

# The Grapevine

  
FINCHLEY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
EST 1949

Winter 2022

*Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society*

All the complicated details  
of the attiring and  
the disattiring are completed!  
A liquid moon  
moves gently among  
the long branches.  
Thus having prepared their buds  
against a sure winter  
the wise trees  
stand sleeping in the cold.

- *William Carlos Williams*



A year has gone by, and a new growing season is about to begin. While we reflect upon 2021, with its ups and downs, our minds turn to 2022 and what it will bring with it. The general consensus among experts is that there is going to be a further shift to a more naturalistic, lower-input gardening, with no-digging, no fertiliser, little watering and more liberal views on weeds, pests and diseases. There will be a greater emphasis on sustainability and minimising chemical use. Wormeries are making a comeback as well as a move away from peat-based composts. Here at the FHS allotments we have long advocated and practised reuse, recycling and buying second-hand. Recent Grapevine issues have included articles about wormeries, encouraging birds and other wildlife to the allotments, no-dig methods, companion planting, moving away from peat-based composts, going organic and many other topical issues. This year will be no different. Happy gardening!

# LETTER FROM FHS CHAIR JO CUTTELL

## 2021 OVERVIEW

Dear Members,

I wanted to write and wish everyone a happy new year. The Pandemic has meant it's been a strange year, and nothing has been as it usually is. However, the allotments have been a haven for many of us and we have all carried on sowing, planting, watering and harvesting. It is a place where we can meet each other safely, have a chat and ask for advice and we are all grateful for that.

Some events had to be changed and others cancelled, but some plans went ahead regardless. The beds for the Plant Sale plants were renovated in January - thanks to the many volunteers who helped with this project.

Our AGM was on Zoom, but it got the job done and our next AGM may well have to be on Zoom in 2022 - we will see.

March saw the planting of the new hedge along Dollis Road by the Allotment Committee. It's doing very well though we may need to do some replanting after the fence has been repaired.

The reclaiming of the land in the corner of the Gordon Road site has begun and we are waiting to see if it's fit to become a small plot.

In May we were able to hold our Plant Sale, catering mostly to members. It was a smaller event than usual, but nevertheless very successful, raising £1,694 and being an enjoyable occasion. Christine and Catherine sold many perennials as well and my thanks go to them for all their hard work in making the Plant Sale such a success.

The Charity Veggie Box scheme ran as usual during the summer thanks to Judy Woollett's enthusiasm, and our donations were truly impressive. Thank you to everyone who contributed fruit and vegetables.

We were finally able to celebrate June Brookes' retirement from committee work in October with a gathering at the Piggery. We thanked her for all her hard work and many contributions to the life of Finchley Horticultural Society, which would not have survived without her.

November saw Pumpkin Soup Night with Tony's famous soup. It was very well attended – true, it wasn't raining for a change - but it felt as if we were all desperate to get together and share. Thanks, of course, to Tony for doing this.

Our Christmas Lunch was also well attended despite the bitterly cold and wet weather. We huddled under the Piggery canopy and enjoyed a fantastic array of delicious food and each other's company. Many thanks to Rowena and Young Mi for organising this event.

As for 2022, I hope that we can all look forward to a fruitful year ahead with good growing seasons and safe gatherings. We would like to be able to arrange garden visits again this year but it's too soon to tell.

Best wishes for a productive year ahead!



# CROP ROTATION (Advice from RHS)

As you are planning what to grow in the coming season, it is a good time to think about crop rotation. Crop rotation helps maintain the soil health of your plot by reducing a build-up of crop-specific pest and disease problems.

Some plants can be grown in any spot that becomes available throughout the year: courgettes and cucumbers, salad leaves, spinach and sweet corn. Others, such as potatoes and brassicas take up a lot of space and have to be moved around regularly.



Crop groups for rotation include:

- \*Brassicas (brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, radish, swede, turnip)
- \*Legumes (peas, broad, French and runner beans)
- \*Potato family (potatoes, tomatoes; peppers and aubergines are less problematic)
- \*Roots (beetroot, carrot, celery, celeriac, fennel, parsley, parsnip etc.).

Traditional three-year rotation:

Year 1: Part 1: potatoes

Part 2: legumes, roots, onions

Part 3: brassicas

Year 2: Part 1: legumes, roots, onions

Part 2: brassicas

Part 3: potatoes

Year 3: Part 1: brassicas

Part 2: potatoes

Part 3: legumes, roots, onions

# Trees, shrubs and flowers in winter to early spring

by Shoko Higashitsuji

## Cornus (Common Dogwood)

Dogwoods are great to liven up the garden – they grow vibrant coloured stems during the winter.



## Nandina

Nandina, also known as 'Heavenly/Sacred Bamboo' is an evergreen shrub that can be enjoyed in all seasons. It is not related to bamboo, but the leaves look similar, and is not invasive like bamboo. In fall, the leaves will turn red and produce red berries, and in Spring it produces white flowers.



In Japan, Nandina is called Nanten which has a meaning of turning difficulty into fortune, and therefore it is traditionally decorated during the first few days of the new year, as a charm for good fortune. Otafuku-Nanten is a variety of Nandina native to Japan and China – it is a small shrub and does not grow tall. The colourful leaves are maintained throughout winter.



## Plum tree

The plum tree is associated with the start of spring as they are one of the first to bloom – usually in mid-February to March. Although they are referred to as 'plum' they are more closely related to an apricot. In Japan, the fruits of this tree are commonly used as flavouring in pickles or alcohol.

*Plum tree in Jonangu Shrine in Fushimi, Kyoto*



## The Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park

### Daffodil Valley

Daffodils bloom in late March to April, and Windsor Great Park is one of the best places to enjoy them. There is a carpet of wild Daffodils which can be found in the Valley Gardens near Virginia Water.



### Heather

The Heather Gardens can be found near the Valley Gardens – there is a huge variety of heather with species from all over the world, including Australia.

Heather is a low growing shrub which thrive in acidic soils. There are three main species of Heather: Calluna, Erica and Daboecia.



### Erica

Erica can be identified by its needle-like leaves. It flowers during winter and spring and is great for adding gentle colour to the garden in winter.



# NATURE LEARNING

Based on an interview with Jane Ouseley

The importance of introducing children to growing things and seeing them grow, gardening and engaging with nature first hand from an early age is well understood. For many years our Gordon Road allotments site has been welcoming schools to do just that in specially erected raised beds. These visits have been a very valuable experience for the children, their parents, school staff and the allotments. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic over the past two years the scheme has had to be put on hold. Hopefully, when the pandemic has finally been brought under the control, the scheme can bounce back to life. To remind us of what it involved, a few weeks ago I spoke to Jane Ouseley, who has been involved in the scheme from the very beginning.

Jane and her husband Chris have long been plot holders at the Gordon Road site. A former Deputy Head at Moss Hall Nursery School, which is about just over half a mile away from the site, Jane came up with the idea of bringing children to the allotments. The Moss Hall Nursery has a beautiful garden of its own, but it doesn't lend itself to vegetable growing because of its many mature trees. When the Gordon Road site had raised beds built, some of them were offered to local schools: Moss Hall, St Mary's and others. In order to make it work, however, you needed someone who goes regularly to the site and who can keep an eye on it as well as keep the beds up to date. The Moss Hall Nursery School decided to take up two of the beds. According to Jane, they were perfectly set up for nursery children - made of sleepers, they provided seating for the kids to sit on and could be easily reached by them. "The scheme was good from the allotments point of view, as well, because we were showing that we were involving the local community and that was one of the main ideas of it and why it was set up the way it was," – Jane told me. "I used to take around 30 children at a time, along with a lot of adults, obviously, because we could only hold those 3-4 year olds. We would start doing the trips in late April, just after the Easter holiday, when we would go and plant seeds. We always incorporated our own crops as well, so that they would see what I'd already planted in our beds and have a look at what was going on there. And then we'd go to the nursery beds. The time was very constrained, as you could only do half days. A lot of it was taken up by walking to the site, which was an activity of its own. It was as much a spring walk as the planting because I would have done the planting already. All the kids had to do was sprinkling the seeds or push them in or push the potato in or whatever it happened to be".

Overall, the staff would take around 100 children to the site and split them into two. One group would have a story and a drink of water and a biscuit before they then went, so they'd have a rest, while the other half would go and do the planting, and then they would swap over. In order to make it work, Jane had to be quite inventive. When planting potatoes, for example, she would prepare seed potatoes, show them to the children, making a joke about keeping them on top of her wardrobe to chit, then show them a dibber and make a hole to drop the potatoes in. The children would, of course, want to bury them, and Jane had to take them out quickly again so that the next lot of children could also have a go at putting them in. "Obviously, you couldn't put 100 plus potatoes into raised beds, - smiles Jane. There wouldn't have been room for anything else".

Big groups made the work harder, but Jane liked the idea that everybody had a chance to come. The trips were particularly good as they neatly fitted with the early years foundation stage of the Nursery curriculum which is full of all the things you should do with children. It includes outside things, all types of physical activities, language because the children and staff would talk about whatever they would be doing; nature studies etc. All is part of the knowledge and understanding of the world. About how things grow, what grows, what you need to make things grow. And then there is teamwork and doing things together. The children realised they could walk that far, which some of them never thought they could, nor had their parents. It was also about showing children where food comes from – that it doesn't just come off shelves at Tesco's, but actually grows, that some things grow on the ground and some grow in the ground. "And it was lovely! They would come and dig up the potatoes and some children and parents had never seen that before. That was really special. Sometimes I managed to get them to grow carrots. Some years, we would also manage to grow peas and green beans - things that would grow quickly. Just to keep things fresh so they could pick up broad beans and eat them straight out of the shell. Lovely!" Coming to the allotment was more than just growing. The children would look at the bees. They'd be taken by the staff - not too close - to get them to see the bees above the netting and given brief explanations about the life and work of bees.

Having the children come to the allotments required quite a bit of preparation, that Jane and her husband Chris did over the weeks - digging and weeding and generally keeping on top of the work.

Jane stressed that for years after she would meet people who had used the scheme, both parents and children. Having visited the allotments, many children would get very enthusiastic about growing vegetables at home and putting them into pots and that type of thing which they would tell the staff at the nursery about. "I think that it worked really well. It was a very valuable activity".

## Jobs to do in January-February (as advised by the Rocket Gardens Nursery)

- Top up compost – if you haven't already done this, cover any empty beds with a layer of well-rotted organic manure OR compost. This'll help improve your soil ready for spring.
- Watch out for the first shoots from rhubarb and pop a rhubarb forcer over them when they appear. This'll give you an earlier, juicier harvest.
- Mulch fruit plants and keep them protected from frost and snow. You can prune them this month too.
- Remove the yellowing leaves from brassicas to keep your veg disease free.
- Stake any taller brassicas to help them withstand strong winds.
- Start repairing and preparing – fix up any damaged greenhouse panes, broken shed doors etc and make a start on getting new beds in place.
- This is a good time to plan for spring planting – take a look at what is available and think about what you'd like to grow and how much space you have.
- Plan to chit seed potatoes on a windowsill to give them a good head start. Depending on weather and soil conditions, they can be planted from February/March onwards.



# Notices

## AGM 2022

This year's AGM will take place at 7.30 on 22nd March 2022, Finchley Tennis Club, Brent Way (unless it has to be on Zoom, due to restrictions).

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## PLANT SALE HELP NEEDED

It is the time of the year when Christine and Catherine start planning for our annual Plant Sale. Sowing begins in the first week of February and things get especially busy around March to April. They shall need as much help as they can get, so if you have an hour or two a week to learn a new skill of propagating plants, socialise and do something useful for the community, please come along. Christine and Catherine are grateful for any type of help and are usually found every Sunday morning in and around the polytunnels.

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## AS GOOD AS NEW

Our long-suffering fence has finally been repaired! How long before another joy rider decides to test its strength, I wonder?



### DISCOUNTS ON SUTTONS' SEEDS

It is still not too late to order from the Suttons' Seeds catalogues! Catherine Schmitt has left copies in the Green Room at Gordon Road and at Nethercourt Avenue. As in previous years, FHS members earn a discount of 50% on seeds and 15% on all other items. You will pay a carriage charge of £1.99 for packets of seeds and £4.99 for heavier items, such as garden equipment. Your order will be delivered direct to your address and if you include your email or mobile phone number you will be notified of delivery if your package weighs more than 2kg. You can order by post, phone or online, [www.suttons.co.uk](http://www.suttons.co.uk), quoting our unique offer code (ask Catherine for the unique FHS code). Catherine Schmitt  
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## Events Diary

### RHS SHOW DIARY:

RHS Flower Shows to enjoy in 2022:

**5-8 May**  
RHS Malvern Spring Festival  
**24-28 May** (after hours event **27 May**)  
RHS Chelsea Flower Show

**23-26 June**  
RHS Garden Harlow Carr  
Flower Show

**4-9 July** (after hours event on **8 July**)  
RHS Hampton Court  
Palace Garden Festival

**20-24 July**  
RHS Flower Show  
Tatton Park

**3-7 August**  
RHS Garden Hyde Hall  
Flower Show

**19-21 August**  
RHS Garden Rosemoor  
Flower Show

**6-11 September**  
RHS Garden Wisley  
Flower Show

Look out for on-sale dates in the members' e-  
newsletter or visit [rhs.org.uk/shows](http://rhs.org.uk/shows)



### Newsletter

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