

The Bledlow Manor Elephant made from an Invasive Weed



One of the most intriguing sculptures we saw during our summer outing to Bledlow Manor was a lifelike wooden elephant sited in a grove of trees within the sculpture garden.

I was intrigued and decided to research its background. This life size sculpture is one of 100 elephants from the "Co-existence Herd" that have been sculpted by the indigenous people of the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, in Southern India. All are modelled from a different elephant in the actual herd, thus, each one is unique.

They are made from the stems of *Lantana camara*.



I knew this plant from my time working in Hong Kong in the 1990s as it was widespread in the country parks and other natural areas, forming dense thickets of scrubby undergrowth. The flower clusters are small but colourful

in shades of yellow and orange. I had assumed it was native as it was everywhere, but it turns out it is an invasive species from South America that is now widespread throughout tropical and subtropical regions, being one of the top ten worldwide invasive species. It is dense and smothers the ground, killing off indigenous understorey forest plants and grasses that many animals rely on for food. The leaves and young stems contain toxins that make them inedible, putting out chemicals that suppress the growth of other plants. It's difficult to eradicate; cutting back just causes it to send out even stronger, longer shoots.

You may see dwarf ornamental varieties of *Lantana camara* for sale as summer bedding or conservatory plants in UK garden centres. Fortunately, this plant is not winter hardy, otherwise it would be added to the ever-expanding list of dangerous invasive species that have been introduced into the UK as ornamentals: Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, Skunk Cabbage to name but a few.

These sculptures are one example how local people have used this plant in a productive way, and harvesting helps to control its spread.



To see a video on how these majestic elephant sculptures are made, where else in the UK other sculptures from the herd may be seen and for more information on the Co-Existence Foundation go to www.coexistence.org.

Something Tasty for Christmas



Cranberry Sauce

As we get nearer to Christmas, you'll soon see cranberries popping up in the supermarket. A big part of the Christmas dinner is the cranberry sauce and it's also a really easy recipe to make.

There are so many inventive cranberry sauce options available to buy at the supermarket, but if you prefer homemade cranberry sauce, you'll only need a few ingredients.

An easy cranberry sauce needs fresh cranberries, sugar, orange juice and maybe some wine or port. I usually add homemade plum liquor or mulled wine.

To make,

- 1kg of cranberries
- 2 oranges, zested
- 400ml of orange juice
- 100ml of wine/ port optional
- 400g of brown sugar

Gently simmer the wine, juice and sugar in a pan on the stove, bring to the boil and stir until the sugar dissolves and it is reduced by half. Add the cranberries and cook on a low heat to slowly cook the fruit without burning it.

As soon as the cranberry mixture resembles a loose jam like consistency, reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for a further 10 minutes, then remove from the heat. It's then ready for you to pop into your jars ready for Christmas lunch.



Tamar Pollard

Old fashioned Scottish Apple and Ginger Boxing Day Chutney

The word chutney is derived from the Hindu word "chatni" meaning strongly spiced. The ginger in this chutney certainly adds an extra kick. This chutney is great for cheese boards, cold cuts, and a ploughman's lunch. It's a lovely addition to use on all your Christmas leftovers.

Ingredients:

- 1 lb onion, when finely chopped
- 2 lbs cooking apples, peeled, cored, and roughly chopped. (Top tip, pop chopped apples in a bowl of lemon infused water to stop them turning brown)
- 40 oz sultanas
- 1 oz fresh ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon dried ginger powder
- 2 teaspoons mixed spice
- 1 lb soft brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Pint malt vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Pint cider apple cider vinegar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper

Place all the prepared onions and apples into a large preserving pan and add the remaining ingredients. Bring slowly to the boil and reduce the heat. Stir the chutney regularly and make sure it does not "catch" and burn. Keep on cooking until the chutney is the consistency of a thick jam and all the liquids have dissolved. (A trick to check if it is cooked is to draw your wooden spoon across the chutney, if the space that is left fills up with liquid, the chutney is not ready).

Spoon the hot chutney into hot and sterile jars and seal. Store in a dark and cool place and leave to mature for at least 2 weeks.

Membership Fee Increase and Membership cards in 2023

It was agreed by a vote of members attending our AGM on 2nd April 2022, that the membership fee will increase to **£3 in 2023, which will apply per person and not per household**. We do hope all our members have made use throughout 2022 of the discounts on offer when using their membership cards. We will continue with our membership card and discount scheme, with the new cards for 2023 available as from Saturday 4th February, at our Trading Cabin on Cameron Road, during our Potato Sales mornings, as well as subsequent events and activities.

TRADING CABIN NEWS – sale of SEED POTATOES, ONIONS, and SHALLOTS in February 2023.

It is that time of year again when we need to start thinking about what we are going to grow on our allotments and vegetable gardens in the spring. Thanks to all the members who responded to my request for feedback on which potato varieties they had success with this year.

Unfortunately, we are unable to stock Elfie and Apache in 2023 as they are still under license from Albert Bartlett. This is the reply I received from them: *"I'm afraid there is a shortage of Albert Bartlett variety seed potatoes this year. This is because the retailers have increased their forecasts for the fully grown potatoes, so there are fewer seed potatoes available for the market. You may still be able to find them in larger garden centres but probably not as a bulk buy - sorry!"*

We are trialling a new Scottish Seed Potato supplier this year as our previous supplier was unable to supply us with any onions and shallot sets. The good news is, we can roll back time and reduce the price we are selling the seed potatoes for. A welcome relief in this time of ever rising prices. Onion and shallot set prices are the same as in 2022.

Our new Trading Cabin, Plot 37C (next to the Focal Point Café), Cameron Road Allotments, will open on the first three Saturday mornings in February 2023 for our annual sale [Please find the dates in the diary section]. Please make a note of these dates as we have reduced the quantities on offer to avoid the waste we had this year with the aim of selling all stock by the end of February.

What we will be selling in 2023:

Potatoes: First Earlies – Arran Pilot ⁶, Pentland Javelin ^{2 & 7}, Swift ^{5, 7 & 8}

Second Earlies – Charlotte (salad) ^{3 & 6} AGM, Kestrel³

Early Maincrop – Desiree AGM, Picasso ⁵ AGM

Late Maincrop – Cara ^{4 & 6}, Maris Piper AGM, Sarpo Mira¹ AGM, Setanta ^{1, 3 & 6}, Valor ⁴

Prices: £4 per 7lb; 70p per lb for quantities less than 7lb.

AGM = Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit.

¹ High Resistance to Blight; ² Good Golden Eelworm Resistance; ³ Good resistance to blackleg and slug damage;

⁴ Good Resistance to Blight; ⁵ Good Disease Resistance; ⁶ Good resistance to scab; ⁷ Keep well in the ground;

⁸ Very early and good in containers.

There is excellent information on growing and recommended potato varieties on this website:

www.gardenfocused.co.uk

Onions: Sturon AGM, Red Baron AGM

Shallots: Golden Gourmet, Red Sun

Prices: £1.20 per half lb.

As in previous years we will also be selling **6X manure** [if you haven't tried this then it is an excellent highly concentrated lightweight alternative to bulky farmyard manure being a fibrous chicken manure fertiliser which is oven sterilized to kill off pathogens and weeds. It contains nutrients and all the trace elements that plants require and no manufactured chemicals or lime, with a neutral pH. The fibrous, organic content conditions the soil and adds bulk to stabilize it.], **Growmore**, **Fish Blood & Bone**, **Bonemeal**, **Sulphate of Ammonia**, **Sulphate of Potash**, **Superphosphate**, **Sharp Sand**, **Silver Sand**, **Coarse Grit**, **fine Potting Grit**, **Perlite** and **Vermiculite** (now sold loose by the litre), sturdy **8ft bamboo canes** for your Runner and French Beans. All at discounted retail prices.

Please remember to bring cash with you for your purchases and membership renewal for 2023.

Adrian Norris, Trading Cabin Manager

A Superb Autumn Show

Once again, on the 3rd September Bellingdon and Asheridge Village Hall was busy with contestants entering our Autumn Show. The hall was alive with people displaying their bounty of vegetables, colourful flowers, eye-catching photographs, amazing artwork, and tasty domestic entries on the long tables, ready for the judges' arrival after 1pm. With the weather looking temperamental, the afternoon was filled with people wondering around admiring the many exhibits, including the newly created category of "Ugliest Vegetable", which had several brave entrants.



The afternoon was complete with the guests tucking into refreshments of tea and cake, whilst enjoying the opportunity of winning a raffle prize! Finally, trophies, cups and shields were awarded according to the allotted scoring criteria for each award. Congratulations to everyone that was awarded a cup in the Show; we look forward to you competing again next year. It was a joy to see the classes for children being won by the next generation of keen gardeners too. Congratulations to **Marion Raper** for winning **Best In Class** and **Best In Show** for her stunning

hand-made earrings!

A big thank you to all exhibitors, helpers and visitors who made the show the success it was.

Membership Renewal - Suttons & Dobies Seeds Discount Codes

For those members who have not yet renewed their membership for 2022, and would like to receive the latest Suttons and Dobies discount codes when they become available in November, then please contact our Membership Secretary, Michelle Page, through our society email

cheshamvalegs@gmail.com.

DATES for your DIARY in 2023:

- **1st Potato Saturday** - 4th February; **2nd Potato Saturday** - 11th February; **3rd Potato Saturday** - 18th February. 9.30am to noon. Trading Cabin Plot 37C next to Focal Point, Cameron Road Allotments, Chesham.
- **Spring Flower Show, AGM and Afternoon Tea** - Saturday 1st April 2.30 to 4.30pm. The Methodist Church Hall, Bellingdon Road, Chesham.
- **Plant Sale** - Saturday 13th May 2.30 to 4.30pm. Bellingdon & Asheridge Village Hall with afternoon tea.
- **Plant Sale** - Saturday 20th May 9.30am to noon. Clock Tower, Market Square, Chesham.
- **Summer Show** - Saturday 1st July. The Methodist Church Hall, Bellingdon Road, Chesham.
- **Autumn Show** - Saturday 2nd September. Bellingdon & Asheridge Village Hall.
- **October Social** - Friday 13th October 7pm till late. Bellingdon & Asheridge Village Hall. Theme will be voted on at our AGM
- **Other Activities, including Garden Outings** will be announced in future newsletters and member email updates.