

## Gardeners' Question Time



From left to right;  
back row, Neil Grant, Darrell Maryon, Sue Kohler;  
front row, Julian Brandram and Hilary Hutson.

The Sustainable Development Group held a very successful Gardeners' Question Time event on September 10th at the Quaker Meeting House. The event, project managed by June Pollard, was attended by more than 50 people who proved a very lively and engaged audience.

During the first part of the afternoon Gavin Faulston of Veolia gave a talk about the progress they are making towards achieving the Council's recycling targets. People were obviously bursting with questions following the talk and Gavin was waylaid with more during the tea break. One surprising (to me) fact is that there is only one site in Sheffield where you can take chemical waste (ie turpentine from washing out brushes, brick acid, and old engine oil) for recycling; I expect a lot finds its way into the sewage system or landfill. It was interesting to learn that a new regulation is coming out requiring those who sell batteries to take back used ones. (nb We have since learned from Neil Grant that the Ferndale Garden Centres now recycle batteries.) We think it would be very helpful and green if Veolia were organised to collect green waste from homes, shred it on the roadside and return it to the homeowners if requested.

The most entertaining part of the afternoon was the Gardeners' Question Time slot. The panel was made up of Darrell Maryon, Head Gardener of Wortley Hall Walled Garden and Project Manager at Heeley City Farm, an organic food growing expert; Julian Brandram, an agricultural botanist specialising in tree fruits; Hilary Hutson, an experienced and knowledgeable gardener who specialises in growing difficult plants; Dr Sue Kohler, Chairman of the Friends of the Botanical Gardens and a Landscape Architect. This team was ably managed by Neil Grant, Radio Sheffield's

own Garden expert and owner of the very successful Ferndale Garden Centres. Neil encouraged a nice touch of humour in the proceedings together with his own valuable advice.

A dozen or so questions were answered and we would like to share the resulting advice and tips:

- Grey water is fine for watering plants (but not that from biological washing powders).
- Cultivated honey bees are dwindling in numbers, but not the wild honey bees. Bumble bees are slightly down in numbers. These are the primary pollinator for our tomatoes. Plant a diversity of wild flowers including foxgloves, hebes, clover etc to encourage bees and other insects.
- We might well need to get rid of our lawns as the climate changes?
- Moss in the lawn makes useful potting material for insectivorous plants!
- Only heat the greenhouse if it gets very cold and if you have tender seedlings on the go. An electric heater is the most controllable because it has a thermostat and also, it provides dry heat. Double glazing is obviously good.
- Container gardening is very good for salads, carrots, herbs etc. Containers are useful because you can move them round the garden to sunny or sheltered spots as required and can also be used as cold frames if you put a lid on them.
- Plants that should do well as the climate changes include fruit trees, rowan, Eucalyptus, Australian shrubs (Sue Kohler's favourites). James Grieve is a good apple for gardens and is self fertile. For other advice visit [www.appletrees@talktalk.net](mailto:www.appletrees@talktalk.net)
- Moulds and mildews are encouraged by dry ground but high humidity. Mulching helps to prevent them.
- The weather is likely to become more erratic so we need to change our gardening techniques:
- Grow spare seedlings in case of a weather disaster;
- Protect plants from wind;

- Use no-dig techniques and mulch the soil well, the worms will do the rest;
- Don't use bedding plants, it's not a sustainable activity and actually, many bedding plant flowers don't bear pollen;
- Build bigger compost areas – invest in a shredder;
- Grow vegetables among the flowers; some of them are very pretty.

In summary, Climate Change means that we must adapt our gardening techniques to cope with changing and more extreme weather patterns and to conserve our dwindling resources. Members of the SU3A Sustainable Development Group are trying to learn about what this means. If you would like to join us, contact information is in the centre pages of *Links* or on the SU3A website.

Greta Pearman