**ELTHAM AND AVERY HILL GARDENS SOCIETY**

Website: [www.eahgs.org.uk](http://www.eahgs.org.uk)

**NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2025**

Every growing year is difficult in its own way – too hot or too cold, too dry or too wet – but this year has certainly been challenging. I found early in the season that with the long hours of sunshine I had better seed germination than for many years and planted out my seedlings with great enthusiasm, only to return after a week away to find them scorched, parched and beyond saving! If this is the way our climate is going to change in the not too distant future I, for one, am going to have to change what I grow and how I grow it. Gardening and growing never standstill and there are always new things to learn and new ways to do them.

**OUR ANNUAL SHOW**

As I’m sure you know by now our annual show will take place at 3.00pm on Saturday 30th August 2025 in the hall at St Mary’s School, Glenure Road, SE9 1UF. Entry for non-exhibitors is £1.00.

You will have received a copy of the show schedule by email. The show will include the John King Single Potato Challenge and the Inter-Society Competition.

As their usual venue is not available to them this year due to ongoing works, we have invited the Mottingham Horticultural Society to submit entries to our show. Hopefully this will result in a good number of entries in what has become a very difficult growing year.

**Show teas – volunteers needed!**

Every year at our annual show, we provide homemade cakes, teas and coffees, with profits going towards the cost of putting on the show.  We do need some help on the day with serving the cakes and making the teas/coffees and all volunteers would be welcome. If you are able to help out for a couple of hours (2.30pm-4.30pm) on Saturday 30 August, or would like to channel your inner Mary Berry and donate a cake, please contact Alison Banks on 07929 908 801.

**NOTES FROM A GARDEN**

After a great start to the garden in spring it feels like things have ground to a halt because of all the hot weather we’ve been having.  I don’t know about you, but everything seems to be about half the size it would normally be.  I had some beautiful peonies back in May, but the stems weren’t very long. My hostas are still doing well, but the leaves are half the size they should be. My crocosmia lucifers and spirea bushes are about a foot shorter than they would be in a good year. This year I’m just going to have to accept that small is beautiful!

That was definitely the case for my gooseberries, which were about the size of large peas when I picked them. They did make a delicious (single portion) of gooseberry fool though.  In the meantime, with three vigorous courgette plants on the go on my patio, perhaps it’s just as well the courgettes themselves are smaller than they would normally be!

And now my attention is turning towards what I can put in the show.  My tomato plants are looking ok, so I’m keeping my fingers crossed for them. I’ve entered for the John King Potato Challenge and am using a potato grow bag instead of putting them in the ground because the four fox cubs that gambol about at the end of my garden would just dig them up for fun.  So far, the potato plants (I split the original potato in two) look ok. Fingers crossed!

**DAVID’S POND LIFE Chapter 2**

So, following my excitement and joy at finally having established newts in my garden pond you may remember from the last Newsletter that I was anticipating a possible explosion of wildlife over the summer. A little like gardening generally, the anticipation of better things to come has rather given way to the continual struggle to keep anything alive.

I suppose like everyone else the challenges of the long dry and hot summer left me wondering what to do for the best. I have a couple of water butts in my garden which I was able to use to keep the pond topped up for a little while, but the evaporation far exceeded the amount of rainwater which I had collected. I was therefore forced to top up with tap water from the garden hose (which I am sure is not recommended by any pond expert). At least the pond was not reduced to a muddy puddle, but what effect the chlorine and fluoride will have had on my newt population only time will tell.

The second rather alarming effect of the hot and dry weather has been that the early drop of fruit from a nearby apple tree has been much greater than usual. Although I am sure some local wildlife has appreciated the unripe apples many seemed to find their way into the pond. This, combined with the early leaf fall from some other plants, has led to a marked reduction in water quality! I have also been very slow to control the growth of the oxygenating plants in the pond which means that even if frogs or toads were attracted by the water, they would need to be very determined to burrow their way through the dense foliage. I suppose the density of the plants did at least stop the rotten apples from sinking to the bottom of the pond.

And have I seen any wildlife? Well, there are large numbers of wasps in the area (no doubt attracted by the apples) and a large number of bees and other insects in the purple loosestrife which surrounds the pond. I can honestly say however that I have yet to see a dragonfly or a frog.

With a free weekend coming up I am scheduled to clear out some of the pond debris in the hope that late summer might still see a wider variety of animals and insects coming to the water. A decent rainfall would also help, I am sure. I am still yet to be convinced by the Gardeners World mantra that if you build a pond all sorts of wildlife will suddenly appear – however, half of the joy of gardening (and ponds) lies in the continual triumph of hope over expectation.

**MEMBERSHIP**

EAHGS membership runs from 1 October to 30 September. You are welcome to renew your membership for 2025/26 at the Show or at the Pippenhall shop on a Sunday morning between 10.00am and 12.00 noon.

**TRADING SHOP REPORT**

The shop is well stocked with peat-reduced and peat-free composts. The Maxicrop liquid tomato fertilizer has changed its name to Xtra-Fol but is still the same product at the same price as before. So, as we say every time,

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE SHOP**

**To keep in touch with all the Society’s news, shop price lists and many other items of interest, log on to**

**www.eahgs.org.uk**