**All Aspects of Fuchsias**

At the June meeting we were treated to a presentation about fuchsias by Carol Gubler, of Little Brook Nursery, Ash Green, near Aldershot.

Carol told the story of the origin of her nursery - from her father becoming interested in fuchsias in 1963 in a garden he passed in South London on his commute to work, and taking cuttings from the gardener. He grew them all over the house, until the 1970s when he took early retirement, and searched for a property to buy which would enable him to fulfil his dream of opening a fuchsia nursery. The land in Ash Green was purchased, and the nursery was finally opened as a business in 1986, unfortunately after the death of her father. Carol continues to run it, as well as previously serving as the President of the British Fuchsia Society, and continuing to run events for them.

Fuchsias come in a large range of sizes, and mostly originate from South America – in general they are tough and resilient. They have a fragrance in the cool of the evening, but only 50% of people can smell it. The berries are edible, and are used for jam, wine, gin, and muffins. Other uses include a New Zealand fuchsia with blue pollen, which is used for face paint by Maoris, and extracts from fuchsias reportedly being used in South America for shrinking heads.

Fuchsias can be propagated by cuttings – the smaller the cutting, the faster it will root, so a half-inch stem, maximum, and a pair of leaves, and they can be started off in anything – coir, vermiculite, compost, water. They will root in about 7-10 days, and can be potted up after 3 weeks (longer in Autumn). Pinch out to make them fuller - every pinch gives double the branches, and therefore double the flowers. Stop pinching 8 weeks before the maximum display is required for singles, 10 weeks for doubles. Carol takes 20-25,000 cuttings each year, between September and March.

Hardy fuchsias can be left planted out all year – in fact in the south of England, most fuchsias are hardy, although standards may need protection for the stem. Plant a bit deeper than the pot, avoid full sun, and apply mulch to keep roots cool. They appreciate regular water and feed, but don’t need deadheading or pinching out, nature will do this. Rather than cut back in the Autumn, wait until Spring, as the twiggy structure breaks up frost.

Fuchsia Gall Mite appeared in the UK in Fareham, having previously moved from Brazil, to USA, to Europe. It is a microscopic pest which deforms and distorts branches, leaving plants stunted, and purply/pinky. It is windblown, and will only affect fuchsias. There is little that can be done to control it, other than cut it out – the rest of the plant will go on.

The evening concluded with light refreshments and a raffle. The next meeting will be on **Friday 19th July,** when Everett Leeds will talk about ‘Herbaceous Clematis’.

Jo Myland