

June 2018

Well it's June already sorry about mays blog as we were without internet for two weeks on and off, the rest just up to my eye balls with work getting the gardens ready for the High Sheriff garden party.

The gardens are starting to look like some one cares at last, not to say we don't have any weed or plant failures because we do. In the walled garden where we mainly grow fruit and vegetables it has not got of to a great start, I'm on my second sowing of early carrots, parsnips and salad onions as the first sowing just did not germinate, the peas and brassicas *[which are grown in module trays]* lovely looking plants one and all, planted out then sprayed with an odourless pest repellent to keep off pigeons lasted until the first overnight rain. Unfortunately the sneaky little blighters swooped down at first light and had one hell of a breakfast, have since sprayed again, the peas have had it, so, replanted new plants and netted as an extra precaution. And for the brassicas they now have brassica aphid so sprayed again with a soap base solution. It is still okay to sow peas in June but don't get a tall variety, better still get sugar pod peas or mange tout type. From now until late mid-August you can sow main crop carrots, sow these a little further apart than early carrot to avoid carrot fly as soon as the carrot tops are about six inches tall get your hoe and ridge the soil up against the carrot top to a depth of about 2 inches, trying not to disturb the foliage too much as to give off a scent which will attract carrot fly. A good tip is when you come to want to lift some carrots get your fork and stick it in at the side and lift don't grab the foliage if you can help it this again gives off the smell of carrots which carrot fly homes in on. Dwarf French beans can still be sow these come in a variety of colours from purple *[to keep the colour steam these]* through red and white to yellow pick when small say 3-4 inches long to keep them producing more beans. Lettuce is one of the main stay of summer salads, what I do sometimes is I mix all my lettuce seed together give it a shake and sow in a shallow drill about half an inch apart this is only a guide line if closer no problem. When this seed germinates and grows to about 4 inches high you can cut it about 1.5 inches from root and cut as much as you want for that meal. If you keep cutting down the drill the first cut will have regrown, after a month sow another drill the same to give you continuity. This goes for a lot of salad leaves such as; - rocket, mizuna spicy greens, coriander, kale, swiss chard and beetroot. Feeding your plants all of the time to get the best quality. If you have been following my ramblings every month you should have some fruit on your tomatoes, it pays to mulch tomatoes if planted outside and irrigate weekly watch out for blight it will be showing its self within the next month check daily there are produces out there to spray as a preventative I mix my own as I can get the raw ingredients and know the recipe. Also watch the potatoes for the same. Last years new strawberry plants have certainly come along with a bumper crop of very sweet fruit, the gooseberries are groaning under the weight of fruit on them. The fruit is doing better than the veg at the moment.

The flower borders down here at Howbury have looked good so far this year especially the Peonies. The Roses are coming along okay after the several grazing's from our own livestock last month. Most of the perennials that were recently planted are coming along steadily as next year will be their first good flowering. Weeding is a constant job one which we are trying to cut down on with giving as many beds a good heavy mulch this keeps moisture in the ground and stops the majority of the weeds coming through. To date June has been a dry month only 2.5mm so far and none on the horizon unfortunately so constantly watering. Areas which we planted in the sunken woodland area are coming along better than hope with this dry spell, was trying not to water is this area to let them fend for themselves with a 90% success rate so far. So far a very happy man.

On Thursday last I had the privilege of showing round the gardens her at Howbury eleven payed up members of the Renhold W.I which was followed up by tea and home made cakes in a marquee in my garden. Cakes were of course made by Jeanette my wife also a member of the local W.I. thankfully they all went away happy bunnies.

This week is going to be full on getting the gardens and surrounding areas looking good ready for the High Sheriffs garden party [invited guests only sorry].

Since I last wrote my ramblings I have been fortunate to have attended two flower shows, the main one Chelsea and the newest Chatsworth. Chelsea is if you haven't been out of this world in the sense that the quality of not only the plants displayed but the show gardens *[though how your average person would glean an idea from some of them is beyond me, seriously]* and the trade stands, sculptures running into tens of thousands minimum, summer house without a hint of practicality complete with gadgets you might use once at a push. As I always get an afternoon ticket it means that you are there as the evening crowd come in and it's not as busy, by this time some of the show gardens are staring to be light up taking on a totally different look and explain why some features are there which is not always obvious at first. This year in my opinion the right garden won best in show unlike last year *[we will not go there]*. The garden designed by Chris Beardshaw *[Whom I am a great admirer of his work]* was for the NSPCC charity the planting was exquisite, it told a story which they are all supposed to do but not many manage it clearly. Before I knew he had won I had two gardens in mind for the top prize the NSPCC garden and welcome to Yorkshire garden*[not biased honest]* totally different, one formal the other a wild landscape which is arguably more difficult to pull off.

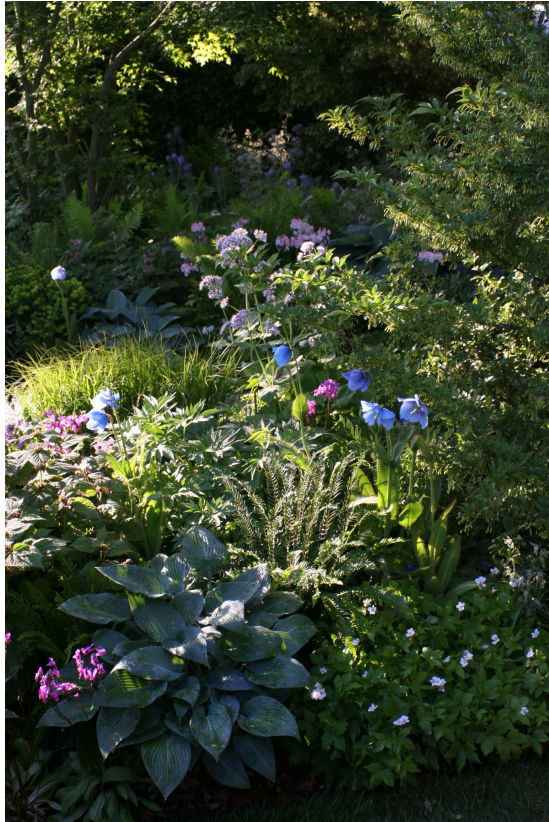
Peter Rabbit at Chelsea standing 60cm tall
set you back about £15000



The vibrancy of this planting in a mental
health charity Artisan garden.



The NSPCC garden by Chris Beardshaw, this is just a section of his planting.



Chatsworth - inflated marquee housing a stunning display of Orchids.



Chatsworth was a totally different show, a cross between a rural county show without the livestock and Hampton Court flower show but in a better setting with Chatsworth House as a back drop in stunning surroundings. The show straddled the river with three bridges having been built which made you what to crisscross the river see the stands and exhibits on the other side and take in the views. There was an inflated marquee roughly shaped like the old glass conservatory that used to stand in the grounds of Chatsworth, inside was a stunning display of Orchids of various types and roses in immense displays. I managed to buy several plants for my own garden. A very enjoyable show.

