



February 2024

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

Welcome to our February Newsletter and an especially warm welcome to our new members Megan Leighton, Helen Field, Shirley Smithers, Emily Banks, Sue Warner and Sue Suban. It's great to have you with us and we look forward to saying hello in person at one of our monthly meetings, hopefully our next one on 29th February.

Time has flown since our December/January Newsletter and during those weeks we have had 2 events:

Our monthly meeting on 25th January when we welcomed Bob Brown from Cotswold Garden Flowers talking about "Light in a dark season" – a lovely insight into the wonders of nature at this time of year and the plants that can brighten up our gardens. The nursery in Evesham opens up from its Autumn/Winter break on 1st March, so well worth a visit.

And just last week, on 13th Feb, we hosted GQT at Heart of England (HoE) School – more on this later in the newsletter. It was great to see the efforts of 2023/24 come to fruition in a very successful event. Huge thanks are due to so many people; to the project team led by Doug Timmis and Marion Keely, to our 27 volunteers who made the event run safely and smoothly, to the committee for their support and ideas, to Alison who make the venue look so pretty, to Pet and her team for the refreshments, to The Lions for carparking duties in the rain, to Fast Aid for providing medical cover and to the maintenance team at HoE for all of their help and support.

Now that the dust has settled on one major event, your committee are thinking about others for 2024 and we will keep you up to date with our plans as we go through the year. In the meantime other key dates coming up for us are:

The Annual Dinner on 14th March - 63 tickets have been sold to date, so there are still a few left if you haven't got yours yet. Or, if you would like to, you can bring a guest with you, why not buy another one - family and friends are welcome.

Our annual plant sale is on 11th May, outside the Village Hall as usual. So when you are sowing seeds and taking cuttings over the coming weeks, please pop in a few extra so that we can add to the range of excellent plants we always have on offer. We usually sell out, so anything you can provide is a great help and fundraiser for the society.

And lastly, we are delighted to let you know that Edward Cotterrell has formally commenced his term as our President and Helen Goodwin, who has been a member for many years, has joined us on the Committee. 2024 is looking to be another busy year – so watch this space!

Ann

BDHS Hosts GQT

As fans of GQT will know the programme typically comes from a village hall or other public venue somewhere in Britain, and even occasionally from further afield, such as in Ireland or Northern France. GQT also often records at special locations throughout the UK including on a moving train, on top of Snowdon, from inside the Tower of London, in December 2016 from the state dining room at 10 Downing Street and on 13th Feb it was recorded at a very special place – the Heart of England School in Balsall Common.



BDHS started communicating with the BBC early in 2023 and towards the end of 2023 we were able to secure a date and begin planning in earnest. Doug Timmis had been involved when The Society last hosted the programme in October 2012 and so initially took the lead with the planning and worked with Marion Keeley to ensure that we had a packed hall for the event.

The BBC recorded 2 programmes back-to-back during the evening which will be broadcast on Friday 23rd Feb at 3pm (repeated on 25th Feb at 2pm) and Friday 15th March at 3pm (repeated 17th March at 2pm). GQT regularly attracts an audience in excess of two million and has answered over 35,000 questions over the years.

Our event was chaired by Kathy Clugston and the audience asked the panel (Bunny Guinness, James Wong & Christine Walkden) some challenging questions, which prompted a degree of lively debate among them as to the likely answers. Some of these have been the subject of ongoing debate amongst our society members!

The BBC commented that the whole event ran smoothly in a warm and friendly atmosphere and they felt very well looked after in our corner of the Midlands.

To hear which questions make the broadcast versions – remember to tune in, in the meantime there are more pictures on our website.



Recipe of the Month

From Helen Jones

Chocolate Orange Sponge Cake

Ingredients

Cake:

- 175g soft margarine
- 175g caster sugar
- 150g SR flour
- 25g cocoa, sieved
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 tbsp milk
- 3 eggs beaten
- Finely grated rind of a large orange

Buttercream Top/Filling:

- 100g hard margarine at room temperature
- 200g icing sugar
- 2 tsp orange juice
- Chocolate orange sweets to decorate

Method

1. Pre heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan)
2. Line and grease 2 x 16/17cm sponge tins, or 1 20 x 30 cm traybake tin
3. Cream the margarine and sugar in a mixing bowl until pale and fluffy
4. Add all of the remaining ingredients and mix quickly
5. Divide the mixture between the tins and level the surface
6. Bake in the centre of the oven for 25-30 minutes, until the top is golden brown and springs back when pressed with a finger
7. Allow to cool
8. Mix the ingredients for the buttercream together and beat until light and fluffy
9. If you have made 2 sponges, sandwich them together with half of the buttercream mix and spread the other half on top. Otherwise spread the whole mix over your tray bake
10. Decorate with chocolate orange segments

This was one of the cakes Helen prepared for the GQT panel – and they loved it so much that they suggested she should enter “Bake Off” 😊

Monthly Flower Spike and Pot Plant Competition

Points are awarded for first, second and third positions (First – 5 points, Second – 3 points and Third – 2 points).

Prizes are awarded for the highest aggregate points at the end of the year. Multiple entries are allowed in the “Flower Spike” class, though only one award will be made per entrant.

Pot Plant

- 1st Iris – Edward Cotterrell
- 2nd Orchid – Carolyn Travis
- 3rd Crassula Orbicularis – David Cotterrell



1st Iris
Edward Cotterrell



2nd Orchid
Carolyn Travis



3rd Crassula Orbicularis
David Cotterrell

Flower Spike

- 1st Hellebore – Edward Cotterrell
- 2nd Hamamelis – Val Cotterrell
- 3rd Autumnalis – Alison Watson



1st Hellebore
Edward Cotterrell



2nd Hamamelis
Val Cotterrell



3rd Autumnalis
Alison Watson

The competition was judged by our guest speaker, Bob Brown, who had a lovely selection to choose from. Thank you to everyone who entered - the photos of the winners are also on our website.

In February I'm sure that we will all have much more colour in our gardens and we are looking forward to seeing a lovely spring display at our next meeting on 29th Feb.

NOTICE BOARD

BDHS Meetings:

2024 Monthly Meeting Dates

7:30pm Tea & Coffee. Please remember to bring a mug with you if possible, it helps the environment and the clearing up after the meeting. Speaker starts at 8pm

Guests are welcome - there is a small charge of £3 for entry which includes refreshments.

29 th February	Paul Williams <i>(Broadcaster & Author)</i>	The Garden – A Natural History Paradise
28 th March	Roger Umpleby <i>(Entomologist)</i>	How to love Lily Beetles and admire slugs!
25 th April	Richard Rallings <i>(Mynd Hardy Plants)</i>	Five centuries of women and gardens
30 th May	Mike King	My obsession with Sarracenias
27 th June	Josh Egan <i>(Pershore College)</i>	Classic plants for classy people
26 th September	Catrina Fenton <i>(Garden Organic – Ryton)</i>	Seed saving & The Heritage Seed Library
31 st October	Nigel Hopes <i>(Hopes Garden Plants)</i>	A year in the life of John's garden

Other BDHS dates:

14 th March	Annual Dinner – 7:15pm for 7:30pm, Village Hall, Balsall Common
11 th May	Plant Sale - Village Hall, Balsall Common
20 th July	Annual Show - St Peters Hall, Balsall Common
25 th July	Social Evening - 6:30pm (Venue tbc)
28 th Nov 2024	AGM – 7:30pm

Further events/details will be announced once they are finalised

Some jobs for the next few weeks...

Despite the soggy weather of the last few weeks, signs of Spring are all around us, so it's time to get out into the garden and finish the preparations for a new gardening year...

- Keep feeding the birds – remember to put out water/deice birdbaths when frosty
- Put up nesting boxes for your feathered friends
- Finish the pruning on your hedges before the birds start looking for nesting sites
- It's time to finish the winter pruning on shrubs and fruit trees – as long as it's done before the first leaves appear, all will be well
- Hard prune *Buddleia davidii*, *Leycesteria*, *Lavatera*, hardy fuchsias & other summer flowering shrubs that flower on this year's growth
- Prune winter flowering shrubs, such as *Mahonia*, Winter Jasmine and heathers, once the flowers are finished
- Prune to near ground level large-flowering, *Viticella* & other clematis types, which flower on new growth
- Cut back deciduous ornamental grasses
- Bare-root fruit canes, bushes and trees can still be planted out, as long as the ground isn't frozen
- Check ties and supports on plants and shrubs – easier to do now before they put on leafage and new growth
- Apply general fertiliser to borders and containers
- Weed and mulch the veg plot
- Clean the greenhouse glass to maximize light and ventilate it on warm days
- Check over-wintering plants in the greenhouse for any dead, decaying or diseased parts and remove to minimize risk of fungal infection
- Tidy up the edges of ponds and remove any leaves, dead or decaying plant matter
- Keep an eye out for overwintering snails and slugs – if you get to them now they will not be around to lay their eggs later in the month
- Spread black fleece or polythene on the veg plot to help the ground warm up and get a head start with planting later in the spring
- Clean garden tools, seed trays and pots ready for planting
- Buy seed potatoes and 'chit' tubers
- Time to start the seed planting, indoors for now; sunflowers, cosmos, salvia, tomato, chilli... so many options. Get you seed packets organised and away we go, ready for another gardening year