

September 2023



## *Sharing the joy of gardening*

Part of my role at Mickfield Hostas is to speak to horticultural groups and share my experience of growing and exhibiting hostas. My aim is to encourage people to try hostas, especially if they have been put off by the threat of pest damage, or help improve their experience of growing the genus.

Each club I have presented to have been enthusiastic, welcoming and hungry to know more, so let's hear it for gardening clubs of all types...



## *People + plants + food = fun*

Food and company are more fun in the fresh air. Add in some plants and the spaces we use become more than just an outside sitting area.



Gardens can inspire, create moods, lift spirits, and generally add to our sense of wellbeing. Indeed most of the gardeners I have spoken to seldom relax in their own spaces as there is always something to do. Perhaps the answer to this conundrum is to relax in other peoples' gardens instead?

## *Societies and clubs I have visited*

Over the past few years I have spoken to a large number of people through presenting to their club, and I am pleased to report that most are thriving.

However, this is not always the case and Covid19 is partly to blame. The impact of this major interruption to our lives has created a world where many people are still not comfortable with socialising. Any gardening fan will recognise this as simply a wish to spend more time with plants and less with people, but we all need to engage at some

I'll hand over to Lenore at this point, and credit her friend Herbert Crosby for the photos in this month's newsletter...

### Greetings Gardeners,

Gardening has increased in popularity in the U.S., especially since the changes we faced during the pandemic. People of all ages here are becoming interested in gardening. Garden clubs have become more popular as well, with some gaining younger members for the first time. Garden clubs here share both similarities and differences. Typically clubs hold regular meetings and charge nominal dues, but differ in other ways, such as their stated purpose and their activities. The two garden clubs I belong to offer examples these differences.

One group, in an adjacent town, is part of a state federation of 37 state garden clubs, overseen by a national organization. It reaps the benefits of that affiliation and promotes its values, including community service and care of the environment. It has open membership and we meet in a spacious public space.



The second garden club is an independent, less formal group in my home town. Its primary purpose simply is to share gardening experiences and to learn from one another. We advocate, practice, and teach environmentally sound methods. We limit membership to town residents only, by invitation, and our members are both individuals and couples. By limiting membership, we keep the group to a manageable level, allowing us to meet in members' homes.

Here are some of the shared benefits of the two garden clubs:

- **Social connection.**

In addition to some social time at regular meetings, each club holds activities with a social focus. The first club has an annual dinner, a holiday party, and garden potluck dinners. The town group holds "Cocktails in the Garden," a popular activity where members take turns hosting in their gardens, with another member providing food and drinks. This club also devotes an autumn meeting to discussing

level and a shared love of gardening is a great incentive.

None of us is getting any younger and therein lies the main cause of concern for the future viability of clubs. Most of us come to gardening later in life for a whole raft of reasons and consequently most horticultural groups have an older membership. However, it is noticeable how many more younger people are coming to talks and plant fairs and they are hungry for knowledge and are keen to try something new.

So here is a big shout out to the fabulous folks who run these amazing clubs – you all do a brilliant job helping to keep our country in bloom. I thought it would be worth listing the clubs I have visited (some more than once) in the hope that it might inspire some of my more local readers to investigate one close to them – here goes:

- 4 Parishes Gardening Club
- Acton Garden Club
- Aldeburgh Garden Club
- Beccles Horticultural Society
- Beccles U3A Gardening Club
- Bedfield Garden Club
- Belstead Garden Club
- Bentley Horticultural Society
- Breckland Garden Club
- Cambridge Plant Heritage Group
- Chedburgh Garden Club
- Cornard and Chiltern Horticultural Society
- Cotton Gardening Club
- Crowfield Garden Club
- Debenham Gardening Club
- Dedham Horticultural Society

our gardening successes and failures over the prior season, typically with praise and much support from other members.

- **Inspiration.**

It is wonderful to see what others have created in their gardens, from visual beauty to impressive vegetable plots. One garden club offers state-wide open garden days during the summer in selected gardens, as well as an annual garden tour. In the town club, we visit one another's gardens and learn about each gardener's practices. Both clubs' events are beneficial. While one allows tours of selected display gardens, the other allows us to visit friends' gardens, of varied sizes and states of maturity.

- **Education.**

Both clubs sponsor presentations from experts in varied gardening-related fields, on a wide range of practical and scientific topics. These might include environmental issues, botany, insects, and photography, along with garden design and art. Many of our members are experts as well, both in scientific fields and in particular plant species. We continue to learn from one another. Novices learn from mentors, and experienced gardeners learn from novices.

Garden clubs offer benefits for gardeners of all ages. Clubs are a great way to connect with like-minded people and increase your gardening expertise, as well as your overall gardening enjoyment.

Happy summer's end,  
Lenore



Thank you Lenore, I couldn't put it any better. There are so many benefits of belonging to a gardening group.

As I mention in the side column, not all horticultural groups are thriving. One of the problems is trying to find activities everyone will want to participate in, which is why I really like the idea of sharing our spaces with like-minded gardening enthusiasts. Trips are usually expensive and take a lot of organising but visiting

Diss Horticultural Society  
Drinkstone Garden Club  
East Harling Garden Club  
Elmswell Garden Club  
Essex Alpine Society  
Felixstowe Garden Club  
Finborough and District  
Gardening Club  
Fordham Garden Club  
Fornham Garden Club  
Fornsett Diggers and Dibblers  
Fowlmere and Thriplow Garden  
Club  
Fressingfield Community  
Gardeners  
Gamlingay and District  
Gardening Club  
Glemsford Garden Club  
Great Bentley Garden Club  
Great Dunmow Hort.Society  
Great Totham Gardening Club  
Hadleigh & District Garden Club  
Hemingford Grey Garden Club  
Hinderclay: Greenfingers Club  
Hitcham' After Sevens' & 'Hoes'  
Hollesey Gardening Club  
Holywell-cum-Needlingworth  
Garden Club  
Horringer Garden Club  
Hoxne Gardening Club  
Laindon and District Hort. Soc.  
Langmere Garden Club  
Lavenham Garden Club  
Lawford and District Garden  
Club  
Letchworth and District  
Gardeners Association  
Little Paxton Garden Club  
Marks Tey Garden Club  
Martham and District Garden  
Club  
Mersea Island Garden Club  
Mountnessing Garden Club  
Needham Market Garden Club  
Norfolk & Suffolk Hardy Plant  
Society

members' gardens is local, and very cost-effective.

Perhaps this is a good opportunity to once again promote the work of a great charity, The National Gardens Scheme (NGS). This organisation raises a colossal amount of money every year through the idea of sharing our garden spaces. NGS Open Garden Days have become a highly enjoyable way to gain inspiration for our own gardens, whilst raising money for charity. There is also the work of Perennial, the charity supporting horticulture, which has taken on significant gardens in order to ensure their continued existence, whilst raising funds to support those who work in the industry. Both organisations use gardens to raise funds so perhaps this would be a great way for horticultural groups to charge non-members to visit their gardens and raise funds for their activities?

Behind every landmark garden is a small army of volunteers working hard to maintain them. I was recently at Hyde Hall speaking to some of the volunteers and it struck me that perhaps they would get more from helping someone maintain their garden a bit closer to home but the opportunities do not present themselves.

There must be thousands of people with garden spaces they cannot manage. Sharing those spaces would not only give the opportunity to non-garden owners to have a space they could tend, it would be the chance to develop new friendships. I have met a few groups who actively undertake this form of outreach to help retain less able members, extending their involvement for longer. What a worthwhile activity!

There are so many possibilities to extend the role of gardening beyond the joy of the activity itself so why not join a club or organisation closer to home and discover the benefits for yourself?

[Happy gardening,](#)

**Team Mickfield Hostas**

Norfolk Hardy Plant Society  
Norfolk Masonic Garden Club  
Offord Gardeners Association  
Orford and District Garden Club  
Palgrave Gardening Club  
Rattlesden Gardening Club  
Raydon Garden Club  
Reydon Gardening Group  
Romford Gardening Friends  
St.Neots & District Gardening Club  
Somersham Gardening Club  
Southend Bonsai Society  
Stalham Garden Club  
Stebbing Garden Club  
Sutton Garden Club  
Three Villages Gardening Club  
Tiptree Garden Club & Horticultural Society  
Tollesbury Garden Club  
U3A Bury Gardens Group  
U3A Newmarket  
West Wickham Garden Club  
Westerfield Gardening Club  
Westleton Gardening Club  
Wickford Garden Club  
Wickham Bishops Hort. Club  
Winterton on Sea Gardening Club  
Woodbridge Hort. Society  
Woolpit Gardening Club  
Yoxford Gardening Club