

Good morning everyone,

On a not very pleasant morning in comparison to the many we have enjoyed over the past 13 weeks of house arrest, I thought I should really galvanise the grey cells and subject you to another one of these. After so much in the way of Vitamin D dosage, good for dealing with Covid-19 apparently, it is almost a relief to have a touch of freshness in the air, but hopefully not for too long. We can't have the school holidays being spoiled by rain, though I am not sure parents or the children will notice much difference between the official school holidays and the last few weeks of home-schooling. Our grand-children are no exception, in that two and half remain engaged with school work, though bored with it and missing their friends, and one and half are definitely not engaged, i.e. one grandchild is engaged part of the time when the subject is of interest!



Unfortunately, I have to report this chap was not photographed in my garden, but I did catch him outside his burrow on the Allander Water down at Clobberfield. His nest was beside a lovely little pool which was also a favourite play spot, complete with a stick-on-a-rope swing, for the local children. I managed to film him early one morning before the children arrived as the thought of appearing with a camera whilst they were there, doesn't bear thinking about! The Kingfisher is a bird often only seen as an iridescent flash, so viewing it sitting on this branch for quite a long time on each occasion that morning was a genuine thrill. At least, I have managed to cross off one item from my photographic bucket list!

As I have said in previous Newsletters, this spell of wonderful weather has saved me, and many others, from going completely stir crazy as I have spent more time out in the garden than I normally enjoy (just!). What has struck me and my wife on our daily government permitted neighbourhood perambulations is how all the gardens around us have produced such an abundance of colour, but it is the height of the plants which is really noticeable. Whenever I go to England down to the Cotswolds or thereabouts, I am always struck by, and envious of, the profusion and size of the plants, and, I think, we are enjoying up here for the first time in many years. The peonies have burst forth with heads on them larger than my hand and multiple heads on most of them. The clematis on the Six Stride Arch are overreaching themselves with the size of and number of blooms. Even one of my bearded irises has actually decided to bloom this year - this is a very unusual occurrence. All the plants seem to be taller and straighter. The only plant that appears to be struggling around the garden are the astilbes, but they responded badly to the nights of frost in May. They are showing signs of recovery now. Also, the lockdown has given me the time to look at some of the shrubs and think they need to be cut back quite fiercely. My rhododendrons were not so good this year and that is because they have become too leggy and are now affecting the well-being of some other plants. It will be a "fun" task cutting them back when I finally summon the energy to undertake it. On the vegetable front, the potato plants are reaching ridiculous heights so they better have a good crop. The courgettes and peas, which I have grown in large plastic pots against the south wall of the house, are promising crops to harm the takings of

Tesco for at least a week or two. Rocket is rocketing, tomatoes are swelling, lettuce means I am having plenty of nutritious lunches and the soft fruit looks likely to fill the freezer again. The downside of this is that the sawfly caterpillar is profuse. My fingers are green from picking all the caterpillars from the nasturtiums and the greenfly from the roses, the lily beetle has returned, though the midges are not too bad so far. I am hopeful my nematodes will keep my potatoes slug free and that would be an achievement. It has been a tremendous spring and early summer and thank goodness for that.

On Club matters, there is not much upon which to report. I am, as is everyone else, waiting for whatever phase of the pandemic it is that allows us to meet as a group again. Until that is known, decision making is in limbo. Subscription notices will be sent out before too long and that will probably be the biggest Club excitement for some time! Similarly, we can't send out the Calendar for the coming season as we don't know when and where we will be able to start. It is a very good Calendar of speakers too! Moira has opened up a section on the Club's website entitled Garden/Wildlife Photos in which members and subscribers may post photos of their gardens, particular plants or their garden wildlife. Currently there are a good number of submissions from the membership, so if you haven't had a peek then take the time to do so as it's a real pleasure. It may even encourage you to submit something and it is a means of staying in contact. Deluge Moira with your photos via the Club's email.

In the time it has taken me to use two fingers to type this, the sun has appeared, briefly, and the daily aged walk is due. The Garden Centres are open but it feels strange having to put on a sort of hazmat suit before entering and, if like me, you wear glasses you can't see anything anyway with your mask on as the glasses steam up; so I lower the mask to see, which rather defeats the purpose of wearing one! It is the new Catch-22 of shopping! Finally, walking on the golf courses is not as safe as it was. People are actually playing golf on them, which is highly inconsiderate.

Keep on enjoying your gardens. Take time to sit and glory in them. Keep safe and healthy.

With best wishes

Willie



