

CSGGA Newsletter

January 2023



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Bordering on Insanity - Timothy Walker

Timothy Walker is a botanist who currently lectures at Somerville College, Oxford.

He gave us an entertaining and informative talk at the last meeting. He spoke without a microphone due to the prevailing issues with the Memorial Hall equipment but was clear enough for all to hear.

He explained how he and his wife created a huge border from scratch in the garden of the cottage that came with his job working for Oxford Botanical Gardens. As a result he has established ten principles and practicalities for borders:

1. It's going to be expensive, especially if it's large. He and

his wife were planting for three seasons in one large space. He recommends packing the plants in tight. Some will need stakes - try using birch - and 4ft fencing pins are very useful. At some point in early Summer you will have to remove vegetation to make room for the autumnal plants.

2. Don't believe the books - everything is hardy somewhere (it's just finding out where!) and, yes, you can have herbaceous paeonies! Another tip - plant tulips when you have the time. They'll grow and flower even if you plant them late.
3. Soil must be looked after but not seen. Get rid of weeds first by double digging. Make your own garden compost, and fertilise at the right time of year - Timothy suggests February when the ground is not frozen. As to when/whether you cut vegetation down in Autumn, he recommends leaving the border up to leave as a welcome habitat for creatures.
4. Try to plan *not* to irrigate. Look after the soil, plant properly and harvest rainwater. When planting, dig the hole, put the plant in and then water heavily until the water remains in the hole, leaving it to slowly drain away. Then gently fill with soil and do not press down. The plant will
5. Do *not* plan to use pesticides. If something dies, there are 70,000 other plants to choose from! Timothy was also concerned about the effect on the soil of pesticides as we don't really know what the effects are.
6. You must start with a plan. Don't start with compromises. Think about the view from the house, inside the garden out, and outside the garden in. Where does sunlight fall during the day and what will the



view from the kitchen be, as this is likely to be the spot from which you most often look out on the garden. Also, give some thought to how colours might change during the day due to the different light of morning, day and evening.

7. Colours are up to you. Harmony? Contrast? Do whatever you want, but men and women generally see colours differently. Timothy reckons women are better at putting colour together than men. If harmonious, plants don't have to be pastels and with regard to contrast, try putting blue and yellow together.
8. Create layers throughout the year and in the space available (horizontally and vertically). There will be quiet times and things will die.
9. A garden is a process, not a product. If at first you do not succeed, try again! Also, things work for a while but may get too big so take them out and start again with something else.
10. It's about making pictures. Think of your favourite plant, create a family around it that share things in common and put it all together in a harmonious community. Colours should bleed over from one to the next.

In summary, Timothy's top 10 Must Have Plants are as follows:



1. *Dictamnus albus*
2. *Euphorbias*
3. *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum'
4. *Papaver orientale* 'Patty's Plum'
5. *Amsonia salicifolia*
6. *Geranium* 'Salobar'
7. *Thalictrum delavayi*
8. *Astrantias*
9. *Clematis vicitella* 'Étoile Violette'
10. Alliums

Hopefully, Timothy will be able to join us again and entertain us on another gardening topic.

Eleanor O'Connor

Community Orchard Update

As you may be aware, our proposal to plant a community orchard did not find favour with the Trustees of Milton's Cottage. We had proposed to create the orchard at the bottom of the hill bordering Deanway as we knew this would give the trees the best conditions, be the most accessible for the village and enhance the view of Milton's Cottage from Deanway. We also intended to plant wildflowers in the orchard area which would have then self-seeded into the rest of the field. We have received many offers of financial and practical support from local organisations and individuals keen to see a community orchard in the village. The full proposal can be found on our [website](#). The following is an extract from the email received in response to our proposal from the Chairman.

"The essential concerns expressed are:-

1)- the proposed location at the bottom end of the Milton's Field close to Deanway is not acceptable, for the following reasons:- *The view of the field rising up from the public realm, with the line of what is considered to be the Roman road passing across it, would be lost from Deanway.

*The views of Milton's Cottage would be partially obscured when approaching it down the hill from Threehouseholds.

*The open character of the lower part of Milton's Field, as recorded in Thomas Jones's eighteenth century painting, would also be lost.

These are important aspects for the setting of the Grade I listed building and for the character and appearance of the conservation area of which it forms a part;

2)- the proposed conversion of the whole of the rest of the Milton's Field to a wild flower meadow is wholly unacceptable and not understood to have been part of your plans. Its belated introduction causes concern;

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3)- the funding and manpower requirements shown in the "Budget and Funding" section of the Proposal for the establishment and long-term maintenance of the proposed orchard are considered to be inadequate, raising concern that in future The Trust would be burdened with the upkeep of the orchard. Given those concerns, it is considered irresponsible for the current Trustees to fetter the Trust with that threat;

4)- the security needs for controlled access to Milton's Field are not considered to be adequately addressed."

Subsequently, I held a further meeting with representatives from Milton's Cottage, and the Parish and County Council, at which it was suggested that if the orchard were to be located at the top of the hill, the Trustees might view the proposal more favourably. However, the Community Orchard Steering Group felt that, while we might be able to dispel some of the concerns, to locate the orchard at the top of the hill would diminish too many of the aims outlined in our proposal and adversely impact on its success. So, after a year of talks we have withdrawn from further discussion and are looking elsewhere for a suitable site with the help of the Parish and County Council.

The Gardens Association and Village Show jointly funded an ecological survey of Milton's Cottage meadow, as a condition for receiving £5,000 of funding from BBOWT to create a community orchard. Milton's Cottage Trustees have informed me that "We continue to support the concept of the community orchard and in the event that you secure "in principle" agreement for an alternative site, we would like to offer to contribute to the cost of one site survey, if that is required to take the project forward, our contribution being up to half the total cost of the survey that was undertaken on your behalf at Milton's Field."

Briony Wickenden

M's Action Diary for January



- Speed up your compost heap by turning to help move the cool outer layers into the middle.
- Prune wisteria by cutting back laterals and side shoots to 2 or 3 buds. Thin out congested spurs by removing excess spurs.
- Sprinkle pelleted chicken manure under hedges.
- Mulch borders generously with well-rotted organic materials such as mushroom compost, garden compost or bark chips.
- Plant lily bulbs in pots to flower in the Summer.
- Remove old Bergenia leaves before new buds appear.
- Boost fruit trees with Sulphate of Potash, Growmore or chicken

manure pellets.

- Prune winter flowering shrubs, such as winter flowering Jasmine, once they have finished flowering.
- Cut back Miscanthus grasses.
- Keep feeding wild birds providing them with fresh water. Clean containers frequently to avoid spreading infection.

Green Gardening Tip – "No Dig" Gardening

As we all know, soil contains beneficial organisms and microbes which provide plants with moisture and nutrients. But, are you aware that soil can help in the fight against climate change? According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), soil [stores more of the world's carbon than biomass \(vegetation\) and the atmosphere combined](#). Digging causes carbon that is stored in the soil to oxidise and be released as carbon dioxide. By not digging, this carbon stays in the soil. We can all therefore do our bit to limit climate change by ensuring carbon stays in the soil.

No dig gardening has other benefits including:

- Higher yields
- Less weeds

- Earlier harvest
- Better flowers
- Improved drainage
- Less watering

For more information see [No-Dig Gardening Guide | BBC Gardeners World Magazine](#)

The Big Garden Birdwatch



Birds play such an important role in the garden from providing a natural pest control to help in pollinating plants, so it is important to understand what is happening with bird populations in our area. Why not spend an enjoyable hour watching the birds in your garden, on your balcony or anywhere outside, by participating in this year's Big Garden Bird Watch? This annual event takes place at the height of winter, this year on **Friday 27th to Sunday 29th 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 [Big Garden Birdwatch | The RSPB](#)

Next Month's Talk 9th February 2023, Memorial Hall

Gardening for Dry Conditions – Terry Cann

We certainly seem to be witnessing the effects of climate change at the moment with the recent rain bookended by extreme cold, so while we might welcome a period of dry warmth, there is no doubt it offers a challenge in the garden. Terry will explain how seasonal climate patterns are affecting garden practices and how to design the garden to meet these conditions.



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

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.

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