

2025

“Garden Birds” - 26th November 2025

On Wednesday, 26th November, after an especially chilly day, we met at the Catholic Church Hall to listen to Roger Beck's presentation on Garden Birds. Roger, a former English teacher, also served as the Group Leader of the Guildford branch of the RSPB. He started by introducing himself and admitting that he was not a keen gardener but had managed to keep the garden created by his late Wife in reasonable order and was very proud of the pond he had dug. He mentioned local wildlife spots, like dragonflies at Thursley Common and wading birds, including a resident white-tailed sea eagle at Pulborough Brooks. Roger talked about the Big Garden Bird Watch and the 10 most seen birds listed there, from the sparrow at the top of the list to long-tailed tits at no. 10. He talked about each of the species on the list, saying how many were predated by our pet cats. He also said that the proportion of blue tits and great tits to other birds was rather overwhelming. Well, regrettably, this morning Dylan came in with a bird in his mouth, and when I reprimanded him, he said, 'It's a blue tit, just culling'. It didn't make him any more popular. Roger shared facts about each bird on the list and played their calls to help us distinguish them, like the wood pigeon and collared dove. He also mentioned the robin's aggression towards other birds and the magpie's intelligence and potential as a pet. He also pointed out how many species, such as the goldfinch and the greater spotted woodpecker, are very different between the male and the female, and in the latter, in the juvenile, the female is always less colourful as she spends more time on the nest guarding the eggs and hatchlings and needs to be more camouflaged. I was surprised to learn that the long-tailed tit isn't a true tit, and its nest, held together by spiders' webs, can expand as its chicks grow. He talked about many other species not on the list, including the wren, green woodpecker, dunnock and even the ring-necked parakeets, who have become frequent visitors to many gardens over recent years as successfully as the collared doves, which have only been here since the 1950s. It was a most interesting evening, and we are very grateful to Roger for sharing his wide knowledge in such an interesting fashion.

“The Story of the Rose” – 22nd October 2025

For the second talk of the Autumn calendar, on Wednesday 22nd October, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were lucky to welcome Kevin Tooher to give his beautifully illustrated talk entitled "The Story of the Rose". Kevin introduced himself and discussed plant-based living. After 11 years lecturing at Hadlow College, he is now working at both Hever and Woolmer Castles and has his own nursery, which, encouraged by his family, he has called Sir Plantalot. His interest in and enthusiasm for his subject was obvious from the start, and we were all keen to hear about where the rose had originated, when and the development of the 250 species and thousands of cultivars. The first acknowledged depiction of a rose is in a tomb in Crete, dating from around 1600 BC, and it is thought that Rosa Gallica first came to this country with the Romans or was brought back by the crusaders. Roses are classified as old or modern, with modern varieties beginning in 1867 when the first Hybrid Tea Rose, La France, was bred in France. Before this, there had been mainly crosses with Rosa Chinensis, Moss roses, Gallicas and Centifolias with a view to getting a perpetual flowering plant rather than one that flowered for just 4 to 6 weeks of the year. Kevin told us that the first almost yellow rose was Soliel d'Or, produced in 1900, but it was still tinged with red; later, many beautiful yellow roses joined the ever-

increasing cultivars. He talked about climbing and rambler roses, the difference being that climbers are repeat flowering, while ramblers only flower once in a season, generally in the early Summer. He mentioned the rampant and much-admired Kiftsgate, which can spread up to 60ft if not controlled and recommended a visit to Hidcote to see their amazing example. He said the largest rose in the world was in Tombstone, Arizona and was a Banksiae. Kevin talked about the much-loved cultivar Peace, which was bred in America and during the Peace Conference of May 1944, one of its flowers was put in front of each delegate, and although another name had been allocated, "Peace" became its title and has consequently been very popular ever since, apart from the fact it is a beautiful rose. After talking about many different cultivars, Kevin told us a bit about planting bare root roses, pruning them and general care of them. He advocated mostly pruning down to 50% in November and just tidying them up a bit in Spring, always prune to a bud, and if you have blackspot, be careful to remove the dead leaves and put them in the green bin, not on the compost heap. Sulphate of potash and a mulch were good, and Epsom salts for rust, for honey fungus, he suggested Jeyes fluid and washing up liquid for aphids. He told us to welcome leaf-cutter bees as they were a sign of a healthy garden. There were several questions from the audience, and Simon thanked Kevin for coming on such a filthy, wet evening and for a most enjoyable talk. He reminded us that the next gathering would be on 26th November for a talk entitled "Garden Birds" by Roger Beck from RSPB Guildford. After coffee, tea and biscuits, it was out into the wet and windy Autumn weather with thoughts of next Summer's roses.

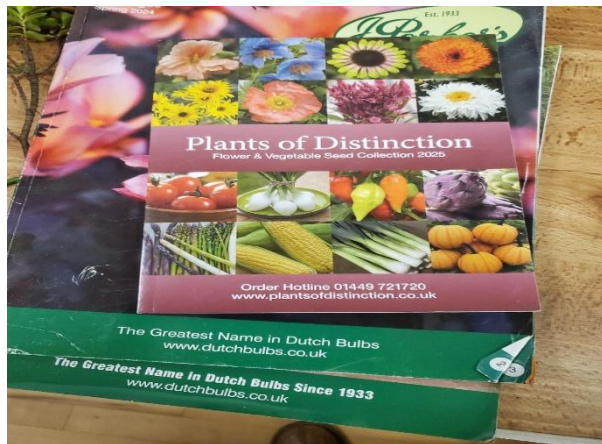
"Ornamental alliums" – 24th September 2025

On Wednesday 24th September 2025, we had a talk on - how to grow them successfully and in succession" from Jakie Currie, garden designer and holder of the national Collection of Allium Species and cultivars.

"Ornamental alliums" – 26th March 2025

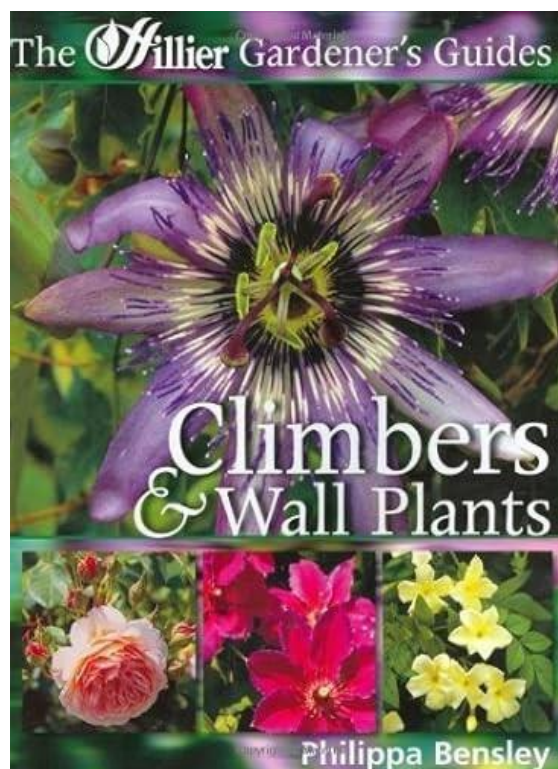
On Wednesday 26th March 2025 we had a talk on "Arundel Castle Gardens" from Martin Duncan Head Gardener/Manager at Arundel Castle, West Sussex. The Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road was almost full for a most enjoyable talk by Martin about the Gardens and the path he had taken from his birth in Zimbabwe to be working there. After his National Service he joined the British Army, which lacked the excitement of encounters with wild animals he had previously experienced, then he spent seven years studying horticulture, first in County Antrim and then in Wales, and having qualified got an amazing job in Jordan as Head Gardener and Designer at the Jordanian Royal Palace for King Hussein and Queen Noor. After a spell in France, he was off with his Wife and Son to work in Bermuda at Government House and the Botanical Gardens there. He showed us eye-watering pictures of blue, seas and white beaches with the sunshine, no wonder when he came back to the UK to work, he didn't find the sea at Littlehampton very tempting. He worked for 3 years at the stately home, Audley End in Essex, on the Capability Brown Garden there and illustrated this time with shots of yew balls and lavender-lined paths and extensive views into the Essex countryside. Then to Arundel Castle to work for the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk, where he has been for fourteen years. During that time, he instigated the annual tulip festival, designed and installed a stumpery, a wildflower meadow, and restored the historic stew pond. There is now a dipping pond, which is visited by around 2000 children each year, encouraging their interest in nature. The number of tulip bulbs ordered each year, and the cost of their purchase was quite mind-boggling, especially when the tulip labyrinth is planted. For a tulip to come back year after year, he recommended Apeldoorn and said the more spectacular peony flowered types could not be relied on for repeat flowering. There were many questions from the audience, and the general

feeling was that we must visit the gardens on one of our future outings. David thanked Martin and his wife, Georgina, who had been in charge of the accompanying slides, and reminded us that the next talk would be on Wednesday, 23rd April 2025 and entitled "Herbaceous Borders" The most enjoyable evening was rounded off with tea, coffee, and biscuits and time to catch up with friends.



"Super Seasonal Displays– 27th November 2024

On Wednesday, 27th November 2024 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered in the Catholic Church Hall to welcome back Mark Saunders, Head Gardener at Fittleworth House, as well as a lecturer, writer, photographer and member of the RHS Dahlia Committee. He has been to us several times before, and this time his subject was "Super Seasonal Displays". He started by emphasising that it is most important to be organised and think ahead to the next season to get a great result and not spend more money than is necessary with impulse buying, getting the plant home and not knowing where it will fit in. He advised checking your seed box before ordering and writing a list before clicking randomly on the seed company's website. Also, to decide before ordering from, perhaps, a wholesale catalogue, what Spring bulbs will give you the best display next year.



Autumn is the time to plan for the coming Spring. For Winter displays, he pointed out that there were many shrubs for pots and beds with interesting foliage and how to make your own Christmas wreath from them. He reminded us that, despite what it may say on the label, many pots are not frost-proof, and it is a safer bet to go for the enamelled ones. January and February are the times to sow seeds of perennials and annual flowers. He favoured using homemade compost, perhaps with heat treatment, to remove lurking weed seeds and vermiculite. His advice was to prick out about 7 to 10 days after germination and to remember not to hold the stems and squeeze their lifeline. Mark, being on the Dahlia Committee, was very knowledgeable about how to store and then restart the tubers into growth each year. He said when lifting to clean the loose soil off and store them in a frost-free dry place until Spring it is time to encourage them into growth in new soil and to protect them from frost and slug damage to the emerging new shoots. Not to plant them out until the growth is about a foot or so high and not so tempting. That way they should give you a good display until the frost cuts them in October or November. The Summer Garden can be a display of herbaceous perennials, which hopefully will last year after year with care and splitting as they get too large, and annuals for that extra colour just where it is needed. Ornamental grasses make a long-lasting and spectacular addition to a border and have lovely seed heads later in the year. As Autumn comes again the garden can be filled with cyclamen and nerines which will come up year after year and hopefully multiply. The late flowers such as rudbeckia and cleome will still be flowering, or a display of many different squashes, either grown or purchased can look attractive. Mark urged visiting gardens such as Wisley and Great Dixter to see their wonderful and varied displays throughout the year. The talk was very well attended and there were many questions from the members for Mark and we all learnt a lot from him. The evening ended as usual with tea, coffee and biscuits and a reminder that our next gathering there will be the AGM at the end of January.

"Climbers" – 23rd October 2024

On Wednesday 23rd October 2024, we had a talk on "Climbers" from Philippa (Pip) Bensley, a long-standing horticultural specialist at Hilliers, RHS Floral Judge and broadcaster.

"Climbers" - 25th September 2024



With the coming of Autumn, the Haslemere Gardening Society series of talks started with a most interesting lecture by Graham Dillamore on Wednesday, 25th September 2024, about the History of Hampton Court Palace Gardens. Graham is the head gardener at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace and has so much knowledge to share with us about the gardens of the former through the ages from pre-history to the present day.

The location currently occupied by Hampton Court Palace and Gardens was originally part of the River Thames floodplain, a characteristic still evident in the existing lakes and ponds found throughout the grounds. The earliest documented structure on this site was a manor house constructed in the 13th century by the Knights Hospitaller in preparation for the Crusades. Later, a bigger dwelling was built and in the 16th century, the land was purchased by Cardinal Wolsey who started the construction of the Palace as we know it today. The area was surrounded by a moat and contained only small what we would term gardens but mostly cloisters and courtyards. Inevitably Wolsey fell from favour and the Palace, and its large surrounding parkland were annexed by Henry VIII who, as well as a small privy garden displaying heraldic beasts, built jousting tilt yards and enjoyed hunting in the vast area stretching from Bushy Park to Greenwich. There were fishponds to provide delicacies for the table, herb gardens and wildflower lawns and a private entrance to the River Thames to access other palaces along its banks. After this came the knot gardens of Elizabeth I, but the next major developments were the ideas Charles I had for a three-quarter of a mile long water and avenues of trees in the baroque style which were copied from those seen in Holland. After the beheading of Charles, I the palace was occupied for a while by Oliver Cromwell who didn't really have much interest in the gardens, and it wasn't until the coming of William and Mary that the Palace and its surroundings got a make-over, much of which is still enjoyed by visitors today. They were both keen horticulturists and introduced plants from around the world, vegetable beds in the tilt yard area, clipped hedges and coloured gravels in the privy garden, and of course the famous maze. They were very fond of exotic plants in large pots and cut flowers for inside decoration. Houseplants were unheard of then. They introduced hotbeds for encouraging and protecting more tender plants and the garden was at it's peak during their tenure. After the deaths of William and Mary and the coming of the Georgian era, a new fashion for a more rural look took shape under the guidance of Capability Brown who flattened the vistas and was against topiary of any kind, although a lot of the gardens immediately around the palace remained. Queen Victoria opened the gardens to the public, trees were clipped, there was carpet bedding and as years went by parking for cars and charabancs. During the 20th century, the palace and gardens suffered from the great fire of 1986 and the devastating storm of 1987. The gardens and the palace have been restored and deer still roam the parkland. The latest development came during lockdown when the gardens were sown with many wildflower seeds

which have grown and remain popular and are in tune with the wish to help combat the effects of climate change which, as Graham pointed out, is not something in the future but something we are experiencing now. It was a very enjoyable and informative evening and ended with tea, coffee and biscuits and we were all very grateful to Graham Dillamore for sharing his time and knowledge with us.

"How I Grow Dahlias - 24th April 2024

Our talk on Wednesday, 24th April 2024, was on "How I Grow Dahlias - (and learn from my mistakes!)" from Darren Everest, sweet pea and dahlia specialist grower and show exhibitor.

"365 days of Colour." – 28th February 2024

On Wednesday, 28th February 2024 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society and a good many visitors gathered at the Catholic Church Hall to hear a talk by **Nick Bailey**, the garden designer and frequent presenter on Gardeners' World, entitled "365 days of Colour." He started by telling us that he could give us some tips on getting twice the colour by doing only half of the work if we pruned things like late flowering clematis and dogwoods only every other year instead of as usual each early Spring. That was a good start when gardening in this cold and wet time of the year is not attractive to most people. He told us that earlier in his career, he had worked at the Chelsea Physic Garden, their microclimate, and where they have the tallest Olive tree in the country at 15m. and the most Northerly fruiting grapefruit.



Back to the subject of the evening, Nick talked about the colour wheel and combining colours in the opposite spectrum, balancing contrasting shades with the inclusion of white and remembering that the most permanent colour in the garden is green and pointing out how many attractive shades, shapes and textures can be had from this one colour. He stressed that the flowering times of perennials like lupins and delphiniums can be extended by deadheading just before the spike of flowers is finished, by altering flowering time by giving plants the "Chelsea Chop", successional sowing of hardy annuals, or even sowing in the Autumn to get earlier flowers next year. He mentioned planting shrubs with bright foliage and Autumn colour to give a year-round interest and several plants that could be relied on to give at least six months pleasure including Heuchera Peach Flambe and Geum Totally Tangerine. Which incidentally were tones of his favourite colour - orange. The evening ended with time for a glass of wine and light refreshments, a chance to catch up with friends and to purchase Nick's book which is entitled "365 Days of Colour".

Gardeners' World entitled "365 days of Colour". Tickets for this have to be bought in advance as there is a limit on numbers in the Catholic Church Hall.

2023

"Cottage Gardening" - 22nd November 2023

On Wednesday 22nd November 2023 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society and friends met for the last time this year at the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road to listen to a talk from David Standing entitled "Cottage Gardening". David is the retired Head Gardener at Gilbert White's Garden in Selborne, where he worked for many years, after having quickly decided that his intended profession in Town Planning and working in an office was not for him. He started there in 1979 doing odd jobs for £1.25p an hour but was promoted later to Head Gardener and eventually left the post in 2017. He started the talk by saying that Cottage Gardening was a mixed and personal concept, being rustic and featuring plants from Old Roses, hollyhocks, shrubs, perennials to bedding plants and sometimes with vegetables mixed in. Many of the plants used are self-seeding and so a very informal look is achieved. To get the desired effect the border needs to be as deep as possible and divided by paths of either local stone or even better foraged bricks.

Of course, the effect is more picturesque if you happen to have a cottage with a thatched roof, but as this isn't possible for all, the Cottage Garden look can be achieved with a pleasing mixture of 'old-fashioned' cultivars which are allowed to fill the space quite randomly. The look is more plants jostling each other than set out with space between them. He brought with him, for sale, some seedlings which he finds work well, including sweet rocket, campanula and yellow foxgloves. As it was approaching Black Friday, they were a special price and they were quickly snapped up with thoughts of exciting things happening in our gardens next year. The talk was very well attended and the tea, coffee and biscuits provided were enjoyed while we chatted and discussed plans for Christmas.



"Fruit for a Small Garden" - 25th October 2023

On Wednesday, 25th October 2023, the members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered for the second talk of the Autumn in the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road as usual. This time the subject was "Fruit for a Small Garden" and was given by Jim Arbury, Fruit and Trials Specialist at the RHS, so it was a very informative and useful evening for us amateurs. It was followed by sociable tea, coffee and biscuits.

Woolbeding - 27th September 2023

On **Wednesday, 27th September 2023**, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered at the Catholic Church Hall for the first lecture of the Autumn Season. This year we started with a talk by Paul Gallivan on the local garden of Woolbeding just outside Midhurst. Paul knows the garden very well as he was head gardener there for more than 13 years working for the National

Trust who now own the property. He is no longer there as he has been promoted to Regional Garden Consultant for the charity. He started by telling us about the history of Woolbeding from the 18th century to the present day when it was given to the NT in 1957 by the then owner Edward Ponsonby Lascelles and later let to Simon Sainsbury and his partner Stewart Grimshaw who transformed the interior of the house while leaving the exterior and the approach recognisable from early paintings and photographs. The colours in the garden are kept to a pallet of mainly blue and white with a little touch of yellow now and then and the Victorian bedding has been replaced by perennial herbaceous borders in those colours. The vegetable garden is caged against thieving wildlife and the damage from slugs is lessened by beer traps and nematodes. No chemicals are used there. Sadly, the old cedar tree in the centre of the lawn, after storm damage, had to be removed but was replaced by an amazing Water Feature like a Champagne saucer which was made in Essex and is a focal point of the garden. Recently a new and very modern glass house has been added to the garden, looking a bit like the nose cone of a rocket as it opens. Leaving the formal parts of the garden there is a walk by the river Rother to follies including a "ruined abbey" and a grotto featuring a large figure of Neptune. The garden is now closed until next April and has to be booked through the NT during the open season as there is no private vehicle entrance allowed, but is well worth a visit and with the added bonus of a tasty sandwich or cake from the cafe. It was a very enjoyable evening and we thank Paul for his time and enthusiasm. The next talk will be on Fruit for a Small Garden by Jim Arbury who is Fruit and Trials Specialist at the RHS and is on 25th October. .

The Growing of Sweet Peas - Wednesday 26th April 2023

On Wednesday 26th April 2023 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society met in the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road for a most interesting talk by Darren Everest on the growing of sweet peas. Darren is a champion grower of this ever-popular summer garden plant and he has won many gold medals with them and this year is exhibiting at the Chelsea Flower Show. He told us that he always sows his first lot of seeds in October which is good when it is a cold Winter but if it is mild, they are inclined to be ready for the outdoors before their right time, so he aims to sow a second batch between November and January. He advocates watering once and warns that they need to be protected from mice, who love them. As they grow, he advised pinching out the growing tip and planting them out in a square frame and not a wigwam as they like to fan out and not go up to a point. He told us about the time he had been filmed for TV, demonstrating how to produce winning plants and the repeated takes from different angles there had to be to get the perfect picture for the viewers. Darren had brought some sweet pea seedlings with him for sale and they were purchased enthusiastically by the members. The evening finished with tea, coffee and biscuits and we all wish Darren good luck with his preparations and a successful time at the Chelsea Flower Show.

"Magnificent Magnolias" - Wednesday 22, March 2023

On Wednesday, 22 March 2023, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society and their guests convened at the Catholic Church Hall on Derby Road for the monthly lecture. Despite inclement weather conditions, attendance was strong for Dr. Peter Herring's presentation, "Magnificent Magnolias." Simon opened the event by clarifying an earlier error, noting that Dr. Herring is an enthusiastic volunteer rather than Head Gardener at Winkworth Arboretum, and Dr. Herring graciously accepted the correction. She is a consultant garden historian, member of the Painshill Park Trust and Surrey Gardens Trust and has obvious enthusiasm for her subject. Cherrill started by explaining to us that the Arts and Crafts movement began in the 1850s when already half the

population lived in cities and had little access to green spaces. At the time most public parks and gardens were filled with bright coloured annual bedding plants in geometrically arranged beds and people like William Morris and his long time collaborator Philip Webb wanted gardens to be filled with more sustainable plants in paler and more romantic colours. Together they built many outstanding houses with surrounding gardens laid out on the principal of a straight path with garden "rooms" of croquet lawns, pool gardens, vegetables and orchards all joined by paths with pergolas and climbing plants. They were also in favour of trellises on sides of their houses with climbing plants softening the appearance. These ideas can also be seen in the designs for fabric and wallpaper by William Morris. The houses were often placed at the top of a hill so that the views from inside were inspiring. One such is Standen, which was visited members of the Society in 2019. Cherrill also mentioned Gravetree Manor in Sussex, now a hotel, which was laid out by William Robinson with lots of trees, natural plantings with meadows of wild flowers allowing things to self seed. Of course, Arts and Crafts could not be discussed without talking about the most famous garden designer of the era, Gertrude Jekyll, and her house Munstead Wood in Godalming. Again the design is for a long and colourful herbaceous border and "rooms" which feature different aspects of gardening. Unlike William Morris, Miss Jekyll was very keen on bright colours but with white flowers in the beds with them I wondered whether this was because her eyesight was failing and the brighter shades were more pleasurable to her, or perhaps she thought it was time for a change from the colours of the previous quarter century.s She designed many gardens with the architect Edwin Lutyens including the one at the Manor House, Upton Grey, which is where members of the Society will be going in July. The last designer she talked about was Christopher Lloyd and his garden at Great Dixter which is such a joy to visit, particularly in high and late Summer when the colourful plants are in their full and exuberant glory. It was a very enjoyable evening and I am sure we would all like to thank Cherrill for sharing her knowledge and obvious passion with us.

Dr. Herring commenced his talk with an overview of the origins of magnolias, stating that the species were first introduced to Britain in 1689 from the Americas, with subsequent varieties arriving from the Far East. Early propagation relied on layering, as magnolias attract pollinating beetles with pollen rather than nectar. He highlighted the diversity within the magnolia genus, ranging from the large evergreen *Magnolia grandiflora* to the smaller deciduous *Magnolia stellata*, known for its distinctive star-shaped flowers. Notably, hybrids of *Magnolia soulangiana*—predominantly white, pink, and purple—are widely cultivated in local gardens, and more recently, yellow varieties have been developed.

Dr. Herring also addressed the vulnerability of spring-blooming magnolias to late frost but noted that some types flower in early summer, mitigating this risk. Following the lecture, attendees participated in a question-and-answer session, after which Simon expressed gratitude to Dr. Herring for his informative and engaging presentation. Refreshments were served, providing members with the opportunity to network and discuss future events; the next scheduled talk will focus on sweet peas.

"Arts & Crafts Gardens" - Wednesday, 22 February 2023

On Wednesday, 22 February 2023, a full audience at the Catholic Church Hall attended a presentation by Cherrill Sands titled "Arts & Crafts Gardens." The session was well received, with Ms. Sands demonstrating extensive expertise on the subject.

2022

"Shrubs - The Backbone of your Garden" - Wednesday the 23rd of November 2022

On Wednesday, 23 November 2022, the Society held its last talk of the year at the Catholic Church Hall. Geoff Hawkins, former Head Gardener at Mill Court, gave an illustrated presentation titled "Shrubs - The Backbone of your Garden." He discussed how shrubs add structure, texture, and color to gardens, emphasizing the importance of good design, proportion, and proper pruning. Hawkins also provided a diverse selection of shrub recommendations, explained their versatility, and offered practical advice. The event was well-attended and appreciated by both members and guests.

"The Fascinating and Secret Life of the Mole" - Wednesday, 26th October 2022

On Wednesday, 26th October 2022, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were gathered once more in the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road for a talk given by Chris Stewart on the Fascinating and Secret Life of the Mole. Chris is a member of the Guild of British Molecatchers, and although his job is obviously to catch and get rid of the little animals, he shared a great many interesting facts about them with his audience. He said although we are inclined to associate Moles with the sweet little fellow in the Wind and the Willows, they are not to be handled without care because they have very sharp teeth. Moles are very much loners who live around 3 years and only produce one litter of usually 6 or 7 kits a year. They are very territorial creatures and will fight to defend their space and as soon as one is removed another very quickly moves into the prepared tunnels. In days past there were many supposed deterrents against moles including putting human hair in the tunnels, but one of the strangest was planting euphorbias in the garden thinking that as the white sap from the plants was used to treat moles on the skin it would also work against moles in the garden. Neither of these actions were of any use. Chris brought with him two stuffed moles, a male and a smaller female, both very tiny considering the amount of soil they can move, some mole pelts for us to feel their softness and a selection of homemade and manufactured traps. Many of the traps are not legal in this country as, happily only humane traps are allowed here. We were probably divided in the hall as to whether to try to eliminate the little creatures from our patch or let them be. I am, personally, on the live and let live side, but perhaps that is because I have never had the type of garden moles prefer. If I did have, I might feel about them the way I feel about slugs in my vegetables. It was certainly a very interesting evening and very well attended.

"An almost A-Z of Good Garden Plants" Wednesday, 28th September 2022

The first talk of the autumn series was held at the Catholic Church Hall on Wednesday, 28 September 2022, presented by Mark Saunders, who has served as head gardener at Fittleworth House for 25 years. The presentation outlined the ten most significant tips Mark wished to share for achieving success in gardening. Foremost among these was the importance of maintaining gardening tools—keeping them clean, sharpened, and oiled—which is especially crucial for secateurs to ensure ease of use and minimise plant damage.

Mark also emphasised the value of staying physically active, recommending yoga and demonstrating several positions for the audience. Although the audience did not participate, largely due to attire, the advice was well received. Additional guidance included the significance

of composting, particularly the necessity of regular turning and continual addition of materials for optimal results.

He further suggested visiting RHS Wisley to observe their Winter Garden, advising that plants selected for winter interest should be positioned near the house for maximum enjoyment. Mark discussed the versatility of using pots within the garden, allowing for displays to be refreshed as different plants reach their peak or decline.

In addition to his horticultural expertise, Mark is recognised for his exceptional photography, which was prominently featured throughout the lecture. Attendees viewed images from his personal garden, Fittleworth House, a vibrant pot display at Great Dixter, and the avenue of Tree Ferns at East Rushton Old Vicarage, among others. The event was both informative and enjoyable, drawing a considerable number of Society members.

“National Trust Gardens” - Wednesday, 27th April 2022

On Wednesday, 27th April 2022, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered at the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road at 7.45 pm to hear a talk entitled "National Trust Gardens", given by David Hunt a long-standing and knowledgeable National Trust Volunteer. This was the last talk of the Spring Season.

“The Modern Kitchen Garden” - Wednesday, 23rd March 2022

On Wednesday, 23rd March 2022, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society had the great pleasure in welcoming back Barry Newman to the Catholic Church Hall to hear his talk entitled "The Modern Kitchen Garden". It was well attended by many of the Society's members and guests all anxious to get the best from their own vegetable plots this Summer. Barry, who is Vice Chairman of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee, and also on the judging team of Britain in Bloom, started by talking about the old-fashioned way of growing in large beds with the vegetables well-spaced and the need to walk on the beds to access the produce, thus compacting the soil and making necessary annual deep digging. Next he talked about growing in pots and troughs and how successful that can be. He is very much in favour of planting potatoes in individual bags and finds this very successful. He also reminded us that vegetables such as courgettes and squashes can be grown as climbers and showed us a picture of squash plants scrambling up a hedge very enthusiastically. If wanting to grow courgettes up a pole he recommended Venus, Ambassador or Defender as being the best suitable varieties. The raised bed method of vegetable growing is the one he favours most as the soil is easily tended without need to walk on it and so doesn't need lots of digging, particularly good for us as we get older and not disturbing the natural organisms in the soil. He stressed that the rows of vegetables should be planted North/South. I will correct this next year. The talk was illustrated with many lovely slides of vegetables with no slug damage in site just what we all hope in the coming season. Whatever happens this Summer we will have been given good advice and are very grateful to Barry for such an informative and amusing evening.

"Painting with Flowers" - Wednesday 9th February 2022

After nearly five years of planning, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society, along with various friends and guests, convened at the Catholic Church Hall on **Wednesday 9th February** to attend a lecture by **Chris Beardshaw** entitled "Painting with Flowers." The event was highly anticipated and met expectations. Chris, recipient of 35 distinguished awards—including 13 RHS

gold medals, several Best in Show honours, and Peoples' Choice awards—has created numerous acclaimed gardens worldwide and regularly contributes to Gardeners' Question Time and other television gardening programmes.

Mr. Beardshaw began his presentation with images of what is believed to be the first recorded garden, dating to approximately 1500 BC. He highlighted how the garden's design reflected vital natural elements such as the Nile and the Sun, featuring a central southern entrance, straight pathways, a central water element, and alignment with the sun's movement from east to west. This "Paradise garden" model, intended to represent an eternal aspiration for its owner, has been emulated in prominent gardens throughout history, particularly within the formal landscapes of Italy and France—a principle to which he returned repeatedly during his talk. A key takeaway was Mr. Beardshaw's encouragement for gardeners to create spaces meaningful to themselves, unhesitant to remove inherited or unwanted plants. He noted gender differences in colour perception and design preferences: men often favour structured hardscaping with defined edges, while women typically prefer plantings that soften architectural lines. He also reminded the audience that, while the herbaceous border is regarded as quintessentially English, its plant palette originates from global explorations by collectors such as Fortune, Banks, and Mason. The earliest example, still existing at Arley Hall in Cheshire, belongs to the Egerton-Warburton family.

Mr. Beardshaw referenced renowned gardens, including Hestercombe—designed collaboratively by Lutyens (formal elements) and Gertrude Jekyll (flowering drifts)—and the works of Thomas Mawson, who contributed designs to Rydal Hall and the Smoky Mountain National Park Gardens in the United States. Gravetye Manor, now a hotel, exemplifies William Robinson's relaxed gardening style.

Chris advised not to hesitate in introducing vibrant clusters within a pastel bed for emphasis—a technique often employed by Gertrude Jekyll. Concluding his talk, he reiterated that personal gardens should inspire joy upon entry, fostering a sense of timeless satisfaction.

Following the presentation, the audience participated in a brief question-and-answer session. David, the Chairman, expressed gratitude to Chris for his passionate and insightful lecture. The evening concluded with attendees enjoying wine and cheese, marking a thoroughly enjoyable and informative occasion.

2021

"A Different Field" - 24th November, 2021

On Wednesday members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered for the third of the Autumn Lectures in the Catholic Church Hall in Weydown Road by a Senior Member of the Surrey Wildlife Trust entitled "A Different Field". It was a talk on conservation and different from the usual lectures on a specific plant. Conservation is such an important topic at present so it was very interesting for members and guests. The evening concluded with tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance to have a chat.

"Gardens in Health Care"- 27th October 2021

On Wednesday 27th October, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were delighted to welcome **Dave Royston**, a retired anaesthetist from Harefield Hospital, to talk about Dave started by telling us about the length of time we have known about the healing properties in certain plants. He mentioned the citing of plant remedies as long ago as 3000 BCE in the Sumerian Tablets and the continuing mention of often the same families of plants right up to Medieval times with the monastery hospitals and the monks growing the herbs and flowers they needed for their treatments in the gardens. They thought four humors dictated how to treat a person. They were blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm. A patient's condition was diagnosed by whether they were cold, hot, moist or dry and the appropriate plant mixture administered. Often the plant chosen to treat the person's symptoms resembled the part of the body causing the distress, eg. walnuts for trouble with the brain. In Italy, there were many gardens connected to the monasteries and in London, there was, and still is, the Chelsea Physic Garden devoted to growing plants for medicinal purposes. During the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus worked on the taxonomy of plants putting them into various families. Throughout history, herbs and flowers such as Roses, Calendula, Aloe, Feverfew, Garlic and Echinacea have been used by, mainly women, to treat their families and neighbours as the ordinary person could not afford qualified medical help. These same plants have continued in use throughout the ages. Now there is scientific proof that they help. In Shakespeare's time, we know Ophelia's saying, "There's Rosemary, that's for remembrance". It is still today used to treat memory loss. He told us of the discovery of Aspirin, Hydrocortisone, Digoxin and many other commonly prescribed medicines all derived from plants. Dave then moved on to tell us about the known benefits of fresh air and contact with growing things in the past and again very much to the fore in present times. He mentioned the hospitals where tuberculosis patients were wheeled outside onto balconies every day for the fresh air to cure them. Many hospitals right up until the NHS in 1947 were self-sufficient, having gardens that provided food for the patients. He, interestingly, had an aerial picture of Milford Hospital with its surrounding gardens. Today there are Healing Gardens attached to hospitals, where there are grasses and sweet-smelling plants to help the healing process. There is proof that daily walking or gardening helps a person's speed of recovery from illness or surgery by a large percentage. The talk was fascinating and well attended by existing and some new members. We are very grateful to Dave Royston for generously giving his time and the payment being a donation to Harefield Hospital.

"Clematis through the Seasons" - 22nd September 2021

On Wednesday, 22nd September it was a question of "Here we are Again", at last, when members of the Haslemere Gardening Society met in the Catholic Church Hall in Weydown Road to hear **Mr Everett Leeds**, who is a past president of the British Clematis Society, give a talk entitled He pointed out that until the reign of Elizabeth I there was only the hedgerow plant, Old Man's Beard when three new varieties were introduced from the Mediterranean. It became more popular in the 17th century but it was not until 1858 that the still outstanding Jackmanii was produced and the race was on for all other breeders of the species to compete for better and more spectacular examples. Mr Leeds told us how and when to take both hard and softwood cuttings and recommended perlite was a good medium for them. He talked about clematis wilt which is prevalent among the larger flowered varieties and recommended cutting the affected growth down to the ground and it should recover and appear again. Another problem can be mildew and black spot, particularly on the texensis varieties which include the popular red coloured Princess Diana and Etoile Rose. He talked of the rampant Montana varieties and pointed out that they are not as hardy as one would think and may need Winter protection. There is one Montana that is suitable for a pot Montana Freda but he thought that clematis is better off in the ground on a North, West or East wall particularly for paler coloured plants. Others will grow on a South facing wall and the scented varieties do like full sun. If growing in a pot it is essential to keep the roots cool, perhaps by lining the container with a double layer of plastic wrap. He told us about the Buckland varieties which he had bred himself and the shrubby plants that scramble through the borders. It was a very interesting and informative talk and we are very grateful to Mr Leeds for coming. The evening was topped off by tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance to catch up on old friends we hadn't seen for a long time.

2019

"Beautiful Borders" - 20th November 2019

With the end of the year fast approaching Members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered in the Catholic Church Hall on Wednesday 20th November for the final lecture of 2019 entitled "Beautiful Borders" and given by **John Negus** who is a member of the Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire and Kent Federation of Judges and Lecturers. The talk took the form of an informal quiz with the audience divided into two teams. Accompanied by slides displaying some well-known and some more unusual plants he fired questions at us as to what they were and told us more about each one and where it would be suitable in the border. He stressed the importance of having plants which would look good not only in the Spring and Summer flowering season but through the Autumn and grey days of the Winter. The talk was well attended, and it was good to see so many members there on such a cold evening.

"Making the Most of Bulbs" – 16th October 2019

On Wednesday, 16th October the Members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were pleased to welcome **Steve Bradley**, a freelance garden writer and broadcaster, for a talk entitled "Making the Most of Bulbs". This highly topical subject was approached both with great knowledge and experience and a fair sprinkling of humour. He talked about planting bulbs amongst other perennials as well as in "lasagne" style in large pots with bulbs of different sizes and flowering times in layers. He did warn, however, never to plant any other bulbs under hyacinths. The talk was accompanied by colourful slides to demonstrate his advice. He showed us how to increase our stock of lilies by removing the outer scales and nurturing them in a bag in a warm place until little bulblets appeared and then they could be planted in a pot to grow on and mature until after three years they would grow into a size to plant out and expect flowers. Steve said it was a myth that bulbs must be carefully planted the right way up and assured us that they would always find the surface whatever way they started. He did stress that bulbs should be handled gently and not to firm them in with your feet, but to water, whatever the weather, to bring the soil around them. Two tips which seem to be worth trying for anyone who loses most of the bulbs they plant to wildlife, to either plant alliums near them or to grate a strongly scented soap over them to hide the enticing smell of the bulbs or the worms in the newly loosened soil. These are just a sample of the bulb related subjects covered, and the evening ended with questions from members.

"Gardening on the Wild Side" – 18th September 2019

The talk was given by **Paul Patton** who is a Plant Pathologist, writer and broadcaster. It was illustrated with colourful and informative slides, starting with an autumnal picture of colourful berries which make wonderful food for birds and small mammals. Paul stressed the importance of getting a balance in our gardens and the help of adding organic matter to the soil. He mentioned the decline of pollinators, not only bees, but wasps, hoverflies etc. and how vital it was to fill our gardens with flowers suitable for these insects to enjoy. As well as talking about good things in the garden he mentioned the black spot on roses and the powdery mildew on things like courgettes, and the importance of not composting infected foliage. Keep one step ahead of pests was his message. Paul encouraged us to have water of some sort in our gardens for wildlife of all kinds and how beneficial it was to have a native mixed hedge to provide food and shelter for them.

“Pollination” – 10th April 2019

On Wednesday 10th April, 2019 the Haslemere Gardening Society held the last lecture of the Spring season which was a talk entitled 'Pollination' and given by **Dr. Michael Keith-Lucas** from the School of Biological Sciences of the University of Reading. This was a most interesting and useful lecture given the current concern about the decreasing number of pollinating insects in our gardens and countryside.

“Inspired by Chelsea” - 20th March 2019

On Wednesday, 20th March 2019 the members of the Haslemere Gardening Society welcomed back **Andy McIndoe**, who has entertained us with his lively and instructive talks several times before. This time his lecture was called 'Inspired by Chelsea - Lessons from the World's Greatest Flower Show' from a man who has won 25 consecutive Gold Medals. Members of the Society had a very enjoyable visit to Andy's own garden last Summer and were made most welcome by Andy and his Wife.