



# Potting Shed News

The monthly newsletter of Cliveden Gardens

## Pea sticking

We have now finished pea sticking the herbaceous borders which has been a joint effort this year between the garden staff and volunteers. (see right) It's a time consuming task constructing these hazel cages. The hazel needs to be supple enough to be bent over and woven without snapping. It's important to get the height of each cage correct so the herbaceous perennials can grow through to cover the cage and receive the support they need. This is why the cages are all different heights and shapes because each plant has a certain requirement.

Pea sticking is a vitally important job, one we all really enjoy doing and a task our visitors love to watch us undertake and chat to us about. We are now in the process of using our estate made compost to mulch the beds to help conserve moisture and improve soil structure.



## All change in the Long Garden

The garden team and volunteers are gearing themselves up for the mammoth task of the bedding change over which we do twice yearly. The first job we will do is start to empty the four Long Garden beds, only 11,000 polyanthus to take out! The beds will be prepared by removing all the plant material and debris. This year, we are going to dig the beds by hand as opposed to rotavating, adding more of our home made compost at the same time. The beds will finally be raked level so we can lay out the pots of summer bedding as accurately as possible in diagonal lines.

If you get the chance head for the lawn in front of Blenheim Pavilion and take a look at a fantastic specimen of *Davidia involucreta*, the handkerchief tree (see left). This Chinese tree is named after French Vincentian missionary Armand David who first described the tree in 1869.

## Water Garden Camassias

If you are a regular reader of PSN you will no doubt be aware of how pleased we are with the success of the camassias in the Water Garden. Creation of our camassia meadow began back in November 2016 when a team of garden volunteers planted 1,000 *Camassia leichtlinii* bulbs. An additional 500 were planted in 2017. The volunteers' efforts have resulted in a most impressive show of colour as you enter the Water Garden through the black bamboo gates.

Camassias are native to western North America, from the US coastal states (plus Nevada) northwards to British Columbia in Canada. The bulbs naturalise well in a variety of landscapes, from shady woodland and wet ground close to rivers through to drier, open grassland. Flowers appear during spring, in shades of blue and purple as well as white, and are borne on sturdy stems that rise above the narrow leaves. In their native region camassias can grow in considerable numbers. The beautiful star-shaped blue flowers of Cliveden's camassias are now looking their best – take a walk to the Water Garden, you won't be disappointed.





## Shades of purple and blue

Throughout the garden bearded irises are starting to flower. These ever-popular plants have long been a key component of traditional herbaceous borders and thrive in a well-drained soil in full sun. *Iris* 'Rare Edition' (see far left) is now flowering in the Long Garden, its flowers an attractive combination of white and deep purple. Further along the border is a super groundcover plant, *Phlox subulata* 'Emerald Cushion' (middle left), providing a carpet of delicate mauve flowers—a perfect splash of colour for the front of a border. *Ajuga reptans* 'Catlin's Giant' (middle right) spreads rapidly covering the ground with its dark leaves, above which are borne spikes of blue flowers. Every spring, Cliveden's formal garden is filled with the sight and scent of old wisteria plants (far right). Introduced to Britain in the early 19th century, wisterias have been popular ever since. It's easy to see why, established plants produce a mass of flowers clustered together in many large, showy pendants, in shades of mauve or pure white.

## Polyword

Using the given letters, no more than once, make as many words as possible of three or more letters, always including the central letter 'L'. Capitalised words are not allowed. Can you make one word, often used in gardening, using all nine available letters? The nine-letter word will be revealed in the next edition.

A	E	P
E	L	I
N	R	N

20 words - Average  
30 words - Good  
35 words - Very good  
40+ words - Excellent

## Jobs for May

Make regular sowings of lettuce/radish etc. for a continuous supply of lovely fresh salads.

Keep an eye out for any late frosts and protect tender plants. Don't be tempted to plant out summer bedding too soon.

Open greenhouse doors and vents as temperatures can soar on sunny days.

If not already done so, start to mow your lawns weekly.

Great time to take softwood cuttings. Dianthus, Penstemon, Pelargonium and many others all root easily. Using a sharp, clean knife, cut a non flowering shoot about 10cm long just under a leaf node. Remove the lower leaves and pop into a suitable pot of free draining compost up to just below the top leaves. Pinch out the soft tip and place into a polythene bag or propagator out of full sun. With a bit of green fingered luck you will have new plants for free in a matter of weeks. One of the joys of gardening.

## Farewell and good luck

We are very pleased for our two-year HBGTP (Historical Botanical Garden Trainee Programme) trainee, Ian who has been offered a job at the Royal Horticultural Society's garden at Wisley. Ian joined this training scheme in September 2017 and we have seen him develop into a very skilled gardener and a great asset to the garden team here at Cliveden. We will be very sorry to see him leave at the end of May but wish him all the best in his new job and hope he returns to work for the Trust sometime in the future.

