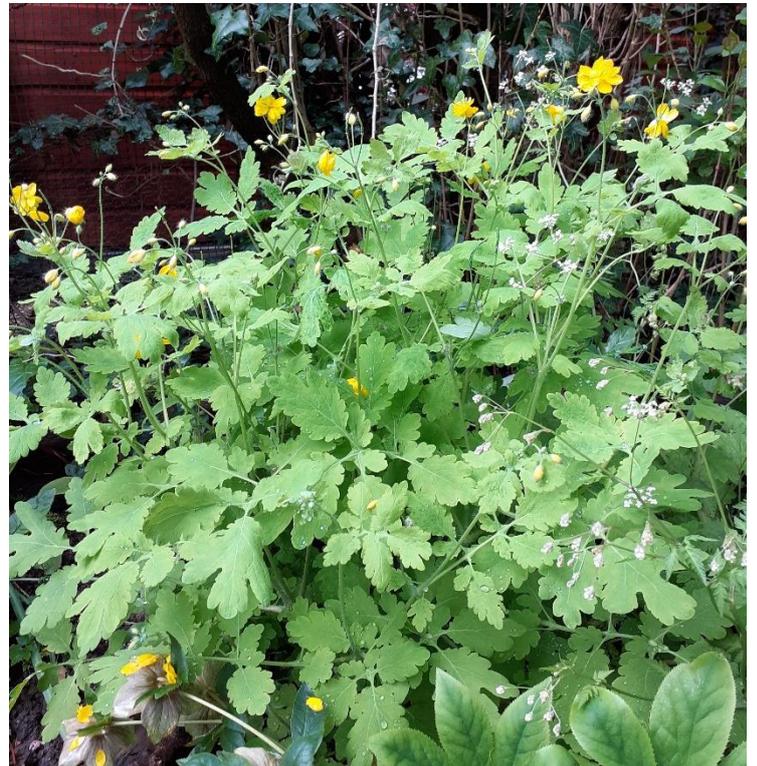


Some plants for shade – Elaine Shears

Natives - spring



Sweet Woodruff under an apple tree – started with a couple of small plants a few years ago - spring



Greater celandine



Herb Paris

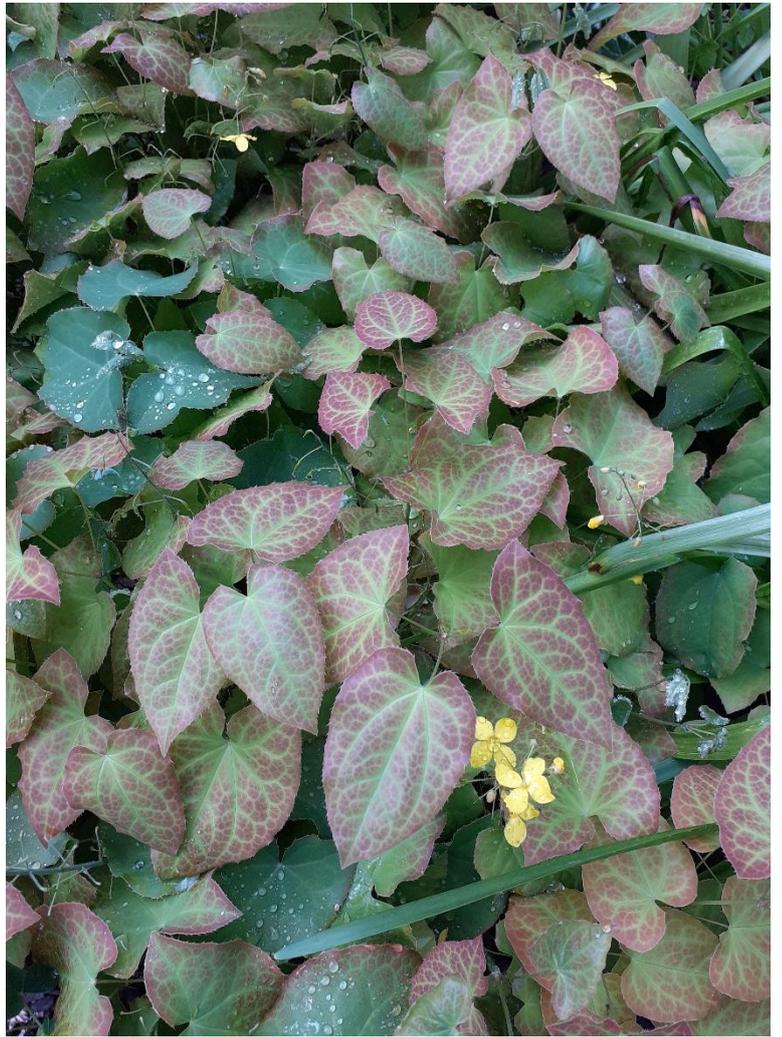


Soft Shield fern

Cultivated Plants



< Maianthemum – provides good flowering spring groundcover



Epimedium sulphureum – yellow flowers in spring
Followed by good patterned leaves



Tiarella

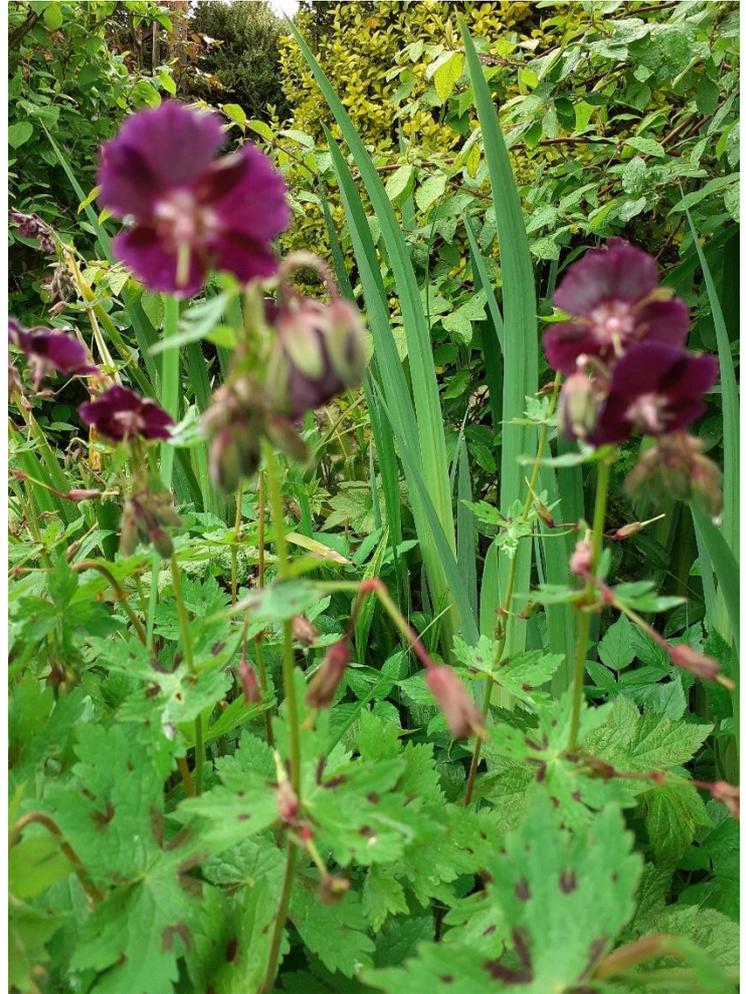


Podophyllum Spotty Dotty

Cultivated - Spring/Summer



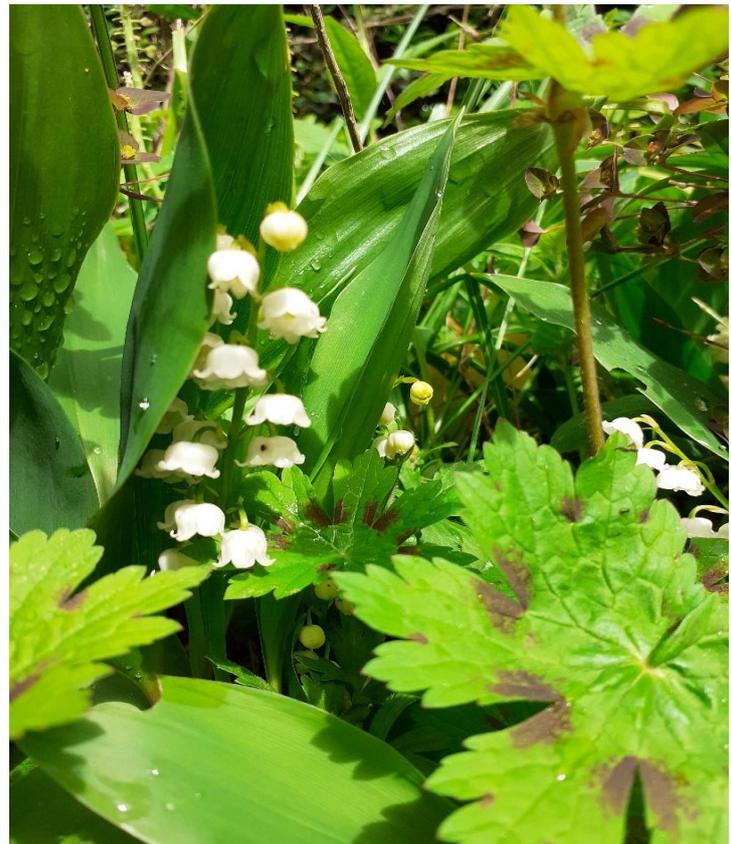
...Geranium Macrorrhizum – tolerates dry shade



Geranium phaeum



Cornus canadensis



Lily of the Valley

THE GRUMPY GARDENER IN SPRING

Spring should be a time when the grumpy gardener can enjoy the garden a little more sitting outside listening to the birds and bees and watching the flowers grow whilst sipping a glass of beer. The last couple of days of March were fine and warm giving hope of better days ahead but then came a cold April with a record number of frosty nights and a cool and extremely wet May dousing any chance of alfresco living.

All the rain has made the plants grow and at first glance the garden looks great both lush and green. However a closer look reveals that much of the greenery comes from weeds particularly the unforgiving ground elder against which we have battled ever since we moved here 40 years ago. It's said that the only way to rid oneself of this dreaded weed is to move and that is probably what we will have to do eventually.

If anyone asks you "What have the Romans ever done for us?" don't forget to mention the hours of time wasted over the millennia trying to get rid of ground elder. The Romans are supposed to have brought it over as a food item but it's my belief that they used it as a way of keeping the native Britons under control. Picture the wealthy Romans comfortable in their centrally heated villas whilst the Britons struggled continuously to keep the ground elder from suffocating their crops leaving them with no time for any kind of rebellion! Of course it wasn't easy for all Romans as the poor bl***y infantry had to spend time on the cold, wet and windy Hadrian's Wall or, even worse, up at Hardknott Fort high in the Lake District fells!

The blossom on our fruit trees was really good this spring but when the plum and pear trees were in full bloom we had cold days and frosty nights whilst the apple blossom had to cope with days of rain with few insects in the air. Thus we can't be very confident of getting much of a crop again this year. The last of our apple trees to flower is our Court Pendu Platt which is now covered in blossom. This variety possibly dates back as far as Roman times and its 2000 years in cultivation is a result of its late flowering which meant it would still bear fruit after a very cold spring. Our problem is that we don't know what varieties were grown as pollinators. We have Orleans Reinette and Lodgemore Nonpareil as very late flowerers but both are already losing their blossom so, just as happened last year Court Pendu will be flowering in splendid isolation and produce very little fruit!

As I finish writing this note I hear that the weather may actually become warm and dry for the Bank holiday weekend so I may yet be able to sit in the garden with an ice cold beer lazing on a sunny afternoon but I shan't bet on it!!

The Grumpy Gardener 25/5/21

[Link to some free talks online](#) - thanks to Pat Hutley

Mirthy Talks | Live Events in the Comfort of Your Living Room

<https://mirthy.co.uk>

Scarlet Tiger Moth – Elaine Shears



Caterpillar on Alkanet outdoors early April



Caterpillars pupated in net in greenhouse end April



Moth hatched early June

This moth overwinters as caterpillars and comes out in spring (they are a bit like large white but much more hairy) and feeds on alkanet/comfrey. I took three into the greenhouse in a pop up net



(In a jam jar, only way to get the underwing colour)

GOGG Walk on Minchinhampton Common in May – Clive Jelfs



Early Purple Orchid

(below)

Fragrant Orchid

Bee Orchid

Pyramidal Orchid

And Selsley Common in June



Sue & Robin's garden



Salad Table – Debbie Davies



I wondered if anyone might be interested in making an anti-slug and snail table ?

The idea was given to me by Robin, many years ago.

It's very easy to construct - the legs are copper tubing (slugs and snails avoid it) and the legs are just pushed into the ground, making it easy to move around if need be.

The heavy tray on the top came from a car-boot sale and the legs are from a long length of copper tubing that a friendly plumber gave me!

I've had no problems with slugs and snails eating my lettuce, young courgettes, etc. since constructing it years ago.

Thank you Robin!

Clive's Christmas Quiz Answers

1	Mulberry
2	Seed
3	Wrong mulberry
4	Yes
5	Insect inside
6	Purple
7	Lily.
8	Either
9	Bristle Cone Pine (sorry this was not one of the options).

10	4,000 years
11	Ginkgo.
12	Silkworm
13	Dutch
14	To please royalty of the House of Orange
15	White.
16	No
17	Rarely set seed
18	9th Century

Fringe Garden Event - Brenda & Dick Moody

We were tending a neighbour's garden while they were away, as you do (not Alec's by the way).

Dick was watering in the greenhouse. He stepped forward concentrating on the tomatoes in planters on the floor. He quickly realised his head had come into contact with something he hadn't previously noticed and now couldn't see. His hair was stuck fast to a fly paper! It turned out to be of the very sticky rectangular yellow sort and brand new.

On further examination he could feel it was suspended with twine from the greenhouse roof but couldn't reach to untie it. He tried to pull free but it hurt - a lot! He was stuck. It was a very hot day and the greenhouse was feeling more like a sauna every minute. What to do?

He looked around, as far as his predicament allowed, and spotted some scissors. At full stretch, he reached them with his finger tips. He then proceeded to attack his Covid-long hair, snip, snip, snip.

He arrived home, quite a while after leaving, sporting a new hairstyle with a modern(?), asymmetric fringe.

Our neighbours, on return, might think they've had a trampolining badger in residence while they were away...

Sandy's Rhubarb Cordial

2 lbs rhubarb cut into one-inch chunks

1 lb sugar

1 large lemon

1 pint water

Put all in saucepan and cook until the rhubarb is soft. Put through sieve, saving the puree in tubs for freezing. Pour the liquid into bottle, leaving space at the top for freezing.

(The Puree can be used for future pies, crumbles etc.)

Self Seeders contd from last newsletter - Poached egg plant in full bloom



Martin's (Davies) Broad Beans



Looking set for a good harvest of beans

Book Reviews – Pat Hutley

3 Must read/own books

[Every Day Nature by Andy Beer](#)

National Trust £12.99 (2020)

On 9th June I watched the stray cat that had adopted my garden as her own catch, what appeared to be, a black butterfly. Since it couldn't have tasted very nice she dropped it and I discovered it was a male banded demoiselle damselfly. Coincidentally the 9th June entry in Andy Beer's delightful book happens to be the Banded Demoiselle. For each day of the year a few paragraphs celebrate something you may just see on a walk in the country, in your garden or simply in the sky above. And timely entries they certainly are. Between our orchid-seeking

walks on Minchinhampton and Selsley Commons, in his entry for 11th June Andy describes Orchidelirium when orchid hunters faced far greater hazards than mere highland cattle.

In his introduction he rightly surmises that you are only likely to glimpse the rear end of a retreating bearded tit/otter/emperor butterfly if you accompany an expert to the exact right spot at the exact right time of year and look where the expert is pointing. But Andy's daily observations refer to nature that you could easily see at those times, if you just notice. Do get hold of this book and find out what St. Mark's Flies are (25th April, Feast of St. Mark), 19 colloquial names for the woodlouse (30th January) or to discover what Nine of Diamonds, Welsh Druid and Hen's Turds are (31st March). There are some lovely water-colour illustrations too.

[The Garden Cottage Diaries by Fiona J. Houston](#)

Saraband £17.95 (2009)

Fiona Houston was curious to find out just how difficult it would be to step back to the 1790's and adopt a life-style for a year in rural Scotland free from electricity, toilet paper and modern transport. Well the answer is – pretty difficult! Concessions to modern life were made only on occasions such as visiting her sick mother and attending her subsequent funeral in Devon, writing magazine articles (editors refused to accept quill and ink written reports!) and antibiotics prescribed on visiting a modern doctor after she stuck a garden fork in her hand – though a comfrey and rosemary poultice was more effective in reducing the swelling. It wasn't feeding herself that proved the greatest concern but mundane chores like hair-washing, keeping bedding aired and drying laundry. The short and damp days in winter, especially in Scotland, were a trial when candles were time-consuming to make – and very smelly, there was no water-proof clothing and skirt hems dragged in the inevitable mud. What do you eat between April and June to stave off scurvy when your stored potatoes are invaded by mice and there are no fresh fruits available?

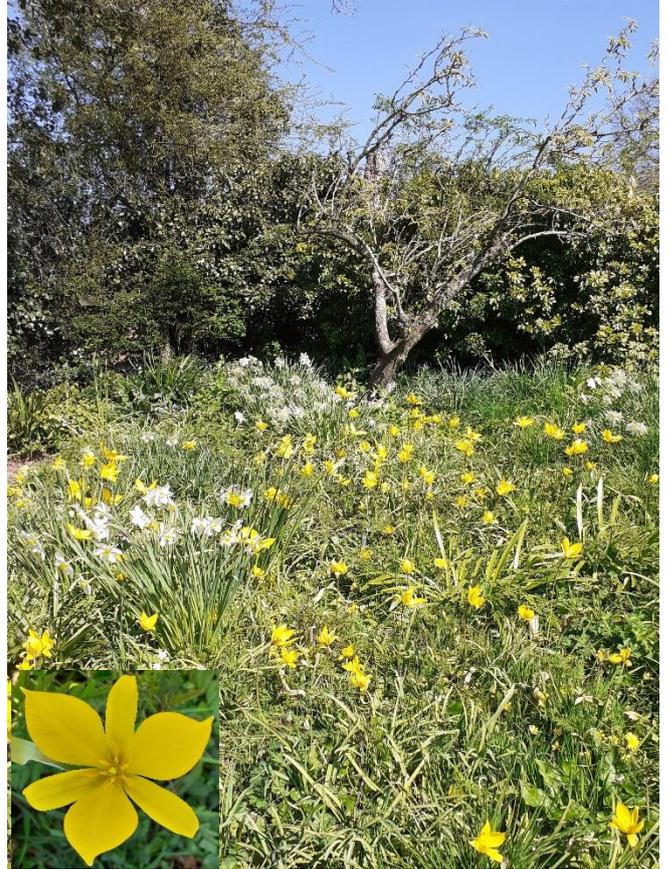
This is just the book for you if you hanker after making your own nettle string or oak gall ink and quill pens. And even if you don't, it is full of tips for making a leek bed, ale, cheese, oat-cakes, sorrel soup and lots of other recipes using our garden produce and foraged crops. (Note -This book has been out long enough that there are cheaper used copies on the market).

[A Short History of the World According to Sheep by Sally Coulthard](#)

Anima £16.99 (or less) (2020) Comes out in paperback in November 2021

I sneakily read this book which I had heard reviewed on the radio before I gave it as a present to my nephew's wife so I was careful not to crack the spine. I'll wait for the paper-back version to buy my own copy. This was a delightful read and full of fascinating descriptions of sheep-rearing lore from Neolithic times, accounts of how sheep have changed our diets, clothing and furnishings, shaped the fortunes of industrialists and influenced our language and place names, particularly relevant in Gloucestershire. Read this book to find out how sheep helped fuel a huge industry in beauty products, finance wars and to control the spread of syphilis. This book is light-heartedly written and utterly fascinating.

Brenda's (Jones) Garden in Spring



Narcissus & Tulipa Sylvestris



Sanguinaria Canadensis



Trillium Erectum



Tulipa Saxatilis



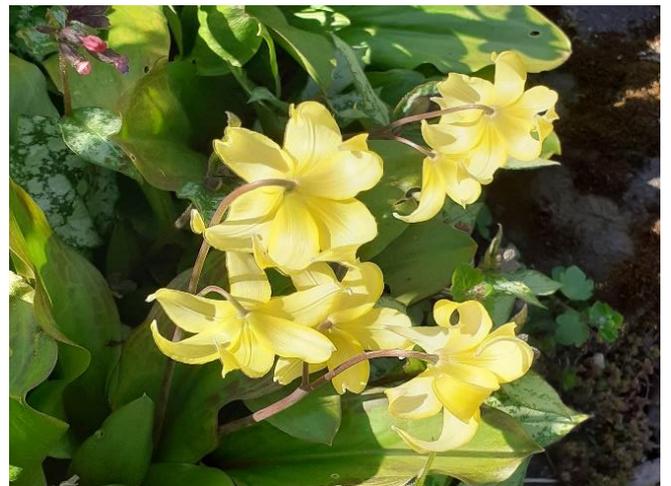
Honesty



Honesty



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With thanks to all contributors!