

CSGGA Newsletter

December 2019



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

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On behalf of the CSGGA Committee may I wish you all a very merry Christmas and health, happiness and fun for 2020! *Briony*



Christmas Party

"While the weather outside was frightful,
The party was so delightful,
And since it was the place to go,
Let it rain, let it rain, let it rain! *
With apologies to Chris Isaak

The Memorial Hall was dressed up with sparkly lights, the tables laid and our dinner deliciously prepared by "To Dine For" when almost 60 members braved the weather, in their finery, to enjoy the company of their gardening friends.

This year we made a change to the table layouts, with larger tables seating 10. We felt this would allow little more room but, more importantly, be more welcoming particularly to new members and those on their own and give everyone the opportunity to make new friends.



Before Stephanie and her team served our tasty festive dinner, judging commenced on the Christmas Table Decoration Competition and the worthy winner, selected by secret ballot, was Caroline for her robin in a teacup. We were treated to a fiendish quiz set this year by our Treasurer, Margaret, and true to form, the table where Alan Clarke was seated won again! We had raffle prizes galore including two vouchers donated by Rowan Nursery. (I'm sure Alan didn't provide all the answers but, it seems it's always his table that wins!) All in all, it was a fun evening enjoyed by all.
Briony Wickenden



Outing to Osterley Park and Kew

Having been unlucky with the weather when we visited Wisley last year for Christmas lights, fingers were firmly crossed for our trip to Osterley Park and Kew. We were not disappointed – it was cold and crisp as we set off in the coach to Osterley.



Osterley Park is a National Trust property with a strong connection to bankers. It was built by Sir Thomas Gresham in the 16th Century but is most famous for its links to the Child banking family. They transformed the ailing building into a place fit to impress in the late 18th Century, employing the up and coming Scottish architect, Robert Adam. The architecture is palatial and striking and certainly fulfils its intention of a building to highlight wealth and importance: no homely warm touches here, this is ostentation.

We were allocated in groups to view the exhibition, 'Treasures of Osterley', which explores the rise to fame and fortune of the Child banking family through the exquisite works of art and furniture they collected. The centrepiece of the exhibition is a 17th-century painting of St Agatha by Italian artist Carlo Dolci. This has been reinstated into the Osterley collection and is on show for the first time after its recent acquisition by the National Trust. The painting is truly beautiful.

There was time for a brief stop in the café or a stroll around the gardens before we got back on the coach for our next stop at a pub for light refreshments.

Despite its good reviews and careful forward planning, the Botanist was more Fawlty Towers than the Ritz but everyone maintained good humour throughout and Briony and Jacqui remained behind to sort out an appropriate refund whilst the rest of us walked down the road to the entrance to Kew Gardens.

After completing the security checks at Victoria Gate, we strolled through street food stalls to start the 1.5 mile walk around the trail to the accompaniment of Christmas music. There were lights in the trees, singing holly bushes, laser illuminations, cascades, arches, and Will o' the Wisp flickering colours. Notable stops included the Temperate House which was illuminated with lines of light and colour and the finale at the Palm House Pond where jumping jets of light danced across the water (Kew's hyperbole, not mine!).

Along the way, there were further opportunities to eat and drink, with just about every type of street food you could think of, plus a traditional fairground for the children. Unsurprisingly, the trail ended at the shop where we weaved and wandered amongst the crowds, enjoying browsing the merchandise and deciding whether to indulge ourselves with a purchase.

Everyone duly gathered together again outside, we went in search of the coach where we collapsed gratefully into the warmth and relaxation of the drive home.

Our thanks to Jacqui for organising a memorable and most enjoyable trip to put us all in the mood for the upcoming Christmas festivities.

Eleanor O'Connor



M's Action Diary for December

- Prune spirea hard to ensure a compact size, shape and colour.
- Do not walk on frozen lawns because you will leave footprints.
- Pinch out tips of wallflowers to promote bushy growth
- Remove hellebore leaves so that flowers can be seen more easily in a few weeks' time.
- If your roses suffered from blackspot this year, clear away fallen leaves from the plant base to reduce risk of reinfection.
- Insulate outside taps.

- Place poinsettias in a bright location away from drafts. Allow compost to dry out slightly between watering. *Note from Caroline: poinsettias and amaryllis are toxic to cats*
- Keep removing spent flowers from pansies, violas and cyclamen.
- Check climbing plants are secured to supports, so helping to prevent damage from high winds.

Merida wishes all members happy gardening in 2020 and the complements of the season.

A Look Back at the Outings Enjoyed in 2019 and plans for 2020

Each year we try to bring you interesting and enjoyable trips out to gardens at affordable prices. Members are invited to book first but if we have space we are happy to accommodate non-members for £5 additional cost.

In 2019, the programme started early with a visit to two renowned winter gardens: Anglesey Abbey (National Trust) and Benington Lordship. Both provided a welcome splash of colour to brighten the dull days of February.

In early May, we visited Evenley Wood and three gardens in Wheatley, Oxfordshire. The head gardener at Evenley, Tom, was a pleasure to hear as he talked about the history of the garden and



how he plans to develop it further. The three gardens in Wheatley had started out as two - the owners of which were very welcoming - but we were allowed a sneak peek into the third. They provided us with home-made scones and lashings of tea (to paraphrase Blyton) but we weren't so lucky with the weather that afternoon as we sheltered from the rain!



The next trip out was to Blenheim Palace for their flower show. Blenheim Palace and its gardens are a joy to visit any time but combining it with the flower show offered a special day out. Plenty of opportunities to see beautiful floral displays and browse stalls offering crafts and every imaginable gardening accessory.

As an affiliated organisation, the Gardens Association is entitled to visit an RHS garden free of charge and this year we travelled to Essex to see Hyde Hall which included a guided tour through the differently themed gardens when we arrived. There was then plenty of time to wander at leisure, with of course, an obligatory opportunity to check out the offerings in the shop and café.

Our final trip of the year was to Kew (see separate report above) for the Christmas lights.

We are still at the planning stage for 2020, but are currently looking at gardens that offer a colourful tulip display in late April/May. For a change, and to accommodate those of our members who work during the week, we hope to offer a Saturday visit in July to the National Arboretum and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Beth Chatto's garden is on the list for early autumn. Our RHS visit is likely to be Wisley in June. We are undecided on whether to offer a Christmas trip but if you have any suggestions, do let us know.

The paragraph above is full of "hope", "plan" and "looking at" as it all remains to be confirmed after the Christmas lull! Watch this space!

All the above, of course, is in addition to the Gardens Association annual holiday which Briony organises through a travel company.

Eleanor O'Connor

Note: Photos and reviews of these and other outings we've enjoyed will be posted on our website shortly. If you have any photographs you would like to add, please send them to me or Caroline.

Green Gardening Tip for October



Feed (and water) the birds!

As well as a delight to watch, the birds in our garden provide ideal pest control with little need for toxic and harmful chemicals. So we should all look after them.

Ensure their water source is fresh and not frozen on frosty days and keep feeding them with seeds, nuts and fat balls (without the netting) and fresh and dried fruit past its best.

Every activity they undertake uses the vital energy they need to keep warm, so make sure your feeders and bird tables are continuously stocked so that they don't have a wasted journey.

Holiday 2020

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

28 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 below.**

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

RHS Shows

Now is the time to book tickets for any of the RHS Shows. Click [here](#) for details. Note: We will again be buying tickets for Chelsea for the draw at the Spring Show

Courses at Wisley

You might be in time to book a place on a one day course at Wisley to make **willow bird feeders** on 13th January.

Or learn how to improve your **garden photography** 25th January

Or Join the **RSPB Garden Birdwalk** 26th January

For details of these and others click [here](#)