

Good day everyone,

And to all those who I did not see on a Zoom screen at the last Meeting, a Happy New Year to you. The non-existent New Year celebrations do seem to have happened quite some time ago, but I suppose that is the effect of every day being a little similar to the one before! The highlight of the week is bin night as it is the only regular event of the week. When I look back at the first lockdown in March of last year living conditions were different. We had good weather for a start, which allowed those of us fortunate to have a garden to go out and tend it like never before. The sun shone, barbecues were the rage and trampolines sold out, though, perhaps, not to members of the BGC for their personal use! Now, it is cold and icy with the ground as hard as cast iron. There has been a little snow, with more forecast, which delighted the children before they returned to home learning. On one of my daily Covid walks around the well trod roads of Milngavie, I watched a farmer towing his little ski-shod son (looked about 7 or 8) up one of his hilly fields in his tractor. At the top, and having gathered some speed, the boy let go of the tow rope and slalomed down the hill, without ski poles, at great speed. The yells of delight made a smile irresistible and this went on for ages. Quite a well socially distanced crowd of Covid amblers gathered to watch the display, with one commenting that they found it hard standing up even with the help of sticks/poles!

As I said above, the ground is like cast iron, so being out in the garden has not been great fun. The hours of daylight, though, are lengthening and the first snowdrops are beginning to open their white inverted cups and one Winter Aconite is blooming. Looking back at photographs of this time last year, my snowdrops were later in making an appearance, whilst the aconites were quite profuse and some erythroniums were flowering; there is no sign of the latter at present. There are plenty of buds on all the hellebores and I just have the feeling that the garden is really beginning to stir back into life. Even though we have had some beautiful, icily clear days, the other dark, dank days appear to have had the most sway. All may be well when we celebrate one year of restrictions in March! The wild life in the garden is scrabbling about finding morsels to eat. The resident tailless blackbird is one of the most aggressive I have witnessed towards his fellows. It seems to eat sparingly, instead expending vast amounts of energy chasing the other blackbirds away. The long tailed tits mob the feeders around lunchtime every day for about ten minutes then speed off to their next meal. The dippers have returned as has the sparrow hawk, though it missed its intended pigeon on its last fly past. A mother and calf deer have decided to visit regularly, which is not quite such a pleasure. Deer can get through one foot gaps, at any level, in your defences and are adept at bending wire upwards! Where are the lynx?

Earlier this month, Colin Walker gave us an expansive and hugely enjoyable talk on Cacti and Succulents. To say that he knows his subject is, perhaps, an understatement of some magnitude, but his passion and knowledge shone through the ether of Zoom to tremendous effect and judging by the number of comments emailed to me afterwards, a lot of you were enthralled by his talk. Coming up, though, you have more delights to record in your diaries. **On Tuesday 2nd February 2021, Brian Cunningham** will be describing the joys of **The Gardens at Scone Palace** where he is the Head Gardener. The history of the gardens and its associations with the History of Scotland is fascinating. Work on reconstructing the gardens was started, as most of you probably know, in 1805 and involved moving the whole of Scone village two miles down the road. (Developers haven't really

changed much over the years!). David Douglas worked as a gardener there for seven years before he went off to become one of the most famous plant hunters. Brian has been Head Gardener at Scone since 2012 and he is now one of the lead presenters for the BBC of Beechgrove (the new name of Beechgrove Garden). Invitations to register for this talk, which promises to be another excellent one, will be sent out next week, but if you wish to register now, you may. There will be **Chat Rooms** available again at the end of the Meeting as they were very successful after Colin's talk.

In the following months, we have **Stan de Prato on Tuesday 2nd March** relating **All the Crimes behind the Compost Heap**. Stan has "heaps" of experience in all things horticultural and is renowned for his entertaining and informative talks. He is a Member of the North Berwick Gardening Club to whom Nancy Stevens is talking in February, so we are undertaking a "Speaker Exchange". On **Tuesday 6th April, Simon Jones** of National Trust Scotland will be speaking about the challenges of gardening in the West of Scotland. I think rain may feature heavily in this as he has been overseeing the work at Geilston. On **Tuesday 4th May** it is our AGM and we are hoping that our speaker will be Julia Corden, who had been due to speak to us in January last year in the days when we could actually meet and converse without a mask or megaphone. You at least now have some engagements to enter into your diaries and they will all be very worthwhile.

The Committee will be deliberating shortly via Zoom on the speakers for the next session starting in September 2021. If anyone wishes to suggest a topic or a speaker, then please let me know as soon as possible. I suspect, even with the vaccine, we will still be Zooming, but predicting the future is an impossible task and so we can only plan to do what we know we can do.

That's it for another fun filled month. On a completely different tack, I have been watching, during my Covid rambles, the construction of the Milngavie Early Learning Centre on the site of the old St Joseph's Primary School. There is a similar project being undertaken where the Bearsden Library used to be and both projects are of a similar design. In the hope that I do not cause offence, I have to say that constructing two very large playpens, as that is what they look like, does not inspire me. They resemble cages, thereby invoking jokes along the lines of "DO NOT FEED THE CHILDREN". I am sure that inside the Centres will be fabulous and they are, when all is said and done, much need in the Community.

Continue to stay safe; take the vaccine when offered and your gardens are awaiting more of your presence, but be careful not to slip on the ice. A&E is not a recommended destination!

Best wishes to you all

Willie



