



SCOTTISH GARDENERS' FORUM

Newsletter

Vol 7: Issue 2

www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

SUMMER 2009

EDITORIAL

MAY 2009

Dear Fellow Gardener

Well, Spring came, a little hesitantly, it is true, but none the less our gardens came to life right on cue, for Easter, and by the time this newsletter appears we will be into the glories of Gardening Scotland. We hope that many of you will have taken the opportunity to make contact with the SGF at our stand at the Pallet Gardens. Lots of ideas and plenty of scope for inspiration. Happy gardening! Now's the time to enjoy it!

Christopher Davies (Editor)

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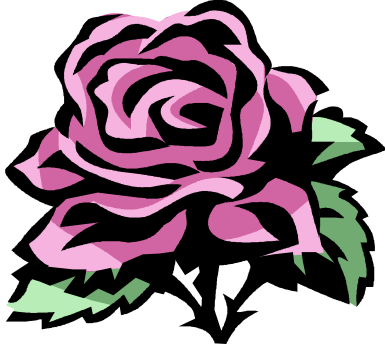
The Scottish Gardeners' Forum exists to provide the communication link between Scotland's many horticulturally-oriented organisations. The Council (see back cover) meets regularly to discuss matters of interest, either to horticulture as a whole, or members in particular. Day to day issues are handled by the Executive. The Annual General Meeting, held around the beginning of November, enables all members to contribute directly to policy making. 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 Road, Dowanhill G12 9YG
0141 334 6523, email arutherford@perennial.org.uk

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 davieschr@aol.com

OUR CHAIRMAN'S LETTER.....

Dear Fellow Gardeners,



Writing with glorious sunshine streaming in, it's great to welcome you to the second Newsletter of the year.

With the evergrowing success of the SGF Pallet Garden Challenge so evident at Gardening Scotland, members will be glad to be reminded that we will be this September, extending the Competition in to Glasgow's Botanic Gardens where we'll first try out the scheme for schools in the Glasgow area. We wish the competitors every success.

All groups who have a love for the beauty of and an interest in Suntrap have been invited to offer help in the maintenance of the garden in these economically difficult times. The SBA Bonsai and the SGF members, particularly those who live locally, I'm sure will respond generously – indeed some already have. If you have spare time that you'd like to put to this use, please contact Alex our Secretary.

On 16th August which at the moment seems very distant, there will be another Open Day at Suntrap. The principal one run in May by the garden itself was a great success. The second is run by the National Bonsai Collection of Scotland and we urge all SGF members to come and join in and to bring friends from local gardening clubs too. You can look forward to FREE light refreshments, raffle, tombola, an auction of trees and pots as well as the unique opportunity to view some of Scotland's finest Bonsai trees that have historically formed the Collection since the 1950s.

It remains now to send you best wishes in the hope that the year will be just excellent for you weather-wise and consequently gardening-wise too.

Alistair

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

PROPOSED BURSARY SCHEME 2009

In our March Newsletter we informed you of this scheme. The idea is for the SGF to make available grants of up to £250 to up to five individual members to help finance a horticultural project the Member may be considering. Conditions are broadly defined: (1) the applicant must be a paid up member of the SGF, (2) the project must fall within the generally accepted definition of the aims of the Member and the SGF, (3) the project must have a beneficial impact on the local community as a whole

and (4) the project must enhance the standing of the local Member and of Gardening in general.

To date we have not received a reaction. Perhaps you are all busy drawing up your plans. Don't wait too long – we will extend the deadline for applications to be received by 30th June 2009, so that you can take advantage of ideas from Gardening Scotland. Contact Alex Rutherford for further guidance.

Alex Rutherford

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SGF WEBSITE

As a matter of urgency, we are revising and updating our website to make it more representative and more easily accessible. Newsletters will be on line, so that any member on internet (more and more people, these days) can read our news – in colour – links to contact us or sister organizations, download application forms: all to make life easier and more environmentally friendly! So get ready to click onto:

www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk

**PALLET GARDENS @ GARDENING SCOTLAND
- LIFE IN MINIATURE**

In the March Newsletter we reported on the growing success of the Pallet Gardens exhibit at Gardening Scotland. The joy of creating one's own miniature garden has inspired some wonderful entries. By not setting a fixed theme for the event it has allowed groups to create entries based on recycling, bug gardens, vegetable plots and desert landscapes, right down to the smallest detail. Some of last year's winning entries can be seen on the back cover of this Newsletter.

As Gardening Scotland approaches it looks like being another fantastic year for pallet garden entries (60 in total). We have had an overwhelming response from Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special Needs schools. However, the response from our SGF members has been somewhat disappointing with only six entries being received. So come on guys, as this is your event why not take up the challenge for next year and lets see a lot more garden clubs and societies participating.

It's great to see an increasing interest in gardening matters within our schools, where a new generation of members for our Gardening Clubs is being educated and the future assured. But our Clubs must cater for this demand and keep their hand in by actively encouraging their own entries in activities such as Pallet Gardens

Running alongside the pallet gardens we are piloting a planter competition this year so if you feel a pallet is too big a task, why not think about putting in some planters next year. To date, we have received 32 entries so this looks as if it's going to be as popular an event as the pallets.

One of the main aims is to showcase our members' skills and knowledge in Scotland's main horticultural show so I look forward to seeing you all there next year.

AND DON'T FORGET – IT'S FUN !

Best wishes

Jim Dickson

My address is:

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SNIPPETS &



CUTTINGS.....

We received the following information on **New Gardens** open through Scotland's Garden Scheme

Garden: Temple Village Gardens, Temple, Midlothian EH23 4UL
Date: Sunday 7 June
Time: 2.00-5.00pm
Entry: £4.00, OAPs £3.00 Children free

Garden: Lip na Cloiche garden and nursery, Ballygowan, Nr Ulva Ferry, Isle of Mull, PA73 6LU
Dates: Saturday 13 June and Sunday 14 June 2009
Time: 11am – 5pm
Entry: £3.00

Garden: 9 Osborne Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HG
Dates: Saturday 20 June
Time: 2.00pm – 5.30pm
Entry: £3.00

Garden: Finzean House, Finzean, Banchory, AB31 6NZ
Dates: Sunday 28 June 2009
Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm
Entry: £4.00pm (OAP £3.00) Children Free

Garden: Auchlochan House, New Trows Rd, Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire ML11 0GJ
Date: Sunday 12 July
Time: 1.00-5.00pm
Entry: £4.00, Children free

Other gardens open through Scotland's Garden Scheme

Garden: Findrack, Torphins, Kincardineshire AB31 4LB

Date: Sunday 5 July
Time: 2.00-5.00pm
Entry: £3.50, Children free

In addition there is a good SGS plant sale:

Plant Sale: Karbet, Freuchie, Fife KY15 7EY
Date: Sunday 14 June
Time: 12.00-4.00pm
Entry: £1.50

Other Gardening Events

Event: **The Plant Exchange “Plantfest”**
Date: Sunday 7 June 2009
Venue: Dumfries House, Ayrshire
Time: 12.00pm onwards
Ticket: £2.00 (parking £1)
In aid of Dumfries House, Help for Heroes and Perennial

Event: All Angus Pallet Garden Challenge
Date: 12 – 14 June 2009
Venue: Forfar
Tickets: £2.00 per pallet entry fee
Run in conjunction with the Scottish Gardeners’ Forum and in aid of Perennial . For more information please contact Pierre Barnard on 01370 446788

Hazel Main, Chairman, Royal Horticultural Society of Aberdeen, would like SGF members and their friends to know about their annual show in August. She writes:

“Over the weekend of the 29th and 30th. August 2009, the Royal Horticultural Society of Aberdeen will be staging its annual flower show in Hazlehead Park, Aberdeen. The show covers all aspects of gardening from cut flowers, bonsai, roses, cacti to vegetables, baking, knitting, photography and even wine. This year we are to be joined by the

Scottish Branch of the National Vegetable Society who are staging their branch championships within our show.

The show is open to the public from 11am to 6pm on Saturday (subject to completion of judging) and 10am to 5pm on the Sunday followed by a sale of produce at 5.30pm. Admission fee will be £3 per head. Further information can be obtained from myself at hmain@tinyworld.co.uk or the secretary on rhsaberdeen@hotmail.co.uk or on the web at <http://rhsfaberdeen.co.uk>

The SGF Newsletter – Mary Marr wrote from Stonehaven asking for advice on how more use could be obtained from the Newsletter – “How do other clubs circulate it?” Before I address that question, let me say that the first thing is to make it more *useful* to you. Our aim is that the Newsletter should act as a bridge between gardening clubs in Scotland, putting us in touch with one another and creating a flow of information so that we can learn from, and about, each other. On this, we welcome your feedback and your ideas: announcements about coming events, accounts of interesting meetings, topics or local specialities. Share your concerns with others, through the medium of the SGF Newsletter which goes to all our members and some other affiliated organizations.

The number of copies sent to each member is limited for practical reasons of cost. Some clubs have a procedure for circulating these to their members, but experience suggests that this is seldom efficient (I am speaking for myself, of course!) We are in the process of updating our website, and this is the way forward. Shortly, the Newsletter will be available on-line, which means that anyone – with Internet access – can read it, or if they wish download it. Then all you need to do, is to inform your members of this facility and encourage them to have a look. Back numbers can be held on the website, together with other relevant updated information. Does that answer your question, Mary, or does any reader have other comments or ideas?

While writing, we apologise for a formatting error which crept in during transmission/printing of the March newsletter. This led to a minor misalignment and the loss of one or two lines on p 14. Sorry – it won't happen again.

Christopher Davies

ANN'S DIARY

May in the Garden – Container Planting

At this time of year the garden centres are selling bedding and patio plants by the thousand, hanging baskets and containers in all shapes and sizes are priced to tempt us. The majority of patio and bedding plants for sale at this time of year are 'half-hardy' which simply means that they will not stand frost. If you buy them and use them in containers now then you must be prepared to do one of the following; keep them in a glasshouse or conservatory for a week or two; whip them indoors overnight if a frost is forecast; or simply purchase some horticultural fleece and spread that over them overnight.

If you are going to have a go at planting up some containers and baskets take the following points into consideration;

- No matter what sort of container you choose to plant you must ensure there are drainage holes in the bottom.
- Always line the inside of terracotta planters with polythene – it will stop them drying out so quickly.
- Always place 'crocks' at the bottom of containers to aid drainage but remember that they needn't be broken terracotta, polystyrene chips or old gravel will do just as well. If weight is a consideration then use polystyrene, on the other hand if your containers tend to blow over use gravel.
- Invest in a good slow release fertiliser (3-4 months) and add a handful to each container at planting time.
- Include an old saucer or shallow bowl at the base of each container or basket to provide a small water reservoir.
- With each container or basket you make leave one space in the top at planting time and stick in an empty pot, you can water into this for the rest of the summer and know that water is reaching the plant roots.

Planting long term containers;

Sometimes we wish to grow perennials such as climbers or wall shrubs in containers, perhaps it's impossible to dig close to a wall, through concrete etc. Long term planting in containers is fine as long as a few points are taken into consideration;

- Use / buy as large a container as you can possibly find or afford.
- Use a 50:50 mix of garden soil and compost or a soil based John Innes compost. This ensures plant nutrients for longer term planting.
- Again use a slow release fertiliser, this time purchase one lasting for 1 year or more.

Thinking about summer cut flowers?

Here are some ideas for planting to bring your garden into your sitting room.....

- *Paeonias* – need full sun with fertile, humus rich, moisture retentive soil. May take a couple of years to establish themselves and flower after planting. Last for up to a week as cut flowers.
- *Pyrethrum* (now known as *Tanacetum*) – an old fashioned daisy like flower in pink, white or red with yellow centres. These prefer free draining almost sandy soil in full sun. Grow them with other herbaceous plants and cut for a full week of blossom in the vase.
- *Alstroemeria* – a real cracker for cut flowers as they last for up to two weeks in the house. Again plant it in among other herbaceous plants in well drained fertile soil, sun or part shade.
- *Alliums* – especially the large flowered types such as *aflatunense*, *crispifolium* and ‘Globemaster’. If these blooms fall over with wet weather in the garden simply cut them and enjoy for up to three weeks indoors.
- Sweet Peas – another old favourite that I don’t think can be beaten. The secret to successful sweet pea growing is to grow them in a different area every year, rather like vegetable rotation and dig in plenty of old manure or compost before planting. As soon as they come into flower start cutting blooms and don’t stop until the plant goes over in the autumn – if you leave blooms on to
- go to seed the plants will stop producing flowers.

So never mind if it is raining – bring the garden indoors with cut flowers!

Ann Burns

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

BEES – OUR GARDEN FRIENDS

*“Blaw, blaw ye wastin’ winds, blaw soft
Amang the leafy tees,
With gentle gale from hill and dale
Bring hame the laden bees.”*

Robert Burns, O a’ the airts

Bees are loved for their honey, and as a reminder of warm summer days. Humankind has a long association with the honeybee, but the social bees that live in colonies are only a tiny minority of the roughly 20,000 species of bee in the world. We used to collect honey from wild



bee colonies in caves or hollow trees, and indeed people still do in some parts of the world. Egyptian temple wall paintings from 2500 BC depict honey extraction from hives, so bees must have been “domesticated” long before. A beautiful gold pendant of two bees clasping a honeycomb is another treasure from the Minoan civilisation of

ancient Crete.

In different parts of the world different techniques have evolved for keeping honeybees. In the Middle East, large clay jars were used, and in Africa hollow logs. In Britain, straw skeps had pieces of wood suspended across, so that bees would build combs hanging down from them. Modern rectangular hives do not look romantic, but have the huge advantage of frames so that that frames of honey can be removed, and the colony inspected, with minimal disturbance to the bees.

It is a fascinating experience to lift the roof off a hive and observe another world: an insect society in action. There may be 60,000 worker bees in a hive, and a few hundred drones, whose only function is to mate with a new queen. The one queen with her long abdomen may be spotted among the hordes of workers. Beekeepers usually open a hive in warm weather, when a lot of the older workers are out foraging. The younger workers remain in the hive, making wax from glands on the abdomen, cleaning out cells, escorting the queen, or receiving nectar and pollen from incoming workers. The queen is really an egg-laying machine, constantly attended by workers who feed and groom her. She “maintains order” in the hive by a glandular secretion called “queen substance”

which is passed to workers. If a queen dies, the workers immediately convert a cell with a young larva into a queen cell, and the larva will be fed “royal jelly”.

In Scotland, trees are an important source of nectar and pollen. Bees are even able to make use of the lightweight pollen from wind-pollinated plants, such as hazel, by sticking the pollen together with a drop of nectar. Throughout the year, gardens provide a treasury of nectar-producing flowers. We all know that heather honey is superb, but work for the beekeeper, who has to move the hives to the heather in August and hope for good weather.

Why do bees swarm? Simply to reproduce. The old queen leaves the hive on a calm, warm day, taking thousands of young workers with her. The compact swarm installs itself on a branch or bush, and scout bees go off to search for a new home. Back in the hive, a new queen is ready to emerge from her pupal cell within a day or so. She then goes on a mating flight, returns to the hive, to spend the rest of her life laying eggs.

Bees are in serious trouble. The parasitic mite *Varroa* has spread to most parts of the world and beekeepers have to treat their hives with a chemical in the autumn in order to kill off the mites (after removing frames of honey). Recently a mysterious new problem has arisen when an apparently healthy hive suddenly loses all its bees. This has been called “colony collapse disorder” (CCD), or the “Marie Celeste” syndrome. The causes have not yet been clearly determined.

Honeybees are vital as pollinators for crop production. There are other insects that pollinate, but none that is systematic in foraging. Bees not only satisfy their immediate needs, but also collect food for the colony to feed the young, and an excess to store for the winter months. Albert Einstein is reputed to have said that if bees died out, mankind would follow four years later. Let us hope that he was wrong! There is a ray of hope: governments are at last waking up to the problem, and providing more funding for research into bees.

Are you interested in keeping your own bees? There are local associations of beekeepers who would be glad to help you get started. You can find them through the Scottish Beekeepers’ Association. Website: www.scottishbeekeepers.org.uk

Jean Haskell (Colinton GC)

SUNTRAP - A GARDEN GEM

In his letter (p 3), Alistair Simpson, our Chairman, refers to Suntrap Garden, at Gogarburn, on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Here is a hymn of praise to the garden.

A tranquil garden; hear birdsong and the wind whooshing in the trees.

A garden of beautiful plants; in autumn, see the fiery glow of the cotinus and purple trumpets of the colchicums.

A scented garden; visit the sensory garden, smell the vanilla tones of the viburnum.

A garden of rooms; follow the wind chimes to the Oriental garden, sit in splendour in the Italian garden.

An educational garden; there, groups learn to paint and pot, plant and design.

A garden of healing; this offers inclusion for many who have learning and mental health problems.

An environmentally friendly garden; observe the greenhouse made of plastic bottles!

A garden centre; it offers advice and choice plants at low prices.

But there is always a danger that this garden is ephemeral and could vanish!

From the web-site: "The three acre south facing garden has been cleverly laid out in distinct areas. Walking through the garden is easily negotiated by a network of paths that meander from lawns to island beds, rock garden and alpine areas, past ponds, sculptures, follies, through woodland plantings, informal and formal areas including patios, peat beds, mixed shrub borders, vegetable pottager, herbaceous borders all pervading colour and scent throughout the seasons. Suntrap comprises many small gardens within a single garden. The different situations and aspects show various plants growing in shady, damp, sunny or exposed parts of the garden which can give ideas and solve problems encountered in the domestic garden."

www.suntrap-garden.org.uk

YOUR COUNCIL

Honorary President: Prof Fred Last

Chairman: **Alistair C Simpson ORS**
(Hon. Life President, Scottish Bonsai Association)

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