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Charlton & Blackheath
Amateur Horticultural Society
Founded 1950

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NEWSLETTER October 2021

Grow Friends, Grow Fit ... Grow a Garden!

For our presentation this month we are welcoming Dr Mark Spencer whose talk is entitled 'Murder most florid'. His website describes him as 'an experienced and internationally respected botanist. His expertise covers many disciplines including forensic botany, the plants of North-west Europe, invasive species and the history of botanical science. He also works globally as a seasoned writer, public speaker and television presenter. As a forensic botanist, Mark has worked on various missing person enquiries, murders and other serious crimes.' Ladies and gentlemen, what more can I add! Sit back and enjoy.

Thank you to all members who have let us know they will be coming to the meeting, it helps enormously with ensuring the Long Gallery does not get too crowded.

As we move into the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness it looks as though Autumn is officially here, bringing with it clear, crisp mornings (and some very misty ones this week) and darker evenings. On the other hand, it has also been perfect weather for carrying out a spot of autumn planting. For those of us lucky enough to visit the Chelsea Flower Show this year, the planting in many of the show gardens was a prompt to get into action. And it was interesting to see how much the autumn planting differed from that of the traditional May Show, with much greater use of perennials such as rupeckias, heleniums and echinaceas which are not seen earlier in the year.



Anna writes:

As in previous years, we were queuing outside the main gates at 7.30am, in readiness for the 8am opening. We do this in order to view all the Main Avenue show gardens before the crowds descend. Chelsea was fabulous this year and we loved every minute. The garden that stood out was the Gold Medal winner, M&G Garden, which was designed to be a shared urban space, capturing the natural beauty of our inner city environment. And they did just that: the planting was really exquisite and the design and hard landscaping faultless (apart from the pipework, which we thought didn't really work). A new category added this year at Chelsea was the Balcony and Container Gardens. One in particular, the Arcadia Balcony Garden, was so imaginatively designed, with its timber pergola supporting a swing bench, and a colour scheme of terracotta and purple to top it off.



October Plant of the Month chosen by Anna: Dahlia

Following the prize-winning blooms displayed at the Autumn Show last month, Anna has chosen to showcase Margaret's allotment dahlias. I, for one, find it difficult to resist the stunning range of colour and form in this beautiful genus of plants.

Dahlia 'Brown Sugar'. (A ball dahlia).



Dahlia 'Rocco'. (Small flowering pompom variety).



Dahlia 'Strong Fire'. (Decorative).



Dahlia 'Chat Noir'. (Semi cactus).



Dahlia 'Dark Butterfly'. (Semi double).



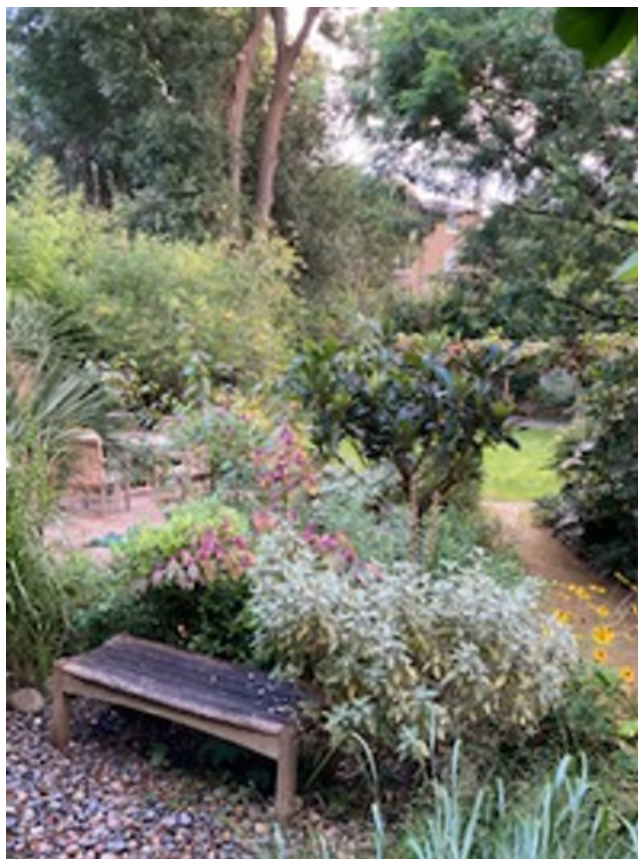
The dahlias were dug up in November, washed, dried and stored frost-free and potted up in March when the shoots were appearing and kept in the greenhouse under three layers of fleece. Manure was dug into the soil during the winter months. The dahlias were replanted outside in late May or the beginning of June. Margaret says she is not going to lift them again!

Experts recommend that purchased tubers are firstly potted up until growing strongly in order to avoid slug damage and this year in particular, many of us will have watched in horror as the new shoots of dahlias emerging from the ground were mown down by slugs and snails. (Vija writes: following this experience, I will be much more careful next year if we have a continuation of the growing conditions we have had in 2021).

Garden visit:

Many of us were like lucky to enjoy a sunny and warm afternoon in Sian's stunning garden on the afternoon of Sunday 10th October. The garden is a spacious, relaxing place, with various seating arranged to catch the sun at different times of the day and pathways leading to exciting planting combinations. The view from the veranda highlighted planting in the pebble garden: a grey-leafed palm, a silver miscanthus, and various other grey shrubs which enhanced the purple berries of the Callicarpa, with the blue-green mimosa in the background completing the picture. Lovely.

The curved pergola, covered with an autumnal grape vine and following the line of the lawn, is an architectural feature in itself. Seating beneath creates another secluded space. Thanks to Sian, for her hospitality and generosity in allowing members to spend an enjoyable afternoon in her beautiful garden. And £251 raised for the Hospice!



Gardening notes

- **The Garden Museum** is holding a Houseplant Festival, 23-24 October, £6.00 per ticket, booking essential.
- Presented in partnership with **The Gardens Trust**, is a chronological panorama of the development of garden history from medieval and Tudor gardens through to the twentieth

century. The sixteen lectures will run over four Sundays and be delivered by well-known and distinguished speakers in their field. 31 Oct - 21 Nov, 11am - 4pm. £100 - £190. Tickets available with or without lunch.

- Hosted by the **Garden Museum**, Benton End: A Paradise of Pollen and Paint online or in person. Tues 26 Oct, 7pm. Available to attend in person or watch the live stream online.
- Returning to the English Gardens in **Regent's Park**, **Frieze Sculpture** is free and open to all. 14 October until 31 October. A chance to see art in the park!
- **The Gardens Trust** has organised a series of online talks on the history of plant nurseries and plant hunters. (There are also some on lesser known plantswomen). Check their website for details and how to book for the talks.
- Keep an eye on the lectures (in person and online and free!) offered by **Gresham College**. There is one in early 2022 on 'Averting the Insect Apocalypse'.
- I missed the work of Darren Appiagyei which was displayed in the Sackler courtyard garden as part of London Craft Week from 4-10 October. Born and bred in Greenwich, Darren sources his woods from Woodlands Farm in Shooters Hill. Follow Darren on Instagram: [@inthegrainn](https://www.instagram.com/inthegrainn)
- **Kew Gardens** is holding a **Japan Festival** until 31 October. Check their website for details.
- **The Horniman Museum** is holding a masterclass with Sarah Price on 15 October, 10.00 - 4.00, looking at how to put plants together in the garden. Tickets £180.

Pat's 10 jobs for October:

1. Time to think about lifting and storing cannas and dahlias by cutting back any top growth and turning upside down and storing in a frost free shed or similar. Or leave in the ground and mulch really well.
2. Sow sweet peas now for an early show next year either in root trainers or five to a 3inch pot. Once germinated, place in a cold frame or sheltered spot outside.
3. Replace faded summer pots and window boxes with winter and spring bedding to give them a chance to get going before cold weather arrives.
4. Clean and wash the greenhouse to eliminate any pests and diseases before storing tender plants and some herbs for winter use.
5. Start to cut back perennials when flowering has finished but making sure to leave seedheads for winter interest and for food and hibernating wildlife.
6. Move containers with more tender plants close to the house or walls for protection from the worst of winter cold and wet.
7. Towards the end of the month prune newly planted shrub and bush roses to prevent any windrock and reduce the height by a third.
8. In the vegetable garden sow bare soil with a green manure such as field beans and grazing rye to feed and improve the soil structure which can be dug in next spring.
9. Now is a good time to lift plant and divide rhubarb, making sure to lift a root for early forcing.
10. When harvesting of fruit in net cages is over, remove netting to allow wildlife to feast on any pests on canes and bushes.

Happy gardening all!

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