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Newsletter 125

Spring 2023



EAGG Committee

President: Maggie Thorpe

Chair: shared by Fiona Pearson and Erica Legge

Secretary: Lynne Knight

Treasurer: Louise Chambury

Website: Sue de Sabata

Newsletter: Isobel Ashton

Speakers: Widget Finn

Co-opted: Imogen Long

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Paying for subscription and tickets can be done

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by cash or cheque to EAGG

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER – Spring 2023

Dear Members,

I am maybe being lulled into a false sense of hopefulness but the sun is shining and the aconites and snowdrops are out - is it Spring?

However, I still have not planted my broad beans.

Since the Autumn Newsletter we have had a very successful wreath making afternoon, Christmas, ice and snow and upsets. Sue de Sabata having had a knee operation then fell down stairs and smashed her hip but is now on the mend, and Erica Legge has been horribly ill with a burst appendix but is home but will be taking things very gently for a while. I have organised for some flowers to be sent.

The new season of talks got off to a cracking start with Steve Edney's engaging talk about herbaceous borders and life after The Salutation Garden. The afternoon had a real buzz and seemed particularly friendly which was most encouraging for the Committee. Steve forgot to give us his flower border list but Sue had it up on the Website almost immediately. Thank you Sue. This was followed by a magical afternoon with Troy Scott-Smith, whose capacity for engaging with his audience and passing on his passion for the gardens in which he has worked made the afternoon go too quickly. An antidote to the grey and cold day.

For those who have not been able to attend the meetings we are thrilled to announce that we have a new Secretary, Lynne Knight. As mentioned at the February meeting the Committee really need, and would appreciate, some active input and suggestions from you, the Members, for visits, any particular interests and maybe speakers you would like to hear. This will help us to keep the Group fresh, relevant and interesting and help to attract new members.

Thank you so much to all of you who put your names down for the Tea Rota. This will be put into place as soon as possible and PLEASE keep the sandwiches, cakes and other goodies coming. The spread in February and March was most impressive.

I think that we are settling down in Monks Eleigh and Maggie Thorpe has found us the wonderful Gary who helps with the chairs. The problems with the delays in signing in should diminish now that the subscriptions are under control. Thank you again for your patience.

The big event of the year is the EAGG HOLIDAY and the date for your diary is 13-15 JUNE 2023 and Dorset is the destination.

Maggie and Erica have put together a stunning selection of gardens for us – Malverleys, Newbury, Cadenham Manor, Chippenham, Mapperton Gardens, Beaminster, Abbotsbury Gardens Weymouth, Mottisfont, Romsey and The Old Rectory, Farnborough. We are based in Shaftesbury at the Best Western Royal Chase Hotel. The full details are printed here in the Newsletter and on the Website. The EAGG Holiday is a splendid outing and extremely good value. Prompt booking is advised.

We still have some super talks lined up for you with Lucy Hutchings – *Growing Fruit and Veg the No-Dig Way* on 1st April. We reconvene on October 4th with Jim Paine – *The Secret Life of Plants* and our AGM on 7th November with Timothy Walker – *In the Not so Bleak Mid-Winter*.

Have a wonderful time in your garden this Spring and Summer and looking forward to seeing all of you at our meetings.

Very best wishes

Fiona Pearson Co-Chair

WELCOME – It is with great pleasure that we welcome Lynne Knight to the role of Secretary of EAGG. Lynne lives and volunteers in Lavenham and has just the right skills for us.

Lynne is a keen amateur gardener and loves the creative process that is gardening. Lynne admits to being a bit of a plant fan as there always seems to be a plant she would love to add to her garden. However, due to limited space she adds and then edits, a process which maintains her love of plants and gardening.

We are all looking forward to working with Lynne.

Fiona Pearson - Co-Chair

VISITS 2023

1st June Thursday Easton Lodge Gardens

Cost: Members: £12. Guests: £15.

Arrive 10.30+ for 11am start of our guided tour and history of the Gardens and the late owner, the Countess of Warwick. After the tour, tea and cake (included) and the opportunity to explore the gardens till closing at 3pm. Picnics are welcome.

Last date for booking 15th May.

Directions: Little Easton, Dunmow, CM6 2BD. (Use Satnav CM6 2BB). Entrance is on the right about ¼ mile beyond Little Easton Church. Directional signs from Dunmow. What3words for car park – *stocky.bulletins.opponent*.

22nd June 2023 Thursday Daws Hall Trust 2 – 5pm

Daws Hall Nature Reserve Lamarsh, Bures, Suffolk CO8 5EX
Daws Hall is a 25 acre nature reserve on the Essex-Suffolk border dedicated to environmental education..

Changing dramatically throughout the seasons, the 25 acre site is small by comparison with some nature reserves. It is often said about Daws Hall that “every acre is different”. Highlights: the staggering number of dragonflies and damselflies to be seen on the riverside in summer, the incredible wildflower meadow and, at the time we are lucky enough to be visiting, over 150 varieties of roses.

Cost £10 You are welcome to bring your own refreshments.

Last date for booking is 7th June.

12th July Wednesday 2-5pm

Tinkers Green Farm, Cornish Hall End, CM7 4HP

By kind invitation of Peter and Denny Swete

Denny is a well-known garden designer and created this most interesting garden from scratch. The 17th century cottage now sits in the middle of the five acres made up of garden, orchard and meadow.

The lawns are surrounded by yew hedging and richly coloured herbaceous borders, which include roses and perennials, leading on to another enclosed area, where there is a dark grey ornamental pool. The charming potager has fruit trees, an interesting variety of vegetables and cutting flowers, the beds are divided up by Cotswold gravel paths.

Cost £12.00 to include Tea and Cake

Directions – From Steeple Bumpstead take B1057 heading for Finchingfield. When you reach Cornish Hall End take the first right hand turn signed Great Stampford. Follow this road and after approximately one mile you pass an avenue of poplars and after a short distance parking will be on the right.

Booking events: available shortly on
website or by email to
contact@EAGG.com

CHRISTMAS WREATH MAKING 2022

We had a very successful afternoon making beautiful wreaths with Helen Newman. Each person was provided with an eco-friendly moss

base and a reel of fine wire and Helen demonstrated the method for attaching the

greenery and decorations. It was a freezing cold December Sunday but despite the weather, the hall was warm and welcoming, tea and mince pies were served and we had

our full quota of 20 participants signed up.



2023 PLANT SALES AND GARDENS OPEN

Sudbury Plant Market 1st May - 20th year. Nurseries from across East Anglia have been very loyal over the years and always bring a great range of plants. I run a plant stall to raise additional funds for the Quay Theatre and look forward to plant contributions on the day.

Bryan Thurlow

Bures Open Gardens

Saturday & Sunday 27th/28th May 2023

1.00 - 6.00 pm

Tickets £6.00 cover both days (accompanied under 16's free)

St Mary's Church: cream teas between 2-5 pm, raffle, bookstalls and local art exhibition.

Lavenham Hidden Gardens

Sunday 4th June 10.30 – 4.30

Up to 30 gardens

£5.00

Tickets in advance from Retail Therapy and Heeks in Lavenham from mid May. On the day from Tourist Information, Market Place.

Boxford Open Gardens 4th June 11 – 4pm

The Hidden Gardens of Bury

Sunday 2nd July 11.00 – 5.00pm

All proceeds to St Nicholas Hospice Care

Tickets: £7.00 from Hospice Gazebo (10.30am onwards) on Angel Hill, Bury St. Edmunds and via website.

<https://stnicholashospice.org.uk/contact-us/hidden-gardens-of-bury-tickets/>

OTHER GARDEN THINGS TO DO

Apr 1/2	Gt Dixter Spring Plant Fair
Apr 2 Su	PH Norfolk Gala – Fergus Garrett & Jimi Blake
Apr 9/10	Henham Park Plant Fair
Apr 15 Sa	Mapperton House Plant Fair DT8 3NR
Apr 16 Su	Lopham Fen Spring Plant Fair
Apr 22/23	Essex PH Plant Fair RHS Hyde Hall
Apr 30 Su	Norfolk PH Spring Plant Fair Hethersett
May 7 Su	Woottens of Wenhaston Spring Fair 10-15.00
May 13 Sa	AGS Show East Anglia Wymondham
May 28/29	Suffolk PH Spring Plant Fair Helmingham
May 31/ Jun 1	Suffolk Show
Jun 10 Sa	East Ruston Plant Fair
Jun 24 Sa	Somerleyton House Summer Plant Fair
Jul 12 We	Fuller's Mill Lily Day
Aug 20 Su	AGS Mid-Anglia Bulb Sale, Pentlow, Suffolk
Aug 27 Su	PH Norfolk Late Plant Fair Hethersett

BOOK REVIEW

THOUGHTFUL GARDENING by ROBIN LANE FOX

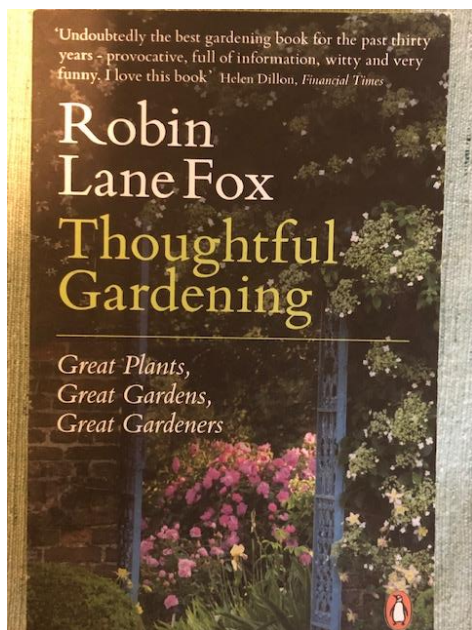
For Ancient History enthusiasts he's the biographer of Alexander the Great and an authority on the Ancient World. To undergraduates of New College Oxford he's the fierce Fellow who jealously guards the college lawns where their Summer Balls are held. To badgers he's the sworn enemy who, enraged by the havoc they caused in his garden, scattered heaps of peanut butter laced with the anti-depressant Prozac. It resulted, he says, 'in remarkable quiet on my lawn'

And to gardeners and in particular those who read the *Financial Times* on a Saturday, he's the gardening columnist who entertains, enlightens and infuriates in almost equal measure.

Robin Lane-Fox has been writing a column every week in the FT since 1970. '*Thoughtful Gardening*', a selection of his articles, was published to celebrate the 40th anniversary in 2010. The book is subtitled *Great Plants, Great Gardens, Great Gardeners*. It contains an eclectic range of subjects, from advice on fending off vine-weevils to an account of his visit to Yves St. Laurent's garden in Marrakech. He's not shy about describing his failures as well as the successes – after all, as he points out, you learn from your mistakes. His vision, conceived in what he calls 'the optimism of late youth', of a formal pattern of avenues copied from great French gardens and known four centuries ago as a 'goosefoot' only partially succeeded. Two decades later the hornbeams are twenty-five feet high and look less like a goose's foot, he says 'than the five digits on my right hand whose outer edge has become splayed with a collision with the ground in Leicestershire during an excellent day's foxhunting. I prefer to claim that I planted a Hunter's Hand.'

This combines the things which Robin loves most, according to an interview; history, gardening, foxhunting and women. The latter, not so much in a romantic context as the great women gardeners whom he has known and

admired, among them Nancy Lancaster, Vita Sackville West, Helen Dillon, Beth Chatto and Miriam Rothschild.



Thoughtful Gardening, like all Robin's writing, is full of gardening wisdom born of over half a century's experience in working with plants. You can learn a huge amount here about what to plant and when, which gardens to visit through the seasons, how to revitalise a middle-aged garden, and you'll pick up information along the way on art, literature and history.

But his writing is not for the faint-heart and 'woke'. He is opinionated, politically incorrect and one is never quite sure whether it is his mischievous sense of humour which is

teasing you. He has unfashionable views on organic gardening 'a load of politically correct hors***' while he claims that prairie gardening and wildflower meadows 'look a mess five months of the year.' And in an article about how squirrels damage gardens he offers a recipe for squirrel stew.

When Robin was interviewed for the post of gardening columnist at the FT the then editor told him that he would be tried out on a Wednesday 'because the paper has become dull mid-week. If you become dull I'll sack you.' He's still there 52 years later. Dull? Never.

'Thoughtful Gardening' by Robin Lane Fox, published by Penguin 2010

Stop Press! We are delighted that Robin Lane Fox is to be our Celebrity Speaker next year. He will be coming to the EAGG Special Event on Saturday 27th April 2024.

Widget Finn

Spring Fever.

Some years Spring comes screaming in like an unruly child, crashing about and slamming doors, and generally being very annoying. Hellebores look as if they are doing the cancan with their frilly dresses whirling. Some years, we even have snow and I rush round the garden with table cloths to protect the more delicate plants. But whatever the weather, March means lengthening days and the spring beds beginning to look like Botticelli's *Primavera*, but without the naked Venus obviously. It's still too cold for that.

Some of my favourite early spring shrubs are deliciously fragrant. *Azara microphylla* has small glossy leaves and tiny, insignificant flowers. But it is the most fragrant shrub in the garden, it smells deliciously of vanilla and on a breezy day, the scent is wafted all round the garden. It comes from Chile and a hard winter can damage it so it is best in a sheltered spot. But I have found it generally recovers from any blackening of the leaves.

Edgeworthia chrysantha is another slightly tender shrub with clusters of yellow flowers which smell slightly of custard. They show up well as they are borne on bare branches. This is definitely one that gets the tablecloth treatment on frosty nights. The flowers emerge from silky, white buttons which have a hairy appearance. *Edgeworthia* is native to China and Japan where its flaky bark is used to make expensive paper.



If you have a sheltered spot outside then *Acacia dealbata* will reward you with fluffy yellow balls with the most delicious musty fragrance. It has feathery foliage and is very quick growing and easy from seed.

Acacia pravissima is also reasonably hardy; it has a weeping habit, and unusual triangular leaves. For some reason it goes by the peculiar common name of Ovens Wattle.



Still on the scented theme, I love *Osmanthus burkwoodii*. It has small evergreen leaves, not unlike those of *Azara microphylla*. The clusters of jasmine-like flowers are very strongly scented.

And in spring we even have a fragrant clematis to enjoy; it is the evergreen

Clematis armandii. It is very vigorous and has clusters of starry flowers bursting out of plump buds. You can get a snow-white one called 'Snowdrift' or a lovely pink one called 'Apple Blossom'. *Clematis armandii* needs quite a sheltered spot as a very severe winter can kill it.

March is the time for the ubiquitous flowering currant and in terms of scent we are going from the sweetly scented to a flower which smells of cat wee. I quite like it because it smells of spring and childhood to me, because when I was small every garden had one.



If the sugary pink one is too common for you then try lovely *Ribes* 'White Icicles' which starts blooming earlier than the pink one. It looks good with the ghostly stems of *Rubus biflorus* which can spread a bit, but not as badly as the more commonly planted Ghost Bramble, *Rubus thibetanus* 'Silver Fern'. Even more sophisticated is *Ribes*

laurifolium 'Amy Doncaster' which comes from China. It has clusters of chartreuse-green flowers. It does sprawl about a bit but you can train it up something although it won't grow much taller than about 1 metre high.



Ribes speciosum is a weird kind of gooseberry with lovely shiny leaves and dangly ear ring type scarlet flowers. I grew it against a south facing wall but it does rather scream against red bricks. It comes from California.

Of course spring wouldn't be spring with some cherry blossom and I wouldn't be without the early flowering *Prunus Kursar* which blooms at the beginning of March. It has lovely dark blossom and good leaf colour in autumn. It is one of Cherry Ingram's hybrids and doesn't get too big, so is perfect for a smaller garden.

If you haven't even got space for *Prunus 'Kursar'* then you don't have to be without a cherry, because 'Kojo-no-mai' makes a delicate-looking compact shrub with pale pink blossoms developing from crimson buds. The name means 'Flight of butterflies' which suits it very well. But even in winter the plant looks attractive with a tangle of zigzag branches. All *Prunus incisa* varieties are known as Mount Fuji cherries because this is where they grow wild.



Spring flowers are a joy, especially the ones which obligingly seed around the garden. I particularly enjoy corydalis spreading everywhere in shades of pink, red, purple, blue and violet. The name is Greek and means 'crested lark'



which is pretty, if fanciful. I have not got to grips between *Corydalis solida* and *Corydalis cava*. I know the first has solid tubers and the second, hollow, but I don't want to dig them up to see which is which. *Corydalis solida* comes in a range of colours; 'George Baker' is red, 'Beth Evans' is pink and I have one called 'Blackberry Wine' which is a dusky purple colour.

Eventually though, all your named hybrids will seed around and mingle promiscuously to give you a whole range of colours. They are all lovely. The fabulous sky-blue varieties of *Corydalis flexuosa* are not so obliging and they never survive long in my garden.

Amongst these jewel-like flowers there are more and more spring bulbs flowering with such treasures as fritillaries and hellebores. This is the most exciting time in the gardening calendar even when the wind is blowing and the nights are still chilly.

Liz Wells



OUR EAGG GARDEN HOLIDAY TO DORSET

13-15 JUNE 2023

Price £416.00 plus single supplement £92.00

(Nat. Trust members £400)

BEST WESTERN ROYAL CHASE HOTEL, SHAFTESBURY

Six wonderful gardens await our arrival. If you want to come with our Group, all you need to do is telephone Kings Coaches (01206 201332) and ask for an application form for the EAGG Holiday to Dorset. We hope to have the wonderful Dee to drive us as she did for our Kent trip.

The first garden is Malverleys, 10 acres of contrasting yew hedged rooms hosting many different borders, a pond garden, stumpery and magnificent vegetable garden with striking fruit cages.

We move on to Cadenham Manor in Wiltshire where we meet the owner Victoria Nye whose Grandmother adored old roses and began planting them there in 1945 (see You-Tube (www.cadenham.com))

We drive on to our hotel. There is an indoor swimming pool for our keen swimmers.

On Day 2 we are really in Dorset, firstly visiting the very special Mapperton, a valley garden surrounding a Tudor/Jacobean house with formal Italianate gardens with wonderful fountains and statues. From there we motor a short distance to Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Garden for a feast of unusual plants and spectacular views of the Jurassic coast

.

We return to our hotel for dinner and on Day 3 set off for home, visiting the world renowned National Trust Mottisfont rose garden. There is a restaurant here for lunch after which we journey on to The Old Rectory at Farnborough, a very established garden where the owner, Mrs Todhunter has been gardening with great skill for nearly 50 years. There are herbaceous borders, roses, vegetables and a bog garden, an explosion of rare and interesting plants and stunning views across the countryside. We have tea here before our journey home, arriving in Lavenham at approximately 7 – 7.30pm

We look forward to having you with us.

Places are limited to 30 so please do hurry to book

.

Cadenham Manor

