

# The Gold Club

July 2015



Charlie in the wildflowers on Melbury Downs & the wild Orchid found there

## Dates for your diary

### Free Talks

Tuesdays @

Brimsmore Gardens

Wednesdays @

Poundbury Gardens

Thursdays @

Castle Gardens

18/19/20 August

**Beetles, bugs, spiders & slugs**

25/26/27 August

**Pond life show & tell**

1/2/3 September

**Companion planting with Mike Burks**

8/9/10 September

**Adam creates a woodland garden**

15/16/17 September

**Fran does low maintenance gardening**

22/23/24 September

**Brian's autumn lawn care**

29/30/1 Sept/October

**Malcolm on roses**

[www.thegardeneronline.co.uk/events](http://www.thegardeneronline.co.uk/events)

## A note from Fran

Dear all,

As summer is finally here it must be time to send out the summer newsletter. So, here it is!

The club visits season is now over and it was so good to see so many had new members and a few with new gardens due to downsizing or needing a bigger garden in which to grow their dream plants. Those that shared a visit due to the small number of members who could attend reported that it was nice to meet new people and share information, experience and ideas over a cup of tea and a biscuit.

The Gold Club special shopping event was a great success with all sites being full of happy shoppers. The weather was glorious and sales were plenty which pleased Mike so much we got cakes for tea the following morning. Thanks to all who came along.

As some of you are aware, my garden revamp has continued to take a lot of time and effort but has been worth it as it is now looking so pretty and even though I have removed spent wallflowers the gaps are quickly filling up with herbaceous perennials planted last year. I only had one failure!! I haven't had the heart to ask for a replacement as Malcolm had told me not to plant it in the first place. Apparently my soil sits a little too wet in winter for it. But we all live and learn and there is always something new to try which is a joy. So this year I have planted a block of Delphiniums, as requested by my sister because they are "her favourite" apparently. This, as you can imagine, has thrown the slug/snail issue into the equation. I have managed to avoid this for years by carefully planning use of or avoidance of certain plants. Now here is the quandary – we adopted a dog last year (picture at the top – isn't he cute!!) so I need to use a pet friendly product. There are several of these – Slug Rid, which is a pelleted slug killer, Slugs Be Gone, which is a barrier, Slug Clear, which is a liquid chemical killer, Grazers, which is a liquid deterrent and, of course, the good old slug trap. There are also lots of weird and wonderful suggestions such as coffee grounds, a chicken! etc etc but we won't mention these. After much deliberation I chose the Grazers and so far the Delphiniums are doing well and the dog is still with us, although this may be because after being screeched at for walking on the borders he has decided they are not the place for him. I am so excited to see an influx of bees, butterflies and other insects which are encouraging an array of garden birds. With this in mind I have added nest boxes and an extra birdbath. I've even added a log pile come fernery for overwintering insects and a large sunken terracotta saucer which I keep full of water and debris with a view to attracting toads etc. I'm thinking I may invite Chris Packham and the crew to film Springwatch in my garden next year!

There has been a tremendous response for this year's summer party with the performance of Iolanthe by Illyria on the 28<sup>th</sup> July. If you haven't booked your place it might be an idea to do so as quickly as possible. I don't intend to say we are fully booked as I'm sure we will "squeeze" you all in regardless, but we may well find it necessary to reduce the volume of Pimm's in each jug if lots of places are booked at the last minute.

There are so many events throughout the summer I cannot list them in this note but all are included in the newsletter so best to take a long study so as not to miss any events coming up.

**Fran**

Fran Powell, **The Gold Club:** 01935 817747 [thegoldclub@thegardensgroup.co.uk](mailto:thegoldclub@thegardensgroup.co.uk)

## Newsflash!

We are introducing our **Houseplant Loyalty Card** this week. Each time you buy a houseplant from any of our centres we will stamp your card & once full you can redeem a £5 voucher to spend on another houseplant.

**Fat Fish Aquatics** at Castle Gardens have their full range of top quality pond plants in stock. They have everything you could possibly need from pumps, treatments & liners to feeds & aquatic plant pots. Not to mention the fish! Both Jane & Tom are very knowledgeable so if you have a query just call **01935 816770**

### Some events coming up.....

#### Hawk and Falcon Days

Come and meet these extraordinary birds

10am - 4pm

Brimsmore Gardens - **Monday 17th August**

Poundbury Gardens - **Tuesday 18th August**

Castle Gardens - **Wednesday 19th August**

*Definitely a hands on experience!*

*Please note change of date from last newsletter.*

The Open Air Wessex Actors Company are performing **Canterbury Tales** at Poundbury Farm on 26th July. Tickets available at **Poundbury Gardens.**

Tickets are still available at all sites for Illyrias' performances of **The Three Musketeers** and **The Taming of the Strew** at Castle Gardens on 2nd July and 4th August respectively.

## Congratulations

**Cath, Zoey and the teams at The Apple Tree Restaurant and The Apple Tree Farm Shop for winning the Gold Awards in the Taste of the West Awards in their respective categories.**

*I have to say that having had lunch at the now renowned restaurant at Brimsmore Gardens it is well worth a visit and the farm shop carry a staggering amount of local produce.*

**My advice is to go on and treat yourselves to something special.**

## The Gardener's Stock Pot

Summer has finally arrived and I'm sure all your pots, baskets and containers are filling out nicely with an array of bedding plants bought, of course, from one of our centres.

We are asked throughout the summer how we manage to grow such wonderful hanging baskets - not only the ones at the front of the centres but the ones planted up for sale in the bedding plant areas. Listed below are top tips, pearls of wisdom and whys and wherefores from our bedding team. These should make sure your summer bedding schemes fulfil your wildest dreams.

We use our own multi-purpose compost mixed with water retaining granules and Osmocote, both to recommended rates. We use wire baskets which we line with moss. This will affect the number of plants needed to get the desired look. A circle cut from an old compost bag is placed in the bottom to assist with moisture levels.

The number of plants used in an 18" basket should be 35 trailing plants and 1 central upright plant such as a Zonal Geranium. 16 of the trailing plants are planted in the side of the basket through the moss. The rest are planted through moss used to build up the basket into a sphere.

A 14" basket takes 14 trailing plants, 6 of which are planted through the mossed sides, and 1 central upright plant.

Baskets are watered DAILY, even if it rains, as there are never enough raindrops captured by the basket. We use a Hozelock irrigation system at the front of the shops purely for ease of access and time spent watering.

We feed our baskets weekly alternating between Tomorite and Phostrogen or Miracle Gro. The reason for this is that Tomorite, being a high potash feed, only encourages flowers and fruit. The others are a more balanced fertiliser which contain trace elements which feed the whole plant. This way you get healthy plants as well as plenty of flower.

Regular deadheading removing all spent flowers is an absolute must. Plants will stop flowering as soon as they set seed so removing the flowers below the ovule / receptacle will ensure that the plant needs to keep flowering in order to produce seeds.

**Top Tip** - Keep two sets of baskets, one for winter and one for summer. This way you can keep your winter baskets out while you ready your summer baskets until the risk of frost has passed.

**Don't forget - more gardening advice on our website [www.TheGardenerOnline.co.uk](http://www.TheGardenerOnline.co.uk)**

## Tales from the Potting Shed

Another Spring is just drawing to a close with summer spluttering into life. The weather over the last few weeks has been unusual in that it's been very dry but actually not very warm especially at night. Lots of plants have flowered really well but growth hasn't been excessive and this is probably due to the low night temperatures. Usually in the polytunnels in our nursery you can tell that plants have grown overnight but the low temperatures have held that back. This is not necessarily a bad thing as the additional flowering probably demonstrates and should we get good temperatures now, with rain at night every now and then, it should be a good summer in the garden.

Speaking of the nursery, the last of the bedding crops are just coming to completion and the new crop of the autumn Chrysanthemums are being potted as I write. Over 4000 cuttings are being potted, 3 to each pot, to be grown on for a splash of autumn colour come September. As these are being potted so the space we need is appearing as summer bedding heads into the garden centres and also out into the town. On Wednesday we team up with The Gryphon School in Sherborne and the Sherborne in Bloom committee along with the support of the Sherborne Town council maintenance team to plant various areas in the town. We have held this planting day for years now so it's a bit of a tradition. We send out one of our experts to a site in the town with the plants, compost and tools and The Gryphon School provide the labour. It's a great community day!

Illyria, our friendly and brilliant open air theatre company have just visited for the first time this summer. They were performing "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" to an audience of 150 plus in sunshine after an hour of rain just before the show. It went down really well with magic tricks, illusions, and slapstick coming thick and fast. The stage was one of the most intricate yet and took a long time to build. After the show the cast (and me) take it apart and pack it into just two vans before they head off – on Saturday it was after 11.30 pm - to their next venue which this time was Crawley. A different group but also from Illyria are back on Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> July to perform "The Three Musketeers". Later in the summer on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August it's "The Taming of the Shrew". We are also of course looking forward to the Gold Club Summer Party on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> July where Illyria will be performing Gilbert and Sullivan's "Iolanthe" exclusively to a Gold Club audience. Tickets are still available but hurry!

If you are coming to any of these events we provide refreshments and seating for the Gold Club party but for the other performances you will need to bring your own!

A lot has been happening at Poundbury particularly in the Engine Room restaurant where the kitchen has been reorganised to make more space. The serving counter and coffee machines have also been moved and a hatch, so that you can see our chefs at work, has been installed. Dan, Josh and Jack are delighted to be able to see the outside world even if it's a limited view!

Brimsmore have spent the Spring winning awards particularly in the restaurant and in the Farm Shop where they have been awarded a Gold in the Taste of the West awards. Both awards are being proudly displayed. This represents a huge amount of hard work from the whole team who have been led by Cath, Debbie and Zoe.

We have also been joined at Brimsmore by Halstock Sheds who make and erect high quality sheds. It's really interesting just seeing the range on display making you want such a thing even if you have no space or need of one! It also has given the planteria a setting in which plants can be shown off.

We have had a very busy spring all round especially with a large number of clubs visiting in the evenings for the special spring shopping events. The last of these has just finished a week or so ago having started in February. They are really good fun but hard work meaning that we finish at 9 or 9.30 pm and then start again at 6 am loading the vans from the purchases made the night before.

And so to the start of summer with loads of events organised at each of the sites. The autumn talks at the centres have been organised and a list already published.

Enjoy your summer!

**Mike**