

Somerset Hardy Plant Society

Self Drive Garden Visits to Charles Chesshire Nursery and Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens on Wednesday, 2 September 2026

Charles Chesshire Nursery, Sheepwash Barn, Symondsbury, Bridport, DT6 6HH

(This is about 1 hour 6 minutes drive from Taunton.)

We will meet at 11.00 am, arriving from 10.30 am. Charles will offer refreshments of coffee and biscuits/cake and then give us an introductory talk about his nursery and the plants. Then we can explore his nursery and make any necessary purchases! He will have a card machine for payment.

Please note that the nursery has very limited loo facilities, so it is best to visit nearby WC facilities before you arrive. Charles will be charging £6 for the visit. If you require gluten free refreshments, please book on the booking form.

Charles Chesshire is a garden designer whose creations can be found as far afield as New York, Long Island, Saudi Arabia, London and France. After a lifetime of travelling the world designing gardens, studying plants, writing and teaching, Charles has settled near Bridport in Dorset where his garden design business is based alongside his rare plant nursery, which offers a wide range of plants including clematis, Itoh peonies, maples, camellias and lace-cap and species hydrangeas, as well as a great selection of other shrubs and herbaceous plants for both the novice and connoisseur gardener.

Nicknamed **'The Cabin'**, the office and design building sits at the centre of the nursery. The nursery started out as a source for rare and unusual plants for design projects but has burgeoned to include a wide range of both curiosities and garden stalwarts. Beyond the cabin is a small field with a peony collection and prototype demonstration borders in various styles. The nursery range is constantly expanding, and offers an enticing choice of unusual perennials for both sun and shade.

Charles has been curator of Burford House Gardens and consultant to Sudeley Castle and Sezincote gardens. His most recent commissions have been the restoration of the park and gardens around Lydney Park in Gloucestershire and complete design of the 90 acres of Morton Hall Gardens, one of our coach visits this May. He has written many books including :

'Japanese Gardens' (Anness publishing) 2006

'Clematis' (RHS, Quadrille) 2004

'Flowering Shrubs' RHS, Practicals (Dorling-Kindersley) 2003

'Climbing Plants' RHS Practicals, (Dorling-Kindersley) 2002

'Clematis' RHS Practicals, (Dorling-Kindersley) 1999

...as well as writing articles for the Sunday Times and RHS Garden magazine.

He also lectures widely in the UK and he taught at Parson's College of Design, New York on many aspects of design, especially Japanese garden design, and clematis, roses and peonies.

We can stay as long as we wish and then can drive over to Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens where you may wish to picnic in car park or eat at the café. This is approx. 26 minutes' drive.

Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, Buller's Way, Abbotsbury, Dorset DT3 4LA

If you wish you may visit Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, as the staff are aware that our members may visit in the afternoon. However, because of various concessions on the entry price it was thought best for us to pay individually on arrival. They accept 2 for 1 Gardeners World and if you are a member of Historic Houses, you can have free entry. It is a RHS partner garden but member's discount entry is not valid at this time of year. The garden closes at 5 pm.

Many unusual exotic plants thrive in the sheltered wooded valley of Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens, as the maritime microclimate enables this Mediterranean and southern hemisphere garden to grow rare and tender plants. Late-flowering ginger lilies, cannas, salvias, kniphofias and hydrangeas create vibrant displays, interspersed with acers, bamboos, tree ferns, aeoniums and giant gunneras. The National Collection of Hoherias should still be flowering in the New Zealand Garden. There is a woodland valley with ponds, stream and a hillside walk to view the Jurassic Coast.

The café serves light snacks and savoury pastries, cakes and drinks, including gluten free, dairy free and vegan options.