



REDDITCH BONSAI

Edition of April 2023.

DOROTHY SADLER.

It was with great sadness that we received the news that Dorothy had passed away on 6th March. Along with her late husband, Mike, she was a great and long-time supporter of the MBS. Of late her visits to see us had been restricted to coming along to help with the Tombola at the Annual Show but we are sure that you will all remember her cheery disposition. She will be much missed.

THE LATE GEORGE BRADLEY.

While we are on this subject I contacted George's widow, Annette, the other day, as I have done occasionally since George passed away. She remains in good spirits but, not being a driver, she is reliant on others. Her son is very supportive. I urged her to check out the local taxi service as a means of getting about. I hope that she will. If you are in Alverchurch and have a minute or two do call and see her. I will let you have the address.

The Oak Apple.

For some years now I have been "cultivating" an oak tree on my allotment. I am actually not quite sure how old it is in truth – perhaps 5 or 6 years.

I have however now removed it from the allotment and it is sitting in a pot in my back garden. When and if it comes into leaf I will place a photograph in the newsletter.

The purpose of this note, however, is to mention the oak apples that were on the tree when removed.

Oak apple or gall is the common name for a variety of apple like growths found on many oak species.

They range in size from 2 to 4 cms in diameter.

An adult female gall wasp lays an egg in a developing oak bud. The resulting larvae feeds on the gall tissue resulting from their secretions which then modify the bud into a gall which protects the developing larvae until it is ready to metamorphose

into the adult wasp. The wasp emerges by boring a hole in the apple and off they go! The wasp most commonly associated with the oak apple in the UK is *BIORHIZA PALLIDA*

Surprisingly enough these galls have, or rather had, at least one useful purpose as far as we humans are concerned. They were, from the middle ages until the early 20th century, used in the production of Iron Gall Ink which during these times was the most common form of ink for writing. The practice does however date back to Roman times.

I should also say that there are many different forms of gall found in nature e.g. the oak marble gall and acorn cup gall to name but two!.



Oak apples,
some showing exit hole

EPSOM SALTS.

Epsom salt is named for the English town in which it was discovered, where it bubbled up in water from an underground spring in the early 17th century. (It's also known as epsomite.)

Epsom salts is therefore a naturally occurring compound that has uses in horticulture. It provides two essential elements that can be in short supply in soil. Magnesium sulphate is believed to have a role in increasing the uptake of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium and other trace elements, resulting in thicker foliage and better blooms. The main use of Epsom salt is to address a magnesium deficiency

Technical

Epsom salts or magnesium sulphate has the chemical formula $MgSO_4$ and has two important elements, magnesium and sulphur. Thus Epsom salt supplement has a large amount of magnesium oxide in it, around 16.5%, which is equivalent to a magnesium content of 10%.

Signs of magnesium deficiency in plants



Symptoms are - yellowish, bronze, orange-yellow, or reddish tissues between the leaf veins, sometimes with reddish brown tints and early leaf fall. Magnesium deficiency is common in tomatoes, apples, grape vines, raspberries, roses and rhododendrons.

NOTE - too much magnesium inhibits the uptake of calcium, and plants can display general symptoms of an excess of salts such as stunted growth, and dark coloured vegetation.

Application of Epsom salts as a fertilizer

It can be sprinkled around plants using 35 grams, a handful per square metre. In addition to aid nutrient intake you can use a foliar spray, with a dosage of 2 tablespoons of Epsom salt dissolved in a gallon of water (4.5 litres). Apply the same mix once a month in place of one regular watering. In hot weather, when growth has slowed, apply a more diluted solution of 1 tablespoon per gallon of water.

Can you feed all plants with Epsom salts?

Epsom salt is a popular DIY fertilizer for outdoor and indoor plants. While it has been shown to boost the magnesium and sulphur content of soil, it should only be used on plants with known deficiencies in those nutrients.

Plants that benefit from Epsom salt

Epsom salt can improve the blooms of flowering and green shrubs, especially evergreens, azaleas and rhododendrons, tomatoes, sweet pepper, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage, plus trees, shrubs and flowers. Magnesium deficiency is common in tomatoes, apples, grape vines, raspberries, roses and rhododendrons.

Use in the garden

In the garden work in one tablespoon of Epsom Salt per square yard (approximately 1 square metre) over the root zone, allowing the shrubs to absorb the nutritional benefits. For established roses, you can use a foliar feed once in spring and once again during flowering.

DETERING PESTS

To stop pests eyeing your plants, you can mix one tablespoon of the supplement with 4.5 litres of water and then apply it as a foliar feed. If you want to deter slug and snails, the rough texture of the crystals should deter them from your plants. Just sprinkle some on top at regular intervals near the plant.

By Robin Dutton.

COMING UP AT THE MBS.

Our April meeting on 6th of the month features a WORKSHOP but also includes the annual BRING AND BUY/AUCTION. The Table Display is “Spring colour”. So, dig out anything that you want to dispose of and bring it along.

Looking further ahead we shall welcome CORIN TOMLINSON in May. As he can be a bit reluctant to “stick to the script” we would like to give him plenty of notice of a subject for the evening. If you have any requests please let us know asap.

COMING UP AT REDDITCH.

Our April meeting will feature a presentation by MALCOLM HUGHES. The Table display is “Spring Blossom”.

Again please send in any requests for this meeting’s subject matter in good time.

Members should also please note that there will be **no meeting** at Webheath in August as the Hall is being refurbished in some way between 14th and 25th of the month. Watch this space.

BONSAI TIP OF THE MONTH.

Bearing in mind what Gil told us in the last Newsletter you can be thinking about applying a gentle fertiliser to re-potted trees once 4 – 6 weeks have elapsed.

Air layerings can be started at this time of the year. If you are not certain of the process mention it at your next workshop meeting.

GARDENING TIP OF THE MONTH.

This year’s planting of GLADIOLI will benefit from an application of fish manure to the soil where they are to be set. Some garden manuals suggest planting now – that’s too early for me – late April is surely soon enough?

Leave seed pods intact on scillas, muscari and other small bulbs – they will readily self sow.

My recipe for a good general purpose fertiliser is as follows:-

- 4lb Sulphate of Ammonia,
- 5lb Superphosphate, and

2lb Sulphate of Potash.

This mix will not let you down. Apply c.14 days before planting.

OFFER I have a 15% off voucher for David Austin Roses which expires on 18th April. Free to a good home.

HARRY GREEN.

I am afraid that so far my letter to the address visited many years ago has not elicited a reply. If anyone happens to be over in West Bromwich and fancies calling at the address do let me know and I will give you the details.

TRIP

We have been thinking about a trip – so we thought, “what about a trip to a Japanese Garden?”

The Japanese Garden Society manage the garden at Danescourt within the cemetery at Wolverhampton, but I believe that that garden, on its own, is rather small for a full trip.

David Cheshire told us of a lovely garden in Hertfordshire, which is a bit of a distance.

Some, in fact many, years ago Redditch visited Lord Byron’s pile at Newstead Abbey where there is a Japanese Garden. It might be worth re-visiting to see how things have developed there?

If anyone is interested in such a visit or has any other ideas please let us know.

LIME SULPHUR.

I bought some lime sulphur at the last MBS meeting. This set me thinking and I wondered whether everyone knew what it was, what it was used for and more importantly, how to use it safely. Wes has found a useful guide to all these issues and the web address is:-

<https://bonsai4me.com/bonsai-myths-part-four-lime-sulphur-demystifying-lime-sulphur/>

Do have a look at this as there are several things that you need to be aware of in order to use this product safely and that is the key word.

Now, here’s what David Cheshire had to say on the subject:-

Lime sulphur has several uses all of which have different requirements, processes and outcomes.

Lime sulphur its self is very variable as there are no standard practices to make it and all available suppliers in the U.K. produce it themselves, and the resulting lime sulphur can massively vary in strength.

In Japan lime sulphur is used as a winter wash and is used on both conifers and deciduous trees when they are dormant this is to help prevent fungal and bacterial

infections, but also has the added benefit of bleaching the wood on some species such as Acer, Japanese White Beech and Japanese Grey Bark elm. In some cases the trees are dipped in a diluted solution, this could be 1/4 strength up to 1/2 strength depending on the original mixture strength. With Acer the lime sulphur is painted on the trunk and branches avoiding buds as this can distort new bud growth, however on Acer we use this full strength. In all plants you do not want to get the solution on the soil or compost. Lime sulphur is also used to bleach and help preserve dead wood and this again can be used on both deciduous and coniferous species.

Lime sulphur is not licensed in the U.K. or EU to be used as an insecticide, bactericide or fungicide and can only be sold as a cosmetic product to whiten dead wood or the trunks of trees.

Branches of *Acer palmatum* Shishigashira are naturally green but the white colouration on this tree, below, is because it has been treated with lime sulphur. Lime sulphur will kill and reduce growth of moss, algae and lichen in trunks and branches.



Richard Gilkes, Editor.

