

**GARDEN CHECK LIST**

This year seems to have been somewhat an adventurous one within many of my clients gardens around Oxford. For many have been experimenting with growing vegetables and edible produce within their flower borders. This is a subject I have covered previously, although rather sketchily.

There are numerous explanations as to why many ordinary gardeners would even consider dispensing entirely with the idea of having a designated vegetable plot.

The obvious one is that vegetable plots are notoriously labour intensive, but much of this workload can be relieved if you separate your vegetable plots out into long narrow beds. This system means you are not continually walking on the soil and compacting it, so it can mean there is less need for digging the soil over during the autumn and winter.

Lots of gardeners also raise the point that their vegetable plots often offer up far more produce than they can use or dispose of. Obviously, this leads to large volumes of wasted crops. Lots of gardeners, further still, prefer to grow flowers to enjoy rather than endless rows of carrots, celeriac or even onions.

So if you are a gardener that falls snugly into the latter category, then growing a few edible plants amongst your flowers is a good option. Lots of vegetables have some ornamental value to them, with the added bonus that you can eat and enjoy them at some point. Giving that extra dimension to your garden.

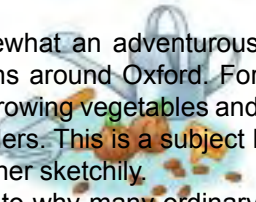
Some old fashioned runner beans can be used as a flowering climber. Leaf beet can be used for their intensely veined leaves and brightly coloured stems. Beetroot give a deep and luxurious look to a flower border with their dark leaves and red stems too. 'Step Over' apples, which can grow as low as 1 foot tall, are another medium you can use to add some unexpected interest. You can also plant some herbs throughout your garden, which have culinary uses as well as adding fragrance throughout the garden.

Many of the gardens I maintain have plantings of mixed herbs running throughout the gardens, seeping through the borders like little overlooked streams. Planted in this way, gives a theme throughout the garden, and it's a good way of making all the areas of the garden tie in and relate to each other. Its good to have different areas to a garden, but there needs to be some element that holds the whole thing together and makes it have some sense and reason to it.

So when you are sat looking through all those seed catalogues this autumn and winter, maybe think about adding something edible to your borders next year. Joining the adventurous movement that seems to be developing across Oxford.

*Happy Gardening*

**STUART MABBUTT**



**FOR SALE**

**TOYS** including Wooden Fort and large bag of figures, £8. Large amount of Lego £8. Various soft toys £2 each. Large bags glass marbles £1 bag. All excellent condition, ideal Xmas presents.

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**FREEBIES!**

Scanner (not compatible with Vista), Computer keyboard Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopaedia 1963, in 19 volumes, containing much of interest that stands the test of time... eg. history, poetry, literature etc. Ring 391 462

**MARCHAM PLAYERS**

You don't have to be good at acting to belong to the Marcham Players! No I'm not suggesting some of our actors are not talented! I'm only suggesting there are others who are not involved with your local drama group. I, like several of our members, joined by accident! Accompanying my young son to rehearsals, I suddenly found myself playing a magpie! Perhaps it was my lack of acting ability, or a lack of parts for ex-magpies, but I then found I was of more use off stage. Thus, for the most part, ended my acting career! To start with, I worked with Sheila Dunford who showed me the ropes in the cutting edge of stage management. In the Marcham Players the role of stage management takes on a whole new meaning to what one would find with the RSC! Not only does the stage manager have to make sure that props appear on stage at the right time during a performance, but also finding the cast to make sure they appear at the appropriate moments, and of course helping younger cast members with their homework!



The problem with props is they are not always fit for purpose. Whenever the starting pistol has been needed, I have frequently needed to hoist it off would-be Roy Rogers in the cast (not only the small boys, but the larger grown men variety!), rushing breathlessly into the wings only to find it jammed! On at least one occasion I have had to shout 'BANG' loudly from the wings during a performance. And this is before we get into the vagaries of 'special effects' some of which have failed miserably to blow up, others have gone off fit to waken the dead! Some of the stranger props have included a dead duck, which did not, like other edible props, end up at the end of production party, or the full sized coffin used in the second airing of the 'Son Illumiare'.

They say never work with children or animals. I would put in another proviso, that is never work with teenagers, children or animals! Galloping hormones are apt to throw a spanner in the works of an already over-worked stage manager! During one review, I need to dash into the female loos to extract weeping teenagers. Apparently both suffering from unrequited love of a fellow actor! Actually older cast members are sometimes as much trouble. The train, which made a half minute appearance in another review, where no one would admit to being a passenger. Each performance I would need to round up half a dozen reluctant passengers, all protesting 'I was never in this scene!' Give some people a part, and they think they are Lord Olivier!

Do consider joining the Marcham Players in what ever capacity, making fish, managing props & cast members or even acting! Contact Joey on 01865 391242 or Dave on 01865 391964.

**CHERYLL SEWELL**

**Our next 'With Great Pleasure' with readings for Christmas, 6th December at 7.30 pm. Venue to be confirmed.**

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