



MEETINGS HELD AT
THE RHS GARDEN
HARLOW CARR
CRAG LANE, HARROGATE
HG3 1QB

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NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Well, we have reached the "back end" again after a rather difficult season (so what's new?). In my neck-of-the-woods, late spring frosts resulted in a much reduced set of pear, plum and cherry blossom. The summer that followed was intermittently wet, chilly and windy; not very conducive to outdoor work (WHAT Global Warming?). The orchard flooded twice and between the wet and the wind, the under-gardener and I were only able to get one spray on the apples. Surprisingly there was a bumper crop, almost no scab and few codling moth in residence. The soft fruit didn't do too badly either.

Other parts of the country have had their problems too. The harvest of Westmorland Damsons this year has apparently been very poor. Damson growers in other areas (Kent, W. Midlands) have also had a disastrous season. Again the causes seem to have been late spring frosts and persistent rain. Price rises of up to 300% have been reported. This is likely to mean scarcity of damson-based products at Damson Day next April.

The UK was not the only area to suffer. Fruit production over much of Europe was also down due to adverse weather - this time late spring frosts and an unusually DRY season! Summer fruit (peaches & nectarines, currants, cherries, strawberries) all gave poor yields, according to a report in Fruit Grower (Aug. 08).

Perhaps next season will be better (hope springs eternal!). In the meantime there is winter to get through. It is usually thought of as the time for gardeners to relax by the fire with the catalogues and recoup their energy - not for us fruit-growers unfortunately. We might manage a respite over Xmas but from January on there is winter pruning followed by apple-grafting to keep us busy (weather permitting). So come along, help and learn!

Diana Davis

