

Hazelbury Bryan Gardening Club Chairman's AGM Report 2015

What a difference a year makes.

Winter 2014 was an exceptionally stormy one, in fact the stormiest period of weather experienced by the UK for at least 20 years when we were battered by at least 12 major winter storms in mid-December to early January, and again from late January to mid-February. This was followed by a much more benign and unexceptional Spring with some settled spells and temperatures remaining broadly above average. The summer saw several spells of fine, settled weather in both June and July but no major heat-waves. However August was rather more unsettled and cooler with very heavy rainfall at times. The Autumn began with plenty of fine, settled weather and little rainfall but was followed in October and November by more typical autumnal weather with unsettled conditions bringing periods of heavy rain and some strong winds at times

This year thankfully we are having a more normal winter. A bit of this and a bit of that. Some rain to top up the aquifers and some hard frost to kill off the pests. Fingers crossed we have a more normal Spring, Summer and Autumn. No extremes.

Why do I start this report with a quick resumé of the last years weather. Because, as gardeners, we are so dependent on it.

Cold weather, particularly frost, causes the water in plant cells to freeze, damaging the cell wall. Our prized specimens become limp, blackened and distorted. Evergreen plants often turn brown and the leaves of tender plants take on a translucent appearance. Frost problems are often made worse where plants face the morning sun, as this causes them to defrost quickly, rupturing their cell walls. Hardy plants and tough evergreens can also be damaged by prolonged spells of severe cold when soil becomes frozen. Roots are unable to take up water and plants die from lack of moisture. Periods of cold, frosty weather during April and May can also kill blossom and damage fruit. And we don't want to go out in the cold do we?

When soil is waterlogged, plants literally drown. Water fills all the air spaces between the soil particles and this prevents oxygen from reaching the roots. In turn, this causes the soil to stagnate and prevents root growth. And we don't want to go out in the wet do we?

A lack of water can cause stunted growth, flowers to shrivel up and fruit to drop. In extreme cases plants shrivel up and die. And we don't want to go out in the heat do we?

But are we down hearted. No we're not. Each year we rise to the challenge. As soon as there is a whiff of Spring in the air we are off with a spring in our step to Castle Gardens clutching our 25% of voucher to replace our drowned, frozen and shriveled plants and to stock up for the season ahead.

Last year was actually a good growing year. We didn't get too many hard frosts and the spring was relatively mild so if your plants didn't drown over the Winter they got off to a good start. The warm weather in June and July meant that we got some good flowers and vegetable as was evidenced at the annual show.

Throughout the year the meetings were all well attended. They covered

- Gardening for Wildlife,
- Autumn and Winter Colour
- Smuggling Trails & Trails,
- Pruning Trees,
- Plants for Specific Places,

We went on three outings this year. The first was the annual visit to Castle Gardens for a talk on what new plant and products are available, a cup of tea and a biscuit and then some retail therapy – not forgetting your 25% off of course.

The second outing was the coach outing in June was to Sir Harold Hillier Gardens near Romsey. The weather wasn't that wonderful but the Centenary Gardens were very attractive.

The third outing in July was to The Old Rectory, Manston. A very interesting garden most of which has been developed over the last 8 years. The gardens consisted of a mixture of mature trees, a flower meadow, a small arboretum only planted in 2003 and some beautiful flower borders.

In May we are going to visit the Old Smithy at Ibberton to see their display of Spring flowers.

This year the coach outing is to Hestercombe near Taunton on Tuesday 23rd June. Hestercombe is a unique combination of three centuries of garden design: Coplestone Warre Bampfylde's Georgian landscape garden, the Victorian terrace and shrubbery and the stunning Edwardian garden design by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll. The gardens have undergone acclaimed restoration works and today provide important examples of gardens in contrasting styles that continue to grow and develop. There is the Stables Kitchen with a bright, airy, stylish Courtyard

and a beautiful vintage tearoom inside Hestercombe House serving full afternoon teas and light lunches. There is also a Gardens Shop which is full of beautiful things for the home and garden and the Plant Centre is well stocked with a wide variety of plants. These facilities and the well-appointed picnic area. Book up early

The Annual Show in August was very well supported with a record number of entries. Again the judges were very impressed with all the entries. Congratulations to all those who were awarded cups and certificates. This year's show is on Sunday 2nd August.

The year was wrapped up with a Christmas Social in the village hall attended by 28 members. The hall was set up and decorated by the committee and a very tasty meal was cooked and served by Else Family Butchers of Stalbridge. The evening finished with a couple of brain teasing quizzes. A very pleasant evening.

I finally like to thank the committee of Julie Bennett (Secretary), Jenny Allen (Membership Secretary), Angela Tingey (Treasurer), Jan Marriot (Vice Chairman and Show Organiser), Ruth Comer, Alma Tenwick, Sarah Mills and finally Barbara Rance who is resigning, for all their help and support in the last year. Thank you.

Matthew Mills

Chairman

February 2015