

Plant Heritage

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Autumn 2009



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Front and back page photograph of Echinacea and Verbena bonariensis at Wisley taken by Sarah Cook..

Cover design by Sally Geeve, www.sallygeeve.com. Thanks to Nicola Hobbs for layout.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

MAGGIE THORPE

Four committee members attended the National AGM hosted by the Herts and Beds Group in Hatfield. We were able to collect some of the plants we requested from the Annual Plant Exchange and these are now growing on Robert Shepperson's allotment awaiting propagation for future plant sales. The Chairman, Professor Michael Alder, gave his view on the future of our association and was bullish about our continuing national deficit.

Groups must do their best as always to supplement the income from membership but we must look to sponsorship and outside funding for special projects. Quite a number of our activities including new collections could well become special projects. Increasing membership is still, of course, vital. Please encourage your friends to join us in our conservation work. Being a member is in fact contributing to conservation even if one doesn't take part or enjoy coming to events.

The change to Plant Heritage as our new name has met with great enthusiasm as it describes what we do and is far less of a mouthful.

The Spring Plant Sale at Helmingham was our best ever in terms of weather and nurseries attending but we must endeavour to raise more plants for our own Plant Heritage stall.

We need volunteers this autumn to grow plants from seed, say one particular genus to be grown on by Robert until they reach a saleable size. Three members are busy growing seedlings of *Euphorbia glauca*, the seed of which Anne Tweddle procured from Dunedin Botanic Garden. More help is needed on our Propagation Days – please do come along, you learn such a lot, meet other members and have the chance to acquire some free propagation material and even a free plant!

Do read Anne Tweddle's article on paeonies and make sure your name is on our list of those who would like a plant. We are so lucky that Ivan has entrusted us with this project which gives members first refusal of a very special plant at a very special price.

Tickets for the talk by Timothy Walker on October 24th are selling well so please don't leave it too late to apply (see advertisement on page 37).

Our own AGM this year will take place in the Guildhall in Lavenham on 30th November at 7.00pm and will be followed by a short talk by Peter

Wilson on plants used in everyday and prescription drugs. Please let me know if you intend to come as I need to know numbers for catering. There will be a glass of wine and light refreshments

Congratulations to our Collection Holders at Hampton Court, Sue Wooster for her second gold for alpine campanulas, and Jim Marshall and Sarah Cook for their silver gilts for their Malmaison carnations and Cedric Morris irises respectively. Thanks are due to the RHS for giving PH the chance to run the cloakroom at Chelsea, two years running. I had the pleasure of joining the team at Chelsea. It was quite hard work keeping track of so many coats and bags but lovely to meet members from other groups and rewarding to have raised over £4000 each year. Help is always needed in our Plant Heritage marquees at all the shows and if you let me know I will forward your name to National Office.

I look forward to seeing you at our Autumn Plant Sale at Helmingham - all we need is one or two hours of your time to help with numerous duties either before or after your plant buying escapades! Entry to the sale is free if you volunteer to help. For the first time we are including a Plant Doctor and an Apple Detective so bring along your plant problems or your nameless apples for identification.

We are anxious to continue to supply the public with the excellent and much appreciated leaflet listing specialist nurseries and collection holders in East Anglia. We need a volunteer to take on the publication of the next issue, a job which entails contacting all the nurseries, collecting payment from them and then passing all this information to the printers. Please do let me know if you think you could take on this task.



What on
earth?
The
answer is
on page
35

ANNABEL THOROGOOD

SUFFOLK GROUP'S NEW SECRETARY

MAGGIE THORPE

Last year we appointed Annabel Thorogood as the Suffolk Group's new secretary, though we waited until after the birth of her son, Digby, last October to throw her in at the deep end! Now she is up and running as she learns what goes on in our group and how best she can help. So far she has been instrumental in sorting out our website and helping with the design of our Plant Heritage stand at plant sales.

With a great love of plants she went straight from school to Otley College, completing an ND in horticulture in 1998. This she followed with an HND in Landscape and Amenity Management at Writtle College and in her middle gap year worked with English Heritage at Down House, the former home of Charles Darwin.

It was at Down House that her passion for historic gardens and plants began, and after completing her HND in 2001 her first job was as sole gardener at Coopersale House, Epping, a private 20 acre historic house and garden which had been derelict until bought by the current owners. She married and in 2004 set up and ran her own plant centre alongside her parent's farm shop in Assington which was sold earlier this year.

She now works in five gardens in and around Boxford, and we are so lucky to have her join us to help with our plant conservation work.



SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE WEBSITE

ANNABEL THOROGOOD

Earlier this year I took on the refurbishment and running of Suffolk Plant Heritage's website. Charged with lots of enthusiasm yet little experience but lots of time stuck in the house with a new baby, I set to work! My aim was to make the site clear and easy to use for all. One of the key features being the ability for other committee members to edit the

site as well as me doing it. The site has all sorts of information on it including the latest news, updates on forthcoming events and details of exhibitors attending the plant sales in addition to photos and information on plant collections held in Suffolk.

I have lots of plans for the site and intend to develop it slowly. I hope to be able to add features such as plant sale tickets available to buy online, additional information from collection holders and maybe even virtual tours of their collections.

I do hope you have found the new site useful and easy to use. I would very much appreciate any feedback you may have about the site. To do this please go to the contacts page to send me a message or e-mail me at annabel.thorogood@gmail.com.

www.nccpgsuffolk.org

PROPAGATION OFFICER'S REPORT

ROBERT SHEPPERSON

GOOD NEWS AND FREE PLANT

In a world bedevilled by bad news and rising costs everyone wants to hear some good news and everyone likes to get something, in this case, for free. Should you wish to benefit from either or both of these recession busters please read on.

First the good news: our spring sale this year at Helmingham comprehensively shattered all previous records for attendance and number and variety of stalls and attractions, and hours of unbroken May sunshine. As a consequence record amounts of financial benefit accrued for Suffolk, ultimately destined to benefit the work of NCCPG (here after mercifully to be known as Plant Heritage).

Around 1,700 people poured through the gates on a flawless day of glorious spring sunshine and gentle breezes. By lunchtime a huge swathe of parked cars stretched out across the deer park alongside the lake, glinting in the midday sun like so many languid highlights on a calm mid summer sea. No greater contrast with our two previous spring sales could be imagined. Inside the sale area eager crowds besieged the free plant collection point to such an extent that apparently all 840 *Iris sibirica* were

gone in less than an hour, leaving the punch- drunk free plant distributors slumped outside the tattered remains of their so recently organised gazebo.

Speaking to a few of the stall holders I got the distinct impression that business had been excellent. Certainly at the Plant Heritage table we sold rapidly, our final income figure was only really capped by availability of plants. I took home barely half a dozen crates. Whilst I am as grateful as ever for all the valuable contributions donated by members, which were every bit as generous as usual, I do have to report that we were let down by our irises.

Conspicuous by their near absence from our display, their normally show-stoppable blooms were not in sale conditions at the time due to an outbreak of iris leaf spot. Not something I had noticed before, I saw the tell-tale oval brown spots on our stock plants at the allotment shortly after lifting and potting up around 80 rhizomes in late March. Suspicious, I paid great attention to the potted plants as these developed longer leaves and sure enough not only did they exhibit the same tell-tale signs, but were actually much worse affected than the plants still in the ground, developing dead patches and elongated brown streaks. This disorder apparently does little harm to the iris but the state of their foliage forced me to reluctantly conclude that they were unfit for sale. Pity really, they rooted well enough and quite a few were even flowering well.

I do find them tantalising as potted plants for sale; getting them right is practically like growing money. They are amongst the toughest plants around, easy to establish with extraordinary powers of survival, but yet so easy to miss the quality target for high class plant sale. According to the iris growers at Howard's Nurseries, where we attended a highly successful Iris Day sale at the end of May, the rhizomes are best lifted and potted in late summer rather than early spring: I intend to follow this excellent advice.

Which leads neatly back to that opening free plant offer. We need more plants; to produce same I need more willing assistants. I encourage and reward those prepared to give a little time with propagation. We have free plants and some of these will be Tall Bearded Irises. I can offer such delights as *Campanula* 'Blue Bloomers', *Silene* 'Firefly', *Iris sibirica* 'Shakers Prayer' (a delicately veined rarely available form), several rare asters, species peonies and of course those stunning irises (subject to controlling of leaf spot!).

So why not come along and join us at our group propagation sessions and take home some horticultural gems for your garden absolutely free. In 2010 these are on March 13 and June 26. Please ring me first if you plan to come (01728628415).

PLANT COLLECTIONS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

MEETINGS AND MARQUEES – THE DIARY OF A PCC

CHRISTINE MOLE

March: Off to RHS Wisley for the Plant Health Information Day with Sean Reid (National Collection Holder of Buxus at NT Ickworth Hall).

There were interesting lectures from Defra and the RHS on topics ranging from Common Pests to Alien Invaders, with some much needed advice on the control of pests and diseases, including biological controls and compost tea (although sadly not much new advice on box blight for Sean). Perhaps the most serious message of the day was the danger of plant imports - it may be the plant itself which causes the problem, such as knotweed and giant hogweed, or a new pest or disease hiding on an import – such as Hemerocallis gall midge, first detected in 1989, but now all too common.

April: The Eastern Region Collection Co-ordinators meeting at Cambridge University Garden Botanic Garden, attended by Mercy Morris, Plant Heritage's Plant Conservation Officer, and PCCs (Plant Collection Co-ordinators) from all over the eastern region. The morning meeting was followed by visits to the Botanic Garden's seed store and library, with its vast array of old and new gardening books; lunch then a tour around the grounds by Tim Upson (Curator), who pointed out to us many of the trees and shrubs which had excited Roy Lancaster at the 2008 Plant Heritage Day.

May: Plant Sale at Helmingham, unusually sunny and dry, and as usual I was given display material from many of the Suffolk Collections, including the wide range of flowering Aesculus which Robert Grimsey brought and laid out in vases which caused a lot of interest

I may have had a short break in **June**, but Josephine Mitson and I were hard at it at the RHS Hampton Court Flower show in early **July**. We were there from Monday to Wednesday helping all three of the Suffolk Collections who were exhibiting in the Plant Heritage Marquee. Sue Wooster with her alpine Campanulas and another amazing mock rock construction made by her husband Simon received a well deserved Gold; Jim Marshall (as seen on TV) was awarded a Silver Gilt for his display of Malmaison Carnations, as did Sarah Cook for her exhibit about British Plant Breeders, focussing on the iris breeders Sir Cedric Morris and Arthur Bliss and four Day Lily (Hemerocallis) breeders, all of whom are represented by collections (see article on page 19).

Robin and Yvonne Milton, with Melanie obtained a Silver in the Floral Marquee at Hampton Court (and another at Tatton) – so yet again the Suffolk collections have been ‘out and about’ and winning medals.

Mid July and I was attending a meeting to discuss ways which Plant Heritage could best engage with education and also saw me getting my hands dirty, or at least wet, helping Jim Marshall and Sarah Cook by watering the Malmaisons and all their other plants while they were away for a few days, and finally visiting Sue Wooster at the Sandringham Flower Show (Silver Gilt this time).

August 24, in the future as I write this, there will be a collections holders meeting at Ickworth courtesy of the National Trust and Sean Reid, where we will all be able to discuss collection issues with Mercy Morris (Plant Conservation Officer) and also have a chance to see the Buxus Collection and garden at Ickworth. Just to finish Alan Shipp who has a Hyacinthus orientalis collection based at Cambridge will be doing a display in Newmarket next year (more details later).

SUFFOLK’S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

AESCULUS	Bury St. Edmunds	Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203
BUXUS	Bury St. Edmunds	National Trust Ickworth Park, 01284 735819
CAMPANULA	Bury St. Edmunds	Sue Wooster, 07879 644958
DELPHINIUM & RIBES	Bury St. Edmunds	Rougham Hall Nurseries, 0800 970751
DIANTHUS (Malmaison)	Ipswich	Jim Marshall, 01473 822400
EQUISETUM	Stowmarket	Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104
ERYSIMUM	Walpole	Dr.Simon Weeks, 01986 784348
EUONYMUS	East Bergholt	Rupert Eley, 01206 299224
HIBISCUS	Woodbridge	John Woods Nurseries 01394 386914
HOSTA	Stowmarket	Mickfield Hostas. 01449 711576
IRIS (Sir Cedric Morris introductions)	Ipswich	Sarah Cook, 01473 822400
SYRINGA	Stowmarket	Norman's Farm, 01449 781081

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

PAULINE BYFORD

It has been a very difficult time to recruit new members because of the economic climate. In April the National Office organised a meeting for the group chairmen and membership secretaries which was a very useful occasion. We exchanged ideas with other county groups on how to attract and keep new members.

Currently there are 4,363 national members of which 267 are Suffolk members. If you belong to a local gardening group, however small, please let me know the name of the secretary so I can send plant sale flyers as our plant sales are among our best recruiting strategies. If you know gardens which are opening for charity, please contact me and I can send you our literature and membership forms. Hosts are usually very happy for you to leave information about Plant Heritage on the table at the entrance. If you have any ideas that might attract other gardeners, please e-mail them or phone me.

We are trying to cut postage costs by using e-mails. New members usually put email addresses on their application form but I am sure many more of you have one too. My new e-mail address is pabyford@btinternet.com.

HELP NEEDED!

for our autumn plant sale at Helmingham Hall on
Sunday 20 September

Volunteers are needed at the gate,
questionnaire desk and members' gazebo.

If you can spare an hour or so please contact Pauline
Byford 01284 762628, pabyford@btinternet.com

Helpers get free entry to the sale and
Helmingham Gardens.

HELP TO PUBLICISE THE PLANT SALE

SUE BURTON

The success of this spring's Plant Heritage Sale at Helmingham owed much to the amount of increased publicity that we were able to organise, and thanks are due to the many members who helped by placing leaflets in suitable sites.

These included garden open days, restaurants and tea rooms, museums and galleries, special exhibitions, markets, and, of course, exhibitors' own nurseries. We also much appreciated the information that people were able to give us about their local parish magazines, village garden societies and parish websites.

We have by no means got every Suffolk magazine, website or garden society on our database and would be grateful to hear of more. If you could help in this way, please drop me an email at rookery.house@virgin.net, or phone 01284 828273. You may know of other local societies which would like our leaflets and/or posters. Or you might be able to help by putting a few leaflets advertising the Autumn Plant Sale in your local post office or anywhere local that is visited by numbers of people. We can post out to you as many leaflets as you can manage!

Thank you in advance for any help that you can give.



SUFFOLK GROUP SPEAKERS AND VISITS PROGRAMME

2009

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 12, 2.30 pm Sally Petitt, Cambridge Botanic Garden. 'The Tulip Species Collection + bulbs for sale Stowupland Village Hall*

Sunday 20
10.30am - 4.00 pm Plant Sale at Helmingham Hall
Please register your willingness to help - email pabyford@btinternet.com or ring 01284 762628

OCTOBER

Saturday 24, 2.30 pm Timothy Walker, Director of the University of Oxford Botanic Gardens 'What have plants ever done for us?'. Stowupland Village Hall. Tickets £10 members, £12 guests including tea.
To book contact Maggie Thorpe smece@aol.com, 01787 211346

NOVEMBER

Monday 30, 7.00 pm Suffolk Group AGM, Guildhall, Lavenham.
including short talk by Peter Wilson on plants used in everyday and prescription drugs.
Please advise Maggie Thorpe smece@aol.com, or 01787 211346 if planning to attend

2010 (ARRANGED SO FAR)

JANUARY

Saturday 30, 2.30 pm Sarah Cook 'Cedric Morris's Irises'
Stowupland Village Hall 01473 652587 *-

FEBRUARY

Saturday 27, 2.30 pm Dr Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries and Gardens, Newark 'Wonderful Woodlanders'
Stowupland Village Hall *

MARCH

Saturday 13, 1.30pm Propagation Day. General spring division and repotting. Robert Shepperson's allotment, Worlingworth. *Ring Robert on 01728 628415 if you intend to go.*

Saturday 27, 2.30 pm Dr Chris Grey-Wilson 'Pulsatillas'
Stowupland Village Hall *

MAY

Saturday 22, 2.30 pm Yvonne and David Leonard, Crosshills, Field Road, Mildenhall IP28 7AL (01638 712742). Garden visit. Specialities *Verbascum* and *Cistus*. £3 per person (for NGS)

JUNE

Saturday 19, 2.30 pm Brenda and John Foster, Gable House, Halesworth Road, Redisham NR34 8NE (01502 575298). Garden Visit. £4 per person

Saturday 26, 1.30pm Propagation Day. Cuttings, repottings, etc. Robert Shepperson's allotment, Worlingworth. *Ring Robert on 01728 628415 if you intend to go.*

JULY

Saturday 3, 2.30pm Bernard Tickner, Fullers Mill, West Stow, Bury St Edmunds IP28 6HD (01284 728248). Garden Visit.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 11, 2.30 pm Sue Martin of Frittenden, Cranbrook, Kent
'Geums' Stowupland Village Hall *

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

APPLE REVIVAL

We're delighted to welcome Apple Revival as a new exhibitor at the autumn plant sale at Helmingham Hall, featuring an 'Apple Detective' table. Bring along your mystery apples, those fruit whose name you have forgotten or never known, and the team of experts will try and identify them for you. Spread the word - and perhaps someone will turn up with an old variety which was previously undiscovered!.

The continuous destruction of traditional apple orchards over recent years is well publicised. Apple Revival has been set up primarily to preserve and sustain the survival of unique and rare old apple varieties.

Part of Apple Revival's objective is to locate and identify rare varieties. Over two hundred years of collective experience in apple growing provides a wealth of knowledge in old English varieties.

Apple Revival's catalogue includes a selection of varieties propagated and grown from the trees of a very old orchard situated in Norfolk. The catalogue lists such treasures as Hembling, dating back before 1644, with only two known trees still growing in Norfolk, and Herringfleet Beauty, which was discovered in the remains of an early eighteenth century orchard. Planting these trees in residential gardens or small orchards will help in the revival of some of the rarest varieties and maintain them for future generations.

Apple Revival is not open to the public, but you can contact them on info@applerevival.co.uk www.applerevival.co.uk.

THE PLANT DOCTORS

Autumn Plant Sale at Helmingham Hall

Do you have some plant problems or problem plants? Bring them along to the Plant Heritage Plant Sale on 20 September, and our team of expert plant doctors will be there to help.

Sarah Cook, former head gardener at Sissinghurst, Ivan Dickings, RHS committee member (and Suffolk Group president) and Jim Marshall, former National Trust Gardens Advisor, will be on duty at the Plant Heritage membership tent between 12 and 2 pm to offer advice and (sometimes!) cures.

THE PLANT HERITAGE NATIONAL COUNCIL

ANNE TWEDDLE

I took over the role of Suffolk council representative earlier this year and now have attended two meetings. The Plant Heritage National Council is made up of a representative of each of the county groups, plus the officers from the National Office and the RHS. It is chaired by Michael Alder and held every four months in London.

The role of the council is more about direction than details. That's not to say discussion is limited, it isn't. Much of the very detailed work of Plant Heritage is done by various committees. The Council members are circulated with minutes of these committees as well as the board. This way we can keep abreast of activities across the organisation. Our role is in overseeing, affirming and discussing the activities and roles of Plant Heritage.

The opportunities created by the Council meetings include the regular contact with representatives from the other country groups where we learn what everyone is up to and how ideas can be shared. This sharing process is starting to take on a life of its own, with an e-mail network beginning between groups.

Budgets is a topic which is always under review and discussion. Michael Alder is taking a pragmatic view about deficits, which is helpful and refreshing for everyone. We also learn about changes in staff and what's happening on the fund raising front as well as reports from all the main committees.

The Council is a melting pot of people and ideas and very helpful for such a wide flung organisation such as ours.

PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

**For an update on what's happening at National Office
visit the current issue of Newlines on the website
www.nccpg.com**

WOODY PLANTS FOR GARDENS IN EAST ANGLIA

A TALK BY BRIAN HUMPHREY

IVAN DICKINGS

Earlier in the year Brian Humphrey gave the Suffolk Group a stimulating and very interesting lecture which was packed with information on technical aspects, tips about cultivation and historical points about the plants he talked about.

The lecture started by giving some disadvantages in growing woody plants. These include being expensive to buy, having to wait several years for maturity, they can get too large and roots can cause damage to buildings if planted too closely especially on clay soil. He then moved on to advantages, which are many, including giving the garden structure, the 'in' word with garden designers, permanency which gives the garden more interest during the year for a longer period especially during the winter. Once woody plants are established weeding and general maintenance can be dramatically reduced. It is surprising how large growing shrubs and trees respond to quite hard selective pruning.

We were then treated to a wonderful selection of slides accompanied by Brian's in-depth knowledge. The first slide was a mouth-watering very large specimen of *Cornus controversa* 'variegata' AGM growing near Lake Como in Italy, but alas it is only suitable for large gardens and must be planted in one's early life in the hope that you will live long enough to see it in its full glory. It can of course be grown in a fairly large garden, but it does require an open space to enjoy and show the tiers of growth. It is often called The Wedding Cake Tree.

If you wish to plant a large growing tree like an oak, but lack space, plant *Quercus robur fastigiata* or any other fastigiate form of a tree. A good medium tree is a selected form of *Betula utilis* such as B. Grayswood Ghost AGM, with its wonderful white bark in the winter. Brian has a passion for Japanese maples and given the correct position, out of direct sunlight and shelter from strong winds, can make a striking feature. They are very happy in large containers and with fleece the young growth in the spring can be protected against late spring frosts.

Magnolias are another favourite and one which will tolerate chalk is *Magnolia salicifolia* 'Wada's Memory' AGM and one suitable for the

smaller garden, *Magnolia x lobneri* 'Merrill' AGM. Daphnes are everyone's favourite and varieties of *bholua*, which was introduced from Himalaya in 1938, are a must. All have a delicious scent. There are now a number of forms but the one recommended was *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' which was raised by the propagator at Hilliers and named after his wife.

A plant which you would not expect to survive in East Anglia is *Acacia pataczekii* which explodes with bright yellow flowers profusely each spring. *Abutilon x suntense*, another Hillier introduction, this time by Peter Dummer, is a wonderful wall plant with deep lilac hollyhock shaped flowers in early summer.

These are but a few of the many plants mentioned by Brian who then turned briefly to planting and weed control. For planting he uses a long narrow spade with an extended handle to make the shape of the hole and a double long handled implement with two trowel-shaped blades which are pushed into the soil to extract the soil, making a perfect hole for the ball of the plant. The soil which has been taken out is pushed in and around the ball with gloved hands and he stresses NO jumping up and down to firm the soil. He does not agree with teasing the roots out from the ball.

Brian is definitely not a hand-weeder nor a hoer. He recommends the use of a knapsack sprayer which can be used for residual weed killing or for spot treatment against nettles, docks spear grass etc. Hoeing disturbs the soil and brings weed seeds to the surface ready for more hoeing, leaving you less time to sit in your deck chair to enjoy the fruits of your labours.

We all learnt a lot from Brian's lecture, so let us hope that he will come back to talk to us again.

MEMBERS' GARDEN OPENINGS

John and Brenda Foster, Gable House, Redisham, Beccles

Sunday 6 September 2009, 11 am - 5 pm
Autumn bulbs and perennials.

Sunday 21 February 11am - 5pm.
Snowdrops

Free admission. Ploughmans' lunches and home made teas
For further information please phone 01502 575298



THE GENERATION GAME

One of Suffolk Group's National Collection holders exhibited at Hampton Court this year with the aid of three generations of the same family.

The small, family-run business of Mickfield Hostas usually exhibits at Hampton Court Flower Show every year in a plant plot (outside exhibit space). This year they decided, after a 10-year absence, to also exhibit in the Floral Marquee. Their Chinese-style stand was awarded a Silver Medal and was extensively photographed throughout the show as it caught the imagination of the show visitors.

Robin and Yvonne could be found just outside the Floral Marquee in the Plant Mall, whilst David, Melanie and Andrew were inside the Floral Marquee. Andrew was taking part in the show as part of his Year 10 Work Experience fortnight.

Visitors to the show found them easy to spot as they were sporting jazzy waistcoats made from fabric with a hosta leaves design.

Photo courtesy of a family friend: Andrew, Robin and Melanie beside their Floral Marquee stand.

DAY LILIES AT HAMPTON COURT

SARAH COOK

When the RHS decided to celebrate the Best of British Horticulture at all its flower shows this year I rapidly decided it was the excuse I needed to apply to put up a display of my collection of Tall Bearded Iris (bred by Sir Cedric Morris - one of the Best of British!) in the Plant Heritage Marquee at the Hampton Court Flower Show. Too late for any irises to be in flower at the time, I needed a supporting cast of flowers to add colour to what would otherwise need to be an exhibit purely in words and pictures. I started to look at the other British breeders who were represented by Plant Heritage collections, there are all too few, but fortunately two collections * are devoted to four of the best British Hemerocallis (Day Lily) breeders. They were an obvious choice to add to my exhibit as some of their hybrids would be in flower in early July

Of the four breeders the earliest (George Yeld) started hybridising in about 1890 and the most recent (Robert Coe) was hybridizing until the 1970s, so all but the most recent introductions would be covered. I have always been fascinated by the people behind the plants we grow in our gardens ** so the research for the stand was no hardship, nor was it as difficult as I feared. It was not long before I realized that all four were even better known for the irises they bred and my collection of British Iris Society Yearbooks provided most of the biographical detail.

Hemerocallis species were introduced to Britain in the 16th century, but it was not until the late 19th century that hybridisers such as George Yeld, who is recorded as the first person to make deliberate crosses of *Hemerocallis*, started hybridising the species, using *H. lilioasphodelus*; *H. middendorffii*; and *H. aurantiaca* as the parent plants

Since his beginnings, breeding has continued in both Britain and the USA, with frequent exchange of material between the two. I have to admit, as with irises, by and large I prefer the older cultivars to their more modern counterparts; to me the flowers are more elegant and associate more comfortably with other plants in our mixed borders, in fact I would agree with Graham Thomas' advice from 1976

“Apart from beauty, colour and fragrance I should look for those cultivars whose flowers are well held above the foliage....The foliage should not be over luxuriant, and the modern tendency towards broader, stiffer leaves, often twisted is to be deplored. The flowers should be of pure, open lily



Above and below: Paeony 'Highdown' growing in Ivan Dickings garden in Bedfield, Suffolk (page 25);
 Left: Seedling raised by Ivan Dickings, which should be called Peony hybrid from Gansu Group. It illustrates the colour range possible from white thru to magenta.



Left: Scarlet Lily Beetle (page 34).
 Right: Queen Mary Apple (page 14)





Above, from left: Hemerocallis 'Stafford', Hemerocallis 'Cool Lemon',
Hemerocallis 'Michelle Coe' (page 19);
Below: Jim Marshall's wild garden (page 23).

Photos of Hemerocallis 'Stafford' and the wild garden courtesy Alison Sargeant.



shape, not with twisted and frilled segments which destroy the outline. Flowers of one tint are more telling in the garden...” ***

I would recommend the large proportion of the *Hemerocallis* bred by these four men, and although sadly many of them are not readily available, some are ‘top’ garden plants and several have the AGM (Award of Garden Merit).

George Yeld was educated in Hereford and graduated from Oxford University, where he received the Newdigate prize for English Verse, presented to him by Mathew Arnold. After graduating he went to York and was a master at St Peter’s School for 52 years.

The first *Hemerocallis* cultivar he produced was ‘Apricot’, which he exhibited at the Temple Show in 1893. In all 37 of his cultivars are recorded in a variety of yellows, apricots and oranges, but probably only four now exist, including Sirius and Miranda which are in the National Collection. None of the 11 irises he bred appear to be growing in England – we know the names – so perhaps someone should search the world just in case.

Henry (Harry) J Randall served as a pilot in the first world war, married in 1923 and moved to Woking in 1935, where he did most of his breeding. He was the first chairman of the London Electricity Board and was awarded the CBE for his work in the electricity supply industry. He was primarily an iris breeder and his connections with the American Iris and *Hemerocallis* breeders led him to introduce American lines into his breeding. He was hybridising in the 1950s; his red ‘Stafford’, yellow ‘Whichford’ and salmon ‘Stoke Poges’ (AGM) are still widely grown. Of the many irises he bred four were awarded the highest accolade (The Dykes Medal), even these four are rarely grown today and all are at risk of being lost – plenty of research and a collection for one of you?

Leonard W Brummit had wide ranging horticultural interests, well known for his work on RHS committees, he was a keen orchid grower. He bred *hemerocallis* from the mid 1950s until the end of the 1960s, his speciality was good hardy red cultivars, such as *H.* ‘Cherry Ripe’, but his cultivars also include yellows oranges and pinks. He was also a prolific breeder of Pacific Coast Irises, one of his best is ‘Banbury Beauty’. Three of his Tall Bearded Iris were awarded the Dykes Medal, including ‘Golden Alps’

Some of you may well remember the nursery of R H Coe at Cold Norton in Essex, who was the fourth *Hemerocallis* breeder on my stand. He was breeding these and irises (predominately ‘spuria’ hybrids) in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Like Randall he frequently used American *Hemerocallis* as his parent plants. Some of his cultivars have the prefix ‘Norton’ to their names, although his best known are ‘Lemon Bells’ and ‘Red Precious’,

both AGM plants. On a recent garden tour of North West England I was pleased to see these and *H. 'Michelle Coe'* growing in gardens we visited

* Leeds City Council and Mr G. Sinclair – for details see under *Hemerocallis* in your Collections's Handbook. Anthony House, Cornwall also has a collection of historic Day Lily hybrids

** If you have the same interest 'Who does your Garden Grow' by Alex Pankhust; Earl's Eye Publishing 1992 is a must.

*** Perennial Garden Plants by Graham Stuart Thomas; J M Dent and Sons 1976

'WILD ABOUT' GARDEN

JIM MARSHALL

When we came to consider what to plant in front of our converted barn in the middle of nowhere it soon became clear that conventional flower borders would not be appropriate. Clearance of the builders rubble and double digging to deal with the compaction gave us time for plenty of thought and discussion. We decided we wanted a garden which would be fun, a bit different, blend in with the surrounding countryside/farmland and to have some benefit for wildlife.

Slowly the idea of associating native and cultivated plants began to emerge. Some of the plants were planned for the effect we wanted, but others have crept in by default, often initially to fill a space, but if they work they are allowed to stay. We now have an eclectic mix of annuals, biennials and perennials, some for their looks and some providing food for the birds and the bees (and I suspect mice and the odd rat). We will probably continue adding and subtracting for ever!

Most plants were initially propagated from seed sown in the greenhouse or cold frame but our hope was that the annuals and biennials would continue from self sown seedlings. This has proved to be the case with Common Poppy and the cultivated Shirley Poppy, Corncockle Goatsbeard (not the native but *Tragopogon croceus*).

Biennials include the true Fullers Teasel, Hollyhocks, Foxgloves and the Mediterranean *Verbascum creticum* which is the jewel in the crown and

creates much discussion – we also have the native perennial *Verbascum* (we collected the seed locally)

Other perennials include *Chaerophyllum hirsutum* *Roseum* and *Papaver bracteatum* to provide spring colour and interest but *Crambe cordifolia* has not prospered perhaps because of the heavy soil. The Perennial Sweet Pea is, if any thing, too vigorous but it flowers throughout the summer, the white form is much more restrained.

Bronze Fennel we thought initially would only be a gap filler but its foliage is an excellent contrast to its green surroundings and the seeds are much loved by warblers (willow or garden?) and the strong stems give cover to birds using our feeder all through the winter – so it is now a permanent feature.

Plants at the edge of the garden include *Morina longifolia* and some *Sanguisorba* which I am becoming quite keen on and various *Iris sibirica* near the pond.

Each year we plant a few annuals such as the common Cornflower and Sunflowers (as yet we have not got the right cultivar for the space, but whichever we plant the tits love them)

The whole seems a haven for insects and birds, and we spend rather too much time admiring the butterflies and hoverflies in summer and enjoying the acrobatics of a troupe of long tailed tits who entertain us morning and evening all through the winter - fun yes, but a word of warning, although the dead stems look great in the frost are loved by the birds and probably give much needed shelter to insects, the whole area cannot be considered a visual treat when it is wet and soggy.

A photo of the area in summer is included in centre pages.

BETWEEN A ROCKII AND A GANSU

ANNE TWEDDLE

Fifteen or so years ago I was setting up the membership tent at one of our plant sales and out of our photos box came a picture of a beautiful peony. Written in pencil overleaf was *P. rockii*. The photo was displayed, gazed upon endlessly until the end of the day, when it was confined back to its box.

My next encounter with *P. rockii* was the real thing, when some years later at another plant sale, once again manning the membership tent.

Ivan Dickings, our President, brought three flowers from his plant of *P. rockii*. The flowers were huge, beautiful and wafted clouds of delicious perfume. They generated much interest and questions during the day. Unfortunately I can't remember if we managed to convert any of the interest into new members, but never mind. I was hooked.

My love affair had begun. I danced round rockii a bit growing other peony species and working at learning more, but always in the background was the memory of those three beautiful flowers.

Late summer 2007, enter stage left, our President Ivan Dickings, with a brown paper bag containing a vast number of peony seeds. "I thought you might like to try these for the group", said Ivan.

There were so many seeds I was sowing them in layers. They germinated well, and spring 2009 saw us beginning the potting up process. The plan was to sell the seedlings on to members everywhere, with an eye on raising money and promoting the sort of propagating projects we enjoy doing in Suffolk. That can't be too hard you would think, until we came to the hurdle of what the seedlings should be called.

Almost immediately the water went muddy with a collection of both romantic and colourful characters. Everywhere I looked a different story was being told. Here is the journey I have been on. You will find out at the end of this article what we are calling our seedling, why and details of how to obtain a plant.

Let us begin with Joseph Francis Charles Rock, plant explorer, ornithologist, ethnologist, photographer (1884-1962), for whom the plant was named.

An Austrian by birth, he became a naturalised American. Rock was first sent to China in the early 1920s by the United States Department of

Agriculture, to collect seeds of a tree that later were used in the treatment of leprosy. His explorations resulted in the introduction of conifers, rhododendrons (493 species), potentilla, and primula to the U.S. His interests were wide ranging, and he was a man of enormous talents. His efforts in linguistics are widely recognized; he spent years collecting and translating 8,000 volumes of original Nazi literature.

“Rock's most outstanding characteristic was his breadth of vision,” Egbert Walker wrote of him in 1962.

Rock saw an exotic tree peony with vast white flowers growing in the garden of a Buddhist monastery in Gansu. He arranged for seed from this plant to be sent to various gardens round the world. Rock was not there first though.

Reginald John Farrer (1880-1920), a traveller and plant collector, had seen and written about this plant in 1917. The RBG Edinburgh and RBG Kew both held a herbarium specimen, long before Rock was on the scene.

One of the recipients of Rock's peony seed distribution, several years later, was the third of our interesting characters, Colonel (Later Sir) Frederick Stern.

Stern gardened at Highdown, a famous chalk garden near Goring by Sea. He bought Highdown in 1909 when he was 25. During the First World War Stern was twice mentioned in dispatches and was awarded the Military Cross. (He had always been very adventurous; as a young man he had a reputation as a big game hunter and a successful amateur jockey.)

Stern furnished the garden at Highdown lavishly and many of the best plants came from a sale held by Veitch & Sons in 1912. In 1914 he subscribed to Reginald Farrer's expedition to Yunnan and Kansu. Stern went to live at Highdown when he married in 1919. In 1936 Stern planted a peony which had come from Rock's seed distribution. There is evidence the plant had come to Stern in plant form, not seed, via Canada.

Christopher Sanders, a modern day plantman's version of Hercule Poirot, has unravelled where and to whom the Rock seeds were sent and where the subsequent generation of plants went. See further reading for details of his interesting and wide ranging research.



Rock, Joseph Francis Charles
Date: 1926 (at age 42)
Source: Copied from original photo in Harshberger Collection, University of Pennsylvania.
HI Archives portrait no. 1



Photo of John Farrer.
www.glendoick.com

There is no doubt though, that what Stern planted and had in flower by 1938 was arguably one of the most beautiful and most controversial plants in British gardening history.

The plant pictured on page 20 has been vegetatively reproduced from Stern's plant at Highdown. It grows in Ivan Dickings' garden in Bedfield, Suffolk.

It is a woody peony, or tree peony that each May bears up to 60 huge single white blooms 20cm across. Each petal marked with a blackish maroon blotch at the base. The perfume is magnificent.

The next link in this story comes with the connection between Stern and Suffolk. Notcutts Nursery in the 1950's & 60's was headed up by Mr. Johnny Crane. Mr Crane was the nursery manager and a fantastic plantsman in the true sense of the word. Mr Crane and Col. Stern sat on the RHS Shrub Committee. They became acquainted and Col. Stern invited Mr Crane to Highdown and shared some of his peony material. So each year the journey was made to collect scions from the *P. rockii* growing at Highdown.

Frank Eley was the head propagator at Notcutts, a product of the old school. He did the difficult propagating, and peonies were certainly considered difficult. Ivan Dickings, whose name has appeared right through this story was his assistant and later head propagator. Frank Eley used a graft he called a wedge graft. Once the scion was cut to fit the peony rootstock, the entire joint was waxed. Penny Dickings, Ivan's wife had this job. She remembers it as a horrid job, involving a pot of very sticky yellow wax that first had to be heated then applied with a stick to the joint. Everything would get covered in wax, including Penny.

Notcutt's catalogue of 1960-64 has listed under Peonies 'Details can be sent on request. Limited stock available of rare and extremely beautiful peonies.' Alas no prices were quoted.

Notcutts propagated *P. rockii*, *P. 'argosy'* (a beautiful single yellow) and a red tree peony called *P. 'Sybille'* which Stern had named for his wife. Ivan Dickings grows these three plants at Bedfield in Suffolk.

The name of Stern's white paeony has now been changed from *P. rockii* to *P. 'Highdown'* to differentiate between the true form and seedlings.

Back at Highdown, Stern's original 1936 plant was becoming frail and finally died, but not before Ivan came to the rescue. Last year he went to Highdown, now managed by Worthing Council, and collected some scions. He has successfully grafted a new peony to return to the garden.

The *P.* 'Highdown' grown by Ivan Dickings does not set seed. The seed Ivan gave us back in 2007 was from another peony which we now know should be called *P.* Gansu.

Devoted plantsmen Christopher Sanders and Will McLewin have spent a lot of time sorting out the correct naming of woody peonies initially derived from *P. rockii*. The formal name is now *P.* Gansu Group.

They have been the subject of many misconceptions, partly because they have been extremely difficult to obtain. White forms have usually been called something like 'Rock's peony' - an invalid and ambiguous name. They have been the holy grail of many gardeners on account of their magnificent scented flowers and their great rarity. In fact there are many different colours and forms. Will McLewin, Phedar Nursery

Our seedlings are all to be called **Peony hybrid from Gansu Group**.

The reason we are using this title is because the parent plants have been open pollinated. Will McLewin does say they can all be expected to come reasonably true. The characteristic dark blotch and two rows of petals should be present. The variation might be in the flower colour. They could range from magenta to white. As the owner of a magenta flowered plant, its beauty is equally breathtaking.

The first of these seedlings will be available next year at our 2010 spring plant sale and will cost £8 each. As the plants won't have flowered the colours won't be known. Should you prefer to wait, we will sell flowered plants in future years for £12 each.

Further reading

'The Highdown peony - its history & nomenclature' Chris Sanders, *The Plantsman* Sept 2007

A paean to peonies: Anna Pavord *The Independent* 14th October 2006

'Peony rockii and Gansu Mudan' (£37.50 inc. p&p) is available from Will McLewin, Phedar Research and Experimental Nursery, 42 Bunkers Hill, Romiley, Stockport, Cheshire SK6 3DS Phone 0161 430 3772

Pictures on centre pages supplied by Ivan Dickings and Anne Tweddle.

SOME THOUGHTS ON GARDENING AND PARENTHOOD

TIMOTHY WALKER

Sir Francis Bacon described gardening as “the purest of human pleasures”. Rather more recently, Alan Titchmarsh, was quoted as saying that “after parenthood, gardening is the most rewarding of activities”. This is one of those remarks that cannot fail to provoke some introspection.

There are certainly some similarities between the raising of the children and the creation and development of a garden. In both there are forces at play that one is unable to fathom no matter how hard you look. How can one possibly explain the fact that with all the annual variation in flowering times *Rosa spinosissima* ‘Dunwichensis’ always flowers in Chelsea Week in London and *Hamamelis mollis* always flowers on Christmas Day?

Both gardening and parenthood represent a commitment that cannot be ignored. When we go on holiday we have to find a kind soul to water the greenhouse plants (though leaving the children at home to do this kills two birds etc.). Both involve pain, mistakes and failures as well as almost indescribable joy & satisfaction. The mistakes are many and we learn from those mistakes; we learn that *Saponaria* is a lovely plant but in someone else’s garden because it will get everywhere and you cannot get rid of it. In both we learn as we go from our own experience rather than from books or the advice of others. We know that you can move herbaceous peonies even though most of the books say that you cannot.

Both change with time and involve a series of stories and both reflect a personal history as they change with age. The changes are so fundamental that comparisons with the past and present cannot be judged subjectively; they are just different. “You should have been here last week” is homologous with “oh that’s a lovely age”. Both excite and stimulate all of our senses. The underside of the leaves of *Rhododendron macabeianum* remains one of the most sensuous surfaces in the world. One might say the same about one’s daughter’s silky hair.

Gardening and parenting are more about process than product. Both surprise you constantly. Just as you think that you know your garden and can predict what will flower together, the *Abeliophyllum distichum* flowers with the snowdrops looking wonderful together. Both activities are concerned with the future and we have to be optimistic about that future

and have faith in our creations. That does not mean that we don't hold our breath for minutes on end when they play in the school concert. Both are a mixture of nature and nurture. No matter how hard you may try, *Gunnera* will not grow well without lots of water and lots of fertilizer —organic fertilizer, I might add.

Finally, both involve schemes and contrivances and one of them is certainly artful. Andrew Jackson Downing, arguably America's first great landscape gardener, believed that "our enjoyment of *some* gardens is due to the polish that art can bestow while in *other* gardens it is the intimation of raw, rude nature. The gardener has reached the ultimatum of his design when he combines both the veneer of art with half-disclosed nature". The poet R.S. Thomas put it more succinctly when he described gardens as a "gesture against the wild". This view is echoed in the one Japanese word for garden, *teien*, that is derived from two other words meaning wilderness and control.

The debate over the balance between art and nature in gardens has been rumbling on for many years and it has recently been eloquently and provocatively summarized in David Cooper's '*A Philosophy of Gardens*'. The mixture of art and nature is not always comfortable but it has a bearing on how we approach the appreciation of gardens. Gertrude Jekyll was convinced of the parallels between the art of painting and the creation of the perfect herbaceous border. Yet a border is rarely viewed from just one place. One engages with a border in a very different way from looking at a painting; you walk along it, you smell and touch it and it changes. This last aspect of gardening led Christopher Lloyd to state that "gardening is the most permanent of the arts".

As David Cooper points out, gardens change in at least three ways; with the cycle of life as things grow, flourish, decline and die, with the cycles of time through a day and through the year and of course thirdly, they change because the gardener changes them. Christopher Lloyd went so far as to suggest that you cannot visit the same garden twice whereas a painting will be that painting for ever more. When the creator of a garden such as Great Dixter dies that garden will inevitably change. However, it will remain a great garden because Fergus Garrett is a great gardener but it will be a *different* great garden.

So if a garden should not be judged as art then can or should it be judged and appreciated as nature? David Cooper believes that a botanist approaches a piece of vegetation in a dispassionate and objective way but a garden visitor would never approach a garden in this way. This seems harsh to me. In '*Seed to Seed*', Nick Harberd regrets the fact scientists are expected to be detached from the object of their study. By the same token,

if you walk through a plant community such as that found in the meadow at the Oxford Arboretum without experiencing the improbable beauty of the grass flowers then your life is poorer. Ultimately though, David Cooper agrees in his own words that “gardening embodies, more saliently than any other practice, the relationship between humans, the world and the ground.” Gardens have a unique strength as objects of appreciation because they are more than art or nature.

Fredrick Law Olmstead, designer of Central Park in New York City and much more, believed that “states of the atmosphere, and circumstances that we cannot always detect, affect all landscapes”. The plants that make up a community, be it in a herbaceous border or a meadow, are part of that atmosphere. To appreciate a garden as just an extension of nature is unsatisfactory because one omits the human input that contains so much hope, imagination and honest toil.

This brings me right back to children and gardens. “Caring for a garden is not a chore but the very point of having the garden in the first place,” says Mary Keen. There are occasions when children and the garden feel like chores. This is normally when there are too many other things for you to do. One solution is to get the children helping in the garden and I have found spreading compost to be a very good place to start!

Timothy Walker is Director of the University of Oxford Botanic Gardens and is the guest speaker at the Suffolk Group Lecture on 24 October.

THE GREAT BRITISH ELM EXPERIMENT

WIDGET FINN

Plant Heritage focuses on conserving garden plants which might otherwise be lost forever, but other areas of the horticultural world are also working to save species from becoming extinct. In the 1970s Dutch elm disease virtually eliminated elms from the English countryside, but the Elms Across Europe campaign was set up in 1979 by technology company Pitney Bowes to distribute disease-resistant elms to schools, parks and gardens in the UK and Europe.

Pitney Bowes introduced an elm hybrid *Sapporo* ‘Autumn Gold’, and the first elms, planted in 1979 still survive. Many more plantings followed

throughout Europe as part of the campaign to help replace some of the millions of elms lost through Dutch elm disease. The Conservation Foundation, which grew out of the campaign, is celebrating the 30th anniversary of the first plantings by researching healthy *Sapporo* ‘Autumn Gold’ elms still growing. Anyone with a *Sapporo* ‘Autumn Gold’ is invited to send details to elms@conservationfoundation.co.uk

The Foundation is also launching a new national elm planting campaign. This time it will use young trees propagated from mature healthy native elms which have been discovered still growing in the English countryside.

How or why some of the UK’s native elms have survived when so many were affected by Dutch elm disease is a mystery, but they may have a resistance to disease and therefore able to be used in further propagation and replanting initiatives.

For more information about the work of the foundation visit www.conservationfoundation.co.uk or if you would like to take part in the Great British Elm Experiment contact elms@conservationfoundation.co.uk

THE SENSORY GARDEN

ANNA NIGHTINGALE

When I was growing up it was a given thing that Mum looked after the flowers while Dad potted around in the greenhouse and on the vegetable patch. Reluctantly, once a year, he would prune the roses and he mowed the lawn once a week but that was the only time he strayed into “Mum’s garden”.

She, on the other hand, never had anything to do with growing produce and she didn’t need to because the glorious things she did with the results of Dad’s hard work were there for all to taste and enjoy. This I accepted as normal and, although I love food, I suppose I took the results of Dad’s hard work for granted and could never understand why anyone would prefer growing vegetables over flowers.

Mum’s garden was a typical example of the 1970s. We had a rockery full of dianthus and aubrietia, neat lawns and formal rose beds. We also had a pergola running the length of the garden, covered in climbing roses the most memorable being a glorious creamy white Iceberg. And of course the sun always shone during my school holidays allowing us to spend hours sitting in the garden or playing games.

For me then a garden has always been an essential part of the home, somewhere to sit and relax or entertain friends. As my husband and I have moved house we have moved into bigger and bigger gardens. We both love all the old favourites such as geranium, roses, pelargonium, honeysuckle and so the list goes on. But only when we came to this garden did I get the vegetable bug!

As soon as I go into the garden shed hunting for twine or stand in the greenhouse on a warm day pinching out the side shoots on my tomatoes I am almost bowled over by a wave of nostalgia. I'm taken straight back to my childhood far more than I ever am in a garden full of flowers. The vegetable plot was always a place of mystery that never seemed to entirely sleep (unlike the flower garden) and now that I am making my own first attempts at growing produce, I find myself growing the same things.

I don't have the same long neat rows as Dad – my garden is a lot more informal - but I have potatoes, beans, cabbage, broccoli, Brussel sprouts (can't wait for Christmas), courgettes, carrots and salad crops.

Although I wish I had paid more attention when I was younger I know I clearly learned something as I carefully hoe between the rows, check for eggs of the Cabbage White Butterfly on my brassicas and erect the most frightening bird scarers I can with miles of string and few old CDs! We also have two apple trees and, like Mum used to, I make jars and jars of chutney each autumn to distribute around the family.

And like Mum and Dad, we are now feeling the effects of a productive vegetable plot and we have a glut. I've made cucumber pickle, the freezer is bursting with courgettes and we are now bracing ourselves for the beans and tomatoes.....but it is so addictive and I can now see exactly why Dad hated taking time out to mow the lawn and prune the roses! A row of young cabbage with perfectly formed dark green leaves, the outer ones curling slightly at the edges and the heart just beginning to form is truly a thing of beauty.



The answer to the question on page four is a Paeony Gansu Group ripe seed pod.

GETTING SCHOOLS GROWING - AN RHS CAMPAIGN

WIDGET FINN

The RHS wants to encourage everyone at any age to have a go at growing plants and reaping the benefits that gardening can bring. Its campaign 'Getting Schools Growing' aims that by 2012 eighty percent of UK primary schools will be providing their pupils with hands-on learning opportunities in school grounds to grow plants and garden sustainably. The campaign website www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening provides a wealth of help and ideas for schools and pupils to get them gardening. Everyone registering on the website will receive a starter pack to help get their school involved.

For teachers who are starting from scratch the campaign will assist in planning the garden and making the best use of the outdoor space the school has available. For schools with more experience of gardening it will help to specialise in growing or use gardening to teach more of the curriculum.

Completion of each of the benchmark stages which schools are encouraged to work through will be acknowledged by an RHS certificate and prize.

PLANT PROBLEMS

SCARLET LILY BEETLE

Plants affected

Lilies (*Lilium* species and hybrids) and fritillaries (*Fritillaria* species).

Symptoms

Holes first appear in the foliage in the spring and early summer.. Damage increases through the summer and severe defoliation can occur. Because of this, the bulbs become under-sized and may not flower the following year. It is important to prevent serious defoliation happening before the end of flowering in order to allow next year's bulbs to bulk up.

Cause

Both the bright red beetles, 6-8mm long, with black head and legs, and their reddish brown grubs feed on the above ground parts of their host plants. The adults are active from late March or April to autumn. In spring they begin laying small groups of reddish brown eggs on the underside of the leaves. The grubs are rotund, soft-bodied, reddish-brown grubs with black heads. They are hidden under a covering of their own wet, black excrement and often feed in groups, eating the leaves from the tips back to the stem. There is one generation a year.

Originally confined to south east England, the scarlet lily beetle has now spread to all counties in England and some parts of Wales. In 2002 it was found for the first time in Scotland and Glasgow and in Northern Ireland at Belfast. It is becoming more widespread in both of those countries.

Control

Inspect plants regularly and pick off and destroy any adults, eggs or grubs when seen. Infested plants can be sprayed with imidacloprid + sunflower oil (Bayer Provado Ultimate Bug Killer concentrate) acetamiprid (Scotts Bug Clear Ultra concentrate) or thiacloprid (Provado Ultimate Bug Killer Ready to Use). The larvae are more susceptible to insecticides than the adults.

Further information

Current research at the RHS Garden Wisley into scarlet lily beetle.
www.rhs.org.uk/Rescue/Projects/lily_beetle.htm

TOMATO BLIGHT

SUE BURTON

It's years since I entrusted my tomato plants to the open air. After several heartbreaking seasons when they succumbed to blight, I decided it was the greenhouse for my plants or nothing. So I was particularly interested to learn recently from a friend that treatment with a milk solution might help them once more to survive life on the outside. A little bit of Google research was called for and here is a digest of what I have found so far.

Prevention:

Mix half milk, half water (apparently you can use less milk quite successfully) and pour onto leaves or into the soil, or spray the plants. It seems that when feeding the tomato plants with your chosen product,

you can even add the milk to that. You can also use powdered milk mixed directly into the soil.

Another recipe is equal parts of powdered milk and Epsom salts mixed into the compost at the bottom of the planting hole before planting, and a little powdered milk sprinkled into the top of the soil. Two tablespoons of powdered milk can be mixed into the surface soil of each tomato plant every couple of weeks or so during the growing season.

Cure:

At first sign of early blight: remove infected leaves (make sure they are dry as damp leaves help to spread the fungus) and spray the plant with one part milk to four parts water plus 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda for every 2 pints of water. Add a dash of washing up liquid to help the mixture adhere to the plants. The milk acts as a disinfectant when warmed by the sun, and the bicarb helps to kill off new fungus. Apparently it doesn't matter whether the milk is full fat, half fat, organic or non-organic. Half fat milk might be less smelly.

PLANT HERITAGE BOOK SHELF

THE THYME HANDBOOK

by Margaret Easter and Susie White published by Plant Heritage price £10 inc. p&p.

This colour booklet is a collaboration of two National Plant Collection holders. Margaret Easter is a holder of *Thymus* (with Scientific Status) who has undertaken many years of research, resulting in new material on cultivars and name changes, and Susie White is author of *Thyme in the Garden* (1994) and *Origanum* Collection Holder.

CACTI

by Brian Fearn published by Plant Heritage price £9.50 inc. p&p.

Brian Fearn has been fascinated with cacti and succulents for over sixty years. He founded Abbey Brook Cactus Nursery in 1956 and has been raising *Echinopsis* hybrids since the 1960s. A National Collection Holder of *Echinopsis* since 2000, he has written a booklet describing the story of his work and the over 130 beautiful hybrids he has selected and named out of the 150,000 seedlings that he has raised

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these new members who have joined the Suffolk Group since our last newsletter. Please introduce yourself to committee members when you come to our events.

Mrs Rosie Ansell, Bury St. Edmunds

Mrs B. Barnard, Chelmondiston

Mr. Roger Bigg, Lavenham

Mrs Felicity Boughton, Fornham St Martins, Bury St. Edmunds

Mrs Colleen Cadet, Bramford, Ipswich

Mr Jeff Collins, Ashley, Newmarket

Mrs K, Elliott, Forward Green, Stowmarket

Mrs Elizabeth Grant, Quay House, Halesworth

Mrs Gwen Gwinnell, Hitcham, Ipswich

Mrs Shirley Hawkins, Haughley, Stowmarket

Mrs Zara Napier, Westley Waterless, Newmarket

Mr & Mrs Rendell, Bury St. Edmunds

Mrs Elizabeth Seiffer, Upper Layham, Ipswich

Mrs Anne Somerville, Lackford, Nr Bury St Edmunds

Mrs Merja Stephens, Hadleigh

If other members live nearby do get in touch to see whether you can share a lift to our talks and visits.

WHAT HAVE PLANTS EVER DONE FOR US?

A talk by Timothy Walker

Director of the University of Oxford Botanic Garden

Lecturer in Plant Conservation at Somerville College Oxford

Saturday 24 October 2009 at 2.30pm

Stowupland Village Hall

Rarely does a minute go by when we are not involved in an activity which would be impossible without the help of plants. Timothy Walker takes an informed and entertaining look at mankind's dependence on plants for everything from food to film and from painkillers to paint. He also examines the ways in which our exploitation of plants could keep up with demand from an increasing global population and what we as individuals can do to help future generations.

Tickets including tea £10 members £12 guests
from Maggie Thorpe 01787 211346 smece@aol.com

SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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