



April 2020: Special Edition 3

Dear Members,

What wonderful weather we have had already this Spring. I hope you have had the chance to sort out the basics in the garden, greenhouse or balcony but also had time to sit back and enjoy what you have already achieved.

Keep sowing the seeds – if you have spare seedlings/plant we are still hoping to have a plant sale at some point and will welcome all additions.

Thank you for the photos of your gardens; please keep sending them in. It always good to see what others are doing and maybe pinch a few ideas! Please send to kateawilkinson@hotmail.co.uk

Keep well and safe.

Kate Anthony Wilkinson (Chair)



Angela and David's garden with some wonderful pear blossom.

GLADIOLI FACTS

Gladiolus corns can be planted over a long period – anytime from early March until mid-
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May, so there is still time. If you are keen to grow them for cut flowers, then plant several batches in succession to yield blocks over a longer season, from July until late September. Most varieties flower 13 weeks after planting. Plant 3 inches deep on heavy land and up to 6 inches deep on lighter soils. In drought seasons water heavily once the flower stems and buds can be felt inside the foliage. If grown only for cutting, they may be planted 6 inches apart in rows on the vegetable plot. If for garden decoration, then plant in bold groups between shrubs and herbaceous plants.



In autumn, lift, clean and store the corns once the top growth has died down. If you don't favour the huge blousy spikes of the large varieties, try the *Primulinus* group or the even more dainty Butterfly kinds with the lovely throat markings. *Gladiolus Nanus* (photo below) is the smallest and very attractive.





FORSYTHIA FACTS

Forsythias are very hardy and extremely easy to propagate and grow, nearly every garden has at least one plant! Some purists ramble on about it being over-planted in British gardens but why not; it gives a wonderful mass of yellow bell shaped flowers along every branch and cheers up any dark or sparse corner until other plants have developed. Most people don't realise that there are quite a few different species to choose from. *Forsythia X Intermedia* is a strong and fast growing hybrid, flowering in March and April. Within this group comes *Forsythia X Intermedia Spectabilis* (below), which as the name suggests, is a spectacularly good form, having masses of yellow blooms.



Forsythia Suspensa is a more rambling species which, if desired, may be grown against a fence or wall. Tying in to some support is advisable in the early years if so grown. Late March to early April will see it in flower.

The upright species *Beatrix Ferrand* (photo below) carries canary yellow flowers more than an inch across when fully opened whilst *Lynwood* has deep yellow flowers. Both are good varieties. The low growing ground cover plant *Arnold Dwarf* is grown only for the foliage. For those who like strong colours, plant bright red tulips and deep blue *Muscari*

(*Grape hyacinths*) beneath these bright yellow shrubs, so timed as to flower all together for maximum effect.



Thanks to Chris Young for Gladiolus and Forsythia Facts. More plant facts in the next edition.

QUIZ TIME ANSWERS

Answers to Odd One Outs – there may be other valid answers, but these are the question setters answers!

1	A - Forsythia (all are prickly except Forsythia)
2	C - Bishops Crown (Bishops Crown is a pepper but the rest are varieties of tomato)
3	A - Ash (The Ash leaf is pinnate but the others have roundish leaves)
4	C - Wisley (Wisley is a RHS garden but the rest are National Trust gardens)
5	D - Foxglove (Snails like all of these plants except the Foxglove)
6	C - Aphid (The aphid is a destructive pest but the rest are predators of garden pests)



This edition's quiz is "Break the code".

There are six well known gardeners hidden in the code words below. Each letter of the alphabet is represented by one symbol/character which is the same for all of the gardeners. All vowels are in red and consonants in black.

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Answers in the next Edition!

LAWNS

Whether you have a large lawn or a small green space; whether it is used for croquet matches or football muck-about. We all like to see it green and lush. Nothing quite adds to the appearance of a garden as does a good quality, well maintained lawn. Lawns have been growing well for some time already and are likely to have already received a cut or two, especially with the spell of good weather we have had. But what if you have some bald patches, or have removed part of a flower bed, tree or bush and want to increase your green area. Turf is a quicker solution but does need some preparation. The alternative is seed. Although it will take longer to establish it is likely to result in a better quality lawn and if you are contemplating a larger area, seed will be much cheaper.

But beware cold temperature. Cold, easterly winds can scorch and check tiny, young grass plants. Germinating grass is
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not likely to be killed outright, but it can turn yellow, reddish or even purple when starved of nitrogen due to the lack of warmth. April therefore is the best time to be sowing grass seed when the soil itself will, hopefully, be warmer but still moist.



First measure the area to be sown and purchase 1 to 2 ounces of seed per square yard. The thicker sowing will result in a quicker and thicker lawn coverage. Select a *Fescue/New Zealand Bent* mixture for fine, ornamental lawns or more practically choose a mixture containing 30% ryegrass, where a more hard-wearing general domestic lawn is required to withstand heavier use (the football pitch!). The soil should have been lightly dug over or forked and levelled during the winter. Shallowly hoe off any young germinating weeds and remove stones which may later catch in the mower. If you missed the winter preparation, then you will have to play catch up now with a more serious dig over and weed clearance.

Immediately prior to sowing, firm the soil well by treading whilst wearing a pair of good flat shoes/boots. Rake level and obtain a fairly fine surface tilth as you go, exactly as you would when preparing to sow vegetables.

Next sow the seed carefully. Sow your one or two ounces of seed on every square



yard. This may sound fussy, but it will pay dividends in getting even growth. Mark out each square yard using bamboo canes. Weigh the quantity of seed and put into an old jam jar, marking the level as this will make the next measurement easier and quicker. Scatter the seed from the jar onto the marked square yard and then repeat on the next and so on. When completed, rake the seed in, very lightly, not more than $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep. Do not roll it, nor bash it down with the back of the spade. Given a few April and May showers, you will have your new lawn. It's first cut can be in 6 weeks.

Perhaps your lawn will look like the one below!



GARDENING AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We all know that gardening is good for the environment, as well as our own physical and mental health. We can grow our own vegetables, rather than buying imported produce from supermarkets; we can decide if we want to be organic; and we can grow what we enjoy eating. The Long Ashton Climate Action Network has put together some ideas as to how gardening and gardeners can help with climate change.

1. When buying compost, try and avoid anything which is peat-based, as using peat for compost is eroding the ancient peat bogs which are an important carbon store. Most garden centres, including Brackenwood, offer peat-free compost.
2. Think about the use of weed-killers such as Roundup, as many may contain glyphosate, the sale of which has been banned in a number of countries. Alternatives to use of pesticides can be found at www.pan-uk.org (lobbying group).
3. Help bees by growing pollinator plants (see Edition 2 for ideas) and try and avoid products which may have neonicotinoids in them, which are harmful to bees.
4. Rewild for biodiversity and carbon capture by mowing grass less frequently (saves the carbon emissions of mowing unless you are using a scythe) and leaving wild areas in your garden.
5. Increase the amount of vegetables you grow.

There are different types of gardens and different ways to garden, but as gardeners we are generally lovers of nature and want to ensure that we add to and don't subtract from the natural environment. If you would like to share ecological ideas that you have found successful, then please get in touch. Simple things like using a water-but can all help protect our natural environment.

GARDEN CENTRES

We have heard that a farmer called Jack Withers in Claverham is delivering 15 year old mushroom compost, £2.50 a bag (25-30 litres) to Long Ashton. See Long Ashton Transition Group Facebook page for more info.