

# Stratford sub Castle Garden Club April 2021

Over coffee and cake in the garden and socially distanced, of course, *Steve said 'We are all virologists now'.*

This was last summer and we have learned so much more since then, Charles Darwin would be proud of us. The Covid virus reproduces so easily, once inside us, that the random mutations (variations) become obvious to scientists because so many generations of the virus can occur in a short space of time. We all listen, apprehensively, for news of a new vaccine resistant variant. Not long ago any **virus** was the stuff of obscure research but now we are all amateur virologists.

Compared to this, **gardening can seem much more complicated.** If you receive a gift of an expensive plant for your garden you think:

*'Oh no, how do I not kill this?' Does it want acid or alkaline soil (pH), does it want rapid drainage or does it want its feet wet all the time? What aspect must it have, (must it look north, south, east or west) and how tall will it get?*

Many years ago, when I was still fairly new to gardening, I read about the colour wheel. I learned that if you took colours from opposite sides of the colour wheel and put them side by side you get a heightened effect. If you put blue flowers next to yellow flowers then both colours seem more vibrant. I HAD TO TRY THIS. I did all the research, pH, drainage, aspect, height and chose two lovely plants that would fit in with my planting scheme. However, I had forgotten one important thing. They both grew well but, guess what, they flowered two months apart, the flowers were dead on one whilst the others were still in bud. Good job that both colours went well with green.

Something I often do, with colour, is plant soft coloured flowers, (white, pale pink, soft yellow and blue) near the house and put orange, red and gold in the distance. The orange 'flavoured' colours will zing out from afar and take your eye across the garden so that you see its full extent. You are aware of the softer colours near you but the eye does not rest there. You can use this the other way round of course if your boundary is a bit grim. A huge white clematis can make a broken fence/shed seem obscure and unimportant.



Well, here is something relaxing to think about. Turn down the volume on all the check points because most plants are very tolerant. It is Springtime and all plants just want to grow. The daffodils, in the pictures, were trampled numerous times last summer, as the wall was built, rendered and painted but the urge to flower in Spring was still there. This is why, in Spring, we can haul plants out of the ground, chop them in half and replant them getting two healthy specimens.



Attitudes to gardening have changed so much recently and new gardeners must wonder where to start. **Well, here is where to start! Grow lots of different things,** including some vegetables and herbs and don't go overboard on any one kind of plant.

Have some evergreen trees and shrubs or a hedge to give shelter, cover and nesting sites for birds, also some trees or bushes that have

blossom for insects and then berries or fruit later. Aim for having something in flower all year and stop worrying about the lawn. When we arrived here seven years ago I was shocked by the poor lawn. Something needed to be done about it but a leaking roof, wonky shower and non-functional kitchen took precedence. But now, unchanged, it is the flower bed that I happen to walk on. We have had an enormous area of violets in flower for three months, from before Christmas and now the daisies are on the way. A message of approval came from goldfinches. In January, one sat for a full five minutes eating the seeds on a scruffy dandelion head in the lawn. (Dandelions deserve a better press.) A few days later, two feasted on the Echinacea seed heads that I had left standing in a flower bed.

Just remember that a dead plant is a wonderful planting opportunity which allows you to learn about something else. Also, when any new plant blooms or comes into leaf put some in a little vase/container next to your dinner plate and enjoy its complexity. This is what I do.

Dorothy Richards