

Plant Heritage

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



# SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2014



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*Cover photo: Thalictrum ichangense 'Evening Star' from Kim Forrester's new National Collection*

*Cover design by Sally Geeve, [www.sallygeeve.com](http://www.sallygeeve.com)*

*Layout courtesy Nicola Hobbs*

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

*JIM MARSHALL*

Gardening has been interesting this year. I have seldom seen the roses so good, herbaceous perennials have produced a lot of growth and good flower, fruit and vegetables have been in abundance. I look forward to some home grown greengages and apricots during late summer!

Plant Heritage has seen some changes at Head Office, with the appointment of Sarah Quartermain as Chief Executive - also having responsibility for fundraising. I am hopeful she will be attending our Group AGM on 16 November., which I do hope you will come to, especially as a number of Suffolk National Collection Holders will be giving short presentations.

Your committee continue to work hard to provide a range of activities; e.g. lectures at Stowupland organised at Stowupland by Sue Hamilton Blythe (see page 10 for details). Providing an interesting and varied series of lectures year on year is not easy and Sue does a superb job. However Sue and the committee are always pleased to receive suggestions for different topics and lecturers.

Our Spring Plant Fair, in conjunction with Helmingham Hall was very successful, not least because of the good weather, but also there were lots of happy visitors and satisfied stallholders. Such success can only be achieved by the hard work of committee members and volunteers – many thanks to you all. We are now looking forward to the Autumn Plant Fair on 14 September. This time we are going to arrange a series of practical workshops in the Garden Marquee, and I hope you will come and support them.

The money raised by the Plant Fairs, the increasingly successful sale of plants organised by Anne Tweddle and Maggie Thorpe (see Anne's report) and other donations is on target for us to be able to send the customary donation to Head Office. This money is a very valuable sum towards all Head Office's conservation work, helping them support National Collections and projects such as the Threatened Plant Project. The work of all our members raising funds is greatly appreciated. The committee has agreed to send our donation after the Autumn Plant Fair in September.

Garden visiting is a popular pastime, and we have had a request from a member to reintroduce some summer visits; do let us know if you agree.

It would also be helpful to have some ideas of where to go and also how far afield it is appropriate to travel.

Please continue to keep in touch, passing on ideas and comments at our meetings, by phone or e-mail, and by Twitter! Hilary Drain, our membership secretary has a Twitter account, with lots of followers, including some well known horticulturalists.

Many thanks for all your support and I am looking forward to a continuing successful year for Plant Heritage.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

*JUSTINE CORNEY*

**T**he Spring Plant sale was very successful with over 2200 people coming through the gates. Thanks to the hard work of Sarah Cook, the number and quality of the stalls was outstanding and the overall income for the day was £17,573. Our 25% share amounted to £4,393, and together with plant sale income less the expenses we made £4,649 on the day.

Anne Tweddle and Maggie Thorpe together with their team have so far this year, including the plant sale at Helmingham, sold plants for £2,719 contributing to our funds and also working on conserving rare plants

## **PROPAGATION OFFICER'S REPORT**

*ANNE TWEDDLE*

**A** big thank you to all the members of the Propagating Group who have come along to our sessions at Stowupland Church hall to take part in raising plants and learn new propagating techniques. We have taken what must be hundreds of cuttings, divided plants, had lessons from National Collection Holders (NCH) and more still to come.

Much of the material you will see for sale at various events and locations has been started off in this small friendly group. Our July session included more twin scaling of snowdrops and daffodils as well as *Eucomis* leaf cuttings. In August Alan Shipp the NCH of hyacinths came to show us how to 'scoop' these bulbs.

Should you like to take part, booking is essential. This can be done either via myself (anne@tweddle1.co.uk or 01473 737337) or Maggie Thorpe (maggiethorpe37 @gmail.com, 01787 211346).



Above: Ruth Prior, Maggie Thorpe, Gloria Bell, Margaret Palmer check material brought for propagating.  
 Top right: Pam Bowling pricking out seeds.  
 Right: Linda Draper taking cuttings.



The treasurer advises we have banked over £2.5K this year from the sale of plants. There have been expenses to set against this income, but it does show just how

important this propagating group is to the success of fundraising for the Suffolk group.

### **The National Plant Exchange**

The annual plant exchange took place at the Plant Heritage AGM in May, and Suffolk came away with many new interesting plants to propagate. We received several 'red label' plants too. So keep an eye out for these in future years.

The National Plant Exchange is open to all members, and I would encourage greater involvement from you all. An email, along with a keenness to troll through names of lists of rare plants, is all you need to take part. No money changes hands, and the plant you bid for and could be lucky enough to get will be yours. I am happy to discuss further with any members interested in taking part.



I. 'Cleo Murrell'  
(photographed by Mavis Smith).

## The Murrell cultivars



I. 'Romance'.



I. 'London Pride'.



# Fullers Mill Garden at West Stow

## OPEN DAYS 2015

Wednesdays, Fridays & Sundays  
April to September  
2pm to 5pm

WEST STOW IP28 6HD  
[www.fullersmillgarden.org.uk](http://www.fullersmillgarden.org.uk)

email: [fullersmillgarden@perennial.org.uk](mailto:fullersmillgarden@perennial.org.uk) Tel: 01284 728888

(Fullers Mill Garden is owned and managed by Perennial a registered charity and remains fully funded by its maker Bernard Tickner.



## **Spring Plant Sale**

Thank you to all helpers, bringers of plants and purchasers of plants. It's a big day for the group, and this year we raised £850 from sales on our plant tables. Your interest and enthusiasm is both welcome and appreciated.

## **Projects**

We have several projects on the go at the moment.

### **Buxus**

In summer 2013 we were invited to have some material from the National Collection of Buxus held at Ickworth. We took material from the following cultivars:

B. 'Green Mountain'

B. 'Langley Beauty'

B. 'Ponteys'

B. 'Green Velvet'

B. 'Ickworth Giant'

B. 'Latifolia' or 'Bullata' - the name needs some clarification.

The cuttings all rooted over last summer and winter and are growing on nicely. They will be available for sale probably next year. All these cultivars are unavailable commercially. They will all be acceptable as plants in the Plant Guardian Scheme, and require conservation.

### **Iris**

The scope of the iris project has changed slightly and hopefully settled into its final shape. We have settled on five iris breeders of the 20th century, spanning 1910's - 1960's. They are Dykes, Pilkington, Chadburn, Long and Murrell.

A list of the iris they introduced has been compiled. When we reached 500 cultivars, there was some consternation and plenty of muttering. Gladly that particular crisis has passed.

Sarah Cook got us off to a good start with three cultivars introduced by Olive Murrell, and these are being bulked up and there will be some for sale in the autumn and next year. The Murrell cultivars are

*I.* 'Romance', *I.* 'London Pride' and *I.* 'Cleo Murrell'

We have had some luck with material from Glasnevin, the Botanic garden of Dublin. They have provided us with eight cultivars on our list of 500+ and we are waiting to hear from a garden in Switzerland about some more.

Any member interested in helping to bulk up these iris cultivars, please let me know.

## **Bulbs**

Twin-scaling continues, with two teaching days this year. More and more members are learning this interesting skill. We have in the pipeline narcissus bred by William Backhouse, snowdrops with Suffolk connections and some Engleheart *Narcissus poeticus* cultivars.

## **Future**

Maggie and I are visiting the National Collection Holder of *Codonopsis* later this summer. It's a new collection and a genus we are interested in learning more about. We have some codonopsis for sale this year, including *C. lanceolata*, *C. ovata* and *C. 'Himal Snow'*. All are beautiful twiners for shade. They are not widely available as selling them in pots is a tricky business for the nursery trade.

Thank you all again for your interest and help with all the different programmes we are running. It's great fun and there is always something new to learn about.

# **PLANT COLLECTIONS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT**

*DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT*

I am very pleased to say we have a new Plant Collection in Suffolk. Kim Forrester's collection of *Thalictrum* has been awarded National Collection status. Her garden was open as part of Worlingworth Open Gardens this summer and she also had a visit from the Essex Plant Heritage group so Kim has been very busy.

Jim Marshall has made a proposal for a new collection of *Dianthus* (Perpetual Flowering Carnation) British pre-1970 and their sports. This was accepted by Plant Heritage HQ in January and Jim has now made a full application – we wait to hear if his collection is awarded National Collection status.

Jon Rose of Botanica made a proposal for a collection of *Santolina* in June and we wait to hear if this has been accepted. Read Jon's article on page 27 of this journal to find out more about his *Santolina* collection.



Anthony Pigott has also made a proposal for a collection of *Dryopteris* – he already has a National Collection of *Equisetum*. So there's a lot happening in Suffolk. His article about propagating *Dryopteris* is on page 29.

The other collections continue to be looked after by their Collection Holders and they are always pleased to have people to visit them. They are very busy people so it is always best to contact them first to arrange a visit.

### More help needed

We have so many collections in Suffolk now that I am looking for someone who would also like to be a Co-ordinator and we can share the visits, displays and report writing. Do get in touch if you are interested and would like to hear more about what is involved. You can ring me on 01473 289556 or email me on [collections@plantheritage.com](mailto:collections@plantheritage.com)

## SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

AESCULUS	Framlingham	Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203
BUXUS	Bury St. Edmunds	National Trust Ickworth Park, 01284 735819
CAMPANULA	Bury St. Edmunds	Sue Wooster, 07879 644958
DIANTHUS (Malmaison)	Ipswich	Jim Marshall, 01473 822400
EQUISETUM	Stowmarket	Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104
ERYSIMUM	Walpole	Dr Simon Weeks, 01986 784348
EUONYMUS	East Bergholt	Rupert Eley, 01206 299224
HIBISCUS	Pettistree	John Woods Nurseries 01728 745100
HOSTA	Stowmarket	Mickfield Hostas. 01449 711576
IRIS (Sir Cedric Morris introductions)	Ipswich	Sarah Cook, 01473 822400
SYRINGA	Stowmarket	Norman's Farm, <a href="mailto:lilacprez@hotmail.com">lilacprez@hotmail.com</a>
THALICTRUM	Worlingworth	Kim Forrester 07796 183988

# PLANT HERITAGE SUFFOLK GROUP EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER

Saturday 6      Talk: 'The Wonderful World of Salvias' by Janet Buist of  
Pennycross Plants  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*About the speaker: Having started a small nursery growing hardy perennials about 16 years ago, Janet Buist 'became hooked' on salvias. Her collection has become so large she now restricts herself to the most garden-worthy of these lovely plants and has a specialist nursery.*

Sunday 14      PLANT HERITAGE AUTUMN PLANT FAIR  
10am – 4.00pm, Helmingham Hall, IP14 6EF

## OCTOBER

Thursday 16    Study Day: 'Trees' at The Place for Plants, East Bergholt  
CO7 6UP led by Rupert Eley. 10.30-4pm. Includes bare  
root and container planting. Tour of Arboretum and  
National Collection of Euonymous.  
£15 including lunch and refreshments.  
Booking jim@malmaisons.plus.com 01473 822400.

Saturday 18    Talk 'Galanthus: Some Favourites Old and New' by Rod  
Leeds 2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*About the speaker: Rod Leeds has a catholic love of plants, but bulbs in particular. He is Vice-Chairman of the RHS Rock Plant Committee, an RHS judge, and past President of the Alpine Garden Society. He has written several books on bulbs.*

## NOVEMBER

Sunday 16      AGM: Moat Farm Barn, Otley IP6 9PE. 12 for 12.30pm.

## 2015

### JANUARY

Saturday 24    Talk: 'Alan Bloom: A Thinker and a Doer' by Jaime Blake  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*About the speaker: Having trained as a teacher, Jaime Blake decided he would rather work in horticulture. He first worked at Peterborough Parks*

*Department, but was then offered the post of Head Gardener/Curator of Alan Bloom's garden, where he has been for 25 years.*

## **FEBRUARY**

Saturday 21      Talk: 'Weather Intelligence: How Does Your Garden Grow?' by Peter Gibbs  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*About the speaker: Peter Gibbs has been presenting the country's weather forecasts on BBC TV and radio for 20 years and is a regular Chairman of Radio 4's Gardeners' Question Time. A professional meteorologist, his career in weather began with a 2-year stint in Antarctica before moving to the Met Office. Peter is also a keen gardener.*

## **MARCH**

Saturday 21      Talk: 'Bewitched and bedazzled: the Wonder of Witch Hazels' by Chris Lane of Witch Hazel Nursery  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*About the speaker: Chris Lane runs a small nursery growing grafted trees for other nurseries to grow on. He has worked for other nurseries and as a lecturer at Hadlow College. He holds four national collections: Hamamelis, Wisteria, Amelanchier and Parrotia and good collections of Flowering Cherries and Nyssa.*

## **APRIL**

Saturday 25      Talk: 'The Well Connected Gardener: Alicia Amherst, Founder of Garden History' Sue Mintner  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*About the speaker: Sue Mintner read history at Girton College, Cambridge, and then trained in horticulture. She worked on the restoration/re-planting of the Palm House at Kew; was Curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden from 1990-2001; and was Director of Horticulture at the Eden Project until 2006. She is now a horticultural consultant.*

## **SEPTEMBER**

Saturday 26      Talk: 'Autumn Flowering Perennials' by Rosy Hardy of Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

## **OCTOBER**

Saturday 24      Talk: Michael Perry 'New, Different and Unusual Plants'  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

*Lectures marked \* are free to members, with £4 entrance for non-members.*

# AUTUMN PLANT FAIR AT HELMINGHAM

SUNDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER 10-4PM

As always there will be plenty to see, do and buy at the Suffolk Group's autumn plant fair held in partnership with Helmingham Hall.

There will be eight hundred free bulbs for the first applicants, and this year we're giving away *Narcissus* 'Baby Moon' which is a richly scented late flowering dwarf jonquil.

A programme of practical demonstrations will be held in the Garden Tent. 'Success with peat-free composts' given by Jim Marshall, 'Chickens in the garden' all about feeding, housing and choice of breed by Andrew Marshall, and 'How to split up (your herbaceous perennials)' by Anne Tweddle and Maggie Thorpe.

And of course the nurseries will include lots of old favourites and new faces – and don't miss out on the tempting array of plants propagated by our members (perhaps including you!) on the Plant Heritage plant stand.

We look forward to seeing you – and bring your family and friends!

## SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE AGM

The 2014 AGM will be held on Sunday 16th November at Moat Farm Barn, Otley IP6 9PE from 12 noon. Mrs Benedicta Chamberlain has once again extended an invitation to use her barn for this event. This is the same location as the 2012 AGM.

You are invited to arrive from midday, and the AGM will start promptly at 12.30. This will be followed by a hot lunch. Members please bring a pudding as usual.

Four Collection Holders will speak briefly about their collections: Robert Grimsey on *Aesculus*: Sean Reid on *Buxus*: Kim Forrester on *Thalictrum*: Simon Weeks on *Erysimum*.

To help with planning and catering please let Anne Tweddle know if you intend to come: email [anne@tweddle1.co.uk](mailto:anne@tweddle1.co.uk)



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# COUNCIL MEMBER'S REPORT

*ANNE TWEDDLE*

The big news from the National Office is we have a new name at the helm. Sarah Quarterman is the new CEO, she replaces Genevieve Melbourne-Webb who left after 11 years as Executive Officer to work in education. Sarah's background is charity work. She was previously with the charity supporting Anaphylaxis. She brings experience from the IT world and John Lewis. Her role will embrace fundraising as well as the myriad of other activities.

From September Mercy Morris, the Plant Conservation Officer, is reducing her working hours while she undertakes an MSc in Ethnobotany.

Finances remain a centre stage item. The charity's new treasurer Alan Ratcliffe shows a budget deficit for the year 2014 as £45K. Last year, 2013, we had a deficit of £9K, thanks largely to the appeal for the Threatened Plant Project (TPP).

Conservation work continues with TPP where 363 genera are now listed or being listed. The first ever list of cultivars threatened in cultivation in the UK and Ireland is published on the website [nccpg.com](http://nccpg.com). A-F is comprehensive, G-Z is indicative with a minimum of 1 genus per alphabet letter.

The volunteers who worked in the cloakroom over Chelsea week raised over £5,000 from donations. There were a number of members from Suffolk who helped, and thanks to all of you.

Norfolk group hosted a very successful AGM back in May; next year the meeting is in April in Somerset. Look out for details.

Membership remains static round 4,000. There are 59 Plant Guardians - see following article.

## THE PLANT GUARDIAN SCHEME

Here's an opportunity for members to do actual 'hands on' plant conservation. The Plant Guardian (PG) scheme is one of the major conservation planks of the Plant Heritage organisation. It is run by the National Office and encourages members to register the names of the rare plants they have in their own gardens.

It's easy to take part. Simply click on Plant Guardians tab on the website [plantheritage.com](http://plantheritage.com) and follow the simple instructions. Your plant needs to be RARE. This is defined as no more than two nurseries listed as selling your plant in the current edition of The Plantfinder. To check use the on-line version of the Plantfinder at the RHS website.

So, no RARE plants in your garden? No problem, buy one at one of our events. We always have a section dedicated to plants that will qualify for the scheme. In addition all the plants listed in the National Plant Exchange qualify for PG status, so why not join in and acquire some rare plants that way.

By registering in the scheme, you are helping the conservation aims of the organisation, and also its future. If you need any help, please contact me [anne@tweddle1.co.uk](mailto:anne@tweddle1.co.uk)

Suffolk has a teenage Plant Guardian, Ian Aldous who has a particular interest in iris.

## **NEW SUFFOLK GROUP MEMBERS**

**W**elcome to everyone who has recently joined the Suffolk Group. Please introduce yourself to committee members when you come to our talks and other events.

Mrs Anne Bustin, Bury St Edmunds

Mr Clive and Mrs Margaret Stace, Middlewood Green

Mr Stuart Haywood Rutter, Otley College

Mrs Ruth Ingham, Woodbridge

Ms Lorna Woods, Bures

Mrs Pam Fletcher, Bury St Edmunds

Mr Ian Holdgate, Boxford

Mrs Janice Cavell, Bardwell

Mrs Lynette Morton, Iken

Please contact the membership secretary Hilary Drain to find out whether there are other members nearby so you can share a lift to our talks and visits. Phone (evenings only) 01206 263223 or email [membership@suffolkplantheritage.com](mailto:membership@suffolkplantheritage.com)

*Rod Leeds will be giving a talk on Galanthus to the Suffolk Group on Saturday 18th October at Stowupland Village Hall. Here is a little taster of the treat we can look forward to!*

## **GALANTHUS, SOME FAVOURITES OLD AND NEW**

*ROD LEEDS*

**W**e began collecting snowdrops long before it was the fashion. Local gardeners like Richard Britten and Jenny Robinson (a past President of Suffolk Plant Heritage) were conduits to the mid twentieth century grower like Bowles and Stern. In Suffolk they had the connections with Oliver Wyatt and John Gray. Specialist nurseries were few and far between, but Ballard of *Hellebore* fame ran an annual Snowdrop list as did Wallace and Barr both long extinct nurseries.

In 1983 John Morley began North Green Snowdrops, a modest A5 plain paper catalogue with the embryo of today's explosion of names. From that time the interest began to grow until today it is Europe-wide with tours, galas and many gardens giving an early financial boost to their year. Here in East Anglia Anglesey Abbey comes to mind with Richard Ayres having to persuade a sceptical National Trust to let him open the garden in February. Now thousands of people flock to the site to see the *Galanthus* and the now famous winter garden.

There has been talk of the RHS conducting a trial of *Galanthus* but the logistics of it have proved impossible, including the problem of security. In a very subjective way we all assess our plants and in the talk which I will give to Suffolk Plant Heritage in October is our view of the best performers here in Suffolk. Just a few years ago Christopher Grey-Wilson and I did a survey for 'The Plantsman' asking a number of dedicated growers to choose their top ten Snowdrops. Surprisingly number one was *Galanthus* 'S. Arnott' a classic snowdrop which has been around for over a century. Only John Morley's *Galanthus plicatus* 'Three Ships' came close to the top. Maybe it is our natural reserve or I hope our objective view of the best in our gardens.

Here our soil is sitting on boulder clay which makes for a strong soil but does need humus to become accessibly to small roots. Snowdrops take well to the environment, but do need regular splitting to remain vibrant and healthy. The old cultivars have a vigour that survives neglect, but really come into their own when given fresh ground.



The modern finds of extraordinary shapes and markings are on probation and quite honestly some need culling, either because they are indistinguishable from many others or they are hard to grow and only survive when grown in pots in a frame. Sometimes when a keen grower says they have an interesting new snowdrop cynicism creeps in, only to be confounded when occasionally it is really special. Selections like *Galanthus* 'Trumps', 'Godfrey Owen', 'Cowhouse Green' and 'Lowick' (a yellow selection from Northumberland) are proving very good garden plants, distinct and easy to grow here in Suffolk.

This interest is very good at condensing the seasons. Winter is only from December 25th to 1st January when snowdrops begin spring!

*Rod Leeds is former chairman of the RHS Rock Garden Plant Committee*

## FLOWERS FROM THE CUTTING GARDEN

*MARGARET PALMER*

There was a definite air of excitement in the room as the Plant Heritage Suffolk Group met for its March talk by Harriet Holt on 'Flowers from the Cutting Garden'. The pull of the topic was obvious in the excellent turnout of around 60 members bolstered by a record number of 14 visitors. And we were not to be disappointed! Harriet was generous in letting us into her world of bringing an abundant admix of annuals, half hardy annuals, perennials, bulbs and shrubs to perfection.

To set the scene Harriet let us into some of the secrets of developing a 'Cutting Garden'. Her guiding principles for a successful harvest are to choose the best examples for cutting of any type of flower selected, to ensure a succession of flowers from spring to autumn and to ensure the best use of space in the garden. Establishing a successful 'Cutting Garden' is no quick fix, having taken 15 years to develop the garden to what it is today. And there's certainly lots of research, planning and day to day management involved and in anyone's terms that means lots of hard work!

Based south of Sudbury, Harriet's garden was chosen well and provided auspicious beginnings. Very importantly, this included the fertile and well tilled soil, a legacy of its previous incarnation as a vegetable garden. Over time borders have gradually been expanded and reworked and a compost

heap integrated. In 2005 greater flexibility of growing and protection of plants was ensured through the introduction of a cold green house. The result of all this hard work: the production of 300 square metres of flowers starting with the fresh delights of narcissi, tulips and anemones in spring through to the crescendo of the season and dahlias, gladioli and more in August and beyond.

Evolution has also been part of the process where selling flowers are concerned. Initially, Harriet began by growing a relatively limited range of zinnias (dahlia flowered mix), cosmos, and sunflowers and sold from a table outside the gate. Subsequently, a more hospitable courtyard position has been found for the cornucopia of flowers now produced which meet the requirements of flower arrangers, special events such as weddings, home decorative and entertainment purposes and for gifts. A diverse customer base has certainly been established.

The focus of a project has also been a strategy employed by Harriet to aid the successful development of her business. One such example was experimentation with the growing of sweet peas to extend their season, to exclude the pollen beetle, and to ensure good fragrance and long stems. King's Exhibition Varieties were chosen, with chicken pellets to boost growth leading to successful flowering in May in greenhouse and June outside. Other experimentation has been around complementary growing, for example grouping narcissi around shrubs where slow die down of leaves won't cause a problem. Similarly, the production of *Eremurus* was perfected by ensuring sufficient space.

But I wonder if it isn't the art of growing flowers for cutting that makes it such an evocative and emotive topic for us. The sheer romance and indulgence of enjoying cut flowers is something most of us savour, not to mention their association with landmark occasions in our lives. Colour, scent, texture are all elements that need to be got right.

Harriet illustrated to us how this is achieved, and how to ensure a balance of fillers including *Eucalyptus* and *Alchemilla mollis*, as a backdrop to the prima donnas such as peonies, dahlias, and roses to name but a few. Then there are the less sophisticated but no less perfect delights of sweet peas, cornflowers, anemones, campanula and alstroemeria. And I really enjoyed the adjectives that conjure up these blooms in our consciousness and to which I have probably added a few of my own: 'vibrant'; 'fragrant'; 'tissue papery'; 'frothy'; 'diaphanous'. And what exotic and delicious plant names too: Dutch *Iris* 'Tigers Eye'; *Sunflower* 'Ring of Fire'; *Allium* 'Purple Sensation'; *Zinnia* 'Purple Prince'; *Gladioli* 'Plum Tart'. What delights Harriet was able to illustrate for us!

I don't think I am just speaking for myself when I say that I thoroughly

enjoyed Harriet's talk. It provided inspiration to begin or extend our interest in growing flowers for cutting and it also gave us time out to indulge in a reverie of flowers that stimulate all the senses. Thank you Harriet!

*NB I have a full list of the plants mentioned in Harriet's talk if anyone would like a copy (patrickjohnpalmer@gmail.com). You may also be interested to know that Harriet runs workshops for The Women's Farm and Garden Association and the National Trust.*

## **A SUCCESSFUL CONSERVATION PROJECT**

*JIM MARSHALL*

I have had contact with carnations most of my life. My grandfather in Edinburgh grew Border Carnations and prior to taking my professional examinations I gained commercial horticultural experience in the Lee Valley growing Perpetual Carnations for cut flower, mostly the 'Sim' cultivars.

On joining the National Trust in the late 1970's I began my passion for Malmaison Carnations and was determined to reintroduce them to gardening at large. At the same time I began collecting a few heritage, and in the main, well scented Perpetual Carnations, e.g. 'Doris Allwood' (raised pre 1930), 'Duke of Norfolk' (pre 1937) 'Storm' (pre 1967) and 'Northland' (1939). As with my malmaisons I have maintained virus free stock of these cultivars by micro-propagation.

Three years ago I was contacted by a head gardener from a large estate, regarding their collection of Perpetual Carnations, which were, in his words, 'in a sorry state', as they were very weak, hardly flowered and were difficult to propagate.

Sarah and I soon made a visit to see the carnations, yes they were 'in a sorry state', but I was amazed to find cultivars growing, which I had thought were long lost to cultivation. The plants had very similar symptoms to my own collection before I had them micro-propagated and freed from virus, so I was fairly certain that one or all of the seven carnation viruses were to blame. We quickly drew up a programme of

micro-propagation and virus testing, and fortunately this was agreed by the owners.

Slowly but surely the new plantlets began to test virus negative, and 'clean' plants have been returning to us over the last two years. The first five of the thirteen cultivars flowered last year and another four are starting to flower now, with three more 'clean' plants just potted up and growing on. One cultivar is proving difficult to free of virus, but there is still hope.

The head gardener was obviously pleased to know that the weak growth was nothing to do with his growing skills, and he now has stock of healthy vigorous plants. The owners are extremely pleased to have a constant supply of healthy flowers the year round and to have been involved in such an important conservation project. They do not want publicity for their central part in the project, but thankfully they are happy for us to maintain a collection of their cultivars alongside our existing ones, and to sell them on the retail market, which will help secure the long term future for these endangered heritage plants.

The majority of these plants were bred in the United Kingdom before 1970, so we have applied for a National Collection in the Historic Category. We both look forward to having a New National Collection, and showing these fabulous flowers at future Open Days, Plant Fairs and Garden Shows, and – of course - we are already looking to secure virus free stock of two more pre 1970 UK bred cultivars which have a single entry in The Plantfinder!

List of rediscovered Perpetual Flowering Carnations:

'Cleopatra' (1962); 'Fragrant Anne' (1953); 'Helena Allwood' (1950); 'Marian Allwood' (1939); 'Monty's Pink' (1953); 'Old Rose' (1928); 'Robert Allwood' (1931); 'Royal Crimson' (1944); 'Royal Fragrance' (1957); 'Royal Salmon' (1935); 'Shot Silk' (1925); 'Velvet Pelargonium' (1945)

And 'Marchioness of Headfort', which is not yet free of virus.

## PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

For an update on what's happening at National Office  
visit the current issue of Newsletters  
on the website

[www.plantheritage.com](http://www.plantheritage.com)

To find out more about Suffolk Group activities  
visit [www.suffolkplantheritage.com](http://www.suffolkplantheritage.com)

# SEARCHING FOR IRISES BRED BY RAYMOND HERBERT LONG

MAGGIE THORPE

Why am I searching? Our Plant Heritage Suffolk Group is anxious to find some tall bearded irises bred in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s by four or five award winning breeders, namely Pilkington, Dykes, Murrell, Long and Chadburn which now in danger of being lost in cultivation. As I live in Boxford as also did Mr Long, I was given the job of trying to find some of his irises.

In 1927 Mr and Mrs Long, unknown in the iris world, staged a sensational exhibit at Westminster RHS and won the RHS's Veitch Memorial Medal. This led Mr. Long to fame and to start his own breeding programme. I put a small article in the Box River News asking people to let me know if they

still had any of his irises and several residents of Stone Street where Mr Long lived have invited me inspect to their irises. Searching the internet for any of his named cultivars has meant writing to several botanic gardens and so far Glasnevin Botanic Garden in Dublin has sent three irises to us, 'Killiney', 'War and Peace' and 'High Command'. These are safely planted and will be watched over and then propagated and distributed eventually among members.



Please do get in touch with me if you can add any more information to help with my detective work!  
Email [maggiethorpe37@gmail.com](mailto:maggiethorpe37@gmail.com) or telephone 01787 211346

*"I know nothing whatever of many aspects of gardening and very little of a great many more. But I never saw a garden from which I did not learn something and seldom met a gardener who did not, in one way or another, help me."* Russell Page





## **HELMINGHAM PLANT FAIR SPRING 2014**

Scenes from the Suffolk Plant Heritage Plant Fair on 24 May, including Suffolk Phoenix Brass, Plant doctor Matthew Tanton-Brown and the lecture tent with Andrew Halstead.

Photo of the plant creche taken by Rosie Ansell. All other pictures courtesy Peter Kendall.



Top from left

*Thalictrum osmundifolium*;

*Thalictrum rochebrunianum*;

Middle *Santolina*

*chamaecypariss*;

*Santolina*

*pinnata* 'Edward Bowles';

Below: Entry for the *Campanula*

*lactiflora* 'Prichard's Variety'

AGM mini trial submitted by

Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter.



# THALICTRUMS

KIM FORRESTER

Like many thalictrums I am an import to Suffolk. Originally from Berkshire, I moved to this lovely county of pretty villages and wide open skies in the summer of 2010 and brought some of my plants with me.

Thalictrums have a worldwide range, from the Mediterranean, Russia, China and the Far East, North America, Afghanistan and the Middle East and of course here in the UK, as our own native *T. flavum* can be found on the fens. Previous medicinal uses include rubbing the leaves on to the scalp to cure baldness (untested but recommended by Pliny the Elder in AD50!) and more recently, being considered in treatments related to heart disease and mental health issues. Aberglasney Gardens in West Wales have also undertaken an RHS Trial, which will be concluded in 2016 and should offer further information for horticulturalists in the future.

The first thalictrum I ever encountered was in 2006 at one of my favourite places to browse for plants, 'Farmyard Nurseries' in Llandysul, West Wales and I simply had to buy it. I couldn't walk by, and *T. delavayi* AGM remains one of my favourite thalictrums to this day (as do many of the variations of this group).

I had no idea this one plant would lead to a collection as I don't collect anything else and I am not a hoarder. I am however, a lazy gardener. I don't have time to pamper, and a plant that will sit in the garden (albeit given the right conditions in the first place) and tolerate temperatures down to -20° without having to be lifted and cared for throughout the winter and then pop its head cheerfully up again in spring to say, 'Hello, I might look dainty but I'm back', is just what I need.

With 127 thalictrums currently listed in RHS Plantfinder and approximately 115 genuinely available, of which roughly 20 are duplications or numbered rather than named, there are plenty to choose from. I hold 70+ in my collection at present and am always on the lookout for those elusive missing plants. Not all thalictrums are as easy to look after as *T. delavayi*. Some are much more sensitive or harder to establish and nothing kills them faster than sitting around with cold, wet feet. Humus rich soil with good drainage is what the majority prefer and most will do better in partial shade than full sun.

Some thalictrums are good at coping with almost anything you throw at them. If you don't have the perfect conditions then I recommend the

*T. flavum* group. These tough, tall varieties can cope even when planted in heavy clay soil in full sun. Check out *T. flavum* 'Illuminator' if you like a wonderful fresh lime-green leaf in spring, although it will soften to mid-green as the season progresses. *T. flavum* subsp. *glaucum* 'True Blue' will offer you deep-sea blue/green leaves. Both top out at around 6' to 7' (1.8m – 2.1m) with fluffy yellow pom-pom heads in summer which will generously spread themselves around unless you snip off those seed heads. If you want even taller varieties, try *T. 'Elin'* bred by Coen Jansen, as this supermodel can reach 8' to 10' (2.4 – 3.4m) given the right conditions and she is not promiscuous as her seeds are sterile. New kids on the block are *T. 'Anne'* bred by Dirk de Winter, and *T. 'Tukker Princess'* (a cross between *T. flavum* and *T. 'Elin'*), both of which are sold under 'plant breeders rights'.

Popular at Chelsea last year and still currently trendy is *T. rochebrunianum*, which is one of the most boldly purple-flowered of the taller specimens. However, a word of caution, don't let her dry out completely as she is prone to wilting in such conditions and will spend the rest of the season looking like she enjoyed a wild party the night before – with crisping around her leaves - it's not a good look!

Amongst the smaller woodland specimens are variations of *T. ichangense* including the astonishingly lovely *T. ichangense* 'Evening Star' strain (v). Flowering from mid-May to October with beautiful dark red to olive-green leaves, highlighted by a pattern of silver veins, this fantastic meadow rue isn't from meadows at all. In fact, it can be found happily growing on moist forest ledges between 2,000' and 6,000' (609 – 1,828m.) elevation in the Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan, Hubei, Shanxi, Guizhou, Liaoning, and Zhejiang. Named by Terra Nova Nurseries – the well-known American breeder and wholesaler of perennial plants, it is topped with 15" (38cm.) sprays of tiny mauve-lavender flowers. Well-known plant hunters Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones at Crûg Farm Plants have also introduced another lovely variety *T. inchangense* var. *minus* 'Chinese Chintz'.

Early spring flowering is covered by the *T. aquilegiifolium* group which are some of the first to open in May. Many people are familiar with this larger leaved species which have fluffy pom-pom heads in either purple or white. If you like this group and prefer dark and moody stems and a slightly risqué name, check out *T. 'Black Stockings'*, also from Terra Nova. Or try my personal favourite, *T. aquilegiifolium* var. *sibiricum* BSWJ11007, from Crûg Farm Plants, similar to *T. aquilegiifolium* 'Album', but on steroids! A word of caution here if you do not like to spray (as I don't), some of these plants can be susceptible to powdery mildew, particularly *T. aquilegiifolium* 'Thundercloud', which is very widely sold at garden centres.

Finally, I must mention three of my other favourite thalictrums.

?*T. omeiense* BWJ8049 from Crûg has a delicate perfume and the cutest little purple buds followed by white filiform flowers. *T. osmundifolium* is similar but has rich dark reddish-green leaves and purple filiform flowers which look like they have been dipped in icing sugar and T.

?*javanicum* B&SWJ9506 found in Southern India by Crûg Farm Plants has white filiform flowers in contrast with glaucous blue leaves. All mid-sized plants with gently spreading habits, there is a thalictrum for everyone and they deserve to be more widely grown in our gardens.

*Kim Forrester's Thalictriums have recently been given National Collection status. Thalictrum ichangense 'Evening Star' is featured on the front and back cover of this issue.*

## THE PROPOSED NATIONAL COLLECTION OF SANTOLINAS

JON ROSE

I started my collection of santolinas, also known as 'cotton lavenders', almost by accident. I had been growing these easy-going trouble-free sub-shrubs in my nursery Botanica for many years and I had without realising it most of the species and cultivars available. While on holiday in the Lake District one year I bought *Santolina* 'Lemon Fizz', for me an awful sounding name, but it stirred me into looking at other cultivars. Having referenced the RHS Plant Finder I realised there was no one with a National Collection. By this time I had rather fallen in love with these unpopular and under-rated shrubs that I decided to start collecting rather more seriously and so the collection began.

The smell of their foliage always reminds me of the Mediterranean, which is indeed of course where they originate from. Though santolinas are from sunny climes they are perfectly happy in our British garden climate. They tolerate quite a degree of dry shade but they are happiest in a sunny spot and are not demanding on cultivation. Do not overfeed and ensure you provide good drainage.

They make excellent formal edging with a long flowering period of button-

like flowers ranging from bright golden yellow to the most delicate pale yellow and cream. Unlike lavender they respond well to the occasional hard pruning back. Regular trimming as new growth begins and again after flowering seems all that's needed to keep them looking neat and tidy.

Plant Heritage members are very welcome to visit and see progress of the site chosen for the collection and of course I am always interested in hearing from anybody who has these rather forgotten plants, particularly anyone with *S. benthamiana* or *S. chamaecyparissus* 'Double Lemon'.

Contact: Jon Rose phone: 01728 747113 [www.botanica.org.uk](http://www.botanica.org.uk)

## FINDING PRICHARD'S

SUE WOOSTER

**C***ampanula lactiflora* 'Prichard's Variety' AGM is a superb border bellflower, with a stouter and less willowy habit than its siblings in this group. The true cultivar is elusive, with its sprays of distinct violet-blue, starry flowers, pure white centres and modest height of 75cm. In the mid summer border, 'Prichard's Variety' positively glows.

So would the recent RHS Border Campanula Trials at Wisley produce the real thing? Not for a moment... of all the entries, this cultivar of milky bellflower caused the most debate.

Maurice Prichard, founder of the famous Riverslea Nursery in Hampshire, raised the variety in the late 1890s but Alan Bloom first showed it in 1964. In the decades that followed, the genuine article has become harder to find, primarily because it seeds prolifically (readers will no doubt be shaking their heads and tutting at this stage— whoever heard of a campanula giving plenteous seed??). Consequently, in all likelihood, 'Prichard's Variety' has been distributed as inferior seedlings from the early days of its appearance.

The RHS Trials Forum agreed that a mini trial would be a useful follow-up and this is now taking place in the Walled Garden at Langham Hall where the National Collection of Alpine Campanulas and Bellflower Nursery live.

I have three entries, kindly donated by Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter,

Jaime Blake at Bressingham Gardens and David Howard at Howard Nurseries. All three 'Prichards' have settled in well in a south-facing border and have flowered profusely in their first summer. It will be interesting to see how they fare.

*Campanula lactiflora* 'Prichard's Variety' maintains its AGM of 1993, and it is hoped the mini trial will reveal the true form so it can be reassessed and its just reward upheld.

*See photo on page 24.*

*Sue Wooster holds the National Collection of Alpine Campanulas and is an RHS Gold Medallist*

*Bellflower Nursery, The Walled Garden, Langham Hall, Langham, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3EE. Open October to March Thursdays and Fridays 10-4 (weather permitting! Do phone ahead).*

## **GROWING FERNS FROM SPORES**

*ANTHONY PIGOTT*

Ferns do not produce flowers. The ferns we grow in the garden are called a sporophytes and they reproduce by producing millions of spores on the back of the fronds. Each spore is a single cell, produced in small clusters, each of which usually contains over 4000 spores.

The spores are shed when ripe and are dispersed by the wind. Spores that land in suitable places then germinate to form prothalli, a new generation of small plants that are completely independent of the sporophyte generation.

Prothalli are small thin green plants from 2-10mm across, not unlike liverworts. The prothalli develop male and female sex organs on their underside, the male organs appearing before the female. Constant moisture is necessary for the development and fertilization of prothalli, which is why young ferns frequently appear between cracks in paving or around potted plants which are constantly damp. Once fertilized, a small fern, a sporeling, develops from the underside of the prothallus.

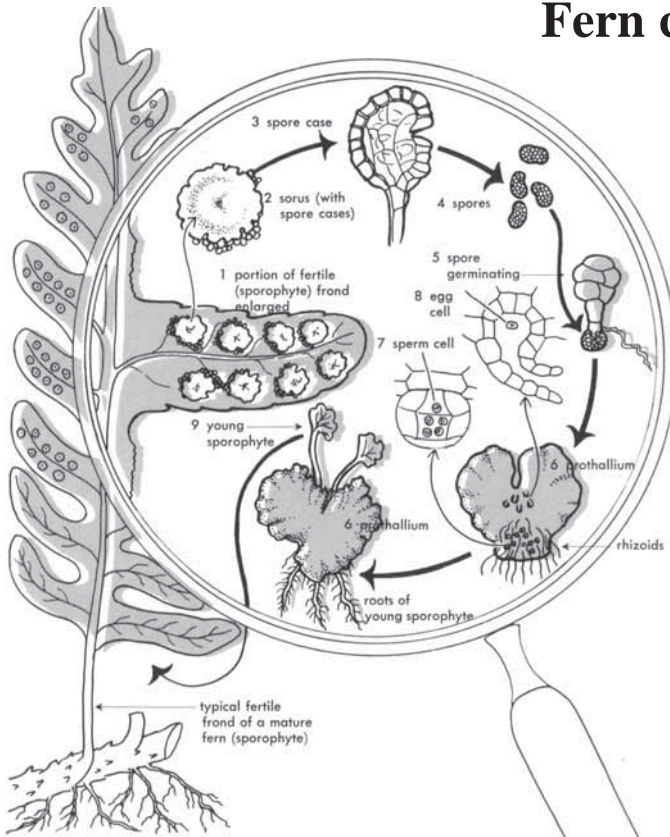
When the sporeling has developed its own root system the prothallus is no longer required for its support and dies. The first fronds produced by the sporeling usually differ in form from the mature fronds. Some small ferns

will mature to adult form and start producing spores in a single season but most ferns take 2 or 3 years to reach adult size and tree ferns take many years before they start to produce spores.

### Spore raising – the Classical Method

- \* Take a small clean plastic pot, 9x9cm and soak in domestic disinfectant for 30 min. Allow to drip dry.
- \* Fill with your favorite seed compost to 1cm below brim.
- \* Cut a piece of kitchen roll and fit in top of pot.
- \* Gently pour boiling water over the kitchen roll to sterilize the top layer of compost.
- \* Cover and allow to cool.
- \* Remove the piece of kitchen roll. Open your packet of spores. Hold it close to the top of the compost and tap to spread spores very thinly over the surface of the compost.

## Fern cycle

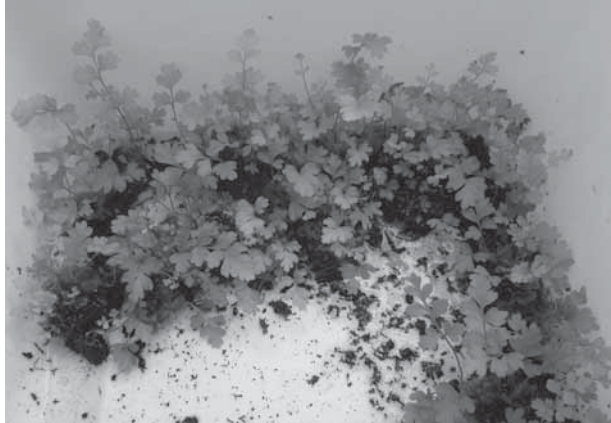


\*Label a new plastic bag, tie handle or self seal. Put the pot into the plastic bag and close it. You now have an individual miniature greenhouse for your spores.

\*Place the bag on a windowsill, but not in direct sunlight.

There should be no need to water the spores. After a few weeks the surface of the compost will start to turn green with tiny prothalli.

The prothalli enlarge and the first fronds appear. Once the fronds are 1-2cm high it is time to open the bag, harden off the sporelings and prick them out. They will need close attention at this stage and must not be allowed to dry out.



If you have more material in the pot than you need, place it in a shady frame or a corner of the greenhouse. Ferns can often be held at this stage of development for a year or so and you can prick-out more ferns next season.

### **Some tips**

- \* The secrets of successful spore raising are sterility and constant moisture.
- \* Spores sown too thickly will produce overcrowded prothalli, reluctant to produce new fern plants.
- \* Prepare a half tray of compost, sterilize with boiling water. Allow to cool then prick out small clumps of prothalli into the tray. Place in a large plastic bag.
- \* If you ever need to water the prothalli, water from below with cold boiled water
- \* You can feed prothalli and small fern sporelings with half strength liquid fertilizer
- \* Keep surplus fern spores in the salad compartment of your refrigerator. They will remain viable for several years

*This article is adapted from an information leaflet produced by the British Pteridological Society (BPS). You can see their web site, Fern World, at <http://www.eBPS.org.uk>.*



## SUFFOLK PUNCH HERITAGE GARDEN



Plants clockwise from top:  
Dahlia 'Suffolk Punch';  
Rose 'Surpassing  
Beauty';  
Clematis 'Alice Fisk';  
Rose 'Benjamin Britten'.

Below: The garden in 2014.





# THE SUFFOLK PUNCH HERITAGE TRUST

SARAH COOK

The county of Suffolk has a wonderful gardening heritage: gardens, nurseries and also plant breeders. The idea of celebrating this has been slowly germinating at the Suffolk Punch Trust, initiated by the chairman of trustees Philip Ryder Davis and taken on by artist and skilled gardener Margaret (Miggie) Wyllie. Early on in the project they asked advice from Plant Heritage, and as a ‘born and bred’ Suffolk lass it wasn’t long before I was hooked in, with husband Jim, who became Chairman of the Trust Garden Committee

Armed with a list of ‘Suffolk Plants’, made some while ago by Ivan Dickings; a design, cleverly incorporating a horseshoe drawn by Sonia Burrows, of Home Meadow Nurseries (some of you may remember the wonderful displays of Iceland Poppies Home Meadow put up annually at Chelsea) and with Charles Notcutt recruited onto our Committee, work began in earnest.

Our first job was to decide which plants would have a rightful place in the garden, so we set out to define a ‘Suffolk Plant’, not as easy as it might seem; we have now decided on the following:

- \* Plant bred in Suffolk by a Suffolk company or person living in Suffolk.
- \* Cultivated plants which occurred in Suffolk (open pollinated rather than bred)
- \* Plant named for a Suffolk place or object
- \* Plant named after a Suffolk person,
- \* Plant with direct link to a Suffolk person (e.g. Rose ‘Omar Khayyam)

We have now decided to limit ourselves to hardy plants – there are potentially 300 ‘Suffolk’ Pelargoniums - which would be a nice little National Collection in itself - as well as other tender plants.

A large number of plants have been identified and sourced for the garden. Planting began in earnest in spring 2013, and many shrubs were added this spring. Most recently a pergola has been constructed to hold some rampant climbers on our list, including Rose ‘Cedric Morris’ and *Clematis* ‘Marjorie’ (a lovely double montana type, found by Marjorie Free of

Westleton and introduced by Fisks Clematis Nursery). We are very pleased that this has been made by a Suffolk company, Tree Incarnated (who exhibit furniture at our Plant Fairs) out of Suffolk oak, most of which grew on the Ickworth Estate.

Researching the plants, the people and nurseries which form our heritage has been fascinating. Some of the stories you may already know, such as Joan Schofield and her dwarf pinks as an article about her by Brian Yates was in the 2011 Spring Journal. I've been 'going on' about Sir Cedric Morris, irises and his other plants 'ad nauseam'. In addition, irises bred by George Haworth Chadburn (another artist) and Bertram Long, who lived in Boxford, are part of the Suffolk Group's iris project.

We have had lots of help along the way, not the least from National Collection Holders. Mickfield Hostas have given me a list of Suffolk Hostas (both their own introductions and those of Park Green Nurseries and Sandra Bond) and are helping me source them. Simon Weeks (*Erysimum*) supplied *E. 'Lewis Hart'*, a Hadleigh plantsman who introduced several plant cultivars. The National Plant Exchange brought *Pulmonaria 'Mournful Purple'*, one of Cedric Morris' introductions, which is not listed in The Plantfinder, and four of Rougham Nurseries' *Aster nova-angliae* which were supplied by a National Collection in



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www.placeforplants.co.uk

Worcestershire. Hopefully these plants will all thrive and we can also feed them into the Suffolk Group's plant propagation scheme. It has been a game of 'Hunt the Plant' which will continue for years to come. My next job is to ask permission from the Seckford Trust for bud material of 'The Seckford Rose', and to sort out the two (I think) Barcock roses, 'Drinkstone Apricot' and 'Tostock Yellow' (or are they the same?). Can anyone help, have you seen both? – does 'Tostock Yellow' still grow on the Post Office there? (I meant to visit it this summer!), do you have photographs to help?

There are other plants I feel must still be around, do you grow: *Aubrietia* 'Baker's Double', *Hemerocallis* 'Orford', *Chrysanthemum* 'Helen' or *Clematis* 'Fulton's Variety' and *C.* 'Jane Cadge'?

We have not been able to afford to buy multiples of many plants, so very little has passed through my hands without being divided or 'shaved' for cuttings. Jim has been very patient, but sometimes looks askance into our mist propagation unit, at which I flee with 'what on earth is that in there for' ringing in my ears! Funds are very tight, but we have been lucky enough to receive grants from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, for plants and the Scott Finnis Trust for tools. We are now fundraising retrospectively for our pergola, and seeking funds to improve our interpretative signs.

We need to find more volunteers to help maintain the garden – do you live fairly near and have time to spare? Is anyone interested in helping supervise the children from two primary schools who use the vegetable plots? Would someone like to help sort out all the information I have amassed on Suffolk plants and plantspeople (and write a book/leaflet)?

If you have any ideas where we can find any 'missing plants' or are interested in any aspect of this project do contact me.

sarah@malmaisons.plus.com, www.suffolkpunchtrust.org, 01473 822400.

*Sarah will be giving a talk about the garden on Thursday 30 October at Framlingham College's Headmaster Porter Theatre.*

*The talk, entitled 'Suffolk Garden Plants and the Suffolk Heritage Garden', is to raise funds for All Saints' Church, Saxtead.*

*Tickets are £10 to include a glass of wine and excellent canapes and can be purchased from the Stationers in Framlingham or at the door on the night (from 6.30pm). Canapes and wine will be served from 7pm and the talk starts at 7.30pm.*

*In the Autumn 2013 edition of the Plant Heritage Journal Sarah Cook wrote an article on 'Flowers as Art', asking the question whether flowers - and gardens - can be classified as works of art. Liz Wells responds*

## **IS THE GARDEN AN ART FORM?**

*LIZ WELLS*

In his treatise 'Aesthetics' Hegel put art into five categories: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music and Poetry. He said that gardening and dancing were imperfect arts and he didn't seem to think them worth discussing. Well I don't know what dance enthusiasts make of that but I certainly take issue with it. How could he so cavalierly reject The Alhambra, The Gardens of the Moghul, Versailles and Japanese gardens as imperfect art? And nowadays, of course we have examples such as Sissinghurst, Giverney and Ninfa to name but a few.

Anne Wareham in her book: 'The Bad-Tempered Gardener' says that we are all too nice about each other's gardens and if we want our gardens to be considered as works of art we must allow them to be treated like any other work of art and that means they should be subject to criticism. If I took her at her word, I might say that I consider her garden to be derivative and uninteresting with a very poor and unimaginative choice of plants. Some people might say that such criticism is hurtful and bad mannered but in his book: 'What Are Gardens For?' Rory Stuart agrees with Anne Wareham that there is a lack of any real critical assessment of gardens amongst garden writers generally. I suppose any other form of art is open to criticism but I am still uncomfortable with it.

Your garden is a picture created by you and even if it doesn't appeal visually to me it is still a form of art because you selected those colours and shapes and placed them in a form that you thought pleasing. Just because you are working with living material rather than paint or marble doesn't mean that it isn't art. You have created it. A flower by itself, however lovely cannot be called art because it is a natural thing. But once you have placed it in your garden with other plants and composed a picture which you find aesthetically pleasing then of course that is art. It is multi-dimensional, not just spatially but it also has the added dimensions of scent, time, weather and the seasons. I have read that some people maintain that because gardens are inherently unstable and are subject to change and deterioration then they cannot be called art. The idea that art,

once made must remain static and unchanging is, I think, a poor argument.

Not all gardens are art though. They don't all aspire to be. Many gardeners are more interested in amassing a collection of plants like a stamp collection and make no attempt to arrange them artistically. Some people (usually men) arrange all their plants in neat rows and dedicate hours to lawn care. I don't think you could call their gardens art. But most gardeners try to create beautiful pictures with their plants. Of course, we can't all produce masterpieces, anymore than any other kind of artist can.

If we allow some gardens to be art we have to let in the conceptual gardens which have crept into Chelsea and Hampton Court. These are the ones which are supposed to mean something and make us think. They often have few plants and lots of hard surfaces. I suppose we have to be tolerant of these installations even if we don't like them, if we want gardens to be accepted as an art form. But I do resent the suggestion once made by Cleve West that conceptual gardens are more like real art because they don't rely so much on living material and so can focus on a feeling or a theme. Now that begs the question of what art is and what its function is and we getting into deep water. We can't get into the semantics here as to whether a line of bricks or an unmade bed are art. But perhaps we can accept the definition that art is the expression of human creative skill and imagination. And a gardener who works hard to create a beautiful picture using colour, shape, texture and form is surely conforming to this definition.

## **MY CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW EXPERIENCE**

*HEATHER MEDCRAFT*

**T**wenty five years ago, I was serving champagne and canapes to celebrities and watching the Queen across the Great Pavilion at the Chelsea Flower Show Gala evening. I was a nervous teenage Hospitality Management student. This year I was wearing jeans, hi-vis and covered in compost! My experience couldn't have been any more different but definitely more enjoyable.

For the past four years I have been working as a gardener (? it's a long story) at Fullers Mill Garden in West Stow near Bury St Edmunds. A great many changes have happened in that time, the biggest being that the garden has been gifted to Perennial (formerly the Gardeners Royal Benevolent Society) who now own and manage the site, staff and volunteers.

As new employees of Perennial, we have gradually learnt about the work the charity does and how it has adapted to help the growing number of people it serves. One hundred and seventy five years ago it was set up to financially support head gardeners who no longer had homes to live in after they had retired. Perennial now supports everyone in horticulture in need whether it's a working groundsman or a retired parks gardener. This year, being Perennial's 175th anniversary, a public awareness and fund raising campaigns have been launched.

An e-mail was sent in the winter of 2013 to Head Gardener Annie Dellbridge at Fullers Mill, requesting pictures of features of the garden. Photos were sent of various scenes, one of which was the copper mash tun plates – a recycled feature from the Greene King Brewery. Designer Jo Thompson was creating a garden for Perennial based upon Fullers Mill and York Gate near Leeds (owned and managed by Perennial). Influences from both gardens were being used for a garden in the Great Pavilion at Chelsea. All very exciting!

Months passed and another e-mail – would some of the Fullers Mill garden team like to help plant up the garden at Chelsea for the day. It was an offer we couldn't refuse!

On Friday 16th May, Annie Dellbridge, work placement student Janice Sequeira and I headed out very early looking forward to a day's hard labour! Hi-vis on, we walked through the gate and into what could only be described as a building site. There was no way we could see that within two days, the show ground would become a haven for beautiful gardens, impressive sculptures and exquisite planting. Fork lifts, lorries, tonne bags of compost, plants and construction equipment littered the site and little groups of hi-vis people were frantically working away.

When we got to our garden there were two teams of people already hard at work: CED Natural Stone, who had supplied Cotswold stone for the gabions, were constructing the paved area through the middle of the garden. The other team 'Streetscape,' a group of very hard working 18-25 year olds (previously long term unemployed but now on landscape gardening apprenticeships) were wheelbarrowing supplies of hard landscaping materials and compost to the garden

We worked with designer Jo Thompson and three volunteers from her team



Top left: Janice, Annie and Heather;  
 Left: Designer Jo Thompson with team;  
 Above: Wire sculpture by Rachel Drucker.

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(one had come especially from New Zealand and one a first year degree student from Australia) and a WRAGS placement lady from York Gate.

Perennial plants supplied by Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants were arranged in their pots in the raised beds to give a soft, relaxed feel – all we had to do was tweak the pots so that they sat at the right angle, to look as natural as possible. It's not as easy as it sounds! *Betula pendula*, topiary spirals and all of the large shrubs such as *Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Diabolo' were already in place. As we worked through two of the three beds we back filled with compost, watered and mulched with bark chippings.

Space on the show garden was tight as there were around 20 people working at any one time. A very large package covered in bubble wrap was always very awkward to manoeuvre around to one side of the stand – we later found out it was the big wooden sculpture (in the centre of the garden) by Walter Bailey. Some smaller metal sculptures were placed where they were intended to be on the final day and we all thought they were particularly eye-catching. These were the work of Rachel Ducker and both sculptors have worked at Riverhill Gardens in Kent.

Plants included in the plan were;

*Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation'

*Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'

*Digitalis purpurea* 'Sutton's Apricot'

*Euphorbia amygdaloides* var *robbiae*

*Euphorbia mellifera*

*Geranium clarkei* 'Kashmir Purple'

*Geum* 'Totally Tangerine'

*Hakonechloa macra*

*Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'

*Silene fimbriata*

*Verbascum* 'Cotswold Beauty'

After a long day on the stand we had a very quick look round at some of the show gardens that were still being planted up long into the evening, they all began to look like it was all coming together nicely. I thought that Cleve West's garden was particularly stunning, the planting was beautiful and he was still busy with his team when we stopped and took pictures. We all agreed that we'd had a fabulous day and felt very privileged to be even a tiny part of the construction of a really beautiful garden.

The Chelsea Flower Show opened to the press on Monday 19th May and Annie was back on the show garden to speak to people about Perennial's work. On the Friday Christine Butcher (gardener at Fullers Mill) and I went to speak to the public visitors about Perennial and hand out leaflets.



We were on hand to answer their questions about the plants and the construction. It was great to speak to so many people and to see the garden finished with beautiful plants and the sculptures in place. We had a great day and got to meet Carol Klein who was with the BBC film crew on the stand in the afternoon

People enjoyed the garden so much that they took time to sit on the benches and many commented that it was a design that they could imagine having in their own gardens. Surely a sign of a great design. And it won a silver-gilt!

A brilliant experience that I wouldn't have missed for the world!

*Perennial website for more information; [www.perennial.org.uk](http://www.perennial.org.uk) also on facebook and twitter.*

*Designer Jo Thompson's website; [www.jothompson-garden-design.co.uk](http://www.jothompson-garden-design.co.uk)  
York Gate Garden; please see perennial website for details and opening times.*

*Fullers Mill Garden – [www.fullersmillgarden.org.uk](http://www.fullersmillgarden.org.uk) or see Perennial website for details and opening times.*

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# SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE JOURNAL

Articles, photos and suggestions for the Spring 2015 Journal are wanted by December 1 for publication early in January. This will include details of gardens that are opening to the public during the year.

All information to be sent to Widget Finn, Smallwood Farmhouse, Bradfield St George, Bury St Edmunds, IP30 OAJ, email [widget.finn@gmail.com](mailto:widget.finn@gmail.com).

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sept. 10-28	Anglesey Abbey Dahlias
Sept 21/22	Essex Plant Heritage Fair, RHS Hyde Hall
Oct 4	Cambridge Plant Heritage, Triliums
Oct 4/5	Great Dixter Autumn Fair
Oct 12	Chippenham Plant Fair and Open Gardens
Oct 19	Suffolk Wildlife Trust Apple Day, Lopham Fen
Feb 15 2015	Snowdrop Day for NGS Redisham (01502 572598)

If you know of events which will interest our members please contact [widget.finn@gmail.com](mailto:widget.finn@gmail.com) for inclusion in the Spring 2015 Journal.

### Advertising in the Journal

Heather Medcraft has volunteered to take over organising the advertising in Plant Heritage Journal. She can be contacted on [gingeandh@hotmail.com](mailto:gingeandh@hotmail.com) or 01359 270721. The current rates are:

1/4 page	black & white	£20.00	colour	£25.00
1/2 page	black & white	£40.00	colour	£50.00
Full page	black & white	£60.00	colour	£75.00

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