



Somerset Group Newsletter



Number 56

January 2016

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<http://hps-somerset.btck.co.uk/>

Cover photograph – Seend Manor, 13 June 2015

Chairman's Letter

It seems at the moment as though all our seasons are departures in one way or another from what we like to think of as 'normal'. Yet somehow there is always something to redeem it. 'Summer' was early and short-lived, with the hot spell in June proving a bit of a nightmare for keeping plants in pots properly watered (a point I'll return to later).

By contrast the cool wet July/August held back the flowering of many plants – indeed, some, that had been planted out in June and struggled to get properly established, continued to struggle since although they needed the moisture, they were not getting the heat they needed to catch up. Thus, my dahlias have performed a little less well than I would have expected. Paradoxically they have carried on flowering for longer since our first significant frost did not occur until 20th November. Had I been growing *Dahlia imperialis* this year it would undoubtedly have flowered, benefitting from the moist if rather cool conditions from July onwards.

The reason I was not growing *D. imperialis* is that, having been left in the ground undisturbed for about 4 or 5 years the tubers had become very congested and the new growths fewer and weaker, so I dug them up and took a few cuttings that should come into their own next year. For those of you who prefer to leave dahlias in the ground over winter, it is worth remembering that they do eventually need rejuvenating as the tubers become congested.

The overall winners this year will have probably been the autumn flowering stars, predominantly the asteraceae and having a number of different types of each has ensured a long succession of flower. The latest of my chrysanthums (Mei-kyo) is only just coming into flower on 25 November as I begin to write these notes. Mei-kyo has lilac pink, button flowers with a darker centre and I also like the yellow sport from it, Nantyerry Sunshine, which is clear yellow. There is also another sport which is bronzy-orange. This group of plants is such good value and there are hundreds to choose



Chrysanthemum 'Mei-kyo'

from – see the link on Gill Mullin’s ‘Plant of the Month’ feature for November 2015 on the HPS website to Judy Barker’s national collection of hardy chrysanthus. I’ve already spotted several that I’d like to add to my collection.



Salvia involucrata ‘Bethellii’

Salvias too are excellent late season performers, and there are more hardy types to choose from than perhaps we think, and there is an excellent article by William Dyson in the September Plantsman, on the RHS Trials of the best Mexican varieties. Well-known names such as Cerro Potosi, Hot Lips (and Christine Yeo) are joined by Peter Vigeon, Nachtvliender, Javier and Dyson’s Joy and others. And this group excludes the well-known *S. involucrata* ‘Bethellii’, which has remained undisturbed in my garden for more than 10 years now and still performs well. Coincidentally, in a matter of

days after reading William Dyson’s article, we visited The Savill Gardens where a wide variety of Salvias were displayed around the garden. Even more exciting, I was able to buy a fine home-grown plant of a variety that Dyson had praised – and at a remarkably cheap price. Like many other people, we thought it a very rewarding visit and the architecture of the visitor centre is a masterpiece.



Internal view of the Savill Gardens visitor centre

I know from my efforts to sell plants at our own Group plant sale, at ELM and at a local plant sale, that it is very difficult to persuade people to look ahead and buy plants in the Spring that are not going to flower until late summer and autumn. Yet when those plants are in flower, the same people will claim they no longer have room for them – sometimes adding that they are too big anyway! The result is that they miss out on some of the glories of late summer and autumn. Moreover the available selection is huge. I've already mentioned Judy Barker's chrysanthemums, but consider also the infinite variety of Michaelmas Daisies (I haven't got my head around the revised taxonomy yet!!). If you include related species like Kalimeris and species as well as cultivars of Michaelmas Daisies it is possible to have high impact flowering from July to November. There are not many plant groups that can claim such a long season. Just for fun I quickly listed all the varieties that I currently grow and surprised myself. It comes to about 30, and I wouldn't want to be without any of them, with perhaps the exception of Cristal, a white dwarf variety which might do better in a different spot.

In the Spring Newsletter I wrote about Melcourt SylvaGrow compost. I have referred above to the difficulty of keeping plants in pots properly watered during hot, dry periods. In assessing the early results of using the compost I was fairly positive, with a bit of a caveat about the need for additional slow release fertiliser. This was true provided the compost could be kept moist, but when the hot weather arrived, this was an issue. It becomes very light when it dries out and pots are then more likely to fall over, and because of its very free-draining texture it is not easy to re-wet and plants quickly become distressed. I'm afraid this means that unless you have a fool-proof watering regime, you are probably better off with a soil-based compost: which takes me right back to square one.

One of the interesting discussions by Trustees of the Hardy Plant Society has been the Nagoya Protocol which is designed to protect plant species from being plundered by unscrupulous plant collectors. In an ideal world this should not be necessary and it has come in for some alarmist criticism from some well-known collectors who have argued that it



will make plant collection legally impossible in some areas and will therefore cut against species conservation. The international agreement is however in place and we therefore have to recognise it. The thrust of it is that any plant collection has to be with the specific (contractual) agreement of the host country, and that agreement should cover the use and distribution of any plant material propagated from the collection. In this way plant species will be protected in their natural habitat and it is difficult to argue with the purpose of the agreement.

Trustees have therefore passed a statement that we support the Nagoya Protocol and should only accept or disseminate plant material that derives from plant hunting that complies with the protocol. Concerns were expressed however about the feasibility of complying where (a) there is no administrative organisation with the authority or competence to enter into appropriate agreements, (b) the administrative regime is corrupt, or (c) the area proposed for collection is in the hands of companies that are “developing” it and who will be antipathetic to any distraction. It will largely depend on whether the country is aware of the significance of its indigenous plant heritage and has the will and the means to protect it. But it’s not all bad news!

Roy Stickland

Subscriptions for 2016

A reminder that subscriptions for 2016 fall due this month. The rates are £8 for joint and £5 for single membership. Thank you to those who paid at the AGM and to those who pay by standing order. For those who prefer to pay by cheque, the usual payment slip is included with this Newsletter. I shall be at the 16 January lecture if you would like to save the cost of an envelope and stamp.

Alternatively, for those of you who are adept at internet banking, you can set up a standing order or do a BACS transfer direct to our bank account:

Bank Branch:	NatWest, Bridgwater
Account name:	Hardy Plant Society (Somerset Group)
Sort Code:	60-03-27
Account number:	46429956

Please remember to quote your membership number.

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 it is necessary that I advise you that, for the purposes of record only, details relating to your membership are stored electronically. If you object to your details being so recorded, please notify me without delay.

Stuart Senior

Group Plant Sale, 23 April

Members can contribute to the plant sale in two ways: (a) take a table in your own right, or (b) grow plants to donate to the Group table. If you want your own table, please contact me (details on back cover). The charge will be £5, payable on the day. This will be waived if you commit to donate all your takings to charity. There are only 16 tables available, and it's first come, first served. If you have plants to donate to the Group table, just bring them along on the day.

We will also need plants for our Group table at the East Lambrook Plant Fairs on 26 March and 24 September so please bear this in mind when you plan your propagating!

Roy Stickland

The HPS Somerset Group Specialist Nursery List

By the time you read this the 2016 Nursery List should have been printed.

We are sad to have lost three of last year's nurseries from the List:

- Chiff Chaffs is up for sale – may have been sold by now – and the nursery closed.
- Teresa and Ian Moss have decided to 'retire' from growing plants and are winding up their nursery business during this winter. They will be attending Plant Fairs until May 2016, so we'll be able to buy their wonderful plants one more time at East Lambrook Manor Plant Fair.
- Millwood Plants gave an unconfirmed change of address early next year as their reason for opting out of the List. Hopefully they'll be back on the 2017 List.

We are pleased to have two new Nurseries joining the List:

- Hurst Brook Plants was established in 2007 and has recently moved to Lower Severalls Nursery near Crewkerne. It is run by three ladies with 30 years combined experience growing Peonies and Irises in both open ground and containers.
- The Dorset Water Lily Company in Halstock, near Yeovil, have vast experience of creating water gardens and designing planting schemes, and sell a wide range of marginal, herbaceous, bogside and oxygenating plants. They have created award winning gardens at Hampton Court and Malvern Flower Shows, and supplied award winning gardens at Chelsea Flower Show.

As usual at the January meeting the bags of Nursery Lists will be waiting for you to collect and distribute to the various nurseries. The Committee and I are always very grateful for your help in the distribution. Not only does it save us a vast amount of time but also a considerable amount in postage costs.

Jenny Deubert

New Members

We welcome the following hardy planters to the Somerset Group:

Caroline Reeves, Castle Cary
Gwyneth Phillips, Wiveliscombe
Lorna Hocking, Pill
Jeremy & Trish Gibson, Weare
Dee Mullis, Bruton



High Garden, 7 July 2015

2016 Programme

Please refer to this and future Newsletters or the website <http://hps-somerset.btck.co.uk/> for further details and booking slips. Location maps or directions will be supplied following booking a place on an event.

All meetings at West Monkton Village Hall are free to members (except Saturday 23 April and Friday 1 July), but there is a modest levy of £2 for each visitor/guest. The Group will have a plant stall and a book stall at most of the lecture meetings listed, plus the 'Plant and Flower of the Month' competition.

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

Tel: 01884 820840 or email: janet.murley@btinternet.com.

SAT 16 JANUARY

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10:00am for 10:30am.

PLEASE NOTE EARLY START TIME FOR OUR 'DOUBLE BILL'

Helen Mount - "The Hardy Plant Society Conservation Scheme"

Helen is the national Coordinator of the Scheme.

Stuart Senior - "The man who planted trees"

As a member of our Committee, Stuart should need no introduction. He will talk about the things he's learned over the past seven years in his attempt to create a modest arboretum in wet and windy (and, occasionally, very cold) Somerset!

SAT 13 FEBRUARY

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

John Wood - "Roses - their history and cultivation"

John is the head gardener at the National Trust Property at Hinton Ampner and is a very active member of the Historic Roses Group. He will be talking about the different types of roses and how to grow them successfully.



SAT 12 MARCH

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Julian Sutton - "On the fringe of botany"

Julian Sutton is a lifelong plantsman. Having started out as an academic botanist, he and his wife Sarah caught the cultivated plant bug seriously while working at Ness Gardens in the 80s. They ran a mail order nursery, Desirable Plants, in Devon for over 20 years. In order to garden and propagate better, and to write more, they've shrunk to a domestic scale, but still sell a wide range of choice and interesting bulbs, woodlanders, ferns etc through their twice yearly Desirable Plants email lists. See www.desirableplants.co.uk. Julian will be bringing plants for sale.

SAT 26 MARCH

HPS SOMERSET EARLY SPRING PLANT FAIR

At East Lambrook Manor Gardens, 10:00am – 4:00pm.

(Admission £3.50)



The following nurseries will be attending:

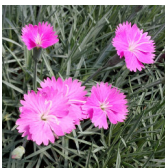
Avon Bulbs, Blooming Hill Plants, Desert to Jungle, Dorset Perennials, Elworthy Cottage Plants, Ian & Teresa Moss, In Clover, Long Acre Plants, Mill Cottage Plants, Millwood Plants, Moor Plants, Pennard Plants, Phoenix Plants, Picket Lane Nursery, Roseland House Nursery and Wild Thyme Plants. The Margery Fish Plant Nursery will be open.

SAT 9 APRIL

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Emma Allwood - "From Pinks to Peles"



Emma will be talking about the history of the well known Allwoods Nursery and how it has developed and transformed into the nursery it is today. She will also talk about the cultivation of pinks and will be bringing a selection of plants for sale.

Aberglasney Gardens

C15th in origin, later a private palace with a unique Cloister garden now planted with spring bulbs. Recently an upper walled garden (see picture), designed by Penelope Hobhouse, has been created. Over the house ruins is a glass atrium for warm-temperate and sub-tropical plants. Outside are herbaceous plants and shrubs, woodland and streams. We will be given a tour by Joseph Atkin who gave us a lecture on the garden in January 2015.



& the National Botanic Gardens of Wales

Full of dramatic features including Lord Foster's domed Great Glasshouse pushing out of the hilltop. In the sunken garden are Mediterranean plants bringing spring colour and grassland naturalised with bulbs. There is a walled garden, tropical house, bog and Apothecary's garden.



SAT 23 APRIL

GROUP PLANT SALE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10:00am to 12:30pm.

(Admission £1)

TUE 7 JUNE

COACH TRIP

Cranbourne Manor Gardens



The garden, which surrounds an ancient Manor House, was originally established by Tradescant. It contains a kitchen garden, formal gardens and planting in grassland which includes wild orchids. There are various interesting sculptures, a circular lawn with fountain, a white garden and yew lined rooms. Also a plant nursery specialising in traditional roses.

FRI 1 JULY

EVENING LECTURE & BUFFET

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 6:30pm for 7:00pm.

Mary Toomey - "Plants with Impressive Pedigrees"

This promises to be one of the most exciting talks of the year! Mary is an internationally renowned speaker and is passionate about instilling her knowledge and enthusiasm to others. She was editor of The British Clematis Society journal for many years and is the only female honorary Fellow of the International Clematis Society. Her interests now lie in being curator of the Alzheimer Society garden in Dublin where she now lives, along with the mentoring of students from the School of Horticulture.

After the talk we will be having a drink and a buffet, so everyone will have a chance to meet and talk to Mary.



(Admission: Members £3.00, non-members £5.00.)

TUE 5 July

COACH TRIP

Fibrex Nurseries, holders of the National Collections of Pelargoniums and Hedera, where we will be given a tour.



& Kiftsgate Court Gardens



A 4-acre privately owned garden created by present owner's grandmother after World War 1 with sunken garden covered in bulbs, *Rosa filipes* 'Kiftsgate' with other old and species roses, wisteria and hydrangea, Japanese maples plus a pool of black water reflecting a foliage sculpture.

SUN 7 AUGUST

PLANT SWAP & LUNCH

At Creech St. Michael, Taunton

WED 7 SEPTEMBER

SELF-DRIVE VISIT

Mapperton House & Gardens, Dorset



We will be given a tour of the house and will then be free to explore the gardens.

SAT 17 SEPTEMBER

50/50 PLANT SALE & LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield

Plant sale commences at 10:00am, Lecture at 11.00am.

Janet Buist - "Salvias: their History and Cultivation"



Janet has a small Salvia nursery in Cambridge (Pennycross Plants) and will be bringing plants for sale, so this will be a great opportunity for all you Salvia enthusiasts to add to your collection!

Salvia x sylvestris 'Mainacht'

SAT 24 SEPTEMBER

HPS SOMERSET AUTUMN PLANT FAIR

At East Lambrook Manor Gardens, 10:00am – 4:00pm.

Inaugural event!



TUE 18 OCTOBER

SELF-DRIVE VISIT

Minterne House & Gardens, Dorset



We will be given a talk and a tour of the house and will be able to examine Joseph Hooker's planting plans. We will be given lunch and then have plenty of time to explore the garden and arboretum with its Autumn colour.

SAT 22 OCTOBER

LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield, 10.30am for 11.00am.

Mark Walsh – "Crocosmias and Eucomis"

Mark has bred some outstanding crocosmias at Trecanna Nursery and will be bringing plants for sale. Ruth Boundy has bought some of his crocosmias and says that they really are smashing: "not thugs and really lovely colours".



SAT 19 NOVEMBER

AGM & LECTURE

At West Monkton Village Hall, Monkton Heathfield 10.00am for 10.30am AGM and 11.15am lecture.

Wolfgang Bopp – “The History of Hilliers Arboretum and the Centenary Border”

Wolfgang is the director of Hilliers so this promises to be a super talk by the top man! He is not charging anything for the talk but will gratefully accept a contribution to the Bursary fund for young trainees at Hilliers. Most members will have visited the Arboretum and will know what a wonderful place it is, so it will be fascinating to hear its history. The Centenary Border is a wonderful example of an herbaceous border ... and everything is labelled!



All events must be pre-booked

If you would like to book places on any of these events, complete and return the entire enclosed Booking Sheet. As you will see from the Booking Sheet, you can receive the Joining Instructions for each event either by email or by post. To receive these details by email, simply fill in your email address on the Booking Sheet **even if you believe I already have a note of it**. If you choose this option, not only will I email your Joining Instructions prior to each event, but I will also send you an email confirming your booking. If you prefer this option **PLEASE** print your name clearly and remember to advise me of any change to your email address. Should you wish to receive this information by post, **PLEASE** remember to send me **TWO** SAE for **EACH** event you wish to attend.

Janet Murley

Cancellation Policy

A reminder about our cancellation policy. There will be no refund of either coach or pre-paid entrance fees unless a replacement participant can be found. The only exception will be for "serious" illness if the organiser is notified before the visit. Amounts of less than £5 will not be refunded under any circumstances.

Plant Sales Table

I'd like to thank everyone who has brought plants to be sold on the Group's sales table last year. For any new members who may be unaware, the plant sales table at our monthly meetings is stocked entirely with plants donated by our members, which may be purchased at a reasonable price prior to and following the meeting. There are often some real gems and rarities available to buy. Given that the traditional sources of free plastic bags has now dried up please bring your own carrier bags or boxes to take away your acquisitions.

I'd be very grateful if you would all consider potting up excess plants from your gardens and bringing a couple of plants each time you come to a Group lecture meeting. And remember that we can now offer "cash back" of 50p for each plant sold at over £1 if members include two labels with their plant. I will assume that plants with two labels (don't forget your name) are seeking cash back and those with one aren't. The monies raised from this table and the second-hand gardening books stall really do help us to continue to provide members with great value for money for their membership.

Jane Hunt

Time for Tea - My Adventures with Tea Roses

I first became smitten by the beauty of these wonderful tea roses when visiting Mottisfont with our Hardy Plant Group. I just thought they were so aristocratic and reminded me of an age of beautiful houses and beautiful people!

I thought I would try to grow some of them and embarked on my collection. Some have been a huge success and others a total disaster!

First the successes! Lady Hillingdon (raised in 1917) must be one of the easiest to grow and is the most wonderful apricot colour and is still flowering now (December)! So too is Devoniensis which was raised near Plymouth in 1858. Both of these are climbers (although Lady H is also available in bush form). Devoniensis is a strong grower with me. He is also a good cut flower with a lovely scent, especially when he warms up. Another climber I have had success with is Mrs Herbert Stevens (1922). She is a dead white with lovely high



Lady Hillingdon

centred flowers of a real aristocrat. She has a mass blooming with odd ones through the rest of the season.



Madame Antoine Mari

Among my most successful shrub varieties is Madame Antoine Mari (1901). She was recommended by the great Graham Stuart Thomas, so I thought she may be a good buy and so she was. A lovely soft pink with beautiful rolled edges to the petals. Yum! Sometimes she has a scent and other times not. It seems to depend on the temperature and the time of the day. Another is Madame Berkeley (1899), which I grow in a half barrel and which seems to flourish with good feeding. She is a pinky cream,

again with rolled edges to the petals. Archiduc Joseph (1892) is also grown in a half barrel and is a most unusual colour, being a mixture of crushed raspberry, salmon and bronze. Although this doesn't sound attractive, it is!



Madame Berkeley



Marechal Niel

I have stopped buying grafted stock and now only source plants grown on their own roots from La Roseraie Du Desert in France. This is no more costly than buying in the UK and they arrive with a good fibrous root system already to go!

This year I have ordered Marechal Niel (1864) which is said to be the most beautiful rose ever bred. It is difficult to get stock that is not virused but Becky and John Hook at La Roseraie Du Desert have sourced a plant from Spain so I am hoping it will be healthy. This rose has the classic rolled petals and is the most gorgeous

yellow and has a wonderful texture. I will be growing it up the front of my house which faces almost due South, so here's hoping!

Some of the grafted stock I have bought have just turned up their toes and died, so I will try them again on their own roots.

The Hooks' nursery in France is a great find and they are so helpful. Do take a look at their web site and give these roses a go. You may be surprised at how beautiful they are. Give them a warm spot and plenty of food and away you (and they) go! They are the true aristocrats of the rose world!

Ruth Boundy

Flower and Pot Plant of the Month Competition

The results of our 2015 competition are as follows:

Flower of the Month - joint winners: Lyn Spencer-Mills and Carol Clements

Pot Plant of the Month - winner: Roy Stickland

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 very 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!



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