



J Maitland's garden on display as part of National Gardens Scheme.

Peek behind the garden gate

By Susan Bennett

Gardens are great teachers. Whatever our talents, they bring out our creativity and inspire us to overcome difficulties and disappointments.

After a bleak winter, it was a treat to visit the family of East Finchley gardens that will be opening for the National Gardens Scheme this year.

The garden route

Janet Maitland's sophisticated landscaping and refreshing planting in her cottage garden in Trinity Road is paired with her neighbour Jane Meir's, who is the winner of an RHS Silver Gilt Medal. The third in this cottage group is John Maitland's quirky creation in Long Lane.

In Abbots Gardens, Stephen Kersley's acumen for design and eye for planting are obvious. Ruth Kersley, a distinguished glass artist, has created a mosaic for their water feature and jewel-like glass elements that sit well among the flowers.

In Stanley Road, a garden designed to be 100% wheelchair friendly includes a camomile lawn, fishpond and masses of climbers, as well as delicious teas from Tudor and Hilary.

Patsy and Paul's bungalow garden in Elm Gardens had a disastrous winter that destroyed many of their hitherto 'hardy' tender species but the terrapins in their pond survived and they are already on the lookout for unusual plants to restore their

award-winning garden to its former glory.

Finally, David Dorton in New Oak Road is opening his garden for the first time this summer. He uses mirror images in his planting and layout to maximise interest in a small space, and the effect is immaculate.

For less than the price of a pint, you can enjoy these gardens. Money raised goes towards charities including Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie Cancer Care and hospices.

Garden opening dates:

- Susan Bennett's own garden, 5 St Regis Close, Alexandra Park Road, N10: Sunday 3 May (2-7pm), Sunday 10 May (2-6pm), Sunday 28 June (2-7pm), Sunday 26 July (2-7pm).
- 66 Abbots Gardens, N2: Sunday 17 May (2-5.30pm).
- 7A New Oak Road, N2: Sunday 17 May (2-5.30pm), Sunday 23 August (2-5.30pm).
- 20 Trinity Road, 22 Trinity Road, 399 Long Lane, N2: Sunday 7 June, (2-5pm).
- 2 Stanley Road, N2: Sunday 7 June (2-6pm).
- The Bungalow, 15 Elm Gardens, N2: Sunday 5 July (2-6pm).

New disability sports initiative

A coaching initiative aimed at providing people with learning disabilities with the opportunity to take part in a range of sporting activities has been launched.

The Wingate and Finchley disability initiative, a joint programme between Wingate and Finchley Football Club and Barnet Mencap, provides multi-sport coaching for those aged 16 and over with moderate to severe learning disabilities.

More than 20 participants attended the first session held at the Football Club, off Summers Lane, on Saturday 7 March, when professional coaches from the football club passed on a range of skills and tips.

The initiative provides a

safe, fun and structured programme allowing those with varying degrees of disabilities to enrich their health, social and life skills.

Ricky Deller, Assistant Club Secretary of Wingate and Finchley Football Club, said: "The club is committed to the development not only of the game but of each individual who takes part. We are very proud of the partnership we have formed with Barnet Mencap and look forward to a long and prosperous friendship."

Not in my back garden

By Janet Maitland

Most people underestimate the value of their garden plants and the items they keep in their sheds. Thieves, however, are fully aware of their worth. Here are some tips to increase your security, provided by Neighbourhood Watch.

To protect your garden, install strong lockable gates at the entrance to side passages. Consider putting gravel down on paths as the noise it makes when walked on will deter intruders. Fix trellis to the top of fences. It will break when someone tries to climb over it, but the noise will alert you or a neighbour.

Plant prickly plants such as Berberis, Mahonia, Pyracantha, and Ilex around boundaries. Criminals don't like climbing through these as they know ripped clothing or blood can help police identify them. If you're using containers for plants, make them as heavy as possible, especially if they are in the front garden.

Shed security

Sheds are attractive targets for thieves. The most effective way to secure them is to fit a strong hasp and staple, using

coach bolts, locking the hasp over the staple with a closed shackled padlock. You can also attach shed shackles, for safely anchoring bicycles. Products of this kind can be found at www.soldsecure.com or www.securedbydesign.com.

Always lock away your tools when they're not in use, not only to stop anyone from stealing them, but also to prevent them being used by an intruder to break into your house. If you don't intend to open the shed windows, screw them shut or fit window locks. Hanging an old curtain up against a window will prevent anyone from seeing what is stored in your shed.

Finally, don't leave spare keys in your garden, garage or shed. If hidden keys are found by an intruder and used to get into your house, you may find your insurance is invalid.

Faith, hope and charity

Local people saw a busy week of community activities, from school projects to jazz, surveys and fun days as part of East Finchley Baptist Church's Hope Week.

Church Minister Simon Dyke said: "It was a very busy but rewarding time. We have enjoyed contributing to the activities of local schools, and it has been great to meet and talk with residents of N2 on the streets and in the estates. We'd like to say thank you to everyone who took part in Hope Week."

The church was involved with two local primary schools, Holy Trinity and Martin, taking assemblies, RE lessons and lunch clubs during the week, and participated in events with the Christian Union and the debating society at Fortismere School.

Commuters and shoppers were asked to take part in a Community Survey by answering questions on priorities, values, and attitudes to the spiritual side of life, and the Bible. Responses given will help to inform the church's work in the local community.

The community week culminated in a jazz concert from The Still Time Band, and a family fun afternoon. The church saw grandparents, parents and children alike enjoying games, face-painting, a treasure hunt and bouncy castle. Refreshments raised £20 for the North London Hospice through donations.

Hair-ing to the finish line

By Diana Cormack

Two local hairdressers are taking part in a charity event organised by Cancer Research UK. Kelly Leach and Shareefa Jennings will be running in the 5K Race for Life at Trent Park on Sunday 21 June. They are trying to raise money for Breast Cancer Research. If you would like to sponsor them or give a donation, please call in to the salon at 202, High Road.

At the same time you might hear some good news about Shareefa and her colleague Stacey Omakalwala. Both have been entered for Wella's Trend Vision Award 09, one of the most prestigious international hairdressing competitions. It aims to promote new talent and discover the next big thing in hairdressing. Shareefa reached the finals in 2006, following the same successful path as Kelly in 2005. This year's two young stylists are hoping to come out ahead.

THE ARCHER needs volunteer distributors for:

- Old Farm Road • Nursery Rd, Stable Walk & Brook Walk
- Cornwood Close, Greenhalgh Walk & Lyttleton Rd (pt)
- The Grange (3 rounds)

Distribution takes place once a month. A typical round takes 30-45 mins to deliver. Please contact 020 8883 0433 or the-archer@lineone.net for details

Garden museum is glorious

By Vikki Chalmers

The Museum of Garden History remained a mystery even to the keenest of gardeners. However, there is a new kid on the block, the Garden Museum: the same museum refurbished and with a new name.

The first gallery in Britain dedicated to gardens and gardening, the Garden Museum offers a range of activities for keen gardeners of all ages. Light and airy, this ultra-modern museum cradled in a beautiful old church next to Lambeth Palace on the south side of the Thames provides ample opportunity to appreciate the original and beautiful stained glass windows. Room has been created for specific exhibitions; the first is a retrospective dedicated to acclaimed plantswoman Beth Chatto. There is a café serving excellent food and a small but well-stocked museum shop.

Outside, the knot garden and the wild garden manage to make one forget for a merciful moment the swirls of heavy traffic thundering past in every direction.

The museum and its gardens are worth a visit, especially for groups taking advantage of the special rates. It is also possible to arrange for a talk tailored to the requirements of your own particular group or club.

If you are arranging a family outing, plan to eat there: the food really is that good. Don't bother with a car. The museum is a pleasant 12 - 15 minute stroll beside the Thames from Waterloo.

The Garden Museum is open daily from 10.30am to 5pm and closed on the first Monday of each month. For more information, telephone 020 7401 8865 or visit www.gardenmuseum.org.uk.

Soul Therapy correction

The contact email address for the Soul Therapy Centre workshops given in our April issue should have been cibachmann@gmail.com. The April issue omitted the letter "i". We apologise for this mistake.

For further information about forthcoming workshops, which include working with crystals, auras and pendulums, Feng Shui, GPs and Healing, Herbs and Healing, and Communicating with Animals, please contact Christine Bachmann at the above email address. For general information about the Soul Therapy Centre, visit www.soul-therapy.co.uk.