

Good (?) afternoon to you all,

Isn't it wonderful to find that there is some normality returning to our lives? Yes it is July, it is Scottish summertime and the wind and rain is lashing down as it seems to do every year! In an abnormal time, we have enjoyed two and half months of lockdown in glorious weather, but now that we can get out and about, if you wish to, the rain has decided to refill our burns, our reservoirs and stave off concerns about water shortages. Yes the plants in the garden have basked in the sun, but were needing some hydration, only not this much! The peonies from looking so big, so firm, so upright are now looking decidedly drookit with bowed and disintegrating flower heads. So far the delphiniums are standing proud, but I actually managed to keep them supported from the very beginning this year. To be honest the weather hasn't been all that bad as there have been some lovely late afternoons and evenings, when the gardens at Crossburn have looked particularly colourful. The midges, though, are back out in force and trying to make up for lost annoyance time as are the ticks, one of which took a liking to me and one to the grand-dog, when on a socially distanced visit to the garden. Both were successfully and skillfully removed without harm to either blood bank. Our wee burn, which recently flowed in a pathetic trickle, has been transformed into a gushing force bringing yet more sand and silt down from the quarry workings. Life at Crossburn is returning to normality when the summer wet weather gear is in full use, but not all has been lost in this lockdown - Bob Dylan (79) topped the album charts with his latest excellent mumbling release, closely followed at Number Two by the wonderful Neil Young (74). So it isn't just aged gardeners who have enjoyed the period of isolation.



The garden, when the sun has been shining, has been looking pretty good. My vegetables have really appreciated all the heat and are flourishing with the rain. My courgettes, grown in big tubs this year as an experiment, have grown to ridiculous sizes and have cropped prodigiously. My peas have actually worked this year and are cropping well, with a second sowing looking promising too. The potato plants grow ever taller, so if height is any indicator of productivity, then there may be a bumper harvest as long as the nematodes have done their job. Last time I wrote, I said that I might tackle the rhododendrons which had become ever so slightly immense and leggy. Well, I have tackled them by "expertly" pruning them right back and creating a huge pile of waste for the bonfire, which will be lit when the wind is blowing

from the east (that way the smoke billows up the burn away from all habitation). I will just have to wait to see if they grow back as they have on previous occasions. The roses have been stunning, I think, especially the ones in our courtyard. In fact, all the climbers are doing well as are the bush roses. My philadelphus is just starting to bloom as is the deutzia, both of which are in dire need of pruning after they have flowered. The dahlias are flowering and all the hot plants like kniphofia, rudbeckia, helenium and echinacea are beginning to look very promising. They have all, like us, benefited from that long hot spell.

With the colour that still promises to come to the gardens and, as yet, no indication as to what we may be allowed, as a Club, to do and all our outings postponed, I was wondering if members would be prepared to allow garden visits from other members? Up here at Crossburn, we have the two gardens - ours and Robert's and Annika's - and we would be very happy to greet parties of up to six or less. We can cope with up to six extra cars in the courtyard. The gardens may not be as pristine as for an official garden opening (Annika has not scraped the moss off her steps!), but it would be an opportunity to chat, gossip, compare the rain damage and enjoy an outdoor cup of tea (bring your own mug!) and maybe a biscuit. It would be very informal and it may give you the opportunity to see a different lawn of moss. We are within the old recommended 5 mile radius. It would be great if other members threw open their patches too for whatever mass with which they felt comfortable; let me know and I will advise the membership. If you want to visit Crossburn, I suggest you have a Whatsapp chat with your friends, give me a ring (07831503472) and we can make the arrangements from there. We can do Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday this week, but only Friday of the following week (week beginning the 13th). Thereafter, we will need to consult our overfilled Appointments' Diaries to see what days are free. As both households are usually labouring away in the garden on the available days and if the weather is fine, then you may be able, after checking we are around and not already hosting a viewing, to just pop out on a whim. The offer is there, and we really look forward to seeing you and I hope others will take the plunge.

Talking of colour, the flower displays in Milngavie Town Centre are wonderful. Again this is all down to the hard work of the Milngavie In Bloom volunteers, who have grown a great number of the plants from seed themselves and have undertaken the planting during the Great Lockdown in full gardening PPE and at a full rakes length apart; that is the length of the rake handle, not the head! Several members of the Club are volunteers and they are looking for more helpers. If you wish to offer your green fingers, then please contact the ubiquitous Sandra Wilson.

The rain has not stopped whilst I have composed this epistle (and has been pretty heavy during the afternoon, too) but I think I should stop. I am awaiting some replies regarding alternative venues for our Meetings, but as yet none have been forthcoming as no one yet knows what will be permitted. As soon as I know, you will be advised. In the meantime, enjoy the sunny breaks amidst the showers, continue to keep safe, wear your masks even though they are horribly uncomfortable and keep smiling (I know the smile can't be seen under a mask!!!) as there is still a lot of summer to come.

With best wishes

Willie
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