrived the night before the benches were still looking somewhat bare. Would our usual exhibitors still support us? Would the public know how to find us? Would the benches fill up with flowers, vegetables, art work, pot plants, and home produce items in time? All these worries melted away as the clock ticked towards the 9.30am deadline. Not only did we have enough of everything we had to race around erecting **extra** staging for the fuchsias, the photographs and the veggies.

Many of the 340 visitors commented on how wonderful and packed the hall looked and our Guest of Honour Mr George Anderson OBE was very impressed with the overall quality and quantity of exhibits.

By the end of the Show the Committee had put in a 12 hour day and it was definitely time to down tools and head home.

Putting on a flower show is not the easiest job in the world in a hall that old hands know well and can almost set up blind-fold so despite a wee few hiccups on the day we were all delighted with the result in our new hall and gave ourselves a big pat on the back.

Ironically the scheduled refurbishment of Brunton Hall did not take place and we just might have to look for yet another venue but now we are *serial venue seekers* it shouldn't be a problem.

*Lindsay Morrison*

## **LIVINGSTON & DISTRICT HS – A SUCCESS STORY**

*About a year and a half ago, the SGF was contacted by Robert Hope from Livingston for advice on setting up a Horticultural Society. Here is Robert's report on their first year. Well done, LDHS!*

It was just over a year ago I put the adverts out looking for people to form the LDHS committee; I was elected as Chairman, Lynne Ward was elected as Secretary, Patricia Currie was elected as Treasurer and Lorna Brown, Veronica Smith, Isabel Strachan, Bobby Furley, Isabel Furley, John Wilson, David Grier formed the rest of the committee.

All our focus was on getting to the Annual Show in September, so the work started, the main thing we had to get was funding, our

main success was securing a Lottery Grant for £4245 from Awards For All, a donation from Almond Housing Association & Almond Enterprises Ltd for £510, there was also great support from numerous other business, to which a great vote of thanks goes out.

Once we had the funding it was then down to looking at what we needed for the show, the first thing we looked at was the venue. We looked at school halls and community centres but they weren't quite right, then we looked at the Howden Park Centre; what a find! It was a fantastic venue, very prestigious, and the staff helped us tremendously. Trophies were purchased with their sponsors name engraved on them, timber to build the staging, software to help run the show and lots more things had to be done. We were holding monthly meetings making sure that all was going well.

Some of the committee held a tombola at Livingston Village Gala Day making £310. Well done.

Then show day came along on Saturday 4th September 2010 in the Howden Park Centre, the day we held the first Livingston & District Horticultural Society Annual Flower Show, what a great day. We could do with a few more exhibitors but that will come with time, the public were out in force with over 300 viewing the show during opening times. Special thanks to the committee and volunteers for all their hard work.

Isn't it great being part of a success story?

*Robert Hope*

## **MAPPING ORCHARDS ACROSS CENTRAL SCOTLAND: CAN YOU HELP?**

**A**n ambitious new project is attempting to map orchards across central Scotland, perhaps for the first time in living memory. Many gardeners are aware of the renewed interest in orchards in Scotland over the last few years. But it has been a long time since a comprehensive attempt has been made to find out the distribution

of orchards across the whole of central Scotland. Perhaps even as far back as 1813 – for it was in that year that Patrick Neill compiled his eight volume ‘*On Scottish Gardens and Orchards*’ on behalf of the Board of Agriculture.



So why is the project being attempted? Traditional orchards are now recognised as an important resource for many reasons; for example heritage, culture, biodiversity and local food. Basic information on where orchards are located, helps to create a foundation for initiatives aimed at regenerating orchards. Many of these initiatives are organised by the growing number of grassroots organisations interested in orchards – such as horticultural societies, gardening clubs and orchard groups.

Who is supporting the project? The project is supported by Central Scotland Green Network, together with NGOs such as Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens. Please contact us if you would like your group to become a supporter.

What counts as an orchard? As a minimum, at least six fruit trees are needed to be considered as an orchard. Orchards are of interest if they are young or old, urban or rural, private or community spaces.

How can you help? Tell the members of your group about the project – put this information in your newsletter or circulate an email, asking them to: Visit [www.mappingorchards.org.uk](http://www.mappingorchards.org.uk) and download an orchard form.

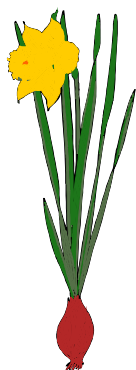
If you have a list of orchards in your area or you are a local group, please contact the project at [fruitymap@eco-consultancy.co.uk](mailto:fruitymap@eco-consultancy.co.uk)

*Crispin Hayes*  
*Mapping Orchards Project leader*

## SNIPPETS & CUTTINGS.....



### Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society Spring Show



As summer comes to an end so the preparations for next Spring's Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society Spring Show begin. The Show, which next year will be held on the **26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2011**, has grown over the past few years and has moved to the Fletcher Building at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

Within the show is a specific Inter-Society Competition – for the Hazelwood Trophy; North Berwick in Bloom are the current holders. So if you have an idea for a spring planting for an outdoor Pallet Garden - 1m x 1m and no taller than 1.5m – why not start planning.

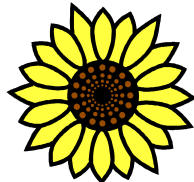
Schedules are available from Pam Whittle (pam\_whittle@btinternet.com) or by writing to Pam at 2 Halmyre Loan, Romanno Bridge, West Linton, EH46 7DN



### Display vases available on loan from “The Caley”:

The R.C.H.S. (the Caley) has a very large number of green-painted, metal vases for Flower Shows, in a variety of sizes. As these are expensive to buy and are only used by us once a year for our annual Show at the end of March, the Show Committee would be pleased to loan the vases out to other Clubs and Societies for their shows.

We would ask for a donation to our funds. The vases are kept in the Society's storage in RBGE, so time would have to be allowed to retrieve them. Don't ring me up needing them later that day ! I can be contacted on 0131 441 6528 or [rchs@colinton.f9.co.uk](mailto:rchs@colinton.f9.co.uk)  
Mrs Elizabeth Ferro, R.C.H.S. Show Committee Convenor.



## **ANN'S DIARY**

### **November – Tidy Up or Leave Alone?**

Imagine a long pile of leaves blown into the wall next to a pavement - don't you want to revert to childhood, jump in, drag your feet and kick leaves everywhere? I know I do and actually if I think no one is looking I admit I still do it. But in my garden fallen leaves are not fun they are just a nuisance that I feel the need to tidy every weekend at the moment.

So 'To tidy or Not to Tidy' is the question; make your own mind up with the pro's and con's below;

Tidy;

- When gathered, fallen leaves from deciduous trees make marvellous leaf mould. Collect them in black bags, make some holes in the filled bags with a fork and hide them round the back of the shed for a couple of years. The resulting leaf mould is a lovely product, perfect for mulching plants, or for mixing in alpine or orchid compost
- Clearing leaves from the ground scrupulously at this time of year reduces the number of places that over wintering slugs, caterpillars, cut worms and grubs can hang out. Therefore you are likely to reduce some pest numbers just by being tidy.

- Lots of leaves that fall from our shrubs, trees and rose bushes will be covered in fungal spores, by removing these leaves we are helping to stop recontamination by the fungus. Composting the leaves tends to kill off a lot of these spores.
- Tidying up leaves and plant debris burns up calories; Christmas is coming – so if you do a weekly garden workout now you will be allowed an extra mince pie next month!

### Or Not to Tidy?

- Clearing all your leaves and plant rubbish may get rid of a number of garden pests but it also discourages the ‘Good Guys’ such as ladybirds and lacewings which love plant debris to over winter in.
- Clearing removes an insulating layer from the surface of the soil, which can expose buds, rhizomes and bulbs to frost and winter wet.
- Nature does her own composting and gradually over the winter much of the dead plant material will be worked back into the soil. When you finally do your spring clean around March time you will find you have far less bulk to get rid of whether to the compost bin or wherever.

So make you own mind up and don't feel guilty whichever you choose.

### **December – Force some Rhubarb**

Are you fed up already with the excesses of Christmas, too many mince pies and too much mulled wine? You probably need a bit of exercise outside in the garden to get you ready for the big day. A great idea at this time of year is to lift a clump of Rhubarb for forcing to give you the earliest and sweetest crop around;

- Choose a large rhubarb plant already growing in your garden, one that is a minimum of three years old is best.

- Dig up the plant keeping as much soil on the roots as possible. (This is not a job for the faint hearted – but you will deserve a small tippie afterwards.)
- Leave the clump outside on the ground to go through at least three or four hard frosts.
- Pot into a large tub, wooden box or even a bag ..... I use a woven blue plastic one from a certain Swedish furniture store! You can use old compost, soil or even sawdust to pot the roots into.
- The plant then needs to go indoors to a temperature of 50 – 60<sup>o</sup>F in complete darkness, a large cupboard or cellar is ideal.
- Keep the roots moist but not wet and around 10 to 12 weeks later you will be able to harvest your first Rhubarb stalks when they are around a foot to 18” high. The stalks will be bright pink and really sweet with small unformed leaves. Use all the stalks that are produced over around a four week period.
- When the harvest period is finished set the plants back outside. They can be replanted in the spring when they will give a small crop; they will recover back to full cropping outside within a year or two.

If you can't be bothered with all the fuss described above remember it is easy to force Rhubarb 'in situ' later;

- Cover the clumps with upside down buckets, pails or proper custom made clay forcers in March.
- Check during April and May and harvest the young shoots as they appear.
- Give different clumps a 'rest year' in between 'forcing years'.
- Enjoy!!!!

Merry Christmas and happy forcing.

*Ann Burns*

Ann Burns is Team Leader, Horticulture and Landscape Construction, at Oatridge College



## YOUR COUNCIL

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**Membership Secretary:** Mike Rossi

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### **Council Members:**

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**Christopher Davies** (Colinton GC)

**Margaret Drummond** (Penicuik Horticultural Society))

**Mike Gourlay** (Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society)

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