

# CSGGA Newsletter

## August 2021



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237



### Inside this Issue

- August Meeting Report
- Next Month's Talk – Heavenly Hostas
- M's Monthly Action Diary
- Green Gardening Tip of the Month - bulk purchase coir
- Community Orchard Project
- Autumn Show at the AGM
- Wild Flowers on our Verges

### Growing and Showing Fruit, Vegetables and Flowers – Alan Clark

This was our first meeting back in the Memorial Hall and some 25 members enjoyed the opportunity to meet again with time to chat. Alan proved to be a very entertaining and enthusiastic speaker.

Alan started out with an account of his childhood ambitions to work in horticulture. His father was against this and thought gardening was "scratching a living from the soil like a peasant" but Alan was determined and was inspired by Percy Thrower on Gardeners Question Time. At age eleven, when horses were still in common use, he worked in the fields with a hand hoe before being promoted to driving a

horse drawn version. Alan found a job with Kingsley Nurseries and later with the RHS at Wisley. This was followed by period working in the building industry before forming his own company, First Class Gardens.

Moving on to Horticultural Shows, Alan explained that these were a particular British custom and fall into three categories of Local, County and National Shows. The basic rules are the same but with increasing need for precision and attention to the produce. The principles are always the same – the produce must be fresh, clean, undamaged, conform with the schedule and be presented to its best advantage. You must read and abide by the rules and follow the instructions. To compete at a higher level you need special exhibition seeds as ordinary seeds can vary genetically and will not give uniform produce.

To grow produce for showing you must give plenty of space and protection in the form of netting. The RHS Handbook on Showing gives details for all the requirements for every class in the schedule. To ensure success you must give plenty of care and attention throughout the growth period and plant several sowings to ensure you have the best vegetables ready at Show time. To produce massive parsnips or carrots Alan plants 5 groups of 3 seeds in an oil barrel filled with sharp sand. Once established he cuts off the tops of the weaker two in each group with a pair of scissors. Do not pull them out as this disturbs the roots of the remaining one. Greenshaft peas are excellent for exhibition but need great care and attention. Leeks are grown under lamps to control light levels for a period of 16 months to stretch them and prevent them going to seed.



Alan moved on to a short demonstration relating to presentation at shows. Always use green bikini type vases as supplied at a show. He uses damp newspaper to support the stems and to line the vase. This is better than using oasis. You need only to consider the view from the front unless flowers are in a bowl when you need an all-round effect. If you have one flower less open than the others, for example a

daffodil, you can encourage it by covering the others with foil and shining a light on it overnight and brushing it gently. This is how the experts get three perfect specimens. **Jan Bradley.**

## Next Month's Talk – 9<sup>th</sup> September

### John Baker – Heavenly Hostas

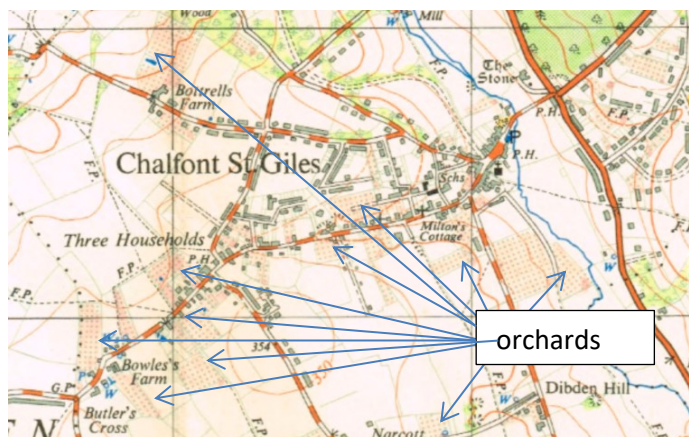
How hostas were discovered and how they have been developed. How to grow and propagate hostas. How to avoid slug and snail damage. Where to use hostas in the garden. Which companion plants look good with hostas. We also show some of our collection of over 1700 hostas and gardens in the USA where hostas are the Number 1 perennial. Hosta suppliers and societies.

## Proposed Community Orchard Project

If the pandemic has shown us anything, it's the importance of having more outdoor spaces where we can relax, play, learn and work together safely.

While we do have woods and open spaces, as the extract from a 1924 map below shows, Chalfont St Giles was once home to many orchards, and there are still some residents who remember them. While all the parishes we share boundaries with have established community orchards or nature reserves, It's sad that CSG has little to show of that heritage, except street names.

2022 is the Queen's platinum jubilee year and we are all being encouraged to plant a tree for the jubilee. Additionally, the Government is urging us all to "plant for our planet". The Garden's Association reserved



some of the proceeds from our plant sale to support these two initiatives and at our last committee meeting we discussed finding a location to plant a few fruit trees but since then our aspirations have grown! We can't think of a better way of recognising the Queen's dedication to the country than to create an orchard, a project that would benefit the village, bring together people of all ages, help with climate change and improve wellbeing.

The Committee has agreed to explore the proposal with the Parish Council and we have shared the idea on the CSGGA Facebook page to gauge interest from the wider community, the feedback has been

very positive. The orchard project will be discussed at meeting of the Parish Council in September. Meanwhile, we have contacted the landowners of two potential sites – one an existing but neglected orchard and the other an unused meadow, both would be ideal sites.

Our research indicates that there is plenty of funding available for orchard projects, particularly as orchards can help reduce our impact on climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide, removing and storing carbon while releasing oxygen back into the air, The aim is to ensure that the orchard is self-sufficient in the long term, but we'll have to ensure there's sufficient funding raised initially to cover maintenance until then.

The CSGGA Committee has agreed to help get the project off the ground - we have the insurance, bank account and constitution etc, but, I believe it would then be prudent to pass it to a separate voluntary entity. Parish Council backing will be important as well as sufficient volunteers and, from the preliminary discussions I've had the signs are that there are those in the community willing to get involved – it will be essential to ensure that there is something in it for them not just asking them to turn up to weed and water!

If you would like to see a copy of the proposal we have submitted to the Parish Council, or have any comments or suggestions or would like to get involved, please get in touch. We will be reporting progress and plans to the AGM in October. **Briony Wickenden**

## M's Action Diary for August

- Prune hebes to shape and encourage more compact growth.
- Lift and store gladioli.
- Start planning trees and shrubs whilst the soil is still warm. Shrubs in the wrong place can be lifted at the end of the month and re-sited.
- Plant hyacinth and daffodil bulbs for indoor display. Place container in a cool dark place until about 1"/2.5cm of growth appears.
- Continue deadheading spent flowers of bedding and container plants to keep them flowering longer.
- Azaleas, rhododendrons and camellia flower buds will be forming now, so keep plants well watered for a good floral display next year.
- Begin a general tidying of the garden to prevent pests and diseases over-wintering. Fork over border soil and spread a good layer of compost.
- Once flowers have gone over and seed has set, mow areas of wildflowers
- Keep an eye open for vine weevil grubs, especially in containers.
- Give lawns an Autumn feed to boost growth before cold weather sets in.



### Green Gardening Tip – Coir bulk purchase opportunity

Watchers of Gardener's World have all seen Monty Don use coir in his potting compost for years now, but I have only seen it once for sale in a garden centre. Previously I was able to buy fair trade coir from Sri Lanka but that supply dried up so, as a committed peat free gardener, I needed to source coir from elsewhere. On the web I came across Coir Products and bought some of their coir bricks and am pleased with the



result. The coco peat is a multi-use growing medium that is 100% natural, biodegradable, and eco-friendly. It is made by extracting coir from the coconut husk. The fibrous coconut husk is pre-washed and then machine dried. Thereafter, it is sieved, and any sand and other impurities such as animal and plant residue, are removed. Coco peat is an ideal alternative to conventional peat moss. The high porosity and water retention capacity make the products one of the best growing mediums around for any type of plant or crop. It is free from soil borne pathogens

and weeds and has a pH that falls in a neutral range of 5.7 – 6.5. Such characteristics of coco peat make it ideal for plant growth and for helping the development of healthy root systems.

We could do an order as the Gardens Association for the bricks and receive a discount for the bulk purchase. They are available in 650g blocks and if we order more than 6 they will cost £3.00 (including VAT) each. Other products are available, as well as the bricks coir products sell coir pots, grow cubes, plugs and chips. Go to [www.coirproducts.co.uk](http://www.coirproducts.co.uk) to order.

#### Product details

- 100% natural and biodegradable
- Ethically produced and sourced
- Neutral pH values
- Good aeration and water drainage
- Free from soil-borne pathogens and weeds
- A multipurpose growing medium, ideal for use in nurseries, gardens, greenhouses, lawns and patios
- Volume (when expanded): Approximately 10L when expanded (can vary due to the nature of the product)
- Due to the nature of the product, there can be a variation of the final weight.
- Add around 2 – 3 litre of lukewarm water to hydrate. Can add more if needed.



## How to use

- Add water and soak the coco peat block/brick
- Allow the dry coco peat to absorb water and expand (15 – 20 mins)
- Stir and fluff the coco peat (add more water if it looks dry)
- Now it is ready to be placed either on the ground or on the container/pot
- Add nutrients as required

In addition to the above attributes, there is not the waste of compost bags, which, I am sure if we put all our compost bags together would make quite a pile and, of course, no heavy bags to lug around. Please either email me or give me a call to place an order for the bricks via the Gardens Association. **Margaret Dykes**

## Autumn Show at the AGM

As we will not be having the Village Show again this year, and to celebrate being able to meet in the Memorial Hall again, we have decided to hold an Autumn Show at our AGM. It just for fun not monetary gain

- Class 1 Vase of Asters**, 3 blooms
- Class 2 Vase of Pot, African or French Marigolds** , 3 blooms
- Class 3 Vase of Roses**, 3 blooms, 1 variety
- Class 4 Chrysanthemums**, 3 blooms of any kind, may be mixed
- Class 5 Any other flower**, 3 stems 1 variety
- Class 6 Dahlia**, 3 blooms, 1 variety
- Class 7 3 Apples, eating**
- Class 8 3 Apples, cooking**
- Class 9 3 Pears**
- Class 10 3 Carrots**, foliage tied and trimmed to 10cm
- Class 11 Pumpkin / Winter squash.**
- Class 12 Any other vegetable**
- Class 13 Flowering Pot Plant** (in flower) including bulbs & orchids (max pot size 8")
- Class 14 Foliage Pot Plant** – (No flowers) max pot size 8 inches
- Class 15 Flowers From My Garden** (Not shrubs)
- Class 16 Mixed Foliage Display** (No Flowering Material) in a vase or jug.
- Class 17 Cactus or succulent.**



## Wild Flowers on our Verges

I hope you have seen the long strip of wild flowers in Townfield Lane that the Parish Council has planted. They are such a cheery sight and of course, are so valuable for wildlife. They plan to plant more wild flowers for next year, so if you have any bright ideas as to possible sites, please let me or Helen Griffiths know. [clerk@chalfontstgiles-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@chalfontstgiles-pc.gov.uk)

## Your CSGGA Committee

### Chairman and Membership Secretary:

Briony Wickenden Mulberry House, 54 Milton Fields, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4EP 01494 870482 [brionywickendke@hotmail.com](mailto:brionywickendke@hotmail.com)

**Secretary:** Jan Bradley, 23 The Lager, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4DH 01494 874704 [janbradley4@btinternet.com](mailto:janbradley4@btinternet.com)

**Treasurer:** Margaret Dykes, 4 Roughwood Fields, Roughwood Lane, Chalfont St Giles, HP8 4AA 01494 874511 [margaretdykes@btinternet.com](mailto:margaretdykes@btinternet.com)

### Committee Members:

Caroline Jackson	01494 876685
Eleanor O'Connor	01494 875646
Sam Patel	01494 875319