



Drinkstone Gardening Club - report to the Annual Parish Meeting 12 May 2016

We welcome everyone, from total novices to experts. We have 45 Members now.

As usual, we started our year in October with Barry Gayton and our own version of Gardener's Question Time. Barry has a truly encyclopaedic knowledge of plants, so he was able to answer everyone's queries in a friendly manner. He casually mentioned he was busy bringing his half-hardys inside; it turned out that there were 2000!

In November, Martin Gibbison from The Place for Plants gave a very interesting talk on clematis climbers. His pictures were sublime and he took some of the mystery out of pruning the beasts.

In December, we went to the Beth Chatto garden for a night time lantern walk around the garden, followed by carols and mince pies in the café. It was very dark but no-one broke a leg or got lost.

Sadly, we had to cancel our February meeting because the speaker was ill. In March, Phil Mizen, an organic gardener, came along to talk about this, proclaiming that it is a 'philosophy'. After hearing that he has to follow the stern commandments in a very thick book published by the Soil Association, some of us decided to follow a different gardening faith and keep on using fertilisers and dear old glyphosate.

Our April meeting was a visit to East Bergholt's The Place for Plants. We had a totally enchanting tour round the garden. Its hilly situation and acid soil made for a complete contrast to what we have round here. The camellias and acers were amazing, as were the woodland slopes with fritillaries, daffodils and snowdrops. There were notices everywhere warning us about 'slippery paths'; obviously, they have no experience of Drinkstone footpaths in the winter.

We are looking forward to our May meeting, when Melanie Collins of Mickfield Hostas is coming to tell us all about these lovely plants. Some advice on how to avoid making them into a slug restaurant would be welcome.

We plan to visit Helmingham Hall in June. Lyn is booking this one so everyone is waiting with bated breath to see if (a) the coach turns up on the right day and (b) it takes us to the right place.

Finally, to round off our year, Christine Harbutt has very kindly invited us to go round her NGS garden. She has a vast variety of plants so we are looking forward to our trip.

In all, we've had an interesting year. We welcome suggestions from our members as to where they'd like to go in future years.