



June 2020: Special Edition 13

Dear Members,

June has been a month of wonderful sunshine and heavy rain, but the grass is now, once more, green and the plants are growing rapidly. I hope that you are all keeping well.

This week we have an article from Chris Young on Delphiniums, following his visit to Blackmore & Langdons. Members can now enjoy 10% discount on purchases from them if you show your valid membership card.

We have a couple of members gardens, a quiz and some Did You Know? facts. Please send contributions to kateawilkinson@hotmail.co.uk

Happy growing!

Kate Anthony Wilkinson (Chair)

MEMEBERS GARDENS

Thanks to Cynthia for photos of her rose and Hosta (clearly loved by the bees)



Deryll sent on a photo of her Passionflower and said she had had it for years with very little success until she came to our talk on Passionflowers 2 years ago by Jane and Toni from Tynings Climbers in Tickenham who advised on how to prune them. Deryll followed the instructions and it worked. She says it has been wonderful ever since!



I'm hoping mine may flower this year!



LAST WEEK'S QUIZ Answers – Floral Films

1		Steel Magnolias (1989)
2		Blue Jasmine (2013)
3		The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel (2011)
4		The Yellow Rose of Texas (1944)
5		White Oleander (2002)
6		Tulip Fever (2017)

THIS WEEK'S QUIZ: TOP FLOWERS

According to Country Living survey in 2017 these were the most popular 10 flowers in the UK. Can you put them in order of popularity from the most popular to the least?

Sunflowers	Tulips	Lilies
Bluebells	Roses	Freesias
Daffodils	Carnations	Orchids
Poppies		

PLANT FACTS: DELPHINIUMS

We are most fortunate to have BLACKMORE & LANGDONS Ltd www.blackmore-langdon.com, the world leaders in the culture of Delphiniums and Begonias situated at Pensford in the Chew Valley, not far from Long Ashton. Consistent winners of Gold Medals at Chelsea for over 100 years, they also bear the Royal Warrant of HRH Prince Charles, Prince of Wales.

Delphiniums are available, either as seed or as plants, grown in 2 litre pots. The spectacular named varieties, which come "true to type" are propagated from cuttings, requiring much more hand-labour. Therefore, they are more expensive than the unnamed varieties, raised from seed.



Above, is *Blue Tit* an indigo blue with black eye dwarf delphinium, which grows to a height of approx. 3.5ft.



Above is *Clifford Lass* a deep pink with a brown eye, which grow to approx. 5ft. Below is *Crown Jewel*, a soft blue with large black eye, which grow to a height of 5ft.





Below is *Blue Nile* a brilliant mid blue with white eye and holder of an RHS Award of Garden Merit.



Below is *Sungbeam* which is deep cream with large florets. It, too, holds the RHS Award for Garden Merit and grows to 5.5ft in height.



Below is *Pink Ruffles* which has the palest pink double florets and a compact spike; it too grows to around 5ft high.



Sadly, seedlings do not come true to type, despite being collected from named varieties. Due to cross-pollination, they will be new cultivars, but still well worth a try, to see if you

can raise some good ones. Seed packets carry the following advice: Sow seed in seed trays at 50-55 degrees F in spring or early autumn, Cover the seed with a little compost, then cover the whole seed tray with black polythene, thus totally excluding any daylight, until the first sign of germinating seedlings become apparent. Inspect regularly, then remove the polythene.

Prick-out the seedlings, individually, into small posts as soon as they are large enough to handle. Plant out into their final flowering positions when the roots fill the pots, after risk of frost has passed. If not sown immediately, store the seed in your fridge, thus ensuring good germination. Susceptible to wind damage, be prepared to stake the growing plants, which can reach over 6 ft (2m) tall. Always protect against slugs especially the newly emerging young shoots in springtime.

Once the first flower-spikes of summer have finished, cut them down to approx. 8 inches tall so that new growth will be encouraged, to provide a second flush of flowers in the early autumn.

You can sign up for newsletters from Blackmore & Langdon on their website Next week we will look at Begonias.





DID YOU KNOW.....?

One of Queen Victoria's favourite flowers was the Clevedon Violet, a very sweet smelling variety, which earned international fame in the 19th century. It was first grown in Tickenham by market gardener George Lee, who was renowned for his fruit, particularly black currents which he grew in his nursery behind the Royal Hotel off Hill Road.



In Victorian times violets were very popular with ladies to adorn their hair and dresses, and the perfume was widely used. Images of violets were common, used on postcards, china, candlesticks, greetings cards and linen. The fashion started in France – violets were the favourite flower of the Empress Josephine, and at that time everything French was the very height of fashion.

George Lee decided that he would start growing violets for sale. He imported violet plants from France, but they did not like the colder British climate, so he acquired some Russian violets which were far hardier. He grew them at a new nursery on the warm slopes of Tickenham Hill (perhaps they should have been called Tickenham violets?). The violets George Lee grew were *Viola odorata* which hybridised very quickly and so he was able to produce a large number of different varieties. Cultivated violets require careful cultivation and

www.lahortsoc.co.uk

George Lee created stone terraces for them – the equivalent of the modern 'raised bed'. He added liberal amounts of horse manure to the soil and the violets grew strongly producing large flowers.

But how did violets in Tickenham come to Queen Victoria's attention?

The story goes that in the early 1870s, George Lee's business was not going so well, and he knelt in the nursery and prayed for guidance. When he opened his eyes, he saw a larger and most beautiful violet growing between two of the beds.



He sent a bunch of these sweet smelling violets to Queen Victoria and asked if he could call it *Victoria Regina* – which she graciously agreed. He sent her posies of every week and the 'Clevedon Violet' (as it became known) was exported all over the world, in tin boxes, bringing fame and fortune to both George Lee and Clevedon.

More info on Clevedon violets:

www.clevedonviolets.wordpress.com

Victoria Regina Odorata Violet – available online from Groves Nursery:

www.grovesnurseries.co.uk/victoria-regina-violet