

East Reading Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Trading shed: Sat, Sun, Mon (Tue if Mon is a bank holiday) 09:30 to 11:00.
Wed evenings - April and May only - 18:30 to 19:30. Mobile number: 0738 463 2903.

Note: Shed helpers are not all young, big, and strong so, if you need to get heavy items, please try to bring someone with you to help you with the lifting.

Web: www.erhs.org.uk

Facebook Group: "East Reading Horticultural Society"

Editor: Tel: 07794 233361, Email: ERHS@hotmail.co.uk

{Get your newsletter early (and in colour): ask to be added to the ERHS email list.}



1. PROGRAMME EVENTS



ERHS events

Cancelled: All talks this year, the Christmas show and Social event and the Kew Gardens visit to see the Christmas lights.

We will continue to issue the monthly newsletter, however, and will use it to tell you when we feel it is safe to resume events.

Sorry, we have another cancellation. This is the January 'Bee-talk' by Steve Moll of Brightwell on Tuesday 19th January, again due to pandemic concerns and a commitment to keeping everyone safe.

2. TRADING MATTERS



Suttons seeds catalogues are now available in the trading shed.

Rhubarb Champagne £1.55

Our range of **seed potato** should be on sale in JANUARY. The varieties are listed below and sold in 2.5 kg bags.

Earlies:

Arran pilot, Foremost, Pentland Javelin.. £2.30
Homeguard, Lady Christl, Winston £2.55

2nd Earlies:

Maris peer, Wilja, British Queen £2.30
Kestrel £2.55

Salad:

Charlotte £2.30
International kidney, Pink Fir Apple, Nicola £2.55

Main crop:

Cara, Desiree, King Edward, Maris piper, Picasso £2.30
Majestic..... £2.55

Note: Masks must be worn when in the shed.

The trading shed will be closed from 11:00 on Sunday 13th December until 09:30 on Saturday 9th January 2021.

3. MISCELLANEA

Next Committee Meeting:

None, but committee members are in touch.

Shed stewards and assistants for December

5 th	t.b.a.	t.b.a.
6 th	t.b.a.	t.b.a.
12 th	t.b.a.	t.b.a.
13 th	t.b.a.	t.b.a.

Suttons Seed Orders

Members are reminded that their seed order forms should be delivered to the shed on Saturday or Sunday 5th/6th or 12th/13th December, respectively. You are also reminded NOT to include any money with your order.

Please note: When your seed order has been delivered to Roger Howard (our seed order supremo,) he will phone to inform you that your order is ready for collection at the trading shed and tell you the invoice price. If you could pay by cheque that would be very helpful. Thank you.

A Message from the Committee

We all love plants growing and blooming in our gardens or on our allotment plots.

The one 'plant' that we all really like now is growing in a laboratory in Oxford and we are calling it the 'Vaccine' plant. This is the 'plant' that we are all putting our money on to help us to return to something close to 'normal' living in 2021. As we all know with growing plants that you can experience failures, so we can only hope that these brilliant scientists, led by Professor Sarah Gilbert at Oxford University may have solved the problem and that we can, during the next six to nine months, be inoculated against this dreadful virus and then begin to feel confident about returning to a life without fear. Do you remember a time when we had a monthly talks programme, we

enjoyed contributing to our horticultural show in the summer or autumn and then had a Christmas 'knees up' & show in December. These wonderful occasions and events may very well reappear in 2021 if we can be safe and healthy, so we would like you all to think positively and plan for happier and safer times.

As this curtailed 'Boris Xmas' time approaches, the ERHS committee extends its warmest good wishes to you all for a happy and safe seasonal time and we trust that Santa delivers joy for us all in 2021.

Things to do this month



Fruit Trees

- After you have pruned your fruit trees, try to shred any prunings as useful additions to your compost heap, or leave them in a pile for a year after which time they can be used as a mulch around the bottom of the tree to keep weeds at bay and to put back into the soil all the nutrients they took out.
- December is a good time to train fruit trees that are growing against a wall and to perfect your espaliers. Remember that cherry and plums should be trained to look more fan-like while apples and pears can be trained so that their branches grow horizontally. Until the ground is frozen, you can continue to plant fruit trees.
- Once the leaves have all fallen, any frost-free day between now and February is an ideal time to prune the fruit trees with pips not stones, i.e. apples, pears, figs etc but **not** cherries and plums.

Garden trees

- Deciduous trees are most easily pruned when there is no foliage on them so that you can really see how the branches relate to each other and you can easily spot any damaged or diseased growth. Re-shape trees and remove crossing branches to maximise healthy growth for next year.
- Snow can weigh down and damage young, small branches or large evergreen ones so brush off any heavy blankets of snow should they ever occur.
- With Christmas coming, you might want to protect some berries on your holly bushes from birds so that you can decorate your home with your very own holly sprigs. Use a net or some fleece to keep the hungry birds away and salve your conscience by planting some bird friendly trees or just filling up the bird feeder more often!

Roses

- Up until the heavy frosts arrive, it is still not too late to plant bare root roses.
- Check that any climbing roses are still tied in to their support structures.
- Prune bush roses to reduce their height so that they cannot be blown around by the wind to cause wind rock. Not only does this make the roots unstable but you can end up with compacted soil around the main stem of the rose where water then collects and causes the stem to rot.

Soft Fruit

- December is probably the best time to prune any grape vines so, if you have not done so already, you should prune hard now by cutting the laterals back to 2-3 buds. Vines will "bleed" sap, weakening the plant if you cut it during the growing season.
- If you have not pruned your black, red and white currants you should do so now.

Climbers

- Check that all the stray, wispy bits that climbers tend to produce remain tied in and have not been dislodged.
- Should it snow, brush the snow off your climbers to prevent any damage.

Bulbs

- Remember all those hyacinths and paper whites and amaryllis bulbs that you prepared earlier in the autumn? Now is the time to bring them inside to the warm so that you can force them to flower ready for Christmas.

Olive and Bay

- Keep an eye on the thermometer and if it begins to plummet, move your pots with bay trees to a frost-free place or wrap them well with horticultural fleece.

Other

- Ceramic pots are especially vulnerable to frost. If water gets into any small cracks and freezes it will expand and, eventually your pot may break. Check them for cracks or, even better, keep them indoors if you can.
- Plants in a greenhouse or conservatory can be tidied, while faded flowers and shrivelled leaves should be cleared up so you don't encourage moulds and fungal diseases by leaving decaying and dead matter lying around. Keeping glasshouse doors open for a few hours on mild days will also help.
- Avoid walking over wet or frosted grass in your lawn. If necessary, put planks down to distribute the weight of you and/or your wheelbarrow.

4. WANTED/FOR SALE/FREE

Members' advertisements are free of charge. Just telephone or email the editor (see newsletter heading.) [The copy deadline for the next newsletter is Wednesday 16th December.](#)

For Sale: Split logs at £3 per sack. Delivery can be arranged. Please phone (0118) 966 7964.

Unless otherwise stated, where items are free, a donation to the Air Ambulance (when you next visit the trading shed) would be appreciated.