

SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2019



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Cover Illustration: 'Late autumn grapevine' coloured pencil illustration by Elizabeth Coventry

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

MAGGIE THORPE

Our Spring Plant Fair at Helmingham was another great success and the rain didn't arrive until 3pm. The Talks Tent (workshop) proves to be very popular with the public and our plant doctor, Matthew Tanton-Brown, answered gardening queries throughout the day. Three of the nurseries gave information on their Plant of Distinction and Anne Tweddle, our propagation officer, talked about our Plant Guardian Scheme. This was a golden opportunity to make the public aware of Plant Heritage's important way of actively getting plants saved for the future. And you can do this too. All that is necessary is for you to find a plant in your garden which has no more than two suppliers in the RHS Plant Finder, then register it on the Plant Heritage website. Ask me for help if you are unsure of how to proceed.

The Children's Marquee, ably run by Libby Brooks and Pippa Michelson, means parents can leave their children to do some potting up etc whilst they shop for plants. Rosie Ansell and Kevin run the plant creche very successfully where people are generous in giving a donation to Plant Heritage.

Isobel Ashton, our secretary recruited new members and thank you lots of you who volunteered to help in many ways throughout the day. The financial reward for our group was much the same as last spring and we look forward to another wonderful fair in September.

Please step forward if you can offer help to our committee, we need you. editor is retiring after this edition. There is help available to anyone wishing to take on this job. Nicola Hobbs who has been doing the layout for Widget for many years is prepared to continue for a few more issues if necessary but she would need to be sent all the material by email.

Darren Andrews has taken on the job of booking speakers for our events at Stowupland Village Hall and has already prepared a wonderful list for 2020 (see events page).

Don't forget to let us know if you are opening your garden in the future so that we can publicise it.

Central Office restructuring is going well and we are kept in touch by email from the new chairman, Cecilia Bufton. Our Jim Marshall has a seat on the board of trustees and is chairman of the Conservation Panel on

which Anne Tweddle serves too. Anthony Pigott is a member of the Resources Panel. So we are well supported at national level and now every one of us has a vote.

Our Annual General Meeting will this year be held at Stowupland on 7 December before a talk by William Butcher entitled 'Garden people, places, plants, poisons and pirates.'

I hope you will come.

TREASURER'S REPORT

PAT STANLEY

Once again the Spring Plant Fair and Artisan Market held at Helmingham Hall in May was a great success. The weather held fair for the most part but brought a sudden closure to the event in the late afternoon when the rains came.

Thanks must go to Sarah Cook for her continuing enthusiasm and hard work, and to the committee and the many willing volunteers for their valued contribution.

Our share of the overall income from the gate, catering commissions and stall rents amounted to £8,811. Our costs for tent hire, free plants and publicity amounted to £1,175, giving us an overall income of £7,636.

Anne Tweddle and the propagation team added a further £1,421 to our funds for plants sold (£1,285) and the plant creche (£136).

SUFFOLK GROUP EVENTS 2019/2020

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 28th 2019: Talk “Siberian Iris”
Speaker: Allun and Jill Whitehead
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Allun and Jill run a small nursery in Herefordshire. Their National Collection of Siberian Iris was part rescued in 2007 from an abandoned nursery field nearby.

OCTOBER

Saturday 26th 2019: *Talk “Growing hardy orchids in a garden or meadow”
Speaker: Jeff Hutchings
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Jeff is the owner of Laneside Hardy Orchids and will tell you all there is to know about conditions and cultivation for growing these native orchids.

DECEMBER

Saturday 7th: 2019 *AGM and Talk “Garden people, places, plants, poisons and pirates.”
Speaker: William Butcher
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Bill has a background in practical horticulture having been a head gardener as well as a background in broadcasting and will be giving us a light-hearted look at history, botany and literature.

JANUARY

Saturday 25th 2020: * Talk “Peonies wild and tame”
Speaker: Gail Harland
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Gail is involved with several horticultural societies and is also the newsletter editor for the Peony Society as well as the secretary for the Peony Group of the The Hardy Plant Society.

FEBRUARY

Saturday 22nd 2020: *Talk “In the land of the giants”
Speaker:Linda Heywood
Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Linda, of Echium World, a specialist nursery in Nottingham holds the National Collection of Echium species and cultivars from the Macaronesian Islands.

MARCH

Saturday 28th 2020: *Talk “Garden chasing in Japan”
Speaker: Barbara Segall
Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Barbara is an author and journalist, well known to our members. After an extensive tour of Japan, she will be giving us an insight into the extraordinary gardens which she visited.

APRIL

Saturday 25th 2020: *Talk “Shade and semi-shade”
Speaker: Colin Ward
Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Colin, of Swines Meadow Nursery, grows a range of plants and exotics on the edge of the fens where he has created a microclimate to accommodate his palms and other unusual plants.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 26th 2020: *Talk “The Late Show”
Speaker: Andrew Ward
Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Dr Andrew Ward comes to us from Norwell Nurseries which is based around a 1 acre plantsman’s garden which holds over 2,500 different species. He will be discussing plants for the end of the season.

OCTOBER

Saturday 31st 2020: *Talk “Garden bugs – cohabit, conserve or control?”

Speaker: Dr Ian Bedford

Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Ian is a senior member of the John Innes Centre where he manages the entomology team and all of the facility’s work activities. He will be taking a look at your ‘pest-control’ options.

NOVEMBER

Saturday 28th 2020: *AGM and talk “Growing a productive and healthy garden with nature and wildlife in mind.”

Speaker: Gabi Reid.

Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ

Situated in rural Gissing on the Waveney Valley, Gabriel’s garden, an organic cutting garden, was born of a lifelong passion for wildlife. Gabi has worked on creating the perfect soil.

** Talks free to members, £5 to non members.*

NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome 10 new members who have joined this year.

Virginia Taylor, Creting St Peter

Catherine Merceur Raoufi, Stratford St Mary

Lynne Knight, Lavenham

Jacqui Hurst, Beccles

William Purdom, Beccles

George Agnew, Bradfield St George

Adrian White, Bradfield St George

Deborah Vass, Diss

Steve Baker, Woodbridge

Anne Wessover, Woodbridge

The committee and members look forward to meeting you at the Stowupland talks and events. Please introduce yourselves when you sign in at the membership table. If you would like a list of events, contact our membership secretary, Isobel Ashton (01284 754993).

PROPAGATION REPORT

ANNE TWEDDLE

Here is a roundup of the different propagation activities undertaken by the group. The plants we have for sale at fairs and events are raised by our propagation group. The group meets each month and undertake different activities. Should you like to come and give us a try, just email me. The Suffolk group raises round £4,000 per annum from selling plants. It is an impressive amount of money, but maybe more importantly it's an impressive amount of plant conservation.

The Plant Guardian Scheme

An important part of the conservation process is in registering the plants you are conserving in your garden. This is done via the Plant Guardian Scheme. Are you growing a rare plant in your garden that could be registered in the scheme? If the plants not registered it's akin to smiling in the dark - no one knows! Your conservation work is going unnoticed and unmeasured. We need to know, we need you to register your conservation activity. Please register any plant you buy from us, that's eligible, in the Plant Guardian scheme. We will tell you or the label will tell you if your plant is eligible.

The Plant Guardian Scheme began in 2013, and in the first year 180 plants were registered. Today there are 1374 plants held by 129 Guardians. The top three groups for plants held in the scheme are Kent, Devon and Sussex. The groups with the most Plant Guardians are North East 17; Surrey 12; Kent 11; Hampshire 10; Suffolk 9

Let's see if we can get Suffolk moved up the League Table with more registered conservation taking place here.

Hydrangea project

The dozen or so cultivars we had from the National Collection in Derby continue to grow on. They were all successfully rooted by Maggie Thorpe, and we are in the 'waiting game' now.

In 2020 you should see some emerging onto our sales tables.

The cultivars were chosen for us by the Collection Holder, based on their garden worthiness and rarity. All will qualify for the Plant Guardian scheme.

Galanthus

This year we have been the recipient of some very generous gifts from two of our members. The propagation group was invited to look at a snowdrop collection in flower and then choose what we might like to have. The ones we chose were dug up and spirited away into our stores.

The second gift was from a retiring *galanthus* nursery. Quite a few of these cultivars will be twin-scaled in 2019 to provide bulbs for future years. Many will be for sale in 2020 too. There are 20+ cultivars new to Plant Heritage all for your winter enjoyment.

Historic Narcissus

Our interest in these plants continues. Many of these historic cultivars are rare and qualify for conservation in the Plant Guardian scheme.

Our propagation group twin-scales bulbs each July, and these tiny bulbils are grown on for 2-3 years before large enough for sale.

There are cultivars new to our group coming through every year, so if your interest is in these charming flowers keep a look out on our sales table.

Hesperantha

A genus whose name has changed more than most but probably known to us all as Kaffir lily. The National Collection holder has donated us 60+ plants of several cultivars. We will have these for sale at Helmingham in September.

Hesperantha is in the *Iridaceae* family and native to South Africa and Zimbabwe. It prefers a warm sunny spot. The cultivars we have are:

- * Cindy Towe ‘ - One of the deepest red of all cultivars.
- * ‘Jazz’ - Distinctive pink cultivar with tendency to produce large number of small flowers.
- * ‘Big Mama’ - Vigorous tall pink cultivar which stands exceptionally well.
- * ‘Good White’ - Large flowered white cultivar, palest pink in bud and sometimes slightly pink in flower

Plant in Focus

This is a new idea we expect to launch in the spring of 2020. Our plan is to choose a good herbaceous perennial that should be more widely grown. The plant must also be in need of conservation and eligible for the Plant Guardian scheme. We want to raise 30-40 pots of the chosen plant and make a feature of both conserving the plant and growing it.

Our first plant has a Suffolk connection too. It is *Geranium sanguineum* 'Rod Leeds'. Rod Leeds is a Suffolk plantsman, author and long-time friend and supporter of Plant Heritage. The cultivar was found in his garden and recognised as something special. It was Rod Leeds who introduced us to twin-scaling daffodils and snowdrops, for which we owe him a great debt.

Historic iris Project

This project has become one of our mainstream activities. We are working on locating, propagating and making available for sale many British bred historic iris. They broadly fit into the tall bearded group. The breeders are British and almost all we have for sale are in need of conservation, and meet the rarity required for the Plant Guardian scheme.

Sarah Cook (NCH - Iris bred by Cedric Morris) has been responsible for repatriating many of these cultivars from USA where there is a very active historic Iris preservation society. Many of the British cultivars were lost here as a result of the WWII Dig for Victory campaign.

If you are new to historic iris, be prepared to be charmed. The flowers maybe slightly smaller, but make up for size with a big heap of elegance, subtlety and grace. We always have them for sale at our Plant Fairs. Should you wish to know which cultivars are available at any one time, email me.

Hardy Chrysanthemums

Another of our projects that has become mainstream activity. Hardy chrysanthemums are a must have genus for good late summer and autumn colour. They are easy to grow, don't require staking and give the garden a truly joyful lift in the lower light days of autumn. Most start flowering in September and can go on as late as November making that welcome splash of colour. The flowers come in many shapes sizes and colours. For the remainder of the year I find the clumps sit neatly in the sidelines waiting for their turn in the spotlight. Propagation is very straight forward, and soon all your friends and family will be converts too.

Growing these chrysanthemums is an excellent conservation exercise too. They are almost all eligible for the Plant Guardian scheme. By growing them you are not only helping with hands-on conservation but bringing often much needed colour to the autumn garden. All the cultivars come to us through the excellent National Plant Exchange. Every year we get a few more so there are plenty of different styles to choose from.

We are always open to discussing new ideas and welcome your comments and feedback. If there's something you would like to see more of, get in touch either with me or Maggie Thorpe.

NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTIONS

DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT

All our National Collection Holders have had a busy time and two of our collection holders have made proposals for another collection.

Rupert Eley who has the *Euonymus* collection has had his proposal for a collection of *Rhus* and *Toxicodendron* accepted by head office.

Jan Michalak, who has the *Muehlenbeckia* collection, recently gave a talk about Lady Byng and the interesting plants she grew in her garden. He has now made a proposal for an historic collection of Lady Byng plants which has been accepted by head office.

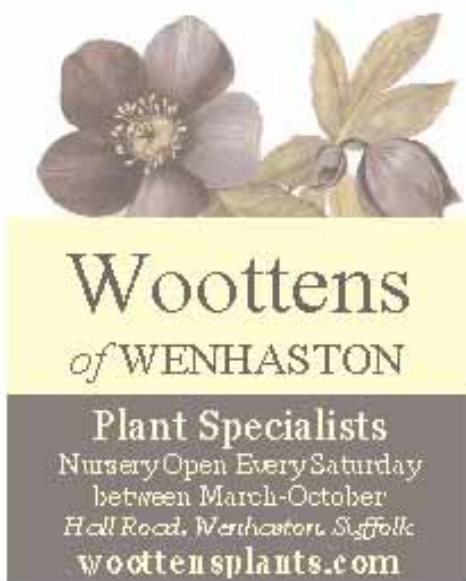
Helen Chen has also made a proposal for a collection of *Disporopsis*, *Disporum* and *Prosartes* plants which has been accepted. William Purdom has also made a proposal for a collection of *Impatiens*.

Collection holders have been very busy including being at the Helmingham Plant Fair in May. There were a good many people there and we were lucky with the weather for almost all the day.

Robert Grimsey, who has the *Aesculus* collection, has propagated *Aesculus turbinata* and he brought 18 seedlings to the Plant Fair for visitors to have for a donation to Plant Heritage. Although many visitors said their garden was too small for an *Aesculus*, all the plants were found new homes.

Melanie Collins, who has the *Hosta* collection, has been awarded the Royal Horticultural Society's Lindley Award for her exhibit at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in 2018.

Well done Melanie!



SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

AESCULUS Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203	Framlingham
DIANTHUS (Malmaison) Jim Marshall, 01473 822400	Ipswich
DIANTHUS (Perpetual Flowering Carnations registered in the UK before 1970) Jim Marshall, 01473 822400	Ipswich
EQUISETUM Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104	Stowmarket
ERYSIMUM (perennial) Dr Simon Weeks, 01986 784348	Walpole
EUONYMUS Rupert Eley, 01206 299224	East Bergholt
HOSTA Mickfield Hostas, 01449 711576	Stowmarket
IRIS (Sir Cedric Morris introductions) Sarah Cook, 01473 822400	Ipswich
MUEHLENBECKIA Jan Michalak, 01359 783452	Burgate
NARCISSUS (Rev.G.Englehart introductions)	Dispersed collection
SANTOLINA Jon Rose, Botanica, Chantry Farm, IP13 0PZ, 01728 747113	Campsea Ashe
SYRINGA Norman's Farm, lilacprez@hotmail.com	Stowmarket
SUFFOLK GARDEN PLANTS (C 20th Hardy) Margaret Wyllie, The Suffolk Punch Trust, 01394 411327	Hollesley,

NATIONAL COLLECTION OF NARCISSUS

BRED BY THE REVEREND GEORGE ENGLEHEART

ANNE TWEDDLE

This year saw the third year of flowering in our dispersed collection. We are starting to feel like old hands, with March and April taking on a slightly demented time, rushing about looking at flowers in our own gardens, but visiting others too.

This year we have the promise of two new cultivars. The bulbs are not yet in my hands, but I expect to have them here in a month or so. The first is a charming double daffodil ‘Plenipo’. The second is a poeticus ‘Dactyl’.

Another first for us this year is micropropagation. We put five cultivars into a microprop programme in Cornwall, and three are successfully growing. The other two bulbs aren’t quite large enough to begin the process. It will be at least another year for us to see any of the benefit of this, but we are very pleased that the process is working for these rare and beautiful cultivars.

Research is becoming a big part of our collection. We spent a lot of time at Warley Place in Essex where Ellen Willmott gardened. She was a close friend of Engleheart, and we know from letters than many of his introductions went to Warley. Finding these cultivars will be a long and interesting journey.

Our two open days at Columbine Hall went well. The first day was very early in the season, before there was much to see. We had 500 visitors, encouraged by good publicity and support from St Elizabeth Hospice who received the gate money and ran the teas. For 2020 we have chosen a more mid-season date for our open day at Columbine - Sunday 5 April, from 1- 4pm. Entry is by donation in aid of the hospice.

We aren’t the only group with a Dispersed Collection of Daffodils. The Sussex group have a collection of Noel Burr daffodils. He was a Sussex man and introduced 54 cultivars.

Should any members be interested in finding out more, there are details on the group’s website where all the contact details of collection holders can be found.

A NEW NATIONAL COLLECTION FOR SUFFOLK

HELEN CHEN

The three genera *Disporopsis*, *Disporum* and *Prosartes* are closely related to *Polygonatum*, Solomon's Seal. They contain some excellent perennials for shade and deserve to be more widely grown. *Disporum* and *Disporopsis* are native to temperate parts of Asia, especially China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. The genus *Prosartes* contains the North American species which were previously included in *Disporum*.

Disporopsis are quite tough little plants, resembling an evergreen Solomon's Seal, with small white or cream, sometimes purple spotted, bell shaped flowers in spring. The flowers are usually lemon scented, and followed by purple berries. They form clumps from slowly spreading rhizomes, and although they prefer moist woodland conditions, will tolerate dry shade. *Disporopsis pernyi*, from China, is the most widely available of the eleven or so species.

Disporum is a larger and more varied genus, with approximately 25 species, and includes some striking architectural plants. It is probably the most ornamental of the three genera, but unfortunately also the most fussy as to cultivation. *Disporum longistylum* 'Green Giant' is a Dan Hinkley



From left: *Disporum uniflorum* (syn *D. flavens*), *Disporum longistylum* 'Green Giant'.



From left: *Disporopsis aspersa*, *Disporum bodinieri*.

introduction from Sichuan, China, with bamboo like stems up to 8 feet tall, and delicate greenish white flowers. *Disporum longistylum* 'Night Heron' is a slightly shorter plant with amazing dark, chocolatey new foliage in spring. One of my personal favourites, *Disporum bodinieri*, is a more delicate plant at 2-3 feet tall, with pretty cream bell shaped flowers in May.

Some forms of *Disporum cantoniense* have attractive purple flowers, whilst *Disporum uniflorum* has comparatively large yellow flowers. *Disporum sessile* is a shorter Japanese species, one foot to eighteen inches tall, of which there are many different variegated forms, showing the Japanese horticultural love of both variegation and finding infinite varieties of their native species. *Disporum smilacinum* is another species with many variegated forms cultivated in Japan, and also a pink flowered form. They all require at least partial shade, humus rich soil, and adequate moisture, being less tolerant of dry conditions than *Disporopsis*. Some species are evergreen or semi-evergreen, and most have black berries.

Finally, *Prosartes*, the North American genus, shares its common name of Fairy Bells with *Disporum*. There are currently six species. Most are shorter, to about 2 feet tall. The most commonly encountered are *Prosartes hookeri*, known as 'Drops of Gold' because of its protruding yellow anthers, and *Prosartes smithii*, also known as 'Fairy Lanterns'. The flowers are generally followed by red berries, which are edible though not especially flavoursome. Unlike *Disporum* and *Disporopsis*, which are clearly quite tasty, the leaves of *Prosartes* species contain a compound which deters slugs and snails.

THE SUFFOLK HERITAGE GARDEN

A COUNTY COLLECTION

MARGARET WYLLIE

The Suffolk Heritage Garden was the brainchild of Philip Ryder-Davies who created The Suffolk Punch Trust in order to breed and save the endangered Suffolk Punch horse.

As far as I know this is the only county collection, so we were tasked with defining a 'Suffolk' plant and the committee came up with: A plant bred in Suffolk by a Suffolk person, named after a Suffolk person or with a strong connection with Suffolk.

After this, research began. I am an amateur gardener and a complete novice in this field so most of the work was done by Sarah Cook and Jim Marshall with their considerable knowledge and connections. Our first plantings were Cedric Morris irises from Sarah.

Suffolk probably like most counties has a wide variation of soil types and even climate. We are in an area of Coralline crag called the Sandlings which suits tough, drought tolerant plants and irises. Other plants from the



clay of mid Suffolk struggle during our long, dry summers.

Our plant list is impressive. We have 43 species and over 170 cultivars. This makes for challenging record keeping.

The plants are displayed in a garden setting with winding grass paths and curving beds.

To fill the space and provide a mosaic of colour, each plant is displayed in more than one position. To keep track of them each bed has its own plan which is updated whenever plants are moved or, heaven forbid, they die.

The income needed to support the upkeep of the garden comes mostly from propagating and selling plants from the collection. This ensures that many of our plants go out into the world, thus helping to secure their survival.

As what I had light heartedly agreed to take on began to unfold, I lost many hours of sleep trying to memorise names of plants and their needs.

I work with a small, loyal band of volunteers who make it all possible.

With Sarah and Jim's guidance and support I've grown to love it and the comments and obvious enjoyment of the visitors makes it a thoroughly rewarding project.

I do hope other counties follow our lead.



ALLWOODS NURSERY AND PERPETUAL FLOWERING CARNATIONS

JIM MARSHALL

A good number of the cultivars in my National Collection of ‘Perpetual Carnations pre 1970 were bred by Allwoods Nursery

The nursery was set up in 1910 by three brothers: Montague, Edward and George. They started with only four acres of land in Sussex; on this they built a greenhouse. Using the knowledge and experience George had picked up whilst working on carnation nurseries in America, they developed their business.

In 1912 they had a stand at the International Exhibition in London, this was held in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. They won a Gold Medal for their exhibit of carnations, the following year the event was organised by the Royal Horticultural Society and became famously known as the ‘Chelsea Flower Show’. The nursery progressed throughout the 1920’s to 1950’s with nurseries on three sites growing carnation plants for the retail trade a postal cut flowers business and wholesale cut flowers. All their plants make excellent cut flower and have the advantage over modern cultivars of being scented. Sadly the carnation industry has changed enormously, most flowers are now grown abroad with very little commercial growing in the UK.

Montague died in 1958 and his two brothers retired. The business was sold and is no longer in the Allwood family. It now specialises in pinks, many, such as ‘Doris’ were bred by the Allwoods in the past.

My National Collection was awarded Plant Collection Status in September 2014. Cut flowers from the collection have since formed part of my exhibits from 2014-2017 in the Plant Heritage section of the Floral Marquee at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show.

All the following cultivars had nearly become extinct due to virus, they have now been micro-propagated to render them virus free and vigorous, all fulfil Plant Heritage’s criteria for a Threatened Plant:

‘Allwoods Crimson’ (1946) Large flowered and tall, unfortunately the calyxes tend to split in hot weather.

‘Doris Allwood’ (1930) Salmon Pink, shaded French grey, tall, a few



'Monty's Pink' Carnation.



'Helena Allwood'.



'Old Rose Pelargonium'.



'Royal Salmon'.

flowers revert to Salmon Pink.

'Helena Allwood' (pre 1950) White, striped scarlet, a shorter cultivar, good for button-holes.

'Marion Allwood' (1939) Cardinal pink, tall, smaller neat flowers.

'Monty's Pink' (1953) Medium pink, highly scented, tall, good.

'Old Rose Pelargonium' (1950) Unique and striking flower old rose and 'brown', fading at the edges to a pale rose.

'Robert Allwood' (1931) Vivid scarlet, large flowers.

'Royal Crimson' (1944) Excellent cultivar.

'Royal Salmon' (1935) Large flowers, tall.

'Shot Silk' (1925) Chestnut ground, flaked red, unusual and lovely.

'Velvet Pelargonium' (1945) An interesting combination of maroon ground, shaded purple with a pale edge.

Perpetual carnations are best grown in pots in a cold greenhouse. During the summer months can be stood outside, although when in flower they may need sheltering from rain.





Photos courtesy Peter Kendall.



Suffolk Group
Spring Plant Fair
Helmington Hall May 2019



PLANTS WITH A PURPOSE

DARREN ANDREWS

Aesthetics trump function in the modern garden. In the past the reverse would have been true. The cottage garden which has of recent years been rapidly in and out of favour, and so inspired luminaries such as Gertrude Jekyll, was once a working space. Vegetables and plants which were needed for food and medicine vied for space in the small plots attached to the homes of the ordinary villagers.

It is interesting to see that the usefulness of plants in the past will often mirror their relative abundance in the countryside. This is especially true of trees and shrubs. Small Leaved Lime is rare in open countryside but is often found growing in numbers in long-coppiced small woodlands. It is considered an indicator of very ancient woodland as it has been used since Neolithic times as both a source of food (the young leaves can be eaten in salads) and rope: the bark when stripped can be plaited and makes excellent bindings.

Alder Buckthorn (formerly *Rhamnus frangula*, now *Frangula alnus*) and Purging Buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica* have a distribution based on use and circumstance. Most of us will be familiar with it because of it being the larval food plant of the Brimstone Butterfly, *Gonepteryx rhamni*, that harbinger of spring, in which the male exhibits the most beautiful butterfly yellow wings, and is therefore thought of as the reason for the very term 'Butterfly'. The plant has been used since the 15th century as a source of the best charcoal for gunpowder production. Areas in Kent and Sussex have large numbers of this shrubby tree since many of the gunpowder factories were situated in the south east. Indeed, during the Napoleonic wars, Sir Joseph Banks was consulted about how best to propagate these plants.

As gunpowder production is dependent upon war, the plants fortunes fluctuated. Under these circumstances commercial production never truly caught on. During both world wars we could no longer import charcoal and sources of buckthorn were sought, 400 tons were required in 1941. In 1915, the War Office requested, via The Gardeners Chronicle, that landowners should assess their land for buckthorn. The Cambridge School of Botany surveyed the whole country again in 1941. The reason for buckthorn's absence in the wider countryside had been the discovery in the Victorian period that certain species of rust fungus used the plants as hosts, and farmers steadily grubbed them out as the fungi attacked wheat and oats.

Interestingly, buckthorn was once known as Black Dogwood. In old arsenal ledgers about the purchase of charcoal this was usually the name used. Modern researchers have had historic gunpowder samples analysed so as to obtain a true identity. Buckthorn was found to be the 'Dogwood' which was bought. Dogwood itself is a corruption of Dag-wood, where dags are skewers.

The burning properties of different woods would have been useful in pre-coal days. It has been long known that ash can be burnt wet and if offered alder, our ancestors would have known that it burns quickly and with little heat. Elm produces more smoke than heat and beech, although a rival to ash, will spit embers a long way and will need a fire guard. Most interestingly is poplar. It burns very poorly and is the reason that matchsticks are made from it: a slow burn. In Constable's painting the Haywain (wain is the Suffolk pronunciation of wagon) the wagon would most definitely have been made from the now rare Black Poplars seen in the painting, as hayricks, hay barns and hay wagons would have all been at risk from fire.

In our current political and ecological climate, where consumables are required for multiple uses and alternatives are required to the ubiquitous plastic, I wonder if the properties of plants will once again become of singular importance?



Plant Centre and Cafe

Annual Open/Tree Weekend
Sat 5 & Sun 6 October 10am-5pm

First class container grown, English trees and shrubs available. Garden tour,
demonstrations and exhibits all weekend.

See website for more information and times.

Open Daily 10am – 5pm (dusk if earlier)

The Place for Plants, East Bergholt Place, Suffolk CO7 6UP

Tel: 01206 299224 E-mail: sales@placeforplants.co.uk www.placeforplants.co.uk

HEBE OR NOT HEBE?

LIZ WELLS

Changes in taxonomy are always confusing to gardeners. The lovely genus of *Veronica* changed to *Hebe* in 1929 so we have had plenty of time to get used to the name. I rather like it. Hebe was the goddess of youth and cupbearer to the gods. She was said to be rather clumsy. She is generally depicted clasping a cup and in rather dishevelled dress. I like the idea of a tipsy goddess staggering around the garden and I always think of her when I look at my hebes.

But then I read that *Hebe* has now been reclassified as *Veronica*, I don't know what the Hebe society are doing about that, it must have messed up their stationary.

Hebe/Veronica is the largest plant genus in New Zealand with more than 90 species. I used to associate it with seaside gardens and rather boring evergreen foliage. But I have come across some new hybrids with gorgeous leaf colours which are much tougher than some of the old variegated leaf ones which for me always seemed to succumb to disease. I have one called 'Marilyn Monroe', she is part of a new Hollywood series, and the leaves are silver, grey and pink.

For summer, I love the small-flowered ones such as 'Pink Pixie' which is a new cultivar with pretty rose-pink flowers. I'm not sure how hardy it is.

My two favourites are ones which are difficult to source. First and best in my eyes is the gorgeous *Hebe hulkeana*, sometimes known as New Zealand Lilac. I

read that it has now been segregated as a new genus, *Heliohebe*. It is a good name for it because it needs to bask in the sun and live in a very sheltered spot. It is a stunning plant with a profusion of long sprays of lilac flowers in May and



June. The leaves are glossy, serrated and edged with red. It forms its buds early in the year so I give it a fleece hairnet until the risk of frost has passed.

I believe *Hebe* 'Hagley Park' is even rarer. It is thought to be a cross between *Hebe raoulii* and *Hebe hulkeana*, and it has the same red-edged leaves as *hulkeana*. The flowers are pinkish-lilac and pretty, but it is not as striking as *Hebe hulkeana*.

Nobody seems to be taking any notice of the name change; the plants are still listed as *Hebe*, have they changed back yet again? Or is it just that everybody is ignoring it? I have dutifully learnt to say *Symphyotrichum* and *Lamprocapnos* for asters and dicentras, I have even got my head round *Hylotelephium* instead of sedums so I am quite happy to call them *Veronica* if that is what indeed they are. I just need to know.



Right: *Hebe* 'Marilyn Monroe';
Below: *Hebe* 'Pink Pixie';
Facing page: *Hebe hulkeana*.



PEONIES – WILD AND TAME

GAIL HARLAND

Peonies are easily recognised and widely grown plants, both as cut flowers and in the garden setting. The genus contains shrubby as well as herbaceous plants with 36 species recognised on the Kew plant list and a distribution that encompasses Europe, Asia, and North America. There is a long history of cultivation from ancient China, the monastery herb gardens of Europe and the more recent development of the lactiflora hybrids in France and England. The Itoh hybrids first raised in Japan have been greatly developed in the United States and these hardy and vigorous plants are becoming much more widely available.

Peonies are known for their silken petals in a range of colours and often sumptuous scents but some people are reluctant to grow them as they imagine big blowsy flowers that demand staking, something like the widely grown pink *Paeonia* ‘Sarah Bernhardt’.

However there is a group of plants that is perhaps the antithesis of those flamboyant French peony cultivars. Plants in the tenuifolia complex have a very refined appearance. As the common name fern-leaf peony suggests, the foliage is delicate and much divided. The flowers are usually single



and vivid scarlet with a central mass of bright yellow anthers. They are chiefly plants of the open steppes or grow among shrubs on dry grassy slopes or in open woodland. They are perfectly hardy but in northern gardens are probably best grown in full sun. They make excellent plants for the front of an herbaceous border, contrasting effectively with the shorter varieties of bearded irises. They are also ideal for rock gardens or raised



beds where the free draining conditions and a sunny aspect will suit them to perfection. The soft pink form *P. tenuifolia* 'Rosea' is easily distinguishable even as the leaves first emerge, as it seems to be totally deficient in the pigment that gives most young peony foliage its characteristic bronzed appearance.

Plants in the *P. tenuifolia* complex can be slow to bulk up vegetatively and so divisions can be expensive to buy. However they are very easy from seed which look like fairly chunky mouse droppings rather than the rounder seeds of other species. Do not be put off by people telling you that peony seed must be sown fresh. I have sown two-year-old seed



which came up early the next spring like mustard and cress. Incidentally do not believe the people who tell you that viable seed sinks and dead seed floats; with peonies this is not a reliable guide and I have sown 'sinker' and 'floaters' in separate pots and got a similar germination rate in each.

One of the most beautiful of the wild species peonies is *P. parnassica* with cup-shaped flowers and silken petals of a particularly intense wine-red. It is endemic to Greece, being found in *Abies cephalonica* forest on Mount Parnassos and Mount Elikon. In June 2018 I went on a trip to the Delphi area in Greece and was lucky enough to see *P. parnassica* in flower. Seeing such beautiful plants in their mountain homeland really is a very pure delight. Hopefully I will be able to share a little of that pleasure with those of you attending the talk in January.

See page 5 for details of Gail's talk.

Photos: Facing page: *P. tenuifolia* at Wisley, top *P. tenuifolia* 'Rosia'; above: *P. Inspecteur Lavergne*

THE WORLD OF TERRESTRIAL HARDY ORCHIDS

JEFF HUTCHINGS

I became involved in the growing and selling of terrestrial hardy orchids in 2002 when I was sent *Dactylorhiza foliorella* from a Scottish alpine nursery. At that time there was little written about how to grow them and a very limited supply of different legally raised species and hybrids.

Over the years the number of producers has increased but there are still only a handful of commercial nurseries in Europe with the laboratory facilities necessary and the greenhouses to raise the plant during the three to five years necessary to raise the plants to flowering size.

The biggest problem I have had as a retail nursery is listening to the comments “I did not know you could grow them outside” or “You must have to take them in during the winter”. People do not realise that there are in excess of fifty native orchids growing in the UK.

My response is to try and get people to think ‘perennial garden plant which happens to be an orchid’ and remember that indoor orchids are being grown in an alien environment.

I usually have in excess of 150 plus different orchids available divided into three groups: orchids for the garden, native orchids for lawns and meadow and enthusiasts’ orchids.

The group of orchids I classify as “garden worthy” are those that produce good flowers, clump up and are capable of withstanding our winters. There are four primary genera *Cypripediums* (slipper orchids), *Bletillas*, *calanthe* and *Dactylorhiza*. Each has its own habitat requirements regarding soil type, moisture, sun or shade.



Gymnadenia conopsea.

Cypripedium are rhizomatous perennials that flower in the spring and early summer. The majority available are hybrids as they grow much better than most of the species. They need cold semi-shade and will only grow successfully in a non-soil mix.



Cup Emil.

Readers may have bought slipper orchids from garden centres and followed the instructions simply to plant out and then found they did not regrow in the spring.

Calanthe have pseudo-bulbs, need a damp organic soil and grow well with hostas and ferns in semi-shade. They flower in the spring and are semi-evergreen.

Bletillas are pseudo-bulbs just under the soil and flower on long stems in the summer. They have grass like leaves and prefer sunny warm soils but are not as winter hardy as some. All three genera can be grown in pots.

Dactylorhiza are clump forming finger tuber plants that grow in many different conditions. A number of gardeners are lucky enough to have this genera self-seeding all around their garden. There are a number of species and hybrids that do well; in particular the large flowered purple forms.

There are a number of other genera including *Epipactis* and *Spiranthes* that do well in a damp or wet garden situation.

The other expanding area of my business is the development of orchid-rich wild flower meadows and lawns. There are a number of native species that can be introduced to a grass area provided the appropriate conditions are met. Often this is as simple as ph which can easily be modified. I am currently developing a very small lawn area in my own garden and have been involved in a number of big projects which I will be illustrating during my talk for Suffolk Plant Heritage on 26th October (see page 5).

For more information about Jeff's specialist orchid nursery contact lanesidehardyorchids.co.uk

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME: IRIS G P BAKER AND AMOS PERRY

SARAH COOK

Nearly every garden plant has two or more interesting stories attached to it. For any of the plant species, forms or subspecies we grow in our gardens this is likely to be the country/ies where the plant is found growing naturally and who introduced it to cultivation – maybe someone will write about the origins and associations of their favourite garden worthy species in another journal?

For me, it is the stories associated with cultivars which I find really fascinating. I am (of course) going to illustrate this with a tall bearded iris which the Suffolk group iris project has obtained from the USA – *Iris* ‘G. P. Baker’. This Iris was bred by Amos Perry registered in 1930, winning the ‘Dykes Medal’ (the iris equivalent of an Oscar) in the same year.



G P Baker and Amos Perry were both iris breeders in the early C20th, they were founder members of the British Iris Society, and attended the inaugural meeting in 1922 (this was followed by a seven course dinner - things were done in style at that time)

G P Baker was a businessman, specialising in the printing of oriental style textiles. Born in Turkey in 1856 his father had been a gardener, designing the British Embassy gardens near Istanbul, who also exported Turkish goods to England, He sent two of his sons, George Percival and James, to set up a London base. Shortly after they bought out a print firm and began producing their own fabrics.
(see www.gpjbaker.com)

G P Baker was a keen gardener, spent much time travelling and mountaineering, and developed an interest in alpine plants. By chance he met iris breeder George Yeld who was a schoolteacher and volcanologist on the slopes of Snowden. It was through him that Baker developed an interest in irises and breeding. He was breeding irises in the 1920s and 30s, although I don't think any of them have survived.

The textile company G P and J Baker is still a leading textile design company, and by chance I was visited earlier this year by the widow of an employee of the company. I was pleased to supply the family with two or three rhizomes of the iris.

Amos Perry (1871-1956) was a leading Nurseryman in the early C19th, awarded the RHS Victoria Medal of Honour. At his nursery in Enfield he focussed on herbaceous plants many of which he collected on numerous trips in Europe, or bred at his nursery. His father and grandfather were also nurserymen (partners in R S Ware in Tottenham). Perry raised and introduced a wide range of irises from different groups, e.g *sibiricas* and interspecific hybrids, for example *Iris* 'Margot Holmes' a hybrid between *I. chrysographes* and *I. douglasiana*. The Suffolk iris project is growing seven of his tall bearded irises. Perry was also well known for day lilies and oriental poppies, such as 'Perry's White' (still fairly widely available). His daughter-in law Frances Perry carried on his nursery.

So the story of *Iris* 'G.P.Baker' could be widened into the story of the company of fabric company GP and J Baker; there is a National Collection of Yeld *Hemerocallis* in Leeds (and the Suffolk iris project has supplied them with some Yeld irises!); we could write a book about Amos Perry, his plants and nursery, not to mention Francis Perry. A single plant can lead you in so many different directions.

The Iris G. P. Baker is a lovely old fashioned pale creamy yellow cultivar, with very attractive red/maroon buds.

PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

For an update on what's happening at National office visit the current issue of News lines on the website
www.plantheritage.com

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HERTFORDSHIRE AND BEDFORDSHIRE PLANT HERITAGE PLANT FAIR

JAN MICHALAK

Moggerhanger Park is a surprising discovery tucked as it is behind the Bedford village of Moggerhanger. The imposing house, built by John Soane for the director of the Bank of England at the end of the 18th century, stands in 33 acres of Repton-designed grounds, still boasting some very fine old trees.

Last year we were invited to bring our plants to the first Plant Heritage plant fair to be held at the park by the Herts. and Beds group. It was a modest, but enjoyable weekend, and when the invitation was repeated this year, for June, we decided to attend again – not least because we can make a weekend of it and visit other attractions in the area. It was good to see the familiar stalls of Mickfield Hostas and Swines Meadow Farm, alongside more local sellers.



The day was never over-busy, but there was a good flow of visitors with a great interest in the unusual and sometimes rare plants on show. The huge old walled garden, borders rapidly maturing, and increasingly decorative, is a perfect enclosed site for the event, if something of a suntrap.



The Head Gardener, Tim Kirk, and his staff and volunteers could not be friendlier – important for us with our limited capacity for loading plants, which we are allowed to

drop off the day before. A near neighbour is the Shuttleworth Collection of vintage aeroplanes at Old Warden, and in the afternoon we were treated to a D-day flypast, bringing back memories for visitors even older than me!

The park is well worth a visit, free all year, and with guided tours of the house during the season; there is a very good café. I have no doubt that the fair will continue to grow, and while we can, we will be pleased to attend.

JAN ALSO VISITED THE DORSET PLANT HERITAGE SPRING PLANT FAIR

We had already visited a number of Dorset and Devon gardens, collecting, naturally, a good selection of interesting plants for the garden. We almost got away from our holiday flat in some comfort. Unfortunately, we heard that the splendid gardens of Athelhampton, near Tolpuddle were going to be the venue for the Spring Plant Fair of Dorset Plant Heritage, and could not resist dropping in on our way home.

The group has nine National Collections. The combination of quite hardy and rather tender plants shows how the county is a sort of transition area between those of us who need more rugged plants, and those who grow bananas and South African bulbs without protection; the sale reflects this, with a selection of genera that would sail through an eastern winter, and those that will keel over when told they're coming to Suffolk. Not that I'm



not up for a challenge. I have always felt that it was right to risk at least one plant a season, and this has often paid off in our rather sandy soil.

We arrived in time to be the first customers, largely, I think because the blue sky belied a very cold day. We met with a number of PH members, who were welcoming and interested in our group, and collections. The PH table, with contributions from members, as is often the case was very interesting, and showed the variety of species available in this mild area.

A similar picture emerged from a trip around the stalls, commercial and amateur, and we soon had enough specimens to make us anxious about packing the car.

As we left, an hour later, the site was heaving and the car park full, good news for the group, and surely a successful event. The first stall we passed on entry was a tombola, with a prize guaranteed for every ticket. I bought mine with the injunction that I shouldn't win one of the batch of sunflower seedlings. Oh, well, the grandchildren will love it...

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We have 13 National
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two more on their way.

Most can be
visited by appointment
and the collection
holders will be
delighted to show you
round.

Contact details on
page 12.

THE BENTON END HOUSE AND GARDEN TRUST – AN UPDATE

SARAH COOK

Benton End, near Hadleigh was for many years the home of the artist and plantsman Cedric Morris and his partner Arthur Lett-Haines, where they ran the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing. Recently it has been purchased by two Cedric Morris enthusiasts to set up a charitable trust with the aim, inspired from the original art school, 'to encourage freedom of invention, enthusiasm and enjoyment.'

Since I wrote about the purchase of Benton End at the end of my article in the Spring Journal, the project is progressing well. The Trust is applying for charitable status which should be obtained by October this year. At the moment we are working on ensuring that the project has clear vision, aims and fundraising strategy.

An open evening to discuss the project with the residents of Hadleigh was held in St Mary's Church, Hadleigh in mid-March, attended by around 350 people. In short, solid foundations for the charity are being worked on.

To encourage us all and giving validity to the efforts to ensure Benton End remains a property of historical significance, the garden has revealed hidden treasures. Many floral survivors from Morris' garden flowered throughout the spring, including *Anemone pavonina* (which Morris always called *A. stellata*!), many different narcissus, for example *N. Queen Anne's Double*, *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* and a wide range of fritillaries. Rupert Eley and Jim Buttress generously visited to help us identify some of the rare trees and shrubs. The original plant of *Rosa* 'Cedric Morris' put on a wonderful display for the RHS Herbaceous Committee's tour in June. I am pleased and amazed that so many plants have survived the 35 years since Morris died.

A website is being worked on www.bentonend.co.uk, where there is currently a temporary Welcome Page. If you want to receive updates keep an eye on this site as you will be able to register here to record your interest and receive newsletters.

EAST ANGLIAN GARDEN GROUP

Presents

A Talk by Professor Nigel Dunnett
Chamberlin Hall, Bildeston IP7 7EZ
Saturday March 7th 2020
at 2pm for 2.30pm



His latest book is 'Pictorial Meadows'. He was co-designer of the acclaimed Olympic Park meadows. He is a plantsman, designer and a pioneer of the new ecological approach to planting gardens and public spaces. Trentham Park, the John Lewis garden and a mini-garden outside the Queen's Gallery are among his recent projects.

TICKETS ON SALE FROM OCTOBER 3rd 2019
Enquiries please contact the Secretary, Liz Law
01449 740085 or lizz.a.law@gmail.com
Or visit EAGG website:
eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net

BOOK REVIEW

BETH CHATTO -- A LIFE WITH PLANTS

BY CATHERINE HORWOOD

WIDGET FINN

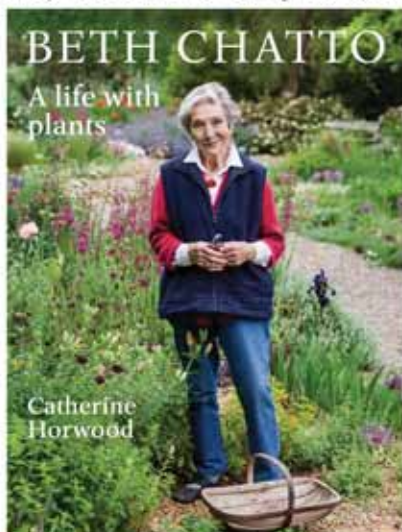
This newly-published biography tells the story of the most influential British plantswoman of the past hundred years. Beth Chatto was the inspiration behind the 'right plant, right place' ethos that lies at the heart of modern gardening. She also wrote some of the best-loved gardening books of the twentieth century, among them *The Dry Garden*, *The Damp Garden* and *Beth Chatto's Gravel Garden*.

Some years before her death in May 2018 aged 94, Beth Chatto authorised her dear friend and author Catherine Horwood to write her biography with exclusive access to her archive. Beth had always been an avid diary writer and author herself so the content of this biography is full of details and events in Beth's life that few knew about, and were certainly never published.

Catherine spent more than 500 hours talking to Beth and her friends and family, and many more hours exploring Beth's extensive collection of personal diaries, letters, photographs and hand-written notes. Thanks to so much personal material Beth's own distinctive and much-loved voice comes across strongly. Most of the photographs from her own archives have never been seen in print before.

James Hitchmough, co-designer with James Dunnett of London's Olympic Park, pays tribute to Beth. "Her garden was perhaps the most original British horticultural creation of the twentieth century. It will continue to have a profound effect on designers across the world in the twenty-first century."

Beth Chatto – A Life with Plants by Catherine Horwood. pub. Pimpernel Press price £30.



SUPPORT IT OR LOSE IT!

We are looking for an editor and layout person for the Plant Heritage Journal (it could be one or two people) to take over from Widget Finn and Nicola Hobbs who are retiring at the AGM. They are both happy to give support and advice to help the new incumbent(s) get started.

Would you like to step in, or do you know someone who might? There is no need to continue in the same format, so lots of opportunity for creativity.

If you love plants, are enthusiastic about the work of Plant Heritage and would like to ensure that our group remains informed and in touch, contact Maggie Thorpe, Widget Finn or Nicola Hobbs to have a chat about what is involved. The only essential qualification needed is basic word-processing skills.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY ELIZABETH COVENTRY

We are very grateful to Plant Heritage member Polly Taylor (known professionally as Elizabeth Coventry) for allowing us to reproduce her stunning coloured pencil picture 'Late autumn grapevine' on the cover of this edition of the Journal.

The picture was awarded the Derwent Prize at this year's exhibition at the Society of Botanical Artists in Pall Mall, London, the second time she has won the award. Greetings card reproductions of this picture and others from Polly's portfolio are available from www.elizabethmhcoventry.com; you can also find them on Instagram at [elizabethcoventryart](https://www.instagram.com/elizabethcoventryart).

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