The 'Gardening Voice' of Hereford and Worcester and Gloucestershire

Hampton Gardening Club had a rare treat on Wednesday September 16th, when we welcomed **Reg Moule to talk about "Gardening in Drought".**

After training at Pershore college he has worked full time in the nursery business as a manager and advisor since 1972. He has broadcast for the BBC national and local radio for the last 34 years and presented on Gardeners' Diary on ITV and Sky for 7 years. He has written books and won Media awards and been employed by the RHS as a freelance Gardening Advisor. Since 2016 he has been based at Rowberry's Nursey in Chaddesley Corbett giving exceptionally popular monthly talks.

Reg took us through the context of UK Climate change with pointers as to how to sustain our gardens in the future. Whilst there have always been droughts, we now have new extremes: November, December and January are becoming extremely wet, July and August are becoming extremely dry.

For water conservation, consider adding to a water butt by linking another one. Use grey water (but not on salad crops, and check detergent level) Watering systems can be helpful but are expensive to install.

When watering with a can, water the ground all around the plant's root spread, water deeply, fully and less frequently. Use mulch and ground cover plants to trap water in the ground. Use windbreaks or hedges rather than fences; put containers in a group and position plants in groups in the border. Install low maintenance groundcover such as bark, chippings, gravel, etc. Dwarf conifers, such as Pinus mugo, with plants like Erigeron karvinskianus, Verbena bonariensis, Origano Kent Beauty, around Nandina 'Fire Power' all make a drought tolerant group in gravel. When planting, put plants in the ground between autumn and early spring so the roots go in warm earth.

Always soak plants in a bucket of water before planting, and mulch with organic matter in the autumn: mushroom compost for the vegetable garden and leaf mould or Strulch or garden compost everywhere else. All kinds of coarse mulch can be used as a layer underneath: cardboard, newspaper etc. Victorian and Edwardian gardeners always used leaf mould which acts like a sponge holding moisture in. When sowing in autumn make the drill a little deeper and water it before sowing. Then cover the seeds with dry soil on top. The aim is to trap moisture. Manure can be used as mulch, but watch out for hormone weedkiller

content which damages plants. Also use water gel capsules sparingly; they do not decompose.

Seek out drought tolerant plants and those that work in dry shade. Plants that have grey or silver leaves, hairy or scented leaves, or tap roots, rubbery leaves or needle leaves are good: e.g. Epimedium, pachysandra, periwinkle, hellebore, hakonechloa and other grasses for shade, or bulbs.

For the lawn, Reg recommended Neudorff Cleanlawn, an organic fertiliser which promotes a healthy green lawn to out compete weeds. Generally, grass will come back from drought, but a liquid feed now can give quick results. Water or apply fertiliser early a.m. for maximum effect, to avoid slugs.

For hanging baskets, woven and wicker are better than wire and moss.

Bidens, silver Cineraria, geraniums, nasturtiums, marigolds, petunias, Helichrysum, Cosmos all work well in heat in baskets and borders. Sprouting broccoli, carrots, leeks, onions, parsnips all work in heat; French beans outperform runner beans.

By thinking about the weather calendar and adapting our gardening to conserve moisture and selecting suitable plants, Reg showed us a route to successful gardening in the future. He also answered a wide range of unrelated gardening questions, "Ask me anything about gardening". We cannot wait to have him back.

Coming Up

Our A.G.M. 21ST October. We review the year and present accounts followed by some pleasant socialising.

18th November Alison Foster: 'Medicinal Properties of Plants

SATURDAY December 12th at 10.30am : Our stand at Hampton Christmas Fayre

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