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Charlton & Blackheath
Amateur Horticultural Society
Founded 1950

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NEWSLETTER July 2022

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

We are so sorry that this month's meeting had to be cancelled, and hope that you are all keeping well and staying in the shade in a garden somewhere! I write this on Sunday, in anticipation of the very hot weather to come, and with hope that our weather forecasters have got it wrong (it has been known). I was really looking forward to the talk from Philip Oostenbrink, we will try to re-book him for another month. For those of you on Instagram, he goes under the name of Mr.Plantaholic if you would like to follow him, and his book, published last year, is "The Jungle Garden".

Garden thoughts (from Kathy, as Vija is away)

It would be interesting to hear from members which plants are coping best with this drought? In my own garden, the Libertia don't seem to mind at all and I haven't watered them. Their drawback is that they are full of little snails, which have hunkered down in the base of the spiky leaves where I can't get at them. In the walled gardens at Charlton House, some plants are definitely struggling, but the Perovskia in the Peace Garden seems to just love it:



If you are looking for something relaxing to do in the heat, how about the Big Butterfly Count? It runs until 7 August and involves counting butterflies for 15 minutes. In my garden I've found that Verbena bonariensis flowers are butterfly magnets. Val Bourne's recent talk to us has made me notice butterflies much more and I can now identify a few common ones such as Gatekeepers. Their caterpillars apparently live in long grass, so another good reason to not be too tidy!

July Plant of the Month chosen by Anna: *Dregea sinensis*

Some years back, Margaret T and I went on a summer plant-buying jolly up to Northamptonshire, visiting a two-day Rare Plant Fair. However, driving towards the stunningly beautiful Coton Manor Gardens for a visit, we called into a nursery nearby (Ravensthorpe Nursery) and spotted several plant species/varieties that we had never seen before.

One of these species was a vine, *Dregea sinensis* (common name Wattakaka sinensis), from China, twining up a pole in a covered growing area. We were captivated by its highly scented, Hoya-like, creamy-white flowers often splashed pink. The deciduous, ovate-heart shaped, felted leaves have distinctive white veins, which also added to the attraction. I have since seen *Dregea sinensis* 'Variegata' for sale in Kent with creamy-white variegated leaves, which is also delightful.

This vine (reaching a height of 3-4 metres) needs support and to be grown in a sheltered location, in full sun / partial shade against a warm wall, planted in well-drained soil.

My vine is still in flower but these photos were taken in June. Whereas, in Margaret T's garden at the moment, the vine is in peak-flowering mode.

I do have an indoor Hoya which never flowers for me! So, in my garden, *Dregea sinensis* is a very nice substitute!



Gardening notes

- Sweetbriar (near Sandwich) last month's speaker Steve Edney's garden is open under the NGS scheme on 21 August. 10.30-4.30, and with homemade teas.
- Closer to home and also under the NGS scheme, another sub-tropical garden is open at 59 Cranston Rd, Forest Hill. 31 July, 12-6pm, offering tortillas & sangria.
- Until 4 September **The Garden Museum** is hosting an exhibition based around Frances Hodgson Burnett's book *The Secret Garden* looking at how different artists have brought the book to life.

Behind the scenes at Prior St Allotments: Preparing for the Open Gardens:

Pat says: Each year for a number of years we agree to open our allotments at Prior Street for Greenwich and Bexley Hospice. We start with a number of tidy-up weekends earlier in the year and put up a list of jobs in the shed for plot holders to help with, such as cutting grass in communal areas, sweeping and weeding the concrete paths cutting back ivy on the walls and of course making efforts to tidy our own plots which this year has been a chore in the dry weather.



We rely on one of our plotholders to supply electricity for our tea urn - which involves running a cable from the shed at the end of her garden in Prior Street, across all the plots to our communal area where we set up tables for refreshments! We do a rota for plot holders on gate duty to see people into the plots and check tickets and have others to serve tea, cake and Pimms and do the washing up.

We arrive early in the day to set everything up. We also organise helpers to talk to visitors and answer their queries about all the things we grow. Our plot holders provide tablecloths, mugs and rugs and we try and do vases of flowers for the tables to make it all look inviting.

Each year we panic that people won't come! But this year we had 105 visitors and many stayed on to chat in our communal areas. We rely on a lot of donations by our members but people are generous and make cakes and provide Pimms etc and I think we put on a good spread. We made **£525** this year which is more than we have ever made! The Pimms was very popular and the weather kind and I think our plots looked pretty

good. To all of you who came to visit, a hearty thanks for your generosity and I hope you think it was worth the effort. I am not sure of the final figure from the hospice but I know it was the most they've ever made.

Pat's 10 jobs for June:

1. Now is the time to take semi-ripe cuttings of lavender, sage and thyme and place in a gritty compost but keep out of the sun until you see some new growth.
2. If you like your lilies be vigilant about picking off lily beetles and their larvae. A friend of mine found 17 the other day in one session.
3. Cut back hardy geraniums as hard as you can before they seed everywhere and you should be rewarded with some new foliage and maybe some flowers.
4. Prune early flowering shrubs now if not already done so back to a side shoot. If something has outgrown its allotted space then prune hard but be prepared to lose next years flowers.
5. Summer prune wisteria either this month or next by cutting off long whippy shoots back to five buds or so from the main stem. Wisteria can make a huge amount of growth if left unpruned and can be difficult to rectify.

6. Lift and divide bearded iris cutting away old woody rhizome and make sure to replant with the rhizome at soil level cutting back the foliage by half.
7. Make sure to water recently planted shrubs or trees as they will be suffering in this drought and mulch around them afterwards if you can.
8. Harvest summer fruiting raspberries as they will quickly frizzle in this heat.
9. Lift spring planted garlic as soon as the foliage turns yellow and hang up to dry in the sun if possible.
10. Make sure pondlife such as frogs, toads and newts can exit ponds safely by having a shallow area or wood and stones for them to climb out.

Above all stay cool and in this heat do your jobs very early in the morning or the evening or leave it all until things cool down. I tried planting veg in full sun and it is not a pleasant experience.

Members Garden Outing:

Don't forget our next coach trip is to **Pashley Manor, on Wed 14th September, cost £27**. Please contact us on the CABAHS email if you would like to join this trip, there are still spaces. We will be offering seats to other gardening groups in a couple of weeks in order to fill the coach, so make sure you let us know soon!

Object of the month



“Haws” watering can: John Haws patented this in 1886: “a watering pot much easier to carry and tip” Still in business today and one of the best designs. For more, visit the website of the Watering Can Museum (yes, really!)

Happy gardening all!
Contact us on: cabahshortisoc@gmail.com