

February 2014

Issue no. 30



# Battisford & District Gardening Club

## From the Editor's Desk

No room for a profound editorial with Jane Pope's '*magnum opus*' taking up the front page! So simply a belated 'Happy New Year' and 'Good Gardening'.  
George

## November 2013: Carnivorous Plants

By Jane Pope

With clear memories of the ending of *The Day of the Triffids* and the adventures of Audrey II in *A Little Shop of Horrors*, I approached the talk entitled "Carnivorous Plants" with some trepidation. Andrew Wilkinson from Triffid Nurseries (tag line; "the food chain in reverse!") came to talk with great knowledge about his passion, these "marvels of evolution". Andrew immediately acknowledged that carnivorous plants (or CPs as he went on to affectionately call them) polarise opinions; people either love or hate them. He described a hobby which went out of control after a friend gave him a CP when he was working in the Blood Transfusion Service. What a great friend!

Triffid Nurseries have become the third largest purveyors of CPs in the country, after Andrew moved his 10,000 pots from Devon to Suffolk, where they thrive in the bright sunshine after the mizzle of the West Country. There are 500 species of CPs - defined as plants which attract, trap and digest prey - covering six plant groups with a world wide spread and we were told that they are "easy peasy" to grow. I was suspicious of this at first, remembering a certain talk on sweet peas, but it turned out to be true! CPs will digest flies, wasps, slugs, moths, grass hoppers, lizards, frogs and small mammals. They were hugely popular with the Victorians, including Darwin, but World War I ended this expensive obsession and they have only more recently had a revival of interest.

Andrew showed some beautiful photographs and talked about the plants from all the groups. The pitcher plants have lids to stop the rain water getting in and cunningly placed ladders for any prey to have easy access to their sweet temptations. Their pitchers are actually modified leaves.

The 200 species of sundews are smaller and more delicate, but use their dew to attract and trap the unwary fly, whilst the (relatively) pretty butterworts use nature's fly paper to trap their food. The bladderworts' traps are soil borne to catch nematode worms. The Venus Fly Trap is a unique species, with orchid like, outsized flowers which are far from the trap to protect the precious insect pollinators. These CPs think of everything...



Throughout the talk I had a mixture of slight discomfort and admiration for the way the plants have developed such cunning traps and loved the amazing information that all of them evolved across the world in parallel evolution, in many different environments. We even have three Sundews and two Butterworts in the Suffolk and Norfolk fenlands, where they thrive in the poor, boggy soil.

CPs can be grown at home in an unheated greenhouse, conservatory or the kitchen window, where they keep down the flies in summer. Andrew assured us that CPs do not attract bees or ladybirds. Two golden rules; never use fertiliser and always use rain water. CPs will live for over 25 years in pots, but they are not happy in the wind.

The photographs and examples Andrew brought along showed just how beautiful, delicate, varied and fascinating the CPs really are. It was an intriguing and very enjoyable evening. And yet, as I walked away from the plant table, I'm sure I heard a whispered hint of Audrey II's "Feed me. Feed me. Feeeeee me!"

Jane Pope



Photo above: Andrew Wilkinson with one of his much loved carnivorous plants (*Sarracenia* sp.). The website for Triffid Nurseries is at [www.triffidnurseries.co.uk/](http://www.triffidnurseries.co.uk/)

Photo left: Pitcher plants with 'lids' and 'ladders'. Products of Intelligent Design, Lamarckian 'besoin', or Darwinian adaptation through natural selection? - You chose.

## December: Quiz Night!

By George Bethell

December 2nd saw a good turn out for the Club's annual quiz, but the attendance may have been somewhat swollen by the offer of a free, M&S finger food buffet! Eight teams battled it out through six rounds of taxing questions. Competition was fierce with some teams clearly well prepared and others simply well oiled - especially after the break. It was nip and tuck all the way before the winners, 'Prunus' emerged from the pack to win it by a nose with an impressive 63 points.

George

*Below: Members of the victorious team 'Prunus' proudly display their 'I won the Quiz' badges.*



*Above: Runners-up 'Cormless' apply their mighty brain power to the picture round on their way to amassing a magnificent 61½ points. So near yet so far...*



## December: The Holly and the Ivy...

By Sandra Henson

Our 2013 Christmas Workshop was held on 7th December with a 'full house' of 31 members and friends. Jackie Collings once again came up trumps as our very own 'resident' demonstrator and guru.

Her first work of art was a table decoration and the second a Christmas wreath. As usual, Jackie proved supremely adept and made it all look so, so easy.

Debbie, with the help of Caroline and Gwynneth, served refreshments before and during our lunch break. Debbie also took care of our super Christmas raffle.

At the end, everyone appeared to have enjoyed their time and to be very pleased with their 'products'. Amazingly every piece was so different.

Many thanks to those who, at the end, helped clear away lots of greenery and trimmings and also to Linda for putting all the arrangements in place before jetting off to enjoy sunnier climes.

But the biggest thank you must go to Jackie for giving us her time and sharing her skills and 'floral accessories' with us. Will there be a 2014 workshop? Who knows but if there is, we'll be there!

Sandra



*Above: Working with holly requires intense concentration at another Jackie Collings workshop.*

## January: Annual Dinner Party

By Anthea Howard

Excellent food, great service, a pleasant venue and lots of bonhomie were enjoyed by 34 members and partners at the annual post-Christmas Gardening Club Dinner on 10<sup>th</sup> January at the Barn in Alder Carr Farm. Before, between and after courses there was lots of chat but when the food arrived there was an eerie silence only interrupted by occasional murmurs of appreciation.

Those of you who did not come missed an enjoyable evening, the highlight of which was the cabaret featuring our esteemed chairman, Mr William Baldry in a leotard. Sorry there are no photos - or at least none suitable for publication!

Many thanks to Paul for the free car boot 'help yourself' of spring bulbs from Thompson and Morgan.

Anthea



Do you know your orchids?  
(Answers at foot of the back page.)

1: Which former British colony has a flag which features the white flower of the orchid tree *Bauhinia blakeana* on a red background?

A Ceylon      B Hong Kong      C Singapore

2: Which of these culinary ingredients is derived from a plant in the orchid family *Orchidaceae*?

A cinnamon      B tamarind      C vanilla

3: American journalist Susan Orlean's 1998 book, based on a true story, is called what?

A The Orchid House  
B The Ghost Orchid  
C The Orchid Thief

4: Which of the following describes orchids that grow on trees?

A acrophytic      B epiphytic      C lithophytic

5: The native plant *Ophrys apifera* is commonly known as what?

A Bee orchid  
B Lady's Slipper orchid  
C Pyramidal orchid

6: The photo shows the famous grey racehorse Desert Orchid. Which of these races did Desert Orchid not win?

A Cheltenham Gold Cup  
B Irish Grand National  
C Epsom Derby



Photos above and top right show that copious quantities of booze were quaffed but where is the food?



Ah - there it is! (Ed.)

### Would you like to write for the Newsletter?

As you can see from this edition of the Newsletter, we are expanding our team of 'club reporters'. If you'd be willing to write a few paragraphs on a club meeting or visit please let me know via [bethell.george@gmail.com](mailto:bethell.george@gmail.com) or in person.

## Coming events...

### Monday 3rd February: Speaker Dave Coop\*\*\*

At the AGM great interest was expressed in the topic of compost and so, in a late change to the programme, Dave Coop of Westland Compost will be our speaker in February. He covers a variety of topics - as well as compost - so it should be an interesting evening. 7:30 pm at the Community Centre.

### Monday 3rd March: Speaker Matthew Tanton Brown

Matthew Tanton Brown of 'The Place for Plants' in East Bergholt will talk on '*The fragrant garden throughout the year*'. 7:30 pm at the Community Centre. (See also 12th May.)

### Monday 7th April: Speaker Geoff Hodge

Geoff Hodge is a prolific author, editor, and TV and radio presenter. Find out more at [gardenforumhorticulture.co.uk/](http://gardenforumhorticulture.co.uk/) He also writes an interesting blog: [lovethegarden.com/blog](http://lovethegarden.com/blog) . This is likely to be a very popular event so members will be invited to 'sign up' in advance - at the February and March meetings or by e-mail to Bill ([wbaldry@btinternet.com](mailto:wbaldry@btinternet.com)).

### Monday 12th May: Visit to 'Place for Plants'

Trip to 'Place for Plants' East Bergholt, CO7 6UP. Meet there at 7:00pm or at Battisford at 6:15pm. Note that this is the second Monday of the month.

### Monday 2nd June: Visit to Hullwood Barn, Shelley

As a follow up to Sarah Cook's acclaimed presentation to the club last year, this trip is a chance to see her national collection of 'Cedric Morris Irises' in all its glory. Meet there at 7:00pm (post code IP7 5RE) or 6:30pm at Battisford for car sharing.

### Sunday 29th June: Club BBQ from 3:00pm

An annual favourite, this year the Club BBQ will be at Old Stoke Farmhouse. Straight Road, Battisford - courtesy of Gwynneth and John Hogger. The BBQ will host the Summer Raffle Draw and give you a chance to hand in your Show entry forms!

### Saturday 5th July: Annual Show and Combs Fete

The 2014 Show Schedule and first of the 'T & M' goodies will be available at the February meeting with more plants available at the March meeting. (Full details of what's on offer this year available on a separate flier.) For more details contact Bill on 01449 672168.

## BDGC Summer Raffle

The Club is organising a ticketed raffle for prizes kindly donated by Thompson and Morgan. Money raised will go to the Club, the East Anglian Air Ambulance and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. .

First prize will be £100 worth of T & M vouchers with more than 50 other prizes to be won. Full details of the prizes will be available on our website.

With the money going to such good causes, we need your help to sell as many tickets as possible. Books of tickets will be distributed at the February meeting and at every opportunity thereafter!

The draw will take place at the Club BBQ on Sunday 29th June.

Denis Wicking is the promoter for the club and he can be contacted with any queries (and for more raffle ticket books) on 01449 770980 or [denis.wicking@wicking.me](mailto:denis.wicking@wicking.me) .

## Anyone for a charabanc trip?

Are you interested in a trip to the RHS Show at Hampton Court on Friday 11th July?

We are thinking of a bulk order of seats on a Galloways coach. Inclusive cost of an all-day entry ticket and coach travel is £55 (RHS non-member admission is £34). Coach leaves 06.45am and leaves the Show at 16.30pm

If you are interested please let Bill know as soon as possible on 01449 672168 or [wbaldry@btinternet.com](mailto:wbaldry@btinternet.com). Alternatively, record your name on the appropriate sheet at the February meeting. If there is enough interest we can then finalise the details.



## And finally... not paid up for 2014?



Unpaid subs (£11) for 2014 are now overdue. Cheques or coin of the realm to Debbie or Bill as soon as possible please!

### Brain Teasels Answers

1: B  
2: C  
3: C  
4: B  
5: A  
6: C