

Plant Heritage

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



# SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2016



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*Cover photo: Rudbekia hirta 'Toto' at Capel Manor Gardens, Enfield.  
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*Design Sally Geeve, [www.sallygeeve.com](http://www.sallygeeve.com)*

*Layout courtesy Nicola Hobbs*

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

*JIM MARSHALL*

**I**t has been a hectic six months for the Suffolk Group, with the changes to the plant fair, new National Collections, the iris and narcissus projects and the continuing propagation workshops.

Visitor numbers to the Spring Plant Fair were a record and the children's activities organised by Libby Brooks and Pippa Michelson proved to be very successful. It was a delight to see so many children with their clip-boards visiting the stall-holders as part of the Treasure Hunt. We gave away 50 children's goody bags.

As we go to print arrangements for the Autumn Fair are well advanced, with the early flowering *Crocus sieberi* 'Tricolour' as the free bulb. At the Hampton Court Flower show we were very pleased to hear lots of positive comments from visitors and nurserymen who have come to our plant fairs in the past.

Our Autumn lectures start again in September and, thanks to our excellent lecture co-ordinator Pam Garside, the 2017/18 lecture series has already been organised (see pages 8 - 10). I am sure Pam would be pleased to receive suggestions for future talks/lectures. The recent newsletter has been well received, but just one plea: could members make sure that Isobel our secretary has your up-to-date e-mail address

As mentioned in the last journal, Plant Heritage has received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to consider future governance and how best to maintain and increase membership. Work on this project is ongoing. I have been asked to be a member of a small group, led by an outside consultant, to consider and provide recommendations regarding governance.

Sadly this is my last Chairman's report as I have decided to retire from the Chair and the committee at the AGM; however Sarah and I hope to remain involved in the organisation of the Plant Fair for the moment. The best news is that Maggie Thorpe has agreed to take the role on again.

I have enjoyed being directly involved with such an active group, which is highly regarded by Head Office for the money we raise and all the conservation work we are involved in. It has sometimes been hectic and demanding, but always 'positive'. I must thank all past and present committee members for their support and also Angela Ainger for her work

as interim Membership Secretary during this last year.

I am now planning to spend more time in our garden, in the greenhouse with my carnations and at Portman Road supporting Ipswich Town Football Club! Best wishes to you all.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

*JUSTINE CORNEY*

The Spring Plant sale was very successful with over 2,900 people coming through the gates. The weather was kind, in a summer that has not been very summery! Thanks to the hard work of Sarah Cook, the number and quality of the stalls was outstanding, following the decision to expand the craft section of the Fair.

The overall income for the day was £25,839 for the gate, catering commissions and stall rents. Our 25% share amounted to £6,460, and together with plant stall income less our expenses we made £6,408 on the day.

## NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTIONS

*DOROTHY CARTWRIGHT*

This year we have gained a new National Collection of *Muehlenbeckia* held by Jan Michalak. This is a very interesting collection of plants not well known in this country – mostly from New Zealand. Jan displayed some of his plants at the Spring Plant Fair and they caused a lot of interest.

Unfortunately, the National Collection of *Hibiscus* has had to be withdrawn as the nursery where they were held has had to close down. The plants have all been bought and are being kept together so we hope the collection may come back in time.

Proposals to Head Office for three collections in Suffolk have been accepted – *Santolina*, *Dryopteris* and Suffolk Garden Plants (C 20th

hardy). The Santolinas are held by Jon Rose at Botanica Nursery, the Dryopteris by Anthony Pigott, who also has the Equisetum collection, and the Suffolk Garden Plants by Margaret Wyllie of the Suffolk Punch Trust. Jon and Anthony are working on making their full applications and Margaret has completed hers – so we are waiting to hear if it has been accepted.

The Collection Holders worked hard at the Spring Plant Fair. The Collection Holders of *Hosta*, *Campanula*, *Dianthus* and *Iris* had stalls to sell their plants. The *Muehlenbeckia* and *Aesculus* collections had displays in the Plant Heritage marquee which provided good talking points for visitors. There were also some *Equisetum* plants for sale there and this led to a lot of discussion – but not many sales!

The new leaflets about the National Collections in Suffolk have been very popular with visitors. These give information about making arrangements to visit the collections. Do contact the Collection Holders and arrange to visit their collections – they will be pleased to see you.

## SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

AESCULUS	Framlingham	Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203
CAMPANULA	Bury St. Edmunds	Sue Wooster, 07879 644958
DIANTHUS	Ipswich	Jim Marshall, 01473 822400
(Malmaison)		
DIANTHUS	Ipswich	Jim Marshall, 01473 822400
(Perpetual Flowering Carnations registered in the UK before 1970)		
EQUISETUM	Stowmarket	Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104
ERYSIMUM	Walpole	Dr Simon Weeks,
(perennial)		01986 784348
EUONYMUS	East Bergholt	Rupert Eley, 01206 299224
HOSTA	Stowmarket	Mickfield Hostas,
		01449 711576
IRIS	Ipswich	Sarah Cook, 01473 822400
(Sir Cedric Morris introductions)		
MUEHLENBECKIA	Burgate	Jan Michalak, 01359 783452
SYRINGA	Stowmarket	Norman's Farm,
		<a href="mailto:lilacprez@hotmail.com">lilacprez@hotmail.com</a>
THALICTRUM	Worlingworth	Kim Forrester 07796 183988
SUFFOLK GARDEN PLANTS (C 20th Hardy)	The Suffolk Punch Trust,	
Hollesley	Margaret Wyllie	01394 411327

# PROPAGATION ROUNDUP

ANNE TWEDDLE

## **Narcissus Project - Rev Engleheart**

Earlier in 2016 saw the start of work on a dispersed collection of *Narcissus* to be held by the Suffolk Group. About a dozen members expressed an interest in being involved in the project. We submitted the paperwork to the Plant Heritage National Office for a proposed collection. Just this week I have heard our proposal has been accepted. This means we are over the first hurdle.

The Plant Conservation Committee is very supportive of our proposal and consider it a very good example of this type of Historical Collection. A dispersed collection means the plants will be held in more than a single physical location. In fact they will be held in the gardens of various members of the Suffolk Group who expressed interest in the project.

The reason the Reverend Engleheart was chosen is in recognition of the influence he had over narcissus breeding from 1890s-1940s. He bred over 700 cultivars. Only a handful are available commercially today.

Now our proposal for a collection has been accepted we can begin the task of searching for cultivars. At this stage we will be looking in old gardens, big gardens and with specialist growers to find bulbs that have already been named. We all have quite a lot to learn about identifying, growing and propagating the bulbs we have. I do hope before long we will have bulbs from the collection for sale.

Should you be interested in being part of the project, please get in touch either with myself, [anne@tweddle1.co.uk](mailto:anne@tweddle1.co.uk) or Maggie Thorpe [maggiethorpe37@gmail.com](mailto:maggiethorpe37@gmail.com)

## **Galanthus donation**

Suffolk Group has received generous donation from a snowdrop collection. The bulbs have now been lifted and passed over. The list is extensive and quite mouth-watering, running to 35 cultivars. Our plan is to twin-scale some of each cultivar and, where we have sufficient bulbs, to offer some for sale to members. The bulbs for sale will be available at talks in the early part of 2017, when they are in flower. So keep a lookout for material from this gift. Bulbs we will have for sale in 2017 include:

G. 'Mrs Thompson'	A large & vigorous snowdrop, producing two flowers from a single scape
G. 'Santa Claus'	Early flowering
G. 'Barnes'	November flowering
G. 'Wendy's Gold'	Yellow
G. 'Kyre Park'	Short, early flowering
G. 'David Baker'	Outer petals reflex
G. 'Chequers'	From garden of Jenny Robinson, Boxford
G. 'Faulkland House'	
G. 'Rodmarton'	'Capela' <i>woronowii</i> cultivar, from Rodmarton Manor
G. 'Bitton'	Tall strong & sturdy
G. 'Seagull'	Chunky honey scented flowers
G. 'The Apothecary'	December flowering
G. 'Majorie Brown'	Very late and vigorous
G. 'Two Eyes'	Outer petal markings
G. 'Three Ships'	Xmas flowering, found in Suffolk
G. 'Sickle'	Tall with broad leaves
G. 'Ivy Cottage Green Tip'	Suffolk introduction, out segments green markings
G. 'Bess'	Easy and vigorous
G. 'Rodmarton'	A compact early double
G. 'Walrus'	Green tipped and a ruff of inner segments

## NEW MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome thirteen new members who have joined Suffolk Plant Heritage since January.

Mrs Emma Darbey	Barry and Lynda Rochester
Ms Imogen Long	Mrs Jean Legg
Mr Peter Godwin	Mr Ian Cross
Mrs Diana Knights	Mrs Anne Gilbert
Miss Christina Clayton	Mrs Jane Crowe
Mrs Pamela Appleyard	Mrs Nicole Freear

The committee and other members look forward to meeting you at the Stowupland talks. Please introduce yourself when you sign in at the membership table.



# SUFFOLK GROUP EVENTS 2016/17

## SEPTEMBER 2016

Sunday 18      PLANT HERITAGE AUTUMN PLANT FAIR  
10am-4pm, Helmingham Hall IP14 6EF Entrance £7

Saturday 26      \*Talk 'Attracting beneficial wildlife to your garden with  
flower power' by Marina Christopher  
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speaker: Marina began as a nurseryman in 1984 and founded Phoenix Perennial Plants in 2002. Emphasis is on a balanced ecosystem which benefits wildlife. Phoenix has supplied the top garden designers with unusual plants for the Chelsea Flower Show and has won 'Best in Show' for the last three years.*

## OCTOBER

Saturday 22      \*Talk 'Orchids and other Plants in Habitat – a Journey  
through Southern Africa' by Johan Hermans  
2.30pm. Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speaker: Johan Hermans is chairman of the RHS Orchid Committee among other prestigious horticultural roles. He has studied the orchids of Madagascar for over two decades, is the author of several books on orchids and lectures at conferences world-wide.*

## NOVEMBER

Sunday 20      AGM at Lavenham Village Hall, Church Road, Lavenham  
CO10 9QT Lunch and talks by three Suffolk National  
Collection Holders  
12 for 12.30pm. Contact Isobel Ashton asap if attending  
01284 754993 isobel.ashton@btinternet.com  
Please bring a pudding!

## JANUARY 2017

Saturday 28      \*Talk: 'Growing for Gold'. Two national collection holders  
Melanie Collins and Sarah Cook discuss their aims and  
approaches to showing.  
2.30 Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speakers: Mel Collins is a partner in Mickfield Hostas, a family micro-business, which has grown out of a collection of the genus*



*Hosta* spanning 40 years and now holds the largest National Collection of the genus *Hosta*. She is happy to share her experiences with fellow collection holders contemplating the publicity of their own National Collections.

*Sarah Cook holds the National Collection of Cedric Morris irises. In 2015, in collaboration with Howard Nurseries, she won a gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show showing Cedric Morris irises. She has spent many years sourcing and growing the irises bred by Cedric Morris who lived at Benton End. Before her retirement she was the Head Gardener at the National Trust Garden at Sissinghurst in Kent.*

## **FEBRUARY**

Saturday 25      \*Talk: 'Poppies of the monsoon (the Genus *Meconopsis*)'  
by Christopher Grey-Wilson  
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speaker: Christopher Grey-Wilson was editor of the Alpine Garden Society for 20 years. Before this he served as a Principal Scientific Officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens for 22 years and from where he made plant collecting expeditions to Iran and Afghanistan, Nepal, western China, Sri Lanka, Kenya and Tanzania. A former editor of the Royal Horticultural Society's magazine The Plantsman he has also been closely involved in a number of gold medal winning awards at Chelsea.*

## **MARCH**

Saturday 25      \*Talk: The Plantsman Magazine. Speaker: Mike Grant  
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speaker: Mike Grant is editor of The Plantsman and RHS specialist publications such as plant monographs, cultivar registers and yearbooks. He previously worked as a senior botanist at Wisley.*

## **APRIL**

Sunday 2          Narcissus workshop. Hullwood Barn.  
10.30am - 3pm. Lunch, tea and coffee provided. £10.  
01473 822400, email Sarah@malmaisons.plus.com  
Maximum number: 20

Saturday 22      \*Talk: 'New Garden Worthy Plants'. By Bob Brown.  
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speaker: Bob has a life-long obsession with hardy perennials widened and much honed since he started his nursery Cotswold Garden Flowers 25 years ago on an isolated acre of unpropitious alkaline clay in*

*Worcestershire. He is known for having opinions (many very critical) about all the 15-16 thousand kinds of plants he's grown or tried to grow. He has been vice chairman of the Herbaceous Committees of the RHS and is the holder of the Veitch Memorial Medal awarded for the science and advancement of horticulture.*

## **MAY**

Sunday 28      PLANT HERITAGE SPRING PLANT FAIR  
10-4pm, Helmingham Hall, IP14 6EF Entrance £7

## **SEPTEMBER**

Sunday 17      PLANT HERITAGE AUTUMN PLANT FAIR  
10-4pm, Helmingham Hall IP14 6EF. Entrance £7

Saturday 30      \*Talk: 'Trees for Autumn' by Graham Proctor  
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the Speaker: Graeme attended Hadlow, Merrist Wood and Capel Manor colleges before starting work with Redbridge Parks Department. Keen to combine his practical knowledge and design skills he started a successful landscaping company that he ran until 1993 when, with his wife and sister in law, he took over what is now Crown Nursery in Ufford. He is a BBC Radio Suffolk Gardening Guru and writes a regular gardening column in the East Anglian Daily Times.*

## **OCTOBER**

Saturday 28      \*Talk: 'Greece: from Forest to Phrygana. A personal experience of a diverse landscape and its flora' by Graham Kendall  
2.30pm Stowupland Village Hall IP14 4BQ

*About the speaker: Graham has worked in horticulture since 1968. Having studied at the Savill Gardens, Windsor, and the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, he went on to be Head Gardener at three National Trust properties before starting his own business. A year studying in Greece in 1979, at what is now a garden owned by the Goulondris Natural History Museum and home of the Mediterranean Garden Society, kindled his love for its native flora. Graham has been leading plant tours to various parts of Greece for 10 years.*

Lectures marked \* are free to members, with £5 entrance fee for non-members.

# FROM CHELSEA TO HAMPTON COURT

SARAH COOK

Two days before the deadline for copy for the Suffolk Journal, it's raining and I've just finished digging the potato crop, I'd better settle down and write....

I've been away from home for a week at the 2016 Hampton Court Flower Show with an exhibit in the Heritage Area of the Floral Marque. The exhibit was a huge contrast to my exhibit last year at Chelsea, showcasing my National Collection of Irises bred by Sir Cedric Morris in conjunction with Howard Nurseries. Hampton Court was another joint production, but this year it was very low cost, low profile and fairly stress free.

I joined forces with Anne Milner who has the National Collection of Iris (Introductions by Arthur J Bliss). Bliss was a relative who bred irises in the 1920s. The title of our exhibit was 'Tall Bearded Irises -100 years of Breeding in Britain', and was purely photographic. It gave us both the opportunity to show pictures of Irises in our own collections and also a selection of the many others bred between 1900 and 2000. We also had pictures of the breeders of all these irises



I'm now trying to discipline myself to take a break from showing, as my husband Jim Marshall and my lives have been dominated by RHS shows for years, firstly with some 'mega productions' at Hampton Court with his Malmaison carnations and then Chelsea 2015 with the Cedric Morris irises. Here are a few reflections on and an update to the Chelsea Show.

The best part of Chelsea was certainly working with Howard Wholesale, who provided all the growing skills and much more. With their years of experience growing irises for show gardens at Chelsea they timed the whole thing to perfection, 2,000 pots of irises all coming to their peak in late May from



Michael Foster, Arthur Bliss and Cedric Morris with their champions Lucy Skelhorn, Anne Milner and Sarah Cook.

which we were able to choose the best 600 for the stand. They provided the carpenter who built the set, and the lorry driver who knew how to get into the show quickly, calmly and efficiently - which is no mean feat. Everyone at Howards seemed to get involved, and I spent many hours working and gossiping with the different teams there.

Howard's 'secret weapon' was Michael Steggles, who in years gone by had put up lots of Gold Medal winning exhibits for Blooms nursery and ended up arranging all the irises. Jim and I, Plant Heritage member Helen Chen and one of our regular show helpers passed him the plants on demand, cleaned and with the pot rims cut off. So what else did I do for the exhibit? I supplied Cherryl, the perfect artist for the backdrop, and Jane who arranged all the flowers for the Studio. With a team like this I should not have been surprised that we won the much hoped for Gold Medal, but when I saw it on our stand I was over the moon.

There were several reasons I was so pleased to take the irises to Chelsea, not least because Cedric Morris himself had taken blooms there in the 1940s and 50s to show to the Iris Committee. I also hoped that publicity surrounding the show might unearth a few more 'Cedric's, and took the opportunity to advertise my search. I was hopeful that 'Benton Baggage', named for a cat and last seen in Glasnevin Botanic Garden, might come to light. I was rung up shortly after Chelsea by a gardener who had passed the iris on to Altamont Gardens in the 1990s. I was sent five rhizomes last September, they have not yet flowered, but I am very hopeful that they are Baggage. A lady also brought a flower to Chelsea which may well be

Benton Griselda. She has since given me rhizomes. Another reason for showing was to raise the profile of Cedric's irises, and we hoped they would become readily available in nurseries and garden centres, as wide distribution should secure their future for many more years. I am pleased to see how many different places they are now on sale.

After all this why do a low tech exhibit at Hampton Court? Possibly because I had promised I would do another joint exhibit with Anne Milner, maybe because all my irises needed splitting, and we are allowed to sell rhizomes at the show

From Chelsea to Hampton Court may be from the 'sublime to the ridiculous', but it felt right to broaden our remit to show how much of our iris heritage (one among many genus) is at risk of loss. Tall bearded irises of today look very different from those of yesterday. Each decade of breeding has changed them and to let the old ones disappear is, to me, akin to keeping modern art and letting the rest disappear. Now I can turn my attention to helping the Suffolk iris project (described on page 30). Anne Tweddle has made contacts in America and we are hoping to repatriate a selection of British Historic Irises which are no longer growing over here.

The sun's come out, I'm going back to gardening, meanwhile I've just had an idea - perhaps Suffolk Plant Heritage could put on a show of the irises we are collecting, what do you think? Hampton Court or Chelsea?

.....don't tell Jim!



From left: 'High Command'; 'Blue Nile'; 'Killiney'



# HELPING AT THE CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW CLOAKROOM

*PAM GARSIDE*

On a particularly dark and dreary day last February the electronic equivalent of the new spring seed catalogue arrived in my email inviting me to take part in volunteering at the Chelsea Flower Show Plant Heritage cloakroom. We had volunteered in 2015 for the first time and memories of lush vegetation, cheerful crowds and the wonderful plants in the Grand Pavilion (including Sarah Cook and Howard Nursery's stand of Cedric Morris Irises) led to a warming day-dream of spring and summer. As this was our second year and we were termed 'experienced' volunteers, we could choose our slot.

For those who haven't had the pleasure of being involved as a volunteer I will explain the reasons for the invitation. As a member of Plant Heritage you have the opportunity not only to visit the show for free; contribute to funds raised by the cloakroom to Plant Heritage; meet other Plant Heritage members on the same rota as you; talk to the public about Plant Heritage and the work that it does; but also to receive a splendid pair of Showa gardening gloves donated each year by Globus!

This year we decided to take the 2-5pm slot which gave us time to get up to the show from Diss and have a look around the show areas before and after our duty. There are early morning shifts, mid morning shifts, early and late afternoon and evening shifts to suit. Most days the show finishes



Showing off the Showa gardening gloves.

late and the cloakroom stays open to accommodate all the left luggage and coats, and allow people to look around free of shopping and luggage. All that is required is a donation to Plant Heritage.

People leave their packed lunches in a cool area and wonderfully weird, often spiky, purchases in what is called the 'spiky area'. All are very grateful, calling it a 'wonderful service'. Not only does the cloakroom make thousands of pounds for funds, it raises the profile of the organisation, with people taking leaflets and membership forms, and creating a lot of good will.

I was struck by the range of people, of all ages and nationalities, visiting Chelsea. The cloakroom accommodated children's buggies, wheelchairs, suitcases, coats, umbrellas, smart and battered briefcases for those coming after work and, of course, plants, garden objects and hats.

We enjoyed meeting members from other area groups on our rota and other collection holders. I had a fascinating conversation with the Superintendent of West Ham Park, which has the National Collection of Liquidambar, during a quiet time when we were both getting cloakroom tickets ready for the busy time. We saw familiar faces from the Suffolk group who had been on a previous shift and left their luggage in the cloakroom.

By the end of the shift we were both in need of a cup of tea and as volunteers we could use the exhibitor's restaurant which has reasonably priced meals, by just showing our Plant Heritage volunteer wrist bands.

Then it was back to the delights of the show. As we went on Tuesday, the medals had just been awarded to the show gardens and we saw TV cameras and microphones as Monty Don interviewed the overall show garden winner who had designed the Telegraph garden. The Grand Pavilion, where all the growers have their stands, was a wonderful place to visit and my personal favourite was the Alpine Garden Society stand.

Finally, it was time to go and we hopped onto the number 11 bus which picked us up outside the Show to Liverpool Street taking in some sights on the way including Westminster Abbey, the City of London and St Paul's. It had lived up to my expectations again and we had a lot to talk about on the way home.

The cloakroom donations raised £5000 this year, which was augmented by gift aid to £6250, and have contributed a similar amount every year since it started in 2008. If you haven't been involved, it is worth doing! Advice from Gillian Spencer of Plant Heritage, who organises the scheme, is to respond early if you wish to do the rota and that slots are kept for new volunteers. You need to be physically fit and able to stand for at least three and half hours.



# A DAFFODIL OBSESSION AND THE REVEREND GEORGE ENGLEHEART

*DARREN ANDREWS*

Spring is absolutely my favourite time of the year. The new growth, the promise of a full year of gardening and a sea of subtly different daffodils, which bring a real cheer to the dullest March morning. They add to the garden a display of understated simplicity, a picture of elegance and charm which can be such a contrast to the fullness and verdancy of June. Daffodils have the ability to accompany their neighbours, rather than overpowering them, as can happen in my summer cottage garden; one can see why they are used in naturalistic settings, they are still wild invaders in our ordered plots.

Daffodils are all variations on a very similar theme. Doubles exist, but essentially, a corona or trumpet surrounded by a whorl of petals or perianth is the basic shape. Colours range from white to gold and orange, a hint of red and the so-called pinks (which are really apricot) yet there are over 25,000 cultivars listed on the RHS daffodil register. It is obvious that daffodils inspire a huge number of breeders and devotees; they are definitely the subject of a 'cult'.



About 10 years ago I started buying bulbs in numbers, simply to bring that hit of colour to my garden in spring. Slowly I realized that if I made better plans I could keep daffodils flowering in my garden from January to May. I started reading catalogues and came across varieties that I remembered from my grandparent's garden. I bought 'Actaea', 'Van Sion' and 'Queen Anne's Double' jonquil (pronounced 'John Quill's' by my grandmother) to fill my garden with some heritage varieties.

As my interest grew I became aware of some of the past breeders and found them to be a very interesting group indeed. Robert Ormiston Backhouse was a cat breeder, photographer and Olympic archery contestant (he came 13th) as well as breeding many cultivars along with his equally famous and prolific, daffodil-breeding, wife. The Brodie of Brodie was a Scottish, aristocratic, Major in the Guards, who organized his garden along strict military lines. Then we come to the Reverend George Engleheart. An Oxford scholar whose interests included saving Stonehenge, providing roman artefacts to the British Museum and breeding over 700 named daffodil cultivars.

I tried to obtain some of the more important cultivars which were instrumental in the production of new varieties and soon realized that the Engleheart daffodils were their ancestors. Sadly, very few of the 728 cultivars are readily available, and I thought I was going to have to content myself with the six I had then found to be commercially grown. Then in



late 2014, Maggie Thorpe came to our garden club to demonstrate twin-scaling of bulbs. In one of those serendipitous moments, I decided to join Plant Heritage so that I could go along to the propagation events held at Stowupland and try to learn how to increase some of my stock. It was here that I discovered how Anne Tweddle, amongst others, was trying to garner interest in forming a dispersed plant collection of Engleheart Daffodils. It seemed that fate had stepped in.

Anne called a meeting of those who were interested in helping out, and a small group was formed. The logistics of a dispersed collection were discussed, some roles were dispensed and Anne put forth a proposal of the objectives of the collection, which has now been accepted. Work has been done to locate Engleheart cultivars, orders have been placed and, with the kind tolerance of Sarah Cook and Jim Marshall, I have been able to photograph the impressive list of Engleheart's already growing in their garden. This has the potential to be a long, interesting and rewarding study, as anyone who attended Duncan Donald's excellent talk on pre 1935 daffodils can attest.



Daffodils are such strange flowers, being completely absent, even in leaf form, for more than half of the year; easily lost or forgotten, and therefore easy to lose their name. They appear in hedgerows and roadsides, often as the only reminder of a long disappeared dwelling. The old cultivars have thin twisted petals and subtle colours; they nod like shy children and have a simplicity which harkens back to the wild forms which Wordsworth immortalized. The small remaining number of the Reverend Engleheart's prodigious output show us what survivors they are, able to endure basal root rot, eel worm and virus for nearly a century, they have quite a head start over the untested varieties of today.



Photos by Darren Andrews clockwise from left: 'Seagreen', 'Will Scarlett', 'Beersheba', 'Horace'.

# E.H. 'CHINESE' WILSON – A 19TH CENTURY PLANT-HUNTER

HELEN CHEN

One of the greatest nineteenth century plant-hunters, Ernest Henry 'Chinese' Wilson was born in 1876 and began his horticultural career as an apprentice at a local nursery before going on to study at Birmingham Botanical Gardens. In 1899 he was working at Kew when he was chosen to go on a plant-hunting expedition to China for Veitch Nursery.

The aim of this first expedition was to find specimens of *Davidia involucrata*, the handkerchief tree, an almost legendary rarity discovered in 1866 by Pere David Armand. A lone tree in a single location had been seen 12 years previously by Augustine Henry. Henry Veitch, employing a number of plant hunters at the time, advised Wilson to stick to the one thing he was searching for and not waste time and money wandering about as probably every worthwhile plant in China had already been introduced.

Wilson's first objective was to reach Henry, then stationed in a remote town in Yunnan.

The journey, by river and mule, was arduous and dangerous, complicated by the unstable political situation and recent anti-foreign riots.



*Davidia involucrata*.

Having met and consulted with Henry, Wilson eventually reached the site of the previous sighting only to find that the tree had recently been felled to make way for a new house. Undaunted, he eventually managed to locate a grove of trees in Hubei. Making his base at the town of Yichang on the Yangtze river he spent the next two years exploring and collecting seeds. Despite the danger of plague and outbreaks of rebellion, he collected seed of 305 different species and 35 Wardian cases full of plant material, as well as dried herbarium specimens, representing over 900 species in total.

Wilson's second expedition to China in 1903 was in search of the yellow *Meconopsis integrifolia*. On this trip he discovered *Lilium regale*, growing in a meadow in Sichuan. On his third visit to the site in 1910 – his last expedition to China - his leg was badly broken in a landslide. He was carried back to Chengdu in a sedan chair – a three day forced march - with the leg strapped to his camera tripod as a splint, but walked with a limp for the rest of his life.



Between 1911 and 1915, Wilson collected specimens in Japan for Harvard's Arnold Arboretum including 63 named flowering cherry forms, and in 1917 he made an expedition to Korea and Taiwan. His wife and daughter joined him on these trips. Wilson named *Rosa helenae* and *Fargesia murielae* after them.

Ironically, given the dangers and privations he had survived on his collecting trips, Wilson died in a car accident in the States in 1930, three years after becoming Keeper of the Arnold Arboretum.

In total, Wilson introduced about 2000 Asian plant species and varieties to the west. Sixty species of Chinese plants are named after him. E

### Plants named after Wilson

*Acer wilsonii*, *Chrysanthemum* E.H.Wilson', *Corydalis wilsonii*, *Cymbidium wilsonii*, *Ensete wilsonii*, *Exochorda giraldii* var. *wilsonii*, *Gentiana wilsonii*, *Hypericum wilsonii*, *Magnolia wilsonii*, *Meconopsis wilsonii*, *Phalaenopsis wilsonii*, *Picea wilsonii*, *Primula wilsonii*, *Styrax wilsonii*, *Trachelospermum jasminoides* 'Wilsonii'. *Sinowilsonia* is a monotypic genus which commemorates the nickname 'Chinese' Wilson.

## PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

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# A HELLEBORE CONVERT

MICHELLE CHAPMAN

Many plants go in and out of fashion, but that's not the case with hellebores. There are dozens listed in the RHS Plant Finder and what seems like an endless supply of delicious new ones are announced by specialist nurseries every year. Yet I confess I'm a latecomer to their charms. Like many beginners I planted some *Helleborus niger* for winter interest in my first garden, but they didn't thrive and quickly succumbed to hellebore leaf spot. Disappointed with the result, I vowed never to grow hellebores again.

My Damascene moment came over two decades later when I visited my first winter show at the RHS Halls in 2011. I'd gone to admire the snowdrops, but it was the sight of the *H. x ericsmithii* cultivars displayed by Harveys Garden Plants which stole my heart. Here were huge healthy plants, with large upright flowers which could be seen easily. Then there was the marbled foliage, promising a plant with plenty of interest long after the blooms had faded. I was instantly smitten and after some cheery advice on how not repeat my earlier hellebore experience, two 'Winter Moonbeam' followed me home.

Since then I've found hellebores like these are fabulous when grown in large pots, as long as they're kept well watered in dry spells. I've placed them on the shadier part of the patio close to the house where I can see their white fading to pinky red flowers every day. Their long flowering season of three months or more makes them perfect for cheering up the winter gloom. They've been joined by *H.* 'Anna's Red', which I simply had to have after a winter's visit to Great Dixter a couple of years ago. This hellebore has prolific, deep red blooms and strongly veined foliage which provides a neat contrast.

Today I'm learning to embrace the qualities of the Lenten rose, *Helleborus x hybridus*, thanks to a large clump of them donated by a friend from choir. I garden on heavy clay and there's a woodland area to the side of my house, perfect conditions for this plant. It's fun to spot the new forms from the self-seeded plants which have sprung from the original gift. Their spread is slow for me, so they've not needed much looking after, especially as the surrounding trees give them a good mulching of leaves in the autumn, which keeps them well-fed and damp. I'm also keen to try some of our native hellebore, *H. viridis* in this spot as they should like my alkaline limestone soil.





Hellebore 'Winter Moonbeam'.

I find the dark days of February a difficult month, and last year I discovered the perfect antidote in the form of a short break to explore some gardens with winter interest. This year's plan is to increase my hellebore knowledge with a trip to the midlands to visit Ashwood nursery – noted for its breeding of hellebores – on one of its open days, and to see the national collection of hellebore species at Hazels Cross Farm nursery in Staffordshire.

I also hope to pop across to Mathon near Malvern, where the Old Country House B&B is the place where Helen Ballard grew her famous hybrids in the north border. This was an accidental discovery I made when I stayed there for the Malvern Spring Show a few years ago. The show's timing meant I'd just missed seeing them in flower and now seems the right time to retrace my steps to a place of historical plant interest.

*Michelle writes an award-winning blog about her small town garden, seasonal food and lots more <http://vegplotting.blogspot.co.uk>*







## HELMINGHAM PLANT FAIR SPRING 2016



# SENSATIONAL SALVIAS

MARGARET PALMER

**M**y topic today has something akin to a confession about it, so I hope I'm among friends? Maybe you won't be surprised, some of you may have had a similar experience, let me share with you; I've developed an enthusiasm bordering on addiction and running alongside the need to evangelise! Salvias are for me the pinnacle of my plant ambitions and if I'm a devotee you must be too!

It was really the fault of Plant Heritage you know, as it all started at our monthly meetings at Stowupland when Janet Buist of Pennycross Plants let us into the secrets of the salvia nursery. It seems incredible, but up until then I had rather cold shouldered salvias still viewing them through the prism of memories of those short red plants commonly grown as bedding plants in many gardens of my childhood. Thankfully with my new lens a whole new inspiring world has opened up.

What also ensured that my new habit took hold was our departure from Mendlesham to new pastures in East Bergholt. A new south facing garden and the urge this time around to choose plants to suit the garden's aspect had a galvanizing effect. My garden deserved my attentions and salvias became my 'must have'!

Now I'm sure some of you already know that there are over 900 species belonging to the salvia genus, some of which are hardy and some of which need protection. Luckily living in the south east as we do many species can survive the winter. My interest, however, is a bit more specific, it's really the so called shrubby salvias most of which originate from Mexico, Central and Southern America, and the southern states of the USA which really get me going.

You may be wondering what's so appealing about these plants? Well, to me they have many merits. Their long flowering period which can be from end of May to end of October or slightly longer is not something not to be sniffed at, nor is their ability to tolerate full sun. Then there is the vibrancy and intensity of colour they provide not to mention the bonus of aromatic foliage.

I'm also hooked on their luscious and evocative names for example 'Mulberry Jam', 'Icing Sugar', 'Cherry Pie', 'Lunar', 'Midnight', 'African Skies', 'Heatwave Sparkle' and 'Heatwave Blast' and we mustn't forget the perennial virtues of 'Hotlips'. There are also names that wet the appetite

for more exploration for example 'Dyson's Crimson', 'Trebah Lilac White', *S. macrophylla* 'Cerro Potosi', 'Trewithen Cerise' and 'Peter Vidgeon'.

A new enthusiasm always leads to more excursions to nurseries, at least it does in our house, and this turns up new snippets of information to digest and leads to follow up. While visiting Beeches Nursery near Saffron Walden, for example, I selected *Salvia* 'Peter Vidgeon' only to discover when paying that PV had actually visited the nursery that morning and complimented the nursery on stocking his plant. Now I don't know about you but I just love these kinds of coincidences! Apparently, this very pretty variety (it's now blooming) was raised by Robin Middleton (a great salvia enthusiast with an excellent website) and named after his friend PV. I also gather that Dyson's Nursery in Kent, run by William Dyson, is the epicentre for shrubby salvias so a visit there is now the height of my ambitions. I hope someone close to me is taking note!



*Salvia* 'Peter Vidgeon'.

Now garden maintenance is something to consider and this again is where salvias also deserve accolades. The salvias I'm keen on don't produce so much growth that there's a massive amount of pruning and herbage to dispose of and that means a minimum of stretching and lifting to contend with. Regular dead heading does keep the plants looking fresh and



*Salvia* 'Dyson's Crimson'.

flowering at optimum level, but I actually enjoy a little routine work to reflect on life and clear the head so that's no sacrifice.

Some of you may worry about the relative tenderness of salvias and I have to admit that I'm still a novice but this winter all my salvias survived. Reining back on pruning until the beginning of April paid off and ensured that plants remained compact with a minimum of woodiness.

Salvias are also so companionable and though it's maybe not *de rigueur* in some circles I've become a fan of modern floribunda roses which can almost match the flowering period of salvias. With my much smaller garden I feel it's important to maximize the space and select long flowering species. Writing at the beginning of July my garden is a mass of colour and scent with salvias, roses, thymes and lavenders providing a backdrop for other specimen shrubs and perennials. While over the top for some tastes I just love it!



# SUCCESSION GARDENING

LIZ WELLS

Fergus Garrett, the head gardener at Great Dixter, gave an interesting talk to Suffolk Plant Heritage on what he called succession planting. We all try to do this to a certain extent, but at Great Dixter where the garden has to look wonderful all the time, they have to make an extra effort to make sure that there are no flat periods. This means that the garden is multi-layered, with several plants sharing a space.

Here are some of his ideas. First of all, most of us have thought of the idea of putting small early bulbs such as snowdrops, scillas and chionodoxas in spaces that will later be filled with large leaved plants. Fergus has examined plant leaves so that he can come up with perfect combinations. For instance the lovely scented *Narcissus tazetta* has large leaves which would kill many plants trying to emerge close by. Fergus suggested planting it with the large leaved *Eucomis* 'Sparkling Burgundy' which flowers later in the summer, but will quite happily grow through the Narcissus leaves. His attention to detail is meticulous. For instance he suggested growing the pretty, yellow spring-flowering *Anemone ranunculoides* with the emerging shoots of a hosta. But not just any hosta; the perfect match would be the urn shaped *Hosta* 'Krossa Regal'.



Fergus has looked carefully at the leaves of the bulbs he plants. Tulips, which are so great for spring colour, have leaves which would kill some perennials such as phlox and rudbeckias. He plants them in groups where their foliage can't damage existing plants. One of the ways he suggested for keeping the garden looking its best all the time is to look out for the best form of everything. Many tulips are poor value because they don't survive for more than a year or two. It is a good idea to look out for ones that will last, such as most Darwin hybrids and species tulips. At Great Dixter, 'Negrita', 'China Pink', 'Red Matador' and the fragrant 'Ballerina' are permanent. It is worth experimenting to see which ones are stayers in your own garden.

To take the garden into May, alliums are wonderful to fill in gaps, but again we were warned to make sure the large leaves were not too close to plants that would get smothered. The showy 'Globemaster' has huge leaves which could be a problem. On the other hand the dainty little *Allium neapolitanum* has slender leaves and pretty white flowers. It is edible too. He suggested growing it with the perennial *Begonia evansiana* which has lovely heart shaped leaves.



As most of us realise, the garden looks good all year round if it has a good structure of shrubs and foliage. Flowers come and go but foliage stays all season. Fergus has an amazing eye for good combinations of shape, colour and texture. Again, it is important to look for good forms and then, with luck you will get not only lovely flowers but long lasting foliage too. Rodgersias have beautiful leaves, but unless you live somewhere with a heavy rainfall, they look awful later in the season. If you can find *Rodgersia pinnata* 'Maurice Mason', it will look good all season. It starts with chocolate brown leaves and later it gets long lasting red flowers. Thalictrums have such dainty flowers, but their lacy foliage is delightful too. Particularly good is *Thalictrum* 'Elin' with purple foliage. We were shown a photo of *Thalictrum* 'Illuminator' with the lovely purple foliage of *Clematis recta* 'Purpurea' and the fresh foliage of an Oriental poppy - no flowers, just a lovely combination of leaves.

Left: *Sambucus* 'Black Lace', *Miscanthus sinensis condensatus*.

Above *Thalictrum* 'Elin' with *Hydrangea* and *Euphorbia mellifera*.

Kniphofia doesn't bloom for very long. We saw a photo of a lovely stand of the yellow K. 'Torchbearer' and of course, even though it only flowers for a week or two, there is room at Dixter to display it. A kniphofia which really earns its place in a smaller garden is Kniphofia 'caulescens', with lovely spiky foliage. It looks good even when it's not in flower. Here are some other lovely foliage combinations we were shown:

*Sambucus* 'Black Lace' with the white flowered *Persicaria polymorpha*. (apparently this knotweed is not invasive).

Spiky, silver *Astelia* leaves with golden *Acanthus mollis* 'Hollard's Gold'.

The all year-round, tall, upright grass, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' with my favourite fern, *Polystichum setiferum* 'Pulcherrimum 'Bevis'.

A dwarf form of the lovely, silvery cardoon, *Cynara cardunculus* from the Chelsea Physic Garden with the magenta flowers of *Geranium riversleaianum* 'Russell Prichard'. This Geranium blooms for weeks on end. Another long lasting geranium is 'Anne Thompson'. I bought this one, because Fergus says it is similar to the magenta *Geranium psilostemon*, but for it blooms for four months instead of one month.

*Agapanthus* grown with the silver, filigree leaves of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'

The other mainstay of Great Dixter is the use of annuals. Of course, they



can afford to produce their annuals on a grand scale and each year they experiment with different combinations, and what fun it must be. We can't hope to produce them on such a scale, but Fergus suggested we grow annuals and have pockets of them here and there to take the garden into autumn.

Great Dixter relies heavily on self-sown annuals to give labour-saving colour. In spring there are forgetmenots with yellow *Smyrnium*

*Salvia superba*, *Helenium* 'Mardi Gras', *Eryngium*, *Allium sphaerocephalon*, *Dipsacus*.





*Verbascum olympicum*, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus'.

*perfoliatum* looking great with tulips. Later, there are lots of their trademark stately *Verbascum* 'Yellow Lightning'. Some of the self-sown plants which they allow are really weeds. For instance last year, they had cow parsley growing in the beds. This is a deliberate attempt to make the garden more natural looking. They have teasels, evening primrose and I even saw some ragwort last summer. Fergus said to prevent prolific seeders like Red orach, *Atriplex hortensis* taking over, you can hoe off the first germination. More will germinate but not quite so abundantly. I love the way the dainty little daisies of *Erigeron karvinskianus* seed alround the Lutyens steps.

Lastly, we saw Clematis clambering through the shrubs to extend the season of interest. The small flowered *Clematis viticella* and *Clematis texensis* with pretty urn-shaped flowers are best for this. He also recommended *Clematis fargesii* 'Paul Farges' for a vigorous plant, with long lasting, starry white flowers, with primrose stamens. This is also known as 'Summer Snow' and is well worth seeking out. Stronger growing *Clematis montana* or honeysuckles are grown at Dixter, but pruned to stop them killing their host shrubs.

Fergus came up with so many tips, that now we have no excuse to say to visitors: 'you should have seen the garden last week!'



# THE SUFFOLK HERITAGE GARDEN

MARGARET WYLLIE

In the nineteenth century a college was formed to train young men to farm in our colonies. Included was a stud where Suffolk Punch horses were bred for export to these farms. As times changed the colonial college became a labour colony for unemployed Londoners and in 1938 it was bought by the Home Office and became a Borstal where the boys were employed on the land and worked with the horses.

When the Home Office sold all its land and farming interests in 2006, a group of local enthusiasts formed a trust which purchased the stud with its land and horses and formed the Suffolk Punch Trust. In its spirit of preservation and conservation The Trust acquired the other iconic Suffolk farm animals: the oldest registered flock of Suffolk sheep, Large Black pigs and Red Poll cattle. It seemed a natural completing of the circle to make a home for Suffolk's horticultural heritage.



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Work began in 2011 on a site 90 x 18metres. It was fenced against deer and rabbits and the rough grass was sprayed with deep root weedkiller. Next spring two of the Suffolk Punches ploughed and harrowed it, after which the area was sown with grass seed using an antique 'fiddle'.

During that spring hawthorn whips were put in round three sides for wind protection and an orchard of old Suffolk fruit trees was planted at the end of the site.

As the Trust is an educational charity, plots were dug for schools to come and grow vegetables. Children from two local schools have been coming since 2012 and take their produce back to the school kitchens.

The design for the flower garden was drawn up by a local garden designer whose family has bred some of our plants, particularly chrysanthemums, all named after family members. During the winter of 2012/13 the beds were marked out, the turf lifted and much of the double digging done. The soil is Suffolk crag and becomes hard a spit down, quite a job. One big plus was the inexhaustible supply of stable manure that was laid in the trenches.

Planting began in Spring 2013 with a collection of Cedric Morris tall bearded iris generously donated by Sarah Cook, who is the National Collection holder and whose help has been invaluable. She has worked with the project from its inception.

The iris bed is horseshoe shaped with obelisks to represent the horseshoe nails. These are planted with clematis, mainly Fisk's and are now scrambling up the supports. Planting has continued each year as cultivars have become available or are discovered.

There is now a pergola to complete the design and to lead visitors into the garden. The oak tree from which it was made had fallen in a storm in Ickworth Park. The rambler 'Sir Cedric Morris' and several other roses and clematis are just getting hold. All the work has been done by volunteers who have learnt so much on the job.

The garden is slow to wake in the spring, though we hope to increase our collection of Galanthus and Narcissus, and *Muscari* 'Baby's Breath' is spreading. It comes into its own in mid to late summer and continues full of colour until well into October.

*More information at [www.suffolkpunchtrust.org](http://www.suffolkpunchtrust.org)*

# THREE HEREFORDSHIRE GARDENS

*ROSIE ANSELL*

Stockton Bury is a four acre plantsman's garden on fertile clay soil just outside Leominster in Herefordshire. Originally it was a grange of Leominster Priory and the fish pond, tithe barn and pigeon house remain from that time. Later it was part of the Berrington estate until sold in the late nineteenth century to the Treasure family who still own it.

The 100 yard long wall of the kitchen garden is right alongside the road through the village of Kimbolton and the garden slopes away from it to the south. You enter through one of the old farm buildings, which has an excellent exhibition detailing the history of the garden then pass the little summer garden to the rear of the house, which was rebuilt about 40 years ago on the site of a Georgian predecessor. The spring garden and an auricula theatre are between the house and the road.



Crossing the main lawn, with its substantial monkey puzzle tree, you reach the kitchen garden where the long walk takes you past the enormous fruit cage backing onto that long south facing wall. At the end of the kitchen garden steps lead into the Dingle, created in 1995 from an old gravel quarry. Flowing spring water feeds a series of pools, surrounded by moisture loving plants. Nearby the secret garden is well hidden, and gives views across to Leominster.



Below the kitchen garden are the Paddock Garden, formerly an orchard,



but now comprising island beds of shrubs, the more formal pillar garden, and the Pigeon House garden, formerly a chicken run. These areas were developed in the 1980s and 1990s by Raymond Treasure and Gordon Fenn and are now reaching maturity. John Treasure, who owned the impressive Burford House Gardens near Ludlow, was also a member of the family.

The garden is now run by Tamsin Westhorpe, Raymond Treasure's niece, previously editor of *The English Garden* magazine, and events and courses are run in the garden studio. The excellent Tithe Barn café is surrounded by a cider apple orchard.



Hampton Court gardens are a completely different proposition. Although the site of Hampton Court is ancient (more ancient than its more famous namesake on the Thames) its recent history has been chequered.

The house was bought in 1994 by an American millionaire, who restored it and furnished it as he thought a British castle should be furnished. It is now open to the public and much used as a wedding venue. The grounds were laid out in the 17th century by George London and Henry Wise, but nothing survives from this time. Humphrey Repton also landscaped the grounds, which are alongside the River Lugg, and the conservatory adjoining the house was designed by Joseph Paxton

The walled garden was built in 1781 but it was completely neglected by 1994 and was redesigned by Simon Dorrell on the plan seen today. The northern half is the vegetable garden, producing food for the castle kitchen and visitors' restaurant, which includes raised beds, an orchard, glasshouses and wild flower meadow, together with a cutting border for the castle and its functions. The whole is run on organic principles.

The southern half was originally a flower garden, but had descended to become a Christmas tree nursery before the restoration. It now includes pavilions built of chestnut and oak set among different compartments, one a rose garden, all alive with water in different forms – moats, staircases, and a water pavement. To one side of the walled garden is the Dutch garden (formerly a tennis court), including a central canal, and full of tulips when we visited.

To the south of the walled garden are the sheltered herbaceous borders, providing interest throughout the seasons. To the west is a maze with a central tower providing a panoramic view of the gardens, and further still is the Sunk Garden, originally excavated in about 1864 to accommodate a fernery, and now a shady area with a pool, a waterfall and a hermitage.

Hergest Croft, between Kington and the Welsh border, is different again, now into the fourth generation of ownership in the Banks family. At one end is the kitchen garden, then the orchard, with lawns in front of the house, leading on to the azalea garden. Hergest Croft is very well wooded and contains over 90 champion trees.

If you are feeling energetic (and have suitable footwear – it was *very* muddy when we went!) you can take the half mile walk across the park to Park Wood where there is a secret valley surrounding a pond and stream which has a benign microclimate where a variety of rare trees and a vast array of rhododendrons grow, together with magnolias and camellias

Hergest Croft holds National Collections of *Acers*, *Betula* and *Zelkova*.

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# CANAL HOUSE GARDENS OF AMSTERDAM

*MAGGIE THORPE*

**I**n June four Suffolk Plant Heritage members, Susan Burton, Barbara Segall, Widget Finn and I, visited Amsterdam for the city's annual Open Gardens Festival. The Open Gardens of Amsterdam gave us three days of peeping behind the facades of those wonderful tall houses fronting the canals. Some are museums, others are offices, one is the home of the Mayor whilst he is in office and others are private homes sometimes divided into apartments. All have a secret garden, mostly long and narrow and nearly always in the shadow of enormous trees protected by the authorities as the living lungs of the city.

We all know how hard it is to garden in the shade but Amsterdam has certainly made the finest use of ivy, hostas, ferns, hydrangeas and box topiary. There are statues, fountains and charming little garden houses, clever use of pots, urns and gazebos but no herbaceous borders. Where there was any sunshine breaking through, there were climbing roses perfuming the air along with the lime trees which were in full flower.

Earlier in the year, and before the huge trees come into leaf, the gardens would be more colourful when they are full of pots of tulips. However, I







feel I learnt a lot about the clever use of contrasting foliage and hostas without a single snail bite!

The paths were mainly small narrow bricks often laid in patterns and crushed shells were used instead of gravel. Museum Van Loon, a double fronted house built in 1671, belonged at one stage to the founder of the East India Company who embellished it with precious panelling, stuccowork and mirrors, all there for us to see today.

Not to be missed was the Canal Museum, beautiful house, neat formal garden and fascinating exhibition of the building of the canals. In true Dutch fashion, vases of flowers adorned every garden table or hallway, very like Dutch master paintings, some you had to touch to know if they were real or artificial! A lovely holiday in a wonderful city.



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# AMONG MY FAVOURITE GARDENING BOOKS .....

**‘OLD WIVES’LORE FOR GARDENERS’ by Maureen & Bridget Boland. Pub. The Bodley Head 1976**

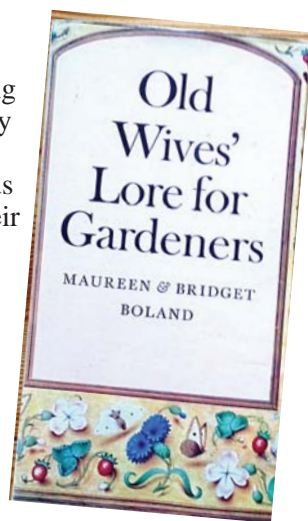
*WIDGET FINN*

Did you know that hollyhocks thrive on beer? That in the past gardeners used camomile like a visiting physician, as planted beside an ailing plant for a short while it improves the plant’s health immensely? That hanging mothballs on a peach tree prevents leaf curl (first find your moth balls)? Or that banana skins, laid just below the soil surface, are good for roses as they rot quickly providing calcium, magnesium, sulphur, phosphates and sodium? And, irresistibly ‘when Old Wives have finished telling fortunes they add the tea-leaves to their camellias which benefit enormously.’

These little gems of wisdom come from a gardening book which I’ve treasured for forty years. Recently there has been a plethora of books with similar advice, probably much of it lifted from this glorious original, for the Boland sisters really did gather their nuggets of gardening wisdom from old wives and ancient gardeners.

Maureen and Bridget were school friends of my mother’s – another reason to enjoy these books since she remembered them as ‘pretty, red-haired girls and incorrigibly Irish.’ Unusually for women of their generation they both had careers – Maureen in publishing, and Bridget as a screenwriter credited with those film classics *Gaslight* and *Anne of the Thousand Days*.

They shared a house in South Kensington whose garden featured in glossy magazines, ‘but only’ wrote Maureen modestly’ because we had placed arch-shaped full-length mirrors in the back wall, giving the idea of two gardens for the price of one’ an idea copied by garden designers ever since. They studied books on plants that would flourish in damp shade though so many of them were poisonous that the sisters claimed that they



contemplated going into business as market gardeners to supply would-be murderers who hesitate to sign chemists' registers for their needs.

In retirement they moved together to a cottage in Hampshire, working a garden on light sandy soil on a steep south-facing hillside. Bridget writes 'The little learning we had acquired gardening on Thames mud was a dead loss, and needing to learn fast we pestered everyone we met for advice. We soon amassed a store of curious information and began to ask all our friends for the gardening lore their grandmothers had passed down to them. We also found in old books so much practical advice of the grandmotherly kind which new gardening books never covered that we decided to pass it on to all those who are not afraid of finding a certain amount of superstition mingled with good sense.'

Add in a dose of Irish humour and the mix is irresistible. Read, learn and laugh, and I hope you get as much enjoyment out of the book as I do.

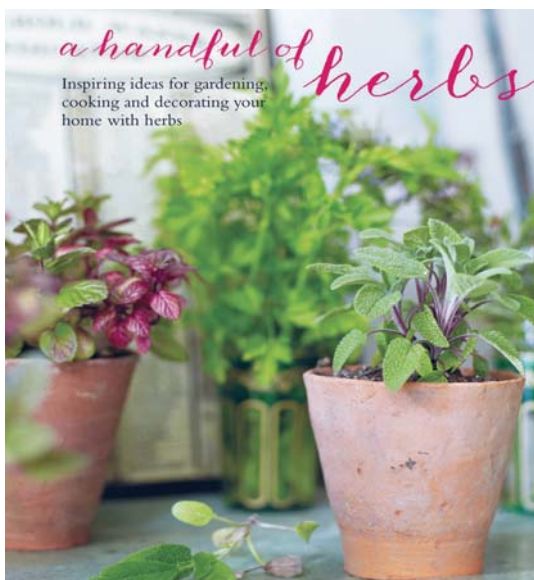
*Secondhand copies of 'Old Wives Lore for Gardeners' can be found on Amazon.*

## **'A HANDFUL OF HERBS' by Babara Segall, Louise Pickford and Rose Hammick. Pub. Ryland Peters & Small**

MAGGIE THORPE

A charmingly illustrated book of essential herbs, their culinary and medicinal properties, tips on growing and some exciting recipes such as foaming sage butter, homemade herb cheeses and delightful summer garden drinks.

One of the authors, Barbara Segall, a previous chairman of our Suffolk Plant Heritage group and editor of Herbs magazine, is an expert blogger of herbal ideas and new recipes. ([www.thegardenpost.com](http://www.thegardenpost.com))



Research presented by the British Psychological Society at their annual Conference showed the results of analysis of the beneficial effect on memory of the inhalation of rosemary and the drinking of peppermint tea, an improvement of 15%.

So I am off to try more ideas from this book with a twig of rosemary in my top pocket and a cup of peppermint tea by my side!

*'A Handful of Herbs' is available to Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal readers for the special price of £9.99 including postage & packaging (rrp £12.99) by telephoning Macmillan Direct on 01256 302 699 and quoting the reference GJ4,*

## MEMBERS' GARDENS OPEN 2017

GABLE HOUSE, HALESWORTH ROAD, REDISHAM, NR34 8NE.  
Brenda and John Foster 01502 575298

Sunday 12 February 11-4pm Entry £4 in aid of NGS  
Snowdrop Day. Large collection of snowdrops, aconites and cyclamen in 1-acre garden.

*More details of members garden openings will be included in the Spring issue of Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal. Entries should be sent to Widget Finn, widget.finn@g.mail.com by 1 December (late entries up to the beginning of January will be included if space permits). Photos welcomed.*

### To advertise in Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal ....

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# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2016

- Oct 1 EAGG talk on Dahlias with Andy Vernon, Hitcham Village Hall IP7 7NE [www.eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net](http://www.eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net)
- Oct 1-2 Great Dixter Plant Fair, Northiam, E Sussex TN31 6PH [www.greatdixter.co.uk](http://www.greatdixter.co.uk)
- Oct 8 Thorncroft Clematis Open Nursery NR9 4QG [www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk](http://www.thorncroftclematis.co.uk)
- Oct 16 Suffolk Wildlife Trust Apple Day and Plant Fair, Lopham Fen IP22 2HX [www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org](http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org)
- Oct 16 Norfolk PH talk by Timothy Walker, Bawburgh Village Hall, NR9 3LL [www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk](http://www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk)
- Oct 28/29 RHS Shades of Autumn Show, London [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)
- Nov 5 EAGG talk by Michael Warren and AGM, Hitcham Village Hall IP7 7NE [www.eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net](http://www.eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net)
- Nov 12 Cambridge PH talk by Fergus Garrett, Girton College CB3 0JG [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com)
- Nov 19 Essex PH talk by Alan Gray of East Ruston, Writtle College CM1 3RR [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com)
- Dec 2 Chelsworth Christmas Fair [www.chelsworth.co.uk](http://www.chelsworth.co.uk)
- Dec 3 Lavenham Christmas Fair [www.visit-lavenham.co.uk](http://www.visit-lavenham.co.uk)
- And two events organised by the Friends of Fullers Mill Garden, tickets and information from 01284 728888
- Oct. 15 'The Garden at Buckingham Palace' 2pm Culford Village Hall IP28 6DN
- Oct 29 'The History, Plants and Gardens of Norway' 6pm Culford Village Hall IP28 6DN

Editorial contributions to the Spring 2017 issue of Suffolk Plant Heritage Journal are wanted by 1 December. Please send articles and photos to Widget Finn, [widget.finn@gmail.com](mailto:widget.finn@gmail.com)



## AND FINALLY .....

A recent article in the Daily Telegraph claimed that the problem of plant thieves has reached epidemic proportions. *Galanthus* 'Might Atom' worth £100 was recently 'lifted' from RHS Wisley, and in 2014 Kew Gardens' rareist plant, the priceless dwarf water lily *Nymphaea thermarum* was stolen.

The article was followed up in the Telegraph Letters Page with a poem, sent by Robin Lane and written by his grandmother in the 1960s. Lady Maconochie of Inverewe was a prolific amateur poet who wrote the poem in response to complaints by her daughter, who was curator of Inverewe Gardens, about visitors who helped themselves to cuttings.

### THE GARDENER'S CURSE

Awake, my muse, bring bell and book  
To curse the hand that cuttings took.  
May every sort of garden pest  
His little plot of land infest  
Who stole the plants from Inverewe,  
Falkland Palace, Crathes, too.  
Let caterpillars, capsid bugs  
Leak-hoppers, thrips all sorts of slugs,  
Play havoc with his garden plot,  
And may late frost destroy the lot.

# SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE

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

