

ELTHAM AND AVERY HILL GARDENS SOCIETY

Website: www.eahgs.org.uk

NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2025

Our annual show took place on 30th August and we were pleased to welcome guest entries from Mottingham Horticultural Society who were unable to hold their show this year because of ongoing works at their usual venue. Despite all the rain earlier the year, followed by weeks of hot sunshine and drought, the exhibits were of a very high standard. Not surprisingly there were fewer entries in the floral classes but there were plenty of entries in the fruit and vegetable classes especially tomatoes. There were interesting pickles and chutneys as well as delicious scones, cakes and bread in the domestic classes.

The Inter-Society competition was won this year by Eltham and Avery Hill so thanks and congratulations to those who contributed to our combined entry.

The homemade cakes available at the refreshment counter showed off the generosity and baking skills of our members. The selling of drinks and cakes gets very busy during the afternoon and more helpers would be greatly appreciated by our stalwart volunteers. It would only take about an hour and a half (2.45 - 4.15pm) of your time and would be a great help.

When entering items in the show it is important to adhere to the instructions in the schedule. For example, any jelly or jams should be approximately 1lb in weight and should be labelled with the contents and date of making. The fruit and vegetables should be of the number stipulated in the schedule. We hope, next year, to include in the newsletter some handy hints on how to prepare your produce for showing.

LOCAL HISTORY

While sorting out some papers in my 'Of Interest' folder I came across this news item from *Greenwich Time* 3 February 2015:

"Protecting Pippenhall

'The Royal Borough of Greenwich is working with local community representatives to restore a special site of historical and ecological importance in Eltham.

Pippenhall Meadow off Butterfly Lane in Eltham has a fascinating history - part of it contains an historic agricultural landscape feature known as ridge and furrow - undulations in the ground from where it was historically ploughed. This meadow is classified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and some rare plant species have previously been identified.

The council is halting the letting on part of the land to sensitively clear some bramble growth using specialist methods to protect the ridge and furrow and to help restore some rare plant species. The council will then develop a management plan for the site to ensure any future letting arrangements will reflect and maintain the special status of the site."

Does anyone know how this management plan progressed and whether Pippenhall Meadow still has special status?

DAVID'S POND LIFE Chapter 3

So, news from the garden pond is not really very positive.

Despite my best efforts to top up the pond to reasonable levels during the long dry spell it was by the end of the summer reduced to little more than a muddy puddle which I am not sure is really the wildlife environment that Gardeners World wax lyrical about.

The pond is now pretty much surrounded by a mixture of native water plants which I am fervently hoping will have provided enough cover for my newt population to have avoided predation whilst they spend their time out of the water. Although water mint is very thuggish in its habit, it does provide cover! I hadn't realised that newts only spend their early days in water. After hatching they develop into small newts called efts which then leave the pond, only returning in the Spring to breed. Surprising to me was also the fact that they only start to breed after two to four years – who would have thought such small and apparently fragile creatures could live that long?

Aside from newts, I have seen no signs of either frogs or toads for the whole summer. I was hoping that it might be possible to collect some frogspawn from another pond next year and move it, but this is not recommended as it potentially transfers diseases and unwanted pond life so I shall have to rely on nature taking its course.

The challenge for the next month or so is of course keeping the pond leaf free, or at least free enough, so that the sludge from decaying organic matter, which always collects at the bottom of the pond, is kept to a minimum. Easier said than done. It always seems that you can spend hours carefully removing the leaves and putting them aside to make leaf mould only to return five minutes later to find that it looks as if you had never done anything. However, hope springs eternal in the human breast. If I can pluck up the courage to dip my hands in to the bottom of the pond and lift some of the debris out, then come next Spring I will be looking into the clear pond waters and seeing newts gently drifting about. We shall see!

NOTES FROM ALISON'S GARDEN

In the last newsletter I said I thought I was going to be swamped with courgettes but sadly that never happened. After the first (delicious) crop I only had a handful of them, probably due to the lack of rain and the fact that they were old seeds to begin with. But I'm not giving up! I've bought some new seeds for next year – Bianca di Trieste (pale green courgettes) – and hopefully I'll be more successful.

Talking about being unsuccessful, the potatoes I grew for the show competition were an absolute disaster. Despite growing them in a container on the patio so I could keep a closer eye on them, they ended up either rotten or covered in potato scabs. Quite how I managed that is beyond me! Still, again, I'm not giving up and I'm going to order some Charlotte seed potatoes from the shop this month so that I can try again next year. I've grown them before in the garden, and they were beautiful, so I'll go back to doing that.

But it's not all been disastrous – I have had a few small wins. I have a small pond (about 50cm diameter) which I dug out a couple of months ago to make a little bit deeper. I was really pleased to walk up the garden to put out the washing one day and see four small frogs looking up at me!* I have also successfully grown two chrysanthemums on from one of those 3-stem pots you can get in M&S, and I'm hoping I'll see my first blooms on them next year. And the bulbs I so carefully lifted and dried earlier in the year are all looking good to plant now that the ground is soft enough again. Turns out that paper compostable bags for kitchen caddies are excellent for storing bulbs!

The next few weekends will be spent putting the garden to bed and splitting and moving perennials etc. I'm also going to go on the hunt for a Victoria Plum Tree to plant if I can – once I've cleared the space for it. And then I can sit back and start planning for next year....

**Editor's note: Such different experiences of garden ponds! I hope David and Alison can help each other with their wildlife ponds.*

ENCHANTED GARDEN KENT

You might remember a visit to this garden in Kent was suggested earlier in the summer. This didn't happen due to lack of support but for if you are interested there is an informative website and regular monthly newsletter with details of their activities and tips on growing: www.enchantedsouthernkents.co.uk

TRADING SHOP

The shop is still well stocked with composts and fertilisers. Orders for seed potatoes at £1.40 per lb will be taken on Sundays during November. Varieties available for order will be listed on our website. Minimum order of each variety is 1lb weight.

The shop will close for the winter from after trading on Sunday, 30 November and reopen on Sunday 2 February 2026.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership runs from September to October and the best way to renew is to call in at the shop on a Sunday morning between 10.00am and 12.00 noon. If this is not possible for you, please contact our Membership Secretary, Brian Greenwood (brian@eahgs.org.uk) (tel 020 8850 6714) to sort something out. Membership remains at £5pa for regular members, £3pa for seniors. If you know of a school group for instance who would like to join they can now be included under our 'Group Membership'.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026 HERE ARE SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

AGM: The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 7pm on Monday 30th March 2026 (date to be confirmed) at the Scout Hut in the lane off the roundabout near B&Q in Footscray Road (where it was held last time) . The business of the meeting won't take longer than half an hour and will be followed by refreshments and a talk by John Webb on Avery Hill Park and its History.

The **annual show will take place on SATURDAY 5th SEPTEMBER 2026**, at St Mary's School, as usual.

This year has flown by and I can't believe it's almost time to wish all our members a happy and healthy Christmas and a New Year season full of enthusiasm and energy for those new garden and allotment plans.

To keep in touch with all the Society's news, shop price lists, potato varieties to order and many other items of interest, log on to:

www.eahgs.org.uk