

Baldernock Gardening Club: February 2023 Newsletter: Snowdrops and daylight herald a new spring



The hours of daylight are certainly increasing as each day passes and there are signs of stirring in the garden. Little men with red hats (the hat is unseen in this rare photo) are even venturing out from their caves or from their storage box in the garage. You may conclude I have rushed out to purchase a gnome after David Marsh's talk earlier this month, but this is one of his and, as yet, none has appeared in Crossburn. Whilst the gnome is peeking through a hole in a fence, the local deer bandits have been doing their utmost to create holes in the defences round the garden up here. As there is very little for them to eat, apart from the bulb shoots, the only evidence of their visit, apart from the hole in the fence, are their little piles of poo. The fence has been repaired again and the droppings dug in!

Moving on swiftly from garden nourishment, it is, as always, such a pleasure to see the snowdrops beginning to bloom. At the moment, they are mostly at the spike stage, but even that brightens up the garden. They are helped by the forming hellebore buds, which are there once all the dead leaves have been cleared away. Over the past week the weather has been kind, so the garden clothing has been donned and I have ventured out to prune my climbing roses and a rose hedge. The latter I planted a couple of years ago and now it is starting to look more like bits of the picture in the David Austin catalogue. There is an awful lot of work to do over the next few weeks, with cutting back, cutting down the old stems and seed heads of the perennials and moving plants to better locations, having planted them wrongly at the outset! Also, browsing some nursery catalogues and gulping at some of the price increases!

This weekend is the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch and on first counting, the range here is slightly disappointing. Yes we have four robins, who spend the whole time chasing each other away from the feed and four blackbirds, who use all their energy to chase all the other birds away. In between the chases, the tits and chaffinches nip in to feed whilst the Woodpecker terrifies them all. The long-tailed tits have returned doing their usual flash-mob approach to the feeders. The mallards have waddled down to Hoover up everything left on the ground and very occasionally the nuthatch makes an appearance. It is a busy time of the year.

I think it is safe to state that all the Members who listened to David Marsh's talk on the History of Gnomes either in the Church Hall or in the comfort of their own sofas, thoroughly enjoyed his presentation, which definitely provided much of the discussion at the after-talk tea bar. I am not certain his talk will have inspired a proliferation of gnomes around Baldernock, Milngavie and Bearsden, but it certainly cheered us all up on a dark post New Year night.

Our Speaker on **Wednesday 8th February** at **19:30 in Baljaffray Parish Church** is **Greg Kenicer**. Greg's talk is on the **Magic of Plants**. "The Magic of Plants is an informative and entertaining look at why various plants have been used in magic and what that tells us about people and plants in a post-magic world. Whether Foxglove or Mandrake, Hawthorn or Aspen, St John's Wort or Bird Cherry, Plant Magic shines a bright and fascinating new light on dozens of familiar plants." Greg is a botanist at the Royal Botanic's in Edinburgh, where he has worked on the Flora Celtica for many years. I am confident this is going to be another interesting and entertaining talk. Unless there is a last minute train strike, Greg will be appearing in person on the Baljaffray stage.

Our speaker on Wednesday 8th March is Douglas Cameron who did so much to establish Milngavie-in-Bloom and to set the standards for similar volunteer work around the districts.

Members may be interested to learn that Cambo's Snowdrop Festival is now on. It started on 25th January and runs until 12th March. Entry to the gardens costs £7.50, unless you are a child, a carer or an RHS Member; if you are one of those, entry is free. It is a lovely day out, with pleasant woodland and beach walks. I have to admit, though, by the end I find it very difficult to differentiate all the varieties. There are snowdrops to buy; some of the individual bulbs have eye-watering prices and the thought of buying one of these "species", planting it and, then, it is eaten by the deer, really doesn't bear thinking about!

You will be pleased to note that your Committee convened last week and they have started the process of inviting speakers for the September 2023 - May 2024 session. If all our targets agree to appear, then we should have another excellent season on a variety of topics. None of the current Committee Members, barring unforeseen circumstances, is intending to spend more time in their garden and retire from the Committee, but that does not mean that we do not need new volunteers to be ready to take over. If you would like to volunteer, please corner me or one of the Committee as that is much easier than us hunting you down and trying to persuade you it is all very easy and jolly (true of course!). If you are truly interested, you may like to test us out by attending one of the 4 Committee Meetings we have and then you can see for yourself the high level of debate and the sharp decision making. The success of the Club depends upon its Members being interested in the programme, but also in having a Committee that is not set in its ways and is constantly seeking new ideas and being relatively innovative.

As the candle wax is now beginning to drip over my computer, I think it is time for me to stop. I hope to see many of you in Baljaffray on Wednesday 8th February and until then, enjoy your snowdrops and the increasing hours of daylight.

Happy gardening,
Willie

