

TO EVERY THING THERE IS A SEASON ...

Is there anything more stunning than sitting on a garden bench, and surveying your garden, taking in the fruits of your labours of that day? Right now, on this balmy August evening, as I write these words in my garden, I doubt it.

I'm intentionally turning a blind eye to the fact that the nights are drawing in already. The evening is warm, and the moon hangs in the air like a guardian angel, all seems relatively quiet. The birds seem reluctant to go to roost for the night, and their calls keep me company. Enough light remains to enjoy the flowers around me, and the moths have replaced the bees, flitting about their business all around. Unfortunately, it's too dark to enjoy more than the silhouettes of the trees. No big deal though, as I know that all the trees and plants around me that are vanishing into darkness, will still be there in the morning. Greeting me with a mind-boggling array of greens.

Green is the most amazing colour in the natural world; it has more shades than any other colour. Scientists, at great expense, have studied this, and have proven that greenery is good for us. We could have told them that, and saved them the money. Although the countryside is good for our well being, our own little green oasis out in the garden is just as important to us. What better feeling can there be than harvesting a crop we have been tending all season, or enjoy the flower borders and lawns we have been tenderly caring for? I'm certainly enjoying this growing season, and growing a range of different plants. Both in my garden and in my clients gardens. It reminds me of disappearing into my granddads garden as a child, and exploring the mini-jungle of plants that grew well above my 3 feet in height.

I've been looking forward to harvesting the blackberries this year, after enjoying their magnificent growth during the wetter than average summer. But sadly, it may not have been worth the wait, as the fruit seems very poor this year. Although I may be wrong, as there were 1 or 2 children who came in with black-stained mouths and fingers, so perhaps the crop was originally bigger than I thought. It just got snaffled before I could lay my hands on it.

But there is a downside to all this harvesting, because once all the picking is underway, however hard it is to believe, summer is nearly over. I just don't want to know though. There's too much gardening to happen before the evenings really start to draw in and those closed curtains and fires shut out the advancing darkness. I'll just continue drinking in the atmosphere of the end of summer, of harvest festivals and full freezers. With a definite feeling of having stocked up against whatever winter might throw our way.

Excuse my ramblings this month, I've been struggling to think of some pearls of wisdom I can write about, and pass your way.

So I thought I would just share with you, the pleasure my garden is bringing me. Hopefully, I will be more inspired next time. The next time I write should be an interesting time personally for me, because I will be in the middle of moving house, so who knows what my inspiration will be? We are relocating up north to Glossop, Derbyshire in the Peak District, just south east of Manchester, so all those rolling hills and moors should be food for thought. But don't panic though, I will still be penning a regular article for you, as well as managing my Oxford gardening business by making regular bi-monthly trips back, so I'm not leaving you. But the thought of setting up another gardening service in Glossop, where the growing conditions are noticeably different from that in Oxford, really excites me.

I hope you will share this excitement with me, by continuing to enjoy the future articles that the relocation will inspire. My current address and phone numbers will still be applicable, even when we move, as my Oxford business office will still be based there, so keep in touch! *Enjoy your garden.*

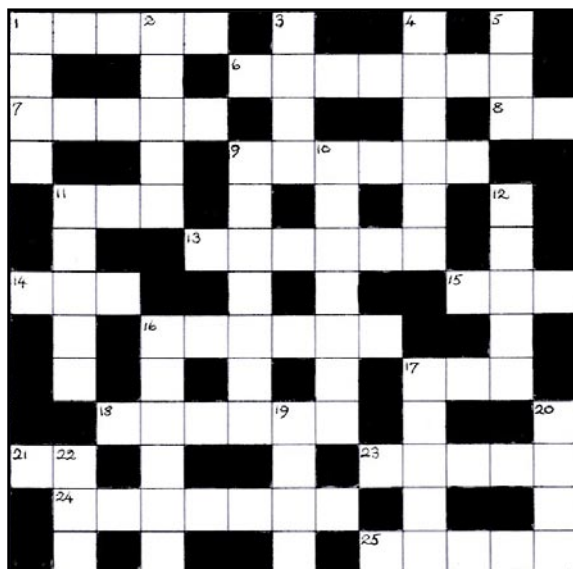
STUART MABBUTT

ABINGDON AND DISTRICT MUSICAL SOCIETY
New members welcome: free trial period
 Instrumentalists (brass & strings); Singers (no audition)
 Rehearsals 7.30-9.30pm: Orchestra Mondays, Choir Thursdays
 from 6 September at Manor Preparatory School
 Further info: Choir: 01865 735182 Orchestra: 01993 812782
www.tadms.org

NATIONAL TRUST
Free Open Day and Summer Show
Coleshill near Faringdon
11am – 5pm, Sunday 5th September 2004

- Farmyard animals
- Arts, crafts and local produce
- Guided walks
- Village gardens open
- Tractor rides through Coleshill Park
- Traditional building and countryside demonstrations
- Refreshments and music
- Free admission and parking
- Display by Oxfordshire Poultry Club

Coleshill lies on the B4019 between Highworth and Faringdon, and the car park will be well signposted in the village.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/buscotandcoleshill



BACK TO SCHOOL by *Alisa*

ACROSS

- 1 Some schools bear this royal name (5)
- 6 & 7 School near Appleton (7,5)
- 7 See 6
- 8 Employment training (1,1)
- 9 High academic title (6)
- 11 Play school object (3)
- 13 & 10 down Local school (6,7)
- 14 School subject (3)
- 15 Once used for writing (3)
- 16 Book names (6)
- 17 Trimming for academic gowns (3)
- 18 and 1 down School on the TV (6,4)
- 21 Degree (1,1)
- 23 Forerunner to PE (5)
- 24 Fictitious school saint (7)
- 25 Teachers (5)

DOWN

- 1 See 18 across
- 2 Public school (5)
- 3 0 (4)
- 4 Requisite for learning (6)
- 5 Do things with (3)
- 9 Primary school south of Abingdon (7)
- 10 See 13 across
- 11 There are 3 every year (5)
- 12 School at Shippon (5)
- 16 School dinner vegetable (6)
- 17 School for the very young (5)
- 19 Aim (4)
- 20 Musical sign (4)
- 22 Consumed (3)

To get your letter included please write to the editor by 20th month latest