

CSGGA Newsletter

MAY 2021



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

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Andrew Mikolajski

Gardens of Tudor England

May's Gardens Association talk was a collaboration with the Chalfont St Giles and Jordans Literary Festival. We were joined by Andrew Mikolajski for a look at Tudor Gardens

Andrew has a notable CV, being an author, lecturer and speaker. He has written 40 horticultural books and is an RHS judge.

As the topic of Tudor gardens is a huge one, Andrew focused on the era of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Plants and flowers during this time were extremely important and plant hunters were bringing back specimens from North Africa

and the Americas. In the 16th Century alone, the number of new plants increased 23 times. Hot houses – no expense spared there – enabled the cultivation of more exotic plants.

Elizabeth's courtiers vied with each other to have the best garden and, if she deigned to visit, that could mean a completely new garden created with no expense spared, not to mention the changes required inside their house. It could and did cripple some financially.

Having an extravagant garden was de rigueur for the wealthy – it was a given that if you had it, you had to flaunt it! Not just gardens, but jewels, clothes, furnishings. You only have to look at a painting from the time to appreciate the sumptuous trappings of those with money. Lord Burghley had a huge house and garden in the Strand reflecting his status as Elizabeth's chief adviser. As an aside, on the subject of status and clothing, Andrew explained that Henry VIII had a servant whose job it was to wear Henry's underwear for half an hour and then pass it to the King suitably warmed!

Tudor knowledge of plants mostly came from Arabs and they laid out their gardens in a similar style to that found in the Islamic world: four quarters with a central tank and geometric beds. This also dates back in time to the Crusaders who brought back healing plants for tending wounds, used by monks who also followed Islamic principles when laying out their monastery gardens. Botanical Latin was in its infancy during Tudor times and names were not standardised yet. Herbal gardening was of course the remit of apothecaries and there were over 100 practising in London alone.



The best example of a magnificent Tudor garden is probably that of Kenilworth Castle as it was created in 1575 by Lord Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, in honour of a visit by her Majesty. It was described in some detail by an official called Robert Langham, who sneaked in whilst the Queen was out hunting and then wrote an account in a letter.

Its layout is in the traditional Islamic style of quarters with geometric beds as well as borrowing from European influences of playfulness, such as a fountain with taps that could be used to soak people "found hot in desire". There were two Atlas sculptures brought in from Italy and arbours planted with honeysuckle, providing a retreat for lovers' trysts. Dudley had an aviary built which was described as "studded with jewels" and there was an orchard whose fruit trees were "bedecked with apples, pears and ripe cherries". Andrew doubts the veracity of this with regard to the actual fruit, given the time of year of Elizabeth's visit. He suspects some cheating using faux fruit for show!

Also included was a viewing platform for the Queen so whether she actually set foot in the garden which was accessed via steep stairs is doubtful and, given Dudley's track record with stairs and women, that's probably a good thing.

We are indebted to Robert Langham for his letter which provides such a clear insight into one of the most extravagant gardens of Tudor times and you can visit it today as English Heritage have recreated it.

If you'd like a further taste of things Tudor, consider the Gardens Association holiday this year which will include visits to some notable Tudor houses. See <https://www.csgga.org/holiday-2021-essex-and-suffolk.html> for further details. **Eleanor O'Connor**

Next Month's Visit to Back Lane Allotments 10th June 2021 at 6.00 pm

Including Celebratory Prosecco and Strawberry Tarts!

After a long year of zoom meetings, at last, we're able to get together! I do hope you will join us. If you've not visited the allotments in Back Lane, you're in for a real treat! Margaret and I have judged the allotments for the Village Show for the last couple of years and found it to be uplifting and inspiring. The site is situated off Back Lane in Chalfont St Giles, not far from the White Hart Pub. Postcode HP8 4PD

We'll enjoy prosecco and strawberry tarts and Jacqui is arranging for us to have a brief talk then we'll be free to wander. We do need to know the numbers by Monday 7th June and there will be a small charge of £2.50 per person towards the refreshments. **Please let Margaret know if you will be joining us. 01494 874511 margaretrdykes@btinternet.com**

M's Action Diary for May

- Stake tall growing perennials before they actually need it
- Give asters, sedums, centranthus, phlox and campanula lactifolia the "Chelsea chop" by cutting some or all of the growth back by a third to encourage shorter, stronger, later flowering growth.
- Hard prune doricum and pulmonaries to remove shoots prone to mildew and to promote compact new growth.
- Clip winter-flowering heathers with shears to remove faded flowers and to retain shape.
- Keep newly planted trees and shrubs well watered until established.
- Before clipping hedges, always check thoroughly for nesting birds, delaying the pruning if necessary
- Check for aphids, lily beetle, vine weevils and viburnum beetle and deal with them.

Green Gardening Tip – Make use of stinging nettles



Make nitrogen-rich nettle feed, cut the nettles with hedge clippers, or crush them into small pieces and cram into a large container. Weigh the nettles with a brick or large stones and cover with water. It will become very smelly so

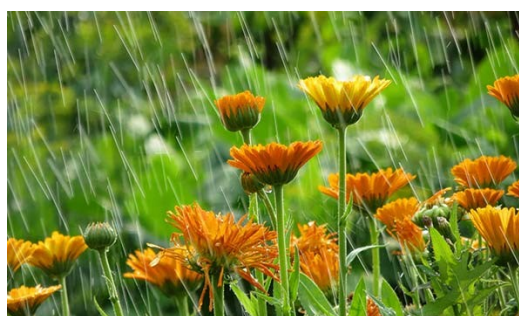
leave well away from the house for for three or four weeks until brown, then drain and store. Dilute with water at a ratio of 1:10 – perfect for foliage plants.

Chopped nettles also act as a natural activator and speed up the decomposition process in compost heaps. For the best results, make sure the nettles are thoroughly mixed with lots of different materials – dry, wet, soft and woody – otherwise they become slimy. Don't add nettle roots, unless your heap is very hot.

Chalfont St Giles Open Gardens

Chalfont St Giles Open Gardens Day organised by the Memorial Hall Fundraisers will be held **on Sunday 6th June 11.00 am – 5.00 pm.** 10 gardens including Milton's Cottage Garden will be taking part in this year's event. Plants will be for sale in some gardens. Cream teas from the Memorial Hall from 2.00 pm. Tickets are available from the Library in advance or on the Village Green on the day. £6.00 for admission to all gardens, accompanied children under 16 free.

Plant Sale(s)



We were delighted to raise nearly £700 at our plant sale on the Village Green, despite the Covid restrictions and the inclement weather. Subsequent sales held by Peter Bentall and Jan Bradley added to that sum and there may well be one further pop up sale when the rain stops! Many thanks to all those who donated and bought plants or helped in any way.

We will be retaining some of the proceeds for the [Queen's Green Canopy](#), otherwise known as "Plant a tree for the jubilee". The remainder will be split between a local food bank, the Fawsett Trust, CSG Youth Club.

New Gardens Association Facebook Group

This month on our Facebook Group we've identified weeds and discussed the merits of leaving them be; been advised to watch a programme about the creation of the new RHS garden, Bridgewater; learnt about gardening in tune with the moons phases and have been offered spare plastic plant pots. The Group now has 77 members. If you are on Facebook, and have not yet join our page you can find it at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/437169020907963>

Your CSGGA Committee

Chairman and Membership Secretary:

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Secretary: Jan Bradley, 23 The Lagger, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4DH 01494 874704 janbradley4@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Margaret Dykes, 4 Roughwood Fields, Roughwood Lane, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4AA 01494 874511 margaretrdykes@btinternet.com

Committee Members:

Caroline Jackson	01494 876685
Eleanor O'Connor	01494 875646
Sam Patel	01494 875319

New Committee members are always welcome. We are a friendly bunch! Please contact a committee member to find out more if you're interested in joining us.