



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

STAFFORDSHIRE GROUP

Newsletter



Spring 2020 No. 47



First Prize Wildlife: ‘Nuthatch’ by Paul Hemingway

First Page: First Prize Flower Portrait:

‘*Taraxacum* agg. (!)clock’ by Pippa Morgan

Last Page: First Prize Landscape:

‘A Quiet Corner’ by Hannah Clendon

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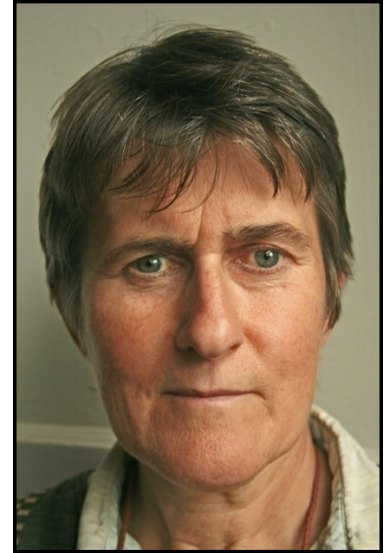
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Editorial (by Yoke van der Meer)

Hello and welcome to the Spring 2020 Online Newsletter!

This is a test for this Spring when many of us may have to stay indoors and not getting their normal paper copy until the next indoor meeting will take place! I do hope it will be well received and you can give me any comments how to improve it by the usual email!

Writing this in early February when it still feels very fresh outside and to make us all feel a bit warmer, for a change, this issue has a little bit of a tropical flavour due to some members visiting Kenya, Peru and finally Sri Lanka!



This last January I was lucky to visit Sri Lanka for the first time and had an amazing time seeing some beautiful countryside, wildlife, gardens and archaeological monuments.

However members Jackie and Paul Hemingway travelled here before me in February last year and I've included Jackie's article on the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens on page 12.

Member Sandy Bhoora went on the Inca trail to Machu Picchu in July 2019 and sent me some pictures of plants seen there. I decided to add a bit of information about one of the orchids she saw.

Member Bernie Norton travelled to Kenya to do some good charity work with the Girlguiding and wrote a report with several accompanying pictures.

I was able to visit Mexico three times during my years at Rodbaston College mainly to study the genus *Salvia*. But with my last visit I also helped out at the Ethnobotanical Gardens of Oaxaca. An Ethnobotanical garden is a garden full of native plants which have some sort of direct link with us humans. It can be a food, medicine, dye, building material or even an artistic use. So, to add to the tropical theme I include the writing of a blog about 'Jardin Etnobotanico de Oaxaca' as I think it is a role-model for western botanic gardens and how they may be in the future! When I returned to Britain I couldn't find anything similar to this! So I started my very own 'Virtual' Ethnobotanic Garden in the form of a blog which aims to include all our native plants which have some sort of use. It also teaches about plant classification whilst I go through various plant families. So, in this newsletter you'll find a much edited post all about the dandelion as I thought it apt with the beautiful front picture of this issue. It is a most useful plant as you'll find out!

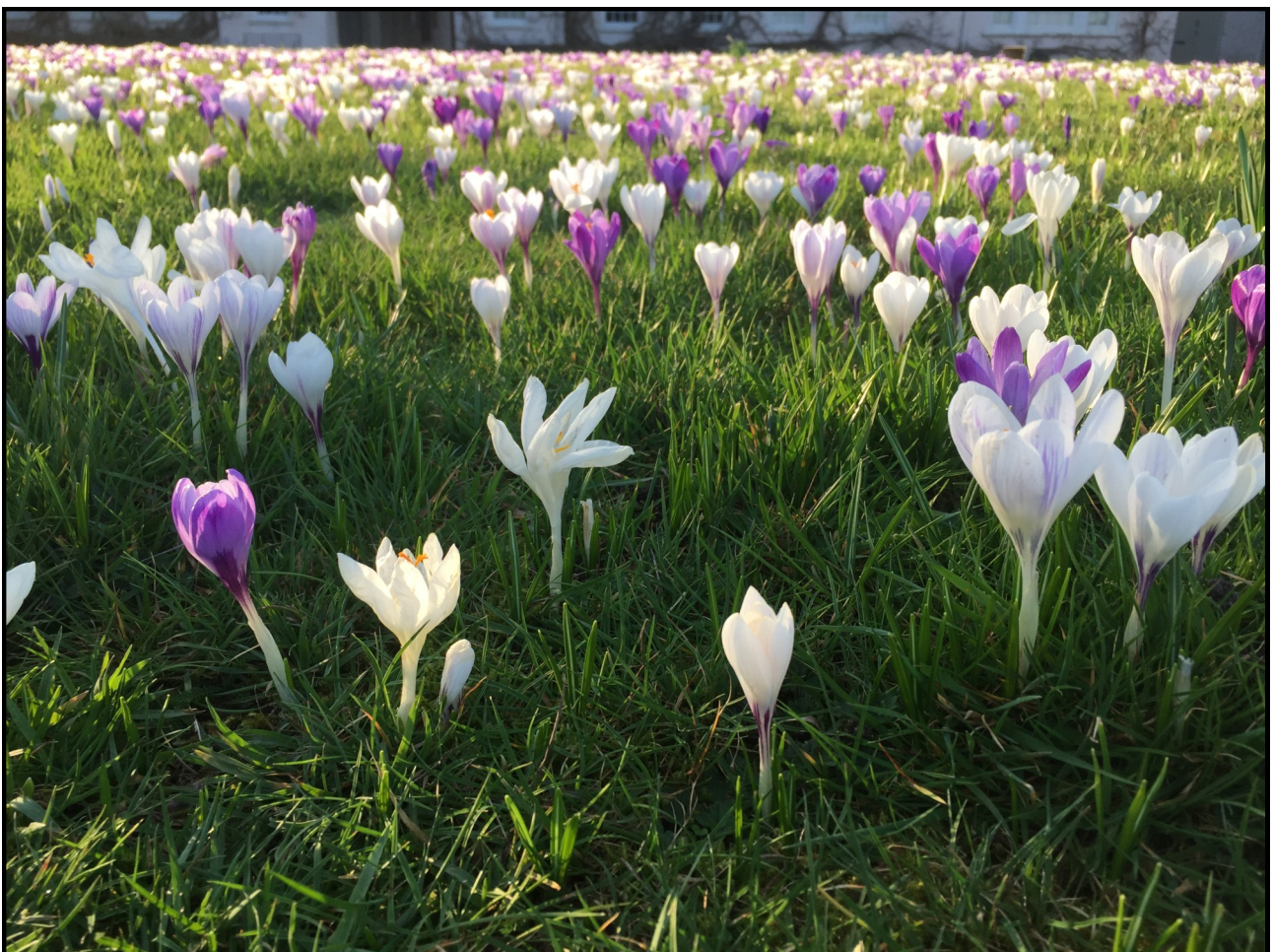
We have had four successful years of the Photographic Competition organised by Clive Plant and there are now even more pictures due to a third category with Wildlife. All of the prize winners' are included here as well as some others and of course the results again professionally judged by Roy Alexander from page 14 onward.

Clive tells us also a bit about the Conservation Scheme and you may want to help growing some of the rarer plants which need conserving.

Then finally by him, a very amusing, but true tale, about his ever growing allotment plot.

Unfortunately our Annual Plant Sale on May 17, may not happen due to the Virus. Please keep checking on our website for further information!

Hopefully you enjoy the read as well as the pictures and please do send me a few items for next Newsletter! This can be by email at yoksmagicgarden@gmail.com or yoke1963@hotmail.com



Second Place Photographic Competition Landscape: 'Crocuses fill the landscape' by Bernie Norbury

Chairman's Letter

With spring just around the corner and a new gardening year ahead, it will be a very interesting time. Winter has been so wet yet mild – how will the plants cope with all these changes?

Our planned lectures can be found towards the end of the Newsletter. I personally am looking forward to Neil Timm – “The World of Ferns” and also to Paul Cook from RHS Harlow Carr.

Two bus trips are planned for this year starting with our Spring Visit to Cholmondeley Castle Gardens and Plant Fair then in the afternoon to Briarfield at Neston – the garden of plantswoman Liz Carter. This will be a very good plant hunting trip for new stock, replacing any lost during the winter (that's my excuse)! During the day, over coffee and cake, I hope to meet and get to know more of you. Friends and relatives are most welcome. See page 18.

After the lecture last year entitled “Summat for Nowt”, I hope by now you all have great supplies ready to bring to our Plant Sale in May. We always welcome new growers and if you need any help, Carol Galley is the one to ask. More details on page

Last year, as your new Chairman, I went through a learning, listening and helping process. This was with the support of a great committee. We are pleased to welcome Hilary Dent to the committee and hope she enjoys her time with us. Liz Smith has stepped down and we thank her for all her help.

Let's hope the weather in 2020 helps to make it a great gardening year.

Pulmonaria rubra
is an early flowering
Lungwort. Picture by
Ruth Plant



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17th January, 2020 (by Fiona Horwath)

Helen Harrison opened the AGM and welcomed members and guests.

1. Apologies: Jackie Burwood, Hilary Dent, Carol Galley, Dorothy & Gordon Holmes, Francis Morgan, John Payne, Margaret & Michael Stapleton and Yoke van der Meer.

2. Minutes of the last AGM – January 2019:

Minutes approved, Proposed: Sue Potter, Seconded: Rosie Knight.

3a. The Chairman's Report:

Read by our Chairman as seen in this Newsletter.

Proposed: Katie Holmes, Seconded: Sandy Lewy.

3b. The Secretary's Report:

Read by our Secretary as seen in this Newsletter.

Proposed: Jane Cameron, Seconded: Pam Walton.

4. The Treasurer's Report:

Ruth Plant had circulated copies of the accounts to those present at the meeting.

Her report is printed in this Newsletter.

Proposed: Trevor Holmes, Seconded: Katie Holmes.

5. Election of Officer:

Chairman; Helen Harrison, Vice –, Secretary: Fiona Horwath, Treasurer: Ruth Plant.

6. Election of other Committee Members:

Carol Galley, Pippa Morgan, Lesley Greening, Jackie Hemingway, Trish Edwards, Hilary Dent (see in the back of this Newsletter). Liz Smith retiring off the committee. Can co-opt during events.

7. Appointment of Examiner for the Accounts for 2019:

Colin Horwath had completed this work for 2019 and had confirmed that he was happy to do so again for 2020.

8. To Agree the Membership Subscription for 2020:

Membership to remain the same at £9. Visitors' fee to stay the same at £4 but extra for high profile speakers.

9. Date of Next Meeting:

Friday, 15th January 2021 at 7.15pm

Chairman's Report for 2019

First, thank you all for attending our AGM. It's very rewarding to see so many members on a dark January evening.

The Group has this year been very active, with monthly meetings Autumn and Spring, plant sales and visits. Owing to lack of support, our Spring visit had to be cancelled, so a questionnaire was sent out. As a result, the details of 2020 trips have already been circulated - please try and give these events your support. This was my first year as your Chairman, and with the support of all the committee it has been a memorable and enjoyable year. Our Secretary, Fiona Horwath has multi-tasked, helping me, being Secretary, and organising visits - many thanks go to her for all her support.

Carol Galley is another multi-tasking committee member, ensuring excellent speakers, and co-ordinating our well-loved and very well-supported Annual Plant Sale. This year was the best total ever. Carol, we look forward to 2020s programme of speakers.

Our Treasurer, Ruth Plant, keeps a very keen eye on our income and expenditure, ensuring value for money. On top of this, she sends out the emails to members on my behalf, and keeps us all in touch with our National Society, whilst co-ordinating membership. Ruth, as always, has the support of Clive, an "unofficial" member of the committee. He is our Conservation Officer, organises the Photograph Competition, looks after and sets up the P.A. equipment and the website. A great "back room" helper whenever needed.

This year we were unable to visit Coley Cottage owing to Yvonne Branson's illness. She sends her best wishes to everyone and you are welcome to visit her in Lichfield. The "Catering Supremo" who took over from Yvonne, Pippa Morgan, supported by Francis and the tea helpers, has kept us all well-looked after. Recruiting new members has been a main aim of our activities in 2019. This included attending the Plant Fairs at Sandon Hall and Eccleshall Show.

Our Publicity Officer, Trish Edwards has kept in touch with all the local papers and magazines.

Our Group Newsletter continues to contain many wonderful items and is expertly edited by Yoke van der Meer. Please do try and submit an article to Yoke this year.

Secretary's Report (by Fiona Horwath)

This has been my first year as Secretary for the Staffordshire Group and I have continued to enjoy our Committee Meetings, Lectures and Social Events.

Sitting on the desk at the back, with Treasurer Ruth, I have endeavoured to learn members' names, although I cannot always conjure them up when put on the spot! I will keep trying!!!!

In March I attended the National Hardy Plant Society AGM in Beverley, Yorkshire, and would encourage other members to think about doing this. It is a great excuse for a weekend away in a different part of the country, as the AGM rotates amongst the different groups. As well as the formal AGM, there are lectures from high profile speakers, several plant stalls, and much useful information about the various activities of our National Society.

I was unable to attend the Group Secretaries Meeting later in the year but Chairman Helen kindly went on my behalf and brought back any relevant items for discussion.

We have had another successful year attending plant fairs, chatting to the public and recruiting some very welcome new members.

We hope to purchase our own Group gazebo for use at these occasions, as my own one is beginning to look ragged around the edges! We have struggled to put it up more than once!!

My thanks to Trish Edwards for assisting me with the minutes and making my job easier.

Thanks also to those who have volunteered to help with our stand at Gardeners' World Live at the NEC in June. I am co-ordinating the planning for this event, and would love to have more people on board, whether it's growing plants, helping to set up the stand, joining the rota on one of the show days or bringing other skills to share. Do get in touch with me if you would like to help.

Let's hope 2020 brings us sunny days for good gardening and some rain, but only during the night time hours!

Hardy Plant Society Staffordshire Group
Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019

Income	2019 £	2018 £
Subscriptions	1044.00	1003.00
Visitors	248.00	145.00
Raffle	405.03	448.00
Catering	148.25	195.55
Card Sales and Interest	46.10	3.24
Monthly Plant Sales	383.40	286.15
Summer Plant Sales	227.40	318.40
Annual Plant Sale	1707.30	1105.51
Open Garden Event	390.00	0.00
Surplus/deficit (-) on outings	-39.00	41.00
	4560.48	3545.85

Expenditure		
Administration	244.68	176.13
Speakers	1391.46	1964.00
Catering	125.04	77.70
Raffle Prizes	0.00	62.97
Magazine	603.76	502.78
Equipment & Website	0.00	143.57
Advertising	230.60	210.60
Room Hire	283.50	276.00
Photo Comp Prizes and Cards	64.00	48.00
	2943.04	3461.75

Surplus/Deficit (-) for the year	1617.44	84.10
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Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2019

Funds at start of year (1 January 2019)	5154.82	5070.72
Surplus/Deficit (-) for the year	1617.44	84.10
Funds at 31 December 2019	6772.26	5154.82

Represented by:

Current account	3548.79	1960.65
Capital Reserve Account	3651.47	3644.17
Floats	100.00	100.00
Cheques not presented	0.00	-19.00
2020 in advance (subscriptions - summer sales booked)	-528.00	-531.00
	6772.26	5154.82

Treasurer's Report (by Ruth Plant)

If you look at the accounts you will see that we have made a surplus of £1,617 in 2019 and this increases our reserves to £6,772. This is mainly due to a very successful annual plant sale and spending a little less on speakers.

We also had fund raising from Rosie Knight opening her garden, raising £390 for the Group. Thank you so much Rosie for such a marvellous effort and result. The final position puts the group on a secure financial basis for the medium term.

I would advise that the current level of reserves that we hold is prudent for the group.



‘The Secret Door’ by Peter Hargreaves, Third Prize 2020 Photo Competition, see page 14.

A visit to Peradeniya Royal Botanic Gardens

Sri Lanka, February 2019 (by Jackie Hemingway)

“If Ceylon is a paradise for every botanist...Peradeniya deserves to be called the very heart of paradise” ERNST HEINRICH HAEKEL 1882

This sun drenched treasure, echoing with the warblings and jewel bright flashes of exquisite tropical birds, is located near Kandy, the gateway to the highlands, at an elevation of around 1500 feet.

Originally created by an ancient Sri Lankan king for his wife, the site was expanded into 150 acres of scientifically run botanical garden in 1824. Backed by Sir Joseph Banks of Kew, Governor Edward Barnes, saw the potential of this verdant tropical island for colonial agriculture. Sri Lanka's first tea bushes were trialled here as were coffee, nutmeg, rubber and *Cinchona*. The latter two introduced by George Gardner, the famous plant collector, when appointed as Chief Superintendent in 1844.

Seeds of the Brazilian rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis* (not to be confused with the Indian rubber tree, *Ficus elastica*) were raised at Kew and supplied to Peradeniya forming the basis of the huge rubber industry that remains the second largest economic crop in Sri Lanka today. The bark of *Cinchona pubescens* supplied quinine, used as an antimalarial drug and, most importantly, flavouring in tonic to accompany gin, a life line for those early intrepid planters!

We walked through the spice garden its multi layered canopy dappled through with shafts of steamy sunlight. Rhizomes of ginger and turmeric spread out across the shady forest floor beneath clumps of Cardamom, leaves tall as men. Coffee and pepper with their trusses of red berries clambered up trunks of coconut, areca palm, and cinnamon trees. “Beware of falling coconuts” the sign said! Onwards to the orchid house stuffed full of exotic ...idioms and ...opsis from all over the world. Through the cactus house, taking care not to get impaled on the monstrous sized specimens. Past nursery houses full, we noticed, with hundreds of cuttings of *Ficus religiosa*. Out into ‘The Great Circle’, the focal point of Peradeniya.

Here, a 4 acre grassy opening in the forest is encircled by magnificent trees, of monumental scale, each planted by a notable dignitary. This was the venue of the worlds first Rubber Exhibition. The location of the Red Cotton and Indian rubber trees and Talipot Palm (*Corypha umbraculifera*), painted by Victorian artist and botanist Marianne North which can be seen in her gallery at Kew. Notable was the quirky Cannon Ball tree planted by Prince George in 1901. The lovely blossoms grow direct from the trunk and produce cannon ball sized seed pods.

A *Ficus religiosa*, Bo or Peepal tree was planted in 1875 by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). The Lord Buddha found enlightenment beneath one of these. Round leaves coming to a distinctive point, here, were badly damaged by disease, hence the greenhouse full of cuttings.

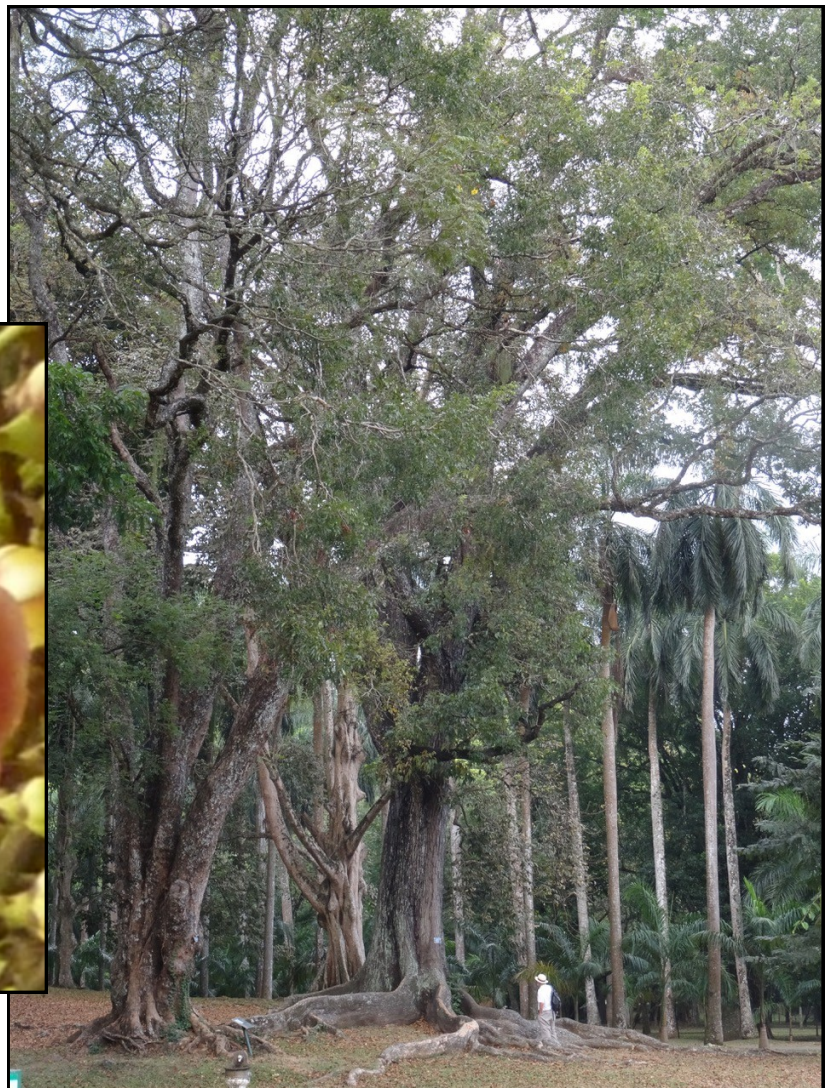
My picture below shows Paul standing beneath a large leaved Mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) so tall, it has developed immense buttress roots for support and the Royal Palm Avenue, planted in 1950 demonstrates just how fast plants grow in this Eden-like climate.

With limited time, sadly much was left unseen by us but enough to grasp the enormous role this garden has played in development of economic crops in the tropics. Flanked by extensive research facilities, conservation, sustainability and education are now priorities.

Refs: 'Royal Botanic Gardens' Peradeniya by N.B.Palipana and 'Marianne North: A Very Intrepid Painter' by Michelle Payne.

**Mahogany Tree with Paul
on the right**

**Close up of the Cannon Ball
tree flower (by Yoke)**



Photographic Competition 2020: Comments by Roy Alexander

Another great batch of entries and a very difficult task to pick winners.
I have used marks out of 20 as that is normal in the photographic world.

This is purely my opinion and everyone will have their own choice. I use parameters such as “Is the picture clear?” “Is the subject of the photograph in a prominent place?” “Is the background distracting?” “Would I like to see the picture on my living room wall?”

Congratulations to the winners there really were some excellent photographs.
The winner of the Plant Portrait category in particular was excellent, it was of professional standard. Well done.

Garden Landscape category:

- 1) Crocuses fill the landscape. Lots of impact Marks 18
- 4) It's a bustling scene but the main subjects, the Tulips in the foreground are too near the edge. Would have been improved by positioning them up and to the left. Marks 12
- 8) A quiet corner in dappled shade. I like the way the wall leads the eye into the picture and to the flower pot. Good composition. Marks 19
- 14) Nice view of a walled garden. I like the couple on the right Marks 15
- 16) Lovely colours and nice composition. Shame it wasn't taken on a better camera because it gets blurry as it gets bigger. Marks 18
- 18) The white and pink colours going across the picture are nice and I like the rustic shed in the background. Marks 18
- 22) I like the symmetry with the two gardeners. Shame about the red bush on the left and I can't decide whether the two tubs on the left enhance or detract. Marks 17
- 23) Nice fountain and I like the colours. I think it would have been improved if the fountain was positioned more to the right. Good picture but a bit busy. Marks 15
- 29) Pumpkins; well seen and quite interesting but I don't like the scruffy rhubarb (?) in the foreground. Marks 13
- 30) Lovely garden. I like the circular composition. The colours look a bit strange though. Marks 14

Results

Third Place: Number 18: Peter Hargreaves; The Secret Door (see page 11)

Second Place: Number 1: Bernie Norbury; Crocuses fill the landscape (see page 5)

First Place: Number 8: Hannah Clendon; The Quiet Corner (last page)

Plant Portrait

- 2) Lots of impact. Subject looking into picture. Nice and sharp but middle of the flower a bit dull. Marks 16
- 5) Another picture with a lot of impact and sharp. I like it. Marks 18
- 7) Nice picture but this category is “Plant Portrait” and unfortunately the subject, in yellow and pink, hasn’t been given enough prominence Marks 12
- 9) Back to full-on impact. Lovely and sharp and in this case the middle is highlighted by the sun. Good picture. Marks 18
- 11) Another very good picture. Nice and clear with a blurred background to make the flower stand out. Shame that the bee is in shadow making it difficult to see. Marks 17
- 12) Love the colours, the blue standing out against the red brick wall. The eye is drawn to the bright foliage on the bottom left though. Marks 17
- 15) Nice rose and good effort at blurring out the background, however the background is still intrusive as are the leaves at the front of the picture. The rose needs to be more of the subject. Marks 12
- 20) Wow! We are getting into expert territory now. Great picture. Marks 20
- 21) Nice composition, however it is a bit dull and doesn’t stand out from the background Good effort though. Marks 16
- 25) Looks like little stars hanging from the sky! Nice picture. Marks 17
- 27) Lovely Lily and the flower in the foreground is nice and sharp. Much of the picture though is taken up with bright flowers which are blurred. Marks 15
- 28) I love the orange against the slate blue background but unfortunately it is all blurred. Perhaps due to low light the shutter speed was too low. Marks 15
- 31) Good idea having the basket of flowers but the surroundings are a bit obtrusive and take the focus away from the main subject. Marks 15

Results

Third Place: Number 5: Clive Plant; Sedum (see page 21)

Second Place: Number 9: Hannah Clendon; Paeony Close up. (see page 21)

First Place: Number 20: Pippa Morgan; *Taraxacum* agg. clock (first page)

Wildlife in the Garden

- 3) Super picture of two bees on a flower. Well composed, background blurred and subject sharp. Marks 19
- 6) Red squirrel caught nicely. Shame about the branch on the right bottom corner but not much could have been done about that. Marks 16
- 10) Good clear picture of a Comma Butterfly. The bright flower in the bottom right corner is a bit distracting. Marks 17
- 13) Unfortunately this picture of a Lizard or Newt is out of focus so is blurred. Marks 10
- 17) Very good photo of a Nuthatch on a feeder. It's super sharp. It's looking into the picture, as is the bird in the background and they both stand out against the nicely blurred background. Marks 19
- 19) I like this picture of a Grey Squirrel beating the anti-squirrel bird feeder. The squirrel is nice and sharp but the background is a little distracting. Marks 16
- 24) Good image of a Red Admiral butterfly. On close examination it seems slightly out of focus. The flowers behind are clearer. Still good though. Marks 17
- 26) Amusing snap of a toad in someone's slipper. As a picture though it is dominated by the slipper. Marks 15
- 32) Nice picture of a frog on a floating leaf. Unfortunately my eye keeps being drawn to the yellow flowers. It would have been better if the frog had been more dominant. Marks 15

Results

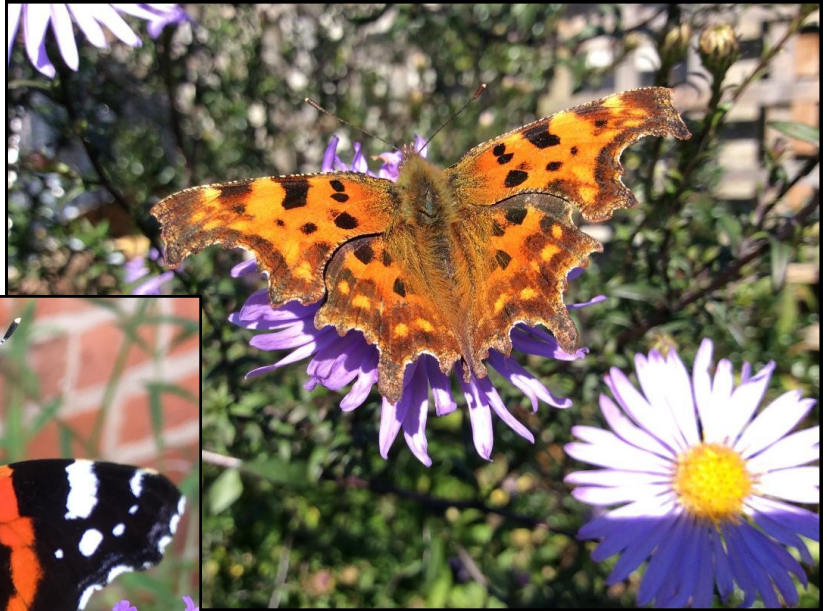
Third Prize:
Heather Holyhead;
Comma Butterfly

First Prize: Paul
Hemingway;
Nuthatch (page 2)



Second Prize: Bernie Norbury; Bees on a Flower.

‘Comma Butterfly’
on *Aster*.



‘Admiral Butterfly’ on *Verbena*.

‘Grey squirrel’ in bird feeder and
below:



‘Red squirrel on branch’



Staffordshire Group Outings (by Hilary Dent)

Sunday 26th April (Cancelled!)

**Plant Hunters Fair at Cholmondeley Castle, Malpas, SY14 8AH and
Briarfield, Neston, Wirral, CH64 5TL**

Cholmondeley Castle in rural Cheshire stands on a high rise above a lake. The castle is surrounded by sweeping lawns and mature trees, including Cedars of Lebanon, Oak and Chestnut. There is a Temple, Water Garden, and in April the thousands of tulips should be looking good. As usual, there will be a wide selection of specialist nurseries in attendance so bring your wallets! In the afternoon we travel on to beautiful Briarwood in the Wirral, the NGS garden of plantswoman Liz Carter. This sheltered garden, tucked under the south-facing side of Burton Wood, is home to many unusual plants. The 2-acre garden is on two sites, a couple of minutes along a lane. Shrubs, herbaceous plants, bulbs and alpine plants jostle together to be enjoyed whilst having tea, coffee and home-made cake, included in your admission. Price per person £30 – visitors most welcome. This includes admission to the Plant Hunters Fair, Castle Gardens and entry to Briarfield with tea and coach travel and driver's gratuity. Please bring a packed lunch.

Sunday 5th July

**Aulden Farm Garden, Leominster HR6 0JT and Stockton Bury Gardens,
Kimbolton HR6 2HA**

Aulden Farm Garden home of Alun and Jill Whitehead, hosts a National Collection of Siberian Iris. Three acres of informally planted country garden surround an old farmhouse and there is a well-stocked traditional nursery. Tea, coffee and delicious cake will await us on arrival.

As we travel on to Stockton Bury, you may eat your packed lunch on the coach, or dine in the Tithe Barn Cafe at Stockton Bury (numbers required). This acclaimed 4-acre plantman's garden offers stunning medieval farm buildings in a relaxing countryside setting. There are many rare and unusual plants, also a working kitchen garden and plant sales area, making this the perfect Summer afternoon's destination. Price per person £31 – visitors most welcome.

This includes admission to both gardens; tea, coffee and cake in the morning, coach travel and driver's gratuity.

Please make cheques payable to "Hardy Plant Society, Staffs Group" (**post dated 5th July**) and send to Hilary Dent, 190 Lichfield Road, STONE, ST15 8PY. Tel No: 01785 812831.

Leave Stafford Sainsbury's long stay car park 8.30 am.

Return to Stafford approx 6.30 pm

Tuesday 28th July

Birch Trees - Copmere End, Eccleshall, ST21 6HH

Surprising ½ acre SW-facing sun trap hidden from the road which takes advantage of the 'borrowed landscape' of the surrounding countryside. Take time to explore the pathways between the island beds which contain many rare & unusual herbaceous plants and shrubs; also vegetable patch, stump bed, alpine house, orchard and water features.

A visit to our members' Sue and John Weston's garden at Birch Trees, near Eccleshall. It is on Tuesday 28th July at 6.30 pm. Entry is £6 and you have to use your own transport to get there. Entry fee includes tea or coffee.

Other Staffordshire Group Events:

Sunday 5th April: HPS Plant Stall at Sandon Hall. 11 to 4 pm

Sunday 17th May: Annual Plant Sale. 10 to 2 pm (see page 34)

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th July: Lichfield Festival of Gardens (Curborough Countryside Centre)

Sunday 2nd August: HPS Plant Stand at Sandon Hall. 11 to 4 pm

Saturday 5th Sept: HPS Plant Stand at Eccleshall Showground. 10 to 5 pm

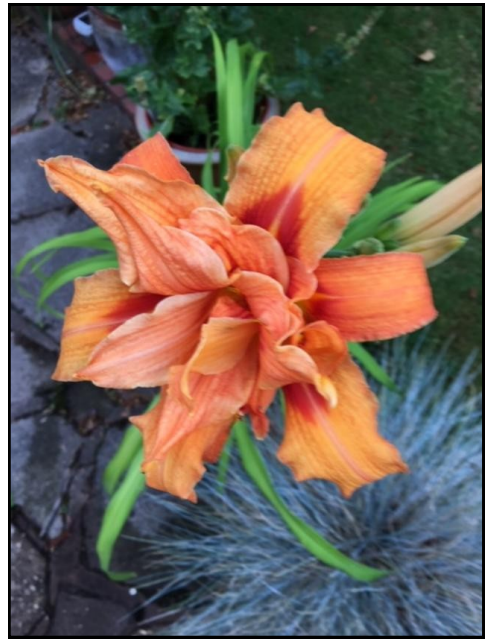
Profile from Hilary Dent:

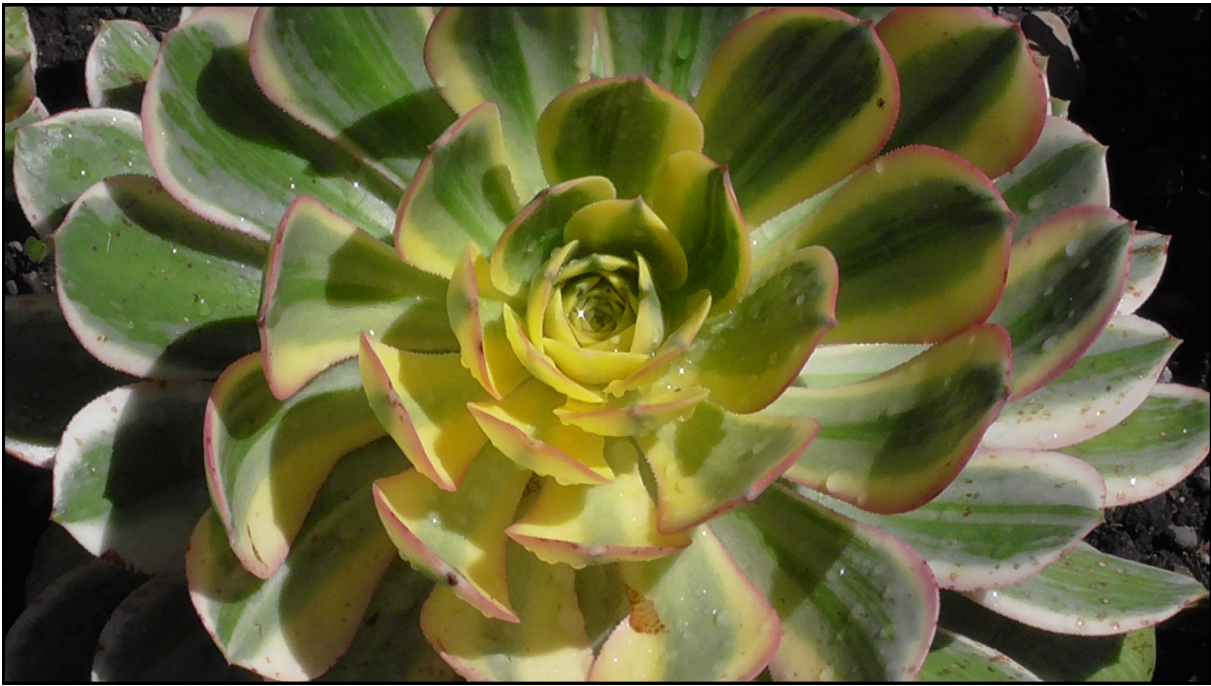
I have been interested in gardening since my early teens. I love landscaping a garden and watching it develop. I love most plants especially spring bulbs. My main passion is growing fuchsias which I overwinter and have had some for a considerable time. It is so encouraging when in January and February they start to shoot knowing that the best is yet to come.



Some Flower Portrait pictures:

Hemerocallis or a Double, petalled, orange Daylily, *Primula* 'Silver-Lace', Sunflower visited by bumblebee, flowers of *Lilium philippinense* and a flower of *Pulsatilla vulgaris*.



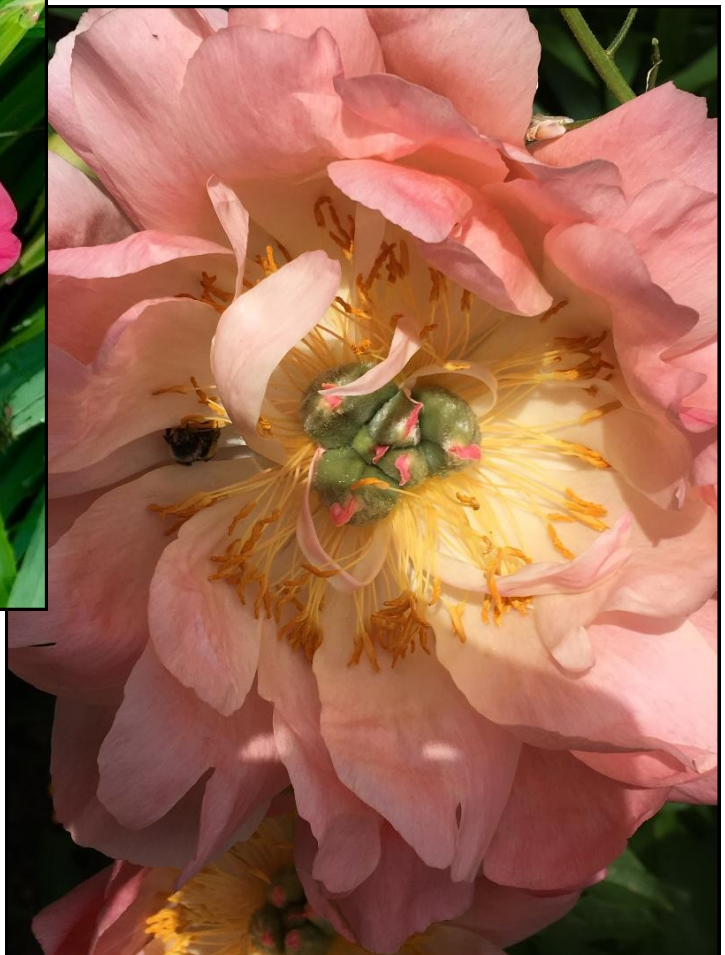


Third Prize by Clive Plant: *Sedum* or *Aeonium canariensis*

Second Price by Hannah Clendon: a Close up of a *Paeony* flower.



Close up of *Tigridia pavonia* or the Tiger Flower which is only one of its common names.



Plant Sales – a means of charitable funding (by Bernie Norbury)

As a member of Girlguiding I have had the recent opportunity of international travel to Kenya. Alongside our personal funding of the trip we were expected to raise a minimum of £150 each to support the project work we were to undertake. HPS plant sales were the perfect opportunity to raise my funds. I divided, sowed, potted on and became a regular helper at each of the plant fairs; making new friends and watching the 60% returns accrue. £187 was my final contribution to the Girlguiding project fund.

Our adult group (11) of leaders and commissioners flew to Mombasa in October. The project is to decorate and refurbish the living quarters for three staff working in a centre for young disabled women. The women are taught how to become seamstresses and look after themselves. After a week the project was complete and appreciated with overwhelming joy, saying that what we had done would change the lives of the also disabled staff members.

Other charitable work took us to a school, orphanage and foster homes, as well as a day working in Haller Park, where we undertook animal welfare. Whilst in the park we were invited to plant a tree each. It was wonderful to be able to plant an almond tree that would become a food source for the animals.

My knowledge of plants and animals has grown immensely over the two weeks. Some are more recognisable than others (see Lion's Ears photo below). Thanks to all of you buying plants, we plant sellers could not do it without you!

From Wikipedia:

Leonotis leonurus, also known as **lion's tail** and **wild dagga**, is a plant species in the mint family, Lamiaceae. The plant is a broadleaf evergreen native to Southern Africa, where it is very common. It is known for its medicinal and mild psychoactive properties.



Orchids seen growing on the Inca trail to Machu Picchu, July 2019.

Picture by Sandy Bhoora, info from Wikipedia (Ed.)

The **Inca Trail to Machu Picchu** (also known as *Camino Inca* or *Camino Inka*) is a hiking trail in Peru that terminates at Machu Picchu. It consists of three overlapping trails: *Mollepata*, *Classic*, and *One Day*. *Mollepata* is the longest of the three routes with the highest mountain pass and intersects with the Classic route before crossing Warmiwañusqa ("dead woman").

Located in the Andes mountain range, the trail passes through several types of Andean environments including cloud forest and alpine tundra. Settlements, tunnels, and many Incan ruins are located along the trail before ending the terminus at the Sun Gate on Machu Picchu mountain. The two longer routes require an ascent to beyond 4,200 metres (13,800 ft) above sea level, which can result in altitude sickness.

Epidendrum secundum, is a poorly understood reed-stemmed species, which Dressler (1989) describes as "the *Epidendrum secundum* complex." Arditti and Ghani note that *E. secundum* has the distinction of bearing the longest seeds known in the Orchidaceae, 6.0 mm long. By comparison, the seeds of *E. ibaguense* (another crucifix orchid) are only 2.9 mm long.

The plant is rather cool-growing and can even tolerate a light frost.



Jardín Etnobotánico de Oaxaca

(blog post by Rebecca Bailey on 10th of August, 2018 (<https://www.quepasaoaxaca.com/jardin-etnobotanico-de-oaxaca/>))

pictures by Yoke van der Meer taken in 2008)

The Jardín Etnobotánico de Oaxaca (or Ethnobotanical Garden in English) is more than just a garden and is not just for plant enthusiasts. It was designed by a team including Luis Zárate, Alejandro de Ávila and artist Francisco Toledo, the living legend known locally as ‘El Maestro’, and the man behind many of the city’s most important cultural institutions. The purpose of the garden, and the definition of ‘ethnobotanical’, is the exploration of the relationship between plants and people. The garden tells a story about the cultural and artistic traditions of Oaxaca and its place in the natural history of Mexico, making it a must-visit for visitors and residents alike.



Front entrance to the Jardin Etnobotanico de Oaxaca on left and a plan of all the different areas and ‘uses to men’ in the coloured, designated areas on the right.

And it almost didn't happen! Located behind Oaxaca's most prominent landmark, the Santo Domingo Cultural Centre, the garden was originally part of the Santo Domingo monastery grounds until it was occupied by the Mexican army for over 120 years. When the garrison was relocated in 1994, the state government made a plan to develop the site as a luxury hotel and car park, but a Toledo-led group lobbied for the garden alternative and won. The garden was officially opened in 1998.

The result is a beautiful garden that showcases the diverse range of flora that is native to Oaxaca, the most biodiverse region in Mexico. All the trees and plants featured in the garden are from Oaxaca and were specially brought in from other sites around the state. Each one has a story. There is a rescue area where you can see agaves and cacti that have been saved from development projects in other parts of Oaxaca, a collection of medicinal plants, and a variety of traditional foods.



This barrel cactus is very old and was rescued from a new road development! It now has a prominent place in the gardens (*Echinocactus platyacanthus*)



A few of the food crop grown: *Salvia hispanica* or **Chia** and *Sechium edule* or **Chayote/Mirliton Squash**, is an edible plant belonging to the gourd family, Cucurbitaceae. (above and right)



Crescentia cujete or **Calabash Tree** with fruit to make small vessels such as cups and musical instruments!

The garden's lack of signage is intentional and creates a seamless aesthetic.

As a result, in order to fully enjoy and understand the gardens, access is by guided tour only. Tours are one to two hours long (depending on the language) and are available in Spanish, English, French, and German. Guides are passionate and knowledgeable. Visitors learn about the history and management of the garden, as well as the significance of, and some of the practical uses of, many of the plants held within it.

Medicinal and ceremonial plants include mesquite, copal used in incense and for carving *alebrijes*, and, of course, the beloved agave plants used to make mezcal. An entire section of the garden and tour is dedicated to traditional food crops including *hierba de conejo*, corn, beans, *chepil* (the herb used in *tamal de chepil*), jicama, amaranth, tomatoes, and chia.

The garden is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year (2018) and continues to expand with a new greenhouse recently installed featuring numerous plant groups from Oaxaca's humid climates including orchids, cacao, and bromeliads.

The garden also works to protect endangered plants and has a strong focus on sustainability. Plants are watered from a rain-fed cistern and the garden's solar panels allow it to be completely self-sufficient in energy. The greenhouse uses geothermal cooling instead of air conditioning, furthering the garden's commitment to sustainable practices. As Director Dr. Alejandro de Ávila says, "We look to the future, not just the past."

In a rapidly developing world, the garden's role as conservationist, historian and teacher of sustainable technologies has become even more critical making it, indeed, more than just a garden!

The Dandelion (by Yoke van der Meer in my blog: wonderfulweedweekly.co.uk)

To start off, a plant which most of us know very well: The Dandelion.

This is in the family of Asteraceae, former Compositae which is the last 'Dicot' native family number 128 in Clive Stace's 'New Flora of the British Isles'

This large family has no less than 104 genera described, sub-divided in 3 sub-families and 16 tribes. The dandelion is in Sub-family 2 or Cichorioideae, tribe 2 or Cichorieae and Genus number 33 just to dazzle you with the scientific classification! All interesting stuff though; hope you agree?

The 'true Dandelion' or *Taraxacum officinale* no longer exists. The dandelion is so varied now that "234 microspecies are currently recognised in the British Isles".

The name Dandelion comes from the French 'dent-de-lion' or 'tooth of lion'.

Most of us know, love and/or hate the dandelion. Their en mass-flowering period is relatively short although it will carry on sending new flowers throughout the year.

For most of us we can easily recognise any dandelion with its typical long dissected leaves and large composite flowers. The large flower on one stem that we see is actually hundreds of individual ones all held together within a green base called an involucre (= a whorl, collar or ruff of bracts at the base of a flower-head).

I heard once, that if the dandelion was not seen as a weed it could be the perfect pest and disease-free perennial border plant with its large rosettes of leaves, a succession of large, bright flowers and attractive globes of parachutes!

But alas, nobody seems to see it this way!

The sunny flowers are of course incredibly useful for a number of different pollinators including bumblebees, butterflies, hover flies, day flying moths and solitary bees.

Now as many of us might know, when we were young and picked a bunch of those flowers for mum or harvested the leaves for the pet-rabbit, they would leave a sticky and very bitter tasting sap! Well, this bitterness is due to the milky sap produced by several members of the large Asteraceae family.

"The scientists found the highest concentrations of the bitter latex in the roots of dandelions. Dandelions need to protect their roots very fiercely because these are the main storage organs for nutrients which fuel growth early in the spring."

It is a well-known fact that the leaves, especially in spring, are a good spring- tonic and in fact keep you healthy throughout the year! The bitterness can be altered by blanching the leaves under an old-fashioned terracotta pot which is heavy enough not to get blown over, **but** the blanching will also reduce its health benefits.

Some uses of Dandelion:

- Gathered early, after the spring's first warm spell, the leaves and roots are used as a spring tonic and to stimulate digestion and vitality after a long winter.
- Dandelion greens also have been used as a diuretic, an agent that promotes the loss of water from the body through urination. Their diuretic effect can make dandelion greens helpful in lowering blood pressure and relieving premenstrual fluid retention.
- Dandelion roots contain inulin and levulin, starch-like substances that may help balance blood sugar, as well as a bitter substance (taraxacin) that stimulate digestion.
- The very presence of a bitter taste in the mouth promotes the flow of bile from the liver and gallbladder, as well as hydrochloric acid from the stomach.
- Dandelion leaves are also rich in minerals and vitamins, particularly calcium and vitamins A, C, K, and B2 (riboflavin).
- Besides the stimulating bitter substances, dandelion roots also contain choline, another liver stimulant.
- Many people could use a little extra support for the liver: We are inundated daily with chemicals and substances that the liver must process.
- Rough dry skin and acne, constipation, gas and bloating, frequent headaches, and premenstrual syndrome are all potential symptoms of an overburdened liver.
- Dandelions also are recommended for wart removal! The roots, stems, and leaves of the dandelion exude a white sticky resin when injured. Applied directly to warts daily or, preferably, several times a day, this resin slowly dissolves them.

From Robin Harford's blog: www.eatweeds.co.uk

‘Although traditionally eaten in Spring time, the leaves I find are at their best after the plant has flowered and seeded and only from plants that have grown under shade, in moisture rich soil and have been quick growing.

This usually means the late Summer, early Autumn growth for the least bitter, most flavoured leaves. Bitterness is reduced by gathering plants in shade. One tip for reducing bitterness in leaves is to store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for a few days.’



Staffordshire HPS Conservation Group

(by Clive Plant, Conservation Group Coordinator)

Our Staffordshire Group currently has a membership of 26 propagators, who have 'adopted' a selection of plants from the National Conservation Scheme. The aim being to grow these plants on to a size whereby the plant can provide vegetative cuttings. It is important that all plants in the scheme are propagated by vegetative means to ensure that the correct identity is maintained. Depending on the plant this could take a year or two.

These plants appear on the National Conservation Scheme list, mainly because they are plants that have fewer than **four** entries in the Plant Finder Book, and indeed may not be in the Plant Finder at all.

So, many of our HPS Groups around the country have members who are part of the National Conservation Scheme. We look after and help to preserve the plants that are not always available within the nursery trade because they may not be easily propagated or can take time to bulk up. If we can keep them surviving, then the future is very bright for some very nice plants that are still worthy of a place in our gardens. If you would like to participate do have a word with me at one of our meetings. See also for more information on the HPS website under Conservation (Editor)

New Members (by Ruth Plant)

Since the Autumn 2019 Newsletter we have had 13 new members:

Sue Clay from Colwich

Sheila and Anthony Leech from Brewood

Sheila Hartshorne from Cannock

Margaret Crossland from Walton on the Hill

Linda Walker from Stafford

Rose Laidler from Stafford

Jenny Swann from Keele

Jackie Burwood from Stone

Caroline Coles from Nottingham and Wendy Farrell, Olivia Spencer and Bernice Cumberland are back after a short break - welcome back to you!

Staffs. Group Member Gardens Open for Charity 2020

Birch Trees - Copmere End, Eccleshall, ST21 6HH

Susan & John Weston 01785 850448 john.weston@ngs.org.uk

Surprising ½ acre SW-facing sun trap hidden from the road which takes advantage of the 'borrowed landscape' of the surrounding countryside. Take time to explore the pathways between the island beds which contain many rare & unusual herbaceous plants and shrubs; also vegetable patch, stump bed, alpine house, orchard and water features.

Visitors welcome by arrangement June & July, groups of 10 - 30. Admission £5 tea and biscuits inc children free. See also 'Outings' on page 19.

The Garth - 2 Broc Hill Way, Milford, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST17 0UB Mr & Mrs David Wright 01785 661182 anitawright1@yahoo.co.uk

www.anitawright.co.uk

½ acre garden of many levels on Cannock Chase AONB. Acid soil loving plants. Series of small gardens, water features, raised beds. Rare trees, island beds of unusual shrubs and perennials, many varieties of hosta and ferns.

Varied and colourful foliage, summerhouse, arbours and quiet seating to enjoy the garden. Ancient sandstone caves.

Sunday 7 June, Sunday 28 June (2 - 6pm). Admission £4.00, children free. Cream teas.

Visitors also welcome by arrangement. May to September for groups of 20+

Grafton Cottage - Barton-under-Needwood, DE13 8AL

Margaret & Peter Hargreaves 01283 713639 marpeter1@btinternet.com

Admired over 27 years our aim is to provide a pleasant afternoon. Unusual herbaceous plants with new additions introduced, perfume from old fashioned Roses, Sweet peas, dianthus, phlox and lilies, viticella clematis, salvias and violas. Cottage garden annuals and use of foliage plants play a part in the garden. Coloured themed borders, parterre, amphitheatre and brook to celebrate 25 years of opening.

Sunday 28th June (11.30am - 5pm) Friday 10th July (1.30-5.00), Sundays 12th & 26th July, Sunday 9 August (11.30am - 5pm). Admission £4.50 children free.

children free. Home-made teas. Visitors also welcome by arrangement June to August min admission £90 if less than 20 people.

This garden also makes a donation to Alzheimer's Research Trust.

The Old Vicarage - Fulford, nr Stone, ST11 9QS. Mike & Cherry Dodson

1½ acres of formal sloping garden around Victorian house. Sit on the terrace or in the summerhouse to enjoy home-made cakes and tea amongst mature trees, roses, relaxed herbaceous borders and a small pond. Move to the organic vegetable garden with raised beds, fruit cage and very big compost heaps! In contrast, easy walk around the natural setting of a two-acre reclaimed lake planted with native species designed to attract wildlife. Waterfall, jetty, fishing hut, *Acer* and fern glade plus young arboretum provide more interest. Featured in Weekend Telegraph. Children will enjoy meeting the chickens and horses.

Sunday 14th June (11.30 - 4pm). Admission £4.00, children free. Home-made teas.

23 St Johns Road - Rowley Park, Stafford, ST17 9AS

Fiona Horwath 07908 918181 fiona_horwath@yahoo.co.uk

Pass through the black and white gate of this Victorian house into a part-walled gardener's haven.

Bulbs and shady woodlanders in spring and masses of herbaceous plants and climbers. Sit and enjoy home-made cakes by the pond or Victorian-style greenhouse. Gardener is keen Hardy Plant Society member and sows far too many seeds, so always something good for sale!

Our new outdoor kitchen is great for refreshments! The waterlily wildlife pond remains - with the greenhouses - the beating heart of the garden. A growing interest in alpines is leading to a proliferation of troughs. Whilst ferns, the quiet green stars of shady areas are also increasing in number!

Thursday 9th April (2 -5pm). £4.00, children free. Home-made teas.

Evening opening Friday 15th May (6.30 – 8.30pm) with wine & refreshments.

£6 children free. Friday 12th June, Thursday 9th July (2 - 5pm). Admission £4.00, children free. Home-made teas. Visits by arrangement April to July groups of 20+.

Yew Tree Cottage - Podmores Corner, Long Lane, White Cross, Haughton, ST18 9JR. Clive & Ruth Plant 07591 886925 pottyplantz@aol.com

Garden brimming with unusual plants. All-yr-round interest incl. *Meconopsis*, *Trillium*, and *Arisaema*. National Collection *Dierama* featured on Gardeners World, flowering in first half July. ½-acre incl gravel, borders, vegetables and plant sales area. Covered courtyard with oak-timbered vinery to take tea in if the weather is unkind, and seats in the garden for lingering on sunny days. Partial wheelchair access - level grass & paved paths - some narrow & some gravel

Saturday 2nd May (2 - 5pm), Thursday 2nd, 9th & 16th July (11am - 4pm), Sunday 26th July (2 - 5pm). Admission £3.50, children free. Home-made teas+ cake.

Visits by arrangement May to July for Groups 5+

Social media and Twitter (by Ruth Plant)

The Social media following for the Group continues to grow with our Twitter Account (@HPSstaffs) with 1657 twitter users following our tweets.

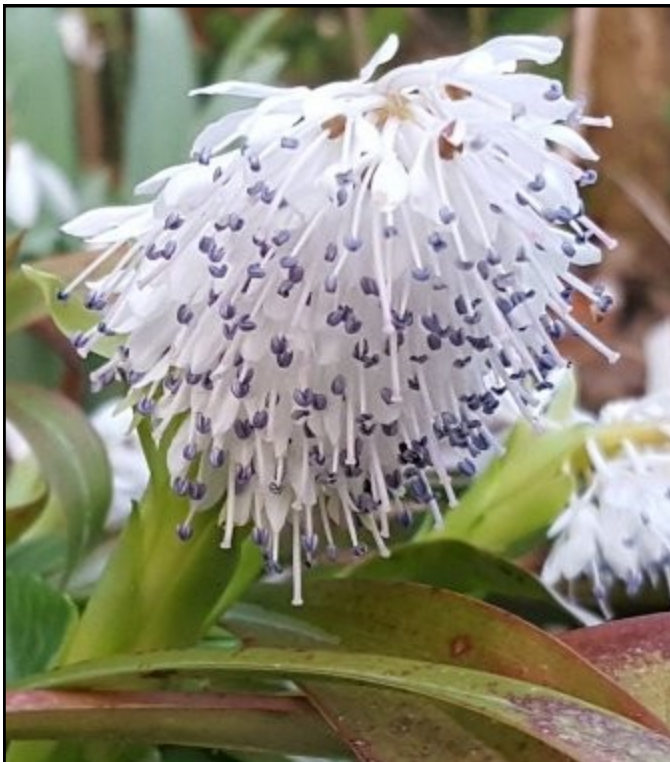
During the long dark days of December we posted an Advent Alphabet of plants and flowers which was very well received.

The most popular tweets were for 'S' and 'Y'....

'S' is for the white campion

Silene fimbriata. (on the right)

It's a bit of a spreader and good for dry shade (if we ever have dry again!). The leaves are a bit coarse and large, but the flowers are delicate and charming. 71 likes and 17 retweets.



'Y' is for *Ypsilandra thibetica.* (on left)

This wondrous hardy plant flowers in February and is fragrant, much beloved by any early bees. Likes a shady position and in the garden here is already forming flowering spikes at the base. 65 likes and 14 retweets.

Speakers for Autumn 2020 (by Carol Galley)

18th September: Timothy Walker: ‘How to be a 21st Century Gardener’.

Timothy , as many of you will know, was the former Horti Praefectus of the University of Oxford Botanic Garden. He has spoken to us several times in the past and is always thought provoking and entertaining.

16th October: Simon Gulliver ‘Plants for the Connoisseur’.

Simon has been Garden and Parks Consultant for the National Trust since 2014. He studied at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh and was previously Plant collections manager at Birmingham Botanic Gardens.

20th November: Paul Cook; ‘RHS Harlow Carr and RHS Bridgewater’,

Many of our members will remember Paul from his time as Head Gardener at Arley Hall and Ness Gardens. He is now Curator at RHS Harlow Carr and is an ambassador for the new, soon to be opened, RHS Bridgewater garden near Manchester.

11th Dec.: Advolly Richmond; ‘Percy Thrower "A Man For All Seasons"’.

Advolly is an independent researcher in garden, landscape and social history who, as Percy Thrower also did, lives in Shrewsbury. This talk should go well alongside our Christmas Social.

Well I'm looking forward to hearing the talks and I hope you are too!

Escape to the Allotment (by Clive Plant)

We have always liked our gardening here at Yew Tree Cottage. You could say it's in our blood. For me, it goes back to my dad and granddad. They both gardened with much larger gardens than some modern day properties allow. They were also mainly vegetable gardeners at heart, with a fleeting nod to using hardy perennials.

Dad gardened for an aunt to help them out, which meant that, at thirteen years of age I took on the full time gardening role at home. Granddad was the family's big hitter. He had an allotment. Proudly showing it off to me when I visited on Fridays after school. On most occasions I came away with a bunch of 'pinks' tied up with raffia, hooked over the handlebars of my bike to bring home to mom.

Now, in our pensionable years, we decided that our half-acre at home needed beefing up somewhat, so we took on an allotment! Smart move!?.... Well it was Ruth's idea. I mean what is she thinking about? No doubt it's a senior moment? Does she need to go to Specsavers? I mean I don't exactly look 25 for that digging malarkey do I?

So in March 2018 we took on our first half plot. Note I have mentioned 'first', and if that sends shivers running through you, it was also the worst plot on the site! So I stand there in my straight jacket, hair standing on edge, due mainly to my electric shock therapy, my two carers on each arm, whilst nodding profusely in acceptance of the unpromising vision before me. Running away was not an option here as I had been chained to a dilapidated polytunnel, now under new ownership.... Us!

Ruth somewhat smoothed things out a little, by saying that we were just getting our 'foot in the door' as she left me tethered to the said polytunnel with just enough free chain for my first days toil.

We made real inroads and cleared half of the fruit bushes and raspberry canes that had overrun the plot. I took down a dying cherry tree and also the irreparable polytunnel was dismantled! We grew potatoes, runner beans, peppers, tomatoes, courgettes, cabbage, sweetcorn and a couple of other veggies. Although by now Ruth's eyes were on other pastures.

So onto Ruth's stage two. Apply for a second half plot that was in the process of being gardened but the holder had changed jobs and the plot was about to be given up. Step in yours truly, who by now is pumped full of vitamins and on oxygen, to carry out a spot of 'easy gardening'! I should like to point out that it's April time and our own veg. plot at home is also in full swing, as well as the two half allotment plots.

This second plot was far easier to whip into shape. We also gained another polytunnel (this won't last long now we are on the scene!), which was in a useable state, and there we grew tomatoes, peppers and cucumber. We decided that some of our newly acquired HPS Conservation Plants could be homed on the new plot, with some of our own herbaceous plants that needed growing on. And on the remaining ground we grew even more veg.

If you are not familiar with allotments, for some reason they can become misused by previous occupants. The compost heap can become a dumping area containing all manner of plastic bottles, dried and unrotted waste, and full of weed seeds. Ours had the remains of a wheelbarrow frame! They are usually constructed from old wooden pallets strapped together. Their sides begin to lean outwards after a while, and those weed seeds and potato haulms with those very junior buds attached, soon start to grow outwards through the gaps in the pallets. A neat plastic compost bin is now onsite, and can be moved around the plot if desired. The waste material really starts to cook when the sun heats it up, so much quicker turning into compost due to it being totally enclosed.

By now we were motoring and yours truly was even still standing. This did not go unnoticed by Ruth. One day while we were having a reminiscing moment and surveying our plots, she suddenly turns to me and says: 'you know Clive, the bloke on the next plot has emptied his half of the shared shed of his boots, fork and spade'.

'Yes I say and I have not seen him for weeks'

'It's not fair says Ruth, letting his plot run away like that, I can't see his potato tops for thistles and he has not finished off his runner bean supports '!

Ruth 'I think I will e-mail the secretary and see if he is giving up the plot'.

Me 'Gulp'

Ruth 'Then we can have two, half plots together and give up the first one'

Me 'Yes Ruth that will be great!

And so it was that we gave up our first wild half plot in exchange for two half plots together. The old, and by now battered polytunnel was removed of its skin and the frame left to grow some new blackberry plants over it.

There is a new polytunnel to erect when the weather improves, but for now its more weeding and bagging them up and taking them to the refuse tip, and covering the soil to keep those damn winter weeds from germinating.

We now have a saying that we need to ‘smart garden’. Never have we used so many rolls of membrane to cover our bare soil. There is probably more square metres of membrane down our Lottie than when the rain covers come out at Edgbaston!

Moving on.....it’s February 2018 and our new polytunnel is now erected. We have also taken over a second plot, half of which I have had to declare war upon. It’s the usual escapees that I keep tangling with...raspberry canes on the march, and the worst bully boy on the plot...a wall of very thorny blackberries, which were small-fruited so needed to be removed. They fought a dirty war with yours truly...first it’s scratched arms, then it’s endless penetrating thorns through the ‘thorn-proof gloves’ as they refused to be bagged up and wrestled into the car boot. Then at the tip they staged a last ambush, as they impaled an already throbbing finger or thumb through an innocent looking compost bag, picked up for their slow slide to the bottom of the skip. Not going easy these guys, some of the bags were jammed at their opening, requiring a last ‘firkle’ to free them from a gloved hand and a thorny goodbye one last time....

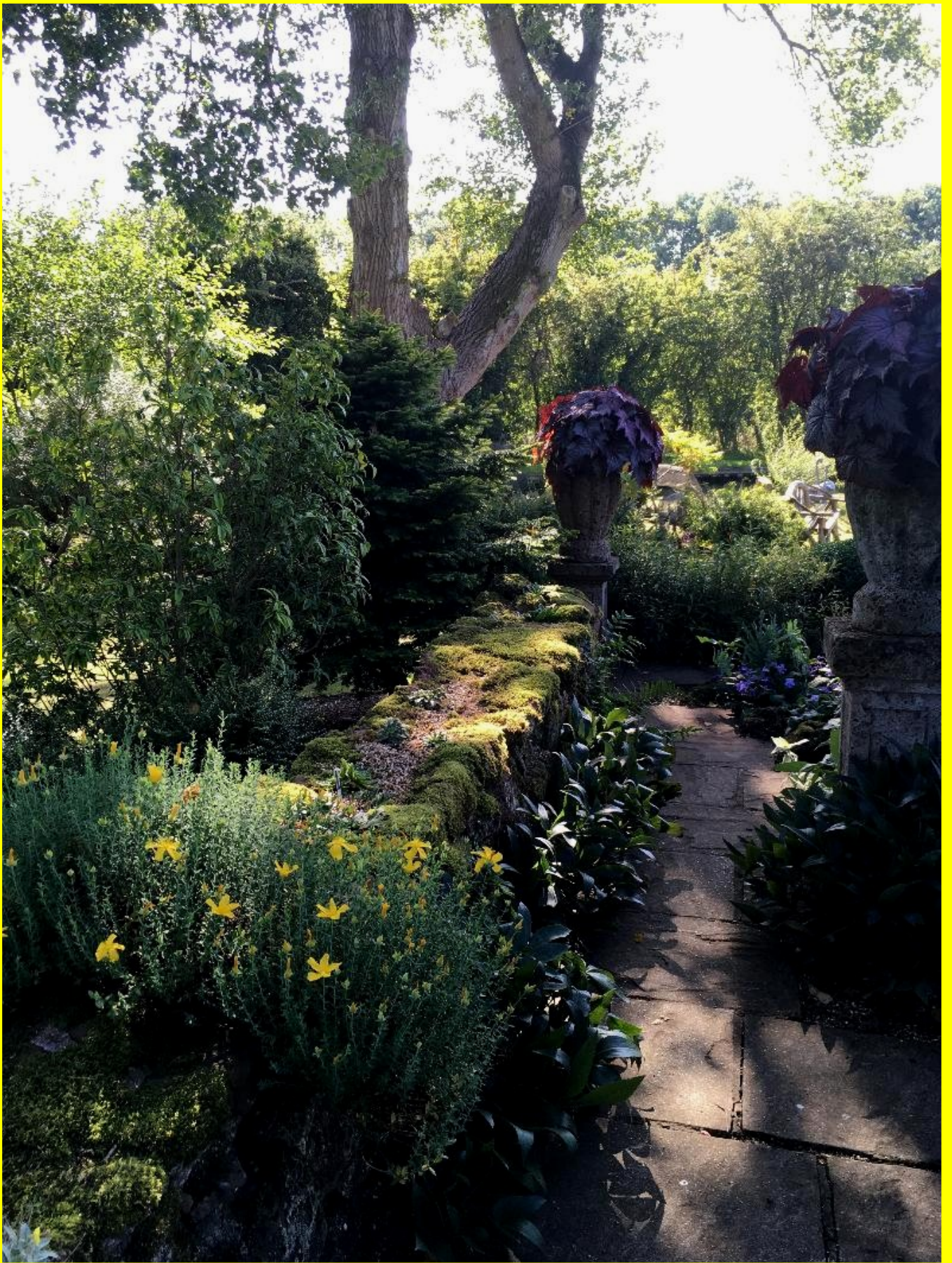
On the allotment, it’s sometime a case of ‘brave’ gardening but also Happy Gardening.....



Snowdrop or *Galanthus* ‘Trymlet’ on left

Snowflake or *Leucojum vernum* above.

Pictures taken by Ruth at their ‘Yew Tree Cottage Garden’.



First Prize Landscape: 'A Quiet Corner' by Hannah Clendon (page 14)