

Gotherington Gardening Club

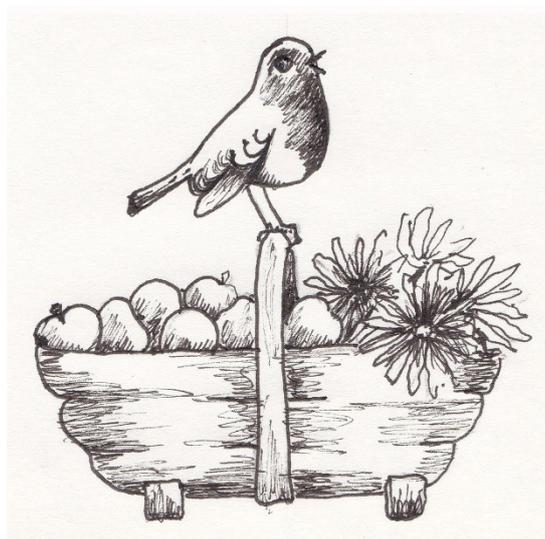
June 2020

Like many other regular activities, Gotherington Gardening Club has had to suspend our monthly meetings since February. We have also been unable to hold our plant sale at the June village hall coffee morning, enjoy our summer garden party and go on a planned club trip to Winterbourne House and Gardens in Birmingham. However, all the speakers have been rebooked and we'll look forward to restarting meetings when it is safe to do so.

Meanwhile, for those of us lucky enough not to have to juggle work and childcare, we have had time to enjoy our gardens. Some of us have also had time to think about gardening and write down some early memories and reflections.

Until the club can meet again, we hope that members will enjoy reading the following articles.

Cathy and Kirsty



Early gardening memories

When I was young we were always moving from one place to another and living in rented accommodation. The gardens were invariably overgrown and the first thing my father did was to put all the rubbish into a pile and turn it into a rockery.

I am sure that many an archaeological dig today has to be abandoned when they find that the ancient burial mound being excavated is in fact the remains of one of these rockeries.

So I was always interested in gardening and it became a passion when I was about 14 and acquired an allotment (rent 1 shilling a year).

My mother usually stayed at home but my father and I spent a great deal of time there. The other member of the family who dearly loved the allotment was Tab (full name Thomas Ab-Normal), our cat. We kept the wheelbarrow and tools at home and as soon as he saw us loading up he stopped doing whatever he was up to, however important, and was impatient to go.

The journey was not without its hazards as we had to pass a house with a rather fierce dog in residence. Still, a true gardener cannot be deterred so Tab head down scurried past at speed.

The other thing I remember about those times was the only pest seemed to be flea beetle. If only that was the case today!

And what of the allotment today? I am sad to say it is the site of a rather unimposing block of flats. I believe this is called 'progress'.

Peter Hulme

My garden sanctuary during lockdown

This March the UK was hit by the COVID-19 Virus, an experience we have never experienced in our lifetime. The Government instructed us to STAY AT HOME AND SAVE LIVES except for one walk per day. Due to my age group, regardless of the fact that I am fit and healthy, I was in total isolation and never envisaged that the days would turn into weeks and now into months. Every day I feel so lucky not to have been one of the many who have sadly lost their lives to this virus and give thanks to the NHS Staff for their bravery and dedication.

Every day I walk across the fields and paths in the hope that I will meet someone just to say hello from a distance. I facetime my daughter in Sydney, speak to friends and family on the 'phone but my garden is my sanctuary. It is said that the garden is a love song, a duet between a human being and Mother Nature.

Due to Alan contracting Alzheimer's disease ten years ago we had to down-size and leave our "Jewel in the Crown" home and garden. We looked at property in Woodmancote and returning home took the wrong turning, ending up in Gotherington where we saw our present bungalow for sale. We saw its potential with the beautiful view and this was definitely meant to be.

This garden only had four hydrangeas in it and every time we wanted to plant something we came across builder's rubble. We persevered and now have a beautiful peaceful creation that has saved my sanity over the last months.

I cannot hear the Toddington Steam Train due to the Railway being closed at the present time but seeing the garden coming to life in the Spring, the house martins arriving, the ducks from Tilley's farm flying over, the birds singing and building their nests, the squirrel up to his antics, the woodpecker pecking the lawn for ants and last but not least the fragrance from the flowers, especially my Dublin Bay Red Rose, makes each day worthwhile.

When the situation returns to some normality in the not too distant future, I am looking forward to meeting my friends and family in person once again together with joining the various meetings at the Village Hall, including the Coffee Morning. My thanks go to Caroline who has kept me in touch with the History Club and Cathy for keeping the Garden Club alive through her emails.

THERE WILL BE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL EVENTUALLY AND TO PLANT A GARDEN IS TO BELIEVE IN TOMORROW.

Virginia Cooper



Virginia's Garden

A London Courtyard Garden

My daughter has a small north facing courtyard which she, Simon and Alice, seven years old, love filling with pots, seed trays, ladders of plants, lavenders, peppers, tomatoes, and so on. A plant bundle recently bought contained 7 ferns. Fiona sent us pictures of them, all named - 3 polystichums, a polypodium, pteris nipponica with long leaf like fronds, a dryopteris, and yes, "I kid you not " she says, doodia media, the smallest of the lot! They are all so attractive. Alice loves the patterns and of course waters them keenly, "a bit too much" says Fiona. She loves checking the other plants' progress. So valuable in these difficult times, back to nature!

My plant encyclopaedia tells me all about ferns. They are amongst the first vascular (with a water system) plants to appear on land, evolving some 400 million years ago in the times of the dinosaurs, long before conifers and flowering plants. Bracken is a fern. As the remains rotted down they produced coal, with rare fossils of these primitive plants. This was the Carboniferous period. They do not lay down woody tissue like trees and shrubs. They reproduce by spores underneath the frond-like leaves. They rely on moist conditions to complete their life cycle, so a courtyard is ideal.

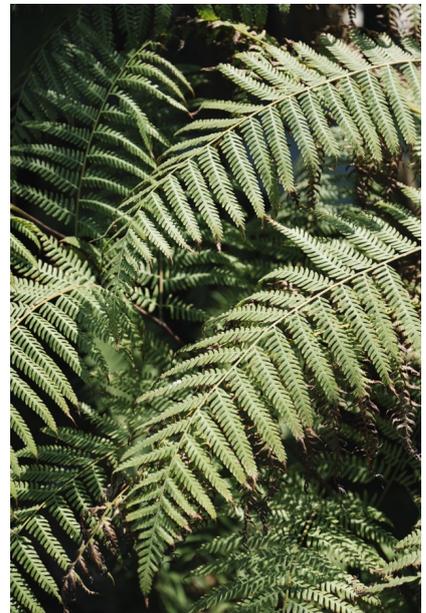


image: Freepik.com

Pteridomania was a Victorian craze with ferneries and grottos a common feature. People had, like Fiona, small displays and what better than a courtyard in North London? Think of the big houses we visit, National Trust and English Heritage. I can't wait to get back to these visits.

Vi Fairmaner

Socially distanced from family for seven years

After WWII ended, my Gran and Grandad moved with my Mum out of bomb blasted Bristol to the safe and quiet Somerset village of Norton sub Hamden where I later had my first memories of their wonderful rectory garden: wheelbarrow rides, collecting leaves, podding peas at the kitchen table, standing on a stool at the sink to wash newly dug potatoes and emptying vegetable peelings on the compost heap. These two photographs of me were taken in their garden in November 1963 just before I sailed with my Mum, Dad and little sister from Southampton to Barbados on an empty banana boat. I was to leave behind this garden and my treasured grandparents for the following



We rented several properties in the West Indies and each time we moved my Mum quickly set to transforming the dry and usually neglected land surrounding each house into productive vegetable plots and beautiful tropical gardens. My two sisters and I were enlisted to shift piles of stones in buckets, gather the cut palm leaves and carry fallen coconuts. We took turns to water the gardens at night (sunset was around 6pm) being careful not to step on the toads which came to find water. One beach house had a pot garden because when the sea roughened the waves would often come crashing right into the garden, drenching everything in salt and washing anything untethered away; we had to help move the pots quickly up to higher ground before they too were washed out to sea. Mr Ming's beach toilet sometimes got washed out to sea too!! It was such a funny sight! Bits of old timber float-

ing away to the cheers of all who gathered on the beach. He always built another one.

Gardening has always been a way of life, a daily way of life. I was a gardener's helper until I moved to Oxford when, at the age of 19, I took over a neglected kitchen garden plot in the grounds of Iffley Mansion, made wine from rows of old parsley and grew enormous sweet peas in a tiny strip of land at the front of our university post graduate house.

40 years later, I have my third allotment and am still squeezing ever more plants into my tiny front garden... and I'm once again distanced from my family, this time by a pandemic.

Kirsty Buxcey

Wake Up and Smell the Roses

I've been reflecting recently on the power of smell to evoke memory. There's a Louis MacNeice poem that made a strong impression on me when I was a teenager. It starts

*'This brand of soap has the same smell as one in the big
House he visited when he was eight; the walls of the bathroom open
To reveal a lawn.....'*

and goes on to describe very detailed memories of the day. This particularly resonated with me as my godmother used the amber coloured Pears glycerine soap and its smell immediately takes me back to happy visits to her flat.

I've been lucky during lockdown to have had the time to properly enjoy the plants in our garden and on local walks. I've noticed that some flower scents trigger a specific memory whereas others, such as the recent displays of lilacs and roses, give pleasure but with no specific association.



Sweet peas and lavender always remind me of my grandma who had a large (to a small child) garden with rows of sweet peas that I loved picking and lavender bushes that we harvested. She taught me to knit and sew and helped me make lavender bags and weave lavender wands.

Lily of the valley reminds me of my mother who chose it for her bouquet at her May wedding. Similarly, I had white freesias in my bouquet and in a vase on top of our cake. I've always loved orange blossom scent and now it reminds me of a recent family weekend in Seville to celebrate a significant wedding anniversary.

Of course some smells have less happy memories; many years ago my

mother picked some wild garlic flowers from a large patch by the roadside and was upset to discover they stank the car out all the way home.

I asked my husband whether there are any plant scents that prompt memories for him but, although he has associations such as lavender and the south of France, nothing as specific as me. Studies have indicated that women tend to have a better sense of smell than men, so maybe that accounts for some of the difference?

It would be interesting to know whether other members have similar strong links between smells and memories and, if so, what?

Cathy Thompson

Gotherington Gardening Club meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month except August, in the Village Hall at 8pm.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 16 September 2020, subject to Government guidance. Gill Hazell, Great Western Gladiolus, supplier of gladiolus corms will be talking about Classic, Rare and Unusual Bulbs

Venue to be confirmed if not in the Village Hall