

# Lavant Horticultural Society

**'Propagation'**     *Ray Broughton*

**Wed 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Having trained at RHS Wisley in the mid-1970s, Ray was Head of Horticulture at Sparsholt College for 12 years. In 2000, he was awarded a Fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Horticulture in recognition of his services to horticultural education. He then taught staff and students at RHS Wisley where he was chief examiner.

This knowledge and experience shone through in a talk full of useful information on many aspects of propagation, all presented in an enjoyable and accessible way.

In addition, Ray gave a large number of useful tips; here are just some of them:

Clean up secateurs by leaving the blades in tomato ketchup for a few days. It is the vinegar that does the work, but if you just used vinegar it would evaporate or run off, whereas the ketchup keeps it in contact with the metal.

You can do the same thing with hedge trimmer blades, using a squeeze bottle of ketchup.

In the spring seedlings and cuttings can get very leggy. This is not due to low light levels, but the lack of carbon dioxide that is needed for photosynthesis. To provide a source of CO<sub>2</sub>, put some fairly fresh manure in a two litre plastic pot, cover with cling film and make holes in the film. Use from February through to the end of April.

Hardwood cuttings, for example of cornus or buddeja, should be taken in November.

One way to make them easier to look after is to use a "Dutch roll".

Take a length of plastic sheet cut from an old compost bag, black side up, and cover it with a one inch layer of compost. Place the cuttings spaced out along it, roll it up and tie it up.

Keep it over winter, lying horizontally somewhere dark and cool, like a shed or garage.

Open it up in April, when roots should have started to form, and pot up individually.

When filling a seed tray always make sure the compost in the corners is also firmed down, otherwise moisture will migrate there, leaving the centre dry.

When sowing dark coloured seed, mix with a little cornflour so that the seed will show up white against the compost.

To remove any surplus seed from the seed tray, rub a plastic pen to create static so the seed will jump up to the pen.

Don't cover seed too much, but even seed that needs light to germinate should still be covered with very thin layer of compost or vermiculite.

When dividing dahlia tubers make sure each division has a stem; without a stem it will not grow.

Hose down hedges mid-December to mid-January to remove female aphids sheltering there before they lay their eggs.

Beware euonymus and nasturtium, as they excrete sucrose which attracts aphids.