

# Bovingdon Gardeners



## Autumn Newsletter 2025

Late August, and as I write this a curtain of rain is falling on my parched garden. To say I am happy is an understatement as like many of you I am weary of dragging a hosepipe around the garden. It has been a trying summer for us gardeners but of course we love the sunshine too. No doubt we will see the effects of this hot summer in the exhibits at the autumn show. Will they be good or bad?

Last year, after a dismal summer, we had 223 exhibits so we are hoping for many more this time. Luckily, we did not have to suffer a hosepipe this year ban so our fruit and vegetables will have had copious sunshine and water. In the autumn show size does matter as there are classes for the heaviest potato, onion, pumpkin and marrow and also the longest runner bean. For a bit of fun there is also a class for the tallest weed and one for misshapen vegetables. Have a look around your garden and see what you can find, there are over 30 classes for vegetables. If flowers are more your scene, there are 30 classes for those too. The standout flower for this time of year is the Dahlia. These diverse blooms have made a huge come back in the last few years and provide late summer colour whilst enjoying a warm climate. To help you decide which Dahlia type you have for showing there is a printed classification guide in your handbook. For those of you who are not growers we have our popular cookery and homemade drinks classes. Sadly, in recent years there has been a decline in floral art exhibits so we are hoping to encourage some of you to have a go at a simple arrangement. Just 3 single blooms and some foliage is all that is needed to enter the novice class 166. You might find that you enjoy flower arranging. Just don't use Oasis in your vase!

All entries must be in at Jarman's by noon on Thursday 11th September. Please remember the new rule - late entries will not be accepted.

It has been a tricky summer to keep our plants watered and especially so if you have hanging baskets. The businesses in the High Street that agreed to adopt a basket for the summer have done an exceptional job keeping them blooming and looking healthy since May. They have now been judged and the winners are 1st. Gary Cullum, 2nd. Barbers of Bovingdon and 3rd.

Bovingdon Library. Congratulations to the top 3 and well done to all who took part in our annual competition. Thanks also to Shantock Nurseries who provided the baskets. These baskets really make a difference to the appearance of our High Street in summer.

As I mentioned earlier Dahlias are enjoying something of a renaissance. Here in Hertfordshire, we have a nursery, Ayletts, that has been growing Dahlias for almost 70 years. Located on the north orbital road A414, near St. Albans, this is a garden centre that I often visit. They offer an excellent choice of hardy plants, trees and shrubs and the best selection of houseplants I know of in our area. Their main claim to fame however is their autumn festival 29th. August to 14th. September, featuring many of the varieties of Dahlias that they grow. If you are looking to buy Dahlia plants for your garden a visit to the festival could help you choose your favourites. Young plants are then available to buy in 11cm. pots from the bedding glasshouse between mid April and the end of June. There is also a Dahlia Information Booklet on their website [aylettnurseries.co.uk](http://aylettnurseries.co.uk).

If you have any Dahlia related questions this is the place to go.

Due to the incredibly hot weather in July we cancelled the trip to RHS Hyde Hall. The visit is now scheduled to take place on Sunday 21st. September. Arrangements are as before and if you were on my original list I am assuming that you wish to come unless I hear otherwise. There will be a sheet to sign up for the trip at the autumn show or you can contact me via the Bovingdon Gardeners website or call me on 01442 833520. We must be at the entrance at 11a.m. to get our group entry. Let's hope we have a dry sunny day.

Immigrants seem to have hit the headlines in recent weeks but as gardeners it is the six legged varieties that we need to be aware of. There are an increasing number of insects now reaching our shores, some good and some bad. Our friend the ladybird often originates on the continent and can arrive here in huge numbers as seen in the summer of 1976. Another common visitor is the Painted Lady butterfly which migrates from North Africa via Europe to reach our shores, sometimes in great numbers. There are migrant moths too, the most fascinating being the Hummingbird Hawk moth that can be seen in warm summers feeding on flowering shrubs in gardens. It lives up to its name by hovering like a hummingbird whilst feeding on nectar with its enormously long proboscis. It is common in the south of England but so far I have not seen one in my own garden. One beautiful migrant that has visited my garden in recent summers is the exotic-looking Jersey Tiger moth. A striking triangle of black and white when at rest but when it opens its wings it displays a vibrant flash of orange. Look out for moths in your garden and encourage them by growing some night flowering plants. Moths are useful pollinators as well as being a source of food for birds and bats. There is one migrant however that is definitely not a welcome sight, the Box Tree moth.

This is a beige colour with a dark border on the wings. After getting rid of it two years ago it has returned with a vengeance and reduced my Box plants to naked twigs. Keep a lookout for caterpillars in their webs in early summer and remove them before they munch too much. Another migrant insect, the Asian or yellow-legged hornet, is a voracious predator and poses a serious threat to our bees and other pollinating insects. If you spot one you should notify the U.K. Centre for Ecology and Hydrology or use the Asian Hornet Watch app. How to recognise this hornet? It is very dark in colour with legs that look as though they have been dipped in yellow paint. It is crucial that this insect does not become established in Britain as it would devastate our bee population and upset our biodiversity. There is lots of information about this insect online including pictures to help you identify it and its nest. Please keep a lookout.

Enjoy the last weeks of warm weather and happy gardening!

Doreen Woods