



WOOTTON COURTENAY GARDENING CLUB

Chairwoman's Report - 2024

2023 was a good year for Gardening Club trips, in particular. We started in April, with a visit to Stuart and Helen Senior's arboretum in Creech St Michael. I suspect we were a little premature with the timing, as we'd have seen more foliage and flower only a few weeks later.

In May we made the trip to Marwood Hill Gardens, near Barnstaple, where several of us tramped round in circles looking for an elusive handkerchief tree in full flower (it was hiding in plain sight, as it turned out). Midsummer saw us at the Rocking Horse Cafe, a charmingly personal garden near Stogumber. By the way, the garden we had hoped to visit on that date, cancelled due to the owner's ill health - Vexford Court - is now in the calendar for this year. In late July we took a group to the much-acclaimed Burrow Farm Gardens, near Axminster. Despite a damp start to the day, it turned out to be a really good visit, with some fascinating trees, beautifully untamed herbaceous borders, great viewpoints and a decent nursery.

The Flower and Produce Show in early August was a big highlight of our year. It was well attended (but not overcrowded) and, as ever, it punched above its weight, with some fabulous exhibits on display. It also made a very healthy profit for the Gardening Club, so we will be able to donate to a horticulturally-related cause again this year. The Committee has decided to repeat our donation to Adam Reed's community growing initiative, Good Vibe Veg, for a second year, as it will provide continuity for his school visits programme. Next year, however, we will be looking for a different cause to support. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

We were all sorry to say goodbye to Veronica Clegg as Chair of the Flower and Produce Show. Veronica did such a wonderful job and she is a hard act to follow, but I'm very pleased that Ingrid Popplewell has volunteered to take on the role, as I think she will be an excellent Chair. Ingrid is on the Gardening Club committee, and we will all do whatever we can to support her as she takes on her first show. I'm also pleased to announce that Jeremy Curtis has agreed to join the Gardening Club committee. Jeremy is a knowledgeable and enthusiastic gardener, and I'm sure his input will be invaluable as the Club goes into the future.

Currently the Club has 47 members. In a village of around 220 people, that is quite a remarkable membership figure. The Club is financially comfortable and we have an exciting programme lined up for 2024, which hopefully will include a trip to Yeo Valley Garden in July.

I'd like to thank everyone in the Gardening Club for their time, effort and enthusiasm this year. I'd particularly like to thank the committee, who have helped put things into perspective for me when things haven't quite gone according to plan!

Marion Jay