



Potting Shed News

The fortnightly newsletter of Cliveden Gardens

Signs of spring

There's plenty of colour beginning to appear around the gardens proving that spring is on the way and that the Beast from the East is hopefully a distant memory. As you walk around the Parterre perimeter path, look out for *Scilla sibirica* (see below right). Commonly known as Siberian squills, they are native to Russia, Turkey and the Caucasus (and not Siberia as their name suggests) and are in the same family as asparagus. There are plenty of opportunities to "wander lonely as a cloud" and spot hosts of golden daffodils around the estate—particularly on the eastern side of the Parterre as well as on Stable Bank.

The bedding schemes are starting to perk up and it won't be long before the Long Garden is ablaze with shades of pink thanks to 11,000 *Bellis* 'Bellissima Mixed'. For those curious minds already wondering what we will be planting for the summer, we will be filling the four beds with 11,000 mixed *Salvia* 'Vista'.

The team have kept busy over the past few weeks re-surfacing paths around the gardens (see the Rose Garden below), as well as reducing the height of the laurel down at the amphitheatre. It's going to be a busy time ahead—we will begin lifting and dividing herbaceous perennials on the borders and filling in any gaps. We then start pea-sticking which will take us



several weeks. This is the process of making basket like structures out of hazel and birch to support taller perennials. We will also be planting up the yew hedge below the terrace (either side of the sounding chamber) as well as undertaking spring lawn maintenance, mowing, edging and weeding. The list goes on. But it's all in a day's work for the garden team!



HISTORIC AND BOTANIC GARDEN TRAINING PROGRAMME

Cliveden has had a long association with the Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme (HBGTP). The scheme is managed by English Heritage and is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. They are currently seeking applicants for one-year placements to start in September 2018. Candidates will work alongside the garden team, gaining knowledge and skills whilst undertaking three written projects as well as weekly diaries. This year there are twelve gardens looking to host a trainee including Chatsworth, Osborne House, Sissinghurst and Trentham as well as Cliveden.

The closing date for applications is 1st April. Much more information can be found on the website: www.hbgtp.org.uk Here are our two current trainees Helen and Ian (see right) who are both on the two-year programme. Emma, one of our Gardeners, also completed the two-year programme at Osterley in 2017. So far, the programme has benefited over 200 students with 98% of those gaining employment within the horticultural industry.





March marvels

Pop down to the Long Garden and you won't fail to spot a carpet of blue in the border (towards the Blenheim Pavilion end). This is *Chionodoxa forbesii* (see far left), which is more commonly known as 'glory of the snow' as the Greek word 'chion' means snow and 'doxa' means glory. This pretty alpine comes into flower just as the snow is melting on the mountains of Crete and Turkey, where it originates from. Whilst in the Long Garden, you'll notice the yellow flowers starting to appear on the *Forsythia x intermedia* 'Spectabilis' growing against the wall (see 2nd from left). It is in the olive family and its flowers bring an abundance of colour to a border or wall at this time of year. Did you know that it is named after William Forsyth (1737-1804), a horticulturalist who was a founding member of the Royal Horticultural Society? The next two picks are from the Water Garden and you may be able to smell the first one before you see it. With wafts of vanilla or perhaps even chocolate, look out for *Azara microphylla* (2nd from right). It's incredible to think that a strong scent comes from such tiny flowers. In fact, the flowers have no petals—the colour is provided purely by the stamens. Finally, although it's March, look out for *Daphne mezereum* which is commonly known as the February Daphne (see far right). It is great planted near paths and front doors, where the fragrance can be enjoyed.

March is the month to:

- ◆ Look out for lily beetle (see right). During March and April, the bright red beetles, up to 1cm long, will begin to emerge and can be very destructive to leaves of *Fritillaria* sp., lilies and *Tricyrtis* sp. (toad lilies). Check the undersides of leaves regularly and the beetles should be picked off immediately and destroyed.
- ◆ Start thinking about taking dahlia cuttings. To begin with, you will need to get the tubers going. You can do this by potting them up individually or placing them in a tray filled with peat-free compost. Cover the tubers with the compost but leave the crown exposed. Place them somewhere dry and keep an eye on them. Once they start to sprout, you will be able to take basal cuttings. Place the cuttings in a propagator and they should have rooted within a fortnight. Once they have rooted, pot them on into 9cm pots. You'll then hopefully have beautiful blooms like this stunning *Dahlia* 'David Howard' (see right).
- ◆ Plant summer flowering bulbs such as gladioli and lilies (although it's best to wait until the soil has warmed up a bit, so April will be fine). Remember with gladioli it's crucial that the corms are planted deep enough otherwise they will flop over and require staking. If you have lots to plant, try and stagger the planting so you have a succession of flowers.



Dates for your diary

We will be running our usual free guided tours of the garden every Tuesday in **April**. There's no need to book, just meet outside the Information Centre at 2pm. Please look at our website for more information on these and many other events taking place across the estate over the next coming months: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cliveden/whats-on>