

Plant Heritage

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Group



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Editor's note

A big thank you to all those who have been generous with their time and contributed to this issue. The deadline for the Spring 2018 Newsletter is 15 February. Please send me your contributions by that date. I would really appreciate short articles on a wide variety of topics about members' own gardens, plant likes/dislikes, experiences, etc.

Chairman's Letter

Welcome to autumn - so far so good; more rain than last year but some bright sunny days, still bringing out the Red Admiral butterflies, which have been with us since February. Back in the spring, with warm March and April days, everything seemed to have burst into life. Then Whack! On 27 April sub-zero winds ripped through, delivering a shock to many shrubs and trees. Any new fresh growth was obliterated. In most cases it took months for a new flush and in a few there was none and we lost the plants. Very sad was the demise of an established *Nyssa* from which we were expecting a good autumn show (see front cover).

Another good season of events, with some excellent garden visits. Those who took up the offer of a visit to Buckingham Palace deemed it the highlight. The Plant Fair at Longstock beat the previous year's figure at a net of over £7,000. Bravo to all who helped; it's a lot of work but very worthwhile. Particular thanks go to members who brought plants for sale. The quality and quantity of these has been progressively increasing over the years and we attract a large number of visitors to our stand. Long gone are the days of the yoghurt pots of unidentifiable sticks. The end result was a magnificent £869, over twice the average for previous years.

As for the shows, Sparsholt achieved a silver medal for their 'Mighty Greens' display (see the article in this issue) at Chelsea and, at Hampton Court, Hart Canna achieved a silver gilt, the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, displaying a selection of plants from their many collections and Amanda Whittaker, with her excellent *Crassula* collection, gained silvers. The Plant Heritage area was brilliantly displayed and generated more medals. It linked in particularly well with the Australasian Plant Society's stand, which displayed a large number of plants held in National Collections by members of the group.

On 3 September we had our open day here at Meon Orchard, with plants for sale on the Plant Heritage table, plus more from Butterfly Plants. After two weeks of fine dry weather, over half an inch of rain fell during the four hours we were open, which rather dampened things down. Remarkably, we had some 113 visitors and PH plants made some £142. Supposing at had been a sunny day...

We have a good series of events coming up in the next year; the first half of these are described in this issue. The Programme Leaflet with all the events up to the 2019 AGM will be sent out towards the end of the year, with the calling notice for the AGM, by post only to those for whom we have no email address.

Finally, Rosie is organising a collections holders get together on Tuesday 16th January at Hillier's, for a day of discussion and experience sharing. Included will be a presentation by staff from Bristol Zoo, who manage a dispersed plant collection, and a tour of the garden.

Fingers crossed for a gentle winter.

Doug Smith, Chairman

Report on Spring and Summer Events

Thursday 2 March 2017

Talk by David Stone on 'Historic Rose Varieties at Mottisfont'.



The Mottisfont estate was gifted to the National Trust in 1957. What is now the Rose Garden was, historically, a kitchen garden. Its foundation as a rose garden began in 1972, when Graham Stuart Thomas entrusted his collection of over 200 19th century roses to their care. Not many years later, David Stone took over the



role of Head Gardener, a position he held until his retirement in 2014, some 36 years later. Graham Thomas had always been interested in Heritage varieties and the rose garden has always been a conservation project. David worked closely with the NCCPG/Plant Heritage. Companion planting was considered important, with white foxgloves and fragrant pinks featuring strongly. David Stone was also very much an 'old rose' man and always said he learnt on the hoof. Graham Thomas left an extensive library of identification material – leaves, prickles and hips.



The 1970s saw a huge expansion of Mottisfont Abbey rose garden with many specimens coming from Germany, often poorly named. With David Stone at the helm more plants were added to the collection, with roses from New Zealand, the USA and Bermuda. It was a hard slog to get the naming accurate and David

acknowledges the importance of the help he received from the NCCPG. Plant Heritage continues the good work and is helpful with tracking down previously 'lost' varieties. The popularity of the garden has risen dramatically over the years; between 1978 and 2014, annual visitor numbers have soared from 7,000 to 300,000.

David has a wealth of knowledge and his contribution to the beauty at Mottisfont is greatly valued. Many thanks to David.

Reserve a June slot in your 2018 diary – it is a great place to visit, particularly on a warm summer evening.



Rosa Duchesse d'Angoulême

Saturday 22 April 2017

Visit to Ben and Paddy Parmee's garden, Chandlers Ford.

This well sheltered sloping site with steps, vegetable plots and lots of spring interest, was a delight in late April. Blueberries were ripening in the fruit cages, pleonies flowering in the greenhouse (right) and the delicate lady's smock adding interest to the borders. Raised vegetable beds were already full of promise. The Parmees have two huge cats who seemed to want to show us around. The central bed was under reconstruction and will include tufa and limestone to complement the spring bulbs. A great project – both for the bulbs and as a sunbathing area for the cats.



The shady sitting area close to the house, the gorgeous banksia rose in full flower and the watery bits, fed by Monk's Brook, were all delightful. Paddy is chair of the



Hampshire Branch of the Alpine Garden Society and the range of alpine plants grown here is very wide.

We wish Ben and Paddy well with their new project and thank them for organising the weather and allowing us to

visit their lovely garden. It was the sort of garden that one needs to traverse two or three times to avoid missing any of the many small plants inviting close inspection. We did our best.

Tuesday 20 June 2017 Visit to Colemore House.

For this visit, on a very hot afternoon, we met in the Church of St Peter and Vincula where it was gloriously cool. Although described as 'redundant', this Grade II listed church is still consecrated. There has been a church here since the 10th Century, with the present building dating from the 12th Century. It has a complex past with many alterations and renovations along the way.



Mr and Mrs de Zoete's house is classically elegant early Georgian and dates to 1770. There is a huge *Daphne* 'Jacqueline Postill' planted close by – the biggest that most of us had seen. Simon de Zoete described his 4 acre garden as "always a work in progress", but until 1976 it was overgrown and derelict, so

much has already been achieved.

The Prince's Trust built the thatched Rondelle which commands spectacular views and sits close to a large pool with black water. The dye inhibits the growth of blanket weed and is quite stunning in effect.

Close to the house a rill ripples peacefully and there are quadrangles and 'rooms' featuring marvellous displays of roses which can be enjoyed from the sheltered seating.

At both the top and lower ends of the garden, in what must have been just fields, a large number of interesting trees and shrubs have been planted and are now well established. Parts of the top end are particularly dramatic. An avenue of *Amelanchier canadensis* (shadbush, or snowy mespilis) is under-planted with a range of interesting grasses which must look particularly delightful in winter and



spring. The attention to detail is impressive throughout and much work must have gone into the design, and a great deal more into the maintenance.

We all enjoyed a cool drink by the secluded swimming pool and (most) resisted the temptation to paddle.

We are grateful to Mr and Mrs de Zoete for their welcome and their time. The garden is open under the National Garden Scheme, usually in late June, and is well worth a visit.

Linda Smith

Special Event

Friday 7 July 2017

Visit to Buckingham Palace Garden

We had a wonderful sunny afternoon for our visit to the garden at Buckingham Palace which holds the National Collection of *Morus*. Our guided tour was led by Mark Lane, the Gardener Manager, who has worked in the garden for 37 years and is also responsible for the gardens at Kensington Palace and Clarence House. Mark is president of the London Plant Heritage group and an enthusiastic supporter of Plant Heritage.

The Royal *Morus* collection consists of 9 species, 26 cultivars and 35 taxa shared between Kensington and Buckingham Palace. Our visit in July meant we were able to see and enjoy tasting the mulberry fruits and we were able to sample several of the different varieties. Our favourite was *Morus* 'Illinois Everbearing', which bears small pointed fruits which have a particularly intense flavour. A very



recent addition to the collection is *Morus* CHARLOTTE RUSSE ('Matsanuga'), developed from a rare Japanese native, *Morus rotundifolia*, and not a cross between a black and a white mulberry as is commonly supposed. It was raised in Japan and named as Chelsea Plant of the Year 2017, the first edible to achieve this award.

We learnt that there is much more to running a royal garden than worrying about the plants. There is a balance to maintain between private and public use, security, views, biodiversity and aside from all that the grass has to look good despite all the marquees and geese. The garden uses only pea sticks and canes wherever possible to maintain a natural look, and plants and trees are often repeated within a border to give a sense of unity and continuity. However, there are other things to consider: plants are given to the Queen as gifts and have to be accommodated, and when the Hilton Hotel was built a group of plane trees was planted to screen the view in both directions. Just collecting up the leaves in autumn takes several months of hard work. Composting is also important; an impressive 99% of waste is recycled but as compost is alkaline it is given away to local gardens; the remaining 1% consists of pernicious weeds.

Altogether we had a most interesting afternoon. Mark was very knowledgeable about both the history of the palace and garden, and the plants, and was extremely generous with his time.

Gill Sawyer

Future Events

Thursday 12 October 2017

Talk by Neil Helyer on 'Pest and Disease Control in the Garden and Greenhouse'. Neil will cover a wide range of pest and disease management techniques, including the use of biological control organisms for pests like aphids, whitefly, spider mites, slugs and snails as well as diseases such as botrytis and mildew. Warning, this talk contains lots of sex and violence!

Time: 7.30 pm Warnford Village Hall.

Saturday 11 November 2017

Social and talk by Amanda Whittaker, National Collection holder of Crassula.

Amanda will be talking about her trip to France, to see how they grow their succulents. This trip was sponsored by Hampshire Plant Heritage Group. She will also be sharing her experiences at Hampton Court in July, where she exhibited in the Floral Marquee, Plant Heritage area.

Please bring along a plate of food to share and a plant or garden-related raffle prize.

Time: 7.30 pm at Warnford Village Hall.

Thursday 11 January 2018

Talk by Bob Gibbons on 'The Most Flowery Places in the World'.

Bob is a writer of around 40 books and has led numerous tours to many European destinations, as well as to more exotic locations such as the Himalayas, Costa Rica, Namibia, Ecuador, and the Galapagos. He will bring books for sale.

Time: 7.30pm at Shawford Village Hall.

Saturday 10 February 2018

AGM and talk by John Anderson entitled 'The History and Plants of the Savill and Valley Gardens'.

John has recently moved to the gardens of Windsor Great Park after 10 years at Exbury, where he worked tirelessly to extend the season from just spring to all year round interest. During this time Exbury established National Collections of *Nyssa* and *Oxydendron* and was awarded Camellia Garden of Excellence 2014, in addition to preserving much of Jeanette Fryer's Cotoneaster collection. We look forward to a fascinating talk about the Savill and Valley gardens and hearing his plans for their future development. We are planning a visit for next year.

Time: 2.00pm Gilbert White Suite, Westley Court, Sparsholt College.

Thursday 15 March

Talk by Pat Murphy on the National Collection of Meconopsis at Holehird Gardens

Holehird Gardens is an extensive 10 acre site located in Windermere, Cumbria. It is the home of the Lakeland Horticultural Society. Pat Murphy writes:

"*Meconopsis* grow well at Holehird due to the relatively cool climate and generally moist conditions. I was a member of the group of gardeners who looked after these plants and soon joined the Meconopsis Group which has twice yearly meetings at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, which supports this study group.

Holehird was asked by the Meconopsis Group to grow the same 23 cultivars and species of the big blue poppies that were to be trialled for the RHS at Harlow Carr. This gave us the requisite number of different cultivars and species to apply to Plant Heritage to have a National Collection of the large perennial species and hybrids. We were successful in 2012. There are now over 60 different clones and species in the collection. I was lucky enough to be asked to join the RHS assessment group for the trial and am now a member of the Meconopsis Group committee."

Tricia Newton adds:

"Pat is a very keen gardener and is a volunteer at Holehird Gardens where, in addition to the National Collection of Meconopsis, she has a strong interest in alpine plants and snowdrops. She also spends many hours tending her own woodland garden which attracts much interest from local deer.

Time: 7.30 at Shawford Village Hall,

A full list of next years events will appear in the programme leaflet which will be issued in December. More details for the spring and summer events will appear in the Spring 2018 Newsletter

New Members

The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Group welcomes the following new, or re-joining, members. We look forward to seeing you at some of our events.

Ann Broscob, Susan Jones, Louise Bendall, James Bendall, Graham & Pauline Bowyer, Clare Freemantle, Kevin Hobbs, Susan Meads, Margaret Millen, Pauline Weeks, Ann Foulkes, Diana Filmer, Mrs J Buchanan, Mr S Beale, Angharad Pike.

Collections Coordinator's Report 2017

My role as Collections Coordinator has changed dramatically since my report in last year's Autumn Newsletter.

If you were at Sparsholt for the Hampshire AGM in February, you may have heard my cry for help with visiting collections. Hampshire has a huge number of collections and I was falling behind with routine visits. I'm delighted to say that the response was brilliant: there are now five of us on the team and we have allocated collections according to interest as well as geography. All the members have or have had a professional interest in the horticultural world and so have experience of the problems that holders face when curating a collection.

Collection holders have been made aware of the changes and visits started this summer. Here is our new allocation:

Jennie Whitemore: *Asclepias & Gomphocarpus; Lobelia* spp; *Roscoea; Rubus* spp; *Clematis* Montana Group; *Hosta*; and the pre-1960 Hampshire and IOW Apples.

Jill Wright: *Agapanthus; Buddleja; Clematis viticella; Canna; Clivia; Crassula* spp.

Tricia Newton: *Geranium nodosum; Patrinia*; and *Salvia* spp.

Tricia Orolenshaw: *Hemerocallis; Nyssa & Oxydendron*; and *Sorbus*.

Rosie Yeomans: *Araliaceae; Eucalyptus; Podocarpus & related Podocarpaceae; Begonia* Rex Cultorum Group; *Eucomis, Hippeastrum* spp; and *Veltheimia, Platanus, Rosa* and *Thelocactus*; Hillier Gardens collections; and *Liquidambar*.

As you see, I still have several collections and will continue to support new applications, visiting prospective collections throughout the process. I also liaise with other counties in the South-West Group and represent them on the Plant Conservation Committee.

Sadly, we lost the *Papaver* Collection this year, but we have some new proposals in the pipeline, two of which are not far away from a full application. Susan Summers, who opens her garden in Winchester under the NGS scheme, is about to put in a full application for her collection of the lovely herbaceous plant *Francoa*.

Rosie Yeomans, Collections Coordinator

A Hidden Gem

Hinton Ampner is a 20thC formal garden owned by the National Trust and set amidst the rolling Hampshire countryside. It was created by Ralph Dutton, starting in 1930. He subsequently, in 1982, became the 8th and last Lord Sherbourne, a man with exquisite taste and an exceptional eye for detail.

Ralph Dutton (as he liked to be called) found inspiration from some of the well known gardens such as Sissinghurst and Hidcote, taking elements from them but adapting their style to suit his taste. For example, the garden is compartmentalised like Sissinghurst, but he found this too claustrophobic. He therefore incorporated more views out into the surrounding countryside.

Visitors to the garden are seamlessly led by a network of cleverly laid out paths and vistas that draw you onwards with a tantalising array of plants and views. The adventurous visitor will find his way to some of the more secluded areas. One such area, the Dell, is a favourite of mine.

The Dell started life as a marl pit in the 1800s, situated in a field to the east of the property. When Ralph began to lay his garden out in 1936 the pit had been used



as the village rubbish dump. He saw the potential of the hollow and subtly moved the fence line, incorporating the hollow into the garden's design.

Like all areas in a garden the Dell has evolved over

the years. In summer it is a sun trap, sheltered from any wind. Ralph thought it would be the ideal site for delicate shrubs, so he planted cistus and various types of hebe. Unfortunately, the hollow also acted as a frost pocket and he lost many of his treasured specimens. Throughout the garden he had his successes, but also his fair share of failures, as he grappled with the varied and sometimes

inhospitable terrain. But he never gave up and the end product was always perfection.

Trees were planted on the top of the banks of the Dell to emphasise its depth: *Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris', *Carpinus pendula*, *Koelreuteria paniculata* and *Taxus*. Many of them are now covered in rambling roses, some reaching 50 feet in height. *Rosa* 'Kiftsgate', *R. brunonii*, *R. 'Wedding Day'* and *R. 'Lykkefund'*, a multiflora hybrid, flourish. In June, these roses cascade down, dripping with white blossom.

I imagine the very old specimen of *R. 'Wedding Day'* came directly from Highdown Garden. Ralph visited this well known chalk garden (created by Sir Frederic Stern) for inspiration when creating the Dell. The rose 'Wedding Day' was propagated at Highdown in 1950, Stern naming it in commemoration of his wife as it flowered for the first time on their wedding anniversary, 26th June.

Tougher, cold-tolerant shrubs were planted in mass: *Deutzia*, *Viburnum davidii* and *V. tomentosum* and scented *Philadelphus*. Under the shade of the shrubs



astilbes, hostas and acanthus thrived, creating an almost jungle-like effect.

Even *Heracleum mantegazzianum* (giant hogweed) was grown for its foliage and architectural flower stalks. The Dell continues to evolve to this day.

The *Heracleum*

may have been phased out, but the lush mixture of foliage provides contrast and drama.

Rheum palmatum 'Atrosanguineum' starts the show in spring as the blood red leaves unfurl. There is a good selection of *Rodgersias* that thrive in the slightly damp conditions. *Rodgersia podophylla* is a real favourite, its chestnut-like bronze leaves rising from the ground and creating a dense mound. The fleeting flowers of *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* (peony 'Molly the Witch') form a contrast with the foliage backdrop. The delicate yellow flowers are replaced in autumn by stunning seed heads which open like a green velvet purse and show their contents of iridescent blue seeds, held in place by bright red packing.

As the season continues the foliage is punctuated by pockets of brightly coloured kniphofias, crocosmias and a Hinton Ampner favorite, dahlias, in particular *D.* 'Bishop of Auckland', with its rich blood-red flowers, and *D.* 'David Howard' in warm orange. *D. imperialis* is grown as a curiosity, reaching sixteen feet or more with thick bamboo-like stems; but it is cruelly struck down by frost every year before it has a chance to flower.

Hedychiums add to the tropical feel and seem to survive the winter if left out. *H. densiflorum* 'Assam Orange' is a fairly compact form, reaching two feet, and is ideal for growing through hostas; whereas *H. coccineum* 'Tara' looks great farther back in the border, where it jostles for position with a ligularia.



A wooden bench stands at the rear of the Dell beckoning the visitor to it. On the bench is an inscription by Alexander Pope, summing up beautifully what Ralph was trying to achieve in this hidden area of garden: "*Let not each beauty everywhere be spy'd*

where half the skill is decently to hide. He gains all points who pleasantly confounds, surprises, varies and conceals the bounds".

The Dell is a great example of how foliage, sometimes overlooked in the pursuit of flowers, can play such an important part in a garden.

The Dell is just one element of this varied 14-acre garden at Hinton Ampner. There are formal bedding areas with stunning displays of dahlias, rose borders, a productive walled garden that supplies the tea room with fresh produce, and many more areas to explore and enjoy.

John Wood, Head Gardener, Hinton Ampner

Great Aussie Adventures - Looking for Lobelias

Having lived and worked in Australia in my early 20s, I knew very well that the flora was incredible. However, back then plants were not such a big part of my life. Many years later I find myself the custodian of several National Plant collections, and it was one of these collections, the Lobelias, that made me look in greater depth at Aussie flora. With some savings of my own and some financial assistance from Hampshire and Isle of Wight branch of Plant Heritage, I set out in late September 2015 to track down the 26 or so species of *Lobelia* native to Australia. Interestingly, the Lobelias of this region are very similar in appearance and stature to those found in southern Africa, being small and delicate. Before you think, "Well, aren't all lobelias small and delicate"? No, they're not really! Especially those from warmer climates, for example the giant lobelias of Kenya, or the Devils Tobacco of Chile, *Lobelia tupa*, both huge robust plants. I did realize that my search would be rather like trying to find a little blue needle in a giant Aussie haystack, so I set myself the goal of also hunting down some of my other favourite Australian plants while I was at it. Specifically, the Teatrees - *Melaleuca* species.

Long time friend and fellow plant madman, Steve Austin, and I started our expedition on the west coast. Western Australia is vast and despite having the reputation of being a very dry state, it has an incredibly diverse landscape and thus flora too. We started in Perth, where one cannot miss out on a visit to the Kings Park Botanic Gardens. These Gardens are a central feature of the city and



hold an incredible collection of native flora. There are also many acres of native bush to explore. Here I came across my first *Lobelia* of the trip, *Lobelia tenuior* (left), which has one of the largest flowers of the Australian species and is perhaps the most common. It is also occasionally available as a bedding plant in the U.K. However, it was still a thrill to see this deep-blue, large-lobed species here in its natural environment.

The bush land in the Gardens and also in the nearby Bold Park, is great for seeing a good range of bush flora, without going too far from the city.

Over the next week we travelled around the south-east coast of Western Australia. At the stunning Fitzgerald National Park, I came across *Lobelia gibbosa*. Sadly, only one small plant, but I was very lucky to see this gem between the masses of *Banksias*, bottlebrushes, eucalypts and other flora. A *Melaleuca* that really caught

my eye here was *M. lutea*, with its tiny sweet-smelling, pine-like foliage and long lemon-coloured bottlebrushes.



Melaleuca nesophila, the Pink Pom Pom bush, was also very common here. But the most stunning plant in the area had to be *Regelia velutina*, another member of the *Myrtaceae* family and reminiscent of a Christmas tree with red tinsel hanging in its branches. The mountains of the Stirling Ranges introduced us to some mouth-watering plants including the bizarre *Eucalyptus tetraptera* with its huge red

calyx tube and bright pink stamens and *Eucalyptus lehmannii* with its large yellow-green, cricket-ball-size flowers. Plenty of ground flora here, too, including the dwarf Kangaroo paw, *Anigozanthus humilis*, many species of Trigger Plant, *Stylidium* species, and native orchids *Caladenia flava*, *Caladenia longicauda* and the Donkey Orchid, *Diuris corymbosa* (above). Unfortunately, we didn't spot any *Lobelia* here, but seeing the incredible Cork Bark Tea Tree, *Melaleuca suberosa*, made up for this. This stunning dwarf shrub produces its vibrant purple-pink



'brushes' straight out of the corky stems rather than at the tips of the branches like most species.

In Tasmania, our next port of call, we spent five days exploring the local national parks. One of my other National Collections is *Rubus*, so it was a thrill for me to see the rare dwarf species *Rubus gunnianus* (left), growing up atop Mount Field, not far

from Hobart. The lovely Hobart Botanic Gardens are definitely worth a visit; our visit was especially pleasing for me as I had missed them when I was last here 20 years ago.

We then flew to New South Wales, starting in the beautiful but bustling city of Sydney and working our way up the coast towards Port Macquarie. We then went inland and followed a route that took in many incredible national parks. At Werrikimbe National Park, by a dry riverbed, we saw a huge colony of the beautiful *Lobelia trigonocaulis* (right).



This was a species I was really hoping to see; it was perhaps the highlight lobelia-wise. The east coast has some amazing plants, but I think my heart was really captured by Western Australia: a year later Steve and I set out once again to see more of the fabulous flora of the Aussie western outback.

Barry Clarke, Hilliers Arboretum

The Garden through the Year

Late autumn: cold, dark, dank. The garden that only a few months ago was alive and vibrant now lies dormant. Dead foliage hangs pitifully from stems, spent flowers slowly mildew and droop, trees are bereft of leaves. But below the surface life still continues albeit dormant. Perennials are asleep, their roots tucked up warm in the earth. Trees stand stately but bare, ready to brace themselves against



cold winds and snow. Evergreens are still in evidence if not in growth, adding form and structure to the garden. Bulb roots are probing the space around them, looking for the necessary elements to bring them to life. The garden in winter can be bleak, but carefully planted it can also give a quiet

majesty to its bleakness. Highlighted by hoar frosts, ornamental grasses glisten in the pale winter sun, frosted box balls and conifers add a truly Christmassy feel and

bare stems of trees reflect icily in garden ponds. Lean birds peck hopefully at frozen earth and sip from puddles, ever hopeful the garden owner will remember them and give them some crumbs. For a few days over Christmas and New Year the garden is forgotten amidst the frivolity and celebration of the festival.



But the garden can still continue to bloom, especially roses for whom the cold weather appears to be a challenge as they defiantly produce yet another flowering bud.

Early spring, and things are on the move. Early flowerers such as snowdrops, aconites, daffodils have pushed through the surface and are in bud, their monocot leaves appearing almost identical until the flower buds appear. It is now that the seemingly innocuous *Allium triquetrum* deceives the garden owner by insinuating its bland green leaves amongst bulbous treasures, crowding them out and slowly but surely taking over. In



conjunction with *Ranunculus repens* the garden can become overcrowded with unwanted visitors but even the most determined attack on their eradication is generally hopeless as they re-appear year after year. Enjoy instead their yellow and white blanket; they are generally gone over and retired below ground by the time the real 'show' begins. Bare-stemmed bloomers such as *Lonicera fragrantissima*, *Edgeworthia chrysantha* and *Hamamelis* are producing swollen flower buds, giving promise to the start of the flowering year. And fragrance is assaulting the nostrils via the Daphne's piquant, slightly citric, scent, *Mahonia* and Lily of the Valley's sweetness and the sugary aroma of *Sarcococca*. Cleverly spaced in the garden these perfumed beauties can make a walk down the winter garden a truly nasal pleasure.

Spring, and the garden is coming alive. The bulbs are out in a riot of colour, shrubs and small trees are in bloom, the pink blossoms clashing garishly with the predominantly yellow bulbs such as daffodils. Birds are roosting and waking up earlier and earlier, introducing heavy sleepers to a dawn chorus or insomniacs to a bedtime lullaby. Gardeners are busy, racing seemingly against time, to prepare the garden for summer. Sowing seeds, mulching, planting, dividing, tidying and pruning, the jobs seem endless whilst the relentless weeks toward summer seem to accelerate beyond control. It is a time when many gardeners miss the things that are important: the neat piles of fresh green leaves of perennials appearing, the purplish mauve buds of peony and *Dicentra* pushing through the soil, the fronds of ferns slowly unfurling. It is a time of re-birth which can be overlooked in the hectic calendar of the ardent gardener. This should be a time of observation and

enjoyment, not of mad rushing around trying to prepare the garden for one single season. A garden is for all seasons. Relax and enjoy its promise.

Summer, and the garden is approaching its peak. Perennials produce their blooms



in a succession of colours, trees are in full leaf and fruit trees are beginning to set fruit. Shrubs are blooming and spreading their presence, filling the vacuum left in winter and spring. Bare earth is disguised with foliage, weeds give up the fight

against such giants already utilising space, nutrients, light and water. Climbing plants and rambling roses are climbing ever higher to the skies, restrained only by ties and the over-zealous pruning of the garden owner. The garden is now at its 'peak' for a lot of gardeners. It is now that the gates are flung open, the yellow

NGS posters appear and the aroma of freshly baked cakes emanate from kitchen windows. Proud garden owners show off their gardens, neatly tidied and dead-headed. Lawns a perfect green swathe, acting as a backdrop to



the vibrantly coloured herbaceous borders. Garden furniture laid out as welcome rest points for when the garden's beauty overcomes the visitor and they sink into chairs to enjoy their tea and cake and discuss oversights such as a strand of bindweed they have spotted hidden in the borders.

Late summer, early autumn and the garden is a bountiful place. Vibrant, blowsy and gently over-grown, it is a flagrant last fling in the face of the cold, dark

seasons around the corner. Rotund robins and plump blackbirds fly in and out of the hedges, replete from nature's diet. Squirrels are extra industrious, collecting nuts for the winter, burying them in the ground, only to forget within minutes where their buried treasure is. Trees hang on to their autumnally hued leaves, producing a tapestry of reds, yellow and browns at high level. Below them shrubs are giving their final spurt of growth before dormancy, and perennials their last blooms before setting seed and dying back. This is when the garden takes over from the owner, who despite any ministrations to the contrary, will never beat nature's last song. Paths are blocked by flopping flower stems, shed doors obscured by climbers, ponds overgrown with aquatic flora. This is nature at its most powerful, its final surge before the cold and wet weather take over and beats it down. Enjoy it for its floriferous, brash and brazen exuberance. Ignore its untidiness and revel in its natural state. This is how the garden should be remembered during the winter months, untamed by human hands and doing what it does best – growing.

And so winter comes again, the garden a flowerless desert. The less tidy gardener will leave old flowering stems for the birds and can then get their own reward with



the hoar frosted-vistas on extra cold days. Tidy gardeners will have a barren expanse of earth unless they plant structural and evergreen shrubs. But what is certain is that no matter how tidy a gardener is, you can never truly rule a garden. Manage it, yes, control and tame it, no. Give it

some laxity and enjoy what nature can give for it is only nature that will make it its most beautiful.

Lucy Watson

National AGM 2017

We headed off to the Yorkshire AGM via RHS Garden Harlow Carr and a tour led by the head gardener, Paul Cook. The garden was looking good but we were just a smidge too early for the mass showings of *Primula* and *Meconopsis* along the stream. Nevertheless, we were impressed with a garden that we hadn't seen before.

On reaching the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Harrogate we had to get the plants for the Plant Exchange to the first floor. Interesting trolleys that only just fitted in the lifts somehow transported 1,200 plants to the relevant room, looking very colourful. David Howells (our Hampshire treasurer) and I each went to a presentation by head office staff: membership for me, and media for David. After dinner we had a very interesting lecture by John Grimshaw about the making of his garden in Yorkshire. Even though there was no PA system, we heard most of it.

On Saturday morning, straight after breakfast, there was a lecture by Robin Graham of Drointon Nurseries on his National Collection of auriculas. It seems that *Primula auricula* originates from the European Alps, but is made up of more than one species, including *hirsuta*, *pubescens* and others; some grow in acid and some in more alkaline soil, so I think a bit trial and error is necessary, unless you know as much as Robin.

There was a lot of discussion at the AGM itself on what's happening at head office and the changes that may be taking place. I am sure the national publication will carry all of that. The important bit is that next year's AGM will be much closer to home - in Wareham, on the last weekend of April. At 1.00pm we headed off on the coaches for our visits, first to Stillingfleet Lodge Gardens, where we found an interesting garden and a nursery (visited the nursery first, of course). We then headed to The Manor Garden, Heslington, where we were shown round by George Smith, the co-owner and apparently a famous flower-arranger. This garden was a hidden gem behind its walls. It was obviously planted by an artist, and also included many interesting plants. To cap it all, they gave us a glass of wine before we left!

That night after dinner we had a talk by the former Head Gardener of York Gate Gardens (with a working PA system). The following morning we visited the garden itself. We were met by the new Head Gardener and shown around another lovely garden. We found Breezy Knees Garden on our way home: lots of herbaceous plants for sale, some of which we liberated before going around the 14-acre garden. It was not started till 1999, but by a clever use of many hedges (and with a map that I think they must change depending on the time of year) the garden is stunning. I fail to understand how they keep on top of it with only two full time gardeners. The garden will only get better and I intend to return if we are ever that way again.

Lynsey Pink, Propagation and Plant Sales

National Plant Exchange 2018

To qualify for the Plant Exchange plants must have 2 or less entries in the current *Plant Finder*. Such plants are not readily available for so many reasons, from not fitting on Dutch trolleys to not being easy to propagate; and occasionally for not being worth growing. The Plant Exchange is perfect for me as I love propagating and getting new plants. Last year I received as well as a few other little treasures which I look forward to seeing flower next year.

For this year Hampshire offered 70 plants and received 46 including 10 new *Narcissus*. I would like to get that number up for next year which means members getting more involved in donating and requesting plants. So please join in.

I need to have a list of all the plants offered and requested by Hampshire members by the end of October. The Shropshire group will collate all these plants and send us both lists to peruse over the Christmas period. Details of anything that you wish to bid for, or of any plant that you can supply from the wanted list, should be with me by mid-February. The exchange itself takes place at the AGM, the last weekend in April, in Dorset.

It is worth looking on the Plant Heritage website to see what was offered this year, they might still be available. I look forward to hearing from you with your lists either in person at meetings, or by email at landjpink@tiscali.co.uk, or by phone at: 01329 832786.

Lynsey Pink, Propagation and Plant Sales

Propagation Workshop - March

It was encouraging to get a good attendance at the March meeting of the



Propagating Club. Twelve people came along to the Wednesday afternoon session, held at Lynsey Pink's house. Rosie Yeomans led the session with a talk on soft tip cuttings. A soft tip cutting is one taken from the current year's growth, which has not yet hardened up. She had brought along new

shoots of various plants such as *Lychnis*, *Veronica spicata*, *Eurybia schreberi*

(Aster) and *Trifolium pannonicum*. Other people had brought Hebes and Penstemons. She demonstrated where to cut the stem so that the cutting retained enough starch to grow, and how to prepare the cutting by removing the lower leaves, reducing the size of the remaining leaves and inserting the cutting into prepared compost, preferably around the edge (where it is warmer) of a 9cm pot. She gave tips on aftercare: basically, water them, and keep them humid either in a plastic bag or a propagator. Air them regularly to avoid fungal disease and expect them to root in just a few weeks.



When potting on rooted cuttings or seedlings you can take the tips out to encourage bushiness, and trim the roots if they are really long so they fit easily into the pot. This was demonstrated on seedlings of *Clematis reticulata* and *Clematis ex* 'Burford Bell'. Rosie also showed how to take basal cuttings without digging up the plant, using a day lily growing in the garden as an example. You take a knife to the outer edge of the plant and cut down, ensuring you get a piece of the basal plate or root, and then pot as usual.

Everyone then tried their hand on the available material and we hope lots of plants will result for the spring sale.

Juliet Bloss, Newsletter Editor

Propagation Workshop - September

The last propagation meeting of the year was attended by 14 members and led by Rosie Yeomans. Although it was a blustery, showery afternoon, we escaped with only one brief shower when we took shelter in Lynsey's conservatory.

We concentrated on semi-ripe cuttings. Now is a good time to take them.

Take non-flowering material from lower down on the lightest side of the mother plant, where the stems will be shorter and thicker, providing more starch for the cutting. The slower rooting the plant the more starch it needs for successful root formation. To prepare the cutting snip just below a node, turn upside down and remove most of the leaves, being careful not to strip the stem. For harder, thicker

plants such as holly or aucuba you can take a slither off (wound) the base of the cutting, Nodes above the bottom one don't usually root, but can sometimes sprout if buried.

Some slow-rooting plants (e.g. berberis) benefit from heel cuttings. A heel is a piece of old wood, which doesn't rot and gives the cutting more stability. Pull the cutting off the main stem; a piece of the stem will remain attached (the heel); trim it neatly and insert into the compost.

Apart from other shrubs, it is worth taking cuttings of herbs like lavender, rosemary and sage, as they sell well at the May plant sale.

Potting on: don't pot on rooted cuttings until spring as sitting around in wet compost all winter will cause them to rot.

Compost: make a light gritty mixture, or add vermiculite.

Pots: some people prefer clay pots, but plastic ones are just as good.

Aftercare: cover with a plastic bag to prevent moisture loss, or place in a propagator.

Succulents: We also looked at succulents: don't use the central rosette, which will flower. Pot up the surrounding offshoots, which often already have roots. Lay them on the surface of the compost and mulch with grit, water once, then leave to dry whilst they root.

Clematis from seed: Val le May Parry, who holds the national collection of Clematis (Montana Group), brought fluffy seed heads of various clematis and showed us how to sow them. A lot of the seeds are not viable so look for ones that are swollen. You can sow them while still green, but it is better if they are brown. Prepare gritty, free draining compost the day before, water and leave to drain. It should be moist but not wet when sowing. Pick off the tail from the seeds and push them head down into the compost, about 10-15 to a 9cm pot. The resulting plants will not come true since they are seed raised, but will bear some resemblance to the parent and may result in a gem! Val used *C. montana* 'Tiny Moll' to demonstrate.

After the session Lynsey gave a tour of her garden. Many thanks to her, and to Paddy Parmee also for the tea and cake, and a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

Juliet Bloss, Editor

Chelsea Flower Show 2017

Our exhibit, **Mighty Greens**, successfully showed a range of edible plants used in green salad mixtures, together with the development of watercress, *Nasturtium officinale**, from the traditional Victorian street snack to the cutting edge work at the University of Southampton in cancer prevention. This message was very well received and we were awarded a Silver Medal this year.

The student group of eight produced some excellent vegetable and herb plants from seed and liners. Some plants were also supplied by our major sponsors, Steve's Leaves and the University of Southampton, for traditional watercress in the growing section, and three new cultivars bred in their laboratories. The data and research information was provided by Prof. Gail Taylor through her PhD Student, Nikol Voutsina, who has now completed five years of study.

One interactive feature was to encourage visitors to suggest a cultivar name for the three new cultivar selections. Some interesting ones from around 500 were: Pipsqueak, Asia, Bolderwood and, of course, CressyMcCressface (which relates back to a competition to name the University's research ship).

The health benefits of growing and regularly consuming a range of salad mixtures,



and the history of watercress, are given in the enclosed leaflet. During Press Day the watercress soup, made from a new recipe developed by Luke Matthews, Executive Head Chef at Chewton Glen Hotel & Spa, was enjoyed by a range of celebrities, including Monty Don, Baroness

Floella Benjamin, Bill Bailey, Rachel Riley and David Hayes, who stated that our 'green gloop' was much better than his usual stuff, and he took the recipe away to instruct his chef. The recipe is also found inside the enclosed leaflet.

**Please note the name change from the spring newsletter: these changes get everywhere.*

Chris Bird, Education

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