



## Spring Plant Sale 2008

Arriving at the garden on a clear, sunny Sunday for my first Culpeper Plant Sale I wasn't sure what to expect. Would anyone turn up? Would we have enough plants? Where should the rickety old trestle tables go?

Straight away I bumped into Patrick sitting outside the tea hut raring to go. Thus it began, moving furniture, clearing space in the tea hut, people arriving offering anything from homemade cakes to beautifully potted and labelled tomatoes or just good, helpful intentions. Established members like Sue (film artist, responsible for the Culpeper DVD), Dee, Jane and Elaine manned the plant stall laden with lime green alchemillas or choco-

late brown geranium pheum, Southwood Smiths vegetables – sweet peppers, aubergines, artichokes, tomatoes and chard. New members like Lucy (assisted by my own daughter Kitty) did a shopping run to Sainsburys and Michael and Margaret from Elfrida took control of the houseplant stall – keeping the Coleus and Cacti watered as the day got hotter and hotter. The tea hut refreshments were masterminded by Elizabeth, Sylvia, Luisa, Jane and Kahil and his children Mohamed, Taslima, and Aklima – they offered wonderful cakes, tea (both iced and hot), coffee, delicious tomato tarts and heart-shaped shortbread. Henna tattoos were provided by Fahmida

Begum.

Islington residents came and went, praised the garden, bought potted treats and left with a wealth of horticultural information distributed at the stall by various members – Kate, Gerrard and Sue were particularly vociferous and gave performances worthy of Gardener's Question Time.

I left the day with sun-burnt shoulders and new knowledge

- I was now much better acquainted with Culpeper's plants and with improved potting skills. In the weeks building up to the Sale I had worked with the Elfrida group and other volunteers digging, dividing and potting plants for the sale. Sharing your plants with other gardeners in this way is, to me,

the essence of good gardening. I also left the Spring Plant sale with a better understanding of how Culpeper works. It is not just about individuals keeping their own plots but about how they work together to create this wonderful communal space. If I have forgotten to mention anyone who helped please forgive me and know that your help was greatly appreciated.



Elaine & Ahmet selling plants

## Strawberry Tea-Time

Anyone free on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July. Newcomers to Culpeper will be awed by the upcoming logistical feat of our annual PENSIONERS' STRAWBERRY CREAM TEA. It's always a great event much appreciated by 80 local pensioners who are invited to take tea, scones and strawberries on the Culpeper lawn followed by live entertainment with optional audience participation and the famous Culpeper RAFFLE.

It does require a tremendous effort from a lot of people...the more the better. First, we need 180 scones. Then we need help on the day from 9.30 am to wash strawberries, whip cream, collect and set up tables and chairs; from 2.30pm to serve tea, scones and the like, from 5pm to clear up. There's also the eagerly awaited raffle to organise: can you donate any prizes, ask any local shopkeepers for donations, or sell tickets on the day?

If you can help with any of this, even for just an hour, please tell Kate/Kirstie or sign up in the Tea Hut. Providing the rain keeps off it's a fun day and we usually over-cater with the helpers in mind!

Tickets available for the over-65's from Kate/Kirstie - first come, first served.

## Dates for your diary

- **Sunday 8th June** - Culpeper Open Day. 11am—4pm
- **Wednesday 18th June** - Stuart Low trip to Tradescant Garden and The Museum of Garden History. Meeting at the Tea Hut at 12pm
- **Friday 20th June** - Room2heal 'Stories in the Garden'. 6.30pm
- **Tuesday 12th July** - Lake Malawi Projects AGM and Fun Day
- **Sunday 13th July** - Workday, 11am-3pm. Minelle's Lunch - Carribean Cookery
- **Tuesday 15th July** - Pensioners, Strawberry Tea
- **Sunday 20th July** - Members Meeting at 2.30pm Everyone
- **Saturday 16th August** - 3.00pm Euroclub Garden Party. Open to members and plot holders
- **Saturday 6th September** - End of summer BBQ & Artshow & Grand Opening of New Building
- **Sunday 14th September** - Workday, 11am onwards. 2pm Trip to King Henry's Walk

## Membership

2008 Membership submissions overdue

Plotholder: £15 (£8 concs)

Non-plotholder: £12 (£6 concs)

Please send to 25 Batchelor Street, London N1 0EG or drop round when Kate or Kirstie are in the garden.

Welcome to Culpeper's new members: Lucy, Paob & Mathilde, Patricia, Sophie, Doris, Irene, and Annie.

New plotholders Mehmet, Pauline, Mika and Non.

## Out and about with Stuart Low

Culpeper and The Stuart Low Trust have joined forces to arrange a series of visits, the first of which was to Kew Gardens in April. Over 30 people braved the weather and thoroughly enjoyed the day, picnicking around the pagoda, touring the glass houses and exhibitions. In May we decided to explore our immediate locality and discovered the lovely local woodland and nature reserve at Barnsbury Wood. For those of you who may be unaware of this little gem is open every Tuesday between 2 and 4. A wander through the leafy streets of Barnsbury brought us to Barnsbury Square where we were treated to tea and biscuits. We would like to extend our thanks to The Friends of Barnsbury Square for their hospitality. The Friends have planted many specimens purchased from Culpeper garden as part of their work in improving this park. Its worth taking a stroll around the Square and if you chance to be there on a Tuesday look out for tea being served from the Friends hut.

You are all welcome to join us on the next trip to Tradescant Garden and The Museum of Garden History meeting at the Tea Hut at 12pm on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June. Details of further trips will be advertised in the Tea Hut. Any suggestions for further visits would be extremely welcome



## Members Meeting 2008

An all members meeting was held in the garden on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. This was an opportunity for members to air issues they were concerned about, put forward ideas, etc. Whilst there were only a few members (8) who came along, it was a really positive meeting. We discussed making a bog garden, engaging youths, the new toilet, signage and having contact numbers prominently on display. The next meeting will be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> July at 2.30pm. Everyone welcome.

## News

### King Henry's Walk Garden:

Summer Fete Saturday 28 June 2.30 – 5pm (tombola, raffle, pick-a-duck, coconut shy, victoria sandwich competition, children's fancy dress competition, cream teas).

**WORKSHOP:** Secrets of Organic Gardening plus a guide to Inter-Cropping, Catch Cropping and Watering on Saturday 21 June 10-12

rsvp@khwgarden.org.uk to reserve a place (£3 suggested donation to attend, refreshments provided).

Please check our website

[www.khwgarden.org.uk](http://www.khwgarden.org.uk) for details

The new website for Regent's Canal: A Fresh Perspective is up and running (apart from the map and a separate tab which will highlight Health and Safety which will be available soon).

Andreas and Rebecca from Zwei Design have ( I am sure you will all agree) done an absolutely FANTASTIC job!!

[www.refreshregentscanal.co.uk](http://www.refreshregentscanal.co.uk)

## Watering

Spurred on by the likelihood of facing hefty bills now that Culpeper's water supply is fitted with a meter, and mindful of conservation issues, we have put away our hoses in favour of watering cans. As it turns out nature has done most of the watering for us so far this growing season. However here are a few watering tips:

1. During hot weather water early morning, or evening to a void most of the water evaporating.
2. Target water at the base of the plants.
3. Regular light watering, while essential for seedlings and recent transplants encourages roots to remain on the surface. It's better to give the ground a good soak once or twice a week to encourage deeper root growth.
4. Improve the water holding capacity of soil by incorporating organic material such as compost or well rotted manure. Mulch in spring after heavy rainfall to help retain water.
5. Vegetables will have varying watering requirements, so check what these are. Veg benefit from feeding so consider adding a liquid fertiliser weekly when watering. The amount and type of feed depends on the plants.

## Stories in the Garden: a Refugee Week celebration

Some of you will know the Room2Heal group who regularly attend the Culpeper Garden on a Friday Afternoon. If you do, you will know that they are very fond of tea and barbecues. What you may not know is that they are also very fond of story-telling. Indeed, over the last several months Room2Heal members have been working with theatre director, John Roche

to explore and develop the art of story-telling.

The Room2Heal members would like to share some of their stories on 20<sup>th</sup> June by way of celebrating Refugee Week. These stories will reflect important aspects of their lives—and perhaps important aspects of the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK more generally.

Culpeper and Room2Heal will be joined by Ahmed and Nihavend (a classical Turkish music group) and Erin Stolarczyk (a folk singer from Bristol) who will provide the musical entertainment for the evening. Needless to say, the stories and the music will be supplemented by tea and barbeque.

Please join us and bring your friends

## Wildlife notes by Viv Palmer

For a few days in March, as you walked past the Culpeper pond, you'd be forgiven for thinking that you were in the Florida Everglades, not North London. The water was seething with frogs, the males gently croaking as they sought an available female. Some females were under siege from eager males, who in their urgency will try to mate with fish in the absence of a more suitable partner. Once mating "amplexus" does start, the female will swim around with the male on her back for up to two days. Though they aren't as loyal in this regard as toads are, frogs try to return to the pond where they were spawned – however, they may be distracted and spawn in any pond that they happen to pass. Judging by the number of frogs crammed into the Culpeper pond, it didn't look as if they passed very many! Some of the frogs might have been around all winter: the males hibernate in the mud at the bottom of the pond, so as to be ready for the returning females. The females are more likely to hibernate in compost heaps or under logs.

It looked as if there would be lots of spawn, but sadly a few days after spawning was complete, a pair of mallard ducks popped by and hoovered up most of it up, just as they'd done in previous years. We'll have to wait and see if we get any tadpoles!

It's not an easy life being a frog – in previous years, herons have visited Culpeper and picked off the frogs one at a time, throwing them up into the air and then catching and swallowing them. There are also dragonfly larvae in the pond, which eat tadpoles – they have specially adapted stabbing mouthparts which they can shoot out to catch their prey. However, hopefully enough frogs will survive to replace the adults who didn't make the trip back to the pond of their birth.

April and May have also seen lots of fledgling birds and nest building in the garden. At the end of April, I saw a wren collecting nesting material in the wildlife garden, but this may not be what it seems. The male wren wins a territory, and then builds a number

of 'starter' nests, which are just the external shells made of grass, moss and dry leaves. He then shows these nests to visiting females. If she likes what she sees, she will mate with the male, and finish off the nest herself. Meantime, the male will be showing his 'properties' to any other females who happen past, in the hope that he can sire more youngsters. It will be interesting to see if any of the nests are successful this year.

There has also been a family of magpies creating panic amongst the blackbirds and great tits. The hierarchy amongst magpies is apparently determined by tail length, and the magpie with the longest tail gets to sit highest up the tree. So, juveniles sit low down and complain while their parents get to enjoy themselves at the top.

As the weather warms up, we start to see more insects in the garden. There are lots more bumblebees, both queens and workers, from a variety of species, and hoverflies setting out their territories below the trees. There are about 270 species of hoverfly in the UK, and they are of great value to the gardener, both because they are important pollinators and because many of them eat aphids. Their colouration is protective because they resemble bees and wasps, and in some cases they even mimic the behaviour of the insects they are impersonating – some hoverflies will push their abdomens into your finger if you pick them up, as if they are trying to sting you.

A less welcome visitor to the garden this spring has been the Rosemary Beetle (*Chrysolina americana*), which actually comes from Southern Europe, and as its name suggests, eats rosemary and related species such as lavender. It also eats thyme, sage and Russian sage (*Perovskia sp.*). Predation is indicated by the leaves being nibbled down to short stumps with brownish grey discoloration. It is a very pretty beetle, about 8mm long and metallic green with purple stripes. The larvae are greyish white with five dark grey longitudinal stripes.



Residents of the Culpeper Pond

Both the adults and the grubs feed on the leaves and (occasionally) the flowers of the host plant. The adults are inactive from June to August, but then start feeding again and lay their eggs, which they continue to do throughout the winter whenever it is warm enough. The eggs hatch within two

weeks of being laid and feed for about three weeks, before dropping to the soil to pupate, emerging as new adults about two to three weeks later. Controlling the beetle in an organic environment involves hand picking any adults and grubs – with taller forms of lavender and rosemary, the branches can be shaken over newspaper or a sheet to dislodge the insects.

The Rosemary beetle first appeared in the UK in the 1990's, but since then has really become a pest since 2005, and is currently the fourth most common pest query on the RHS Pest Advisory Service website. It is assumed that this is as a result of climate

### Culpeper Projects

Three exciting projects to look forward to over the Summer in the garden:

**Bog Garden.** Bill is hoping to encourage participation by teenagers and is looking forward to making a bog garden in the old disused pond (Friday afternoons throughout the summer holidays). If you have any ideas or know any bored teenagers who want to get involved contact Bill or Kirstie.

**Soheila's Summer Arts.** After the success of last summer's project and exhibition Soheila is back with her paints. Tuesday and Thursday 10-12 in August.

**Kirstie's Wildlife Signs/Mosaic.** Painting wildlife pictures and making a mosaic for the entrance to the wildlife area in June/July—on Thursday morning and Friday afternoon—check noticeboard for dates.

Contact Kirstie for information on any of the above.

**Lake Malawi Projects**, a small international charity, will be holding its AGM at the Garden on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July. After the formal meeting (12-1pm) from 1-3pm there will be African music, African/Western food and lots of activities for all, including maize pounding, traditional Malawian baking, treasure hunt, children's games, face-painting and much, much more!

LMP's Coordinator Clare Sutton, who worked at Culpeper from 1997-2005 and is a frequent visitor, said, "We have invited LMP's donors and supporters but it would be great to see Culpeper members come along and join in too. Do bring along some African-style food to share if you can: Frank's already promised a Seychelles speciality and I can't wait to see what Elizabeth will come up with!"

### John Slade's Apple & Blackberry Tart

1. Roll out a thin layer of shortcrust pastry
2. Spread with blackberry jam
3. Peel and slice apples and place on top
4. Bake lightly and cut into squares

## Wharfdale Road Greenwall Project by Sophie Talbot [www.cookie.org.uk/kccp](http://www.cookie.org.uk/kccp)

It all started over a year ago. A few of us living on Wharfdale Road kept saying to each other, "isn't that wall ugly", or "surely something could be done with that wall", or "even a climbing plant up there would be an improvement". So, together we decided to take it on ourselves. Little did we know where that was going to lead us!

We contacted the owner of the wall and they said they liked the idea, but would need to approve the final design. So, we gave it a lot of thought. We came up with a simple design that would require minimal maintenance and need as little watering as possible – mostly using run-off rainwater from the two adjacent buildings – Lighterman House and Battlebridge Court. At first we thought a couple of thousand pounds would be more than enough to install a planter, some steel wire to act as a kind of trellis and to stick in a few plants.

To get us started we contacted our nearest community garden at Thornhill Bridge, Groundwork Camden and Islington and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV is based just around the corner from the wall). They all gave us the first clue – a few thousand pounds just would not do it. We had to think bigger, and we had to decide whether we were willing to take on what might become a very big project.

I really didn't want to do this. I thought it was far too ambitious and I didn't want to get that involved. So, I asked Thornhill Community Gardeners if they would host our project for us. They rightly said they wouldn't – it was just going to be too much. So now, we were stuck.

We started talking to other local organisations to see what interest there might be in the 'Wharfdale Road Greenwall Project'. We put up a few postings on the local community blog [www.kingscrossenvironment.com](http://www.kingscrossenvironment.com) and even set up our own website [www.cookie.org.uk/greenwall](http://www.cookie.org.uk/greenwall). Suddenly interested people starting popping up all over the place. It became obvious that we couldn't let this go. Not only were we looking at creating a new green vertical space on the north side of the King's Cross gyratory system, but we were also getting involved in bringing various community groups together, all of whom wanted to par-



ticipate in design and construction of the green wall.

By now the plan was no longer a planter, some trellis and some climbing plants... it had become a sculptural planter made from corton steel reflecting the history of the King's Cross area, a stylised bespoke trellis matching the planter all with subtle solar powered lighting, nesting boxes for wildlife, a rainwater run-off irriga-

tion system, planting for sustainability, ease of maintenance and accessibility with a focus on sensory elements.

So far we've had very positive feedback from Camden Garden Centre, Copenhagen Youth Project, Global Generation, Culpeper Community Garden of course, BTCV, Groundwork Camden & Islington among many others. We want to get local kids involved by training them to run a consultation exercise with local people. This will result in the final inspiration for the planter, trellis and planting scheme. The planter and trellis will be designed and constructed by a local artist again with local kids assisting throughout. The planting scheme will be completed by Camden Garden Centre involving their trainees who also maintain the planting outside Battlebridge Court.

Phew! So, we had to set up an organisation to manage all this. That's how King's Cross Community Projects, our new local Trust, was born. One chilly March night, a few of us got together at my flat and agreed to set up the Trust. We've applied to the Charity Commission and following recent correspondence with them we are hopeful that we'll get approval very soon. This will help us to fundraise for the project which now has a budget of well over £100,000! Our first big funding application has been submitted and we should hear next week whether we've been successful.

A long road travelled so far, and a long way to go yet. We hope to have the wall completed by this time next year. Watch this space!