

**Garden Group Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009**

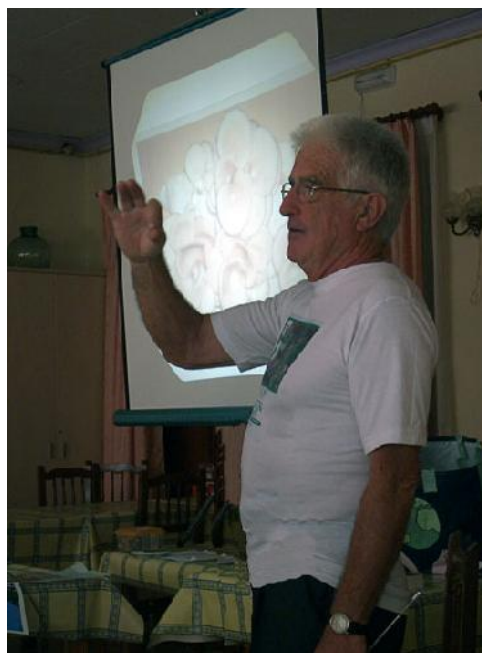
Bar Mediterraneo – Teulada

**GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GARDEN**

A Talk by Dick & Clodagh Handscombe



We were very privileged to have a talk by Dick and Clodagh Handscombe who came to Bar Mediterraneo, Teulada and gave a presentation entitled “Getting The Most Out Of Your Garden”.



As one might expect, the talk was quite wide ranging. Dick explained the design of their garden, aided by photographs taken as the garden developed. They have also acquired a large

plot for growing vegetables. Their philosophy is very much along the lines of eco-friendly growing – avoiding all artificial fertilisers and insecticides; for example, their vegetable plot is surrounded by comfrey plants which attract various insects, including grasshoppers, and therefore prevents attack on the vegetables. Also effective is planting garlic cloves near geraniums and roses to prevent aphids and moths.

Dick advised us that, when planning a garden, consideration should be given to plenty of shaded areas, where time can be spent outdoors – why come to Spain if not to spend most of the time outside? Plenty of plants will grow well in shaded areas, whereas cacti, succulents and lavender are more suited to exposure to the sun. Lantana and most flowering trees also enjoy full sun.



As we have recently heard, Dick confirmed that soil should be prepared with 30-40% compost and manure (horse manure is a good example and is freely available). Dick also recommended seaweed, which can be collected from the beaches at Moraira and the beaches between Denia and Oliva. The seaweed should be left to rot slightly before mixing with soil, or alternatively, can be added to a compost heap. Another possibility for soil improvement is to add dried goat manure which can be purchased from co-operativas.



Once beds are prepared for planting, the choice of plant positioning is crucial. Consideration should be given to grouping plants together depending on their water requirements. Plants that are deep-rooting will ultimately require little to no water (grapes, lantana and bouganvillea; too much watering can result in insect infestation). For rockeries choose drought resistant plants. Shallow rooting plants will require more water but should not be planted in full sun as soil temperatures can reach over 40° C and will burn or boil the roots!

Secondly, consider colours: whites and blues for 'cool' areas, reds, oranges, yellow for 'warm' areas. Thirdly, cover the soil with either ground cover plants or some form of mulching (not stones as they retain the heat). One of the main reasons for plants failing to flower is over-watering, so we should try to resist watering well-established plants.



Dick advised that hard pruning be carried out in January, whilst trimming and keeping plants in shape can be carried out throughout the year, e.g. lavender, lantana etc. When pruning fruit trees take out 10-20% of new growth every year (from the centre) of a new tree, and 50-80% from an old tree. Remember to feed citrus trees in the Spring. Dick recommended the Lunar Lemon variety as it flowers and fruits all year.

If you haven't an area in your garden for a vegetable plot, Dick recommends window boxes or pots for producing a whole range of vegetables and herbs, and is easy to manage.

Dick recommended the Fiskars range of garden tools which are of excellent quality. Also an effective snail and slug killer – Ferramol Antilimicas.

Two useful websites are: [www.gardeningspain.com](http://www.gardeningspain.com) and [www.wddty.com](http://www.wddty.com).



At the end of Dick and Clodagh's two hour presentation, there was an opportunity to ask questions and to purchase some of their books which contain comprehensive information on garden plants, fruit growing and vegetables. We feel sure that all of the twenty-eight members who attended the meeting will find the information given extremely useful.

Some of us then adjourned to the restaurant of Bar Mediterraneo for the Menu del Dia.

Chris & John Parsons  
November 2009