

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Photo: Jo Latimer

Summer 2009

Autumn Show 12th September 2009

Calling all members to enter. If you have never exhibited before, just have a go. Make sure you follow precisely the schedule on pages 12-13 of the 2009 Programme. All entry details should be given to our Show Secretary Barbara Macknish between 6 and 9pm on Thursday September 10th. The fee is 10p for each entry. Exhibits may be staged on the Friday evening between 9 and 9:30pm and between 10am and 12:45pm on the day of the show. The doors open at 3pm and admission to the show is free. Take the opportunity to buy plants, raffle tickets, tea and a slice of cake before the prize giving at 4:15pm.

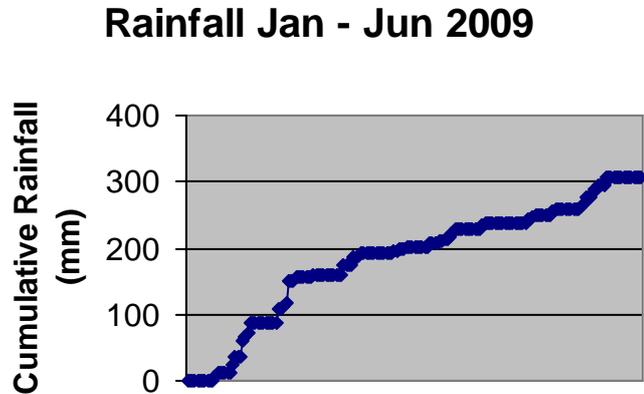
NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED

If you enter something in the show, please help clear up afterwards and be sure to take your own entries home. Buckets and black sacks will be provided to help with the operation. Please do not expect others to clear up for you.

Rainfall

This graph shows the cumulative rainfall from January 1st to June 30th 2009. During this time the total rainfall was 307mm or 12.1" which is over 100mm less than the same period last year.

January and February were cold and dull with around average rainfall some of which fell as snow. March was wet but April was warmer and drier than normal with the maximum temperature of 22.1°C recorded at East Malling on 15th. May had less than 75% of average rainfall and temperatures a little above normal. June rainfall was also below average but a warm end to the month saw Wisley recording the highest temperature (31.8°C) on the 30th.



2010 Programme

The 2010 programme is now complete although no speaker has been booked for February. It is proposed to use this meeting for an exchange of ideas and tips between members. We have a vast knowledge of many different aspects of gardening and we hope this will be a lively and interesting meeting for everybody. The show dates are 20th March for the Spring Show and 18th September for the Autumn Show.

Organic or Not?

A recent FSA (Food Standards Agency) study concluded that organic food was no more nutritious than that grown using conventional methods. The survey deemed only 55 of the thousands of studies performed over the last 50 years to be relevant. The studies showed that organic food had higher levels of acidity and phosphorous whilst conventional food had more nitrates. The FSA concluded that these results were irrelevant to public health. It took no account of pesticides and fertilisers used in conventional growing. The most recent study commissioned by the European Union to look into the differences between organic and non-organic was excluded. Another recent EU-funded study found that organic milk contained 60% more antioxidants and healthy fatty acids than normal milk and that vitamin levels are higher in organic tomatoes, onions and wheat. Whatever you feel about the validity of this report, is nutritional value the only reason for people wanting to grow their own food? Or does it have more to do with improved flavour, knowing where ones food has come from and how it has been grown. Most of us who grow our own produce are probably not strictly organic but do our best to avoid using chemicals if possible. Much of the food in supermarkets has been imported often from countries with less strict legislation on the use of chemicals.

Historical Snippet

CARNATION, PINK, SWEET WILLIAM

Botanical Name: *Dianthus*

Family: Caryophyllaceae

Dianthus are ancient flowers, and derivatives of their different names and forms are various. The Greek botanist Theophrastus, who first classified plants according to their form and structure, called them "*dianthus*", from the Greek *dios*, "divine", and *anthos*, "flower". The most common garden *dianthus* are carnations, pinks, and Sweet Williams.

Some scholars think that the name "carnation" is from *coronation* or *corone* (flower garlands), as it was one of the flowers used to make ceremonial crowns in Greece (see "Spirea"). Others say this name comes from *carnis* (flesh), referring to the colour of the flowers, or possibly from *incarnacyon* (incarnation), referring to the incarnation of God, made flesh. The flowers were also symbolic of marital bliss and fecundity, and at his wedding ceremony Maximilian of Austria was instructed by the bishop of Treves to search under his bride's wedding dress for a carnation hidden there – which he did, we are told, first tentatively, and then with increasing enthusiasm.

Pinks first came to Britain in the middle of the sixteenth century. It seems that they would have been so named because their colour is pink, but actually it was the reverse. Pink was not a specific colour until the eighteenth century, and almost certainly came from the name of the flower. Some say the word comes from the Middle English *poinken*, which originally meant "to pierce holes" in leather or cloth, and then came to mean decorating the edges – in a similar manner to the pinked edges of *dianthus* petals.

The name of "clove pink" or "clove gillyflower" is probably derived from the French *clou de girofle*, or "*nail of the clove tree*", once called *Caryophyllus* (from the Greek *caryon*, "nut", and *phyllus*, "leaf"). In any case the pink's clove-like fragrance led to its association with Crucifixion nails, because cloves are shaped like nails. Sometimes the infant Jesus is shown in paintings innocently playing with a carnation or pink, as a dreadful reminder of his future. This also could, of course, refer to the fact that he was "God incarnate".

Sweet Williams, the biennial pinks, are also a mystery of nomenclature. Some say the name came from the French *oeillet*, "eye", which became "Willy" and then "William". Some say it was St William, whose festival is on the twenty-fifth of June, when the flowers bloom. John Gerard suggested they might have been named

for his contemporary William Shakespeare, whom he generously called "the greatest man" of the time. But maybe Gerard is an example of his own belief that he "that dothe looke upon beautifull things [cannot] have his minde not faire".

(Adapted from *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names* by Diana Wells)



Photo: Mike Hughes

Poetry Corner

My Choice

In all my garden's length and breadth
I like these common things
A sturdy, low-branched apple tree
Where, daily, a finch sings;
The clematis that trims the fence
With garlands of white lace;
The maidenhair and Ostrich ferns
That fill each shady space;
The fragrance of quaint mignonette
When touched with evening dew
And best of all I like grass pinks
Like those my mother grew.

Velma D. Bates

Angels in My Garden

Among my gift begonias
Is one called "Angel-wing"
So true to form I fancy
I hear the seraphs sing.
For surely higher beings
Inspired the friendly hearts
Of my new next-door neighbors
To give me these "new starts".

O Angels, hover always
About this garden spot!
Help me to share life's blossoms
With those who have them not!
And from your shining wing-tips
Shake fragrance for the hearts
Of beauty-hungry thousands
Today, who need new starts!

Irene Stanley