



## October 2026 Newsletter

[www.gardenclub.org.uk](http://www.gardenclub.org.uk)



### Hello

Very warm for the time of year! We're into October and not much rain fell last month; we are all moaning about the state of our lawns!

On a brighter note, and as previously mentioned, Chenies Manor has its Dahlia Festival on Monday and Tuesday afternoons through to the end of October.

Our next Speaker is Chris Day talking about bulbs for all seasons, details below and just one Garden is open under the National Garden Scheme in October. It is Acer Corner in Wendover open on two days – Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>. It has over 70 acers in the garden and was featured on Gardeners' World last November. The following link takes you to the NGS site -'

[https://ngs.org.uk/gardens/near/buckinghamshire/?all\\_gardens&temp=17376352691238259657](https://ngs.org.uk/gardens/near/buckinghamshire/?all_gardens&temp=17376352691238259657)

*Julie*

### Next Meeting

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October at 8pm**

Church Hall, Church Lane Chalfont St Peter SL9 9RJ

**Chris Day**

**'A Bulb for All Seasons – Jan-March & Sept-Nov'**

We are delighted to welcome back Chris Day, Nursery Manager at Alban Hill Nurseries near Newport Pagnell. It is a family focused plant orientated nursery. Chris has also written for and edited weekly and monthly garden magazines and has edited gardening websites.

Chris will help us explore bulbs - planting, displaying, associating, and growing them in your garden. This talk is prop driven with plenty of practical stuff too!

<https://www.albanhillnurseries.co.uk/>

*Julie*

### Dates for your Diary

Wed 18<sup>th</sup> November: Speaker Sandy Primrose 'Performance Plants'  
Wed 25<sup>th</sup> November: Outing to RHS Wisley Glow; booking now open!  
Wed 16<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Social: Meal & Entertainment by 'Ifty' Amazing Magician

**RHS Discount card:** The RHS is offering affiliated clubs use of a Discount Card enabling up to two club members gain entry to any of the five RHS gardens with 50% off. Email committee member Karen at [CSP\\_GardenclubKaren@outlook.com](mailto:CSP_GardenclubKaren@outlook.com) to reserve the card for a date that suits you.

**Discounts:** On production of your membership card, you get 10% off outdoor plants not already on offer at both **Rowan Garden Centre** and **Farnham Common Nurseries**.

We also get 50% off seeds and 20% off live plants and bulbs at **Dobies /Suttons** (same company) either on line or using an order form. Visit the Hut or contact [info@gardenclub.org.uk](mailto:info@gardenclub.org.uk) for the new discount code which is valid until the end of August 2027.

## JANE'S OCTOBER GARDEN TIPS

Clear away bedding plants saving any seed, weed and fork over, spread on compost or manure.

Another way to add a mulch to the soil is to try the popular method of chop and drop technique. When the old growth of herbaceous perennials is cut back, instead of composting it or disposing of it, simply cut up the trimmings into small pieces and let them lie in place. This forms a layer that covers the soil around the plants and decomposes in situ. It benefits wildlife and the health of your soil, and is a great way of doing more by doing less.

Lift dahlias, cut back stems and get rid of as much soil as possible from the tubers. Allow tubers to dry out by turning them upside down for a few weeks, before storing in boxes of peat free compost.

Also, dig up tender bulbs, begonias, cannas, and gladioli allowing them to dry before storage in trays.

Take hardwood cuttings from plants such as buddleia, forsythia, spiraea and philadelphus. Cuttings should be 10" long. Choose a sheltered spot and make a slit trench in which to plant the cuttings so that the lower 2/3 is buried, transplant rooted cuttings next autumn.

Lift and divide herbaceous perennials which have outgrown their current position.

Continue raking leaves, especially from places where they cover small plants. Suck up leaves from the grass using the mower, setting blades higher, this will shred the leaves speeding up the compost process. Lawns are often expected to look great year after year especially this year when they looked so dead. After such a hot summer, they are now beginning to recover and may even need a trim. With no investment in nutrition, and after the dry summers we have had in the last few years, most lawns will need some attention. So, if your lawn needs reinvigorating then now's the time to give it an autumn weed and feed and a top dressing. If it is covered in moss or thatch it will need scarifying or raking before adding anything; also go over poorly drained areas with hollow tined aerator or fork and brush equal parts of sharp sand and compost into the bare areas, also adding some grass seed as necessary. Hopefully, autumn rain will keep it watered to allow new seeded areas to grow. When cutting the grass at this time of year raise the blade level.

Plant garlic placing one clove in each hole with the tip just showing.

Sow broad beans in shallow trenches for a crop in early summer.

Remove yellow leaves from brassicas to prevent diseases spreading.

Continue to check stored vegetables and fruit for signs of rotting.

After clearing out old crops from the greenhouse give it a good clean and then try some winter salad crops such as winter lettuce, radish, mustard and cress in old grow bags.

If you fancy fresh mint during the winter, pot up some roots now for forcing indoors on a well-lit windowsill to encourage fresh new growth.

Jane

## HUT REPORT - OCTOBER

OPEN ON SUNDAYS 10am to 12noon

Greetings from the Garden Hut team

Autumn is now upon us and the weather is cooling down as we enter the last month and a half of Hut trading for the year.

The Hut has stocks of almost all items including composts and additives to encourage establishment for cuttings and plants.

We have had some enquiries for autumn lawn feed; historically it was found that there was not much demand for this item so stock holding was discontinued. We would like to understand what appetite there is for this type of product so that we can investigate possible stockholding next year. Can interested parties please contact the Hut manager at [sl9gardenchalfont@gmail.com](mailto:sl9gardenchalfont@gmail.com) to register their interest. 07759 18856; [sl9gardenchalfont@gmail.com](mailto:sl9gardenchalfont@gmail.com) Simon

## YOUR PAGE

**AVAILABLE** 16" Atco Petrol Cylinder Mower. Please contact Penny Amlot on 01753 883119 or email her at [penny@armlot.net](mailto:penny@armlot.net).

If anyone wants to sell any item or wishes to put anything of interest into the Newsletter then please email at [dianalongshaw@outlook.com](mailto:dianalongshaw@outlook.com)

## TALK REPORT

Wednesday 16th September 2026

### Alec White Growing Peonies / Behind the Medals

Alec White, with his parents, have bought an 8 acres site near Toddington. It was this Nursery that featured on BBC RHS Chelsea with Mary Berry. Alec has won 21 RHS medals and his Talk took us through the highs and lows of exhibiting but also the relative ease of growing peonies. Alec has published and had his book 'A Love Affair with Peonies' with him. Horticulture was in the family as his great grandfather grew plants professionally. Alec had practised as a lawyer but always thought his love of plants would be his priority and he turned to horticulture too as a profession. He is in the unusual position of having won 2 medals in the same year for different flowers – Peonies and Alstroemeria – although he just concentrates now on Peonies. It was his determination to experiment by growing a wide range of flowers that led him to the peony as the one flower that stood out from all the rest.

Peonies are fragrant, don't have pests and diseases and the range of cultivars flower from April – July; the single and doubles can be impressive. They grow in any free draining soil but the key rule is to plant 1-2" below ground level. Any deeper can limit flowering. So, mulching around, not close to the plant, is important. Tree peonies are different and should be planted 6" below ground level. The intersectional peony is a cross between the herbaceous peony, which most people grow, and the tree peony.

Alec took us through the trials and tribulations of exhibiting at Chelsea and the need to have a large range of cut flowers ready for that one week in May. Polytunnels are used to warm up thousands of flowers and show garden designers need them to be in flower for at least two weeks so Alec is planning for their gardens as well as his own stand. RHS Judges look at everything on the stand, not just the flowers. Perfection has to reign in every aspect. In the early years Silver and Silver Gilt were awarded largely to do with extraneous issues. Once educated Gold Medals were to follow! Alec's first show was at Hampton Court in 2012 and in 2015 he was 'invited' into the tent at Gardeners' World Live as a test before being invited into the Chelsea marquee the following year. His designs have included a 'chandelier' of peonies and a 'river of peonies'. By his 4<sup>th</sup> year at Chelsea Alec had created a walk-through stand which included a bath filled with peonies. Judging and Royal visits (including Queen Elizabeth) and the need to be open 8-8 can lead to mishaps, one of which included the breaking of a huge glass vase which was central, with another, to the exhibition. Alec was in London the next morning at 4am collecting a replacement with everything in place by Judging time! Both of Alec's parents are involved in building the stand and the wider team members are enriched by the team beliefs – perseverance, determination, observation, attention to detail, passion and teamwork.

Julie



## OCTOBER HEDGEROW RECIPES

**SLOES** Very seasonal and ready to be picked in October and November. Traditionally picked after the first frost, but you could pick them earlier and freeze to mimic that first frost. The theory behind this is that frost splits the skins so the juices are released easily when cooking. You can use frozen sloes in this recipe; they take a little longer to cook down and you need to remove the stones after cooking. The following Sauce Recipe is excellent with Pork Chops or any other meat where the stronger taste is useful.

handful of **sloes** or bullaces (c. 100g/3½oz): 15g/½oz butter  
 1 banana **shallot**, finely chopped: 1 large **garlic** clove, finely chopped or grated  
 100ml/3½fl oz **red wine**: few sprigs fresh **thyme**:  
 100–120ml/3½–4fl oz chicken or other meat stock: 1 tbsprunny honey or soft **brown sugar**

To make the sauce, stone the sloes using your fingers or a cherry stoner (alternatively, stone them after cooking, which is messy but easier). Put in a small pan and add just enough water to cover (approximately 150ml/¼ pint). Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and poach for a few minutes to allow them to break down a little. Set aside.

In another saucepan, heat the butter. Add the shallot and garlic and cook for 1–2 minutes. Stir in the remaining ingredients and the poached fruit, including any poaching water. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 3–5 minutes. Taste the sauce and add a little more honey or sugar, if needed. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**ELDERBERRIES** Overlooked but really worth gathering. You can use them whole added to apple pies or, of course, with Blackberries. They also make a good sharp Jam as very similar the Blackcurrants.

**Pontack Sauce:** This is a Sauce used to accompany rich meats like Liver but, more particularly, game and duck. It was traditionally kept for up to 7 (yes seven) years so that the flavours intensified.

500 ml (1 pint) boiling vinegar (or claret!): 500 ml (1 pint) Elderberries  
 1 tsp salt: 1 blade mace: 40 peppercorns: 12 cloves: ½ tsp ginger: 1 onion, finely chopped.

Pour the vinegar (or claret) over the elderberries in a stone jar or casserole dish. Cover, leave overnight in an oven at a very low heat. Next day, pour off the liquid and put it in a saucepan with the salt, mace, peppercorns, cloves, onion and ginger. Boil for 10 minutes and bottle securely with the spices. The sauce improves with age.

**ROWAN BERRIES** These can be brewed into ale but the easier option is to make Rowan Jelly which is a deliciously dark orange with a sharp, marmaladish flavour which is perfect with game, lamb and cheese.

4 lbs (1.8 kg) rowan berries: 3 lbs (1.4 kg) Crab Apples, peeled, cored, and quartered:  
 12oz (350g) white sugar (for every 1 pint 600 ml of juice) Water.  
 You can also add a handful (or two) of Rosemary leaves if you like. Adds another dimension.

Put rowan berries and apples into a large pan or stockpot (there should be room for the berries to reach a good rolling boil and not be crammed in). Barely cover the fruit with cold water. Using medium-heat, bring the fruit to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the fruit is soft. Let the mixture cool off for 5 minutes and place, with a bowl underneath, in a jelly strainer bag overnight, at least 12 hours. It's very important not to squeeze the jelly bag to extract more juice as this will make the finished jelly cloudy. Although it will still be delicious, it won't look as pretty.

Measure the juice you've collected and weigh-out the correct amount of sugar as directed above. Add the juice and sugar to a clean large pan or stockpot and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes until the sugar has dissolved.

Increase the heat and cook at a full rolling boil for 5 minutes, then test for a set. When the jelly has reached the setting point, pour into hot, sterilized jars.

### GARDEN CLUB CONTACTS

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