



### **MORE FROM THE SHED – 5 – A CHELSEA SPECIAL**

Dear DGT Gardeners,

How are you? Hopefully we are getting there! But just for a short break forget the lack of flour and think FLOWER. Don't veg indoors, get outside and plant VEG. And no reading – it's WEEDING!

IN this week's Shed News, Chelsea features, the virtual RHS show and the Chelsea chop and we learn some odd facts about salads.

I was comforted by someone writing in to say that she too had failed to get some seeds to germinate but when she decided to use the compost for other plants the first lot suddenly came good and sprouted, I guess that is companion planting for you.

But the answers to the last quiz about PROPER companion planting are:

1.E; 2.G; 3.B; 4.F; 5.J; 6.I; 7.C; 8.H; 9.A; 10.D

But first WATER..... and inspiration from Chelsea



To have a dry garden, no matter how small, is to give thanks during a really hot dry spell. Less watering needed! But tending our plants by watering is so important and luckily how we water has become so much easier over the years since the primitive thumb pots,



Then there was a huge step forwards in Victorian times with the use of flexible India rubber



when to possess a Sphinxer Grip Garden Hose merited inclusion of it in the family photographs. This topic has been covered superbly in the Garden Trust Blog .

<https://thegardenstrust.blog/2019/07/13/the-history-of-hosepipe/>

Finally, a definition: **Garden Hose** – socks worn while you work in the garden.

The use of water in a garden can be summed up by thinking of **Thrills, Spills and Rills** and I'd like to think of those fun **Thrills**.

There have been highly enterprising thrill seekers in water gardens, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, take for example what went on the Serpentine and at Versailles, where scaled down model battle ships were used to practice naval manoeuvres in readiness for sea battles. Interestingly one can see a French flag on one of the ships in Hyde Park in the left photo.



Another boat on water – this was the stand for Grenada in 2016



Well - OK so Hyde Park is not quite a regular garden so let's think smaller scale and rejoice in the Giochi d'acqua or Water Games. In the sixteenth century, Europe had a renewed interest in Greek thought and philosophy including the works of Hero of Alexandria about hydraulics and pneumatics. His devices, such as temple doors operated by invisible weights or flowing liquids, and mechanical singing birds powered by steam, motivated several European palaces to create similar clever devices to enhance their public image.



In Italy several royal houses constructed large water gardens incorporating mechanical devices in water settings. The best-known is the **Villa d'Este** at Tivoli, constructed in 1550 AD. A hill cascaded with many fountains and grottoes, some with water-driven figures that moved or spouted water. One of my favourite water gardens, which delivers plenty of thrills is the **Chateau de Vendevre** in France – started in the 1750s and inspired by those water gardens of Renaissance Italy. As soon as one enters the gardens one comes across what appears to be a dead tree, investigate closer and hey – a soaking!



Admire a Greek statue and – wow, a wetting.



Feel the need of a rest? Great! But getting out is a problem.

In the Summer Palace, St Petersburg – a custodian sits quietly reading but with a foot poised to work the magic when anyone approaches the bench





And now at The Newt in Somerset near Bruton the spitting newts can still get the unsuspecting visitor



Weeping trees also made an appearance at Chelsea



### **Hair today and Gone tomorrow**

When all this isolation started our minds turned immediately to hygiene and food. Loo paper rolled off the supermarket shelves, yeast rose to become the must have item on the weekly shop. BUT did we worry in those days about HAIR? Now we are discovering the problems of an overlong fringe. I have friends searching desperately in drawers for old Kirby grips. One friend tried to use pinking shears to get an elegant cut (no luck!) Another friend has tried dog clippers – different. However, all this prompted me to wonder about THE CHELSEA CHOP, so named as the cutting should take place in May at the time of the Flower Show. Is there anything in it? Does it work? And what about the Derby Day Box Cut?

Doing the 'Chelsea Chop' can delay the flowering of perennials up to six weeks. You could try chopping just half of a clump which will extend the flowering period as some will flower when they are expected to do so and the other half will flower later. Plants most suitable include achillea, campanula and asters.

There is an old saying 'You should cut your box hedges on Derby Day' This is usually in early June, but it's advisable to wait until the new foliage has hardened off a bit. If you prune too early you might get brown patches.

This gives me an excuse to look at just a bit of topiary



Les Jardins de Marqueyssac above  
the Dordogne



Part of the warrior garden at Sericourt in  
the Pas de Calais



In Hidcote Garden – the archivist there believes that these pillars which number 22 were planted by Johnston to represent his fellow officers in the Northumberland Hussars who died in WW1.

And one of my favourite bits of topiary is to be found in the local cemetery at Ibarra in Ecuador



### A FRINGE BENEFIT?

Just one last thought on the subject of hair cutting – many gardeners suggest putting cut human hair at the base of the trench before you plant your runner beans. So your home coiffuring endeavours could bring culinary rewards.



## The Chelsea Flower Show in the Royal Hospital Grounds



This won't be the first time that the show has not taken place. A show was first held in the Hospital Grounds on 22-30<sup>th</sup> May 1912, the venue having been found by Harry Veitch - of the famous Veitch Nurseries as it was felt that a larger venue was needed for a Horticultural show as a result of the success of the shows staged at Temple Gardens. That first year there were 428 competitive classes and it returned a profit of £25,000 which was split between 3 charities. From then on it was known as Chelsea Flower Show and the first show under that name took place in 1913. Although the 1915 show took place and also the 1916 the numbers of visitors and exhibitors were well down and it was decided not to continue the show while England was still at war. The 1919 show encountered administrative problems and it was not until 1923 that it was felt the show had returned to its pre-war standards.



The Chelsea Flower show was stopped during WW2 and it was not until 1947 that it resumed. And it has run ever since until.... Yes this year. BUT we are promised a virtual Chelsea, we will still get a taste of those gardens and exhibits and I am told we may be visiting the garden of the wonderful, multi-Gold Medal winner Mr Ishihara Kazuyuki – who can forget his joy when he receives his Gold medal. This is his garden in 2016.



## SUMMER SALADS

Were the rich in the 16<sup>th</sup> century really poisoned by tomatoes? Why is a cucumber cool? And were the Flopsy Bunnies correct about lettuce?



**Tomatoes** arrived in Europe from the Americas in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The British admired the tomato for its beauty, but believe that it was poisonous. This was because the rich ate off pewter which had a high-lead content. Foods high in acid, like tomatoes, would cause the lead to leech out into the food, resulting in lead poisoning and death. Poor people, who ate off plates made of wood, did not have that problem, and hence did not have an aversion to tomatoes. This is essentially the reason why tomatoes were only eaten by poor people until the 1800's, especially Italians.

**Cucumbers** have been part of our diet for a very long time. They were first domestically grown in ancient India around the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC. There can be a 20° difference between the inside of a cucumber and the actual temperature outside, this is thought to be where the phrase “cool as a cucumber” came from. The waxy coating of a cucumber can actually remove ink, rubbing the skin over the writing will slowly remove it. Try it – it really works! Cucumber can also be used to cure bad breath -press a slice of cucumber to the roof of your mouth for thirty seconds with your tongue and this allows the phytochemicals to kill the bacteria causing the bad breath.

**Lettuce** The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies by Beatrix Potter starts: *It is said that the effect of eating too much lettuce is "soporific." I have never felt sleepy after eating lettuces; but then I am not a rabbit.* Is this true? Science has shown that the milky sap released by cut salad greens is indeed known to calm the nervous system, and to possess a mildly soporific, sometimes euphoric effect. Lettuce is actually named for this sap. *Lactuca*, the genus name for both wild and domestic lettuces, is rooted in the Latin *lact-*, milk, and though our garden varieties were bred by modern agriculturalists to have less of this bitter substance, plenty of it is still released when we cut into the base of most lettuce heads. Lettuce sap contains the chemical Lactucarium, a non-narcotic sedative and analgesic, structurally similar to opium, but not nearly as strong.

If you want to grow more salad plants be inspired by these ideas from a previous Chelsea Show – use old cans or even a bath.





It is very sad that the DGT School Gardening team can't be out there encouraging school children to get planting. These tips from a previous Chelsea were sent out to schools to inspire them to have a go.



### FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD!

I have just mentioned salad vegetables and as many of us have been sowing the odd vegetable or two I thought we would turn our quizzing skills this week to a food themed question.

What are the main ingredients of the following dishes?

1. Tarte Normande
2. Pesto
3. Dhal
4. Tzatziki
5. Guacamole
6. Tortilla
7. Tebouleh
8. Allo gobi

### Going up in the world.

A reader spotted the similarity between the idea of early scythe workers wearing platform soles when cutting the grass in order to raise the height of their lawn cutting and the stilt men on Kent hop farms when they were picking the hops.







A last look at Chelsea in its prime



NEXT TIME

We WILL be finding out about Hooker's Lips

And lastly a good excuse not to tackle certain weeds this month:

*'Cut thistles in May, they grow in a day*

*Cut them in June, that is too soon;*

*Cut them in July, then they die.'*

**KEEP WELL AND GOOD GARDENING!**

