Records of Talks in the Past

On **Wednesday, 25th March 2026**, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society attended an evening presentation delivered by Annie Guilfoyle, titled "What Makes a Great Garden?" Despite the return of winter weather following a period of pleasant spring conditions, attendance was strong, and the event proved highly rewarding. Ms Guilfoyle began with a summary of her horticultural background and current professional engagements, which include garden design, authorship, judging at Chelsea, podcast production, and teaching throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. Her multifaceted career is notable for its breadth and intensity.

Ms Guilfoyle shared insights from numerous gardens she has visited and encouraged members to explore these sites within their own schedules. She highlighted Wild Side, the garden of Keith Wiley near Dartmoor, as essential to visit, describing its naturalistic style. She also recommended Caisson Gardens near Bath, designed around fifteen locks by Phil and Amanda Honey, noting the unique layout and quality refreshments available.

Annie discussed several prominent British gardens, including Sissinghurst, Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage, West Dean, and Great Dixter, which is scheduled for a Society outing later in the year. Her presentation included images and descriptions of gardens ranging from The High Line in New York to locations at the southernmost tip of New Zealand. She reviewed the work and approaches of various designers such as Dan Pearson, Beth Chatto, Piet Oudolf, and John Little, particularly emphasising innovative use of materials and sustainable practices.

Ms Guilfoyle also referenced community projects, including Horatio's Garden—an initiative transferring Chelsea Flower Show gardens to hospital settings for patient enjoyment—and the Glass House scheme, which equips female prisoners with horticultural training for improved post-release prospects.

The session covered key elements of garden design applicable to all scales, including leaf texture, colour, plant structure, bulbs, and perennials like hardy geraniums and helenium. She emphasised the importance of seating arrangements that enhance the garden’s ambience, ultimately reminding participants that the space should reflect their individual enjoyment.

David expressed gratitude for Ms Guilfoyle’s inspiring lecture and announced the forthcoming talk, "Familiar Foes - Top Ten UK Garden Diseases," to be presented by Louise Jones on 22nd April. Regrettably, David and Georgina will be unable to attend as they will be travelling in Greece. The evening concluded with the customary serving of tea, coffee, and biscuits before members braved the cold.

The final week of November 2025 was equally eventful for the Haslemere Gardening Society, featuring the last lecture of the year and a Christmas outing on an exceptionally mild November evening.

Records of Talks in the Past

On **Wednesday, 27th November 2024**, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered in the Catholic Church Hall to welcome back Mark Saunders, Head Gardener at Fittleworth House, as well as a lecturer, writer, photographer and member of the RHS Dahlia Committee. He has been to us several times before, and this time his subject was "Super Seasonal Displays". He started by emphasising that it is most important to be organised and think ahead to the next season to get a great result and not spend more money than is necessary with impulse buying, getting the plant home and not knowing where it will fit in. He advised checking your seed box before ordering and writing a list before clicking randomly on the seed company's website. Also, to decide before ordering from, perhaps, a wholesale catalogue, what Spring bulbs will give you the best display next year. Autumn is the time to plan for the coming Spring. For Winter displays, he pointed out that there were many shrubs for pots and beds with interesting foliage and how to make your own Christmas wreath from them. He reminded us that, despite what it may say on the label, many pots are not frost-proof and it is a safer bet to go for the enamelled ones. January and February is the time to sow seeds of perennials and annual flowers. He favoured using homemade compost, perhaps with heat treatment, to remove lurking weed seeds and vermiculite. His advice was to prick out about 7 to 10 days after germination and to remember not to hold the stems and squeeze their lifeline. Mark being on the Dahlia Committee was very knowledgeable on how to store and then restart into growth the tubers each year. He said when lifting to clean the loose soil off and store them in a frost-free dry place until Spring it is time to encourage them into growth in new soil and to protect them from frost and slug damage to the emerging new shoots. Not to plant them out until the growth is about a foot or so high and not so tempting. That way they should give you a good display until the frost cuts them in October or November. The Summer Garden can be a display of herbaceous perennials, which hopefully will last year after year with care and splitting as they get too large, and annuals for that extra colour just where it is needed. Ornamental grasses make a long-lasting and spectacular addition to a border and have lovely seed heads later in the year. As Autumn comes again the garden can be filled with cyclamen and nerines which will come up year after year and hopefully multiply. The late flowers such as rudbeckia and cleome will still be flowering, or a display of many different squashes, either grown or purchased can look attractive. Mark urged visiting gardens such as Wisley and Great Dixter to see their wonderful and varied displays throughout the year. The talk was very well attended and there were many questions from the members for Mark and we all learnt a lot from him. The evening ended as usual with tea, coffee and biscuits and a reminder that our next gathering there will be the AGM at the end of January.

Records of Talks in the Past

"Climbers" - Wednesday 23rd October 2024

On Wednesday 23rd October 2024, we had a talk on "Climbers" from Philippa (Pip) Bensley a long-standing horticultural specialist at Hilliers, RHS Floral Judge and broadcaster.

"History of Hampton Court Palace Gardens" - Wednesday 25th September 2024

On Wednesday 25th September 2024, we had a most interesting lecture by Graham Dillamore on the History of Hampton Court Palace Gardens. Graham is the head gardener at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace and had so much knowledge to share with us about the gardens of the former through the ages from pre-history to the present day. The area that Hampton Court Palace and Gardens now occupies was once the flood plain of the River Thames which curls round it; remnants of this can still be seen in the lakes and ponds. The first recorded building on the site was a 13th-century manor house built by the Knights Hospitaller preparing for the Crusades. Later a bigger dwelling was built and in the 16th century, the land was purchased by Cardinal Wolsey who started the construction of the Palace as we know it today. The area was surrounded by a moat and contained only small what we would term gardens but mostly cloisters and courtyards. Inevitably Wolsey fell from favour and the Palace, and its large surrounding parkland were annexed by Henry VIII who, as well as a small privy garden displaying heraldic beasts, built jousting tilt yards and enjoyed hunting in the vast area stretching from Bushy Park to Greenwich. There were fishponds to provide delicacies for the table, herb gardens and wildflower lawns and a private entrance to the River Thames to access other palaces along its banks. After this came the knot gardens of Elizabeth I, but the next major developments were the ideas Charles I had for a three-quarter of a mile long-water and avenues of trees in the baroque style which were copied from those seen in Holland. After the beheading of Charles, I the palace was occupied for a while by Oliver Cromwell who didn't really have much interest in the gardens, and it wasn't until the coming of William and Mary that the Palace and its surroundings got a make-over, much of which is still enjoyed by visitors today. They were both keen horticulturists and introduced plants from around the world, vegetable beds in the tilt yard area, clipped hedges and coloured gravels in the privy garden, and of course the famous maze. They were very fond of exotic plants in large pots and cut flowers for inside decoration. Houseplants were unheard of then. They introduced hotbeds for encouraging and protecting more tender plants and the garden was at its peak during their tenure. After the deaths of William and Mary and the coming of the Georgian era, a new fashion for a more rural look took shape under the guidance of Capability Brown who flattened the vistas and was against topiary of any kind, although a lot of the gardens immediately around the palace remained. Queen Victoria opened the gardens to the public, trees were clipped, there was carpet bedding and as years went by parking for cars and charabancs. During the 20th century, the palace and gardens suffered from the great fire of 1986 and the devastating storm of 1987. The gardens and the palace have been restored and deer still roam the parkland. The latest development came during lockdown when the

gardens were sown with many wildflower seeds which have grown and remain popular and are in tune with the wish to help combat the effects of climate change which, as Graham pointed out, is not something in the future but something we are experiencing now. It was a very enjoyable and informative evening. It ended with tea, coffee and biscuits and we were all very grateful to Graham Dillamore for sharing his time and knowledge with us. We meet again on Wednesday, 23rd October for a talk by Philippa Bensley on "Climbers"

"How I Grow Dahlias - (and learn from my mistakes!)"- Wednesday 24th April 2024

Our talk on Wednesday 24th April 2024 was on "How I Grow Dahlias - (and learn from my mistakes!)" from Darren Everest, sweet pea and dahlia specialist grower and show exhibitor.

"365 days of Colour" - Wednesday, 28th February 2024

On Wednesday, 28th February 2024 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society and a good many visitors gathered at the Catholic Church Hall to hear a talk by Nick Bailey, the garden designer and frequent presenter on Gardeners' World, entitled "365 days of Colour." He started by telling us that he could give us some tips on getting twice the colour by doing only half of the work if we pruned things like late flowering clematis and dogwoods only every other year instead of as usual each early Spring. That was a good start when gardening in this cold and wet time of the year is not attractive to most people. He told us that earlier in his career he had worked at the Chelsea Physic Garden and about their microclimate where they have the tallest Olive tree in the country at 15m. and the most Northerly fruiting grapefruit.



Back to the subject of the evening, Nick talked about the colour wheel and combining colours in the opposite spectrum, balancing contrasting shades with the inclusion of white remembering that the most permanent colour in the garden is green and pointing out how many attractive shades, shapes and textures can be had from this one colour. He stressed that the flowering times of perennials like lupins and delphiniums can be extended by deadheading just before the spike of flowers is finished, by altering flowering time by giving plants the "Chelsea Chop", successional sowing of hardy annuals, or even sowing in the Autumn to get earlier flowers next year. He mentioned planting shrubs with bright foliage and Autumn colour to give a year-round interest and several plants that could be relied on to give at least six months of pleasure including Heuchera Peach Flambe and Geum Totally Tangerine. Which incidentally were tones of his favourite colour - orange.

on Wednesday, 24th January 2024 we were lucky to get David Elliott, the Lead Ranger for the South Downs West National Park to talk to us, and he gave us a most interesting insight into the reintroduction of Beavers to Haslemere and how the whole ecological profile of the area is intertwined. He talked firstly of how the amount of wildlife - birds, beasts, insects and native flowers has declined since we were young, and the efforts being made to re-establish many species and the hope that having the beavers working on the river will help to increase the biodiversity in the area. He told us about beavers and their habits. They are about the size of a labrador dog but with short legs, they are vegetarians so in the wild are no threat to otters or the fish they eat. They are mostly nocturnal but if about in the daytime unlikely to show themselves to us, their predators, who made this native species extinct in our country for 400 years. If you are walking near the river and hear a loud splash it is likely to be a beaver's large wide tail warning you to keep away. Beavers live around 12 years, the first two spent in the family group. They breed once a year in Spring and usually have between 2 and 4 kits. He did mention one female beaver in particular who they are trying to trap to send to a much bigger territory in Scotland, when she can be encouraged to enter the transportation cage. It seems she has a serial habit of killing the males and has no intention of breeding. She came from Nep Estate, where in her wake there was one dead male beaver. Suspicious! I think she could be a subject for Lucy Worsey's Lady Killers on Radio 4. He stressed the improvement in the water quality of our rivers when beavers are present and the fact that they create dams upstream helps to reduce the flooding further down the river. The polluted rivers and flooded fields are things we are hearing a lot about now. David finished by saying he knows not everyone agrees with his views, but his wish is to see beavers not in restricted areas but free to build their dams and make their homes where they want to as in the long distant past. It was a very enjoyable evening, and the members left looking forward to the next talk which is on 28th February by Nick Bailey of Gardeners' World entitled "365 days of Colour". Tickets for this must be bought in advance as there is a limit on numbers in the Catholic Church Hall.

Records of Talks in the Past

"Cottage Gardening" - 22nd November 2023

On Wednesday 22nd November 2023 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society and friends met for the last time this year at the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road to listen to a talk from David Standing entitled "Cottage Gardening". David is the retired Head Gardener at Gilbert White's Garden in Selborne, where he worked for many years, after having quickly decided that his intended profession in Town Planning and working in an office was not for him. He started there in 1979 doing odd jobs for £1.25p an hour but was promoted later to Head Gardener and eventually left the post in 2017. He started the talk by saying that Cottage Gardening was a mixed and personal concept, being rustic and featuring plants from Old Roses, hollyhocks, shrubs, perennials to bedding plants and sometimes with vegetables mixed in. Many of the plants used are self-seeding and so a very informal look is achieved. To get the desired effect the border needs to be as deep as possible and divided by paths of either local stone or even better foraged bricks. Of course, the effect is more picturesque if you happen to have a cottage with a thatched roof but as this isn't possible for all, the Cottage Garden look can be achieved with a pleasing mixture of 'old fashioned' cultivars which are allowed to fill the space quite randomly. The look is more plants jostling each other than set out with space between them. He brought with him, for sale, some seedlings which he finds work well including sweet rocket, campanula and yellow foxgloves. As it was approaching Black Friday, they were a special price and were quickly snapped up with thoughts of exciting things happening in our gardens next year. The talk was very well attended and the tea, coffee and biscuits provided were enjoyed while we chatted and discussed plans for Christmas.

"Fruit for a Small Garden"- Wednesday 25th October 2023

On Wednesday 25th October 2023 the members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered for the second talk of the Autumn in the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road as usual. This time the subject was "Fruit for a Small Garden" and was given by Jim Arbury, Fruit and Trials Specialist at the RHS, so it was a very informative and useful evening for us amateurs. It was followed by sociable tea, coffee and biscuits.

“Woolbeding Gardens” - Wednesday, 27th September 2023,

On Wednesday, 27th September 2023 members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered at the Catholic Church Hall for the first lecture of the Autumn Season. This year we started with a talk by Paul Gallivan on the local garden of Woolbeding just outside Midhurst. Paul knows the garden very well as he was head gardener there for more than 13 years working for the National Trust who now own the property. He is no longer there as he has been promoted to Regional Garden

Consultant for the charity. He started by telling us about the history of Woolbeding from the 18th century to the present day when it was given to the NT in 1957 by the then owner Edward Ponsonby Lascelles and later let to Simon Sainsbury and his partner Stewart Grimshaw who transformed the interior of the house while leaving the exterior and the approach recognisable from early paintings and photographs. The colours in the garden are kept to a pallet of mainly blue and white with a little touch of yellow now and then and the Victorian bedding has been replaced by perennial herbaceous borders in those colours. The vegetable garden is caged against thieving wildlife and the damage from slugs is lessened by beer traps and nematodes. No chemicals are used there. Sadly, the old cedar tree in the centre of the lawn, after storm damage. had to be removed but was replaced by an amazing Water Feature like a Champagne saucer which was made in Essex and is a focal point of the garden. Recently a new and very modern glass house has been added to the garden, looking a bit like the nose cone of a rocket as it opens. Leaving the formal parts of the garden there is a walk by the river Rother to follies including a " ruined abbey" and a grotto featuring a large figure of Neptune. The garden is now closed until next April and must be booked through the NT during the open season as there is no private vehicle entrance allowed but is well worth a visit and with the bonus of a tasty sandwich or cake from the cafe. It was a very enjoyable evening, and we thank Paul for his time and enthusiasm. The next talk will be on Fruit for a Small Garden by Jim Arbury who is Fruit and Trials Specialist at the RHS and is on 25th October.

“Shrubs – The Backbone of your Garden” - Wednesday the 23rd of November 2022

On Wednesday the 23rd of November the Society held its final talk of the year at the Catholic Church Hall. It was given by Geoff Hawkins, lecturer, broadcaster and retired Head Gardener at Mill Court. His illustrated talk gave us some ideas of which shrubs we could use in our garden to give structure, shape and texture as well as colour through flowers, stems and foliage.

He advised starting with a good garden design, remembering that shrubs are there all the time, a constant through the changing seasons, so it is important “to get it right”. Proportion is vital, as is pruning that retains the natural shape- no “lollipops”! Pruning should be done properly; (it is best not to have a shrub that must be pruned all the time) and going under the shrub to do so is sometimes best. He went through the alphabet and described a richly varied selection of shrubs, all illustrated in slides, and demonstrated their versatility. It was a very enjoyable and informative talk and was attended by many members of the Society and guests.

Records of Talks in the Past

“Fascinating and Secret Life of the Mole” - Wednesday, 26th October 2022

On Wednesday, 26th October, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were gathered once more in the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road for a talk given by Chris Stewart on the. Chris is a member of the Guild of British Molecatchers, and although his job is obviously to catch and get rid of the little animals, he shared a great many interesting facts about them with his audience. He said although we are inclined to associate Moles with the sweet little fellow in the Wind and the Willows, they are not to be handled without care because they have very sharp teeth. Moles are very much loners who live around 3 years and only produce one litter of usually 6 or 7 kits a year. They are very territorial creatures and will fight to defend their space and as soon as one is removed another very quickly moves into the prepared tunnels. In days past there were many supposed deterrents against moles including putting human hair in the tunnels, but one of the strangest was planting euphorbias in the garden thinking that as the white sap from the plants was used to treat moles on the skin it would also work against moles in the garden. Neither of these actions were of any use. Chris brought with him two stuffed moles, a male and a smaller female, both very tiny considering the amount of soil they can move, some mole pelts for us to feel their softness and a selection of homemade and manufactured traps. Many of the traps are not legal in this country as, happily only humane traps are allowed here. We were probably divided in the hall as to whether to try to eliminate the little creatures from our patch or let them be. I am, personally, on the live and let live side, but perhaps that is because I have never had the type of garden moles prefer. If I did have, I might feel about them the way I feel about slugs in my vegetables. It was certainly a very interesting evening and very well attended.

"An Almost A-Z of Good Garden Plants”- 28th September 2022

Now that Summer if officially over the members of the Haslemere Gardening Society are getting together for a series of talks on various subjects, mostly to do with gardening but sometimes on related subjects. The first of these took place at the Catholic Church Hall on Wednesday, 28th September and was given by Mark Saunders who has been the head gardener at Fittleworth House for 25 years. It featured the ten most important tips that Mark wanted to give us for success in our own gardens. The first and of premier importance was 'look after your tools, keep them clean, sharpened and oiled '. This is particularly important with secateurs, making them easier to use and kinder to the plants. His next tip was to stay active. For this he recommends Yoga and demonstrated some positions for us. Sadly, none of the audience got up to join him. Well, we weren't dressed for it. Mark also talked about the importance of compost making and stressed that it did need turning regularly and on adding more materials for the best results. He recommended a trip to RHS Wisley to see their beautiful Winter Garden and suggested that if we plant items for interest in the colder parts of the year, we did so near the house to get the full benefit from them. He talked about the usefulness of pots which can be swapped around to improve the display as they peak and then die-off. Mark, as well as a

gardener is known for his brilliant photography, which was very obvious from the slides he showed us. There were pictures of his own garden, Fittleworth House, an exuberant display of pots at Great Dixter and the avenue of Tree Ferns at East Rushton Old Vicarage among many others It was a very enjoyable and informative talk and was attended by many members of the Society.

“National Trust Gardens” – Wednesday 27th April 2022

On Wednesday, 27th April, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered at the Catholic Church Hall in Derby Road at 7.45 pm to hear a talk entitled "National Trust Gardens", given by David Hunt a long standing and knowledgeable National Trust Volunteer. This was the last talk of the Spring Season.

“The Modern Kitchen Garden” – Wednesday 23rd March 2022

On Wednesday, 23rd March 2022, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society had great pleasure in welcoming back Barry Newman to the Catholic Church Hall to hear his talk entitled "The Modern Kitchen Garden". It was well attended by many of the Society's members and guests all anxious to get the best from their own vegetable plots this Summer. Barry, who is Vice Chairman of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee, and on the judging team of Britain in Bloom, started by talking about the old-fashioned way of growing in large beds with the vegetables well-spaced and the need to walk on the beds to access the produce thus compacting the soil and making necessary annual deep digging. Next, he talked about growing in pots and troughs and how successful that can be. He is very much in favour of planting potatoes in individual bags and finds this very successful. He also reminded us of that vegetables such as courgettes and squashes can be grown as climbers and showed us a picture of squash plants scrambling up a hedge very enthusiastically. If wanting to grow courgettes up a pole he recommended Venus, Ambassador or Defender as being the best suitable varieties. The raised bed method of vegetable growing is the one he favours most as the soil is easily tended without need to walk on it and so doesn't need lots of digging, particularly good for us as we get older and not disturbing the natural organisms in the soil. He stressed that the rows of vegetables should be planted North/South, this made me look at my own the next day and realised that my lines were East/West. I will correct this next year. The talk was illustrated with many lovely slides of vegetables with no slug damage in site just what we all hope in the coming season. Whatever happens this Summer we will have been given good advice and are very grateful to Barry for such an informative and amusing evening.

“Painting with Flowers – Wednesday 9th February 2022

At last, after nearly five years in the planning, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society and many friends and guests gathered in the Catholic Church Hall on Wednesday 9th February to hear Chris Beardshaw give his talk entitled " Painting

with Flowers". It was well worth waiting for. Chris who is the winner of 35 prestigious awards including 13 RHS gold medals and several Best in Show and Peoples' Choice. He has designed many award-winning gardens all over the world and is a frequent contributor to Gardeners' Question Time and many television gardening programmes. He started by showing pictures of the first recorded garden from around 1500 BC, pointing out how the aspect of the garden was controlled by the life-giving properties of the Nile and the Sun with the central southern entrance, straight paths, central water and the Sun rising from the East and travelling over the garden to the West at the end of the day. It was a Paradise Garden to represent what the owner would like for eternity. This basic plan has been adopted by many of the great gardens throughout the centuries, especially the formal gardens of Italy and France. He came back to this principal of design several times during the evening. One of the chief points he made to us was that we should have what we want and what means something to us in our gardens and not be afraid to discard plants we had either inherited with the plot or been given and never really liked. He pointed out that men and women actually see colours differently and that men are nearly always keen on the solid hard landscaping with firm edging while women more generally like to see plants softening the hard lines. He reminded us that although the herbaceous border is thought of as being very English in nature, the plants that fill it come from all over the world, brought back by the great plant hunters such as Fortune, Banks and Mason to grace the gardens of the wealthy. The first such border was, and still is, at Arley Hall in Cheshire the home of the EgertonWarburton Family since not long after the Norman Conquest. He talked about some of the well-known gardens such as Hestercombe designed by Luytens, for the formal parts and Gertrude Jeykill for the drifts of flowers, following ideas of their contemporary Thomas Mawson who designed many gardens including Rydall Hall and The Smokey Mountain National Park Gardens in America. The garden surrounding Gravetye Manor, now a hotel, designed by William Robinson is a glorious example of this relaxed style of gardening. Chris said don't be afraid to put a clump of something vibrant in a pastel bed to draw attention. Something Gertrude Jeykill did quite often. He finished by going back to the point that our own gardens should always be a joy to step out into first thing in the morning giving the feeling that this is where we would like to spend eternity. At the end of the talk the audience asked a few questions and David, the Chairman. thanked Chris for his enthusiastic talk showing his obvious love for his subject. After the talk ended a glass of wine and cheese were enjoyed everybody. It had been a most enjoyable and informative evening.

"Woodland Industries in Southern England" - Wednesday 12th January 2022.

Following the AGM we sat down to hear a talk by Tim Winter entitled "Woodland Industries in Southern England". Tim has lived all his life in Haslemere and his interest in the many industries which have been carried out in the area started when he began collecting old postcards. We all know of the Chestnut Fencing industry which still happens in many locations in our area but there were so many more that few had heard of. He told us about the oak bark which was harvested for its tannin

properties in the making of leather, done mostly by women and he showed us a barking spoon which they used to scrape the bark from the trunk of the tree. Next there were pictures of charcoal burners, and their huts shaped like an Indian Teepee and told how whole families were involved in the production. Another industry was the production of thousands of barrel hoops from hazel wands which were used for packing cases for herrings in brine before modern packaging replaced them. Other Woodland Industries were the making of clogs, hop poles, sheep hurdles, walking sticks and faggots for firewood. He pointed out how beneficial for the biodiversity of wildlife the coppicing and management of the woodland is and that Chestnut Fencing is still an important industry on notably Henley Hill. He finished by showing us a short and fascinating film on the making of Beson Brooms. It was amazing to see how fast the workers completed their task. His talk was, for me, among the most interesting ones we have been lucky enough to have and has added interest to my daily dog walking. It really was a most enjoyable evening.

"A Different Field" - 24th November, 2021

On Wednesday members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered for the third of the Autumn Lectures in the Catholic Church Hall in Weydown Road by a Senior Member of the Surrey Wildlife Trust entitled "A Different Field". It was a talk on conservation and different from the usual lectures on a specific plant. Conservation is such an important topic at present, so it was very interesting for members and guests. The evening concluded with tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance to have a chat.

Records of Talks in the Past

"Gardens in Health Care"- 27th October 2021

On Wednesday 27th October, members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were delighted to welcome Dave Royston, a retired anaesthetist from Harefield Hospital, to talk about Dave started by telling us about the length of time we have known about the healing properties in certain plants. He mentioned the citing of plant remedies as long ago as 3000 BCE in the Sumerian Tablets and the continuing mention of often the same families of plants right up to Medieval times with the monastery hospitals and the monks growing the herbs and flowers they needed for their treatments in the gardens. They thought four humors dictated how to treat a person. They were blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm. A patient's condition was diagnosed by whether they were cold, hot, moist or dry and the appropriate plant mixture administered. Often the plant chosen to treat the person's symptoms resembled the part of the body causing the distress, eg. walnuts for trouble with the brain. In Italy, there were many gardens connected to the monasteries and in London, there was, and still is, the Chelsea Physic Garden devoted to growing plants for medicinal purposes. During the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus worked on the taxonomy of plants putting them into various families. Throughout history, herbs and flowers such as Roses, Calendula, Aloe, Feverfew, Garlic and Echinacea have been used by, mainly women, to treat their families and neighbours as the ordinary person could not afford qualified medical help. These same plants have continued in use throughout the ages. Now there is scientific proof that they help. In Shakespeare's time, we know Ophelia's saying, "There's Rosemary, that's for remembrance". It is still today used to treat memory loss. He told us of the discovery of Aspirin, Hydrocortisone, Digoxin and many other commonly prescribed medicines all derived from plants. Dave then moved on to tell us about the known benefits of fresh air and contact with growing things in the past and again very much to the fore in present times. He mentioned the hospitals where tuberculosis patients were wheeled outside onto balconies every day for the fresh air to cure them. Many hospitals right up until the NHS in 1947 were self-sufficient, having gardens that provided food for the patients. He, interestingly, had an aerial picture of Milford Hospital with its surrounding gardens. Today there are Healing Gardens attached to hospitals, where there are grasses and sweet-smelling plants to help the healing process. There is proof that daily walking or gardening helps a person's speed of recovery from illness or surgery by a large percentage. The talk was fascinating and well attended by existing and some new members. We are very grateful to Dave Royston for generously giving his time and the payment being a donation to Harefield Hospital.

"Clematis through the Seasons" - 22nd September 2021

On Wednesday, 22nd September it was a question of "Here we are Again", at last, when members of the Haslemere Gardening Society met in the Catholic Church Hall in Weydown Road to hear Mr Everett Leeds, who is a past president of the British Clematis Society, give a talk entitled He pointed out that until the reign of Elizabeth I there was only the hedgerow plant, Old Man's Beard when three new varieties were introduced from the Mediterranean. It became more popular in the 17th century, but it was not until 1858 that the still outstanding Jackmanii was produced and the race was on for all other breeders of the species to compete for better and more spectacular examples. Mr Leeds told us how and when to take both hard and softwood cuttings and recommended perlite was a good medium for them. He talked about clematis wilt which is prevalent among the larger flowered varieties and recommended cutting the affected growth down to the ground and it should recover and appear again. Another problem can be mildew and black spot, particularly on the texensis varieties which include the popular red coloured Princess Diana and Etoile Rose. He talked of the rampant Montana varieties and pointed out that they are not as hardy as one would think and may need Winter protection. There is one Montana that is suitable for a pot Montana Freda, but he thought that clematis is better off in the ground on a North, West or East wall particularly for paler coloured plants. Others will grow on a South facing wall and the scented varieties do like full sun. If growing in a pot it is essential to keep the roots cool, perhaps by lining the container with a double layer of plastic wrap. He told us about the Buckland varieties which he had bred himself and the shrubby plants that scramble through the borders. It was a very interesting and informative talk, and we are very grateful to Mr Leeds for coming. The evening was topped off by tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance to catch up on old friends we hadn't seen for a long time.

Records of Talks in the Past

“Beautiful Borders” - 20th November 2019

With the end of the year fast approaching Members of the Haslemere Gardening Society gathered in the Catholic Church Hall on Wednesday 20th November for the final lecture of 2019 entitled "Beautiful Borders" and given by John Negus who is a member of the Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire and Kent Federation of Judges and Lecturers. The talk took the form of an informal quiz with the audience divided into two teams. Accompanied by slides displaying some well-known and some more unusual plants he fired questions at us as to what they were and told us more about each one and where it would be suitable in the border. He stressed the importance of having plants which would look good not only in the Spring and Summer flowering season but through the Autumn and grey days of the Winter. The talk was well attended, and it was good to see so many members there on such a cold evening.

"Making the Most of Bulbs" – 16th October 2019

On Wednesday, 16th October the Members of the Haslemere Gardening Society were pleased to welcome Steve Bradley, a freelance garden writer and broadcaster, for a talk entitled "Making the Most of Bulbs". This highly topical subject was approached both with great knowledge and experience and a fair sprinkling of humour. He talked about planting bulbs amongst other perennials as well as in "lasagne" style in large pots with bulbs of different sizes and flowering times in layers. He did warn, however, never to plant any other bulbs under hyacinths. The talk was accompanied by colourful slides to demonstrate his advice. He showed us how to increase our stock of lilies by removing the outer scales and nurturing them in a bag in a warm place until little bulblets appeared and then they could be planted in a pot to grow on and mature until after three years they would grow into a size to plant out and expect flowers. Steve said it was a myth that bulbs must be carefully planted the right way up and assured us that they would always find the surface whatever way they started. He did stress that bulbs should be handled gently and not to firm them in with your feet, but to water, whatever the weather, to bring the soil around them. Two tips which seem to be worth trying for anyone who loses most of the bulbs they plant to wildlife, to either plant alliums near them or to grate a strongly scented soap over them to hide the enticing smell of the bulbs or the worms in the newly loosened soil. These are just a sample of the bulb related subjects covered, and the evening ended with questions from members.

Records of Talks in the Past

"Gardening on the Wild Side" – 18th September 2019

The talk was given by Paul Patton who is a Plant Pathologist, writer and broadcaster. It was illustrated with colourful and informative slides, starting with an autumnal picture of colourful berries which make wonderful food for birds and small mammals. Paul stressed the importance of getting a balance in our gardens and the help of adding organic matter to the soil. He mentioned the decline of pollinators, not only bees, but wasps, hoverflies etc. and how vital it was to fill our gardens with flowers suitable for these insects to enjoy. As well as talking about good things in the garden he mentioned the black spot on roses and the powdery mildew on things like courgettes, and the importance of not composting infected foliage. Keep one step ahead of pests was his message. Paul encouraged us to have water of some sort in our gardens for wildlife of all kinds and how beneficial it was to have a native mixed hedge to provide food and shelter for them.

"Pollination" – 10th April 2019

On Wednesday 10th April 2019 the Haslemere Gardening Society held the last lecture of the Spring season which was a talk entitled 'Pollination' and given by Dr. Michael Keith Lucas from the School of Biological Sciences of the University of Reading. This was a most interesting and useful lecture given the current concern about the decreasing number of pollinating insects in our gardens and countryside.

"Inspired by Chelsea" - 20th March 2019

On Wednesday, 20th March 2019 the members of the Haslemere Gardening Society welcomed back Andy McIndoe, who has entertained us with his lively and instructive talks several times before. This time his lecture was called 'Inspired by Chelsea - Lessons from the World's Greatest Flower Show" from a man who has won 25 consecutive Gold Medals. Members of the Society had a very enjoyable visit to Andy's own garden last Summer an