



GARDENING

Spring Beauty

By Zena Robson

It's Hellebore time! And I love 'em! No better sight than a whole crowd of them with daffodils (sounding like that Lakeland poet now!) lighting up the beautiful dark purples and spotty pinks. They have a tendency to hang their heads so you need to get down there and lift them gently to appreciate their real beauty. Visit a spring garden soon so you can see them in their massed ranks. Benington Lordship near Stevenage would be a good choice where they have open days when you can buy some of their specimens - but be warned, get there early or be crushed in the scrum!

It's a good time to lift and split any herbaceous stuff you didn't get around to last autumn. Keep the younger outer growths and discard any knobbly old bits from the middle, then simply replant with appropriate spacing, water in and mulch.

Thanks very mulch

Talking of mulch, if you don't do this regularly, start now. Spring is a good time to apply a 5-6cm layer over the soil once it has warmed up enough. It will keep the moisture in and help to suppress some weed growth. It needs to be well-rotted to do the soil good and you can take your pick from a certain place in Crews Hill between mushroom compost (remember it has lime in it so is no good around Camellias etc.), horse and cow manure. Their nutrient content is variable but they really help to improve soil structure and all the good guys in the way of earthworms and micro-organisms will thank you for it.

Once your early-flowering shrubs like Forsythia have finished, get out there with the secateurs and give them a good thinning out and cutting back. But restrain yourself! Don't start hacking into the later stuff! You know what will happen - I can hear you now "D'you know, this bloomin' thing has done nothing again this year" - I wonder why!!

Goodbye and Good Gardening

It is also time for me to sign off. I'm hanging up my trowel, metaphorically speaking, so these are my last ramblings for you. I hope that I've been entertaining *and* informative and that you have enjoyed reading my bits and pieces as much as I have enjoyed writing them for you.

Happy gardening and I wish you all a successful season of growing this year.

Garden Blues

By Pam Smith

I've had a dose of Coleus, it's really very sore.

I've only just got over having Physalis once more.

Last week I caught Cytis and a painful Cornus too,

I felt as ill as if I'd had a bout of Asian flu.

Someone's given me Lycisteria, my head is spinning round,

And what with my Gasteria, I'm rolling on the ground.

So give me a shot of Vaccinium and put me in a cell,

And maybe in the morning I'll have Nemesia as well.

And when I've lost my memory and feeling so much better,

Don't remind me of what I had, not even in a letter.



Coldfall crocus By Tony Roberts

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Cherry Tree Wood in snow Photo by Toni Morgan

Our Library

By Mal Jacobs

What a wonderful day it must have been on 15 October 1938 when the new East Finchley library was officially opened by Alderman A T Pike OBE JP - and it is still vivid in some people's minds.

The whole community coming to the one place for one thing... *learning!* Learning to read, think, speak, and dream about life itself. The use of a library then was to borrow books, read newspapers and as a reference point. Talking was in whispers, as silence was golden in 1938! Within 12 months many found themselves in foreign lands, learning something new... *war!*

Evaluation

Nowadays, libraries incorporate computer usage and hire tapes, CDs, videos, DVDs plus speaking books. (Of course, senior citizens don't get any concessions!) Imagine having a business since 1938 that in 2002 saw around 490 people per day using it. To maintain this success it should be time to re-evaluate it. Some things are obviously lacking:

- A 'What's On' A4 sheet showing what the daily events are

- for this week and next
- A self-explanatory indicator board showing position of toilets, music room, children's library etc.
- The tea-room disguised as a machine upstairs? Many London bookshops now have tea or coffee in the main area
- The pink leaflet on 'Libraries' does not show access via stair - no lift.
- A lift should have been installed years ago as a matter of need.

Before forward planning can be done, it is essential to have correct information to know who and what the planning is for! That information is not known, so it is impossible to plan an overall strategy to

make full use of the space and facilities available.

A customer survey and suggestion box are two excellent ways of staying ahead of likes and dislikes. Libraries are for the living and should be 'user friendly'.

Money spent in libraries has to be viewed as an investment for us and future generations. A customer survey earlier would have revealed what people want and don't want. Popularity is hard to beat, so as we have a good library, in a good position, for a good community, let's keep it, if that is what the people want. Make sure that the vision that was there in 1938 is maintained today.

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