

ALLAGOGG

The Newsletter of the
Gloucestershire Organic Gardening Group
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Winter 2022

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FLEECE, ENVIROMESH & NETTING

FLEECE width 3 metres @ 75p per metre

ENVIROMESH width 2 metres @ £2.40 per metre

NETTING width 2 metres @ £2.40per metre

Contact Anne Matthias 01452 614214 to place your order, which will be brought to the next meeting. Monies to be paid to Stella Ellis

Fleece is finely spun polypropylene and can be used for crop protection, especially for protection against carrot fly or for aid to germination for more difficult crops.

Enviromesh is a white nylon woven fine mesh, useful for protecting crops such as brassicas from butterflies, fruit from birds etc.

Netting is black nylon netting approx. 0.7-inch diamond mesh that will expand to a much larger width than 2 metres. Useful for protecting brassicas and fruit, as long as the net is left proud of the crop.

DUNDRY NURSERIES MEMBERS' DISCOUNT

Dundry Nurseries, Bamfurlong Lane, Staverton, near Cheltenham.

However, members are reminded that due to the current situation, Dundry are not giving discount on their goods for the foreseeable future.

The nursery can be contacted on 01452 713124.

I think they are now operating usual opening hours..

Cover photo: **Blood Royal apples at GOT Mother Orchard**

GOGG has associate membership of **GARDEN ORGANIC**. Any member wishing to use the Group's ticket for members to visit Ryton Gardens should contact **Stella Ellis on 01242 230442** (Please check opening on the GO website: www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

NATURE NOTES SUMMER/AUTUMN 2021

After the heatwave in mid-July, the last week of the month gave us a return to changeable weather finishing with an Atlantic storm named "Evert". bringing high winds and heavy rain. This wet and windy weather continued into the first week or so of August and the weather remained cool and cloudy but mostly dry for much of the month. It's funny how the weather usually changes for the worse once the school summer holidays begin!! And of course the return to school at the beginning of September brought a short spell of very hot and sunny weather with temperatures reaching 30C higher than at any time in August!!

The long dry spell of weather finished on 26th September (just before we set off on the GOGG holiday to Yorkshire!!) with temperatures dropping by about 10C and heavy rain arriving overnight. This changeable weather lasted into early October before giving way to a long dry and fairly warm spell which seemed to extend summer right into the middle of the month with the oak trees in Lots Meadow showing no sign of autumn colour. On the other hand the town trees in Cheltenham which are probably under more pressure from lack of water showed much more autumn colour. The end of October brought high winds and heavy rain causing more flooding in Cumbria but stayed relatively mild .

However, as I finish these notes on 1st November there are signs of colder weather with the possibility of some frosty nights.

The hot sunny weather in mid July brought more butterflies out and late July was notable for the appearance of reasonable numbers of chalk hill blues. I was particularly delighted to see a few on Leckhampton Hill where I hadn't seen any since the heavy rains that resulted in the flooding of 2007 which must have washed away the majority of the pupae of the previously strong population on the site. Hopefully the butterflies will be able to return to higher numbers in the years to come. Visiting Crickley Hill Country Park a few days later with Elaine on a rather cloudy day we were amazed to see dozens of chalk hill blues and many other butterflies amongst the rich variety of wild flowers on the site which has been under the management of the Glos Wildlife Trust for a few years now. Also notable on Leckhampton Hill were a few dark green and silver washed fritillaries probably taking advantage of the healthy crop of their food plants, violets, up there in the spring.

During the last full week of August we spent a week of mostly sunny weather on the Dorset coast and in the village where we stayed we were delighted to see the buddleia bushes covered in butterflies mostly small tortoiseshells and red admirals with some painted ladies, commas and peacocks. It's many years since we have seen such high numbers on our buddleia and we were hoping to see something similar when we got home. Unfortunately, once home the weather turned dull and chilly and the buddleia only had one or two flowers left so no such luck! The sunny start to September brought out some speckled woods and common blues but in general the cool cloudy and damp weather in spring and summer has made it a poor year for butterflies.

During the summer months the carpets of wild flowers on our deciduous woodland floor gives way to a much more limited palette of colour under the thick canopy of leaves. However a few species seem to flourish in these conditions and this summer in and around Lineover Wood there has been an impressive show of nettle-leaved bellflower.. Also prominent in the wood in summer are St John's Wort, hemp agrimony and enchanters nightshade. Despite its charming name this latter flower has rather insignificant little white flowers but does seem capable of holding its own among the dogs mercury and other plants on the woodland floor. It is a member of the circeae family and is believed to be the plant used by the enchantress Circe in Greek mythology to turn Ulyesses' crew into pigs .The flowers although at first sight rather insignificant, are at closer inspection, rather pretty looking like a tiny butterfly. It is not related to deadly nightshade which is in the family solanaceae along with potatoes.

Out on the limestone grassland the predominant yellow of early summer gives way to the bluer shades of scabious and harebell. It was a particularly good year for scabious and on Crickley Hill small scabious carpeted much of the open areas. Also present in the shorter turf are tiny white flowers such as eyebright, fairy flax and the charmingly named squinancywort. A final flourish in the woodlands is given by the naked ladies (*colchicum autumnale*) pushing up their pretty mauve flowers through the undergrowth. The common name arises because the leaves appear in the spring and die down before the flowers appear on shortish stems with no leaves. Also known as meadow saffron it is really a meadow flower, but it has been more or less eradicated from this habitat and driven into woodland as it is poisonous to livestock. As a lover of calcareous soils it is still fairly common in Cotswold woods.

In the garden the small birds seem to have done OK this summer and in particular there have been plenty of blue tits reminding me of the far off days when they dominated the peanut feeders. In general however small birds are struggling to raise their large broods because of the reduction in the supply of caterpillars. Also in the thick tangles of roses and forsythia by the back door the continuous chirping of the house sparrows shows that they are breeding successfully here- I just wish they had a more tuneful song. However the birds that migrate here for our summer do seem to be in serious decline. I've mentioned before that swifts, swallows and house martins have disappeared from our area and this is clearly not unusual as a recent report indicates that these species are in decline across Europe. In addition to the on-going problems of modern agriculture and habitat loss, the climate emergency is also affecting numbers as the areas where they need to feed on their migrations to and from Africa are becoming more arid with far fewer insects for the birds to feed on. A further difficulty is that the hotter the weather the more active the insects become, making them more difficult to catch. Another once common bird which is reported to be in serious decline since 2015 is not a migrant but the rook and, on thinking about it, I realise that they don't seem to be about as much as they used to be. It would be very sad if the countryside no longer echoed to the familiar cawing of many rooks in their age old rookeries in late winter- always a sure sign that spring is just around the corner. I reported last time that great spotted woodpeckers are now visiting the garden regularly and for a change, it is nice to report that this species is doing well having increased by over 200% in recent years. The 2 main reasons for this are that they are finding food in gardens and are under less competition from starlings for nest sites as starling numbers have declined dramatically. So it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good!!

I seldom mention mammals in these notes as they are mainly nocturnal and thus I rarely see them on my travels apart from a fox in the garden and the occasional roe deer on Leckhampton Hill. However early this year we bought a trail camera to set up in the garden to see what creatures are about at night. Not surprisingly, the most frequent visitors are foxes and we know that there are more than one because one of them has a bent tail. We have also frequently recorded hedgehogs and occasionally badgers but fortunately no rats have appeared although no doubt they are present along the old railway line. The camera is heat sensitive so doesn't record cold blooded creatures. We know there are newts breeding in the pond and frogs and toads appear from time to time. In our early days here we used to see slow worms in the garden even in daylight but haven't seen one here for many years. It was a lovely surprise therefore when we discovered a baby slow worm near the pond recently which suggests that they are still breeding in the area. Slow worms are actually legless lizards and are very shy probably because they have been persecuted by people thinking that they are snakes whereas they are harmless creatures which do a great job in the garden eating slugs. As far as we know we have no other species of lizard or snakes in the area but adders are probably still present on Leckhampton Hill although I haven't seen one up there for many years now as they try to keep well away from humans.

As I complete these notes on the 1st of November the clocks have been put back an hour and we have short days and long dark evenings to look forward to. However, pleasant as it is to sit comfortably in the warm we shall try to get out for a walk most days and hope there will still be plenty to see round and about us. Let us hope that winter just brings normal winter weather and we don't have to cope with any extreme weather events such as severe flooding and "beasts from the East" especially with the huge increases we face on our fuel bills this winter!

Vic Ellis 1/11/21

GOGG HOLIDAY TO YORKSHIRE 2021

On 27th September, just 15 months after the original planned date, our holiday to visit gardens in Yorkshire got underway. Although 42 members and friends had initially booked for the holiday, for one reason or another, only 27 of us set off in Barnes' large turquoise coach "Moonraker" driven expertly as always by Sherrie for our long awaited tour.

After weeks of dry and warm weather, heavy rain and cooler weather was forecast for the week ahead and this change had arrived overnight. However, as we left Whiteway the clouds rolled away and we travelled North in much brighter conditions and by the time we reached our first garden at the great mansion of Harewood House, north of Leeds, the sun was shining even though it was rather cool and breezy. Thus a day which had promised a lot of rain ended with clear blue skies which was perhaps a portent of the weather for the days ahead which, although not perfect, was not nearly as dire as forecast.

Harewood House stands in rolling Yorkshire countryside and the gardens fit happily into the surrounding landscape. The large Terrace and Archery parterre gardens outside the house looked grand in perfect harmony with the house and from the terrace balustrade gave lovely views out over the Capability Brown landscape. To reach the large walled garden it was necessary to walk round the large lake by way of the Himalayan garden which was intriguing although, of course, the azaleas and rhododendrons were not in flower. Although this was a pleasant stroll for us the gardeners in the past must have cursed the need to take their produce all the way over to the house! If anyone was worried that there would be less to see in the gardens this late in the summer, our fears were soon allayed by the colourful displays in all the gardens. In particular the many varieties of Michaelmas daisies in flower in most of the gardens show what a valuable source of autumn colour they are along with the rudbeckias, heleniums and the ubiquitous dahlias. We were also able to visit a number of the state rooms in the house as well as below stairs where there was a special feature on the first black man to work in the house. Nice to see that it isn't just the National Trust that is "woke" - whatever that means!

So from Harewood, where a red kite appeared as we were about to leave, we drove on to the Jury's Inn hotel in Bradford which was to be our base for the next four nights. Our hotel after two changes of booking was situated in the city

centre and was comfortable and provided some tasty meals including vegetarian. My only complaint was that the bar did not stock any of the wonderful ales from Yorkshire - typical of a chain hotel!.

The Tuesday morning brought in more grey skies and the constant threat of rain but fortunately it stayed dry for our morning visit to Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey which was as well as this involved a walk of about 4 miles. The National Trust visitor centre is situated well away from the main attractions but the walk over to Fountains Abbey through meadows was very pleasant with stunning views down to the abbey ruins at the end. The ruins of the abbey show that this was clearly one of the richest monasteries in the country making its great wealth from the wool trade in the middle ages. The abbey is romantically situated in the steep valley of the River Skell and this valley is followed round to the extensive water gardens where the valley widens out at Studley Royal. From this haven of peace and tranquillity we walked back through the beautiful deer park to the visitor centre for lunch. These inspirational gardens and ruins are lovingly maintained by the Trust and well deserving of their World Heritage Site status.

Our afternoon visit was to Newby Hall and, although rain threatened, it stayed dry for an hour or so before the rain started. The rain became progressively heavier for an hour or so before easing off for a few minutes before we had to leave. Before the rain came some of us enjoyed a ride on the miniature railway alongside the River Ure and were then able to walk around most of the gardens before either retreating to the house or the cafe out of the wet. Those who chose to visit the house first were rather less fortunate and had to rush around the gardens in the rain although as the rain eased some of us were able to take a last look at the amazing herbaceous borders before we left. These celebrated gardens are lush and colourful and the long double herbaceous borders running down from the house to the river were magnificent with varied shapes and colours all the way down. It was surprising, therefore, to learn that the gardens would be closed after the weekend when still looking so good!

Wednesday dawned bright and sunny if rather breezy as we made our way towards York to visit 2 gardens which were late substitutes but turned out to be well worth visiting. The morning visit was to Stillingfleet Lodge a private garden and nursery south of York. The gardens are organic and in her introductory talk the owner expressed delight in the fact that we were the first ever organic gardening group to visit the garden and she wouldn't have to explain why she didn't bother to do anything about the black spot on the roses.

The gardens and nursery have been developed since 1975 on 4 acres of grassland around an old farmhouse and are a delightfully intimate and colourful haven in the flat Vale of York. There is an attractive rill garden but in general the gardens are very informal and it was enjoyable to stroll around especially as it had become warm and sunny enough to bring butterflies out onto the Michaelmas daisies. After coffee and cake, some members bought plants from the nursery whilst others bought some of the attractive ornaments made from chicken wire seen in the garden. From here we moved on to our afternoon visit to the National Trust garden at Beningbrough Hall north of York. Set in extensive parkland this is another haven in the Vale. The main attraction was the large walled garden which is planted with many varieties of fruit tree and was home to various exhibits about apples of many varieties. The sun continued to shine and we were able to enjoy various colourful borders as well as look in at an art exhibition in the hall entitled “The Art of Wellbeing”! So we returned to the hotel after visiting 2 interesting and contrasting gardens which had proved excellent substitutes for the visits originally scheduled for the day.

Thursday morning broke wet and windy with the prospect of rain and drizzle for most of the day and as we drove towards Harrogate for our visit to the RHS gardens at Harlow Carr the prospects didn't seem much better. However once in the gardens the rain began to ease and our umbrellas soon became redundant! Harlow Carr is certainly one of the finest gardens in the UK and is probably unrivalled in the north of England. From the visitor centre you look down to the valley with a variety of colourful beds in all directions and mixed woodland on the far side. In the valley the stream gardens were still attractive with plenty of waterside plants and crossed by a number of pretty little bridges modelled on the packhorse bridges found throughout the Northern hills. There is an attractive lake and some modern lakeside gardens but the main attractions are the flower and shrub beds that fill the gardens with such colour and variety. People wanting to eat at Betty's restaurant by the entrance hall had to queue for seats as is normal for these popular cafes but the Betty's Teahouse in the gardens served coffee and tea and some of their excellent cakes including Yorkshire curd tarts and the infamous “fat rascals” without the need to queue. From Harlow Carr we drove the short distance into Harrogate for some free time in the afternoon. Known as the “Cheltenham of the North”, Harrogate is the most important spa town in the north of England. The Valley Gardens are a colourful municipal garden and the Stray is a large green area within the town. There is excellent shopping and here is the original Betty's tea room. As usual there was a long queue outside but the full afternoon tea we enjoyed was well worth waiting for although some of the party

found other excellent cafes without having to queue. After our tea, I found a pub near the coach pick-up where, glory be, I was able to enjoy an excellent pint of “Landlord “ - my only decent pint of the week!

Our last day began with a visit to the National Trust estate of Nostell Priory near Wakefield in bright and breezy weather. The handsome 18th century house and the gardens are approached from the coach park through beautiful parkland which seems so remote from the surrounding West Riding coalfield. The main attraction in the gardens is the working kitchen garden which the Trust has developed in recent years and as if to prove the point one of the gardeners was picking lovely ripe tomatoes for the cafe. From here we took a walk through woodland and round the beautiful lake to the peaceful menagerie garden. Unfortunately we didn't have time to have a look around the house before returning to the coach for the drive to our last garden of the tour. Because we needed more time at these gardens I feel that in future when we have a long drive home we should only visit one large garden on the last day of the holiday. Our afternoon visit was to the gardens at Wentworth Castle near Barnsley. Again this has a handsome grand house which is occupied by the Northern College and not open to the public. The estate is owned by the Barnsley Borough Council but is now managed by the National Trust after the gardens were closed a couple of years ago due to a shortage of funds. Like Nostell the house and gardens are set in beautiful parkland quite remote from the surrounding industrial areas. From the coach park we walked up through parkland round to the back of the house to see the gardens. Unfortunately we were visiting at the wrong time to see the azaleas and rhododendrons in bloom and the famous Union Jack garden was looking somewhat neglected as it awaits some TLC from the National Trust. On the other hand the large conservatory is looking spick and span and was filled with a variety of interesting tender and exotic plants. Beyond the gardens is Stainborough Castle, a fake ruined castle built by the original owner to fool people into believing that his family had deep aristocratic roots. Again I felt that we could have done with more time to see the rest of the garden. So from Wentworth, we boarded the coach for the journey back to Gloucestershire after a most enjoyable holiday. The weather had been much kinder than forecast, the gardens were still full of colour despite the lateness of our visits and the hotel was excellent spoiled only by the lack of any Yorkshire ale. However one member of the party bought me a lovely bottle of “Scarborough Fair IPA” as a thank you for organising the holiday- cheers, Terry, it was much appreciated. Finally, I must thank our driver-cum-courier, Sherrie, for looking

after us so safely and well and Lionel and Amanda at Barnes for ensuring that we had a hotel to stay at and gardens to see after such a difficult 18 months for them.

Vic Ellis 28/10/21

Edible Leaves – GG48

As gardeners travel further, and diverse communities live together in the UK, different and tasty vegetables are being discovered and incorporated into the western diet. So we have the opportunity to move away from some of the longstanding popular vegetables and to try something new.

Winter salad leaves

Winter is the time when there are many more exotic and tasty salad leaves available. Most are sown around August and then provide a supply of salad leaves from October until next March. They can be grown outside or in an unheated glasshouse. There are advantages and drawbacks to both. Here is a selection:

Claytonia (Miners' lettuce)

This shows good frost resistance and is best sown directly in the beginning of August. It has quite a mild taste, described by one grower as 'padding' for his salad bags. It will start to flower in April, but can look attractive, and it still remains edible. Sow directly in rows 45 cm apart. Readily self-seeds - can become a nuisance.

Endive

There are both flat and curly types of endive. Flat types have better frost resistance although the curly leaved variety will grow through a mild winter. The leaves have a bitter taste so need to be mixed with other salad leaves. They don't bolt as quickly as salad brassicas, but the bitter taste gets stronger as the temperature warms up. The curly types harbour aphids which are difficult to wash off. Plant 60 cm apart in 45 cm rows. Blanch to improve flavour by putting a flowerpot covered by a stone on top of each plant about 2 weeks before harvest.

Kale

Small young kale leaves are very tasty in a salad, and will provide a dependable crop during winter. Ragged Jack, Seaweed or Red Russian are reliable varieties that are not too bitter eaten raw. Plant 45 cm apart in 45 cm rows. May need covering with mesh against pigeons in some areas.

Mizuna

This is a really dependable favourite that will remain productive for much of the winter. It has excellent cold resistance. Keep picking outer leaves to prevent it from bolting. Its peppery taste adds a bit of bite to a salad. It will run to seed and suffer from flea beetle in spring. Plant 45 cm apart in 45 cm rows. **Land cress (*Barbarea verna*)**

Looks and tastes like watercress but doesn't need running water: appreciates damp soil. Tolerates some shade and overcrowding, best harvested on the cut-and-come-again principle. Rapidly runs to seed in spring, making the leaves unpleasant to taste. Lift the plants, as they will self-seed profusely.



Lambs lettuce Pak Choi

This is a mild tasting small leaf that will survive very cold temperatures. Growth is slow but dependable. It will suffer from downy mildew under mild, damp conditions but can grow through it. Plant 15 cm apart in 30 cm rows.

A close relative of Chinese cabbage. Eat raw or lightly cooked at any stage from seedling to mature plant. Sow June to August or even September if growing under cover. Prefers a sunny location but will tolerate semi-shade. Likes a rich organic soil. It will need protection from really heavy frosts and will bolt in early spring or early autumn especially if temperatures fluctuate, or soil becomes dry. A particular favourite with slugs too, so may need protective measures. Plant 45cm apart in 45 cm rows.

Rocket

Rocket is best sown directly and will grow outside through a mild winter, but it may be knocked back by hard frost. It is quickest to harvest it with scissors. It will run to seed very quickly in spring and get attacked by flea beetle. Plant 15 cm apart in 30 cm rows. The flowers are edible.

Winter red mustard

These pretty leaves with red and green veins show moderate frost resistance – so may need protection in very cold weather. The leaves can become very large, and develop an extremely hot mustard taste. Generally the flavour is too strong for it

to be used on its own, so needs to be mixed with other leaves. Plant 60 cm apart in 45 cm rows. Green leafy mustards often have a stronger taste but show more cold resistance.

For more information on winter leaves see factsheet GG61 – Growing winter vegetables.

Other leaves:

Amaranthus

Amaranth is commonly grown as the ornamental ‘love lies bleeding,’ but there are also varieties which have leaves that are good quality for eating. Its leaves are like a firmer version of spinach. It is eaten by many different cultures including Indian, Bangladeshi, Jamaican and Chinese. Amaranth likes dry hot conditions, so is best sown in late May or early June. If you don’t have much seed, then sow it into trays first before transplanting outside, but it does grow well from being directly seeded. Space plants 30 cm apart in rows. It will grow very quickly and once it is 60 cm high, you can take a harvest by cutting off the top 30 cm and allowing it to regrow. You should get regular harvests as you do this. In August it will start to produce flower spikes which should be removed, to keep it producing leaves.

It is very easy to save seed from Amaranth but leave until October, to allow the seeds to ripen fully.

Cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus*)

Cardoon is grown for its blanched leaves and stalks, which need to be cooked before eating: they taste similar to globe artichokes. Cardoons are heavy feeders and require considerable moisture, so ensure that ample organic matter is incorporated into the growing area.

Sow 2 seeds to a 9cm pot in March at a minimum of 13°C. After germination, remove the weaker seedling; grow on with plenty of light and water. Towards the end of May, after hardening off, plant out 60cm apart, 1.5m between rows or in a block at 80cm stations. By early autumn the plants should have filled their growing space: this is an indication that they are ready for harvesting. Ensuring that the leaves are dry, tie them together at the top with string then wrap the bunched leaf stalks in cardboard, sacking – anything that will exclude light – or put a dustbin over the top. After blanching for 2-3 weeks they are ready for cooking.

Chinese cabbage (*Brassica rapa*)

A quick growing plant that produces a mature head in approximately 8-10 weeks. Good raw or cooked briefly, has a mild brassica flavour. Sow from midJune to August either directly or raise plants in modules from May to August. Space plants 35cm apart if block planted or 35x45cm if planted in rows. Chinese cabbage prefers a moisture retentive soil and tolerates some shade. To harvest, cut semi-mature plants or mature heads. A cut stump left in the ground may sprout new leaves.

Courgettes and squashes

The young shoots of pumpkins, squashes and courgettes are delicious – provide they are properly cooked. Remove any bristles and stringy parts from stems using a sharp knife or potato peeler then stir-fry, add liquid and cook until desired texture is reached.

Good King Henry (*Chenopodium bonus-henricus*)

This ancient perennial vegetable is a relative of the ubiquitous weed Fat Hen (*Chenopodium album*) but much more garden friendly. The young shoots can be blanched or leaves used like spinach. Perennial, it makes small clumps and does not run, is shade tolerant and prefers a deep rich soil to enable several cuts a year to be harvested.

Malabar spinach (*Basella alba*)

A tropical vegetable which needs protection in the UK, but is useful if you have a cold greenhouse or polytunnel. A climber with reddish or dark green heart-shaped leaves which can be eaten raw or cooked: they have an earthy taste, reminiscent of beetroot and a juicy, gelatinous texture.

Soak seed before sowing at minimum of 24° C/75°F and prick out once two leaves have developed. Plant out once danger of frosts have passed in rows 45cm apart and provide support. Plants will continue to grow until frosts but produce most foliage during the summer months.

Rampion (*Campanula rapunculoides*)

All *Campanula* species are edible but Rampion is one of the easiest to grow from seed, producing small leaves with a pleasing if slightly bitter taste which can be used cooked or raw in salads. Does best in full sun, and any soil, except very wet sites. The small white roots are also edible and tasty.

Sea kale

A good perennial plant for a hot dry garden, seakale will tolerate exposure superbly. The large blue-grey leaves and fragrant white flowers make it suitable for a flower border as well as the vegetable patch. Two-year old plants are forced by covering crowns with a bucket in late winter to early spring when a single cut of blanched leaf stems is taken - older plants will stand several harvests each year.

Although it can be grown from seed the vegetatively propagated French cultivar 'Angers' is much superior and should be selected in preference to 'Lilywhite'.

Sorrel

Sorrel has a slightly sour, lemony taste which adds a zing to salads. It will continue to grow slowly outside over the winter, but be more productive with protection. Leaf production will continue until around June, when it produces a flower spike. Remove flower spikes to ensure continued leaf production. As it is a perennial, it can remain in place, but it can be difficult to remove after a few years, so make sure you have committed to growing sorrel. Plant 60 cm apart in good soil: will stand some shade. **Stridolo or Sculpit (*Silene inflata*)** A UK native, also known as bladder campion, this is a traditional Italian vegetable useful in early spring when little else is growing. It has a pleasant if slightly bitter taste, cooks down greatly in volume in a similar way to spinach and is often used mixed with other greens in vegetable pies and pasta dishes. Plants can be grown from seed or division. Prefers full sun and free draining soil, very hardy. Suitable for growing throughout the UK.

Sweet Potato (*Ipomea batatas*)

The leaves of sweet potatoes can be used as a cooked green vegetable. Best results are from plants which are grown under protection with plenty of water, as these produce the tenderest foliage: white and purple fleshed cultivars are said to have the best flavour. They have a slightly glutinous texture.

Turkish Rocket (*Bunias orientalis*)

A perennial vegetable which is shade tolerant, bunias is useful in late winter as it shoots very early in the year. The leaves are best eaten very young or left until near flowering and pulled as a shoot – which encourages more to emerge.

Turkish Rocket isn't fussy as to soil and will spread from root fragments left in the soil so make sure you like it before planting up a large area. It needs virtually no aftercare and is ideal for forest gardening.

Sweet violet (*Viola odorata*)

Sweet violet foliage makes a pleasant if peculiar tasting addition to salads in early spring. Plants grow well in semi-shade in fertile, moisture retentive soil. Several harvests can be taken over a year without compromising flowering once established, provided not all the leaves are removed at a time: just pull a few as required. Grow from seed or divisions: well established clumps will live for over 30 years.

Water spinach, Chinese convulvulus, kangkong (*Ipomea aquatica*) Another tropical vegetable which does well under cover provided it has enough water, this is a tender perennial best grown as an annual in the UK. The leaves and young stems are eaten cooked, and have a refreshing juicy texture. Soak seed overnight before sowing in modules at a minimum of 24C/75F. Keep plants well-watered and plant out in a polytunnel or unheated greenhouse once the last frost date has passed: space at 20cm apart. Has been cultivated successfully in a bathtub inside a tunnel! Full sun and acidic, deep rich fertile soil are necessary. Cut shoots off as needed.

Further sources of information

Oriental Vegetables Joy Larkcom ISBN 0-7195-5597-3

Growing Unusual Vegetables Simon Hickmott ISBN 1-899233-11-3

Sowing New Seeds - a guide to growing unusual crops in the UK – Sally Cunningham & Anton Rosenfeld, Garden Organic publication. ISBN 97809575642-0-6

Seed orders 2022 from Organic Gardening Catalogue - UPDATED INSTRUCTIONS

AS A GROUP WE ARE NOW ABLE TO SUBMIT OUR ORDERS DIRECTLY TO DOBIES AND THEY WILL DESPATCH THE ORDERS DIRECTLY TO OUR HOME ADDRESSES

TO QUALIFY FOR THE GROUP DISCOUNT OF 30% , YOU WILL NEED TO CONTACT CLARE SHERIDAN FOR A GROUP ORDER CODE TO ADD TO YOUR ORDER

PLEASE NOTE:

THIS CODE IS FOR THE SOLE USE OF GOGG MEMBERS AND MUST NOT BE DISCLOSED TO ANYONE ELSE – A CHECK WILL BE MADE ON YOUR MEMBERSHIP OF GOGG

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Previous instructions on getting a catalogue apply.

Please contact Clare for the group code: clare@solarious.co.uk

01453 827286

Please submit your orders by end of January.

If you have any problems, then please contact Clare **01453 827286** or Elaine **01452 790259**

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY SENT YOUR ORDER TO CLARE , THEN SHE WILL EMAIL THE CODE TO YOU SO THAT YOU CAN SUBMIT YOUR ORDER DIRECT TO DOBIES YOURSELF.

(One of our members has sent an order with the code and received their order, direct to their home address, in a couple of days – so this is much easier than previously.)

Elaine

GOGG HOLIDAY TO NORFOLK 2022

Arrangements are now in hand for the GOGG holiday In 2022 to Norfolk with Barnes Travel We shall be staying at the Comfort Dolphin hotel in Great Yarmouth from Monday 27th June to Friday 1st July. We stayed at this hotel when we toured Norfolk in 2006 and were very happy with it including the vegetarian food. Great Yarmouth is one of the most popular seaside resorts in the UK and has been smartened up in recent years.It also has a long history as a North Sea fishing port and, as well as the miles of golden sands, it has an historic centre and a harbour where we watched terns fishing when we were here in 2006.

We will be visiting 2 gardens in Essex, both of which we visited in 2006, and 5 in Norfolk, 1 of which we visited then. The draft itinerary for the tour which is of course subject to confirmation is as follows:-

Day 1

On our way up to Norfolk we will visit RHS Hyde Hall gardens in Essex. Perched on a hill overlooking the Essex wheat fields over 25 acres of gardens have been developed over the last 30 years to showcase gardening in this the driest part of the UK much of it since our visit in 2006. It features a large dry garden with a wide variety of drought resistant plants and the Hilltop garden has roses and herbaceous borders. In 2017 the boundaries of the garden were extended to create the Global Growth vegetable garden where circular vegetable plots have been developed around a large glasshouse to show various kinds of plants from across the World and to challenge conventional allotment growing. With its many other gardens, Hyde Hall makes an excellent introduction to what should be a wonderful tour.

Day 2

In the morning we will visit the National Trust estate at Blickling Hall. The 55 acre gardens here are set around the Jacobean house and represent a panorama of garden history from the 17th century to the present day filled with colour and interest. The parterre has corner beds planted in the 1930s with roses growing around the edges. There is an orangery dating from 1782 with a variety of halfhardy plants and a kitchen garden as well as many other historical elements. Our afternoon visit will be to the 15 acre garden at Hoveton Hall near Wroxham deep in Broadland. Here there are 2 walled gardens the first of which is known as the Spider Garden because of the spider's web gate and contains many old roses. The other walled garden was the original 19th century kitchen garden and contains well-labelled vegetables grown in a time-honoured way. The magnificent glasshouse is one of only 3 or 4 remaining examples in the UK constructed with iron in the 19th century. The gardens about the wetlands of Wroxham Broad and the rare Norfolk Hawker dragonfly (*aeshna isosceles*) may be seen here.

Day 3

Our morning visit will be to Pensthorpe Wildlife gardens near Fakenham. These 200 acre gardens appeared in the BBC Springwatch programme several years ago and were created mainly for the benefit of wildfowl and other wildlife. However the site contains 2 important gardens created by well known garden designers. The larger is the Millenium garden which is probably one of the finest examples

of a garden designed by Piet Oudolf in the UK. The smaller is the Wave garden by Julie Toll using a mixture of wild and cultivated plants to great effect. Both are striking and colourful gardens which merge gently into the natural landscape. In addition the newer Infinity and Wildlife Habitat gardens are designed to be both beautiful and to be attractive to all kinds of wildlife.

In the afternoon we go to the charming little seaside port of Wells next the Sea on the North Norfolk coast for some free time. Here you can walk or take the miniature railway to the beach with its miles of golden sands, perhaps enjoy excellent fish and chips sitting on the harbour wall or sample a pint of Wherry Bitter on board the “Albatros“, a Dutch North Sea clipper permanently moored by the quay. Also look out for marsh harriers and other wetland birds over the salt marshes as we make our way back to our hotel along the coast road.

Day 4

Our morning visit will be to Mannington Hall, the home of the Walpole family. The 20 acre gardens are full of charm and colour featuring lawns running down to a moat and drawbridge and other colourful sections. The former walled garden includes rose gardens showing the development of the rose from medieval to modern times with over 1500 varieties, together with a vegetable plot and children’s garden.

In the afternoon we go to East Ruston Old Vicarage near Happisburgh (pronounced Haysborough!). When we visited back in 2006 the garden had just begun to be recognised nationally as a great garden and we were totally bowled over by this stunning garden created by Alan Gray and Graham Robeson. I’ve no doubt that it is worth coming on the holiday if only to see this incredible garden as this is undoubtedly the most flamboyant garden we have visited in the 20 years of running these holidays. With so many individual gardens it is difficult to pick out the highlights but the desert wash garden, the Mediterranean garden and the brilliant herbaceous borders should not be missed. Rare and unusual plants abound including many half-hardy plants reflecting the closeness of the garden to the sea. The gardens also make use of the surrounding countryside with vistas out to 2 churches and a lighthouse. Altogether this is a magical place!

Day 5

On our journey home, the last garden we visit will be Beth Chatto’s garden near Colchester but although the last it is by no means the least important. Although Beth died a few years ago, her daughter has taken over the management of the garden and it remains one of the greatest gardens in the UK. It was created in an area of farmland which was unproductive and shows how a wonderful garden can

be created in the most unpromising of areas. Beth was one of the most influential gardeners of the late 20th century and the garden remains a classic example of the way to use the right plant in the right place. The dry garden created on the original car park is an object lesson in colour and design in an area of very low rainfall but throughout the garden are wonderful combinations of plants. At the bottom of the garden is a beautiful water garden created in the former marshy area which is wonderfully colourful and serene. There is a nursery with many of the plants in the garden on sale. We visited in 2006 and Stella and I have also visited on several other occasions and it is certainly worth another visit.

The likely cost of the holiday will be £470 to £530 depending on numbers booking with a single supplement of about £60. Barnes have produced a poster (based on this note) and booking form which have been sent out to everyone who has been with us on recent holidays but if you are interested and haven't been with us before, let me know either by phoning me on 01242 230442 or emailing me on the GOGG address (glosorgg@gmail.com) and I will add your name to the list.

Vic Ellis

POSSIBLE COACH TRIP TO ST. FAGAN'S MUSEUM, CARDIFF on Sunday 10th July, 2022.

Please contact Clare if you would be interested, and where you live so pick up points can be decided.

Email clare@solarious.co.uk Tel 01453 827286

GOGG MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

It's that time of year again!

Payment methods:

Online: 1. make payment by bank transfer to GOGG bank account

Account Name: Gloucestershire Organic Gardening
Group

Sortcode: 30-91-87.

Account No: 01648281

Payment Ref: your surname followed by your initials

2. email completed renewal slip to glosorgg@gmail.com

Post: 1. Complete renewal slip
2. send with cheque made payable to GOGG to the address on the renewal slip.

If you wish to receive a receipt, please send a stamped addressed envelope together with completed renewal slip to the address on the renewal slip.
(Renewal slip: a copy will be attached if you receive this by email, or a hard copy will be enclosed if you receive this by post)

EDITORS NOTES

As usual, comments or suggestions to me please at: Walton House, Station Road, Churchdown, Glos GL3 2JR 01452 712336.

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Copy for next edition by 30th March 2022 please to:

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Proposed Programme 2022

(We will update as we go along during the year)

Jan 18 th	Talk by Sally Morgan on 'Living on one acre or less'- Zoom
Feb 15 th	Talk by Caroline Sheldrick on 'Flowers for Healing'- Zoom
March 15 th	GQT – Clive, Robin, Elaine - Zoom?
April 19 th	Talk tba
May 17 th	Plant Exchange
June 21 st ***	Garden visit tba
July 19 th ***	Garden visit tba
August 16 th ***	Garden visit tba
Sept 20 th	Harvest Supper
Oct 18 th	AGM & Slide show
Nov 15 th	Talk by Nicola Hope(hopefully)
Dec 20 th	Christmas social

Due to mask wearing and venue cleaning having been compulsory at St. John's Feb meeting will be on zoom.

In view of the recent lifting of some restrictions, we shall review the March meeting venue and feed back nearer the time.

Jan-Mar All arranged

April & Nov Talks tba

May Plant Exchange at St. John's (outdoors if restrictions apply)

June – Aug Walk & outdoor meetings currently being arranged

Sept, Oct, Dec Hopefully all restrictions will have been lifted and we shall be able to meet at St. John's!
