



Potting Shed News

The fortnightly newsletter of Cliveden Gardens



What have we been up to?

The gardens have been looking so colourful in the sunshine recently but make the most of them as over the next few weeks, we will be removing all of the bedding plants in the Long Garden, Duke's Garden and Parterre and replacing them with in excess of 45,000 plants as part of our biannual changeover



process. The *Bellis* 'Bellissima' in the Long Garden have been a real picture filling out to provide a carpet of pinks and whites (see above) and the Duke's Garden 'Uncle Tom' tulips have been stunning against the yellow polyanthus. On the Parterre, we will be replacing the polyanthus in the semicircle at the southern end with *Salvia* 'Vista Red' with an edge of *Senecio cineraria* 'Cirrus'. The 16 triangular beds will be filled with a total of 20,400 plants and the central azalea beds have already been planted this week with *Gladioli* 'Glamourglads' - thanks to the Thursday crew of volunteers (see above right).

The whole bedding process will take over a month and will see us helped by volunteers, trainees, students from RHS Wisley as well as staff from other National Trust properties. Hopefully, many hands will make light work! Elsewhere, the lower terrace has been turfed and is looking a lot greener than it was a few months ago (see below). We will be planting up the ribbon beds behind the newly laid lawn with four different coloured marigolds next month. The reinstatement of the seasonal bedding scheme will provide a visual link between the newly restored Duke's Garden and the Parterre. The completion of the project after five long years involving cross-team working as well as specialist contractors will mean that the south terrace has been fully restored and is prepared for another 350+ years!



The team have also been busy peasticking on the herbaceous borders, using coppiced hazel to make basket-like frameworks to support the taller perennials. This more attractive method saves the need for bamboo canes and string and is certainly a talking point with our visitors.



Rhododendron roll call

Now is a great time to spot rhododendrons around the gardens so we've picked out four from the Water Garden—*Rhododendron* 'Cynthia' (see far left) with intense rose-crimson flowers which is in the middle of one of the beds towards the play area. *R. 'Loderi King George'* (see 2nd from left) is on the

right hand side of the black bamboo gate as you enter the Water Garden which opens with pale pink flowers that fade to white. In front of this, you can't fail to spot the bright pink flowers of *R. 'Hinomayo'* (see 2nd from right). This small, spreading azalea grows up to 60cm tall. Finally, look out for *R. luteum* (see far right). Commonly known as the sweet pontica azalea, this deciduous shrub has highly fragrant yellow flowers.



Everything's all white in the Long Garden

This week, we've decided to pick out four white highlights in this edition which are all looking fabulous in the Long Garden. First up in the shrub border, you'll see (and smell) the white flowered lilac, *Syringa vulgaris* 'Madame Lemoine' (see far left). Highly fragrant double white blooms are produced in May and June with heart-shaped bright green leaves. In the herbaceous border in front of the wall, look out for a couple of clumps of *Veronica gentianoides* 'Tissington White' (see 2nd from left). The spikes of white flowers are great for brightening the front of the border and the evergreen leaves of this speedwell make a great groundcover. A sea of white is being produced by *Spiraea* 'Arguta' (see 2nd from right). Flowering in April and May, it's easy to see why its common name is bridal wreath. It's worth remembering that to obtain such an abundance of flowers, it must be pruned immediately after flowering (and ideally it prefers to be in full sun.) Our final offering this week is *Centaurea montana* 'Alba' (see far right). Commonly known as mountain knapweed, white flowers are produced in late spring/early summer and it too prefers full sun and is also tolerant of poor soils.

Not to be missed....

There are lots of wild flowers to look out for around the gardens. *Cardamine pratensis* (see right) can be found along Main Drive and in Rushy Valley. Its common name is lady's smock or cuckoo flower. This is a native perennial that prefers damp conditions and is widely found throughout the British Isles.

Sometimes we spend the majority of the year waiting for a particular tree or shrub to flower and then in no time, it's over. Head to the lawn in front of Blenheim Pavilion and you'll notice the white bracts of *Davidia involucreta* (see far right) wafting in the breeze. More commonly known as the handkerchief tree, it is the only member of the genus *Davidia* and is native to China.



Jobs to do in May

- Now is the time to start looking out for saw fly. The Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum biflorum*) is in flower in the Water Garden (see left) but the larvae of sawfly can completely defoliate plants. As they feed in large groups on the underside of leaves, damage can be very quick. Look out for grey/white caterpillar like creatures with black heads and remove them as soon as possible. Once the larvae are fully fed, they will overwinter in the soil. Affected plants will grow back next year but will be somewhat weakened. We will also be keeping an eye on the gooseberries in the Walled Garden for gooseberry sawfly damage.

- As the temperature is beginning to warm up, start thinking about direct sowing vegetables such as beetroot, carrot and radish. When ready, rake the soil level and make a shallow drill using the end of a bamboo cane or a hoe. Water the drill before sowing the seed, then once the seeds are sown, use a rake to lightly cover the seeds over, filling the drill. Don't forget to label the rows and water them well.

- Harden off tender plants such as dahlias and cannas so they are ready for planting out. Also now is a good time to take cuttings of dahlias and other tender perennials such as fuchsia and pelargoniums.