

CSGGA Newsletter

January 2022



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

Inside this Issue

- January Meeting Report
- A Community Orchard for Chalfont St Giles
- Showing your Garden
- M's Monthly Action Diary
- Green Gardening Tip of the Month – Plant a Native Hedge
- RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch
- Next Month's Talk – Stoke Poges Memorial Garden – Franzi Cheesman
- New Committee Member

Plants of Madeira - Brian Fisher

January can be such a gloomy month so to be warm and comfy indoors listening to Brian Fisher's presentation on the Plants of Madeira was most enjoyable, even if we couldn't meet in person at the hall. Brian has lectured on plants on cruises where Madeira is a port of call.

He treated us to a wander through the most colourful and interesting plants he and his wife enjoy seeing when they visit Madeira. They first went in April and were disappointed to find it wet and cold but in October everything is in flower and the weather is much kinder.

Madeira is Portuguese which means woods. It's a mountainous island due to volcanic eruptions activity. Most of the photos were from the capital Funchal which is named after the wild fennel that used to grow there.

Trees are in abundance, such as the Jacaranda which lines many of the main streets. This is best seen in April or the beginning of May and its flowers and pods are a

spectacular sight. Madeira has an abundance of palm trees which were brought from Africa and one which is always in flower is the African Tulip Tree, splendid in orange. The island has suffered occasional fires, notably in 2016 when palm trees were affected badly but later in the year Amaryllis sprouted up amongst the stumps.

Madeira has a variety of beautiful parks. Take an hour wandering round Santa Caterina where you can see around 50 trees and plants - the Silk Floss tree being probably the most spectacular. Some official

residences open their gardens to the public, including Quinta Vigia, where Bougainvillea, the Chinaman's Hat Plant (great name!) and Frangipani flower all year round, the latter filling the air with scent. A variegated fig here is conspicuous for being the only one Brian has seen on the island. He also advises against touching Frangipani in gardens as he pulled a branch down once to take a photo and ended up snapping it off! He hotfooted it away before he was caught!



Personally I was interested to learn that the Clivia Miniata grows on Madeira as a ground plant as I have one in a pot here at home.

Flowers are naturally an important part of island life. They hold a yearly flower festival with a spectacular parade of colourful floats. There are flower markets but you can also buy from the sellers in traditional dress sitting on the streets.

The Botanical Gardens are famous for their amazing views and beautiful carpet bedding displays. There's a cactus garden and topiary on display here as well as Dragon trees which are native to the Canaries and have an orange sap which is used as the dye to paint Stradivarius violins.

Madeira enjoys many fruits, some inedible such as orange bananas but the edible variety is abundant and avocados grow well here. Notable for its connection to Banks (after whom our Banksian Medal is named) are Banksias, native to Australia. They enjoy the very dry conditions on Madeira and have spectacular flowering heads. Camellias can be seen at higher altitudes together with the national flower – Echium candicans – which flowers in spring and summer and is known as the Pride of Madeira.



The photos weren't all of plants and flowers however. A very beautiful cat was included and Brian noted that all the Toms had been neutered as there was rather an abundance of moggies!

One hidden gem he recommended is at the Magic Garden Café. If you enjoy a beverage there you can ask to look round their amazing garden.

And finally, Brian kindly offered to identify any plants from Madeira if you send him a photo.

I've never been to Madeira but I think it may now be on my list and I have a good idea what to look out for.... when international travel becomes a bit easier maybe! **Eleanor O'Connor**

A Community Orchard for Chalfont St Giles

There are several notable dates in the Apple Orchard calendar and, after many months of work behind the scenes and, in the week when wassailing is traditionally celebrated, 17th January, I'm delighted to be able to report that we are having discussions with [Milton's Cottage Trust](#) about creating a Community Orchard, for Chalfont St Giles, in the meadow attached to the Cottage.

On Apple Day, 21st October, we met with [Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust - BBOWT](#) to discuss our proposal. They have earmarked some funding for the orchard and are providing advice and guidance. [Chalfont St Giles Parish Council](#) are fully supportive of the proposal for an orchard and are partners in the discussions.



Let's hope that by Blossom Day, April 23rd, (also St George's Day and Shakespeare's birthday) we will have some good news and more detailed plans to share. I'm greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm of all those concerned and dare to dream that we might have our own, newly planted orchard by next Wassail Day.

The next step is to carry out soil sampling and drill bore holes to assess the soil/sub-soil/underlying chalk topography to establish the suitability of the site. This will be followed by an ecological survey. I have been in touch with Future Nature, BBOWT's wholly owned ecological consultancy, and, by coincidence, their MD, Russell Hartwell, recalls sledging in the meadow some 50 years ago. His father is still a resident of Chalfont St Giles.

Russell's account is only one of many tales of activities and events held in the meadow that I have found while researching its feasibility as a potential site for an orchard. Some of us may recall the buffalo residing there, but the meadow hasn't been used for grazing for many years. From the research I have carried out, it seems that, in the past, the land has been more extensively enjoyed by the village than it is at present. Many villagers talk of enjoying tobogganing there in the winter and fetes have been held there,

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(as a record in one of the cabinets in the museum shows. In 1992, Merida Saunders (our own "M", who writes M's Monthly Action Diary) was one of eight tree wardens for Chalfont St Giles, and she supervised the planting of 40 trees, sponsored by Bucks County Council, to mark 40 years of the Queen's reign. The village schools and community groups planted native trees in rows on either side of the field and a small copse at the top of the hill. Sadly, these were destroyed by the farm animals that subsequently grazed there, as the farmer would not grant permission for Ernie Tyrrell, the tree warden responsible, to enter the field to secure the tree guards.

My research also shows that Lord Wakefield of Hythe, was the main benefactor and initiator, when the land was purchased for Milton's Cottage Trust "in order to preserve it from the ravages of the builders, thereby preserving the quietness of the cottage". He was an English businessman who founded the Castrol Lubricants Company. He was also Lord Mayor of London 1915-16 and was a significant philanthropist who donated a huge proportion of his extensive wealth to promoting health and well-being initiatives including many hospitals in the east end of London. I like to think that this is a project which would meet with his approval. **Briony Wickenden**



Showing your Garden, Courtyard, Allotment or Greenhouse

One of the bonuses of belonging to CSGGA is members' willingness to share knowledge and ideas. Many of us enjoy visits to private gardens that open through the National Garden Scheme and some of our members show their gardens every other year in support of the Memorial Hall. Most gardeners love a little



praise for their labours and enjoy sharing their gardens with friends. We know that many members have wonderful gardens, but not all of us feel we have the pristine lawns and tidy beds that are expected for an official open garden scheme or feel our small gardens would be overwhelmed by vast crowds visiting. So, Sam has come up with an idea! She would like to hear from members who would be happy to welcome other CSGGA members to visit their garden informally. We think it's a great way to exchange ideas, give

joy to others, gain inspiration, receive compliments and make new friends.

Is there a time when your garden looks its best, or is there a plant in your garden that is unusual or impressive? Are your snowdrops, tulips or roses looking spectacular? Is your allotment or greenhouse worthy of a visit? If so, get involved and show them off! No garden is too small! Alternatively, do you want a bit of advice or have a gardening question which you think other members might be able to help with? Please let Sam know if you would like to join in, sumitardpatel@outlook.com Once we know who would like to share their garden/allotment and when, or would like some advice or guidance, Sam will agree a suitable date(s) and put together a programme. Or, if you suddenly find that your giant Himalayan Lily ([look it up](#)) is about to flower, you can let her know that you're open for visits at the last minute.

I photographed Merida's garden, pictured above, last week. It looked glorious in the sunshine, showing how a formal structure and some well-chosen plants can provide long lasting interest in the winter.

M's Action Diary for January

- Even in winter, in a dry spell, plants in pots might require watering. Every two weeks or so check the soil and water sparingly to avoid waterlogging.
- Plant lily bulbs in containers for a summer display.

- Boost fruit trees by feeding with Sulphate of Potash, Growmore or chicken manure pellets. Hedges could also do with similar feeding.
- Prune acers, birches and vines by removing any dead or diseased growth back to a healthy bud. If pruned any later they will bleed sap from the pruning wounds.
- Winter prune wisteria by cutting back laterals and side shoots to 2 or 3 buds. Thin out old congested spur stems now by cutting out excess spurs.
- Prune winter flowering shrubs such as winter flowering jasmine and forsythia once they have finished blooming.
- Prune spent flower stems on winter flowering heathers.
- Remove old bergenia leaves before new buds appear.
- Recycle your Christmas tree. If you have a shredder, use the clippings as a mulch around established trees and shrubs.



Green Gardening Tip – Plant a hedge

If you want to do more to help our native birds and other wildlife, now is the ideal time to plant a hedge. A native hedgerow is great for wildlife and contains hundreds of species, including those also found in woodland and meadows.

According to the RSPB, in the last 50 years we have lost more than half our hedgerows, so planting one in your garden will really help wildlife.

- Add more species if your hedge has only one, e.g. ivy, clematis or wild honeysuckle. Or add some hedge-bottom plants, e.g. dead-nettles.
- Choose native trees and shrubs for a new hedge, e.g. hawthorn, beech, spindle, blackthorn, hazel, holly, field maple, buckthorn.
- Grow a variety of plants along the hedge bottom, e.g. dog's violet, garlic mustard and hedge woundwort. It will become a wildlife haven.
- Hedgerow berries provide birds with high-energy food in autumn and winter.
- Trim once a year, preferably in winter and definitely not in the nesting season. Maintain an A shape, broad at the base. Don't tidy up too much – leave leaf litter and seed heads to attract hedgehogs, birds, small mammals and insects.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/gardening-for-wildlife/plants-for-wildlife/garden-hedges/>

The Big Garden Birdwatch

In 2021, more than one million people took part in the Big Garden Birdwatch. This annual event takes place at the height of winter, this year on **Friday 28th to Sunday 30th January**. It's very easy to participate:



1. Watch the birds either in your garden or outside your window for around you for one hour
2. Count how many of each species of bird lands on your patch
3. Go online and tell the RSPB what you saw

For more information go to <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/birdwatch-take-part/>

Next Month's Talk 10th February 2022, Memorial Hall

Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens – Franzi Cheesman



The Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens were the brainchild of Sir Noel Mobbs, Lord of the Manor of Stoke Park. In order to protect the land from being used for housing development he bought it and commissioned Edward White, a leading landscape architect in the 1930s, to design it as a Memorial Garden, without any tombs, buildings or large memorials and to look like a country garden. Franzi Cheesman will take us on a virtual tour of the now Grade 1 listed landscape.

Change of format for meetings - We will be trialling a change to the format for February's meeting. We will not have a refreshment break during the talk, instead we will be serving

drinks and biscuits from 7.45 – doors are generally open from 7.30. We hope this will allow members time to chat while enabling the speaker to set up their presentation with a little less pressure.

Looking Ahead – Plant Sale May

As things stand we should be able to hold our annual plant sale on the Village Green this year, so please remember to plant some extra seeds, make additional divisions and take extra cuttings in preparation! Seeds to sow now include the ever popular sweet peas,

New Committee Member

We are delighted to announce that **Mary Holloway** has been co-opted as new member of the Committee and we welcome her contribution to the team. Her contact details can be found below.

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

Your CSGGA Committee

Chairman and Membership Secretary:

Briony Wickenden Mulberry House, 54 Milton Fields, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4EP 01494879482 brionywickendke@hotmail.com

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 margaretdykes@btinternet.com

Committee Members:

Mary Holloway	01494 875793
Caroline Jackson	01494 876685
Eleanor O'Connor	01494 875646
Sam Patel	01494 875319

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