



THE OFFICIAL BIT

This is the first issue of a new 'Newsletter' based on contributions from members (supplemented by information from the committee as appropriate). The aim is to provide a forum for members to exchange thoughts and ideas, as a partial substitute for the interactions that normally take place at Club Nights or around the Trading Hut. There's more information in the [October Newsletter](#).

The nature of the content depends on **YOU** (subject, of course, to a certain amount of editorial control – Ed.). Please send your items to: members-news@sandhurstgardeningclub.co.uk. For those of you not on email your items can be posted to: Club Newsletter, 174B Branksome Hill Road, College Town, Sandhurst, Berkshire GU47 0QQ.

AUTUMN COLOUR

Beginning the annual leaf collection in the garden at the weekend reminded me of last year's wonderful holiday, spent on a road trip around the six states that make up New England, enjoying just a small taste of the colour on show (if you'll excuse the mixed metaphor!).



As well as the glorious trees and leaves, set off so beautifully by brilliant blue skies, there were displays of pumpkins in front of many shops and on porches as well as this interesting one including a bike!

While the colours in this country are lovely, I think it is the sheer scale and depth of colour that makes the visit worthwhile. Perhaps something to look forward to once we can travel again...

Julie Sheppard



A REMINDER

Don't forget that we're still looking for photographic contributions from members for the March 2021 club night, showing what you've been getting up to during the difficult year that 2020 has been. There's more information, including helpful suggestions of potential subject matter, in the [October Newsletter](#). Items should be sent to juliesheppard@sky.com.

QUINTAGRAM

Solve all five cryptic clues using each of the letters in the grid only once. The answers are all horticultural in nature and will appear in the next issue.

1. This may make you cry (6)
2. Go walking to become this (7)
3. Gracie Fields claimed to have the biggest (10)
4. A red ruler might be a variety of this (4)
5. Tell him to leave (5)

A	A	A	A	A	A	B	B
D	E	E	G	I	I	I	L
L	L	M	M	M	N	N	O
P	R	R	R	S	S	T	U

MY FIVE OCTOBER FAVOURITE GARDENING ITEMS

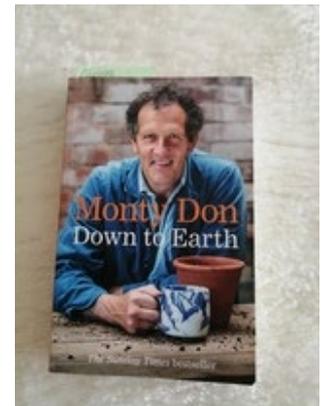
To start with I just love using my litter picker as it is so useful for reaching those hard to reach places such as under a shrub or floating debris in a pond. Plus I convince myself the stretching I do is a gentle form of exercise. Yes, I know we are encouraged to leave fallen leaves for wildlife or to protect plants from the cold weather but sometimes there is the urge to be out in the fresh air and tidy.



Another item is my newly purchased Canna lily: original price £25.95, but in the end of season plant



section for the bargain price of £10. Years ago, I only bought a plant if it was £5 or less; then if it did not survive I would not feel as though I had wasted my money. Definitely a sign of the times I now stop at £10. This links in well with my third item, a book entitled *Down to Earth* written by Monty Don. It can be used as a reference book, and I certainly dipped into it when I needed information about the Canna lily, or it can be used just as a gentle read in the evening. Always something in there to learn about gardening.



My fourth item is a ramekin dish that is perfect for holding 20 grams of hedgehog food. The reason I love this is because at dusk when I put the food out I can see and hear the hedgehog. He certainly does not eat quietly and sometimes I think he lies in wait for me as he is so punctual. I feel very privileged that he is a regular visitor and I am thrilled he has investigated the hedgehog house I bought for him.



My fifth favourite item is a bodum mug, other makes are available. This is an essential bit of kit as it keeps my drink hot whilst I am in the garden. Often I think I will just pop outside for half an hour but when I check the garden clock two hours have zipped by. Thankfully my drink is still waiting for me in the bodum and yes it is still drinkable.

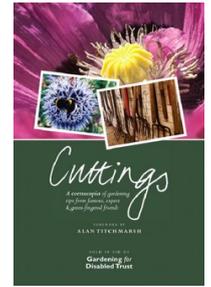
Well these are my five favourite October gardening items a litter picker, Canna lily, *Down to Earth* book, a ramekin dish and a bodum mug.

I wonder if you too have any favourite gardening items that you might like to share. Happy gardening.

Claire Shenton-Taylor

GARDENING FOR DISABLED TRUST

Cuttings is a book of over 500 gardening tips from famous gardeners such as **Carol Klein, Mark Lane and Alan Titchmarsh**. Find out what **Joanna Lumley, Helen Mirren, Julian Clary and Jeff Beck** have in common, and benefit from the combined experience of many green-fingered friends. It's described as a fun and informative little stocking-filler, with sparkling photography and beautiful illustrations. Available from <https://www.gardeningfordisabledtrust.org.uk/get-involved/book-of-gardening-tips/>, at £10 plus P & P.



ON THE INTERNET

The National Garden Scheme was hard hit by the restrictions this year, but there are more than 180 virtual tours available from www.ngs.org.uk/virtual-garden-visits/ (and if you navigate through 'Group Gardens' to 'Warton Gardens' you'll even be able to see my sister! – Ed.).

If you like the idea of composting garden and food waste, but get frustrated by the time it takes, there are some useful tips in www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5E45ReIPPY&list=PLdau3EIomliuDKI5rD1-xbK7VzgHPkXiM&index=3/.

Wildflower meadows are all the rage nowadays and one-third of the formal lawn in front of King's College Chapel in Cambridge (as viewed from the Backs) has been transformed into one. There's an interesting video about the whole process, with particular reference to the environmental impact, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=5K6rRnOAd90/.

LIMONCELLO

There's still time to make this really nice liqueur in time for Christmas, and it's very easy.

Ingredients: 8 lemons
1 litre vodka
1 kg granulated sugar
1 litre water



1. Wash the lemons and scrub the skins. Use a potato peeler (or equivalent) to extract strips of the yellow peel, avoiding the white pith. Put them in a carafe/jar, add the alcohol and put the top on. Leave it for a week, shaking every so often. Then filter the alcohol into a jug (using muslin or a fine strainer), and dispose of the peel.
2. Put the sugar and water in a saucepan and stir over low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil and simmer for (no more than) 10 minutes before removing from the heat. Pour the alcohol (carefully, as it might spit) over the hot syrup in the pan.
3. Allow to cool completely before pouring back into the carafe/jar. Seal it and leave for 10-15 days.
4. Drink and enjoy.

HOLLY

Holly has been a familiar part of our winter festivities and traditions going back centuries, with the custom of bringing holly into the house in midwinter going back to pre-Christian times. Prince Albert made firs popular in the 19th century, but before then 'Christmas trees' were holly trees. But how much do we really know about it? There are many varieties of holly across the world, both evergreen and deciduous, some of which we can purchase as ornamentals for our gardens. However, the variety that comes to mind at this time of year is our native holly, *Ilex aquifolium*. This is not only for its dark, shiny evergreen leaves, which stand out, but also for its bright red berries which brighten up our woodlands, scrublands and hedgerows during the winter - as well as our homes. It is found particularly in oak and beech woodlands where it provides an understory.



Hollies can become quite tall, up to 15 metres, and can live for up to 300 years. It is the younger leaves which tend to be the most spiky to protect the young growth from browsing animals, the older ones higher up the tree becoming smoother. It seems that if the trees are browsed by larger animals, such as deer, they will produce prickly leaves at that height in order to deter them. Although evergreen, the leaves are shed on a 3 to 4 year cycle and take a long time to decompose. Holly is dioecious, meaning that individual trees are either male or female. Small white flowers are borne in spring on both female and male trees but only the female trees bear berries; to do so, they need to be pollinated by a male tree. The berries can remain on the plant throughout winter, although they are a food magnet for many birds. In a 'mast' year, a bumper crop of berries is produced, being usually followed by a couple of lean years with fewer berries. A bumper crop of berries is said to predict a hard winter but is really the result of a good summer.

Talking of birds, the berries provide an important winter food source. They are particularly beloved by redwings and fieldfares, both winter visitors to our shores. Mistle thrushes will strenuously guard their own berry-laden bushes, chasing away any potential thieves. Small mammals such as wood mice and dormice also feed on the berries. Holly benefits wildlife in other ways. Its dense cover gives good nesting opportunities and shelter for birds, and the deep dry leaf litter underneath may be used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation. The flowers provide a good source of nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves, flower buds and berries are eaten by the caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, as well as several different moth species. In winter, deer graze on the smooth leaves if they can reach them.

If you are interested in growing holly in your garden, be aware that all parts of it are mildly toxic to humans if ingested and somewhat more toxic to pets. For this reason they are dangerous to small children who might be attracted by the berries. There are some beautiful garden varieties which were brought back by the Victorian plant hunters from China and Japan, some with variegated leaves and some with small dainty leaves which are good as an alternative to box. A few of the names are confusing though: Silver Queen is actually a male plant and Golden King is a female! Winkworth Arboretum (National Trust) near Godalming in Surrey has a good collection of different varieties of holly and winter is an excellent time to see them.

Julia Goodall