



December 2024

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

Welcome to our December newsletter.

We have had a couple of meetings since our last newsletter in October; our AGM and our October monthly meeting. Our October speaker was Samantha Hope who stepped in at the last minute and gave an excellent talk with some beautiful slides, many from "John's garden," to highlight the different ways we can introduce colour and contrast in our gardens through the seasons. I'm sure that those of you who were able to attend have picked up some great ideas for 2025

And of course, last week we had our AGM and got the chance to socialise over the excellent buffet. The meeting was chaired by Wendy, who has decided to step back from this role going forward. We will miss Wendy's experience and guidance, though she will still be a member of our society and carry on supporting the organisation of our Annual Show – so we will continue to benefit from her active support. Thankyou Wendy for doing such a wonderful job over the last 3 years.

If you were not able to make the AGM, there is an article later in the newsletter with an overview for you.

The AGM minutes will also be published on our website which has been re-designed by Judy Lambourne and is now much more user friendly and easy to navigate. Huge thanks to Judy, we know how much work this involved and we are delighted that you were able to take this on. The website address is the same – why not have a look and let us know what you think.

Our next meeting is on 30th January when we will be welcoming Pip Smith to talk to us about "The Fragrant Garden. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

January is the time to renew your BDHS membership and you will find a form attached to the e-mail that this newsletter is sent in which has space for renewing your membership and the Annual Dinner. Great news, the Committee have been able to keep the prices that same as 2024; membership fees £15 and the Annual Dinner £27.50. Please get your forms back to us asap as it helps Helen with the admin and, if possible, please pay by BACS. Membership forms will be ready for you at the January meeting.

In the meantime I hope you all have a relaxing festive break.

Ann

AGM

The AGM was held on 28th November and was attended by 68 members. The minutes will be published in the next few weeks and appear on our website, in the meantime here's a brief summary:

We had reports from our President – Edward Cotterrel, Chair - Wendy Jenkinson and Treasurer – Helen Jones and reflected on the many achievements and successes of The Society in 2024.

This was Wendy's last meeting as our Chair. Sadly, she has made the decision to step back from this role due to her many other commitments. Wendy will remain a member and will continue to offer us her invaluable experience and support. Ann Fenton will take over from Wendy as Chair with effect from December. Committee members for 2025 were proposed and elected. In recognition of her excellent 3-year tenure as our Chair the Society presented Wendy with a thankyou gift.

The certificates for the 75th Annual Show were awarded as well as thankyous to your committee members for the roles they each play in our society's success:

Helen Jones – for hosting our summer flower arranging and Christmas wreath making workshops, growing seeds for the May plant sale as well as managing our finances and supporting Ann with the Annual Show.

Edward Cotterrell – for his support and advice, sourcing the plug plants for our Annual Show and becoming our President this year, taking over from Jackie Tomnie.

Alison Watson – for finding our excellent speakers by visiting shows, events and other garden groups, for the seasonal plant displays, photos and information at our monthly meetings. Alison also sources the spring bulbs for us to grow ready for the March competition.

Ann Fenton – for being our Annual Show Secretary, producing our Newsletter and writing articles for the Meriden Mag highlighting all we do at BDHS.

Angela Shaw – for researching gardens for us to visit, planning and organising our trips as well as taking minutes at our meetings and supporting the committee in all of our ventures.

Doug Timmis – for his guidance and advice, especially working with the BBC over BDHS hosting Gardeners Question Time earlier this year.

Marion Keeley – for her support, advice and becoming the link with Lady Katherine School in Temple Balsall and also the lead for GQT in 2024.

Pet Hawley – for her creative ideas and suggestions, supporting the catering at our events and serving refreshments at our monthly meetings.

Maggie Smith – who sources the "sundries" on sale at our monthly meetings and is a great support at our meetings.

Helen Goodwin – for her enthusiastic contributions and support at committee meetings.

There were also some special "thank-yous":

- Margaret Sears - who is always on hand to help and give support at our events and selling our raffle tickets.
- Mary Cotterrell - our internal auditor for our accounts.
- Jackie Tomnie – who retired last year from the Presidents role. In recognition of the immense support Jackie has given over her many years of membership she was awarded this year's RHS Recognition award.

Thank you to everyone who helped with the setting up and clearing away and to our "Catering Team" Helen Moore, Sue Edwards and Helen Jones for the delicious buffet.

We look forward to 2025 being another successful year for our Society and to welcoming new members.

Recipe of the Month

From Sue Edwards – as served at the AGM buffet

Smoked Mackerel Paté

Ingredients

- 165g (one pack) smoked mackerel fillets
- 1 tsp fresh grated horseradish or 2 tsp of horseradish sauce
- Grated zest and juice of a lemon
- 150ml of double cream
- 1 tbsp mayonnaise or yogurt
- Ground black pepper to season
- Lemon and cucumber slices to decorate

Method

1. Remove the skin from the mackerel and check for bones
2. Flake the flesh into the bowl of a food processor and add all of the other ingredients except the pepper
3. Blitz to a consistency you like
4. Season with pepper to taste before piling into a dish and decorating with lemon and cucumber slices
5. Chill for 2 hours (or overnight) before serving

The Annual Show 2025

The Show Schedule and Exhibitors Guidance for 2025 are now ready, these are on our website and a printed supply will be available at our meetings. Please have a read of both of these and remember that the criteria for some of the classes may have changed from what they were in 2024 – **pay special attention to pot sizes and numbers of specimens.**

Main changes for 2025:

Removed

- A17 – Longest runner bean
- G79 – Loaf of white seeded bread

Added

- C36 – Flowering shrubs (3 of different varieties – not roses)
- G79 – 6 Chelsea buns

Changes

- C32 – Display of cut garden flowers (More than 3 species)

So now that the schedule is finalised, we can all start to think about which classes we might enter, add a few seeds to our orders and make a start on ensuring that we have yet another successful show in 2025. Good luck everyone.

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 competition period (March to February). Multiple entries are allowed in the “Flower Spike” class, though only one award will be made per entrant.

Pot Plant



1st Orchid
Carolyn Travis



2nd Stonecrop
Celia Davis



3rd Succulent
Angela Shaw

Flower Spike



1st Nerine
Felicity Hill



2nd Dahlia
Sue Edwards



3rd Dahlia
Wendy Jenkinson

The competition was judged by our guest speaker, Samantha Hope, who had an excellent display to choose from. Thank you to everyone who entered - the photos of the winners are also on our website.

We are looking forward to seeing what you bring to share with us in January.

NOTICE BOARD

BDHS Meetings:

2024/25 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.

30 th January 2025	Pip Smith	The Fragrant Garden
27 th February	Alun & Jill Whitehead <i>(Aulden Farm)</i>	Wild Shropshire - Gardens and more!
27 th March	Alan Deeley	Burton Green Honey
24 th April	Lottie Allen <i>(Head Gardener)</i>	Hidcote, the vision of one man
29 th May	Duncan Coombs	The Shaded garden
26 th June	Nigel Briggs	Garden Photography
25 th Sept.	Val Bourne	A year at Spring Cottage
30 th October	Drew <i>(Lincolnshire Pond Plants)</i>	Pond Plants

Other BDHS dates:

20 th March 2025	Annual Dinner – Village Hall, Balsall Common
14 th June 2025	<i>Provisional date for our garden visit to Bluebell Arboretum and Felly Priory</i>
19 th July 2025	76 th Annual Show – St Peter's Hall, Balsall Common

Further events/details will be announced once they are finalised

Other Dates for your diary

17 th Dec 2024	WFYFC Tractor run 4:30 – 7:30pm. More than 60 tractors decked out for the festive season will take part. Starting at Berskwell & Balsall Rugby Club the trail will weave its way through Kenilworth, Leamington Spa and Warwick (along with surrounding villages). Raising money for Warwickshire YFC and Myton Hospice. More information of their website.
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Some jobs for the next few weeks...

The hours of daylight may be short, but the list of jobs isn't...

- Most of the seeds and berries have now gone so it's time to make sure that we feed our feathered friends – remember to put out water/defrost birdbaths in the chilly weather
- Harvest your winter veg for Christmas plates. Parsnips, leeks, brussels sprouts and winter cabbages, can all be left in the ground until you need them. It's difficult to harvest crops from frozen soil, so if temperatures plummet, cover the soil with straw
- If you have grown potatoes for Christmas, they should be ready now
- Keep kale, winter cabbages and other brassicas covered with netting to protect them from hungry pigeons. Remove any yellowed leaves, so that fungal diseases such as grey mould and downy mildew don't take hold
- Continue to plant bare-root fruit canes, bushes and trees, as long as the ground isn't frozen
- Winter prune apple and pear trees to control their shape and size, and to increase their productivity. If you didn't get around to it last month, you can still prune blackcurrants, gooseberries, redcurrants and whitecurrants
- It's not too late to lift and divide large clumps of rhubarb, replanting the outer sections into soil enriched with well-rotted manure. Alternatively, select a large clump to force for an early crop next spring
- Sow broad beans for a crop as early as May. Sow direct outdoors if conditions are mild (broad bean seeds should germinate within a couple of weeks and will then stop growing and enter dormancy until temperatures pick up in the spring). In cold conditions, sow into pre-warmed soil under cloches or fleece, or in multi-celled trays in a greenhouse/windowsill, which you can plant out later
- Boxing Day is the traditional day to sow onion seeds. Start them off in pots indoors or undercover, to aid germination. Plant the young onion plants out in spring, spacing them 10cm apart.
- Certain lettuce cultivars, such as 'Winter Gem', have been specially bred for their ability to grow at low temperatures and provide a harvest. Lambs' lettuce and Mustard greens can also be grown. Sow in pots in an unheated greenhouse or a cold frame, for the best results
- Prune climbing roses between now and February
- Hard prune any overgrown shrubs and hedges while they are dormant
- Snapdragons can be sown under glass, to flower from June onwards
- Sweet peas can be sown indoors, ideally in containers, such as cardboard tubes, which can then be planted into the soil, minimising root disturbance
- Order seeds and plan for 2025. Have you noticed some of the new classes in the BDHS Annual show? These could be just the thing for you