



A bi-monthly electronic newsletter covering a number of topics related to gardening and the broader horticultural industry



March and April 2017

Topical Tips for March

- Cut off all the leaves of *Helleborus orientalis*. The old evergreen leaves are tatty and by cutting them off now it puts more energy into the flowers and also means you can enjoy the flowers better. New leaves are being produced as they flower.
- Greenhouse sowings begin in earnest from now on – please scroll down to page 5.
- Revive stored dahlia tubers for cuttings.
- Start dormant fuchsias back into growth and then take cuttings.
- Many gardeners are aware of the value of planting snowdrops 'in-the-green' (Feb & early March) but don't forget the merits of also splitting up polyanthus after flowering.

..... and for April

- Pinch off dead bulb heads (daffs etc) and feed to build up next year's flowers. Avoid the temptation to remove the foliage until it has yellowed and wilted – not before April.
- Sow main-crop leeks.
- Take soft cuttings of garden shrubs and in many cases use rooting hormone as sold in garden centres.
- Take particular care when buying or raising tender plants – we cannot be sure of being frost free in Wickham until late May.
- Feed lawns for good summer growth as soon as they start to grow again actively.



The History of the Rose

Roses have been symbols of love, beauty, war, and politics. The rose is, according to fossil evidence, 35 million years old. In nature, the genus *Rosa* has some 150 species spread throughout the Northern Hemisphere, from Alaska to Mexico and including northern Africa. Garden cultivation of roses began some 5,000 years ago, probably in China. During the Roman period, roses were grown extensively in the Middle East. They were used as confetti at celebrations, for medicinal purposes, and as a source of perfume. Roman nobility established large public rose gardens in the south of Rome. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the popularity of roses seemed to rise and fall depending on gardening trends of the time. During the fifteenth century, the rose was used as a symbol for the factions fighting to control England. The white rose symbolized York, and the red rose symbolized Lancaster, as a result,

the conflict became known as the "War of the Roses." Roses were in such high demand during the seventeenth century that royalty considered roses or rose water as legal tender, and they were often used as barter and for payments. Napoleon's wife Josephine established an extensive collection of roses at Chateau de Malmaison, an estate seven miles west of Paris in the 1800s. This garden became the setting for Pierre Joseph Redoute's work as a botanical illustrator. In 1824, he completed his watercolour collection "Les Rose," which is still considered one of the finest records of botanical illustration. It wasn't until the late eighteenth century that cultivated roses were introduced into Europe from China. Most modern-day roses can be traced back to this ancestry. These introductions were repeat bloomers, making them unusual and of great interest to hybridizers, setting the stage for breeding work with native roses to select for hardiness and a long bloom season. Many of these early efforts by plant breeders are of great interest to today's gardeners. (*University of Illinois*).



Plant of the Month - *Eranthis hyemalis* (winter aconite)

In the bleak months of late winter, many of us seek signs that there is still life out there in the garden. Winter aconites are in the buttercup family and join the winter flower parade with their relatives the hellebores. Like many members of the buttercup family, it contains a wealth of toxic compounds. It is commonly reported that winter aconites contain cardiac glycosides such as are found in hellebores but more recent studies have not found these substances. It is now believed that winter aconites are more closely related to *Actaea* and *Cimicifuga* than to *Helleborus* as previously thought.



From the Editor's Bookcase

- The Editor was given '**Fifty Sheds of Grey**' that has the strap line 'Erotica for the not-too-modern male'. Published in 2012 by Boxtree at £9.99, the ISBN is 978-0-7522-6545-2. The book comes with the warning that it 'contains graphic shed-based images - please don't look if you are easily offended'. This book is strongly recommended to all horticulturists of either sex!
- Also recommended is '**RHS Pruning & Training**' by Christopher Brickell and David Joyce. ISBN 0-7513-0207-4. It includes some very clear instructions for the pruning and training of established and overgrown plants, something often omitted from books of this type. The recommended retail price is £19.99 but the Editor has found it on Amazon at £12.79 with free delivery.



Mushrooms

With the widely reported weather problems in Spain causing a shortage of some salad crops in our shops, it seemed to be a good time to look to alternative foods. It is a known that in 2015 more than 25% of Britain's vegetable imports came from the devastated Spanish Murcia production areas.

Mushrooms can provide more than just taste and texture for our meals - they actually have a surprisingly high nutritional value also. With more than 14,000 kinds of mushrooms in existence, only 3,000 of those are edible and about 1,400 are actually recognized as poisonous. Western Europe's most commonly consumed edible fungus is *Agaricus bisporus*.

Nutrients in Button Mushrooms

White button mushrooms, the popular ones you see in all the grocery stores, have a surprising amount of nutrients including niacin, riboflavin, folate, phosphorus, iron, panthothenic acid, zinc, potassium, copper, magnesium, vitamin B6, selenium and thiamin. In addition, white button mushroom extract has been found to reduce the size of some cancer tumours and slow down the production of some cancer cells. It is most prominently linked to reducing the risk of breast and prostate cancer.

An Excellent Source of Potassium

Most people think bananas are the high potassium food, but it may surprise you to learn that mushrooms out rank bananas on the potassium chart. Potassium helps the body process sodium and lower blood pressure. So people with hypertension or a high risk of stroke can enjoy tremendous health benefits from a regular dose of mushrooms in their diet.



A Great Weight Loss Food

For those who are always looking for nutritious weight loss foods to pack into our diets, mushrooms are a less well-known option. Mushrooms are low in calories, carbohydrates, fat and sodium. However, like watermelon, they are very high in water content (around 90% water) and fibre, which makes them a great diet food!

At Eastertime, - the 'Passion flower'

The *Passiflora* or 'Passion flower' acquired its name from descriptions of its flower parts supplied in the seventeenth century by Spanish priests in South America, known at that time as the 'New Spain'. It was known by the Spanish as 'La Flor de las cinco Llagas' or the 'The Flower With The Five Wounds.' 'Passionis' refers to (Christ's) suffering. The parts were interpreted from drawings and dried plants by Giacomo Bosio, a churchman and historian, in Rome (1609), as representing various elements of the Crucifixion. The five petals and



five sepals are the ten disciples less Judas & Peter. The corona filaments are the crown of thorns. The five stamen with anthers match the five sacred wounds & the three stigma the nails. This symbolism is not universal however, in Japan it is sometimes known as 'The Clock-faced Plant' and apparently has been adopted as a symbol for Japanese homosexuals.

The Daffodil's Trumpet

The daffodil is one of the few plants with a 'corona', a crown-like structure also referred to as the 'trumpet'. New research suggests that the corona is not an extension of the petals as previously thought, but is a distinct organ sharing more genetic identity with stamens, the pollen-producing reproductive organs. The origin of the corona has long been a subject of debate in botany, and in the 1930s botanist Agnes Arber claimed that it was an evolution



from the petals. With its colourful petal-like appearance, it's easy to see why this was believed for so long. Yet by studying the corona's development and genetic information, this new study has shown that it is in fact related to stamens. Dr Robert Scotland of the University of Oxford led the research, and was supported by colleagues at Harvard University, the United States Department of Agriculture and

the University of Western Australia. The researchers were funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation and the United States National Science Foundation. By studying the development of daffodil flowers, the researchers found that the corona only begins to form after the other parts of the flower are fully established. 'This shows that the corona could not be a straightforward modification of either petals or stamens,' explains Dr Scotland, 'Since it develops independently of both, it is more accurately described as a separate organ.'

National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Dublin

This edition features two botanic gardens that some readers might like to consider for 2017.

The National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin are 3.5 km north of Dublin city centre. It was in 1790, the Irish Parliament, with the active support of The Speaker of the House, John Foster, granted funds to the Dublin Society (now the Royal Dublin Society), to establish a public botanic garden. In 1795, the Gardens were founded on lands at Glasnevin. The original purpose of the Gardens was to promote a scientific approach to the study of agriculture. In its



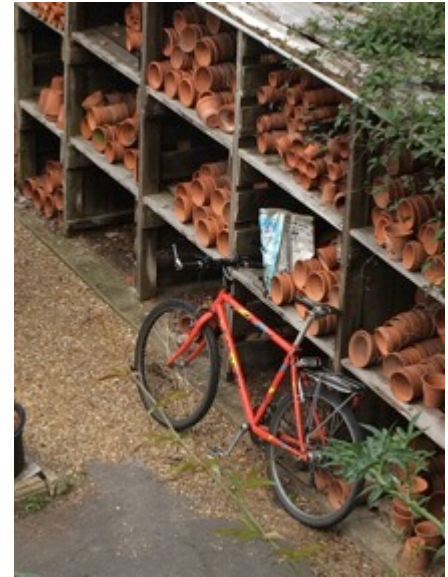
early years the Gardens demonstrated plants that were useful for animal and human food and medicine and for dyeing but it also grew plants that promoted an understanding of systematic botany or were simply beautiful or interesting in themselves. By the 1830's, the agricultural purpose of the Gardens had been overtaken by the pursuit of botanical knowledge. This was facilitated by the

arrival of plants from around the world and by closer contact with the great gardens in Britain, notably Kew and Edinburgh. These wonderful gardens are just over two miles for Dublin city centre. Flying to Dublin in the spring costs typically about £100 return and a taxi from their airport to the city centre is about €20. You can walk from the city centre to Glasnevin in 35 minutes or just hop onto a No. 4, 9 or 83 bus. Dublin is a great place to visit, the gardens are lovely and the Guinness is good as well!

Cambridge University Botanic Garden

The present Garden was opened in 1846, and was the vision of John Stevens Henslow, Professor of Botany from 1825-1861. The western half of the site was landscaped not only as a place of beauty, enjoyed by generations, but also as a botanic garden

devoted to the study of plants in their own right, and to the understanding of their diversity and origins. The meandering paths take you past trees and herbs arranged to show their family relationships, illustrating ideas about variation and the nature of species. This would ultimately be taken up in a revolutionary fashion by Henslow's most famous student, Charles Darwin. In the 1950s, the Garden was extended to occupy the eastern half of the site, and themed to demonstrate horticultural principles and grouping of plants. Today there are over 8,000 plant species from around the world, including nine National Collections, cultivated across the 40 acre heritage-listed Garden. This site is in the very centre of Cambridge with 'park-and-ride' facilities close by or a 10 minute walk from Cambridge railway station. City centre parking is expensive at typically £10 (Double Tree Hotel car park in Mill Lane and a 10 minute walk) to £20 (Lion Yard and a 5 minute walk) per day. Opening hours between April and September are from 10am–6pm. The Glasshouses and Café close 30 minutes before the Garden and the Botanic Garden Shop at Brookside closes 15 minutes before the Garden.



Diary dates

When in 2017	What	Where
28 - 30 March	RHS London Spring Plant Extravaganza & Orchid Show	RHS Horticultural Halls, London SW1P 2QW
21 - 23 April	The Garden Show at Firle Place	Lewes, Sussex BN8 6LP
23 - 27 May	RHS Chelsea Flower Show	Royal Hospital Chelsea, London SW3 4SL
9 - 11 June	The Garden Show in Summer at Stansted	Stansted Park, Rowlands Castle, Hants PO9 6DX
4 - 9 July	RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show	East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU
19 - 23 July	RHS Flower Show Tatton Park	Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6QN
28 - 30 July	The Garden Show at Loseley	Loseley Park, Guildford, Surrey GU3 1HS

In the Greenhouse

Some specific suggestions for March greenhouse sowings can be as follows, in most cases raising seedlings in modular trays. You might try beetroot 'Bolt Hardy', leek 'Musselburgh' & 'Below Zero', carrot 'Amsterdam Forcing' & 'St Valery', sweet pepper 'New Ace', salad turnip 'Snowball', Webb's lettuce, broccoli 'Atlantis', cabbage 'Minicole', celery 'Victoria', cucumber 'Cucino' and 'Pepinex', French marigolds, Cosmos

Sonato and Helichrysum Monstrosum.

Early April sowings could include statice Sinuata Fortress, Nigella 'Persian Jewels', larkspur Hyacinth Mixed, candytuft 'Candycane Mixed'. If you plan to grow butternut squash, try Hunter F₁ and courgettes 'Tosca' and 'Zucchini' in mid April followed by all of the runner beans such as 'Enorma' & 'Streamline' and French beans 'Ferrari' about a week later. Periodically re-sow crops such as lettuce, salad onions and carrots to give a bit of continuity in the kitchen during the summer months.

Horticultural quotations

- It is utterly forbidden to be half-hearted about gardening. You have got to love your garden whether you like it or not. W.C. Sellar & R.J. Yeatman, *Garden Rubbish*, 1936.
- Gardening is medicine that does not need a prescription and with no limit on dosage. *Author unknown*



Whoops!

This is the time of year to wage war on slugs and snails. Plants such as tulips and the soft young shoots of delphiniums are prime targets. Of course you can buy pet and bird friendly slug pellets or you can drench the ground around plants such as hostas with a liquid killer to kill slugs below the surface. If you agree that hosta plants look good in large ceramic glazed containers, then spray the outside of those containers with WD40 – it works a treat. Of course you can buy copper rings and special tapes and whilst these work quite well, they can be expensive to buy. Thrushes in particular love to eat snails and having a few flat stones in the borders can be very useful to the birds as they practise their snail bashing techniques. If you have the time and patience to pick snails off your plants, remember that they are nocturnal, as they do not like bright light, although they can be found during the daytime after the rain. Having picked them off your plants, try to avoid the temptation of throwing them over your garden fence or hedge as that can upset the neighbours!



And finally

The Editor would like to include as much local gardening and horticultural news as possible in future editions. For example, news of forthcoming events such as open gardens, pictures taken in your garden, questions, articles etc. My name is Mike and I can be reached at hallrainbow@btinternet.com - if you e-mail me please include the word 'Wickham' in the header of your message. Thanks.

