



FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2019

Message from the Chairman

Welcome to our autumn newsletter. We've had such a busy summer, what with spring outings, the plant sale and June garden party - it feels like the year has flown past. I'm delighted to announce that Crescent Garden has won a 15th Green Flag, a Gold award from South and South East in Bloom in the 'Small Parks' category, and as a further bonus being rated 'outstanding' from the RHS and Britain in Bloom in their 'It's your Neighbourhood' award - a tribute to the gardening team.

It's not all good news however - we lost our beautiful mulberry tree in a gale in June, almost to the day it was planted 25 years ago in remembrance of D-Day. We're also still battling the dreaded box caterpillar of which you will read more about in the head gardeners' report inside.

Nevertheless, the garden continues to mature and improve with all the love and care that the gardeners bestow on it.

Thank you for all your support at our events and for simply enjoying the garden every day.

Do have a peaceful Christmas and new year.

Elaine Martin



PLEASE NOTE!

Due to ever-rising costs we have had to implement a modest increase in our membership fee from £5 to £6. The first for many years.

Dates for your Diary

Friday 6th to Sunday 8th December
Alverstoke Christmas Tree Festival

Saturday 29th February 2pm to 4pm
Anglesey Crescent Garden AGM
Parish Centre, Alverstoke
Teas served

Spring visit - yet to be arranged

Saturday 16th May 10am to 4pm
Annual Plant Sale
All are welcome, refreshments available
More details in spring newsletter

Saturday 20th June 6pm to 8pm
Friends' Garden Party at the garden
More details in spring newsletter

www.alverstokecrescentgardens.co.uk

Head Gardeners' Report

Box Moth Caterpillar

In April, we discovered the Crescent Garden box hedge was infested with box tree moth caterpillars and started a programme of spraying with Topbuxus XenTari, a biological pesticide designed to kill just the box tree moth caterpillar. It does not harm other insects such as bees or butterflies, birds that may eat them or indeed humans. We conducted the first spraying in mid-April and followed up two weeks later with the second spraying. A third spraying was conducted six weeks later and we sprayed again in early July when there was a particularly bad recurrence of infestation. Box tree moths are active from April to October with a life cycle of 45 days. Their peak activity is from July to late August. We also put pheromone traps in trees near the box hedge which attract the male box moth so that one can monitor the number of moths in the vicinity and try to break the life cycle.

It has been an expensive and time-consuming process, stretching our Green Team and funds severely. We are taking stock as to whether to remove the hedge and replant another type of hedge or not have a hedge at all. So many areas in Britain have lost all their box bushes and we are doing our best to contain it but may have to look at complete removal or a phased replanting. Some ideas for alternatives include yew (*Taxus* sp), Japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*) or *Lonicera nitida*.



Demise of the Mulberry Tree

We also had another sad loss in the garden when our magnificent, mature mulberry tree (*Morus nigra*) split apart and had to be removed. It happened on the 6th June 2019, almost 25 years from the day it was planted. It had been donated to CG by a local campaigner for the Mulberry Harbours remaining in Britain, Maggie Christensen. Earlier in the year we had noticed a split in the trunk. A local tree surgeon has said it is quite a common phenomenon for trees to split apart as the Mulberry did after a long period of dry weather as we experienced in May, followed by heavy downpours, which happened on 6th June. The tree tries to take up as much water as possible and as it is in full-leaf it puts a massive strain on the trunk, which in the case of the mulberry tree was pulled in three

directions resulting in the schism in the trunk. We are pleased to report that at the garden party in June our local Councillors suggested holding an impromptu collection for a new mulberry tree and raised a considerable sum.

The Third casualty

At the far east end of the garden a large mature bay tree was blown over in the gales on 30th July, taking with it some smaller trees and shrubs and straddling the road. It also knocked one of the finials off the top of the railings.

Reasons to be cheerful in Crescent Garden

It's not been all doom and gloom in CG as the first few paragraphs seem to suggest! The roses have been a real treat. Both the original roses and the new roses planted last winter, have been really lovely. This has been helped in good part by the care the volunteers - led by Sarah Palmer - have lavished on them with the pruning and mulching programme, and also the new drip-line system which was extended to the horseshoe area around the fountain in early spring.

The newly planted area along terrace walk where the three Burnet roses (*Rosa pimpinellifolia*) were planted looked lovely with the under-planting of primroses, cowslips, geraniums and scented pelargoniums. We also transplanted several dogwood saplings (*Cornus sanguinea*) along the back, which added a lovely light green foliage.

In late May/early June GBC contractors carried out the bay tree removal work and crown lifting of some of the specimen trees. This has resulted in a number of areas along terrace walk having more light and opens the possibility of introducing new planting options. As a direct result of this work several shrubs, which had been struggling to survive in the dark conditions, have put on a lot of new growth and flowered more profusely. Two plants which have benefitted are the fuschias and the Persian lilac (*Syringa x persica*). It is also lovely looking along terrace walk at different times of the day and seeing the areas with the shafts of light coming through. This has also impacted the insect life in the gardens as the report predicted, as by opening up these areas along terrace walk we are seeing more butterflies, bees and dragonflies - a feature which was particularly remarked on during the judging of South and South East in Bloom.

At the West end of the garden the grinding out of the bay tree stumps by GBC contractors has meant that we have been able to set up more compost bins for the garden.

In May a number of annuals grown by the Green Team volunteers were planted in various beds around the fountain area, including corncockle (*Agrostemma githargo*), *Nicotiana*, *Echium*, spider flower (*Cleome*), cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), Bishop's flower (*Ammi majus*), cosmos etc. These plants have taken well and are enhancing the other flowers in the beds.

Finally we hope to carry out a small project at the brush area in the east end of the garden. GBC contractors have removed several bay trees but have left their stumps. We hope to be able to get these stumps removed and restructure this area to make a hazel copiced blue bell area with shrub planting which will make this area more accessible and attractive, whilst encouraging wildlife.

Irene Bugge, Stef Fisher, Sharon Miles and Gina Rowe

Garden Cuttings

Leafing through an antiquarian 'Treasury of Interesting Facts Useful in Horticulture' dated 1858, I was struck by how resourceful Victorian gardeners were and the measures they took to eradicate pests and diseases in those distant days. I've selected a few examples from the book which, hopefully, will give rise to some amusement and perhaps a little incredulity.

Apple Blight

'Spirits of tar, ammoniacal liquor from the gas works, strong tobacco water, soap suds, urine (two months old), may be used with decided benefit.' - *no apple crumble for me thank you!*

Woodlice - To clear a conservatory of

'If two or three tomtits are shut up in a conservatory for a few days, they will devour all the woodlice, without doing any injury to the plants. If a toad or two are kept constantly in the conservatory, they will devour a great number.' - *one assumes the poor creatures were eventually released!*

Gardener's Boots - To waterproof

'A pint of boiled linseed oil, half a pound of mutton suet, six ounces of clean bees' wax, and four ounces of resin are to be melted and well mixed over a fire. While warm, with a brush, lay on plentifully over new boots. The leather remains pliant' - *if not a little smelly!*

Green Fly

'Syringe the plants with tobacco water. One part ammoniacal liquor from the gas works, mixed with five or more parts of water, will also destroy the insects.' - *first find your nearest gas works!*

Liquid Manure - for strong growing edibles

'One part, by weight, of cow dung, with four parts of tepid water, or the collected drainage of the cow house or pig-stye, diluted with a similar quantity of water'. - *phew!*

To destroy Weeds and Worms in Gravel walks.

'Lay a coat of salt all over the walk, and then water it, using a rose water pot; but this should not be done where there is a box edging, or it will kill that likewise.' - *we have the box tree caterpillar for that particular task now!*

Red Spider - To destroy in Green-house

'The vapour of sulphur is fatal to these insects where the air is thoroughly impregnated with it.' - *if not somewhat dangerous for the impregnator!*

To poison Rats

'Mix arsenic and lard together, spread it on bread and push a piece into every rat-hole' - *No doubt the arsenic and the lard were kept together in the pantry!*

Trap for Snails

'Snails are particularly fond of bran; if a little is spread on the ground and covered over with a few cabbage leaves, they will congregate under them in great numbers for destroying every morning.' - *Escargot a la chou anyone?*

I have extracted these potions and remedies verbatim from a work published 161 years ago, during which time gardening for ordinary householders was evolving rapidly. Poisons and dangerous chemicals were freely available and the advent of the ubiquitous 'elf and safety' over a century away.

Richard Martin

Garden Volunteers

Night Time in Crescent Garden

The wind was a gentle whisper among our favourite trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon sailing the starlit seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight along the Crescent dark,
And the foxes came a-gambolling
Gambolling, gambolling
The foxes came a-gambolling, out for their nightly lark.

Into the garden they frolicked, beneath the trees they pass,
Badgers were there before them, digging for grubs in the grass.
The moths were flitting around them, seeking for food in the night.

Birds were asleep in their boxes,
Asleep in their wooden boxes,
But owls were out a-hunting, with cautious, silent flight.

Much dwells just there in the garden, at peace in the mellow air,
For all of the lovers of gardens, to happily, thoughtfully share.
If passing this way in the evening, stroll through
the garden and look
Then look for life by moonlight,
Watch for life by moonlight,
Expect to hear some beastie, hidden away in its nook.

No Highwayman to frighten you in Crescent Garden, but animals and plants of interest at any time of day or night.

Rita Rundle



The ceremony for our 15th Green Flag award was held on a beautiful day in August and was attended by the Worshipful Mayor of Gosport Kathy Jones and local councillors Alan Scard and Dr Phillip Raffaelli, pictured here together with our Green Team and committee.

In other news...



Commander Gillian Comrie ARRC QARNNS (1946-2019)

Sadly, after a long illness bravely fought, our good friend Gill passed away earlier this year. Gill led a long and distinguished career as a naval nurse, notably being deployed as matron on *RFA Argus* during the Gulf War.

She was a dedicated supporter of Crescent Garden, and is fondly remembered for selling our garden party tickets for many years. She would always attend our events, no matter how poorly she must have felt at times.

She will be missed by us all and lived her final years by her mantra: 'You can only play the cards that you have been dealt'.

Our successful June garden party -
blessed again with beautiful weather!



Friends at the spring outing to the Neasden Hindu Temple. The temple was constructed with Italian marble and decorated inside with hand-crafted Burmese cedar. The gardens surrounding the temple were an absolute delight. Thank you to **Enid Billington** for her excellent organisation.



Our May plant sale was a rip-roaring success and gets bigger and better every year!



Yours truly with Gina Rowe collecting our Gold award at the South and South East in Bloom ceremony at the Amex Stadium in Brighton

JOIN THE FRIENDS!

For all membership enquiries contact Ginny Whelan at virginia@fridaywhelan.plus.com
Any other enquiries contact Gina Rowe on 02392 358207