

CSGGA Newsletter

March 2024



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

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Propagation – Tom Cole

We had an excellent talk in March from Tom Cole, who explained to us about propagating plants. Tom covered the different methods of propagating in detail covering seeds, dividing and taking cuttings.

Seeds for perennials such as Echinacea can be collected on a dry day in mid to late summer. As the petals drop off invert the seed heads into a paper bag. It is important to keep the seed dry (you can use silica gel in the paper bag), and store in a plastic tub in the fridge. Seeds for annuals can be collected in late Sept / Oct. Store in a clearly

labelled bag in a plastic container to maintain viability for a couple of seasons. You can sow hardy annuals before Christmas. Sweet peas can be soaked overnight to encourage germination. When preparing the seed bed for annuals leave it fallow for two weeks after preparation to allow you to pick off the weeds before sowing. Roses can also be propagated by seed - remove them from the hip and grind them with sandpiper to ensure a 90% germination rate.

Plants such as Primulas and Snowdrops can be propagated by lifting and **dividing** after they have flowered. Cyclamen and aconites have a basal plate - as long as you have some of the basal plate you will have new plants. Grasses / sedges / rushes - wait for new growth before you lift them and use a bread knife to divide.

Herbaceous perennials can be propagated by taking **leafy cuttings** Put them on a north facing windowsill. After four weeks move the cutting into potting compost.

For **woody plants** such as Dogwoods, prune in Feb / March and use the prunings of one year's growth for propagating. It should be the thickness of a pencil and have four junctions on the stem. Cut just below the bottom of a junction and push into the ground leaving two junctions above ground. Don't lift until them until autumn when you can pot on.



Plants with **semi ripe stems** such as Hydrangeas and Berberis can be propagated from May onwards when the wood is less sappy. Cut non flowering growth to a length of approx 3/4" just below a junction. Strip off lower leaves to reduce water loss. They need heat and humidity so cover with a bag and put on a north facing windowsill. Open the bag after a week and the cutting should root in 8 weeks.

A note about **compost** - if your compost is too heavy add in perlite. Tom has had success with a mixture of coir and loam with added perlite. Immersing your seed tray in water before sowing consolidates the contents.

Vicky Mogford

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Next Month's Meeting – Thursday 11th April

Spring Show

Show Schedule

Foliage does not need to be attached to the stem for Classes 1-5a

Classes 1-3 are for single-headed blooms only.

Class 1 Daffodils/Narcissi – 1 Stem, Own Foliage.

Class 2 Daffodils/Narcissi – 3 Stems, Own Foliage.

Class 3 Miniature Daffodils/Narcissi – 3 Stems, Own Foliage – less than 13"

Class 4 Multi-headed Daffodils/Narcissi – 1 Stem, Own Foliage

Class 5 Tulips – 3 Stems, Own Foliage

Class 5a Tulip – Single stem, Own Foliage

Class 6 Flowering Shrubs or Trees – 1 or more varieties

Class 7 Pot of Primulas, Primroses or Auriculas. (max pot size 8 inches)

Class 8 Petite flower arrangement – to fit within a 6" cube

Class 9 Any other flower - 1 Kind, 3 Stems

Class 10 Rhubarb – 3 Sticks, forced with leaves OR 3 sticks natural, leaves trimmed

Class 11a Root Vegetables (Any quantity)

Class 11b Brassicas (Any quantity)

Class 11c Any other Vegetable. (Any quantity)

Class 12 Flowering Pot Plant (in flower) including bulbs & orchids (max pot size 8")

Class 13 Foliage Pot Plant – (No flowers) max pot size 8 inches

Class 14 Flowers From My Garden (Not shrubs)

Class 15 Mixed Foliage Display (No Flowering Material) in a vase or jug.

Class 16 Cactus or succulent.

Members may set up at 7.30pm. Judging will start at 8pm. Refreshments served at 8.00pm and members are asked to allow all the judging to be completed before viewing the exhibits.

Guidance for entries

- **If you require any help either in preparing for the show or when you arrive – please ask.**
- Collect an entry card for every exhibit when you arrive. These can be found on the tables which are located in the middle of the hall.
- Please be careful to observe the Class specifications shown above.
- Bikini vases will be available at the hall and should be used for all entries in classes 1-6 and class 9.
- Make sure you exhibit your entry in the correct class and that your name is on the entry card.
- There is a maximum of TWO entries per person per class

M's Action Diary for March

- Prune shrubby cornus and willows to two buds from the ground or low junction point to allow new shoots to sprout from this point. (Ed: Remember Tom Cole's hint that you can use these prunings to create new plants)
- Pot up dahlia tubers which have been stored during winter.
- Give birds a helping hand by leaving out twigs, wool and fur from groomed pets.
- Remove faded flower heads of early spring flowering bulbs such as daffodils. Let leaves die back naturally to feed bulbs for next year.
- Prune buddleias hard to encourage new growth to flower later in summer.
- Top dress containers to keep plants healthy. Trees and shrubs planter permanently in pots need a boost so use a hand trowel to scrape away the top 5cm of compost, taking any weeds with it. Add slow release fertiliser and top up with fresh compost and water in.
- Apply moss killer to lawns for short term control, then rake and scarify to remove thatch.
- Start to mow on high setting.
- Cut back penstemons to allow new growth.

- Improve the soil in established borders by mulching the surface with a layer of organic matter such as garden compost.

Snails – no longer a pest!



The Wildlife Trusts and Royal Horticultural Society are joining forces to challenge the negative perception surrounding slugs and snails in gardens across the UK. The 'Making Friends with Molluscs' campaign, which starts today, aims to encourage gardeners to reconsider the role of these often-maligned creatures in their garden ecosystems.

Slugs and snails have long been viewed as a gardener's greatest foe, but this reputation isn't wholly deserved. There are around 150 species of slugs and snails in the UK, and only a small fraction of these pose problems for gardeners. The majority contribute positively to the garden ecosystem in a number of ways. By learning to appreciate and coexist with these creatures, gardeners can adopt a more environmentally friendly approach to gardening.

While they may not be as valued as earthworms, slugs and snails provide several important services in our green spaces. One of their most significant roles is as nature's clean-up crew; molluscs feed on rotting plants, fungi, dung and even carrion, helping to recycle nitrogen and other nutrients and minerals back into the soil. They can also clean algae off the glass of greenhouses, leaving behind their trademark trails.

Many of our much-loved garden visitors, including frogs, song thrushes, and ground beetles, rely on slugs and snails as a key food source. They also make up part of a hedgehog's diet. By supporting these molluscs, gardeners indirectly support a diverse array of wildlife. In addition, territorial slugs, such as leopard slugs, can be helpful in warding off other species of slug and therefore protecting plants from grazing.

Helen Bostock, RHS Senior Wildlife Specialist, says:

"The RHS wants everyone to help protect the plants, animals and fungi that benefit our gardens and protect the wider environment. While a small number of slugs and snails can cause damage to certain plants, overall they bring many benefits to the garden and contribute to a balanced ecosystem, whether that's by clearing away rotting vegetation or providing a vital food source for more popular garden visitors such as frogs, hedgehogs and song thrushes. We hope that by highlighting the crucial work that molluscs do in our gardens we can help give them a well-deserved reputation makeover."

Kathryn Brown, Director of Climate Change and Evidence, The Wildlife Trusts, says:

"I have always welcomed snails and slugs in my garden; they play such an important role in maintaining natural functionality. Many of them are detritivores, consuming dead plants, animals and fungi, recycling nutrients back into the soil and creating nutritious compost, great for growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.

"The Wildlife Trusts want everyone to avoid using pesticides which can indiscriminately harm other creatures too. You can grow a range of plants that snails and slugs tend to not eat, such as onions and hardy herbs, instead of trying to control them. These marvellous molluscs help to enrich and aerate the soil, and they're also a great food source for other incredible animals such as newts and beetles." [The Wildlife Trusts and RHS ask gardeners to make friends with molluscs / RHS Gardening](#)

Green Gardening Tip – Living Harmoniously with Snails

Follow these five tips:

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- **Encourage predators:** Create a haven for natural predators of slugs and snails, such as ground beetles, song thrushes, frogs, and toads, by providing suitable habitats, such as long grass, log piles and wildlife-friendly ponds. Predators help to naturally regulate slug and snail populations, keeping their numbers in balance.
- **Selective planting:** Choose plants that are less attractive to slugs and snails or are more resilient to their feeding habits, such as lavender, rosemary, astrantia, hardy geraniums, hellebores and hydrangeas.
- **Barriers:** Implement barriers – such as copper tape and wool pellets – which may provide some protection for vulnerable plants from slug and snail damage.
- **Handpick and monitor:** Regularly inspect plants for signs of slug and snail damage, and manually remove any you find, relocating them to your compost heap or areas with less vulnerable plants. Consider evening patrols with a torch, as slugs and snails are most active at night-time.
- **Provide shelter:** Create habitats for slugs and snails by leaving log piles, mulch, and natural debris in garden areas. These spaces offer shelter and a food source for these creatures, and it may make them less likely to venture out into your vegetable bed.

Outing to the Tulip Festival at Hampton Court Thursday 25th April

Over 100,000 tulip bulbs erupt in colour in one of the UK's biggest displays of planted tulips. Celebrate the start of spring with a visit to Hampton Court Palace, as their tulips emerge to herald warmer days to come. There are 60 acres of colourful royal gardens and entry includes access to the Palace buildings.

We will be departing from The Green at 9.30am and arriving back at approximately 5.00pm depending on traffic. Costs vary depending on concessions and membership of Royal Palaces – maximum £39.00 but see booking form for precise details. Members may take one guest at additional cost. Lunch – picnic or café.

Booking closes on 12th April but you are encouraged to advise Eleanor O'Connor as soon as possible if you want to join this outing as places are limited.



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