

Plant Heritage

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



# SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2011





# CONTENTS

Letter from the Chairman	3
Membership Report	5
New members	.5
Suffolk Group Events	6
Members' Gardens Open	7
Spring Plant Fair	8
Leaflet appeal	8
Carry On Propagating	9
Free Bags of Bulbs	9
Where are they now?	10
Propagation Officer's Report	12
Maggie's shop	14
Plant Collection Officer's reports	15
Congratulations to our Collection Holders	17
Hampton Court	17
RHS Floral Trials Campanula	18
Hardy Chrysanthemums	24
Recognition for National Thyme Collection	25
National Council Report	26
Members' Subscriptions	28
A Garden of Suffolk Plants	29
Triploid Hibiscus	31
Roots: Out of Sight, Out of Mind	32
Beans on the Plot	33
Gardening Women	35
Alan Blyth Clematis	37
Wanted	37
Suffolk's National Collections	38
Suffolk Group Committee	39

*Front and back page photograph of Chrysanthemum Spartan Linet  
copyright Judy Barker*

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

*Thanks to Nicola Hobbs for layout.*

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*MAGGIE THORPE*

In May Plant Heritage was chosen by Waitrose in Sudbury to be one of the three charities to be supported by their 'Community Matters' and we have just received a cheque for £510. We were of course absolutely delighted and thank Waitrose for their kind gift.

Although we again had the most outstanding success at our Plant Fair at Helmingham, Anne Tweddle and I decided to visit the Hampshire Group Plant Fair to see if we could learn anything as they have a reputation for being one of the best. In fact there was little difference in the way it was run except for the sponsorship and huge help given by the John Lewis Partnership. It is held in the arboretum next to the Longstock Park Nursery and small garden (owned by John Lewis). They had about the same number of visitors through the gate and the same number of stalls but nothing like so many wonderful plants on their own plant stall. So we must be very proud of our efforts at Helmingham without any sponsorship.

We also took a trip to Devon to visit and buy plants from two Collection Holders, Agapanthus and Dierama and met their Devon Chairman, John Turner. Of course we swapped notes and look forward to him visiting Suffolk soon. All the plants we bought will be propagated and then will appear at our Plant Fairs. Do let me know if you would like to join our propagating team.

One cannot visit Devon without viewing a few gardens and top of my list was to see the new garden of Keith Wiley, Wildside Garden and Nursery. What a treat! His garden is unlike any other. You may have seen him on television with Matthew Wilson digging it out, making hills and valleys out of a flat landscape. The result is staggering. You walk round recognising many familiar plants, all growing in a very natural way, not competing with each other but creating a very colourful landscape with no lawns or clipped hedges but bees and butterflies everywhere. (see photo on centre page).

I am so proud of all we achieve in Suffolk and thank you all for the enormous help you so willingly give to run our Plant Fairs, the profit from which is our main source of income. We endeavour to send any surplus to our National Office, the mainstay of our Association which, unlike other garden societies is recognised nationally and internationally as being of great importance in the conservation of garden plants, Collection Holders

being named as 'Living Libraries'. It gives me great pleasure to report that, after many years showing a loss, our National Accounts now show a surplus.

The Plant Heritage Marquee at Hampton Court was definitely the best ever and our very own Jim Marshall won a gold medal again for his Malmaison Carnations but also was 'Best in Show' for his wonderful 'Living Library Exhibition' theme in the Marquee. Mickfield, our Hosta Collection Holders won a Silver. Well done both.

Please note that our AGM this year will be held at lunchtime to avoid any recurrence of the cancellation last year because of snow. Nick Cook has again kindly invited us to hold it in his barn at Worlingworth. We will provide the lunch but, as usual, ask members to bring a pudding. For catering purposes, please let me know if you intend to come (01787 211346).

'Give a Car' is a new way of giving to Plant Heritage. A member in Sheffield donated their LDV /Convoy which had a value of £150 to Give a Car, nominating Plant Heritage as the recipient. After collection fee/VAT, we received £105. So, if you have an old car you would like to get rid of, go to: [www.giveacar.co.uk](http://www.giveacar.co.uk)

I look forward to meeting you all at our Autumn Plant Fair at Helmingham on the 18th September. Please volunteer to help – we need you!

## HELP NEEDED!

for our Autumn Plant Fair  
at Helmingham Hall  
on Sunday 18 September

*Volunteers are needed at the gate,  
free bulb table and members' gazebo.*

If you can spare an hour or so please contact  
Pauline Byford 01284 762628, [pabyford@btinternet.com](mailto:pabyford@btinternet.com)

# MEMBERSHIP REPORT

*PAULINE BYFORD, SUFFOLK GROUP MEMBERSHIP OFFICER*

Slowly we are continuing to recruit new members. The Helmingham Fairs have not been a good hunting ground for several years but happily this year seven were recruited. Head office was also pleased as they recruited 54 new members at the Hampton Court Show, three for Suffolk. Maybe now is the time to approach fellow gardeners. Unfortunately we have had several resignations so our membership remains at 267

We had a stall selling our plants at the Chelsworth Open Gardens where we talked to many keen gardeners who had never heard of us. They all went away with our literature but no takers. Many people think they have to be very knowledgeable but this is not the case. Do try to bring a guest to the events in Stowupland Hall when you come as they are always welcome and some have joined there and then.

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these new members who have joined the Suffolk Group since our last newsletter. Please introduce yourself to committee members when you come to our events. If other members live nearby do get in touch to see whether you can share a lift to our talks and visits.

Mrs May Page, Iken.

Mr and Mrs Broadhurst, Beccles.

Mr and Mrs Vanner, Gislingham, Eye.

Elizabeth de Planta, Aspall, Stowmarket.

Mrs Beverley Thorpe, Stowmarket.

Mrs G. Smith, Oulton Broad.

Mr and Mrs Punter, Ipswich.

Dame Tamsyn Imison, Halesworth.

Mrs MacLean, Felixstowe.

Mr Paul Hansford, Ipswich.

Mrs Angela Tolputt, Boxford.

Mrs Elaine Jenkins, Stanton, Bury St Edmunds.

Mr Geoffrey Wilson, Halesworth.

Mrs Osborne, Groton Street, Sudbury.

# PLANT HERITAGE SUFFOLK GROUP EVENTS

## 2011

### SEPTEMBER

- Saturday 3      Talk 'The Restoration of the late H. Avray Tipping's garden' by Helen Gerrish. Tipping dominated the pages of Country Life in the early 20th century, writing learned articles about houses and gardens which he later turned into influential books.  
Stowupland Village Hall (IP14 4AL) 2.30pm \*
- Sunday 18      Plant Fair, Helmingham Hall  
Members please volunteer to help tel:01284 762628 or email our Membership Secretary:pabyford@btinternet.com
- Wednesday 28   Study Day 'Irises – cultivation and propagation' by Sarah Cook at Hullwood Barn, Shelley, IP7 5RE  
Booking necessary 01787 211346 £10 incl light lunch

### NOVEMBER

- Sunday 13      AGM and Party –1.00pm at Barton Grange, Worlingworth, Woodbridge IP13 7PE  
Lunch is provided but members please bring a pudding!

## 2012

### JANUARY

- Saturday 28      Talk 'My Desert Island Vegetables' by Pauline Pears  
Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4AL 2.30 pm \*

### FEBRUARY

- Saturday 25      Talk 'Women Gardeners' by Dr. Catherine Horwood  
Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4AL 2.30pm \*

### MARCH

- Saturday 31      Talk 'Climbers, in particular Roses and Clematis' by Kathy Brown.  
Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4AL 2.30pm \*

## **MAY**

Sunday 27 Plant Fair, Helmingham Hall.  
Members please volunteer to help

## **JULY**

Tuesday 3 Guided Walk through Bradfield Woods, National Nature Reserve, led by the Warden, Pete Fordham followed by light refreshment in the garden of member Widget Finn at Smallwood Farmhouse IP30 0AJ. Ring 01449 736358 for directions. Booking essential £5.00pp 01787 211346

Saturday 21 Study Day 'Ferns' by Anthony Pigott  
Details to follow. Booking essential 01787 211346

## **SEPTEMBER**

Sunday 23 Plant Fair, Helmingham Hall  
Members please volunteer to help

## **NOVEMBER**

Saturday 3 Talk 'Conserving Old Varieties of Fruit Trees' by Graeme Proctor of Crown Nurseries  
Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4AL 2.30pm \*

*Lectures marked \* are free to members, with £3 entrance for non-members*

# **MEMBERS' GARDENS OPEN**

**Gable House, Halesworth Road, Redisham, Beccles NR34 8NE**

Sunday 19 February 11am - 4pm Snowdrop Day. For the National Gardens Scheme. Soup lunches and home made teas. Plants for sale.

Sunday 3 June 11am – 5pm For The National Gardens Scheme. Salad lunches and home made teas. Plants for sale

Sunday 2 September 11am - 5pm John's Bulb Sale. Salad lunches and home made teas. Free admission.



# THE SPRING PLANT FAIR AT HELMINGHAM HALL

*WIDGET FINN*

The Plant Heritage annual spring plant fair held in partnership with Helmingham Estate at Helmingham Hall on 29th May was generally voted to be the best ever – so far!

There were over 60 exhibitors, a good mix of specialist nurseries, National Collection Holders and stands selling horticultural accessories. Old friends including Fernatix, Harvey's Garden Plants, Woottens and Herbal Haven were there, along with newer recruits like Priory Plants and Paugers Nursery. You could buy clematis, campanulas and carnations as well as hats to garden in, dibbers to dib with and obelisks for supporting those roses you'd just bought. Suffolk Wildlife Trust were on hand to answer queries about – well, wildlife, a local beekeeper brought some of his charges (safely confined to a demonstration hive) and the Plant Doctors were there to advise on plant problems and problem plants. Musical interludes were provided by The Stowmarket Brass Band and a Dutch Street Organ.

The plant fair attracted 2,259 visitors from all over East Anglia and from as far afield as London, Yorkshire, Dorset – and a coachload from Berlin!

If you would like to spare an hour or so to help at our autumn plant fair on Sunday 18th September and contribute to yet another great success, please contact Pauline Byford on 01284 762628 or [pabyford@btinternet.com](mailto:pabyford@btinternet.com)

## LEAFLETS APPEAL

*SUE BURTON*

A big thank-you to all who helped distribute leaflets and posters for the Spring Plant Fair at Helmingham. It makes so much difference to spread the word around as much of the county (and beyond) as we can manage, and the record numbers at the Fair reflected the effort we all put into this. Currently we are trying to do the same for the Autumn Fair, so if

any of you would like a little bundle of leaflets to be dispersed in your area, do please get in touch: Phone: 01787 247258,  
email: susanburton77@gmail.com

## **CARRY ON PROPAGATING –**

*WIDGET FINN*

**T**he Propagation Gazebo is a new and exciting attraction at the autumn plant fair at Helmingham Hall on Sunday 18th September.

It's fun to grow your own – and even more fun to increase and multiply your favourite plants – and it needn't cost a penny! Would you like to learn how to take root and leaf cuttings, the art of grafting and twinscaling, micro and peat-free propagation, and have tips from Plant Collection holders on getting more hyacinths and irises for your money?

Come along to the Propagation Gazebo (next to the Plant Heritage Marquee) where our Plant Heritage experts will be demonstrating these skills in a programme of half-hour workshops between 11.30 and 3pm. Entry is free.

11.30	Root and leaf cuttings	Maggie Thorpe
12 noon	Grafting	Ivan Dickings
1.00	Hyacinths	Alan Shipp
1.30	Irises	Sarah Cooke
2.00	Micro/peat free propagation	Jim Marshall
2.30	Twin scaling	Anne Tweddle

## **FREE BAGS OF BULBS**

*WIDGET FINN*

**T**he free plant offer has become a much-anticipated tradition at our spring plant fairs at Helmingham Hall (see following article 'Where are they now?'). At our plant fair this autumn we are introducing an exciting new innovation – we're giving away 750 free bags of bulbs. The bulbs will be supplied by Rose Cottage Plants, a regular and very popular exhibitor at

our plant fairs. The nursery's owners Anne and Jack Barnard have kindly agreed to part-sponsor the bulb offer.

The bulb which we have chosen is *Iris* 'Alida', a lovely miniature iris which was introduced only a few years ago and is still not widely available. The flowers are a striking mid-blue with yellow blotches on the falls. They are just 4" (10cm) tall and have a delightfully delicate scent. *Iris* 'Alida' can be planted in borders or containers where it will provide welcome colour in late winter.

The bulbs should be planted in autumn or early winter, around 3" (7cm) deep, in well-drained soil. Like most irises they appreciate a sunny position. In containers they may be under-planted with later flowering bulbs such as narcissus or tulips to extend the display time. The bulbs are completely hardy and flower reliably year after year.

Rose Cottage Plants recommended *Iris* 'Alida' to *Which Gardening Magazine* for their annual bulb trials a couple of years ago and it was awarded a 'Best Buy' recommendation.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### *WIDGET FINN*

In 2000 for the first time Suffolk Group rather tentatively offered 500 free plants to visitors at our spring plant fair. The idea was to reinforce the message that Plant Heritage (or NCCPG as we were then known) is in the business of conserving garden plants. We decided to choose a plant which was fairly rare or difficult to find, give away as many as we could afford, and hope that they would increase and multiply across Suffolk, East Anglia or even further afield.

Eleven years later we are still doing it – at the spring Plant Fair we gave away 1,000 of *Dianthus* 'Whatfield Can Can', a truly local treasure bred by the late Joan Schofield at Whatfield in Suffolk, and at the autumn fair our new-style offer, a Bag of Bulbs will be available.

Nearly six thousand unusual plants have been given away in the past eleven years at our plant fairs, which raises the question *where are they now?*

We'd love to know what happened to all those treasures cast like bread

upon the waters or, more appropriately, scattered like seeds in the wind. Is Lady Bacon growing graciously, has Iris Benton faded, is the Mendlesham Maid now mature, and is My Old Mum still staggering on? How many of them survived, have they proliferated, what lessons have their owners learnt on how to tend and nurture them?

Have you had one (or several) of our free plants, or have your friends or family introduced them to their garden? Do please contact us with an update on their progress (or demise). To jog your memory, here is a list of all our free plants – pretty impressive, I think you’ll agree.

- 2000 *Armeria euscadiensis*
- 2001 *Dianthus* Mendlesham St. Helens & Mendlesham Maid
- 2002 *Phlox stolonifera* ‘Purpurea’
- 2003 *Penstemon* ‘Connie’s Pink’
- 2004 *Fuschia* ‘Lady Bacon
- 2005 *Primula* ‘Barnhaven Blue’
- 2006 *Teucrium fruticans* ‘Azureum’
- 2007 *Erysimum* ‘My Old Mum’
- 2008 *Digitalis cariensis* f. Trojan
- 2009 *Iris Sibirica* ‘Roanoake’s Choice’
- 2010 *Iris* ‘Benton’
- 2011 *Dianthus* ‘Whatfield Cancan’ & ‘Whatfield Gem’

If you can throw light on where they are now, please contact Maggie Thorpe on 01787 211346 or email [smece@aol.com](mailto:smece@aol.com)

### DO YOU OPEN YOUR GARDEN??

Please let us know if you are opening your garden for charity, a good cause or even just for the enjoyment of others, so that we can publicise it in the Suffolk Group Plant Heritage Journal. Send details before 1 December to [widget.finn@gmail.com](mailto:widget.finn@gmail.com)

# PROPAGATION OFFICER'S REPORT

*ANNE TWEDDLE*

**M**y steep learning curve continues along with quite a lot of fun and some interesting experiences.

The spring sale as reported on in detail elsewhere, was a great success. Record takings and huge numbers of plants sold. Grateful thanks to everyone and especially all the members who brought wonderful plants for sale, who helped man the stall, gave support in many ways and those who have taken stock plants to grow on in their own gardens. None of the success could happen or continue without your involvement and encouragement. So thank you.

The stock plant project is on-going, as we hope is your interest in it. Some of the plants we acquire along the way we want to keep as stock plants, for future propagation. These plants need homes. We will have any stock plants looking for homes at meetings and plant sales. Should you like to help with this project, please remember to look for these plants on the membership table at our various events. Currently we have a number of salvias looking for homes.

An update on various propagation projects underway at present, which include narcissus, the Engleheart collection.. The bulbs all survived the winter chill and have grown well this spring and summer. They should be ready for distribution in 2012, autumn most probably as dried bulbs, and any remainders being sold in pots in spring 2013.

We bought a number of galanthus in the spring 2011. All have links to Suffolk and include

G. 'Chequers' which was discovered in Jenny Robinson's garden Boxford (past president of the Suffolk group).

G. 'Three Ships' found by John Morley at Henham Park in 1984. Named for the carol because it flowers at Christmas.

G. 'Benhall Beauty' a seedling in John Grays garden at Saxmundham, named prior to 1952

G. 'Little John' no Suffolk connection here, but a very good galanthus.

These bulbs were twin scaled in July, and at the time of writing tucked up in two airing cupboards doing their thing of growing new little bulbils.

A number of members have indicated they would like to either learn or have a refresher on twin scaling, so there is every chance that next year this propagating technique will be on our events programme.

Maggie Thorpe and I have made contact with Goosegreen Nursery at Beccles who produce millions of plug plants. We have bought a few for the autumn sale, mostly lobelias and penstemons. This option, of growing plants from plugs, is yet another string to our bow. Goose Green Nursery welcomes visits, so expect to see a group outing there on the calendar before long. Walking along rows of hundreds of plug plants is fascinating and mouth watering. Easy to get carried away, after all that's half the fun.

The asters we purchased last year and wrote up in an earlier Journal are growing well. They will be large enough to propagate next year and we will have some for sale.

What delectations await on the sales table in September you might wonder?

Salvias, cultivars of *x jamensis* and *involute*. The *x jamensis* cultivars are hardy to -6 and the *involute* should over winter fairly readily in a sheltered position. Remember when you are lured by the beauty and clarity of the flower colours, the planting site needs to be chosen with care. It's winter wet rather than cold that causes the problems. We have a couple of frost-tender species too. These will certainly need wintering under cover.

We have found a number of small and interesting sedums which are great for the front of the border. They have various coloured foliage and flowers and are easy to grow in sun.

We shall be trying out a range of species tulip bulbs. This is in the pipeline at the time of writing.

Come along to Helmingham Plant Fair on Sunday September 18th and see what we have been propagating.

Maggie and I have been to Devon visiting nurseries and collection holders. We've found lots of interesting material, suitable for Suffolk gardeners and will make them available to you in the months to come.

### **Looking to 2012**

We plan to continue our successful sales table at all events in the winter and spring months. There are a number of genus we have been working on including more cultivars of *Anemone nemorosa*, various *Cardamines*, *Epimediums* and *Erythroniums*. Should you have plants of your own you would like to share, please bring these along too.

During 2012 we will be starting to propagate from our stock plants.

Maggie or I will contact you at the relevant time and make arrangements with you. Either you can do the propagating or we can collect material from you. Should you wish to learn how to propagate what you are growing, we can help there too.

Thank you to everyone for supporting our propagating projects. We appreciate all the help everyone gives and the endless enthusiasm for plants. Our charity's aim of ensuring cultivated plants are kept safe for the future is active in Suffolk, thanks to all your support.

Read about Maggie's shop in the next article to see how we are selling our plants and raising money.

## **MAGGIE'S SHOP**

*ANNE TWEDDLE*

**W**e all know buying plants in flower is irresistible. It warms the heart and lifts the spirit. Sense doesn't always prevail when we consider where is it going to go, are my conditions right and so on.

Choosing the right plants which will be in flower for our plant sales is not easy. Robert Shepperson spent years working on this, and handed the information on to Maggie and me for future events. Then there's the weather and countless other hazards to upset your plans. How could we make this less anxious and more fun?

There were so many other genus we wanted to try, and felt sure members would be interested in interesting plants. So this year, we began our sales table at events. Sales were good, even better when we had flowers on plants and suddenly we were raising not insubstantial sums for the cause of Plant Heritage as well as learning a lot ourselves.

As spring moved along we found we had plants in flower and no prospect of selling them..... until Maggie opened her shop. Shop is slightly grand for the large shelf and cash box outside her house in Boxford. We are waiting for the call from Mary Portas for our makeover.....

So far several hundreds of pounds have been raised from these sales. Maggie is selling lovely plants in flower, and I am not anxious about keeping plants for a specific date. There is a rumor a Wyevale employee buys! Shopping in Swan Street is getting prettier.

# LEARNING ABOUT NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTIONS

*DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT*

**W**hen I started my new role of Co-ordinator of National Plant Collections for the Suffolk Group at the beginning of this year I did not realise how enjoyable it would be.

My plan was to visit all the collection holders and see their collections at a time when they were at their best. The collection holders were all very helpful and welcoming – especially as it was usually their busiest time for visitors and attending plant fairs and shows.

I had visited several of the eleven National Collections in Suffolk over the years, seen the plants at plant fairs and attended talks about them but I was unprepared for the pleasure I was to have. The collection holders all took time out of their busy schedules to show me around.

I've learned how some collections started with a gift of one plant while others are the result of research into which plants did not feature in an existing collection; how the problem of collections outgrowing the garden have led to expanding into nearby fields or a walled garden on an estate; how record keeping has changed over time and computers are now used. Also the different types of labels which are available and the costs involved and how disasters have struck in various forms and been over come with determination.

It has made me look at the plants with much more knowledge and appreciation. The collection holders have my admiration for the work they do and their willingness to share their achievements with others.

## PLANT COLLECTION CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

*DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT*

**O**ver the past six months I have visited seven of the Collection Holders in Suffolk in my new role and hope to visit the remaining four during



the next few weeks. I have also visited two gardeners who would like to become Collection Holders to discuss requirements.

In May I had my first experience on the Plant Collection stand in the Plant Heritage Marquee at the Spring Plant Fair. I had inherited some lovely photographs of the *Aesculus*, *Buxus* and *Erysimum* collections from Christine Mole, and Collection Holders provided additional photographs of *Dianthus*, *Iris*, *Hosta*, and *Campanula*. These made a lovely display around a map of Suffolk showing where all the Collections are situated.

I hope to acquire some more photographs so that the whole of Suffolk's Collections are covered at the next Plant Fair.

Five of the Collection Holders had stands at the Plant Fair and said the sales were very good. They were sited near the Plant Heritage marquee which was convenient for me to direct interested parties to them.

The following week Plant Heritage had a stand at the Suffolk Show at Trinity Park in Ipswich and I went along to help. Once again the photographs of Collection plants were admired. One visitor asked if we knew what happened to the Iris Collection which was at Great Welnetham Hall, near Bury St. Edmunds in the 1960-70s. This was before Plant

## BROWN'S TREE SERVICE

all types of tree surgery,  
hedge cutting and felling  
undertaken

fully insured

nptc & city & guilds  
qualified

free quotes

telephone (home)  
01359 259149  
(mobile) 07881 816761 email  
dbrowntrees@googlemail.com



Bellflower  
Nursery  
at the  
Walled Garden  
Langham Hall  
Bury St Edmunds  
IP31 3EE

- ☞ Hardy plants, alpines,  
shrubs – campanulas a  
speciality
- ☞ National Collection of  
Alpine Campanulas
- ☞ Garden planning

Thursdays and Fridays 10-5

Saturdays 10-1

March till October

Tel: 07879 644 958

[campanulas@btinternet.com](mailto:campanulas@btinternet.com)

Heritage was formed so we are looking for local knowledge.

There will be a meeting in August of Collection Holders at Corner View, Ashfield, thanks to Robert Grimsey (*Aesculus* Collection Holder). Collection Holders will be able to discuss collection issues with Mercy Morris (Plant Heritage's Conservation Officer) and share information.

*A list of all the Collection Holders in Suffolk is on page 38.*

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COLLECTION HOLDERS!**

**S**uffolk National Collection Holders have been bringing home the medals again this summer, our congratulations to them all for their success.

- Gold Medal and Best in Show in the Plant Heritage Marquee at the Hampton Court Flower Show went to Jim Marshall for his *Dianthus* (Malmaison) Collection
- Yvonne, Robin and Melanie Milton won a Silver Medal at Hampton Court for their *Hosta* Collection
- John Woods won a Silver Gilt at The Chelsea Flower Show for his 'Generations Garden' and a Silver Gilt at BBC Gardeners World Live for his show garden. Unfortunately neither garden included examples of John's National Collection of *Hibiscus* as the shows were too early in the season.

## **HAMPTON COURT – 'WHAT A WEEK'**

*JIM MARSHALL*

**A**t the time of writing it is now just a week since Sarah and I returned from exhibiting in the Heritage Marquee at Hampton Court Flower Show. As yet we have not "come down to earth", with a mixture of excitement, exhilaration and exhaustion. The Plant Heritage marquee was

voted Best Show Feature by the visitors to the show, which was a wonderful end to a very hectic week.

Exhibiting at Hampton Court is an excellent way of advertising and highlighting the importance of National Collections. This year the RHS and Plant Heritage introduced an overall theme of 'a library of living plants' and it seems they are continue to continue with a theme in future.

We had our first discussions with the RHS and Plant Heritage in December 2010 and agreed in January 2011 (perhaps somewhat to our surprise) to put up a large stand - 20ft by 9ft! Fortunately Malmaison carnations are at their best during July and therefore we decided to recreate a number of Edwardian decorations suitable for the 'Summer Season' in grand country houses, including a decorated 'library'.

We were fortunate to receive much help and advice from a variety of sources, including Brent Elliott, archivist at the RHS, Cheryl Fountain who prepared the theatrical backdrop, Byfords wholesale florists for advice on historic cut foliage and Poplar Nurseries for potted ferns and palms. We also could not have coped without the aid of our many volunteers who manned the stand and sold plants.

The most enjoyable aspect was meeting all the visitors to the show, many of whom showed their interest and enjoyment, especially by buying plants! A week not to be forgotten.

## **RHS FLORAL TRIALS CAMPANULA 2011-13**

*SUE WOOSTER*

**H**olding the National Collection of Alpine Campanula has lead me down the most amazing garden path, along the way establishing a specialist campanula and hardy plant nursery in The Walled Garden at Langham Hall, and exhibiting at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in the Plant Heritage Marquee. Two gold medals and Best Exhibit in the Marquee award were far from expected.

However, in my wildest dreams I never imagined being invited onto the RHS Floral Trials Committee to assist with the new Campanula Trials.



Campanula rapunculoides 'Alba', part of Sue Wooster's National Collection of Campanulas (p18)..



## Witton Lane Seeds

Choice Fresh Seed

Bulbous, herbaceous, climbers and alpines. Notably cyclamen, Lathyrus, Helleborus, Galanthus, Paeonia and Codonopsis.

**A wide selection and many rare and unusual.**

*For catalogue please contact:*

**Witton Lane Seeds**

16 Witton Lane, Little Plumstead  
Norwich, Norfolk, NR13 5DL. UK

email : sally.ward246@btinternet.com

[www.wittonlaneseeds.co.uk](http://www.wittonlaneseeds.co.uk)



# The Plantsman

**Essential reading for the dedicated plant enthusiast**

A quarterly magazine offering a mix of plant profiles, breeding developments, plant exploration, and advanced propagation and cultivation techniques



**Annual subscription for four issues:** RHS members in UK £29, Non-members in UK £37

**For a free sample issue, please email:** [theplantsman@rhs.org.uk](mailto:theplantsman@rhs.org.uk) **or send your postal address to:** The Plantsman sample, RHS Media, Churchgate, New Road, Peterborough PE1 1TT

**View sample articles at:** [www.rhs.org.uk/plantsman](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plantsman)

**To subscribe:** Online: [www.rhs.org.uk/plantsman](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plantsman)

Email: [membership@rhs.org.uk](mailto:membership@rhs.org.uk) Or write to:

The Plantsman, RHS Subscriptions, PO Box 313, London SW1P 2PE



Royal  
Horticultural  
Society





Photos clockwise from top left:  
Spring Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall (p8). Photos by Zara Napier and Nicola Hobbs;  
*Iris* 'Alida', the free bulb at the Autumn Plant Fair (p9);  
Alan Blyth Clematis in Sue Hamilton-Blyth's garden in Lavenham (p37). Photo by Tanya Hamilton);  
Maggie Thorpe's photo of Wildside Garden in Devon (p3)





Jim Marshall and the Plant Heritage stand at Hampton Court (page 16) with Cheryl Fountain's library backdrop and Jim's Malmaison Carnations

## Come to your local award winning nursery for ...

**British Hedging - Coming soon, Pre order yours now!**  
Shrubs and Climbers

**Ornamental, Native and Fruit Trees**  
Evergreen & Screening Plants

**Garden Design and Landscaping**

**Our next fun and informative course is:**  
**'Focus On Fruit' Thursday 27th October 2011 10am-1pm**

**Join us for our annual Apple Day Celebration**  
**Saturday 22nd October 2011**  
**10.00am - 4.00pm**



**Crown Nursery Ltd**

**High Street, Ufford, Woodbridge IP13 6EL**

Tel: 01394 460755

Email: [enquiries@crown-nursery.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@crown-nursery.co.uk) Website: [www.crown-nursery.co.uk](http://www.crown-nursery.co.uk)

Open Monday - Saturday 9am - 5pm

How flattering is that? To be consulted by the great and good of the horticultural world on the planning and implementation of the 2011-2013 Trial has been, indeed, a real honour.

Why does the RHS hold trials at Wisley? A number of plants and vegetables from a wide range of genera are constantly being selected for trialling, to be assessed for the Society's Award of Garden Merit (AGM) scheme. Plants in the Trials are then judged every two weeks in their season of interest on their garden-worthiness. For instance, entries in the Campanula Trial are judged on the criteria of:

Invasiveness

Rust resistance

Self-cleaning

Flower colour and markings

Reflowering.

The invitation to be part of the Trials came through last summer. I had had some gruelling work done at the dentist that day, and listened in awe at the voicemail message from the RHS Trials office. Panic! I couldn't speak after the treatment but desperately wanted to let the office know how keen I was to be involved. Saved by email...

After the initial shock, I corresponded with the Trials manager about cultivation of border campanulas, their likes and dislikes, and their susceptibility to pests and diseases, as well as the best candidates for the trial.

In autumn last year the Trial Beds were planted up, and my first opportunity to view the Campanulas and meet the Committee was in mid-June, when I got to spend the day at Wisley. Somewhat nervously I made my way across the gardens to the Trials Ground. A group had assembled already, all donning sunhats and clutching clip boards. I was greeted warmly by the Committee, and introduced to the members, who included Val Bourne, garden writer, Fergus Garrett, Head Gardener at Great Dixter, and Chairman Tony Lord, author of many books on plants and horticulture, as well as two local familiar faces, Jaime Blake, Head Gardener at Bressingham Gardens and Tim Fuller from Plantsman's Preference.

We were handed score sheets and given a few minutes to walk round the Trial to make notes and mark each entry out of 20. My task was to check the 74 entries were correctly named – some were not, so bravely I pointed these out, with suggestions for their identification. Other questions were raised about a cultivar's habit, history or origin – testing work! Hopefully I held my own – the Committee couldn't have been more welcoming and



certainly put me at my ease. Over lunch, joined by RHS Director of Horticulture Jim Gardiner, we exchanged Campanula notes.

Commitments at the Walled Garden have prevented me attending a couple of the meetings, but I'm looking forward to returning to Wisley later in the summer. If you have the chance to go to Wisley, do head for the Trial Grounds where visitors can see all the current RHS trials, from Lobelia to lettuce!

*You can visit Sue's Alpine Campanula collection at Bellflower Nursery, The Walled Garden, Langham Hall, Langham, Bury St Edmunds, IP31 3EE 07879 644958, campanulas@btinternet.com www.bellflowernursery.co.uk*

## HARDY CHRYSANTHEMUMS

*SARAH COOK*

**I**t is always good to see a group of worthwhile plants come back into fashion after years in the doldrums. Dahlias had been neglected for a long time, but are once again considered a 'garden must'.

In my opinion hardy chrysanthemums are, if anything, an even more valuable plant and I am pleased to see, judging by her recent catalogues that Sarah Raven, amongst a range of other gardeners, agrees.

Our own Ivan Dickings and Christine Mole gave this trend a helping hand several years ago when they were instrumental in rescuing plants from the local Home Meadow Nursery's collection of hardy chrysanthemums and distributing them to both the garden at Wimpole Hall and to National Collection holder Judy Barker.

The Royal Horticultural Society has recognised this trend and is currently trialling over a hundred different (yes one hundred different!) cultivars of hardy chrysanthemums at their Wisley garden. I saw the trial last autumn – there are so many plants which would grace any autumn garden, I saw them again in spring and was thrilled to see that even in such a cold winter all but two cultivars were still thriving, so despite what many people believe these plants are really tough. The only disadvantage is that this trial is 'behind the scenes', so is not easy to see.

However if you would like to see the trial and find out more about the

history and cultivation of this beautiful and useful group of plants, the RHS is holding a one-day event dedicated solely to hardy chrysanthemums. There will be short talks on their history and cultivation, exhibits about the different groups of hardy cultivars, nurseries selling plants and lots of experts to talk to. The date of this not-to-be-missed event is October 11th 2011.

The National Collection in London Colney, Hertfordshire is open to small groups by appointment (Judy Barker 01727 822564) and Plant Heritage is hoping to give more focus to these plants next year.

## RECOGNITION FOR NATIONAL THYME COLLECTION

### WIDGET FINN

Plant Heritage has conferred its most prestigious honour, The Brickell Award, to Margaret Easter of Harpenden, Hertfordshire, who holds the National *Thymus* Collection, as well as National Collections of *Satureja* (Savory) and *Hyssopus* (Hyssop).

The Brickell Award for Excellence in Cultivated Plant Conservation is presented annually to recognise outstanding work undertaken by a National Plant Collection Holder with Scientific status.

Margaret's collection of

Right: Margaret Easter receives the Brickell Award from Plant Heritage President, Alan Titchmarsh. Copyright Tim Easter.



*Thymus* species includes examples from the UK and Europe as well as cultivars, around 250 in total. She is recognised as one of the world's leading authorities on the genus and is the International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Thymus*. Together with Dr Madan Thangavelu she has undertaken wide-ranging DNA investigation which has solved significant identification issues.

In 2006 Margaret was invited to Beijing by the Chinese Academy of Forestry as adviser for their project to introduce *Thymus* species and cultivars to China.

In addition to her many academic publications Margaret wrote *The Thyme Handbook* for Plant Heritage, a beautifully illustrated guide for gardeners and nurserymen. For further information contact [www.thymus.co.uk](http://www.thymus.co.uk).

## NATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT

*ANNE TWEDDLE*

The Council meets three times a year, and is the interface between the Board of Trustees, various committees and the county representatives. I am the Suffolk representative. The meetings are largely about disseminating information from the various parts of the organization.

The Sussex group hosted the 2011 AGM at Worthing in May. The presentation of accounts declared a surplus, yes a surplus of £36K. Income was reported at £454K up £42K on the previous year. Expenditure came in at £418K versus £422K in the previous year. The charity had approximately £506K in reserves of which £200K is held by the Groups. It is a great credit to the National Office and the Board for the amount of work and scrutiny in getting to this positive position.

National membership at 24th June stood at 3,939. This excludes a mighty effort at the Hampton Court Flower Show where 60 new members were recruited. The recruitment that comes through the county groups looks to be holding up too. Suffolk was second in the recruitment league table gaining 12 new members. Research shows that most people who join through a county group, are introduced by an existing member. This clearly demonstrates that everyone's effort in recruiting is important .

Future subscription increases are dealt with in a separate piece. It's a complex and important issue and warrants further explanation.

The Threatened Plant Project is moving forward. Secure funding of £75K over three years finances this project. A new co-ordinator Kalani Seymour began work in early July. She has a background in taxonomy. This project is of great importance to the organization as it is tangible demonstration of how as an organisation we are achieving our charitable goals of conservation. Demonstrating our conservation plays a vital role in the *'hunt for project funding'*.

There are 201 genera in the process of being listed. 50 genera of these are moving to the second stage of determining the classification of critical, endangered or vulnerable. The final stage involves developing a rescue plan. Much of the work is being done at county level, by individual members. Should you wish to be involved, please contact either me or Maggie Thorpe.

The Plant Conservation Officer Mercy Morris has been doing some interesting thinking and working on the level of verification on the collections. This is further evidence of the high standard the collections are, she reported over 50% of collection holders have their plants verified to a good level. This is comparable to standards at many botanic gardens.

**VISIT THE PLANT  
DOCTORS  
AT THE AUTUMN  
PLANT FAIR**

DO YOU HAVE SOME PLANT  
PROBLEMS OR PROBLEM  
PLANTS?

THEN BRING THEM ALONG TO  
THE PLANT HERITAGE PLANT  
FAIR AT HELMINGHAM HALL ON  
18 SEPTEMBER, AND OUR  
TEAM OF EXPERT PLANT  
DOCTORS WILL BE THERE  
TO HELP.

**CREAKE  
PLANT  
CENTRE**

We stock a wide range of  
shrubs, herbaceous and  
climbers - many rare  
and unusual. Also a  
wide range of old roses  
in season

Leicester Road, South Creak  
Fakenham, NR21 9PW  
Tel 01328 823 018  
Email: trevor-harrison@  
btconnect.com

The Demeter project continues. Version 3 of the software is now available. David Goodchild who has led this project from the start, would be available to hold tutorials for collection holders.

The over-riding message that I bring back from council meetings is the organization is healthy, active and brimming with energy and ideas. There is no doubt Suffolk is a very successful part of this. We have a thriving membership and our plant sales are a credit to the imagination and hard work of the teams running them. The Chairman Michael Alder has got us to a place where our energies can start to be really directed to conserving plants. The money and membership problems of the past remain under scrutiny, but no longer absorb most of the thinking time. We are able to get on with the work we all joined the organization for - conserving the plants we love.

## **PLANT HERITAGE MEMBERS' SUBSCRIPTION**

*ANNE TWEDDLE*

Among the items discussed at the recent Council meeting was members' subscriptions. The annual single subscription is £25. The Plant Heritage Board believes it is better to have small but fairly regular subscription increases rather than a hefty increase once in a while. To this end they proposed an increase for 2012. The last increase was effective in 2008. The increase they were looking at was either £2 or £3.

On consulting the county groups the response was *to a man* NO. Many of the groups suggested other ways of raising funds. The Board has listened to the groups and decided for 2012 there will not be an increase in subscriptions but Council were told this position is not sustainable and subscriptions will have to go up, probably in 2013. Currently £107,000 comes from subscriptions which represents 50% of income.

There are many points that can be argued over whether or not the subscriptions should be raised. Having the type of organization we do involves an office with paid staff, which costs money. The current level of subscription is very reasonable when compared to other expenditure. It costs me more than £25 to go to London for one Council meeting, and that's with an old folks' pass and travelling out of peak time!

# A GARDEN OF SUFFOLK PLANTS

*The Suffolk Punch Trust needs YOUR help in searching for plants*

SARAH COOK

Suffolk is a county rich in gardens and also many cultivated plants which have been bred here, introduced by Suffolk companies and Suffolk people, or which have a strong connection with the county in some other way.

Several years ago Plant Heritage, recognising the need to maintain these plants explored the idea of a Suffolk Garden and under the guidance of Ivan Dickings assembled a long list of ‘Suffolk Plants’. Unfortunately for a number of reasons the proposed garden at Otley College never took off, but luckily all the research was retained. Thus when the Suffolk Punch Trust decided that a garden of Suffolk plants (and an orchard of Suffolk fruit) would fit very well with their work maintaining Suffolk’s own Heritage Heavy Horse and other Suffolk breeds of farm animal, they have been able to use the work already done by Plant Heritage.

Jim (Marshall) and I have got involved with this project through my collection of Irises bred by Sir Cedric Morris, some (or maybe all) of which will be fitted into the garden along with the other plants which Morris introduced into horticulture. We are now helping the Suffolk Punch Trust find and collect together as many Suffolk plants as possible for the garden.

The first decision to make is obviously what constitutes a Suffolk plant? At present we have decided on the following:

- \* Plants bred or introduced by ‘Suffolk People’ (do we need a definition of this?) or a Suffolk company. For example Notcutts, Thompson and Morgan or Fred Barcock’s Nursery; Cedric Morris or Jenny Robinson, Lewis Hart and of course Joan Schofield – two of whose pinks were the free plant at the Helmingham Spring Plant Fair.
- \* Plants named for a Suffolk Person
- \* Plants named for a Suffolk Place (normally bred by a Suffolk resident)
- \* Plants with a strong Suffolk connection e.g *Rosa* ‘Omar Khyyam’ (Edward Fitzgerald who translated the Omar Khyyam was a Woodbridge man, the rose was propagated from seed from a plant on the tomb of Omar Khyyam at Nashipur and planted on Fitzgerald’s tomb).

The Suffolk Punch Trust, driven by Margaret Wyllie the wife of one of the trustees, is making good progress on the project. The site has been deer-fenced and a design drawn by Sonya Burrows. If you visit the Suffolk Punch Trust you can see the design plan and explanation of the project. School children are already working on site, growing vegetables from seed donated by Thompson and Morgan and learning about gardening. The garden will be a great resource for them to learn about their heritage as well as the value of gardening, and hopefully in the end they may be growing and maintaining Suffolk vegetable and annual flower cultivars.

Now the main thrust is searching out and obtaining the plants. Hopefully members of Suffolk Plant Heritage will be able to help with this stage. The people and companies mentioned above are on the original list, but there are certainly more to add to the list. For example the Rev. Stanley Stringer from Occold near Eye bred a range of pelargoniums (all called Deacon....) and I have recently been told of two other pelargonium breeders from Suffolk.

Please let me know if you can add to our list of Suffolk plant breeders, introducers or Suffolk people immortalised in plants (sadly our quest for the tulip named after the brilliant D.J., John Peel may not succeed).

Do any of you grow any Suffolk plants which you would be willing to propagate and give to the Suffolk Punch Trust's garden? This would save the charity a lot of expense, and is also essential if the plants are no longer commercially available (for example as yet we have not been able to locate, among many others, any of Lewis Hart's plants).

Would you be able to write a short history/biography of any of the Suffolk companies or people to be featured in the garden as this will form an important part of the background knowledge. The project is very much in its infancy and needs much support.

Please, if you are able to help this worthwhile project with plants, advice, history etc, would you contact me on 01473 822400 or [sarah@malmaisons.plus.com](mailto:sarah@malmaisons.plus.com)

*For further information about the Suffolk Punch Trust visit [www.suffolkpunchtrust.org](http://www.suffolkpunchtrust.org)*

# TRIPLOID HIBISCUS

IVAN DICKINGS

Autumn flowering shrubs are always at a premium in prolonging the summer colour in the garden before the onset of early autumn frosts and winter.

One of the best such shrubs to grow is cultivars of *Hibiscus syriacus* which are ideal plants for East Anglia for they thrive in dry sunny conditions. Every garden should have them. I have seen them struggling in the damper climes in the country where they survive, but flowering is not good; the doubles are hopeless as you end up with a mass of soggy buds and branches on old plants festooned with lichen. The popular varieties available in most garden centres are the likes of 'Woodbridge' AGM, 'Bluebird' (Oiseau Bleu) AGM, 'Dorothy Crane', 'William R Smith' AGM 'Hamabo' AGM; all admirable plants, but there is something better!

In 1971, the late Dr Donald Egholf, Arboretum Scientist at the National Arboretum in Washington DC, made crosses between diploid seedlings and colchicines induced tetraploid seedlings, which resulted in triploids! The colchicine was applied to apical tips or seeds which are pre-soaked before sowing. The resulting seedlings included Helene, Minerva, Aphrodite, and Diana. All these are triploids and have much larger and thicker petals than the normal syriacus varieties. Young grafted plants of these will be available for sale at the Plant Heritage Autumn Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall on Sunday 18th September.

Hibiscus can become very large, up to 10ft when left to grow if space allows, but where space is limited they can be pruned hard each spring when they make wonderful compact bushes with much larger flowers, ideal where space is at a premium. When I say 'hard prune' I mean really hard prune so you are left with a very short stump and top dress with fertilizer. I use Blood, Fish and Bone. It really does work as they flower on the current season's growth and make an excellent front of border plant where you can really enjoy these flowers.

APHRODITE Deep pink ruffled petals with a dark red eye.

DIANA Very large pure white ruffled petals with dark green foliage.

HELENE White ruffled petals with bright red eye and twisted petaloides. My favourite.

MINERVA Lavender pink with dark red eye.



# ROOTS: OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND!

*ANN SOMERVILLE*

**W**e stand and look at the flower to admire its colour, size, perfume, complexity, beauty and other attributes which appeal to our senses.

We consider the foliage – the colour, texture, leaf size and overall appearance as we think whether the plant as a whole will look good in our garden.

However, we usually fail to consider the root system – the most important part of the plant, as it is the root system which anchors the plant in the soil and supplies all the water and nutrients to the plant, allowing it to grow and thrive. The roots are out of sight and often out of mind. They are buried in the soil, surrounded by various potentially destructive grubs and micro-organisms such as fungi and bacteria. They have to work hard to push their way through the soil, despite meeting obstructions such as rocks, bigger roots, stones and other diverse obstacles. They are not deterred and carry on making their way forward, seeking food, in the form of various nutrients in soluble form and water. Roots are really important.

There are two main types of root system – fibrous and tap. The fibrous root system consists of many thin, branching roots which tend to grow close to the soil surface. They quickly capture water that falls on the soil, removing nutrients before these are leached away into the deeper soil, but they are also susceptible to drought. However the mat they develop does help to prevent soil erosion.

Tap roots, usually just one or two per plant, are sparsely branched and grow rapidly down into the soil. They are particularly useful for anchoring plants growing in shifting soil and / or windy conditions as well as finding water and nutrients which have penetrated lower soil levels. Some plants use both systems in unison, others use just one and this is likely to be the most appropriate system for the conditions where the plant originally evolved.

Food is stored in both root types, though tap roots are more efficient due to their size. It is the food stored in the roots which provide the energy that enables plants which die down for the winter to produce new foliage and flowers in the spring. Most garden plants have relatively shallow roots growing down between 1 - 6 feet (.3m – 2m). This allows ease of

transplanting and allows plants to remain healthy in containers, provided sufficient water and soluble food is made available.

The root tip is protected by a root cap, to reduce damage to the area where root growth takes place. Further back from the tip, hairs grow all round the root surface, increasing hugely the surface area able to absorb water containing dissolved minerals, the plant food. This absorption takes place by osmosis and once in the root cells it is pushed along to the base of the plant by root pressure. The pressure is sufficient to move the water into the stem and thence to all parts of the plant. Presence of water in the plant cells keeps them turgid and the plant upright. Lack of roots or lack of water means the plants cells become flaccid and the plant wilts. The plant will die if the lack of water continues.

When buying a plant it may be useful to consider its type of root system in relation to the soil conditions in which it will be planted. Healthy roots in appropriate soil will maintain a healthy thriving plant to admire and enjoy.

*Pauline Pears is an organic gardening writer, trainer and broadcaster. She ran the organic advisory service at Garden Organic for many years, and now edits the membership magazine. She and her husband have three allotments, all managed organically.*

*She will be giving a talk titled 'My desert island vegetables' to Plant Heritage members and guests at Stowupland Village Hall at 2.30 on January 28th 2012.*

## **BEANS ON THE PLOT**

*PAULINE PEARS*

**O**n my allotment there are several rows of climbing French beans, now growing way past the tops of their canes, alongside a few beds of a dwarf variety – grown through an old bed frame to give them a bit of support. These are a vital part of my allotment growing system which I have developed over the last 15 years or more. I major on crops that need little attention, crop over a long period from one sowing, and/ or produce a crop that will store for a long time, preferably without the need for a freezer.

Hence the beans, which I grow for drying, rather than eating fresh. This

seems rather to have gone out of fashion, so choice of seed is limited – until you go to the Heritage Seed Library (HSL) where there are loads. Many of them are good eaten fresh too – but for me the importance is that the variety reliably produces seed / beans for storage in the UK climate. And as many of the HSL varieties have been kept in cultivation by amateurs over the last few decades, this must be the case.

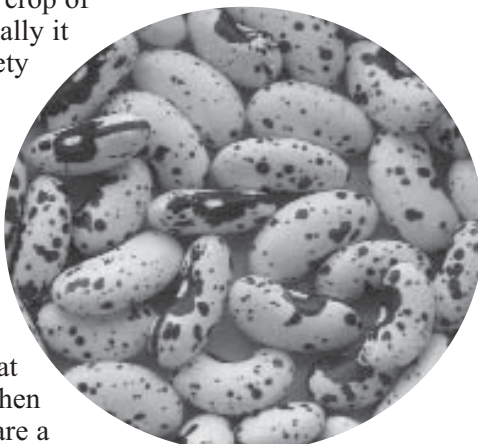


I have three favourites – which are good examples of the different sorts of variety that are kept in the Heritage Seed Library.

‘Ryders’ Top o’ the Pole’ (left) is a white seeded bean, which is always the first to reach the top of the canes. It was bred by the seed company Ryders, which was St Albans-based. When the company was bought out in the 1970s, all their own varieties were ‘discontinued’ – i.e

abandoned. Fortunately some gardeners continued to grow this variety and save seed. In the late 1990s, seed was donated to the HSL by a lady who had been growing it for 30 years.

‘Lazy Housewife’ produces a great crop of plump, buff coloured beans. Originally it is thought from Germany, this variety has been around since the 1800s. There are various theories as to the origins of the name. My least favourite is that, because the leaves drop early, the dry pods are easier to pick. Though I must admit that this is the case.



My dwarf drying bean is Ernie’s Big Eye (right). It was the name that attracted me in the first place, but then I fell in love with the beans. They are a really good size and with a white skin mottled with maroon, they look beautiful in a glass jar on the shelf. This bean is a variant of the American Trout bean, but the question remains – who was Ernie?

*Catherine Horwood is a new member of Suffolk Plant Heritage, having recently moved to Clare. She has written a wide range of books including the social history of sports clothes, and was a specialist consultant to the exhibition 'A garden within doors' at the Geffrye Museum in London in 2010. We're delighted to include an extract from her latest book 'Gardening Women, their stories from 1600 to the present day' published by Virago. This extract is about an eighteenth century Gardening Woman who lived at Ickworth Hall, Suffolk.*

*For more information about Catherine and her book go to [www.gardeningwomen.com](http://www.gardeningwomen.com)*

## GARDENING WOMEN

*CATHERINE HORWOOD*

One of the biggest social changes in eighteenth-century Britain was the emerging reality of leisure time for a far wider proportion of the population. Among the middling sorts, the home was now the centre of material consumption as domestic ornaments such as mirrors, china and paintings came within the price range of all but the poorest families, as did garden design. While large estates were landscaped, smaller domestic gardens were laid out with beds to the side containing mixed plantings of perennials and shrubs. At the upper end of the social scale, aristocratic men were keen to display the new 'exotick' plants that were arriving in the country from the new world. Women, on the other hand, were thought not knowledgeable enough to be interested in them.

But the truth was rather different. In her youth, Mary Lepell, Lady Hervey and her husband John, 1st Earl of Bristol, had been kept occupied as leading courtiers to George I. But in later life, particularly after the death of her husband, Mary Lepell spent more time at the family home at Ickworth Hall in Suffolk. From there she wrote frequently to her friend, the Rev Edmund Morris, confiding in him about the time she spent in her garden:

'For these last three weeks, or indeed a month, I have been stuck as deeply in my garden as any of the plants I have set there, and I wish they may flourish half as well; for though I can't say I have run up in height, yet I have *spread* most luxuriantly.'

She was writing in 1747, two years after her husband's death, when she

took control of the design of a completely new area of the garden. Rose breeding had begun in earnest in the late seventeenth century with the Dutch and other new varieties readily available from nurseries to tempt British gardeners. ‘I have made a rosery; perhaps you will ask what that is: it is a collection of all the sorts of roses there are, which amount to fifty’.

Some seventy years later the editor of her letters thought that there were by then nearly five hundred varieties of roses available to buy, but there was in reality probably double that number on offer after the Dutch, and later the French, became enthusiastic rose breeders, most now lost to us. The work involved in creating this new-fangled garden was clear: ‘This rosery perhaps may bring me to an untimely end, but it is a very pretty thing: I have made the whole design of it myself. In the middle of it, raised above all the others, is one of the most *beautiful kind*, who, conscious of the right to possess that place, does not *blush* in doing so.’

Gardeners often have strong likes and dislikes, and Lady Hervey was no exception. ‘I approve of flowers and sweet shrubs for your garden,’ she wrote to Rev Morris, in 1745, ‘but pray what have you to do with exotics? They are things of little beauty, great expense, and only matters of curiosity. Pray stick to what will make your parterre gay to the eye and sweet to the nose.’

Lady Hervey’s dislike of exotics puts her out of step with horticultural fashion. These newly discovered species were beginning to flood in from the Americas and further afield, many of them tender and requiring the added expense and bother of stove and hothouses, and because of this necessary specialist treatment, few women had the resources to grow them or perhaps their attitude to these newcomers was more a case of what you have never had, you do not desire.

## PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

FOR AN UPDATE ON WHAT’S HAPPENING AT  
NATIONAL OFFICE VISIT THE CURRENT ISSUE  
OF NEWSLINES ON THE WEBSITE

[WWW.PLANTHERITAGE.COM](http://WWW.PLANTHERITAGE.COM)

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE SUFFOLK  
GROUP’S ACTIVITIES VISIT

[WWW.SUFFOLK.PLANTHERITAGE.COM](http://WWW.SUFFOLK.PLANTHERITAGE.COM)

# THE ALAN BLYTH CLEMATIS

*SUE HAMILTON BLYTH*

**M**y husband, Alan Blyth, would have been absolutely tickled pink to know that a clematis has been named after him. Alan died four years ago, but not before an enchanting clematis ‘appeared’ in our garden in Lavenham.

Every year it re-appeared and last year a friend suggested I should apply to have the clematis registered as a new variety. This sat at the back of my mind until Maggie Thorpe, chairman of Suffolk Plant Heritage, also encouraged me to do so and I finally sent the application to the International Clematis Registrar. I have just received confirmation that it has been accepted onto the register.

I have begun propagating the clematis and will be selling plants as from next spring in aid of Marie Curie Cancer Care. Numbers will be very limited at first but I will be happy to have a waiting list for future years.

## WANTED ....

### PLEA FOR POTS

**D**o you have any large pots you can spare, please? 1.5 litres and above only though. Anne Tweddle has a fabulous source of 1 litre pots and finds anything smaller too hard to keep the plants going in, so thanks but no thanks. Pots can be brought to plant sales or group events. Plastic carrying trays are not needed as we have a collection of larger rigid nursery boxes in which to move plants. Contact Anne, by email on [anne.tweddle@onetel.net](mailto:anne.tweddle@onetel.net) or phone 01473 737337.

### AN EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR

**W**e need someone to join the Suffolk Group team as events co-ordinator. This involves booking Stowupland Village Hall and organising the annual programme of speakers and visits using the official Plant Heritage speakers list and suggestions from members. If you think you might be interested please contact Maggie Thorpe on [smece@aol.com](mailto:smece@aol.com) or 01787 211346.

## YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES

Sending our members information and reminders about events is quicker, easier – and cheaper – by email. If you have an email address please send our membership secretary Pauline Byford an email NOW, even if you think she already has your details, so that she can ensure that your contact information is up to date. [pabyford@btinternet.com](mailto:pabyford@btinternet.com)

## ADVERTISERS FOR THE JOURNAL

The Journal is widely distributed (and, we hope, widely read!) as it goes to every Plant Heritage county group as well as to Suffolk members, and is available at all our meetings and plant fairs. If you would like to advertise in the next edition or know of a business which might be interested please contact Ann Somerville on 01284 728622 or email [annatalder@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:annatalder@tiscali.co.uk)

### 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	Woodbridge	John Woods Nurseries 01394 386914
HOSTA	Stowmarket	Mickfield Hostas. 01449 711576
IRIS (Sir Cedric Morris introductions)	Ipswich	Sarah Cook, 01473 822400
SYRINGA	Stowmarket	Norman's Farm, 01449 781081

# SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**President** Ivan Dickings AHRHS, Rumah Kita, Church Lane, Bedfield, Woodbridge IP13 7JJ, 01728 628401, ivandickings@suffolkonline.net

**Chairman** Margaret Thorpe, Weavers House, Swan Street, Boxford, Sudbury CO10 5NZ, 01787 211346, smece@aol.com

**Vice Chairman** Sue Burton, Dyers Hall, 95 High Street, Lavenham, Sudbury, CO10 9PZ, 01787 247258, susanburton77@gmail.com

**Treasurer** Lynn Cornforth, Antler Ridge, Willisham, Ipswich IP8 4SP, 01473 658814, lynn.cornforth@gotelee.co.uk

**Secretary** Annabel Thorogood, Orchard Cottage, Assington, Sudbury CO10 5L, 07801 431427, annabel.thorogood@gmail.com

**Membership** Pauline Byford, The Dolls House, 13 Eastgate Street, Bury St Edmunds IP33 1XX, 01284 762628, pabyford@btinternet.com

**Publicity/Newsletter Editor** Widget Finn, Smallwood Farmhouse, Bradfield St George, Bury St Edmunds IP30 0AJ, 01449 736358, widget.finn@gmail.com

**Propagation Officer** Anne Tweddle, Brook Farm, Charsfield, Woodbridge IP13 7QA, 01473 737337, anne.tweddle@onetel.net

**National Collections Co-ordinator** Dorothy Cartwright, 6 Bowthorpe Close, Ipswich IP1 3PZ. 01473 289556, dot.cartwright@btinternet.com

## **Other committee members:**

Jim Marshall, Hullwood Barn, Bolton Lane, Shelley, Ipswich IP7 5RE, 01473 822400, jim@malmaisons.plus.com

Anthony Pigott, Kersey's Farm, Mendlesham, Stowmarket IP14 5RB, 01449 766104, anthonymigott@btinternet.com

Idrone Brittain, Willow Farm House, Southolt, Eye IP23 7QJ, 01728 628675, idrone@btinternet.com









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

