



HAPPY CHRISTMAS FROM THE SHED



Welcome to the Christmas Shed News! Well, the weather hasn't quite given us the snow-covered garden and, sadly, we have had a dreadfully wet autumn which has made me realise just how fortunate we were with the weather in the first Lockdown. In this edition I am going to think about keeping warm in the garden, seek inspiration about gardens from carols, challenge you to a Christmas Book Quiz about gardeners and suggest how to bring the garden indoors.

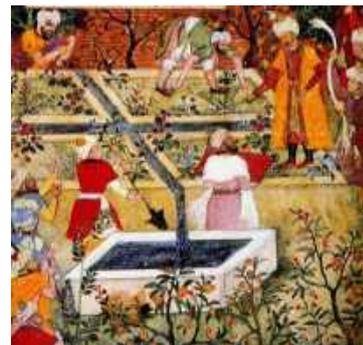
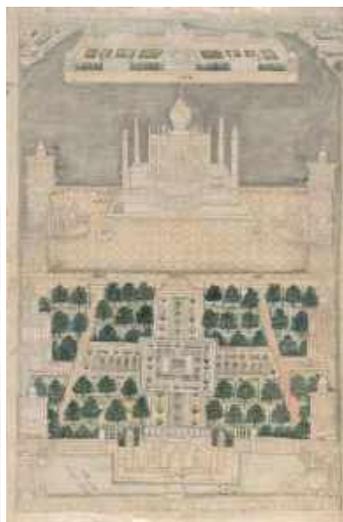


Festive Fun Fact - 1. *Oh bring us some figgy pudding*



Stir Up Sunday was 22 November this year and while making your pudding, did you wonder what was the difference between sultanas and raisins? Thompson seedless grape produces raisins and sultanas. A raisin is dried naturally but a sultana is dipped in vegetable oil and acid and then dried.

Bringing the garden indoors - 1 Eternal Springtime: A Persian Garden Carpet



In Persia, many carpets were designed to resemble gardens. The carpet on the left is from Isfahan - it is based on the design for a Charbagh which can be translated as 4 gardens. This was the usual layout for Paradise gardens as can be seen in the drawing of the Taj Mahal. The picture on the right shows Barbur, the conqueror of India in his Garden of Fidelity. He was a great gardener and was utterly despondent when he looked out at the newly conquered countryside in Hindustan, complaining that it was as flat as a board. In the picture on the left you can see the four water channels representing the four rivers of paradise or sometimes said to be rivers flowing with milk, clarified honey, wine and water. There is a square basin at the junction of the channels and alongside the water can be seen alternating cypress trees (symbolising death) and fruit trees (to represent life). The garden is full of birds which added to the sensual pleasure of being in such a garden.

Bringing the garden indoors -2 Leonardslee Model Gardens

Leonardslee is a great woodland garden in Sussex, inspired by the planting ideas of Sir Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight and JC Loudon. Exotic plants are used in a 'picturesque' manner, derived from landscape painting. Sir Edmund Loder bought the estate in 1889 and imported a herd of Wallabies. The Leonardslee Gardens lie in a sheltered valley with a string of ponds, made a century earlier to provide waterpower for the iron industry. Being damp and slightly acid, the soil is well-suited to rhododendrons, camelias and magnolias. Loder gave his name to the famous hybrid Rhododendron 'Loderi'. The gardens closed to the public in 2010 but re-opened in 2019. One of the most charming additions to the estate are the model gardens:



The models were created by Helen Holland in 1998 and were recently restored. Helen began her work with a greenhouse and potting shed; the displays charmed visitors, and she went on to create a market town complete with an emporium, greengrocer, butcher shop, post office, laundry, wheelwright, carpenter and cabinet maker, church, pub, and school. Check out the website for further details and opening times.

[Leonardslee Gardens, Brighton Road, Lower Beeding, Horsham, RH13 6PP](#)



Festive Fun Fact - 2. *Ding Dong Merrily on high.....*



Trees in churchyards:

At St Nicholas Church at Barfeston in Kent, the bell is suspended in a tree in the churchyard, similarly an old tree is used in an Ethiopian churchyard to hang stones from which are struck to act as bells.



Why are there often yew trees in churchyards?

The bark, the leaves and the seeds of yew trees are highly poisonous to cattle, horses, sheep and other domestic livestock as well as people, especially children; only the red fleshy seed covering is not poisonous, hence yew trees were planted in churchyards so that local people did not graze their livestock on Church land.



One of the most spectacular displays of yew trees is found at Painswick parish church in the Cotswolds. Every September the yews are clipped and these tree clippings are a source of the basic raw material for the anti-cancer drug paclitaxel.

Yew trees were vital for English soldiers. The strong but flexible branches were cut into bows taller than a man and were strung with hemp or flax to create powerful weapons with a range of 230 metres capable of launching arrows that could pierce chain mail. They helped English victories at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt during The Hundred Years' War and, at the sea battle of Sluys, finished off many French trapped on their ships. Longbow skills were taken seriously. From 1252 onwards, by law, men had to practise their archery. This happened in an area known as the Butts, a space wide enough to avoid 'friendly fire'. Many 'Butts' street names survive, often near churches.

And for the arrows? A tree from South Africa known as the kokerboom or Quiver Tree is in the aloe family but has a tree-like appearance; it gets its name from the San people's practice of hollowing out

the tubular branches to form quivers for their arrows. These specimens are in the temperate glasshouse at the Hortus gardens in Amsterdam.



Festive Fun Fact- 3 Gold, Frankincense and MYRRH



Did Cleopatra use myrrh in her perfume?

Myrrh is a natural gum or resin extracted from a number of small, thorny tree species of the genus *Commiphora*. Myrrh resin has been used throughout history as a perfume, incense and medicine. Myrrh mixed with posca or wine was common across ancient cultures, for general



pleasure and as an analgesic.

An archaeological dig in 2012 at Tell-El Timai uncovered what was believed to have been the home of a perfume merchant and as a result of research on the remaining contents of some bottles it was found that the perfume had contained Myrrh and it was most probably a perfume which contained myrrh which had been used by Cleopatra.

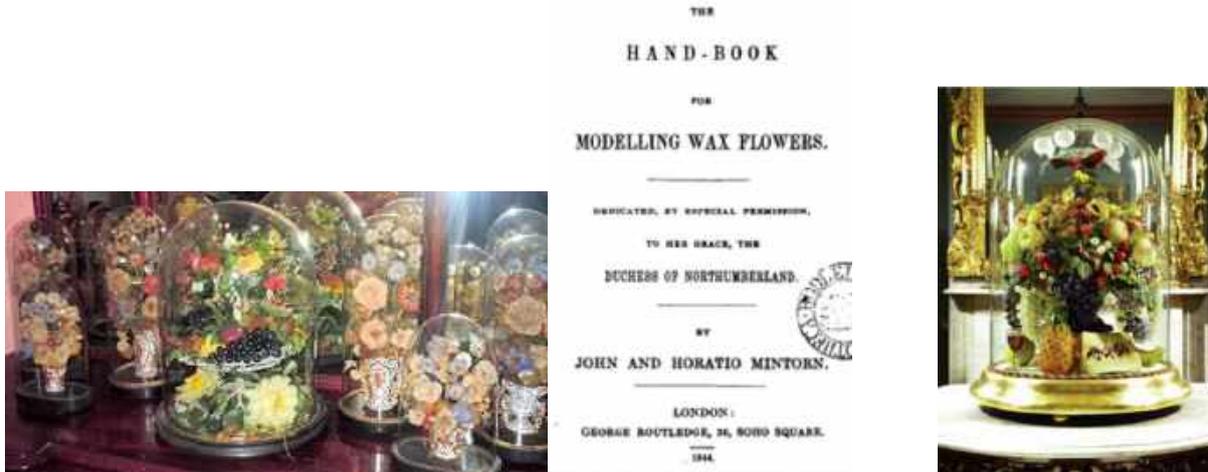
Myrrh also attracted the attentions of another woman in the ancient world. The beginnings of organized plant exploration date to the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, who, as early as 2000 BCE, brought back exotic trees and plants in their foreign campaigns and illustrated them on their temple walls.

Queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1500 BCE) sent out ships to bring back trees, especially those from which myrrh could be obtained, from the land of Punt (northeast African coast).

WHAT TO DO INDOORS WHEN YOU CAN'T GARDEN OUTDOORS?

One idea would be to copy Victorian ladies and try making flowers from wax. The Gardens Trust Blog covers this topic - "The Agreeable Occupation of Imitating Nature" which was posted on its web site on 24th August 2019.

Making these wax flowers became enormously popular in Victorian times – kits and instruction books were advertised in newspapers.



In the 1830s Emma Peachey took a bunch of wax flowers she had made to Buckingham Palace and left them as a gift, hoping the new Queen would see them. The following year she was hired to recreate the Queen's wedding bouquet and other flowers in wax and to make thousands of white roses in wax to be given as bridal favours. Queen Victoria gave Emma a Royal Warrant and appointed her "Artist in Wax Flowers to Her Majesty."



Displays of garden fruit were also made in wax such as this one from Disraeli's home at Hughenden

Not something you could try yourselves, but there are remarkable examples of flowers recreated in glass. The examples below are modern, photographed in February (when one could still travel) in Venice



One of Harvard University's most famous treasures is the internationally acclaimed Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants, better known as the "Glass Flowers." This unique collection was made by Leopold (1822-1895) and Rudolf Blaschka (1857-1939), a father and son team of Czech glass artists. Over fifty years, from 1886 through 1936, the Blaschkas produced 4,300 glass models that represent 780 plant species.



Glass sculptures were also exhibited in a display at Kew Gardens in 2017



And US artist Dale Chihuly created installations at Kew in 2005 and 2019





Festive Fun Fact - 4 *Deck the Halls...*



In 2004, the Tenbury Mistletoe Association successfully petitioned Parliament to recognise December 1 as National Mistletoe Day.

Mistletoe is the county flower of Herefordshire. The mistletoe and holly auction usually takes place every year in Tenbury Wells; sadly it has been cancelled this year for the first time in more than 150 years.



The mistletoe plant has been important to Tenbury for centuries. There are large amounts of mistletoe in the many orchards around the market town with the plant having the perfect growing conditions on the many apple trees.



Festive Fun Fact - 5 *The holly bears a berry..*



How holly controls seed distribution

The bright red berries attract many birds; however, in autumn and early winter the berries are very hard and bitter due to mildly toxic compounds including cyanogenic glycosides. As winter continues the frosts break down these chemicals eventually making the berries more palatable in late winter and early spring. But even then the berries retain some toxicity so the birds eat just a few on each visit. Therefore, frequent visits are needed and this aids the dispersal of the seeds, with a few seeds deposited in droppings in many different places over a longer period of time.



Festive Fun Fact - 6 *In the bleak mid-winter..*



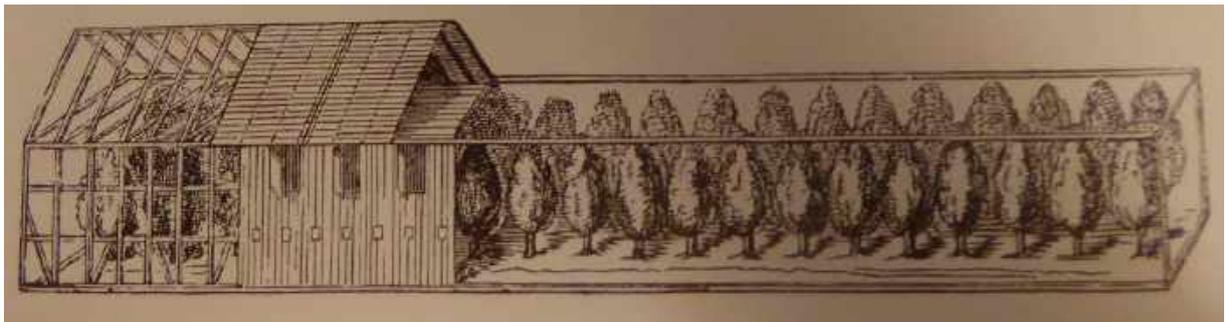
Oranges at Christmas:

It has long been a tradition to put an orange or satsuma in the toe of Christmas stockings, this was to represent a bag of gold that Saint Nicholas was supposed to have thrown down the chimney of a poor man who needed a dowry for his daughters and this gold landed in the stockings that had been hung

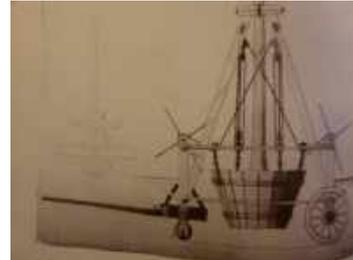
up on Christmas Eve. Oranges are also used in the Christingle service, they represent the world, bearing the candle as the Light of the world and the fruits of the world.

Since the 14th century giving a gift of an orange was a sign of being rich and powerful. Oranges were rare as there was no chilled transport, which meant they often went bad during the journey to this country. Only the rich could afford oranges

Citrus fruits were cultivated by the Persians from the fifth century. Eventually from the mid-sixteenth century, orange seeds from Italy were brought to northern Europe and it was realised that protection was needed for the growing fruit. A building to shelter the trees along with heating provided by charcoal braziers kept the specimens safe from frost. Sir Francis Carew, a courtier to Queen Elizabeth I, is said to be the first Englishman to grow orange trees successfully.



Salomon de Caus' first design for a temporary winter storage house, dating from about 1619



The orangery at Wimbledon Manor House built in the 1640s

a machine for moving orange trees

for Queen Henrietta

These buildings became more and more elaborate: *below: the orangery at Hestercombe*





Above: The orangerie at Versailles in 1685

and below: the present day



In 1663 the **Palace of Versailles** was endowed with an orangerie built by Louis Le Vau. 20 years later Jules Hardouin-Mansart doubled the length and breadth of the original building, making it an immense edifice. It is 150 metres long with 13m high vaulted ceiling; the walls are 4-5 m thick and have double windows enabling it to maintain a temperature in winter that is no lower than 5°C. It houses 1055 containers with orange trees, palm trees, oleander, pomegranate trees and Eugenia bushes in the winter months.

With more and more exotic plants being brought back in the 17th and 18th century from exotic parts there was a great need for shelter from the weather and so conservatories and glasshouses were built.

KEEPING WARM IN THE GARDEN Under glass.....

2020 marks the 100-year anniversary at Chatsworth, when, on the orders of the Duke of Devonshire, Joseph Paxton's Great Stove was blown up, the plant collection it had contained had declined beyond salvation as during WW1 no coal was available for non-essential purposes such as heating the magnificent glasshouse



The ingenuity of gardeners to grow these new exotics knew no bounds. The pineapple arrived in Europe from South America in the 16th century but the problem of how to give the growing plants similar growing conditions as in their native tropical Brazil was resolved by the invention of the Pineapple pit. These contained a hot bed filled with warm fermenting tan bark and covered with glass,

as seen in the photograph of a restored Pineapple Pit at Heligan. Further manure was heaped up around the pit.



*The restored Pineapple Pit
at the Lost Gardens of Heligan*

*Pineapple Manor built in 1761
for Earl of Dunmore*

*An enviable steaming manure heap
in a Cotswold garden in October.*

A pineapple was considered the height of luxury and there were shops in London in the 18th century that hired out pineapples for display (and not consumption) on the tables of the wealthy.



Festive Fun Fact 7 – *I saw three ships come sailing in*



The Porters Garden at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard has a series of sculptured seats.



Each seat has the shape of the cross section of the hull of one of the three historic ships, Mary Rose, HMS Victory and HMS Warrior. They are made from 6 granite blocks, of total weight 10 tons, that had formed a cart track in Portsmouth dockyard.





Festive Fun Fact – 8 *Oh, Christmas tree...*



By the 1920's around 60 per cent of *trees* in London were London *planes*. This has now fallen to an estimated 4 per cent in central London and even lower on the outskirts.

The Times recently posed the following questions: 'What can make you walk slower? What when they are near the entrance to a shop can make you feel like a big spender? What amazing substance- when present - makes you want to spend 9 per cent more for a coffee? The answer is trees. And so perhaps trees are the answer to our ever increasingly empty high streets.



CHRISTMAS QUIZ – Fictional Gardeners



We have all been using this lockdown period to read and catch up with films, but in which book or film would you meet:

1. Pat;
2. Boothby;
3. Samwise Gamgee;
4. Tom and Barbara Good;
5. Pomona Sprout;
6. Chance the Gardener;
7. Mr McGregor;

In January's Shed News,



Inspired by the statue of the head of Janus (the Roman god of doors, gates and transitions) in Harold Peto's garden at Iford Manor, we will be welcoming the New Year by looking forward and back. We look back to mark 100 years since a marrow growing enthusiast and retired detective made his appearance. And also making an appearance in 1921 was Christopher Lloyd. We will find out more about a garden which 50 years ago changed its entrances charges from 3d to 1p. And we look forward to new inventions, new appearances and hopes for a good and healthy 2021.

I finish with wishing you all a safe Christmas and leave you with a view of the roof garden at Christmas time at John Lewis in Oxford Street in London – home of the John Lewis Gardening Club.



