

We didn't like it at all, that cold, wet month of May, but the plants loved it!



Yes, I know that flowering was delayed but there was still plenty going on. Plants are very good at deciding what is 'freak weather' and ignoring it but we know that plants can count days or somehow measure time. The cool, wet weather went on for so long that they decided that these temperate rain forest conditions were going to continue and could sustain taller plants. My *Geranium magnificum* is taller than I have ever known, up to my waist, submerging the bird bath (see the picture) and it is usually considered a good, front of the border, plant. Stachys, Phlox, Viola, Astrantia,

Campanula, to name but a few, are also much taller than usual. I fear an almighty flop may be on the cards if the dry weather continues. Two books that you will find fascinating to read are 'What a Plant Knows' by Daniel Chamovitz and 'The hidden life of Trees' by Peter Wohlleben. You will be amazed.

The low temperatures did delay the flowering of some plants by about two/three weeks. In 2019, when we opened our gardens, I knew exactly what was in flower on 2nd June. This gives me a good way of checking and the weather effects were not universal. Clematis, 'Broughton Star' flowered as usual but most other things were late.

The good news is that, at last, the perennials are billowing and shoulder to shoulder, creating a haze of white and shades of blue/purple, with injections of yellow from my trusty yellow or variegated shrubs. (See the picture).



It is so good that the garden visiting season is here. I have done two visits already and I usually have some horticultural or design problems that I want to solve as I look round. Alliums, like Purple Sensation, are spectacular, trouble free plants. Tall, fascinating, good for pollinating insects, untouched by aphids or slugs but there is one drawback. As they come into flower their leaves turn yellow and lie in an untidy mess round their ankles. You can pick these up but the long leafless stem still looks odd and anyway this is a waste of space. I need something that is the right height at the right time to cover the mess. By then, Phlox have grown enough to do the job but they are sometimes nearly as tall as the allium so rather defeat the object of getting tall purple lollipops striding through the border. *Alchemilla mollis* is a possibility but am I the only person who can't get

it to grow well? Anyway, I came home with *Geranium sylvaticum* Album . It is one of the earliest geraniums to flower, (white), and another possibility was *Geranium sanguineum* which I haven't managed to get hold of yet.

Gardening has got to be fun so when we first arrived and I had to plan the front garden long border, I decided to have some shrubs that were geometric shapes. This would tie in with the geometrically laid blocks which give a formal air to the front garden. I am really glad that I made that decision as we now have a long low rendered wall, painted cream, and the shapes show up beautifully against it. The shrubs are *buxus* (box), some inverted cones and some drum - shaped. The other are slow growing conifers that make good pointed cones or rounded ones, rather like plump, puffed up cushions. Doing my pruning round this last week I realised that I had no cubes so..... *Euonymus* Silver Queen has turned into a cube, or at least, it will be by next year. It was what I call volcano shaped, shooting out in all directions. It is looking at me a bit dejectedly at the moment but it will get over the shock.

Whatever your gardening interest, enjoy the outdoors while it is lush and remember, keen gardeners, that what we called weeds are now favoured and sometimes rare, wild flowers! There is a thought!

Happy times!

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