

Baldernock Gardening Club; October 2023 Newsletter; So Agnes missed us, but still a wet September

Good morning to you all,

After the last club meeting I left the country for a week to seek some sun and warmth, thereby missing the torrential (apparently) downpours that occurred during my Vitamin D top-up. On my return, the top-up was soon exhausted owing to a drop of some 10C and gardening conditions not exactly attractive to working under soggy plants, dripping trees and squelchy ground. Like many others, I am sure, I prepared for the worst after listening to and receiving increasingly hysterical notifications from the Met Office app about the imminent arrival of Storm Agnes, only for the whole thing to be cancelled at the last minute as Agnes decided not to visit Milngavie and Bearsden. Sighs of relief, but no real let up in the intensity of some of the showers and the blustery wind.

It has not been, in my opinion, a kind September, but the apple trees have loved it. The crop of cookers this year is extremely good and the size of some of them is monstrous; plenty of stewed apple in the offing to accompany the morning porridge. There is still colour in the borders provided by the phlox, the rudbeckia and heleniums (though some of those have disappeared this year); the verbena is starting to spread after two years and coupled with an underplanting of thalictrum 'Black Stockings' is creating a pleasing effect. With the deer having mercifully ignored the sedum for the first time in several years, I am able to enjoy the different hues of red florets and black stems. Some of the cosmos grown from seed have transformed themselves into mini shrubs and with continual dead-heading they provide an apparently inexhaustible supply of colour. Amazingly, the *Azalea luteum* is flowering ever so slightly again, which is perhaps an indication of how topsy turvy the seasons are all becoming. For much of the rest like the sweet peas, which have done so well this year, it is time to cut down as they are looking very tired and fed up. October will be spent in leaf collecting, tidying up but leaving enough seed heads for the birds and planting bulbs for the spring. We still have four more weeks before the clocks go forward and the number of hours of daily daylight lessen, so I had better make good use of them.

Melissa Simpson of Dumfries House Gardens gave us a wonderful start to our new season of talks, when she spoke passionately about her work and her love of gardening. She is most certainly a terrific ambassador for Dumfries House and for all the work and training that is undertaken there. On **Wednesday 11th October at 19:30 in Baljaffray Parish Church** our speaker is **Andy MacGregor**. His talk is entitled "**Ferns: With fronds like these, who needs anemones?**" Andy is an ecologist based in Bearsden and works for NatureScot to conserve important habitats and species across West Central Scotland. In his spare time, he indulges many obscure interests, including an enthusiasm for ferns. He has been an active member of the British Pteridological society for many years, and occasionally leads excursions into the Highlands looking for rare Arctic-alpine ferns. His garden, apparently, is a mess. Personally, I find ferns to be fascinating plants, slightly

prehistoric somehow, so I am looking forward to Andy's enjoyable and informative talk. I think most of you will, too.

On 8th November, our speaker will be Leonie Paterson, archivist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, who will tell us all about Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, a Scottish botanist. Balfour was Regius Professor of Botany at the University of Glasgow (1879-1885) and is known for major reform of gardens, establishing a proper botanical institute, and largely redeveloping the layout of gardens.

Tomorrow, Monday 2nd October, club members are off on an outing to Cowden to visit the Japanese Gardens. The weather is looking not too bad and hopefully those going will start to see the autumn colours beginning to appear in the garden. The outing has been impeccably organised by Caroline Preacher, so I am sure all will have a great day out.

The club still needs someone to volunteer to be mentored by Douglas Patrick for the Treasurer's post; an accountancy degree is not required, but an ability to add and subtract in the correct columns is. The club needs you!

After one of the speediest annual renewal periods that I can recall, we have unfortunately lost a few members, but we have gained new ones. We look forward to all our new members joining us at the next meeting and enjoying the chat, the transfer of knowledge, good talks and a welcome cup of tea or coffee at the end. I look forward to meeting them, too, and to seeing as many of you as possible on the 11th for what will be another excellent talk. At the last meeting, the improved sound system met with a good response, though it was still not quite good enough for some of those with less acute hearing. I am hopeful, as always, that a tweak here and there will overcome that issue so that everyone is able to pick up the pearls of wisdom. In the meantime, enjoy the outing if going and look forward to all that leaf collecting!

With best wishes

Willie



