

SCOTTISH GARDENERS' FORUM

Newsletter

Vol 9: Issue 4



Winter 2011



www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

WINTER 2011

EDITORIAL

DECEMBER 2011

Dear Fellow Gardeners,

Another year is almost past, with the cool rainy season in the summer, and mild, unseasonal (but rather enjoyable) weather in November, tempting plants into premature bud while my lawn boasts this year's exceptional harvest of moss.

While you ponder over what to do about it, give the garden its rest too. Have a read of what your fellow-gardeners have been up to in that never ending dialogue with nature, and delight in planning the next chapter in 2012, just round the corner.

Christopher Davies

CONTENTS			
Editorial	2	Queensferry "Potatoes in a Pot"	15
Chairman's Letter	3	Dalgety Bay HS and Daffodils	16
SGF in Action	4	Gifford HS	18
SGF Annual General Meeting	6	Developing a Website	20
Impressions from the AGM	8	Lanark GC – New Website	22
The Elgin Biblical Garden	10	Ann's Diary	23
Nairn GC and a Community Bed	12	What's On	26
Barony GC Potato Competition	14	Who's Who	27

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): Roger Evans, Lilyvale, Quothquan, Biggar. ML12 6ND

01899 308 695

email secretary@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

Our cover picture: a scene from the Elgin Biblical Garden, coming to life after last year's winter. (See article on page 10)

OUR CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends

At this time of year it seems there is a real urgency around getting as much done in the garden before the weather turns and Winter settles in. I have really enjoyed watching the trees change into their autumnal colours and the wildlife stocking up on the abundance of berries and nuts. I can only hope and keep my fingers crossed that the Winter is less severe than last year.

I was so disappointed that I missed the AGM as it sounded like it was such a fantastic day. My thanks to all.

We have two new council members this year. I would like to welcome Roger Evans from Lanark Gardening Club who will be taking over the role of secretary from Alex Rutherford and John Smith who has kindly agreed to take over the running of our Pallet and Planter Challenges at Gardening Scotland. I have organised the competition for the last five years and have thoroughly enjoyed the event and the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people.

Our new register of speakers should be winging its way to you this month, that's if you have not already received it. There have been a number of alterations so I would like to put out a plea to you all. Please can you let us know of any speakers that you have had at your own events in order for us to approach them with the possibility of adding them into our records.

The SGF continues to grow even in these difficult times. We are continuing to strive to provide you, our members, with a forum to share information for your mutual benefit. If you have articles you would like to appear in our newsletter please send these on to our editor Chris Davies.

On behalf of myself, and the SGF I 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.

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

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.

Secondly: 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: by circulating the printed copies, or better still making your members aware that they can read the Newsletters on line.

Finally, let us know if you would like receive the Newsletter by email (as a pdf file).

NEXT ISSUE – MARCH DEADLINE

Our newsletter is gaining in readership and popularity. Thank you for your articles, and for reading it. Let's keep up the good work.

Just to remind you that the next issue "Spring" will be published at the end of March, so please send me your news, ideas, observations by the middle of March.

I will send round the usual reminder by email.

**Items for the newsletter should be sent to me: Christopher Davies, 7 West Carnethy Avenue, Edinburgh EH13 0ED: Tel 0131 441 2152,
Email: editor@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk**

Christopher Davies

SGF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 11th Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Gardeners Forum was held on 29th October 2011 at Oatridge College, Ecclesmachan, Broxburn. Attendance was slightly up from the previous year with 55 representatives from 16 organisations. Lanark and Penicuik Garden Clubs alone sending along a combined total of 19 participants! Word had clearly got round SGF members that the AGM is a good day out!

The SGF Vice Chair, Ann Burns chaired the meeting in the absence of Jim Dickson, Chair, who sent his apologies. The Chair reported on the activities of the SGF during 2010/11, focussing on the distribution of the £250 awards to Kilmacolm Horticultural Society, Moray Rock Garden Group and Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society, and the success of the Pallet Garden Competition at Gardening Scotland in June 2011. Dr Shiona Mackie, Treasurer, provided a financial report. She advised the meeting that membership now stood at 102 with 84 organisations obtaining their PLI through the SGF. She also advised that there would be no need to raise the subscription or the PLI in 2011/12. A surplus of £676.80 had been made at the end of the SGF financial year. The AGM accepted the audited accounts, and agreed to appoint Gillian Hewitt as the auditor for 2011/12.

Ann Burns thanked Alex Rutherford and Hazel Main for their contributions to the SGF in their capacities as Secretary and member of the Executive Committee respectively, and presented each of them with a bouquet of flowers.

A discussion ensued on the criteria for allocating grants for 2011/12. The Executive Committee had considered offering gardening kits to organisations to take to their local schools to support gardening initiatives locally. It became apparent that a number of clubs/societies are already engaged with schools and youth groups

in promoting horticulture through the provision of seeds, bulbs etc. It was felt that providing a number of grants for which member organisations could apply to support their local young people initiatives might be more appropriate. The Executive committee agreed to consider all options at their next meeting.

Following the AGM, David Mitchell delivered a fascinating talk on Impressionist Gardens and his involvement in the exhibition of that name which took place at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2010. After an excellent lunch provided by Oatridge College, George Anderson took us through his life in gardening. The final item on the programme was the

ever popular Gardening Question Time, and in true Radio 4 fashion, there was even an interesting exhibit for the panel (John Smith, George Anderson and Ann Burns) to consider!



The Panel: John, George and Ann: l to r

Throughout the day, the Tombola and Raffle was, as usual, run very efficiently by Mrs Simpson. A total of £103 was raised.

Once again, the general consensus at the end of the day was that it had been an enjoyable day with representatives appreciating the opportunity to share their gardening experiences, and to listen to two excellent speakers.

Shiona Mackie

“IN THE SMALL PRINT”

– IMPRESSIONS FROM THE AGM

In the small print of the booking form for SGF there it was, ‘no limit to the number of members per club’ our excuse to arrange an impromptu excursion as an addition to our winter syllabus. SGF beckoned with an interesting day of speakers, AGM, gardener’s question time, food and a venue - all our club had to do was pay and turn up.

Then to the people, how better to check the accuracy of our members list and remind existing and previous members that the new syllabus was underway with an invitation to the SGF, also what a great opportunity to use our new website as the key information point. The wheels on the bus went round and round to arrive at the splendid county location of Oatridge College with its easy parking and fabulous facilities, not to mention tea and cake (yet).

The AGM was a prompt, engrossing, and effective meeting with a jocular but businesslike progression through the agenda, not least our own president Roger Evans as agreeing to take a position on the Council.

David Mitchell then held the gathering spellbound with his information about the romance, politics, history, and of course gardens and plants featured in the paintings of the Impressionist Painters. From the seemingly simple question “could you name the plants in some Impressionist paintings” David embarked on a major project featuring 97 paintings, 4 years culminating in an exhibition of international works from private and public collections in our capital during 2010. Working alongside Claire Willson of Glasgow University they identified plants and dates against horticultural records for the dates, even tracking down the marriage certificate of American Charles Courtney Curran to date the ‘Lillies in Lotus Lillies’; researched the spiritualism and cross referenced historical records. David explained Impressionists and their followers naturally turned to gardens for artistic inspiration.

My friend and I had visited the exhibition but I had not seen it in the detail we experienced during this talk and the enthusiasm and details discussed made me want to revisit the exhibition and explore the gardens featured; however, I have contented myself with a reread of the exhibition book and lunch.

Lunch was the best conference event buffet I have ever enjoyed, a satisfying tasty assortment of good wholesome soup and mini steak pies and potatoes polished off with fruit.

East Lothian is not just famous for “A Cabbage Garden 1877” it was here that our second speaker George Anderson began his gardening journey. The familiar face from the Beechgrove Garden led us back to a time of 'proper jobs' and apprentices and parental intervention although not as far as Cabbage Patch! Having begun his career as a pot boy apprentice his thirst for knowledge and advancement was not met by his hands-on training and he pursued a formalised education. The determination essential as a Scottish gardener saw him apply and not attain placement twice. However maternal intervention prompted reconsideration and allowed him to embrace his capacity for knowledge and travel through his life and indeed the world. His main message throughout his talk and the Q&A session was that we all continue to learn. I consider that my knowledge is greater having attended this event.

Question time:

What techniques could be used to remove them or fatten them up caused much hilarity. We discovered the ‘nurture and protect’ way vegetables should be cared for and I confessed to the ‘just bury the carrot seed and abandon it’ approach. The planning ahead methodology was demonstrated with the guest appearance of a leggy parsnip who it seems was over nourished.

A day to be recommended so for 2012 we have entered 27 October in to our diaries and suggest you do too.

Tracey Stone, Lanark Garden Club

ELGIN BIBLICAL GARDEN

Moray Rock Garden Club's Involvement in the Elgin Biblical Garden

The Elgin Biblical Garden is a community garden maintained and planted by the Friends of the Biblical Garden, Moray Council and Moray College horticultural students. In 2007 the Chairman of the Friends of the Garden asked the Moray Rock Garden Club (MRGC) if they would be interested in constructing, planting, and maintaining a rock garden in the Garden.

The MRGC accepted the challenge but decided rather than constructing a general rock garden, they would build one which



would depict some of the mountain plants that would be found growing in the mountains of the Holy Land. They started by setting terms of reference for the project. After research they decided to widen the mountainous area from the very restrictive Israel/Jordan type areas to a much wider area. It was agreed by the MRGC and the Friends to use as Terms of Reference Acts, Chapter 2, vv. 5 - 11 (Revised Standard Version) – ‘Pentecost’, paraphrased -*‘Jews from far and near were in Jerusalem at that time and they were amazed*

to hear the apostles speaking the languages of Iran and Iraq, of Turkey and Italy, of Egypt, Syria, Libya and Greece. In their own languages, these visitors heard the apostles tell of the mighty works of God.' – In so doing they widened the possibility of being able to grow representative plants.

Work started in clearing and sculpting the allotted area with the assistance of Moray Council, the College Horticultural staff, students and MRGC members. The ground was cleared and left fallow until 2008 to see what perennial weeds regenerated. During this time, MRGC held seed sowing workshops. Seeds were procured from many sources; Gothenburg Botanic Garden, Prague Rock Garden Club, Alpine Garden Society, Scottish Rock Garden Club. Both the

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Alpine Garden Society provided articles and lists of plants likely to be found. Rumbling Bridge Alpine Nursery and Potterton's Alpine Nursery were very enthusiastic about the project and along with the Friends donated material to assist the making of a quick impact.



During the winter months, Propagation Workshops are held, while during the summer months there are weekly evening Workshops. Over the past four years a wide and diverse collection of plant material has been accumulated, with plant representatives from most relevant countries. Growing from seed is a slow process with many of the bulb seeds taking four plus years to flower. Fortunately there is other plant material which takes far less time before being ready to be planted out in the garden and MRGC are at the stage of cataloguing and mapping their growing positions.

Winter and spring construction work continues and earlier this year, with sponsorship from Scottish Gardeners Forum, along with the Friends and students, steps were built on the north side of the rock garden. This allows access for the public to walk around or through the garden. Future landscaping work includes procuring a suitable top dressing to suppress weeds and to set the plants off to advantage. Work in progress is the revamping of the signage in the main garden and new signage for the rock garden.

The garden is well visited in the summer months by the locals and bus tours from around the globe. Great interest has been shown in the rock garden and a number of visitors have asked if there are any other Biblical rock gardens depicting plants that are likely to be grown in the mountainous areas of the Bible Lands.

With the creation of the rock garden, many of the Friends of the Biblical Garden and ex-students have joined the MRGC members in attending the MRGC winter lecture programme and taking part in the propagation and plant management workshops and garden visits.

The Friends of the Biblical Garden have a web site along with a video presentation which may be found at – Biblical Garden, Elgin, Moray, Scotland – You Tube.

Those wanting further information can contact morayrockgarden@gmail.com

Davie Sharp, Moray Rock Garden Club

NAIRN GARDENING CLUB ADOPTS A COMMUNITY BED

Nairn & District Gardening Club has this year joined forces with another local voluntary horticultural group, Keeping Nairnshire Colourful (KNC), to safeguard some of the garden beds around the town traditionally filled with seasonal planting.

KNC learned last summer that, as a result of budget cuts, Highland Council was going to grass over three of these beds alongside the A96 out of Nairn towards Inverness. They decided to apply for lottery funding so that they could adopt all three, turn them into perennial herbaceous beds and find three local groups to agree to plant them up and maintain them. The application was successful and when approached members of the Gardening Club agreed to adopt one.

A local garden designer offered to do a planting scheme for each bed and the two local nurseries, Greens' Nurseries and Broadley Garden Centre said they would source and supply the plants. The money was confirmed in September and plans were made for an autumn planting.

However, it soon became clear that a hard winter was forecast and so the plans were put on hold. The snow and frost finally cleared and the plants were ordered for April. Members got together for a mass



plant up. Shaped like a peanut the central features of the bed are a yellow column Yew and dwarf Junipers. Surrounding these are bushes of Skimmia, orange Potentilla, Hebe "Red Edge" and Sarcococa. Continuing the red, green, purple & yellow theme, the bed is edged with drifts of purple-leaved Heuchera, Sedums, Stipa tenuissima & Epimediums. Over the autumn members have added dwarf Narcissisi "Jetfire", early & mid-spring daffodils and purple Alliums to extend the seasonal colour.

To maintain the bed, the Club has organised a rota with pairs of members checking on the plants, weeding and trimming the grass edges each month. With the warmth of April and plentiful rain this

year the plants have established well and put on good growth. The Club has an exciting hands-on project for members and at the same time it is helping to ensure that visitors and residents alike can continue to enjoy colourful beds around Nairn.

BARONY GARDENING CLUB POTATO COMPETITION

We heard from Mrs. Jeanie Jones, Chairman of the Barony Gardening Club, Lockerbie, who mentioned that she had run a potato growing competition for three years. Sensing an interesting story, we contacted her for details. Here is her reply.

Re our Potato Competition - it was not my idea, I was talking to a gardening club in Yorkshire on my travels to the Himalayas, just before the Harrogate Spring show and they were handing out potatoes.

This is how our Barony Gardening Club does it.

I go to various supermarkets - Lidl being the most helpful - and ask for the black buckets they use for flowers. I understand some supermarkets recycle, and others chuck out the buckets and are pleased that they are going to be re-used. I drill 6 one inch holes in the bottom of the buckets - luckily my husband is an engineer and I have access to drills and bits. I number the buckets and I bought some black poly potato growing bags (which I also number), from the seed potato merchant, where I buy a net of first early potatoes. We have used Winston, Swift and Maris Bard over the past three years. At our March and April meetings I hand out a bucket and / or a black poly potato bag, and record details. At our meeting in September, people bring back their buckets and bags and we tip them out and record the crop.

We give out free membership to the person with the biggest yield in a bucket, biggest yield in a bag, and the biggest potato. This year the best yield and biggest potato were grown by the same person. I asked her what was the secret in growing them, as most people had far smaller yields, and the answer was she fed them on home made Comfrey liquid.

Results this year were - 13 buckets and 9 bags were handed out, 8 buckets and 5 bags were brought back.

Ina Gordon had the best yield in a bucket and largest potato – 1949g and 206g.

Wendy Branbon best yield in a bag 921g, they both receive free membership.

Jeanie Jones

QUEENSFERRY AND DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB “GROW POTATOES IN A POT”

Two years ago, it was decided that holding a Flower Show was no longer viable due to a fall in numbers of those contributing. This year we decided that to encourage participation , we would hold a growing competition of some sort. So the “Grow Potatoes in a Pot “ idea was born.

In March, each member was given three seed potatoes to grow in the container of their choice. A date was given for planting and a date and time in September for the “Weigh-in”

It had been decided that the pots should be brought to the the house of a member with a large driveway, for weighing, Help was offered to any who would find this difficult.

So with wine and nibbles being provided, and quite a party atmosphere, eighteen members gathered to watch, as the weighing

commenced. The size of the pots were many and varied from 14 inch flower pots to something which resembled a water butt!

Each pot was tipped out and the contents weighed and recorded. Eager members inspected the contents for size and amount and discussed the compost used. (The winner had used a compost largely of his own making. The two who were second equal, used compost from a well known “do it yourself store”.)

It was a light hearted competition, but made for a pleasant social occasion which everyone seemed to enjoy. As a committee we have been encouraged by this success and are planning to give each member some Daffodil bulbs this month , to grow in a pot for Spring.

Margaret Brown. (Secretary.)

DALGETY BAY HS AND DAFFODILS

Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society (DBHS) applied for a Scottish Gardener’s Forum (SGF) grant to go towards floral enhancement in the community and was awarded £250 at the SGF Annual General Meeting in October 2010.

In 2009 Dalgety Bay and Hillend Community Council was persuaded to install a number of hanging baskets on the lamp posts on the main



drag through the centre of the town, Regents Way. DHBS had a hand in persuading the Community Council to put up the baskets

but the final decision was made very late in the day and the baskets did not look brilliant that year. They looked good but they did not look brilliant. They looked brilliant this year because they were not put up at the eleventh hour.

Lady Helen Nurseries, in Cardenden, supplied the baskets on a maintenance contract. They plant up the baskets, they put up the baskets at the start of the season, they maintain and water the baskets and they take down the baskets at the end of the season. They have the contract for a lot of the communities in west Fife and you often see puddles on the pavement under baskets which have been watered early in the morning, very early. You might hear it said "Lady Helen's been here again" and to the uninitiated, this sounds quite grand. It has to be said, we play on it.

Anyway, to get back to the SGF grant. DBHS wanted to increase the number of lamp posts that were adorned with hanging baskets to further enhance the town and this is why we applied for the grant. The Community Council, however, did not want to increase the number of baskets. Perhaps this was because, in the first year, the baskets were not as good as it was thought they might be. It did rather scupper our plans.

After a rethink, we amended our plans, and thought about bulb planting. There are a lot of grassy areas in Dalgety Bay, which are just that and they would be brightened up in the spring with daffodils if they were planted. We decided that this would make good use of the grant. Last spring we planted a whole load of snowdrops in the green along-side part of the coastal path. There were already large clumps of snowdrops there, which were split up and replanted. They will look good next spring.

We identified several areas in the town that would benefit from bulb planting and have embarked on an exercise to have them planted with daffodil bulbs. We bought four 25kg sacks of different varieties of daffodil and the first lot we planted was Dutch Master, good old Dutch Master, 40cm, soft yellow, I love the descriptions in

the catalogue. We planted these outside the gates to our allotments. We are looking after ourselves first. We only covered half the area so we planted Camelot, 35cm golden yellow, lovely. Next we planted a circle of tulips, which were donated to us. Salome, 35cm white, were planted around them. Binkie, 35cm, lime and yellow reverse bi-colour, was the last lot to be planted this year. We will continue with the project in 2012.

The cost of the snowdrops and the cost of the daffodils did not come to the total value of the grant but what we do is plant up five planters positioned around the Day Care Centre in Dalgety Bay. Maintenance is a problem here so we are planting more shrubs and less bedding in 2012 but in 2011 full summer bedding was planted and the cost of this was covered by the rest of the grant. So, £50 well spent. Thank you very much SGF.

The photographs show a couple of the plantings and we will follow them up in the spring when we have flowers.

Mike Gourlay

GIFFORD HS – ANNUAL REPORT

These extracts from the report to the AGM give an interesting insight into the activities of the Club.

At the AGM of **Gifford Horticultural Society in November**, the President, Mrs Beryl McNaughton reported that the Membership of the Society stood at a remarkable 271. The charitable objectives, education and support of the community were being actively pursued.

The winter programme had included talks by George Anderson on his life as a horticulturist, Paddy Scott on the Open Garden Scheme, which the Society will again be joining in next year, and finally a topical lecture on bees and honey.

The annual Inter-Society Quiz was held in Pathhead this year and Gifford came a valiant 3rd. Next year the venue will be in Gifford Village Hall and it will be a return to gardening questions rather than general knowledge.

The Flower Show, the biggest two day village Flower Show in Scotland, was held on 20/21st August. It got a lot of well deserved publicity and despite 2011 being one of the worst gardening years it maintained its reputation for being one of the best shows in the region, with quality exhibits and high entries across all sections.

The summer outings included a visit to Gardening Scotland and later there were full day visits to gardens in the Borders and later to gardens in Fife. The contrast of old and new gardens, national and private gardens provided excellent choices. There was then an evening visit to Floors Castle and a private tour of its walled garden. All of the outings were fully booked and all the reports back were complimentary.

The Plant Sale is another important way of raising funds and is a popular source of annuals as well as a wide range of perennials and vegetable plants. The list of annuals that are purchased has not been reviewed for some time and, based on comments received on quality and variety, it is planned to have a greater variety available next year.

What has become an annual event, the Members Lunch, was very well attended and is recommended to all for the good food and company that it provides at a very reasonable cost.

The last event of the year was the Social evening in October which involved a light hearted 'pub' style quiz followed by wine and cheese. An excellent way to end the Society's gardening programme which everyone enjoyed.

Mrs McNaughton thanked the committee and all volunteers that help make the Gifford Horticultural Society such a successful community and gardening organisation.

DEVELOPING A WEBSITE

In this first of two articles, John Murison gives valuable practical advice to those considering setting up a website – and perhaps a useful checklist for those already there. The continuation of the article will appear in the SGF Spring Newsletter.

Preliminaries and Planning

Suppose you have been asked to develop a website for your society, and that you have agreed. It is tempting to start by thinking about technical issues. For example: What web technology should I use? Where should the website be ‘hosted’ (that is, which computer should be used as the ‘web server’)? What should be the back-up strategy? What visual appearance and colour scheme should the site have?

These things do have to be considered, but they are not where you should start. What matters in a website is its contents and having a regular supply of fresh material – so that’s what you should concentrate on first. Try to answer these questions: What material do we want to include and how should it be structured? Who will keep it up-to-date? How many people are willing to help regularly?

Arriving at a logical structure for your site is the first task you should consider. One approach I have seen used successfully is to write, on separate slips of paper, all the topics you would like your website to include. You might come up with some of the following: contact information, members’ news, calendar, details of regular meetings, events, shows, current publications, this week’s chores, photographs (for a gardening site this could be a ‘floral gallery’), photo of the month, problem corner, office bearers, site map... Discuss your list with colleagues and try to extend it to cover all the topics that might reasonably be included. Now lay out the slips of paper on a flat surface and try to organise them under at most five or six headings. This will reflect the overall structure of the website. Having a simple, logical structure makes it easier for users to

navigate your website. You should aim to make it *predictable* and *fit for purpose*.

But you shouldn't work in a vacuum. To help you understand current website practice and discover good ideas already in use, surf the web for similar sites. Try typing some relevant words into Google (or whatever your preferred search engine is) and follow up the more promising results. Here are some sites found by such an approach; one or two may be far more elaborate than you have in mind, but that doesn't stop you picking up good ideas:

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

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/>

<http://www.gardenmatters.biz/>

<http://www.ecba.org.uk/home.aspx>

<http://www.lfgnp.org.uk/>

Don't be discouraged by the sophistication of some sites. They may have been produced by experienced professionals. If this is your first attempt at producing a website you can't expect your efforts to match their work. What matters is that your site contains the information people want to know about. You can polish it later.

The other point I can't stress too strongly is to get started! Do start making your list of topics and do try to group them logically, but don't keep the resulting structure to yourself – show it to interested colleagues, and take their comments on board. Once you have thought about this and discussed it, you should begin to get a picture of what your final website will be like, structurally at least. The choice of fonts and colours comes later.

John Murison

LANARK GARDEN CLUB: THEIR NEW WEBSITE & THE CLUB

Lanark Garden Club have used their green fingers to tap into internet resources by setting up a web site <http://www.lanarkgardenclub.btck.co.uk/> using the free of charge website portal for non profit making community organisations provided by BT Community Web Kit <http://www.btck.co.uk/>.

We found this a straight forward process (*it only took a day to set up and load content*) and as a small club with big ideas we liked very much that it is free to set up and has no subscription fee.

We hope to reach a wider audience/membership and will use the site for information about our events and links to other interesting events and organisations including of course Scottish Gardeners Forum (SGF). We would recommend it to other organisations and confirm it is as it says on its home page “easy to build” however we would be pleased to provide support to other SGF subscribers if required.

Lanark Garden Club is open to all with an interest and enthusiasm for Gardening. We welcome new members (*£15 per annum*) and visitors (*£4 per event*) at our meetings on the last Thursday of the Month at 7.30pm during Sept, Oct, Nov, Jan, Feb, Mar, and April at Christ Church Hall, Cleghorn Road, Lanark ML11 7NE.

We have speakers, plant sales, raffle and refreshments throughout the winter months and arrange trips throughout the summer months.

Thanks to our volunteer drivers and availability of a minibus from The Rural Development Trust during Summer 2011 our destinations included an interesting residential break at Kirroughtree House

Newton Stewart visiting the Cosmic Garden of Speculation, Crichton Gardens, Logan Botanic's and Broughton House. We also enjoyed day trips to Floors Castle and Lady Anne Frasers Garden at Inveresk.

Please refer to our website for the "Whats On" for our new syllabus or to the SGF feature at the back of this newsletter, don't miss Professor David Rankin (Oct) or Dr Marek Kukula (Feb).

Happy Gardening – we look forward to meeting you!

Lanarkgardenclub@hotmail.co.uk

From all at Lanark Garden Club

ANN'S DIARY

November Gardening – making leaf mold;

If the falling autumn leaves are driving you crazy at the moment, raking, brushing, gathering and binning – STOP – collect the leaves and start making leaf mold. Sometimes known as 'Gardeners Gold' it is one of the best soil conditioners there is and very easy to make.

Deciduous tree leaves are best as evergreens normally take longer to break down. Collect your leaves by raking, brushing or even better mechanically with a garden vacuum; if you have a rotary mower that collects clippings use this to lift your leaves instead. Both the vacuum and mower methods of collection have the added advantage that they chop the leaves up too allowing the leaf mold to rot down quicker.

Stuff the damp leaves into large black plastic refuse bags, tie the tops and then puncture the bag with a gardening fork, making maybe 20 holes through each bag. Stack the bags out of site behind a shed or similar and forget about them until this time next year by

which time they will have rotted to 1/3 of their volume and will have made lovely, crumbly sweet smelling leaf mold.

On a large scale you can construct a cage from wooden posts and chicken wire and fill this with your leaves – cover with an old piece of carpet or hessian to speed the rotting process.

Leaf mold is normally almost weed free so it makes a great moisture retentive mulch around garden plants. The fact that it is pure organic matter makes it ideal for use as a soil conditioner in either very light sandy soils or alternatively to add to heavy clay soils, it provides a fantastic habitat for soil life, including earthworms and beneficial bacteria. It is pretty low in nutrients so is a great base to use mixed with gravel for potting your alpines into, or alternatively used mixed with bark it's a good potting mix for many orchids.

And the greatest thing about it is that it is FREE - so start collecting now.

December;

Garden Centres and Supermarkets are full of our favourite Christmas pot plants at the moment; Blowsy red, pink or cream Poinsettias, marbled leaved Cyclamen and shocking pink Christmas Cacti. Chances are you'll buy at least one or perhaps receive them as a present. So just how do we look after them in the house?

Poinsettias;

- DO NOT LIKE DRAUGHTS. Choose carefully in the shop and avoid those sitting in front of doors. Ensure the plant is well wrapped for you to take home.
- Place in indirect sunlight at a temperature of around 16-18°C, an east or west facing window ledge is ideal. Do not place over a radiator and remember to avoid cold draughts.
- Water when compost is moderately dry. A good way to judge is to stick your finger into the pot and if compost sticks to it, the soil is still moist.

- Poinsettias are members of the Euphorbia group so produce a white sticky sap when injured; take care to wash carefully after handling these plants as the sap can be an irritant.

Cyclamen;

- Again these plants prefer indirect light.
- Temperatures should be kept much cooler for long lasting Cyclamen, 10-15⁰C is ideal. I keep mine in a frost free conservatory and they last so long in these cool temperatures that my Mother (jealous of course) has been known to ask in March if they are fossilised!
- Keep Cyclamen on the dry side, only watering when the leaves are beginning to lose their rigidity and soften up a bit. Over watering encourages grey mould to attack these plants.
- Remove dying flowers and leaves by snapping stems off right back to the corm.

Christmas Cactus;

- These need plenty light, a south facing window ledge is great.
- Water only when the compost feels dry to the touch and water sparingly.
- Bud drop is normally caused by over watering or because the plant is too close to a radiator.

All of these plants, especially the cactus, can be nurtured through the year to bloom again another Christmas but honestly for best results with Poinsettias and Cyclamen I would advise you to buy new each year. All are available for a few pounds, comparable to a nice bunch of flowers – so go on treat yourself! Chuck them out when they have finished flowering in February and you will have the perfect excuse to go to the garden centre and buy something else.

Ann Burns

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

“WHAT’S ON:” This feature is provided for the interest and convenience of members. The information is given in good faith, depending on the accuracy of those who supplied it. In the event of your acting on it, we suggest you double-check. The events are arranged in datal order.

SOCIETY	EVENT	VENUE	DATE
Leuchars & District Horticultural Society	Floral Art (Alyson Christie)	Burnside Hall Ballmullo	8th Dec
South West Scotland Rock Garden Group South West Scotland Rock Garden Group	Malcolm McGregor, Saxifrages AGM and Photo Competition		13th Jan 2012
Leuchars & District Horticultural Society	Cairn O'Mor Winery	Burnside Hall Ballmullo	9th Feb 2012
South West Scotland Rock Garden Group	Tony Rymer, North America-Rockies & Pacific NW		10th Feb 2012
Leuchars & District Horticultural Society	Crafts Evening	Burnside Hall Ballmullo	8th March 2012
South West Scotland Rock Garden Group	Peter Foley, Alpines to Grow, some plants for sale		10th march 2012
Leuchars & District Horticultural Society	Annual Plants	Burnside Hall Ballmullo	12th April 2012
South West Scotland Rock Garden Group	Ken Redshaw, Pleiones & Their Cultivation		14th April 2012
Leuchars & District Horticultural Society	Herbs	Burnside Hall Ballmullo	10th May 2012
Hurlford Garden Club	Annual Flower Show	Hurlford Community Centre	19th Aug 2012
Kilmalcolm Horticultural Society	Replanting of Garden at the Cross		spring 2012

YOUR COUNCIL

Honorary President: Professor Fred Last

Chairman: **Jim Dickson** (Suntrap Gardening Club)
52 Allan Park Drive, Edinburgh EH14 1LP,
0131 443 6315

chair@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

Vice Chair: **Ann Burns (Oatridge College)**

Ecclesmachan, BROXBURN, EH52 6NH

vicechair@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

Secretary: **Roger Evans**

Lilyvale, Quothquan, Biggar. ML12 6ND

01899 308 695

secretary@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

Treasurer: **Dr Shiona Mackie** (Suntrap GC)

Braeburn Stable Cottage, 16, Braeburn Drive,

Edinburgh. EH14 6AQ, 0131 449 7239

treasurer@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

Membership Secretary: Mike Rossi

98 Main Street, Coaltown of Balgonie, Glenrothes, FIFE, KY7 6HZ

Tel: 01592 771541

membership@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

Council Members:

Ann Cross (Kirkintilloch HS)

Christopher Davies (Colinton GC)

Margaret Drummond (Penicuik Horticultural Society)

Mike Gourlay (Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society)

Hazel Main (RHS Aberdeen)

Alison Murison (Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society)

Alistair Simpson (National Bonsai Collection of Scotland)

John Smith (Pallet Garden & Planter/Gardening Scotland)

Newsletter Editor Christopher Davies

7 West Carnethy Avenue, Edinburgh, EH13 0ED, 0131 441 2152

editor@scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk