



Potting Shed News

The fortnightly newsletter of Cliveden Gardens



The changeover is complete

We can finally take a break from all the hard work over the last five weeks now that the autumn bedding changeover is complete for another year.

A grand total of 37,350 plants and 14,800 bulbs has been planted both on



the Parterre (see above right—yellow pansies with white 'Mount Tacoma' tulips) as well as in the Long Garden (see above left—11,000 citrus coloured polyanthus.) Senior Gardener Matthew, helped by both staff and volunteers, has spent the past few weeks bulb planting in preparation for next spring. Last week, they planted 2,000 native



Narcissus pseudonarcissus (see below) in Rushy Valley. It is the easiest daffodil to grow for naturalising and it readily spreads by self sowing in grassy areas and under trees. The polytunnel has also seen a hive of activity where thousands of bulbs have been planted in pots (see right). Some of which will be on display in the gardens, others will be for sale in the shop. We don't want to spoil the surprise, so you will just have to come back in the spring and be dazzled by over fifty different types of daffodils.

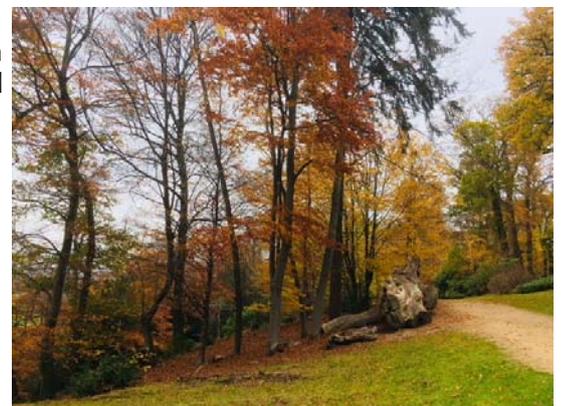


Leaves, glorious leaves

Leaf clearing here at Cliveden sometimes feels like painting the Forth Bridge. No sooner have we cleared an area of leaves, they start to fall again. It is important that leaves are collected rather than left on the grass as they look unsightly and as they decompose leaves can damage the turf underneath. Clearing them up will allow the grass



to breathe, whereas leaving them on the flower beds will provide a mulch. We remove leaves from paths as they can be a health and safety hazard when they become slippery.



Here at Cliveden, we use leaf blowers to blow the leaves into piles which are then picked up by the tractor powered leaf sucker (see left). The leaves are shredded by the machine at the same time so they can be added straight to the compost heap. It operates rather like a vacuum cleaner sucking up the leaves very efficiently.



Autumn colour

There has been and still is plenty of colour to see around the gardens although depending on when you're reading this, that might not be the case! Towards the back of the Water Garden, you'll notice several *Acer griseum* (see far left). Commonly known as the paper bark maple, not only do the leaves of this slow growing medium sized tree turn a stunning shade of red, it also has highly decorative, peeling bark. You can't fail to spot the tall sweet gum tree as you cross over the steps near the pagoda. To give it its botanical name, *Liquidambar styraciflua* is grown for its maple like leaves that turn beautiful shades of orange and red in autumn (see 2nd from left). It is native to eastern North America and parts of Mexico, its name derives from the Latin word *liquidus* meaning liquid and the Arabic word *ambar* meaning amber which refers to the resin that exudes from the bark. Our final pick from the Water Garden is *Malus hupehensis* which not only provides a stunning display in spring, but colours well in autumn producing bright red fruits that look like cherries (see 2nd from right). It was discovered by the famous plant hunter Ernest Wilson in 1900 in China, where allegedly the leaves are crushed to make tea. Finally, if you take a trip down to the river, you will notice several swamp cypress trees (*Taxodium distichum*) on the banks of the River Thames. They are a deciduous conifer hence why they are also sometimes called bald cypress. It provides great autumn colour (although this picture does not do it justice— see far right). It is native to the USA from Texas to New Jersey and was introduced by John Tradescant the Younger in the early 1640s. Coincidentally, he was also known for introducing another tree found nearby on the river bank—the tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) as well as several magnolias.

Jobs to do now

Although you can sow sweet peas in the spring, you can actually sow them now (from late September to late November). By sowing them now, the theory is that you will have a stronger, earlier flowering plant. There is always doubt around whether seeds should be soaked overnight prior to sowing. Lots of major retailers will tell you to do so on the back of the seed packet. However, some commercial growers disagree. They advise to 'nick' the seed with a sharp pen knife or by using a piece of sandpaper before sowing. This process is known as scarification and by breaking the seed coat, it aids germination.

It's still not too late to plant daffodils and November is the best time to plant tulips.

This week we will be cutting back the roses to reduce wind rock during winter gales as this can damage the root system of the plant. We shall remove all the old leaves that may be lying on the beds to avoid the overwintering of fungal spores. The roses will have their proper major prune around February.



Last week, HBGTP trainee Ian lifted the Jerusalem artichokes from the Forecourt borders (see left). *Helianthus tuberosus* are tubers that grow below ground and can be roasted, boiled or even eaten raw. When sliced thinly and cooked in the oven, they make a great alternative to crisps. If you believe everything you read, there are copious health benefits to eating Jerusalem artichokes. They are great for reducing blood pressure and contain high amounts of iron, potassium and protein. The plants produce attractive yellow flowers, similar to a sunflower, (after all they are in the same family – *Asteraceae*) on stems up to 10ft high. They are very persistent plants, so it is important that we lift every single last tuber. The tubers are currently being given away outside the shop (but are not likely to

hang around for long, particularly as a "never knowingly undersold" supermarket is selling them for £3.75/kg!) If you so wish, the tubers can be planted in plastic pots and planted out again next spring. Just don't blame us if they take over your border!

Compiled by Chantal Lawrence, Assistant Head Gardener

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