

Good morning one and all,

After a brief spell of rain overnight, the earth has a funny dark hue to it and the newly laid gravel has lost its dusting of sand. The plants are looking suitably revived and no doubt, after battling the upsurge of weed growth after that last rainfall, the battle will recommence with ground elder and sticky willow emboldened after the rehydration. I have to admit though that my vegetables and fruit are thriving so far with the mixture of seemingly endless sun and heat, coupled with doses of liquid seaweed and periodic rainfall. My courgette plants, which were planted as Monty instructed in a deep bed of manure, are taking on Triffid proportions, so I can only hope they produce their fruits as profusely. Strawberry plants are looking the healthiest they have been in years and it looks like being a good crop of black and red currants. Sadly, there is not a plum to be seen on the tree this year. It didn't even have the decency to flower, which does give concern for the future. The apple trees blossomed thickly so I may be in for another bumper crop, which means precarious balancing skills on ladders will be once again required. The rocket I planted last year did not amount to much, but I left it in over the winter and it has lived up to its name. It is producing a wonderful crop of peppery tasting leaves and the more you pick, the more it grows. One of nature's production line plants! The vegetable garden is having a good year so far; it was due a break after so many wet springs over the past few years.



The garden plants themselves are providing plenty of colour and pleasure. The primulas, shaded at the back of the garden in a permanently damp section, are putting on a magnificent display and for the first time, I am hopeful that the Vialli may actually flower this year. This may be down to the fact that I have managed to plant them in the correct place, which I cannot claim for my previous attempts! The Candelabra are profuse and have spread to such an extent that the whole of the Plant Sale next year may consist of these! The geums have enjoyed the heat, the poppies are opening their tissue paper blooms and I am waiting with baited breath for the peony buds to burst. One of my bushes has over 20 buds on it and if they all open, the display could be a joy. The azaleas are really showing off. I really do find it all terribly exciting watching the plants develop to the extent that I am almost measuring the size of the buds each day for I am not sure I can recall such a promise of profusion in my garden. So many plants, along with the gardeners, have enjoyed the sun and warmth of this lockdown spring plus all the care and attention they have received (not necessarily the gardeners though!) when there has been nowhere else to go. As I keep on repeating, boring I know, the garden almost makes me forget about why, this year, I am able to spend so much in the open air doing my horticultural Joe Wicks.



This guy has been a regular winter visitor to the garden over the past five or so years. He is not the most handsome pheasant as his body feathers do have a slightly mangy look, but I still love watching him run across the "lawn" to ensure he can peck up the detritus from the bird feeders. He usually disappears in March to return again in time for Christmas. This lockdown year he has listened to Nicola and not flown off to his second home, but has up until this week, stayed around here and has become increasingly bossy and demanding. He doesn't rush off in a dignified retreat when I appear but will knock on the glass door to advise that his bowl of seed is empty. The back door cannot be left open in case he decides to take a wander through the house, which a family of ducks did several years ago! Anyway, I do think he looks a bit like a cardinal wearing a plague mask, which is appropriate for the pandemic.

It is a pity we could not have our Summer Social this year, but Marjorie and Colin, as you know, are continuing their preparations for next year's visit. Colin will also be one of our speakers during the 2020/21 session. We missed the Social, but a few of us have managed to link up via Zoom over the past two evenings to drink a glass or two to the Club and to inspect the changing hairstyles. It has been good fun. I am getting more hopeful, except when I witness the number of cars and motorbikes careering up the A809 towards Loch Lomond, Queen's View and the Devils Pulpit, that we may be able to start our meetings in September. One of the Speakers has already intimated that he is willing to do a Zoom session or video or whatever we would like. I have a feeling though that quite a few of us will be rightly nervous of meeting especially in such an enclosed and sauna like venue as the Fraser Centre, so in the next few weeks we will probably investigate alternative venues that will allow for greater social distancing, thereby easing the meterage between us and providing a ceiling height for the air to circulate. You will be kept informed of developments and all will depend upon when the easing on the restrictions of numbers attending a gathering are announced.

A few changes have been made to our website and they are on the public side, thereby allowing both members and guests to view. We have introduced a Section entitled **Garden/Wildlife photos** where we can display pictures from your garden that you may wish to share with the rest of us. It is all very well being subjected to my efforts, but there are many other far more competent photographers amongst you. At present, Gordon and John have a much envied by the Chairman photograph of a Tawny Owl Chick sitting outside their owl box. Moira's rhododendrons are enjoying a great year and she has captured them beautifully, whilst Marjorie and Colin have sent in some pictures of what we would have seen had we been able to have our Summer Social. So please, if you do have pictures, send them in as I am sure they will give pleasure to many of us. Also, we are putting the current Newsletter on the Website so if you don't want to download it, you can simply view it on the Baldernock Gardening Club website. Both new

pages will hopefully encourage more people to use our website and encourage even more to perhaps join us, venue space allowing.

The Garden Centres and Nurseries are now open, which is good news. My wife and I ventured out to Dobbies yesterday at 9:00 a.m. complete with mask, rubber gloves and wipes. It was a slightly foreign experience, but I have to say Dobbies have it very well organised. Plant selection is a bit limited and sadly a friend was there last week and found the big refuse skips at the rear full of dead and discarded plants. Anyway, I was able to stock up on "essentials" and venture out into the world. i don't think my car has had a full tank of petrol for so long ever before and what is really annoying is I can't exploit the petrol price! £0.99p in Morrisons and Asda. Having said that I would not want to go to any beach or place of natural beauty at the moment!

That is all I have to say for this fortnight. I will endeavour to keep pestering you over the next month or two as I don't suspect many of you will be going on holiday over that period and I think it is one way in which we can all stay in touch. Let's hope the weather maintains its wonderful sunshine and warmth and continues to allow us out to enjoy our gardens. Please continue to Stay Safe and Alert and to wonder at the enjoyment of your plants and wildlife.

Best wishes to you all,

Willie



