

# SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2013



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Cover photo: The Winter Garden at Anglesey Abbey by Richard Todd Cover design by Sally Geeve, www.sallygeeve.com Layout courtesy Nicola Hobbs

# VICE-CHAIRMEN'S REPORT

#### SUE BURTON & JIM MARSHALL

During the past year we have held a series of well-attended and successful talks on Saturday afternoons at Stowupland Village Hall. While it is difficult to single out a particular occasion, one of the highlights has to have been the 'Members' Favourites' (see report p.34), an event which we hope to repeat in coming years. We want to record our grateful thanks to Sue Hamilton Blyth for booking excellent speakers at Stowupland, and to her daughter Tanya Hamilton for taking and showing her beautiful photographs at the 'Members' Favourites'.

The committee set up a working group consisting of Anne Tweddle, Ann Somerville, Hilary Drain and Patrick Palmer to look in some detail at our current profile and financial situation. They came up with many new ideas, some of which have already been implemented. Anne and Maggie Thorpe's fantastic work of propagating and selling plants for the Group has meant that we were able to open another outlet, this time at Café Knit in Lavenham.

We have welcomed two new committee members during the year: Margaret Palmer and Heather Medcraft. They will bring fresh ideas and expertise to our discussions.

Dorothy Cartwright, our Plant Collections Coordinator, organised a meeting for our Plant Collection holders at The Place for Plants, which was attended by Mercy Morris, Plant Conservation Officer. At this meeting Dorothy mentioned that there are a number of new collections in the pipeline. With the aim of maintaining the conservation remit of Plant Heritage, Head Office have agreed three new initiatives: the introduction of new criteria for National Plant Collections, strengthening the protocols of the Threatened Plant Project and the introduction of a Plant Guardian Scheme (see Anne Tweddle's article). We will continue to keep you up to date with progress of these projects.

With the above in mind our committee agreed to send Head Office a donation of £10,000. This will be put towards the Threatened Plant Project.

Thanks as always go to Widget Finn for her work in editing our beautiful Suffolk Journal and to Nicola Hobbs for doing the layout. We are grateful to Ann Somerville for her successful efforts to secure advertising for the Journal, which covers the costs of printing.

We were again blessed with lovely weather and nearly 2,000 visitors for the Spring Plant Fair at Helmingham. It's always a bonus to see how many people come to these Fairs for the first time, and consequently how interest in Suffolk Plant Heritage continues to grow. It is going to be a challenge to manage without Widget who has run our Fairs for ten years with efficiency, style and flair, and indeed to replace Ann Somerville who has taken our publicity work to new levels of excellence. We'd like to thank all our Members who help with the dissemination of leaflets and posters for the Fairs, in particular Sue Morley, and Patrick and Margaret Palmer.

And now I (Sue) have the pleasure of recording that Jim Marshall won a Gold Medal and Best Plant Heritage Exhibit at the Hampton Court Flower Show. (He would be far too modest to write this!) Congratulations also go to Mickfield Hostas who also won Gold and to Sarah Cook who, with Ann Milner, won Silver for their combined stand of Iris, bred respectively by Sir Cedric Morris and Arthur Bliss.

Our secretary Annabel Thorogood manages us and our website with calm efficiency. How she does this considering she has two small children is nothing short of miraculous. We also have a truly great Membership Secretary in Hilary Drain who has taken over from Pauline Byford and is also, with Annabel, handling our forays into cyberspace with expertise. We



are delighted to have Justine Corney back as our reliably efficient Treasurer. Indeed we thank all our Committee Members for their hard work and dedication. Without them we would be floundering.

Finally we would like to record our thanks to Lesley Dolphin at Radio Suffolk, and to the East Anglian Daily Times for their support during the year.

Please look at our website from time to time. We endeavour to post news and information and welcome any comments you might have.

Jim Marshall at the award winning Malmaison carnation stand at Hampton Court.

# PLANT COLLECTIONS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

#### DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT

The Collection Holders have all been very busy this year – starting with the Plant Fair at Helmingham where several Collection Holders had stalls and others provided plants from their collections for display.

The next week Robert Grimsey had an Open Evening when his *Aesculus* collection could be viewed in bloom. It was a lovely sunny evening and everyone was commenting on the variety of colour and shape of the flowers and how they did not realise there were so many different horse chestnuts.

The next day was the start of the three Open Days in Suffolk to celebrate 35 years of Plant Heritage. First Sarah Cook's Open Day when people came and viewed her iris collection – unfortunately the weather was rather cold – but it was still a very enjoyable day.

At the end of June, it was Jim Marshall's turn – but again the weather was not kind and it rained. Fortunately, many of his *Dianthus* (Malmaison) collection were in the greenhouse so could be viewed in the dry.

Two days later it was Sue Wooster's turn and the weather was lovely and sunny. So everyone was able to view her collection of *Campanula* in the sun and have tea in a shady spot.

Many thanks to all three for agreeing to help celebrate 35 years of Plant Heritage in this way.

The Collection Holders had their annual meeting at East Bergholt Place - thanks to Rupert Eley - and after the talk they enjoyed a very interesting guided tour of the garden.

At the meeting the Collection Holders were asked if they would like to take part in the Threatened Plant Project with which Anne Tweddle is involved. Sean Reid (*Buxus*) and Simon Weeks (*Erysimum*) have both agreed to provide plant material for propagation from the rarest plants in their collections. Many thanks to them both.

Collection Holders have also been busy with Flower Shows – setting up displays – the Miltons with their Hostas, Jim and Sarah with the Malmaisons and Sue Wooster has provided Campanula plants for display. The exciting news is that both the Hostas and the Malmaison Dianthus displays won GOLD at Hampton Court Flower Show. Melanie Collins and Jim Marshall also appeared on television to talk about their displays.

Several people in Suffolk have shown an interest in having a National Collection and are working hard to gather together the plants and make records of them. Kim Forester with her *Thalictrum* Collection has worked her way to the application stage so we hope to have another collection in Suffolk soon.

We are very lucky to have so many lovely collections to visit in Suffolk – thank you Collection Holders.

# 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

**EOUISETUM** Stowmarket Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104

ERYSIMUM Dr Simon Weeks, 01986 784348 Walpole

EUONYMUS East Bergholt Rupert Eley, 01206 299224

HIBISCUS Pettistree John Woods Nurseries

01728 745100

HOSTA Stowmarket Mickfield Hostas, 01449 711576

IRIS Ipswich (Sir Cedric Morris introductions) Sarah Cook, 01473 822400

SYRINGA Stowmarket Norman's Farm, 01449 781081

# Members' Gardens Open

The next issue of Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal will include details of members' gardens open to the public. Details should be sent to Widget Finn widget.finn@gmail.com by 1 December for publication in late January

# PROPAGATION OFFICER'S REPORT

#### ANNE TWEDDLE

### Galanthus

We will have a good supply of dry *Galanthus* bulbs for sale at Helmingham in September. This is the first time we have offered *Galanthus* as dry bulbs. They will be priced very much more cheaply than when they were sold in flower: *G.* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley', *G.* 'Sam Arnott', *G. woronowii*.

In addition two cultivars, G. 'Dionysus' and G. 'Neill Fraser'which we scaled in 2012, could be large enough for sale in early 2014, so look out for these at talks in the spring. Details of the cultivars will be in our next newsletter.

### Iris project

The iris project written about in previous newsletters is moving forward, slowly but certainly. In the spring at Helmingham we found homes for three *Iris* 'London Pride'.

One of the new homes was Ian Aldous who came to the sale with his parents, and told me how keen he is on iris growing. Our youngest member by a long way, Ian has yet to make it to teenage.

The next stage of the project is to establish which cultivars we still want to trace. A member has offered to help with this research at the Lindley Library searching through old catalogues and books.

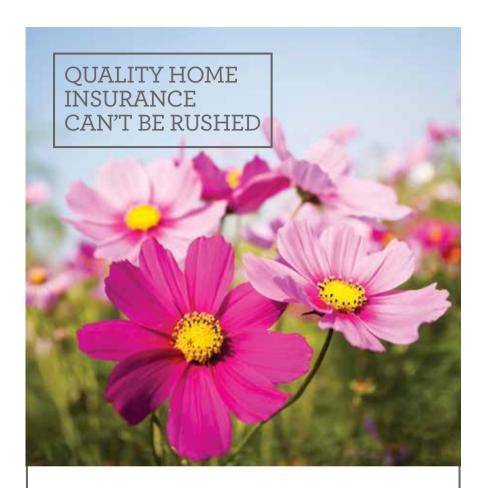
While this background work continues, the material we have growing in several gardens is bulking up.

## National Collections Project

This is a new idea, and was born out of wanting to have closer ties with our Suffolk Collection Holders.

Dot Cartwright the National Collections coordinator asked the collection holders at their annual meeting if any would be interested in working with the propagating group. We didn't have a definite idea of what we wanted, other than to share their expertise.

Two collection holders said they would be happy to work with us. Simon Weeks who has the *Erysimum* collection and Sean Reid head gardener at the National Trust's Ickworth Park who have the *Buxus* collection.



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Maggie Thorpe, Dot Cartwright and I went to Ickworth and collected material from six rare box cultivars. None of these are currently listed in the RHS Plantfinder. They have all been laid out in my vegetable garden, under shading. We wait to see what we get. It will be fairly slow, and hopefully not too hot for them.

Simon Weeks is coming to an Autumn propagating day, and will share his expertise and material with us. We hope to be able to have plants for sale from this propagating day next spring at Helmingham.

### Plant Guardians

I have written about this elsewhere in the newsletter, and urge you to join the scheme. If you don't have a current copy of the RHS Plantfinder, why not use the on-line version. It's always up to date and free. I find it easier than a book. www.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantfinder

### Paeony 'Highdownensis'

P. 'Highdownensis' is a beautiful tree paeony, white with black eye and wonderful perfume. It has been known in the past as *Paeony* 'Rockii'. Ivan Dickings has grafted some plants and these are for sale at £75 each. Should you want one please contact Ivan direct via email ivandickings@suffolkonline.net

Ivan is moving house, and this will be the only opportunity to secure one of these wonderful plants. Ivan can trace his plant back in a direct line from a plant brought to this country by the plant collector Joseph Rock. The original plant went to Frederick Stern's garden at Highdown, and Ivan's plant was grafted from material from Stern's original plant. So you are getting the 'real thing'.

### The Plantsman Journal

The June edition of the RHS Journal The Plantsman was devoted to Plant Heritage. Should you be interested in a copy of this edition only, contact RHS membership department (0845 062 1111). Copies are £8.50 inc p+p.

## Red & Blue Labels

Red and Blue labels made their first appearance on our plant table in the spring at Helmingham. They are set to become defining elements of the plants we sell at all future events. The labels indicate how rare or endangered the particular plant is.

Red labels indicate a plant is endangered in cultivation. This means it is not available commercially, and only found in a National Collection or garden.

You might well ask, how have we come by these plants? All the red label

plants I am currently propagating for the Suffolk group have come via Plant Heritage's National Plant Exchange. All plants going through the National Plant Exchange are assessed for rareity and labelled accordingly.

We currently have about 15 of these plants in Suffolk, and they will be available for sale at various events. Look out for our red section on the plant table. If you buy one of these plants you will be doing hands-on plant conservation by growing a plant known to be endangered. How long we have waited for this! No more talking about conserving plants, but actually doing it.

When you buy a red label plant we will ask for your details, name, email etc. We want to know where it goes, and should we lose ours we know where another one is. If your plant dies, then the same applies.

Blue labelled plants are available commercially, but rare, with two or less suppliers as listed in the RHS Plantfinder. We don't want these plants to become Red label plants.

Once again look out for the blue plants section on our plant table at future Narcissus Project

The Engleheart narcissus are all sold and we move on to a new breeder. C.J. Backhouse is the new man in our lives for the next year or so. We have six cultivars, which were twin scaled last year and should be large enough for sale in the spring, at our talks: *N*. 'C.J. Backhouse', *N* 'Stella', *N*. 'Gloria Mundi', *N*. 'Emperor', *N*. 'Duchess of Westminster' and *N*. 'Mrs Langtry'.

# MEMBERSHIP REPORT

#### HILARY DRAIN

Our new email address membership@suffolkplantheritage.com is fully active and I have transferred all emails to this new address.

A new membership list has come through from Head Office. Since November last year we have had 19 new members which includes four from Helmingham and one from Hampton Court. We have lost a few members, Maureen Thompson will be sadly missed and we lost another member through illness and several for financial reasons. Our current total is 266. Head Office estimated a loss of 10% for 2012/13 and made our target 42 new members, we have done well I think. I have been advised that fees for new and existing members can be paid quarterly by direct debit.

I attended RHS Hampton Court Flower Show specifically to help with membership. I nearly melted because of the extreme heat but did manage to recruit a new member though not for our group, and chatted to a lot of very interested people.

We have bought some leaflet holders for the welcome table at talks and these of course can be used at other events. Hopefully they will give keep the table tidier. Helpers are needed for Helmingham in September; if you know of anyone who may be able to spare an hour please let me know as soon as possible. Phone (evenings only) 01206 263223 or email membership@suffolkplantheritage.com

# **NEW MEMBERS**

Welcome to these new members who have recently joined the Suffolk Group. Please introduce yourself to committee members when you come to our talks and other events.

Rev Nancy Baird, Needham Market

Mr N Bradfield, Cransford

Mr Richard Barker, Ipswich

Mrs Janet Nunn, Stowmarket

Mrs Valeria Tinkler, Lavenham

Mrs Ann Holdgate, Boxford

Dr Andy Exon, Bury St Edmunds

Mrs Irene Bugg, Stowmarket

Mrs Tina Burt, Colchester

Mrs Grace Gemmell, Great Finborough

Mrs Dorothy Rham, Great Finborough

Mr Robin Baldwin, Felixstowe

Mr Paul Aldous, Ipswich

Mrs Vivienne Aldous, Ipswich

Master Ian Aldous, Ipswich

Mrs Michelle Morris, Hartest

Miss Margaret Kilcoyne, Bury St Edmunds

Mrs Susie O'Reilly, Hadleigh

Mrs Sandie Cain, Marlesford

Contact the membership secretary Hilary Drain to see whether there are other members nearby to share a lift to our talks and visits. Phone (evenings only) 01206 263223 or email membership@suffolkplantheritage.com

# **SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE JOINS FACEBOOK (and starts tweeting)**

ANNABEL THOROGOOD

Like it or not social media is gradually creeping into our lives.

Facebook and Twitter are not only a social phenomenon for personal use, but have become powerful tools for businesses and organisations reaching out to hundreds and thousands of people with a click of a button.

Our website has been running for several years and is a very useful way of keeping our members and others informed on the ins and outs of Suffolk Plant Heritage. It covers all aspects of the Group from events and news to the committee and propagation projects.

With the growth of social media and the benefits it can bring Suffolk Plant Heritage has recently joined Facebook and Twitter. We feel it will be a great way to increase the awareness of Plant Heritage, the work it does and the importance of National Collections. We already have a loyal group of followers and hope to increase this over the coming months.

To follow us on Facebook and Twitter go to our website and use the links. www.suffolkplantheritage.com

# WANTED – MINUTES SECRETARY

The Suffolk Group is looking for someone who can replace Annabel Thorogood as minutes secretary. Annabel is taking on a new role in charge of social networking for the Group. With Suffolk Plant Heritage now on Facebook and Twitter, Annabel needs to concentrate on keeping us at the forefront of new technology!

If you are interested in what's happening in Plant Heritage why not come to our committee meetings and find out. The role involves taking the minutes at each meeting and distributing them by email to committee members. It's not onerous, the committee meetings are fun, and the refreshments are pretty good too!

If you want to find out more, please contact Sue Burton on 01787 247258, susanburton77@gmail.com or Jim Marshall on 01473 822400, jim@malmaisons.plus.com



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# Fullers Mill Garden at West Stow

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www.fullersmillgarden.org.uk

email: 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 creator Bernard Tickner.



# PLANT HERITAGE SUFFOLK GROUP EVENTS 2013-14

#### **SEPTEMBER**

Saturday 7

TALK 'From Diaz to Diamonds – the Floral Kingdom of Southern Africa' by Timothy Walker, Director of Oxford University Botanical Garden.

2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4AL \*

About the speaker: Timothy Walker is the Director of the Oxford University Botanical Gardens and curates the National Collection of Euphorbias. His only gardening is at weekends in his wife's garden - if allowed! In 1997 Timothy was elected to the Ernest Cook Lectureship in Plant Conservation at Somerville College, Oxford. In 2011 he presented a history of Botany on BBC4. He has travelled all over the world in search of plants growing in their habitats.

Timothy is a very popular and entertaining speaker.

Sunday 15

PLANT HERITAGE AUTUMN PLANT FAIR 10.30-4.00pm, Helmingham Hall, IP14 6EF

Members please volunteer by contacting Hilary Drain 01206 263223 (evenings only) or email membership@suffolkplanthritage.com

#### **OCTOBER**

Saturday 19

TALK 'Winter Gardening: A Special Beauty' by Richard Todd of Anglesey Abbey.
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4AL \*

About the speaker: Richard Todd has worked at Anglesey Abbey Garden for nearly 40 years and is now its Head Gardener. The 120 acres of garden have year-round interest but Richard is particularly keen on the winter garden and snowdrop collection. He involves the local community in project work and is passionate about developing areas of the garden to connect with younger people. He has a wildlife -friendly approach to gardening. In 2013 Richard was awarded a BEM for his work with the National Trust and contribution to heritage in Cambridgeshire.

#### **NOVEMBER**

Saturday 9 SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE AGM

6 pm, The Guildhall, Market Place, Lavenham CO10 9QZ

A talk by Jaime Blake will be followed by a light supper. Members please bring puddings as usual. To help with catering please let Sue Burton know if you intend to come: susanburton77@gmail.com or 01787 247258

About the speaker: Jaime Blake is the curator of Bressingham Gardens and son-in-law of the late Alan Bloom, founder of the Gardens. He will speak about Bressingham plant introductions.

Wednesday 27 STUDY DAY: Roses by Sarah Cook and Jim Marshall 10-3.30pm Hullwood Barn, Shelley, IP7 5RE £10 including light lunch. Booking essential. Contact sarah@malmaisons.plus.com 01473 822400

About the speakers: Both Jim and Sarah have grown roses all their professional lives. For many years Jim was a judge of the international award of 'Rose of the Year'. While working for the National Trust, he organized a research project with 'Grow Organic' on growing healthy roses, the results of which form the basis of the first session of the Study Day. The final session on pruning roses draws on Sarah's experience pruning the collection of many types of roses at Sissinghurst, where she was head gardener

#### 2014

#### **JANUARY**

Saturday 25 TALK 'The Story of Henstead Exotic Gardens and Exotic Gardening in the UK' by Andrew Brogan, owner/creator of

Henstead Exotic Garden.

2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

#### **FEBRUARY**

Saturday 22 TALK 'Harcourt Arboretum: Past, Present and Future' by Ben Jones, Curator of Oxford/Harcourt Arboretum 2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

#### **MARCH**

Saturday 22 TALK 'Growing Flowers for Cutting' by Harriet Holt,

who has worked with growing flowers for cutting for ten years and runs workshops for the Women's Farm and Garden Association and for the National Trust 2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

#### **APRIL**

Saturday 26 TALK 'The Beautiful Flowers of Kashmir' by Chris

Chadwell, freelance lecturer, Himalayan consultant and

proprietor of Chadwell Seeds.

2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

#### MAY

Sunday 24\*\* PLANT HERITAGE SPRING PLANT FAIR

10.30-4.00pm, Helmingham Hall, IP14 6EF

#### **SEPTEMBER**

Saturday 6 TALK 'Salvias' by Janet Buist of Pennycross Plants

2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

Sunday 14\*\* PLANT HERITAGE AUTUMN PLANT FAIR

10.30-4.00pm, Helmingham Hall, IP14 6EF

#### **OCTOBER**

Saturday 8 TALK 'Galanthus: Some Favourites Old and New' by Rod

Leeds, author, bulbsman and former Chairman of the RHS

Rock Garden Plant Committee.

2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ \*

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

Dates marked \*\* awaiting confirmation.

# PLANT HERITAGE AT HELMINGHAM

# Autumn Plant Fair 15th September 10.30am - 4pm

On Sunday 15th September we will be holding our plant fair at Helmingham for the thirteenth year running. There will be over 50 exhibitors, with many old favourites as well as interesting newcomers among the specialist nurseries and also a tempting selection of garden sun dries. You can buy bulbs, alpines from D'Arcy and Everest; Henstead Exotic Plants will be selling ..... exotic plants, and you can head for Predator Plants for some scary looking specimens.

This year we're giving away 800 bags of *Alium unifolium*. This alium has dainty pink clusters of around twenty bell-shaped florets on a single stem. It has the RHS AGM (Award of Garden Merit) and is good for the alpine or mixed border. Get there early to claim your free bag of bulbs – first come, first served!

Don't miss the Group's plant stall in the Plant Heritage marquee, where you'll find lots of unusual and exciting plants which have been raised by our own members. Also in the marquee you can learn more about Suffolk's National Collections and admire the Plants of Distinction which have been loaned by nurseries who are exhibiting in the fair as examples of what they have on offer.

For some useful information about how to propagate your favourite plants or choose a tree for the smallest garden, go to the Garden Talks Tent where there will be two free events. At 11.30am Danny Everett, the sales manager at Botanica Nursery, will be giving a talk 'Trees for a purpose'. Do you want autumn colour, screening, fruit or perhaps shade when you choose a tree for your garden? Danny has lots of suggestions!

Roger Harvey of Harvey's Garden Plants will be talking at 2pm on 'Propagating and potting on' – how to make more plants for less, and what to do with them when they start to grow.

Do come – and tell your friends! As always, we are keen to involve as many members as possible in helping at the Fair. If you can spare an hour (which would qualify you for a free pass) please contact Hilary Drain on 01206 263223 (evenings only) or email: membership@plantheritage.com

# PLANT HERITAGE NATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT

ANNE TWEDDLE

The Council has met twice this year, with the final meeting coming in November. The main points of interest are:

**The Appeal** - Michael Alder, Chairman of Plant Heritage, decided with the Board to launch an appeal in 2013/14. The aim of the appeal is to secure our financial future. It has been called 'Threatened Plant Appeal'. Further information is available on the website at www.nccpg.com. All members will receive a letter and leaflet with the Autumn Newsletter. If you are able to support this appeal, please do so.

**Threatened Plant project** - 320 genera now listed and 230 genera have been assessed for Threatened Plants

**Plant Guardian Project** - A new project being launched by National Office which encourages members to record rare plants they have in their gardens. A longer piece about this project can be found below.

**Finances** - Finance continues to be an area of concern. The deficit is expected to be round £10,000

# PLANT GUARDIANS

# A plant conservation scheme for members

The National Office has launched the Plant Guardian scheme, which is open to all members of Plant Heritage. The scheme grew out of a desire to find a way for members to contribute to our objectives of plant conservation. The role of the plant guardian is to look after a threatened plant in your own garden or allotment. The plant must belong to you.

A record of your plant is held on the National Office website at www.nccpg.com. This record is created and updated by you. An email address is essential to take part. The definition of plants that can be registered for guardianship are:

- \* TPP defined as 'threatened'
- \* RHS Plantfinder listing 2 or less suppliers
- \* Red label from the plant exchange or from our group sales
- \* IUCN Red List

You register to become a plant guardian (PG) on the national website www.nccpg.com.

You identify which of your plants you would like to record in the scheme, and register the plant details on the national website and check they meet at least 1 of the above.

The 'threatened' status of the plant you record will be checked by the TPP project coordinator and your plant will be listed as being cared for by an anonymous PG on the website

You need to be happy about your contact details (email or phone) being passed on to other members who may make an enquiry about the plant. It will be entirely your decision if you share your plant on request. The scheme will involve members more with hands-on conservation, and it will help to make members aware of the National Plant Exchange.

I will be registering all the red label plants I have received on behalf of the group over the last two years. There can be more than one guardian for a plant, in fact the more the better. The plant is more widely distributed and therefore less likely to be lost. If the scheme interests you, please get involved and sign up for guardianship

## MAUREEN THOMPSON 1930-2013

Many of you will have visited Plant Heritage member Maureen Thompson's garden at Long Melford. After retiring as a leading expert in antique glass she had thrown her considerable energies and artistic flair into creating an iconic garden at Sun House which attracted garden lovers from as far afield as Japan and America.

In 2008 at the age of 78 she decided to downsize and took on a garden in nearby Lavenham. Undismayed by its 1980s style she attacked the project boldly, removing black tarmac and Leylandii hedges, replacing them with lavenders, hellebores, tulips, masses of roses and her latest passion, agapanthus. In 2012 she opened her new garden to an admiring public, and was proud to raise nearly £1,000 in one afternoon for the local church.

Maureen was a familiar figure at the Helmingham plant fairs, seeking out special treasures among the nurseries and last year greeting visitors to the Plant Heritage marquee with her usual charm and enthusiasm. She will be much missed, but the memory of the enchanting gardens which she created will live on.







Above: From left Suffolk Group Chairman, Maggie Thorpe, member Rosie Osborne and Propagation Officer Ann Tweddle



Above: No, not plant hunters but members of the 'Chocks Away' 1940s dance team who got everyone jiving.

Left: Lady Tollemache guiding a group around the gardens.







# ALL HAIL THE VOLUNTEER!

#### MARGARET PALMER

Now I may be a bit slow on the uptake but I have to admit that I only recently began to realise just how important volunteers are to Plant Heritage. Of course I was aware that we have a committee who 'organise' things for us, but that was as far as it went. Since becoming involved as a committee member myself however, I have begun to see just how much hard work is going on behind the scenes, in fact I would state it more strongly than that and say that volunteers are the lifeblood of Plant Heritage.

I suppose it wasn't just becoming a committee member that triggered this realisation. The other thing that started me thinking was reading in the last group journal about the tremendous achievement of the Suffolk Group in being the largest donor to Plant Heritage National Office giving over £38,000 from 2006-2012. Once I started ruminating it all began to fall into place and I could see that the success of Plant Heritage Suffolk is due to the tremendous efforts of volunteers.



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Leicester Road, South Creake Fakenham, NR21 9PW Tel 01328 823 018 Email: trevor-harrison@ btconnect.com It's not all about fundraising but it has to be said that money oils the wheels and enables us to achieve our aims of conserving plants and promoting Plant Heritage. Perhaps the most obvious exemplar is the twice yearly plant fair at Helmingham Hall in Spring and Autumn. Everything from the negotiations to hold the event to gaining publicity from local and national media; from approaches to nurseries to secure their attendance to the propagation and nurturing of our own plant stocks; from support to encourage collection holders to exhibit their plant collections to all the help on the day including selling plants, meeting and greeting visitors, acting as MC, gaining feedback from nurseries, unpacking and packing away and so on and so forth, it all depends on the goodwill and energy of volunteers.

I've certainly missed out many jobs but you will get the feel of just how much there is to be done and having performed so effectively. Suffolk Group has enjoyed great success and respect in raising funds for Plant Heritage National Office.

Now volunteering isn't a one way street, there's a lot to be gained by us as individuals if we give the organisation a bit of time. I've already discovered that getting involved means getting to know other members on a more personal level. It's really interesting finding out about other's backgrounds and interests and at the end of the day we're all gardeners so there's always a common theme to help cement these social interactions.

Volunteering is also a chance to gain satisfaction from using the many skills and talents we all possess and have brought with us from our previous experiences. Alternatively, it can also be the chance to experiment with doing something different or to develop a new skill or just have a go. I recently joined a group of members as a 'propagating student' and really enjoyed myself. It has to be said that as well as helping Plant Heritage volunteering has a lot to offer us.

We certainly have lots to celebrate in Suffolk and a huge reputation to maintain and I'm hoping that this article might just encourage more of you to have a go. Volunteering doesn't have to be a huge commitment, you don't even have to be hugely energetic or active as some jobs can be done from your armchair. At all levels we always need members to get involved.

So if your appetite is whetted why not have a word with one of our committee members to work out where you would be happy to fit in as a volunteer and help the continued success of Plant Heritage Suffolk Group.

Deadline for your articles, photos, ideas for the Spring 2014 Journal is 1 December. Send them to widget.finn@gmail.com or ring 01449 736358.

# THE HAMPTON COURT FLOWER SHOW 2013

#### MAGGIE THORPE

We (four Plant Heritage members from Suffolk) arrived just before the gates opened at 10am which gave us the opportunity to see the garden exhibits before they became too crowded. But before any of this we simply had to rush into the Plant Heritage Marquee to see Jim Marshall looking so proud of his beautiful display of fabulous Malmaison carnations.

The whole stand made you feel you were inside an Edwardian florists shop and the door was still open behind you. You were surrounded by crystal vases of carnations, the perfume stopped one in one's tracks and the artistry of the display made the stand a truly deserving gold medal winner. Many congratulations Jim, we loved it! And Jim won the Best in the Plant Heritage Marquee.

The other gold medal winner was Mickfield Hostas and they were highlighted for their magnificent and highly informative instruction boards, saying just enough to capture one's interest without getting involved in too much detail. And not a slug or snail in sight!

The centre of the Marquee was decorated with a spectacular wheel of radiating blue, lime green and purple spokes using Collection Holder plants. So much to admire and lots to learn from the experts about the best varieties for our Suffolk gardens.

After some time here, we set off for the gardens and two of our party suddenly found themselves shaking hands with the Duchess of Cornwall who was inspecting the Garden for Joy, designed and planted for the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for Disabled People. What a lovely surprise for Anne Holdgate and Angela Tolputt.

There was still time to do a bit of shopping - gadgets and ornaments as well as plants. But time had to be taken away from the madding crowd to just sit by the canal and look towards the wonderful Hampton Court Palace on one of the hottest days of summer.

# **FLOWERS AS ART**

#### SARAH COOK

One of the advantages of being a National Collection Holder is that you never know what surprise is round the corner. Most are pleasant surprises, and earlier this year I was asked to visit Vienna and give a lecture connected to Sir Cedric Morris and his irises, part of a lecture series and exhibition in the University department of Applied Arts (which includes a Landscape design department). However, despite a visit to Hullwood Barn by the University lecturer organising the exhibition, I managed to misunderstand my brief for the lecture – probably I was so excited by the thought of an expenses paid trip to Vienna in early June that I was not listening properly to what she was telling me. I thought the exhibition was on 'Flowers in Art', but the reality was much more thought provoking it was 'Flowers as Art' –and yes I did have to very quickly change the focus of the lecture!

The thrust of the exhibition and lecture series was inspired by a statement of American artist George Gessert that "Time is long overdue for ornamental plant breeding to be considered an art". The lecture and his book has introduced me to terms such as 'Bio Art' and has made me wonder whether living things can be art - and made me think "ah! but what is Art" – something which, you will be relieved to read, I am not going to try and answer here.

I discovered through the exhibition that there is a long history of plant cultivars which are the deliberate product of a breeding programme being considered works of art.

In 1936, Edward Steichen, a professional designer, photographer and painter who was also the President of the Delphinium Society of America, made history by exhibiting his delphiniums the New York Museum of Modern Art. The press release for the exhibition reads "......to avoid confusion, it should be noted that the actual delphiniums will be shown in the Museum – not paintings or photographs of them. It will be a 'personal appearance' of the flowers themselves". Part of Steichen's vision was to sell seeds of his 'Conneticut Yankee' range to give everyone a chance to buy (and grow) affordable art.

In 1939 Sacheverell Sitwell wrote that highly bred ornamental plants are fine art because they 'represent a direct and conscious attack upon Nature' Sitwell wrote about Morris and his 'Benton' irises and certainly considered

them to be art. At this time, before the Second World War the science of genetics was expected to become increasingly important in both science and art, however it is not surprising that after the war artists and writers did not pursue genetic hybridisation as art.

It was not until 1990 that plant cultivars were again shown in an art gallery, pacific coast irises bred by Gessert. If 'man made' plants can be works of art, I also would put Cedric Morris in the same league, and if their beauty defines them as fine art, then they certainly qualify. I would also agree with Gessert that the ruffled highly coloured irises which are being bred today would qualify as Kitsch Art, and also many modern cultivars of other species.

Flowers as 'art' have also had a Damien Hirst moment. In America, Eduardo Kac has inserted a gene from his own blood into a chromosome of a Petunia, the resulting plant he called an Edunia, he deliberately ensured it had red veins. It produces seed which also contain Kac's genes (is this a bit scary?)

I have recently seen fungus as art – a friend's graduation exhibition contained a damp slice of mother's pride bread sandwiched between two pieces of Perspex, the 'art' was watching the mould grow. I am still not entirely sure about some of this, but for me it is an interesting line of thought. I have definitely come to consider gardening to be a form of art with gardens such as Stourhead and Sissinghurst to be great works of art. In different genres I very much admire the landform art of Kim Wilkie and the plant associations of Christopher Lloyd.

Incidentally I would suggest that landscape parks and gardens are multidimensional works of art, with, in addition to having the usual three spatial dimensions, at least four time dimensions. As Jim Marshall says in his article 'A Horticultural Crisis' (page 37) to care for these works of art requires a unique understanding of science and art, so we should be training the curators (gardeners) to a very high standard, and valuing them accordingly. Maybe, if cultivars of ornamental plants can be considered fine art in themselves, this puts an interesting complexion on the work of Plant Heritage?

#### PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

FOR AN UPDATE ON WHAT'S HAPPENING AT NATIONAL OFFICE
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# THE SOUTH WEST TIP OF AFRICA

#### TIMOTHY WALKER

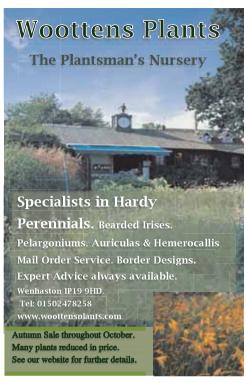
What is it about the southwest corner of continents that makes them such wonderful places for plant diversity? The Iberian Peninsular, the corner of Western Australia, and the Cape of Good Hope are all extraordinarily diverse botanically. Take the latter for example. Charles Darwin described it as the place where "more species of plants are crowded together than in any other quarter of the world".

This is true; in an area similar to Greater London (i.e. inside the M25) there are more plant species than are found in the whole of Canada. Furthermore, at least 80% of these species are found nowhere on Earth and 30% of the genera are endemic too. This is why the plants in this little area are known as a floristic kingdom and it by far the smallest of the six floristic kingdoms.

As with so many biological questions there is no one reason why there is so much botanical diversity here. The nutrient poor soils help. The fires every 12-20 years certainly play a part and certainly prevent the area becoming dominated by trees and creates opportunities for short-lived species. Isolation from other regions by water or deserts isolates these populations to evolve down their own path. The mild wet winters and hot dry summers create another layer of diversity onto an already rich matrix of variables. There is no doubt that diversity begets diversity and the Cape is on an evolutionary roll. A very good example of this is the genus *Erica* of which there may be 658 species in this area and of these 635 are endemic.

Another great observation from Charles Darwin was that "the degree of adaptation of species to the climates under which they live is often overrated. We may infer this from our frequent inability to predict whether or not an imported plant will endure our climate." This is just one of many simple statements that anyone could have made but it was Darwin who did. This is very true of plants from south west Africa. For example, *Melianthus major* grows side by side with many species that will not survive even a mild winter in the UK.

Of course *Melianthus major* flowers reliably in Africa whereas in Oxford this is a very rare event. While the flowers are a beautiful burgundy colour with black nectar, it is really the leaves for which we are growing it despite the fact that the leaves when damaged smell like stale vomit. This



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is not a problem if you plant it near the back of the border. As Sybille Kreutzberger put it in *Hortus* magazine, "this is a plant to admire but not to fondle".

The fields of wild flowers are one of the most memorable aspects of the South African flora. This is partly because the farmers in this part of the world have competitions and silver cups for the farm that contains the largest number of native flowering plants. If you cannot get to South Africa you can see a similar idea in Oxford.

In 2008 work began on alterations to the lower garden at the Oxford Botanic Garden. A large double border was created and it was decided that this should be developed by Professor James Hitchmough, of London 2012 Olympic Village fame, as a prairie-style, "wild flower" border. The inverted commas are there because, while the random distribution of the plants is reminiscent of wild flower meadows, some of the plants used are cultivated varieties. In this 800m2 area three different plant communities have been sown. One from North America, one from the Mediterranean, and one from South Africa.

This new feature was not universally applauded as it developed. A feature that is sown, rather than planted, will take much longer to mature but now that it is flowering opinions are changing. Many visitors have commented during June and July 2013 that they think that the border is wonderful. If you want to see it for yourself the Garden is open every day except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Timothy Walker will be talking about the floral kingdom of South Africa at the Suffolk Group talk on Saturday 7 September at Stowupland Village Hall.

# Help at Helmingham!

Please spare an hour or so to help at the Plant Heritage Plant Fair at Helmingham on Sunday 15 September.

People are needed to work at the entrance, at the free bulb table and in the members' marquee.

All helpers get free admission to the fair.

Contact Hilary Drain by phone 01206 263223 (evenings only) or email membership@suffolkplantheritage.com

# BEYOND THE KEYHOLE

#### NICOLA HOBBS

In earlier issues of Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal, I have reported on developments in sustainable horticulture promoted by Send a Cow that I had seen in East Africa. Very poor families were being taught techniques to grow crops in small areas of land with exhausted soil and little water. 'Keyhole' gardens were one such method, using local materials, a lot of mulching – and the by-products of the cows and other livestock that the charity had supplied.

I was lucky enough to return to Uganda this spring, seven years after my first visit and 25 years since Send a Cow was launched there. The changes in the circumstances of those I had met earlier were amazing. Many have managed to buy more land and are now growing a far wider range of crops, some have started training centres where they are paid to teach others the skills needed to turn their lives around.

Diversification schemes include the building of fishponds, small solar drying units to preserve a wide range of produce, and the brewing of banana wine (where farmers were dissatisfied with the price they were getting for their bananas). 'Value added' was a phrase which frequently crept







into conversations.

Keyhole gardens are still built, often near the roadside where they can demonstrate to passers by how crops can be successfully grown throughout the year.

Locally based Send a Cow staff work with groups of people who have asked for help – such as widows,

people with disabilities, orphans.... Group members support each other and when they have made such progress that they no longer need the close contact with the charity, they 'graduate'. This frees up resources for more groups to be taken on. There are very many groups in the seven countries in Africa where Send a Cow currently works waiting to be taken on, so the need for funds is greater than ever.

The charity's practical approach has very definitely been shown to work and its success is now widely recognised in development circles.

More information about its work is available on its website, www.sendacow.org.uk or by contacting me (Ford House, The Green, Grundisburgh, Woodbridge IP13 6TA, 01473 738267,

Nicola@nicolahobbs.com). We are always looking for more volunteers to help spread the word – and one the benefits of becoming involved is the opportunity to go to see its work in Africa and meet some of the wonderful people who have been helped. Quite rightly, we meet all our own expenses but it is the most fantastic experience.

Photos: Top left: A tip tap, a device promoted by Send a Cow to improve hygiene and minimise water use. My own tip tap goes to the Helmingham Plant Fair each spring where it provides amusement for younger visitors.

Below left: A lesson in compost making. The stick takes the temperature – when it comes out cold, the compost is ready (often in only two or three weeks). My hosts couldn't believe how long my compost took.

Above: One of the keyholes in my Grundisburgh garden in spring. The garden is open to visitors most weekends for the sale of plants to raise funds for Send a Cow.

# A MEMORABLE VISIT: SUE HAMILTON BLYTH'S GARDEN

#### MARGARET PALMER

Imagine a pleasant early summer evening after an extended and unsettled spring. Imagine the opportunity of the company of fellow gardeners, and the chance to view a garden into which much thought and effort has been invested, not to mention first class wine and nibbles. Such was the occasion of the visit in June by Plant Heritage members to Sue Hamilton Blyth's beautiful and interesting garden in historic Lavenham.

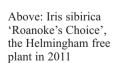
There are many defining features to the garden that make a visit there such a positive experience. Approaching through an ancient lathe and plaster passage that marks the boundary on one side of the house I was immediately filled with wonderment as I emerged into the garden with so much on which to feast the eyes.

First, there are the pergolas and arches, which support grape vines and roses and suggest summer and autumn splendour and fruitfulness to come. Then there is the interesting and sympathetic hard landscaping such as the pool, the dais and the beautiful brick pathways that intersect the garden creating various planting areas and a canvass which Sue has used to very good effect. All of this blends perfectly with the setting of a medieval town and its mellow roof tops all around which also complement the scene. These were the foundations for the plants still to appreciate and enjoy.

The choice of small trees is another of the features which attracted my attention and interest. These were positioned at subtly strategic points in the garden lending structure, shape and colour. The white bark of the silver birch at one of the furthest points in the garden almost acted as a beacon, illuminating its corner as dusk began to fall. I imagine that in winter it will also have much to offer. There was some discussion about the identity of a tree closer to the house which seemed to have much to recommend it in terms of the beauty of its shape and proportions and when told about its merits in terms of autumn colour, the *Parrotia persica*, was quickly added to my 'must have' list.

Then I noticed the *Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Sunburst' its yellow- green leaves living up to its name. Positioned not too far away from the *Parrotia*, the trees made very happy companions the fern like leaves of the *Gleditsia* 





contrasting beautifully with the denser ovate leafed *Parrotia*. Where trees are concerned Sue has definitely shown excellent judgement.

The use of colour to accentuate and light up planting areas is also something which Sue uses to good effect. Examples which spring to mind are the rich red of an early dahlia beneath the yellow green foliage of the *Gleditsia* which suggested the impact of red Papavers still to burst their sepals, the yellow leafed *Acanthus mollis* against darker leafed Hostas and other plants, and the abundance of *Melica altissima* 'Alba' which has happily propagated itself providing a twinkling effect throughout much of the garden. Then there was the spectacular lilac clematis gloriously in bloom on the back wall of the house. Overall the planting has an informal cottage garden feel with many old and new friends such as aquilegias, astrantias, erysimums and irises all happily in bloom with the promise of other treats later in the season. Sue's collection of potted specimen shrubs, including the newly acquired Sibley's Patio Quince also contributes to this traditional ambience. Sue's planting is certainly a joy to behold.

What I love most about visiting a good garden is the inspiration and enthusiasm it generates in me stimulating plans for incorporating new plants and new designs into my own garden and ensuring that gardening never becomes stale. From this point of view Sue's garden is definitely a success and an experience I would unreservedly recommend.

# **MEMBERS' FAVOURITES**

#### BRYAN THURLOW

The Plant Heritage meeting at Stowupland village hall in April 2013 was a meeting with a difference when members were invited to talk about their favourite plants. Our propagation officer, Anne Tweddle, got the proceedings under way with news of Plant Heritage's (Suffolk) iris project and a plea for help in tracking down and recording some of the rarer cultivars. She illustrated just how showy some of the bearded irises had become since the early 20th century when Iris enthusiast William Dickinson Dykes took up their cause.

Committee member, Patrick Palmer, shared with us his enthusiasm for *Abutilon vitifolium*. He grows both the blue and the white forms and is rewarded with self-sown seedlings each year. His slides of the white form in full flower reminded me of the eucryphias I was so enchanted by in Devon and Cornwall gardens some years ago. As Patrick explained his

abutilons provide a wonderful show at a time when most of the bulbs are over and before the roses start to bloom.

Fuchsia magellanica 'Lady Bacon' was the favoured plant of Linda Draper. It was also the plant that was given to visitors to our spring plant fair about ten years ago. With its plentiful, small, delicate flowers on arching stems it is a most attractive plant loved by bees.

Foxgloves, in my opinion, are some of the most underrated plants in our gardens. Sue Hamilton-Blyth thinks so too and I shared her enthusiasm for this most every-day plant providing, as it does, excellent verticals of colour in our gardens in early summer. Its promiscuity ensures there is never a shortage of seedlings and colour variations.

In the absence of Jo Pugh, our president, Maggie Thorpe, talked about *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, a heavenly scented evergreen climber. Maggie explained that it can be prone to small scale insects which, in turn, leave a sooty mould. *Trachelospermum* is on the tender side and will require a south facing wall but, even then, it can be knocked back by our cold winters. It is easily propagated by layering in the autumn. My neighbour grows it under the shelter of his carport which is ideal as it remains dry at the roots throughout the winter.

Widget Finn introduced us to 'the people' in her garden, the 'people' being the many roses she grows named after people; Bobby James, Lady Hillingdon and Ferdinand Pichard to name but three. 'People' also referred to the roses she especially remembers friends and family by. Zephirine Drouhin, with its strong pink flowers, reminded her of her mother who always referred to it as Elizabeth Arden pink.

Rounding off the afternoon, Anne Worledge shared her passion for *Rosa* 'Cecile Brunner' which she described as a polyantha pom pom rose, a form often described as the 'sweetheart rose.' Its small, pale pink, tightly packed flowers are prolific throughout the summer, giving Anne a great deal of pleasure.

The membership turned out in good numbers for this event which was, surely, a good indication that this 'home-made' entertainment should be repeated in future years.

#### SPONSORED BIKE RIDE IN AID OF PLANT HERITAGE

Gillian Spenser, Plant Heritage's membership administrator, is raising money for it and the Motor Neurone Disease Association by cycling from London to Amsterdam -300 miles in three days. Details on the Plant Heritage website www.nccpg.com

# THE WINTER GARDEN AT ANGLESEY ABBEY

RICHARD TODD, HEAD GARDENER

The Winter Garden at Anglesey Abbey was designed to celebrate the centenary of the First Lord Fairhaven by adding an element to the garden that covers the winter interest period.

John Sales was the original designer in establishing 'the bones' of the structure of the garden. The concept was born between John and Richard Ayres, my predecessor, initially. They both retired in the year that the Winter Garden opened. This was a really early stage, with so much more to add and tweak that there have been lots of influences, including me and the National Trust's Garden Advisers over the last 12 years.

The soil is alkaline 7.5, very free draining, nice loam, then sand and then chalk. We're in Cambridgeshire in the East of England, with a dry climate. The Winter Garden is 450m long, and 35m at its widest point.

We are a team of six full time gardeners, supported by 25 volunteers. There is a lot of to-ing and fro-ing involved in the Winter Garden, so there isn't a fixed team dedicated to it.

The garden is run almost fully on organic principles. The only thing I have done, but am doing so less and less, is spray the outer boundary on either side of the Winter Garden with one of the less harmful herbicides. We simply run out of time to keep on top of it, looking after a total of 120 acres of garden at Anglesey Abbey.

The main features of the Winter Garden are the various coloured stems of dogwood, willow and rubus varieties throughout. Attractive bark is another feature, with *Prunus serrula*, snakebark acers, paperbark acers and silver birch. Scent is also key, with many winter-flowering shrubs, such as *Mahonia, Viburnum*, winter honeysuckle, wintersweet and *Sarcococca*. The other big feature is wide variety of early flowering spring bulbs such as snowdrops, narcissus, tulip, *Chionodoxa*, crocus, cyclamen and aconites.

The garden is at its best any time from November to March, but the one month which shines above all is February when most things are at their peak. Over the years we've added lots more bulbs, so we've got lots of colour well into March.

Among our rare plants is a very beautiful *Daphne bholua* 'Jaqueline Postil' which flowers in late February. It's probably the most spectacular and

sweetest scent throughout the whole garden. *Fritillaria raddeana* is a rare bulb, belonging to the group called Crown Imperial. It flowers much earlier than other fritillarias, with pale lime green blooms. One of my favourite bulbs is *Iris* 'Katherine Hodgkin' which looks almost like an orchid.

Last year we planted some species tulips (*Tulipa* 'Little Beauty') underneath the Himalayan Silver birches. These will multiply, so in 5-10 years time the whole patch will be a pink haze under the beautiful white trees. I can't wait to see it.

Mulching is a brilliant way to make a plant which would get lost stand out against the black floor created by leaf mould. It also makes the borders look really neat.

I always like to encourage people to consider, when planting, making maximum use of the low light of winter – it's important to be able to see the sunlight coming through certain plants. The Tibetan Cherry has slightly flaking bark. When the low sun shines though, it picks out orange jewels of light. The Japanese wine berry, you might think is a fairly ugly bramble, but the many thin hairy thorns down its stems glow orange in the sun.

Always prune your coloured stems on a yearly basis because they have their best colour on first year growth. There is a variety of pruning methods depending on which cornus or willow you have. Most cornus get cut right down to the ground – it's best to check the recommendations for your specific variety.

The Winter Garden is one of the most exciting elements of gardening that I've encountered, and I've been gardening for over 30 years. It does things at a time of year when nothing else is going on. It's breathtaking, just amazing.

For information on opening times at Anglesey Abbey contact www.nationaltrust.org.uk/angleseyabbey/

# A HORTICULTURAL CRISIS

JIM MARSHALL

The July edition of the RHS Garden magazine highlights a 'crisis' in many branches of horticulture, including gardening. There is a shortage of skills in the horticultural workforce. This is not a sudden event, as over the last four decades the image of horticulture and other 'green skills' has been greatly reduced, resulting in a lack of career appeal. It is

recognised that the following factors have contributed to this: changes at all levels in the educational system and National Vocational Qualifications; the steady decline of direct labour in public parks and increase in contract labour; the demise of the traditional apprenticeship schemes run by parks departments and others, which has not been replaced by adequate training (however both this and the last government have created some apprentice vacancies for school leavers and the unemployed); the perception that horticulture is a low skill profession/industry – this last factor is in many ways the most worrying.

Horticulture/gardening, at all levels requires not only the essential English, Mathematics and IT skills, but also requires understanding of a wide range of scientific principles and often a knowledge and appreciation of both history and art. How many careers/professions can be said to need such a broad mix of arts and science?

The RHS, along with other related bodies are to be congratulated in high-lighting this crisis in the report 'Horticulture Matters' and hopefully Plant Heritage can be encouraged to do its bit to improve the image of horticulture.

What do you think? Should we be doing more to encourage gardening to be thought of as a rewarding and valued career option? If so how can we encourage likely candidates to consider it from an early age, through to late career change?

LATE NEWS: Just as this issue was going to press, our vice chairmen received an effusive thank you from Joanna Jones, Fund Raising Manager of Plant Heritage "...the Suffolk Group have done it again. Completely raised the roof of this small office here at Loseley Park when I opened the envelope to discover a cheque for £10,000! This is a most generous donation from the hard working team in Suffolk and we thank you all so very, very much. Your donation to the Threatened Plants Project is so greatly appreciated and comes at a most exciting time with the formation of the Plant Guardian Scheme.

"I would also like to add a huge thanks for the help and support given from the Suffolk Group towards the work of the charity this year (not to mention the Radio, TV and publicity material that comes with everything the Suffolk Group do) including 8 members helping with the Chelsea Flower Show cloakroom. My thanks, as always, to Maggie Thorpe for her efficiency with coordinating all details with regards two complete shifts."

She also highlighted the three Suffolk Collection Holders opening their gardens for PH (Jim, Sarah and Sue Wooster) and the three in the marquee at Hampton Court (Jim, Sarah and Mickfield) winning Gold, Silver and Gold.

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