

SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Spring 2022



CONTENTS

Chairman's Letter	3
Treasurer's Report	4
Secretary's Report	4
National Events	5
Programme of Forthcoming Events	5-7
So what did Linnaeus do for us?	8-9
Suffolk National Collections Report	10
Suffolk National Collections 2021	10-11
"Designing with Plants" talk by Fergus Garrett	11
Helmingham Autumn Plant Fair	12-13
Plants of Distinction	14
The search for more plants named for Miss Willmott of Warley Place - Uncovering Forgotten Orchids	15-17
Florists' Flowers	18-20
A Date for Your Diary	20
A day in the life of a plant Crèche Volunteer	21-22
Suffolk Group Committee Members	23

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Layout: Tuddenham Press

Cover design: Sally Geeve. www.sallygeeve.com

*The cover photo is of *Pusatilla vulgaris* at RHS Wisley
taken by Amanda Clowe of Wildcarrot Photography.*

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

MAGGIE THORPE

I am really hoping that 2022 will be a better year for all of us and that we will be able to meet more freely by the summer. We will take all necessary precautions to keep you all safe at our meetings in Stowupland Village Hall and at our Plant Fairs at Helmingham on the 29th May and 18th September.

I do hope you will all take advantage of the exciting talk by Fergus Garrett on the 26th March when he takes us through the art of designing with exciting plant combinations. Please do wear masks and come wearing warm clothes as there will be plenty of ventilation! Riverside Bulbs will be selling spring bulbs, Richard Mountstephen selling his garden paraphernalia and Anne Tweddle will have our own propagated and rare plants for sale. Don't forget you can order from each and collect on the day.

Then, at the end of April, Alastair Harris, a member of our Committee, has invited you for tea in his summer house after viewing his wonderful magnolias and camellias.

We want to have a membership drive this year and are making a special offer to members to enrol a friend and in return you will be given a voucher for £15 to spend on our Plant Heritage plants for sale at Stowupland and Helmingham.

Just ask your friend to join online at www.plantheritage.org.uk, or ask Isobel, our Secretary, for a membership form, and then tell either Isobel or me and a voucher will come to you.

Darren Andrews has been booking speakers for our talks for a while (a task made much more difficult by the pandemic and restrictions) but has now stepped down. I want to thank him for all his hard work and the excellent programme for 2022.

We are looking for a volunteer to take on the job of enlisting speakers for our Talks Programme in 2023. This is urgent now as speakers get booked well in advance. Help will be given with suggested speakers. Please let me know if you can help.

TREASURER'S REPORT

PAT STANLEY

2021 was a difficult year for us all but despite the obstacles Plant Heritage Suffolk Group encountered, we raised sufficient funds to be in a position to send Plant Heritage Central Office a donation of £8000 at the end of our financial year. We were able to do this from monies raised by our involvement with the two Helmingham Hall Plant Fairs and plant sales achieved by our members.

We have a healthy bank balance to begin the new year and look forward to running a full programme of activities to enjoy and enable our fund raising efforts.

Once again thanks are due to the Committee and all volunteers who gave their time and enthusiasm at our events.

**Contributions for the Autumn Suffolk Group
Journal wanted by 22nd August 2022.
Please send to rosieansell@aol.com**

SECRETARY'S REPORT

ISOBEL ASHTON

We welcome new members - Mrs Nancy Gardiner, Sproughton, and Dr Marie and Mr David Ellerton, Rushall.

We look forward to meeting members and friends for our talks at Stowupland Village Hall where there are plants to buy and time to talk with other members over refreshments.

Don't forget that you get free entry to Helmingham and the Plant Fair if you volunteer an hour of your time on Sunday 29th May.

Congratulations to our member Professor Lorna Wood for her award of an OBE for services to Internet Safety Policy.

There continues to be an interesting selection of forthcoming webinars available through the Plant Heritage website - Plantheritage.org.uk/events

NATIONAL EVENTS

Colourful Climbers

A Zoom talk by Jane Lindsay of Tynings Plants (familiar visitors to Helmingham Plant Fairs). February 3rd at 8pm, cost £4.

Gardens of a golden afternoon: Arts & Crafts Gardens

A Zoom talk by Simon Gulliver, National Trust Gardens Advisor. February 15th at 6.30pm, free to members.

Growing on the edge

A Zoom talk by Richard Baines, Curator of Logan Botanic Garden in Scotland. February 24th at 6.30pm; cost £4.

Gardens open

January 23rd Green Island Gardens CO7 7SP open for NGS and Plant Heritage, National Collection of Hamamelis. 10am – 4pm, £9.

February 13th Gable House Redisham NR34 8NE open for NGS 11am – 4pm, £4.50. Refreshments.

February 20th The Manor House, Middleton, Saxmundham, IP17 3NS open for NGS, 10am – 3pm, £4.50.

February 20th The Laburnums, St James South Elmham, IP19 0HN open for NGS, 11am – 4pm, £4.50.

March 20th Columbine Hall, Stowupland, IP14 4AT open to see the National Collection of Engleheart daffodil cultivars 1pm – 4pm, £5.

PROGRAMME OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All talks will be held at Stowupland Village Hall. The programme of events may be subject to change. Please check the Suffolk Plant Heritage website if regulations about gatherings change.

January 29th 2022: “The Ghost of Cedric Morris” by Sarah Cook and Lucy Skellorn

Cedric Morris was an artistic and gardening giant who lived in Hadleigh. His former home and studio (formerly the East Anglian School Of Painting and Drawing) has come under the care of The Benton End House & Garden Trust. Sarah and Lucy will be talking about the man, the garden and what is happening at the house now.

**February 26th 2022: “Garden Chasing in Japan”
by Barbara Segall.**

Many of you will be familiar with Barbara's book 'Secret Gardens of East Anglia' and will know what a treat visually and intellectually will be in store when she talks about her visit to Japan. Barbara is a writer for a number of journals, a blogger and the 2020 holder of The Chartered Institute of Horticulture's President's Award.

March 26th 2022: “Designing With Plants (Plant Combinations)” by Fergus Garrett

This is a ticket only event. £7 members £12 guests

Fergus Garret has taken on the mantle of his former mentor, Christopher Lloyd, and has continued to make Great Dixter a place of pilgrimage for anyone with the slightest interest in plants and garden design. Fergus is an excellent speaker who will bring his vast knowledge and expertise to Suffolk to help us improve our own gardens.

April 23rd 2022: “Little Blue Bulbs” by Richard Hobbs

This will be a very special look at all things Muscari. Richard is a botanist and keen gardener, he has worked extensively in nature conservation and has travelled widely to show people wildflowers. He has held the National Collection of Muscari for nearly 30 years which was inherited from the great Suffolk gardener, Jenny Robinson. The collection started with 30 plants and is now pushing 200.

September 24th 2022: Companion Planting for a Balanced Garden by Dr Ian Bedford

From studying butterflies on the South Downs as a youngster, Dr Bedford went on to pursue a career in Research Entomology and ran the Entomology Dept at the John Innes Centre in Norwich up to his recent retirement after 42 yrs.

Many plants have properties that can either attract or repel bugs. This talk explains some of them and how they can be used in our gardens to create a natural balance system for attracting nature and keeping the pests under control.

**October 29th 2022: “Shade and Semi-shade” by Colin Ward.
(Re-booked from a 2021 cancellation)**

Colin Ward of Swines Meadow Farm Nursery is well known among those who are interested in the rarest and most interesting plants available. The nursery sits on the edge of the fens and has a wide range of plants from all habitats but the woodland plants are some of the most interesting and will certainly feature in a talk on shade and semi-shade.

November 26th 2022: AGM and 'Conifers' by Fay Jones

The AGM will cover a short part of the beginning of the meeting and will be followed by a talk on conifers by Fay Jones. Learning all about the fascinating world of conifers. Get your pines sorted from your spruces and your cedars from your firs. Helping you work through a basic taxonomy of conifers and their key identifying features and notable species. A relaxed talk, ideal for beginners, taking a fun look at this wonderful group of plants.



Plant Centre , Garden & Café

Specialist Plant Centre stocked with an extensive range of plants for all gardens from trees and shrubs, including fruit to climbers, roses, herbaceous, ferns, grasses, alpine and herbs. Garden sundries, pots, compost and gifts.

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www.placeforplants.co.uk**

SO WHAT DID LINNAEUS DO FOR US?

JAN MICHALAK

That's the title of one of the talks I offer, based on Monty Python of course. But only partly. On the celebration in 2007 of the 300th anniversary of Linnaeus at the university in Uppsala a member of the BBC's *Gardener's Question Time* team was sent to Sweden. After a fascinating and comprehensive guided tour of the exhibition he asked the very knowledgeable curator, 'So what did Linnaeus do for gardeners?' She, clearly puzzled, repeated what she had been saying for the hour of the programme – that he had invented a whole new system of classifying animals and plants; designed a way of labelling plants using a two-word (binomial) vocabulary; encouraged the study of plants in the field; named over 12,000 species of plants and animals (including fossils) in his lifetime; that he made the language of plant naming accessible to anyone interested in gardening by using a simplified form of Latin. 'Yes,' said our representative, 'but what did he do for gardeners?' Baffled, the curator began to recap, but I'd had enough, and turned it off.

I'm very serious about plant taxonomy, and its designer, Carl Linnaeus – it's a serious subject. Which I suppose is why gardeners pretend it's not really there, or at least nothing to do with growing flowers and veg. Botanical Latin is an added difficulty especially for many people who avoided Latin and Greek at school, and prefer to see plant names as a series of labels, rather than elements of a language.

For years I've been including the story of Linnaeus and his disciples in the history of gardening, because it belongs there as much as in the science of botany. My efforts gained me a Fellowship of the Linnean Society in 2012. I've also wrestled, with rather less success, with teaching a pronunciation that can truly be understood by a range of gardeners whatever their native tongue; a true *lingua franca*.

From my earliest days in horticulture I've heard the old saw that it's wonderful the way gardeners can still communicate even if they don't speak the same language. Well, I told the story at the AGM of a visit

I made with Polish friends to the botanic gardens in Prague, where I was introduced as being English in spite of my Polish name. The cheery welcome we had been enjoying suddenly became muted, with a lot of studying of toecaps. What was the problem? My friends didn't know, but a short distance into the gardens the director suddenly pointed to a shrub and asked if I knew it. Yes, it's *Viburnum tinus*, I said, and the atmosphere immediately became light-hearted again. I didn't say Vye-ber-nem tye-ners, but Vee-boor-noom tin-oos, which is exactly the way everyone in Europe would say it, except the English speakers. It emerged that the gardens had regular visits from often very eminent English botanists, whose papers and books were well-known but whose spoken plant names were incomprehensible.

Around 20 years ago I produced a pack with a booklet and a cassette tape (remember those?) that would help students to speak basic botanical Latin. Friends and colleagues were very interested and complimentary. A typical response went something like:

'I say it my way, and if they don't understand me, that's their problem!'

Or the slightly more positive:

'Did you enjoy the course?'

'Oh, yes. It was really interesting'

'So you've changed the way you pronounce plant names?'

'No, not really'

Oh well, not much encouragement to update the material. Still, I'm a pragmatist, and will continue my lonely crusade in spite of problems like friends not wanting to talk to me about plants or show me around their gardens because they're frightened I'll correct them with a lecture. So, late in my career I've set myself a new challenge, by going on the route of '*Binomial Taxonomy can be Fun*'. All I have to do is sell the suggestion to sceptical club and society organisers, and then hope the audience won't be too frightened to turn up.

Wish me luck!

SUFFOLK NATIONAL COLLECTIONS REPORT

DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT

We have three new National Collections in Suffolk.

Bellevalia held by Debbie Amor in Lowestoft, Disporopsis, Disporum and Prosartes held by Helen Chen in Bures and Suffolk Irises pre 1985 held by Steve Baker near Woodbridge.

Unfortunately, Simon Weeks has had to give up his Erysimum collection as it has been affected by a virus.

I have been able to visit Collection Holders this year despite the Coronavirus as we could be outside and keep well apart.

SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS 2022

Aesculus Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203	Framlingham
Bellevalia Debbie Amor 07565 966682	Lowestoft
Dianthus (Malmaison) Dianthus (Perpetual) Jim Marshall, 01473 822400	Shelley
Disporopsis, Disporum & Prosartes Helen Chen, 07805 238680	Bures
Dryopteris Equisetum Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104	Stowmarket
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
Iris (Suffolk pre 1985) Steve Baker 07764 500104	nr Woodbridge
Narcissus (Rev. G. Engleheart) Darren Andrews, 01473 822987	Dispersed
Plants named for Ellen Willmott Nick Stanley, 07710 656757	Witnesham
Santolina Jon Rose, Botanica, 01728 747113	Campsea Ashe
Suffolk Garden Plants Suffolk Punch Trust, 01394 411327	Hollesley

“DESIGNING WITH PLANTS”

TALK BY FERGUS GARRETT

Stowupland Village Hall, IP14 4BQ - 26 MARCH 2022 - 2.30pm

TICKETS: Members £7 Guests £12

Book Tickets from: Jo Mitson email: elmfarmedbreakfast@gmail.com

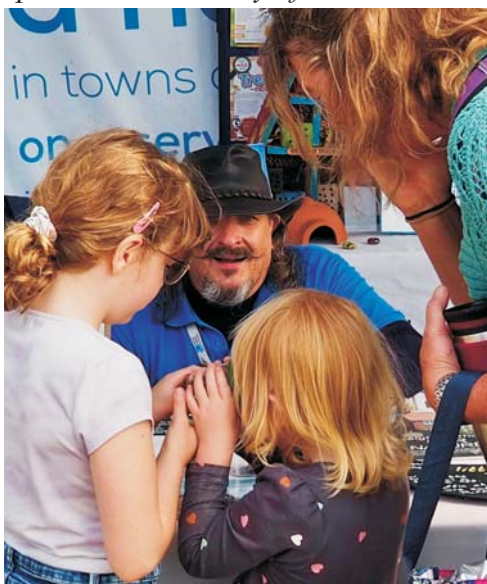
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Suffolk Group

Reference: Fergus talk

You will be emailed with a ticket number to be presented at the door on the day. If you prefer to send a cheque, please POST to Jo Mitson, The Old Rectory, Stonham Aspal IP14 6AE and ensure you give your email address for confirmation and ticket number details.



Helmingham photos are courtesy of Peter Kendall



HELMINGHAM AUTUMN PLANT FAIR

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 31/7/2022.

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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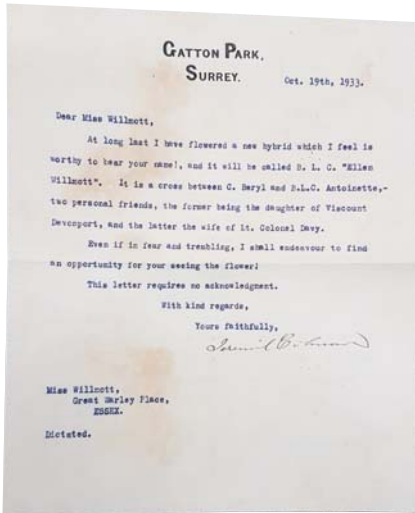
THE SEARCH FOR MORE PLANTS NAMED FOR MISS WILLMOTT OF WARLEY PLACE

UNCOVERING FORGOTTEN ORCHIDS

NICK STANLEY

In February of this year, I received an email from John Cannell, one of the people who give their time freely at Warley Place, asking if I knew about this orchid. Sadly, I got very excited. I knew that Miss Willmott grew orchids. Audrey Le Lievre, 'Miss Willmott of Warley Place', 1980, had written that *'there was always a magnificent silver bowl of spray orchids on the table, which sparkled and gleamed with its silver and glass'*. I also knew that she maintained greenhouses for the cultivation of exotic plants. But any more than that was a mystery.

I started to look at the letter more closely.



The letter head says 'Gatton Park, Surrey'. Using Wikipedia I discovered that in 1933 Gatton Park would have been the home of Sir Jeremiah Colman – this was confirmed by the signature at the bottom of the letter.

Sir Jeremiah was Chairman of the Colman's Mustard empire, President of Surrey County Cricket Club and he lived in a very large house with 300 acres.

Interestingly there was no mention of orchids.

On the right is the date the letter was written: October 19th 1933, just 11 months before Miss Willmott died. Although Miss Willmott maintained her interest in RHS Committees her garden was beginning to lack the care and attention that had always been

lavished upon it. At its height she employed 104 gardeners but by the 1930s there were only 1 or 2 of them left. So, she must have been pleased to receive this letter to remind her of her past successes.

Now we come to the main body of the letter and you can read the deference and veneration. *'At long last I have flowered a new hybrid which is worthy to bear your name!'*

Below this Sir Jeremiah writes *'Even in fear and trembling, I shall endeavour to find an opportunity for your seeing the flower!'*

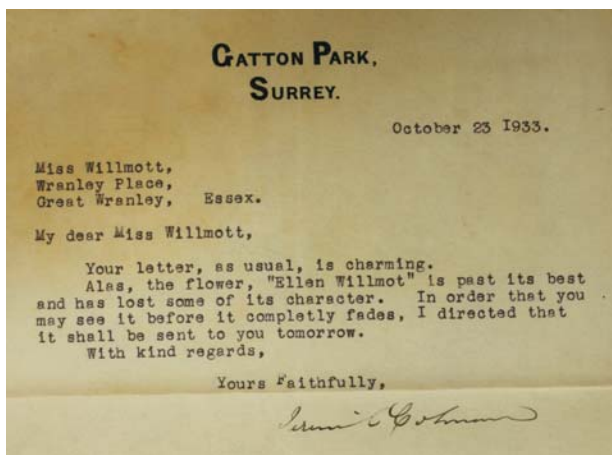
So here we have a Knight of the realm, a 1st Baronet who is in fear and trembling. But we must remember Miss Willmott's reputation. In 1900 her garden contained over 100,000 species and varieties of trees, plants and shrubs. Gertrude Jekyll had called her *'The greatest of women-gardeners.'* And she was said to be *'unrivalled as a cultivator of difficult subjects.'* She also had friends in very high places. When she was accused of shop-lifting by the manager of Galleries Lafayette in Regent Street she didn't say *'It's a fair cop Guv!'* she asked to use the telephone and phoned the Queen who immediately sent the King's Private Secretary, Lord Stamfordham, to try to sort out the problem. Imagine the Manager's face. Perhaps he too was in fear and trembling!

The following sentence had me completely stumped *'and it will be called B. L. C. 'Ellen Willmott'.* I know very little about orchids and had no idea what was meant by B L C so I sent the letter to Sarah Cook. Now Sarah is very knowledgeable and very generous with her time. In reply Sarah said she didn't know either but had sent the letter to a lady she sometimes meets on the London train. This lady turned out to be Clare Hermans, Chair of the RHS Orchid Committee.

A little later I received an email from Clare who was even more excited than me. She had done some work on Sir Jeremiah Colman in the past. Sir Jeremiah, she said, had been the RHS Orchid Committee chairman from 1917 to 1941 and was a prolific orchid hybridizer, raising about 330 crosses. However, Clare had no knowledge of this particular orchid and in checking the index of The Orchid Review she had found no B L C 'Ellen Willmott' but she had

found a reference to *Cypripedium* 'Ellen Willmott' now named *Paphiopedilum* 'Ellen Willmott'. She added that B. L. C. is an abbreviation of *Brassolaeliocattleya* but it would now be known as *Rhyncattleanthe* 'Ellen Willmott'.

So instead of one new orchid discovery we now have two. The *Paphiopedilum* 'Ellen Willmott' and *Rhyncattleanthe* 'Ellen Willmott'.



When I asked Clare what were the chances of finding either of these two previously forgotten orchids she said 'Slim!'

An article by Clare and Johan Hermans duly appeared in the September edition of 'The Orchid Review'.

Now I believe that this kind of publicity is very important. If anyone is going to be cultivating either of these orchids then they are likely to read 'The Orchid Review' and so this is the best chance of unearthing these plants.

Four days after the original letter Sir Jeremiah writes again: *'Alas the flower, Ellen Willmott is past its best and has lost some of its character.'* I find this sentence quite poignant – his sentence could just as easily be about Miss Willmott herself. But at least we can presume that she did get to see the orchid.

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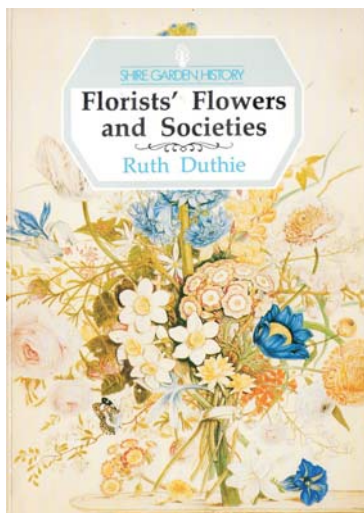
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FLORISTS' FLOWERS

JIM MARSHALL



TODAY THE WORD Florist is used of someone who keeps a shop for the sale of cut flowers and pot plants. This, however, is not its original meaning. The word was used to describe someone who grew plants for their decorative flowers rather than food. From the beginning of the eighteenth century it was used only for those who grew certain kinds of flowering plants for exhibition *eg auricula, polyanthus, hyacinth, anemone, ranunculus, tulip and carnation*. Initially the enthusiasts met at conveniently placed public

houses and their meetings became known as florists' feasts. The showing of plants was certainly an excuse for plenty of eating and drinking. By the end of the eighteenth century it was the norm to have more organised events and most of the larger towns in England, including Ipswich and Norwich in East Anglia held such annual events. It was not until the middle of the C19th that single, national flower societies as we know them today were formed; for example the Tulip Society in 1849 and the National Carnation and Picotee Society in 1850.

Primula auricula

Of all the Florists' flowers few are so well loved as the auricula. They were first grown in the sixteenth century and continued to be developed to the present day. In the latest edition of the 'Plant Finder' I counted over 200 cultivars! Nowadays 'Auriculas' are divided into groups – Alpine, Border, Double and Show. (There are seven National Collections of Auricula.

Dianthus

It was not until the late C18th that Florists turned their attention to

Pinks as they had previously been considered a very humble flower. Prior to improvement most pinks were single, with no more than five or six petals. The florists favourites were 'laced pinks' (with a band of contrasting colour on a white ground).

There is much confusion about the origin of the cultivated members of the genus *Dianthus*, which is not helped by the name 'gillyflower' in Mediaeval times being used for carnations, stocks and wallflowers. Most botanical historians now consider our cultivated pink is mostly derived from *Dianthus plumosus*, but with other *Dianthus* species in their parentage. Much has been written about the laced pinks of Paisley. The Paisley Florists Society was formed in 1782 and was active well into the C19th. It is strange that we know of no authentic list of Paisley pinks, unlike the many English cultivars. However 'Paisley Gem' which is registered as being introduced in 1798 is still available – but is it a 'Paisley Pink'?

There is also the problem of separating the 'carnation' from the 'pink'.



The Carnation is considered to have evolved from *Dianthus caryophyllus*.

There are many wonderful paintings from the early C18th of typical flowers of *Dianthus caryophyllus* cultivars. Most were irregular in outline, the petals having serrations. By the middle of the century the florists had bred more regular flowers, the most popular being 'Picotee' in particular those with a yellow ground colour. By the 1770's 'Flakes', which have one colour laid lengthwise on a white ground, and 'Bizarres', which have two colours laid in, were being exhibited.

At the beginning of the C19th new types of 'Picotees' were gaining favour. Most had a white ground with a narrow pink, red or purple edge to the petal. By the end of the C19th the 'Flakes' and 'Bizarres' were being replaced by the self-coloured and fancy types similar to the modern day Border Carnation cultivars.

Tulips

Tulips were first grown in England before the end of the sixteenth century and Parkinson described a striped Tulip in 1629. 'Florists Tulips' were divided into groups according to the prevailing colour. The first Tulip show was held in Suffolk in 1740, and the early C19th saw the development of the English Florists Tulip. The pattern of markings was very important and usually of contrasting colours. Some of the cultivars still grown are over 150 years old. Information about growing them can be obtained from the Wakefield and North of England Tulip Society. A National Collection of these cultivars has recently been approved.

Further information

There is an excellent book by Ruth Duthie in the 'Shire Garden History Series' 1988 *ISBN 0 85263 953 8*. I think it is out of print, we bought one in 'The Idler' Hadleigh's wonderful second hand bookshop.

See the Wakefield and North of England Tulip Society website to order 'Flames and Feathers' and/or 'Old Flames' their publications on English Florists Tulips

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Spring visit - Don't forget the visit, for members and friends alike, to Alastair Harris's garden, Foxhall Place in Ipswich on April 30th 2022.

There are over twenty different magnolia and camellia speci and hybrids among a number of individual trees and shrubs, collected over a twenty year time span, the largest of which are now probably two redwoods planted in 1997. Hopefully the Magnolias and Camellias will be in flower.

The largest Magnolias, *veitchii* (a hybrid first introduced by the famous nursery in 1907) and *denudata*, were transplanted here on our move to Ipswich from Bedford and have reached perhaps 40 foot plus and so should give a good show.

There is a charge of £5 per head and the visit will include home made cake and scones.

Foxhall Place, Purdis Road, Foxhall, Ipswich, IP10 0AE

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PLANT CRÈCHE VOLUNTEER

ROSIE ANSELL



You arrive bright and early at Helmingham, collect your Plant Heritage apron and set out your table – notices, a plan of the fair, a dish to collect donations, masses of sellotape and the essential raffle tickets. You hope you get a notice identifying you as the Plant Crèche, and enough chicken

wire to accommodate all that you are going to take in during the day.

Your first customer is another PH volunteer who has got in early and bought things before the paying public have got in. Your heart sinks as you know that will be the last set of plants to be collected. You watch as the cars roll in to the car park and the queue to get in lengthens and then the punters head in to collect their free plant and rush off in search of bargains.

Early on you get two ladies, friends, or sisters, or a mother and daughter, who dump half a dozen bags on the table and suggest that this is only the first of many bags they will be collecting over the day. You give them two or three tickets. When they come back later they tell you they already have a clutch of bags, but if you (or they) know where they are you will find there is no space, so you give them more tickets.

Then a small boy comes along – he has bought some cacti, or some carnivorous plants, all in very small pots that get lost among the masses of bags containing waving plants and trees. If it's spring they will be irises, in the autumn they will be grasses or tall asters. They all want to fall over, especially if it is breezy (and it usually is at Helmingham).

“How much is it?” people ask; “just a donation to PH,” you say and people are usually generous, either when they deposit their purchases or when they collect (if they still have money left then!). People pass by and ask you what assorted plants are, and what stall they might

find them on, in case they want to get one themselves. Sometimes they think that you are selling raffle tickets and the plants in your charge are the prizes!

After a couple of hours of being, mainly, rushed off your feet, you spot your lunch reliefs, and explain to them what order the deposits are arranged in before you go off hoping to get a chance to look round a bit, get some lunch, and even sit down for a few minutes to eat it. If you buy any plants yourself you need to make sure that no-one tries to claim them as something they bought.

When you get back you find that they have been really busy too, and greet your return with great relief. They explain that they are just about to run out of room so you have to come up with a plan of what piece of ground to take over next. If you are lucky some people have begun to collect their purchases and go home, or at least put them in their car, so you can move things round a bit to make more room. Some people put things in for a very short time, and others you wonder whether they are actually coming back to collect their plants or have forgotten that they left them.

People return and hunt for their tickets, and point out that the big green bag is theirs, or the Sainsburys bag or they have parked a loaded trolley with you, or some large metal plant supports. Sometimes people tell you that they can't find their ticket, but they know the number, or what they bought.

If you are really unlucky you get a customer who comes to collect their plants and announces that they have left at least nine bags with you, which cost them £50 in all, but you only gave them one ticket and now you have lost ALL their plants. Even if you explain that they would never have got nine bags in on one ticket they refuse to believe you and create ructions. Some people cannot remember whether they put things into the plant crèche or if they left them on particular stalls with the stall holders.

And then there are the ones who put things in at 3.30, or even later, so they can have a look round the gardens, and have not come back when everyone starts packing up, even though you have told them that you close at 4 pm. If you are really lucky all the plants that you took in are collected, and not too long after 4 pm, and you can wend your weary way home.

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