

# Comment

The Garden, RHS Media, Churchgate, New Road, Peterborough PE1 1TT



RHS / TIM SANDALL

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

### Dipping your toe in water

Editor of *The Garden*, Chris Young

When we first saw our house seven years ago, one thing I noticed was a small pond in the front garden. It was (and still is) technically in the wrong position – under the lee of a silver birch so leaves fall into it during autumn – but its presence is a constant reminder of the value of water in a garden. Yes, it may be tiny (about 1sq m/10sq ft) with just enough room for a flag iris and a dwarf white waterlily, but its value, both aesthetically and for wildlife, is not to be overlooked.

As part of an overall garden composition water brings so many valuable attributes. It reflects the sky or surrounding planting; gives a sense of movement; allows for a different range of plants to be grown; and can act as a focal point. Yet for water in the garden to be most successful, it needs to be considered from the outset. Take time to look around your plot and consider where water will best sit – and how manageable it will be in the long term. By understanding the rhythm and needs of your pond, you can be sure to maximise

its part in the overall garden composition.

Water is also one of the most effective ways to support wildlife. As Jeremy Biggs (in this month's Living Gardens, pp72–76) explains, by creating different shaped bodies of water, some of which can be as shallow as 10cm (4in), a whole host of insects, predators and herbivores can be welcomed in. One of the most fascinating parts of having water in your garden is its colonisation by wildlife – many invertebrates fly in, but others such as frogs still manage to seek out this precious habitat by their sense of smell. From newts to damselflies, birds to aquatic insects, any body of healthy water can be a magnet for wildlife.

There are so many ways to include water – mini ponds in tubs on a patio, ponds at the bottom of the garden, rain-fed seasonal pools or formal rills – that there is something to suit all styles of garden. And even if, like mine, your pond is not in the ideal place, or a bit smaller than desired, you won't want to be without it, and neither will the wildlife. ●

## FROM THIS ISSUE

*“As the light dims, the cool yellow colouring of the flowers gleams in the gloaming, scent seeping through the evening air”*

Graham Rice: From dusk 'til dawn >> Pages 50–53

## FROM RHS ONLINE

### Flower Shows continue

Prepare for the autumn planting season by visiting Wisley Flower Show (5–9 September) which, set within the gardens, includes around 40 exhibitors selling plants and sundries.

For details of this and other upcoming shows, visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/shows](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows)

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Fascinated by fasciation

Author: **Mike Grant**, Editor, *The Plantsman*

Growth in plants sometimes goes wrong. One of the most dramatic manifestations of this is 'fasciation', commonly seen as an enlarged and flattened stem. It is caused by the apical meristem (growing tip) becoming abnormally lengthened sideways. Subsequent growth of the stem is then ribbon-like, rather than cylindrical.

Fasciation is said to be caused by mechanical or chemical damage, or pest or micro-organism attack. My belief is that it is more often a random growth abnormality. Some garden plants, such as *Linaria purpurea*, seem more prone to it, and it is often seen in wild plants such as thistles and dandelions.

Fasciation can be regarded as an ornamental trait, known as 'crested'. Plants where it is fixed permanently can be selected as cultivars; various monstrous cacti are examples. Other fasciated cultivars include selections of *Celosia argentea* var. *cristata* (cockscomb) and willow *Salix udensis* 'Sekka'. The flattened stems of this are said to be popular with flower arrangers, but is that an excuse to justify the existence of an unappealing plant? ●

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RHS / JENNY DENTON

Fasciated *Veronicastrum*.