



March 2025

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

Welcome to our March Newsletter and an especially warm welcome to our new members Hazel Etherton, Nicola & Duncan Hutchinson. It was lovely to meet you at our last meeting and we are looking forward to getting to know you better.

Perhaps at our next meeting on 27th March when we will be welcoming local apiarist Alan Deeley who is buzzing in to tell us about "The fascinating world of bees & beekeeping". Alan will have quite a few props to illustrate his talk, as well as the opportunity to taste some honey and has kindly donated some as a raffle prize for us. Come along and find out why bees are so important to the environment and what we can plant in our gardens to provide for them throughout the year.

March is a great time of year to get this insight as our thoughts are now turning to our sowing and planting plans for 2025. Being able to produce a long-lasting show of flowers that will delight us and the bees has got to be a gratifying experience. Plus you might just snap a winning photo for the photography section of our Annual Show. The classes are my favourite flower, garden scene and back to nature. Lots of scope there (the schedule is on our website).

A colourful garden is something that the Methodist Church in Meriden has been thinking about and in the winter edition of the Meriden Mag they had an article about their hopes for their garden. BDHS donated some compost for them to get the seed sowing off to a flying start. They sent us a lovely thankyou card which you can see later in the Newsletter. We are always happy to support local causes and are exploring ways that we can engage more with the Foundation of Lady Katherine Leveson in Temple Balsall (The primary school takes part in the children's art competition as part of our annual show). If you know of other local endeavours that we could consider, please let us know.

We have lots of events planned for 2025, our Annual dinner on 20th March is our next opportunity to get together and as well as our monthly meetings we have other events that you can see in the notice board section of the newsletter.

One event that we are still looking for ideas for is our "summer social" when we usually visit one of our members gardens for a few snacks and refreshments. If you have any ideas for gardens to host this, please get in touch. The committee takes care of the arrangements, so there is nothing for the host to do, other than be our host.

Ann

Wild Shropshire, Gardens and More – Alun & Jill Whitehead

Alun & Jill shared some beautiful photos with us and were kind enough to send us a list of the key ones visited along with the schemes that they open within. So if their stories and slides inspired you, have a look at the gardens below and, if you visit them before our Annual Show on 19th July, you might find something you could enter into the photography session.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Gredington, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 3DH | Historic Churches |
| • Attingham Park NT SY4 4TP | Ludlow Secret Gardens |
| • Marehay Farm, Rattinghope SY5 0SJ | Closed |
| • Cardington Open Gardens, Church Stretton SY6 7JZ | NGS & Historic Churches |
| • Ruthall Manor, Bridgnorth WV16 6TN NGS | |
| • Sibberscote Manor, Lea Cross SY5 8JF | Occasionally for charity |
| • The Dower House, Morville Hall WV16 5NV | NGS & Historic Churches |
| • Windy Ridge, Little Wenlock TF6 5BB NGS | |
| • Preen Manor, Church Preen SY6 7LQ NGS | |
| • Hawkstone Park, Weston-under-Redcastle SY4 5JY | Open during season |
| • Wollerton Old Hall, Market Drayton TF9 3NA | NGS & regular openings |
| • Hodnet Hall, Market Drayton TF9 3NN | NGS & regular openings |
| • Goldstone Hall Hotel, Market Drayton TF9 2NA | NGS |
| • Stokesay Court, Onibury SY7 9BD | Historic Churches |
| • Moortown, nr Wellington TF 6JE | NGS |

Thankyou from the Methodist Church in Meriden



Just a note
to say thank you
for the compost.
Now that spring
is here we
will make good
use of it.
Julie
(Meriden Church
garden)
A garden for
Meriden.

The garden at the Methodist Church in Meriden is undergoing a re-vamp and aims to provide a quiet space for reflection. The volunteers will be working hard in the garden over the next few months to get it ready to take part in the Meriden Open gardens later in the year.

Recipe of the Month

Pet's Chocolate Cake

(As sampled at our January meeting)

Ingredients

For the cake:

- 50g sifted cocoa powder
- 6 tbsp boiling water
- 3 large eggs
- 50ml milk
- 175g SR flour
- 1 rounded tsp baking powder
- 100g softened butter
- 275g caster sugar

For the icing and filling:

- 3 tbsp apricot jam
- 150g plain chocolate
- 150ml pouring double cream

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180°C/160°C fan and prepare 2 x 20cm sandwich tins (grease the tins and line the bases with parchment paper).
2. Blend the cocoa and boiling water in a large bowl, then add the remaining cake ingredients and beat until the mixture has become a smooth, thickish batter. Divide the mixture equally between the 2 tins and level the surfaces.
3. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until well risen and the tops of the cakes spring back when lightly pressed with a finger. Leave to cool in the tins for a few minutes, then turn out, peel off the parchment and finish cooling on a wire rack.
4. To make the icing, warm the apricot jam in a small pan and spread a little over the base of one cake and the top of the other. Break the chocolate into pieces and gently heat with the cream in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water for about 10 minutes or until the chocolate has melted, stirring occasionally. Remove the bowl from the heat and stir the mixture to make sure the chocolate has completely melted and is evenly distributed through the cream. Leave to cool to the point of setting then spread on top of the apricot jam on both cakes.
5. Sandwich the cakes together and use a small palette knife to smooth the icing of the top cake. Keep in a cool place until ready to serve.

Note – cake can be frozen iced or un-iced for a month

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 Snowdrops
Alison Watson



2nd Scilla
Marion Keeley



3rd Cyclamen
Sue Edwards

Flower Spike



1st Sarcococca
Mandy Ghent



2nd Snowdrop
Val Cotterrell



3rd Hellebore
Derek Hill

The competition was judged by our guest speakers, Alun and Jill Whitehead, who had a beautiful display to choose from, highlighting that spring is on its way. 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 at our March meeting, when spring will be well and truly sprung.

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. The meeting starts at 8pm

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

27 th March	Alan Deeley <i>(Burton Green Honey)</i>	The fascinating world of bees & beekeeping
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	Annual Dinner – Village Hall, Balsall Common (£27.50 per ticket)
10 th May	Plant Sale – 10am to 11:30am. Village Hall, Balsall Common
4 th June	Garden visit to Bodenham Arboretum and John's Garden at Ashwood Nurseries (£25 per ticket, £30 for guests)
19 th July	76 th Annual Show – St Peter's Hall, Balsall Common
27 th Nov	AGM & Buffet – 7:30pm. Village Hall, Balsall Common

Further events/details will be announced once they are finalised

Other Dates for your diary

28 th March	Rowington Spring Flower Show. 7.30pm Licensed Bar, light Supper, raffle (£10 per ticket) More details on circulated poster. Contact Lucy Marsden on 01564 784823 or 07887 526544
6 th April	Temple Balsall Sunday Teas 2:30pm - 4:30pm. Recurs the 1st Sunday in the month from April – September. More details on circulated poster

Some jobs for the next few weeks...

Now that Spring is here there's plenty to do in the garden...

- Keep feeding the birds – remember to refresh the water and defrost birdbaths when frosty
- Keep on top of the weeding – seedlings may not be growing much in the cold temperatures but the weeds are
- Deadhead spring bulbs as they finish flowering, leaving the leaves in place for at least 8 weeks or until they die down naturally
- Lift and divide large clumps of Snowdrops after they have finished flowering
- Finish cutting back / splitting hardy perennials and ornamental grasses, feed, then apply mulch to beds & around trees
- Lift and divide herbs
- Cut dogwoods, willows, cotinus and paulownia right down to the base to promote vigorous new growth
- Complete the pruning of shrubs & climbers that flower on new growth such as Buddleia, Hydrangea, Lavatera, Sambucus and Hardy Fuchsias
- Finish pruning late summer flowering (from July onwards / Group 3) clematis
- If you didn't prune your bush and climbing roses before winter you can do it now
- Plant woody shrubs so that the roots can start to grow before the demands of the foliage begins
- Mulch fruit trees and bushes; bare rooted fruit can still be planted
- Lawns can be mown lightly when dry, spike & feed if required, tidy up lawn edges. Grass seed may be sown & turf laid
- Plant shallot / onion sets, asparagus, new rhubarb crowns, strawberry plants and early potatoes
- Sweet peas can be sown outside this month. Place autumn-sown sweet peas in a sunny position, perhaps on a high shelf in the greenhouse that gets plenty of light. Sow summer bedding plants in a heated propagator or under glass
- Plant out autumn sown Broad Bean seedlings
- Start Dahlia tubers off in damp potting compost; when shoots appear these may be used for cuttings.
- Tidy up alpines as they start to flower, removing dead foliage, then mulch with grit to keep the foliage off damp soil
- Plant lilies and other summer-flowering bulbs in pots and borders
- Feed ericaceous shrubs, such as rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and Pieris, with an ericaceous fertiliser
- Keep a few dandelions in your garden if you can to support early bees, particularly pantaloon bees