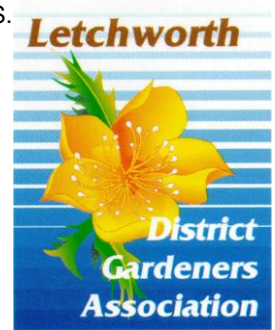


www.ldga.org.uk

Gleanings from the

Compost Heap



Winter 2011

LDGA highlights of 2011

It has been an interesting and sometimes disappointing year for all of us as growers of flowers, fruit and vegetables, but the Letchworth District Gardeners' Association as a whole has had a very good year and we are grateful to all of our members who have supported us in 2011.

Some of the highlights were



* Excellent **Summer and Autumn Shows**, due to the

hard work of Paul Heydon and his helpers. Though most competition entries were very good, particularly special exhibits were the sweet peas in the Summer Show and the chrysanthemums and dahlias at the Autumn Show.

* In May, the LDGA hosted students and staff from the **Chinese Academy of Sciences**. The group also included staff from the Department of Rural and Urban Studies and the Director General of the Agriculture Commission from Shanghai.

They were focusing their visit on environmental aspects of city planning, with particular attention to the potential contribution of urban agriculture and garden cities to food security and low carbon

emissions, and are hoping to integrate the underlying principles into future town planning in their home land.

* Great publicity was achieved at the **Letchworth Festival** with a very successful stand and 185 people taking home a potted plant and a pledge to start growing their own vegetables.

We hope to repeat this next year and would be delighted if more members would like to help over the weekend.

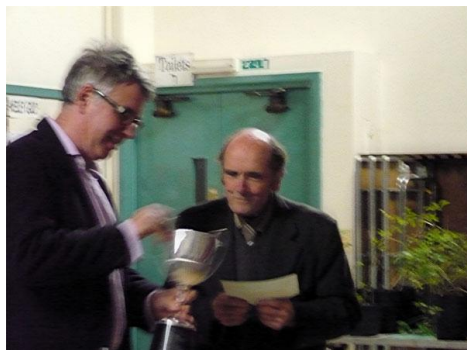
Contact any of the committee and look out for dates in *Compost Heap* and at monthly meetings at the beginning of next year.

* Larger audiences than ever attended the **monthly meetings** and the trip to the Royal Horticultural Society HQ at Wisley was a great success. Many thanks are due to Thelma Colman and Laurie Cook for all the planning and organisation.

TANGLEWOOD TROPHY

Tommy Cox, who holds an allotment on the Norton Site, was awarded a stainless steel border spade and the prestigious Tanglewood Trophy for 2011 for his outstanding

allotment. The prizes were presented to Tommy at the Annual General Meeting, by LDGA President, John Hoyland.



All members with an allotment in Letchworth Garden City were automatically entered for this competition for the Best Kept Allotment, with the winner on each site receiving a year's free membership of the LDGA

The judges looked for well-stocked plots that were neat and pleasing in appearance, with evidence of succession planting and free from weeds or excessive damage by pests or disease. They wanted to see organic pest control eg: pinching out of tops of broad beans against black fly; putting barriers against carrot root fly; companion planting and composting.

The winning plots had a broad

range of healthy vigorous crops, including vegetables, fruit and flowers.

A list of winners on each site follows:

Hillbrow

1st place – Thomas Clark

Pryor Way

1st Place – Jacqueline Keith

2nd place – Barbara Jenkins

3rd place – Mr D Stapleton

Norton

1st place – Tommy Cox

2nd place – R Morley

3rd place – Mrs B Gardiner

Runnalow

1st place – Mrs S Whitworth

2nd place – Mrs A Smith

3rd place – Mrs E Daniel

Wilbury

1st place – Mr C Rosa

2nd place – Mr R Waldrock

3rd place - Mr M Nightingale

Radburn

1st place – Mrs J Gosling

2nd place – Mr J Cates

3rd place – Mrs R Gore

Woolgrove

1st place – Mr C Roberts

2nd place – Ms V Gulliford

3rd place – Mr P Dean

ANOTHER LOOK BACK INTO LDGA HISTORY



Dr Norman Macfadyen, MB DPH, President of the Association in 1935, seated in the middle of the front row of the photograph, is another very distinguished character connected with the history of LDGA.

After qualifying at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, through the persuasion of Ebenezer Howard he moved to Letchworth, where he was the first resident doctor and the town's first Medical Officer of Health.

His obituary recorded that "it was largely owing to the energetic drive of Dr Macfadyen that Letchworth Hospital was built". He was "a kindly and yet forceful man; he and his wife Gertrude made Letchworth their enthusiastic hobby: indeed

being childless everyone thought of Letchworth as the offspring of the Macfadyens".

Both of them gave much of their time to schools and organisations working with children and young people, particularly those encouraging sport and on her death in 1958, Gertrude left the town a bequest of £30,000. Norman Macfadyen died in 1959, in Lister Hospital, Stevenage aged 82, having left almost his entire estate to the Letchworth Civic Trust "to benefit worthy causes in the town and help people in need".

His obituary in the *British Medical Journal* ends movingly, "He and his wife loved Letchworth and gave their all to its service, both during and after their lives. They will not be forgotten; their monument, not of stone, will help the future of their town."

Show Judges

More information has also been uncovered about two of the Show judges, Joe Billington and Jack Smith, listed in the 1935 Show Schedule and I am particularly grateful to Frank Hyde of Stotfold, for providing much of this background.

Both the gardening judges had excellent credentials. Jack Smith's father Charles started his career as a gardener for Lord Salisbury at Hatfield House. He moved to be Head Gardener at Radwell House, then "a proper country residence with lots of gardeners". According to Frank Hyde, he was a real patriarch who ruled his household strictly.

Jack's family consisted of his three brothers, Henry; Charlie who was a builder in Baldock and Frank who owned a building business in Letchworth. "Frank was a good tradesman and like his father and Jack, was a very good gardener, specialising in growing orchids". There were also several sisters: Hilda - who was connected by marriage to Frank Hyde; Annie; Mrs Self and one other who "became a ladies maid and travelled throughout Europe".

Jack was uncle by marriage to Frank Hyde. He worked under his father at Radwell and then seems to have been successful enough eventually to buy Radwell House and convert this into flats. He married Edie and had a son and daughter, John and Eileen.

Besides his gardening interests, Jack was a great cricketer and played for Letchworth Town.

Joseph Billington, the other Show Judge in 1935 was a friend of Frank Hyde's father and served on the parish council in the 1920s and 30s. In 1930 he stood for the County Council and served through the war. He "had a splendid moustache and always wore a watch chain stretched across his waistcoat".

Joe, as he was known, worked as a gardener for what was then the Three Counties Mental Asylum at Fairfield Hall, now Fairfield Park, just across the A507 from Stotfold. In addition to maintaining the formal grounds around the beautiful Victorian building, Joe and his fellow gardeners would have overseen the work of the inmates of the asylum. Gardening was regarded as a beneficial activity for people with mental illnesses and it also provided fresh fruit and vegetables for all inmates and staff.

Frank remembers him from when he was a boy as Joe Billington also served as a Manager (now called a

governor) of the Boys' School in Stotfold, now the Roecroft Centre. He lived in 202 Hitchin Road, Stotfold, ten minutes walk from his work at the Three Counties Mental Asylum. Mr Oyston, who also contacted me about Joe Billington, remembers him as "a very nice man, very upright".

Joe Billington also has a living memorial in Stotfold as he helped plant the line of chestnuts on Malthouse Lane, with the assistance of a young Frank Hyde, replacing the ancient elms that got Dutch Elm disease.

THE 2011 GARDENING QUIZ

(Answers are on the last page)

1. *What is the common name of the following?*

- a) antirrhinum
- b) leycesteria formosa
- c) lathyrus odoratus
- d) papaver orientale
- e) aquilegia

2. *Which of these can provide berries for hungry birds?*

- a) pyracantha
- b) forsythia
- c) holly
- d) malus
- e) skimmia

3. Which of these is not an allotment site?

- a) Runnalow
- b) Norton
- c) Hillbrow
- d) Wilbury
- e) Redford

4. Which of these are runner bean varieties?

- a) Moonlight
- b) Hestia
- c) Green Windsor
- d) Scarlet Emperor
- e) Painted Lady

5. Which of these are varieties of tomato?

- a) Sungold
- b) Marmande
- c) Shirley
- d) Monarch
- e) Pink Wonder

5. Which of these plants will thrive even in drought?

- a) lavender
- b) astilbe
- c) rosemary
- d) osteospermum
- e) clematis

6. Which of these is not a brassica?

- a) kale
- b) cauliflower
- c) brussel sprout
- d) lettuce
- e) cabbage

7. What variety of vegetable are these?

- a) Aquadulce Claudia
- b) Nero di Toscana
- c) Chantenay
- d) White Lisbon
- e) Butterhead

8. Which of these are apple varieties?

- a) Pippin
- b) Russet
- c) Morello
- d) Braeburn
- e) Victoria

9. Which of the following should you not put into your compost heap or bin?

- a) newspaper
- b) grass cuttings
- c) perennial weeds
- d) cardboard
- e) dried leaves

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2012

We are delighted to inform you that the LDGA has been offered exhibition space in the Heritage Museum from 18th September to 18th December 2012.

This is an ideal chance to showcase the past and present of the Association and we are inviting members to lend us any items of historical interest that can make this a really eye-catching display. If you have

any old photographs or news cuttings, show schedules, books or magazines, tins or boxes relating to gardening or the LDGA, please contact a member of the committee.

We are also looking for creative people to help design the display, so again please get in touch if you feel you can help.

TALKS AND VISITS - SOME HIGHLIGHTS

Though details of the programme are still being finalised, the following gives some tasters of what is to come.

*January - Peter Drewitt:
Orchids: an expert guide

*February - John Branham from
the National Vegetable Society

*May - Keith Hichisson from
Langford Nursery

*June - visit to Edible
Ornamentals, Chawston

*July - visit to Tapps Garden
Centre, Baldock

*September - visit to Hitchin
Garden Centre

There will also be two long-distance trips, one to Garden Organic's wonderful show gardens and headquarters at Ryton and one to the RHS Gardens at Hyde Hall.

STORE HELPERS NEEDED

One of the great advantages of the Association is the excellent value provided to members by our well-run and well-stocked Store. Peter Faulkner and his helpers work wonders in the background and all of us are very grateful for their efforts.

New helpers are always welcome at the Store, usually needed for a few hours on a Sunday morning, and Wednesdays during the Summer. Plenty of friendly support and training is available and it gives you an excellent chance to see behind the scenes. See the Store schedule for exact details of opening hours in 2012.

We also need a new forklift driver, so if you think you have the relevant skills or are interested in helping, please contact Peter or one of the committee.

PRE-SEASON SALE 29th Jan

Make sure you don't miss out on the bargains at the Store's Pre-Season sale, only available on 29th January. As an added bonus, you can combine the sale with instant renewal of your LDGA subscription.

LDGA T-SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE

If you need an attractive T-shirt for doing your gardening or wish to show your support for the Association, you can now buy a splendid royal blue T-shirt with a gold logo.

You can either order via our Membership Secretary, Jo Schurch - details on the last page of this edition - or go directly to Chicks in the Arcade in Letchworth and ask for one. Prices for 2011 were £14 for polo shirts or £10 for T-shirts.

GARDENING WORKSHOPS

We will again be running workshops in early 2012 for beginners, or those who wish to improve their skills in growing their own fruit and vegetables. The programmes is still being finalised, so please email Maureen Hersee if you wish to receive information or keep an eye on the Association website. Information will also be given out at monthly meetings and advertised in *Compost Heap*.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. a: snapdragon b: Himalayan honeysuckle c: sweet pea d: oriental poppy e: columbine
2. All of these should give good berries, except forsythia.
3. Redford is not an allotment site.
4. Green Windsor is a broad bean.
5. Monarch is a celeriac.
6. All except astilbe and clematis should do well even in dry weather.
6. d
7. a: broad bean b: kale c: carrot d: spring onion e: lettuce
8. Morello is a cherry variety; Victoria is a classic plum.
9. Newspaper and cardboard are fine, as long as they are torn up or shredded. Grass cuttings should be interspersed with more woody material so it doesn't form a wet mass. Dried leaves should be left in a separate pile or placed in plastic bags, loosely tied and with drainage holes, till they rot down. Perennial weeds are the only ones that should not be included.

CONTACT DETAILS

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For more information on membership telephone: Jo Schurch on 01462 674195, visit our web site : www.ldga.org.uk. or call in at our trading centre at Flint Road, Letchworth Garden City on Sunday mornings. Check your members' pack or the website for opening times.