

Sussex Group Plant Fairs

Like most Plant Heritage Groups the Sussex Group is heavily dependent upon the income from plant sales each year to support its local activities. We shall be attending three plant fairs this year (see page 5 for further details). All plants for sale have been grown and provided to us free of charge by Sussex members, both professional and amateur. We are very grateful for this support but always welcome donations from other members since this increases the range of plants available to us. If you are able to provide plants for one or more of these fairs or can spare a few hours to help at the plant stalls (which is not only great fun but also allows you time to visit the rest of the event free of charge) please contact one of the committee members shown on page 2.

SNOWDROPS AT WELFORD PARK Near NEWBURY RG20 8HU

Mrs J H Puxley (01488 – 608203) www.welfordpark.co.uk.

6miles North-west of Newbury on Lambourn Valley Road

Entrance on Newbury-Lambourn Road. Please use clearly marked car park.

See website for details.

OPEN 11am-4.pm for SNOWDROPS until 28th February inclusive. CLOSED MON-DAYS.

Wide drive with snowdrops and aconites. Snowdrops in the surrounding fields and across a small stream a spectacular sapling wood, with flowers like snow

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PLANT HERITAGE SUSSEX GROUP

Spring 2010

Number 79



Acacia pravissima

PLANT HERITAGE SUSSEX GROUP

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Ficus benghalensis (Banyan) An evergreen tree usually found in moist tropical forests, originally from India. The branches have pale grey bark and broad glossy dark green leaves bearing round red figs borne in pairs. A mature tree may reach 21m (70') in height. All parts of the tree have a sticky milky sap. Outstanding for its aerial roots which descend from the branches to the ground rather like a curtain, eventually forming secondary trunks known as prop roots.

Monstera deliciosa (Swiss Cheese Plant) Evergreen epiphytic woody-stemmed root climber originating in the rain forests of Central America. It has thick shoots with numerous hanging aerial roots. This robust plant grows by climbing often more than 10m (30') high, sometimes on surrounding vegetation. Mature plants have large decorative leaves and single arum like white spathes followed by large edible fruit. These edible fruits smell and taste like a mixture of pineapple and banana and are very nutritious. There is also a variegated form marbled yellowish cream, but often reverts to green.

Opuntia ficus-indica (Prickly Pear) A bushy or tree like perennial cactus from hot, arid regions, a native of Mexico. With green flattened stems and spine arising from white areoles the yellow or reddish flowers are produced in late spring and summer, followed by edible purple fruits. This specie is often found to be the host of the cochineal beetles which have been used as a carmine dye in lipsticks and cake icing. Traditionally this cactus is grown as a crop on Lanzarote for this particular purpose.

Puya berteroniana (Bromeliad) Unusual bold terrestrial evergreen perennial from the rocky slopes of Chile. It is a tree-like erect or semi-erect prostrate rosette with hollow stems comprising brightly coloured, variegated or spiny margined leaves which often adapt to absorb or conserve moisture. During summer a striking panicle of blue flowers are borne up to 3m (10') tall. Notably this plant may tolerate short cold spells much better than most bromeliads. Some gardeners have established them in the open.

Ravenala madagascariensis (Travellers Tree) A native of Madagascar, but is now a popular park tree in a suitable climate. It is an evergreen palm-like tree grown for its foliage and attractive appearance. The banana-like leaves are long stalked which have expanded leaf bases that collect water. Boat-shaped spathes enclose tiny flowers from the leaf axils. The name of the tree refers to the legend that it is a source of fresh drinking water for the traveller. Rainwater is contaminated by decaying leaves and insects that accumulate on the leaves!

Victoria amazonica (Giant Water Lily) The largest known water lily widely found in standing and slow moving water from tropical South America. The leaves grow up to 2m (6') in diameter and said to be strong enough to support a small child! It thrives in a water temperature of 27-30c.(80-86F);. A submerged deepwater aquatic annual or perennial with strong rhizomes supporting rounded, mid-green leaves. In summer bearing night-blooming white flowers up to 30cm (12") across. It was most pleasing to recently visit the Amazon to see this wonder of nature first hand.

It is important for the owners to be around during a garden opening. Many visitors are knowledgeable, others less so but most want to talk about plants, to exchange information and ideas. On the whole visitors are appreciative of what they see and generous in their comments. As a result of the NGS openings we are getting more and more visits from gardening groups and organisations and even invitations to give talks.

When the last visitor has gone, gates closed, washing up done, posters gathered in one can finally relax with a well earned glass and tot up the takings before the final task on sending a cheque to the county treasurer to help towards that £2 million total.

The Garden at Bradstow Lodge will be open for the National Gardens Scheme in 2010 on

Sundays 4th April; 30th May and 8th August from 2.00 to 5.00p.m. Admission £3.00

Homemade Teas. Plants for Sale

**Local nursery Charleshurst Farm Nursery Loxwood Road Plaistow RH14 0NY
Tel 01403 752273 e - mail Charleshurstfarm@aol.com website charleshurstplants.co.uk**

EXOTIC PLANTS WITH A DIFFERENCE—David Fitton

On my travels as a host for garden tours or as a guest speaker on cruise ships I have the opportunity to observe exotic plants from around the world, both in gardens and in their natural habitat. This is a short review of a few of my favourites some with special features. It is essential to realise that this selection of plants needs protection from the cold and wet. Grow in a warm or temperate greenhouse or conservatory as a houseplant as appropriate to their needs.

Cyperus papyrus (Egyptian Paper Plant) This plant is found in calm water near embankments originally from Africa. An evergreen rhizomatous perennial sedge with triangular leaf stems and broad clumps of grass-like leaves bearing umbels of brown spikelets in summer. It is extremely vigorous growing up to 2.4m (8') tall. The Egyptians produced a sort of paper over 5,000 years ago. They cut the core of the stem into strips and pressed them together until they dried in the sun. Also used to make baskets, shoes and boats.

Dracaena draco (Dragon Tree) A robust slow-growing widely branched evergreen tree from the Canary Islands. It has linear glaucous mid-green leaves grouped at the apex and arranged in a rosette shape. Mature plants produce terminal panicles of white flowers in summer followed by spherical orange fruits. There are many legends about the 'Drake of the Canary Islands' - in medieval books which describe blood or fire coming from the trunk when the bark is cut, having both healing and magical properties. There is a notable specimen at Icod de los Vinos on Tenerife reputed to be over 1000 years old.

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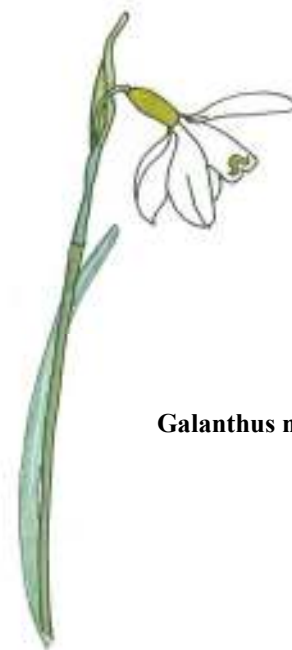
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Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members. We hope that you will be able to participate in the varied activities offered at local and national level and that some of you may ultimately be able to contribute to extending the range of plant collections within Sussex;

Mandy Burgess
Elizabeth Gammon
David James
Gary Jones
Caroline Mathias
Clare Parkinson
Andy Stevens
Emma Sumner Wilson

Galanthus nivalis. All illustrations by Jenny Stewart



Chairman's Report
Gary Firth

Hopefully the worst of the winter weather is over and we can begin to take stock of any damage caused by the worse snow falls in 20 years. Evergreen plants have probably been the worse hit by the heavy snow falls. 10 inch snow falls in Haywards Heath snapped branches on several of my Acacias and Myrtles and a number of Eucalyptus trees have either been bent over in a u shape or left lying at an angle of 45 degrees. Hopefully a lot of this can be rectified by appropriate pruning although it may be well into summer before we know the full extent of any damage. Lophomyrtus in particular can take a long time to show the full extent of any damage. On the other hand previous experience has shown that apparently dead Acacia trees may start showing evidence of new growth from the base as late as July or even August.

Thanks to EU regulations, the amateur gardener has a much reduced choice of products available to fight plant pests and diseases. I was therefore particularly interested to hear of a relatively new product at one the Pest and Diseases lecture programmes organised by Mercy Morris last year. This is SB Plant Invigorator (www.sbpj.co.uk), a product claimed to be biodegradable, non toxic, suitable for use throughout the year, requires no harvesting interval and yet controls whitefly, aphids, spider mite and mealy-bug! And because it works by a physical mode of action it is claimed that the usual problem of build-up of resistance to the product will not be a problem and it can also be used in conjunction with natural predators. Sounds too good to be true however a number of professional gardeners present at the meeting had used it and been very impressed with the results. I have therefore been trying it for most of last year, primarily on my greenhouse collections of orchids and must say it does seem to be pretty effective. It also seems to deter slugs from munching on the newly emerging flowers of my orchids. SB Plant Invigorator is available from a number of suppliers on the internet and is slowly appearing in some local nurseries and garden centres.

Another product that I am trying for the first time and which may not be familiar to everyone is 'Strulch', a mineralised straw product that is said to be a very effective and long lasting mulch. Further details can be found in the RHS 'Garden' Journal.

2011 National Plant Heritage Weekend and AGM

We can now confirm that next years National meeting will be held at the Chatsworth Hotel in Worthing from Friday 27th to Sunday 29th May 2011. It will be open to both resident and non-resident delegates. We are busy putting together what we hope will be an exciting mixture of lectures and garden visits as well as displays of plant collections and posters detailing the Sussex National Collections. The full programme will be published in the Autumn editions of both the Sussex and National Plant Heritage journals and we hope that as many Sussex members as possible will be attracted to attend this unique event. Members wishing to get more actively involved with helping at the event are encouraged to speak to any of the committee members listed on page 2.

Long before the garden appears in the 'Yellow Book' is the process of making sure it meets the criteria for opening. Today the NGS requires that a garden should have forty - five minutes of interest within its boundaries. Choosing the right time of year or even day is important. If your gardens crowning glory is the display of roses there is little point in opening in March; similarly if you know that there are 20 other gardens open on the same day try to choose one when no other garden is open. In Sussex August is a lean month and this year we will have an opening to fill the gap.

The two gardens we have opened to the public have both been created from scratch. The first was about 1 ½ acres and fairly mature - 13 years; our present garden at Bradstow Lodge we opened after only three years but with the express intention of allowing visitors to witness its development and growing to maturity. Of course both were 'inspected' by the county organiser, an experience which we found far less daunting and far more friendly and encouraging than that often portrayed in the 'Open Gardens' series on the BBC. Perhaps West Sussex county organisers are a more friendly breed!

There is no secret to preparing the garden for opening - the usual hard work of weeding, edging, lawn mowing, etc.. But there are other things to be organised. Homemade teas are a great draw but cakes have to be made, cups and saucers, tables and chairs borrowed from the local village hall; serving teas is labour intensive and one's loyal band of helpers have to be booked well in advance. Luckily the NGS provide posters, tickets, information, insurance and labels but the task of displaying 'Garden Open' posters falls to the owners. It generally takes far longer than the actual time a garden is open to drive around the locality putting up posters, changing the 'today' signs and then taking them down when it is all over. The County Highways Dept is happy for roadside posters to be displayed provided they are removed promptly. Other forms of publicity are important; the local press, radio or even TV have to be contacted. Advertising is important because although dedicated garden visitors will buy the Yellow Book many visitors arrive because they have seen a poster or read the local paper or heard the local radio. Having plants for sale is also a great attraction and organising a local nursery to come is useful. We are fortunate in having a nurseryman on the doorstep who is helpful, knowledgeable and who has good quality plants which he propagates himself.

And then, as Vergil puts it in Book V of The Aeneid '*expectata dies aderat*' - the long planned for day arrives. No matter how much preparation has gone in one is always at the mercy of the weather. We have woken to glorious sunshine, dull greyness, rain and even one Easter snow. But mercifully the afternoons have been kind and at least dry. Returning to Caroline Palmer, what truth is there in her lines? Well some but not all. Sadly visitors do take 'cuttings' and yes labels, especially on more unusual plants regularly disappear. If only people would realise what a generous breed gardeners are and ask they would be readily given a piece of a plant or the name written down or where to obtain one. Yes occasionally flowerbeds do get stepped on, not to peer in and view our family heirlooms - all blinds and curtains are firmly closed - but to better see the name of a plant or to smell it. Visitors do like their tea and cakes but are always willing to pay and all profits go to charity.

THE NATIONAL GARDENS SCHEME or Let's open our garden

Ian Gregory

In 1927 following a flash of genius by Miss Elsie Wagg, who realised that there was a match to be made between the thousands of people who would happily spend a shilling in going to look at someone else's garden and the proud owners who would be happy to open to the public the National Gardens Scheme was started. In that first year 609 gardens opened and £8000 was raised for district nurses. Eighty years later over 3600 gardens took part and over £2 million raised. One early garden owner, Caroline Palmer, wrote the following verse gently pointing out the disadvantages of garden opening to the public.

When you open to the public
They come along and say
'Oh what a lovely shrub that is'
And take a piece away
They also like to know the names
Of all the plants on view
They never bring a notebook
So they take the labels too.
They like a pretty garden
And expect a damn good tea
And though it's all for charity
Take extra cakes for free.
Because they weren't invited
Inside the house to pass,
You'll find them in the flowerbeds
Their faces to the glass.

So what is the reality of opening one's garden to the public? When 2.00p.m. on the appointed afternoon comes the visitors find a well manicured garden, hopefully bathed in sunlight. But like the duck moving serenely across a pond, underneath the surface furious paddling is going on.

Sussex Group Events

2010

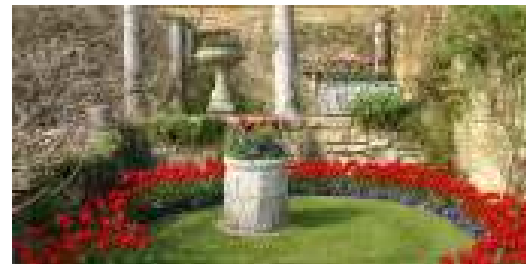
- 13th March Spring lecture at Haywards Heath Town Hall, commencing at 2.00pm. Andrew Gaunt will be speaking on his National Collection of Hedychium.
- 2-3rd May Sussex Group plant stand at the South of England Spring Garden Show. Ardingly.
See www.seas.org.uk/shows for more details.
- 9th May Coach trip to Hever Castle and Charts Edge Gardens. See below.
- 11-13th June Sussex Group stand at the Stansted Park Garden Show.
In association with the Hampshire Group.
See www.thegardenshowonline.com for further details.
- 10-11th July Sussex Group stand at the Parham Park Garden Show.
See www.parhaminsussex.co.uk for more details.

2011

- 27-29th May National Plant Heritage Weekend and AGM.
Chatsworth Hotel, Worthing

COACH TRIP, SUNDAY 9TH MAY 2010

The next coach trip will take in several gardens on the Surrey/Sussex/Kent border together with a nursery visit. This will include Perryhill Nursery, Hever Castle Gardens plus Charts Edge Garden, near Westerham, a lovely 10 acre garden containing Rhododendrons, Magnolias, a terraced water garden, exotic garden, Victorian folly and mixed borders. Cost is £28, including garden admissions. For more information please contact Maria Firth (contact details on front inside cover)



COLLECTING SNOWDROPS – SOME OBSERVATIONS

CHRIS SANHAM - National Collection Holder for Galanthus

(This article was originally published in the 2008-2009 Edition of the RHS Daffodils, Snowdrops & Tulips Yearbook and is reproduced here with their kind permission)

Our garden lies on the sandstone ridge that runs through Sussex and on into Kent, and much of the garden where I now grow *Galanthus* was previously used as an orchard. Although I did not realise it when we moved to Sussex in 1999, what I had inherited was an ideal site for growing snowdrops with both fresh ground that had not previously been used for garden cultivation, and with sandy soil that provided excellent free drainage – both vital ingredients for maintaining a healthy collection and for helping to reduce the build up of disease.

Growing Snowdrops

One of the first lessons that I learnt was that there is no agreed 'perfect' way to grow *Galanthus* – if you ask the same question of a thousand different snowdrop growers, you are just as likely to get a thousand different answers! Probably the most sensible piece of advice that I received was “the best thing to do is to try a few and see what happens” - a good general rule in gardening!

I have tried to learn as much as possible from other people's experiences and I have taken what seemed to me to be the most important elements and applied them to the growing conditions that I have – what I mention below are therefore things that work for me in my garden.

In the early years I planted all of my *Galanthus* directly into the ground and then laid down a good covering of coarse grit, both to mark the exact location of the bulbs and also to prevent the snowdrop flowers from being splattered with mud when it rained. The only feed that I gave the bulbs, before they came into growth each year, was a top dressing of bone meal.

With the very dry summers of recent years the initial growth of the autumn flowering species has often been stunted, with flowers opening just barely above the surface and it has become necessary to start watering in late August to create the right conditions for full growth [this article was written in late 2007, when 3 of the 4 previous summers had been very dry!]. It seemed to me therefore that if I applied it thickly enough the coarse grit might also act like a mulch and help to keep the bulbs moist during the dry summer months. This would in part replicate conditions in the wild where, for instance, *G. reginae-olgae* tends to have its bulbs and roots down deep between rocks, in shady places, where they can stay cool and moist. I also thought that the coarse grit might, in some small way, help to discourage the activities of slugs and snails, but I suspect that this was just wishful thinking on my part!

- RED Small Hortensia - Pia or Westfalen or Merveille Sanguine (lovely purple leaf)
Medium Hortensia - Ami Pasquier
Medium lacecap – Geoffrey Chadbund
Large lacecap – Tellers Red
- WHITE Medium Arborescens Annabelle (Huge white snowballs)
Large Hortensia - Mme Emile Moliere (turning autumn pink for drying)
Small lacecap – Tokyo Delight or Kyosumi (red edged white flowers)
Medium lacecap – Whitewave
Large lacecap - Veitchii
- LARGE PANICULATAS Tardiva or Unique.



Orchis morio

HIGH BEECHES EVENTS

High Beeches Gardens opens for the season on March 20th, 1-5pm, every day except Wednesday.

Easter Monday open at 11am, with Plants for Sale, from Rapkyns Nursery.

May 29-30-31, open 11am, Bonsai Weekend. The National Collection of Stewartias in flower at the end of June.

June 26th and 27th, open 11am, Wildflower Meadow Weekend, explore the meadow with botanists and naturalists. Guided Tours.

Displays and Information Boards.

August 15th, open 11am. Gentian Day. Heavy Horses working on the meadow. Plants for Sale.

For more information, visit our Website, www.highbeeches.com

BIRCHANGER– Open Days 2010

Derek Worrall's garden at Birchanger, Balcombe Forest, RH17 6JY, will be open in aid of various charities from 2.00 – 6.00pm on the following weekend dates. Entry £4;

8th, 9th, 15th, 16th, and 23rd May.

HYDRANGEAS - GRAHAM FERGUSON

I owe my love of Hydrangeas to my late father-in-law Michael Haworth-Booth, who wrote one of the earliest English books on Hydrangeas in 1950 at a time when they were not at all fashionable, and well before the current explosion of new cultivars which now number over a thousand. They are truly a plant for all seasons, and one of the saddest horticultural "parrot cries" is "I can't grow Hydrangeas – I've got the wrong soil!"

Of course the blue ones do require acid soil and the sickly pink of a blue Hydrangea in alkaline soil (over 4.5 PH) can be depressing. However the expense and labour of adding frequent doses of aluminium sulphate and ensuring that no alkaline water reaches them is prohibitive, so I would happily settle for whites and lovely dark reds instead which do so well in alkaline.

Hydrangeas come in many shapes and sizes and meld well with most other shrubs - mop headed Hortensias, lacecaps, large paniculatas, large leaved Quercifolias or even an evergreen climber can all be achieved between July and November and then you can look forward to the stunning colours of dried Hortensias for your winter flower arrangement. Thanks to my father-in-law we have over 100 species and cultivars, varying from Pia which is 18" tall to Paniculata Tardiva and Sargentiana which are 10 feet. In a short article one cannot get too carried away about cultivation, pests, or propagation but before recommending a list of my favourites I would like to add a word or two about hardiness and pruning. Given a moist shady spot most hydrangeas are hardy particularly the Paniculatas which are also fairly drought resistant, though after this winter the spring may hold some nasty surprises. Villosas and Quercifolias are not so frost hardy, and the splendid and unusual evergreen climber, H.Seemanii does need a warm background if it is ever to flower. Pruning Hortensias will curtail this years flowering and should be limited to removing frost damaged shoots though Paniculatas can be hard pruned in the spring.

With over 1000 to choose from and with many of them very similar it is hard to choose favourites particularly as colour will depend very much on soil (PH 4..5 or lower is ideal) – however;

BLUE Large Hortensia - Enziadom or Vibraye

Small lacecap -Blue Deckle or Domotoi

Medium lacecap - Bluebird

Large lacecap – Bluewave or Tellers Blue.

PINK Small Hortensia - Preziosa (lovely red stems)

Medium Hortensia – Altona (best for dried heads)

Large Hortensia - Beaute Vendomoise (huge flowers)

Small Lacecap - Miranda

Medium lacecap - Grayswood

Large lacecap – Grants Choice.

As my collection grew I realised that, partly through constraints of space, I would have to change this approach of planting directly into the ground, particularly as it became clear that the bulbs of many forms of *Galanthus* had a tendency to 'wander', with the danger of intermingling with the bulbs of their neighbours.

It was then that I heard about the lattice pots, used for growing pond plants, which offered the potential for containing this wandering habit, whilst also enabling the roots to grow naturally into the surrounding soil through the holes in the pot. I decided to experiment by planting some bulbs in these pots, using my own 'mix', before then planting the pots in the ground. Whilst this offered the immediate benefit of stopping bulb 'wander', allowing different forms to be grown closer together, I quickly realised that there were other substantial benefits, viz

- **controlled feeding** – by getting my 'mix' right, I could ensure that the plants got the balanced feed they need, year on year, with minimal need for supplementary feeding,

- **easier to lift bulbs** – most galanthophiles that I know hate digging up bulbs because of the risk of damage. By growing them in lattice pots, I find it is so much easier when lifting dormant bulbs, and it even helps when lifting 'in the green', because you know exactly where they are and can greatly minimise damage to the bulbs and their roots,

- **regular checking of the health of the bulbs** – because I have to lift the lattice pots and replenish the 'mix' regularly, I can take the opportunity to carefully examine the bulbs and thus get early warning of any signs of problems and, where necessary, take immediate corrective action before the bulb is too far gone.

I now plant all of my new plants in lattice pots and am gradually transferring the bulbs that were originally planted directly in the ground.

I should not move on without talking about my 'mix' but I must emphasise that this is what works for me, in my growing conditions, and is not intended in any way to be prescriptive. What I have tried to do is devise a 'mix' that provides both quick release and slower release fertiliser for the plants, whilst at the same time ensuring that the soil remains free draining. My 'mix' comprises, two parts sharp sand, two parts John Innes No 3 [1] and one part multi compost [2] – for those snowdrops that are known to require a more acidic soil, or a chalkier soil, I adjust accordingly. Since changing to this 'mix', I have had consistently good results, with plants generally showing strong growth, flowering well and with good natural division.

Following the very heavy and prolonged rains in the summer of 2007, when the bulbs were sitting in saturated soil for long periods, at a time when they would normally expect to be dry and dormant, I found that I had a higher than usual incidence of bulb rot and *Stagonospora curtisii*. So this year I have further improved the drainage by adding one part coarse grit to the 'mix' and, when potting/re-potting, I now seat the bulbs on a bed of sharp sand to try to avoid the bulbs sitting in wet soil in their dormant period. With increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, this will probably not be the last adjustment that I will make.

Keeping the collection healthy

I have mentioned disease and this is a constant challenge for snowdrop growers – do not assume that your snowdrops will not be hit by disease, or that if they are then it must be someone else's fault. Whilst measures should be adopted to guard against introducing disease into the collection, the best way to guard against disease is to do everything possible to try to ensure the good health of your plants. I have already mentioned the importance of ensuring that the plants are fed well, and this cannot be overstated in helping to keep them healthy, and it is equally important that the soil is free draining and that the bulbs do not sit in soggy conditions when they are dormant.

Good hygiene is essential – none of us wants to spread disease around our own collection, or for that matter to pass it on to anyone else, so at various times of the year, when it is necessary to handle the snowdrops, and always when I am dealing with plants that I suspect may have a problem, much washing of hands takes place between handling the different plants, as well as ensuring that any tools used are dipped in Jeyes fluid, or a similar garden disinfectant. I know that some of the commercial growers go one step further and use a different set of tools for different parts of their growing area.

Newly acquired plants are carefully examined for any sign of a problem and then all of them are routinely held in quarantine for at least a year, irrespective of whom they came from. Indeed, some could remain in quarantine for up to three years if the source of the plants has had any 'problems' in the past. Only after a minimum of a year, and after checking that they appear to be healthy, are newly acquired snowdrops then planted out amongst the main collection.

Here I must touch upon the vexed question of fungicides, which are a general problem for private gardeners due to the lack of available products [3]. Furthermore, fungicides may be curative or preventative and are not necessarily both. Whilst some growers routinely spray with fungicide, two or three times annually, to provide some protection against infection, there are limits to what can be done to save infected plants and in most cases, particularly where the plant is a common form, the best course of action is to carefully lift and destroy both the plant and the surrounding soil. If the infected plant cannot be removed immediately then, as a holding measure, I isolate both the plant and the surrounding soil by dusting them with Bordeaux Mixture, to help stop the infection from spreading. If a modest spraying programme is envisaged, the fungicides used should be as varied as possible, using different classes of fungicides so as to reduce the likelihood of fungicide resistance occurring.

Constant visual examination is essential when the plants are in growth and I check daily for any signs of problems. Any plant that looks in any way out of the ordinary is suspect and the policy that I operate is 'if in doubt, chuck it out', on the basis that it is better to do this than to take a chance and put the rest of the collection at risk. If disease is found, or suspected, both the plant and surrounding soil is immediately removed and destroyed. A plant from a different genus is then planted in its place and the surrounding *Galanthus* are given a precautionary drenching in fungicide. Care is needed here, in that many other bulbous species may be attacked by the fungi likely to attack snowdrops.

Sussex members Open Gardens 2010 See NGS Yellow Book for full Details

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 4th April | Bradstow Lodge, Ian and Elizabeth Gregory. |
| 25th April | Malthouse Gardens, Chithurst, Rogate Nr Petersfield. 2.00 – 6.00pm. |
| 2 nd May | Malthouse Gardens, Chithurst, Rogate Nr Petersfield. 2.00 – 6.00pm. |
| 2 nd May | Peasmarsh Place, home to the National Collections of <i>Tilia</i> and <i>Castanea</i> . Open from 11.00am to 4.00pm for NGS. Light lunches and teas served. See plant directory for full address. |
| 3 rd May | Malthouse Gardens, Chithurst, Rogate Nr Petersfield. 2.00 – 6.00pm. |
| 30th May | Bradstow Lodge, Ian and Elizabeth Gregory. |
| 8th August | Bradstow Lodge, Ian and Elizabeth Gregory. |
| 8 th September | Malthouse Gardens, Chithurst, Rogate Nr Petersfield. 2.00 – 6.00pm |
| 24 th October | Peasmarsh Place, home to the National Collections of <i>Tilia</i> and <i>Castanea</i> . Open from 11.00am to 4.00pm for NGS |

Borde Hill Garden Events 2010 Contact Borde Hill for Further Details

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| 20 & 21 March | Borde Hill Friends Weekend |
| 29 March | Easter Bunny Trail starts |
| Until 18 April | Easter Bunny Trail |
| 6 April | Early Spring walk |
| 8-22 April | Sculptures by Juginder Lamba in Tudor Mansion |
| 27 April-4 May | Bluebell Time |
| 1 -31 May | Sculpture in the Garden |
| 5 May & 10 May | Art in the Garden |
| 13 May | Spring colour walk |
| 6 June | Motorcar Gathering |
| 7-27 June | Roses in Bloom |
| 3 July | Summer Party Concert with Tony Hadley, ABC and friends |
| 4 July | Rolls Royce & Bentley Day |
| 8 July | Summer colour walk |
| 24 July | Champion Tree Walk |
| 25 July | Brass Band & Picnic |
| 26 July | Kids' Summer Fun -starts |
| Until 27 August | Kids' Summer Fun |
| 7 August | Battle Proms |
| 8 August | Sunday Jazz & Picnic |
| 12 August | Late Summer colour walk |
| 22 August | Brass Band & Picnic |
| 12 September | Sunday Jazz & Picnic |
| 23-31 October | Halloween Week |

Roger Parsons Sweet Peas

www.rpsweetpeas.co.uk

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We are pleased to announce our **2010 open days** on:

Sunday 6th June 2010: 2.0pm - 4.0pm  
Tuesday 8th June 2010: 6.0pm - 8.0pm  
Wednesday 9th June 2010: 6.0pm - 8.0pm  
Thursday 10th June 2010: 6.0pm - 8.0pm  
Saturday 12th June 2010: 2.0pm - 4.0pm  
Sunday 13th June 2010: 2.0pm - 4.0pm  
Monday 14th June 2010: 6.0pm - 8.0pm  
Tuesday 15th June 2010: 6.0pm - 8.0pm  
Thursday 17th June 2010: 6.0pm - 8.0pm  
Saturday 19th June 2010: 2.0pm - 4.0pm  
Sunday 20th June 2010: 2.0pm - 4.0pm

**Admission price is £3.00 per person by pre-purchased ticket only.**

Ticket price includes:

- o a one hour guided tour starting at 2.30pm and 6.30pm respectively;
- o a minimum donation of 50p to St. Wilfrid's Hospice.

Visitors are limited to 50 per date so early purchase of tickets is recommended.

**To purchase tickets, please send your name, address and payment to the address below**

Send an Email if you prefer to pay via PayPal

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Seeds from the National Collection of **Sweet Peas** and other *Lathyrus* species.

We have hundreds of varieties in our seedbank.

If you can't find the variety you want, just ask us about availability.

Visit our website or send S.A.E. for seedlist. New season's seedlist available each

August

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The only exception to my policy of destroying infected plants is for rare plants, which have been attacked by fungal disease, where I will attempt to save them. Any infection on the leaves and stem must be cut out and any infected bulb scales must be peeled back until the bulb is 'clean'. Then the plant must be soaked in fungicide and, when it is dry, dusted with sulphur powder and then potted up in sharp sand so as to minimise conditions for re-infection and to encourage strong root growth. The plant is then kept in quarantine, with further applications of fungicide after about two weeks and during the next growth cycle. If the plant remains in sharp sand for an extended period, it is sensible to give it some liquid feed. I then cross my fingers and wait as, whilst many of the plants treated in this way appear to recover, success is by no means guaranteed. The surgery that I have described can be quite traumatic, not least for the surgeon (!), and is best left to an expert, particularly one who has access to an effective fungicide. If damage to the infected bulb is extensive, twin scaling is the best option and, in expert hands, good results have been achieved, saving rare plants that might not otherwise have survived. There is of course no treatment for plants attacked by virus.

As soon as I can, and in order to further reduce the risk of total loss of rare forms, I plant bulbs of the same form in more than one place in the garden, get a bulb twin scaled and, as a last line of defence, I place 'back up' bulbs with trusted friends.

I keep a log of 'problems' so that any trends can quickly be detected e.g. plants grown in a particular part of the garden, plants coming from a particular source, etc.

My final observation is that you should not underestimate the amount of time that is involved in building and maintaining a collection of snowdrops. As I have found, it is an addictive all year round hobby – is this what is meant by 'White Fever'?

[1] Research carried out at the John Innes Horticultural Institution before the Second World War confirmed that most plants can be grown in standard potting mixtures. Several firms in the United Kingdom make composts using formulae resulting from that research. The three John Innes potting composts comprise seven parts of medium loam, three parts of peat and two parts sand. A balanced composite fertilizer is added to the compost, with JI No 2 and 3 respectively having double and treble the amount in JI No 1.

[2] The multi purpose compost that I use is a mix of peat, sterilised loam, horticultural sand and trace elements, that contains enough nutrients for the first four to six weeks

[3] Since this article was originally written a very useful article by Gordon Hanks 'Fungicides for amateur daffodil growers' which, with a few stated exclusions, includes all fungicides available for amateur use on ornamental plants, has been published in the 2009-2010 Edition RHS Daffodils, Snowdrops & Tulips Yearbook.

## Winter hardiness of the garden plants at Heaselands

Stephen Harding

Despite the cold weather, with record lows and heavy snowfall, it is amazing how plants adapt to the conditions. Walking around the garden in the second week of January, with ten inches of snow on the ground and more forecast, the Rhododendron hybrids look their usual sorry state. They curl their leaves along the central rib to protect themselves from the Arctic blast and hang from the branches looking very forlorn. They always seem to make a full recovery though and knowing this, we do not worry about them, even when they are laying flat on the ground and not standing upright.

The National Collections of Azaleas (sorry, I refuse to call them Rhododendrons) do not look as though they care about the cold weather. The apical flower buds stand proud above the snow covering their twigs. Because they are deciduous and are sturdy, the snow falls between the twigs and branches without collecting on them, so there is no need at all to brush any snow off the plants.

The Camellia collect snow and get bent out of shape easily. These plants do need uncovering and the owners' two youngest children enjoy beating the plants with a large stick.

The only problem we have had is with the tree cover. Our Corsican and Scots Pine throughout the garden have been devastated. Snow laden branches have been dropping for three days now, and the common Oaks are starting to shed limbs. It is too dangerous to clear the debris until the snow thaws as you do not get any warning when a branch will tear away from the trunk.

Eucalyptus have bent right over to rest on the ground which does not sound that unusual, but these multi stemmed trees are over forty feet tall, and not one branch has broken.

Ornamental conifers have been smashed to pieces and when you look at certain coniferous groups, you appreciate how clever nature is. The large Redwoods, Swamp Cypress, Wellingtonias and Spruce are all from colder climates where heavy snow is the norm and are all pyramidal in shape, which deflects snow and prevents damage. The ornamental conifers, mainly Lawson Cypress, Leylandii, Macrocarpa, English Yew and Pine have either open branches or are so feathery that even a tiny amount of snow ruins their shape. Split limbs have been sawn off and we can only hope that the thinner, springier branches will "pop up" and grow normally in the Spring.

We anticipate that it will cost us up to £20,000 to clear hanging limbs and fallen branches, but the true cost may not be known until the summer when root death caused by the cold weather becomes apparent with shrubs suddenly packing up through lack of water uptake.

On the positive side though, we should get an exceptional flowering season this year as many shrubs need a prolonged cold spell to initiate flowering. If any trees or shrubs are damaged beyond repair, then we will simply remove them and replant to improve the gardens.

## SPRING LECTURE

**The 2010 Spring Lecture will take place at Haywards Heath Town Hall on Saturday 13th March commencing at 2.00pm.**

**The speaker will be Andrew Gaunt, who will be give an illustrated talk on his National Collection of Hedychiums (Gingers).**

**TEAS**

**RAFFLE**

**PLANTS FOR SALE**

**Fritillaria imperialis**



## East Sussex National Plants Collection Co-ordinator

Congratulations to Stephen Harding, was elected Plant Co-ordinator for East Sussex at last Novembers AGM. If you require further information about current or potential National Collections in East Sussex please contact Stephen (details on page 2)