

CSGGA Newsletter

August 2019



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

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Container Gardening – Andrew Mikolajski

You might be forgiven for thinking a talk in August wouldn't get much in the way of attendance, but we had a packed hall of members and some non-members interested in learning more about container gardening. Andrew Mikolajski should know his stuff - he's written over 30 gardening titles, is a speaker and lecturer, an RHS judge, and a consultant for the RHS' A-Z Encyclopaedia. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable speaker, he took us through his ideas for containers, plants and planting.

He believes good gardeners have lots in pots. Mainly because their garden just isn't big enough! Containers have a role in garden design and there are tricks worth knowing:

- Pots of the same style dotted around create unity.
- Pots don't need to be the same size but stick to the same design.
- Plant in 3s, or 5s of the same variety or different plants. Cram bedding plants in.
- A heavy plant needs a heavy container.
- A fabulous pot requires minimal planting.

- Shallow containers need plants with shallow roots.
- With tall pots, put the plant in a smaller container sunk into the top section with stones in the base.

Seasonal displays, eg, spring bulbs, are ideal for containers. Don't plant them too early, particularly tulips. Keep in cold storage and plant later or get half price in the sales! Feed bulbs whilst growing.

Plants good for containers include:

- Japanese maples – oriental plants need an oriental container.
- Begonias – like damp conditions so water well and don't assume the rain will get through the leaves to the compost. "Fragrant Falls" is scented and the petals are edible! Hydrangeas also need watering well.
- Blueberries - the smaller variety contains higher anti-oxidant properties.
- Clematis – like their roots to be shaded so use other plants/pots around the base.
- Fig – prune in winter from bottom to top and keep to a minimum.
- Roses – keep well-watered whilst forming buds. "Warm Welcome" is long-flowering. Get them bare rooted and plant in November. Make sure the graft is buried below the surface.
- Other good container plants include Fuchsias, Hostas, Canna Lilies, Aucuba Japonica and Agapanthus.



After the theory came the demo. Andrew explained that plants are often sold in pots containing peat based compost. These inevitably dry out and it is impossible to rehydrate effectively. This affects the plant and its performance once replanted so he recommended soaking the pot and removing all the compost before planting afresh. To use the vernacular, when it comes to compost, "don't use crap!" - you don't really know what you're buying and the contents can vary from batch to batch of the same brand so use the cheap stuff for seasonal planting such as summer/winter baskets. If you want good quality compost, go for John Innes No 3 or ideally Melcourt. Never use compost straight from the bag – add perlite, and grit for long-term planting.

Andrew suggested putting polystyrene chunks in the bottom of the pot rather than stones and advised on breaking up the roots properly before planting.

One tip for container plants that suffer from the frost – put it in a bigger container and fill the gap with polystyrene or other material to keep them warm. For long-term planting, when the performance goes off, take them out in Autumn, trim the roots and put back using fresh compost.

You can re-use good compost if bulbs have been in it. Use coir blocks soaked in water in a ratio of 50/50 with the spent compost and use this mix for summer temporary bedding.

Fertilizers – don't need to be organic for pots. Use tomato feed to encourage flowering and for fuchsias in autumn to help them through the winter. Apply wood ash to fruit plants now.

Andrew's talk was very well received and he will return during the Literary Festival next year.

Eleanor O'Connor

Monthly Cup

Eleanor O'Connor was our winner for August, selected by Andrew Mikolajski with a very healthy looking African Violet – I was going to call it a Saintpaulia but they've had name change according to the RHS website *"African violets, formerly known by their botanical name Saintpaulia but now included within Streptocarpus, make attractive houseplants originating from tropical East Africa. They are available in a many colours from white, through pink and red to purple and various flower types. With careful cultivation they can flower for many months and the compact plants are ideal for small spaces such as windowsills."*



The Raffle

Richard Bolton was the winner of a trailing begonia in the raffle.

M's Action Diary for August

- Prune wisteria by shortening long side shoots to 2 or 3 buds from old wood.
- Start pot cyclamen into growth.
- Lift and store gladioli bulbs.
- Tidy penstemons but do not trim back until next March/April
- Trim rambling roses after flowering, and mulch with rotted manure.
- Dead-head summer flowering plants regularly.
- Plant hyacinth bulbs for indoor display. Place container in a cool, dark place until about an inch of growth appears.
- Evergreen and deciduous hedges require their final trim.
- Trim hebes lightly after flower to encourage bushy, compact growth.
- In the next few weeks, purchase hardy perennials, roses and deciduous trees and shrubs as they are best planted during the Autumn whilst the soil is warm. Conifers, evergreen and grey leafed or slightly tender plants are best left until Spring.
- Trim rock roses to remove spent flowers – do not cut into old wood.

Green Gardening Tip for August



An old 'un but a good 'un! "In order to protect flourishing fruit trees, hang up aluminium pans in the midst of all the foliage, as the reflection of the sun will deter any birds from eating the produce. This is a simple, efficient and a cheap solution to an age-old problem." If, perchance, you find you are short of aluminium pans anything shiny such as foil takeaway containers or old compact discs would also do the trick!

Plant Collecting in Bolivia – Pamela Holt

Thursday 12th September 2019 8.00 pm

A Horticulturist since leaving school, Pamela has worked variously in private gardens, nurseries, garden centres, the Home Office, Horticultural Colleges and for Local Authorities. She trained at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew with Alan Titchmarsh and taught Charlie Dimmock whilst a lecturer in Somerset. An intrepid traveller Pamela has collected plants in Peru and Bolivia for Kew. **Bring a friend for free this month**

Holiday 2020

The Gardens of Essex and Suffolk
5 days Sunday 7th to Thursday 11th June 2020

20 members have already put their name down for next year's holiday. Are you going to join us? 5 days from £599 Departs 7th -11th June 2020. 4* Hotel, Half Board Accommodation. A full programme of excursions and guided tours including Ickworth House, Wyken Hall Gardens & Vineyard, Layer Marney Tower, Marks Hall Gardens & Arboretum, Gibberd Gardens, Gainsborough House, Helmingham Hall Gardens, Gainsborough House, Green Island Gardens, Southwold, Lavenham, Colchester, Ipswich, and many more places of interest. Full details of the holiday can be found on our website or at Tailored Travel www.tailored-travel.co.uk and quote csgg201. **No deposits are due until the end of the year but if you are interested in joining us, please contact Briony – contact details on last page.**

Don't forget closing date for entries to the Village Show is 31st August

Do you have some sassy sunflowers, dazzling dahlias, awesome apples or tremendous tomatoes? Or come to the show every year and say "my onions are better than that!" If so, why not enter the competitions, they are free and you could go home rich and famous! For details of the classes see www.csgshow.org/competitions/default.asp



July Outing to Blenheim Palace Flower Show

On a sunny day in July, 24 members enjoyed an outing to the 2019 Blenheim Palace Flower show which proved to be bigger and better in its 7th Year. It was opened by TV's George Clarke on Friday 21st June and celebrated the very best of gardening, home and lifestyle. The show was packed with inspiration, flowers and plants and everything you need for your home and garden.



The 2019 event had more exhibitors than ever before with the stunning 30,000 sq ft Grand Floral Pavilion as the centrepiece of the show. Packed with exhibitors showcasing the UK's finest nurseries and plantsman competing for the prestigious "Best in Show Award".

The Floral Carousel was a new feature packed with beautiful floral arrangements creatively displayed.

The Shopping Village featured an abundance of trade stands selling everything from unique gazebos, greenhouses and arbours to gardening sundries and hundreds of other products from over 250 leading exhibitors.

Food and Drink including hot cold snack to full dining as well as tastings and samples were readily available.

For early Christmas Shoppers the Home and Country Living Pavilion was filled with a selection of original handmade giftware, jewellery and luxury goods.

The space, time to browse, explore the Blenheim Palace Gardens, grab a bite to eat and acquire some unique garden accessories proved to be too tempting to resist. Fully laden we set-off back to Chalfont St Giles arriving in good time. Whilst the traffic proved a challenge, our later than planned arrival did not spoil what was a delightful and intimate day.

Jacqui Greenham



Your Committee

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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.

Dates for the Diary

Visit to Kew

We are planning a visit to Kew to see the Christmas lights on **Wednesday 4th December**. The outing will include a visit Osterley House for their winter exhibition afternoon tea close to the entrance for Kew. Full details and costs will be published once they have been finalised.

Lindengate Open Days

If you missed our outing to Lindengate in June, or were so inspired you want to go again there are three further opportunities in September

- Friday, 6th Sept 6.00-8.00 pm
- Sunday, 8th Sept 2.00 – 5.00 pm
- Wednesday, 11th Sept 5.00 – 7.00 pm

www.lindengate.org.uk/events/category/events/