

CSGGA Newsletter

February 2020



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The Language of Flowers

Michael Brown

Michael Brown, MA and garden historian, took us on a journey through the Language of Flowers for our February talk. Michael has visited us before, to talk about Shakespeare's Flowers two years ago. He enters fully into the spirit of the talk, dressing as a true Victorian gentleman to take us through his experiences with the fairer sex and their resulting "conversations" through the exchange of flowers.

Certain flowers have had meanings or attributes attributed to them since Mediaeval times but, like Tartan, it took the Victorians to take this into a new dimension with a whole lexicon of meanings. Prior to this in the 18th Century, Lady

Mary Wortley Montagu is first credited with starting the language of flowers from her letters home whilst she travelled through the Ottoman Empire with her husband, the British ambassador to Turkey. During the 19th Century, the first book on the subject was published in 1819 in France: "Langage des Fleurs" was followed by books in English later in the century. Art joined literature, with artists such as Alphonse Mucha painting in the genre.

The significance for different flowers varied and often definitions arose from the appearance or behaviour of the plant itself. The rose bud, for example, is attributed to Christ and the petals represent his five wounds. The rose goes back centuries, however, as it was sacred to Venus and Aphrodite in ancient times. The Iris represents the Virgin Mary and the Trinity. Mary is also represented with sweet violets, whilst the carnation represents the nails of the crucifixion. Interestingly, Michael explained that 'pinks' are not named for their colour, as indeed they are not all pink in hue, but rather because the edges of their petals have a similar shape to that made by pinking shears.

St Valentine has of course long been associated with love and therefore flowers, with Shakespeare referring to the day in A Midsummer's Night's Dream and Hamlet. Love is represented by so many flowers: the rose, primrose (early love), tulip (declaration of love), daisy (true love), withered flowers (rejected love), lilac (first emotion of love), and jonquil (I desire a return of affection).

Michael did not take us through a dry list of flowers and their connotations but instead took us on the path a Victorian gentlemen meeting various ladies with whom he experienced different journeys in search of love and with whom flowers were exchanged as covert messages, allowing the protagonists to express emotions that could not be expressed in Victorian society.

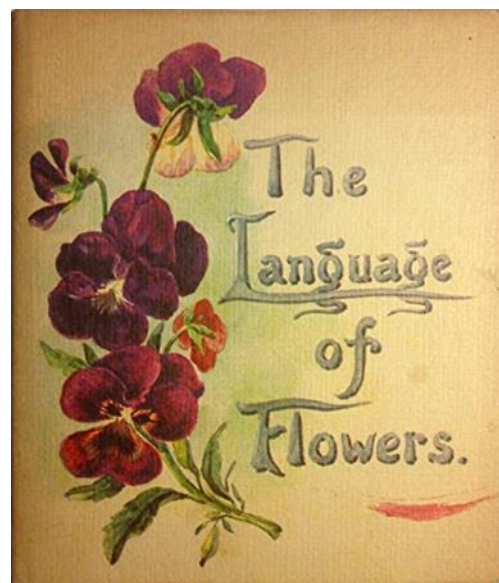


We were also shown how the Victorians socialised and entertained: at dances, pleasure gardens (slightly risqué amongst the hedges!), card parties, promenades in the park, horse racing, archery and tennis, and the seaside to name but a few! Plenty of opportunities to meet the opposite sex. Fans were also used by ladies to send signals in the language of the fan.

New love could be expressed through lilacs (first emotion of love), violets (modesty, virtue, affection), daffodils (new beginnings), bluebells (constancy), and celandines (joys to come).

The trials of love could be found in rhododendron (danger, beware), rue (disdain), carnation (alas for my poor heart), lichen (dejection), pasque flower (you have no claims), hyacinth (sorrow), love in a mist (perplexed), anemone (forsaken), white rose (infidelity) and foxglove (insincerity).

Some flowers have been used to treat ailments, some because they look like the ailment itself: celandine "Brazen Hussy" being such an example, used to treat piles as the roots look like the affliction! However, the meaning of the flower is more inspiring, being "joys to come".

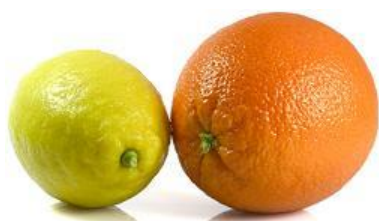


Eleanor O'Connor

M's Action Diary | for February

- Cut brown fern fronds back to the base of their stalks to make way for new foliage
- Prune mahonias by removing spent flowers. Overlong shoots can be cut back now.
- Lift and divide clumps of snowdrops after flowering. Replant to same depth as before. Cyclamen corms can also be lifted and replanted to encourage spread.
- Sow sweet peas in long pots.
- Plant bare-rooted shrubs and trees now, and move any shrubs that may be growing in the wrong place.
- Dead head amaryllis (hippeastrum) but allow flower stems and leaves to die down naturally.
- Shorten all the stems of shrub roses by about a third.

Green Gardening Tip for February



Large quantities of citrus in a compost or worm bin can make the contents excessively acidic. Only add a little citrus peel at a time and mix with other waste. To help the peel break down, cut it up into small pieces. Addition of a handful of ground limestone will help to re-dress the balance if you add too much peel and composting has slowed down. If you are producing a large volume of peel you may wish to dispose of it in another way. You could put it in our food waste bin or take it to your local green waste dump

where it would be composted with a larger volume of materials www.gardenorganic.org.uk

Plant Passports

You may have heard that new Europe-wide regulations on plant passports came into force in December 2019. A Plant Passport is documentation that professional growers must provide if they are selling online or moving plants between businesses, ie plant nurseries and garden centres. Additionally, landscapers, professional gardeners and garden designers now have a responsibility to be registered and to be provided with plant passports when they purchase plants. They should also keep a record because they have new responsibilities to the clients that they're designing or building for.

This will not affect the plant sale as plant enthusiasts only need to be authorised if they are trading plants as a business.

Did you know?

There's a film club that runs at the Gardens Association Hall on the first Friday of the month at 7.30. Any profits go to worthy causes in the village. Details from the Library.



Monthly Cup

Alan Clark won the cup with his exhibit of giant parsnips. Caroline Jackson also entered her orchid. I'd like to encourage everyone to bring something you're proud of to the meetings. The entries often become a talking point at the break and it's an excellent way of sharing knowledge.

Outings for 2020

Eleanor has finalised the arrangements for this year's outings and for those who receive the newsletter by email, the booklet is attached. Those who receive the newsletter by post will have to contact Eleanor or Briony for a copy though details will be included in relevant newsletters. We are very pleased to offer a varied choice of gardens and hope there is something that will appeal to you. Beth Chatto's Garden was requested by a number of members when we carried out a survey at the end of 2018. We felt it was time to accommodate those who have commitments on weekdays so we are going to the National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday 25th July. Please note the change of date for the Wisley outing – now Thursday 15th October.

Holiday 2020

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

30 members have 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. **If you are interested in joining us, please contact Briony – contact details below.**

Your Committee

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Eleanor O'Connor	01494 875646

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

Science Extravaganza

7th – 15th March

RHS Garden Wisley are holding a week-long science extravaganza showcasing the research of the RHS, along with hands-on activities, workshops and talks.
www.growingevents.co.uk/events/rhs-garden-wisley

Plant Sale

9th May 2020

Our plant sale will be held on the Village Green on Saturday 9th May in the morning. More details will follow but start thinking about the seeds you could sow or the cuttings you could take to help make the sale as successful as it was in 2019.