

JOTTINGS FROM THE GARDEN
Jan 2008



Happy New Year to everyone – the beginning of my 3rd with LSW, would you believe! It's gone so quickly.

Well, is it a sign of madness when you find yourself having a conversation with a squirrel? If so, then I'm afraid I've completely lost it. When looking at the feeder last week, I couldn't work out the shape on it, but realized soon that it was one of our squirrels – which explains why the food has been going down so quickly! I moved towards him, but he wasn't too perturbed, just moved to the branch above. As I suspected, as soon as my back was turned, he was back again, despite me telling him specifically that the food was for the **birds**, not him.

Ah well, I shall have to look at one of the gadgets you can get to protect feeders from such as he. Otherwise I'll be bankrupt!

It's a while since I "jotted" (September I believe). It's a quiet time of year now – and the weather has certainly stopped a lot of activity. There has been a fair amount of clearing up after storms I have to say! Phil has invested in a fancy new leaf blower/vacuum/shredder to make my life easier. So the car park is a little easier to keep clear of leaves now, so I shall endeavour to do so for you – let's hope I don't prove too "risky" when the health & safety assessment is carried out!!

My winter projects: At the front, I have cut down the bushes in front of the Priory Room, in preparation for new planting. I now await their root removal before I can put in some of the *Gaura* I mentioned in September's Jottings. Along with these I shall plant some of the grasses that have seeded themselves about - *Stipa arundinaceae* (there are some at the bottom of the garden which are doing splendidly). They will give some all year round colour, and the *Gaura* providing dainty summer flowers lasting well into autumn. I plan sowing some Californian poppies amongst it all, so shall be interested to see if they come up. And maybe in the autumn plant a few more bulbs for springtime. Lovely jubbly.



There is also an old abandoned canoe by the side of the house, which is earmarked for another "Flower Barrow" project. I thought it would look good under the trees in the car park, painted up with shade loving plants in it. I'll see if I get round to that this year. Also the ivy under the box hedge ever needs attention, but that's quite boring really, not of much interest to you all.



Fiona asked me if anything is happening in the garden – well, just take a walk outside and see for yourselves (as she did, I saw her – well done Fiona!). In the grass over on the left hand side of the garden, between the 2nd & 3rd trees (I think), the *Anemone de Caen* that Paul sent me, are coming up, along with some daffodil bulbs, which is very exciting. Under the laurel tree, the spring bed is waking up – the "stinking hellebore" (so inappropriately named for such a beautiful and useful plant) is now flowering (left). These are easy to grow, useful for winter/spring colour, all year round structure, and they seed about readily, so cheap! Some cyclamen coming up, some in flower, Phil's

snowdrops, *Anemone de Caen*, foxgloves are beginning to shoot again, bluebells (of course – but that's ok cos I've said they can grow there!), primroses (those the pigeons haven't eaten). And yes, I shall be delighted to

JOTTINGS FROM THE GARDEN **Jan 2008**

accept more snowdrops from Fiona when she's dividing hers – and anyone else who cares to offer. Thank you very much.

In the main lawn, the crocuses I planted on August bank holiday are now beginning to show. At home, mine have just begun to show colour, so hopefully ours will not be far behind. I planned them to be flowering early, so they're finished before they start cutting the lawns. It's best if there's a few weeks after they've flowered before cutting, in order for them to set seed, and thus naturalise. But nature will do what nature will do!



In the reception bed, the tulips are just nudging up now – now here's a lesson to you. I thought I was being very clever, planting 'Spring Green' tulips (left) in amongst the *Pieris* and *Carex* which are predominantly green/yellow/whitish. Thought that would look good, and some free pink tulips 'Angelique' around the other side. However, I wasn't paying attention, and it was only when I'd nearly finished that I realised that I've done it the other way round! So it will be interesting to see – I look forward to comments Emma/Lizzy and anyone else in the office there. Probably will turn out much better than my original

plan, and put me to shame.

The Flower Barrow has now past its winter best I have to say. The pansies were lovely, but now been cut back and fed – they may flower again, but we'll see. The *Carex* 'Evergold' looks lovely with the purple *Heuchera* anyway, so all is not lost! These *Carex* (right) are another useful plant. These have all come from divisions of my own at home (do in spring time when in active growth). Evergreen, seem to be ok in all soils, sun/shade. Low maintenance. Magic. Now, what are thoughts for the barrow this year? The sweet peas were lovely but I thought Fuchsias would give a longer lasting display with less maintenance. I thought of something else as well, but can't remember. Any other thoughts anyone?



The central bed has just been tidied – I will cut back the *Stipa* flower heads soon, they're beginning to look a bit sad. No signs of tulips or fritillaries yet. The long border has signs of bulbs coming up – though I have to admit to being unclear as to exactly what is where there I can remember some. I wrote in Sept of the daffodils. And I think I can also see some *Nectaroscordum* (ornamental onions, left) coming up. I haven't grown these before, so this is an experiment (where have you heard that before?).

All the hardy geraniums and other herbaceous perennials have had a hair cut, as I can see fresh young leaves coming through. And I've used up all my compost now, putting it as a mulch on the reception bed. Next lot is coming along. The slow worms have hibernated somewhere else, but a toad was still there the other day.

The car park border needs a bit of cheering up, so I'm hoping to give that some attention this year, as well as the long border.

I will be ordering some seeds soon, and, I think, investing in more hellebores for the laurel bed; maybe some more dahlias, and perhaps some cypripediums to provide autumn flowers – very useful for cutting for the house. So many things in the catalogues I want to grow but they all cost money of course, and there is only so much you can fit in! .

Take heart, Spring **IS** just around the corner – the garden is telling me so. Next time I write I will be back from a sunny diving holiday in Cape Verde, lovely sunshine, 24C, warm seas, mmm. I must go now to check on the *Bergenia* plants (Elephant's ears) that have been potted up from root cuttings done a few weeks ago. I'm hoping to establish them around the bases of trees in the left hand lawn. They're in the propagator under the desk in our lounge. I was hoping Sam wouldn't notice

JOTTINGS FROM THE GARDEN
Jan 2008

Dlys x