

SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2020



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*Cover Illustration is *Acer palmatum dissectum atropurpureum* in the Editor's garden, 23 Bristol Road, Bury St Edmunds.*

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

MAGGIE THORPE

I hope you are all well and that you have found ways to keep happy during this horrible Covid-19 pandemic. Gardens have been so important in providing solace, inspiration and exercise and our Central Office has been so helpful by giving assistance in putting on some very interesting webinars, particularly the amusing and very informative one by Dr. Ian Bedford on 'Garden Bugs'. Ian would have been our speaker at Stowupland in October and then we had the talk by Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries on 'The Late Show' a week later.

I want to say a big welcome to our new members who I regret we have been unable to meet. We will keep in touch with news of how soon we will be able to get back to Stowupland for the talks Darren Andrews has lined up for 2021.

Our Plant Fair at Helmingham was welcome relief for those who were able to attend. The day was an undoubted success although numbers had to be restricted and stands had to be spread out. The weather was very kind and a happy day resulted in our being able to help Central Office with a donation of £5,000. Part of this money came from the sale of plants raised by our excellent team of propagators.

These days we are forced into using more and more technology and would like anyone with these skills to come forward and help us, particularly with putting on webinars for our speakers in 2021.

We will endeavour to keep in touch and please do feel free to contact me if you have any questions or think you can help in any way. As we cannot meet, it is nice to talk in any case.

TREASURER'S REPORT

In this strange and very difficult year the Suffolk Group has worked hard to raise funds for Plant Heritage. The Spring Fair at Helmingham was cancelled but the Autumn Fair went ahead on a booked ticket basis with limited admissions and timed entries. Funds raised for this event after costs amounted to £3895. Thanks are due to the Committee and all the volunteers who gave their time, knowledge and enthusiasm to this event.

Plants generated by Ann Tweddle and the members of the propagation group were sold at the Autumn Fair and at the garden gates of Maggie Thorpe, Ann Tweddle and Sarah Cook throughout the year. Funds from plant sales amounted £2516 after costs.

We have therefore this year been able to send a donation of £5000 to Central Office to support the work they carry out.

MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

To ensure that you have access to all national and local Plant Heritage news, events and webinars, please make sure that you have provided an e-mail address to Central Office or to Suffolk Plant Heritage Group secretary: secretary@suffolkplants.org.uk. A number of events arranged by other Plant Heritage groups are made available free to all members.

SUFFOLK NATIONAL COLLECTIONS REPORT

DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT

Good News – we have a new National Collection in Suffolk – Plants named after Miss Ellen Willmott held by Nick Stanley. Helen Chen has made an application for her Disporopsis collection and we are waiting to hear from Head Office.



Sea Holly 'Miss Willmott's Ghost'

Unfortunately, Jan Michalak has withdrawn his collection of *Muehlenbeckia*.

Suffolk National Collection Holders have been working hard during this difficult time with the Coronavirus. They have managed to sell plants online and arranged delivery or for plants to be collected by the gate to their garden. Also several were at the Helmingham Plant Fair and were able to sell plants there.

Sarah Cook, Jim Marshall and Melanie Collins have all given talks on Zoom for Plant Heritage. I hope you have seen them they are very interesting.

I have really missed visiting Suffolk National Collections this year as I am sure you have too. Let's hope things go back to normal soon.

SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS 2020

Aesculus Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203	Framlingham
Dianthus (Malmaison) Dianthus (Perpetual) Jim Marshall, 01473 822400	Shelley
Dryopteris Equisetum Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104	Stowmarket
Erysimum (Perennial) Simon Weeks, 01986 784348	Walpole
Euonymus Rhus Toxicodendron Rupert Eley, Place for Plants, 01206 299224	East Bergholt
Hosta Melanie Collins, Mickfield Hostas, 01449 711576	Stowmarket
Impatiens Will Purdom, team.botanico@gmail.com	Beccles
Iris (Sir Cedric Morris) Sarah Cook, 01473 822400	Shelley
Iris (Sir Michael Foster) Lucy Skellorn, 07730 507900	Stowmarket
Narcissus (Rev. G. Engleheart) Darren Andrews, 01473 822987	Dispersed
Plants named for Ellen Willmott Nick Stanley, 01473 757585	Witnesham
Santolina Jon Rose, Botanica, 01728 747113	Campsea Ashe
Suffolk Garden Plants Hayley Churchyard, Suffolk Punch Trust, 01394 411327	Hollesley

THE SUFFOLK HERITAGE GARDEN - A County Collection

HAYLEY CHURCHYARD

In November 2019 I was interviewed for the post of Head Gardener at the Suffolk Heritage Garden by Sarah Cook and Jim Marshall and appointed by the Suffolk Punch Trust. I was delighted to take up the position and threw myself into learning all about the history of the garden and its horticulture.



Cedric Morris agapanthus

Until I was appointed the garden was managed and run purely by volunteers, headed up by Miggie Wyllie, who has done a splendid job at building up the material in the garden and sourcing plants related to Suffolk. We are the only National County Collection of 20th Century Hardy plants.

Our definition of a 'Suffolk' plant is:

- 1) A plant bred in Suffolk by a Suffolk company or person living in Suffolk.
- 2) A plant named for a Suffolk person.
- 3) A plant named for a Suffolk place or object.
- 4) A plant with a close connection to Suffolk.

Based at The Suffolk Punch Trust, Hollesley, it was the brainchild of Philip Ryder-Davis, the then chairman, who felt that a garden based on the county's heritage, complemented the Trust's commitment to conservation, especially the native breed of the Suffolk Punch horse.

The first planting of the Sir Cedric Morris irises was in 2013, and planting has continued, over the years since. Plants, some of them very rare, are now safely in the garden from many growers in Suffolk. Notcutts bred and introduced a wealth of cultivars over the



Syringa Maude Notcutt

years, including the lilac Syringa 'Maude Notcutt', a beautiful double white flower, named after the late Charles Notcutt's grandmother.

As well as the irises donated by Sarah Cook we have a number of other Sir Cedric Morris plants - galanthus, agapanthus, a beautiful pink geranium, and a very vigorous single white climbing rose of his growing up the pergola on the entrance to the garden. The pergola was built from oak timber from Ickworth Park, so even that has Suffolk heritage!

Due to the pandemic we have only been open to the public for 6 weeks of this year. I have had to sell the propagated plants through social media to produce much needed funds as donations have been very sparse.

It is imperative for our County that the collection survives and the garden will reopen at Easter 2021. My project for the winter months is to write a sort of "guide book" for visitors to purchase which will give a history of every plant and its Suffolk connection.



Pergola made from oak timber from Ickworth Park

Please note entrance to the garden is free.

<https://www.thesuffolkpunchtrust.co.uk/heritage-gardens>

PROPAGATION REPORT

ANNE TWEDDLE

Lockdown resulted in a major rethink about producing and selling plants this year. There was a meeting of the propagating group in January, but after that everything changed. I was able to sell plants at my gate, which worked very well especially while the nurseries and garden centres were closed. Once things started to reopen my sales dropped and it was back to the drawing board.

The spring sale at Helmingham was cancelled. Maggie Thorpe came to the rescue though by opening her little stall outside her house in Boxford - our plants were being bought once again. This has continued through the year with Maggie raising as much money for Plant Heritage as she does in a more 'normal' year. I have been doing some propagating from material in my own garden. We also had an intimate twin-scaling session of daffodils and snowdrops.

When the group of six began, we were able to meet in my newly covered poly tunnel potting on. It was certainly fun to be together again, doing what everyone in the group seems to love, messing about with plants.

The autumn plant fair at Helmingham went ahead after much wondering and a degree of nail biting. The day worked very well, and we sold a good lot of plants.

We had planned a hardwood cutting session in November for six members of the propagation group, but this has been moved to December in the hope we will be able to meet then.

So, like all our lives this year, topsy-turvy has been the order of the day. Although not quite what we normally achieve, we have made a worthwhile contribution to the coffers by raising money from our sales.

In the future, given that we will be able to meet, we may plan more dates for meetings of smaller groups of people. We need to work on improving the quality of the plants we grow, which is something for us all to look forward to.

DAFFODIL COLLECTION REPORT

ANNE TWEDDLE

Covid has had its effect on our daffodil project, in both positive and negative ways. The daffodils at Columbine Hall continue to be added to, and 2020 gave a good showing with more flowers and even some drifts to see, although our planned Open Day was cancelled.



We continue to search for Engleheart cultivars, as well as propagating the cultivars we already have in the collection. One cultivar has been removed, and a second is in doubt, as not being correct. Both these instances were backed by Lindley library research and historic paintings. So even losing things from the collection brings interest.

The very big research project we have at Warley, is a positive Covid benefit, it brought TIME, something which we have had on our hands rather.

The Ellen Willmott notebooks which we have been slowly working on for a couple of years have now been totally transcribed and all the data entered into spreadsheets and the Plant Heritage Persephone database. This work has been done by the members of the dispersed collection, but primarily the work of putting the information into spreadsheets has been done by Nick Stanley. What he has achieved is nothing short of remarkable. A huge amount of material, much of which is extremely difficult to interpret has been patiently and steadily added. 10,000 lines of data later, Nick emerged from his computer.

From here we go forward with details of what daffodils Ellen Willmott was growing at Warley. This makes our needles in the haystack much easier to identify.

Darren has christened our searching for Engleheart daffodils at Warley as something akin to playing snap. We now know what was grown, and how much of it. We have on the other hand photographed and described what we have found growing at Warley. Let's hope there will be a lot of noisy SNAP noises drifting round the ether as we make possible matches.

This is very exciting for us as Ellen Willmott grew more of Engleheart's daffodils than anyone else. She was a substantial supporter of his early cultivars, and there is great hope we could find cultivars thought lost. If we can make a SNAP it will see the start of another journey to have confirmed by others that we have found something thought lost.

Our 2021 Open Day is at Columbine Hall on Sunday 11th April 2021
1pm - 4pm

PLANTS NAMED FOR MISS WILLMOTT OF WARLEY PLACE

NICK STANLEY

It was in early June of this year that I heard my collection of plants named for Miss Willmott had been granted National Plant Collection status.

For a number of years we had had in our garden some of the more common plants with the Willmott name – *Ceratostigma Willmottianum*, *Scabious caucasia* 'Miss Willmott' and *Eryngium giganteum* 'Miss Willmott's Ghost'. But it wasn't until I had visited Warley Place with the Engleheart Daffodil group that I realised Warleyensis was the basis of a real place and Miss Ellen Willmott was an important figure in the history of the British garden.



Rosa 'Ellen Willmott'

Using the RHS Plantfinder I began to research the number of plants with the 'Willmott' suffix and how many were still available in nurseries. The answer was very few. However further research led me to believe there were or had been about 40 plants which had had the name Willmott in some form such as Willmottianum, Willmottiae or Willmottiana and an even greater number were called 'Miss Willmott' or 'Ellen Willmott'. After much more research I thought I could realistically gather together 24 of the 40, the rest perhaps may have been lost to cultivation.

I began to add the easy to source plants to my collection but as the collection grew, I was surprised at how many of the 'lost to cultivation' plants came to me. I was offered 15 bulbs of Tulipa 'Ellen Willmott'. When I had researched this tulip the RHS Lindley Library could only find black and white photographs and in correspondence from Vicki Cooke, PH's Plant Conservation Manager, it seems I have the only known cultivars in the UK.

Following a publicity shot by Plant Heritage Central Office a nursery in Gloucestershire emailed me to say they had Liliium x marhan 'Ellen Willmott' and on further enquiry they also had Nerine sarniensis 'Miss Willmott', another plant 'threatened in cultivation'. The same nursery put me in touch with another Gloucestershire nursery who were able to supply Corylopsis Willmottiae, the winter flowering hazel. And so my small collection of 'Willmott's' now totals 18.

For 2021 I have decided to limit my search to four more plants (at least that is my aim). The challenge with this collection is that all the plants have different needs. Some are maintained in open ground in sun or semi-shade, some are kept in pots; they flower in different seasons and are propagated in a variety of ways and are, therefore, a year-round labour of love.

I am would like to thank Anne Tweedle, Darren Andrews and Matthew Long for their encouragement and support throughout the year.

HELMINGHAM 2020

Having had to cancel our Spring Plant Fair, it came as a great relief when we realised that it was going to be both legal and possible to go ahead with the autumn one; a frenzy of activity ensued.

We liaised with Helmingham to plan to expand the site, put the trade stands further apart, limit the number of visitors and introduce a ticketing system, with staggered entrance times to enable proper social distancing.

In addition to these general considerations, we decided not to have a Plant Heritage Marquee, but to have a completely 'outdoor' presence, and designed ourselves a large area, surrounded by our tables and some fencing to accommodate all the usual Plant Heritage Features.

Most of the Plant Heritage committee and a small number of other volunteers came to help us 'man' our area and also keep an eye on the whole sales area, to help ensure everything went smoothly.

We were able to do most of our usual activities, albeit in a slightly different way. Anne and her helpers were selling a wide range of unusual plants; Matthew Tanton-Brown joined us as our Plant Doctor; there was a display of Suffolk National Collections and one of 'Plants of Interest' from the Nurseries organised by Dorothy and Isobel.

Rosie and Kevin ran the Plant Crèche, as usual (as I helped there during their lunch break, I realised how much work this is) - lining up numbered bags of plants in order and then seamlessly finding them again when the visitors came back to reclaim them. Last but not least thanks to Brian and Ann who handed out the free bulb –





SUFFOLK GROUP AT SEPTEMBER 2020 H





AUTUMN PLANT FAIR ELMINGHAM HALL



Tulipa clusiana 'Cynthia' and simultaneously gave out the 'Children's Trail', which encouraged young visitors to take a closer look at the plants and draw ones with different coloured flowers or variously shaped leaves etc. An activity designed to keep a child standing still long enough for their parents to be able look at the plants.

The nurseries were selling everything from cacti to climbers and standard trees and from bulbs to grasses. They all seemed very happy to be out talking to customers and selling plants and gave us very positive feedback.

The whole day went very well, the sun shone on us, the band played on the Moat Bridge, there was dancing, plenty to eat and drink and, of course, the artisan market as well. Helmingham Hall with its beautiful gardens is a perfect location – we all hope that the Plant Sale and Artisan Market can go ahead as usual next year. Our ambition is to trial a two day spring sale on Sunday May 30 and Monday May 31. The Autumn Plant Fair will be a one day event as usual on Sunday 19 September.



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www.placeforplants.co.uk**

PROGRAMME

As we are unable to meet face to face for the foreseeable future, our programme of speakers for Spring 2021 will all be made available to our members as webinars. An invitation will be sent to you as an email. Accepting the invitation will enable you to see the speaker as a live event, or for a period of up to seven days afterwards.

21st January 2021 4.30 pm **Helen Chen with: "Bamboos"**

Helen is in the process of becoming a National Collection holder and has a small nursery: Japonica Plants. She is hoping to be able to sell some of her Bamboos at the next Helmingham plant sale. Helen has been on the committee of Suffolk Plant Heritage and has been interested in Japanese plants and Gardens for some time.

18th Feb 2021 4.30 pm **Peter Eeles - "The life cycle of British and Irish Butterflies"**

Peter is the author of possibly the most comprehensive book on the subject of butterflies, also of the same title. Peter will talk to us about the nectar sources and larval food plants of these beautiful insects, with a view to educating those of us who would like to encourage them to our gardens.

Saturday March 27th 2021 2.30pm **Alan Gray "Plant Combinations"**

This is an exciting opportunity to see one of the most interesting plantsmen from over the border in Norfolk. Those of you who have visited his wonderful gardens at East Ruston, will know what a treat is in store.

Also we are hoping to persuade Dr Peter Boyd to speak to us about "Scots Roses".

Dr Boyd is the National Collection Holder of *Rosa spinosissima* (syn. *Rosa pimpinellifolia*) in Shropshire, with an impressive collection comprising over 300 taxa (the largest in the world). He has written extensively on the subject of Scots Roses (cultivars and hybrids of *R. spinosissima*), so called because the first cultivars were developed in Scotland in the 18th Century.

A ROCKERY WITH A DIFFERENCE

As with any nursery accumulations of 'stuff which may someday prove useful' occur and build over time to become an eyesore. This was the case with all the old tyres we had in stacks dotted around Mickfield Hostas. A little lateral thinking and they have formed a planting installation they have nick-named our 'Rubber Rockery'.

Not everyone would consider a stack of old tyres interesting but Mel rather liked the range of sizes and treads, indeed she thinks they are perhaps more interesting than the vehicles they once belonged to, but that's another story.

"It's like a history of the nursery in tyre form"

Initially, back in the autumn of 2018, the tyres were placed in a wavy formation disappearing into the south field but they had to be moved when a neighbour twisted our arms to buy a strip of land that ran through the installation. The tyres



were moved into position, filled with topsoil and planted before the decision was made to sell the strip. Two thirds of the installation had to then be moved over winter, when they were nicely wet and cold. The plants were dormant, which isn't a great time to move them, and part way through we lost track of what went where. However, the arrival of spring 2019 saw all of the plants emerge - we hadn't lost any of them.

2019 was the busiest year we had had at Mickfield Hostas, and Mel only spent one day in the garden during the whole season.

Consequently, due to the lack of rain and attention, everything looked a little sad by autumn and then the rain started. Undaunted Mel decided to plant some shrubs and transfer some plants from her own



garden to help soften the starkness of the tyres. She also took advantage of the offer to supply labels to collection holders and was delighted when she was able to have 50.

By January 2020 the weather had improved and she was finally able to get outside and begin work on the Rubber Rockery. The plants had all survived the winter and all but one of the shrubs. Mel has installed leaky pipe along the rear of the tyres to supply the shrubs and the tyres are watered periodically by hand. Aside from the odd rearrangement by the chickens, the installation is now looking rather lovely and the tyres are less conspicuous as the plants are taking centre stage. The labels look very stylish dotted through the planting and Mel is delighted with how clear and strong they are, so she would like to thank Plant Heritage for this and the Suffolk Group for their support.



Over time Mel hopes that the Rubber Rockery will look more natural and that she may extend it a little, she already has a few more tyres at the ready.

Checkout the website

<https://btsecureession.com/mickfieldhostas.co.uk/>, and the availability list (mail order available), and sign up to the free newsletter.

DIETES BICOLOR

DARREN ANDREWS

At Hampton Court in July 2018 I was lucky enough to attend a ceremony where Sarah Cook received the Brickell award. Whilst there I looked around the Marquee and made a few purchases for the garden. I don't often buy plants about which I know absolutely nothing, but on this happy day I made an exception. It was a lovely day, and as with so many plants I own, I associate them with an event or person. The fact that this one belongs to the Iris family is especially relevant to Sarah and her extraordinary achievement that day.

A stall holder with an eclectic array of plants was keen to talk about her (exceptional quality) stock and I was looking for plants for a dry gravel garden. I asked if anything was available and she produced a plant which looked like a grass. “I grow this on the top of a dry stone wall” she explained, “the flowers are quite charming”.

Indeed the label showed a small orchid-like flower which was pale butter-yellow, on to which were perfect finger prints of maroon on three of the six petals. A neat, rounded flower was shown on a candelabra stem which hovered butterfly-like above the thin grassy foliage.



I planted it in a very dry place indeed, in the lee of a south-east facing wall. The ground was a part of reclaimed driveway, where a gravel layer sat on top of a compacted sand and ballast foundation. A small amount of compost was mixed in with the sand and the plant was settled in.

Move forward to August 2020. Amongst the thin upright leaves, a

fleshy stem not dissimilar to those on *Hemerocallis* appeared and atop was seen a perfect flat disc with its characteristic spots. The flower lasted only a day but a second one appeared and so the pattern repeated for weeks. The flower stem becoming more and more branched with time. At East Ruston in September I found a specimen of *Dietes grandiflora* growing near the café. I sought it out in the garden centre and found a label which stated that a moist site was necessary; it was covered in flower and set me wondering more about my *Dietes bicolor*.

A native of South Africa, it apparently prefers to grow along riversides where the damp promotes flowering. These waterside refuges are fickle in the southern sun and will dry up for years at a time, hence the extraordinary tolerance to drought. I found online pictures of it growing in planted drifts on roundabouts in Johannesburg where its evergreen sward and (presumably in S. Africa) fast growing tendencies makes it a good choice to preserve the integrity of poor soils.

I found one reference only to trimming the flower spike, which was described as unwise since it “will flower from the same stalk in subsequent years”. This is something which I will have to wait for to test the reality. Although, after seeing pictures of it mown like a rough lawn, I wonder if this too is true.

I will leave the current plant in situ and treat it with a little more care, but I now want to try and grow it in an herbaceous border with a deep rich soil to see if I can witness the “continuous summer flowering”. My only concern would be the varied reports on frost-hardiness. So far my own specimen avoided the beast from the east and has only really seen a few very cold days. The free draining nature of its current spot has almost certainly saved it from any harm; a more prolonged period of cold in a moisture-retentive soil may be more difficult.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Helen Picton from Old Court Nurseries in Malvern, the Collection Holder of Asters/Symphotrichum gave a wonderful webinar talk in September listing all the best garden varieties and, during question time when Maggie asked about a cordifolius type called 'Ideal', she confessed that, sadly, they no longer had it on their nursery. So, a promise was made to send her one.

Our propagation team have been raising this beautiful plant and have it for sale. You will see from the picture, it grows 3 to 4ft and flowers all September with abundant tiny lilac daisy flowers beloved by bees.



**Contact Anne
Tweddle if you would
like one: anne@tweddle1.co.uk**

A GOOD MOVE



When Kevin and I moved to Suffolk from Hertfordshire in the summer of 2009 we brought rather a lot of plants with us. This was partly because I had had allotments for many years and so brought plenty of fruit bushes etc, and also because we had a number of things in our old garden that we thought the new owners would not miss.

The decision to bring with us our acer palmatum dissectum atropurpureum was rather last minute – it was very overshadowed in our old garden and was not a particularly good shape. However we knew that our buyers were not planning to move in immediately, and were also planning on doing a lot of building work so it had a better chance if it moved with us. Also our new garden was a relatively blank canvas and would need plenty to fill it.

A year or so after we moved in the acer was planted at the apex of a new bed projecting into the lawn; its size can be seen in the photo.

As you can see by the cover photo on this Journal it is now over four foot high and has done rather well since it was planted; it is probably quite pleased that it moved to Suffolk with us.



PLANTS OF DISTINCTION

Plants of Distinction is a local family run seed company based at Framsdon near Stowmarket. Members of Suffolk Plant Heritage can order seeds from them at a 50% discount on the catalogue price. Catalogues can be obtained by calling the Order Hotline and Customer Service No. 01449 721720. Seed orders can be posted using the order form in the catalogue and applying a 50% discount to the seed price, but the postage and packing cost is **not** discounted. The website has a greater selection of seeds than can be found in the catalogue together with a selection of bulbs and plants.

The discount code shown below must be written on the order. Orders may be placed on the hotline number shown above and again the discount code must be quoted when placing the order. If you place your order via their website www.plantsofdistinction.co.uk and enter the discount code the discount will be applied automatically.

The discount code, **for seeds only**, is SPH50 and can be used until 31/7/2021.

PS. Due to a change in regulations many of the heirloom tomato seeds will no longer be for sale after the end of the year. There are limited stocks available at present, but they are selling out fast.

**Contributions for the Spring
Suffolk Group Journal wanted by
1st March 2021. Please send to
rosieansell@aol.com**

RICHARD'S GARDEN SUPPLIES

RICHARD MOUNTSTEPHEN

I have been asked by several members if I can supply them with various items by post or by collection from my home in Sudbury. I am happy to supply small and fairly light items by post, with postage being the only additional cost. Large or heavy items would have to be collected from Sudbury. Any enquiries about your requirements, i.e. price or availability and payment should be made to me on 01787 372603 any evening between 6pm and 9pm.



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PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

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

To find out more about Suffolk Group activities - including details of garden events and openings visit <https://suffolkplants.org.uk/>

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www.suffolkplantheritage.com

