

Plant Heritage

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Group



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Cover photo: *Eranthis hyemalis* (Tubergenii Group) Matt Pringle

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Editor's note

A big thank you to all those who have been generous with their time and contributed to this issue. The deadline for the Autumn 2017 newsletter is 1 September. Please send me your contributions by that date. I would really appreciate short articles on a wide variety of topics about members' own gardens, plant likes/dislikes, experiences, etc.

Chairman's Letter

Welcome to the spring, this newsletter and a new year to enjoy. After 2015's brilliant display of late colour, last year's autumn was a bit of a let-down. Meon Orchard's first frost of 2015 arrived on 22 November, by which time everything had basically done its stuff. This time round, it looked promising with a few early frosts, but a -3°C on 8 November put that to an end. A number of deciduous trees with a reputation for good autumn displays just dumped their leaves overnight. The ginkgos were particularly affected, depositing a carpet of yellow on the grass.

The threat of very cold nights at the end of November into December was worrying and certainly caused us to gird our loins into getting everything a bit tender under cover; none of the complacency of the previous winter, when the first hard frost did not come until the end of January. Inevitably, in the absence of warm wet winds from the SW the second half of 2016 was remarkably dry – less than 50% of our normal rainfall. Again, we wait to see what we have lost; maybe the drier soil will have been helpful. As I write this on 19 February, after a balmy day in the garden, spring has definitely arrived. The sight of two Red Admirals taking nectar from *Daphne* 'Jacqueline Postill' was quite uplifting. If anything could



encourage these butterflies out of hibernation it would be the exquisite fragrance of this great plant.

A new year and a new programme of events. After the excellent talks and outings in 2016, your events committee have again come up with a top quality, varied programme. Details for the first half of the year are explained in more detail later in this newsletter. I am pleased to report that our application to visit the gardens of Buckingham Palace has been approved by the Queen. This will happen on 7th July, but will be limited to a group of 30.

I was able to report at our recent AGM, that your Group is financially very sound; and national figures, for 2016, indicate that the organisation as a whole pretty much broke even. We were pleased to be able to transfer £6000 to National Office, to assist in the general running of the charity. While some groups are losing members, our membership has slowly but steadily increased over the last six or seven years. So, I suggest we are getting quite a lot right. We much appreciate the support provided by Chris Kidd and Warren Gilchrist to Rosie Yeomans with collection administration. With Warren standing down, I explained that Rosie

needs more help. We were delighted that three members put up their hands as potential assistants. Great stuff. As usual, I requested help on the gates at the Plant Fair, and if you haven't already given your name to Gill Sawyer, and can spend an hour or two, then please let her know.

At the end of last year I stepped down as a trustee, after a 6 year stint. I am still involved in one of the reviews as to how the charity is run and in contact with the other trustees when I need to be; so I am still in a good position to represent your views.

One development I have been very much involved in is Persephone, the relatively new plant-recording system, designed to replace Demeter, and to provide national collection holders with an easy to use, secure, on-line facility to maintain their plant data. Persephone has now been accepted by the Board of Trustees as the preferred method of record-keeping for Collection Holders not using a commercial system such as Iris or BG Base. In the autumn 2015 newsletter I reported that we had 45 collections on the system. We have now uploaded 132, of which 105 are full national collections, with the details of just over 20,000 individual plants (accessions) recorded. For most of these plants we have checked the names against the RHS horticultural database and The Plant List and are now providing the RHS with lists in cases where we feel that their naming is inaccurate or incomplete. This is working extremely well and we are ironing out anomalies on both sides. Two Thirds of the Hampshire national collections have now been uploaded. If you are a national collection holder and would be interested in having your data stored on the system, please send me an email. The project is being run by just three of us: David and Penny Ross, from the Devon group, and me. If you think you might be interested in helping us, please let me know. Being such a small team, we now need to find more volunteers to assist.

I trust you enjoy reading this newsletter and thanks to all who have contributed. Juliet is always keen to receive snippets or full articles from members and their friends. We tend to be rather over-reliant on a small number of contributors, particularly those associated with the larger gardens such as Hilliers and Exbury. It would be good to hear more from members with smaller gardens and from other national collection holders. If you don't feel up to writing something yourself, but know someone who could, please pass their details on to Juliet.

If you are a Facebook user, you can find our pages by searching for 'Plant Heritage Hampshire and Isle of Wight Group'. The public group version allows you to upload material, please join the group and get composing. If not, then just look out for regular updates from Margaret during the year.

Have a great spring and summer.

Doug Smith, Chairman

Report on Autumn and Winter Events

Saturday 8 October 2016

Visit to Andrew Gaunt's National Collection of Hedychium.

A large glasshouse near Chichester houses Andrew Gaunt's National Collection of Hedychium. Andrew gave us a talk and then let us loose in his glorious collection of Ginger Lilies. The salient points he made were:

- *These are vigorous, greedy plants, often hardier than originally thought.*
- *They need plentiful water and feed in the growing season.*
- *Winter frosts will put them into dormancy, when they can be brought in to overwinter or, if left outside, they should be mulched.*
- *They are generally pest free, though some varieties can be susceptible to Red Spider Mite if grown inside.*
- *Most varieties come out of dormancy as temperatures rise above 10 degrees C but others may not emerge till summer.*
- *They can be propagated from fresh seed, or by splitting them while actively growing.*
- *Some varieties are harder to get into flower than others, e.g. *H. coronarium* and *H. gardnerianum*.*
- *Flowering starts in June with the earliest species, continuing till October/November, depending on the variety and the season.*

The following plants are the ones that were most stunning on the day of our visit:

H. 'Anne Bishop' 5' Very fragrant

H. chrysoleucum (ellipticum
x coronarium)

H. coccineum 'Form 4'

H. forrestii 'Paksong' 6-8'

H. 'Kahili Ann' 7' apricot yellow.

H. 'Kahili White' 3-7' scented, lemony.

H. maximum 6-9' fragrant, lemon yellow.

H. 'Mutant'

H. 'Orange Crush' 6' fragrant.

H. 'Syu-Rei' pale apricot with dark orange eye.

H. 'Tahitian Flame'.

H. villosum var tenuiflorum 3-4'.



Jill Wright

Saturday 12 November 2016

Social Evening and Talk by Jennifer Harmer 'Meet the Galanthophiles'

It was a great pleasure to welcome Jennifer, a long term friend of our group and its first treasurer, to talk to us about snowdrops. November is a grim month and thoughts of these white beauties gave us all hope for the early spring.



The common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, is a species with a very wide distribution, from the Pyrenees to Greece and as far north as Poland. Although it has been suggested that it may have arrived here with the Romans, it is more likely that it was introduced in the 16th century. Snowdrops were first naturalised in large gardens in the 18th century, and by the 19th a number of new species and forms appeared. They were featured in Rossetti paintings and were brought back from the Crimea by servicemen – the equivalent of the 20th century poppies perhaps.

In the mid-19th century, James Atkins, in partnership with John Jeyes, (him of the 'fluid') started mass plantings of snowdrops and alpinas. He is remembered for *Galanthus*. 'Atkinsii' (right). Another prominent galanthophile of the time was the Rev. Harpur-Crewe, who still has a wonderful display around his grave. At this stage they were all very cagey about origins and provenance.



James Allen from Shepton Mallet, a mill owner, bred snowdrops in huge numbers, most of which were sadly lost to a fungal disease. He introduced some excellent cultivars, the most famous being *Galanthus*



'Magnet' (left). Bringing us more up to date, Walter Butt (great name) became a snowdrop expert in the 1930s and grew a wide range. In 1947, a bleak and snowy winter, Winifrede Mathias, back from India with her husband after the war, became involved in snowdrop propagation, formed the Giant Snowdrop Company and showed them at RHS shows in

London in the 1950s. Medals were plentiful and the wide variety commercially available today really dates from this time. Ruby Baker, quite a character, was another great collector.

Traditionally, snowdrops were passed around between the landed gentry and therefore the preserve of the wealthy. This persisted until the 1950s when they became widely available to all, but some now at a considerable price!

Many thanks to Jennifer.

Thursday 29 January Talk by Barry Clarke on his trip to Australia.

Your group provided Barry with a bit of financial assistance towards his trip to Australia, looking for *Rubus* (8 known species) and *Lobelia* (23 known species), of which he holds National Collections. He found some of these, and much more. We were also made aware that he has developed a fascination with the genus *Melaleuca* (more later).



He flew to Perth, where the Kings Park Botanic Garden, a research hub and renowned repository of native plants, has one of the most diverse collections of the world's flora. Regrettably, the indigenous plants of this region of Australia are notoriously difficult to grow in the UK. Extremely nutrient deficient soil (builder's sand is, by comparison, quite rich), perfect drainage, a Mediterranean climate, good air movement and freedom from frost is difficult to emulate here, even under cover. An exception may be the

Kangaroo Paws (*Anigozanthos*). There are a number of species, all endemic to SW Australia, and a range of cultivars have been produced (above left one of the 'Bush Landscape' series) which are worth a try.

Interestingly, there is a native *Lobelia*, botanically *L. tenuir* (right). A plant, marketed commercially under the name, 'Blue Wings' (either under *L. tenuior* or *L. erinus*) as a tender annual and a candidate for hanging baskets, would appear to be one and the same. Barry eventually found it growing in the wild.



It was in the south west that he found the first of the melaleucas, of which there are some 600 species. Now for a conundrum: historically we were used to two closely related genera: *Callistemon*, the bottlebrushes (usually red flowered), and *Melaleuca*, the honey myrtles or paperbarks (with a wide range of flower colour, such as pinks, purples, oranges and yellows). The two groups have in common the fact that the flower heads consist of groups of individual flowers that feature colourful stamens. Generations of horticulturists and gardeners have learnt that the difference between the two is that the stamens in *Melaleuca* are in little bundles while they are free in

Callistemon. It sounds simple, but apparently some species do not fit neatly into this differentiation, such as the weeping bottlebrush (*C. viminalis* - left), where the stamens are all united together at the base. This is now more correctly known as *Malaleuca viminalis*. It looks as though the rest of the genus may well move with it into *Malaleuca*.



Flying on to Tasmania he found two which are indigenous to this island, *M. virens* (syn. *C. viridiflorus*) and *M.*



pustulata (right). Both can be considered hardy in parts of the UK. While the latter tends to grow closer to the sea, the former is a higher altitude plant and probably the easiest for us to grow. Both are attractive shrubs up to about 4m tall.



He also found more Tasmanian endemics. *Telopea truncata*, (Tasmanian waratah) (left) is a member of the *Protea* family and, given the right conditions hardy in the milder parts of the UK. An established specimen grew for many years at the Hillier Gardens. The two species of *Richea*, *R. dracophylla* and *R. pandanifolia* (below), members of the *Ericaceae*, are

difficult. The latter is more reminiscent of a yucca than a heather. It grows in mountainous regions, and by rights should be hardy. Propagation material is difficult to obtain and seeds need to be extremely fresh. The challenge may be our excessive summer heat!

Finally, on to New South Wales, with views of Sydney opera house and the close-by botanic garden. A trip to the Wollami National park was included, but Barry, like other visitors, was not allowed anywhere near the source of the famed Wollami Pine. On this leg of the trip he came across some *Rubus* and close to the coast a lobelia which may be a new, undescribed species.



During his talk Barry also presented some of the fauna of the country including wombats, echidnas, galah cockatoos and the pademelon, a type of kangaroo. Many thanks Barry for a fascinating evening and we look forward to hearing from you after your next trip, to wherever it may be.

Saturday 11 February 2017
AGM and talk by Chris Lane.
A Marriage made in Heaven or “What did Arnold Promise”

Once the business part of the meeting was completed and refreshments taken, we were treated to a talk by a renowned plantsman, who is a member of the RHS Woody Plant Committee and the holder of four National Plant Collections. Chris Lane owns the Witch Hazel Nursery and is the UK expert on the genus.

There are six species of this genus, four found in North America and two in the far-east: *Hamamelis mollis* and *Hamamelis japonica*, respectively the Chinese and Japanese witch hazels. He restricted his talk to the hybrids between *H. mollis* and *H. japonica*, known as *Hamamelis x intermedia*. He described the story of how these hybrids developed, starting with ‘Arnold Promise’ (left), one of the earliest



crosses, made at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston USA (note Arnold, not Arnold’s). All these hybrids are fully hardy in the UK. By way of introduction Chris explained that after 2 nights at -18°C, in the winter of 1979, the flowers on his plants had ‘shut down’ but re-opened undamaged. Apparently the petals contain their own anti-freeze

The main centres of *Hamamelis* breeding have been Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, the last being credited with the best ‘burnt orange’ flowers. Flower colour ranges from palest lemon to deep maroon with the oranges in between. ‘Jelena’ (right) is a particularly good red flowering form. The yellows



are the most highly scented. These scents are quite distinctive and a connoisseur could easily separate *H. ‘Pallida’* from *H. ‘Arnold Promise’*. All produce good autumn colour, those with more red in the flowers produce the better range of orange and red autumn leaves, ‘Diane’ being one of the best (left), although ‘Arnold Promise’ does have more than just the normal golden yellow. Habit is also variable, from very wide spreading forms (more towards the *H. mollis* end of the spectrum) to upright, vase shaped habit (closer to *H. japonica*)

The following currently hold an RHS Award of Garden Merit:
‘Angelly’, ‘Arnold Promise’, ‘Barmstedt Gold’, ‘Diane’, ‘Jelena’, ‘Pallida’

Linda and Doug Smith

Future Events

Thursday 2 March 2017

Talk by David Stone on 'The Conservation of Historic Rose Varieties at Mottisfont'.

David will cover his experiences during the years of his stewardship of the Mottisfont National Collection. He was Head Gardener from 1978 to 2014, working closely with Graham Stuart Thomas for much of this time. This subject was to be covered by Jonny Bass last year. As he has now moved on to Broadlands, David has kindly agreed to talk on the subject this year. We couldn't ask for a more knowledgeable speaker on the gardens

Time: 7.30 pm at Shawford Village Hall.

Saturday 22 April 2017

Visit to Ben & Paddy Parmee's garden, 179 Hursley Road Chandler's Ford. SO53 1JH.

Ben and Paddy are active members of the Hampshire AGS and have the most amazing garden containing a wide range of plants including a huge collection of alpines, plus herbaceous plants, trees, a beautiful vegetable plot and a hydroponic system in the greenhouse. Teas and cakes available. Donation requested.

Directions: Hursley Road (B3043) runs north from Chandler's Ford to Hursley Park in Cuckoo Bushes Lane, a turning just north of the house.

Time: Meet at 2pm.

Monday Bank Holiday 1 May 2017

GRAND PLANT FAIR. Longstock Park Nursery SO20 6EH

Our main fund-raising event of the year, probably the most prestigious Plant Fair in the south of England, held in conjunction with Longstock Park Nursery and attended by over 30 specialist nurseries. Members' plant stall, hog roast, teas, beer tent and live music. Ample free parking. Please bring clearly labelled plants for our sales table. Entry: Free to members, and children, John Lewis employees £2, General public adults £5.

Directions: Longstock is signposted from Stockbridge: turn R at north end of the High Street. From all directions, follow AA signs.

Time: 10.00am - 4.00pm.

Nursery and Tea Rooms open all day.

Tuesday 20 June 2017

Visit to Colemore House Gardens, (4 miles south of Alton). GU34 3RX.

A lovely 4 acre garden with many different 'rooms' featuring a wide variety of unusual plants. The owners, Mr & Mrs de Zoete, propagate and sell plants not widely available elsewhere. The garden is continually evolving; as the owners work to increase their diversity of plants. New areas include a woodland walk, grass

gardens and an arboretum. Simon de Zoete will give an introductory talk.
Donations please, for entry and teas.

Directions: Turn east off the A32 just south of East Tisted along Shell Lane, park on the grass verge near Colemore Church.

Time: Meet at 2.30 pm.

Friday 7th July 2017

Visit to Buckingham Palace gardens

A guided tour of the garden with Head Gardener Mark Lane, to include the National collection of Morus (Mulberry) and other developing plant collections. Entry will be Free as we are a Plant Heritage group. Numbers restricted to 30. Please book a place with Gill Sawyer as names have to be submitted in advance.

Meet outside the Queen's Gallery in Buckingham Palace Road at 1.30pm for security checks, entry at 2.00pm.

Sunday 3 September 2017

AUTUMN PLANT SALE at Meon Orchard, Kingsmead, Nr Wickham. PO17 5AU.

A visit to Doug and Linda Smith's garden, in conjunction with their NGS Open Day. 2 acre Garden planted with a huge array of exotic plants, including three National Collections. Specialist nursery stalls and members' plants, 20 acre meadow and ½ mile of river Meon bank. Please bring plants for sale.

Members and children free, general public £5. Home-made teas. Ample parking.

Directions: A32 north from Wickham for 1½ miles, turn left at Roebuck Inn, garden in ½ mile. Follow NGS yellow signs.

Time: 2.00pm - 6.00pm.

Later events will be published in the Autumn newsletter.

In case anyone had a problem printing off this year's events leaflet, emailed out in January, with the calling notice for the AGM, a paper version is enclosed with this newsletter.

New Members

The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Group welcomes the following new members. We look forward to meeting you at some of our events.

*Steve Austin, Ashley Basil, Joy Evans,
Stephanie Holloway, Clare Leonty, Eve McBride,
Jo Ransom, Karen Spencer.*

An introduction: Thomas Clarke, newly appointed Head Gardener at Exbury Gardens

Like a lot of young people, after a fairly unspectacular school career, I found myself wondering what on earth I was going to do for the next 50 or so years.



I had always loved the outdoors and had a lifelong fascination with natural history, so in order to occupy my time I decided to volunteer at a local National Trust property. I was initially disappointed to hear that the Warden's department didn't need anyone, but fortunately for me the gardens did. I had never considered horticulture as a career; even now

horticulture is woefully under-represented as a career choice. What a revelation: after a few weeks working under the guidance of the head gardener I became convinced that this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I was lucky enough to be selected for the National Trust's Apprenticeship Programme. Whilst most of my friends were amassing huge student debts I was being paid to go to college and spend my working day in the newly restored walled gardens at Calke Abbey. I could not believe my luck. Since graduation I have had the opportunity to work in some of the greatest gardens in the country.

The next big turning point for me was when I applied for a post at Trelissick Gardens on the banks of the Fal estuary in Cornwall. I was immediately plunged into a sub-tropical world, as plants from throughout the world's temperate zones thrive in the sheltered woodland gardens along Cornwall's south coast. This is where my lifelong interest in rhododendrons,



amongst many other genera, started. A mature *R. sinogrande* in full flower is not easily forgotten. It was also my interest in all things Himalayan which led to my friendship with John Anderson, my predecessor as Head Gardener at Exbury and current Keeper of the Gardens at Windsor Great Park. Over the next six years I was lucky enough to visit the remote mountains of north east India on three separate occasions with John, which gave me the opportunity to see plants I have come to know well from gardens at home, growing naturally in vast unruly unspoilt forests. This was truly life-changing.

If I am completely honest I thought I would spend the rest of my horticultural career tending to the gardens at Trelissick, but you never know what is around the corner. When John announced his move to Windsor, and after a lot of



deliberation, my family and I decided that I should apply and at least consider relocating to the New Forest. My interest was piqued, for Exbury has one of the finest collections of rhododendrons in the UK and is internationally renowned for its woody plants, but the draw of my

Cornish life was still very strong. I was interviewed in early May and was blown away by the spectacle of the mature-woodland setting with countless rhododendrons, both hybrids and species. There were endless drifts of azaleas, all softened by a fantastic collection of acers, birches and dozens of other deciduous trees and shrubs, all under-planted with swathes of native wild flowers and bulbs. The effect was second to none, and I decided there and then that the Head Gardener's position at Exbury was my top priority. After several nerve-wracking interviews, we were on the move.

I can honestly say that I enjoy my work now even more than when I started out as a volunteer over 26 years ago. I am constantly reminded how fortunate I am as I walk to work through the Gardens each morning, watching the sun rise through the trees. I was once told that if you find a job you love you will never have to work again. This is definitely true in my case.

Thomas Clarke, Head Gardener, Exbury Gardens

Photos: With John in India; *Rhododendron macabeanum*; the Wiggly tree at Exbury

Plant Heritage Superheroes to the Rescue

We all have injuries or health problems from time to time, and at the time of writing (November 2016) I am recovering from a prolapsed disc, and trying my best not to lift or carry. This isn't easy when the seasons are changing, the weather is turning cool, and it's high time to put my greenhouse to bed for the winter. It's easy to put off for another day when you might have the odd plant of no significance here and there, but as I look after the National Collection of *Crassula* species then I can't afford to hang about for too many cold nights. Luckily I can call upon the very valued help of Plant Heritage's superheroes to help to get the job done. Under the coordination skills of Rosie Yeomans the word was put out, and very soon I had help at hand.

Day 1 saw the greenhouse emptied completely; this included the 400+ plants from the National Collection, another 30+ succulent plants, innumerable pots and



potting-on equipment, and the usual pile of tat that seems to go in and out of the greenhouse every year, mainly for sentimental reasons. It's always a good time too to give each plant a little makeover after the summer months, remove any dead leaves or stalks, check for mealy bugs, and top up with horticultural

grit. I borrow a collapsible gazebo each year, so the plants spent the night under canvas looking at the stars and wondering when it's going to get warm again. The greenhouse is then hoovered to remove all the dead flies and spider webs and then the whole thing is given a power wash. When the mist from the power wash subsides, my husband Martin starts to put up the insulation. This consists of sheets of 4mm thin-wall polycarbonate, cut to shape and attached to the bolt channels in each upright. It's all very organised, and each piece is carefully labelled so that it can be fitted each year reasonably easily. All that takes time. We have to work fast to finish in the daylight so that there is sufficient time for the greenhouse to dry off over-night.

Day 2 sees everything going back in - a little more complicated this year as I recently decided to reorganise the collection using the sections and subsections laid out by Toelken in his monograph "A Revision of the Genus *Crassula* in

Southern Africa". For the National Collection this makes sense, as plants are organised according to their morphology rather than any arbitrary system.

The team of superheroes did a sterling job and coped well with having to read labels of plants they had never heard of before, as well as working within a tiny space (the greenhouse is only 3m square; having more than one person inside at a time is a bit like playing one of those games where tiles are moved one at a time on a board to make a picture).

By mid-afternoon the job was done. We enjoyed a lunch of Jamie Oliver's Tomato Soup, home-made bread and lemon drizzle cake. It was nice to chat to my helpers and to learn what each was doing. After lunch I shared my knowledge of Persephone (where all the data for National Collections are stored) and how to link it up to a Brother label printer.

As a National Collection holder I am extremely grateful for the help that is at hand. It is comforting to know that when you are in a pickle there is always someone to help sort it out. As a member of Hampshire's Plant Heritage I hope it gives food for thought for those members who do not have a collection but are wondering how they can get involved. There is always something that needs doing! Thank you to friends old and new - Rosie, Margaret, Joy and Jeff.

Amanda Whitaker, National Collection Holder of Crassulas



Celebrating Herbaceous Plants

I adore herbaceous perennials. I think there is something astonishing about the fact that a few dead sticks in the ground can produce a plant that might grow to 10ft during the summer and produce fantastic foliage, flowers and seed heads before disappearing for a well-earned rest in the winter. There is such a huge variety of shapes, colours, and textures and most herbaceous plants are hardy, pest and disease free and, even if you do nothing to them, will come back year after year.

Of course, 'doing nothing' is not really an option for most of us gardeners, and the truth is that herbaceous beds are pretty high maintenance, requiring staking, weeding, dead heading, dividing and mulching in order to keep them looking good. But isn't it all worth it when you see a herbaceous border at its glorious summer best?

Exbury Gardens is known for its rhododendrons and azaleas, camellias and magnolias which create a mass of spring colour. But we also have large areas of herbaceous plants which provide colour and interest throughout the summer and autumn when much of the garden is a tapestry of greens provided by the shrubs and splendid trees.

The largest herbaceous area is near the house and has a mixture of grasses and herbaceous perennials. Rather than traditional linear borders, it comprises a number of island beds, some surrounded by gravel paths, the rest by lawn. This gives a pleasing contrast of backgrounds and to an extent the planting reflects this, often with subjects more suited to drier conditions in the gravelled areas.

These beds were made about 15 years ago. The area was formerly a plant centre and the ground had a deep base of hardcore to support traffic. Rather than dig all this out and replace with topsoil, a large and costly business, the solution was to pile about 18" of soil and well-rotted manure on to the designated bed shapes so that they were raised rather than at ground level. A thin layer of soil was added where the turf paths were laid, and gravel put in between the other beds - simple! We have recently added another bed to the area using this method and the plants have quickly become established.

And so to the plants...

The majority of the original planting is still in the beds, but inevitably some things have died, or been removed because they are hooligans. This gives a chance to introduce a few new things each year to keep visitors (and staff) interested. It is generally held that herbaceous plants should be divided and replanted every three years to keep them fresh, but with such a large area, we tend to leave most of the plants to form really big clumps and only divide or reduce them as necessary. A good example of this is *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', a wonderful plant growing to around 6' tall with a mass of lemon yellow flowers in August & September, but it is

extremely vigorous and this autumn will have to be drastically reduced. (Look out for some plants at your next sale).

In choosing plants, I always think of what my horticulture tutor said: "In an ideal world herbaceous plants should have three qualities - they won't need staking; they will have a long flowering season; and they will 'die nicely'". We all know that such plants are few and far between, but many answer two out the three criteria; inevitably the rest will be made up of things which are one or none of the above but which we cannot live without - more of that later.

Bearing those criteria in mind, here are some plants which I love and/or do well here. It is by no means exhaustive, my apologies if *your* favourites are not here!

***Aquilegia* spp** - so many to choose from: 'Magpie' has deep purple spurs with a white centre and can be grown from seed. Lovely for early flowering in between later plants.

Allium* spp** - great value with stunning seed heads held until the autumn winds dislodge them. The most dramatic is *A.schubertii*, (left) like an exploding firework. Also ***Nectaroscordum* (syn. *Allium*) *siculum - tall stems bearing clusters of dropping salmon pink flowers, and the seed heads turn upwards afterwards. The bumblebees adore these.



Papaver orientale varieties - oriental poppies give a lovely blast of colour early in the season. 'Turkenlouis' (right)



is one of the boldest with fringed red petals. Plant something in between to fill the space later as the poppies die down.



Alchemilla mollis (Lady's Mantle) - an old cottage garden favourite with a froth of acid green flowers in July. A great edging plant, but needs cutting back as soon as flowers start to brown off and look unsightly (i.e. they don't 'die nicely'). Sadly no second flowering.

Digitalis lutea (left)- much quieter than the typical foxgloves, shorter spikes of pale yellow flowers are best in a mass. Seeds around freely.

***Geranium* spp** - the Geranium family is vast, with one for every situation and soil type. The earliest start flowering in May (*G.phaem*, *G.macrorrhizum*) while many go through into the autumn (*G.*

'Rozanne'). *G. psilostemon* with magenta flowers and black eye is always striking in flower and the leaves turn scarlet in autumn.

***Delphinium* spp** - these can be tricky to start with as young plants do get chewed by slugs. But once established they are glorious and a must for a herbaceous border. Staking is essential and dead heading encourages a second flowering.



'Black Eyed Angels' is stunning - white with a black eye.

Erigeron karvinskianus (left)- this great edging plant makes neat mounds covered with masses of tiny white daisies all summer long.

Cynara cardunculus - Cardoons. These artichoke-like architectural plants are the most remarked upon in our borders, growing 10 - 12ft with massive purple thistles beloved by the bees. The seed

heads hold for months but the tall stems need serious staking against the winds. Only for a large garden.

***Agapanthus* spp** - these marvellous plants are well known locally thanks to Patrick Fairweather's great collection, well worth a visit on his open weekend (details follow this article). The flowers (ranging from navy blue to white with all combinations between) are followed by pretty seed heads. Some have weak stems and may need support.

***Echinacea* spp** - Cone Flower - these don't like to be too wet in winter and new plants don't always make it through, but once established will hold their daisy flowers for ages. Lots of good pinks to choose from, some whites, and now yellow, red and orange available, though some are temperamental. 'Harvest Moon' (right) is a lovely light yellow.



***Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum'** - Bronze Fennel. This lovely light and airy plant has yellow umbels above feathery bronze foliage. It seeds everywhere but is easy to remove when small.



Gaura lindheimeri 'Whirling Butterflies' (left)- well named for masses of delicate white flowers from July to September. Weak stems and not terribly hardy but so pretty.

***Penstemon* spp** - not strictly herbaceous but such fantastic value, penstemons will flower from July until autumn, especially if dead

headed regularly. Loads to choose from, but the Pensham range make good bushy plants. Cut back hard in spring to prevent them getting woody.

***Crocoshia* spp** - Again, lots to choose from: old favourites include deep scarlet 'Lucifer', (left) two toned 'Emily McKenzie' and 'Solfaterre' with bronze leaves and apricot-yellow flowers. They do spread and when too dense often flop over, so thinning out now and then helps, but they are notoriously difficult to get rid of if you want to make a change.



***Kniphophia* spp** - regular dead heading keeps the pokers going for weeks. 'Bee's Lemon' is a pale yellow favourite, and 'John May' is late flowering with masses of tawny orange pokers above blue green leaves. The bees love these plants and cleverly make a little hole at the base of the flower tubes to reach the nectar.

Dahlias - having something of a renaissance these days, dahlias are fantastic value, flowering from July to the first frosts. Particular favourites are 'Pooh' (right) - yellow with an orange centre, much beloved by bees and butterflies, and 'Julie One', with narrow bicoloured petals. Also the 'Bishop' series are all good and easy. We leave all our dahlias in the ground and protect with some bark mulch, and they have formed really big clumps now. Some varieties need support - I use link stakes - and weekly dead heading keeps them flowering all season. They get a good dressing of well-rotted manure in spring as they are greedy plants. Visit Gilbert's Dahlias to see a fantastic range of varieties in flower.



***Aconitum* 'Stainless Steel'** (Monk's Hood) - *Aconitum* has had a bad press because the whole plant is poisonous and care should be taken when working with it. But I love it and this variety is well named, having steel grey flowers late in the summer.

***Anemone* spp** - 'Bressingham Glow' is a semi double deep pink, but any of the varieties are lovely. Flowering July to September and trouble free, but they are great spreaders so give them a good space.

Ligularia spp - these like a damp situation but seem to manage well in our drier beds. *L. wilsoniana* is the largest, with leaves the size of dinner plates and a flower spike over 6ft tall covered in a mass of starry yellow daisies. The seeds are also starry so it remains decorative well into the autumn. Ligularias are a martyr to slugs but I use nematodes to control these, watering them in as the leaves appear, and they are very effective.



Ceratostigma plumbaginoides (left) - a neat edging plant which spreads slowly. Vivid cornflower blue flowers are followed by stunning scarlet autumn foliage.

Rudbeckia spp - in August and September these are the stars of the garden. 'Goldsturm' is deep gold with black centres which hold through the

winter, and 'Herbstonne' is 6ft tall but self supporting with bright yellow flowers.

Sedum spp - loved by all for the late show of flowers with seed heads looking good all winter. Adored by the bees and butterflies, 'Autumn Joy' is still my favourite.

Aster spp - asters are wonderful for late summer colour, but an awful lot of them are great spreaders and need staking. Mildew-resistant varieties are commonly available these days. Well behaved are *Aster divaricatus* (right) - tiny white flowers - which does well in light shade; 'Alma Potschke' - a mass of vulgar salmon pink daisies; and 'Purple Dome' - exactly that.



And finally, in praise of paeonies ...

Paeonies are one of those plants which fit none of my tutor's criteria.

They have a very short flowering season, they always need staking, and often the leaves blacken off later and look unsightly until the plant dies back completely. But when those great pompoms and powder puffs appear, what joy! I fall in love again and all is forgiven.

Happy herbaceous gardening!

Linda Runnacles, Exbury Gardens

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Non-native Invasive Plants

Everyone knows of the horrors of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*): rhizomes that can extend for 7m, shoots that can force their way through concrete, its ability to regenerate from tiny pieces. Many other troublesome non-natives are associated with waterways and can be found locally in the New Forest. Since April 2014 five invasive plants have been banned from sale in England: Creeping Water Primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*), Water Fern (*Azolla filiculoides*), Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), and Floating Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), all from South, Central or North America, as well as New Zealand Pygmy Weed (*Crassula helmsii*). Introduced into the wild from garden ponds, not all of them are widespread, but they all have the potential to do enormous harm by crowding out native plants, clogging up waterways, increasing the risk of floods, and damaging the ecosystem.

Other well known bank side undesirables include Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) (left) from the Himalayas



and Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) from the Caucasus.

Strenuous and expensive efforts are made by the environmental authorities to eliminate or control all these plants. In our area the New Forest Non-native Plants Project, supported by Natural England, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Forestry Commission and several other bodies,

organises practical and awareness-raising events.

Many other well known and desirable garden plants are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildside and Countryside Act. This schedule makes it an offence for them to be grown in the wild. Although *Rhododendron ponticum* is a commonly seen invasive shrub I was surprised to see such stalwarts as *Rhododendron luteum*, *Rosa rugosa* and *Gunnera tinctoria* listed. Several species of Cotoneaster, including *C. horizontalis*, *microphyllus* and *integrifolius* are also on the list. I was less surprised to see *Allium triquetrum*, which spreads like wildfire in gardens, as does Variegated Yellow Archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum*), a plant I've been trying to eliminate almost since the time I planted it. Montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiflora*) is another obvious one, often found along grass verges. Although not listed, Agapanthus is something to be careful with; in some countries varieties of Agapanthus are considered to be too invasive. In New Zealand *Agapanthus praecox* is classified as an environmental weed, although moves to have it added to their National Pest Plant Accord have come up against opposition from gardeners.

The main point to take from all this is that no garden plant should ever be dumped or allowed to escape into the wild. We gardeners should be extremely careful about disposal: burning, composting or putting unwanted plants in the Council green waste bin are recommended ways; passing excess invasive plants on to others is not. Special care is needed with pond plants: it's a good idea to rinse any aquatic plants you buy over a bucket and dispose of the water onto your own compost heap or flowerbeds, thus ensuring there are no unwanted "hitchhikers". Tipping pond water down land drains or into local ponds allows fragments to regenerate and spread into the environment.

Juliet Bloss, Editor

The Garden at Brandy Mount House - 6th February 2017

Visiting gardens in February is risky, but after a light frost, which caused my snowdrops to dip their heads, the day warmed up a bit and the weather was bright, if not sunny, for our visit.



Michael Baron's garden at Brandy Mount House is always a pleasure to visit but snowdrop time is exceptional. This year the snowdrops looked fantastic and the garden itself looks really good with its new crescent-shaped beds that Michael has dug alongside the paths: ideal for displaying and viewing

snowdrops. Our visit was well timed as, although some snowdrops come into flower as early as September, we saw them in profusion, perhaps at their best.

Besides snowdrops there was much else of interest: daphnes and *Hamamelis* coming into flower, cyclamen and crocus growing in beds near the house, with *Eranthis* in the grass around trees. Also looking good were lovely early *Narcissus* tucked up in the alpine house and cold frames, some of Caryl's favourites. One of the most charming parts of the garden is always the area around the pond and the snowdrops here were looking exquisite. Even the new beds in the vegetable plot looked immaculate, with the raspberry canes cut down and ready for the new season.

Michael's book, *The Garden at Brandy Mount House*, was available to look at and buy. The book not only contains a fascinating account of the development of the garden by Michael and Caryl, but also describes the friends they made along the way and their travels to see plants in the wild. The Hampshire Plant Heritage

Group made a donation towards the publication of the book which is published by the Alpine Garden Society.



If you would like a copy of Michael's book please contact Lynsey Pink and she can arrange for you to get it for £25.50. As the list price is £32.00, this is a special discount for Plant Heritage members.

Gill Sawyer, Events Secretary

Photo: Galanthus 'Sutton Courtenay' by Paddy Hinton

Propagation Workshop

Another meeting of the Propagation Group took place at John and Lynsey Pink's house on Saturday 24 September.



Several people brought cutting material from home and Rosie Yeomans gave a talk and demonstration on the best way to achieve results with various shrubs and herbaceous perennials. Some of the plants used were *Hydragea paniculata*, *Pelargonium* spp., *Sedum* spp, *Penstemon* spp. and *Olearia* spp. among others. We hope the results will be available for the Spring Plant Sale.

A collection of seed trays containing seeds collected by Chris Chadwell and sown by Peter Catt were distributed for overwintering amongst the attendees.

The great value of these sessions is that it encourages people to have a go. Materials are provided, expert advice is given by Rosie, so what's not to like? If you haven't already been, do come along to the next session and experience a profitable and enjoyable afternoon.

Juliet Bloss, Editor

The Winter Garden 2017

The Winter Garden at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens has a good balance of evergreen and deciduous woody plants interspersed with a mixed range of perennials and bulbs. Shrubby winter-stem colour plays an important role, together with the coloured barks of ornamental trees, which have such appeal when laid bare. Scent also carries on a light breeze and catches you unawares as you stroll through the area which is a delight. On a cold winter's day plants are rimed with frost and laden with dew, and shafts of low winter sunlight filter through to bring the picture alive, making this part of the gardening year so special.

Winter gardens have become deservedly popular in a number of UK gardens, and we ourselves now receive an increasing number of visitors, particularly since our Winter Garden was expanded three years ago. In keeping with the original garden master plan, the Winter Garden has a hard surfaced circular footpath with a soft grass approach through the middle; this works well in all seasons, including during periods of inclement weather. At the far end mature pine trees had become increasingly frail and needed to be removed in the interest of visitor safety. However, their loss provided a large space for new planting opportunities and a much better approach to the children's tree house; more importantly it revealed a lovely view through to the adjacent Pinetum, which was planted by Sir Harold Hillier nearly fifty years ago but had long been partially hidden, obscured by overgrown evergreen shrubs.

People used to enter the Gardens and enquire where the Winter Garden could be



found, because it was tucked away around the corner, partially out of sight. To overcome this and create a clearer, vibrant sense of arrival, new plantings of *Salix* and *Cornus* were established in large colourful groups which are now impossible to miss. Red *Cornus*

alba 'Sibirica', yellow *Salix alba* 'Golden Ness', the red/orange *Salix alba* 'Yelvertori' and yellow/red *Cornus sanguinea* 'Winter Flame' light up the scene. The large groups help to deliver a simple, bold effect as you enter or leave the Winter Garden, and white-stemmed *Betula utilis* cultivars rise above them to provide a

very effective colour contrast. On the opposite side a more recent planting uses two different types of *Tilia*: *T. cordata* 'Winter Orange' and *T. platyphyllos* 'Aurea', which will be coppiced in due course to provide two different colour tones, i.e. red-budded orange stems and a more subtle olive-green. *Tilia* is underused at present compared with the different forms of *Salix* or *Cornus*; an accompanying simple groundcover carpet of the snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, is all that is required.

As you turn the corner a mature hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*, has a lovely oval outline at this time of year, although it casts a dense dry shade throughout the summer. However, during February snowdrops still manage to push their way through to mix informally with the cyclamen. I love their marbled foliage and short stubby rich pink flowers with a purple blotch to their mouth; a perfect choice to mingle with the snowdrops and much to the enjoyment of our visitors. Nearby, winter aconites, *Eranthis hyemalis*, catch your eye with their bright yellow blooms at the base of red-stemmed *Cornus*. They often appear before the first snowdrops yet somehow fail to achieve similar recognition or popularity although they too help denote the start of a new season.

Scent from a nearby semi-evergreen *Daphne bholua* is impossible to ignore; its many small white, mauve-reverse flowers boast twenty or more in each terminal cluster.

However, of all the daphnes 'Jacqueline Postill' is still one of the most desirable of winter-flowering shrubs. It was bred by Hillier Nurseries propagator Alan Postill from a seedling of *Daphne bholua* 'Gurkha' and



named for his wife. Dense clusters of star-shaped flowers appear purplish-pink in bud, opening to white flushed-pink, while at the same time imparting a very rich and pleasant fragrance amid semi-evergreen foliage. On the opposite side of the path stands another rare deciduous shrubby character with densely bristled stems; this is a *Lonicera setifera*, with white and pink flowers carried on naked stems in small, nodding clusters delivering a sweet, subtle scent.

There are a number of *Cornus* cultivars in the Winter Garden, ranging from the



vibrant orange/yellow and red of *C. sanguinea* 'Winter Beauty' to the olive green/yellow tones of *C. 'Flaviramea'*, and from *C. 'Bud's Yellow'* to the red *C. alba* 'Sibirica'. They all play their part, but another star of the show has to be *Cornus sanguinea* 'Anny's Winter Orange' (left), whose shoots are flushed orange-red in

winter and always deliver a good display. It is quite a vigorous cultivar which suckers freely, but can be divided easily.

Evergreens are an important structural element of the Winter Garden, especially the architectural conifers, mahonias, linear phormiums, long-flowering *Skimmia* 'Kew Green', bamboos or compact pines, each having their own shape or individuality. Among the pines *P. mugo* 'Winter Gold' is very good, fading from summer green to a winter golden-yellow; it goes well as a foreground planting against dark-foliaged *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Apollo' and a background curtain of bamboo foliage. A more recent introduction, *Pinus contorta* 'Chief Joseph', is probably the best smaller-scale pine to date and worth seeking out. The foliage is a rich vibrant deep yellow, and this plant is quite outstanding sitting comfortably above a carpet of heathers, where it appreciates the acid soil.

There are several *Rubus* cultivars in the Winter Garden; the best of all the white *Rubus* has to be the species *R. biflorus* (right), a vigorous sharply thorned character with a very attractive vivid white, waxy bloom on arching stems. *R. 'Golden Vale'* is a more subdued



relation in colour and growth but looks so good next to an inky black carpet of the grass-like *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens'. I like the shape and outline of

such plants, which leap to the fore when laid bare. Likewise the Japanese wineberry, *Rubus phoenicolasius*, is another conspicuous shrub with red, bristling, arching stems; it deserves a space in any winter garden.

Stem quality continues vertically, with several bamboo cultivars such as the clump forming *Phyllostachys nigra*, which enjoys a sunny corner. The culms are green during their first season but change to black in the second year. In complete contrast are the golden yellow/striped green canes of *Phyllostachys vivax* f. *aureocaulis* which, again, are clump-forming. Far more vigorous is the yellow groove bamboo, *Phyllostachys aureosulcata* f. *spectabilis*, a striking form which becomes yellow with an alternating narrow green band on the groove. It is particularly energetic and has little difficulty growing through the tarmac footpath; it therefore requires an annual root prune to curtail its marching growth. The genus *Borinda* is a relative newcomer, and several cultivars are now commercially available. Of particular note is *B. papyrifera* (left), which has ghostly blue-white stems. Our plant is now 2.5 metres high and has been lightly crown-lifted to reveal the appealing stem colour, which really does have an air of special quality and presence.



I always enjoy spending a quiet ten minutes in the Winter Garden from time to time, as it is so rewarding to see the recent plantings establishing so well. I appreciate the efforts made by our horticultural team who deserve great credit. People no longer need to ask where the Winter Garden is, as the fruits of our labours speak for themselves. These notes may hopefully encourage you to visit before too long: I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

**David Jewell, Head of collections
Sir Harold Hillier Gardens**

photos: Matt Pringle

Sparsholt at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2017

Mighty Greens

Our display intends to show a range of edible plants used in green salad mixtures, together with the development of Watercress, *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*, from the traditional Victorian street snack to cutting edge work at the University of Southampton into cancer prevention. The garden is divided into three sections: growing, preparation (kitchen) and dining. Edible plants will be used in the dining area to add colour and interest.

The RHS theme for 2016 was Health and Wellbeing, which we are continuing into 2017, working with our major sponsors, Steve's Leaves and the University of Southampton.

We are going to highlight the health benefits of growing and consuming a range of salad mixtures regularly, together with showcasing cutting edge scientific research.

The exhibit will include: Watercress, *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*, including a range of new forms; a range of lettuce *Lactuca sativa* cultivars, including crisp types (Batvian) and curled-leaf cultivars; a range of Endive *Cichorium endiva* cultivars, including both frisee and scarole types; a range of oriental greens, including Chinese Cabbage cultivars *Brassica rapa* var, *perkinensis*; Red-Veined Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*; Orach *Atriplex* 'Scarlet Emperor' and Mustard *Sinapis alba*.

The design and build is undertaken by a group of 8 City & Guilds Level 3 Horticultural Year 2 students to bring together all their skills as a live project towards the end of their current course, before progressing into Higher Education or employment.

Chris Bird, Sparsholt College



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