



Scottish Gardeners' Forum Newsletter

PROMOTING SCOTLAND'S GARDEN CLUBS



Daffodils in Bridge of Weir see page 13

Spring 2021

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Letter from the Chair

Is that a light I see at the end of the tunnel? I have had my first vaccination and am so grateful to the brilliant scientists, many of them women, who have made our route out of the pandemic a little clearer.

What a year we have lived through, isolated, and perhaps uncertain of the future, but I think many of us have been sustained by the resilience of nature. Our gardens and green spaces have continued to encourage and inspire us and many have taken more notice of the wildlife in our area which seems to have thrived. I am happy to see that the frogs haven't forgotten my pond, the hedgehog has returned to snuffle out tasty morsels (hopefully slugs) and bulbs and leaves are popping up all over the garden.



The importance of the natural world has been very much brought to mind as we have counted birds and identified bees and perhaps contributed to local conservation and improvement efforts.

In my area, local residents formed solitary work parties to cut back branches overhanging pavements. They also removed weeds from the gutters which seem to have proliferated now that the Council have stopped spraying harmful herbicides.

In March I took part in an online conference entitled "Connecting Nature Innovation Summit". Although I would have much preferred to have attended in person, it was fascinating to hear of projects from across the world aimed at bringing our cities back

to life. A neglected park in Greece will be regenerated to provide a green lake front for recreation and greater levels of green-focussed employment. A city in Spain aims to increase biodiversity by use of alternative transport and replacing car spaces with trees.

Closer to home, projects in Glasgow are aimed at managing public spaces to help improve health and mental wellbeing, encouraging community involvement through allotments and providing opportunities for employment. There are also ambitious plans to create a new National Park within the city.

This is also an important year for Scotland – the UN Climate Change Conference will be held in Glasgow in November. Many of us have already made efforts to reduce our carbon emissions but this will be an opportunity to find out what more can be done. I feel sure that as gardeners we are willing to do whatever we can to help.

I am also delighted to see the reopening of our Garden Centres and Nurseries. The past year has been disastrous for many businesses and it was heart-breaking to see so much stock going to waste. Many have cleverly adapted to include online sales and a Click and Collect service, but nothing can compensate for being able to look and sniff. I have a very long wish list and once this cold spell is over, I will be out shopping at my local nursery with the added attraction of a scone and cup of tea

in prospect.

I hope you are soon able to rediscover the delights of your garden space and have the added pleasure of sharing it with your friends, families and neighbours.

Kathryn Pitts
Chair



Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticultural Society

H&GHS are holding their popular annual plant sale, which had to be cancelled last year due to Covid, in the James Street Community Garden, Helensburgh, on Saturday 8th May from 10am to 12.30pm.

There will be bedding plants, sweet peas ready to plant out and a wide selection of herbaceous and vegetable plants grown in members' greenhouses and gardens.

Morag Young

It All Started in Lockdown – A Year in the Life of Our Pallet

April 2020, the country in lockdown, tulips were blooming throughout the town. What were we going to do with all those tulips in bud and ready to sell at our traditional **Tulip Tea**? Local children drew rainbows, and our rainbow pallet was created, positioned in the North Berwick High Street outside the Abbey Church for all to see.



In May, another challenge, what to do with the hundreds of tulip bulbs as the **Tulip Festival** came to an end? As the tulips faded, bulbs were removed, sorted, and labelled. On the last Saturday in May, bags of tulips were left outside the Abbey Church, inviting people to take a bag of tulip bulbs and leave a donation. At the same time

North Berwick Gardening Club were organising their Sunflower Challenge, why not launch it at the same time as “In Bloom” were giving away the tulip bulbs? An ideal opportunity to repurpose the pallet, to plant it with bedding plants to promote the **Sunflower Challenge**.



There were arum lilies, begonias, tagetes, bacopa, marigolds and vervena. With lots of watering and deadheading and some help from our junior members they lasted all summer. Blooms were fading by October. **Armistice Day** presented another opportunity to change the pallet. Artificial grass, poppies and crosses from the Scottish Poppy Appeal were mixed with creativity from our volunteers to give this poignant display. **Advent** was now fast approaching.



primroses. Slowly other spring bulbs appear on the pallet; iris reticulata, crocus, puschkinia and narcissi. The conifers remain, the holly berries disappear.

It is March, the daffodils are in bud and a tulip display is planned, one year on and the pallet has become a focal point on the high street.



Volunteers Ian Craigie and Christine Gollan transformed the pallet into a winter scene: An alpine church set at the end of a gravel path leading from the village; a forest of conifer trees surrounded by holly laden with red berries; stars sparkled in the dark sky and lights shone from church and house windows.

Snowdrops then appear, so the pallet slowly evolved from a winter to spring scene. First the buildings were removed, replaced by



As the daffodils bloom, another opportunity arises, to use the pallet to support Marie Curie and the national day of reflection.

Cathie Wright
North Berwick Gardening Club

www.northberwickhortisoc.com/

Photos: Libby Morris
North Berwick in Bloom

www.northberwickinbloom.org/



Primroses and Spring bulbs appear



Supporting Marie Curie



John Vincent's Calamondin orange tree
See article opposite

My favourite Plant

The Calamondin orange tree

Three years ago, a large box arrived from plants4presents (other plant delivery services are available) on the occasion of my husband's birthday. On opening, we found that our daughter had sent a Calamondin orange tree. Much as I relish a horticultural challenge, my immediate reaction was – "whatever makes her think that this will be suitable for the Highlands?" It transpired that her original plan had been to send a cactus but as these were out of stock, the Calamondin was a hastily chosen substitute! I am pleased to report that this orange tree has been a great success and it certainly qualifies as a favourite plant. (See left)

The Calamondin orange (*Citrus x microcarpa*) is considered to be a cross between a mandarin orange and a kumquat which originated in China. The plant is most likely to be a multiple hybrid with its exact origins as a subtropical edible fruit lost in antiquity. It is economically important in the Philippines, where it is known as the Philippine lime, and is a key ingredient in Filipino and Malaysian cuisine. I understand that it was introduced to the USA at around 1900 and since the 1960s has become increasingly popular as a houseplant. Most of the Calamondins imported into Europe have been grown in Israel.

Fortuitously it is the hardiest of citrus trees with a temperature tolerance down to 6°C. It needed to be hardy to thrive indoors and survive the chill

of a Highland winter, in a sitting room which is rarely overheated. This is clearly one of the easiest citrus to grow in a temperate climate.

Growth was strongest in the summer, when the plant produced fragrant white flowers, then fruit formation became apparent in December. At the time of writing in early April, our orange tree carries a number of small fruits of 3–4cm diameter. The fruit has a fine rind which loosens as it ripens.

Citrus plants need generous feeding throughout the year, and from April to late October a feed high in nitrogen is recommended. There are various fertilisers formulated for citrus which are commercially available. The Calamondin only requires minimal pruning to help maintain a good shape.

When we remove the oranges from our Calamondin, the question arises as to how we plan to use the fruit which has a very tart, acid flavour. The juice has similar qualities to lime juice and can be used as a marinade for fish and to flavour cakes. Marmalade made with equal quantities of Calamondin and kumquats is said to have an exceptional flavour. We have plenty of marmalade following my own mass production in lockdown two, so maybe not this year. Instead, I intend to freeze the fruit and we look forward to using them to cool a well-earned summer drink, after a day's work in the garden.

Anne Vincent
Nairn & District Gardening Club

Dollar Horticultural and Garden Club with Dollar in Bloom

As part of Sustainable Dollar we bulk bought a butterfly mix seed and divided it into 5 gram envelopes for people to purchase. Last Saturday we sold 330 packets of seed along with a planting guide in just 90 minutes, showing the interest that people have in trying to attract butterflies and insects into their gardens.

Our annual plant sale is running in the same format as last year, with members selling plants from their own driveway using an honesty box for passers-by to purchase in a completely safe manner. At the moment we have no plans in place for our annual flower show in September. It is a wait and see situation.

Margaret Stephenson



Stewarton Gardening Club

The early morning dawn chorus is a joy to hear with the birds all proclaiming their territories and the Rooks and Jackdaws noisily advertising their presence.

The Spring season started well with a fantastic show of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils, the lengthening days giving us hope of a better year to come as we sow seeds in propagators and trays on the windowsills with great anticipation. As April passed we had bright sunshine one moment and the

next we were sheltering from hail and snow showers.

While many have prepared the vegetable plots and flower beds, it is too early in some areas of Scotland to plant out any tender plants; the frost has already damaged the new tender shoots of herbaceous shrubs.

As we come out of yet another lockdown we are all keeping our fingers crossed, hoping the Gardening Clubs and Societies will open again and we can start to make plans for the year ahead, with Plant Sales and Flower Shows and much more.

**Hazel Mulberry
Club Secretary**

Dalgety Bay Horticultural Society

Future Meetings and the Annual Show

DBHS hires Dalgety Bay Community Centre for monthly meetings. We were asked by Fife Council to attend an on-line Covid Officer course and to create a risk assessment for the use of the hall.

I don't know if other SGF member societies have been asked to do something similar. The Covid Officer course was very straightforward and I was sent a certificate for completing it successfully. The risk assessment was also reasonably straight forward. One meeting is pretty much the same as the next, so it covers all of them. There is no point in reinventing the wheel so other SGF members may benefit from using a risk assessment that has already been accepted. You are welcome to do so from:

www.scottishgardenersforum.org.uk/membership/members-only/

We review our meetings on a monthly basis and all meetings so far this year have been cancelled. Our May meeting was a trip to Cairn o'Mhor winery on the A90 between Perth and Dundee but we have just cancelled that. There was also our Annual Plant Sale, which too has been cancelled. The meeting in June will be reviewed in May.

We have decided that our Annual Show in September would still have too many restrictions on it, like mask wearing and distancing, that it would be too difficult to police. Exhibitors would have to be allotted slots to exhibit and visitors to the show would have to be monitored and keep a distance. I do not feel I could

ask volunteers to man the doors and to help put up the show and take it down again. It would just be too complicated.

We will hold a digital show with the use of photographs. The schedule will be published with fewer classes. For example, the Vegetables Section at present has 34 classes; this will be reduced to 12 at the most and include Fruit, Novice and "Just for Fun". The Cut Flowers Sections of Herbaceous and Annuals; Roses, Carnations, Chrysanthemum, Dahlia, Sweet Peas, Gladioli, Floral Displays and the Novice class will be under a Cut Flowers Section and have about 12 classes at the most. The Pot Plants Sections of Fuchsia, Pot Plants, Alpines, Cacti & Succulents, Begonia and Bonsai Display will be under a Pot Plants Section also with 12 classes at the most. We will have a single Industrious Section to include Baking and Sweets, Handicrafts and Green and Recycled with limited classes. A cut down Photography Section will be included and a cut down version of the Young Gardeners and Young Photographers will be included. There will be no Schools or Local Groups Sections this year. We will award the usual prize money but there will be no trophies handed out. I'm still thinking about whether to have Best in Section Rosettes.

So, although we are not meeting very often we are still busy, busy, busy in the background.

Michael Gourlay
Chairman

SOCIETY	EVENT
Cupar Flower Show	Cupar Flower Show
Broughton Horticultural Society	167th Annual Exhibition of Flowers, Vegetables, Industrial Work and
Busby and Clarkston Horticultural Society	Annual Show
Banchory Gardening Club	Annual Show
Dunbar Flower Show	Flower Show
Fife Flower Show	Annual Show
Brighter Bervie	Gardens Open Daily to the Public

We have tried to keep the list as up to date as possible

Therefore it is advisable to check before you go

Gifford Horticultural Society



This has been a challenging year for us all, even if it has resulted in some trimmed and tidy gardens! Our members have also enjoyed a Gardener's Question Time event, a Quiz and a number of Talks, all by Zoom.

For the second year running, our annual August Flower Show has sadly been cancelled. Instead, we plan to hold 'Gifford Gardening Festival' from **14th to 21st August**. A plant sale of donated plants, window box and children's flower pot competitions, together with a Scarecrow Trail, will brighten up the village and entertain visitors this year.

Further information will be available on

www.giffordhorti.org

	VENUE	DATE
	Corn Exchange, Cupar. More info at www.cuparflowershow.co.uk	August 21st
ers,	Village Hall Broughton, Borders	August 28th 2.30pm
	Clarkston Halls G76 8NE	September 4th 2-4pm
	Banchory Town Hall	September 4th and 5th
	NI	September 11th
	Leven Parish Church	September 18th 11am-5pm & 19th 11am-4pm
c	Montrose Road, Inverbervie, Montrose	Daily

ple but in the current climate this could change daily.

before attending any of these events.



Jeanie Cole
Secretary
Gifford Horticultural
Society

Musselburgh Horticultural Society

MHS has sadly made the decision to cancel the annual May Plant Sale and August 2021 Flower Show. Having to make the decision to cancel these events for a second year is disappointing for us, but the Committee felt that many members and exhibitors would feel uncertain about attending what is always a very social and popular event. Our staging the Flower Show requires months of planning, preparation and a considerable early commitment to financial outlays. A decision had to be made.

We had concerns regarding people returning from holidays abroad, children returning to the classroom ten days before the Flower Show and the possibility of Covid-19 mutations. Our Flower Show depends on the safety and willingness of our Committee and volunteers.

Be assured that we intend to have a show in 2022! Our Flower Show in

August 2022 next year will be a little bit different. Our aim is to encourage more amateur gardeners and children to take part.

I would suggest that, now our local garden centres have reopened, you support them and use this Summer to hone your (and your children's) gardening skills ready for next year.

Now is the time to start thinking about growing your own tomatoes, lettuces, cucumbers and other fruit, vegetables and flowers.

We expect to be able to resume our evening talks later in the year and our Plant Sale, Outing and Guided Walks along with the Flower Show in 2022.

MHS is always happy to give advice where needed. We can be contacted via our website or on Facebook:

www.musselburghhorticulture.org.uk

Please join us and help preserve our society for future generations.



Mrs Eve Dickinson
President
Musselburgh
Horticultural Society
SCO:28659



Bridge of Weir Horticultural Society

Like most of the sociable organisations affected by Covid restrictions, we are keeping in touch with members using newsletters, delivered electronically or, for members not comfortable with computers, hard copy put through their door. The committee managed one socially distanced meeting, when it was allowed, but the renewed restrictions put paid to the best laid plans.

Our newsletter has been giving information and tips, from local gardens which were open for people to go for exercise to the naming system for plants.

The planned plant sale, which previously took place in the village school playground, has been shelved due to uncertainty around how to organise a socially distanced sale, how to ensure that we did not introduce contamination to the school grounds and, equally important from our point of view, to allow local garden centres to get people back through their doors and assist their financial viability.

The Society's annual outing to a local garden, which is a May or June event, may still go ahead. This will be dependent on when gardens are open to visitors and then getting members to make their own way to the site. It

would allow us to chat face-to-face with those members we have not seen for a year – strange days, indeed.

We are still in discussion about the possibility of running the annual show in late August. The venue would, hopefully, be the local primary school and we are waiting to hear when restrictions are relenting to the extent that we are comfortable with the staging of the



show. In case it is not possible, the committee is also looking at alternatives, e.g. scarecrow competitions or digital photographic entries, as carried out by enterprising Societies. Entry by photograph would save the blooms and veggies being cut, allowing them to be enjoyed at home for longer, but it does make it difficult to weigh the marrow: perhaps dimensions could be provided?

As can be seen, like many of the gardening societies and clubs, the BoW HS is doing its best to maintain contact and interest from the membership. Fortunately, we have been strongly supported and look forward to getting back to our normal routine (vaccines allowing) for the coming year.

Donald Hepburn

Arran in Lockdown

The only certainty has been the uncertainty during the pandemic in relation to planning events. We have missed two Spring shows and one Summer show here on Arran; now, however, there are some signs of an easing in movement restrictions. We can only monitor the situation as time passes and hope that we can yet organise some gardening event in the venue we had booked provisionally.

The weather has been testing gardeners and their plants here, as usual – a mild winter then gales and rain, and recently snow and ice, but now, the gulf stream is showing signs of lapping our shores again.

From my vantage point here in Brodick I have been looking across the bay to the Castle gardens where the rhododendrons have been displaying their magnificent blooms, as have the varieties of Magnolia. Alas, the frost has taken its toll and many of the blooms have succumbed. However the island greenhouses are filling up with seedlings and the usual mutterings, will they, won't they? Of course they will...!

Best wishes from Arran!

John Sillars
Arran Horticultural Society.



The Windowsill Orchid, *Pleione formosana*.

Back in the 'mists of time' when I was a young teenager our then next door neighbour Chris asked, as great gardeners always do, if I would like a piece of a lovely little plant that she called the Windowsill Orchid. As a youngster beginning to appreciate plants I gratefully received a tiny pot with a couple of strappy leaves sticking out from compost that looked to me like floor sweepings! Instructions for maintenance were to keep it on my bedroom window ledge, bone dry in winter, moist in summer and I should be rewarded with a flower or two in Spring!

Nearly half a century later that little plant now fills two bowls, countless offspring have gone to friends and family, and I now know it as *Pleione formosana*. A native of Taiwan, China, Nepal, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam, the *Pleione* is indeed an orchid with 24 species recognised and a number of natural hybrids occurring. The genus is divided into two sections: section *Pleione*, which includes the autumn flowering species, and section *Humiles*, which includes the spring flowering species (and my *Pleione formosana*).

Pleione formosana is around 15cm in height and deciduous. Each Spring the plant produces new annual

pseudobulbs which can be left to grow in an existing bowl or removed to start a new plant. The plant is not fully hardy so does best in a cool room or heated glasshouse over winter when it should be allowed to dry out completely; watering recommences in spring and as long as a really free draining compost is used it can be watered regularly throughout the summer with an occasional light general liquid feed applied once a month or thereabouts. I replot my pseudobulbs in the bowls about every 4 or 5 years in early spring, just before growth starts, using a really open compost mix of about 60% bark and 40% multipurpose; alternatively I might use an orchid mix.

Pleione (from Ancient Greek) was an Oceanid nymph in Greek mythology and mother of the Pleiades. *Pleione* presided over the multiplication of the flocks – fitting, since the meaning of her name is “to increase in number”. So I always remember when I am replotting my *Pleiones* to pot a few spare pseudobulbs and pass them on to anyone I can – thereby increasing in number the plant lovers of the future as well as the numbers of the beautiful Windowsill Orchid.

Ann Burns

← *Ann's Pleione*

Some more unusual recycling...

Like most gardeners, I have two characteristics – being aware of the environment and being reluctant to spend money! Recycling used objects into useful gardening equipment fulfils both tendencies. Apart from the usual reuse of food punnets as seed trays, I have utilised some more esoteric items that have come my way. When our old trailer substructure rusted away, the main body became a raised bed and the two wheel mudguards put together a container for a clematis. Some fence posts and square netting at the back of the trailer have provided a



Two mudguards make a container framework for more climbing plants (Clematis tangutica – very easy to grow from seed) to hide the storage area behind.



The body of a derelict trailer with clematis climbing up to hide storage area

When my workplace was refurbished, I rescued some old venetian blinds. The slats were aluminium and have made very satisfactory seed labels. Since then I have also acquired (shhhh... skip-dipping) wooden and plastic blinds to reuse. Why would anyone want so many seed labels? When holding plant sales or giving seedlings away, I feel it is imperative that everything should be labelled. This can run into hundreds of seed labels, so a cheap way of providing them is welcome.



Finally, those plastic water bottles can make an easy self-watering pot – cut in half, upend the top half and place a strip of used capillary matting through the opening into a water reservoir below.

Sue Thomas
Badenoch Gardening Club



Digital Horticulture



Like many clubs and societies, The Caley has been unable to hold its normal shows, nor hold its usual Winter Lecture Series. Both went online this time, with the lectures progressing with their usual excellent speakers with lovely slides, and an audience logged on at home.

In a tour de force by Pam Whittle, the Spring Show went online with only a slightly reduced schedule. The participants submitted their photos within a strict time-frame according to the schedule. Pam then put up the images on the Caley website.





thecaley.org.uk/spring-shows-cut-blooms/



thecaley.org.uk/spring-shows-pots-other-classes/

The Caley also holds an annual Junior Groups Competition. This special section is open to schools and groups such as Brownies, Cubs, etc. If you would like to register your group to take part in 2022, email schoolspringshow@rchs.co.uk

Alison Murison
The Caley



Regional Co-Ordinators



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Pallets and Planters at Saughton Park 2022

Having lost our previous exhibition space at Ingliston with the demise of Gardening Scotland in 2019, we have been looking for an alternative venue ever since.

We had great plans to participate in the proposed Scone Palace Flower Show this Summer, so you can imagine the disappointment when the decision was made to cancel this event too. I suppose that it was inevitable, as we watched with dismay as many bigger shows were delayed or abandoned until more certain times return.

Scottish Gardeners Forum Council have discussed the use of other venues for the Pallet and Planter Challenge and the suggestion was made that we approach the Caley with a view to holding it at Saughton Park. We also spoke to the Friends of Saughton Park who are responsible for maintenance of the Physic Garden.

We were delighted to find that our suggestion was warmly welcomed by both groups and that the Park Management Group were also keen for the event to go ahead.

At the moment, there are still restrictions on activities in the park, which have been imposed by Edinburgh Council, and everyone working within the gardens are bound to comply with the risk assessment guidelines. However, we would expect that later in the year we will see a relaxation of these constraints which will allow us to make more definite plans.

It should be possible to reinstate the Pallet and Planter Challenge in the late Spring 2022. The Caley are holding their Apple Day in October this year, so we thought of having a Scarecrow competition at the same time. We will discuss this at our Council meeting and circulate the rules in due course.

It would be lovely to be able to hold both challenges within the safe enclosed space of the courtyard, next to the Caley Headquarters and within easy reach of the Garden Bistro for refreshments*.

Kathryn Pitts
Chair



The Courtyard at Saughton Walled Garden

*I can recommend their traybakes, but they also do excellent soup and cooked meals. Ed.