

# SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2021



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*The cover photo is of Liquidamber styraciflua in Jude Law's garden at Stradbroke.*

# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

*MAGGIE THORPE*

I am so pleased to be able to report on a highly successful Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall in May. Two wonderful sunny days making us feel that the world was definitely returning to normal. Tickets for the Autumn Fair will not be limited or timed so I look forward to seeing you all there. To save queueing, go on line and book now – [www.helmingham.com/events](http://www.helmingham.com/events).

This year, as a great conservation project, we are giving away 800 packets of seed of Tulipa sprengeri, the amazing scarlet tulip fringed by a touch of gold, native to Turkey and lost in cultivation there.

Also from October we are looking forward to seeing everyone back in the Hall at Stowupland. Every effort will be made to ensure you are safe according to Government guidelines. If you have any problems or particular needs, do give me a ring.

The propagation team have been limited to a few people at a time as we operate in small spaces. Hopefully we shall be able to remedy this before long.

Please do help us to increase our membership. Bring your friends along to meet us at Stowupland. We have one of England's most famous gardeners, Fergus Garrett, coming to talk to us in March, and we welcome guests. Tickets will go on sale in the New Year.

Best wishes for a Covid-free winter and although early, I wish you a Happy Christmas.

**Contributions for the Spring  
Suffolk Group Journal wanted by  
10th January 2022. Please send to  
[rosieansell@aol.com](mailto:rosieansell@aol.com)**

# MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

*ISOBEL ASHTON*

We trust you have enjoyed some of the amazing webinars made available over the past months – and still some to come – keep an eye on the national website. Many excellent county organised webinars are available to all members.

Don't forget that you get free entry to Helmingham and the Plant Fair if you volunteer an hour of your time on Sunday September 19th.

New Members 2021, Welcome to Plant Heritage!

Catherine Bacon, Brundish - Sally Jackman, Woodbridge - Mary Scott, Debenham - Roderick Newton, Cotton - Miss Lightfoot, Great Welnetham.

We look forward to meeting you at Stowupland Village Hall on 23rd October 2021 and beyond.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

*PAT STANLEY*

### **August 2021**

In yet another very difficult year the Suffolk Group has continued to work hard to raise funds for Plant Heritage.

The Spring Fair at Helmingham was a great success, raising £8906.84 after costs. Our thanks once again go to the Committee and all those who volunteered on the two day event. A tiring but very enjoyable two days.

In addition to the above Anne Tweddle, Maggie Thorpe and members of the propagation group have during the course of the year raised a further £1716.80 from plant sales at Helmingham and sales “made at the garden gate.”

We are now looking forward to participating in the Autumn Plant Fair at Helmingham in September, when we hope to add to our 2021 fund raising total.

# SUFFOLK NATIONAL COLLECTIONS REPORT

*DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT*

We have a new collection in Suffolk – Bellevalia held by Debbie Amor in Lowestoft which is very interesting to see.

We also have an application from Steve Baker in Hollesley for a collection of Historic Irises raised in or linked to Suffolk and we are waiting to hear from Head Office if this has been accepted.

Collection Holders have been trying hard during the Coronavirus time to supply people with plants they have asked for. Some were at the Helmingham Plant Fair.

I have been allowed to visit Collection Holders. If you want to visit a collection it is best to contact the collection holder and arrange a suitable date.

## SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS 2021

Aesculus Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203	Framlingham
Bellevalia Debbie Amor 07565 966682	Lowestoft
Dianthus (Malmaison) Dianthus (Perpetual) Jim Marshall, 01473 822400	Shelley
Disporopsis, Disporum & Prosartes Helen Chen, 07805 238680	Bures
Dryopteris Equisetum Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104	Stowmarket

Euonymus Rhus Toxicodendron Rupert Eley, Place for Plants, 01206 299224	East Bergholt
Hosta Melanie Collins, Mickfield Hostas, 01449 711576	Stowmarket
Impatiens Will Purdom, team.botanico@gmail.com	Beccles
Iris (Sir Cedric Morris) Sarah Cook, 01473 822400	Shelley
Iris (Sir Michael Foster) Lucy Skellorn, 07730 507900	Stowmarket
Narcissus (Rev. G. Engleheart) Darren Andrews, 01473 822987	Dispersed
Plants named for Ellen Willmott Nick Stanley, 01473 757585	Witnessham
Santolina Jon Rose, Botanica, 01728 747113	Campsea Ashe
Suffolk Garden Plants Suffolk Punch Trust, 01394 411327	Hollesley

## TRIBUTE TO JOHN FOSTER



We in Plant Heritage were immensely sad to hear the news of John Foster's sudden death in July. He and Brenda had been members of Plant Heritage for many years and their stall was a fixture at our plant fairs at Euston and Helmingham since 2003.

Born in London John attended agricultural college and worked on a dairy farm after national service. He moved to the Waveney Valley soon

after and met his wife Brenda at the local Young Farmers Club. After their marriage in 1965 they moved to Redisham where they brought up their four children and established their well known garden at Gable House, specialising in snowdrops and other bulbs. It has been opened regularly for the National Gardens Scheme since 1977. An account of a visit to it is on the NGS website (<https://thegardengateisopen.blog/2017/02/18/forty-years-on-and-still-growing-strong-at-gable-house-9/>). John and Brenda also ran a shop in Beccles for a number of years selling fruit, vegetables and flowers.

John won many prizes at local shows as well as giving talks and advice to gardening groups and societies, along with caring for gardens and open spaces in Beccles, working with the local Horticultural Society. He was a vice chairman of the Norfolk Group of the Alpine Garden Society and served on Redisham Parish Council.

Many tributes have been paid to John locally, praising his helpful support and advice, and his calm and patient personality, though with a twinkle in his eye.

## BEGINNINGS WITH BELLEVALIA

DEBBIE AMOR

In his book *The smaller bulbs* Brian Mathew describes Bellevalia as, *'A group of Muscari-like bulbs from Europe and the Middle East, which on the whole have little value as garden plants, interesting as they are.'* If I had read this, before meeting my first Bellevalia, I might never have bothered!



My obsession started innocently enough, before I had ever heard of Brian Mathew, five years ago. As an amateur gardener I was just looking for some spring bulbs for pots on my patio. I liked Muscari. I visited the National Collection held by Richard Hobbs in Norfolk and discovered that they came in colours other than blue. Back home, excitedly searching the internet, I spotted four *'Muscari-like'* Bellevalia bulbs, which I added to an order. I put them in pots in the autumn, left them on a sunny

patio in winter and in spring I was rewarded with beauty.

Needing to know more I turned to the oracle that is Wikipedia. Remember, I am an amateur. Today I know about RHS Library resources, specialist databases, clubs, societies, and publications. I enjoy contacts via social media with plant collectors and growers around the world. However, it was that initial search which started me on the learning journey through history, geography, science and horticulture that I'm still very much enjoying.

I learnt that French naturalist, Philippe–Isidore Picot de Lapeyrouse first described the genus *Bellevalia* in 1808. He named it in honour of Pierre Richer de Belleval. Belleval was a 16th Century French physician and botanist who founded the Jardin des plantes de Montpellier, the first botanical garden in France.

The range of *Bellevalia* spreads from Portugal and Morocco in the East to Pakistan and Tajikistan in the West. They are dotted about in most of the countries of Europe and Africa which border the Mediterranean.

*Bellevalia* are also present through the Trans-Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Southern Russia), and on via Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and more. Turkey is a hot spot of endemic species. At this point I got quite excited. While some of the countries on the list do not spring to mind as immediate holiday destinations, the possibility of travel, to see some of these plants in the wild, added to their allure and I've long wanted to visit Turkey.

The genus *Bellevalia* is in the taxonomic Family Asparagaceae and Subfamily Scilloideae. This all sounded simple enough to me, until I started reading proper grown-up scientific papers on Family, Genus and Species. Let's just say DNA sequencing has a lot to answer for and there remains much scientific discourse on what exactly goes where within the *Bellevalia* family tree. I have a nasty feeling that I shall be doing some serious relabeling as clever botanists come to fresh conclusions on taxonomy in coming years. And don't get me started on the myriad of synonyms and historical name changing which has occurred since 1808.

For the time being I base my plant naming and labelling on the Kew Science database, Plants of the World Online (POWO) shows 75 'accepted' *Bellevalia* species. The number increased even in the last



year. It is unlikely I shall ever hold a complete collection, but I'm only just getting started, and I do like a challenge. I am quite proud of the fact that if you search for *Bellevalia rixii* on POWO you will already find some images from my collection.

In spring 2021 I held examples of 12 species which were flowering bulbs with a further 16 either as seedlings or small bulbs yet to flower.

I say 'held' because, as anyone who has ever loved a plant knows, the return of old friends is never certain. I have lost one species due to a virus which I believe came with them from their supplier. Unfortunate, but it highlighted the need for plant hygiene and was a valuable early learning point. I lost one example of relative rarity through underestimating the difference in temperatures plants would experience on a larger north facing patio when I moved house. Fortunately, I found a replacement. He and his kind now spend winters under cover.

Initially I focused on sourcing bulbs. But, as my interest and confidence have increased, I've been working on growing from seed too. While I have been able to collect a little of my own, the internet has been invaluable in finding suppliers. Patience is key here. It takes 3 to 5 years or more before bulbs develop enough to flower. Added to which, it's never quite certain what you will get from seed. Developing my skills in vegetative propagation is a work in progress!



My experience, living on the Suffolk coast, is that *Bellevalia* species are a little more precious than *Muscari*. For best results they require protection from the cold and wet in winter and benefit from more careful watering in spring. Also, slugs and snails seem to enjoy the leaves of the larger species, but I guess that just proves they are plants.

As I type, in August, the whole collection is dormant. Anyone visiting would simply see rows of terracotta pots, filled with John Innes No.2 and added grit, sitting dryly in the greenhouse. Hopefully the bulbs are snoozing away waiting for repotting at the end of August as their cue to wake up. If all is well, the blooms should start to return from mid-March, with the last ones fading into May. I do

hope they will all choose to return and look their best; I will be able to show them the plaque I have just received, identifying them as a Plant Heritage National Collection.

In the meantime, if you would like to see a few more, please have a look at my website <http://www.gardeneasta.com>

Plants in order of appearance - *Bellevalia longistyla* - *Bellevalia cyanopoda* - *Bellevalia rixii* - *Bellevalia dubia*.

(Ref: *Brian Mathew - The Smaller Bulbs - Batsford 1987*)

## PROGRAMME OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All talks will be held at Stowupland Village Hall at 2.30 pm. Please check the Suffolk Plant Heritage website if regulations about gatherings should change.

### **October 23rd 2021: “Camassia Calling” by Stella Exley.**

Stella Exley of Hare Spring Cottage Plants holds a National Collection of Camassia. She has exhibited at Chelsea with these wonderful plants and obtained a Gold Medal. Camassia are plants that span the gap between the end of the bearded Irises and the start of the Roses and are rightly sought after for their elegant colour and form.

### **November 27th 2021: AGM and “Yes, But What Did Linnaeus Do For Us?” by Jan Michalak.**

The AGM will cover a short part of the beginning of the meeting and will be followed by a light-hearted talk about Linnaeus and his method of classifying and naming plants. Jan is a knowledgeable Garden Consultant and plant enthusiast. No Greek or Latin required!

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

Cedric Morris was an artistic and gardening giant who lived in Hadleigh, Suffolk. His former home and studio (formerly the East Anglian School Of Painting and Drawing) has come under the care

of The Benton End House & Garden Trust. Sarah and Lucy will be talking about the man, the garden and what is happening at the house now.

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

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

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

*This is a ticket only event. £7 members £12 guests. Tickets will be available in the New Year.*

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

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

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

**April 30th 2022: Garden Visit 2.30 pm.**

All members and friends are invited to visit Alastair Harris's garden at Foxhall Place, Purdis Road, Foxhall, Ipswich IP10 0AE to view his collection of Camellias and Magnolia.

Full details in the Spring Journal 2022.

## PLANTS OF DISTINCTION

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

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

The discount code, **for seeds only**, is SPH50 and can be used until 31/7/2022.



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# SPRING PLANT FAIR SUNDAY MAY 30TH AND MONDAY MAY 31ST

*SARAH COOK*



We were all very pleased that our Spring Plant Fair, with Helmingham Hall, went ahead almost as usual on the late May Bank Holiday. We had a very good number of Plant Stalls, with most of our regular exhibitors joining us. The continuing Covid restrictions meant that visitor numbers were restricted to under 2,000 people for each of the two days and entry was by pre-booked tickets only.

Of course, there were lots of Nurseries, selling plants as diverse as ferns and cacti, trees and herbaceous plants. Our plant stall holders, and the artisans reported that they had had a very good event, and the less crowded conditions were appreciated by the visitors.

The Fair had many of the usual attractions. The highlight for me was the group of musicians, who, dressed for the part, were situated at one end of the site, but they regularly toured around playing their instruments, banjo, saxophone and tuba.

No need to bring food or drink to sustain the day's shopping. The Helmingham bar was popular as usual (as was their tearoom). Food available included Fish and Chips, Pizza, Hot Dogs and Ice Cream.

On the subject of food, the Artisan area included Yum Yum Tree Fudge (another of my favourites) and everything else you could want: artwork, pottery, glass, candles, clothing and much more.

Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves, and all the hard work the Helmingham staff and Plant Heritage Volunteers put into the event was very much appreciated.



# HELMINGHAM SPRING PLANT FAIR

*Photographs taken by Amanda Clowe  
of Wildcarrot Photography.*



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# HOOKED ON HOSTAS

Our collection of hostas was a passion for both Yvonne and Robin, though they came at the subject from different directions: Yvonne is a collector, driven to add to her list of plants, of many genera, but especially hostas. Robin became an enthusiast off the back of Yvonne's interest in the genus, motivated to turn the hobby into a business.

## **So how did it start?**

In 1981, Yvonne visited her old school chum who had recently returned to the UK after several years living in the USA. On her return she moved to St Neots (Cambridgeshire) and in her garden she found a mature clump of *H. Halcyon*, from which she split a piece for Yvonne. This gift marked the start of Yvonne's hosta obsession.

## **The early days**

In the early 1980s there were very few hostas available and those that were, were often plain leaved varieties. This was just before micro-propagation techniques created the explosion of sports we now have available. It was also the time before the Internet, so tracking down new varieties and seeking information about the genus involved quite a lot of detective work. Sourcing new varieties to add to her collection became a bit of a quest.

## **Hosta triangle**

We are still puzzled why, in the driest part of the UK, three hosta specialists started up around the same time, coming at the subject from very different backgrounds. Although we began collecting hostas from 1981, we didn't start Mickfield Hostas until 1992, and we started exhibiting in 1993.

A few miles north of our nursery is the village of Hoxne, on the border with Norfolk, and home to Goldbrook Plants, which was established in 1983 by Sandra Bond. Sandra was a keen propagator and breeder of hostas but perhaps more widely known for her wonderful Chelsea displays of miniature varieties.

Only two miles north, on the same road as our nursery, was Park Green Nurseries established in 1985 by Richard and Mary Ford. The Fords made a name of themselves through hostas but were not exclusively a hosta based nursery, offering all sorts of other plants and sundries.



We all exchanged hostas with each other in the early days and got to know Roger and Ann Bowden in Devon, Diana Grenfell in Hampshire, June Colley and John Baker, also in Hampshire, and Una Dunnett in Worcestershire, among many others. We also had Beth Chatto and Adrian and Alan Bloom at Bressingham Gardens to call on locally, which was a good start.

### **Where next?**

It became apparent quite quickly that the best source of new varieties was to be found in the US among the American Hosta Society, which we joined in the spring of 1986. We promote the organisation to anyone with a keen interest in hostas as there is such a wealth of information to be shared. Indeed, the latest issue of the AHS Journal features an article about H. 'Halcyon' and the remarkable contribution of Eric Smith, a UK breeder, to the genus. Written by Mike Shadrack and June Colley, if it doesn't whet your appetite to explore this branch of the genus then I don't know what would. Delicious photos abound in the Journal, especially after the annual Conventions, when gardens of the host state open up their magnificent acres for inspection.

### **American connections**

Robin and Yvonne's early forays resulted in making contact with Peter and Jean Ruh from Chesterland, Ohio in 1989. Peter and Jean held a beautiful collection of over 2,000 different varieties and were meticulous with regard to cataloguing their plants. Regular correspondence throughout the 1980s and 1990s usually centred on getting hold of specific Tardianas, the group name for the offspring developed from Eric Smith's original crossing of H. Sieboldiana and H. Tardiflora. Over the next decade Robin and Yvonne ordered something of everything Peter had available and towards the end of the 1990s they had to look elsewhere to satisfy their collection habit. This was when they started ordering from Shady Oaks in Minnesota. At that time they were also ordering sales stock to help bolster their own divisions as interest grew in the UK.

### **Dutch connections**

In 1993 a young Dutchman, and his father, introduced themselves at the nursery. If Yvonne and Robin were enthusiasts then Marco Fransen could be called an uber-enthusiast and he returned several times over the next few years on collecting forays throughout the

UK, occasionally camping at our nursery as a handy base close to the ferry terminals to Holland.

Over the years Marco became our trusted source of plants and he supported us when our 1999 consignment of sales plants from Shady Oaks was poisoned by some peat substitute we bought from our usual supplier. Not only was that whole consignment poisoned, everything we potted on that autumn was also affected. Only a handful of the plants we bought over that autumn survived. This left us facing the 2000 season without the quantities we needed to service the shows. Marco stepped in and supplied us with everything he could spare so we were able to keep going – what a friend.

### **Getting diverted**

The decision Yvonne and Robin made to start exhibiting in 1993 soon became a way of life, which was necessary to continue building the business. The downside to the exhibiting was less time spent at the nursery during the season. As with any hobby that turns into a business, the reason for interest soon becomes eclipsed by the need to make money. You end up not doing the things that interested you in the first place. In the early days of exhibiting Robin and Yvonne rarely spent any time at the nursery, returning to re-stock and swap out parent plants for displays.

Robin and Yvonne had an open invitation to visit Peter and Jean Ruh but they never made it over. Unforeseen events, and the pressures of the show season, meant they could only do so out of season, missing all the opportunities to visit the wonderful gardens. They managed numerous trips over to see Marco as it is so easy from our part of the world to nip across to Holland.

It was such a shame Robin and Yvonne never managed to get to an AHS Convention, the next best thing was receiving the AHS Journal coverage of the events complete with photos of mouth-watering gardens that looked impossibly lush

### **My interest in hostas**

I am often asked 'why hostas?' and for me, their appeal grew over time. I have never been a collector of anything really, least of all plants but it is really hard to ignore the impact of hostas, especially when used to great effect in a garden or edging a pathway. In May

1988 I was over in Washington DC to give a paper at a conference at Georgetown University. I stayed on the edge of Georgetown and walking to the University each day involved passing down wonderfully picturesque streets lined with hostas. What a sight it was with the cherry blossom still out. It left a lasting impression of seeing these beautiful plants in the flesh, or should that be leaf? Exhibiting is one thing but you can never do the plants justice in such a confined space so my desire is to exhibit them permanently here at the nursery in more imaginative ways.

### Getting started



*H. 'Halcyon'*

The advent of the Internet and the ability to research subjects easily has bought the joy of collecting to a wider audience and has ensured knowledge continues to be shared. Modern collecting has been made so much easier when you are only a few clicks away from brilliant resources to aid your search, such as Plant Heritage

We are so far removed from the pioneering days of the Victorian collectors but there are still remote regions of the world yet to be explored. As far as hostas are concerned the trick is finding the older cultivars when so many modern cultivars have been introduced that overshadow them. However, as long as Mickfield Hostas exists we will continue to promote the older cultivars and try our best to ensure they continue to have a place in peoples' gardens in the future.

The plant that started a 40-year collecting habit. It's no surprise Yvonne fell in love with this cultivar as there is much to recommend it.

One question I now have on my mind is how a mature clump of H. 'Halcyon' was to be found in a St Neots garden in 1981. Who planted it and where did it come from? As a mature clump it would have had to have been in the garden for at least 4 years. It is entirely possible this was one of the original plants Eric Smith was responsible for introducing to the public. How exciting if it was!

**Melanie Collins, Mickfield Hostas - [www.mickfieldhostas.co.uk](http://www.mickfieldhostas.co.uk)**

# THE GLIMPSE GARDEN

*JUDE LAW*

A further instalment on the creation of Jude Law's garden at Stradbroke.

When I put down my pen in March, I imagined picking it up again in the Damp Tree Meadow. The *Metasequoia* cuttings are growing well and, thanks to the help of some very kind friends, the trees are in, have survived the wettest of winters and the coldest of springs and are now enduring the drought and windiness of the last few weeks. They are yet to put on any extension growth but are looking ok.

While I focussed on tree planting, my neighbour was busy removing his hedgerow on our boundary opening my Top Garden up to the north and easterly winds. The hoped-for microclimate disappeared in a trice and a new task to create a windbreak must go into the garden development plan.

Elsewhere, last year's potential morphed into this year's jungle. Delayed by sitting mallards, a cracked bone in my wrist and enhanced family responsibilities, I found myself playing catch-up and the garden going backwards. Groundsel seeded merrily in the Top Garden and creeping thistle (what a misnomer!) romped away on any bare patch. I've made the mistake of starting too many areas simultaneously but I've learned to look at what I have done and enjoy the butterflies on the thistles and the cinnabar moth caterpillars on the groundsel. I closed my eyes to the bad bits and concentrated on the Glimpse Garden for a sense of progress, moving, planting, dead heading, scribbling notes and planning changes. A small set back but once again, I have friends to thank for keeping me and my spade on course with garden making...

You may remember the Glimpse was formed by erecting a fence of slatted verticals to slow the wind and create shelter for plants moved from our last garden. From this jumbled beginning the utilitarian fence has evolved into a central feature. I love its hint of things to come - half- seen flowers and foliage, peep through the slats and call you from the breakfast table, coffee cup in hand. They pique the interest on your journey to the entrance before appearing in their full glory as you round the corner.



*Rosa x odorata* 'Mutabilis'  
peeping through.

This has become a garden to linger in, to enjoy the intricacies of form and flower, leaf veining and gradations of colour.

As I write, it is the shy *Erodium x variable* 'Roseum' nestling under an aster, the whimsical beauty of *Seseli gracile*, the waving urn of *Stipa pseudoichu*, the tiny beauty of *Rosa* 'John Gwilliam', the bee laden flowers of *Teucrium x lucydris* and *Verbena macdouglii* 'Lavender Spires', the mahogany stems and tiny pipe-cleaner flowers of *Boehmeria tricuspis*, the unfurling buds of *Inula hookeri* a clematis seed head look-a-like, which

catch the eye. The emerging flowers of *Miscanthus nepalensis* hint at the silken golden tresses to come, and the kaleidoscope colours of *Rosa x odorata* 'Mutabilis' look good in any weather. These and other treasures, many bought from our stand at Helmingham, provide constant interest. My only demands are that a plant can hold its form and has flowers that die nicely. The *Inula* fails here but, by a path, is quickly deadheaded.

A few evergreens provide winter structure. *Ulmus* 'Jacqueline Hillier' is always architecturally sublime and, if kept low, will hopefully escape the elm bark beetle. A garden then of individuals but, here and there, are little groups of complementary plants. In spring it is the emerging foliage of *Rosa glauca*, *Clematis recta* 'Purpurea' and *Paeonia delavayi*. As the season develops leaves intermingle happily, joined by a leavening of pink stained allium seed heads and the ivory clematis flowers. Fleetingly, the pink stamens of *Rosa* 'Jacqueline du Pre' join in and in the *Rosa banksiae* corner another planting peaks in early summer. As the rose reaches its zenith its neighbours spring to attention. *Euphorbia x pasteurii* and *E. wulfenii*, *Buddleja alternifolia* 'Argentea', *Lupinus arboreus* (lemon form), *Iris* 'Romance' all backed by alliums, *Seseli libanotis* and the leaves of *Rubus calophyllus*. On the ground *Geranium malviflorum* blooms through the leaves of *Artemesia* 'Valerie Finnis'. I return constantly to stand and stare.

For each combination that works there is one that doesn't. Intrigued by the ruffled, grey-green foliage of *Leonurus cardiaca* 'Grobbebol' I planted it next to *Nepeta nuda* 'Romany Dusk'. In the first year they looked balanced, the *Leonurus* a little smaller than the *Nepeta* but, in year two, both grew enormously and were joined by a *Delphinium requinii*. Horrible, too many verticals and not enough contrast. The

*Leonurus* will be the one to move.



*Inula hookeri*

There is a danger that such a pot pourri is too 'busy'. Here, self seeders rescue me. *Salvia verticillata* 'Purple Rain' flows between plants creating a river of silver and blue, *Silene armeria* 'Electra' dabs its shocking pink in unlikely places and *Verbena bonariensis*, *V. hastata*, *Dahlia merckii*, *Eschscholzia*, *Nicotiana* and *Orlaya* are all welcome. Disciplined thinning stems their enthusiasm but they keep the garden alive, popping up in the most unlikely of crevices with a creativity that is beyond me.

A hurrah of colour is added by dahlias, agapanthus, clematis, asters, helianthus and the like which keep the show going until the snowdrops and winter flowering shrubs take over once more.

The gap between fact and fiction, dreams and achievement is large but there is enough to point optimistically to another year ... and perhaps another article. Next up, it really will be the Damp Tree Meadow.



## CLEMATIS INTERNODAL CUTTINGS



Clematis seem to root well from internodal cuttings and our group recently tried a development of this process gleaned from a long-ago article by Christopher Lloyd.

Ideal material is semi-mature, healthy current season growth. Sever the cutting material about 4-5cm below a node and trim

just above the node retaining one of the leaves. If the area is large cut this in half to reduce water loss. Then, taking a sharp knife or blade split the stem in half longitudinally down the midline below the node. Insert one half of this cut stem in a sharp draining cutting compost and lay the other along the top surface. Pin this down or better, cover with gravel, to ensure good contact and keep the material moist. Place the cutting in the shade and cover to reduce transpiration.

Roots should appear along both sections and from the junction between the two in about 5 to 6 weeks.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING A BAMBOO

*HELEN CHEN*

Bamboos are amazing plants. They add height and texture, are evergreen, hardy, and disease resistant, and best of all are highly decorative. However, many people are afraid to grow them, and indeed a few species are highly invasive and completely unsuitable for most gardens. However, there are well over 200 species and varieties of bamboo that can be grown in the UK, many of which are excellent garden plants. So, what should you look for when choosing a bamboo?

The first thing to consider is whether it is a 'clumping' or 'running' bamboo. Unfortunately, it's a little more complicated than

clumping = good, running = bad. Clumping and running describe the root structure rather than the behaviour of a bamboo. A clump-forming bamboo sends out new rhizomes which turn up at the ends to form new culms (the living canes of the bamboo). The next year, new rhizomes will branch off from the old rhizomes, and themselves turn up at the end to form culms. In other words, they never send out runners. Running bamboos send out rhizomes which put up culms at nodes along their length and continue onwards. In other words, running bamboos have the capacity to send out runners to a length of several metres from the original clump. Some of the most invasive species (*Sasa* spp. and *Chimonobambusa* spp.) can send out a runner 30 feet (10m) or so in a single growing season!

However, clump forming does not necessarily mean small! While typical clumpers (e.g. *Fargesia* spp.) send up new culms very close to the clump, some (e.g. *Yushania* spp. and *Chusquea* spp.) have rhizomes with a long 'neck' which can grow outward a foot (30cms) or so before turning up into a culm. These can form a large, relatively open clump very quickly.



*Phyllostachys vivax* f. *aureocaulis*

Just to complicate things further, running does not necessarily mean invasive. The tightest clump of bamboo in my garden is *Phyllostachys aurea* 'Koi', a running bamboo, which has been in the ground for twelve years and is still less than two feet across at the base. Some bamboos can be hard to predict as well. For example, *Phyllostachys nigra*, the very popular black bamboo, is very variable in its habits. It is often quite well-behaved, but can also run aggressively.



The next thing to consider is height. The shortest bamboo available in the UK is about 18” (45cms) tall. The tallest species get to over 20 feet (6m). The shorter genera of ground cover bamboos do tend to be quite energetic runners, but as they are quite shallow rooted can literally be pulled up by hand if they wander too far. Most clump formers are in the 10-16ft (3-5m) range, and the tallest bamboos are usually running types. It's important to remember that if you want height the plant will need a proportionate amount of space width wise.

Following on from that, the shape of the bamboo is important to consider. Many clump formers, especially *Fargesia* spp., have a rather umbrella like shape, with a wide cloud of foliage over a narrow base. For screening, where something upright is needed, a well-behaved running bamboo might be a better choice.



*Borinda albocerea*

Really, the hardest part of growing bamboo is choosing the right one in the first place. They are incredibly low-maintenance and unfussy plants, tolerate all sorts of conditions, and add so much to a garden. It's well worth doing a little research or asking a specialist nursery for advice to get the right plant.

Finally, if controlling growth is important, it might be a better option to grow a bamboo in a container. Most bamboos do very well in containers as long as they are not allowed to dry out. Of course, you can also use root barriers, but if these completely surround the plant it will eventually become effectively pot-bound and try to break out.

# A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Will we be lucky? On April 30th 2022 Suffolk Plant Heritage is fortunate to be able to offer a garden visit for all members and friends alike to Alastair Harris's garden, Foxhall Place in Ipswich. We hope it will be a relatively frost free spring and that Magnolias and Camellias will be in flower giving the bees (and probably beetles) an early feed in the new year when perhaps little else will be in flower.

The plants have been collected over a twenty year time span from a number of sources and often as presents from the family. The largest Magnolias, *veitchii* (a hybrid first introduced by the famous nursery in 1907) and *denudata*, were transplanted here on our move to Ipswich from Bedford and have reached perhaps 40 foot plus and so will give a good show if the weather permits.

There are over twenty different magnolia and camellia speci and hybrids among a number of individual trees and shrubs, the largest of which are now probably two redwoods planted in 1997.

If the weather is uncooperative, come anyway and enjoy some home made cake and scones!

## PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

For an update on what's happening at National Office visit the current issue of Newslines on the website [www.plantheritage.com](http://www.plantheritage.com)

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

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