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Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Group



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NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2019



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Cover photo: *Acer rubrum columnare* by Matt Pringle

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 2020 Newsletter is 15 February. I would really appreciate short articles on a wide variety of topics from members and Collection Holders. Contact the editor: Juliet Bloss: tel 023 8084 8085. email: sevenmeads@aol.com

Chairman's Letter

We are now halfway through September, as I write this. I think we have been relatively lucky with the weather. Despite the odd aberration, with temperatures climbing to the low thirties in both July and August, putting gardening in the sun pretty much out of the question and even sitting in the shade felt unpleasant; a new record set at 38.7°C at Cambridge botanic garden on 25 July. A bit of a gale in early August turned our marquee upside down, blew over most of our potted stuff, but was well short of the 84mph recorded on the Isle of Wight at the Needles. Rain was somewhat intermittent with an odd saving downpour, but container watering was again a chore. However, the gardens seem to have responded. After a mild winter and a delayed spring the Rhododendrons and azaleas held up well for our late May opening, and the Laburnums were the best we have had for years – so unpredictable, sometimes yet to open, sometimes over, and not infrequently wiped out by a late frost. By late July the Dahlias were giving a good show. We haven't lifted any for several years, relying on a thick mulch of garden compost. The problem this year was whilst there was moisture at the surface the tubers, now quite deep, were bone dry and took some time to get into growth, but they responded to a thorough watering. The clumps of *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer' (right) were most impressive, but I must



remind myself to stake them earlier in future. They look pretty good cascading over the beds but don't do much for the plants beneath them. Our *Acanthus mollis*, somewhat more tender than *Acanthus spinosus*, produced some 50 flowering heads, very much a record. The *Phlox paniculata* were particularly good this year and have lasted right through to early September, when the exotics came into their own. The bright orange of *Hedychium* 'Tara', *Dahlia* 'Pooh' and the tithonias made a very bright display (left). The weather was particularly kind to us for all of our three NGS openings, with no rain and temperatures in the low 20's. Perfect! We managed to attract some 863 visitors, who consumed close to 600 portions of cake and gallons of tea, and collected over £5,500 for the NGS charities. The autumn PH Plant Sales table made an

additional £318 for the group.

As usual we had some interesting talks and a couple of good garden visits. I hope you enjoy the write-ups. There are four more good talks coming up between now and the February AGM. The programme from then on is still being finalised, and events, from March onwards, will appear in your programme leaflet which will be issued at the end of the year, with the calling notice for the AGM.

The National AGM appears to have gone well and you can read about it in Lynsey's report. I reported, this time last year, on the changes in the management of the charity. With the demise of Council, which has been replaced by specialist panels, the role of approving trustees and other regulatory issues will fall to members on a one member one vote basis. Voting is expected to be by email whenever possible, but members who don't have such a facility will receive the papers by post. The panels may need to be revised; this will be discussed at a chairs get-together next month, which I plan to attend. It would appear that the first stage of the new website is complete and will be presented then. I will provide feedback to our members at our AGM.

I trust you will enjoy reading the articles in this newsletter. I look forward to reading David Jewell's on Champion Trees. We have a number of gum trees with this accolade, measured some seven years ago by that stalwart of TROBI (the Tree Register of Britain and Ireland) Owen Johnson, and re-estimated by a hovering drone more recently. They continue to grow! With competition between examples in different gardens, depending on how each has fared, means that without repeat measurements the County, British and British Isles overall champions will shift from year to year. I am confident, however, that our examples of *Eucalyptus badjensis* and *E. eliptica* will continue as the champions of the British Isles.

Finally, a mention of the National Garden Scheme. Our garden has been opening for them now for 20 years. Pat Beagley provides information on the scheme later in this newsletter. The NGS has an important part to play in Plant Heritage's work. Many National Collection holders own gardens that are also open for the NGS. This removes the need for them to organise separate events. With good explanations of the National Collections held, many thousands of people have the opportunity to observe our work in practice. The NGS is brilliant at publicity, particularly on-line and with the issue of the yellow book (over 50,000 Hampshire Yellow booklets were distributed this year). This publication is also a very useful vehicle to publicise our Fairs/Sales. The NGS is always on the look-out for new gardens. If you aware of some good ones which don't currently open please suggest they may wish to apply. Linda (an assistant county organiser) and I will be happy to act as contacts.

The weather now is extremely pleasant and we look forward to that continuing and hope for another mild winter ahead. I wish you all a pleasant autumn and a gentle winter to come.

Doug Smith, Chairman

Report on Spring and Summer Events

Thursday 14 March 2019

Talk by Martin Duncan on his life in gardening around the world.

Martin certainly has a wealth of gardening experience.

His early slides were spectacular and treated us to the “smoke that thunders” (Victoria Falls), some orphaned elephants and the world heritage site of Petra in Jordan’s Rift Valley which, in addition to the fantastic ruins, houses some interesting tombs for gardeners as well as rich and productive farmland.



We moved on to Audley End in Essex, a grade 1 listed setting with Capability Brown gardens, where Martin had been Head Gardener. Sadly, these suffer badly from muntjac damage. Human and animal hair, loud radios etc., have all been tried, to no effect.

The next visit was to Château de Sully in Burgundy, followed by a

trip to Bermuda, where Martin was responsible for all the public parks and gardens. What a challenge!

He then took us on to Arundel Castle, where he has been Head Gardener for 10

years. This is a stunning setting where gardens have the historic castle as the backdrop. The Rose Garden has Gothic seats and a wide variety of highly scented Old English roses. The Organic Kitchen Garden has two glasshouses growing pawpaws, guavas, pineapples and a chilli collection. The rest of the garden boasts UK heritage vegetables and fruit



trees trained against the walls. The new tropical glasshouse has a resident cat to keep the mice under control. There is so much to see in this garden, including wildflower areas and fabulous perennial borders. A major attraction each spring is the unique labyrinth of tulips. Just the 60,000 bulbs, planted by hand!

Finally, Martin had time to give us a couple of gardening tips. Epsom salts, applied at a couple of teaspoons per plant and washed in, reduces black spot on roses. Nemaslug® is very useful for the control of molluscs around hostas.

Many thanks to Martin for this amazing and brilliantly illustrated journey.

Linda Smith

Thursday 11 April 2019
Talk by Colin Moat: 'Fifty Greys of Shade'.

Colin, a retired financial advisor, now runs Pineview Plants in Kent with his wife Cindy. They grow a wide range of interesting and unusual plants with a particular focus on the shade-lovers.

Many of us will identify with the dingy corner of the garden which needs brightening up a bit. Colin has lots of suggestions including arums, erythroniums, fritillaries and trilliums. Cyclamen are wonderful for September and October and spread well thanks to the ants which distribute the sweet seeds widely. Cardiocrinums look good on a woodland edge and alliums are an excellent choice for planting between hostas. The fresh new hosta leaves hide the shabby foliage of the alliums while the heads still look good. Alliums are equally effective planted among hellebores for the same reason.

Colin also had some inspiring ideas for ground cover. These included the epimediums ('Pink Champagne' is a good one), pulmonarias ('Ice Ballet' [below left] and 'Cotton Cool' [below right] are recommended. The new breeds of



bergenias are good as ground cover and

in shade. Colin told us that *Bergenia* 'Overture' is a seriously pink example and a very good doer. The possibilities are immense. Just think about angelicas, persicarias, *Digitalis ferruginea*, astrantias, smyrniums and the lovely *Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty' [left], always a talking point.



Colin left us with a printed plant list for further inspiration.

Many thanks Colin. Our dingy corners are waking up now.

Linda Smith

4th May 2019 National AGM

The 2019 AGM was held in Felbridge, East Grinstead in Sussex. It was arranged at short notice but was none the less enjoyable for that. It was not too far for us to drive, so we stopped off at High Beeches, which I had often thought of visiting but never got around to; and it did not disappoint. It is mainly a woodland garden with many rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. There were also other unusual plants: I noticed many *Stewartias* on our way around, but sadly they were not in flower. Only when reading up on High Beeches later did I realise they have the National Collection of *Stewartias*, so we must go back at flowering time.

We arrived at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and took the plants for the plant exchange to the allotted room. I attended a workshop for the Plant Guardianship scheme before heading for dinner. The after-dinner speaker was Stephen Herrington, the programme manager for the National Trust Gardens, and previously head gardener at Nymans. He gave a very interesting lecture entitled a 'British and Irish Botanical Expedition to Tasmania in the footsteps of Harold Comber' that he had been on.

On Saturday morning Andrew Gaunt from DEFRA gave a talk about the 'Don't risk it' campaign. It seems that it will become more and more difficult to bring plant material into the UK legally. He suggests that we should always quarantine new plants that come into our gardens from any source. There are so many new pests and diseases out there just waiting to invade. As we know, the biggest threat currently is from *Xylella fastidiosa*, a plant pathogen transmitted exclusively by sap-feeding insects. It is all very worrying.

The next speaker was Neil Miller from Hever Castle, telling us all about the Castle garden. One thing that stuck in my mind was that the early gardeners were paid partly in beer!

We then had the AGM, which will be written up in full in the National Newsletter. We need to make members aware of the 'one member one vote' system that was put in place last year. The feedback showed that most members had missed this completely.

In the afternoon we had a choice of gardens to visit. We had been to Borde Hill recently with the Hampshire group. We went instead to Leonardslee Gardens, which I had never visited. The gardens had been closed for 10 years and only recently reopened. Not all of the site has yet been finished, but the restored was excellent. It was of course the perfect time to visit a woodland garden; it was beautiful with many, many rhododendrons, etc. We had a shortish lecture from the head gardener, who was very knowledgeable and incredibly enthusiastic, but we showed ourselves around.

The lecturer after dinner that night was Tom Hart-Dyke talking about Lullingstone and the World Garden. Tom was on excellent form as always.

There was nothing planned for the Sunday, and we had to get home to sort out all the plant exchange plants as well as those for the plant sale at Longstock the following day.

Lynsey Pink

Monday 6 May 2019 Grand Plant Fair

This was once more a highly successful event. Numbers were 29% up on last year and the nurseries did the best they ever have (13% up on last year). The PH plant sales table took in a little less than last year but still managed close to £800. Final figures, after all expenses (quite small this year), look like a net income close to £10,000. **Please note, with the shift in next year's early May bank holiday, we will be running the Fair on Sunday 10 May.**

Doug Smith

Friday 21 June 2019 Visit to Richard Duke's garden, Ampfield, Nr Romsey

We visited Richard's garden on a beautiful sunny day in June, and what a surprise! A garden that was only a few years old but had the feel of a much older one, full of many unusual and rare plants.



Richard welcomed us, and then Roy Lancaster gave an introduction to both Richard and his garden. Roy and Richard have been friends for many years, having met first when Richard was Roy's local butcher. Roy gave Richard seeds from his collecting trips abroad, and any spare ones were sold in Richard's shop, together with the occasional plant. Kevin Hobbs, another friend of Richard's, was also there to talk about the plants, many of which had come from his own garden. Richard has given them sanctuary whilst Kevin is between gardens, and they added to the mature look of

the garden. We were privileged to have such experts to guide us round; Roy to introduce his dear friend, and Kevin to introduce the exciting plants.

There were many lovely trees, including a giant redwood that Richard grew from seed, and a beautiful *Cornus* 'Miss Satomi', which you can see in the picture of Roy and Richard. Many of us were excited to see a dwarf *Styrax*, which was found as a "witch's broom" on a plant in China. A *Calycanthus sinensis* which still had a

few flowers also caused a lot of interest amongst our members. We were like children in a sweet shop, going from one new delight to the next. Many photos were taken of plants, and their labels or names were carefully written down for future reference. We were particularly interested in a purple form of *Cotinus coggygria* which Kevin had grown as a standard; not an easy task, apparently. It was altogether a delightful visit, one we were all pleased to have been part of.



Gill Sawyer & Lynsey Pink

Friday 5 July 2019 Visit to Andy McIndoe's garden.

We last visited Andy and Ra's garden back in 2006, when it was relatively new. It has developed enormously. Andy gave us a detailed tour of the garden, pointing out the many successes and some rarities. The flowering dogwoods, rather in their juvenile state at our last visit are now enormous. Of particular note was *Cornus kousa* 'Miss Satomi', a mass of pink bracts – which last a considerable period on the bush (see previous report for a picture). *Cornus* 'Porlock', a hybrid between *C. kousa* and *C. capitata* is similarly effective, with white bracts, tinged pink before they fall, and with very attractive fruit, highly attractive to birds (at back of picture). It would seem that this is indistinguishable from *C.* 'Norman Hadden' and Andy considers them to be the same plant. The garden contained a good number of attractive roses, with the bigger ramblers such as *Rosa filipes* 'Kifsgate' climbing to the



tops of the trees. A good example of *Rosa* 'Emma Hamilton' struck all who approached it with its beautiful, and powerful, scent (see picture). I was particularly taken by an unusual *Actinidia pilosula* (now apparently renamed *A. tetramera* var. *maloides*), growing by the back door. I have had this for some years, but it is not a common plant. Similar to a degree to the more familiar *A. kolomikta* but with much narrower and more pointed leaves, with more pink and white; the pink bell flowers are also bigger. It's fully hardy and grows to around 5 metres. Being dioecious, if you want fruit, you need to grow one of each sex.

In addition to the excellent planting, there was a large area where mown paths intersected a very well established wildlife meadow wide a wide ranging flora and

a considerable number of butterflies and other insects. Being on chalk makes it easier to establish and maintain. A wildlife pond, being frequented by dragonflies during our visit, added to the picture

All in all a very enjoyable visit, capped off by a well appreciated cuppa and excellent cakes. Very many thanks to Andy and Ra for giving up their time.

Doug Smith

Sunday 1 September

Autumn Plant Sale

See Chairman's report.

Future Events

Thursday 17 October 2019: Warnford Village Hall 7.30pm

Talk by Kit Strange: 'Cultivation of Temperate Aroids'.

Kit Strange, alpine horticulturalist at Kew Gardens for 17 years, specialises in bulbous plants. She gave us an excellent talk on 'Bulbs of Kyrgystan' back in 2009 and we decided that it was time to invite her back.

Thursday 21 November 2019

Social and talk by David Tite on Carnivorous Plants: Warnford Village Hall 7.30pm

David has been growing carnivorous plants for over fifty years. He has a hugely diverse personal collection and assists Matthew Soper, of Hampshire Carnivorous Plants, both with his shows and talks. Please bring a plate of food to share and a prize for the raffle. Drinks will be provided.

Thursday 9 January 2020: Warnford Village Hall 7.30pm

Talk by Andrew Cleave on 'Mountain Flowers'

Andrew has written more than thirty books on natural history subjects, including field guides to trees and wild flowers. He has led natural history tours to the Mediterranean, Spitsbergen, and many regions of Europe.

Saturday 8 February 2020: Sparsholt College 2.00pm

AGM and talk by Julian Sutton: Dilemmas of a nobody'

Julian is a life-long plantsman and was a great supporter of our group for many years. He and Sarah ran their small Totnes nursery, Desirable Plants, for 20 years but they have now scaled back. Julian is a most accomplished speaker.

Later events will be published in the 2020 Programme Leaflet and in the spring newsletter.

New Members

We are pleased to welcome **Jane Davies, Sarah Harris, Jo Whitworth, Rachael Neville, Henk Somberg, Judith Purslow, Ian Chadwick and Sue Denny** to our group. We look forward to seeing you at some of our events.

Champion Trees

Sir Harold Hillier had a remarkable ambition in life: to plant one of the finest collections of woody plants anywhere in the temperate world, and he achieved this goal within his own lifetime. Present day, his legacy continues to grow at the



***Fagus sylvatica* 'Dawyck's Gold'**

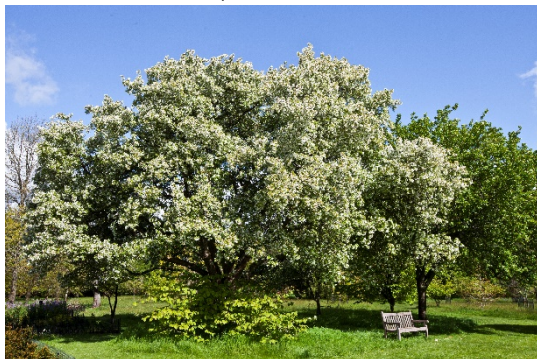
Sir Harold Hillier Gardens (SHHG) with a collection containing more than 12,000 taxa across a 180-acre site, which currently includes 615 champion trees, the largest number of any garden in Britain and Ireland. A good number of our champions are from Sir Harold's original collection but year on year we continue planting rare and interesting tree material from around the world. As a result, potential champion trees of the future continue to grow here, widening the variety still further.

Champion trees are exceptional examples of their species as defined by Owen Johnson in his book *Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland*, which states: "*Champion trees are individual trees which are exceptional examples of their species because of their enormous size, great age, rarity or historical significance*"

The trees in the SHHG are continually measured by the 'Two Michaels', Messrs Harris and Hughes, who are part of our volunteer workforce, numbering 160 at present. We are indebted to all of them for their invaluable contribution. Without any doubt many equally large and important gardens today simply couldn't manage without similar help and support.

The SHHG trees are surveyed and measured using the Haglof Vertex measuring tool. The Vertex comprises a transponder, which transmits an ultrasonic signal, and a receiver that converts the signal to distance, enabling accurate readings to be made even in areas of thick undergrowth. The transponder is aligned to the highest point of the tree and the surveyor's position, themselves at a distance of 1 to 2 times the height of the tree, and measure the exact distance. The Vertex is then aimed at the top of the tree to measure the angle of elevation; using basic trigonometry it then calculates the tree's height. In addition, measurements are taken of the tree's diameter and canopy spread. The data is then input into BgBase to provide a historical record, and with subsequent readings one can

determine growth rates. The tree data are also submitted to the Tree Register of the British Isles (TROBI) for confirmation as to whether a tree can officially be classified as a champion.



Malus hupensis

TROBI is a registered charity that collates and updates a database of notable trees throughout Britain and Ireland. The register comprises details of more than 150,000 trees stretching back more than 200 years and includes records by J C Louden (1830s), Henry Elwes and Augustine Henry (early 1900s).

At the end of March 2019

TROBI launched a new interactive map on their website displaying over 800 parks and gardens, where you can find trees that are champions of Britain and Ireland, plus other sites of botanical interest worthy of inclusion.

(See “Where to find Champion Trees” www.treeregister.org/map/). During 2017 the survey of the SHHG champion trees by the ‘Two Michaels’ took 12 months to complete and it has received final approval by TROBI. As a result the following item has been posted on the Register’s website: “*The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Hampshire (administered by Hampshire County Council) can boast the largest number of champions of any site in Britain and Ireland. They are also the only gardens to organise their own programme of tree recording*”. All this hard work means that the Tree Register has been able to award 615 national champions to the Gardens, nearly twice the number of their nearest rival, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, as well as nearly 3,000 local champions and trees remarkable for their rarity and stature.



Sequoia sempervirens

The work doesn’t stop there for the ‘Two Michaels’. They are now continuing with the re-surveying of all of the trees in the Gardens, area by area. As the trees are surveyed they are cross-checked against the TROBI data base, and notable trees are listed for submission to TROBI on completion of each area. So the likelihood is that the number of champion trees will increase as the survey progresses.

Visitors can see the Champion Tree list at our visitor centre and be guided from there. However, public interest in the champions has gathered pace recently, increasing demand for a Champion Tree trail to be compiled. As a starting point 25 easily accessible champions have been identified to deliver an informative, pleasing walk. Also, the champions will be easier to identify as they will have a blue background label with white lettering, as distinct from our standard tree labels, which have a black background and white letters. These valuable trees will need to be surrounded by a rope barrier to protect their root plates, bearing in mind that too many visitors' feet could create severe compaction problems.



***Acer saccharum* 'Newton Sentry'**

shouldn't be overlooked, but above all they deserve to be better known, respected and admired.

David Jewell, Curator, Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

Photos: Matt Pringle

★ Star sites	No. of Champions
Sir Harold Hillier Gardens	611
Kew Gardens	333
Tregrehan	160
Westonbirt Arboretum	140
Glasnevin National Botanic Gardens	119
Bedgebury National Pinetum	100
Wakehurst Place	95
Tresco Abbey Garden	93
Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden	91
Caerhays Castle	83
Borde Hill	70
Hergest Croft	70
Windsor Great Park	69
Wisley RHS Garden	56
Mount Usher	54
Castle Howard: Yorkshire Arboretum	52
Cambridge University Botanic Garden	50

Does the addition of Mycorrhizal Fungi to pot grown plants improve plant health?

At one of our group's evening presentations last winter a question arose regarding the usefulness of mycorrhizal fungi to plants grown in pots. I thought it might be interesting to share the results of research I did as part of a horticulture degree.

Mycorrhizal fungi (mycorrhizae) occur naturally in soils, forming mutualistic associations with the roots of 90% of terrestrial plants. There are specialist mycorrhizae that associate with ericoid plants and orchids, but the proprietary products available are a mix of generalist fungal species suitable for most trees, food crops and herbaceous plants. Plant families that can't form mycorrhizal associations are: Brassicaceae, Chenopodiaceae and Proteaceae (Taiz et al, 2015)

Mycorrhizae use their extensive hyphal root as networks that spread throughout

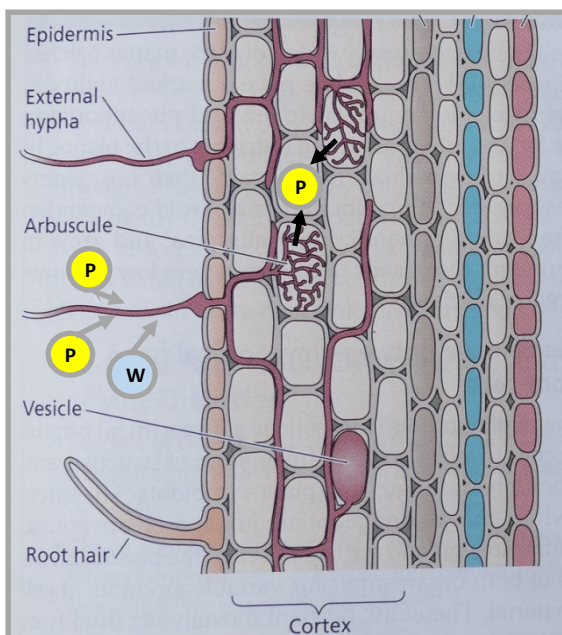


Figure 1. Cross section of plant root. Mycorrhizal fungal hyphae penetrate root cortex cells, transporting water (W) and nutrients such as phosphorus (P) from soil into the root (Taiz et al, 2015).

the soil to transport otherwise unavailable water and nutrients back to the plant (Figure 1). This unavailability may be because plant roots don't reach far enough or because the nutrient is locked in the soil in a form that plant roots can't absorb but mycorrhizae can. In return the mycorrhizae receive carbohydrate produced by photosynthesis. This mutualistic association leads to a healthier plant better able to withstand pests and disease, environmental stresses such as drought, and to a more productive plant in terms of flower or fruit.

Research has shown that associations between plant and mycorrhizae grown in the ground are most likely

to occur when the plant is short of nutrients and water. It is also known that the type of growing medium affects the ability of mycorrhizae to establish colonies; soil is the most successful and there is no colonisation in peat.

My research investigated whether plug plant growth in pots was improved by addition of a proprietary mycorrhizal fungal mix to a peat-free growing medium and also a peat-free growing medium with added loam. The effect of adding a slow-release fertiliser was also included in the study. The hypothesis I wanted to prove was that mycorrhizal fungi **did not** improve plant growth of plug plants being grown on in nursery conditions in pots.



Plants were grown over 4 months with light and temperature levels controlled to replicate the growing season (Figure 2). Water was supplied to ensure plants didn't dry out. Three plant types were used: *Aucuba japonica*, *Daphne* 'Valerie Hillier' and *Prunus incisa*.

Figure 2 Plants in the glasshouse



Start and finish of experiment – *Aucuba* (photographs © Getgood, 2017)

The results of the study showed no significant increase in top growth or root growth between those plants with added mycorrhizae and those without. Nor was there any growth difference between peat-free or peat-free with added loam

growing media, or between plants grown with or without fertilizer. Rather an underwhelming result you may think!

This result was expected. Well cared for plants, being grown on from plugs for sale in the same season, have sufficient water and nutrients for healthy growth. They do not need an association with mycorrhizal fungi.

But what about those of us who grow mature plants permanently in very large pots of soil-based compost and who forget to water and feed (surely not!). If nutrients and water are available in the pot but for some reason could not be reached or taken up by the plant, then the addition of mycorrhizal fungi may possibly help. However, there is no specific scientific evidence to confirm this speculation for ornamentals grown permanently in pots.

As mycorrhizal fungi occur naturally in soil, my solution would be to stick a spadeful of garden soil (unsterilized and from an area planted with plants of the same family if possible) into my permanent pot plantings around the plant roots. I would also use a peat-free soil-based growing medium. If my plant needed the help of mycorrhizae it would hopefully have some naturally occurring fungi to form a mutualistic association; this saves the cost of buying a proprietary product that may not be beneficial.

Becky Getgood

Reference: Taiz, L., Zeiger, E., Møller, I. and Murphy, A. (2015). *Plant physiology and development*. Sunderland, MA.: Sinauer Associates.

Acknowledgements: Hillier Nurseries R&D (supply of plants), Plant Works Ltd (supply of Rootgrow Mycorrhizal Fungi product), Melcourt Industries Ltd (supply of Sylvagrow peat-free compost).

VOLUNTEER WANTED!

Hilliers Gardens is looking for a volunteer to help out in the herbarium. This is an important volunteer post which has been brilliantly carried out for many years by PH member, Linda Barker, who is retiring. No previous experience is necessary and training will be provided. As noted in David's article on champion trees, volunteers are really valued and appreciated and a vital part of the work of the Gardens.

Please contact **David Jewell** david.jewell@hants.gov.uk **Tel: 01794 369304**



NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME HAMPSHIRE

As we come to the end of our Open Garden season, we wait to see if all the efforts of all the volunteers, garden owners and garden visitors have managed to beat our 2019 total of £3 million nationally, and £200,000 from Hampshire, donated to our beneficiaries. To view all our beneficiaries click on the link: <https://www.ngs.org.uk/beneficiaries>

One of the National Garden Scheme's beneficiaries in 2019 was Hampshire's ***Treloar's School and College in Alton***. At Treloar's they focus on the ability of the



students - not the disability. Around 170 children and young people, aged between two and 25 years attend the school and college. The complexity of the students' needs is increasing, which means that Treloar's need to upgrade some of their facilities. To this end the National Garden Scheme donated a very generous £85,000, which will be used towards a new Outdoor Learning Centre. This will offer

more vocational learning opportunities and therapeutic benefit for students.

Earlier this summer, one of our very popular gardens - The Thatched Cottage, Upper Farringdon - invited a number of students and staff from Treloar's to visit their garden on an educational visit to study pollination. As well as being a beautiful garden the site has chickens and ducks wandering around. As you can see, this made Debbie one very happy young student.

To read more about this trip, visit the website <https://ngs.org.uk/discover-more/news/> and page down to the item on 26th June.

Finally, (nothing to do with the NGS) but with reference to Juliet's article in the spring 2019 issue, p22, about Asian Hornets, I have an App on my phone: Asian Hornet Watch. It gives instant access to pictures of both European & Asian Hornets, and a space to record sightings, and it's FREE.

pat.beagley@ngs.org.uk

National Collection of Agapanthus: Open Day at Fairweather's

Patrick Fairweather's National Collection of Agapanthus was on display at Fairweather's annual Open Day in July. Many of the evergreen specimens are grown in pots, others in beds. The collective display is impressive and for the purposes of comparison it is instructive to see them all together. The whole event was as always very well organised, and I urge anyone who hasn't been to go along next year.

These days Agapanthus days, both deciduous and evergreen, come in many different shapes and sizes, from tall to short, from white through many shades of blue to purple, to the recently developed stunning 'Fireworks' with its bicoloured florets. Some have loose flower heads, with individual florets on long pedicels, others are more tightly bunched globes. Foliage ranges from broad to narrow, and from green to glaucous; the stems can be upright or gently curving, the anthers yellow or black. There is a plant for every garden, and it is difficult to single one out from so many lovely possibilities.

There were over 150 entries at the recent RHS trials, the majority of them also held in Patrick's National Collection. Most were awarded an AGM, given to plants considered outstanding cultivars for garden use on the basis of time of flowering, length of flowering, colour of flower through season, balance of flower and foliage, as well as how the flower dies, strength of stem, quality of foliage, and attractiveness of seed-heads.

But how to choose a plant for your garden from amongst so many worthy candidates? You can start to whittle the choice down by deciding between evergreen and deciduous. The advantage of the evergreen types is that they can be grown in pots and moved to overwinter somewhere protected. Grown in the soil they require a winter mulch. On the other hand, the deciduous ones are easier to manage in borders, requiring less tidying up in spring.

Next, look at the colours available. Stick with blue? Bright or pale? Tight head like 'Heidi', 'Blue Magic' or 'Northern Star', or a looser head as in 'Ballerina' or 'Fireworks'? What about white? A tall strong-growing type such as 'Arctic Star', 'Snow Crystal' or *inapertus* 'Avalanche', or a front-of-border neat grower like 'Double Diamond'? There are also gorgeous purples, one of the best being mid-coloured 'Popping Purple', which is black in bud; it will be launched next year after Chelsea. Or perhaps you prefer the darker 'Royal Velvet'? As for foliage, it varies from mid-green through glaucous to olive or yellowish green. There are also some with variegated leaves, such as 'Silver Moon', considered one of the best, though personally I would prefer it to have white rather than mid-blue flowers. What about timing? 'Jacaranda' flowers early, 'Hoyland Blue' is late. The newest stars are, of course, the fantastic 'Fireworks', winner of third-best plant of the year at Chelsea this summer, and its cousin 'Twister', a slightly smaller rather less floriferous semi-deciduous plant, which is slightly the hardier of the two. Both

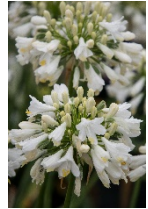
have bi-coloured florets, their white trumpet-shaped flutes turning inky blue at the base. 'Fireworks' is evergreen with long dark pedicels and a big densely-packed loose head. 'Twister' is slightly less violet and lacks dark pedicels.

I asked Patrick to select some of the best. Here are his picks (and one of mine):



1. **'Flower of Love'**: deciduous; 60cms; very free flowering, stunning colour, a glowing bright mid-blue; low foliage so flowers stand out well.

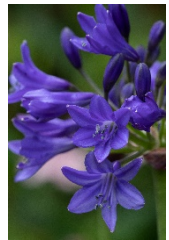
2. **'Ever White'**: evergreen; 60cms; small and compact with well-shaped umbel; in spite of its size it makes an impact; yellow anthers, free flowering clean white, well-balanced.



3. **'Royal Velvet'**: deciduous, 90cms, shows off its flowers well on elegant upright stems; dark, almost black buds against a good purplish blue.

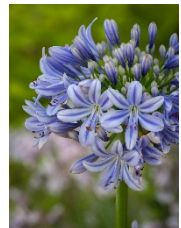
4. **'Jessica'**: deciduous, 60cms, with narrow low foliage; VERY floriferous, in fact amazingly free flowering, with a lightness or airiness to it. Very good for front of border.

5. **'Regal Beauty'**: evergreen; 1m; old NZ hybrid which needs winter protection; massive size of bright blue flower heads (25cms) made up of hundreds of individual florets, which open over many weeks. A



huge plant, with broad evergreen leaves.

6. **'Full Moon'**: evergreen; 1.2m; a big, flamboyant plant, which stands out from a distance; big umbels of light blue petals with a dark blue vein; its flowers have a general lightness about them.



My favourite: **'Ballerina'**: deciduous, 110cms; a dainty light blue with black anthers, very elegant, loose umbels from *inapertus* parent, with tall slender stems.

Juliet Bloss

A visit to the National Collection of Francoas

Susan Summers, a member of the Hampshire Plant Heritage group, holds the National Collection of Francoas. Visits to the collection are free by appointment; the best time to see them is in July and August. Every few years her garden is open on behalf of the National Garden Scheme, and this year the three garden open days in July were blessed with lovely sunny weather. The sum of £2,157 was raised for the NGS.



The garden is beautifully laid out with a circular lawn, fish pond, greenhouse, vegetable plot, flower beds and fruit trees. It is cleverly designed so that all these elements interlock seamlessly, and although it isn't a big garden, space is used so cleverly that nothing feels crowded.

At the end of the garden there are trial beds of francoas where they are grown on so that their size, growth habit and flowers are easily compared. Francoas are known as plants for shade, but Susan explained that they don't mind the sun as long as they have some shade during the day. However, francoas don't like drying out or the plants become "quite crispy". Susan starts her seeds off before the end of the year so that by the end of March they are starting to sprout.

The three open days, besides the lovely sunshine, had excellent tea and cakes, with francoas and other garden plants for sale. It was a lovely occasion.

Gill Sawyer

Search: National Plant Collection - Francoa in Facebook, or go to www.summersgd.co.uk/francoa for some lovely pictures of the plants. Susan has francoas available for £4 per 9cm pot or 3 for £10. Contact francoa@susansummersgd.co.uk for details of the varieties available.

National Plant Exchange 2020

Autumn is nearly here again, and this can mean only one thing: it's time for the first round of lists for the National Plant Exchange.

Firstly, though, I must pass on to you the very sad news that Lloyd Kenyon, who has organised the National Plant Exchange for several years, has passed away. At the time of writing there is no replacement for Lloyd, but Lucy at head office will run the Exchange until someone is found. If you think that this is something that you might like to take on, then please let me or Lucy know. It would be a very interesting and rewarding job.

To qualify for the National Plant Exchange the plants must have two or fewer entries in the current *Plant Finder*. This can be found online if you don't have a current copy. The Plant Exchange is an important part of Plant Heritage. I just love plants, like many of you, and for me swapping plants, learning and sharing is what gardening is all about. So please look in your gardens and see if there is anything you can donate to a fellow plant lover. Look at your "must have" lists and put in a request, and you may be lucky enough to receive an exciting new plant for 2020.

I need to have a list of all the plants offered and requested by Hampshire members by the end of October. These will be collated and the lists then sent back to us in time for Christmas. Notice of anything on that list that you wish to bid for, or any plant that you can supply from the wanted list, should be with me by mid-February. The exchange itself takes place at the National AGM on the last weekend in April, in Durham.

It is always worth having a look at previous years to see what has been offered. A plant offered in previous years might be offered again! This information is available on the Plant Heritage website.

I look forward to hearing from you with your lists either in person, at meetings, or on 01328 832786, or by email at landjpink@tiscali.co.uk

Lynsey Pink

National AGM 2019

The 2019 AGM was held in Felbridge, East Grinstead in Sussex. It was arranged at short notice but was none the less enjoyable for that. It was not too far for us to drive, so we stopped off at High Beeches, which I had often thought of visiting but never got around to; and it did not disappoint. It is mainly a woodland garden with many rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. There were also other unusual plants: I noticed many *Stewartias* on our way around, but sadly

they were not in flower. Only when reading up on High Beeches later did I realise they have the National Collection of *Stewartias*, so we must go back at flowering time.

We arrived at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and took the plants for the plant exchange to the allotted room. I attended a workshop for the Plant Guardianship scheme before heading for dinner. The after-dinner speaker was Stephen Herrington, the programme manager for the National Trust Gardens, and previously head gardener at Nymans. He gave a very interesting lecture entitled a 'British and Irish Botanical Expedition to Tasmania in the footsteps of Harold Comber' that he had been on.

On Saturday morning Andrew Gaunt from DEFRA gave a talk about the 'Don't risk it' campaign. It seems that it will become more and more difficult to bring plant material into the UK legally. He suggests that we should always quarantine new plants that come into our gardens from any source. There are so many new pests and diseases out there just waiting to invade. As we know, the biggest threat currently is from *Xylella fastidiosa*, a plant pathogen transmitted exclusively by sap-feeding insects. It is all very worrying.

The next speaker was Neil Miller from Hever Castle, telling us all about the Castle garden. One thing that stuck in my mind was that the early gardeners were paid partly in beer!

We then had the AGM, which will be written up in full in the National Newsletter. We need to make members aware of the 'one member one vote' system that was put in place last year. The feedback showed that most members had missed this completely.

In the afternoon we had a choice of gardens to visit. We had been to Borde Hill recently with the Hampshire group. We went instead to Leonardslee Gardens, which I had never visited. The gardens had been closed for 10 years and only recently reopened. Not all of the site has yet been finished, but the restored area was excellent. It was of course the perfect time to visit a woodland garden; it was beautiful with many, many rhododendrons, etc. We had a shortish lecture from the head gardener, who was very knowledgeable and incredibly enthusiastic, but we showed ourselves around.

The lecturer after dinner that night was Tom Hart-Dyke talking about Lullingstone and the World Garden. Tom was on excellent form as always.

There was nothing planned for the Sunday, and we had to get home to sort out all the plant exchange plants as well as those for the plant sale at Longstock the following day.

Lynsey Pink

Propagation Meetings

Two propagation meetings were held this year. They continue to be well attended and inspirational to the participants, encouraging us to take cuttings, sow seeds or otherwise propagate plants for our sales. The meetings were held, as usual, in the pleasant surroundings of John and Lynsey Pink's garden and included welcome tea and cakes. A really wide range of interesting material was brought by members to both meetings, from seedlings, through perennials to shrubs.



In the spring Rosie Yeomans gave us a lot of interesting tips:

Soft tip cuttings:

Hormone rooting powder no longer contains fungus protection and goes off very quickly, so probably isn't worth using.

If cutting is very soft, don't take out the tip – leave till you see some action.

Use grit on top of the compost to help prevent rotting off.

Choose non-flowering shoots as far as possible; if not possible take off all flowers, both initially and as they start to grow.

Insert the cuttings up to their necks in the pot.

Firm the compost before inserting the cutting, and water after insertion.

Remove most of the foliage, leaving just the top pair of leaves.

Soft tip cuttings need a lot of moisture as they have few reserves, so should be placed in a propagator or covered with a plastic bag.

Seedlings:

Seedlings should be pricked out around the edge of the pot where it is warmer, and not in the middle.

A layer of grit on top of the compost helps prevent damping off.

Aftercare of seedlings: grouping 2 or 3 together creates a bushier plant more quickly.

Snipping off the growing points, leaving just one or two internodes above the cotyledons, encourages bushiness.

Rosie was unable to attend the autumn meeting, but Lynsey took over and gave us a great tour of the garden, and encouraged people to take cuttings or pieces of plants. Afterwards, we all worked on our cuttings.

Juliet Bloss

Chelsea Flower Show 2019: Sparsholt College

Behind the genes

Sparsholt College's Chelsea exhibit was awarded a gold medal as well as Best in Discovery, a wonderful result for Chris Bird and his student team. **Ed.**

This year's exhibit featured the lengthy processes of breeding, selection and development that go into producing new plants, and explained the techniques used to achieve improvements. We showed the plant-breeding milestones over the years, starting from the pioneering work of Gregor Mendel on plant genetics. Working with Thompson & Morgan as our main sponsor we also took part in the RHS Plant of the Year 2019 competition. We used a wider range of student groups this year, including some from our RHS Level 3 practical course. Please see the enclosed leaflet for the plan and the new plant introductions we featured.



We had a delayed start with the build on day one because our minibus broke down on the M3. The good news was that the smart motorway “lane closed” system, marked with a red X, worked well, and after changing minibuses we finally arrived at the show at 18:30, just when everyone else was leaving for the day. However, this allowed us full and quick access to our stand site, only to find some newly painted black support-frames in the centre of our site. We worked on the display until 21:30 to get back on track. Day two also saw another delay of two hours, caused by a visit to the show by HRH the Duchess of Cambridge. The rest of the build period went smoothly.

Our central feature consisted of a 3-metre high metal structure/sculpture of a DNA spiral. However, to emphasise the point we employed 'Flipped Learning' as our spiral went clockwise, whereas in nature it is anticlockwise. We used mirrors to show the true direction, but during the show three of the four were 'recycled' by show visitors.

A high level of interest was shown in our plant range, which included some large specimens of *Hydrangea* 'Runaway Bride', winner of the RHS Plant of the Year 2018. We presented five new plants, with a further three shown by Thompson & Morgan through other exhibitors: the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) and the City of Birmingham. *Agapanthus* 'Fireworks' came third at the show but subsequently won at the HTA Plant Show later in the summer. This plant also attracted the eye of Mary Berry, which resulted in a BBC 1 TV feature on the evening of Friday 22 May.

On Press Day the students enjoyed a 15-minute chat with Monty Don and a wide



range of VIP visitors, including Roy Lancaster, Peter Catt and, visiting from New Zealand, Wolfgang Bopp and Janet Cubey.

Dismantling the exhibit after the show on Saturday went smoothly, and we finally unloaded our 7.5 ton lorry at 02:30 on Sunday. In an extra twist this year I ended up driving the lorry since I possessed the correct driving licence.

In June 2019 we rebuilt two-thirds of our display for a one-day event called Sparsholt Futures, when over 1,000 school children (in years 8 and 9) visited the College to view modern technology in action, and to discuss land-based career opportunities.

My thanks go to all who contributed to another successful year.

Chris Bird

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