

TIDDINGTON WITH ALBURY & MILTON COMMON NEWSLETTER

www.tiddingtonoxon.co.uk

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2011

From the Editor

February and March appear to be quiet months for activities - perhaps just as well if we get any more inclement weather to keep us grounded. I wonder if our County Councillor knows something we don't (see page 5)!

However there is a chance to exercise the little grey cells at the WI quiz evening on 5 February and at the Cricket Club on 26 February (see page 12).

A Valentine Disco on 12 February (see page 10) will be a chance to celebrate.

Everyone is invited to celebrate, too, "the" wedding in April and details of plans for the village can be found on page 11.

Zena Knight

Poppy Collection November 2010

The Tiddington with Albury door-to-door Poppy Collection made the grand total of £500.45. Thanks to everybody.

Now our appeal. We are looking for volunteers who would help us with Poppy Day this year, therefore allowing us to continue with this worthwhile cause. Please contact one of us.

Thanks

Pam, Joan and Freda

Carol Evening 16 December

The proceeds of the Carol Evening held in aid of Cancer Research UK amounted to £346.00. Many thanks to all who supported the event.

AnneEdwards

Milton Common NHW (West Side) and Sandy Lane



THEFT OF VEHICLES - Plant Theft

Between Tuesday, 11 January at 16.30hrs and Wednesday, 12 January at 07.30hrs, there was theft of two high value vehicles from a lay-by on the B4009 Henton, near Chinnor. A Bobcat Skid Digger and a yellow Bomag ride on roller were stolen. Overnight between Wednesday, 12 January and Thursday, 13 January, there was theft of a Takeuchi 1.5 Tonne Digger and three digger buckets from a site on the Newington Road, Stadhampton.

Trading Standards are making enquiries about a company called Homepride Landscapes. They are a driveway and landscaping company. Trading Standards have the vehicle used by this company, but would like to know if anyone saw it in their area before 11 January this year.

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From the Parish Clerk

Potholes - nothing much seems to happen regarding potholes and reporting them to Oxfordshire Highways seems to have little effect. The December snows seem to have done their worst - small holes are now larger. Surely prevention is better than cure, and almost certainly cheaper? Lack of funds is no doubt an issue, but surely safety should be the priority?

Subsidence on A418 near turning to Albury - I have written to Oxfordshire Highways regarding the road surface on the Thame Road carriageway, which is very uneven and seems to show signs of subsidence. No response as yet.

Speeding vehicles in Albury View - following comments received from residents, the matter of speeding vehicles in Albury View was discussed at a recent Parish Council meeting. Please be aware of the danger of driving too fast in residential areas where there are likely to be children, elderly and disabled people and domestic animals. Better to be safe rather than sorry!

Royal Mail post boxes - our postman tells me that he recently cleared a post box in the village of a load of circulars which someone had pushed into the box, as a result of which he

Tiddington with Albury Parish Council Members

Chair	John Nowell-Smith	339650
	Econ.development, businesses	
Vice Chair	Elaine Horne	279520
	Planning, highways and Milton Common	
Councillor	Cherry Draper	339347
	Environment, conservation, recycling waste	
Councillor	Ken Field	339671
	Housing, planning, building & controls	
Councillor	Zena Knight	339340
	Planning; recreation, arts, grants	
Councillor	Brian Price	339977
	Health & safety	
Clerk	Ken Poyser	339216
	Rosewood, Ickford Road, Tiddington	
	Email: twaparishcouncil@googlegmail.com	

discovered some hidden mail which had not been collected.

The people who empty the boxes have instructions to beware of such detritus for fear of dangerous objects which could be hidden therein. Anyone having waste items for disposal should do so in an appropriate way.

Proposed development by Arla Dairy Foods at Aston Clinton/Buckland - the Parish Clerk to Buckland Parish Council has written to inform me that there will be an anticipated 800 to 1000 additional vehicle movements per day should this development go ahead. Not sure if this will have any effect on our neighbourhood, but that's an awful lot of lorries/tankers! The planning application has not yet been submitted.

Parish Councillors - this is the year for Parish Council elections, which will take place in the spring. If you have a burning desire to be a Councillor, now's the time to gear up/get enthused! More information in due course (once I have it)!

Ken Poyser - Parish Clerk

Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme

Residents of the Parish can see the records of the Council held by the Parish Clerk or learn where they may be accessed. Records include minutes, financial information and responses to planning consultations. Application can be made to the Clerk (Tel: 339216) and documents viewed by appointment. Any copies required will be charged at 10p per page.

Post Office

Tiddington Village Hall

Please support your local post office facilities in the Village Hall on Wednesdays from 1.30pm-3.00pm. Your postmaster from Great Milton is able to provide all the usual needs including top-up of mobile phones, etc.

Neighbourhood Watch

(continued from p 1)

Milton Common

The vehicle is a Green Land Rover with yellow wording "Contracting and resurfacing division - Civil engineering", registration number J8 HDF. If you have had any sightings or dealings with this company, please could you let the Doorstep Crime Team know at Trading Standards on 0845 051 0845.

At the moment we are going out to quote for heating oil for the NHW Oil Group - we have 26 households in the Group - so please let us know if you want to join.

Also we have started up Horsecwatch under the NHW banner at the moment until all the paperwork has come through from Thames Valley Horsecwatch - eventually this will include Tiddington & Albury.

Elaine Horne

NHW Co-ordinator M/C and Sandy Lane
01844 279520

Neighbourhood Watch

Tiddington

Thanks to the alertness of individuals in our area, the Police have been able to solve many crimes and prevent more being carried out. Just this week, Thame Police and Trading Standards arrested five men operating in Thame as "rogue traders".

As you will have seen on the news, due to the high cost of metal, particularly lead, copper, brass and aluminium, well organised gangs of "metal thieves" are stealing from railways, the electricity network and the telephone network. In the first week in January two men in their 20's from Wallingford were arrested on suspicion of stealing lead from the following churches: All Saints Church, Lydalls Road, Didcot, St Andrew's Church in East Hagbourne, St Peter's Church in Wantage and St Michael's Church in Blewbury. Recently lead was also

stolen from the roof of the Doctor's Surgery in Wheatley.

Here is a website for more information - <http://www.thamesvalleypolice.uk/yournh-tvp-pol-area-n235>

If you see anything suspicious in our village or the surrounding area then immediately report it to Thames Valley Police on 08458 505 505 or in an emergency 999.

Chris Williams

NHW Co-ordinator Tiddington
07710 620820



From your Chairman

Welcome to the New Year. I hope the inhospitable weather is now behind us and none of you are left too battered or bruised.

Talking about the weather, have any of you, as I have, noticed that we seem to have a sort of microclimate of our own? When it is raining only a mile or so away, we are, if not wreathed in sunshine, then totally dry. Similarly, when the sun is shining quite close by we are "enjoying" a downpour. If anyone can explain, or has views on the phenomenon, please share them by writing to the Newsletter.

Another matter that might be of interest is a Parish Plan. That is, a mechanism to deliver one or more projects that could benefit the village. A committee would be formed to identify such projects and, with the help of outside bodies such as the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), would work out how to bring one or more of them to fruition. The committee would be independent of the Parish

Council and funding would be raised separately - not out of Council Tax. A few of the benefits of such a Plan, as outlined by ORCC, can be found on their website. This suggestion will be on the agenda for the next Parish Council meeting on 7 February so come along. All suggestions will be welcome. The projects can be as small as planting a few trees or as big as creating a village shop!

John Nowell Smith
339650

From your County Councillor

Library funding to be stopped - you will have seen much publicity on this subject as the County Council grapples with setting its budget for next year, following a large cut in its Central Government funding. I am pleased to report that the two closest libraries to the Tiddington area (Thame and Wheatley) are not on the list to have funding withdrawn.

Clearing Snow (Government website advice on clearing snow and ice from pavements yourself) - there's no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside your home or from public spaces. It's unlikely you'll be sued or held legally responsible for any injuries on the path if you have cleared it carefully. Follow the snow code when clearing snow and ice safely.

The snow code - tips on clearing snow and ice from pavements or public spaces. Preventing slips. Pay extra attention to clearing snow and ice from steps and steep pathways - you might need to use more salt on these areas.

If you clear snow and ice yourself, be careful - don't make the pathways more dangerous by causing them to refreeze. But don't be put off clearing paths because you're afraid someone will get injured. Remember, people walking on snow and ice have responsibility to be careful themselves. Follow the advice below to make

sure you clear the pathway safely and effectively.

Clear the snow or ice early in the day. It's easier to move fresh, loose snow rather than hard snow that has packed together from people walking on it. So if possible, start removing the snow and ice in the morning. If you remove the top layer of snow in the morning, any sunshine during the day will help melt any ice beneath. You can then cover the path with salt before nightfall to stop it refreezing overnight.

Use salt or sand- not water. If you use water to melt the snow, it may refreeze and turn to black ice. Black ice increases the risk of injuries as it is invisible and very slippery. You can prevent black ice by spreading some salt on the area you have cleared. You can use ordinary table or dishwasher salt - a tablespoon for each square metre you clear should work. Don't use the salt found in salting bins - this will be needed to keep the roads clear. Be careful not to spread salt on plants or grass as it may cause them damage. If you don't have enough salt, you can also use sand or ash. These won't stop the path icing over as well as salt, but will provide good grip under foot.

Take care where you move the snow. When you're shovelling snow, take care where you put it so it doesn't block people's paths or drains. Make sure you make a path down the middle of the area to be cleared first, so you have a clear surface to walk on. Then shovel the snow from the centre of the path to the sides.

Offer to clear your neighbours' paths. If your neighbour will have difficulty getting in and out of their home, offer to clear snow and ice around their property as well. Check that any elderly or disabled neighbours are alright in the cold weather. If you're worried about them, contact your local council.

Kissing gates replace stiles on countryside walk - attractive kissing gates have been installed by Oxfordshire County Council's

Countryside Service along a popular walk in a North Wessex Downs beauty spot. The wooden 'Oxford' kissing gates have replaced seven stiles along the six-mile circular route which leads from The Ridgeway National Trail to Ashdown House and Ashbury village. Three further stiles have been replaced with pedestrian gates. The new gates make the walk entirely stile-free and therefore accessible to those with lesser mobility.

Please feel free to contact me about County Council issues that concern you. My contact details are as follows:

Address: David Turner, 50 Hardings, Chalgrove, Oxford, OX44 7TJ.

Home Telephone: 01865 891169

Email: david.turner@oxfordshire.gov.uk

David Turner
21 January 2011

FREE! SWAP SHOP

**Saturday, 9 April,
9.30am – 11.00am**

Merry Bells, Wheatley

**Bring useful old stuff you no longer need;
take away FREE stuff that is useful to you.**

**If you are bringing stuff it
needs to be in the hall by 10.15am**

You can now bring (small) electrical items!

We have a notice board to advertise items too big to carry easily.

Bringing is not compulsory – call in and see if there is something you want to take.

Recycling: You can also bring used printer cartridges (not Epson, please), old mobile phones*, plastic milk bottle tops, batteries* and foil milk bottle tops for us to recycle.

Refreshments available (small charge)

Run by Wheatley Community Action Group
www.wheatleycag.org

Reuse, recycle and keep stuff out of landfill!

*See website for other places to recycle these items

From the Vicar

There has been much welcome publicity about the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible KJV. Introduced in 1611, arguably the KJV has had more influence on spoken English than any other book. Many phrases in use today can be traced back to the King James Bible, phrases such as "no peace for the wicked" Isaiah 57:21, "Filthy lucre" 1 Timothy 3:3, "Wheels within wheels" Ezekiel 10:10 and "Gave up the ghost" Mark 15:37. These are a few surprising examples of sayings that have permeated our spoken language. We often use them without realising they have biblical origins. One scholar counted 257 phrases still in use today that can be directly traced back to the King James Version. Compare that to the more modern versions, off the top of my head I cannot recall any phrases that jump immediately to mind.

The King James Version has shaped the hearts and minds of English-speaking people for centuries. It came into being at the request of King James I, who was unhappy with the older translations at the time. 54 scholars were chosen to work on the translation, but only 47 completed the task. They were based in Oxford, Cambridge and London. The King often visited them at their work. Scholars worked from original Greek and Hebrew texts but also drew heavily from previous translations, especially William Tyndale.

One of the most intriguing things about the King James translation is that it is not based solely on what would today be considered a good translation. The translators often took a literal view of the text, the result may not have been as linguistically accurate as some of the more modern translations but the result has much linguistic beauty and preserves much of the poetic nature of the original texts. I think this is where the secret of its longevity lies. Only time will tell but I wonder whether in the future scholars will celebrate the 400th

anniversary of the Good News Bible or the Revised Standard Version.

Today in our worship there is still room for the KJV but it takes its place alongside some of the more modern biblical translations such as the Good News Bible, the New Revised Standard Version and the New International Version. This is surely right; in many ways the more modern bible translations are not as poetic, but they can be less obscure, and bring the Word of God to life in new ways.

This year though it is right to honour the King James Version. The old-fashioned words of the

King James Version aren't just part of our heritage. The King James Bible is not like an ancient monument or museum; it is much more than that. It has an esteemed place in our language and in our culture and its ancient beautiful language can give us poetry that can speak directly to our needs today. They can give a stronger and more immediate sense of God's tender love and glorious majesty.

With best wishes
Caroline

Church Services	St Helen's Church, Albury
6 February	9.30am Morning Prayer
13 February	9.30am Holy Communion
20 February	9.30am Morning Prayer
27 February	9.30am Holy Communion
6 March	9.30am Morning Prayer
13 March	9.30am Holy Communion
20 March	9.30am Morning Prayer
27 March	9.30am Holy Communion



What you think of our service...

The centre staff and I would like to say a big thank you for all your comments and completed questionnaires returned as part of the recent County Council survey. We are waiting to hear about how the cuts to public services will affect us all, and your views have been included in the report to officers of the Council to show the impact that Sure Start Children's Centres provide in the community. We conducted our part of the survey over the whole catchment area and every service we run, and there are some strong themes to highlight. We are delighted to see that 94% of you rated the service as excellent. Of particular value to you are access to groups, parenting workshops, and

support and advice on child health and breastfeeding. Since visiting the centre, 81% of you feel you gained knowledge about how children learn and develop and 73% report more confidence in parenting. 78% of parents indicated greater awareness of child health and are more confident about making home life healthier. 60% of you feel that your relationship with your children has improved since using the centres services. 25% of parents using our service have gained skills and information to help find employment or make decisions about future work options. Going forward, the majority of you would like us to be open more often and many of you would like to access additional services through the centre more frequently, such as midwives, employment advice etc. and for our services to be better advertised so that more people are able to use those on offer. Whatever happens

in the future, it is rewarding to know that you value our work over the last year and a half, and the team at the Maple Tree CC will use your feedback as we plan for services from April onwards.

Oxfordshire Family Information Service - Pauline McKinnon from OFIS will be attending Bumps to Babies on Monday, 7 February (2.00-3.30pm, Wheatley Young People's Centre) and Stay & Play on Friday, 11 March (9.30-11.00, Great Milton Neighbours Hall). OFIS provide information on a range of topics such as childcare, early years' provision, help with cost of childcare and activities for children, as well as a brokerage service for parents who are finding it difficult to locate childcare.

Special days - we will be celebrating Chinese New Year in February and in March we have activities planned to celebrate St David's Day, St Patrick's Day and Pancake Day - contact Debbie for a full programme 07988 159041.

School half term w/c 21 February - is messy week! Older children are welcome to attend if they are accompanying siblings under 5 years old and an adult.

Evening First Aid Workshop - we are planning to hold our next first aid workshop as an evening session so that we can offer our services to working parents - please contact Nicole for further details 07545 209819.

Children's Centres are a one stop shop for all young children, their parents, grandparents, childminders and other carers. As well as running **free** and low cost play events for families, we also provide a range of information and advice about local children's services, including health and education and outreach home support. Please contact Deborah Jackson for a programme or further information on 07988 159041 or email deborah.jackson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Jenny Stoker
07533 573746

jenny.stoker@oxfordshire.gov.uk



Children's Centres
for families in Oxfordshire

Waterstock & Tiddington W.I.



Members enjoyed a convivial evening in December at the Oxfordshire Golf Club for a festive Christmas dinner and we were lucky with the weather!

In January Caroline Robinson described how people can be divided into four main personalities and identifying these can be helpful in cultivating good relationships in the workplace and socially. Members were invited to vote anonymously for the category they felt they belonged to and the result made for an interesting analysis from Caroline.

On 10 February, John Fox from Wheatley will be talking about the history of the local area and there is a bring and buy stall. The competition will be a kitchen item beginning with the letter "Q" and in March "R". At the February meeting nominations will be taken for the committee and we are in urgent need of further volunteers to spread the work load, thus making it easier for everyone. In particular can we please have a new treasurer, otherwise the Institute will fold. A great pity as we welcomed two new members at our January meeting.

On 10 March we will form a new committee at our Annual Meeting and Beryl Mann from the County Federation will be our speaker.

We have recently had a request from SANDS (Stillbirth & Neonatal Death) for volunteers to knit baby blankets for a project to make memory boxes for all those parents who have experienced bereavement. If anyone would like a copy of the pattern please get in touch with me by phone or email.

New members will be made very welcome at our monthly meetings on the second Thursday of the month in Tiddington Village Hall at 7.30pm, or come as a visitor to see if you like us!

Zena Knight

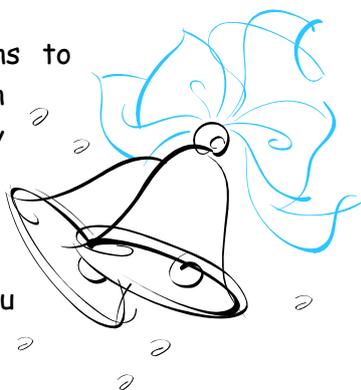
Tel: 01844 339340

Email: zenaknight42@btinternet.com

Tiddington Village Hall

It's been a fairly quiet start to the year. However it will soon be spring and this year there's a Royal Wedding! The Village Hall Committee is putting together plans for how we as a village can celebrate William and Kate's special day and what better way than a traditional Kids street party! The plan is to hold the party in the afternoon (probably about 4.00pm) in the area outside the Fox with hopefully a marquee in the pub garden just in case it rains. Then in the evening we've booked a live band so that we can all party the night away.

There are also plans to give a Tiddington with Albury commemorative mug to every child 16 and under in the Parish. Some of you



may remember the ones we had made to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. Adult residents will also have the opportunity to purchase them. Full details about price etc will be in the March/April newsletter but in the meantime we need to conduct a mini census to ensure we order enough mugs to go round and gauge interest in the party celebrations. To keep costs down we are hoping that people will pitch in with food for the street party and we don't expect to charge much for tickets in the evening.

If you have children who would like a mug, wish to purchase one yourself or would like to register your interest in attending either or both functions then please complete the slip below and drop it into the box at the garage. Alternatively, you can email me your requests (stratton@gmx.com)

More details in the March/April Newsletter.

Alan Stratton
Chairman, Village Hall Committee
07889 851588

✂.....

Tiddington Royal Wedding Celebrations – Friday 29th April 2011

I/We would like to register our interest in being part of the Villages' Royal Wedding Celebrations.

There are children (16 and under) in our household and of them would like to attend the afternoon street party

I/we can/cannot (*delete as applicable*) help with food for the street party

..... of us would like to come to the party in the evening

I/we are also interested in purchasing (subject to price etc) Tiddington Royal Wedding Commemorative mugs.

Name(s)

Address:

Tel: Email: (Useful for sending updates)

Please hand in to Sue at Tiddington Garage, or email your answers to stratton@gmx.com

Tiddington Village Hall

Car Boot Sale

A Date for Your Diary

Saturday, 7 May at 10.00am

There will be a special price for residents - look out for the coupon in the April/May edition of this Newsletter



We welcome the New Year on many positive notes and look forward to celebrating 125 years of cricket in Tiddington.

We have a new logo to reflect this and a range of clothing can be found on our website: www.tiddingtoncricketclub.org .

Orders can be left at the club and we will arrange delivery as soon as possible.

Following our plea for help for a large TV, we are pleased to announce that we now have a brand new 42" in pride of place. It complements the sport that is on offer and we offer our grateful thanks to Stephen Bowley for his continued support of the activities of our club.

A reminder that we have a quiz night on Saturday, 26 February, 7.30pm. Tickets are £5 each to include a light supper. Book your team in at the bar. The race night is on Saturday, 2 April and further details will follow.

We are looking for casual summer bar staff. This will mainly be weekend working and if interested, please contact me. References will be required and over 18's only.

We are pleased with the continued success of our youth coaching programme and currently have 4 girls training with the County under-11 squad, 2 girls with the under-13 squad, 2 boys with the under-16 squad. We also have 8 boys training with the South Oxfordshire District Squads.

Our summer youth programme will commence in April, further details will appear on the website shortly.

We are planning to replace our cricket nets and this is a major task. We have some funding ourselves and we are aiming to source further vital revenue to support this.

It really is four years since our clubhouse has been up. It is looking a bit tired inside and during April we aim to redecorate. If you have any spare brushes, rollers, etc taking up space, we would love to use them, just drop them into the club or to Ray Manning. Any offers of help are also appreciated.

Finally our AGM is planned for Sunday, 6 March. We are looking for more members to join our general committee. We need people to assist with the collection and administration of our varied memberships - social, playing and junior and our 100 club. Also a special person to co-ordinate fundraising and our volunteer workforce. Without volunteers we would not have the club that is the envy of many. If you feel you could offer some time and expertise, we would love to hear from you.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Lesley Pykett

Secretary

Tiddington Cricket Club

07762 572558

lpykett@oxoncb.com

Wheatley Library

Monday	Closed
Tuesday	2.00pm - 7.00pm
Wednesday	9.30am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 5.00pm
Thursday	2.00pm - 5.00pm
Friday	9.30am - 1.00pm 2.00pm - 6.00pm
Saturday	9.30am - 1.00pm

The Merry Bells, High Street, Wheatley

Tel: 01865 875267

Email: wheatley.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Thame & District Citizens Advice Bureau Market House, North St, Thame OX9 3HH

Opening Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Friday	9.30 – 4.00	Open door
Wednesday	9.30 – 1.00	Specialist debt clinic (appointment)
Thursday	9.30 – 1.00	Telephone advice

Advice line: 01844 214827

Appointments line: 01844 217186

Website:

www.citizensadviceoxfordshire.org.uk

A session is held at the offices of the United Reformed Church, Crown Square, Wheatley on Monday mornings from 10.00am-1.00pm

GREAT HASELEY AND DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Walking in my garden in the sunshine yesterday I was reminded that, however miserable the weather may be, spring is not far away. The white of snowdrops and yellow of winter aconites are already visible and the shoots of irises, daffodils and alliums are advancing rapidly. I will have to work hard to finish clearing the decaying perennial vegetation which threatens to swamp them, while leaving enough in an attempt to thwart the best attempts of the local deer which are very fond of irises. I no longer grow any tulips in the

back garden as they never get beyond ground level before being eaten. Snowdrops and daffodils remain unaffected. Late in February is a good time to beg clumps of snowdrops "in the green" from gardening friends who are dividing their congested clumps as I find this the best way to get them established. However, a snowdrop enthusiast friend (who has over 200 different varieties) tells me that they should be lifted just after the leaves have died back; this avoids root damage which would reduce the bulb's development for the following year. I know that there is at least one snowdrop enthusiast (galanthophile) living locally who might like to correct me!

This is also the time of year to appreciate scented, winter flowering plants on a mild day. Sarcococca (Christmas Box) varieties are in full flower and can be hard to spot when the delightful scent is noticed as the flowers are tiny. Flowers are about to open on my wonderful Daphne "Jacqueline Postill" which has a powerful scent filling the front garden on a sunny day. Other scented plants include Lonicera fragrantissima which is also just opening; this I bought at the church fête many years ago and I suspect may actually be Lonicera x purpusii, but either way it is good value and happily spreads, especially by layering itself where stems touch the ground.

It is time to prune the roses which can be difficult to master, especially the climbers, as I often seem to cut off stems I meant to keep. Usually I get my better half to deal with the climbers because, despite having no training at all, he seems to instinctively make all the right cuts and is much more brutal than I am and to great effect; it has taken years for me to be able to watch him pick up the secateurs without worrying about my plants!

One other job I intend to do this month is to remove some stems from my Philadelphus plants. I have three varieties in one bed which flower at different times and so give pleasure over about six weeks in early summer. The correct time to prune these is after flowering,

but this is tricky as luxuriant foliage makes it difficult to see which stems should be removed. An alternative, which I read about in one of the late Christopher Lloyd's books, is to take out whole stems down to almost ground level in winter when the plant is leafless; this encourages the plant to send up new shoots which flower better. If you take out the oldest one third each winter then the whole plant is renewed every three years. What you must not do at this time is give the plant a haircut or you will lose this year's flowers which arise from side shoots on last year's growth.

Liz Moyses



Sense in Switching?

At a time of rising energy prices on-line comparison can help you save money. Switching energy supplier on-line is easy. A switch usually takes effect within 6 weeks and can result in annual savings of up to £100 a year.

Switching supplier makes no difference to the actual gas or electricity you receive. The big six providers share the same supply infrastructure. However, customer service, payment options and price do vary significantly.

Comparison sites can help you compare customer satisfaction ratings, penalties for leaving contracts, capped price options and dual fuel discounts. A green electricity tariff is the best for the environment and usually costs extra.

To switch you need to know the name of your existing supplier(s) and either the cost of your energy for the last year or (for improved accuracy) the number of kWh used.

You won't be able to change suppliers if you are in debt to your present supplier. The Home Heat Helpline on 0800 33 66 99 can help in this situation.

Even if you are happy with your current supplier, you may still be able to save money by moving to direct debit and on-line account management.

For more information visit
www.cocoonyourhome.co.uk/saving

Newington Nurseries

Statuesque Versatility

The Mahonia is a really statuesque shrub that gives structure to the back of the plants border. It's a member of the Berberis family which explains its rather spiky leaves (its more common name is Holly-Leaved Barberry) so it's also a rather good plant to site along a boundary too. Best of all is its highly fragrant, long-lasting yellow flowers that cheer up the long, dull days of winter.

Mahonias are really very versatile shrubs. They can be planted as part of an evergreen shrub border, used as structural plants to combine with other spiky-leaved plants such as Fatsia and Ilex, or planted alongside other winter-flowering shrubs such as Daphne and Viburnum tinus. They can also be used in a contemporary planting scheme that includes Trachycarpus, Phormiums and Miscanthus grasses. They are also a good backdrop for small winter-flowering plants such as snowdrops and hellebores.

Mahonias are native to the chilly environs of East Asia, the Himalayas and North America. For example, *Mahonia x media* 'Charity' is a really tough and cold-tolerant plant, producing long, upright spires of sweetly-scented, lemon-yellow flowers from October onwards. These are followed by petrol-blue, edible berries (very sharp in flavour and full of Vitamin C) which are loved by the birds if you don't pick them first. It's very architectural and will reach a height of some 2 metres.

Mahonia x media 'Winter Sun' is another good choice and will withstand a north-facing position in the garden. 'Winter Sun's wonderfully-fragranced flowers are produced on rather upright stems, are sulphur yellow in colour and are followed by purple berries. The variety *Mahonia x media* 'Buckland' produces very long flower spikes from late autumn and these last well into the winter. Both get to heights of some 2 metres.

If you prefer a lower-growing variety, try *Mahonia aquifolium* (meaning holly-like). This is a really attractive shrub, small in habit, and used as either hedging or as a ground cover plant. The spiky green leaves often turn red in cold winters. Rich yellow flowers appear in spring and these are followed by bluey-black berries. *M. aquifolium*, or the Oregon Grape (on account of the colour and size of its berries), will get to a height of 1.5 metres and spread to 2 metres. Another good choice is *M. aquifolium* 'Atropurpurea'. The habit is the same as *M. aquifolium* but the foliage turns into a stunning red-purple colour in autumn.

Mahonias are very easy to grow and are very hardy yet rather under-rated plants. They like shady positions and neutral to slightly acidic soil. If planted in slightly alkaline soil, their foliage may discolour and turn yellow so feed the plants with a soluble or liquid ericaceous plant food during the spring and summer. To maintain the shape of Mahonias and to prevent them from getting too leggy, cut back the stems by about a third each spring. This is the key to keeping them compact and shapely.

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Does the thought of your next heating bill leave you cold?

As the price of fuel increases, energy bills can become unmanageable. To help combat this, a free phone helpline has been set up to advise residents in Oxfordshire how to cut their fuel bills. The service is offered by the United Sustainable Energy Agency in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, the five district councils, and the Primary Care Trust. Anyone who is struggling with their fuel bills can call **0800 107 00 44** for free, impartial advice on:

- Improving the efficiency of your property through cavity wall and loft insulation including the grants available
- Local authority grants
- Switching energy suppliers to find the best deal
- Social tariffs provided by the energy companies for vulnerable customers
- Advice on fuel debt
- Home Improvement Agencies who undertake minor repairs for vulnerable home owners
- Improving your energy efficiency to cut your energy bills

United Sustainable Energy Agency is a not for profit company providing services to the Public Sector, Business, and individuals to help them reduce carbon, adapt to climate change and tackle fuel poverty.

Oxfordshire Dementia Information Line and Website

We are currently looking to recruit, train and support volunteers to take calls on the Information Line. There are also administration and networking opportunities around Oxfordshire to increase the awareness of our new service. Please contact us if you would like to volunteer. We would like to hear from anyone who may be able to make a commitment of a few hours a week to provide this very important service.

For more information, please contact The Dementia Information Line 01993 700061