

CSGGA Newsletter



January 2020

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News from the Garden Centre Shelves

Chris Thorn

Chris Thorn, for 20 years the retail manager at Ayletts Nursery at London Colney, shared some insider knowledge with us on what is the best buy for our gardens. This was possibly the first ever meeting where the speaker took a photo of the audience!

Chris brought along samples of the products, and explained how best to use them, and how to avoid the pitfalls. Starting with weedkillers, he told us how people can be confused by what's on offer. All packaging now states what the product is for, and exactly how to use it. "Resolver" will turn leaves black very quickly, so it is easy to

see where you have treated weeds. However, like all weedkillers it takes 3 weeks to kill the root, so don't take the product back two days later and say it didn't work. Don't be fooled by "Extra Tough weedkiller, it's the same product, you just pay more. Our old favourite "Round Up" now says "No Glyphosate" but is still effective. More eco-friendly products include Weedol for Paths and Drives which also contains a chemical to prevent seed germination and fresh weeds arriving quickly. It is vital that you measure the area you are treating and measure the correct amount. It's no good expecting 50 ml to do an acre. Lawn weedkillers such as "Weedol Lawn" are suitable for new lawns, but may stimulate growth so need a bit more mowing. "Lawn Rescue" is great if you have an incontinent pooch.

Slug pellets : Metaldehyde was banned a few years ago, and modern pellets are iron based. They disrupt the digestive system and slugs go underground, so do not think that because you don't find dead slugs that the pellets are not working. They are organic and do not harm birds. Grazers brand repellents are less chemical based and deter slugs and snails. However it does need reapplying after rain.

Plant invigorators prevent fungal spores and insects taking hold and strengthen the plant. Hormone rooting powder is no longer available. There is a liquid rooter available by Clonex, costing £10 a bottle but it lasts a long time. Similarly Sulphur is no longer available as a potato blight treatment, but is now disguised as a plant nutrient and soil acidifier but does the same old job. Copper mix is no longer available, but is now marketed as a soil improver but works on potato blight. Black plastic pots and trays will be phased out,



except for those plants whose roots don't like light. Bamboo based pots are available, and fibre pots are mostly peat free.

Fertilisers such as a "Maxi Crop" are eco-friendly, and "Johnson's Smart Lawn Feed" uses a natural nitrogen fixer to encourage root growth. Now is the wrong time to use nematodes for pest control. They will attack leatherjackets, grubs etc but will die unless the soil has warmed to 5-10C." The new generation of products are watered on. They have a short lifespan so use within the recommended time. Liquid feeds are good but if you buy them "ready to use" all you are paying for is the water. "Sympathy Rootgrow" mycorrhizal fungi are recommended for new trees, roses, shrubs and edibles. Sprinkle into the root hole when planting to ensure direct contact with the roots. You only need a teaspoon per plant sprinkled round and the results are splendid. Chris recommended Q4 general purpose fertiliser which is a balanced fertiliser now available in granules, which also contains trace elements and has been shown to be successful. "Toprose" and "Tomorite" are basically the same so use for both, and hanging baskets too.

Pheromone traps work by releasing female moth pheromones which attract and trap the moths. 1 trap should be sufficient for several trees, are refillable and are best deployed when 80% of the fruit flowers have dropped. Box moths too have traps available. The pesky moths can breed 8 times a year so you need to keep spraying if using something like "Bugclear".

New liquid algae removers are good but cannot be used on soft stone. Hard surfaced patios need "Patio Magic" which should be watered on during a cloudy cool day with no rain, or evenings, so it does not dry out too quickly.

Chris recommended cedar wood nest boxes, which does not rot, and pointed out that Cuprinol coloured fence paint does not contain preservative so you will need that too. His take home message was: shop wisely, and never dispose of chemicals down the drain. Wash out containers thoroughly and tip the contents onto waste ground. We should all feel far more confident when wandering the aisles now that we know what we are looking for.

Jan Still

M's Action Diary for January

- Boost fruit trees by feeding with Sulphate of Potash, Growmore or chicken manure pellets. Hedges could also do with similar feeding.
- Plant lily bulbs in pots to flower in summer.
- Arrange service of petrol mowers and shears in time for Spring.
- Winter prune flowering shrubs, such as winter jasmine, once they have finished blooming.
- Prune acers, bushes and vines by removing any dead or diseased growth back to a healthy bud. If pruned any later they will bleed sap from the pruning wounds.
- Winter prune wisteria by cutting back laterals and side shoots to 2 or 3 buds. Thin out old congested spur systems.
- Cut back deciduous grasses, such as miscanthus, taking care not to damage any new growth.

Green Gardening Tip of the Month

Composting

Add enough dry waste to balance the large amounts of wet waste coming out of the kitchen just now. Scrumpled up Christmas cards, envelopes and bits of cardboard are very useful to provide the carbon element needed. www.gardenorganic.org.uk



Monthly Cup

No one entered the Monthly Cup this month! Let's hope for some entries next month – an early bunch of daffodils or an amaryllis perhaps?

Did you know?

Our greengrocer, Natalie, at Fruits and Roots, keeps plastic to a minimum, and keeps the food waste as low as possible both in the shop and in your home as you can buy just what you need. Do your bit for the environment and shop locally.

Outings for 2020

Eleanor is beavering away planning this year's outings. Details will be sent as soon as they have been finalised but in the meantime you might like to make a note of the following dates:

- o Wednesday, 29th April – Tulip time – Pashley Manor including a guided tour with Caxton House Gardens in the afternoon with cream tea.
- o Saturday, 25th July – National Memorial Arboretum including Plant Hunters Fair and another garden
- o Thursday 20th August – Beth Chatto's Garden

We will also be visiting Wisley for our "free" visit, only paying for the cost of the coach and possibly arranging another Christmas outing, please let us know if this would be of interest.

Snowdrop Gardens



The snowdrops are peeping through all over Chalfont St Giles and for a particularly lovely, local sight you might like to visit the Parish Church grounds.

You might also like to visit one of the gardens open with the National Gardens Scheme for details see www.ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/snowdrop-gardens/

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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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

Big Garden Birdwatch

25th to 27th January

Take part in the 2020 Big Garden Birdwatch. To register for a free pack and hints and tips on how to attract birds to your garden go to:
www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/

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.