

U3A Gardening group April 24 report for Forum

The gardening group continues to grow with further new members joining. Our thanks to Celia and Pauline who are now welcoming new members.

In April we had a talk from Kelvin Vincent on Growing Chrysanthemums and Dahlias in the garden and containers. Kelvin is the Secretary of the Darlington Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society. He started early growing plants from the age of 8 and learned how to cross pollinate at an early age. During his teenage years he pursued other activities but returned to growing at the age of 19. He had a full career in the police service and served in Barnard Castle for some years in his early career.

In fact Kelvin focussed mainly on growing dahlias. In his Newton Aycliffe garden he now has 4 greenhouses to support his efforts. At the peak he was growing 500 dahlias but has now kept it to 175 as growing for exhibit is a lot of work. In January he starts off by growing from tubers in the heated greenhouse. In April he takes cuttings and plants these up in cell trays of 40 plants. Every 2 weeks they are potted on and planted out in the garden around June. Each plant in the garden has its own individual support as the plants are susceptible to blowing over in strong winds. When the flowers are ready for the shows he displays them in accordance with the society rules. If a particular type of dahlia is too large then it will be rejected. It seems to be a harsh world for these competitive growers.

This was another interesting talk which was enjoyed by the group.

On 3rd May we will be having our first coach trip to Holker Hall and Gardens.

On 7th June we will be visiting the RHS Bridgewater garden.

Julie, Fran and Kate