

## **Baldernock Gardening Club: April 2024 Newsletter: And still the rain continues and continues and...**

Good evening everyone,

First of all, I hope you all have a very pleasant Easter weekend and that the rain stops for a while to allow for the egg hunts and the rolling of eggs down wet slippery slopes. Not only is Easter Sunday about eggs, it is also the morning when you lose an hour's sleep as the clocks slip into British Summer Time and probably more rain.

In last month's newsletter I was bemoaning the seemingly endless heavenly precipitation and not much has changed during March. Statistically we have experienced the wettest 7 months on record and it is all a little depressing. When we do get a day of sunshine, seldom do we get two successive days of the golden orb, everyone cheers up and smiles; even the flowers raise their drooping heads to catch as much of the sun as possible. The water butts, though, have been constantly filled to overflowing, so I haven't had to deplete Scottish Water's reserves for garden use. Despite the rain, the plants do appear to be thriving as they have not had much really cold weather with which to contend. The snowdrops have gone, but the chionodoxas, the erythroniums, the grape hyacinths, the scillas and the wonderful hellebores have all blossomed and spread. My trillium grandiflora are just about to open their huge buds and how they have seeded and spread in the past year. I have managed to dig up some of the larger ones to transplant elsewhere and to pot up along with some hellebores. I have even managed to take cuttings of philadelphus (mock orange) and they, so far, look to have taken. The primulas are lining up to show off their blooms and the peonies are shooting up. The forsythia blossom has been dense and vibrant. Over the past winter, I did not cut back or tidy up any of my beds to give the birds plenty of seed heads to eat and to allow the dead growth to re-fertilise the surrounding soil. Over the past few weeks, I have tidied up all the beds, except for the marshy primula bed, which is far too squelchy to work in at present. Already, I am seeing the first growth in the phloxes, penstemons and the campanula lactiflora, so at least I know they are still alive. It is a busy time gardening in between the heavy showers, plus the other day I got a delivery of 8 tons of gravel which needs to be "barrowed" around the garden to rejuvenate some of the paths. The birds are coming back to the bird feeder and the song thrush provides a daily and very mellow but somewhat early reveille. A moorhen appeared one day, but obviously didn't care for the neighbourhood and has travelled onwards to a more peaceful environment and last night, the deer had a party consuming all the marsh marigolds (caltha).

Speaking of deer reminded me of Alan Watson Featherston's excellent talk to club members at the March meeting. Alan told us all about his life's work of trying to restore the Caledonian Forest and how actually just leaving the forest alone, but protecting it from the deer, how quickly the native plants revived. He is a passionate believer in rewilding and reintroducing animals that our predecessors had hunted to extinction. The beaver and the wild boar are doing well since they have been carefully reintroduced, but the hope of bringing back predators like the lynx, wolves and bears causes a bit more public concern, especially the latter two. He also wished to see us all enjoying a totally plant based diet, to which I suggested to him after his

talk that the predators probably had more of a chance of being accepted than all Scots becoming vegans. He is a fascinating man and gave us all a marvellous talk.

On **Wednesday 10th April at 19:30 in Baljaffray Parish Church** our speaker will be **Gavin McNaughton of MacPlants**. The McNaughton family founded this superb plant nursery many years ago and they are Central/Southern Scotland's largest growers of herbaceous perennials, alpines, ferns and grasses. They are famous, too, for their gentians. Gavin will be telling us about his nursery, the plants he loves and, I hope, will be bringing a selection with him for you to buy. The latter point has still to be confirmed and I will advise you beforehand either way. Another excellent evening of gardening knowledge awaits you all.

At our meeting on **8th May**, you will have the double delight of the club's AGM and **Nicola Dibley of the Japanese Garden at Cowden** to look forward to and as all veteran members know, the AGM is a not-to-be-missed 10 to 15 minutes of relentless excitement. Full details of both events will be included in the next newsletter.

Immediately after the May meeting, or, more exactly, three days later is the day of our **Annual Plant Sale**. The rain is no excuse for not having plants ready for this, **our one and only Club Fund Raising event**, which contributes greatly to us being able to afford the excellent speakers who appear before us. There are many new members in the club who may not know what is expected of them in what is a collective effort. I will be sending out my huge list of Do's and Don'ts sometime later on in April, but in the meantime you can all be getting plants ready. Last year, the quality of the plants on sale was very good, but the quantity was not so good, mainly, I believe, due to the cold weather we had in the early spring. This year everything will just be soggy, but as a guideline if every member could provide between 15 and 20 good quality plants then we are starting to fill our tables. Many members provide far more than that, but if you are not sure, then hopefully this will give you something of a target and don't forget about the baking either or any old plant pots, dilapidated garden implements or whatever, which can be sold off in the bric a brac section (the baking is not part of the bric a brac!!). Lists will be available at the April meeting for you to commit yourselves to assisting during the day.

That is about it, thank goodness I hear the cry, for this month, a month which has had some notable events occurring outwith the confines of the club. Photographs, or their enhancement rather, have taken up quite a bit of media space in the past couple of weeks with most of the clamour being totally spurious. The truly serious traducement was the case of Alan Titchmarsh's trousers. How could he not have known that when he was filmed in 2010 wearing jeans, North Korea would air his programme in 2024? Shocking behaviour to even consider donning such subversive clothing when in the garden and the photoshopping was certainly not up to standard, but at least it made most of us smile.

Have a wonderfully enjoyable Easter and don't forget to put your clocks forward. The rain will stop one day, hopefully for many more than just one day, but we can still enjoy our gardens and increase the dampness in our arthritic joints. See you on **10th April**.

Best wishes to you all,

Willie





