CHESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Patron: The Viscount Ashbrook
Company Limited by Guarantee, no. 05673816
Charity Number 1119592

Issue No. 26

April 2010

Newsletter

www.cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Inside:

Some future events:

- Henbury Hall – Friday 14th May
- Poulton Hall, Wirral – Saturday 26th June
- Vernon Park, Stockport – Tuesday 13th July
- Biddulph Grange – Saturday 14th August

Knutsford Civic Hall was the setting for a fascinating and entertaining talk by Ken Thompson on 21st November 2009.

Ken is the well-known author of a number of very enjoyable gardening books e.g No Nettles Required, An Ear to the Ground, Compost, the natural way to make food for your garden and other titles.

He is also a key member of the Sheffield University BUGS project, Biodiversity in Urban Gardens in Sheffield, which shows just how diverse and wildlife-friendly our humble plots can be.

Ken showed photos of an idealised wild garden with overgrown shrubs, lawn grasses and nettles but said that an ordinary attractive garden was perfectly suitable for wild life.

Wildlife sees blocks of green not individual plants. Ken quoted the work of a Leicestershire gardener Jennifer Owen who has spent the last 30 years recording the fauna, flora and insect life in her suburban garden which is managed sympathetically for wildlife. More than 2,200 animal and plant species were recorded in her garden.

Ken emphasised the importance of gardens which can provide a broad range of microclimates, plant species and vegetation structures and habitats such as ponds that may be increasingly rare elsewhere.

Ken then went on to describe the BUGS project. In it the insect and plant life in 61 typical Sheffield gardens ranging from tiny backyards to plots ten times larger in the city and suburbs were surveyed. Gardens that were specifically designed for wild life were not included.

Garden size was found to be unimportant but trees, hedges and climbing plants were invaluable as they gave an extra dimension to the landscape providing a range of habitats. Gardens that were flatter and duller with more hard surfaces and no cracks were the worst for wildlife.

Some popular methods for increasing the diversity of wildlife in the garden were also evaluated:

1. Patches of food plants i.e nettles were introduced to determine whether they would attract and provide breeding sites for widespread butterfly species. These did ***not*** attract butterflies but the aphids which colonised them were a food source for ladybirds and lacewings. Patches of long grass are good habitats as they are a food source for the caterpillars of many butterflies e.g. Speckled Wood.

2. Bumblebees and solitary bees and wasps normally breed in hollow plant stems or old borings in wood neither of which are abundant in gardens. Artificial nest chambers were created by placing paper straws in painted tin cans, filling sections of 11cm drainage pipe with lengths of bamboo and boring tunnels 4-10 mm diameter in wooden blocks. Nest uptake was widespread but the tunnels were the least popular. Bumblebee nesting sites were tested. These were in the form of a terracotta plant pot, upturned on a tile, and raised off the ground by a brick and were ignored.. Bumble bee houses on sale in garden centres are not recommended!

3. Small ponds were added to gardens without ponds to see their effect as the larval stage of many insects, such as flies and mosquitoes which provide food for birds and bats, is spent in water. Insect larvae appeared within a week but the key to getting a good wildlife pond seems to be that you need to introduce some appropriate species to get it started.

4. Small piles of birch logs were placed in the gardens as they are a resource for wood feeding insects and decaying fungi and a refuge for overwintering invertebrates and amphibians. Initial results were promising but dead wood needs to decay over a longer time period to realise its full value.

Compost heaps had the same effect as log piles and ponds providing a habitat for insect larvae and a range of insects and invertebrates.

Several members then asked Ken questions.

Can you suggest any plants to grow to attract insects?

Garden plants as well as native plants are attractive to wildlife. Avoid highly modified cultivars as bees and flying insects cannot use them. Grow plants to cover the whole season e.g ivy, mahonia, asters. Lavender is a good plant to grow as it is long flowering.

Have you any advice re the use of slug pellets?

Pellets kill more snails than slugs. Think twice about using metaldehyde based products as these are persistent and have been found in drinking water in country areas. The newer ones e.g. ferric phosphate are less toxic as they are not persistent and wash away after rain but they are less harmful to slugs.

Were bird boxes and feeders included in the survey?

No but other surveys have found that even seed eating birds need insects to feed their young. Insects appear under certain weather conditions and this can affect feeding patterns.

Identification of flying insects on water lily leaves?

Go to website www.ispot.org.uk to find out more about wildlife and identify what you have seen.

Ken then summed up his talk. His chief conclusion is that wildlife gardening is easier, cheaper and more attractive than the stereotype. A successful wildlife garden does not have to be large, untidy or full of weeds. The most important thing you can do for wildlife is to grow as many trees large shrubs and climbing plants as you can, but even that is not essential. Successful wildlife gardening is much more about how you garden than about what you grow."

Heather Turner

Note: Further information about the BUGS project and other information on wildlife gardening can be found by a Google search using the terms ***BUGS project Sheffield University.***

Didn't make the lecture and would like to find out more? No Nettles Required is the book to get. Only £7.99 new, copies on Amazon can be had for as little as 1p!

Visit to the Walled Fruit Garden at Tatton

Until the restoration of the Walled Gardens at Tatton, the present fruit area was the site of the Tatton Garden Society's garden.

When the National Trust was bequeathed the Tatton Estate in the 1950s it was deemed far too expensive and labour intensive to run the Kitchen Gardens and the T.G.S. was encouraged to develop and maintain a mainly ornamental area instead.

However, by the end of the twentieth century the importance of walled gardens in the production of fruit and vegetables in their Victoria/Edwardian hey-day was receiving greater emphasis and resulted in the restoration of many, including Tatton.

The restored gardens at Tatton are worked using traditional methods of fruit and vegetable production, including the use of associated glasshouses and support buildings.

The walled gardens cover 7½ acres in total, but not yet included in the restoration is the former nursery area with its extensive compost yards and frame yards.

At the height of production these areas would have been smelly, smoky and a hive of activity, more closely resembling an industrial site than a rural idyll. Tatton is unusual in that the productive gardens are close to the Mansion.

The high walls surrounding the fruit area create a warm micro-climate protecting the vulnerable fruit (both the varieties grown in the open and those grown on the walls) from inclement weather, particularly wind and frost. Brick walls are dry, and consequently, are able to absorb heat during the day which can then be maximized by being released overnight.

Many kitchen gardens were built in the form of a parallelogram rather than a square, with the south-facing wall situated so that the sun would strike it fully just after mid-day when it was at its strongest.

The height and aspect of the walls was determined by local topography, with the north and south walls longer than the east and west ones.

The walls were also used to support forcing frames and lean-to glasshouses which again benefitted from the additional warmth and were always placed on the sunniest sides, with the support buildings, compost yards, frame yards and workshops being constructed on the colder, northern sides to the rear of the wall.

A further advantage of brick walls was that the nails needed to support the espaliers and fan-trained fruit could be easily knocked into the mortar between the bricks.

In the early eighteenth century hot walls were being built, particularly in the north of England. Lean-to glasshouses and hot-houses which encouraged the ripening and protection of peaches, nectarines, apricots, figs and grapes were increasingly used against the walls.

Fruit walls of this type were heated by internal smoke flues running horizontally within the wall. Fireplaces were situated at the back of the walls, and the flues, the serpentine nature of which ensured even heat distribution throughout, opened into chimneys at the top.

At Tatton the chimneys adjacent to the Pleasure Garden are in the form of ornamental urns which disguise their utilitarian function. In contrast, the chimneys of the vegetable garden are plain.

The heat thus provided was used to protect the fruit blossom from frost damage and to help ripen the fruit and the maturing bud wood. The walls at Tatton are Grade II listed. The cost of their construction was equivalent to £1.5m in modern currency.

Eighteenth century gardeners also made use of mats or canvas/hessian screens or straw to protect the blossom. These could be rolled down as required when frosty weather threatened.

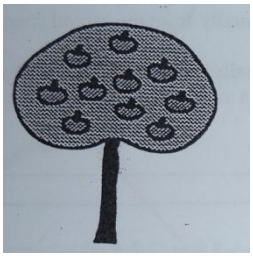
In the late eighteenth century approximately two hundred varieties of top fruit were available. By Victorian/Edwardian times garden owners and their head gardeners had a choice of nearer two thousand.

Of those still available, Tatton chose about one hundred, many obtained from local sources. Using information from the Clibran's Nursery Catalogue of 1911, thirty-nine varieties of apple traditional grown in Northern England were chosen. In addition to apples, the restoration has seen the re-introduction of a range of top fruit: pears, plums, gages and cherries grown mainly as fans and espaliers plus peaches, nectarines and apricots grown under glass.

The Cheshire Gardens Trust visit concentrated mainly on the growing of apples, including types of tree form, rootstock, planting distances, reducing vigour, pollination and basic pruning.

1. Tree Forms

Unrestricted tree forms are those which are grown in the open ground in what is basically their natural growth habit.

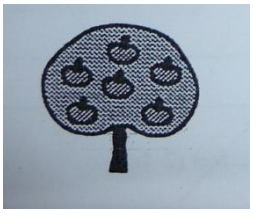


STANDARD AND HALF STANDARD

Overall height 15-30 feet (5-10m).

Size gives problems when spraying, picking, etc.

Not suitable for small gardens; not now used commercially



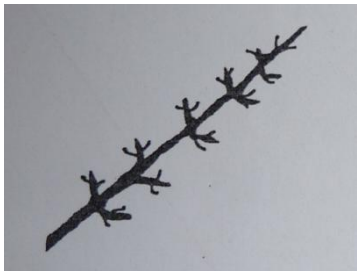
BUSH

Overall height 6-15 feet (2-5 m)

Most suitable for the garden.

Bushes are available in a wide range of sizes depending on the rootstock.

Restricted tree forms include cordons, espaliers and fans and are usually given support, being grown against a wall or on wires.

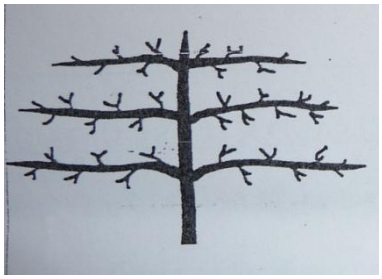


CORDON

Height 6-8 feet (2-2.5m)

Consist of a single stem with spurs on which the fruit is borne.

Can be grown upright but are more usually grown at an angle because this reduces vegetative growth and increases fruiting



ESPALIER

Height 6-8 feet (2-2.5m)
Spread up to 10 feet (3m)

Consist of parallel stems trained horizontally from the central stem.

An espalier can be limited to one tier and is called a step-over tree. Useful for edging a path.

FAN

Height 6-8 feet (2-2.5m)
Spread up to 10 feet (3m)

The stems in a fan are trained in an arc from a short trunk.

Fans require the support of a wall or a fence.

2. Rootstocks

Top fruit are not grown on their own roots for a number of reasons:

- most fruit trees are cultivars and, therefore, some means of vegetative reproduction must be used.
- Some cultivars may not grow well on their own roots.
- Some rootstocks are more resistant to pests and diseases or will grow better in poor conditions.
- Different rootstocks can be used to control the size of the tree; for fruit trees this is the prime reason for using rootstocks.

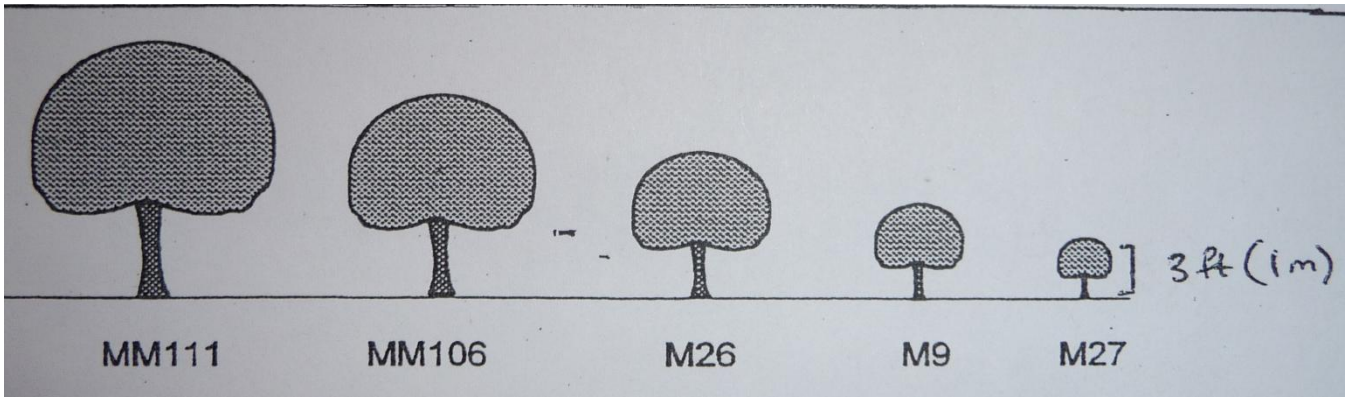
Before finally selecting the rootstock the soil type should be considered: in poor soil (e.g. sandy or shallow soil over chalk) the dwarfing effect will be too pronounced, so it is better to choose a more vigorous stock.

The choice of stock is also dictated by the tree form selected.

Originally wild crab apples with the desired characteristics would have been chosen for grafting, but a large number of rootstocks would have been required because not all would have been suitable.

Apple growers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tended to use Broad-leaved Paradise, Narrow-leaved Paradise, Doncin, Non-such and free (seedlings of cultivated apple, principally cider apples) in addition to Crab.

Nowadays rootstocks developed by the Malling ('M') and Malling Merton ('MM') Fruit Research Establishments which provide a known standard of quality are used by growers.



M.27 Extremely dwarfing

A new stock which requires a very good soil and does not produce a satisfactory tree if there is competition from grass and weeds. Trees on this stock are usually very precocious, bearing fruit within two or three years. It is excellent for the very vigorous cultivars because it substantially reduces their vigour. Not suitable for weak cultivars.

M.9 Very dwarfing

A widely used stock for dwarf bushes, dwarf pyramids and cordons. Trees on this stock are soon into bearing, usually within three years.

It requires a good soil and does not tolerate neglect or competition from grass or weeds. The root system is brittle and the trees require permanent support.

M.26 Dwarfing

A good rootstock for average soil conditions. Trees on this stock are soon into bearing, usually within three or four years. The stock is suitable for bush trees, dwarf pyramids and cordons.

MM.106 Semi-dwarfing

A stock widely used by nurserymen; suitable for most soils including the lighter ones. Used for bush trees, cordons, espaliers and fans; trees on this stock are soon into bearing, within three or four years.

MM.11 and M.2 Vigorous

Trees on these rootstocks make large trees on good soils but medium-sized trees on poor soils.

Dwarf and restricted forms of fruit tree have distinct advantages over the traditional standards and half-standards which used to be grown in orchards:

- they will fit into small areas (see planting distances)
- are easier to cultivate (e.g. spray, irrigate, harvest)
- are easier to protect (growing within a cage is feasible
- fruit is produced earlier in the life of the tree
- a number of different cultivars may be grown in the same space as one large cultivar
- fruit yield per unit area is increased
- they usually produce better coloured fruits because there is less mutual shading and the framework is more open.

	Distance between trees	Distance between rows	Years to fruiting
Standard	30 ft (10 m)	30 ft (10 m)	6-7
Half-standard	20 ft (6m)	20 ft (6m)	5-6
Bush	12-15 ft (4-5m)	12-15 ft (4-5m)	3-5
Espalier	12-15 ft (4-5m)	6 ft (2m)	3-5
Fan	12-15 ft (4-5m)		3-5
Cordon	2 ½ -3 ft (0.75-1m)	6 ft (2m)	2-4
Column	2 ½ -3 ft (0.75-1m)	6 ft (2m)	2-4

3. Reducing Vigour

If trees grow very vigorously, it is likely to be at the expense of fruiting because the energy of the tree is used for vegetative growth. There are three ways in which the vigour may be reduced and fruiting encouraged.

- Grassing – grass grown beneath the tree will rob it of water and nutrients
- Root pruning – this is done by digging a trench around the tree at a radius of 3-5 feet (1-1.5m) to expose the roots, some of the larger, older ones of which are then severed. The up-take of water and nutrients is thus reduced and the tree is put under stress causing it to produce more blossom and/or fruit. Root pruning should be done during the dormant season.
- Bark ringing – a ring of bark about ½ inch (1cm) wide is removed from the trunk of the tree in late spring and the area covered with tape. By removing the phloem vessels in this way the flow of food to the roots from the leaves is prevented.

4. Pollination

Fruit trees are pollinated by insects and, because most are not self-fertile, require another tree of the same species to be planted reasonably close. For successful pollination the trees must be in flower at the same time and for this purpose they are divided into pollination groups. Apples, for example, are divided into seven groups. For reliable pollination trees from the same group should be chosen, although those from the groups either side will probably also pollinate successfully. There are a number of points of which to be aware:

- Some varieties are better pollinators than others
- Some varieties, although the same group, are incompatible with each other and need some other variety as pollinator
- Triploid varieties are not successful as pollinators of other varieties. Therefore, it is necessary to plant two other varieties so that they pollinate the triploid and each other (triploids require two pollinators).

Examples	Cultivar	Pollinator	Cultivar	Pollinator
Dessert Apples	Discovery	3	Epicure	3
	St. Edmund's Pippin	2	Ellison's Orange	4
	Merton Beauty	5	Gala	4
	Idared	2	Suntan (T)	5
	Crispin (T)	3	James Grieve	3
Culinary Apples	Grenadier	3	Howgate Wonder	4
	Rev W. Wilks	2	Bramley's Seedling (T)	3
	Newton Wonder	5		

5. Basic Pruning

This is a topic in itself and was aptly demonstrated by Simon Tetlow (Tatton Gardens) who gave us such an in-depth and far-ranging talk as is demonstrated in the above article. Suffice it here to say that summer pruning retards growth and winter pruning promotes growth for next year's buds and fruit. I feel an article about apple tree pruning coming on – or even a visit to Tatton to look at soft fruit production/vegetable production or glass house production….. ***Ruth Brown***

Caldwell's Nursery: the suet pudding connection

Working on 'a project to enable access and improve awareness of the heritage of Caldwell's Nursery' has had some surprising outcomes. Caldwell's Nursery was based in Knutsford and traded from 1769 -1991.

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies hold 13 ledgers providing great detail of the nursery's business from 1769 - 1840. This is a rare collection of considerable historic interest.

As explained at the AGM the project has five main strands which are:

- To scan each page of the Caldwell ledgers
- To transcribe each page of the scanned ledgers onto a bespoke database
- To record oral history about the nursery from family, employees and customers
- To research the history of the nursery and a cross-section of its customers
- To share all this information via a Caldwell website and travelling exhibition

We had been developing the project and writing a business plan for some months when contact with a local historian, Joan Leach, revealed the presence of two additional ledgers dating from 1912 to 1926.

This was an exciting discovery and we have arranged for the ledgers to be deposited with the rest of the collection at the archives.

This discovery was followed up with an article in the Knutsford Guardian outlining the project and asking people to get in touch if they had connections with the nursery.

As a result of the article we have received calls from a number of former employees with wonderful stories about how the seeds were packed and wreaths made, who managed the glasshouses, where the pots came from, and how the compost was mixed, plants delivered and cut flowers taken to Caldwell's florist shop on King Street.

One lady called to say that her father had worked at Caldwell's in the 1930's. One day he was sent out to do some gardening at a house on the Toft Road for a Mr Hugon. He must have got on well with Mr Hugon because he was offered a job as gardener and stayed there until the he neared retirement and the Hugon family moved away. Then my informant said, "Do you know about suet puddings?" Somewhat surprised I said "yes" and she said "well this is the interesting bit. Mr Hugon owned Hugon's Atora Suet, but the company was taken over and the suet is now just called Atora. That's all I know". Intrigued by her story, I searched on Google and sure enough Atora's website confirmed the information:

"Gabriel Hugon, a Frenchman who lived in Manchester, set up the first-ever factory to manufacture shredded suet - an act which was to revolutionise suet cooking.

Hugon, who had an engraving business, was one day watching his wife tediously chopping a large piece of suet and had the idea that it would be so much easier if you were able to buy suet already chopped. He subsequently sold his engraving business and in 1893 founded the Atora suet making factory in Openshaw, Manchester, manufacturing ready shredded suet - one of the first 'convenience' food products available. It was the largest factory of its kind in the world.

It is believed that the name "Atora" was derived from the word toro, the Spanish word for bull. This was clearly linked to the fact that suet comes from beef cattle. In fact, between 1893 and the early part of World War II, Hugon used this very fact to publicise the brand. Atora suet was transported around the country in colourfully painted wagons bearing the Atora name and pulled by six pairs of Hereford bullocks. It was known to be one of the best publicity stunts carried out by a British firm in its time - long before 'the marketing concept' was officially discovered! Later the wagons joined the famous Chipperfield's Circus and took part in parades up and down the country."

So that is the suet pudding connection! If you would like to share the fun, hear and record these stories, or undertake research for the project do get in touch and register your interest for when the project starts, hopefully this autumn. If our funding applications are successful volunteers will get full training in making oral history records, or to undertake documentary research. The time involved will be approximately 5 days per volunteer over a period of six months or so – and more if you get hooked!

Barbara Moth

barbara.moth@btinternet.com tel: 01606 46228

Monday mornings will never be the same again!

It all began when those people researching and recording parks and gardens requested a little more training in recognising the features in a historic landscape. So to help us on our way to better garden recording, Cheshire Gardens Trust Chairman Ed Bennis agreed to present "A short History of Parks and Gardens in Five Acts".

Of course, there could not have been a better tutor in this subject for, in addition to being CGT chairman, Ed Bennis is head of the Centre for Landscape Research at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has been a landscape consultant in the UK, Italy, Portugal, France and Germany. In addition to teaching and running Master Classes in China and Serbia, Ed has co-authored books, published and lectured extensively and is Visiting Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia.

So every other Monday morning for 5 weeks, we met in Tarporley Community Centre for an infusion of Garden History in two "scenes" separated by an infusion of tea, coffee and discussion. What a fine start to a week! Interestingly all 25 participants were women – are there no men interested in garden history?

Act 1, Scene 1 The gardens of the ancients in Egypt have been investigated from tomb paintings, relief sculptures and in the hieroglyphics. For example, there is a plan for an official of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III in around 1400BC which shows the walled garden as a place of pleasure as well as function with fruit trees, pavilions and papyrus ringed fish ponds. In **Pompeii**, destroyed in 79AD but rediscovered in 1748, archaeologists have found gardens, public areas, market gardens and commercial vineries. The layout of the gardens can be seen on wall paintings and mosaics. Planted areas have been excavated and rhododendron, box, myrtle, orris root for perfume and delphinium, a native of China, were present.

Act 1, Scene 2 The paradise garden was developed in ancient Persia in pre-Mohamed times and spread across the Mediterranean into India and Asia. After the 7th and 8th centuries Islamic gardens were developed where religion played a significant role. Water channels divided the walled garden into four quarters representing water, fire, earth, air. Fruits and water were plentiful, with spreading trees for shade, cool pavilions and fountains of running waters, rills or terraces. The gardens had a wealth of plants, such as Eremurus, cedars, pomegranates and espalier fruit trees; productive gardens such as orange groves had a geometric pattern, with water always central to the plan.

Act 2, Scene 3 After the fall of Rome, it was the monastic communities that carried forward the idea of the garden and it became important at all levels of society in the Dark Ages for sustenance and for pleasure. The six components of the Medieval Garden were: *Form* using squares or rectangles with a central statue or fountain; *Enclosure* with brick or stone for the wealthy, and wattle, hedge or trellis for the poor; *Grass* in a rectangular shape and containing meadow flowers; *Turf seats* for "resting with pleasure"; *Trees and plants* for shade, food, medicine as well as beauty; *The Mount*, easily climbed, from where the garden could be viewed, e.g. Kew and Dunham Massey.

Act 2, Scene 4 The gardens of the Italian Renaissance were for pleasure not production. They stood high on hills with magnificent views over a "borrowed landscape". Cypresses provided structure. Extravagant water features with fountains, rills, canals and parterres were a major part of the design. The earliest was Villa d'Este sitting at the top of a long ascent through the garden while Villa Lante is considered to be the most faithful of the Renaissance gardens. At this time too, there were developments in public urban spaces.

Learning can be fun!

Act 3, Scene 5 The French Renaissance Garden of the 17th century was a demonstration of absolute power over nature and dominance also of man. In this tightly controlled landscape, flowers were kept to the same size, and colour was added by the use of brick chippings and gravel. Versailles is a well-known example, while in Britain, similar designs were used at Hampton Court Palace.

Act 3, Scene 6 William and Mary remodelled the elaborate gardens of Het Loo in the Netherlands and this later became the model for Kensington Palace and Hampton Court. During this time, books on gardening were written, botanical gardens were being developed, floral societies became popular and horticulture became an important industry. William and Mary supported this emerging industry and their gardens exhibited new plant varieties.

Act 4, Scene 7 Following the Anglo-Dutch landscape, a period of 50 years passed before a new more natural style appeared with the work of William

Kent. In the early part of the century, gardens appear as nature applied to geometric designs as at Studley Royal, while in the latter part of the century there is the more familiar Brown landscape style. He is said to have completed over 100 designs during his 35 years of business, the best known being Blenheim Palace. He is said to have designed with a painter's eye, and is noted for his simplicity of composition of trees, sky, water and land.**Act 4, Scene 8** Where Brown's work was for the landed gentry, Humphry Repton's work was for the middle classes. He was a water colourist who produced Red Books of proposed designs which were presented to owners. Locally Tatton Park and Rode Hall have Red Books. This period also saw the development of the public park like Birkenhead Park, designed by Joseph Paxton and supervised by Edward Kemp.

Act 5, Scene 9 While Chinese Imperial gardens had grand areas for holding large events for the court, they also had smaller areas where the royal family could relax. Private gardens could be a simple scholar's retreat for study or a more elaborate display of wealth. A Chinese garden is a series of spaces each with a different, often framed, view. There are hints of its influence in the English garden e.g. Biddulph Grange has a Victorian vision of Chinese garden complete with plants from the area.**Act 5, Scene 10** In the first half of the 20th century, gardens such as Hidcote, Sissinghurst and Hestercombe were developed around Arts and Crafts houses. Following the development of public parks, industrial villages as Port Sunlight and Cadbury's Bournville village were built for the workers. A development from these was the idea of Garden Cities as in Letchworth and Welwyn in Hertfordshire.

Ed Bennis ensured that each lecture was most interesting, totally absorbing and extremely stimulating. The series has given the participants a really useful basis to work from when recording gardens.

We must thank the local NADFAS group (TADDFAS) who are helping CGT with the recording of parks and gardens. Special thanks are due to Gilliain Edwards who organised the venue and the infusions at half-time.

Freyda Taylor

When CGT announced the course, it was restricted to about 25 people because of the size of the room, and was quickly oversubscribed. If you missed out because you were too late booking, or if you were not able to make the time and place, please let us know. Another course will be run if there is sufficient demand.

To register your interest, giving your preferences for days and times, contact Heather Turner 0161 980 4561 ericanw@yahoo.co.uk.

Book Review

Wedlock by Wendy Moore.

At first sight there would seem no reason why this biography, sub-titled 'How Georgian Britain's Worst Husband Met His Match', should be reviewed in a newsletter concerned with gardens. But bear with me…

Every one remembers the Queen Mother; not everyone remembers that her younger brother David was President of the RHS from 1953 until his sudden death in 1961. Wedlock is the story of their great, great, etc. grandmother Mary Eleanor Bowes (1749-1800) from her first marriage to the Earl of Strathmore.

David Bowes-Lyon lived at St. Paul's Walden Bury – a garden which has been in the family (inherited via Mary Eleanor's mother) since 1725 – and is today occasionally open for charity or by appointment. The garden was greatly loved by Mary Eleanor. She was a skilled botanist and committed gardener. If it hadn't been for her disastrous choice in men, she may well have become one of the well-known names in horticultural history.

Between marriages (the first was unhappy, the second catastrophic) she sent a gardener, William Paterson, to South Africa to hunt for new specimens. The book includes a chapter detailing his travels.

Mary's second husband refused to let her go into her gardens and greenhouses and, getting control of her money, refused to meet the costs of Paterson's expedition, leaving him penniless and dependent upon the goodwill of others; indeed, when he did return to England, rather than proclaim his discoveries, he had to go into hiding to avoid his creditors.

This is a well-researched book which will appeal to the academic with its index, 22 pages of notes and 10 pages of bibliography. But it is also a cracking read: an almost unbelievable story set in a time when social mores were so very different to today.

Wedlock is a Phoenix Paperback and costs £7.99.

St Paul's Walden Bury is five miles south of Hitchin in Hertfordshire. The gardens are open for charity this year on 23rd May and 20th June, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. More information on www.stpaulswaldenbury.co.uk.

Artist Christine Wilcox-Baker recounts her residency at Tatton Park with Gardens Manager Sam Youd.

In 2008 I graduated from the MA Art as Environment course at Manchester Metropolitan University, and importantly my work gained a clearer definition. Being passionate about nature and our astonishing planet, I focused my work on food plants.

I have been steadily building my professional practice and over recent years have taken part in many projects. I want my work to have purpose and meaning and therefore try to find projects that will deliver these goals. I enjoy a mixture of solo and collaborative working, and projects that have mutually beneficial outcomes. I got talking to Sam Youd at a Cheshire Gardens Trust meeting and found empathy in our passions for gardening and art, so I seized the moment. We arranged to meet the following week and so began a fantastic working relationship.

Sam had previously worked with artists in residence and felt they had been very successful partnerships and so he was open to the idea of hosting another. I set about writing a proposal to put to the General Manager, Brendan Flanagan, and as I knew Tatton weren't actually looking for anyone at the time I added the proviso that I would look for my own funding. I'm strongly of the view that professional artists must strive to create opportunities for themselves and partners. I met Brendan to show him examples of my work and to further explain my proposal. Happily my aim to re-make the links between the Kitchen Garden and the Mansion Kitchen were in line with some of Tatton's aims and they agreed to my proposal.

Having always been a passionate gardener and artist these two paths have now started to merge and I have become more and more influenced by food cultivation, planetary needs and sustainability. My work invites the visitor to look differently at food and focus not just on the harvest but on the whole growing cycle and the beauty of the entire plant.

Through my research into the Tatton archives and spending time in the garden I found links between the produce of the past and that still grown there today. The Kitchen Garden was once the true heart of the estate and would have fed the extended community of the resident family and estate workers. I feel very privileged to be working closely with Sam and also with Mansion Collections Manager Caroline Schofield and their amazing teams, and I am constantly learning from them. Being allowed 'behind the scenes' access to such vast amounts of knowledge and experience enables me to uncover 'growing' first-hand both naturally and metaphorically. However, working with a large organisation and site has had a few pitfalls in arranging and agreeing logistics. It also takes quite some time to work out who is who and what everyone does! Luckily there has been a long lead time into this project which allowed me to get to know the staff and systems and vice versa.

Working out which plants we could use for my growing artworks was another learning experience in its own right. I have been able to draw on the experience of the garden staff to find the right solutions and this has also emphasised the fact that if I want to work with Nature I have to really work with it as I can't tell it what to do and when!

My work has developed in many directions during this residency as I have been able to experiment both with using actual growing plants to create artworks and also using plant imagery as inspiration. I have documented the Kitchen Garden through the seasons and have drawn from life before creating works and designs. The whole experience has enabled me to 'think outside the plot' and I have many more ideas to take forward and develop, including designs for fabric and wallpaper.

Christine Wilcox-Baker,
Garden Jewels, *redcurrants and mixed media, 2009.*

I have been very lucky with lots of projects I have worked on as I have received enormous support and always try not to get in the way whilst still gaining all the

knowledge I need. However the Tatton residency has been more in-depth than previous projects with regard to my own professional development, as this is a piece of work specifically for me and not for a particular project outcome. It has enabled me to experiment more than usual and to look at using a variety of different processes in realising my work. There's been flexibility and space for me to grow as an artist during this project as it has been a long and in depth residency.

The support I have received from Brendan and all his teams has been immeasurable and I would like to put on record my sincere thanks for a truly inspiring residency.

Christine Wilcox-Baker

Christine Wilcox-Baker: *Heart of the estate,* growing artwork: lettuce and radishes, 2009.

I met Christine at a meeting of the Cheshire Gardens Trust in early 2009. I found out she was an artist and also a great lover of Tatton Park, living very nearby. I'd been thinking for some time that it would be great to have an artist in residence working with the Gardens in particular, and Christine was full of ideas about creating work inspired by Tatton. She spoke very passionately about her love of nature and – of particular interest to me – vegetables! This shared passion of gardens and food was one of the factors that made it work so well. We also got on well personally as she has a great sense of humour. Because of her television background she's able to think outside the box and has a very 'can do' attitude. Christine developed a professional working relationship with the team – she was keen to not tread on anybody's toes and was aware of their daily responsibilities.

As her projects developed, Christine has increasingly looked at the link between the Gardens and the Mansion and how produce moved from the gardens to the kitchens, and finally to the grand dinner tables of the Egerton family. Vegetables are often seen as just a food source, but Christine (like us gardeners) also sees them as beautiful living things, as worthy of celebration of any other foliage or flowers in the gardens. It's been interesting to see what she considers beautiful and iconic – we think our job is very creative and it's been great to see Christine highlight and celebrate things that often only gardeners appreciate. It's been interesting for us to see these vegetables made into something different and then brought back into 'display' in the family dining room – much as they would have done in the past, as we no longer make that connection between garden and house.On a practical note, we helped advise her with some 'growing' knowledge – working out which salad crops could be best used under our soil conditions, and the gardeners had fun helping her to plant out some of her salad artworks. As always, when working with artists you're not exactly sure what's in their minds and how their plans will unfold (as they also might not be either). This often impacts on time and resources and you need to plan this fluidity into the timetable. Inevitably where this type of art involves living plant material it is also subject to seasonal difficulties and problems.

Ideally we like to work with artists with a sense of humour, who can not only do joined-up thinking but also joined-up listening so it's a two way process. Being open to the public makes us aware of other sensitivities that need to be taken into consideration with any work we do. Because Christine was working with living material there needed to be a long lead-in to the planning and execution of works. Christine developed a relationship with us through repeat visits and was able to fully explain her plans which we've watched grow, rather than receiving an artwork that's arrived out of nowhere and been left.

Artists face the challenge of the understanding and acceptance of their works. Obviously Tatton's traditional visitors may not necessarily expect to be exposed to influences outside of their comfort zone. As art is very subjective perhaps artists need to accommodate different people's perceptions and this can be a challenge when you're creating work for public spaces.

It's been great to see this seed of an idea develop and grow and I'm really looking forward to seeing her work this spring. ***Sam Youd***

On April 10, CGT visited Tatton Park to see Christine's work. A report of the visit will appear in the next newsletter.

Members who visited Belgium in 2008 will be sad to hear of the death of Dr. Karl Heeremans, owner of the famous Canneel-Claes garden in Liedekerke on Monday 12th April, aged 72.

Larches and canals

Cheshire is fortunate to be crossed by a number of canals, and like me, I imagine many of you enjoy walking along them. Both the Trent and Mersey and the Shropshire Union have provided walks on my door-step for the last 20 years. But I have recently learnt something that has made me look at trees along the canals with renewed interest.

For work I have had contact with British Waterways (BW) who own and manage the canal network, and the Lancaster Canal Trust (LCT), a voluntary organisation which champions a very picturesque canal in Lancashire running from Preston to Kendal.

Unrelated to my work, BW and LCT have started a joint project to record the presence of old Larch trees along the Lancaster Canal, because they have realised that these trees are uniquely associated with the construction of it.

Larch timber is remarkably hard and resilient to water. BW and LCT therefore believe that the Lancaster Canal Company planted Larch to meet the future timber needs of the working canal, for example to use as stop planks to dam sections and allow them to emptied for repairs. The notches in the stone edging near bridges are used to hold these planks. What foresight of the canal engineers, and how sustainable!

Larches on the embankment of the Shropshire Union canal, with Peckforton Hills in background (and repairs in the foreground!)

Native to the mountains of central and southern Europe, the European Larch (Larix decidua) was introduced to the UK about 1620 for its ornamental value. By the golden age of canal building in the 18th century, its timber value was also well known. Unusually it is a deciduous conifer, has bright green needles and small pink flowers in spring, and becomes golden yellow in autumn. These combined with its craggy, pyramidal shape make it a very distinctive large tree.

Aha, I thought….there are Larches along canals in Cheshire too! I regularly walk the section of the Shropshire Union between Bunbury and Chester, and was aware of 2 large groups of the mature trees. They have been planted where there is plenty of space, and probably due to their hardiness in quite exposed locations; on either side of a large embankment where the canal is raised, a mile or so from Beeston castle (see photo); and on the sides of a steep cutting near Bunbury.

So what does this have to do with the Cheshire Gardens Trust, I hear you ask? Well, although it may be stretching the definition to say that the canals are a 'designed landscape', they are certainly a planned one. These trees contribute to local character and are part of our local history, in just the same way as more formally designed parks and gardens.

If you spot groups of canal-side Larch, I would be interested to know where they are, and their approximate numbers and age. If you could e-mail this to the Editor, I will then pass the information onto the Heritage Advisor at BW. A grid reference and photograph would complete the record if you have the time for these as well.

Larches next to the Llangollen canal near Nantwich

For background information see www.lancastercanaltrust.org.uk. As well as their very good website, the Trust publish an excellent guide to the canal, which is full of detailed information for those wishing to boat, walk or cycle along it, as well as the history of its construction and natural history.

Maria Luczak

Is your garden home to a cherry tree?

Then why not take part in the cherry tree survey being run by the Natural History Museum (NHM)? The museum wants to build a picture of what is growing where and to understand more about trees in the urban environment.

The cherry tree survey will run for three years and there will be further surveys on other urban trees.

Cherry trees bursting into flower are a classic sign of spring, but not all flowering trees are cherries, so the NHM has included on its web-site instructions for identifying if your tree is a cherry, and if so what type of cherry it is.

Log on to www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/british-natural-history/tree-survey to find out more and to do your bit for science.

"To the Curious in Flowers"

If you are a plantaholic and had lived in the 18th century, adverts headed with these words are the ones you would have looked out for.

Researching through old newspapers, and finding this phrase over and over again, I thought I'd better check out its meaning. 'Curious' clearly wasn't being used in the way we'd use it today.

The Oxford English Dictionary gave the solution. Obsolete uses of the word include 'Bestowing care or pains; careful; studious, attentive' and 'Careful as to the standard of excellence; difficult to satisfy; particular; nice, fastidious – *esp.* in … matters of taste'.

In 1695, John Houghton, in his Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade let his readers know that 'a curious Gardner' could provide a range of plants from fruit-trees to garden seeds. Houghton had made him promise 'with all solemnity imaginable' that anything he provided would be 'good' and 'cheap', but warned that he expected cash on delivery.

It wasn't only people who could be described as curious. The word was used to describe plants as well: 'curious orange-trees'; 'curious flowers' even 'curious seeds'.

Adverts headed 'To the Curious in Flowers' were aimed at those who wanted something new and different. Murdock Middleton was a gardener in Walton upon Thames. He had 'a new Painted Lady double Sweet-William, pheasant-ey'd, and curiously spotted, with Variety of rich Colours'. They were in pots, in bloom and cost 'half-a-crown a plant' [12 ½ p in today's money, or, with inflation, more like £16.50].

In May 1770, James Gordon, a seedsman, had 'a collection of the newest and most beautiful tulips' which people could go to look at for free, presumably to be so taken with them that they would instantly place an order. Gordon also promised the 'best collection of ranunculas in England to be seen as above, in ten days from this date'. Whether the plants lived up to the hype is, of course, another question.

In January 1784 a news item addressed to the 'curious in flowers' was to be found in a number of papers. A Mr. Garston of Chester had had a 'July-flower' (a variety of dianthus) in bloom continually for 16 months and 'and, what is very extraordinary, it has stood the inclemency of the present season unimpair'd.'

The term 'florist' was used for both those who made a living from raising and selling plants and those who were simply collectors. The news report in the London Evening Post on October 9, 1736 doesn't make clear into which category a Mr. Jones fell. What we do know is that he had 'several times [been] robb'd of valuable Flower Roots in his Garden'. But he came up with a brilliant solution. He rigged up a gun ready to go off when the thieves next broke in and tripped the wire. It worked, too, though not quite as he intended. Having set his trip wires and loaded the gun, he remembered he'd left his coat in the garden. And went back for it…

We are not told whether he was at least pleased to know that his idea worked. The ball shattered his shoulder and 'notwithstanding all possible care' by an eminent surgeon, the wound proved fatal.

Few would go to the length of the thieves who, unintentionally, brought about the demise of Mr. Jones. But when visiting gardens, who has not been tempted by the plants. You may not pick a bloom, or snip a cutting, or slip a seed-head into your pocket, but next time you are tempted, remember this is nothing new. In December 1772, the Morning Chronicle carried the following paragraph:

> 'It might not be amiss for the eminent gardeners to caution visitors who are apt to employ itching fingers about curious flowers and exotics they admire, to have the following motto, which was inscribed on a door at the entrance of a famous garden in Italy, - *Hic occuli, hinc manus'*

I haven't been able to find a suitable translation of this Latin phrase. 'Look, but don't touch!' seems suitable, but I think it means something stronger. Something more along the lines 'anyone caught damaging or stealing a plant, will be thrown out and prosecuted'.

If, unlike me, you studied Latin at school, you may be able to satisfy my curiosity.

Joy Uings

Auriculas were a favourite florist flower: here we see a variety in a traditional display at Malvern Spring Show 2009

Natural Waste not wasted

During the inclement weather (now a distant memory), Ruth Brown read some old gardening books and decided to share some with us. A(lbert) J(ames) Macself (1878-1952) published a number of gardening books, including ones on chrysanthemums and gladioli. Ruth has Special Manures for Garden Plants and I was pleased to find it answered one of my queries.

I have several times come across mentions of salt as a manure. It seemed unlikely, but apparently it is okay, as long as you use it the right way, and for the right plants:

> "Many people look upon salt as being a potent fertilizer. Its chemical composition belies that assumption. Nevertheless, it is an acknowledged fact that various plants and crops, such as asparagus, beet, see-kale, potatoes, and flowering plants like eryngiums, statices, armerias, and other maritime subjects, show marked improvement in growth – if the soil is light and sandy – after a sprinkling of salt at the rate of an ounce to the square yard. The secret is that the salt helps the soil to retain water and also liberates inert potassium which otherwise would remain insoluble. Salt brought into actual contact with vegetation has a seriously injurious effect, and if used too freely will prevent plant growth in the soil for several months."

Elsewhere, Macself wrote about the different types of dung available. The one that caught Ruth's eye – and led her to comment "*is this next in local authorities' re-cycling campaigns*" – was dog dung.

> "It is customary to dismiss the idea that dog's manure is of any horticultural value … It is certainly not advisable to attempt to nourish the garden by utilizing the excreta of the household pet, but where a range of kennels accommodates a number of dogs the manure they produce is capable of doing good service if properly dealt with. One has only to think of the kind of food well-kept dogs consume to realize that there must be strength in their dung. … it must be stored in a manner that will enable it to be kept for a considerable time. If it is simply thrown in a heap and left it will become unbearably offensive. It should be built up in layers on a hard floor, and each layer should be covered with an equally thick body of sifted soil, previously burnt for preference, in order that fungi, insects, and weed seeds may be destroyed. Spread sufficient gypsum over the soil to whiten the entire surface. That will secure the ammonia and kill odour. In due time it will reach a stage of decomposition that will enable it to be crumbled down when dry. In that condition it will make a really excellent manure for digging into vegetable plots in autumn or into ground that is to be planted with flowering subjects of free, vigorous growth. A barrow-load of the mixture will serve for 10 square yards."

Macself goes on to talk about the efficacy of 'night soil' [human excrement] which is 'a great deal stronger … than the richest of farmyard manure', but needs careful preparation to be of use.

Two hundred and fifty years before Macself was writing, dung was being used for a very different purpose.

I should probably put in a warning here. Something along the lines **"those of a weak stomach, please turn to the next page immediately. Read on at your own risk.**"

Because in 1695, John Houghton wrote about dung as medicine!

> 'Dungs are used very often in *Medicine* and commended for the easing of most sorts of Pain'.

The heat generated by dung, made it useful for poultices. The heat and moisture of dung was good for opening the pores.

Not just for external use, dog dung could be taken internally for Quincies or sore throats. And to relieve colic, the juice of pressed horse dung was held to be efficacious.

There was a natural antipathy to Man's Dung, although 'by reason of their continual Flesh-Eating' the author had no doubt that it was the best of all. (Possibly not the case today, if we are following the Five-A-Day advice.) Apparently, even though the smell of human dung was unpleasant, 'it's confidently said that by Art, such *Civet* may be made from it as is undistinguishable from that of *Cats*'. Civet was used in perfumery!

Strawy dung was used to mix with lime for walls. But surely the most useful tip is that '*Horse-Dung* is common to preserve *Cellars* and *Water-Pipes* from freezing in Frosty Weather'. Definitely worth remembering for the next cold snap!

Joy Uings, with thanks to Ruth Brown

In the 19th century 'night soil' – i.e. human excrement – was held to have been the reason Stretford's rhubarb grew so well. Last year there was a report that United Utilities had been perfecting the means of making manure from human waste at its Ellesmere Port waste water treatment works. The odourless result has been used on farms in Cheshire.

With North Sea Gas running out, it is also being used as fuel. Items on the BBC web-site have sewage generating power in Manchester, Teesside and now Didcot.

Call for help

At this year's Arley Garden Festival on Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th June, there will be special sessions from 12.45 to 13.45 each day, for children to get involved with gardening by planting pots which they will then take home with them. CGT has been asked to supply volunteers to help with this. Arley will provide all the equipment necessary, so they are only looking for help with explaining and encouraging children in the activity.

If you would like to be involved, why not contact Helen Robinson, the Events Organiser, on 01565 777353 x 31 or 0771 269 3897. There would be no admission fee for volunteers, and there would be the opportunity of seeing the other displays and walking round the garden when not working with the children.

Helen says "you do not need to keep solely to planting seeds. If there is anything else you can organise that would be great. Just let me know. There is a PA system if you felt you would like to do a talk".

So over to members. This is your opportunity to put on a show for Cheshire Gardens Trust. We shall be having a stall, with a display stand, but it is the human touch which makes these things of interest. If you have ideas to liven it up, or you would like the chance to pass on some of your knowledge, let us know.

Proposed Visit to Germany

The response to the item in January's newsletter on the proposed gardens visit to Germany in September has had only a limited response. If you would like to go, but have not yet registered your interest, please contact immediately Ed Bennis on 0161 291 0450 or e.m.bennis@mmu.ac.uk.

Newsletter distribution

It was suggested at the AGM that to save time and money, the newsletter should be sent round by e-mail in the form of a pdf. The majority of members attending were in agreement, although a minority would still prefer to get a hard copy through the post. If you have received this newsletter as a pdf, it means that we have sent you an e-mail and you have not responded to say that you would prefer a hard copy.

If you have received this in the post, it is because you have asked for a hard copy or because we do not have an e-mail address for you.

If you would prefer to get the newsletter sent to you in a way other than you have received it this time, please contact the newsletter editor a.s.a.p.

Private Passions - Gardens on Display

This June, Didsbury Open Gardens will be offering another chance for gardening enthusiasts to view the creativity of some of the best private gardens in Manchester. Over twenty gardens, normally lying tantalizingly unseen, will be throwing open their gates in aid charity including, St Anne's Hospice and The Alzheimer's Society, on Sunday 13th June, 12-5.30pm.

Peter Jordan, who opened his gem of a cottage garden for the first time last year said, "It was one of the best afternoons of the year. I opened with my neighbour Simon, and although our terraced gardens are tiny, visitors seemed amazed at how many plants we managed to pack in. I'm really looking forward to opening again."

Anne Britt, a local garden designer who also opens her garden added, "It can be nerve-wracking, willing the roses to open on time and praying my Allium Globemasters don't flop over."

Even more private gardens have decided to open this year, from formal courtyard to cottage style private garden, allotments, and school, church, college and public gardens. Several offering refreshments and plant sales, plus a chainsaw woodcarver, pottery exhibition, live music and giant lawn games. There are also plans for a small Farmers Market outside the Library.

Programmes go on sale 1 May, from The Cheese Hamlet, RazmaRead, Living Flowers and Inmans Newsagents. Each is £5, and allows entry to all of the gardens.

To be added to the Didsbury Open Gardens mailing list, email: info@didsburyopengardens.org and also visit the web site at www.didsburyopengardens.org