



RUISLIP  
CENTRAL  
HORTICULTURAL  
SOCIETY

**WE are now halfway through the year; we will soon be at the longest day.**

Where is Summer? Well all of us at the RCHS are ready for it, with the **RCHS Summer Show this month on Saturday 25th**, we have coach trips organised, Open gardens and a full calendar until December! *What could you be doing this month?* Well if you look back at this time last year I told you all about making Elderflower Cordial. Visit the RCHS website for all the back dated "In and Around Ruislip" articles.

## PELARGONIUMS A NOSEY AFFAIR!



Over 40 people came to the RCHS monthly talk which was given by *Chelsea and Hampton Court Gold Medallist* Derek Lloyd Dean who exhibits **Scented Pelargoniums**. It was a fantastic evening, Derek brought over 60 plants for sale, and he took home 8!

*I've included some pictures of these fantastic plants and now it's over to Derek to tell you all about the Scented Pelargonium...*

**Scented Leaf Pelargoniums** In 1632 - during the reign of King Charles I - the first Pelargonium was introduced to the United Kingdom. The plant was called *Pelargonium triste* and it had a creamy flower with a sweet scent that seemed to be at it's strongest during the evening hours.

The modern day scented leaf plants are considered a 'super group' and are collected by enthusiasts all over the world. The range of scents is vast but descriptions of these vary from person-to-person. Out of interest, one year at the *Chelsea Flower Show* I asked the public to describe the scents of some of the plants I was displaying. The results were... interesting, with descriptions ranging from petrol through washing-up liquid, dirty washing, old boots to my personal favourite - "my husband's old socks". I promised myself that I would only show plants that wouldn't offend the public - plants like *Prince of Orange*, *Citronella*, *Lemon Fancy*, *Creamy Nutmeg*, *Royal Oak* and many more, but even these prompt diverse opinions and lively debate. I'm a particular fan of *Mabel Grey*. It's a strong scented lemon variety - a dab of that behind the ear keeps the white fly away for days!

The leaves of many scented leaf varieties can be used in cooking recipes and they're sometimes used in the perfume industry too - some varieties of scented leaf pelargoniums are the source of



geranol, an essential oil often used in perfumery. *Pelargonium sidoides* has been used for centuries by Zulu tribes to treat respiratory illnesses and has been found to be an effective alternative to antibiotics. You can actually buy tablets of 'concentrated dried extract of *Pelargonium sidoides*' in the UK.

Cuttings can easily be taken from all scented varieties. Late summer cuttings can be overwintered to make good, sturdy plants come the following spring, but they must be kept frost-free and on the dry side to ensure success.

Early spring can also be an ideal time to increase your stock. It's important to remember that Pelargoniums are not frost hardy and they don't like wet feet!

Leaves should be brushed to make the scent airborne. Even before Victorian times they were often planted along paths and in pots leading into people's homes so that ladies dresses would brush the leaves releasing the lovely scent to combat the more interesting odours of the day.

This is only a short introduction to one of my favourite Pelargonium groups and I hope you've enjoyed it. I hope you have a successful growing season! **Derek Lloyd Dean.**

Don't miss the **RCHS SUMMER SHOW** on **25th June** at 1pm, The Great Barn, Ruislip... **FREE ENTRY!**

A magnificent garden in Ruislip is **OPEN FOR CHARITY** on **Sunday 17th July**, 2pm to 5pm Ticket only £5 in advance to include refreshments. For tickets please call Warren on **01923 451616**.

All of these events and others are on the website <http://ruisliphorticultural.org.uk/>

Finally please email in your gardening questions to the RCHS panel to: [rchstalks@gmail.com](mailto:rchstalks@gmail.com) as we will be featuring a *Gardener's Question Time* in the next article.