



South & South East & London in Bloom Green Lines September 2021



This month's edition is smaller than usual as we are in the Awards season, and that has taken up most of our time in the preparation and delivery. So, rather than publishing just a single region's results, we will wait until after the London in Bloom awards on the 5th & 6th of October to publish a larger edition.

The South & South East in Awards have taken place via Zoom – all very interesting!

Despite a few warm days over the past week or so, without a doubt, Autumn is very much on its way. The Bloom year is coming to a close, but our gardens still need tending. The view that gardens go to sleep from late Autumn to early Spring contradicts reality, as our resident Horticultural Guru Reg Leach tells us in his article this month. Bloom does not stop once awards have been presented or received; the judge's report is an opportunity to look at what has been achieved and what can be done to improve. We are planning a regular seminar season next year, an opportunity to find out how to reach the next grade or level. So keep an eye out for our 2022 program later in the year.

Next year, we plan to simplify the Parks Marking Sheets and continue with our Desktop Awards for individuals and non-mainstream entries. These have been very successful this year in both regions.

Funding has been a significant issue for both regions in 2020/21, with sponsors withdrawing and many smaller companies are struggling to get back to profitability. It's difficult for us all. However, the donations we have received from you, our most loyal participants, has helped greatly, and we ask if you are aware of any company that might be interested in providing some support. We would love to hear from you.

Best Wishes Mark & Peter

Jim Buttress VMH – Patron South & South East in Bloom & London in Bloom

Sadly no article from Jim this month as he has been busy with judging at Chelsea & Malvern, but he'll be back next month.

Victorians and their houseplants. Kate Harris – Campaign Manager

The Victorians are well known for their love of a trend, from the latest health fad to the season's fashion must-have, those in fashionable society always had their eye on the new big craze. With plant hunters trotting the globe to bring back newer, more exotic finds, it was only a matter of time before these became the new must for the wealthy, upper class. I mean, who even were you if you didn't own houseplants?

As I have touched upon in previous articles, the Victorian era was a great period of change and invention; this did not stop when it came to architecture. Window tax was halved, and cheaper glass became readily available, encouraging oversized windows, letting in far more natural light. The way Victorian houses were heated also began to change as many moved away from fireplaces in each room in favour of basement furnaces that used natural convection through hot air vents to allow heat to rise throughout.

Many Victorian houses also boasted conservatories, solariums, and open, airy parlours, which along with improved household heating, this new indoor plant trend became an everyday household staple.

The creation of the Wardian Case, an early terrarium, allowed for the growth of tropical, humid loving plants and, along with those that could afford greenhouses and hothouses, allowed for the care and cultivation of many of the exotic species that the modern plant hunter returned with from plant hunting excursions.

The air in Victorian cities was thick with smog and pollution churning out from countless factories alongside coal-burning household fireplaces, which impacted the health of not only its residents but also the plants grown both inside and outside, meaning that often these plants had to be hardy to cope with the environments. Palms, Sansevieria, Philodendrons and the aptly named Cast Iron Plant (*Aspidistra*) adapted perfectly, enabling them to survive in these darker conditions. These plants are also now known for their ability to filter harmful toxins, perfect for Victorian homes.

Many of the houseplant's fashionable during this era will be very familiar to many of us now. Fuchsias, Boston Ferns, Maidenhead Ferns, Kentia Palms, Jasmine, Majesty Palms, Parlor Palms, English Ivy, Hyacinth, Heliotrope and Citrus, are just some of the numerous varieties of plants popular in Victorian houses.

Many of the plants grown solely indoors during this era are now found happily growing in our gardens; perfect examples of these are Heliotrope, Fuchsia, Ivy and even varieties of Citrus, amongst others.

While the air we breathe today is not thick with black smog, we still have our issues. What stands out most of all is that these plants could not survive the outdoor temperatures of even the most built-up inner city during the Victorian era, yet nowadays, these are pretty much at home in our gardens almost year-round.

I would imagine as part of this bloom family, many of us have similar views on the topic of global warming, but for me, this adds further veracity to the argument and is a timely reminder to make sure I continue to play my part and make changes where I can in my own home and garden, but that is a subject I will leave that for you to ponder.

GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR SEPTEMBER

Reg Leach, SSEiB Judge and former Parks Manager – retired.

Autumn is now with us, and I hope you have all had a rewarding year, both in the garden and on your community projects, despite the weather and the Covid restrictions. Please keep safe and cautious in your working arrangements with friends, neighbours and colleagues. There are several tasks to do in the garden as the days get shorter, and we may also experience frosts again at night, so we'll need to protect vulnerable plants.

Composting and Autumn Leaves:

If you don't have a compost bin ready for autumn leaves, consider buying one or preferably making your own. The easiest way to make your own is to get hold of some wooden pallets. You will need four of them, which can be secured to each other to make a square. If you have space, you can align two or three of them together so that you will need three for each extra compost bin. You could go for a 'deluxe' model and cut a hinged flap at the bottom to scoop out your ready-made compost next year. Ask your local garden centre or builders' merchant if they have any spare pallets.

As the autumn leaves start to fall, collect them off beds, borders, containers and the lawn and compost them. Make sure you regularly collect the leaves, particularly in the morning after a hard frost, as they will drop much more readily. Add softwood prunings to the leaves and other green waste. You can add grass cuttings too, but mix them with other green waste as they do not mulch down well on their own.

Don't, of course, add perennial weeds such as couch grass and oxalis.

If you only have a light leaf fall in your garden, put them directly onto your borders so that the worms can work them into the soil over the winter period, for example, Silver Birch leaves. More rigid leaves such as the London Plane will take some time to break down, so it's best to compost them with a mix of other vegetation.

If you have a pond, it's a good idea to net it during leaf fall.

Plants susceptible to frost:

Plants such as Canna, Dahlia and Agapanthus (in severe winters) are susceptible to frost and need protection. When the leaves have turned yellow, cut them down. If frost susceptible plants are planted in your border, and you decide to take the risk and leave them in the ground, apply thick mulch over the crowns to give them extra frost protection. However, if your soil tends to retain moisture, the tubers may rot during the Winter!

If they are in pots, it's a good idea to take them out, removing the tubers carefully and divide them up, creating more plants for next year. Then repot them into a dry compost and place them into a frost-free shed or garage and allow them to dry out. The soil should be kept dry over the Winter to prevent the tubers from rotting. Next Spring, when the risk of frost has passed, you will be able to bring them out again.

Herbaceous and shrub borders:

Don't be tempted to cut off dead flower heads of sunflowers or other seed-bearing flower heads; leave them for the birds. If your roses have an abundance of rose hips, leave them for the birds too.

Old flower heads of Hydrangea and Sedum should be left, as they will give some colour and interest to the winter garden. It's also a good way to protect the new dormant buds at ground level from winter frost.

Cut back perennials that have finished flowering, but leave grasses with their flower spikes, as they will give winter interest to the garden.

Now is a good time to lift and divide herbaceous plants and reorganise your border to get them in their best places. For example, shade-loving plants may be struggling in the sunnier border; conversely, sun-loving plants may be in too much shade. Move taller plants to the back of the border. Consider lifting and replanting your borders for a better effect next year. Some herbaceous plants may be too vigorous for smaller borders and may need to be moved to more extensive beds.

Now is also a good time to introduce new herbaceous plants into the border, add new colour and interest, or replace older plants that are a bit tired.

If you want to plant containerised plants into the ground, do this while there is some warmth in the soil. Leave bare-root plants until a little later. Bare root deciduous trees should only be planted after they have dropped their leaves and are best planted between November and March.

If you haven't already done so, trim back Lavender and Rosemary to keep them within their allocated space in the garden, but don't trim them too hard or into the old wood, as they will not regenerate.

When all the autumn/winter work has been completed, it's a good idea to mulch the beds with well-rotted organic matter, giving plants protection and suppressing annual weeds.

Climbers:

Vigorous climbers such as Wisteria will have become unruly if you've not already done so cut this year's new shoots back to two or three buds out from the old wood to keep them in check and retain the old framework. If you want to increase the framework, select appropriate shoots and tie them into the area you want to cover. Tie in climbing roses the same way if you wish to extend its cover against a wall.

Bedding:

If you have not got around to doing this yet, dig out the remains of your summer bedding and empty hanging baskets, troughs and containers. It's a good idea to wash out and sterilise containers before storing or re-using them for winter/spring bedding. Suppose your summer displays included bedding geraniums and ivy leaf geraniums. In that case, if you've not already done so, there's still time to take cuttings or pot up and over-winter them, keeping them relatively dry and frost-free in a light and airy position, preferably a glasshouse or conservatory, or even a window ledge, throughout the Winter.

Before planting winter/spring bedding, try to incorporate some organic matter – from your compost bin - or buy a few bags of well-rotted horse manure and work into the beds.

If you are including bulbs, such as Tulips, into your scheme, but the bulbs in *after* planting the bedding. If you plant them first, you may accidentally cut through them with the trowel! As a guide, plant bulbs to a depth of around 2 ½ times their diameter. Taller Tulip varieties should be planted a little deeper to give them better wind resistance when flowering next Spring.

Although many of us only plant hanging baskets for the summer months, they can be re-planted for the winter/spring season and give a good splash of welcome colour early in the year. Plant up with winter pansies and include some variegated ivy, so there are some trailing plants to cover the sides and perhaps include some miniature daffodils. You can also plant baskets with cyclamen or even winter flowering heather to give a bright display during the Winter through to the Spring.

If your garden or location is subject to cold winter winds, you may wish to plant up baskets early next Spring instead to avoid the worst of the weather. In this case, when the baskets are soon to show some colour, harden them off carefully before hanging in situ.

Hardy Annuals:

Why not try something different next year, such as hardy annuals for next summer.

There is a wealth of hardy annuals to choose from, including Poppy, Corn Marigolds, Annual Chrysanthemum, Clarkia, Godetia and Cornflower. Also, consider replacing traditional bedding plants for more sustainable and bee-friendly hardy annuals. They can be sown direct and will give a welcome splash of colour in the summer.

Alternatively, plant up the beds that you usually use for annual bedding displays with a range of bee-friendly herbaceous perennials instead, or perhaps plant one of the beds up with a selection of culinary herbs!

Lawns:

The grass will be growing much more slowly now, if at all. If you do need to cut the lawn again, by raising the height of the cut, you will leave a thicker sward, helping the lawn get through the Winter and will also help reduce wear and tear.

Remember also to keep the lawn clear of fallen leaves too.

If your lawn is in good condition and does not need significant renovation, it's a good idea to apply an autumn feed that will help produce stronger roots. In the next few months, I'll write about some winter projects.

Wildflower Meadows:

If you have a wildflower meadow that has yet to be cut down, you will need to cut and collect (as you need to keep the soil condition poor for best quality meadows). The arisings, which will contain seeds, could be thinly laid onto another grass area to create another wildflower area. It's not as effective as starting a meadow from scratch, but it can work given time.

Forward Planning:

As the longer evenings will now be with us for a few months, order a few seed catalogues so you can plan and develop your garden for next year.

Don't forget:

- Collect leaves from around the garden and compost them.
- Pack away the hosepipe and lag the outside tap to protect from frost.
- If the weather continues to be mild, keep hoeing to remove annual weeds such as chickweed that seems to grow all year round in London and southeast.
- Now is a good time to consider water butts for the house and outbuildings to capture the winter rains or attach overflow water butts to existing ones to increase your capture. Natural rainwater is so much better for your plants than tap water.

Awards for South & South East in Bloom Horticulturists & Judges



At the recent Royal Botanical Gardens Kew – Kew Guild Annual General Meeting, two regional judges were awarded the Kew Medal. The Medal is awarded for outstanding merit in the furtherance of one or more fields of interest of members of the Kew Guild.

Barry Newman & Peter Holman both received awards for services to Horticulture.

The Guild objectives are the advancement of horticultural, mycological and botanical knowledge for the benefit of the public, particularly (without limitation) in connection with the work of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The encouragement and advancement of horticultural and botanical education for the benefit of the public, in particular at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, including (without limitation) by the provision of awards, prizes and grants to schools and students. Promote the improvement, preservation and sound management for the benefit of the public of places of natural beauty, gardens and lands of ecological, horticultural, mycological or botanical importance or interest.

A sad loss

Upton in Bloom is sad to announce the death of long-term groundsman and Committee member - Brian Cooper. As a founder member of Upton in Bloom, his knowledge and expertise were invaluable. With his guidance, Upton in Bloom finally achieved the much-coveted Gold Award. The flower beds were commented on by residents and visitors alike. They are a lasting tribute to Brian.



The Broadstairs Town Team Gardening Year 2021

It is the first day of Autumn and a time for lots of reflection about our first sortie into the world of "Bloom".

Spark to a Flame

The dark days of December 2020 was a perfect time for *quiet* reflection on our gardening year. Everything changed with a message from South & BSoluth East in Bloom read, "The RHS Its Your Neighbourhood entries for 2021 have opened*."

This was the spark to a flame that started our gardening group's amazing first year in the world of "Bloom".

January: Should we, could we, can we, let's do it. Four entries forms were submitted.

February: A time for community engagement, research and planning.

March: Sighs of relief as restrictions eased, Volunteers recruited, serious digging and planting started.

April: To plant or not to plant? That was the question. A slow cold start to Spring and oh so dry. We gambled and planted.

May: Raindrops kept falling on our heads. A gardeners delight. Everything in our gardens was thriving, including the weeds.

June: The bees were buzzing, and our volunteers were a hive of activity, weeding and watering.

July: Visitors enjoying our displays heaped us with praise. Judging day loomed, and volunteer nerves were jangling. Oh, what a perfect day.

August: A blooming lovely holiday season for some, but our volunteers were kept busy pruning and preening to keep everything looking pretty.

September: Results and celebrations. Will we do it again? A resounding Yes! Yes! Yes.

October: Back to Potting, Plotting and Planning.

November: Watching and waiting for the RHS 2022 It's Your Neighbourhood entries to open.

Just a few reflections from a volunteer - **Scottish Sue**

The wonder of the seasons.

Kate Harris - Campaign Manager

If I was to ask you what was your favourite season, would you have a clear favourite? Each season has its own magic that seems to draw you in. We start each year in the grips of Winter, the bare trees often coated in snow, breath clear to see in the air, the sparkle of frost on everything it touches and the sound of frosty leaves as you walk. Spring follows with its new beginnings, its first pops of colour as the bulbs suddenly appear, blossom on the trees, fresh shoots on trees and plants alike and the familiar sights and sounds of the first insects as they venture out as the temperatures rise. Or maybe Summer with its still, warm mornings, gardens overflowing with beauty, filled with insects, and bursting with colour. Balmy days and nights filled with fun and adventure. Then to Autumn, the season of browns, reds, oranges, ambers, and yellows, of sunlight breaking through misty mornings and dewdrop laden spider webs, toadstools, the sweet smell of decay as you walk through damp woods, the satisfying crunch of newly fallen leaves underfoot. Although I love each season for its beauty, Autumn has my heart. I could lose hours hunting for toadstools and picking up leaves to marvel at their colour, trying to get the timing just right to spot the best fungi.

That slight chill in the air you may have been feeling and the night's drawing in are clear indications that Autumn is upon us, that little signal telling you to get out your secateurs. Time to potter in the garden, tidying up the borders, saving any seed-heads for next season, or maybe leaving them out for the hungry birds. I leave the technical advice for the experts. I mean, that's what my Dad, Google, and the fantastic tips from our resident expert Reg Leach are for, after all.

A quick Google search will find you countless poems and quotes about the beauty of Autumn, and if you have read any of my previous articles, you know I am a little partial to these. This one especially stood out to me, although there were so many I could have easily chosen.

Leaves, by Elsie N Brady

How silently they tumble down
And come to rest upon the ground
To lay a carpet, rich and rare,
Beneath the trees without a care,
Content to sleep, their work well done,
Colours gleaming in the sun.

At other times, they wildly fly,
Until they nearly reach the sky.
Twisting, turning through the air,
Till all the trees stand stark and bare.
Exhausted, drop to the earth below,
To wait, like children, for the snow.

From the centre of London to the far corners of our regions, we are blessed with some truly beautiful places to visit, from tiny inner-city parks to woodlands to huge county parks and everything in between. There are so many ways to connect with nature; the Edwardians and Victorians saw to that. The UK is also home to around 3.17 million hectares of woodland, and with less time needed in the garden, it seems the perfect time to get out and about in nature and explore. Across London and the South & South East region, we have access to some great green spaces, which I have harped on about no end, but it remains true.

Although I'm sure there are many upsides to more constant climates and year-round sunshine, I count myself lucky to live somewhere where I can see our seasons shift in all their magnificent beauty. The mental and physical benefits of nature and our proximity to it are well documented. I ensure my garden isn't too tidy to allow for places for our numerous insects, reptiles, and animals species to hibernate and making sure bird feeders and window feeders are well stocked to make the most of watching my garden visitors from the comfort of my house, tea firmly in hand.

So as the days get shorter and the nights draw in, I will get my boots on, bundle up warm and get outside and enjoy Autumn in all its glory, and I very much hope you will do the same.

Autumn shows us how beautiful it is to let things go – Arnav A

Can you identify these trees?



Figure 1 Norway Maple but which one?



Figure 2 Leaves 10 inches x 5 inches

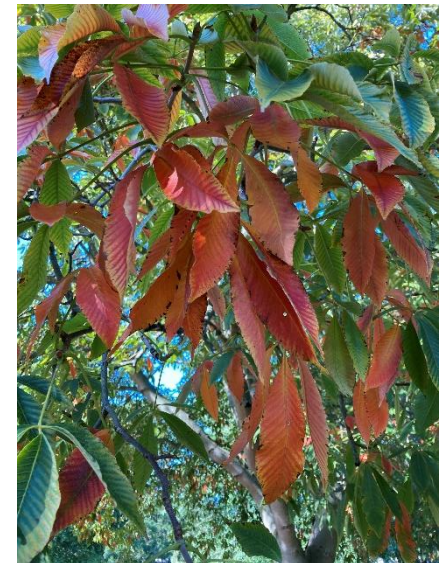


Figure 3 Horse Chestnut but which one?