



Winter newsletter January 2024 No 171

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Editor's notes

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024, you will see that this looks very different to previous ones. We will be keeping the same frequency, which means that this newsletter will be produced on a quarterly basis, based on the seasons and issued at the end of each of the following months.

January - Winter
April - Spring
July - Summer
October - Autumn

One of the changes will be articles from my guest contributors Dan Bosence, Bridgette Wilson and Ruth Murphy, who I have chosen for their expertise in certain areas and who will be contributing in each of this year's newsletters, and I would like to thank them for their articles, I hope that you enjoy reading them.

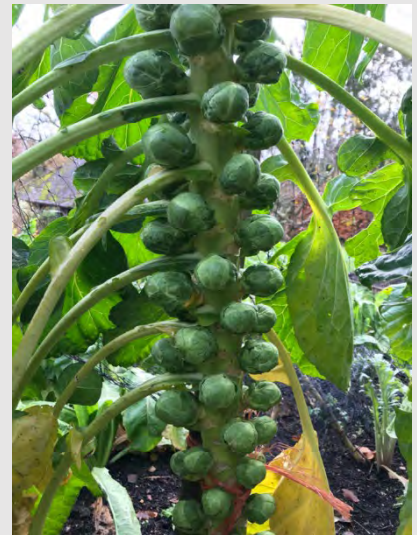
This is your newsletter and there is always room for more articles, so if you would like to contribute on a regular or ad-hoc basis, have anything that would be of interest to members, comments or ideas on what you would like to read, I would love to hear from you. You can contact me by email; marketing@fdhs.org.uk or by telephone on 07894 471000. Thanks Neil

From the Veg Plot by Dan Bosence



Neil asked me if I would contribute some personal notes on vegetable growing for the new-look, seasonal issues of our Newsletter. This is my first attempt and, without too many surprises, focuses on winter greens and salads.

This year seems to have been a very good year for winter greens. Maybe just the right amount of sunshine and rain through the growing season? My no-dig raised beds get a 2 inch covering of compost (my own or ProGrow from Lyndsey-Clark) every winter and that's it, no additional fertiliser. This year the kales (Curly Kale and Cavolo Nero) and sprouts (Brussels and Kalettes) are tied to stakes and pushing up the top of their 5' high anti-pigeon netting and we have a choice of four delicious brassicas to eat. I am a firm believer in total netting for the brassicas. Firstly a 10 mm mesh to keep the white butterflies out (they fold their wings back to fly through coarser mesh sizes!) but this does not keep out the cabbage moth whose larvae eat out the hearts of the growing plants in the summer. There are never many of these and I do a regular patrol with tweezers to remove them. As the season progresses white fly may move in so my strategy here is to get the butterfly netting off as soon as the whites have stopped flying and drape a 2" mesh anti-pigeon netting over the frame, just over the top. This allows the small birds in to feast on white fly which, together with any frosts, get rid of most of these persistent pests. It's all a bit of a battle, but worth it to have fresh organic produce. (Photo shows Brussels Sprout Claudius F1 under pigeon netting).



Quatre Saisons, Winter Imperial and Mizuna leaves (left to right) in greenhouse 31st Jan 2022.

Another winter treat if you have a greenhouse is to grow salads after the tomatoes have been cleared. These need to be sown a month or so before transplanting (as plug plants) for them to put on enough growth to crop later in winter and early spring.



Sutton's "Spicy Leaves" mixture 5th Dec 2021

Winter's growth is much slower than summer growth and the glass should be clean to let in maximum winter sun. There are varieties that can grow well in an unheated greenhouse such as Lettuce á Quatre Saison's and Winter Imperial lettuces and Japanese spicy leaves and radishes:

Finally, and for a treat, why not try Belgian chicory or chicons? The trick here is to ensure you have space in the veg garden to sow seeds directly outside in July. A time when space is always at a premium. The dandelion-like plants then grow through the late summer and autumn and are lifted (for forcing) before the frosts. Then they are left to wilt and the leaves then cut off about an inch above the roots as in pictures below.

The roots are then planted upright and up to the shoulder of the root in old compost in a clamp (an old dustbin or water butt with a lid works well, or two plant pots, one for the compost and one inverted as a cover). The roots need to be kept in the dark for forcing and to be stored in a coolish room. I use our unheated utility room; Christopher Lloyd used his understairs cupboard.

These are left in the dark for 3-4 weeks when new crisp chicons grow, like magic, out of the old roots. If the roots are large and healthy you may get two crops off them. I plant up two bins and leave one somewhere cold and bring it in to replace the first bin when it has finished cropping. The photos show the different stages of growth and preparation. They are very much tastier than the shop brought chicons which nearly all come from just one farm in Lincolnshire.



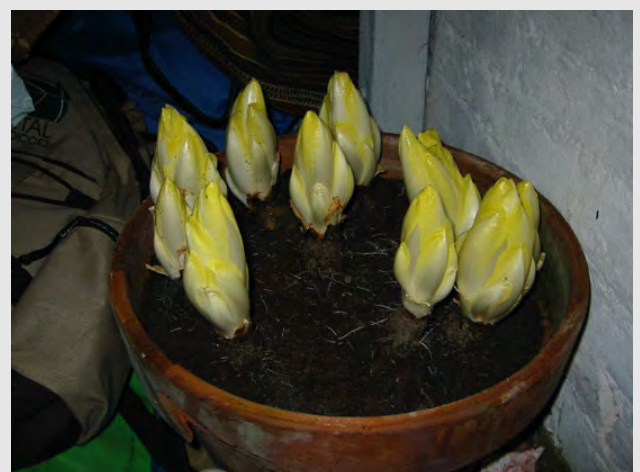
Chicory growing and ready to lift



Leave undercover outside for leaves to wilt.



Roots prepared for planting in old peat in dustbin with lid (behind) to keep dark.



Chicons grown in large flower pot with cover removed and ready to cut.

Winter rituals and the flower garden by Ruth Murphy



At last! It's January and the start of the growing year! In readiness, the greenhouse is clean, tools are clean, and the beds mulched. The autumn sowings are slowly emerging and eagerly await longer days to fully get going! I generally sow hardy biennials, such as Lunaria, Digitalis, Alcea and others in autumn that require cold stratification to stimulate germination.

A favourite winter ritual is pouring over seed catalogues and eventually honing the inevitable long list into one that will more realistically get sown and grown. However, I still haven't achieved that and always finish the growing year with a few leftovers for my ever-burgeoning seed tin!

Part of the selection process for me stems from a desired aesthetic. I have no floristry experience but do have an appreciation of the art and my observations have informed me to aim to have a wide selection of flowers and shrubs in the garden that fit one of the following criteria: foliage, focal and filler, in a colour palette that tones well together. Personally, I favour loose and frothy plants so will always have umbels and ferny foliage plants growing which I team with summer meadow plants such as cornflowers and achillea.

Even though I sow annuals and biennials each year, I have also grown several perennials, such as Eryngium, Echinops, Aquilegia, Echinacea, Solidago, Japanese Anemone, all of which have been either grown from seed or cuttings. Over the years, as these plants have matured, I have split them and used them to fill any gaps around the garden, more plants = more blooms!

This perennial palette often informs my seed selection each year. The exceptions being sweet peas and sunflowers which in my view, need nothing else in the vase. This year I will be growing Chiltern Seeds Lathyrus 'Mulberry Mix' and most likely a sunflower combination of deep reds and yellows with plum tinged pinkish sunflowers.

All my gardens feature Digitalis. They add height to the border, are a great cut flower, bumblebees love them, and it is of a generous nature. Having inherited a self-seeded mix in the garden, each year I deposit seed into areas that I wish to introduce more. Often, I select and transplant seedlings that I think will have white flowers into borders where I want a continuation of a planting scheme where I have used white foxgloves.

Many years ago, I was given a handy little tip and shown how to identify the potential flower colour of self-seeded digitalis by looking at the leaves of the basal rosette that has grown in year one. If the mid rib is pink tinged - the foxglove will most likely be pink, if it's white it's a fair bet that it will flower white too!

Digitalis – leaf mid rib on left is pink tinged, the other white. (Pictures show the front and back of the leaves).

Last year I also grew a variety called Suttons Apricot, some of which did flower in the first year - these are out in the garden alongside Allium 'Purple Sensation'. I look forward to the soft warm tone it will add to the early summer garden.



What's made my 2024 shortlist?

- *Nigella Damascena* 'Persian Jewels' mix, *Lunaria annua* and *Scabiosa* 'Sternkugel' – for the seed pod/head.
- *Anthriscus Sylvestris* 'Ravenswing', *Ammi visnaga*, *Daucus* 'Dara' great as a focal and filler
- *Gypsophila* – great frothy flower, wonderful teamed with an airy grass such as *Deschampsia cespitosa*.
- *Centaurea* 'Blue Ball' and 'Black Ball', *Calendula officinalis*, *Achillea ptarmica* 'The Pearl'

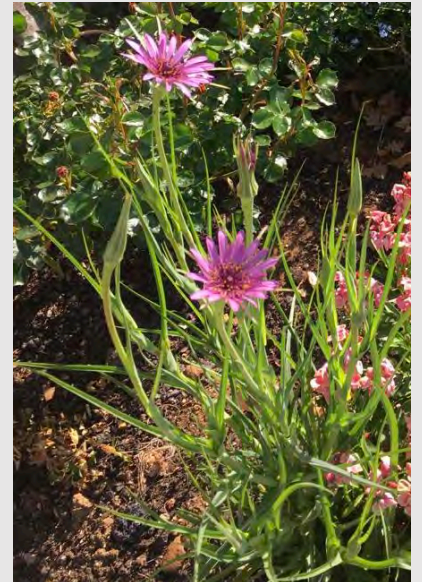
Two plants worthy of a mention that I will also be growing this year, is *Digitalis ferruginea* and *Tragopogon porrifolius*.

Digitalis ferruginea, the rusty foxglove, is a drought tolerant biennial/perennial with rusty peach coloured flowers, similar to *Digitalis parviflora*, only larger blooms.

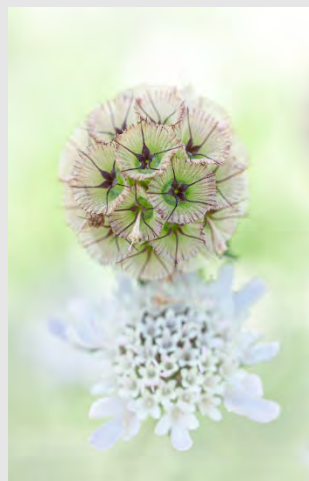
Tragopogon porrifolius (better known perhaps as Salsify) - at our own Gardeners Question Time last year, the panel was presented with a photo of a 'mystery' flower which was identified as *Tragopogon* (Salsify)! I loved it and can't wait to see how it sits with my other plants. **(See photo to right)**

Finally, having set up the heated mat on the propagation bench in the greenhouse, I love the ritual of combining my compost mix with bare hands, into a delightfully crumbly texture and filling the pots and modules that I prefer to use.

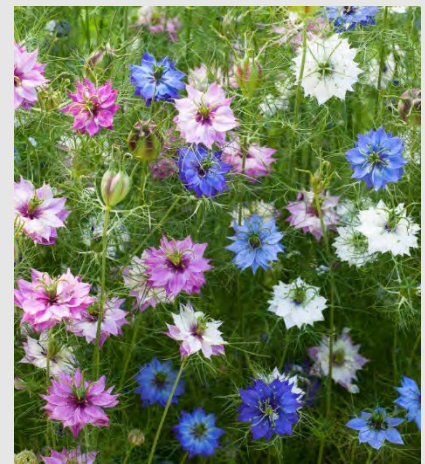
First to be sown, why sweet peas, of course! Wonderful! and we're off. Let the growing season commence!



Digitalis Ferruginea



Scabiosa stellata, 'Sternkugel'



Nigella Damascena 'Persian Jewels'

Frensham Fayre Plant Stall- An appeal

Whilst on the subject of sowing flower seeds, once again, we will be having a plant stall at the Frensham Fayre. Caroline Plant does a sterling job supplying most of the plants and manning the stall, which is always extremely popular and a sellout, but we do need your help to create a wider offering.

As the spring descends upon us and you start dividing your plants, taking cuttings and sow your seeds, could put a few aside for the society. Ornamental grasses, perennials and vegetable plants are particularly popular, so if you can help, please contact Caroline on the following email: caroline.tonkin@gmail.com.

If you can give some of your time up on Saturday 15th June, to help man the stall, again Caroline would love to hear from you.



Society noticeboard

February Meeting 22nd

“Attention all Vegetable Growers”

We welcome John Trim who will talk about growing ‘**Greens**’.

John is a Fellow of the National Vegetable Society and a national show judge. This is a must for all the societies vegetable growers. At the Marindin Hall, 7.30pm for an 8pm start

No March Meeting

As the Spring show, is late in the month and due to an early Easter, there will be no members meeting in March.

Annual Membership

Fees are now due for the 2024 year and remain the same at £20 for a single membership and £35 for a double membership. If you have not had the opportunity of paying you can pay by bank transfer or even better set up an annual standing order, the bank details are as follows:

Account name: FDHS
Account number: 81476443
Sort code: 09-01-28

Please quote your surname in the reference box so that we can match the payment to you.

Spring Show Reminder

Our Spring show will be held on Saturday 23rd March 2024.

In 2019 we received a record number of entries for the spring show 279, from 52 members can we beat that this year?

We are grateful once again to Squires Garden Centre for sponsoring the show.

Please refer to your handbook for classes and entry form.

Local society spring shows

6th April- Elstead (Village Hall)
6th April – Churt (Village Hall)
6-7th April Tilford (Rural Life Centre)
13th April- Thursley (Village Hall)

Bridget's Kitchen

Pheasant or Chicken Casserole

Ingredients

Serves 6

100gms thickly sliced bacon cut into strips or lardons.
2 leeks coarsely shredded.
2tbs oil
6 pheasant/ chicken breasts
25g plain flour
300ml apple juice
300ml chicken stock
1tbs cranberry jelly
1 bouquet garni
Salt and pepper
Chopped fresh parsley.

1. Cook bacon gently in a frying pan stirring occasionally for a few minutes, add leeks and cook until the leeks are beginning to brown, and the bacon is crisp. Remove bacon and leeks to casserole/ slow cooker.
2. Add oil to the pan and fry pheasant/ chicken quickly on a high heat until browned all over. Then remove to the slow cooker.
3. Add flour to the pan and cook, stirring for a minute. Gradually blend in the apple juice stock and cranberry jelly. Bring to boil stirring until thickened.
4. Pour the sauce over the bacon, leeks, and pheasant/ chicken, add bouquet garni and seasoning.
5. Cover and place in the oven for 2 hours to 2hrs 30mins at 150c or a slow cooker for about 4 hours at medium.
6. Ensure casserole doesn't dry out. When ready check seasoning, remove bouquet garni and sprinkle chopped parsley on top.

Bridgette Wilson will be supplying a seasonal recipe in each newsletter.

Looking back in time

Members Supper

To celebrate the end of our 75th Anniversary, we welcomed over 40 members and guests to the Members supper in November to enjoy a sumptuous Indian banquet supplied and served by Sprinkle of Saffron. This is the time of year when we present our final two awards of the year.

The Anniversary Cup is our most prestigious award and recognises the person who the committee feel has provided the society with outstanding support over a number of years and the 2023 recipient was Neil Mumford for his painstaking work on pulling together the history of the society and producing a book to celebrate the 75th year of the society.

The RHS Banksian Medal is awarded to the competitor who obtains the highest total amount of points combined across the societies two shows". Points awarded for non-horticultural classes such as Floral arrangements and Home Industries are excluded. The RHS rules also excluded any member who has been awarded the medal in the previous two years. Dan Bosence showed his versatility in both shows by deservedly winning the medal for the first time since his last win in 2010. Dan, your one behind Alison!

The raffle also turned out to be a great success and thank you to everyone who supported it and raised valuable funds for society. One of the prizes, was an excellent selection of home grown seasonal vegetables donated by Dan Bosence, which was won by Kate Shipton, Kate is our resident home industries judge and she has written to us, to let us know how she used all the veg:

Fennel - went into a fish pie.

Leek - added to a stir fry of veg.

Beetroot - made into chocolate & beetroot brownies.

Red Pepper - ratatouille

Aubergine - Moussaka & in the ratatouille

Chard - veg dish with roast (stalks & leaves cooked separately but served together)

Squash - soup pending, as this is not needed to be used urgently.

It is a current tradition to present the Anniversary Cup at each member's supper.

The only person to be awarded the trophy twice is the late Laurie Weeden, in 1999 and again in 2007. A keen grower of vines, Laurie made his own wine and as a long-standing member, he supported the society in various ways, entering the shows and winning the Wood Cup in 2004 and the Bill Othen Vase in 2002, 2008. He also voluntarily tended the Marindin Hall Gardens from 1991 to 2007.

Laurie was also instrumental in welcoming new members, the first time that Dan Bosence decided to enter some veg for the H&P show, Laurie collared him, to join the society because he could see what a keen veg gardener he was! He wasn't wrong on that score!!

Laurie served during the last World War and on the night of 5th June 1944, he piloted one of six gliders, that had been tasked with a critical mission. The troops they carried, were to attack a series of strategically important bridges on the invasion's eastern border, blowing them up to prevent German armour and troops moving in to attack British troops landing by air and sea. During that flight he received a call from the radio operator "Happy Birthday!" Laurie turned 22 on D-Day (6th June).



In 2015, The Prince of Wales commissioned 12 portraits of surviving D-Day Veterans for the exhibition 'The Last of The Tide' at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London 2015. Laurie was one of the chosen four. Laurie is pictured above, with the then Prince of Wales, with his portrait in the background, at the exhibition opening in October 2015.

The Christmas Tree Festival by Caroline Plant

As you may be aware – the FDHS put in an entry to the Christmas Tree Festival at St. Mary’s The idea is to create a tree around a word with “tree” as part of it – the tree is put in place, people visit on Saturday and Sunday, money is raised for good causes. a forest which had died, but all around it were many seedlings: death, birth, renewal. The idea is to create a tree around a word with “tree” in it – the tree is put in place on Friday, people visit on Saturday and Sunday, money is raised for good causes.

Alison Bosence and I used as our tree out of a stem of a myrtle which I had trained for about 15 years into a cloud pruned tree, as seen in the foreground of this photo (right) of 2022; sadly, the extremely cold weather in December killed it, amidst much gnashing of teeth, and it did not resprout.



A stem of this small tree was used as it was, and white birds were crafted out of paper and feathers to flutter and perch, plus a few out of papier mâché, also painted white, to mooch around the base. Plus a few LED lights, the batteries of which gave out in no time whatsoever. All very tasteful. Since it was after all a Christmas tree, around the base of the tree we placed 24 seedlings of 6 native species (oak, holly, rowan, Cornelian cherry, sweet chestnut, and hornbeam) which we had dug up from our gardens, and the pots of which we wrapped in colourful Christmas wrapping paper. We put out a sign exhorting people to take a tree and start their own forest. To our delight, all 24 trees were taken, including one by Jane the Vicar. Result! We had extremely positive feedback for our efforts, though the winning tree entry was that of the choir – to whom our congratulations. Below are photos of the work in progress, and a close-up of some of the birds.





We are delighted to welcome Rosy Hardy as our speaker for the April meeting.

Rosy, along with husband Rob, are the owners of Hardy's Cottage Garden, based in the beautiful Hampshire village of Freefolk, near Whitchurch. Founded in 1988, this small independent nursery focuses on selling over 1,200 perennials and is an RHS Master Grower.

A regular at all the RHS shows, the nursery has won a staggering 24 Gold Medals at Chelsea and 2 Tudor Roses at Hampton Court Flower shows. Last year alone, they won best in show at Gardeners World Live, Silver Gilt and Long service award at the Malvern Spring Show, Golds at Hampton Court, and the Malvern Autumn Show.

In 2020, Rosy was made an honorary Vice President of the RHS in recognition of her contribution and education to horticulture.

Rosy's is a renowned speaker, and her talk is entitled "Seasonal Flowering Perennials". Anyone that has heard her talk will want to attend.

BOOKING

We are expecting this talk to be extremely popular and are therefore holding this at the Good Shepherd in Dockenfield, which is a larger venue. This talk will be **free to members**, but you will need to reserve your place to attend, can you therefore ensure that you email **events@fdhs.org.uk** by 31st March, **after this date we cannot guarantee you a seat.**

Non-members can reserve a space on a first come first served basis and on payment of £10.00 per ticket. If you wish to invite a guest, they will need to purchase a ticket for this event, and these can be reserved and paid for with your advanced reservation.

Gardeners Diary

There are a number of events being held over the next few months and these are a few of those. A useful website to visit which will provide information on even more events is www.pumpkinbeth.com. If you know of any local or national events that are not listed, including national garden scheme events, that you feel should be included, please let me know by email: marketing@fdhs.org.uk



National Events

15th March RHS Wisley Orchid Show
9th-12th May RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Local Events

6th April Churt Spring Show
April Tulip Festival , Arundel Castle - Check website for details
April/May Pashley Manor Tulip Festival, Wadhurst, East Sussex – check website for details
5th May Surrey Plant Heritage Plant Fair, Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking
3rd-5th May BBC Gardeners World Spring Fair, Beaulieu, New Forest

Plant Heritage – Zoom events. -Press the links below to register as a member prior to the event.

10th February 2024 – 2pm-4pm- Clematis a complete guide.

<https://www.plantheritage.org.uk/events/gloucestershire/clematis-a-complete-guide-also-via-zoom/>

21st February -9.30am – 11.30am Growing Peat Free –research and talk by the RHS

<https://www.plantheritage.org.uk/events/national/growing-peat-free-hear-the-latest-research-from-the-rhs/>

28th February 6.30pm-8pm Tulips -Historical Tulips a National Plant Collection

<https://www.plantheritage.org.uk/events/national/historical-tulips-a-national-plant-collection-with-polly-nicholson/>

National Vegetable Society

Zoom events. -Press the links below to register as a member prior to the event

7th February -7.30pm- Growing quality veg in a small home garden.

<https://www.nvsuk.org.uk/events/copy-of-zoom-talk-emily-plumb-it-s-sow-simple>

5th March – 7.30pm -Autopot – Growing anything, anywhere, power free with no running water required- Jason Ralph-Smith.

<https://www.nvsuk.org.uk/events/copy-of-bucks-d-a-talk-zero-to-hero-by-a-talk-jason-ralph-smith-autopots>

20th March – 7.30pm - A closer look at Asian Hornets – Vanessa Jones.

[https://www.nvsuk.org.uk/events/Vanessa Jones A closer look at Asian Hornets](https://www.nvsuk.org.uk/events/Vanessa%20Jones%20A%20closer%20look%20at%20Asian%20Hornets)