

Good morning everyone,



Well we have all had a good bit of a cold winter with snow, ice, icicles and crystal clear blue skies, plus, probably, enormous heating bills. Just as the snow began to fall the snowdrops were on the cusp of carpeting areas of the garden (not mine unfortunately) and then they were covered. Occasionally one would rise above the snow level, but now that the thaw has come, they have reappeared as though nothing has happened. There is no doubt that these marvellously robust wee flowers do lift the spirits every year and make us realise that the garden really is coming back to life. On top of that, the days are lengthening, the vaccine has been expressed out to all us more mature citizens and there is a glimmer of hope that some form of normality may at last be manifested. It is almost a year of restrictions, which none of us foretold this time last year and, I have to admit, it has all brought about a certain degree of ennui. The snowdrops and a few aconites have rekindled the gardening urges. Under the snow, quite a lot has probably been happening, but as yet there is no doubt that this year's progress is quite a bit behind last year's. With a little bit of sunshine and some warmth getting into the soil, colour will start to appear. Some of my potted iris *reticulata* are budding so have been released from their cold frame quarantine. I have started the process of cutting down last year's perennials and filling up the already overfilled compost bins, but I am holding back on any seed sowing until March this year as I have tended to be too impatient in the past resulting in some mediocre germination attempts.

The appearance of deer in the garden has not helped my mood and neither has the squirrel's digging up of bulbs been much appreciated. I think the squirrel is exacting revenge upon me as I have successfully blocked off it's access to the bird feeders with "squirrel domes". The tailless blackbird continues its never ending quest to hog the fallen bird seed from other blackbirds, whilst I have had brief cameo appearances from a nuthatch (who apparently prefers my neighbours' feed!) and a delightful little tree creeper. The solitary fieldfare has still not told the rest of its flock about the cache of rotting windfall apples, but it has had to share it with a song thrush and the blessed deer before I put up yet more wire on the fences.

Onto the far more important matters regarding the Club, it is wonderful to report that our audiences for our talks are increasing every month as is our membership. We are attracting over 50 screens to each talk, with some screens having two people squeezed into that wee space. Our latest speaker was Brian Cunningham, one of the presenters of Beechgrove, talking about his day job as Head Gardener of Scone Palace Gardens. What a pleasant person he is and what a mammoth task he has of managing 40 plus acres with six helpers.

Brian provided us with a fascinating tour of the gardens and their history. Some Members have visited Scone Palace, in the days when one could, and have had the pleasure of being given a guided tour by Brian. The Club is definitely looking to visit when permitted.

Our speaker on **Tuesday 2nd March** is **Stan Da Prato**, who is extremely well known in the horticultural and ornithological worlds. Stan will be bringing a touch of Taggart to our gardens by talking about "**Crimes behind the Compost Heap**" where terrible murrnderrs occur and sex and violence proliferate all in the cause of providing nutrients for your flower beds. Stan is Honorary President of North Berwick Gardening Club, where they have much fancier titles for their executives (it's an East Coast thing) as well as being Honorary Secretary of the Scottish Ornithological Society, a co-opted Member of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society AND a Judge for Beautiful Scotland, in which Milngavie in Bloom are eager and successful contestants. I know, without a shadow of doubt, that we will enjoy another fascinating evening full of knowledge and a good dose of much needed humour. Reminders to register for the talk will be sent out soon, but if you can't wait to get your name on the list (as long as you don't forget you have done it!!) you can register now.

On the evening of **Tuesday 6th April** our speaker is Simon Jones of the National Trust for Scotland, where he is regional manager covering the South and West Region and including gardens like Threave, Culzean, Geilston and the Hill House. In May we will be holding our annual nail bitingly exciting AGM and we are in discussion with a potential Speaker to follow that pulsating event. Your Committee has been working hard over the past few weeks (they always work hard) and we have filled every date, bar two, for the 2021/22 season, which has all the potential to be another "cracker", to use some common parlance. All potential Speakers have been primed to appear either via Zoom or in person on a stage! No hologram substitute will be accepted. As to the Annual Plant Sale, I do think it unlikely we will be able to hold one in May. If we can we will, but if not we may have to plan for one in September, so don't dispose of your cuttings just yet.

That is it for another month, but Milngavie in Bloom, along with many members probably, will be grateful for any snowdrops in the green that may be going spare. Donations for MIB may be left at the Tool Shed behind the Youth Centre in Mugdock Road or at Diane Black's house. I am sure if any Member has spare snowdrops or aconites, other members will willingly come to an arrangement with them, so let me know and I will circulate the information.

The sun is shining now, so it is time to get out into the garden. I have been Pfizered and now await the sequel. So far the pin prick in the arm has made absolutely no difference to my daily life except to provide a glimmer of hope that we all will get out to meet people sometime within the next few months, which is the main activity we are all missing. Stay patient, stay safe and start to enjoy your hours in your gardens again. Nature always bounces back.

With best wishes to you all,

Willie



Hamamelis in the snow in Fay Pascoe's garden

