



Gardening with hardy perennials

Somerset Group Newsletter

June 2019



<https://somersethps.com>

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Editorial

Hello again, and welcome to the June Newsletter. If your garden is anything like mine, this year's mild winter and beneficent spring have paid dividends. Many outdoor potted plants I would consider borderline tender barely stopped growing: shrubby salvias continued to bush out; trailing bedding verbenas are reshooting unabated; temperamental *Pennisetum* 'Dark Desire', with its huge, chimney-sweep's brush flowerheads, and even a large *Anisodonteia capensis* have come through unscathed.



On the other hand, the soil was rather sodden for long periods and I lost a few of my autumn-planted favourites. One of these was *Monarda* 'Raspberry Wine', a plant I'd rate in my top three for its aromatic foliage and intricate, deeply-flushed flowers, whose bracts provide colour for weeks in summer. I should have known better, really - monardas have a reputation for 'disappearing' over winter, and a monarda-fanatic friend of mine always advised me to pot up root sections from the outer parts of the clump in autumn and overwinter them in a coldframe, as a necessary insurance policy. I have invested in new plants and will heed his wisdom this year.

This spring has been a long, somewhat exhausting round of planting. I felt it was time to be disciplined and get all plants in plastic pots either doggedly planted or gleefully chucked. The result has been the creation of a whole new area of garden. The plants all look tiny as yet, of course, with acres of bare earth between, but I know how vigorous many of them are so I was wary of planting closely.

The theme is one of rich colours, so I've taken the plunge with an orange and blue combination in one semi-shady/sunny area, incorporating the yellow/orange torches of *Kniphofia* 'Bee's Sunset' with deep blue *Aconitum* 'Spark's Variety', backed with 5' tall, deep orange *Crocasmia* 'Zeal Giant' (from Trecanna Nurseries). *Heliopsis* 'Summer Nights', with its golden daisies and black stems, also features (although it's on a final warning, as it has never performed well for me). A central stand of *Euphorbia schillingii*, with acid-green flowers in summer, a large swathe of blue *Geranium* 'Rozanne' and a full-stop clump of sterile, double-flowered orange *Geum* 'Fire Storm' completes the picture.

Large pots of *Agapanthus* 'Marchant's Cobalt Cracker' nearby will offer extra 'wow' in July, and evergreen *Nandina domestica* 'Lemon Lime', with fresh lime-green foliage, will provide winter interest, along with a scattering of hellebores. Will it will make my heart sing or just make my eyes go funny? I'm not sure, but I'm excited to see how it turns out.

Marion Jay

HPS Somerset Group Plant Sale

A big thankyou to all who helped with the Group Plant Sale on 27th April. With 138 customers through the door and a wide variety of plants on offer, there was brisk trade. The event brought the chance to chat to fellow gardeners and glean some good advice to boot.

The yearly Plant Sale is a chance for Local HPS Groups to interact with the general public and encourage new members to join up. It's also an opportunity to discover some new and often unusual plants which you may not have tried growing before.

It takes a lot of effort by members to run the Sale, and you all deserve a round of applause - well done!



Your HPS Group Needs You!

As mentioned previously in the January Newsletter, Janet Murley and Sandra Macqueen will be standing down at this year's AGM, after many years organising and running the outings for the Group.

This role could be an opportunity for a couple of friends to join forces and take the reins as **Trip Organisers**; you would decide which gardens to visit and when. Penny Berry has stepped forward to take on the admin side of this role, reducing the workload and enabling the new organiser(s) to concentrate on the trips themselves. Janet and Sandra will be happy to give all the advice you need.

Some help is also required with the management of the SHPS website. Bill Hodgson redesigned the new site but his full-time job now takes up much of his time. He would like a **Website Assistant**, who could send out the email reminders for Meetings and Plant Sale events, and also update the Plant of the Month page each month. This is a fairly simple task, but one which requires regular, date-specific engagement. Basic computer skills are all that's required. Full training available!

And, of course, the Group is still without a **Chairman**. It goes without saying that this is a vital role and a position we are keen to fill as soon as possible.

An enquiry doesn't mean you are obliged to commit, so do please get in touch if you are interested and would like to find out more about any of these roles.

Donations for the Group Plant Sales Table

I wanted to thank everyone who so kindly donates plants for our sales table at the monthly meetings and plant fairs. It is much appreciated and provides valuable funds which enable the Group to have good speakers at each lecture meeting.

Many kind donors bring rare and unusual plants, which is great as our buyers are keen to find something unusual but, our sales table needn't be stocked solely with plants of interest to the connoisseur. We need a good supply of the old stalwarts and 'good doers', so don't be put off donating if you are growing ordinary, garden-worthy plants.

Please could you ensure that any plants you donate are established in their pots (or, if freshly dug, cleanly wrapped in a plastic bag) and correctly labelled. If you have something unusual to donate that the sellers might not recognise, a short note about its growth habits and preferences would be welcome.

We don't charge our members for entrance to our lecture meetings so please do consider bringing a plant as your entrance fee.

Jane Hunt

Flower and Pot Plant of the Month Competition

The rules of the competition are as follows. Members are invited to bring a flower and/or a pot plant to each of our seven meetings at West Monkton Village Hall throughout the calendar year. The entries will be judged by our guest speakers and the top three in each section will be awarded points: 3 for 1st, 2 for 2nd and 1 for 3rd. Points will be accumulated during the year, and the overall winners will receive gardening vouchers as their prize.

For the flower section, the requirement is a single flower (usually displayed in a vase) if that is how the plant grows, e.g. a narcissus or a dahlia. If it is a flowering shrub, for example with clusters of flowers along the stem, then it is the whole stem that you display. The point is that it is not a flower arranging exhibit, so multiple blooms or stems are not what we are looking for. If you are an Ikebana fiend then you'll know, of course, that even a single bloom may be displayed artistically!

For the pot plant section, much the same rule applies. The requirement is for a single plant in a pot. For a plant that naturally produces little offsets all around the central growth, as many succulents do, you do not have to remove all the offsets!

Thankyou to Our New Volunteers

I am happy to say that we have a new Refreshments Co-ordinator. Mike Vernoum has stepped into the role and is now organising the list and reminding volunteers.

In addition, Dick and Sue Sheppard have volunteered to set up the noticeboard at each meeting, a job which until now has been one of Jane Hunt's myriad tasks.

Thankyou to all of you for taking the time to contribute to the Group - your efforts are much appreciated.

New Members

A big welcome to all the new Somerset Group members:

Lindy Booth, *Bridgwater*

Maggie & Paul Chownes-Dove, *Hinton St George*

Judy Hampshire, *Radstock*

Francis and Pat Lewis, *Taunton*

Noelle Mace, *Wells*

Dee Mullis, *Bruton*

Virginia Murray, *Taunton*

Mary Pring, *Crewkerne*

Jane Temple, *Bridgwater*

Rose Thomas, *Taunton*

Andrew Tolman, *Minehead*

Hayley Wakeford, *Ilminster*

Peter & Brenda Wilson, *Taunton*

Cornucopia

Cornucopia is a twice-yearly magazine which brings you the pick of the best articles from the HPS Local Group newsletters. It's a snip, at only £3 a year (including postage). Subscribe to the magazine on the HPS website: bit.ly/hps-cornucopia

Misprint

The name *Cuphea insignis* was erroneously included in Roy's Chairman's Letter in the January Newsletter. The correct plant name is *Cuphea ignea*, which is a tender, spreading evergreen sub-shrub from Mexico, often grown in the UK as an annual, and known as the cigar plant, because its tubular red flowers appear to be tipped with ash at the ends.



Such a Pretty Flower!

We moved here to a much bigger garden in 2015. It had been neglected for a few years and was generally overgrown. Trees and shrubs dominated, especially viburnums, and although the grass was several feet tall, borders were still visible. I followed the accepted advice of living with a garden for a year to see what appeared through the seasons. Shrubs flowered and the majority were identified and either marked for removal or keeping. Drastic pruning ensued.

Only a few herbaceous plants were apparent: crocosmias, pulmonarias, perennial cornflowers (*Centaurea montana*), Japanese anemones and several types of geranium. However there was one plant, unfamiliar to me, which was evident in lots of areas of the garden. It looked healthy, with no pests that I could see, and grew equally well in shade or sun. A good doer, perhaps! I liked the leaf shape and it had such a pretty flower; flat clusters of white flowers, similar to cow parsley.

Unfortunately, this lovely plant turned out to be ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*), and it was everywhere: in the borders, hedges and amongst the fruit bushes. When I looked carefully, I found it in the lawn - at a much reduced size, yet still there. So, once identified, I read up on how to get rid of it. The suggestions included: eating it (but not a lot); repeat applications of systemic weedkiller; laying turf and constant mowing (why is it in the lawn, then?); hoeing over and over again; laying black plastic



© Giersch@WikimediaCommons

Deceptively attractive ground elder

sheeting down for years...and then, if your neighbours have it (and inevitably they do), it will creep back in. I resent using weed killers and I'm also a 'no digger', who believes the less disturbance to the soil the better. Nevertheless, I needed space to grow, so a patch of clean soil was required as soon as possible.

I decided to dig out the ground elder. The mass of roots made it hard to get a fork in, but persistence paid off and it was very satisfying to sift out the roots. The white roots are easy to see, but they are brittle and break easily. I settled on cutting lines across the bed with the spade, about two feet apart, and then forking through each section. Once a patch was cleared I was constantly on the lookout for any new

leaves appearing; any that I found were trowelled out. Each piece of root or, strictly speaking, stem that has a node will send out roots and new leaves. I have found new leaves sprouting from pieces as small as 1cm. So far, this appears to be working but I wonder if, come spring, it will have reinvaded.

In really congested areas under trees, I confess I used glyphosate weedkiller. The results were rather disappointing; it weakened the plants but did not kill them. In these areas I have either dug up and removed the roots after the weedkiller has taken effect, or removed the top growth and mulched using black plastic with a topping of woodchippings.

Caroline Reeves

St Margaret's Hospice Open Gardens

St. Margaret's Hospice has been at the heart of Somerset's community for 39 years, delivering high quality, responsive and compassionate care to patients facing life-limiting illnesses. 100% of the care and support they provide is free of charge to patients and their families, no matter how long they need care. Gardens contribute enormously to the health and wellbeing of hospice patients and their families, providing places of relaxation as well as reflection.

This year St Margaret's Open Garden scheme has more than 50 amazing gardens to visit, including village walkabouts, allotments, arboretums, woodland walks and many stunning gardens with beautiful views. In addition, many gardens will be offering delicious cakes, scones and teas, or added extras such as children's trails and book sales.

Brochures can be collected from any St. Margaret's shop, many garden centres, libraries and Tourist Information Centres, or call 01935 709182 to have one sent to you. For full online details of the gardens and opening times, go to: **www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk/glorious-somerset-gardens**



© St Margaret's Hospice

**The garden at the Open Pathway Retreat
Centre at Queen Camel, near Yeovil.**

Early Spring Plant Fair at East Lambrook Manor

The HPS Early Spring Plant Fair on 23rd March at ELM Gardens was a huge success. Prior to the gates opening at 10am, the lane was lined with a queue of hundreds of people, and soon afterwards the carpark was filled to capacity.



**Jenny from Elworthy Cottage
Plants pauses for a hot drink**



**Millwood Plants' stall was extremely
busy with sales and advice**

Photos © Bill Hodgson

Nurseries from across the South West had set up stalls all around the garden and their sales areas were packed with keen-eyed customers. Many exciting finds were on offer, from trilliums to Taiwanese scheffleras, and Wollemi pines to wallflowers. A line of people waiting to pay in ELM's own nursery snaked round the plant displays, and the Malthouse Cafe did a roaring trade. Our own SHPS stall made plant sales, gave out plant advice and helped raise awareness of the HPS's activities.

A big thankyou to all those who manned the gate, helped on the SHPS plant stall, and contributed plants for sale. Finally, many thanks to Gail and Mike Werkmeister for hosting the event.

Trip to Wildside, 16th May 2019

Keith Wiley is a visionary gardener with an infectious enthusiasm for his subject. He and his wife, Ros, began the garden at Wildside in 2004, and over the years a flat, 3-acre meadow has been sculpted into an undulating landscape, creating sequences of ponds, shady groves and sunbaked hillsides. He began our tour by stressing the importance of growing 'happy plants': Keith's interpretation of Beth Chatto's mantra - 'right plant, right place' - is to modify the garden environment to accommodate the plants' requirements...and how!

Keith introduced us to the garden by describing his experiments in burning off dierama foliage. Dierama are exposed to flash fires in their native South Africa, the heat passing over them so quickly that the bulbs remain undamaged. Keith doesn't do this every single year, but every two or three years the build-up of old foliage becomes unsightly, and burning is not only easier but also adds potash to the soil.



Photos © Bill Hodgson, unless otherwise stated

Wildside's large sequence of ponds, full of colonising plants. Note the meadow just visible at top left, and standard wisterias, top right.

He is comparing the burnt-off plants with dierama cut back to the ground and then fed, to see which method produces better results the following year.

Winding his way along shale-strewn paths which resembled dry river beds, Keith led us down to the newly-excavated water garden. A dell shaded by acers, here the south-facing side provides warm shade, suitable for Californian plants, whereas the north side affords cooler shade, ideal for Himalayan subjects such as *Adiantum pedatum*, *disporum*, hostas and epimediums. These pools are a new addition to a previously established series of larger ponds, now colonised by golden creeping Jenny, moisture-loving ferns such as *Onoclea sensibilis* and *Osmunda regalis*, yellow candelabra *Primula cockburniana*, and numerous astilbes. Short, standard wisterias in full bloom wafted scent across the water, where broad-bodied chasers darted.

Beyond a small meadow area studded with gnarly apple trees, the ponds continued to widen, leading to a large, recently-constructed summerhouse, high on a mound, fronted by a 3-dimensional, elliptical, walled bed built in pale grey stone. Keith built



The newly-built summerhouse and elliptical bed

a similar-shaped sequence of beds in The Oval Garden at The Garden House, where he was Head Gardener for 25 years. At this far end, the pond was surrounded by many different types of *rodgersia*, along with the large purple-and-green foliage of *Rheum palmatum*, elegant ginger lilies and chevron-patterned *Persicaria* 'Red Dragon'.

Up we wandered, through groves of magnolias and Japanese acers. Keith has planted 80 magnolia trees - 20 different varieties - their primitive flowers filling the air with heady scent. He described the perfume of pink-flowered *Magnolia sprengeri* 'Diva' as 'what heaven must smell like'. As we entered an area thronged with burgundy-leaved varieties of *Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum', he added that one big advantage of starting a garden from scratch was the freedom to choose which trees to plant; he has been careful to select trees with at least two seasons of interest.

Wildside's trees and shrubs have similar shapes, which repeat through out the garden in a rhythmical way. The standard wisterias, Japanese acers, magnolias and many of the conifers have soft, roundly conical outlines, echoing the shapes of the ancient oaks and hawthorns on the boundary, and giving the garden continuity with the landscape. Keith went on to explain how saplings planted in close groups create the impression of multi-stemmed trees; in one area, conifers, and in another, eight *Magnolia stellata*, their branches now interlaced to form a single canopy.

Passing shaley mounds studded with dwarf conifers and embellished with the silken seedheads of *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, we entered a rhododendron woodland. Scented trumpets of apricot and pink led us to a sheltered niche, where tree-peony *Paeonia rockii* was in full bloom, its white, purple-blotched flowers some 8" across. Nearby grew white and pink forms of *Rhododendron viscosum*, the swamp azalea, with its open habit and exquisitely slender flowers opening from honeysuckle-shaped buds.

© Will Stuart@WikimediaCommons



Rhododendron viscosum



Paeonia rockii

Camassias had self-seeded promiscuously wherever light reached through the azaleas, their blue and white heritage blending in a myriad of different striated combinations. Keith advised that these bulbs are very difficult to remove once planted, and must be sited carefully as their foliage is coarse and prolific, effectively smothering delicate perennials early in the year. Well suited to growing amongst robust perennials, however, or in uncut areas of lawn.

As we ascended to drier, sunbaked heights, Keith revealed the reasoning behind his habit of banking up planting areas and sinking the paths between. The raised areas, whether shallow-soiled or deep and rich, are always well-drained, which prevents plants rotting off in winter. The paths act as conduits for rainwater, conveying it

down to the ponds at the bottom of the garden. The soil pH at Wildside is 5.5 (very acidic), yet Keith has been able to grow dianthus - which usually require a calcareous soil - because he can provide sheer drainage. The banked beds also elevate plants, making it easier to breathe in scent or examine, for instance, a hellebore flower's intricate design.

We reached the rectangular, more formal Courtyard Garden, originally the nursery area but now populated by tall, multi-stemmed cordylines, which framed the view in every direction. Plants from the southern hemisphere evidently thrive in the sheltered, warm environment, surrounded by a running pergola of wisterias against rendered walls of soft pale pink. Sedums, irises and grasses mingled and spread, and a dainty *Paeonia tenuifolia* held its gold-centred, crimson flowers above finely dissected foliage. Lichened terracotta urns contrasted with the rounded, soft grasses. In the centre sat a large, laboriously-carved granite trough, once sited through a hedge to water animals in the fields on both sides.



The Courtyard Garden, framed by cordylines

And so to the newest area of Wildside: The Canyons. Approached via a small copse of *Elaeagnus* 'Quicksilver' (which tends to sucker; Keith prunes away unwanted stems and keeps those which create an attractive, open structure), The Canyons is where Keith's 3-ton digger has had the most dramatic effect. The first section is already planted and established, and reaches its peak in July when agapanthus, daylilies, crocosmia, coreopsis and ornamental grasses shimmer in the sunshine. However, the area beyond seemed, at first glance, to be a moonscape.

Pale grey shale covered the ground, which had been scooped and mounded into amorphous shapes, serpentine paths delineating the layout. To the right, an enormous canyon had been excavated, topped by a long bank of white shrubby cistus covered in thousands of buds, just poised to open. Attempting to imagine this place as a flat field was nigh on impossible. The surface area had been increased so much by the landscaping that the impression was one of a huge expanse.

Keith was at his most animated when talking about this new area of garden, becoming positively evangelical in his delivery. Spreading his arms to demonstrate the height, he explained that he had dug down around 6ft and, at the peaks, raised the soil level by 25ft. Astonishingly, over the 14 years he has worked on Wildside,



The newly-landscaped Canyons, populated by birch and conifers



Keith's demonstrative style



The cut profile of shillet

he has moved over 100,000 tonnes of soil. His plan is to add 9" of sand to the mounded beds, plant them up and mulch with shillet, the loose, substrate shale which is so characteristic of this garden. Through the centre he has gouged a series of shallow ponds, which will eventually have water pumped from a deeper 'bowl' at the top. An open pavilion will overlook the scene.

Already punctuated by birch trees and conifers, well-suited to the free-draining conditions, The Canyons will be home to lots of daisy-flowered plants, including a matrix of anthemis to provide consistent colour throughout the summer. Agapanthus, dierama, crocosmia and kniphofia will rise above the lower plants, with taller perennials ranging up the banks. Many alpine plants originate in shallow soil and scree, hugging the ground to reduce transpiration and protect from drying winds, so the thin soil and shale mulch are perfect for them, too.

And finally to the nursery, which Keith and Ros are winding down now, sadly, as maintaining the plants is very labour-intensive and distracts them from developing the garden. For a small selling area, it certainly scored highly in the unusual treasure department. As, indeed, does Wildside itself.

Marion Jay

2019 Programme (Jun-Jul)

All lecture meetings are held at West Monkton Village Hall (TA2 8NE) and are free to members (except for the Group Plant Sale in April). Non-members are welcome, at a modest charge of £2 per person. Doors open at 10.30am and tea/coffee and biscuits are available before the lecture. The Group has a plant stall and a book stall at most meetings, plus a 'Plant and Flower of the Month' competition.

Further programme details may be found on the website, which is updated whenever fresh information is released. Location maps or directions will be supplied once a place on a trip, or ticket for an event, has been booked.

Information on how to book is at the end of the Programme pages.

Thursday 20th June

Coach Trip to Sudeley Castle and Gardens

Henry VIII's sixth wife, Katherine Parr, is buried at Sudeley, and the gardens reflect the castle's Tudor heritage. Of nine individual garden areas, the centre-piece is the Queen's Garden, famous for its abundant roses which are at their peak in June. There is a Knot Garden, designed according to a pattern on a dress worn by Elizabeth I, and also a Rare Breeds Pheasantry, conserving a variety of beautiful and gloriously-coloured birds. The replanted Tudor Physic Garden would have originally provided the household with culinary and medicinal plants.

There is a restaurant and a cafe on site.

<https://sudeleycastle.co.uk/gardens-exhibitions/>

Sunday 7th July

HPS Somerset Summer Plant Fair

Lower Severalls, Crewkerne, TA18 7NX

Admission £3.50 (£4 for non-members)

The stalls at the Summer Plant Fair will be arranged outside the grounds this year, leaving the garden unencumbered for everyone to enjoy. The garden at Lower Severalls is set in front of a beautiful hamstone, 17th century farmhouse, with a formal front garden and borders full of colourful herbaceous perennials and herbs.

2019 Programme (July)

Lower Severalls is home to CB Plants, a traditional nursery run by Catherine Bond, specialising in unusual hardy perennials, wild flowers and cottage garden favourites. All the plants are grown naturally in peat-free compost and many are of benefit to wildlife, being nectar rich and great for attracting pollinating insects.

On the day of the Plant Fair, Mary Pring, who now runs a B&B in the farmhouse, will be providing us with her homemade cakes, tea, coffee and elderflower cordial. It promises to be a great day out, so come and browse the stalls and snaffle a few unusual additions for your borders.

Volunteers are needed to help man the gate and the HPS stall at Lower Severalls. Please call Sally Gregson on **01749 676966**, or email **millcottageplants@gmail.com** if you are willing to do a stint. Your help is very much appreciated.

Tuesday 9th July

Self-drive Visit to Newton House Garden, Yeovil, BA20 2RX

The gardens of this Jacobean manor house are Grade II listed and slope down to the river Yeo. They include an extensive walled garden, a 90ft-long greenhouse, over 70 standard 'weeping' roses, formal potager, mediaeval carp ponds, pleached limes, statuary and an orchard. The summerhouse, which has since been converted into a cottage, dates from



© Newtonsurmaville

1750 and was built as a 3-storey octagon with 2-storey flanking wings. Newton House Gin, hand-crafted using botanicals picked from within the walled garden, and distilled on site, won Gold at the 2018 World Gin Awards in 2017.

Refreshments available at the Tea Room, on site.

<http://www.newtonsurmaville.co.uk/gardens/>

2019 Programme (Sep)

Wednesday 4th September

Self-drive Visit to Prospect House Gardens, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5BH

Early September is the perfect time to visit Peter Wadeley's one-acre plantsman's garden, when the late-summer display reaches full splendour. Hidden behind high stone walls, bold plantings of crocosmia, rudbeckia, helenium, echinacea and ornamental grasses form swathes of shimmering colour. Rare shrubs - many borderline tender - and over 200 varieties of salvia combine with breathtaking views across the Axe Valley to make this a wonderful private garden to visit.

<https://www.ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/garden/19061/>

Tuesday 17th September

Coach Trip to Bicton Park Botanical Gardens

Once recognised as being one of the finest gardens in England, Bicton Park, near Exeter, is set on a hillside leading down to formal water gardens with canals, fountains, a small stream and a large lake. A fernery and rock gardens are overlooked by a flint stone hut which houses a shell collection. The pinetum and arboretum boast over 1,000 trees, including 25 Champion Trees (exceptional specimens), and the drive to the nearby college is lined by an extraordinary avenue of monkey puzzles.

The semi-circular Palm House, built in the 1820s, predates the one at Kew by 20 years and comprises Tropical, Desert and Temperate Houses.

There is a restaurant on site.

www.bictongardens.co.uk



© letsgowiththechildren.co.uk

2019 Programme (Sept-Oct)

Saturday 21st September – 10.00am (Hall opens at 9.30am)

50/50 Plant Sale

The 50/50 Plant Sale prior to the lecture at our September meetings continues to prove popular. The Group keeps half the money taken and returns the other half to the seller. The hall will be open from 9.40am to 10.10am to receive your plants to sell. Please ensure that each one has **two** identical labels bearing the name of the plant, your name and the price. One will be removed when the plant is sold, so that the amount you are owed can be totted up and given to you at the end of the meeting, when you can also retrieve any unsold plants and your labels (tip: use pencil on labels so that they may be reused).

Selling will begin at 10.20am and finish at 11.00am. Offers of help with selling on the day will be most welcome. The Committee reserves the right to restrict the number of plants accepted for sale if demand and space so require. However this has not been necessary at our previous sales.

Followed by:

Marcel Floyd – ‘Clematis’

Lecture starts at 11.00am

Marcel is the owner of Floyd's Climbers and Clematis in Wiltshire, and has been growing award-winning clematis for over 30 years. He will be demonstrating how to prune and take cuttings from various types of clematis, as well as advising on how and where to grow the different varieties. All your clematis questions answered!

Plants for Sale

www.floydsclimbers.co.uk

Saturday 19th October – 11.00am

Lecture

Peter Cantrill – ‘Unusual Herbaceous Plants’

Peter runs the wholesale nursery Dayspring Plants near Exeter, which supplies plants to National Trust gardens, amongst others. With a lifetime's experience in the business, his horticultural knowledge is second to none, and the plants he brings to sell have been known to cause a rush to buy at the end of his lectures.

Plants for Sale

2019 Programme (Nov)

Saturday 23rd November – 10am for 10.30 AGM.

Lecture

AGM, followed at 11.15am by:

Tom Hart Dyke – ‘*Tales of a Modern-Day Plant Hunter*’

Tom Hart Dyke first shot to international prominence in the year 2000, when he was kidnapped in the Colombian jungle on a plant hunting expedition that went dangerously wrong. His plant-hunting jaunts have taken him from the volcanic archipelagos of the Cape Verde Islands to down under in Tasmania, and from the Atlas Mountains in Morocco to the remote Mentawai Islands in Indonesia.

Many of Tom’s collected plants are housed in the World Garden of Plants, which he created within a two-acre walled garden in the grounds of his ancestral home of Lullingstone Castle in Kent. This promises to be a talk woven with adventurous and exotic tales...and some fascinating plants.

www.tomhartdyke.co.uk

Advance Notice:

Wednesday 4th March

Coach trip to the Orchid Festival at Kew Gardens

This is an unmissable treat. Kew’s Orchid Festival is a feast for the senses. Every year the organisers choose a different theme, creating a unique and vibrant exhibition inside the tropical Princess of Wales Conservatory. Incorporating sound and art installations, and now in its 25th year, the festival celebrates the glorious colours and extraordinary forms found in Kew’s collection of over 6,000 orchids.

Details to follow in the January Newsletter.



© Cristian V.

An intricate *Phalaenopsis* orchid

Booking Information

All coach trips and garden visits must be pre-booked with Janet Murley:

Tel: 01884 820840

Email: janet.murley@btinternet.com

If you would like to book places on any of these events and trips, please complete and return the entire enclosed Booking Sheet. The Joining Instructions for each event will then be sent to you via email or by post.

To receive the Instructions via email, simply fill in your email address on the Booking Sheet **even if you believe I already have a note of it**. In addition to emailing your Joining Instructions, I will also email your booking confirmation. **Please print your name clearly**, and remember to advise me of any change to your email address.

To receive your Joining Instructions by post, **please** remember to send me **TWO SAEs** for **EACH** event you wish to attend.

Janet Murley

Toad Lilies and Cuckoo Flowers

The temple gardens of Japan are renowned throughout the world for their raked gravel, well placed rocks, and lack of plants. Or, at least, very few plants. Such occasional plants are placed singly, strategically, and designed to engage the visitor with their enigmatic immediacy: 'less is more'. Each plant is indigenous to Japan: cherry, chrysanthemum, or wisteria, for example; each is symbolic; each celebrates a season. In traditional poetry - 'haiku' - the tricyrtis represents the late summer whose days are shortening into autumn.

The toad lily, to use its English name, is called *hototogisu* in Japanese, an onomatopoeic word for the cuckoo, whose spotted chest the flower is thought to resemble. The Zen Buddhist monks find in the delicate, complex flower structure a metaphor for life itself. They consider and contemplate every stage of the flower as it develops from a flat-bottomed, boxy bud into a complicated, tripartite flower. Each has six narrow tepals: three petals and three sepals that open outward like delicate stars, or are sometimes fused to form a bell.



Tricyrtis formosana

The reproductive parts of the flower - the stamens and the stigma - are supported on an elongated style above the starry petals. When the flower is pollinated, the whole corolla drops away, leaving a shining green seed capsule which is the same shape as the bud. These plants merit a position close to the path, the better to examine the flowers more closely.

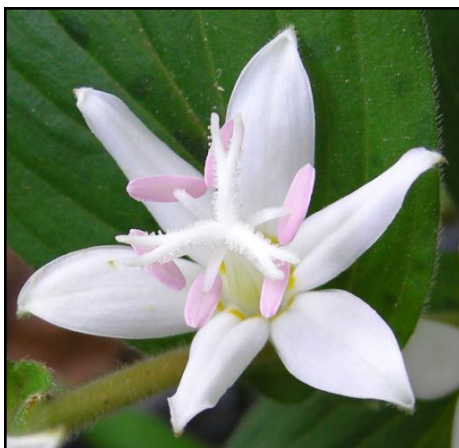
Here in northern Europe, tricyrtis flower during that long, lean, autumnal gap in any shady garden, between the last of the foxgloves and the first of the spring snowdrops and primroses. In the

wooded mountains of central Honshu, the main island of Japan, they accompany acers, *Hydrangea serrata*, and soft, lush ferns, from August to October.

The most commonly-grown tricyrtis in the UK, *T. formosana stolonifera*, the 'toad lily', spreads slowly via creeping rhizomes in moist, loose, leafy soil in light shade. It has upright, typically spotted, flowers and is easy to grow in the right conditions. There is also a rare form, *T. formosana* 'Samurai', with a sharp golden edge to the leaves that will remain evergreen in mild winters in the south of the UK.

Japan is home to many other species of tricyrtis: *T. hirta* grows wild on shady rocks, arching down to present its paler, spotted flowers over light green, slightly hairy leaves. It has crossed with another Japanese native, *T. affinis*, which has plain, palest mauve flowers, to produce *T.* 'White Towers', also with a prostrate habit.

Delicate *T. macropoda* has recurved white flowers and pink spots; it is called *yama-hototogisu* in Japanese: the 'mountain cuckoo'.



***Tricyrtis* 'White Towers'**



Tricyrtis latifolia



Tricyrtis macrantha

But not all tricyrtis are purple, pink or white. There are some golden yellow species that are also worth seeking out from specialist nurseries. *Tricyrtis latifolia* has, as its name suggests, leaves as wide as saucers, offsetting yellow flowers which are speckled chestnut brown. It would trail prettily down a shady bank or over rocks, or down a moss-covered wall.

Tricyrtis macrantha has golden flowers that are a treasure worth any amount of effort: it can be quite a challenge to grow successfully in the UK. It comes from Shikoku in central Honshu, where it trails down smooth, wet rocks and cliffs in a constantly humid atmosphere, enjoying the shade and shelter of the mountainous woodland.

So try a few tricyrtis under a light tree canopy, where the soil is 'woody' and moist without getting boggy. Be sure to mark them well, as they are late back in spring and may be dug up by accident. And dot a few slug pubs about. Slugs and snails are lager-louts: they prefer beer to beauty.

Perhaps you too will become hooked on toads...or should that be cuckoos?

Sally Gregson

Sally Gregson runs Mill Cottage Plants in Somerset, which specialises in rare Japanese hydrangeas and epimediums.

www.millcottageplants.co.uk

Committee

Chairman

Position vacant

Newsletter Editor

Marion Jay
01643 841486
info@somersetshps.com

Secretary

Jane Hunt
01934 732441
hunt.frogshole1@btinternet.com
Frogs Hole Farm
Brinscombe
Weare
Axbridge BS26 2LH

Visits & Events

Sandra Macqueen (retiring)
01934 843363
sandra@enamelsandra.co.uk

Janet Murley (retiring)
01884 820840
janet.murley@btinternet.com

Treasurer

Stuart Senior
01823 442344
stuart_senior@msn.com

Plant Fair Co-ordinator

Sally Gregson
01749 676966
millcottageplants@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Caroline Reeves
01963 351269
carolineofcc@gmail.com

Publicity

Pauline Foster
01823 410019
fosterpaulineh@gmail.com

Speakers

Maralyn Norman
01823 975899
beaconview@yahoo.co.uk

Website

Bill Hodgson
01643 841486
info@somersetshps.com

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***Geranium x oxonianum* 'Lace Time'**

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