NEWSLETTER

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

No 82 April 2018

OFFICERS

Chairman

Hilary Dodson

Treasurer

Peter Robinson

MEMBERS

Sharan Packer (Membership Secretary)

Peter Nichol (Minutes Secretary)

Jean Richards (Newsletter Editor)

Margaret Drury (Apple Events Co-ordinator)

Rachel Benson

Philip Rainford

Chris Simmonds

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LOCAL CONTACTS

Local contacts are an informal network of volunteer members who may offer a range of services from organising occasional events in their area, to swapping seedlings, or simply providing information to visitors and newcomers. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you think they can help you.

James Ellson: Hayfield (and area) Bridget Evans: South Yorks Melanie Fryer: Skipton/Guisburn Ken Haigh: Darlington
Peter Nichol: Manchester area
Philip Rainford: Cumbria & North West
Chris Simmonds: Ryedale & North Yorks Moors

As you can see, the list isn't complete, so if your area isn't included, would you like to volunteer? Simply get your name and contact details in the Newsletter, and you take it from there, doing as much or as little as you wish.

DIARY

Dates for your diary for the next four months: please see the Programme and Events sections below for further information, and visit our Facebook page for updates and last minute changes to the programme.

APRIL
Wednesday 4: Dewhurst Road teaching garden
Thursday 12: Otley teaching garden
Wednesday 18: Dewhurst Road teaching garden
Tuesday-Wednesday 24-25: Setting up for the Harrogate Spring Flower Show
Thursday 26: Otley teaching garden
Thursday-Sunday 26-29: Harrogate Spring Flower Show

MAY
Wednesday 2: Dewhurst Road teaching garden
Thursday 10: Otley teaching garden
Wednesday 16: Dewhurst Road teaching garden
Thursday 24: Otley teaching garden
Wednesday 30: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

JUNE
Saturday 2: meeting open to all members: see Programme for details
Thursday 7: Otley teaching garden
Wednesday 13: Dewhurst Road teaching garden
Thursday 21: Otley teaching garden
Wednesday 27: Dewhurst Road teaching garden

JULY
Sunday-Thursday July 8-12: Setting up and Great Yorkshire Show
Monday-Sunday July16-22: Setting up and RHS Flower Show at Tatton Park

FURTHER AHEAD
Saturday November 10: AGM

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EDITORIAL

It's snowing gently as I write this in mid March, but surely Spring can't be far away. Hurrah for rhubarb, which is already doing its stuff and reminding us that a new fruit season is almost upon us. Yes, I know rhubarb isn't really a fruit, but I'm getting tired of talking about the custard test, though it does pop up several times in this edition of your Newsletter.

As usual there are some housekeeping matters for your attention. Please do have a look at our membership secretary's item on cards, and get in touch with her if you haven't received yours. She works very hard to keep the lists in order, but the gremlins sometimes win. Talking of which, please see also my apology on rootstock confusion, if that affected you. And make a note in your diaries now of the date for the AGM in November.

In this issue I'm delighted to include items from two of my predecessors, from Diana Davis writing in 1998, and Ursula Rehkemper taking gleanings from the press, as well as reporting on a German pear conference. We also have more on juneberries, an introduction to the chuckleberry, and lots for those of you who enjoy the occasional alcoholic drink. James Ellson is planting cordons with a little help from his long suffering wife, Anne Lee is at Parcevall Hall Gardens and Chris Simmonds is back in her fruit cage, four years on from its construction.

Thirty-two pages again, with, I hope, something for everybody.

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A message from the Membership Secretary

This will be the last Newsletter you will receive if you have not renewed your membership for 2018. Thanks very much to everyone who has renewed and also moved their bank transfer payment to January or February if they pay by that route.

Now that the Newsletters are posted out direct from the printers I cannot add membership cards to the Newsletter envelopes any more, so this year I have sent as many as I could as pdfs via email, for members to print off themselves. This saves the costs of sending them via the post separate from the Newsletters. (Some emails have bounced because the email address is not valid, people's in boxes are full or the security settings have not accepted the email and in these cases I have sent cards via the post).

Membership cards have been posted out to those that I do not have email addresses for. Those members who have received cards this way, please could you send me your email address to nfg.members@gmail.com so that I have it for future communications. (Thanks to those of you who have already done this).

If you don't have a(ny) 2018 membership card(s), know that you have paid your membership fee and have already provided an email address, please check you spam folder to see if the email with the membership card(s) attached is in there and also set my address as a trusted site in your security settings: nfg.members@gmail.com

Please contact me if you have any queries. Thanks very much.

Sharan Packer

ROOTSTOCK ORDERS

The gremlins have been out in force and were determined to thwart the efficient collection of rootstock orders. Organiser Peter Robinson has moved house, and I managed to muddle his new address and put him three doors down the street. Never mind, we could fall back on Paul Yashbon, but a rogue digit had crept into his phone number! Peter's address is now correct in the committee list, and Paul's phone number is xxxxx.

My apologies to anyone who was inconvenienced.

PROGRAMME
Fruit Group Events

Executive Committee members please note that meetings for 2018 are scheduled for June 2 and November 10.

Meetings

Four times a year, on a Saturday, the Executive Committee meets in the morning, and there follows in the early afternoon an event open to all members.

The next meeting is on Saturday June 2, 2018, in the Jubilee Room, Bramhall Learning Centre, Harlow Carr, with the Executive Committee meeting as usual at 10.00am and a Members' meeting at 1.30pm. For more

information on the topic or speaker, please visit our Facebook page or consult any member of the committee, nearer the time.

And please note in your diaries that our Annual General Meeting will be held at 1.30 pm on Saturday November 10, 2018, at the same location, preceded as usual by an Executive Committee meeting at 10.00am, and followed by a talk by Martin Fish entitled "A North Yorkshire Garden".

Dewhurst Road teaching garden

We will continue to meet fortnightly on Wednesdays, from 10.30am to 3.00pm: dates in the Diary.

The site is looking good with all the trees neatly pruned and manure spread on most of the beds. There is promise of a fine display of pear blossom so we hope the weather will not be frosty at the wrong time. Plums and apples also seem to have the potential for a spectacular display of blossom. Watch out for alerts on Facebook to view peak blossom days.

Otley teaching garden

Here we meet fortnightly also, but on a Thursday. The times are similar in that we meet about 10.30am and continue until about 3.00pm.

There are some good signs of progress at Otley. Work has started well on the fruiting hedge, and the orange netting is protecting the plants.

There are many more trees to be planted, and digging is still providing a fine crop of bricks! Plans and design for the garden are still needed so even if you are not able to help on site please let us have your ideas of what we should be growing.

Shows

Harrogate Spring Show

On April 24 and 25, we will be setting up. If you can help, just turn up on site. If you are thinking of coming please ask for our location on the show ground. As previously indicated the theme is "My Backyard" so any plants or ideas you can contribute will be gratefully received.

The show is open to the public from April 26 to 29. As ever, we need people to help on the stand. You do not need to be on the stand all the time, there is plenty of time to also enjoy the show. Also there is no need to be an expert, it is a good opportunity to chat with the visitors and learn. Please let Rachel Benson know if you can help, we need five people each day.

Great Yorkshire Show and Tatton Show

These shows take place in July (please see the Diary for dates) and the produce on show is soft fruit. Themes were in the January Newsletter, but may I remind you that this will be the 20th Birthday of the RHS Flower Show at Tatton Park and the organisers are looking for spectacular displays with a birthday party theme. Please, please, please help with some ideas. We will not be popular if we go down the route of our well tested display of soft fruit arranged in baskets.

Further details will be in the next Newsletter so please think how you can help.

Hilary Dodson

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MAKING OF A SMALL HERITAGE ORCHARD

Chrissie Clayton's talk at the January Meeting

Chrissie Clayton has been a member of the Northern Fruit Group for many years; although she's moved to Lincolnshire she claims that, if cut in two, the white rose of Yorkshire could be found running right through her.

Chrissie's talked started by explaining the history of Nettleham, just to the north east of Lincoln. The bishop's manor house on the south side of the village dated from the time of Edward the Confessor but was given to the Bishop of Lincoln who expanded it. By 1301 it was fit for the King and was where Edward I created the first Prince of Wales, later Edward II. After the Reformation the buildings were stripped to provide building material but the footings remain under the surface and the site is a scheduled monument. Consequently when a project was established to improve the Bishop's Palace Field there was very little land that could be used for any planting. However one corner near the old bakery proved not to contain any ruins and was allocated for trees and a wildflower meadow.

The project leader was interested in incorporating a small heritage orchard alongside the wild flower meadow and tree planting. Chrissie agreed in 2012 to help with this scheme. It would by virtue of the restricted site be a linear orchard, 2 metres from the old bakery wall and 2 metres from the wild flower meadow. She explained the considerations that she took into account in planning the site and in choosing the trees.

Chrissie asked the Parish Council to remove the top 6" of soil to clear the couch grass, but they were unable to do this, so she and others

including family dug over and cleared a metre square patch for each tree. Given the link with 1301 and the birth of Prince George in 2013 when the trees were planted, Chrissie chose 13 heritage varieties initially, with local or historical links.

There was more support for the actual planting day, by the end of which the trees were well staked and mulched. The entire site was "opened" by the Duke of Norfolk whom Chrissie met with her mother, both sporting embroidered Northern Fruit badges.

After the opening event, Chrissie received a letter from the Parish Council indicating that further responsibility for the site had been passed to the Facilities Committee who would appoint qualified contractors. She was asked to provide a schedule for maintenance but this has not been used. When it became apparent that the neither the Facilities Committee or their contractors were actively managing the orchard area, Chrissie offered several times to help prune the trees and manage the surrounding ground but received no reply from the Committee. Chrissie showed slides of the site last year, when growth from the wildflower meadow swamped the trees. Most importantly, the trees have not been pruned since they were planted in 2013 and have not therefore developed as vigorously as expected. Weeding has been achieved by application of glysophate, which led to a lively discussion of the relative merits of chemical weeding and strimming on sites maintained by contractors.

Overall the talk emphasised the need to conclude agreements for ongoing responsibility and future maintenance when orchards are planted as part of a capital project with a limited timescale.

Many thanks to Roni Senior for this summary of Chrissie's talk.

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INTERNATIONAL POMOLOGIST'S MEETING 2017

(Internationales Pomologentreffen 2017)

Dr Walter Hartmann, who attended the pear conference in Harrogate a few years ago and who gave a nice talk to the NFG about plums about 4 years ago, invited me to attend the 16th international pomologist's meeting. It took place in Metzingen-Neuhausen, a town in Baden-Wuerttemberg in the southwest of Germany, from 17 to 19 November last year. As the conference language was German, I did not mention it to the NFG.

Several important representatives of local fruit growing associations and the ministry for the countryside and consumer protection addressed the participants.

Most lectures were about the traditional orchards outside the towns and villages of south Germany, Austria and Switzerland known as "Streuobstwiesen" which translates approximately as "extensively cultivated orchard meadows". The predominant fruit trees in these orchards are standard apple and pear trees; to a lesser extent and in some areas only, plums and cherries are grown. Several lecturers emphasised the importance of these orchards for the conservation of old and endangered fruit varieties. Many varieties would have been lost if it was not for the enthusiasm of the owners and locals who maintain these orchards. The environmental benefits are considered as increasingly important as these orchards attract rare insects, birds and other wildlife and the meadows are still full of most beautiful wild flowers. In addition, the tourist industry has discovered the orchards as an asset and there are now walking and cycling routes through the most attractive areas. (*I lived in Tuebingen and Stuttgart for several years and have seen these orchards. In spring when all the trees are in full bloom, in autumn when the trees are laden with fruit and in winter when everything is covered in snow it is a most beautiful area. U.R.*)

Other lecturers talked about the early days of fruit identification, how fruit identification developed over the last centuries in this area and the most important local people and experts working on useful and reliable identification systems. Various systems, their advantages and disadvantages, and the people who introduced and used them were mentioned. Nowadays computer-assisted data collections are developed by well-trained pomologists to aid with the identification of new and old varieties.

New and old varieties resistant to pests and diseases are increasingly important as the use of pesticides is frowned upon by many people in Germany and a lot of pesticides are either no longer available or not legal for use in these orchards. In addition, chemicals to prevent or combat pests and diseases are expensive and in many cases uneconomical, especially for owners of small orchards who keep them as a "sideline". Therefore the introduction of new varieties only makes sense if they are resistant to pests and diseases.

One speaker gave a very enthusiastic talk about an old group of apples, the "Luikenapfel". These apples used to be fairly common 100 to 50 years ago but are getting increasingly rare despite being good apples.

He mentioned some reasons. The tree thrives only when grafted on a half-standard to standard rootstock which starts very late in spring because the tree is a "late-starter". If grafted on the wrong rootstock it will survive only a few years. The tree develops a characteristically "untidy" growth, becomes very large, starts fruiting fairly late (after about 10 years) and needs a lot of attention BUT the apple is VERY nice and well worth growing. It can be used for salad dressing, soups, sauces, various puddings, ice cream, chocolates, liqueur and Schnaps. (*We were given samples of the Schnaps made from single varieties of this group of apples. It was delicious!!!! Forget everything about Schnaps bought in German supermarkets, this is a totally different class of spirit. By the way, I was told that, if you call that spirit "Schnaps", it is an insult. It is a "Destillat", not a "Schnaps"!!! U.R.*)

Other speakers emphasised that it does not make sense to grow fruit just for the sake of growing fruit, you have to use/sell the fruit and you have to show the public how to use the fruit and what to do with it. There were some very interesting examples for the use of fruit.

Dr Hartmann gave an interesting talk about pears and their use for distilling. He pointed out that "Schnapsbirnen" ripen fairly early and that it is very important to pick them and start distilling at the right time otherwise the taste and aroma of the "destillat" will suffer. The distillation has to be done gently and with great care. A number of varieties are specifically grown for distilling and fruit wine and newly developed varieties are also tested for their suitability for distilling (*at least in the south of Germany, I am not sure about other regions. U.R.*). We got a few samples of single variety "Destillat" for tasting and, again, the taste was outstanding and totally different from Calvados or what is available in German supermarkets.

Another talk was about the use of pears for drying. Again, there are some old varieties, especially of pears, which are specifically grown for this purpose. In the south of Germany they dry the pears when they are soft and brown inside. The pears are cut into half, cored and then dried. The speaker showed some pictures of pears which were totally brown inside and only kept together by the skin but the brown "yuk" turns into caramel when dried. (*I could not believe that something which looks absolutely horrible would be edible but they passed around samples of dried pears for tasting - absolutely delicious!!*). Apparently any variety of pear which is brown and soft on the inside (not the rotten mouldy ones!) can be dried. (*If I had known that I would not have thrown out my soft brown pears. U.R.*)

On Saturday afternoon it was time for “the practicals”. We could choose to attend either a guided tour through an orchard or courses in apple tasting, fruit wine tasting or tasting new products made from old varieties. I went on the guided tour through an orchard (“Streuobstwiese”) which is being looked after by Dr Hartmann. The coach took us through some very picturesque villages and a local guide told us some interesting details about the villages and surrounding orchards. She mentioned in one village that almost every household had a licence for distilling Schnaps from the fruit of their orchards and that they continue doing that. The reason is that, up to this year, the German state is/was buying the Schnaps and it is used as industrial alcohol. That gave many villagers an incentive to maintain their orchards as a financially lucrative sideline. The tour through the orchard was guided expertly by Dr Hartmann. He explained everything we needed to know about this special way of fruit cultivation and talked about the advantages and properties of most fruit trees and varieties. There were still some apples and pears on the trees which we could taste. I was surprised how nice these not-so-nice looking pears tasted! As it was a cold afternoon we obviously needed something to warm us up and we were not disappointed: we got small samples of single-variety Schnaps – absolutely delicious.

On Sunday the emphasis was on the cultivation of cherries. They are grown mainly in certain areas, often as standard trees and there are still some old varieties around. Of particular interest are those varieties which don’t turn dark red but remain yellow-orange-crimson and don’t get as large as the modern varieties sold in supermarkets. Their distinct advantages are that the taste of most varieties is outstanding, there is abundant clear juice which does not stain the clothes, they are excellent for a variety of uses such as bottling, juicing and distilling, the trees are more robust and less susceptible to pests (including birds, they don’t seem to go for the cherries, or the spotted wind drosophila which is a serious problem in the south of Germany) and diseases, they can be eaten in large quantities (they were talking about 2 kg of cherries in one go!) without causing stomach upset and are suitable for people allergic to cherries. Several old varieties were mentioned and their advantages. (*I managed to get the business card of an Austrian nursery which sells some of these old varieties. They have an export licence and I hope to get in contact with them to discuss some important details. U.R.*)

To summarise the meeting: Travel and hotel were very expensive. The meeting was organised in the usual effective German way: the venue was an old, listed barn beautifully restored, there was ALWAYS an

abundance of very nice traditional apple-, pear- and plum cakes, tea, coffee, fruit juice on the tables. I met some very interesting people, listened to interesting talks, learned a lot and was invited to attend the 2018 meeting. It was well worth going!! And if I can sort out the transport I am likely to go again this year.

Ursula Rehkemper

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CONFESSIONS OF A FRUIT NOVICE

These days no one believes in alchemy, in particular the creation of gold from base metal, which so obsessed not only medieval minds but also those of later generations, including such greats as Isaac Newton. Pop in a few bits, stir it up, bubble bubble toil and trouble, and bingo, you have created a marvel. No way!

But courtesy of the Constant Gardener (aka Husband) I have discovered a modern alchemy which *works*! Bung in some assorted rubbish, stir it if you must or simply leave it alone, wait a while, and lo! You have a wonderful new substance. Wow!

Any gardener will have guessed that I am talking about compost.

Even though Wikipedia claims that "modern, methodical composting is a multi-step, closely monitored process with measured inputs of water, air, and carbon- and nitrogen-rich materials", ours seems to function perfectly well on a bung-it-in-and-stir basis and very little else. Worms appear as if by magic, sometimes in obscenely large writhing handfuls, and munch away at whatever is offered to them, while assorted if invisible fungi (I am told) do the rest.

Gradually I became obsessed. Leaving the garden rubbish to the CG, I dropped in egg shells, tea leaves, coffee grounds, brown paper bags, veg peelings, burnt toast, olive stones, nut shells, plate scrapings and even mouldy bits from the bottom of the fridge, all grist to my mill. The cat began to look nervous and move away as I approached.

Then I learned that you can go too far. One day I opened one of the allotment bins and there was Ratty smiling up at me. I believe in live and let live, so I suggested to him that he should go away, and amazingly he

did, scurrying back down the tunnel he had dug through my offerings.. Quickly we emptied the bin, turned it over and covered the bottom with wire mesh, so that worms and water are not impeded but small rodents are. "Told you so", said the CG smugly, "no more food scraps, or at least not meaty ones". You live and learn.

And before you correct me, yes, I went back to *Wind in the Willows* and was reminded that Ratty was actually a water vole.

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FROM OUR NEWSLETTER OF APRIL 1998

RECIPE FOR AN EXCELLENT MESS

We promised you some historical material in the four issues of the 2018 Newsletter celebrating our twenty years of publication, so how about this recipe, which appeared in April 1998:

"*Take either currants, mulberries, raspberries or strawberries, sprinkle them with a little rose-water; press out the juice and draw the milk of a cow's udder into it; sweeten it with a little sugar and beat it well with birchen twigs, till it froth up; then strew over it a little fine beaten cinnamon and it will be an excellent mess. You may do this with the juice of plums, gooseberries, apricots, figs or any juicy fruit."*

OK, we own up: it was quoted by Judith Rothenburg in April 1998, but was first published rather earlier, in *The Family Magazine, Containing Useful Directions in All the Branches of House-Keeping and Cookery*, in 1741.

"An excellent mess" might well describe it, although, as any cook will tell you, "mess" can mean simply a dish of food, as in the famous Eton Mess. Judith confessed that she hadn't tried it: anyone willing to give it a go?

IS RHUBARB A FRUIT?

Not surprisingly, given the season, rhubarb figured prominently in April 1998, with editor Diana Davis musing on the definition of fruit, and whether rhubarb is or isn't.

Botanically, "fruits" are the reproductive parts of the plant, she wrote, and the edible bit is usually the casing which protects the seeds while they develop and ripen; occasionally the seeds themselves are eaten (nuts, for example). However, some fruits in the botanical sense are not regarded as fruits in the horticultural or culinary sense - peas and beans,

marrows, peppers, sweetcorn, mushrooms etc, which are firmly placed amongst the vegetables by gardeners, cooks and most authors of gardening books. The old definition is "vegetables go with gravy, fruit goes with custard".

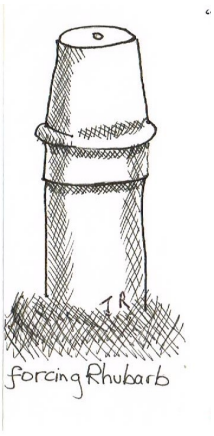
Unusually Bob Flowerdew's Complete Fruit Book (*which was reviewed in the same issue*) includes several tender annual fruits more normally covered by vegetable books (tomatoes, peppers, aubergines, okra, squashes - none of which go particularly well with custard). The Group will doubtless debate the limits of our interest at future meetings, but maybe we should be fairly strict about the custard connection, which gives us more than enough varieties to play with.

Which brings us to rhubarb. "Manifestly not a fruit", Bob Flowerdew says, but he includes it in his book "after several protests". Apart from him, authors of fruit books generally exclude it. However, Diana concluded, I am told that the NFG will include rhubarb in its remit for two reasons. 1, It goes with custard and 2, the National Rhubarb collection is at Harlow Carr. *(Since then, alas, rhubarb has deserted us, and the National Collection has moved to Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire. Ed)*

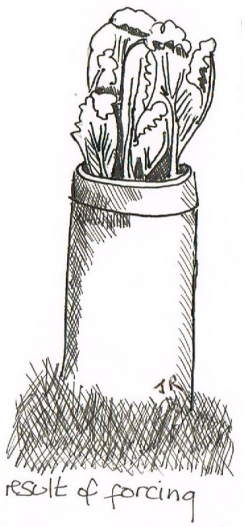
RECIPE FOR RHUBARB AND GINGER JAM

Rhubarb is ok then, so here, concluding our look back to 1998, is Judith Rothenburg again, with a recipe for the once popular rhubarb and ginger jam. Perhaps it will make a come-back.

This can be made with older, unforced rhubarb, but make sure the stalks are still tender, not toughened or stringy.



Cut 4lb of trimmed rhubarb into 1 inch pieces. Layer with 4lbs of sugar in a large bowl, add juice and rind of two lemons, and stand overnight. Turn into jam pan, add 2 oz bruised root ginger in a muslin bag, and simmer until reduced to a thick pulp. Add equal weight of sugar and boil rapidly until setting point is reached. Remove bag of ginger, stir in 2 oz of chopped crystallised or stem ginger, pot and cover.



Finally the 1998 Newsletter had two lovely sketches of rhubarb, bearing the initials JR - Judith Rothenberg I would guess. Certainly not Jean Richards, who cannot draw. At all.

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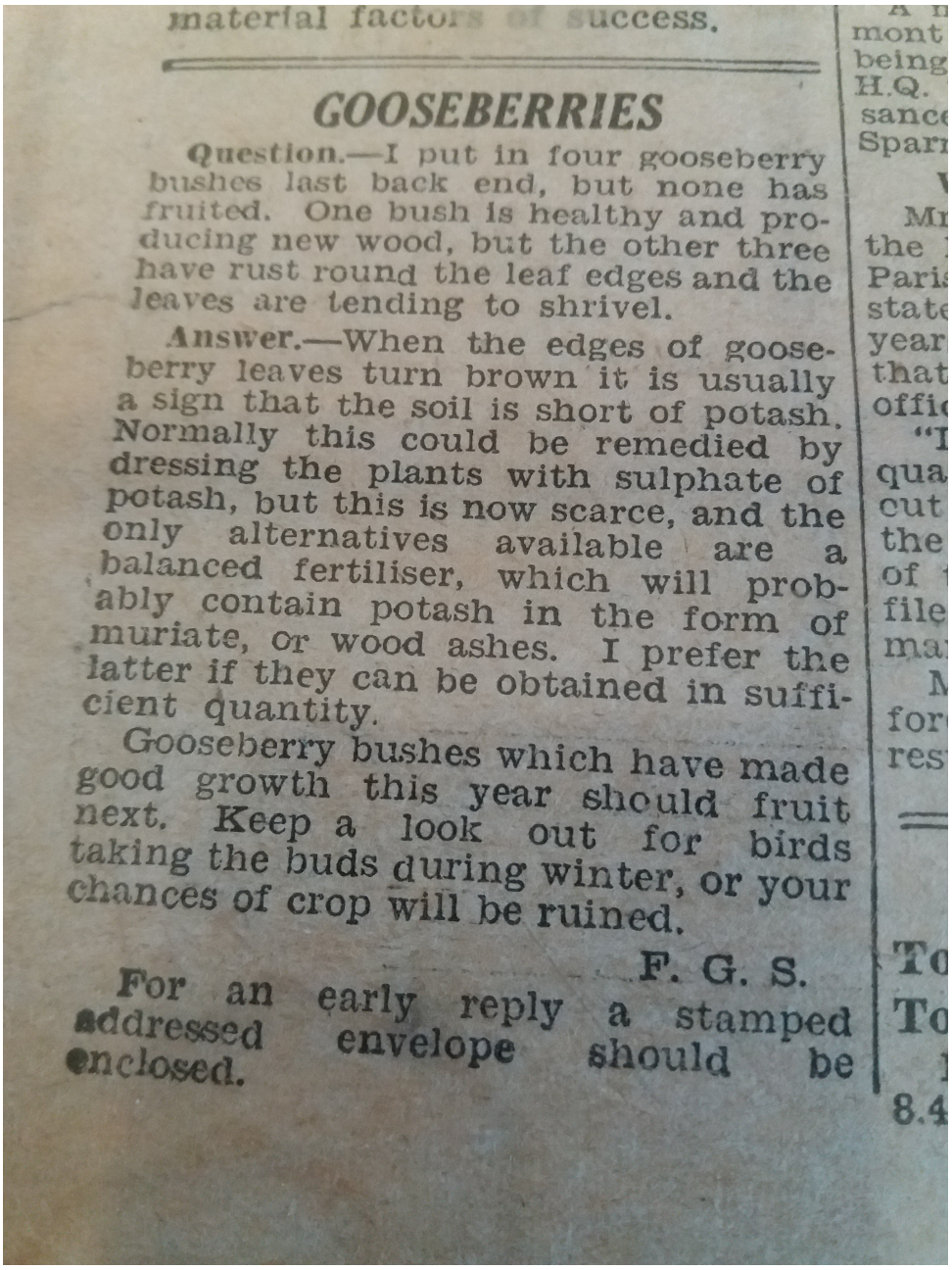
And while we are on the subject of times past, thanks to member Rachel Benson, who was in the café in How Stean Gorge earlier this year, noticed a page from the Yorkshire Evening Post, dated Thursday 21 September 1944, under the glass of the table, and sent us a copy, pictured below.



material factors of success.

GOOSEBERRIES

Question.—I put in four gooseberry bushes last back end, but none has fruited. One bush is healthy and producing new wood, but the other three have rust round the leaf edges and the leaves are tending to shrivel.

Answer.—When the edges of gooseberry leaves turn brown it is usually a sign that the soil is short of potash. Normally this could be remedied by dressing the plants with sulphate of potash, but this is now scarce, and the only alternatives available are a balanced fertiliser, which will probably contain potash in the form of muriate, or wood ashes. I prefer the latter if they can be obtained in sufficient quantity.

Gooseberry bushes which have made good growth this year should fruit next. Keep a look out for birds taking the buds during winter, or your chances of crop will be ruined.

F. G. S.

For an early reply a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed.

The paper was apparently under some carpet in the owners' house, and was discovered a couple of years ago when they had the carpet replaced.

I'm told that the advice hasn't really changed, in 75 years, though sulphate of potash is no longer scarce.

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FRUIT CAGE AND BRASSICA TUNNEL:

4 years on

Back in issue 72 (autumn 2015), I reported on our experience with our recently purchased fruit cage and brassica tunnel. At the time of writing we had been using the two structures for about 18 months and both were performing well, but these things are not cheap, so what about the longer term durability and usefulness I hear you ask? Two and a half years further on down the line, and after coming through four winters, I thought an update might be useful if anyone is thinking about spending their hard earned cash on one of these structures.

The fruit cage was purchased from Robinsons Polytunnels and has a 10m x 4m galvanised steel frame. We remove the top netting every winter to prevent damage from snow building up, but this is a 10 minute job and fairly straightforward as it is held in place with metal 's' hooks (purchased separately, the cage is supplied with plastic cable ties which have to be cut off every year). It is coming up to four years since we bought this cage and apart from removing the top netting every year we have not had to do any maintenance or repairs to the frame or side netting. It would be difficult to disguise the metal framework but the side and top netting are black and almost invisible from just a few feet away so overall the structure is not too unsightly. Despite the concerted efforts of local pigeons, blackbirds and jackdaws, our fruit has remained unmolested and because the roof is 2m high it is very easy to work inside the cage. This size of fruit cage is probably a bit much for the average garden but the design is modular in 2 metre increments, so you can purchase a size to fit your space. This type of fruit cage is certainly not cheap but we grow raspberries, loganberries, strawberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries and 4 cherry trees inside ours and the structure looks as though it is going to last a very long time, so overall I would highly recommend investing in one.

Now to the brassica tunnel. This is a 'walk-in wonderwall' 9m long x 3.5m wide x 1.9 m high but can be bought in sizes from 2 metres long and

2.5 metres wide. It looks like a mesh covered polytunnel and is made of plastic piping hoops and connectors with some wooden uprights for stability and covered in green fine mesh netting. It provides protection from wind damage, flying beasties and marauding animals but does let rain through (modified to a fine mist even in torrential downpours) so is very useful for weather protection but not for fruit which needs to be insect pollinated. It was very simple for two people to erect and was fairly straightforward to take down and move a couple of years ago. But after four years some limitations of the design are becoming obvious. The green fine mesh netting has survived well and would be easy to replace if there were a problem; however the frame is another matter. The plastic clips holding the pipe frame can be difficult to clip into place and become hard and slightly brittle with time and exposure to the elements, so vigilance is needed to spot supporting pieces 'popping out' of the clips and weakening the overall structure. Sadly I wasn't quick enough to spot a problem a couple of months ago and a sudden snowfall collapsed one portion of the cage onto some of last year's grafted fruit trees with disastrous consequences. We live and learn. As time has gone on the plastic connectors have deteriorated, and some have broken, so we are now looking at finding a way of clipping the plastic frame together more permanently and hopefully avoiding another partial collapse. If this can be done then the brassica tunnel is still a very useful addition to the garden, slightly more pleasant to look at than a polytunnel but less robust than a metal framed structure.

Chris Simmonds

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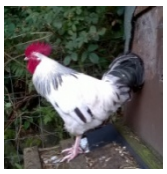
A Smallholder Writes . . . No 8

NFG member James Ellson writes a blog about his smallholding http://jamesellson.blogspot.co.uk/



The cordon line rulebook

A cordon line solves the problem familiar to orchardists of how to cram as many different cultivars into a garden as possible. It has other advantages, too. Their diagonal, rather than vertical, growth encourages fruit development.

Trees grown in a cordon can also be coaxed into espaliers, arches, U-shapes, triple-stems or simply grown vertically as minarets. There is great aesthetic potential for the budding RHS Designer of The Year.

However, as quickly as the cordon line solves one problem, it creates another. How to build one? Not quite as easy as digging a hole and shoving a maiden into it. A cordon line requires planning, and having built one each year for the last five years, here are my rules.

Location

South-facing, or as near as you can.

My latest cordons involved a gradual process of negotiation with my wife. A year before I started digging I banged in approximate posts on the lawn. Thus began 12 months of remembering anniversaries, doing the washing up and rubbing her feet. My wife was concerned about aesethtics and consulted my mother.

Finally, there was a decision. 'Yes. If you must.'

I must.

Size – spacing etc

My newest cordon beds are 11 metres long and 60 cm wide. Trees should be planted 60-75cm apart. Measure it out, knock sticks into the 4 corners and attach string for digging guidance.

Boards

Boards, then dig, *or* dig, then boards, is a chicken and egg question. I've done both and could write another article about the pros and cons. (I probably won't.)

I'm a chicken man, so, following the string, I removed the turfs and laid them on sacks alongside. I then fixed the gravel boards (treated), just like in a raised bed.

Digging

This is the hard work. I did a metre a day for a fortnight. (Half-day on Sundays (not for religious reasons, or for football ones, but to learn Latin. (*Caecilius est in atrium**.)) First, I dug out and put aside the topsoil. I dug down to a depth of 2 feet and removed the stony soil, sorting out the

stone as I worked. The final 6 inches were mainly slate. I inverted the turfs and laid them at the bottom. Then filled the hole, mixing rotted manure and compost with the topsoil and some of the stoneless subsoil.

Posts

Posts should be placed at the ends of the cordon and at 2.5 to 3 metre intervals.

There are as many options as there are apple cultivars. Well, not quite. You could use wood, but wood rots, even treated wood. You could set wood in cement or metal spikes, but the wood will still rot. You could use concrete, or you could use metal.

My first cordons employed 2 metre painted metal angle posts from Wicks. I set them in cement (bags of post cement). I wanted 1.5 metre high cordons. In hindsight, the posts were not long enough or sturdy enough (the men who inspected the elephant and found it to be variously like a snake / a spear / a rope / a wall could have pointed this out).

I spoke to my wife, and she authorised additional payment. I sourced 2.5 metre angle iron posts, galvanised, from a blacksmith's in Herefordshire. Not that impressive sourcing and not that cheap either (AWB steels, 01531 670 957 – they will drill holes for the wires as you specify). But they will last 50 years, maybe even 100.

My (post-)cementing has improved. I now make it up in an old plastic bucket and wait until it's slappable-onable. Filling the hole with water and pouring in the powder has never worked for me.

It's also worth noting that I added (cemented, then bolted) diagonal supporting struts (the previously-mentioned angle posts from Wicks) for the end posts.

Wires

My first cordon used metal wires between straining bolts. However, I never got the hang of uncoiling coiled wire. Even after research on YouTube (previously useful for lining a cake tin and changing a smoke alarm battery).

I now use Gripple. It's quick and very easy – even for me. 4 wires, equally spaced.

Planting

When I started, I transplanted trees as if it was a surgical procedure. Hours of preparing / collecting fine soil, mycorrhizal root powder, trowels

and spades. But having worked alongside Hilary for a few years, I now just dig a hole, plonk the tree in and tread it down.

Of course, the trees need to be planted so the leader grows at an angle of 45°. Attach bamboo canes at 45° to the wires, and tie the leader to the cane. It'll never get the message and insist on growing up, but just keep tying it back to the bamboo. Down boy!

Finally, add labels. My current favourites are MacPenny's which involve scratching onto a black surface. Hilary says they'll last 2 years, I say more. (And we've got £50 down.)

And that's about it.

Prune in the late Summer with the modified Lorette system.

Then, after 3 years or so, you should start to get many different varieties of apples / pears / plums (unless you've only planted one variety). You can entertain the other half by telling them that the first fruit cost £275 (£100 boards, £120 posts, £20 struts, £35 gripple). But after that, they're all free.

** Et Metella est in horto, as every right thinking soul should be on a Sunday afternoon. Ed*

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FRUIT WE DON'T GROW: Juniper and Sloe

Fruit we don't grow was intended to cover fruits that we commonly eat but don't grow here in the UK. In this issue, however, we're extending the range a bit to cover two fruits that do grow in the UK, but not usually

Gardens open for charity

Member Ted Whaley is opening his garden on August 4, with nine or ten others, as part of Market Rasen open gardens run by the local Rotary Club. He writes:

We have a half acre garden with a mixture of top fruit, soft fruit, vegetables and flowers. Some of the apple trees were bred by the former owner and some imported by him from the US when he worked there. The gardens are open from 10am to 4pm and the entry for all the gardens, I think, will be £4. Our address is: Sunny Vale, Willingham Road, Market Rasen, LN8 3RE.

in our gardens or greenhouses, and which we certainly don't eat. They are, however, indispensable to life's pleasure, at least in the Editor's household. We're talking about juniper berries and sloes, both used in the production of alcoholic drinks, so if that's not your scene, pass swiftly on to the next item.

We will also pass swiftly over the issue of whether these two 'fruits' are actually fruits as the Group perceives it, a question which has taxed us since the beginning. In other words, they fail the custard test, but no matter, they pass the strictly botanical test, and are interesting. So…

Juniper, typically *Juniperus communis*, is used to flavour gin, a liquor developed in the 17th century in the Netherlands. The name *gin* itself is derived from either the French *genièvre* or the Dutch *jenever*, which both mean "juniper".

A juniper berry is the female seed cone produced by the various species of junipers. It is not a true berry but a cone with unusually fleshy and merged scales, which give it a berry-like appearance.

Apart from water and ethanol, the only other raw materials used for distilled gin-making are natural flavourings referred to as botanicals. The predominant flavour is always juniper. Nearly all the juniper used to make gin is wild, virtually none is cultivated. We are reliably informed that the Yorkshire Dales National Park has implemented conservation methods to protect their stocks, hoping to keep us in gin for many years to come.

Flavoured gin is all the rage at the moment, from Lavender to Yorkshire Tea, and commands high prices. If you fancy making your own - and it's very inexpensive if you use a cheap spirit such as a supermarket's

own brand - why not begin with the traditional version, with sloes. You can buy ready made sloe gin, but it's costly and (in my opinion) overly sweet.

Sloe is the fruit of the blackthorn bush *Prunus spinosa,* a species of flowering plant in the rose family Rosaceae, and a rare example of plant and fruit having quite different names. It is native to Europe, and also found in other parts of the world. The bush has savage thorns, and is traditionally used in Britain and other parts of Northern Europe to make a cattle-proof hedge. The fruit is similar to a small damson or plum, suitable for preserves, but too tart and astringent for eating.

In rural Britain, Wikipedia informs us, a liqueur is made by infusing gin with sloes and sugar. As far as I know, it's a fairly widespread practice, rural or not, though you do need to find a source of wild sloes: a good excuse for a country walk. The production process is a bit tedious, but worth it. Wash and dry your sloes, then prick each one a few times with a fork, to encourage the juice to flow. I've tried freezing them to break the skins but it doesn't seem to be as effective. Put one pound into a large jar with 4 ounces of sugar, pour on a 70cl bottle of gin, close and keep in a dark place for a few months, shaking occasionally. In due course, strain and put into a clean bottle. Lovely on its own if you like slightly bitter drinks (if its too bitter, use more sugar next time), or mixed with Prosseco to produce a pale pink bubbly aperitif.

And if all that is too much bother, here's a fast, easy, inexpensive and seasonal alternative. Chop up some fresh pink rhubarb, put it in a jar and top up with the gin of your choice. Leave it for a week, shaking occasionally and voila, you have your own Rhubarb Gin.

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OLD ORCHARDS: SOME DETECTIVE STORIES

Anne Lee follows the trail of Ernest Oddy's Old Orchard Notebooks

2. Parcevall Hall Gardens, Wharfedale

When Sir William Milner died in 1960 his house and estate were inherited by the guardians of the Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham. The house is not open to view by visitors, as it is leased to the Church of England for use as a religious retreat. The Walsingham Trust retains responsibility for the upkeep of the grounds and these are open to the public from 1st of April to 31st of October.

No record of the earliest history of the Parcevall Hall Estate survives. The archives were said to have been considered rubbish and thrown on a bonfire when the property changed hands. The project to restore the gardens to their former grandeur started in the early 1980s under the direction of then administrator Jo Machin and head gardener Phill Nelson. The original cultivation had to be deduced from what was still existing on the ground: the garden architecture, plants and some old lead labels. However a fascinating oral history has been told by people who remember Sir William and I am particularly grateful to Ernest's sister Elizabeth, who is 92, for recounting her memories. (If this is truly a detective story such evidence would be considered 'hearsay', nevertheless I want to record it before it is lost.)

Sir William was known locally as 'the Gentle Giant', because he stood 6 ft 7 in tall and lived an almost monastic life in this isolated valley. He was reputed to have been a notable church architect and a keen plantsman. In 1927 he started the reconstruction and extension of the derelict hall that stood at the top of a steep slope overlooking a stunning view across to Simon's Seat and he landscaped the gardens to his own design.

The geology at the top of the hill is limestone (alkaline soil), but at the bottom is gritstone (acid). A fast flowing beck, alongside which the streamside flowers include native orchids and wild narcissus, runs down through woodland. In addition to his terraces, rose gardens and the alpine rock garden surrounding the high pond, Sir William wanted to install an orchard and a walled garden. His head gardener, George Dugood, is said to have remonstrated: 'Nay, sithee, thee cain't grow apples: yon's 800 feet above sea level.' Notwithstanding, Sir William was insistent. So before they took any decision about what varieties to plant, he and George consulted the local expert, Ernest Oddy (Prof Apple Ernest's father), who was head gardener at Fairfield Hall, Addingham. He had replenished the Fairfield orchard in 1910. Prof Apple, then aged about seven, remembers the occasion when this consultation took place, because he and his father were conveyed to Parcevall Hall in the second car by the second chauffeur - his father taking along his young son for a trip in 'an automobile'.

It was decided to plant a selection of popular dessert and culinary apples of that late 1920s period, but also consideration had to be given as to what might be hardy enough to tolerate the quite severe conditions. Spring comes late in the upper dale (Parcevall's apple blossom time is in June) and Winter early. The orchard is sited north west of the hall near the top of the south-facing hillside. In this position it would certainly receive

lots of sun, but be exposed to bitingly cold winds, so shelter was required along the north, east and west sides (now mature trees that overshadow the orchard). The south side was left open to allow the heavy cold air to roll downhill and prevent a frost pocket collecting. The site was also interplanted with leylandii-type conifers designed to divert the stream of cold air away from the apple trees. It is also a wetter area than lower down the dale and that encourages parasitic diseases such as scab and canker.

Sir William evidently decided that the orchard should be a decorative feature of his gardens. I guess that *Monarch* and *Red Victoria* were chosen because of their brilliantly attractive red and shiny fruit. The latter looks delicious enough to eat off the tree and the gardeners laugh if they see a garden visitor sneakily pick one and take a bite out of it, because they're so sour. Apples destined for the kitchen included the ubiquitous *Bramley's Seedling*, *Keswick Codlin*, *Queen* and *Newton Wonder*, but also *Stirling Castle* - and I wonder if that choice was because they thought a Scottish variety would be hardy. The dessert apples include Ribston Pippin, a Yorkshire variety and Ernest senior's favourite, however the early summer *Gladstone* and *Irish Peach* don't thrive.

Because no account ledgers exist, we don't know where George Dugood sourced his fruit trees. A likely possibility was Kershaws Nusery in Brighouse, as Prof Apple told me they were his father's supplier.

At the top of his orchard Sir William created a cliff walk that overlooks Troller's Gill. He liked to walk up through his apple trees and sit on the bench up there to watch birds and the night sky. Armed with a sack of wild flower seeds and a catapult, he would shoot them onto the gorge walls. So, if you've ever walked up Troller's Gill and remarked on the astonishing flora colonising the limestone cliff sides...

Sir William's walled garden is located at the bottom of the hill and now partly used as a visitors' car park. The uniquely curious feature of its construction is that the walls are stone, not brick. Brick walls absorb and retain heat from the sun, are dry and easily worked for training trees as they readily accept nails - hence their use for walled gardens. Sir William loathed brick and refused to contemplate it. The trees trained on the walls are dessert pears, plus two *Cox's Orange Pippin* apples. I guess Sir William liked these and wanted to ensure quality fruit produced under favourable conditions.

According to Prof Apple's 1985 notebook list, not all of these pears are common ones. In addition to *Conference*, *William's bon Chretien*, *Doyenne du Comice* and *Louise Bonne of Jersey*, there are two *Jargonelle* and a *Windsor*. *Jargonelle* is a July pear, the first of the season, and since

the old tree at Newby Hall died, I don't know of another. I have never come across *Windsor*. l gathered samples in the hope that Jim Arbury and Philip Rainford could examine them at the Harlow Carr Apple Festival at the end of October, but, although I kept them in the fridge, *Windsor* is a summer pear and they quickly rotted - perhaps I could freeze them this year. In appearance they look very similar to *Winter Windsor*, handsome, smooth and bright yellow, but Edward Bunyard describes it as 'not worth growing' [*Handbook of Hardy Fruits*, 1920]. Prof Apple's notebook also lists *Knight's Monarch*, but I haven't found it.

In 2016 Parcevall Hall escaped a late spring frost and the harvest was the best that Phill could remember. I noted a prolific crop of pears, so nipped round the walled garden to check them. The identification of most was simplified because they still bear their original labels. These consist of a narrow band of lead with the name stamped into it, then loosely wrapped round an espalier branch near the trunk like a bracelet. I found the *Jargonelle* label on the ground and handed it to Phill. He told me that they are retaining the old labels they find, rather than putting them back on the trees from which they get lost, and he's replacing them with wired-on tin labels. Most of the *Williams bon Chretien* label has broken off, so that it reads ...*en*. I scrabbled in the soil underneath in the hope of finding the lost section and spotted a bit of metal sticking out. When I tugged it, I pulled up a carthorse shoe - and instantly was transported back to a vision of the 1920s - pre-tractor days, when a carthorse worked in the gardens. I gave it to Phill to nail to the potting shed door - a traditional belief is that an iron horseshoe warded off evil.

(to be continued)

Anne Lee

Parcevall Hall is at Skyreholme near Appletreewick, BD23 6DE.

The Gardens are open daily from 30th March until 31st October between 10am and 6pm, with last admittance at 5pm.

Adults: £7, Seniors: £6, Children under 12 free. Admission is free for RHS members in August, September and October, but the tearoom is not open in October.

For further information, check the Parcevall Hall Gardens website http://parcevallhallgardens.com

MORE ON JUNEBERRIES

Following our item on juneberries in the January Newsletter, Joan Morgan, editor of Fruit Forum, drew our attention to an article by John Stoa in the Forum. Here is a slightly abridged version, edited to remove duplication with our earlier piece: you can view the full item at http://www.fruitforum.net/saskatoons.htm

John Stoa, a former professional fruit grower and now full time artist, fell in love with this fruit when on holiday in Canada after visiting a pick-your-own saskatoon farm outside the city of Saskatoon, the capital of Saskatchewan. John is harvesting his own saskatoons in Scotland and now tells us how easy they are to grow and good to eat. Not surprisingly, considering how he discovered juneberries, John uses their Canadian name, saskatoons. Here's what he had to say:

The saskatoon fruit is delicious and, in my opinion, tastes very similar to the blueberry. In Scotland it fruits in July with up to ten pounds of fruits per bush when mature. The saskatoon shrub, *Amelanchier alnifolia*, is native to North West America growing from Alaska to California in open woodland, hillsides, and banks of streams on ground ranging from dry rocky soils in full sun to moist deep soils. Native Americans used the berries as a major food source for hundreds of years and now that its health benefits have been realised the demand for this fruit vastly exceeds its supply.

The berries can be eaten fresh during the picking season, which starts with me in early July and can last for four weeks depending upon the weather. They also have many culinary uses (*see our January article*). Nutritionally saskatoons have an abundance of anthocyanins, which may help prevent heart disease, strokes, cancer, cataracts and other chronic illnesses associated with ageing. In their anthocyanin content saskatoons are similar to blueberries, but with higher levels of iron, potassium, magnesium and calcium.

Saskatoons are very easy to grow, thrive on most soils and in full sun or partial shade. Unlike blueberries they do not require an acid soil. The bushes grow quite thickly and sucker easily if taller branches are pruned down to ground level to encourage fresh young growth. They require no pruning other than removal of any shoots too tall for comfortable picking

after six or more years: cut out any tall shoots from the centre right down to ground level. Give a light fertiliser dressing each spring in the early years and the bush will remain productive for 30 to 50 years.

Bushes need to be planted about six feet apart or, if you want them to grow into each other and form a hedge, then set the plants three feet apart: prepare the planting hole with some compost and give a dressing of fertiliser. The only pests likely to bother them are birds which love the fruit so netting is essential on a small scale. Young plants may suffer leaf spot and mildew but mature plants are usually too strong to be affected.

Most commercial varieties in Canada are grown from seed as saskatoons comes very true to type, so if a seed crop of, for example, Smokey is collected from the middle of an isolated plantation the plants will be Smokey, and the level of variation very minimal. However, several producers are micro-propagating stock which is 100% true to type, but some growers have concerns about this type of plant as they feel it in the long term it may not be as healthy as seed grown plants.

Smoky and Theissen are two well known varieties and I grow one row of each, true to type, but produced from seed. However, because they are adjacent to each other, I cannot claim to grow these varieties true to type from their seeds as there will be some cross pollination. All my plants will have traits from these two varieties. In fact, I find no difference whatsoever in them other than one crops about four days before the other. Sometimes I find Smokey a bit better than Theissen, but then a few days later the reverse is true. Once these are taken up by commercial growers, I am hopeful the Scottish Crop Research Institute in Dundee will carry out some variety trials as there are many well worth exploring to see which ones are best suited to the UK climate and soils.

I have been growing saskatoons for over seven years and the past year harvested my heaviest crop, despite a cool, wet summer and a previous very severe winter. Saskatoons seem to like this extreme climate.

John Stoa

Plants available from: http://www.johnstoa.co.uk/saskatoon.htm

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CHUCKLEBERRIES

We were given a jar of “Chuckleberry Jam” for Christmas. Neither the donors nor we the recipients had ever heard of this berry so of course we made immediate recourse to Google.

Some confusion resulted. Some sites assured us that ‘chuckleberry' was merely another folk name for juneberry, which as it happens was featured in the both the last Newsletter and this one. More research however established that this is not the case: chuckleberry is a new fruit bush that has been available only since 2012.

The chuckleberry was bred by Chas Welch in Norfolk, who crossed Redcurrant Rovada with Goosberry Pax to produce a seedling and Redcurrant Rovada with Jostaberry (itself a cross between blackcurrant and gooseberry) to produce another seedling. These two seedling were then crossed with each other to produce the chuckleberry. The result is a blackcurrant-like bush that produces high yields of dark, superbly flavoured, attractive, versatile berries in mid-July. The berries, it is claimed, make fantastic red jams and jellies, with flavours of all three fruits in their parentage. It has great potential for gardeners and food producers alike.

Advice is to grow the chuckleberry like a blackcurrant. Plant 1.2-1.5m (4-5′) apart. Grow as stoolbed bushes where the branching arises from soil level. Plant a little deeper than on the nursery to encourage branching from below soil level. After planting reduce branching to a couple of buds above soil level. Mark the plants well because little will be visible initially. However the chuckleberry will quickly grow in a sheltered, fertile site with plenty of sunlight. Some shade can be tolerated.

The chuckleberry is high yielding and easy to pick, fruiting at the same time as other currant fruits in June-July, with blackcurrant-like fruits with the flavours of the three parents. Good for desserts, juicing and jam making with little sign of seeds when cooked or juiced.

All this sounds a little too good to be true, so we would love to hear from members who have tried it. Certainly the jam was delicious. What about chuckleberry gin?

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GLEANINGS

Thanks to Ursula Rehkemper for keeping an eye on what 'The Fruit Grower' has been reporting lately.

WEEDS, PESTS AND DISEASES

Weedkillers: The weedkiller glyphosate is authorised for another five years. Independent regulatory bodies including the European Food Safety Authority and the European Chemicals Agency looked at the scientific evidence and came to the conclusion that glyphosate is safe to use. The decision has been welcomed by the NFU.

The Fruit Grower, December 2017

Fungicides: A new fungicide, Luna Sensation, was developed by Bayer and is very effective against powdery mildew and Botrytis in strawberries, especially those grown in polytunnels but also grown in the open. It does not interfere with biological pest control and has a short harvest interval. (*I don't know whether it is available for the amateur grower though. U.R.*)

The Fruit Grower, December 2017

How to identify nutrient deficiencies, a list:

Low nitrogen: poor growth, pale leaves
Low phosphorus: low pollen viability, soft fruit, reduced shelf-life
Low magnesium: low flower-bud quality and quantity, poor leaves, poor sugar content
Low calcium: quicker fruit maturity, low stress tolerance (*and bitter pit in apples. U.R.*)
Low manganese: poor nutrient uptake and mobility
Low iron/manganese: poor photosynthesis and movement of other nutrients
Low boron: poor pollen viability and poor calcium mobility
However, too much of these nutrients can be damaging as well.
Excessive nitrogen: sappy growth, soft fruit, calcium deficiency which can result in rots and breakdowns in store
Excessive potassium: cause problems with calcium and magnesium uptake leading to increased breakdown and poor shelf life

The Fruit Grower, May 2017

FRUITY NEWS

Roots: Fine root systems (smaller than 2 mm in diameter) are important for the uptake of water, minerals and other nutrients in plants including trees. As the impact of these fine roots on apple tree growth and development is not well understood Chinese scientists undertook a six year trial to investigate the relationship between the fine roots and mortality and longevity of *Red Fuji* trees grafted on five different rootstocks or interstems. Based on root length density, fine root production and morality were markedly lower in *Red Fuji* trees growing on dwarfing M9 and Shao series 40 rootstocks than in trees on *Malus robusta* Baleng Crab rootstock. About half of the fine roots of trees grafted on M9 were scattered in the top 20 cm of the soil, indicating a shallow root system. In contrast, more than half of the fine roots of trees grafted on Baleng Crab were distributed between 100 cm and 150 cm of the soil indicating a deep root system. The addition of interstems did not alter the fine root depth distribution. Fine roots with a lifespan of less than 80 days were generated in spring and summer by all rootstocks/interstems, fine roots living longer than 81 days were produced all year round. Lower fine root numbers were associated with the dwarfing growth of dwarfing rootstocks /interstems but not the average root length or shallower rooting.

The Fruit Grower, June 2017

Mini apple trees: A Dutch company developed an apple tree which does not grow higher than two meters and not wider than 50 cm. When fully grown it can produce up to 25 to 30 apples and is tolerant of most diseases. The varieties are *Rosalie, Goldlane, Redlane, Redspring* and *Moonlight.* The trees can be bought all year round, are delivered at 70 cm to 100 cm tall and are a popular present on the continent for birthdays, christenings, weddings and Christmas. Each tree comes with instructions as to how to grow and look after it. Apparently, no pruning is necessary, only application of water, fertiliser and the occasional re-potting into a larger pot or the garden, the trees can get to 15 years old and older. At the moment they are available for online sales in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium but the nursery is in negotiation with a British supplier. (*May be that they are available now in the UK, the Dutch breeder is the Fleuren tree nursery. I 'googled' Fleuren tree nursery and got a number of results – all in Dutch. U.R.*)

The Fruit Grower, October 2016

Another new-ish strawberry: *Malling Centenary* is a strawberry which was released in 2013. The plants produce high quality, sweet fruit BUT do

not have a high disease resistance. (*After my experience with Sonata I reserve judgement and stick with my favourites which do well on my allotment: Elsanta, Christine and Florence. U.R.*)

The Fruit Grower, October 2016

Friendly Helpers

Hoverflies and others: Hoverflies are the most voracious aphid predators, followed by lacewings. A single hoverfly larvae can eat between 650 and 1150 aphids in a lifetime whereas lacewings can consume between 550 and 800. During some trials on strawberries it was found that wildflowers grown between tabletop strawberries attract large numbers of hoverflies and may be an alternative to chemicals. During the same trial it was shown how different pollinators operate. Bumblebees and honeybees visited the centre of the strawberry, hoverflies go to various areas of the flower and solitary bees move around the edges of the flower receptacles.

The Fruit Grower, September 2016

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My thanks to all contributors for their help in preparing this edition of the Newsletter. Ed

The next Newsletter will be circulated in early July 2018. All contributions welcome, to the editor please by June 10.

If you would like to receive your Newsletter in electronic rather than paper form, please tell the Membership Secretary.

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