

SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Spring 2025



Contents

Chairlady's Letter 3

Secretary and Membership Report 4

Treasurer's Report. 4

Suffolk National Collections Report. 5

Maggie Thorpe's Retirement. 6

Coming Events. 7

Profile: Julia Heywood 8

Plant Heritage Suffolk Events 2025 9

Woolly Aphid *Eriosoma lanigerum* 10

Delving into the Archives. 12

New Trustee: John Humphreys 13

Suffolk Plant Heritage Fern Conservation Project. 13

Helmingham Hall Autumn Plant Fair 14

A Gardener in the Family 16

Building Bridges. 18

Profile: Nigel Last. 19

A Useful Addition. 19

Notes From Our Speakers 20

Plants to look out for 22

Propogation Report. 24

Plants of Distinction offer. 24

Advertisements 26

Suffolk Group Committee Members 27

Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal

Editor: Rosie Ansell

Design & Print: Lavenham Press

Cover photo: Iris Rising Moon at Woottens, Wenhaston.



Chairlady's Letter

Gill Beardsworth

Happy New Year. As I write my garden has a coating of frost that is being slowly thawed by the weak sun. By the time you read this I hope the Spring flowers will be a riot of colour in our gardens.

I am sure you will all join me in thanking Maggie Thorpe for her hard work over the past 25 years. She handed over the role at the AGM in November, just before her 90th birthday, and we will miss her wise leadership but she still continues as President and we look forward to seeing her at our events in the future.

Sadly, Anne Tweddle felt unable to continue as Propagation Officer and I would like to thank her and her propagation team for all their hard work in support of Plant Heritage. Jude Law and Matthew Tanton Brown are continuing to hold propagation days at Fuller's Mill, preparing plants for sale at our plant sales, both at the monthly meetings throughout the winter and especially for the Plant Fairs at Helmingham Hall. If you would like to take part, please contact Jude on judith.law@btinternet.com

Date for your Diary: The autumn Plant Fair will be held on 14th September 2025 and will be in celebration of 25 years of plant fairs at Helmingham Hall. Please put "Helmingham 25" into your diary.

Thank you, Catherine Bacon, for stepping into the role of Programme Secretary. She will be organising the booking of speakers for 2026 so if you or anybody you know would like to speak to Suffolk Plant Heritage or if you have a new topic in mind, please contact Catherine on baconcatherine@hotmail.com

The plant in the picture is Abutilon 'Souvenir de Bonn', which I received (free of charge) through the Plant Exchange in 2024. I am delighted to say that it has produced lovely flowers and I hope to propagate from it in the Spring. If you are interested in receiving or donating plants with the Plant Exchange, please contact Jude Law, who is the Plant Exchange organiser for Suffolk. This is an excellent way of contributing to the work of Plant Heritage and of acquiring exciting new plants that can be shared with your gardening friends.

I would like to thank all the members of the committee for their generous support throughout the year and in the busy year ahead.



Secretary and Membership Report

Nigel Last

I'm pleased to take over the role of secretary and membership officer from John. I aim to continue the excellent work he did especially in developing the email newsletter to tell members about PH and other gardening events in the county. If you know of any events which might be included, please send me an email **secretary@suffolkplants.org.uk**

If you don't receive the email newsletters, it may be that they are being filed as 'spam' by your mail server. For data protection, I send a 'blind' copy and this can cause problems. If the email is in 'spam' or 'junk' then it can usually be flagged using a click of the righthand mouse button and selecting the relevant option. If you're still not receiving them, please send me an email, as above.

We continue to build our membership and now have 220 members of Plant Heritage affiliated to the Suffolk group. Welcome to those new members.

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Treasurer's Report

Jag De Alwis

Once again, we have been successful in raising funds for Plant Heritage.

Our share from the two Plant Fairs at Helmingham was £13,020, which was a little lower than last year, but this is likely due to the poor weather at the May event.

We have also raised £3,787 in other plant sales. We bought a Sumup unit to be able to take card payments and this has contributed to increased sales.

Expenditure over the year, including speakers' fees, hall hire, free plants and the costs of the Journal came to £5,359. We were therefore again able to send £10,000 to Plant Heritage Head Office.

Thanks as always to the Committee and volunteers, who give their time, expertise and enthusiasm.

Plant Heritage News

For an update on what is happening at National Office please visit
www.plantheritage.com

For more information about Suffolk Plant Heritage Group activities including details of garden events and openings please visit
www.suffolkplantheritage.com

Suffolk National Collections Report

Gill Beardsworth

On 23rd September many of the Collection Holders met at The Place for Plants by kind invitation of Rupert and Sarah Eley. I was pleased to be able to see some familiar faces as well as some I will visit this year. The Suffolk National Collections Leaflet was discussed and plans made to have it reprinted in a more attractive format. The group was then treated to an informative walk around the collection of deciduous Euonymus, Rhus and Toxicodendron followed by excellent tea and cakes in the café.

The collection of Suffolk Hardy Garden Plants is attached to the Suffolk Punch Trust in Hollesley and is well worth a visit. The garden is managed entirely by volunteers. If you or another gardening friend are able to volunteer there, please contact Mary Owles on mary.owles@outlook.com and she will be happy to welcome you. The visit raised some concerns that rare plants may be under threat through lack of attention so a further visit was arranged to meet two of the Trustees of the Suffolk Punch Trust to discuss ways in which the garden could be better supported. It was agreed that a further helper on Licence from Hollesley YOI would be trained to assist in the garden in 2025 and that facilities would be made available within HMP Hollesley for propagation and development of plants from the collection. At a third meeting a visit was made to view these facilities and arrangements made to start propagation in May.

A visit to The Place for Plants was made when the autumn colours were at their best. The Collection of deciduous Euonymus, Rhus and Toxicodendron is in excellent condition and all the trees are clearly labelled.

Anthony Pigott's collection of Dryopteris and Equisetum showed a comprehensive collection of both these genera. All the plants are clearly labelled. The ferns are planted on several sites around the garden and are growing vigorously. The horsetails are all in pots, because, although not all are invasive, this is a better way to display them

Will Purdom's collection of Impatiens, held at Barnby Nursery Centre near Beccles, is very comprehensive. I was quickly disabused of the idea that I would be looking at a collection of 'Busy Lizzies'. The Impatiens come in all shapes and sizes, from plants like small palms to those with tiny flowers. Many are kept in the polytunnel but some thrive outside in the sun during the summer. All are clearly labelled and are propagated regularly.

Date for your diary

There will be a Collection Holders' Meeting on **13th May 2025** at Robert Grimsey's home in time to view his Aesculus collection in bloom. Agenda to follow.

Maggie Thorpe's Retirement

Maggie took on the chair of Suffolk Plant Heritage over 25 years ago and has brought the group to its present excellent standard with twice yearly plant fairs at Helmingham Hall, monthly meetings with speakers throughout the winter months and maintenance of the Engleheart narcissus collection and propagation days, initially with Anne Tweddle and more recently with Jude Law.

She has carried out her role selflessly as a volunteer in order to further the cause of garden plant conservation.

Maggie has now stepped down from that role following her 90th birthday and we wish her well in her 'retirement'.

Suffolk Plant Heritage has awarded her Honorary Membership in recognition of her outstanding term in office (pictured).

She is still our President and we look forward to seeing her at events in the future.

Thank you, Maggie.



Coming Events

Saturday 22nd March, 2.30pm SPH Jim Paine: Climate Change: the long-range gardeners' forecast. Wetherden Village Hall Park Road Wetherden IP14 3JS

Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th March, 11.00am – 5.00pm Hyacinth Open Days. Waterbeach, CB25 9LQ, £3, ample parking.

Saturday 5 April 2.30pm EAGG Eileen and Time Tordoff: Cut Flowers from the Tin Shed Nursery. Monks Eleigh Village Hall, IP7 7JL non-members £6.

Sunday 13 April Little Ouse Headwaters Plant Fair. The Frith, South Lopham, IP22 1SD

Saturday 26 April 2.30pm Jane Steward, The Revival of the Medlar. Wetherden Village Hall Park Road Wetherden IP14 3JS

Saturday 26th & Sunday 27th April Essex PH Plant Fair. Hyde Hall, CM3 8ET

Sunday 27th April Open Day. Columbine Hall Stowupland, IP14 4AW

Sunday 27th April SWWAG Plant Fair. Wyken Hall, Stanton IP31 2DW

Sunday 4th May Norfolk PH Plant Fair. Hethersett, NR9 3JJ

Sunday 4th May Woottens Spring Fair. Wenhaston, IP19 9HF

Saturday 10th May AGS East Anglia Show. Connaught Hall, Attleborough, NR17 2AS

Sunday 11th May Bungay Garden Street Market

Sunday 11th May, 1st June and 28th September, 11.00am – 5.00pm Garden open at 2 Holmwood Cottages, Bower House Tye, Polstead, CO6 5BZ for NGS, £5. Please see NGS website/leaflet for more information.

Online Talks *Book at <https://www.plantheritage.org.uk/events/>*

Thursday 6th March, 6.30pm David Mathers: Orchids of Yunnan. Free to members.

Thursday 13th March, 7.30pm Steve Edney and Louise Dowle: A Horticulturalist Home Garden. Free to members.

Thursday 20th March, 6.30pm Philip Oostenbrink: The Plant Collector. Free to members.

Tuesday 25th March, 3.00pm Chat on Plant Guardian plants. Free to members.

Thursday 10th April, 7.30pm Peter Smith: The Secret World of Moths. Free to members.



Profile: Julia Heywood

I am Suffolk born and bred and having lived in London, Nottingham, Norwich and Lincolnshire returned to the place I love best which is definitely Suffolk, 9 years ago. I retired from working in the East of England Health Protection team in 2023 after a career in different areas of healthcare.

My plan was to sort my garden out but there is still a long way to go. I have managed to grow more flowers and vegetables from seed but still have a lot more to learn. My thirst for gardening knowledge has definitely been supported by attending a Suffolk Plant Heritage propagation day and the talks at Wetherden where the enthusiasm of everybody is contagious.



I joined Suffolk Plant Heritage at one of the Helmingham Plant Fairs a few years ago and had no idea that I would find myself volunteering to help organise these. I have only been involved with this since the end of the summer 2024 when I found myself responding to an email because they needed someone to volunteer due to previous emails not being successful in finding a member to do this. The Helmingham Plant Fairs are one of the highlights of my annual calendar and I felt an odd compulsion to respond, secretly hoping someone else would beat me to it! Event planning is not in any way on my list of attributes but with the support of other committee members and the fabulous events team at Helmingham the Autumn 2024 Fair, where my primary role was booking the nurseries, was arranged. Who knew that plotting out pitches and directing traffic was so much fun. There are always opportunities to get involved in the fairs, so please contact me or another committee member if you would like to.

I am looking forward to continue to be part of Suffolk Plant Heritage and with this year being the 25th Year that the Helmingham Plant Fairs have been held, 2025 is a special year.'

Request for your memories

As we are celebrating 25 years of holding our Plant Heritage Plant Fairs at Helmingham it would be good to hear if any of our members have special memories of particular Fairs, maybe from the early days, or more recently when we were still doing the setting out and manning the gates etc. or even noting how things have changed over the years as the event has got larger.

Please send to the editor roseiansell@aol.com

Plant Heritage Suffolk Events 2025

A reminder that all meetings will be held at Wetherden Village Hall, Park Road, Wetherden, IP14 3 LE. The programme of events may be subject to change – please check the Suffolk Plant Heritage website.

22nd March Climate Change: the long-range gardener's forecast. Jim Paine.
A wide-ranging talk on the current science, and likely impacts of climate change, locally, nationally and globally.

26th April The Revival of the Medlar. Jane Steward.
Jane Steward holds a National Collection of Medlars on her 6-acre site, formerly a fruit farm, north of Norwich. She makes an array of goodies with her produce.

25th & 26th May Spring Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall

14th September Autumn Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall

27th September Astartia and Chrysanthemum collections. Andrew Ward.
Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries is a familiar speaker in Suffolk and he will be talking about the two National Collections he holds.

25th October My National Plant Collections *Aspidistra elatior* & *sichuanensis*, Variegated and Yellow-leaved *Convallaria*, *Hakonechloa macra* and *Ophiopogon japonicus*. Philip Oostenbrink, Head Gardener at Walmer Castle Kent.

22nd November AGM. Creating Garden Style & Impact. Alison Marsden.
A long-term advocate of the power of gardening on wellbeing Alison loves talking about gardening to fellow gardeners.



Woolly Aphid *Eriosoma lanigerum*

Matt Tanton Brown

What is it?

A black Aphid that sucks sap from the woody stems of several plants in the rose family, often covered in a white waxy substance, which gives it the 'Woolly' name.

Plants commonly affected

Apple, Cotoneaster, and Pyracantha; sometimes Chaenomeles.

Symptoms

This pest is easy to spot due to the white fluffy 'Wool'. Signs often appear between spring and early autumn. The thinner bark around pruning cuts, and any splits or cracks in the bark, are prime sites for infection. Affected shoots often develop lumpy growths in the bark which can sometimes be soft to the touch. These lumps are caused by the aphid feeding and can split in frosty weather allowing more entry wounds for the aphids to increase their infestation. Unfortunately, these wounds can also lead to the increased risk of infection by apple canker.

Life Cycle

Woolly aphid tends to overwinter on its host plant as very small nymphs (young adolescent aphids) and hide in crevices or cracks in the bark. They suck sap and create the fluffy wool to protect themselves from predators and the cold. Populations peak in late summer and often spread out onto the new shoots of growth from this year. Chemicals in the saliva of the aphid cause lumpy growth especially on the younger shoots.

In mid-summer winged aphids are produced, and these will fly off to new host plants.

Control

Cultural Control On small trees, or trees that are trained against walls and fences, control is possible, especially if it is only a light population. Scrubbing the aphid colonies off with a stiff bristled brush can help reduce populations. Best done before the leaves have emerged. It is becoming common that this pest is tolerated more as we all try to garden more environmentally. Woolly aphid does form an important part of the food chain for some garden birds and some insects. Pruning out highly infected branches can help reduce infestations in summer, however, keep an eye on the cut surfaces as these can become areas of infection.

Biological Control There are several natural enemies of woolly aphid. Unfortunately, these are not able to always control an outbreak, but they can



reduce numbers. Some ladybirds, lacewings and hoverfly larvae eat them as do the parasitic wasp called *Aphelinus mali*.

According to the RHS, some research has indicated that earwigs on fruit trees can reduce aphid numbers and they themselves do not harm the fruit. Providing shelters such as upturned flowerpots loosely stuffed with hay in the trees can help to increase earwig numbers.

Chemical Control For large trees this is probably a difficult thing to do, but for trained fruit which are restrained to a small space it is more practical.



Organic sprays such as natural pyrethrum-based chemicals such as Bug Clear Ultra 2 or Neudorff Bug Free and Larvae Killer can be used. These give a good control but are not specific and can kill helpful predators.

Plant oils such as Vitax Plant Guard Pest and Disease Control can have a good reduction in pest numbers but like the chemical above will need reapplication in large infestations. These however are less likely to affect larger insects such as adult ladybirds.

Plant invigorators combine nutrients to stimulate growth with surfactants or fatty acids that have an action against the aphid, eg Growing Success Bug Stop or SB Plant Invigorator.

Winter Washes do not work with this pest as they hide too deep in the crevices of the bark for it to work satisfactorily.

Systemic insecticides work by being absorbed into the plant and being carried around its system, so that when the aphid sucks the sap it gets a stomach poison killing it. However, these come with certain caveats, and you must read the label as to which edibles they can be used on. Chemicals such as Provanto Smart Bug Killer with the active ingredient Flupyradifurone are such chemicals.

Delving into the Archives

Rosie Ansell

I have a collection of back issues of our Journal – mostly complete for recent years, but a bit thin for earlier years.

The Suffolk Group of the then NCCPG produced its first Newsletter in Spring 1990. The Group then had 35 members and it seems the Newsletter was produced in Suffolk as Head Office did not have the funds to produce a national one at that time.

The first issue comprised 12 pages, describing progress so far, a list of future activities and mention of what other local groups were doing. There were plans for a Grand Plant Sale, at Letheringham, in June and a list of points about presentation of plants donated for sale. Finally, there was a list of committee members (including Jon Rose, who wrote about his collection of Santolinas in our last issue) and a couple of advertisements for local nurseries.



Issue 2 in the Autumn reported on the success of the Plant Sale – people came in their droves, undeterred by some rain, and bought up everything.

One change was in the prices – subscriptions £6, visitors to talks 50p, refreshments 15p.

Several visits had been undertaken and were reported on, and a Plant Exchange (local only) was suggested. There was also a report on the first ever Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in July 1990.

There was a plea from the editor (which I can only echo) for members to write an article for the Newsletter to share their knowledge.

New Trustee: John Humphreys

Hello everyone. I was delighted to hear in November that following an interview process I was selected to be a Trustee and Director of Plant Heritage – a national charity that we as members respect and love for the work it undertakes both centrally and locally.

Under our relatively new CEO Gwen Hines and existing Chair Cecilia Bufton Plant Heritage is going places. A number of new trustees were appointed in November – all selected for a range of skills that we can bring to the charity.

You will remember me, I hope, as your membership Officer and local Secretary and having recently moved to North Yorkshire I hope to be able to help colleagues in the large geographic area covered by the Yorkshire group attract new members.

Nationally, I was selected based on my work in Suffolk and have been asked to join the Members and Supporters committee to work through how we can best attract and maintain contact with members.

I am keeping a close eye on how Suffolk group is doing and wish you well for a successful 2025.

John Humphreys • Tel: 07776 356634 • Email: jdh.norley@btinternet.com

Suffolk Plant Heritage Fern Conservation Project

Jude Law

One year on from the initial sowing of *Dryopteris pseudodisjunctia* spores (Spring 2024 Journal) the group met to review progress and sow more spores.

Experience with the spores varied from total failure to speedy germination resulting in plants of sufficient stature to pot on in August 2024. There was some slow activity in pots of spores left outside for the winter with little fernlets appearing in Autumn 2024, but the best germination was achieved with pots kept on a windowsill in a warm but not hot room.

From those potted on, we have been able to offer two to the National Plant Exchange and share some for growing on in the gardens of members. We have also provided Anthony Pigott, who is leading the project, with some really healthy stock plants and will have some available on our stall at Helmingham in May.

This fern is endangered in the wild and we are planning to re-introduce in due course.

Helmingham Hall Autumn Plant Fair





A Gardener in the Family

John Humphreys, our former secretary, sent us some details from his family archives. He had a great uncle. George Williams, born in Montgomeryshire in 1913, who made gardening his career. He worked at Leeds City Council and at Walton New Hall, Warrington. His final job before retirement was as Head Gardener at Cefn Park, Abenbury near Wrexham. He was a specialist dahlia, chrysanthemum and tomato grower and was responsible each year for the main pavilion display at Chester Races.

His chief love, however, was coleus, and In November 1961 he had an article on Coleus published in the *North Wales Gardener*:

COLEUS

Possibly there are some who may not have realised how much in recent years Coleus have been improved; the dull and common varieties previously grown have given way to new and superior kinds with beautiful and highly differentiated colours and shapes. They are a joy to stage as the colour range is so large now and there are various heights to the varieties as well as various shapes to the leaves; one is helped, too, by the fact that there is no danger of the colours clashing with each other, from creamy-white and green through the gold, pink, orange, red, brown and silver shades they blend perfectly and light up the greenhouse.

The Coleus was first introduced in 1764. Most of those grown today are forms of *C. blumei*, a plant of Javanese origin. This perennial plant may be grown from seed or cuttings—this last method is used, of course, for all named varieties. Cuttings may be taken at almost any time of the year; for plants for your Show bench in July and August, take cuttings in February and March from over-wintered plants and insert in boxes or pots filled with peat and sand or vermiculite; when rooted and re-potted they can be pinched back to induce a bushy habit, or if the pyramid form is wanted the leading shoot should be tied to a stake and not stopped; otherwise all shoots may be pinched occasionally to encourage branching, and the flowers removed.

Coleus will grow in most types of soil, but best results are obtained with a light, rich one such as the following: 2 parts turfy loam, 1 part well decayed manure, 1 part leaf-mould and sand. Add 3 ozs. hoof and horn meal and 3 ozs. lime or chalk to each barrow of compost.

It must be stated at once that Coleus are definitely not cold greenhouse plants as during winter months they require a minimum temperature of 60 degrees, and trouble may occur if the thermometer goes down below 50 degrees; they should be kept on the dry side at this time, giving only sufficient water to prevent wilting. In hot weather, on the other hand, they should be given all the water they can absorb and some shade is beneficial, though it must not be excessive; on dull days water more sparingly.

Two well-tried older varieties are "Beckwith's Gem" and "Paisley Shawl"; some newer kinds are "The Marquis" (reddish-brown with golden edge), "Moonbeam" (light yellow-green turning cream, frilled edge), "Russet" (golden brown with pink centre, pale green edge), etc. A few of these will give continual colour in your greenhouse even when in the cutting stage.

GEORGE WILLIAMS,
CEFN PARK GARDENS, WREXHAM, DENBIGHSHIRE.

He also supplied cuttings – in 1962 his list ran to 40 named varieties, rooted cuttings were available in the spring for 1/- each or 10/- for a dozen, post-paid.

There is also a photo of the display with which he won 1st prize at the Royal Welsh Show. George is the man to the rear of the inset photograph.



Building Bridges

Kate Elliott

What a wonderful start to 2025 we are having here at Columbine Hall with the completion of our new bridge. We have had a brick bridge built across our moat replacing the causeway that was there. Made from old looking Tudor bricks the moat now flows underneath our new bridge making Columbine we hope even more romantic.

It really is quite something and what superb craftsmanship has gone into building it. It has been utterly fascinating and so exciting to watch it being built and now we can't imagine Columbine without it.



What was especially fascinating to watch was the process of building the two brick semicircular archways. Starting from the base they constructed wooden arches as a guide that also supported the bricks as they built. Once they finished the arches, they carefully removed the wooden supports revealing the new brick archways.

Now complete we haven't been able to resist walking and driving over and over the bridge from pure excitement! We can't wait to row underneath it in our little green rowing boat and to play Pooh sticks from the top. And of course, think of all the planting opportunities we now have.

And we're not stopping there! We've built a bridge and now we're creating a new walled garden too! By taking the roof off one of our old farm buildings and keeping the walls we are making an Italianate style walled garden with soft, romantic planting. I can see the garden in my mind's eye. There are roses blooming freely in every shade of pink and white – a rosy heaven. The walls festooned with roses, jasmine, figs and grapevines. The beds billowing with exuberant planting with pencil cypresses and in terracotta pots grow lemon and olive trees. The whole garden brimming with beauty and a sensual delight. Well – that's the plan.

And you can come and see all of this – our new bridge and the progress of our new walled garden on our big open garden day on Sunday April 27th 12-5pm all in aid of St. Elizabeth Hospice. There'll be plants for sale, crafts and homemade teas and cakes. Under 16's free. Dogs on leads welcome. It will be lovely to see you.

Watch progress on the walled Garden via Kate's Facebook and Instagram:
[kateelliottcolumbinehall](#)

Profile: Nigel Last

I was born in Suffolk and moved back at the end of 2023 to live in Redgrave near Diss. After studying Applied Microbiology and Crop Protection, I began work in agriculture and have moved around England (this is house/garden #7) but a home-based job has allowed me to return to my roots.

I have always enjoyed gardening and creating my own collections of plants. I'm very much looking forward to renovating my new garden which had become rather overgrown having waited a year to see what appeared through the seasons. I've managed to exclude the deer but am now doing battle with the moles!



When not gardening, I enjoy travel, nature, walking, photography and cooking. I was introduced to Plant Heritage by John Humphreys, a long-time work colleague, who persuaded me to take over the secretary/membership role from him when he moved away. I enjoy being involved and look forward to meeting you at PH events in the future.

A Useful Addition

Rosie Ansell

When my husband gave me these, I was sceptical; I am wedded to my Felco secateurs and thought I did not need an alternative.

I was wrong. These are very sharp and very small and can get into places where secateurs cannot fit. I have found them ideal for dead heading, particularly short stemmed flowers like cosmos, for cutting salad leaves, cutting dahlias, harvesting cucumbers and courgettes as well as for light pruning of grasses or small twigs.

Obviously now what I need is a larger tool belt to include these, my secateurs and my trusty knife!



Notes from our Speakers

In October we had a visit from **Steve Edney** and his partner **Louise Dowle** from the No Name Nursery near Sandwich in Kent. Steve was head gardener at the Salutation in Sandwich for a number of years and Louise also worked there. They began the nursery on a 3-acre site in 2019, gradually building it up in an area that, like Suffolk, is one of the driest in the country. Between them they hold four National Collections and Steve is involved with RHS plant trials.



Steve suggested that what they grew were similar to old fashioned cottage garden plants, such as *Nepeta* and *Phlomis* Edward Bowles. *Berkelya purpurea* he said was “aster with attitude” with large thistle like leaves but asters with small flowers and leaves also do well in dry conditions. *Serratula tinctoria*, a knapweed, is late flowering and has valuable seedheads. *Vernonia lettermanii* is a plant for the back of the border with small leaves and useful seedheads. *Baptisia* is a prairie plant with good seedheads that Steve reckons is better than lupins.

One of Steve’s collections is of purple leaved dahlias, which he said did not grow so large in dry conditions. *Lychnis coronaria* *Gardeners Worlds* (rose campion) is a short-lived perennial that is good for a sunny border, and does not self-seed. Hardy Geraniums are valuable and varieties like *psilostemon* like dry conditions, *geranium Anne Thomson* is a more compact variety.

Erodiums come from rocky or chalky habitats and do well in dry sunny spots – *Erodium manescavii* has a small root but soon spreads and is also good trailing over pots. Steve said that plants that do not drop their nectar if it is very dry are especially helpful for bees, such as *Centaurea*.

Steve is also a fan of *crambe cordifolia*, which you can use at the back of a border as a climbing frame once its flowers have gone over. He also recommended *Kniphofia rufa*, *Rudbeckia deamii* and *Argyranthemum Jamaica Primrose*, with honourable mentions for *Eryngiums*, *Asphodel*, *Hemerocallis*, *Thermoposis* and *Verbena officinalis*.

Steve was adamant that you do not need to water in plants when you plant them, or water them to get them established – they are drought tolerant!

At the end there was a good queue of people wanting to buy some of the plants Steve and Louise had brought with them and photos taken of the plant list that they had on display.

In September **Derry Watkins**, a famous plantsperson, lecturer and specialist plant seller delighted a packed house at Wetherden with her description of how wonderful gravel gardening can be even on heavy clay. She described how she and her husband set up their new garden not many miles from where they were before in the near Bath and illuminated the talk with over 80 photos of more unusual plants.



However, their new garden was yellow clay and the previous garden Cotswold brash so they needed to think long and hard about how they were going to establish the garden on ground that was choked with thistles, docks and other indigenous weeds. Not only that it was on a slope. The outcome is glorious and you can visit the garden on Tuesdays. Derry also runs courses where her zeal, passion and plantaholic nature shine through.

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After our AGM in November **Helen Chen**, one of our collection holders, spoke about Asian Woodlands Plants, which left us all wondering how we could fit some of them into our own gardens.

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In January we had a very comprehensive introduction to irises from **Luci Skinner**. The Iris genus includes Dierama, Crocosmia, Sisyrinchium, gladiolus and crocus, and irises are divided into bulbous or rhizomatous species.

She described the various parts of the flowers, the way that bearded irises had developed over years of breeding, and gave us care tips.



She finished by saying that you can have irises in flower every month of the year and gave us a display of different species to illustrate this. Fortunately, I do not need to go into too much detail as Luci has promised us an article on this topic in our next issue.

Plants to look out for

Searching the sales tables and plant fairs

Matt Tanton Brown

These are a few of the plants that we have been propagating over the past months that we hope will be ready for sale at some point over the next year.

Campanula latifolia 'Brantwood'

This gorgeous Campanula is a must for anyone who likes tall clump forming perennials. It grows up to 75-100cm in height and makes a good solid clump in a border within a year or two. Unlike many of the latifolia group this cultivar holds its lavender-blue flowers more horizontally, rather than having them hanging down. These flowers are narrower than the species and darker in colour. Still a rarity, there are only 2 suppliers named in the Plant Finder.



I was lucky enough to buy it some 15 years ago and it has performed every year without many problems, occasionally it will get blackfly, but a spray of soft soap soon removes these.

It is named after John Ruskin's Garden which you can find on the banks of Lake Coniston in the Lake District. It's a mainly woodland garden which is gradually being restored by the preservation trust that owns the house (The Brantwood Trust). If I remember rightly, he was one of the first advocates for using terracing to grow plants on steep inclines. This can be seen at Brantwood in the 'Zig-Zaggy' which is a garden based on Dante's Divine Comedy. Each terrace is designed to represent one of the seven deadly sins. If you like art, historic houses, wild gardens and stunning views it's well worth a visit, we loved it when we went a few years ago.

Penstemon 'Connie's Pink'

A tall very upright Penstemon has an Award of Garden Merit (AGM). Bred in Suffolk by Ivan Dickins, I think. Semi-evergreen and up to 1.2 m in height, spreads to roughly 60-90cm. Erect flower spikes which are covered in bright rose-pink flowers through the summer. The flowers can be up to 3cm in length and are striped deep red with a white throat. Will tolerate any soil as long as it is fertile and moisture retentive. At present there are no suppliers listed in the Plant Finder for this gem of a plant.



***Polypodium x mantoniae* 'Cornubiense'**

A beautiful evergreen fern which has creeping rhizomes great for ground cover in moist but well drained soils. Will tolerate sun or partial shade in any aspect. The broad ovate, bipinnatifid fronds often have lobed segments.

Very hardy and will tolerate dry shade but it must be watered regularly in its first season to get it acclimatised. For such a tough and reliable fern there are only 8 suppliers in the Plant Finder. Kindly donated to our propagation team by Kate Adams.



***Chrysanthemum* 'Dr Tom Parr'**

A lovely semi-pompon flowered perennial which has reddish-pink clusters of flowers (3cm across) from early to mid-autumn. I have had this in the garden at home for the past few years and it performs well, reaching a height of 60cm plus. It does need some support as it can produce many flowers which can add weight to the stems.

I find the plant forms a good dense clump and often has evergreen basal shoots through the winter, does best in good fertile soil which is well

drained but moisture retentive in full sun. A sheltered spot helps reduce stem damage by wind. When I first bought it there were 5 suppliers in the Plant Finder but alas now there are only 3! A really good cut flower for the house too!

Scilla mischtschenkoana

This little beauty the Mischzenko Squill is a bulbous perennial with strap shaped leaves and starry pale blue flowers in spring. Grows to a height of 15cm and is ideal for well drained sites in full sun or part shade. Looks good in gravel gardens, alpine and rock gardens or in a pot on your patio table.

There are only 4 nurseries named in the Plant Finder for this pretty bulb. Kindly donated to our propagation team by Sally, Imogen and Matthew Long (Riverside Bulbs).



Propagation Report

Jude Law

We have enjoyed 3 propagation days since our last report involving many regular 'propagators' but also welcoming many new faces and its good to report that the group is thriving. We must extend thanks to Fullers Mill Garden for making their prop shed available to us and also providing a standout area for plants growing on throughout the year. The venue only holds 10 people at a time but we have been able to run both morning and afternoon sessions meaning everyone wanting to come has been able to do so.

In March the focus was on sowing seeds, dividing perennials and taking basal cuttings. In July on more seeds, soft-tip and semi-ripe cuttings, pricking out and potting on, and in November again on divisions, sowing of perennials, tree and shrub seeds, plus hardwood cuttings of roses and shrubs. We also experimented with last-minute optimistic softwood cuttings which have done well in a heated propagator and are growing on strongly.

Once again Matt Tanton Brown has been manically sowing and taking cuttings throughout the year and his efforts combined with those of the group have resulted in many beautiful plants on offer at Helmingham. A huge thanks to all.

Prop sessions will be kicking off again soon for 2025 – details to be announced soon. Do come along if you are interested and haven't yet done so; the sessions are fun and informative and we all learn from one another.

Plants of Distinction – Member Offer

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 30% 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 30% 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 **SPH30** and can be used until 31/7/2025

Missing Collections 2025

Gill Beardsworth

Argyranthemum Often grown in pots, their large daisy shaped flowers add bursts of colour from late spring to the first frosts. Their long blooming season attracts a range of pollinators too, including honeybees.

Caryopteris Best in a sunny border or gravel garden with free-draining soil, these fluffy blue-purple flowers are striking in late summer and early autumn, providing late-season nectar for butterflies and bees.

Clethra Also known as Summersweet, these fragrant flowers and their nectar attract a wide variety of butterflies and songbirds in the summer, and seeds in winter.

Erysimum Commonly known as wallflowers, are spring to summer-flowering plants that provide vibrant displays of colour. Many varieties are hardy perennials and have attractive evergreen foliage, adding structure and aesthetic value to the garden even after the flowers have faded.

Gaillardia Known as Blanket Flowers for their masses of richly coloured, daisy-like flowers in vivid shades of red, yellow and orange. Perfect for a wildlife garden, they bloom from late spring to early autumn and appeal to butterflies, bees, beetles and birds for their seeds.

Ligularia Another daisy-like flower. Imposing herbaceous perennials, ideal in boggy areas and alongside water features. Cater well for butterflies, bees and hoverflies.

Lysimachia Related to Primula and Lythrum, they thrive in full sun if the soil remains moist. They form upright dense spikes with yellow or white flowers, and their pollen and nectar attracts many species. Some types also produce floral oils which attract loosestrife bees.

Osteospermum Also known as Cape Daisy or African Daisy. Long-lasting colourful flowers, beautiful from summer to autumn. Another favourite with pollinators.

Potentilla (herbaceous) This huge but recognisable genus flowers from late spring through to autumn. It's a favourite of many pollinators and is one of the known food sources for the larvae of the rare grizzled skipper butterfly.

Verbascum With their distinctive, upright spires of flowers, these pretty perennials (or biennials) – which come in white, yellow, orange, blue or purple – are great for bees, hoverflies and moths.

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Please contact Rosie Ansell rosieansell@aol.com

Suffolk Plant Heritage Group

Committee Members

President

Maggie Thorpe

Chairlady & National Collections Co-ordinator

Gill Beardsworth gmbearsworth@gmail.com

Vice Chairman

Neil Bradfield scuddingclouds2@gmail.com

Treasurer

Jag De Alwis jagdealwis@hotmail.com

Secretary & Membership

Nigel Last secretary@suffolkplants.org.uk

Plant Fair Co-ordinator

Julia Heywood plantfairs@suffolkplantheritage.com

Programme Secretary

Catherine Bacon baconcatherine@hotmail.com

Propagation Officer

Jude Law judith.law@btinternet.com

Journal Editor

Rosie Ansell rosieansell@aol.com

IT Administrator

Anthony Pigott anthony.pigott@btinternet.com

Other Committee Members

Sarah Cook sarahmalmaisons@gmail.com

Anne Lawrence aelawrence3@gmail.com

Matthew Tanton Brown matttantonbrown@yahoo.com

Linda Weeks linda.weeks2@aol.com

www.suffolkplantheritage.com

