

October 2021 Newsletter: It's awfy dreich, but enjoy the autumn colours!

Good evening everyone,

There are descriptions from Timothy Walker's recent talk to the Club that keep on recurring as I wander around my rather squelchy patch. The thought of Kew Gardens being referred to as the "Richmond Allotments" was one of the first smile inducing comments. Then there was the description of variegated leaved plants (he didn't like them) looking as though they had been used as a roost by pigeons with a loose bowel syndrome; this provoked a bout of tearful laughter amongst the small throng in the Fraser Centre. Tear inducing hysteria was affecting nearly everyone in the audience around me as he moved onto how slugs can be minimally and rather gruesomely controlled. He certainly doesn't use chemicals in his bid to rid them from his, or rather his wife's, border. No, he stamps on one, leaves it and waits for all its cousins, family, friends to come along and feast on its remains (no waste in the natural world) and then he stamps on all of them! By this time, Timothy could have said anything and we would have laughed heartily and willingly. His talk on the life of his wife's border in his tied cottage at the Oxford Botanical Garden was a masterpiece of information, down to earth advice and practical tips all laced with a good wheelbarrow load of humour. I have a feeling that a good laugh mixed with a splendid dose of gardening knowledge was what we were all needing! There are, though, a couple of caveats (aren't there always?). Firstly, his photograph of his compost heaps steaming away merrily in the autumn sunshine left me perplexed as my compost heaps have never done that! Maybe I should use urea as Timothy suggested. Secondly, his assertion, probably supported by many of you, that there are only four types of snowdrops, large, small, green tinged and not green tinged and that he much prefers leucojums as they are more striking, does cause a slight problem. Our next speaker on **Tuesday 2nd November** is **Michael Myers** whose talk will be all about his love for and obsession with.... **Snowdrops!** Your Committee works hard to organise a programme that segues seamlessly from one month to the next.

Our talk at the beginning of October was the first we have held where we had a "live" audience of 20 souls in the Fraser Centre linked to another 45 screens via Zoom. Admittedly, at the outset there were a few minutes of mild cardiac stress for the Chairman when he discovered that no one could log into the Meeting. Fortunately he could still work his mobile, creating a link to Marie Kotzur (she knows how computers work) who remained sane and managed to talk him through the complex and, up until that moment, unknown stages of linkage in plenty of time for the start of the Meeting. He is still trying to comprehend why the link didn't work, but it will be resolved by 2nd November and hopefully Marie's emergency service can be kept in reserve for another occasion. Thank you Marie. Needless to say, it was wonderful to be part of an in person audience and to see, hear and witness the responses of others. Zoom has been a life-saver as far as the Club is concerned and will continue to be a valued option, but not being virtual is far, far better and we have missed it tremendously over the past 18

months. So thank you, too, to the guinea pigs, sorry brave souls, who ventured into the Fraser Centre and to all of you who logged in despite the initial hiccup.

As I have mentioned above, **Michael Myers** is our Speaker on **Tuesday 2nd November at 19:30**, his subject is **Snowdrops**. Michael is a lecturer in horticulture at Craven College in North Yorkshire. He has had an interest in snowdrops since his teens and grows several hundred varieties (yes varieties!) in his North Yorkshire garden. His most significant introduction is the cultivar "E.A. Bowles" which was found on a visit to Myddelton House nearly twenty years ago. He grows a wide range of hardy, dwarf bulbs some of which he has exhibited at Alpine Garden Shows. We all have our snowdrops, maybe not 400 varieties, and we all enjoy them when they appear every spring. Their appearance signifies that the winter is nearly past us and they lead us through to spring heralding the arrival of yet more colour. When seen en masse they are a spectacular sight, but even a small clump raises the spirits. They have become almost a cult plant, like the tulip in the 17th Century. Snowdrops, though, are unlikely to cause a financial crash as Tulipmania did, but the prices of some of the bulbs is staggering. If I was to plant a £50 bulb (yes £50 and more for one snowdrop bulb), the squirrel or the mice would know very quickly and thank me for the expensive meal! Michael promises us another excellent evening. The talk **will again be a hybrid event with a limited number of places available in the Fraser Centre** and the rest being asked to continue with Zoom. After the experience with Timothy's talk, we can accommodate **30 people in the Fraser Centre**, so again if you wish to venture out into the wilds of Milngavie Town Centre please let me know as soon as possible. A few seats will be reserved for those who have not tried or been able to link into the joys of Zoom, plus a few for some Committee members doing their ushering duties, but the rest are there for those who reply the fastest! Full details for those wishing to continue registering for Zoom will be released next week, but as usual I am always willing to open the register from now.

After my plea in the last Newsletter and over the airwaves (?) of Zoom, I am delighted to announce that Caroline Preacher has volunteered to be mentored as Outings Executive by Sandra Wilson and to join our happy throng of organisers. Caroline will undergo a rigorous training regime, which she will accomplish in style and all of us look forward to working with her and enjoying our outings once again in 2022 and beyond.

There is little doubt that autumn is now upon us. Everything in the garden is looking soggy and droopy. The recent cold nights made me fear for the dahlias and the cannas, but all seem to have survived, so don't require to be dug up, dried, cleaned and stored just yet. The apple crop has been disappointing this year, but I think that can be attributed to not having a good living crab apple tree this year. The old one fell over last autumn and despite my rescue attempts it has looked very sad throughout this summer. A replacement is on its way, Butterball, which I had ordered prior to Timothy Walker recommending it, and perhaps next year the apples will once again grow in the difficult to access parts of the trees. The hanging basket continues to flourish, but I think the time is close when it will have to come down. Pots are being emptied, cleaned and being prepared for the spring bulbs. Under a few of the pots, I have disturbed a few frogs and toads, but they quickly search out another dark and dank spot. Quite a

few plants are being split, ready for the Plant Sale in May, or being moved to another location. The chillies and peppers in the greenhouse are now struggling to ripen, but I will give them a bit more time. It is now the beginning of the leaf sweeping season and filling the bins for the production of leaf mould. Trees are lovely, especially in the autumn, but they do make you work at this time of year. After last month's picture of the Pink Waxcap, the fungi have been sprouting all over the place. and I have invested in an App (free on iPhone) called "PictureMushroom" which identifies all the ones growing in the garden and beyond. I got very excited when I discovered a Chanterelle, until I saw the word "False" before it. It is definitely not recommended for inclusion in any cookery project, in fact none of my discoveries are.

That's it for this month. The November Meeting may well be the last we hold in the Fraser Centre for quite some time. As from **Wednesday 8th December, when we hold our Christmas Party (Members Only) our meetings will be held in Baljaffray Church Hall.** The Fraser Centre has served us very well over many years, but we will not feel quite so claustrophobic in our new home. So I look forward to seeing a few of you in the FC and many more on Zoom on November 2nd.

Best wishes to you all and may you all be jabbed soon for flu and Covid no.3.

Willie



