

Baldernock Gardening Club May 2024 Newsletter:

Sun is shining, but the nights are cold

Good morning one and all,

At last we can talk about sunshine, a touch of warmth, very little wind and about soil that is not so waterlogged that it is unworkable. It has been such a release to be able to get out into the garden and to see the plants responding so quickly to the better conditions. There is plenty of colour all over the place. Our Elizabeth rhododendron (one of the first plants we planted some 39 years ago) is quite magnificent, he says modestly! It is almost completely red with very few leaves even visible. In the courtyard, the flowering cherry with a lean that puts Pisa to shame, has produced yet another eye-popping display. The *Amelanchier lamarkii* is on the cusp of joining the blossom brigade, whilst the tulips, untouched so far by deer, are almost iridescent. The *Fritillaria imperialis*, or at least one of them, has actually flowered for the second year in succession and that has taken several years to achieve, so goodness knows how long it will be before the others actually decide to join in, instead of growing up so far then giving up droopily. The tree fern has survived the mild, wet, winter and is now unfurling its fronds, which, I think, always engenders a sense of the prehistoric. The spring bulbs have been wonderful and now the candelabra primulas, in the extremely boggy bit of the garden, are hinting that those layered whorls of flowers are about to shoot skywards and the primulas have spread since last year! In amongst all this natural activity, I have been making some changes to areas of the garden with new plantings and reconstructed beds, so it has been a busy few weeks. In the greenhouse, the tomato plants are demonstrating reluctance to grow, but with some more warmth they will hopefully decide to move upwards. Seedlings of summer annuals are presenting a more positive attitude to germination and growth.

The wildlife has also been busy. The bees have been buzzing around all over the place, with the large bumble-bees almost colliding with me as I stagger around the policies. And have you noticed that there seem to be more butterflies around this spring? Our dippers are zooming up and down the stream and pond, which has become a bachelor pad for lonely drakes, as four of them have taken up temporary residence. The heron visits every morning to lessen the number of potential frogs, whilst the nuthatch makes occasional visits to the feeder and, during the day, its call rings all around the garden like a superior car alarm. The reed bunting, the song thrush and a family of wrens can be seen most days up near the compost bins. The latter two are prominent voices on the Merlin app along with the goldfinches, who are simply refusing to come into view. The whole garden is alive and there is a lot more in the offing.

Our last speaker was Graham MacNaughton of MacPlants who presented a super talk on meconopsis and gentians, plus a terrific array of plants for sale. He had very few to take back to Pencaitland. Unfortunately, his visit coincided with a ghastly day of incessant and heavy rain, which deterred quite a few of our regular attenders, which was a pity. On **Wednesday 8th May** our speaker is **Nicola Dibley**, who will be talking about the **Japanese Garden at Cowden**, a garden many of you will have visited and enjoyed. Nicola's talk will start at 19:30 and will be open to non-members. Before Nicola takes to the stage, **the Club's Annual General Meeting will take place**, so if attending, please arrive before 19:00. **The AGM will start at 19:00** and hopefully finish by 19:15, when non-members will be admitted to the hall for our last talk of this season. The new season will begin on Wednesday 11th September 2024.

The AGM will mark the termination of their sentence on the Committee of two committee members, who have both been towers of strength, sagacity and sheer hardworking commitment to the running of the club. Douglas Patrick and Marie Lees have both contributed immeasurably to the progress and success of the club. Douglas has introduced new functions making the organisation of the club's funds much easier to handle and operate. Marie has run the catering activities with inordinate dedication, especially the provision of feasts at the Christmas Party and the managing of the tea room at the Plant Sale. Personally, I will miss both of them greatly for their support and common-sense advice and Members should be grateful for all that they have done, mostly unseen, for them as club members.

Once everyone has recovered from the stresses and strains of the drama that is the AGM, we are all back in action for the **Annual Plant Sale on Saturday 11th May**. All members should have received full instructions, so there is no need for me to repeat them all again. If bringing stuff for the sale, whether it be plants, baking or old spades please do so between 10:00 a.m. and 12 noon. We are a bit thin on the

ground for helpers, especially in the setting up of the halls for use; we are in need of more "grunt"! If you haven't volunteered yet, please do so as soon as possible.

After that (phew! what a month) there is the outing to Luckie Harg's on Wednesday 15th May. Caroline has emailed all members and the response has been pretty good. Please follow Caroline's instructions about signing up for the day-trip, which has been meticulously organised.

The final event of our year **(for members only)** is the **Summer Social on Wednesday 12th June at 18:30**. The venue is Isabel Ewing's house and garden at Baldernock. Attendance lists will be available at the next meeting for you to sign up. For new members, this is a terrific social occasion where you have a perfect opportunity to meet and chatter with fellow members. It is very informal, though badges are still necessary for the Chair's sake. The club provides all the wine and soft drinks, whilst you are asked to bring along the nourishment. When signing up to attend, you will be asked whether you will be bringing a savoury or sweet dish, which all may enjoy. Basically, it is a huge taster buffet at which members load their plate full of small(ish) helpings of each of the dishes on offer. After the feast and the midges have arrived as the sun sets, you may gather up your dish and take it back home for washing. We should all pray the gardening gods do not conform to previous weather conditions of one year rain (2022), next year sunshine (2023) and that we have a gloriously warm evening to wander around and admire Isabel's wonderful garden. It is always a great way to end the club's year. As I say, sign up lists will be available at the next meeting, but if you can't be at the meeting or can't make up your mind, please indicate that you will be attending, with dish, **no later than Friday 7th June**. Similarly, if you put your name down to attend, but then can't, then please let us know as soon as you can.

I do not wish to take up any more of your gardening time, as I know you really want to be potting up your trays of plants for the sale. The weather looks as though it will remain kind to us for the next couple of weeks, which is ideal. Enjoy the sunshine, enjoy your gardens and I look forward to seeing you at all the imminent events.

With best wishes

Willie



