



**FRENSHAM &  
DOCKENFIELD  
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER  
No 153 February 2021**

**FEBRUARY NEWS....**

*By Sharon Bleach*



Crocus on Shortfield Common – photo by Emma Bleach

Hello Everybody. Well such a relief that the cold spell seems to have vanished for a while at least. Hopefully some of the plants will recover from their frosting and more of the bulbs will be able to come into bloom over the next couple of weeks. It was most impressive to see ponds frozen over and that people were swimming in Frensham Great Pond despite the chill. The downside of the thaw of course is that the dog and I both will be getting far more muddy now the ground is not frozen!

The Council have been meeting and planning the events for the next few months as it seems quite clear now that we will not be able to get together face to face for a while. Dates for your diary are:

Week of 15<sup>th</sup> February – Seed Swap

February 25<sup>th</sup> 8pm – Members gardens through the year (Zoom meeting)

March 25<sup>th</sup> 8pm – Alliums by Jackie Currie (Zoom meeting)

April 22<sup>nd</sup> 8pm – Bark by Caroline Plant (Zoom meeting)

May 27<sup>th</sup> 8pm – Presentation by Adam Pascoe (Zoom meeting, topic to be confirmed)

The FDHS website has been updated and now includes photos and information on the Council members – do take a look to see what has prompted people's interest in horticulture. The website is also the go to place for historic information on the Society – even old newsletters!

In addition we have decided it would be easier long term if Councill members used email addresses to the FDHS website. You will see some changes to our 'official' email addresses over the next few months.

One great piece of news in recent weeks is that Dan Bosence has been recognized for the tremendous work he has done in raising money for the Vine Centre in Aldershot, through selling plants and seedlings. He has been awarded a South West Surrey Heroes Award by Jeremy Hunt for the difference his efforts have made. Great work Dan!

Our January Zoom talk by Claire Brown of PlantPassion, cut flower growers, was a great start to the year, with enthusiastic reception by the 30+ attendees. It was recorded from just before the formal start and can be viewed by [clicking here](#) for the next couple of weeks.

**Thursday 25th February** at 8 pm – this will be our next Zoom talk – this time on our **Gardens through the year**. We will have 6 members presenting in their own individual ways on their gardens small and large. BYOB and snacks of choice! The Zoom link will be sent out a few days beforehand. Here's a picture of my garden taken during the recent snows.



**Thursday 25th March** at 8 pm – as a reminder – this will be a Zoom by Jackie Currie, garden designer and holder of a National Collection of alliums, who will talk about guess what – alliums!

#### **OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST –**

**Hydroponic cultivation at Applegarth farm in Grayshott** – some of you will be aware that Applegarth Farm is seeking planning permission to extend their range of activities. Amongst other things, there is a plan to have a hydroponic greenhouse to grow heritage fruit and vegetables for distribution and sale locally. Hydroponics as an approach is of course highly commended for its environmental credentials, using as it does about 5% of the water required for traditional farming methods. They are also planning to grow produce aeroponically in a greenhouse (effectively misting it) to supply their restaurant. If you are interested in finding out more about their plans, [please click here](#).

**And something to do with your seeds whilst waiting for the ground to thaw- this came to Dan from the Binsted Econetwork and shows how to test for germination. To watch this short video, [please click here](#).**

The members seed swap is now underway. Plastic boxes containing packets of seed collected by members from their gardens last year are **available to all members** at the following locations until the end of the weekend. Any remaining seeds will then go the village shop for anyone to choose from, as one of our initiatives to get more people involved in gardening and of course the FDHS!

- Dockenfield – Jeffreys Cottage, Bealeswood Lane (just inside the open garage)
- Frensham – April Cottage, Hamlash Lane (to the left of the front door)
- Frensham – Dragonfly, Hammondswood Road (inside the log store at the top of the drive see the signs!)

Please email us ([bleachsharon@gmail.com](mailto:bleachsharon@gmail.com); [annabelsommerfelt@gmail.com](mailto:annabelsommerfelt@gmail.com)) if you are unable to get along to see what is available and we will try to put aside any seed you might like. The seeds are available to all members – you do not have to have contributed this year to pick out some seeds. You can collect seeds this coming summer and we should then have even more seeds to pass around next year! Hopefully this will become an annual event on the FDHS calendar – one we can enjoy face to face in future.

Shortly after seed distribution will be a....

**Seed sowing workshop** – A practical session to be run on Zoom by Ruth Murphy, unless lockdown restrictions are loosened so this can happen outside in the garden.



### FRENSHAM & DOCKENFIELD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY



### BEGINNERS SEED SOWING WORKSHOP

Are you new to gardening? - Looking to grow your own garden from seed? - A little unsure where to begin?

**FDHS are here to support you!**

Join Ruth Murphy on Zoom for a demonstration on seed sowing, including choosing the right compost, what tools and equipment, nurturing seedlings, and pricking out seedlings to grow-on.

**Saturday 13 March at 11am** - duration no more than 90 mins including Q&A

Email: [secretary@fdhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@fdhs.org.uk) (or call 01252 793267) to reserve your place.

Joining details will be emailed prior to the event.

[www.fdhs.org.uk](http://www.fdhs.org.uk)

There is a tradition that new potatoes should be planted on Good Friday but I find this strange because the best time to plant any crop is when the soil and weather conditions are right, rather than the timing of an event in the rather variable Christian calendar. More likely, it is when hard-working country folk had a few days off in which to catch up with the garden, and a major event is planting the UK's favourite tuber.

If you read about the optimum soil temperature for planting early potatoes, you will see numbers ranging from 6 to 20 degrees C. Not very helpful, but it also suggests it is not too critical so what I look for are signs that weeds are beginning to grow, the ground is not too wet, and it's not cold and frosty. In our area I am looking for a day in the first two weeks in March for my early potatoes, the main crop is not so critical and can wait a month. The point of getting the earlies in as soon as possible is that you don't have to wait so long for that delicious flavour of freshly dug, home grown new potatoes. Planting this early means they will be ready by mid to late May.

If you have bought your seed potatoes then they should be unpacked and laid out in a light, frost free place in a seed tray, egg boxes/trays, or cut off bottom of a cardboard box. This is called chitting and allows the tubers to grow short robust shoots which will give them a good start when they are planted. However, they need to be the right way up! What is the right way up for a potato? If you look at the tuber, one end should have a cluster of buds, or just small blisters in the skin. That is the top and needs to be pointing upwards in the tray and when you plant it.

If the weather is warm the first shoots will break through the soil in 2-3 weeks. They must be protected from frost with fleece or "earthing-up", or both. If frosted they will go black and die back, but all is not lost as new shoots will appear in a week or so. The tubers grow off the underground stems, they are not roots that grow down onto the soil. Therefore, soil or compost must be placed around the stems and this is where your potatoes grow. The conventional way is to have a row of potatoes, planted 12" (30 cm) apart, in a 6" (15 cm) trench and when the shoots appear the soil is "earthed-up" to form a ridge. If you have raised beds plant them in a grid with equal spacing in a design to give you most efficient use of space but maintaining 12" (30 cm) between each plant. For raised beds I "earth-up" with up to a foot (30 cm) of compost and the tubers are then be easily harvested.

When all the potatoes have found their way to the kitchen, sometime in July to early August, then the bed is ready for its next crop, which, for me, will be leeks. Main crop potatoes need more space, say, 15" (or 38-40 cm) and rows 30" or 75 cm apart, or a 15" grid in your raised bed. Writing this, I am already looking forward to the taste of this year's new potatoes, cooked with a sprig of mint and served with a knob of butter.

*(Continues on next page...)*

Editors note: when asked for recommendations of tasty varieties Dan's response was 'it is all down to personal taste' but he did also mention the following:

- First Earlies- Belle de Fontenay. Very quick to mature and great flavour waxy potato.
- Second Earlies- Charlotte. An all time favourite. Waxy yellow and full of flavour, Boiled, roast or baked.
- Main Crop- Pink Fir Apple. The wacky knobbly ones with the great flavour. Boiled or baked.

(Tip for boiling potatoes passed on from my parents is to parboil in lidded casserole until just beginning to go soft (10 minutes?) and then drain, add knob of butter, replace lid and finish in very low oven (100 C) for half an hour or so.

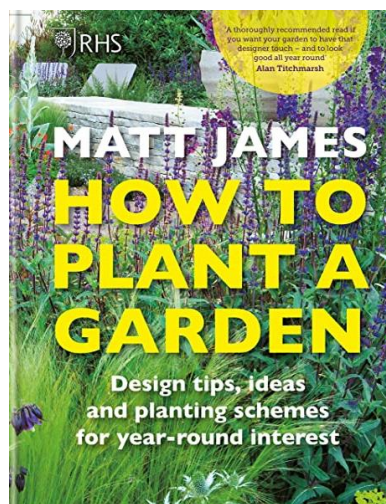
## BOOKS OF INTEREST

*Recommended by Ruth Murphy*

How to Plant a Garden  
Matt James for Royal Horticultural Society  
ISBN 978-1-84533-984-5

A super book and gives a real insight into design using plants. As a garden designer, who studied under Matt James's expert tutelage, I am probably a little biased. However, he does an excellent job of demystifying the use of colour, texture and form to suit the space. I have an extensive library of planting and design resources at my fingertips and this is often one of the handful of books that I pull out when researching ideas for a garden design and planting scheme.

If you're new to design or have a space in your garden you need some help with, this book is invaluable and comes complete with a chapter of suggested planting schemes to suit a variety of aspects.



***Roasted parsnips and sweet potatoes with caper vinaigrette from Yotam Ottolenghi***

The addition of vinaigrette to freshly roasted vegetables gives them a freshness and juiciness they don't normally have; the acidity brings out new shades of flavour, too. The combinations are endless - try adding yam or salsify, or celeriac and beetroot. Furthermore, the dressing can easily take a sweet note, if you prefer - just omit the capers and add honey or maple syrup. Fold in some fresh herbs, such as basil or oregano, chopped at the last moment, and a little grated lemon zest to take it even further. Just try. Serves four.

**4 parsnips (around 700g in total)**  
**2 red onions**  
**90ml olive oil**  
**4 sprigs of thyme**  
**2 sprigs of rosemary**  
**1 head garlic, cut in half horizontally**  
**Salt and black pepper**  
**2 sweet potatoes (around 600g)**  
**20 cherry tomatoes, halved**  
**2 tbsp white-wine vinegar**  
**2 tbsp baby capers (or larger ones roughly chopped)**  
**1 tsp mustard**  
**1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds**

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/ gas mark 4. Peel the parsnips and cut them into two or three segments, depending on their lengths. Cut each piece lengthways into two or four - you want pieces that are roughly 5cm long and 1.5cm wide. Top and tail the onions, peel them and cut each into six wedges.

Place the parsnips and onions in a large mixing bowl and add 60ml of olive oil, the thyme, rosemary, garlic, a teaspoon of salt and some pepper. Mix and spread out on a large roasting tin. Roast for 35 minutes.

While the parsnips are cooking, top and tail the sweet potatoes. Cut them (with their skins) into two widthways and then cut each half into six wedges. Add the potatoes to the tray with the parsnips and onions, stir and return to the oven for another 35-45 minutes.

Once all the vegetables are cooked through and golden brown, stir in the halved tomatoes and return to the oven for another 10 minutes.

Whisk together the vinegar, capers, mustard, 30ml of oil and half a teaspoon of salt, and pour over the roasting vegetables the moment they come out of the oven. Stir, taste and adjust the seasoning as necessary. Scatter the sesame seeds over the top and serve straight from the tin.

## AND FINALLY....

Neil Mumford spotted this from the Surrey Heritage Society which members might be interested in:

**“Planting Ideas: Sources for the History of Gardening in Surrey - 28 April, 5.30pm to 6.45pm on Zoom”**

This illustrated talk explores the wide range of sources held by Surrey History Centre that can be used to study the history of Surrey's gardens – ordnance survey maps, tithe and enclosure maps, charity records, deeds, estate plans, sale particulars, family papers, photograph albums, business and society records, watercolours and engravings can all be used to uncover the history of garden design, planting and the skills of Surrey's gardeners over some seven centuries.

Tickets £5. Please [book a place online](#). After payment has been received you will be emailed a unique link and password to attend the talk on Zoom.

**Items for the next newsletter to Sharon Bleach by 11<sup>th</sup> March please. It would be great to have a few photos of flowers that are in bloom in your gardens, recipes or books you have enjoyed recently or suggestions for plants that grow well in the soils around here.**

All unattributed articles are by the Editor; Sharon Bleach.  
Items for next Newsletter please to be sent by email [bleachsharon@gmail.com](mailto:bleachsharon@gmail.com) or  
by post to Dragonfly, Hammondswood Road, Frensham, GU10 3EH