



Well. This is all a bit daunting. Two pages to fill with pretty well whatever I want to: provided, of course, that I do not get too above myself or start rambling off on tangents that stray too far from gardening for even the Sainted editor to tolerate. The aim is to point you in the direction of some interesting things that are happening this month. Or maybe the occasional scurrilous rumour that I may choose to disseminate. Or something that I feel deserves a bit of a rant (or cheer). We shall see how it all transpires. If you have anything that you feel might tickle my dander then please feel free to drop us a line next time you remember.



Hot house beauties

I can't do indoor plants: there I've admitted it in public. *Ficus benjamina* drop their leaves when they hear my footsteps, Mother-in-law's tongues are struck dumb by my ministrations and I think that most cactii have taken out injunctions against me. The idea of me and an orchid is as terrifying as allowing a wolf to babysit your hamster. Fortunately the survival of this particular plant genre does not rest on my shoulders. There are many people out there with magically green fingers. Many of them will be gathering in the RHS Horticultural Halls for the London Orchid Show on 20-21st March. The place will be stuffed to the gills with hundreds of orchids being sold by specialist growers. There will be talks and demonstrations on aspects of orchid growing. *RHS Horticultural Halls, 80 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2PE. Tel: 0845 260 5000. www.horticultural-halls.co.uk*

ROY LANCASTER

Even if you are only slightly interested in gardening you should never turn down an opportunity to hear Roy Lancaster talk. He is the most interesting and knowledgeable speaker I have ever heard so, if you find yourself anywhere near Hadlow College in Kent on 31st March then you should cross burning coals to get a ticket. He will be talking about his travels and plant collecting in China but, quite honestly, if he was talking about rock cakes it would still be worth the journey. *Hadlow College, Hadlow, Kent, TN11 0AL. Tel: +44 (0)1732 853211. www.hadlow.ac.uk*



PLANT HERITAGE

I have just given a lecture to my local Plant Heritage Group in Northamptonshire and a very jolly time was had by all - at least nobody threw anything at me and the vast majority stayed awake throughout so I call that a pretty good result. The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (now called Plant Heritage) is quite a young organisation, formed in 1978 to unite the skills of botanists, horticulturalists and amateur gardeners. All these multifarious groups join together to propagate and preserve garden plants. Most counties hold regular talks and plant sales. *For details of your local events, visit www.nccpg.com*



MATTHEW WILSON

This month sees the long awaited release of Matthew Wilson's Channel4 Series and his accompanying book. I grabbed him the other day and asked a series of impertinent questions to which he, very sweetly, responded.

What is Landscape Man about, is it like cro-Magnon man but with flowers?

I like to think that we are all part of the species Landscape man - because we are all part of the landscape. In essence it's the story, or stories, of six couples attempting to apply their dreams to their own bit of the landscape.

Any particularly good ones?

They are all good, in different ways, because the landscapes, the dreams, the dreamers and the outcomes are all so different. I would genuinely struggle to pick a favourite, which surprises me because at the start I thought it would be easy to do so.

Were the gardens designed by you?

Three of them

designed by professionals - Jill Fenwick, Tom Hoblyn, Ian Kitson - three flying solo but with a lot of help from specialists, and some nudges in the right direction from me (on the odd occasion when I felt I knew what I was doing)

Lots of ideas for people to take away with them?

I think so, yes, because you have access into the landscape/garden design process, which you don't often see on TV these days.

And because we were following the projects in real time there was never any temptation to go for a makeover approach, so it's as real as it's possible to be.

It wasn't our aim to make a practical gardening show - *Gardeners World* has that covered - but I think there's a lot of practical stuff in there.

The programme is described as a bit like Grand Designs.

Are they all big budget projects? Two of the projects have big budgets (i.e. six figures) two are more modest and two have almost no budget

at all - one of our contributors made their garden almost entirely by recycling, swapping, bartering and borrowing, which was fascinating to see if it's possible to make something of aesthetic merit when many of the design decisions were driven by available materials. I suppose if the show shares anything with *Grand Designs* it's the scale of the projects, and the ambitions of the owners.

Any notable unfortunate events. Too many to mention - seriously. But in one garden we dug up an unexploded artillery shell.....

And with that he paced off across the wide hillsides with the wind blowing in his hair and sideburns billowing...

Matthew's book is called Making A Garden. Quadrille, £20. From all good bookshops.



URBAN GARDENS WEEK

Many of you have shown concern as to the whereabouts of Charlie Dimmock erstwhile tawny haired mistress of the Ground Force water feature. This month she is supporting the Urban Gardens Week from 22nd-28th March. But, much more exciting, is the news that she will be appearing in a touring production of *Calendar Girls* (based on the hit Film with Julie Walters and the long running West End stage production). It is the heartwarming story of some WI Ladies who, in order to raise money for charity, well....get their Charlies out.

For more information about *Urban Gardens Week*, visit the sponsor's website, www.ronseal.co.uk

MARCH

● Every Sunday between mid February and mid March, Essex

Snowdrops at Easton Lodge. 12-4pm. Tel: +44 (0)1371 876979 www.eastonlodge.co.uk

● Sat 6 Feb - Sun 7 March, Surrey

The Tropical Extravaganza at Kew Gardens consists of thousands of orchids and tropical plants in the Princess of Wales Conservatory. Tel: +44 (0)20 8332 5197 www.kew.org

● Wednesday 10 March, London

Seasonal vegetable planning and practical kitchen gardening with Chris Pike at the Arne Maynard Design School. Tickets cost £120 including refreshments and lunch. 9.45am-5pm. To book tel: +44 (0)20 7689 8101 www.arne-maynard.com

● Wednesday 10 March, London

Discover Gilbert White's Garden with a lecture by Head Gardener David Standing at 70 Cowcross Street. 6.30pm. Tel: +44 (0)20 7490 2974 www.gardenhistorysociety.org

● Friday 12 March, Surrey

Join The English Garden and designer Annie Guilfoyle at Hampton Court Palace, to plan your garden for the summer. Tickets cost £100. 10am-3.30pm. Tel +44 (0)1242 211073.

● Saturday 13 - Sunday 14 March, Middlesex

Spring bulbs and NGS weekend at Capel Manor Gardens. No booking required. Tel: 08456 122122

● Sunday 14 March, Derbyshire

Mothers Day at Chatsworth House. Visit the gardens, sculptures and kitchen garden. Tel: +44 (0)1246 565300 www.chatsworth.org

● Friday 19 - Sunday 21 March, Warwickshire

The Edible Garden Show at Stoneleigh Park. For tickets call 0871 231 0847. www.theediblegarden.show.co.uk

● Sat 27- Sun 28 March, Oxfordshire

Resident expert Adrian Young will talk about saxifrage at Waterperry Gardens. Tel: +44 (0)1844 339254 www.waterperrygardens.co.uk

● Sunday 28 March, South Wirral

Plant Hunters Fair at Ness Botanic Gardens with specialist nurseries. 10am-4pm. Tel: +44 (0)151 353 0123 www.nessgardens.org.uk