

Baldernock Gardening Club: February 2026 Newsletter: Storm after storm but spring is appearing

Good afternoon everyone,

The weather through January has not been sufficiently clement to encourage me to venture out for too long to do 'things' in the garden. I have had, therefore, time to stand and stare out of the kitchen window to watch the antics of the birds around the feeder. We have a smallish charm of chaffinches in regular attendance and the males do cling onto the feeder, whilst the more canny females stay on the ground waiting for the falling crumbs, which also attract the blackbirds.

Pitying the foraging of the female chaffinches for any crumbs that may fall, I throw seed (sunflower seeds, nothing but the best for the Crossburn birds!) onto the ground for them, but, naturally, the blackbirds want to enjoy it too. It is then I recognise and become fascinated by the inherent territoriality of the blackbirds. There are three in particular who wish to dominate the fallen seed cache. Bird A arrives first and takes up his stance amongst the seed. Bird B lands to the west and bird C lands to the east. Bird B advances towards the seed. Bird A then rushes to chase him away, which prompts bird C to seize the opportunity to feast on the seed. Bird A, then rushes back to chase bird C away and, of course, bird B speeds in for the seed. This toing and froing lasts for about five minutes, during which the only bird that doesn't get any seed is bird A, whose frantic territorial protection antics means he loses out. Trying to be dominant doesn't always work in the natural world either. It was great fun to watch and proves it is not only the plants in your garden that provide pleasure when you have time to stand and stare.

The weather has not been great, though I think Bearsden and Milngavie have escaped the worst of the winter weather so far, unlike those hardy souls in the North East of the country. As I have said above, I have not relished going out into the garden for too long, but I have been out tidying up some of the easier areas. There are definite stirrings in the ground, with the snowdrops, those wonderful bright harbingers of spring, really beginning to appear and almost opening their bells. One group of winter aconites are just about to open up, whilst those in the sunnier part of the garden have been far more cautious about making an appearance. The peonies are showing their red stem starts, the camellia looks as though it has flower buds, which if it flowers will be a first for me. The rhodies and the azaleas all look healthy with fat buds and many of the other spring bulbs are indicating they are still alive and are spreading. Even every clematis has leaf buds appearing, so let's hope we don't have a severe cold spell through February or March like the infamous Beast from the East. The lawn mower is off for its MOT, secateurs have had their annual clean and, maybe, in the spring tidy up of the garden I will find the pair I 'lost' last autumn. They are probably in a compost heap. Today, though, Storm Chandra will not entice me out into the garden and I suspect none of you will be either.

Our January speaker, Michael Brown, gave us a fascinating talk via Zoom on Medieval Gardens. He culled all his information from paintings and murals of the period as there are no extant medieval gardens in the UK. It was interesting to see how the gardens were laid out, but I am certain the turf seats/benches would only be sat upon during an extremely dry period and I see little appetite for their revival, especially in today's weather. The brave members who ventured to share their Zoom talk with others in the church hall, definitely lost out in the comfort stakes as the heating in the church was on in every other room apart from where we were and it was the coldest night of the winter so far. We were all frozen and I have never seen members so anxious to leave after a talk as on that night. I am sorry that others apart from myself had to endure it, but it says a lot for Michael's talk that they stayed until the end. The church authorities have apologised for the misunderstanding and the club has not been charged for using the hall on that night and the blood has finally recirculated into my fingers.

On **Wednesday 11th February at 19:30** the heating will be on in the **Baljaffray Parish Church Hall** for our speaker **Matt Williamson**, who is a local physiotherapist with a practice in Milngavie. His talk will concentrate on the health benefits of gardening as well as simple exercises and ways of lifting and moving to protect your body and prolong your gardening enjoyment. So "**Is Gardening the Next Olympic Sport?**" will be a non-participatory look at what may help us all to achieve that. Matt is a gardener himself and when he is not racing around his garden he runs ultra-marathons, lectures at Caledonian University and holds daily 'torture' sessions in his surgery to relieve pain and discomfort in all parts of your body. It will be different from any talk we have had in the club, and it may provide us all with new ideas to ease those aches and pains. There is no requirement to wear a leotard or gym kit to attend.

Brian Young of Holm Farm Plants is our speaker on 11th March. This will be Brian's third appearance at the Club, though the last time was in the middle of Covid and he was Zoomed into our home. He is always excellent value and entertaining.

The Outings Sub-Committee (OSC) have been hard at work during these dark days and have already set up two outings for later on in the summer. Full details of a trip to Cambo in late August and to Alistair Wallace's garden in Strathblane in early July will be announced once all the details have been confirmed. The OSC are finalising arrangements for another garden visit in the summer. My thanks go to all OSC members, but in particular to Hilary MacNaughton who has done an incredible amount of research on our behalf. The full committee has been beavering away too, enjoying delicious gingerbread at Jane Logan's house as we started work on obtaining our speakers for the 2026/27 session. We have made a pretty good start with suggestions and it is to be hoped this will result in promises to come to talk to us. We discussed the Annual Plant Sale too and that happens on **Saturday 9th May**.

Gardening clubs throughout the length and breadth of the UK have been contacted by Thompson and Morgan offering members quite significant discounts on seeds (50% off) and 20% off live products like potatoes, garlic, plants, bulbs and fruit. How it works is the club has to enrol and is given a unique offer code, catalogues and pre-printed order forms. We then have to place a combined group order of £100 (after discount) each year, though there is no need, thereafter, to consolidate orders. Once the initial order has been placed, each member can then place their own orders using the unique offer code provided at enrolment either on-line, by phone or by post and you get the discount. Thompson and Morgan claim the administration of this scheme is minimal and maybe it will be, but before committing ourselves it would be interesting to know how many BGC members would be interested, so if you are please let me know as soon as possible. If there are sufficient numbers, then it could be worth trialling.

As Storm Chandra's fringes lash the skylight in my garret, it is time to stop waffling and end this month's update. We have very good talks coming up for the rest of this session, the church hall heating will be on, the microphones will clearly boom out the speakers' voices and the Chair will hobble around. There is always an air of anticipation at this time of year, with more daylight time, with plants emerging, plans being finalised for new projects, money being spent on new plants (space can always be found or created) and hopefully a warm and settled spring, which does so much to strengthen the plants for the summer. Gardening is not about the past, it is the expectation of the pleasures to come that keep gardeners looking forward. Storm Chandra will wheel away and I hope that the North American snow doesn't come here!

See you on 11th February,

Best wishes

Willie



