



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024

**WISHING YOU A HAPPY GARDENING YEAR FOR 2024, FROM YOUR
MGA COMMITTEE**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

I have now taken over the Chair role until the AGM in February. Many thanks to Debs for covering the role, as well as Treasurer, for the past three months.

Looking forward to the year ahead

I was doing some leaf clearing today, and noticed that my hellebore buds, and some snowdrop stems, are peeping through already. So Nature marches on, even if we like to hunker down in these dark days. Everyone who came to the December meeting enjoyed chatting with other members, sampling lots of edible (and quaffable) goodies, and picking their brains on fun quizzes. There is lots to look forward to with the MGA in 2024 – another full programme of speakers, newsletters and trips. We will provide more information in the next newsletter, and hope that you are sufficiently tempted to want to renew your membership – which is due in February. You can also find lots of useful information on our website: <http://www.marlbga.org.uk/>

We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting (details below) – and don't forget to bring something for the display table; the topic is "best garden tool". That reminds me; I really must put into action my annual new year resolution about cleaning my tools. If you need any help, see the article from the RHS giving advice.

Deirdre Watson

THE FIRST MEETING FOR 2024

Wednesday 10 January 2024: We are back to our usual venue of the Town Hall. The doors open 6.45pm, to allow members to mingle and chat with a free cuppa, have a look at the display table (and even bring something for it), and buy some raffle tickets, before the speaker starts at 7.30pm.

The Speaker for January is ANDREW TOLMAN from Malmesbury, and his intriguing sounding subject is "Off the Beaten Track - Hidden Gems".

Andrew is a professional gardener with 40 years experience, working with the public sector, private estates and gardens, and has been self employed for the last 13 years.

Jan Lilliwhite

THE RAFFLE

Congratulations to Gerald Payne, the lucky winner of our special Dobbies raffle prize. Thank you to those of you who support our funds by buying raffle tickets, and also by providing garden themed raffle prizes. You know where you can find a home for any unwanted Christmas presents!

Bev Luxford

WINTER JOBS: RHS ADVICE ON CLEANING TOOLS

Regularly cleaning hand tools will help them last longer and work better. The spread of plant diseases and viruses can be controlled by cleaning and sterilising equipment.

Quick facts

- Tools kept clean and in good working order are more efficient and safer to use
- Ideally, garden tools should be cleaned after every use
- Soil on boots and shoes can spread soil borne diseases within your garden and beyond

Cleaning cultivation tools (spades, hoes, forks, rakes and trowels)

- Use a stiff scrubbing brush to remove any soil from the blade and shaft
- Extremely muddy tools may need a wash down with a hose before drying with an old towel. Drying prevents wooden handles from absorbing water and swelling, and stops metal from rusting
- Traditionally, to help prevent rusting, tools were oiled with a thin protective film of general purpose oil after cleaning. Many modern tools are made from stainless steel, which is less likely to rust. However, this does depend on the quality of the metal. Occasional oiling may be required.

Cleaning cutting tools (secateurs, knives, loppers, pruning saws and all types of shears)

Blades of pruning tools become gummed up with the sap of the plants you are pruning, attracting grime to the blade. This build up affects performance, causing blades to stick together over time.

- Clean off dried-on sap with a nylon pan scourer or wire wool. Use a penetrating oil and water-displacing spray such as WD-40 to help loosen the grime
- Once the metal is clear and smooth, wipe off the remaining spray with a clean cloth
- Tighten any loose working parts and drop some oil into the central pivot point, opening and closing it to work the oil in
- Store in a clean dry place

How to sterilise hand tools

Garden hygiene is important for preventing the spread of diseases such as Phytophthora, bacterial canker and box blight, to name a few. It is important to clean all used tools that have come into contact with contaminated soil and plant material. Good hygiene for propagation tools is essential too.

- Stop soil transfer by brushing cultivation tools like spades at the site
- Apply a suitable disinfectant such as Jeyes fluid, Citrox or Propellar to all used blades. To successfully kill pathogens, leave for 15-20 minutes before wiping off
- Dry with an old towel and then oil, remembering that any brush or cloth should also be disinfected
- Don't forget your boots, remove contaminated soil and disinfect the soles

Deirdre Watson

PENNARDS PLANTS

If you grow fruit and veg, you may have come across Pennard Plants, who run the Potato Days that we have advertised before. They have various offers on at the moment for early birds who are already thinking about Spring planting. See below, and for more details, have a look at their website: <https://www.pennardplants.com>

As Christmas arrives thoughts are already turning to the New Year.....

We may have finished shipping for 2023, but the nursery never stands still. It may be cold outside, and the ground may be frozen or very wet but at least you can plan what to grow in 2024.

To help with this we have a few ideas to help you save money whilst getting stocked up with seeds and plants for the new season.

We have reduced lots of varieties of Vegetable seeds to just £1.00 until January 6th.

We are giving you FREE shipping for orders of £50 or over until January 6th.

You can save 20% on your seed potato order using the code *spuds2024* at checkout until 31st December.

Don't forget your Potato Fertiliser 1kg pot £4.95 or 3 for just £10

Deirdre Watson

NGS ONLINE TALK ON 30 JANUARY

If you are interested in joining this talk, have a look at the website <https://ngs.org.uk>, then go to Shop and Online talks.

In Celebration of Snowdrops

On Tuesday 30th January our Chief Executive, George Plumtre, will kick off a new season of online talks with a panel of garden owners who all open their gardens for snowdrops and other treasures of the late-winter. Myra Ginns who gardens at **1 Birch Drive** in Bristol, Griselda Kerr from **The Dower House**, Melbourne in Derbyshire and Karin Proudfoot from the **Old Rectory Fawkham** in Kent, will discuss their favourite snowdrops and how best to grow them. They will reveal how snowdrops first captured their imagination, but they will also show what other plants make their gardens so special in January and February.

The deadline for copy for the February Newsletter is 23 January 2024. Please send contributions to dwatsonweavers@gmail.com