



## Cuddington Gardening Club

### December 2017 Newsletter

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered!  
Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803 - 1882

#### **A TALK ON ORCHIDS or not! By John Cresswell**

Twenty two members attended the club meeting on Monday, 13th November, interestingly most had come expecting a talk on orchids (as did the committee!) by John Cresswell, a passionate amateur grower of orchids, and had brought several of their own specimens for John to look at and give them advice! However John Cresswell, also a retired commercial tomato grower of some 30 plus years, thought it might be of more interest to talk about the changes in the tomato growing business! We were treated to a most interesting talk giving us facts and figures we never knew and had not imagined in the horticultural industry, in particular in the growing of tomatoes!

John outlined the changes from 1968 to 1998 and how these changes had increased the yield and number of trusses per plant. In 1968 when he first began, tomatoes were grown in soil in timber glasshouses with limited light using labour intensive processes and producing one crop per year. By 1978, soil was replaced by peat troughs and then grow bags. Carbon dioxide was used to produce larger fruit at a quicker rate all year round. The industry had also become highly computerised keeping the growing atmosphere in the glasshouses at a consistent level.

In 1988 new aluminium glasshouses increased light levels and mechanisation using battery operated rail systems between growing rows were installed. Biological controls also replaced pesticides. Pollination methods had also changed considerably since 1968 from self-pollination to mechanical shaking of the plants and the introduction of bumble bees with hives into the glasshouses. In 1984 John had moved to hydroponics, which is soilless growing in oxygenated water. He explained how system works providing nutrients circulating around a closed system in which aeration is crucial.

By 1998 tomato yields per plant had increased substantially. Plants typically being 30 feet high with 30 trusses per plant. A system of very high moving trolleys for people to climb on was developed to enable them to reach the tops of the plants. In 2017 nurseries are even bigger and have to produce 180 tons per acre to be profitable. Modern glasshouses are now the size of football pitches and the average size of a nursery is 10 acres.

Although he had talked for a considerable time about tomatoes which were quite obviously his passion, in order not to disappoint those members (all of us!) who had come to hear about growing orchids, John then talked about the three varieties of orchid showing examples of his own plants. He offered advice on their cultivation to promote flowering in Phalaenopsis, dealt with the viruses that can affect Cymbidiums and advised giving a cool dry period in winter for Dendrobiums. Members were then able to present their own plants to John for inspection and advice, which was informative and freely given. All in all most members enjoyed the talk and found it very interesting. Only a few of you were disappointed that the subject was not about Orchid growing.

*Grace Brown*

#### **Calling all Gardening Club Members!**

Many hands make light work! The committee is urgently seeking a couple of members willing to come on to the committee and help us. Nothing too strenuous or technical you don't have to be an RHS qualified gardener, in fact you don't have to be a gardener, actually just someone who likes

gardens/gardening! We are a nice band of people trying to give you all a little fun and pleasure so please think about it and perhaps get in touch with me or another committee member.

For those members who did not come to the club's 25th Anniversary Lunch, I am holding a very nice porcelain CGC mug for you as a souvenir of the club's 25 years – no charge, this is a gift! You can collect it from me Jennifer Schram de Jong at Larden, Spicketts Lane, Cuddington. You can also contact me on [www.jschramdejong@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:www.jschramdejong@yahoo.co.uk) or 01844 291501.

### **Provisional Programme of Future Events – 2018**

**CGC evenings begin at 7.30 pm in the Playing Fields Clubhouse – guests most welcome!**

**Monday, 15th January, 2018 (the third Monday)** The Club's annual social evening with supper and a light hearted quiz! A flyer to follow shortly.

**Monday, 19th February** – The Club's 26th AGM followed by a slide show of the club's 25 years

**Monday, 12th March** – Derek Dexter will speak on growing Fuchsias; this will be an interactive talk and Derek will also show us how to propagate fuchsias and will hopefully have plants for sale

**Monday, 9th April** – Edwin Rye from Wendover. A visit to Edwin's lovely garden possibly being planned for July.

**Fast Forward to June 2018** – We will be organising a coach visit to the RHS Gardens at Hyde Hall in Essex, known particularly for its lovely rose gardens.

Further possibilities are: A visit to Kathy Brown's garden – members have asked for a return visit by Rob from Waterperry. A Gardeners' Question Time with hopefully a professional gardener to advise on our gardening problems. A visit to a wholesale Herb Farm and another attempt to arrange a visit to the Eythrope Walled Garden.

The committee is working hard to complete the Programme of Events for 2018. Any suggestions from members for speakers or outings **will always be gratefully received** – in fact I am sitting at my computer/telephone awaiting your calls so please don't disappoint me!

**Tips for the winter** For those of you with greenhouses, don't forget to check if plants need a little watering. Also look out for white fly and other pestilent pests.

Potted plants left outside in winter, especially when it is wet, are in danger of the horticultural equivalent of "soggy bottoms" - "soggy compost"! Wet compost will freeze and if left, will kill off your plants. Lift pots out of water and put "feet" under them, better still, put them on the ground but still use the "feet" for protection against slugs! In severe cold weather, bubble-wrap your plants and preferably put them under cover against rain if you haven't room in your greenhouse.

Amongst Poinsettia's greatest dislikes are drafts and changes in temperature which cause leaf drop. Find a place in your home which is free from drafts and in a room with a not too hot but constant temperature. Water sparingly and don't feed while flowering. Good luck!

During the winter months, there are still jobs that you can be getting on with in addition to perusing your gardening magazines and catalogues! So keep warm and chop wood or prune something!

*A little early, I know, but may I wish you all good wishes for a happy Christmas and a peaceful, healthy, happy New Year. Looking forward to seeing you in January! Jennifer xx*