



Chairman's note

Dear members

I hope you will join us in welcoming our latest members Mr & Mrs Halahan of Cophthorne and Mr & Mrs Walsh of Pontesbury which brings our membership up to 100, the highest it has been since the days of the Men of the Trees! . This is a great milestone for the Severn Tree Trust. On behalf of the committee I can say that we have all been working to raise the profile of the STT in the local community and hopefully our main venue of St Peter's Church Hall, Monkmoor, and where necessary the University Centre, Shrewsbury, will provide good venues for speakers over the coming years.

Membership renewal time is approaching for those who joined STT before October 2018. The January Newsletter will be sent out by surface mail to all members along with renewal documents in between Christmas and the New Year. You may be surprised to hear that we have held membership fees unchanged for nearly 10 years. All that we ask is that those members receiving their Newsletter regularly by surface mail make an additional contribution for the postage, which with ever increasing postage charges, now accounts for over 50% of the membership fee!

We have much to look forward to next year including trips to arboreta in the Severn Valley and Birmingham and a good winter season of talks by our own experts and keynote speakers from outside the STT such as Aljos Farjon who has recently published the definitive text on British Oaks,

Merry Christmas to all our members and a Happy New Year

David

Our first talk of the autumn/winter season: Tony Russell on "Gardening with trees in the 21st Century" (Tuesday, 13th November)

We used the Shrewsbury University building on this occasion and it appeared to be perfect for the larger audience we had for this celebrity talk. Seventy-five people came along to hear Tony Russell, one-time head of Westonbirt Arboretum, writer of tree and horticulture books, contributor to a number of magazines and panellist on BBC's Gardeners' Question time, to name just a few of his accomplishments. Now a freelance gardening and tree expert/advisor, he was just the person to talk to us and, from hearing what people said after his talk, his was a very enjoyable and useful talk and the audience was abuzz with enthusiasm following a successful evening.

Tony had come to us for the evening from his home in Snowdonia where his house stands at 700 feet above sea level, faces strong windy conditions and has ericaceous soil. He told us he was "trying" to establish a garden with the interesting comment that "if you plant something in your garden, you want it to thrive not just survive".

He talked about why we might want to plant trees in our gardens and came up with the following suggestions: they look nice; they provide shelter; they screen unsightly objects; they screen noise, they break up the starkness of the built environment; they provide certain foods – fruit and nuts; they bring wildlife into the garden; they create a focal point to

make a garden more interesting and, in a larger garden, they create “garden rooms” whereby there can be an element of surprise as one moves from one part of the garden to another. He also mentioned the use of trees to commemorate family events: the birth of a child or an anniversary, for example.

But choosing the right trees for the right spot is most important and Tony suggested that we consider the mature height of a tree before we plant it. He implored us to research our tree wish list before we bought to consider each tree's appropriateness for our gardens. He talked about trees planted on shrinkable clay soils, that these cause 90% of all subsidence occurrences and that we should match our potential trees to the pH of our soils, together with how much water-logging is suffered by the various parts of our gardens. A book - “Tree Roots and Buildings” by D.F. Cutler and B.K. Richardson – was Tony's recommendation to help those of us who are worried about trees and subsidence.

Following a review of our garden sites, Tony told us that, then was the time to consider which species to plant. Then, too, you can look at the forms of trees. Do you want a spreading trees or a fastigate variety for a particular spot ? Do you want something tall or small ? What about a weeping variety ? At this point, Tony took us carefully through the “rules” for planting our new tree: important points like teasing out the roots, not making the hole too deep, keeping one metre diameter clear of other vegetation to avoid competition and strimmer damage. And then, a very interesting point about watering: trees need plenty of water, particularly when newly planted, but whenever they are watered, only 8% of the water is actually taken up by the roots. Watering down a tube can focus the water better and allow the tree to take up 22%.

I list below all the tree species suggestions given by Tony but I shall leave readers to look up the details of each suggestion for themselves, otherwise this report could take up more than one Newsletter. Here are Tony's suggestions:

The “Sunrise” Horse Chestnut.

Azara species.

Judas Tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*).

Flowering Dogwoods. Go for the Asian strains. The American strains are prone to viruses. e.g. *Cornus kousa* and its cultivars.

The Lantern Tree (*Crinodendron hookerianum*).

The Chilean Firebush (*Embothrium coccineum*).

The Bell Tree (*Enkianthus* species)

The Handkerchief Tree (*Davidia involucrata*)

Magnolia wilsonii. “A wonderful, wonderful tree”, said Tony. Highly scented flowers, the scent of which will wash up to 20 yards away from the tree and the flowering continues well into May. Grows in any soil.

Crab Apples: e.g. 'Butterball', and 'Floribunda'. Also *Malus* 'Snow Cloud'.

Cherries: The Great White (*Prunus* 'Taihaku') and *Prunus sargentii*.

The tree Arbutilón.

The Indian Buckeye (*Aesculus indica*)

The Golden-leaved Indian Bean Tree (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea')

The Wedding Cake Tree (*Cornus controversa*)

The Pineapple Broom (*Genista* species, or try *Cytisus* species). Not sure which this is – try *Cytisus battandieri*.

Desfontainia spinosa.

Robinia frisia or *Gleditsia tricanthus*. The former has been suffering from a virus recently.

The False Camelia (*Stuartia* species)

The Japanese Maples (e.g. *Acer palmatum* 'Osakazuki' or 'Sango-kaku')

Sorbus vilmorinii.

The Yellow-berried Yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Lutea')

Various Spindles

For interesting bark, try:

Acer griseum

Prunus serrula

or *Pinus bungeana*

What about tree ferns ? Or perhaps the Chusan Palm ?

Tony's talk was long and fascinating, informative and absorbing. No-one noticed the time which is an excellent sign for both speaker and organisers. His slides were both apt and useful.

I could go on. He told us about the Cork Oak, the Wollemi Pine, the Ginkgo. The latter soaks up more CO₂ than any other plant. But I must stop. Let's have him again another time. Thank you, Tony, for a wonderful evening. Oh, and you'd better rush out now and buy your *Magnolia wilsonii* before others in the audience beat you !

John Tuer

Our next talk on 11th December in the St. Peter's Church Hall, Monkmoor atarting at 7.30pm

In John Tuer's own words :-

My talk is called "**Looking after your garden trees**" and I shall be talking about how a knowledge of basic tree botany can help us look after the trees in our garden. I shall use the up-to-date methods which accord with the current British Standards on tree care. These came from the USA in the 1980s and are now used by all arborists "in the know". This is a talk that I have given to numerous gardening groups in Shropshire and mid-Wales so, if any members have heard this already, it will not be new to them. But we have had so many new members to the Severn Tree Trust in recent years, that we thought it might be a helpful addition to their tree knowledge. My talk is illustrated with colour slides and actual specimens from trees.