

Merriments Garden Club Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2015



Dear Member,

I do think autumn is a really beautiful and bountiful month, although it is sad of course to see summer slip away. There is such an array of pretty berries and hips, interesting squashes in the vegetable patch, and the final blaze of

colour from late summer flowering plants and beautiful autumnal shrubs. It is a super time for walks in the mellow sun, a spot of bulb planting in the garden, collecting shiny conkers with little people, making chutneys, collecting leaves, enjoying the first real fire, and a welcome return to soups and casseroles, and for many of us, the delight of Downton Abbey!

Our two garden open days in the spring and summer raised over £1,335 for Macmillan Cancer Support and the NGS group of charities. They are all very worthy recipients so we are delighted to help them along.

We had two good media scoops this summer, with the Daily Mail naming us in their top 20 enchanting gardens and Which Gardening doing an extensive article on our late summer colour (see our front cover, which is one of their photos).

We have some very exciting news relating to the garden which may well generate some more media interest in early 2016, but we have to keep that under wraps for now until the spring, so more of that later!

Thank you to all those of you who entered our photography competition earlier this year, it was lovely to see Merriments garden through our customers eyes. Of our many entries, by chance it was a Merriments Club Member who won first prize, well done to Carol Newcomb. Disappointingly we did not receive any paintings from children.

The Merriments team are all thrilled that we are now serving breakfast for the first time! It will be available from 9am - 11.30am Monday - Saturday and from 10.30am on Sunday's until 11.30am. Please see our website www.merriments.co.uk for the full menu.

Finally, don't miss our Christmas Club Day on Thursday 26th November.

Happy home making and gardening (enjoy it whilst you can!)

Best wishes

Laura



Merriments Club Day

Thursday 26th November, 9am – 5pm

Exclusive to all Club Members



Come and stock up on all your Xmas essentials.

***** Special offer: Full English Breakfast only £4.50, available until 11.30am. Cream Tea just £4.50, available from 2.30 – 4.30pm *****

20% off all your purchases*

**except products already on offer & gift tokens*

Seasonal Garden jobs...

Planting and transplanting work

Autumn is the time to lift and divide herbaceous plants that are overcrowded or are dying in the middle. Dividing plants is also a great way of making more free plants! Now is also the traditional and perfect time to plant roses as they establish well in the autumn. All our roses are now reduced in price by 20% until the new stock arrives around mid- November.

Planting bulbs

Spring flowering bulbs should be planted in autumn. Often, the earlier you plant, the better the results. This is the case with daffodils, but leave tulips until November to help reduce problems with the disease 'tulip fire'. Bulbs should be planted in the ground at a depth of two to three times their height with their tip facing upwards.



Cutting back

Don't rush to cut back and tidy everything in the border after the first frosts, leave some seed heads as they provide food for the birds in winter and also natural cover for wildlife.

Lawn Care

Fallen leaves should be cleared from the lawn regularly to deter moss forming. Mow your lawn for the last time around the beginning of November, keeping it longer than usual because of the lower levels of sunlight. Clear the moss or weeds from any areas of grass and give the grass one last feed before winter sets in.

Make compost

You can continue to develop next year's compost by adding fallen leaves to the mix. Gather the leaves and add them to grass clippings, kitchen scraps and shredded prunings (it is important to maintain a good mix of ingredients) and layer them in a compost bin. A word of caution, don't put grass clippings that have had moss or weed killer into the compost. Turn periodically with a garden fork to allow air to circulate and decompose the organic matter more quickly. Then wait patiently for the magic to happen!



Merriments News

A Walk On The Wild Side...by David Weeks

Well what happened to the summer? From a growing point of view I suppose it hasn't been too bad, we've had rain when we needed it but I still feel that most of the plants have lacked sunshine. A lot of my vegetables have not been as good this year, particularly the courgettes, tomatoes and cucumbers. Some plants have just rotted off but generally the fruit has not been setting properly. Also what has cropped hasn't had the flavour of previous years. I'm about to harvest my onions so we'll see whether they have any flavour. But, despite all this, I am not put off, every year some things do better than others, it's part of gardening.

Doubtless some of you have heard that I'm selling Merriments. This has been a hard decision to take but after approaching 31 years I feel it is time to move on. Neither of my children are interested in taking it on so I feel that the time has come.

Some of our long standing customers will have seen Merriments grow from what was literally a green field site. When we bought the place in 1988 there was an orchard where the shop is now, there are still some of these trees left around the shop area. We bought part of the adjoining field in 1989 and began turning it into a garden in the early 90s. When we bought it we weren't really sure what we were going to do with the field, eventually settling on the idea that it would work well to display the plants we grow in a garden situation that most people could relate to, and that's how we started.

It won't be easy leaving but I am hopeful that we can find someone to continue to run it the way we have and get the same enjoyment out of it. So if any of you are interested in owning a nursery, come and see me!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for being such loyal and long standing customers.

Best wishes

David

Up The Garden Path...

As I write there is definitely a change coming about. The days are shorter, there's a nip in the air and our waterproofs have been put to the test and on occasion sadly failed. We have decided we should be product testers.

There is still fabulous colour in the garden, particularly the *Euonymus europaeus* or Spindle Berry, which really deserves its place and looks stunning. However our thoughts are turning to the latter part of autumn to get ready for the cold frosty mornings which will surely come. It is time to order straw and fleece for tender perennials and to dig up and bring in the tender *Echivera*'s and our *Aeonium ubicum* 'Zwartkop'.

The Jewel Garden has surpassed itself this year. Many visitors have loved the tall arching stems of *Persicaria orientalis* sharing the stage with *Verbena bonariensis*. After receiving many requests for *Persicaria* seeds, we have had a limited number of them available in the shop for the first time.

While some areas triumph and bask in favourable conditions, there are, as with every garden, areas that present an interesting challenge. One such area is the formal garden. We have a bit of box blight in the formal garden, but luckily the less invasive type. To help control this we have given the box a feed of chicken manure pellets because the high nitrogen levels encourage leafy growth. In addition to this we have given it a light trim. If you are thinking of the same treatment for your box, be sure to clear and burn the trimmings and also to disinfect your tools.



Another corner of the formal garden is also presenting a challenge. It is an area of dry shade, which isn't difficult in itself as countless plants tolerate these conditions, but as a formal setting, finding the right plant to balance the rest of the planting can be tricky. But we like a challenge, isn't that what gardening is about?

**All the best,
Fi and Sally**

Nursery Tales

Why not plant a tree this autumn, maybe in memory of someone or perhaps the birth of a baby? Trees play a vital role in improving the environment we live in; they offset the effects of climate change. National Tree Week takes place from 28 November to 6 December and launches the start of the winter tree planting season. We've just had our new trees delivered, so if you see something that you like, you might find this information helpful:

Planting a tree:

- 1) Use a spade to take turf out of the ground, turn it over and split it almost in half.
- 2) Dig a hole slightly wider and deeper than the roots of your tree. Loosen the soil around the edges.
- 3) Put the tree in the hole and check the depth. Look for the 'collar', the mark on the tree from where it originally started to grow above the ground. This should be level with the top of the soil. If a tree is planted too deep the stem may rot, if it is planted too shallow the roots above the ground will die.
- 4) Hold the tree upright and gently push back the soil onto the roots but don't compact the soil as this will stop water and air circulation. Make sure your tree is steady.
- 5) Put the turf back over the hole grass side down, with the split either side of the young tree.
- 6) Cover your tree with a guard if necessary, using a cane or stake to provide support. You can use a tree guard to protect it from animals nibbling!

See you soon

Viv

Shop Gossip

We have all really enjoyed the recent spell of warm early autumn weather and it has encouraged many of you to carry on spending time in your gardens and to continue to stock them with lovely late flowering plants.

My colleagues and I have spent an enjoyable few days ordering delicious, seasonal chutneys which, I am sure, will have arrived by the time you read this.

If you haven't yet bought your spring bulbs, don't delay while we still have stock left! They bring hope and brightness at the end of a long winter.

We always look forward to unpacking the Amaryllis bulbs, they come in such stunning colours to match their majestic forms. This year we love Black Pearl, which has a deep maroon colour. They make great Christmas presents. Talking of Christmas, soon the shop will have lots of lovely twinkly, sparkly things to dress up your tree, so be warned!

See you soon, don't forget Club Day on the 26th November.

Cathy

Garden Terrace Restaurant Bites

As some of you may have noticed, Annie our Restaurant Manager is not presently with us, this is because she has a trapped nerve and is at home recovering. We wish her all the best and hope to see her again soon.

We are delighted to be serving breakfast daily for the first time from 9am - 11.30am and on Sunday's from 10.30am until 11.30am. Come and try our hearty, mouthwatering Full English Breakfast, Welsh rarebit, eggs on toast, or maybe just a bacon baguette? There's lots more to tempt you too.

We have embraced autumn and are now serving our new menu with some warming favourites such as soup, cottage pie and steak and kidney pudding. Our cream teas remain popular all year round, and in November our cream teas (2 homemade scones, jam & cream, a pot of tea) will be on a special of just £4.50, usually £5.90.

Our lovely festive Christmas menu will be available from the 1st - 23rd December, 11.30 - 2.30pm. Please visit our website

www.meriments.co.uk to view the menu.



We will still have our charming Vintage Teas available through the winter. These are popular for being affordable, and yet special, booking essential!

With best wishes

Rachael, and the Restaurant Team