

# NEWS

NUMBER 183  
FEBRUARY 2022

## *letter*



**HPS**  
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

- The Hardy Plant Society is a registered charity. No. 208080  
President: Roy Lancaster CBE VMH
- The **Newsletter** is published in February, July and November. Views and opinions expressed are those of individual contributors. The editor is delighted to receive contributions about HPS news or events by email. Please send to... **newsletter@hardy-plant.org.uk**
- The copy deadline for the next issue, due out in July, is **TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2022**
- The address of the HPS office is  
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- Photographs in this issue are courtesy of... the HPS Photo Library, Rob Cole, Lyn Maile, Louise Edge, Phil Gadd, Eileen Shone, Chris Davies, Pamela Clark, Linda Hall, Brian Hackett, Bob Armstrong, Deidre Falcon, Madeline Giles, Tricia and Peter Howard, Mike O'Leary, Sophie Wilson, Matthias DeJaegher and Bressingham Gardens – plus an illustration by Twink Addison.
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Email: [enquiries@hmca.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@hmca.co.uk)
- **Front cover photo:** *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Washfield Doubles', by Marian Goody, a Shropshire HPS member. Readers are invited to submit their photographs for consideration as future front covers of the newsletter. Please send hi-res jpg files with plant names to **newsletter@hardy-plant.org.uk**

# NEWS

## upfront



By the time this lands on your doorstep, we'll be enjoying about 135 minutes more daylight a day than we did at the winter solstice. Spring is not far away!

There's joy in my house about that and even more joy as seed packets start to arrive. First was my HPS seed scheme order – I got most of the 20 I ordered, which is a good thing. In this issue, seed distribution manager Diane Puncheon has a few thoughts on how we can make the scheme even more successful in 2022.

Next were my seeds from Chiltern's, whose catalogue I've found exciting in recent times. Other catalogues are available. That order was mainly for annuals – sorry about that – but I managed to slip in a stylish *Thalictrum* and a lovely *Lysimachia* too.

So, my New Year feelings of new beginnings, fresh hope and special pleasures are surfacing. Maybe those thoughts are not unique to gardening folk, but from talking to other members, they're pretty widely shared.

We've been talking in this issue to people in local groups across the UK, to try to gauge just how optimistic they're feeling as we approach the second anniversary of Covid. Read on...

Right, I must go – it's only four months until the summer solstice and we all know what happens after June 21!

Mick Dunstan, Newsletter editor

# NEWS

## *inside*

### Our leaky pond...

Lincolnshire member Bob Armstrong on renovating the garden pond **page 16**



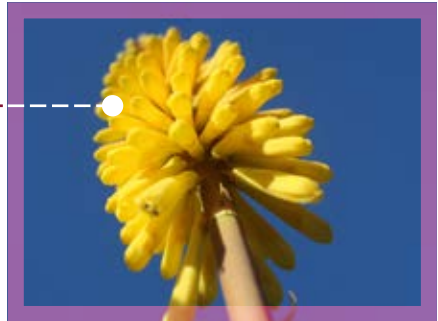
### Golden moment

Tricia Howard and husband and HPS Trustee Peter have won a prestigious RHS award. **page 23**



### Tip-top tips

Photo librarian Matthias Dejaegher with his top tips for taking a winning flower picture **page 32**



### Plus...

- New roles, new opportunities **page 5**
- How are we doing? **page 10**
- The making of a meadow **page 18**
- Win £230 worth of compost **page 20**



### Seeds of success

Seed distribution manager Diane Puncheon wants to make the scheme even more successful

**page 34**

# NEWS *update*

Society chair **Pamela Clark** on a TV great, tip top photos and a thought-provoking talk...



I have been entranced, like many of you I am sure, by *The Green Planet*, the BBC's latest offering from Sir Richard Attenborough. The information about the plants is mind-blowing enough but it is surely the filming that brings the whole programme to life. I find the 'On Location' section at the end of the programme equally fascinating and camera enthusiasts will be inspired by the techniques used.

Images of plants play an important part in HPS too, albeit rarely to the level of exoticism of *The Green Planet* but what we have would stand up to comparison with images seen on TV gardening programmes. Our former slide and current image library were recently commented on in *Country Life* magazine, giving me the opportunity to bring readers up to date on the changes made last winter by Brian Hackett, which you read about in last Spring's Newsletter.

We like to celebrate the photographic skills of our individual members and so we have recently announced the winners of the HPS Photographic Competition. You can read a little about the winning entries elsewhere in this Newsletter, with tips on how to take good pictures by the HPS

Photo Librarian, Matthias Dejaegher, Chair of the judging panel. We had more entries from children this year than before so please encourage your young family members to take part in this year's competition.

Local and Specialist Groups continue to offer an excellent range of talks, now a sociable mix of in-person and online events. It would be invidious to pick out any one in particular but I am happy to do so where it has the potential to impact the work of the Board of Trustees.

“Why not make volunteering for HPS your 2022 New Year's resolution?”

The Monmouthshire Group invited Nicola Spence, Chief Plant Health Officer at Defra to talk about 'Protecting the UK from plant pests and diseases'. An excellent talk with a good Q&A session including an opportunity for HPS members to confess to growing any unwelcome or banned plants in their gardens. Towards the end Ms Spence suggested that HPS might consider developing its own biosecurity strategy – no mean undertaking as you will agree. I committed to putting it on the agenda for the next Board of Trustees' meeting, for their consideration. I'll keep you informed of the outcome.

As ever we have a number of opportunities for members to join all the other volunteers that help keep the HPS show on the road. Elsewhere in the Newsletter, you can read about some new appointments and current opportunities. Why not make volunteering for HPS your 2022 New Year's resolution?

## NEW ROLES

A round-up of the latest changes at national level in the society...

The appointment of a new Chairman at last year's AGM presented an opportunity to review some of the tasks that the National Society carries out and to consider what refinements, if any, might be appropriate.

- The first of these was the role of the Hon. Secretary, currently held by Helen Curtis. Not only does Helen look after the Trustees' Board Meetings and all the associated organizing and paperwork, she also manages the Postholders' meetings. In addition she manages the Head Office, including Clare Powell, the Society's Administrator. Over the past two years the office systems have been completely revamped and upgraded, a monumental task undertaken by Helen, Clare, and the Hon. Treasurer, Stuart Senior. Helen's workload was far too much for one person, never mind for someone who was doing this as a volunteer. In consultation with Helen it was decided, and agreed by the Trustees, that the role should be split. Helen is now the Hon. Secretary for the Office and its associated Administration functions and we are pleased to welcome

Linda Hall into the newly-created post of Hon. Secretary – Trustees. Linda is coming to the end of her time as Chairman of the Norfolk & Suffolk Group and will be known to many of you as one of the Seed Receivers. You can read about her elsewhere in the Newsletter.

- Keith Scott's role with the Group Secretaries remains unchanged, except that he is now known as Group Secretaries' Liaison, rather than Co-ordinator. Suggested by Keith, this new title is a better reflection of what his role involves.
- Brian Hackett takes on many tasks on behalf of the Society. Most recently he has taken on responsibility for Dropbox, the National Society's central document repository. He also spent lockdown going through the old slide library and converting images that were of good enough quality and of plants not already in the collection, which were then added to the Image Library.  
Brian's role has now expanded to become the Society's Archivist/Librarian, ensuring that we capture the society's important print and visual history.
- For some time the Society has endeavoured to appoint a Publicity Postholder to help develop a PR strategy for the National Society in the first instance and, longer term, to be a liaison with Groups in the development of their own PR plans. Ann Franks, a member of the Derbyshire Group and its current publicity officer, has volunteered to take on this role and you will be hearing more from Ann in the course of the year. Please join the Trustees in welcoming her to this important role.



# NEW OPPORTUNITIES

- The current Hon. Treasurer, Stuart Senior, is standing down at the AGM in September this year. As the Society cannot function without this position being filled you are encouraged to consider taking this on. Some financial experience is helpful but the role does not demand a qualified accountant. There is a detailed job description available and you can discuss the role with Stuart in the first instance at [treasurer@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@hardy-plant.org.uk).
- There are a number of vacancies for Trustees as three of the existing Trustees finish their three-year term of office at the AGM. The Chairman welcomes expressions of interest and informal discussions at [chair@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:chair@hardy-plant.org.uk).
- Here are the opportunities available for volunteers...

**Events & Shows:** this has been done as a job-share by Sue Lander and Julie Harvey and could continue as such;

**Horticultural Advisor:** Emma Reece is standing down due to the commitments of full-time work;

**Website Manager:** Colin Doughty is standing down after a number of years managing the technical side of the Society's website;

**Cornucopia Editor:** Marion Jay plans to stand down later this year.

If you are interested in any of the above roles please contact the Chairman at [chair@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:chair@hardy-plant.org.uk).

If you would like to have an informal conversation about any of the above Postholder opportunities please contact the current Postholder. Their details can be found in the back pages of the Newsletter under Contact Information.

## Would you like to help run our website?

With over 80,000 visitors a year, our website describes almost all of the activities of the Society, including special interest groups and links to local groups. There is a wealth of information about plants including many back copies of The Journal and Cornucopia, with interesting new articles added frequently. There is also a library of more than 10,000 images.

Members can pay their subscriptions online (about 1200 last year) and anyone can order seeds (over 600 orders last year), or publications (booklets and copies of Cornucopia).

The website has been used during the pandemic as a tool to keep members up to date with online talks, alterations and cancellations, something printed media is not capable of. It is an important membership recruiting tool, especially for the younger generations.

It is currently run by Colin Doughty, Website Manager, and John Dyson, Website Content Co-ordinator, who split the updating work but can stand in for each other on almost everything that needs to be done in a timely

manner. Both have been doing the job for over six years and it is time for a change and for new ideas, and possibly for a new way of working. If needed, John would be willing to stay on for another couple of years to assist with the takeover, and both are happy to talk to and help anyone who might be interested. Contact details are near the end of this newsletter and on the website.

The website was designed by Cotswold Web and it is still running on their server. The underlying system is ageing and becoming more expensive to maintain. This should not be an immediate problem, but we would like a new manager to be in place in time to help make decisions about the future platform and service provider.

Most of the website updating needs a good level of basic IT skills, but the manager also needs a deeper knowledge of website technology. Both also need to keep in touch with the Society's Administrator, officers and most of the postholders, and also to a lesser extent the group secretaries, to keep the website accurate and up to date.

## Meet Linda Hall, one of our new Hon. Secretaries...

### **Hi, Linda. How did your new role come about?**

It became evident to our new Chairman, Pamela Clark, that the HPS Hon Sec role – being done by Helen Curtis – was far too onerous for one ‘volunteer’. She asked Helen how the job could be divided. Helen suggested ‘Support for the Office’ and ‘Support to the Trustees’. So, Helen has now taken on the role of Support for the Office, leaving someone to be found for the Trustee element. Pamela approached me and, after a couple of conversations over a cup of tea, I agreed to take on the role. I must admit that Helen has the lion’s share of the division.

### **Have you always been a gardener?**

I have always loved flowers and can remember growing hollyhocks and candytuft as a young child in ‘my patch’. When aged 10-13 I used to spend my pocket money on buying items for my Floral Garden, produced by Britains Limited in the 1960s and I would spend hours playing with it. I am such a hoarder and sentimentalist that I still have this although some of the plastic pieces are a little brittle now! It was not until I got married in 1974 and we bought our own house with a tiny garden that I really began gardening. I bought myself a paperback copy the RHS Gardeners’ Encyclopedia of Plants & Flowers, which I always took with me when going on a buying spree.

### **And now?**

Working full-time in the City (London) as a legal secretary and then having a family curtailed my gardening greatly – but I still ‘dabbled’ as and when I could. After the children left home, we moved to Norfolk in 2000 where I had a blank canvas of just under two acres to play with. There was no master plan – the garden has developed, as have I.

### **When did you discover HPS?**

I had not heard of the Hardy Plant Society but, in 2004, I visited my first NGS garden. It was there that I was fortunate enough to meet Janet Sleep, an extremely keen and knowledgeable plantswoman and an HPS member, selling plants. She told me about the HPS Norfolk & Suffolk Group, which I duly joined in 2005. In 2006, I joined the committee and served as chairman from 2007 to 2012 and again from 2017 to date. I organise speakers and, in the past, garden visits. I have been a seed receiver for the HPS Seed Distribution Scheme since 2019.



## Brian Hackett brings us up to date with his new historical role... and asks for your help

For some time I have been maintaining the HPS Dropbox account, the central place where we hold our key HPS documents in this electronic age, under the title of Dropbox Manager.

This has involved setting up individual accounts for new Trustees and Postholders and generally trying to keep things tidy! This proved to be an essential task, given the frequency with which our officers change – it's all about maintaining the continuity of the records.

However, in the autumn I was asked by our new Chairman, Pamela Clarke, on behalf of the Trustees, to widen the role a little and become the Librarian/Archivist of the HPS – a role which has not existed since 2002.

I have been looking at the archives, gathered over the years, and have been moving them into a classified arrangement, in the hope of making it easier for those looking for information about the past of the HPS and the people who made it what it is today.

For example, there are now folders for each decade of the HPS story, each containing appropriate material. I discovered that there used to be 'history sheets' for each year of the HPS, giving a brief digest of the key information for that year – who the officers were, significant events, what the membership was, that sort of thing.

The history sheets stopped in 2002, so I have undertaken to bring them up-to-date, by extracting the relevant information from old Newsletters which, by chance, we still have in our house because Covid-19 has prevented us from handing them on after my wife, Lynne, ended her term as Newsletter editor

– there had to be one good thing about Covid. I'm up to 2012 so far.

I've created a folder dedicated to significant players in HPS history – and this is where I should like to ask for help from members! The coverage, particularly in terms of photographs, is patchy. If you have images of past Chairs, founders of Specialist Groups – anyone you think played a part in the HPS story, please scan them, if necessary, and send to me at [dbadmin@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:dbadmin@hardy-plant.org.uk).

On the other hand, there are images in the collection of people I don't recognise. I'm hoping to make those available to members, perhaps through a link in Facebook, so that we can put a few more names to faces. There's still a lot to do, but it's fascinating – if you want access, please contact me and I'll send you a link, but bear in mind it's at a very early stage!





## Horticultural Advisor Emma Reece is stepping down. Here's her advice on what her role involves...

This service is provided free of charge by the HPS as part of its charitable status, there is no requirement to be a member although I do always strongly advise everyone to join.

The questions are varied and usually extremely interesting as they may require some research and further correspondence between the questioner and myself.

There are many requests for identification and I do tread with extreme caution here particularly with regard to cultivars. As we know, gardeners are a generous species and plant material is freely shared. If the wrong name is given, that error can persist for many years resulting in the possible loss of the original cultivar. This applies to saving seed too. I will always attempt a genus and suggest species but advise that a photograph of the plant in flower is sent to a botanical institution or the RHS for correct naming by a taxonomist.

I have really enjoyed this post and have learned a lot. However, my day job is taking up a great deal of time and my limited brain capacity and so it's time to give someone else the chance. I would ideally like to 'retire' in the Spring.

If anyone is thinking about applying for this role please do get in touch if you would like to discuss it further. My contact details are in the back of the newsletter.

I would say that, on average, there are a couple of queries every week. Sometimes the answer is straightforward and takes minutes to deliver; others are more involved. I really believe in horticulture and the power of nature to encourage forward thinking and optimism, which is what we all need.

Most questions arrive directly into the advisory email account, some are sent via the efficient Clare in the Office, but I occasionally get real post. Here is an example. . .

### From X

*I hope you are the one to help solve the problem with Anemonopsis macrophylla.*

*I obtained seed some eight years ago from one seed distribution scheme. I have three plants in different places of shade 'woodland type' all now bulky plants. They look healthy until they start to bud up then the foliage crisps and dies and then the flowering stems do the same. They have plenty of moisture in my opinion but it has been suggested they are not being kept moist enough. HELP – they are beautiful flowers when they open. PLEASE HELP!*

### Dear X

Thank you for your letter-always nice to receive real post rather than an email! Firstly, congratulations on germinating such rare and valuable plants. *Anemonopsis* is a monotypic genus in the family Ranunculaceae. Their distribution is a very limited montane woodland area on Japan's main island of Honshu.

The elegant flowers resemble small lotuses; the common name *Renge-shoma* originates from the Japanese *ki-enge-shoma*. This roughly translates as 'the yellow lotus flowered woodland herb with compound serrate leaves' and another beautiful woodland perennial *Kirengeshoma*, is named after *Anemonopsis*.

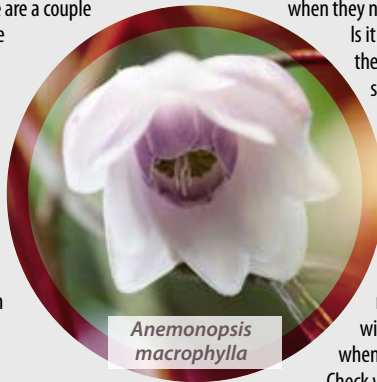
Having researched this genus, I conclude that they are not easy to place unless you can provide a humus rich preferably acidic soil, which is moist but well drained. You do not mention in your letter exactly where your group is planted. This woodlander needs shelter from cold drying winds and is it this factor that I suggest is the most important. It sounds as though you are keeping the roots moist but it is also the air surrounding the plant that must contain high humidity. It is a crucial time when the plants come into flower and that is when they need extra cossetting.

Is it possible to provide more shelter from the wind? Either a physical barrier, perhaps some bamboo screening, or you could use trees or shrub hedges that will filter out the wind. This species is happy in semi-shade so using other plants for protection will be effective as long as they don't rob the *Anemonopsis* of moisture. Consider temporary windbreaks such as netting, woven hurdles or proprietary windbreaks fixed to stakes that you erect when the plants start to bud up.

Check where your prevailing wind originates from – usually the southwest, and take it from there. Aim to reduce the wind speed before it reaches the plants. Check also for any wind funnels, these are created by channeling of air between hillsides and along valleys, through corridors of established trees or between adjacent buildings. Wind funnels have the effect of intensifying wind speed and strength.

If you find it necessary to move the plants then take great care to keep them cool and moist and incorporate some leaf mould into the planting hole prior to planting.

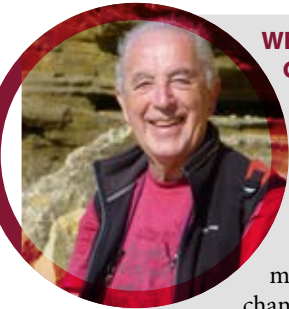
I wish you the very best of luck in your quest – it will all be worth it when you gaze upon such exquisite blooms.



*Anemonopsis  
macrophylla*

Two years on from the first COVID-19 lockdown, we've been talking to local HPS groups to find out how things are now and the challenges they see in the future...

# How are we doing?



## WESTERN COUNTIES GROUP

**Rob Cole, standing down in April after four years as chair of the group**

“We have about 175 members and that didn't change last year because we made no charge for membership in 2021. I ran a virtual meeting every month – an emailed newsletter, with contributions from members – that went to everyone on the same day as our meeting would have been held. I produced 18 in all and it was very successful. Several of our stalwarts – we have some very good, very experienced gardeners in the group – provided me with two or three page articles and photos for many of the issues.

We've been back face-to-face since September 2021 in our usual, full-day format. We start at 10am on the last Saturday of the month – with discussions in the morning when Bob Brown, from Cotswold Garden Flowers, leads a 90-minute session talking about some of his plants and others that members have brought in. After lunch, we have a speaker. Before COVID, we'd regularly get around 100 people attending but that's dropped to about 50 since September. There isn't quite the same vibe and rushing around as there used to be.

We have changed a few things in response to the COVID threat – we have the windows open and advise people to come with a coat and a blanket if necessary. We don't start with tea and biscuits any more, nor tea and cake at the end. Our library of more than 200 books was closed but we are reopening that in February. We are also operating a booking system for attending a meeting in an effort to reduce numbers to a safer level – currently 50 attendees.

There is still a lot of caution out there with some members saying they're sorry, they'd love to come but feel they can't until things improve. They are a bit scared, I think. We charge £4 for annual membership and £2 on top per meeting. With fewer members coming in person now, we are starting to nibble into our reserves – but that's what reserves are for. I'll be proposing a slightly different structure eventually but I want to take the membership with us and to introduce it at the start of next year, not immediately and possibly spread over a couple of years.

We intend to continue committee meetings on Zoom, which will save us about £70 a time on mileage expenses.

In general though, I think we should all hang on in there. I have great optimism that Western Counties will continue to thrive and we have picked up new members in recent times.”



### **WORCESTERSHIRE GROUP**

**Lyn Maile, chair since 2020 and a committee member for seven years**

“COVID has been a challenge for our group, that’s for sure. We had 118 members when I became chair, just as the pandemic started and it has taken its toll on our older members, A few have died and others are dealing with health issues for themselves or partners. We are going through membership renewals right now.

We have also moved venue for our Saturday afternoon meetings from a village hall to a good location in a modern church on the edge of Worcester. This year, we have a speaker every month except June, when we have our plant sale, and August when we don’t meet. For the last two years, we have not been able to fund raise normally – through plant sales and celebrity lectures – and we have begun to live on our savings. We have now decided to raise our annual subs from £12.50 to £35. We want to maintain our high standards and not go backwards. If we had done nothing, we’d have only £300 in reserves in 12 months. We had to grasp the

nettle. It’s not pleasant, we aren’t enjoying it, but we are resolved to see it through.

The membership fee was the same for 13 years and our costs are increasing. It has caused ill-feeling but we have recruited eight new members in our new venue and we still feel we provide good value. A survey of members in 2018 showed high levels of satisfaction and an appreciation of the friendly nature of the group.

We’re facing two challenges – funds and a lack of people willing to serve on the committee. When we can resume fund-raising, the proceeds could be used to subsidise extra things – like coach trips, garden visits and celebratory events. In the past, we have run propagation courses but last summer a coach outing had to be cancelled because we could not attract enough people to break even.

I think it would be a good idea for national to put greater effort into selling the benefits of membership. There does seem to be a bit of a disconnect here. We’re putting together an action plan for our group but the big changes across our wider society do cause me some concern for the future. I am not convinced that the idea of service, duty and giving something back – which is what our volunteers do – are as strong as they were. ”



### **NORTH WEST GROUP**

**Louise Edge, secretary for two years**

“In general, I don’t think we are doing too badly. We now have about 90 members, down from 100 two years ago, and we have a few new members in that total, including the head gardener at Salmesbury Hall. Our annual membership

fee is £8 and then it’s £2 for each meeting after that.

Since October, 2020, we, like many others, have had Zoom meetings, But we restarted face-to-face meetings last September and have been getting about 60 people at our meetings. We’re reverting to Zoom for January and February this year because people are still quite worried about the virus and don’t like coming out on dark nights.

Normally, we have speakers from

September to May and garden visits and day trips during the summer. I don't think COVID will change how we do things here. As soon as we can get on a bus or go to a nice garden, our members will be happy. One member has just taken on the role of organising our coach trips.

We are not struggling with finance. The main issue for us is our age profile and average age. Although, to be honest, some of our older members have said it's a double-edged sword. They are really keen to return, despite their caution but, at the same time, they are aware that time is just ticking away.

We have to do more to recruit younger people and we are starting some progress with that now. Part of that is down to word

of mouth. I joined HPS about three years ago and I just tripped over the Hardy Plant Society when I was looking round. It had passed me by – and I'm keen on plants.

One of the things people like here is sharing seeds. One of our members sent me some Schefflera macrophylla seeds – and I'm quite happy with myself because 15 of them have germinated. I have some pretty rare clematis seeds too – people are just so generous.

We have a green sticker we give to people coming for the first time – so anyone can see they're a fresh face and give them a warm welcome. We often get new members at our plant sales – which make a profit for us of around £2,000 a year. ”



**CORNWALL GROUP**  
**Phil Gadd, chair for the last three years**

“ During COVID, we effectively shut down. I did an email, a newsletter really, almost every month.

We have around 100 members and charge a £12 annual fee for an individual and £20 for a couple, which includes everything. In normal times, we meet at a community hall at Ladock near Truro during the winter months, apart from January, where we feature a guest speaker and we run summer garden visits from May to August.

During December, there is social gathering, with nibbles and wine, as well as a speaker, a Christmas festive lunch is arranged which normally attracts about 35 or so, and we do a New Year walk and pub lunch in early January for members and their dogs.

There has been a definite reduction in people returning to our meetings since

September, about 50 per cent I would say. We have all the controls in place but we have members with genuine concerns or health issues to consider. We have had Fergus Garrett to speak to us since September – free to members and £5 to non-members – and we took a bit of a financial hit with that meeting having to work with reduced numbers to maintain social distancing. We have good resources but we can't keep doing that. We don't spend huge sums on a single speaker and some are now very expensive – and therefore not for us.

I suppose I feel neutrally pessimistic about the way things are at the moment. We didn't charge any subs last year and now we're active again and need to boost our finances. The last I heard around 40 per cent of members have paid this year's subs but we will be chasing the others.

In our area, speakers often have to travel long distances and, of course, we pay their mileage and, sometimes, overnight accommodation. Our one significant fund raiser is our plant sale, which raises in

excess of £1,000. Last year, being the first event we ran following lockdown, it was half that.

In Cornwall, it's tough sometimes to get a few of our members to pay their national membership as they do not see that element as value for money. We remind them of course. We keep our fees so cheap because of the requirement to be part of the national society as well. If you add the

two together, people are getting good value for money.

This year could be a challenge – only time will tell. All we can do is provide the service and hope to attract people to join us. There is a Cornwall Plant Group annual fair and we are going to that to try to promote ourselves. I have a great team around me and we hope we can continue to flourish. ”



**EAST YORKSHIRE GROUP**  
**Eileen Shone, chair for**  
**the second time**

“ We became a bona fide group of the HPS in October 2001 after an initial meeting in the July of that year. We've grown from

30 to 97 at the last count and I've had only one year when I haven't been on the committee or co-opted in some other way. Our subs are £3 to join and £2 for every meeting.

During lockdown our annual newsletter became a monthly one to keep everyone in touch. As the situation has changed, we decided to go quarterly. We started face-to-face meetings in August with a garden visit to Burnby Hall Gardens, Pocklington and then talks in September but in December, because of Omicron, we held our normal social event on Zoom – 50 people joined us for that. Our first Zoom attracted about 30 people but we are up to about half our membership now.

The first meeting of 2022 is in February and we're trialling Sunday afternoon – hoping that a switch from Thursday evening will encourage people to join. We switched venue a few years ago, to the village of Lund, about 15 minutes from Beverley, and lost a third of our membership but we gained a third within

three months. We have members who drive 40 miles to meetings. We have about 50 or so members at normal meetings but for some of the bigger names, like Timothy Walker for example, we can get over 100.

We have a real mix of experience amongst our members, from complete novices to professional plants people, including John Grimshaw, director at the Yorkshire Arboretum, Alastair Gunn, head of gardens and landscape at Castle Howard and Martin Walker, Chelsea-winning horticulturist and former head gardener at York Gate. We have members with large gardens and others who live in a flat with a balcony.

COVID has made our members nervous. Even some of those who are fully jabbed have said they will be waiting until things get better. I know the thing people find hardest is not seeing each other, which has been one of the good things about Zoom: lots of laughter, chat and gentle teasing.

Our biggest challenge is getting people to join the committee. People often are not confident enough or think they are not clever enough – but it's not about being clever. It's about how we act as group and giving help to reach the decisions we have to make. In a strange way, the group seems to run itself with just a light hand on the tiller. I'm optimistic it will go from strength to strength. ”





## NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK GROUP

Secretary and former chair Chris Davies

“Our membership has just gone up to 126 individual people (some in pairs) – though we lost a few during COVID – but new people kept popping up. We are now proud to have the youngest HPS member ever, as a member of our Group, at 8 years old. I think people couldn’t go on holiday like they used to and people working from home were spending more time in their gardens. We’re a friendly lot here and many of our members have been with us for a long time, but when I see new people I tend to pounce on them to say hello, introduce them to others and help make them feel welcome. Our subs are £10 a year for single memberships and £15 joint – and guests pay £5 to attend a meeting.

Like other groups, we have speakers in the winter and we organise visits during the summer – locally and occasionally beyond county borders. There are so many lovely gardens here, including those belonging to a number of members, especially in North Norfolk.

Until last summer, when we could arrange visits again, our chair has written a monthly email – although we have eight people without email and I post them a copy. Our members said how much they liked it which was nice after all the effort that was put in.

“We probably feel more comfortable with the situation now than we expected to, with the level of vaccination, lateral flow tests, masks and social distancing.”

Without visits and talks, our newsletter, organised by editor Irene Tibbenham, carried articles about individuals’ garden projects, during COVID constraints, which was also much appreciated by members.

We had a summer social in August when people brought their own food because of the situation at the time – and, as a result of judicious purchase via Irene, we provided the Pimms! We haven’t had many face to face meetings in the winter indoors, because the village halls insisted on stringent and time-consuming cleaning regulations that didn’t appeal to us. But we are meeting in February and March. We’ve joined other Zoom meetings – including the ones organised by Monmouthshire group.

We probably feel more comfortable with the situation now than we expected to, with the level of vaccination, lateral flow tests, masks and social distancing. We have Fergus Garrett coming to talk to us in May – and we’re looking forward to that. It has been put off for two years but the vast majority of people who booked left their money with us and are hoping to attend.

I don’t think we have too many concerns about the future. We are happier with the national side of the society than we have been – I believe that the level of competence of officers has improved, and, as a local co-ordinator for the Conservation Scheme, I have first-hand evidence of its improvement in recent years.”

## BANK CHARGES

Treasurer Stuart Senior with a word of advice on how to help the society save money. . .

HSBC, our principal banker, has recently introduced charges for Charitable Bank Accounts. The ‘charitable’ irony was not altogether lost on me.

Some local and specialist HPS groups have also been informed of this unilateral change and other banks are following suit. So, from now on we get charged £5 per month for having the account, plus 40p for every cheque banked: in December, Clare, the society’s administrator, banked 659 cheques, incurring a charge of £263.60. The charge is irrespective of the value of the cheque.

So, what can we do? The obvious response is “don’t use cheques” but that’s an oversimplification. So, what are the alternatives?

The first is PayPal, either direct to our account, paypal@hardy-plant.org.uk, or via the website.

With PayPal, we are not charged a fixed amount: instead, we incur a charge based on the value of the transaction. For a £5 seed distribution payment, we are charged only 27p: “a bargain!”, I hear you say. But a single sub of £17 incurs a charge of 44p, i.e., more than the 40p cost of handling a cheque!

The second option, and by far and away the preferable one, is via internet banking, paying direct into our account for which we incur no charge. Please consider this option when you next have occasion to send money to the Office. Our principal bank account details are as follows:

**The Hardy Plant Society**  
**HSBC sort code: 40-11-60**  
**Account number: 30212407**

Do remember to include your membership number in the payment reference and email Clare at the Office (clare@hardy-plant.org.uk) to confirm that a payment is on its way.

## SALVIA NAME

An eagle-eyed reader has spotted an error in a recent issue – when a picture of a salvia was wrongly identified as *Salvia chamaedryoides*.

A new HPS member, Will Mullen, spotted the error in last July’s edition, and suggested it was actually *Salvia semiatrata*.

Photo librarian Matthias Dejaegher is on the case and is aiming to trace the original donor of the photograph, which was given to the society in 2002, to try to make a correct identification. In the meantime, it is being withdrawn from the library.

Will is a long-time member of Plant Heritage, and Cambridge plant exchange co-ordinator for that group, as well as being a guide at the city’s Botanic Gardens. “The photo library is an excellent resource,” he said.

## APOLOGY TO JENNIFER

Apologies are due to Jennifer Hewitt, a member of the HPS for more than 45 years. She wrote or commissioned most of the society’s original booklet on Pulmonarias, which she believes is the first publication solely on this topic in the UK, as well as working with Margaret Stone on the recent second edition.

We wrongly attributed that to Jennifer Harmer, not Jennifer Hewitt, an error for which we apologise.

“I’ve gained a great deal from my membership of the HPDS and am glad to have been able to contribute a little in return,” she said.



The errant salvia

Do you have a garden project up and running that our members would be interested in? We'd really love to hear about it. Get in touch at [newsletter@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@hardy-plant.org.uk) and we'll take it from there.

## When the pond sprang a leak

Lincolnshire member Bob Armstrong, whose wife, Ann runs Woodlands Plants nursery near Louth, brings us up to date with their big autumn garden project – renovating the garden pond...

We love to have a garden project and, because of our open garden commitments, this usually takes place in late autumn. In 2021 two things happened to trigger the autumn activity.

Our old pond sprang a leak that we couldn't locate and we decided to increase (double actually) the size of our lean-to conservatory. Now we realise most sensible people would deal with one at a time but, as you will see, the two are inextricably linked.

When we first dug our pond (September 2003) we borrowed a jack hammer to break up concrete, and then we moved the underlying soil to create a new bed all along the back of the conservatory. Looking back, it probably wasn't the greatest of pond designs, but wildlife came and we were very pleased with it.

Fast forward to 2020 when we first noticed a problem, the water level dropped by about a foot almost overnight. Despite several careful searches, we couldn't find the source of the problem, but since we weren't having visitors, decided to leave it, and, sure enough, it filled up again with the winter rains. When the same thing happened again in 2021, we knew it was

decision time!

We discussed several options, a bog garden possibly or a raised sand garden over underlying water, but decided we'd still like to have a pond, but smaller so we could access the far side of the old pond which had become rather neglected.

We started to clear the pond of plants, many of which found new homes with friends, and one small container of snails even moved to Norfolk! A friend with a very large pond is keeping a few of our plants until we are ready to replant. We borrowed a pump and transferred most of the water into a small pond at the back of the garden trying not to harm the multitude of little frogs we discovered and then barrowed the sludge to lay around our hydrangeas.

Finally, we were able to get the old liner out and re-acquaint ourselves with an old bedroom carpet we'd originally used as an underlay.

After much discussion, we decided to have a crescent-shaped pond, using the shape of part of the original pond, with a smaller top pond fed by water run off from the garage roof. This meant we had to dam the old pond and the same friend storing our plants gave us a load of incredibly heavy concrete blocks. All we then needed was some soil.

Remember the conservatory? The footings were being dug so we pushed



barrow after barrow of heavy subsoil and tipped it straight into the other end of the pond along with bits of unwanted hardware such as an old sink and pedestal. Because the conservatory is being extended, we also had to clear land around it, which meant that a lot of the 2003 original bed has now been returned to its original home.

We laid engineering bricks around the main pond but left the small pond with the look of a dry river bed full of different-sized cobbles which we had rescued from the original pond. This meant that the only expense for our new pond was for the liner and some mortar and we actually finished the mortaring on Christmas morning!

As I write this we still have to landscape the area and cover with weed suppressant and, since we want a more open feel, cover with pea shingle which should blend with the cobbles around the pond. There will be a little planting, after all we are in the HPS, but, for once, not too much.

We already have another project in mind for later this year and, of course, the new conservatory, due to be erected in February, will keep us busy.

Whoever said retirement was boring?



Top, Bob dives in to the improvement work.  
Right, the original pond.  
Below, the latest update



Ann and Bob's nursery and garden is the venue for the members of the Shade and Woodland Plants Special Interest Group after their AGM this year. The AGM day, being held at St Mary's Church, Fotherby, near Louth, includes a talk by Michael Myers, horticultural adviser at Craven College, North Yorkshire, on Woodland Wonders. He holds national collections in *Anemone nemorosa*, *Hepatica* and *Primula marginata* and is bringing plants for sale. There'll be a members' plant table and an auction for unusual plants.

For further details, contact secretary Diana Garner on [montana@cholesbury.net](mailto:montana@cholesbury.net)



# The making of a meadow...

## NEWS *project*

by East Yorkshire member Deidre Falcon

I live near York and garden one-and-a-half acres, half of which is old pasture, long used for grazing and bounded by enclosure award hedges from 1820.

My wildflower meadow project started around 20 years ago when I wondered what to do with this field of rough grass, nettles, thistles and docks all too aggressive in habit to co-exist with wildflowers. I fondly thought that growing wildflowers would be easy with less mowing to do, but I had little idea of how to achieve such a transformation and at that time information was scarce. It turned out to be the steepest learning curve of any gardening project I have undertaken.

A local farmer offered to spray these, 'weeds'. All foliage died back leaving unsightly yellow, decaying patches but to my surprise, the following spring these 'weeds' re-appeared and grew vigorously. Again, they were sprayed only to regrow a year later.

I read all the literature I could find. One article suggested regular mowing and removal of all grass clippings would clear perennial weeds, reduce soil fertility and improve grass quality thus aiding wildflower growth. It worked and by the spring of year four my meadow produced its first display of dandelions, the top favourite of bees, followed by buttercups. I was elated, counting a total of 15 wildflower species that year!

Spurred on, I vowed I would become organic and persevere with the mowing and removal regime in autumn and spring. The nettles disappeared and the thistles



A banded demoiselle

and broad-leaved dock reduced dramatically. Another bonus was learning how to compost the mountain of mown grass and use it as a beneficial mulch in my organic garden.

The grass was allowed to grow from April to late August and once flowering had finished, it was time for hay making. The mown grass had to be turned and tossed with a pitchfork to dry, then raked into rows for collection. My field was too small for a bailer, but the loose hay was loaded onto a trailer for winter feed. It was four days of hard work, but I consoled myself with the thought that it was only once a year and gave me as much exercise



as a daily gym workout for a month!

Wildflowers such as meadow cranesbill and lesser knapweed grew easily from seed. Potted on and planted as plug plants in autumn they soon spread. Others such as germander speedwell and lady's smock just appeared. Yellow rattle proved more difficult to introduce but I eventually had success with planting plugs in early spring.

Regular mowing and removal of the cut grass, although hard work has proved highly successful, the flower species list has grown to 40 together with 11 species of grasses. The biodiversity increase has been equally amazing. Grasshoppers have just appeared, and the meadow now supports 118 moths, 16 butterflies and 16 species of bees together with amphibians, hedgehogs, voles, and an increased birdlife.

Last September two ponies, their owner short of grazing, came for a trial period to relieve me of the autumn 'aftermath' mowing and grass collection and to trample in seeds with their hooves. Next summer will bring the results of this experiment.

My wildflower meadow project has enriched the wildlife of my garden and brought me enormous enjoyment and great satisfaction over the past 20 years.



Deidre with one of the ponies



Making hay for winter feed



May 2020 Lady's Smock

# It's competition time



A prize of £230 worth of compost is up for grabs in our latest competition – courtesy of FertileFibre.

The 15-bag mixed pallet contains five each of multi-purpose, seed and potting compost, delivered to your home.

FertileFibre, based near Hereford, now produces eight different peat-free composts and regularly scores highly in annual compost tests conducted by Gardening Which? Magazine – including being the UK's No1 for seed compost in the latest tables.

Set up in 1989 by Robert and Kim Hurst of The Cottage Herbery nursery, it was bought in 2004 by current owner Matthew Dent and

production capacity has steadily increased since. Their range has expanded to eight composts, including vegan and biodynamic, which all have full accreditation with the Soil Association.

The company will be rebranding in the near future and is launching its new website this month.

To be in with a chance of winning the prize, you'll need to send us a maximum of 200 words on the subject of "The best gardening tip I've ever been given is ..."

The deadline for receipt of entries is the end of day on Monday, March 21. The winner's details will be passed on to FertileFibre who will





make contact to arrange delivery. Please send your entry to [newsletter@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@hardy-plant.org.uk) – or by post to NEWSLETTER COMPETITION, The Hardy Plant Society, 3 Basepoint Business Centre, Crab Apple Way, Evesham WR11 1GP.

That's all there is to it. Good luck – we look forward to hearing from you soon.

**FertileFibre**  
100% Organic • 100% Peat Free

## And here are last issue's winners...

A plethora of lovely garden stories landed in my inbox – and one via post – in response to the competition in the last issue. It was a truly difficult job to choose four winners – entrants were asked to write about their favourite garden tool – but the decisions were finally made. Two winners each won £125 worth of plants from Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants and two more won copies of Bloom's Best – Perennials and Grasses from Bressingham Gardens.

**The first plants winner is national member Jenny Scruton** – who lives near Hull. Here's what she said...

*Without doubt my late mother-in-law's honest, old fashioned, long-handled fork. As she was born in 1910, and began gardening after she married in 1933, it is a venerable piece of gardening history. It dug for victory during the war, providing the family with home-grown fruit and vegetables. I inherited it and have continued to use it in preference to modern substitutes. It is the perfect length for me – modern 'ladies' forks are too short – and it cuts through the soil as well as any stainless steel version, though it needs cleaning afterwards, when I remember!*

*As it is older than I am, like me it is beginning to creak a little, and last year the shaft cracked. I took it to a local hardware shop to ask if it could be repaired. He initially refused, but when he saw it, he changed his mind. "You'll never get another of this quality, I'll have a try". I now have a fork which he says should last another 50 years. I shall have to leave it to someone in my will. I have her matching spade as well, but that's another story.*

**Next, our other plants winner is Jacqui Warren**, secretary of the Monmouthshire Group. *Dear Jakoti Hand Shears (you're not dear really but no-one can call you cheap)*

*First of all, I have to tell you that you live in Wales*

now. You may already have spotted lots of sheep, not least those over there, the other side of the hedge. Yes, I know, you were made for sheep shearing but you know you're really useful for lots of other jobs, don't you? You're my star performer and first choice for many things in the garden that need cutting – from flowers to topiary to handfuls of grasses or perennial stems. It's so easy to reach in with your long blades and to be precise, and your spring also saves me much effort. I'm truly sorry though that my other half got over enthusiastic and tried to cut some small branches with you this afternoon. Such a bad idea as we have those run-of-the-mill secateurs for that. We were very glad you made it through unscathed!

Have a good rest now though. Looking forward to our next outing tomorrow – see you first thing. Love as always

Her (not very often) Indoors

xxx

PS Someone else will shear these sheep. . . probably!

### **Now, it's time for the book winners' words.**

#### **A former national treasurer, Mike Foers**

– who lives in St Albans – took time to praise his better half's gardening prowess.

My wife and I have an identical set of secateurs, identical, that is, except that I have lost one of the coloured plastic handle grips from mine. This makes ownership easy to establish.

Whenever I set out on a pruning exercise, it seems that I am unable to make a clean, sharp excision; added to this, the amount I remove is either too little or too much. I leave long spurs, inviting disease, and unfortunately the overall shape of the object of my attention is disappointing, verging on a disaster.

On the other hand, whenever my wife ventures forth into the garden, the way in which she wields her secateurs is reminiscent of the confident way a surgeon handles a scalpel in the operating theatre. Each cut is well placed, sharp and clean; everything is a perfect length with nothing too long or too short.

There are no unsightly spurs to threaten the health of the plant; there are no crossing branches, no weak or damaged shoots: the whole exercise results in a perfectly balanced and beautifully shaped tree or shrub.

Without a doubt, my favourite garden tool is my wife's secateurs!

#### **And finally, our last winner is Madeline Giles**

– secretary of the North East Group – with a gripping tale of her Badger Rake.

Frankly, I was disappointed. My ticket at the group raffle was the last to be drawn. All the plants had been taken. No-one wanted the hand rake. It was a sturdy tool with a comfort grip and strong forged tines; but its handle looked too long. Whenever would I use it?

It languished in a shed for many months until the day my husband and I were involved in a DIY garden job. We were stuck. "What we need is a tool that . . ." After scouring tool boxes and shed, we settled on the hand rake. Perfect. From then onwards it got used more and more. We even gave it a name – The Badger Rake. At the time, we had a visiting badger who was enthusiastically scraping the moss out of our lawn. The tines on the rake are just like badger claws – short, strong and with a curve to extra give traction. Very effective. The Badger Rake has earned a place of its own in the shed. It is my first choice for when I'm gardening on my knees. It gives that extra reach under hedges and shrubs. Wonderful. And the badger? It's moved on. No contest.



Many thanks to everyone who entered last time. We've a great prize to offer in this issue. Why not give it a try?

Hidden Valley Gardens – run by Tricia Howard and her husband and HPS Trustee Peter – has won a prestigious RHS award. Head gardener Tricia tells the story of their Cornish nursery and under gardener Peter answers a few questions...

# NEWS

## *winner*

## Hidden Valley's golden moment



Peter and Tricia receive the award from Jonathan, right

In 2021 the RHS launched a RHS Partner Garden of the Year Competition for visitors to vote for their favourite RHS Partner Garden with the theme 'Feel Good Gardens' in recognition of the positive impact gardens have had on our physical and mental wellbeing, especially in recent times.

We were surprised and delighted to be voted the regional winner in the South West and Wales. Jonathan Webster, Curator RHS Garden Rosemoor, presented us with an oak plaque to display.

After more than 20 years of developing a three-acre garden from an overgrown wilderness, it has given me great satisfaction to know our visitors have

enjoyed Hidden Valley Gardens so much. One quote read, "A real plantsman's garden, relaxed atmosphere with knowledgeable helpful and friendly owners". It is gratifying to know how visitors appreciate the hard work we've put in over the years, with the help of our enthusiastic staff.

I have always loved gardening and grew up in a lovely garden in Surrey, helping my dad. He was an aircraft designer, but gardened in his spare time even doing an hour's gardening every morning before cycling to work at Vickers. Peter (who calls himself the under-gardener) and I were in the same class at school, got together on a youth hostel school trip to Cornwall and have now been married for 53 years.

I always wanted to develop a garden, which I could open to the public with a small nursery. When we purchased Hidden Valley on November 17, 1999 – my birthday – Peter was working away in Manchester and then London for many years. He came home at weekends to help and wasn't allowed in the house until it was dark!

The first couple of years were difficult, rebuilding our home and clearing the overgrown grounds. One bonfire took the whole winter to burn, something we try to avoid now. Once the house was ready, I did Bed & Breakfast to help pay for the development of the gardens. It was about the time the nearby Eden Project started





Around the garden at Hidden Valley



and there were lots of visitors wanting accommodation.

As we know, running a garden business is not all about just growing flowers and listening to birdsong. The under gardener is very efficient dealing with the more mundane tasks – insurance, accounts, advertising, printing garden guides, repairs to garden machinery and assisting visitors – while I do the fun bits like propagating and planting up beds. I also bake cakes, make sure the tea hut and toilet are clean, organise plant sales and occasionally give guided tours.

The garden is in a sheltered and hidden valley, hence the name I decided on, and the planting is mainly herbaceous with 26 beds and borders with different themes. I do love all plants. I grow far too many from the HPS seed exchange and I seem to have got hooked on ferns, growing them from spores received from BPS (British

Pteridological Society).

Most plants are labelled, which delights both plant experts and those new to gardening, although they seem to encourage even more questions. I have the RHS encyclopaedias to hand for visitors to read! I seek to create a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere, which is also helped by including self-service tea or coffee in the entrance price. Local garden lovers can return with the same ticket to see the garden through the changing seasons and some even return for the home-made cakes!

We both love it here and enjoy the many challenges that running this type of business brings. We look forward to the coming season and displaying our RHS oak plaque on the tea hut wall.

## **And Peter, the under gardener, with a few views from the side lines...**

**You've been an HPS member for a while, Peter? Tell us about your time as an HPS member, Cornwall membership, offices held etc...**

*Whilst Tricia has been a member for many a year, I've only been a member since I retired, and was therefore able to accompany Tricia to meetings and garden visits and support her during her period as Cornwall chair. Currently, I am Cornwall treasurer*

**Best part of HPS membership in Cornwall?**

*Cornwall HPS is a very social and happy group of members. The indoor meetings start at 7:30 but everyone arrives before 7:00 for a good chat and to set up their entry to the '3 Flowers' competition or the display table.*

**You've been one of the society's trustees for almost three years now and you'll be standing down later this year, I understand. What's it been like?**

*It has been interesting and surprising to see the numbers of members, either as trustees or, importantly, as postholders, who support the running and associated activities of the society – all, apart from the Office Manager, on a volunteer basis. There has been a strategic review of the role of HPS, which is continuing. I will continue to support ideas that seek to strengthen the HPS family of the national, local and special interest groups.*

**Best part of being at Hidden Valley Gardens?**

*Being able to step outside early in the morning and enjoy the peace and beauty of our lovely garden.*

**How do you feel about winning the RHS award?**

*I'm proud of Tricia's achievement and how it has, in some way, supported the community and visitors alike in these difficult times.*

**Best gardening book you've ever read?**

*I don't read gardening books but Tricia reads me the best bits!*

**Best tip you've been given about gardening?**

*Always enjoy the moment in the garden.*

**Favourite group of plants?**

*I am a simple person – I enjoy all plants with lovely colour.*

**The garden job you hate most?**

*Cleaning the big greenhouse roof.*

**Best day of the week – and why?**

*Not sure. Perhaps the best day of the year is when the garden opens for the season (March 20) and the second best, when it closes for the season (October 15) and we sit down for a moment!*

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

Looking far ahead, and hoping we've seen the end of the devastating effects of Covid 19, West Yorkshire Group has decided to go ahead and plan for the revival of The Magic of Plants Conference in 2023!

We hope we will see many of you there – more details will be revealed over this year, but at present the date is Saturday 6 May 2023 and the venue will be the newly refurbished Pudsey Civic Hall, between Leeds and Bradford.

## **JOURNAL UPDATE**

Copies of the next issue of The Journal will be landing on doorsteps from April 4 onwards, says editor Souren Ala. The deadline for submissions from members for the autumn edition is June 1. Send your ideas or copy and pictures to [editor@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:editor@hardy-plant.org.uk).

## **NEW BOOKLET**

The new edition of Peonies was published at the end of January. Gail Harland has been growing peonies for nearly 30 years and shares her expertise and enthusiasm.

The first part of the booklet includes information about the art and history of peonies as well as their structure, cultivation and propagation. The Directory then includes both old favourites and new additions with lots of lovely photos.

There are useful Best Choice lists for early and late flowering, for scent and for cutting as well suggestions for good places to go to see peonies. The price £7.50, £5.50 for members, and there is an order form on the back of this issue.

The cover features the Tree Peony P. 'Rosy Prospects'.

- Publications co-ordinator Jan Craig is looking for a suitable hosta expert to work on an update of the society's booklet on the genus. If you are interested, or know someone who might be, please contact her. Her details are listed in the back pages information section.

A garden built over the last 38 years has won the Wales and the Marches region award in the Nation's Favourite Gardens competition run by The English Garden magazine.

# NEWS

## winner

## The garden Mike and Bev made

It's the one-and-a-half acre Hillcrest garden of Monmouthshire HPS member Mike O'Leary. It was created by Mike and his partner Bev Price, who sadly died two years ago. Bev, who was a metallurgist at British Steel, liked designing and making the various structures around the garden from new and recycled materials – including a steel-framed gazebo clad with cedarwood.

Over the past 15 years, their National Garden Scheme openings have raised around £50,000 for charity. An estimated 8,000 people have visited the site, which is a cascade of secluded areas with hidden delights and unusual trees, including Embotrium, Liriodendron, Cercidiphyllum, Eucalyptus and Davidii, along with interesting shrubs including several Camellia, and many flowering plants.

"It's great to win this award," said Mike. "It's pleasing because in this area, in Blackwood, near Caerphilly, NGS gardens are a bit thin on the ground. You usually have to get out towards Abergavenny to find good gardens. There's no garden to speak of in front of the bungalow, but if we get people through the side gate, they invariably love it.

"When we started we didn't have a clue, but we often visited other gardens and thought we'd like to do it ourselves. Then we bought a plot that was big enough and it all went from there," said Mike, who



Mike, right, and Bev



The gazebo they designed and built

worked on the production side with Welsh National Opera before retirement. "We wanted a garden that was basically a peaceful and natural place, unpretentious





and welcoming – but we made mistakes along the way.

“One of the areas here is a box parterre. Originally we bought box balls and the entire parterre is made from cuttings from those. We were surprised how quickly they rooted. We love cornuses and have lots of varieties including *Cornus Venus*, which is spectacular.

“Everything in the garden has been planted or built by us. We have not spent a lot of money. There was no definite design and when we started digging in places the soil was quite shallow, about 12 inches deep. So, we planted the trees where there was deep soil and shrubs in the shallower places. The garden is at its best in May and June.

“Bev loved looking after his vegetable garden, but I can’t cope with all the varieties now and I’ve planted them up with flowers and two *Catalpa bignonioides*,

which have since grown to about 6ft. I’m 70 now and I may not be here to see them fully grown. They’re looking very healthy.

“I belong to four gardening clubs, including HPS Monmouthshire, which is very well run. I’ve been in HPS for about five years. I am starting to creak a bit and a few friends help in the garden. In the summer, a gardener cuts the grass. I’d like to think I could open the garden to visitors for another 10 years – but we’ll see. The garden has been my saviour during COVID and as long as it’s here, Bev’s memory will be here with me too.”

**New chairman Pamela Clark has recently been interviewed by Clare Foggett, editor of *The English Garden*, and will be included in a feature on horticultural societies in the March edition. Watch out for it!**

Photo librarian Matthias Dejaeger with the winners of the society's latest photo competition – and his top tips for taking a winning flower picture in 2022...

# NEWS

## focus

### Our winners

Another year and another photographic competition is complete.

Full results and winning pictures of the 2021 photographic competition will be available in the next HPS Journal, due out in April, but this is the list of the winning entries and one of the winning pictures to whet your appetite:

**Winners of the Individual category** – 1st: Nadine Mitschunas; 2nd: Gordon James; 3rd: Mary Jones.

**Winners of the Border category** – 1st: Louise Sims; 2nd: June Skinner; 3rd: Linda Hall.

**Winners of the Children category** – 1st: Chloe Jassim; 2nd: Sophie Wilson; 3rd Jamie Hall.



### Tip-top tips

Another competition year has just begun and I would like to give you some brief explanations of the rules and a few helpful hints for your next competition submission.

#### CLOSING DATE

The most frequently asked question I get is ‘When is the deadline?’. The last couple of years, this has always been December 6.

There are three reasons for this date:

This is to give people as much time as possible to look through the pictures they’ve taken during the year and submit their three favourites.

It gives the judges enough time to submit our results for the deadline of the next HPS *Journal*.

It’s an easy day to remember for me – that’s when we used to celebrate St. Nicholas when I was a child!

You don’t have to wait until the deadline before submitting your pictures. You can send them whenever you feel like it. You can even change the pictures you’ve submitted if you change your mind.

#### CATEGORIES

There are three categories: Individual hardy perennial – whole plant or close-up

Plant grouping, border, garden view or HPS events

Photographs taken by members’ children/stepchildren/grandchildren/step-grandchildren. This is for children age 16 or



under. They can submit pictures of any gardening related subject.

Any member of the HPS can submit a maximum of three pictures in each category. You can win only one prize per year. The competition was started with a

legacy from Nancy, Lady Rowlinson. It is now funded from the Kenneth Black legacy. Prizes for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in each category of are £50, £30 and £20 respectively – with book tokens for children.

### TIP 1: TITLE

The first tip to improve your chance to win is to give all your submitted pictures a title. This may seem logical but often pictures are received without titles. We will still judge those pictures but you will increase your chances if you do because it helps to set a context and understand a picture. This is also what makes it so much fun judging pictures taken by children. We always look forward to the titles. Take this picture from Jassim who ended up second in the 2019 competition:

The title of the picture was “**Dinosaur in Gramp’s Garden**”. Straightaway, it put a smile on the judges’ faces.

Also note that if I don’t get the name of the plant for a picture in the first category, I can’t add it to the image library either so people won’t be able to enjoy it for years to come.



Lights, Camera, Action!



### TIP 2: LET THE PICTURE TALK

We don’t judge a picture on its photographic merit alone. We also judge the story it is trying to tell as well. Take this picture that ended up in second place in the 2020 competition by Louise Sims:

Technically, this may not have been the best picture but it came second because the picture managed to tell us a story. We all thought, ‘Lights, camera, action!’

### TIP 3: CROP YOUR PICTURE

We do allow minor digital enhancements, e.g. improving contrast. In fact, the easiest enhancement is by far the most important one to increase your chances: cropping. Every year, we look at some pictures and comment, 'If only it was cropped appropriately, this could have been a brilliant picture'. Unfortunately, we have to judge pictures as submitted. The only thing we sometimes change is turning it 90 degrees so it's in the appropriate orientation. So, we can't start cropping pictures to what we think looks better. As an example, take this very ordinary picture I took of a Verbena:

In some pictures, it's nice to have plants in the background that are out of focus, but in this case, I find them too small and distracting. It had the effect that the main subject was a bit lost in the sea of background so I want to crop them out. I want people's attention to go straight to the plant rather than what's around it. This is the same picture but slightly cropped: I find the second picture far more balanced than the first one, but it also shows that you can't make an amazing picture out of an ordinary one, you can only improve it.

Original image



Cropped image



#### TIP 4: PICTURE SIZE

This is where it gets a bit more technical. Sometimes I do have to refuse pictures. The biggest reason is when the size of the picture is too small (i.e. the resolution). While I will often allow smaller pictures destined for the image library, I'm afraid I can't do that for pictures submitted for competition. The reason is that all winning pictures need to be published and therefore have to be of a good quality to be printed. To show you the effect of reduced quality, take the previous picture of the Verbena again and next to it, see what happens when I reduce the resolution (exaggerated for effect):

This image has become flat, lost its vibrancy and sharpness. But how do you know the size of the image you've sent? That's where it becomes a bit more complicated I'm afraid as it depends where you send it from, I can't give you any definitive rules. I believe that Android phones will always send the highest resolution by default, but on an iPhone, it will ask you the size you want to send. If it does, always send as 'Actual Size'. On a laptop, just drag and drop the picture into your email and that should be enough. I generally go with the rule that both x and y dimensions have to be over 1200. All modern cameras far exceed those dimensions.

Cropped image



Cropped and scaled image



### TIP 5: LIGHTING CONDITIONS

Enough about technical issues, let's go back to the content of the picture. Sometimes, it's useful to take a picture in totally different lighting conditions. More often than not, it's better not to take pictures in the middle of the day under bright sunlight. It flattens the colours and the lack of shadow means it reduces the depth of your picture so try to take your pictures in the early morning after sunrise or late evening before sunset.

Also, try thinking out of the box. I have taken pictures in the night lit by a light or even under moonlight. This is an example of a picture I took at night. Note how different the colours come out.



Pictures taken at night

### TIP 6: CHANGE YOUR VIEWPOINT

Take this picture of a Kniphofia. It's also useful to think about taking a picture of a plant from a totally different viewpoint.

The bottom two pictures are of exactly the same plant on the same day from a totally different viewpoint. Just one important note with taking pictures from the top down. They can be very disorientating as you have no idea what's up and down, left or right.



Traditional viewpoint

Top down

Bottom up

### CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the day, judging will always be subjective, but that does not mean it's a random exercise. There are ways to improve your chances and, hopefully, these tips will help.

**PLEASE SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS TO  
[photo-comp@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:photo-comp@hardy-plant.org.uk)**



# Book review

## *Bloom's Best – Perennials and Grasses* by Adrian Bloom

Hundreds of new varieties of plants will have been offered to gardeners in the 12 years since this book was first published, but as Adrian Bloom says in his original introduction, "Less is more" and a limited collection of excellent plants can guarantee a better chance of encouraging newcomers to gardening to create a beautiful garden and challenge the more experienced to look again at some of the older varieties. The plants described in this book had stood the test of time then and are still stalwarts in the perennial garden today.

Adrian Bloom VMH has had a distinguished career in horticulture, and, whilst in the UK he became known as a leading authority on conifers, in the US he worked to promote the use of perennials and grasses to create dynamic and vibrant gardens. The Bloom family have been at the forefront of supplying and introducing a huge range of perennials since Alan Bloom established the nursery and gardens at Bressingham in Norfolk in 1953, and as one of the founders of the Hardy Plant Society, he was keen to encourage all gardeners to grow and enjoy hardy perennials.

Over time Adrian has been redesigning his garden at Foggy Bottom to include more perennials, used in large drifts or 'rivers' of plants running through a backdrop of mature shrubs and trees to bring colour and interest through the seasons. Many of us will not have the space to recreate his style, but this book will appeal to all gardeners, even those with much smaller spaces in which to grow plants.

Picking a selection of the best performing perennials is a daunting task, but those Adrian has chosen have proved their worth, from *Hemerocallis* 'Hyperion' introduced in 1924 to newer introductions like *Salvia* 'Caradonna'; and for the more experienced gardener there are further recommendations of related species and cultivars. Each entry in the directory of perennials and grasses gives the origin of the plant and the growing conditions found in its native habitat, so helpful in predicting whether it will suit the conditions in our own gardens. I particularly liked the

historical details for plants such as *Kniphofia* 'Percy's Pride', named as a tribute to Percy Piper who produced many fine selections with Alan Bloom at Bressingham, and there are many other fascinating stories here.

Of course, it is one thing to have a list of plants, quite another to know how to grow them together for best effect. The photographs in the book (taken by Adrian and his son, the renowned garden photographer Richard Bloom), show perennials at their best in garden settings, in containers and combinations, as well as individual plant portraits that are sure to inspire everyone.

The chapter on preparation, planting and maintenance is a clear guide to gardening with perennials, but it is also where Adrian shows his passion as a gardener. Amongst the practical aspects, he talks about the enjoyment of nurturing plants, observing the cycle of growth, learning about their origins and introduction, and of course the importance of taking pleasure in the garden, relaxing on a summer evening, or catching a low autumn sun backlighting grasses and seed heads.

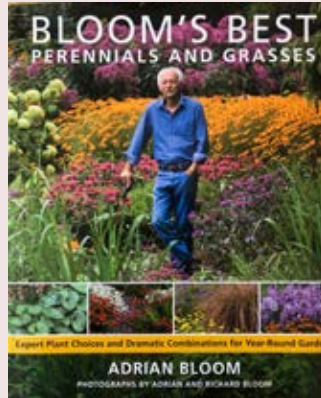
For gardeners in the UK there may be some confusion in the use of the United

States Department of Agriculture (USDA) guide to winter hardiness zones as we are now familiar with the RHS Guide to hardiness ratings introduced in 2012. Some plant names have changed too and a short preface to this edition may have helped to explain these changes.

There are many books gardeners can turn to for planting advice, but experts all have an individual style making their personal choices unique, and providing the reader with an opportunity to learn and be inspired. 'Bloom's Best', like the plants Adrian has included, has stood the test of time and will be a valuable reference for all gardeners. Hardy Plant Society members will particularly welcome the focus on perennials and enjoy seeing them grown to perfection.

Published by Foggy Bottom Books, signed copies of 'Bloom's Best' are available from Bressingham Gardens website [www.thebressinghamgardens.com](http://www.thebressinghamgardens.com)

**Jan Vaughan (Former Chair of the HPS)**



Seed distribution manager Diane Puncheon wants to share the joy and make the scheme even more successful...

# NEWS

## background

### How to succeed with seeds

Thousands of packets of seeds have been winging their way to members who ordered from the society's annual scheme.

But someone who has never taken part in this scheme may be wondering exactly what all the excitement is about and what its purpose is.

Well, it's one of the benefits of being an HPS member. When you donate or order seed, you are engaging with the wider community of the society, you are part of a process involving many volunteers in several local groups, who take that seed forward from you to the person who orders it in the end.

Donating gives other members the chance of trying to grow plants they don't have, and what pleasure there is in scouring the order list for those seeds you would like to grow yourself! It might be that all your donated seed does not get purchased but it is not wasted. Around 40 charitable groups benefit from receiving seed at the end of the ordering season and local groups give out free seed at events throughout the year, which promotes the society.

Your seeds may go to another member and a charity and will help to fulfil the objectives that underpin and sustain the national group. Growing seed is a learning process however experienced you are and there will be failures and successes, all of which contribute to your knowledge base.

#### SO WHY DON'T YOU DONATE?

##### **Do you find the instructions difficult to follow? Unsure how to clean it?**

The website instructions will be simplified and the May newsletter will have additional help. If are still unsure about any part of the process, get in touch with me and I'll help you through it. Everyone has a first time when they are not sure what they are supposed to be doing.

##### **Do you feel your seed isn't interesting enough?**

All seed is welcome and is interesting to someone. More inexperienced HPS members may want to start with ordering well known varieties. Charities benefit from tried and tested more common seeds.

##### **Do you think you haven't got enough seed?**

Even very small amounts are welcome, four or five grateful members will be glad you have donated the seed they ordered.

##### **Do you think your small donation won't make enough of a difference?**

In the main, the vast majority of packets of seed come from dozens of different small donations, every little helps!

#### WHY DON'T YOU ORDER?

##### **You don't grow plants from seed**

You don't need a greenhouse or a cold frame to experience the joy of growing plants from seed, try it. Pots on a

windowsill or against a sheltered wall with covering in severe weather, any container with some compost will do. If you are already an HPS member, you are interested in plants anyway.

**You buy your seed from commercial companies**

This year, for just one of your seed purchases, support the group you belong

to and the scheme it provides. The scheme relies on plant lovers donating and ordering seed .

**You don't know what to do with the seed**

Ask another member, look at the propagation section of HPS booklets, or get together with others in your local group who are new to seed planting like you. You can also contact me at any time.

## And finally...

Someone who loves the whole process and who is an enthusiastic and loyal supporter of the seed scheme is Twink Addison. Here is what she has to say.

“I'm a huge fan of seed. I like to donate what I've got, in case somebody else doesn't have it. There's the contemplative process of sowing seed in separate pots and labelling it and covering it with fine grit, often on a Sunday morning in Winter with the radio and a cup of cocoa and Desert Island Discs (Radio 4) followed by Private Passions (Radio 3). Most important, after that, does anybody know anything more interesting on a daily basis than nipping out and seeing if there are

any little green shoots appearing in those pots? Learning what the first leaves look like? Hoping that pricking out the seedlings will get you a lot of interesting plants, and being either thrilled when they grow and thrive, appalled when they damp off, devastated when a little slug chomps the lot before dawn or hoping against hope that the only two seedlings to germinate will hold on and grow. Half of them don't germinate. Is it my fault? Was it viable seed? Did I overwater, not water, were they too hot – too cold – what? It's a soap opera on the tiniest set in the world – always enthralling!”



## CORNUCOPIA

A subscription to *Cornucopia* is surely the best value for money you'll find this year, says editor Marion Jay! Featuring the best articles from HPS Local Group newsletters in full colour throughout, there's something for everyone.

Two issues a year cost just £3.50 (UK postage included). You can subscribe online by going to 'Publications' on the HPS website and clicking on 'Cornucopia', where you'll find a link to the website order form. Or you can subscribe when you renew your membership. Non-members are welcome to subscribe, too.

Alternatively you can send a cheque for £3.50, payable to The Hardy Plant Society, to: HPS Administrator, 3 Basepoint Centre, Crab Apple Way, Evesham, WR11 1GP (please write Cornucopia on the back of the cheque). Don't miss out – subscribe now

## SOMETHING SPECIAL?

Have you got a potential conservation plant? Something a bit special, or maybe an older cultivar that is hard to find now? As you go about your garden clean-up this spring, check to see if you have a good, garden worthy plant that should be more widely grown. The Conservation Scheme is always looking for new plants. We aim to keep good cultivars going so there is always a wide variety of beautiful plants for people's gardens. Chrysanthemum 'Goldengreenheart' AGM is just one of our success stories, now listed in 11 UK nurseries.

What we look for:

- Older, heritage cultivars that may have fallen out of fashion
- Cultivars with links to important nurserymen or HPS members
- Cultivars not widely available from UK nurseries
- Plants that need the special attention that Hardy Planters can give them

If you think you might have a plant that could go in the Conservation Scheme, please contact the national co-ordinator Sally Adams by email at [conservation@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:conservation@hardy-plant.org.uk)

## ZOOM DATE

An April Zoom talk has been organised by the Monmouthshire Group – and will feature Razvan Chisu.

He grew up in Transylvania, calls himself The Transylvanian Gardener and his talk, *Fifty Shades of Green*, explores leaves in their diversity of shape, size, colour and texture and gives examples of how foliage plants can be used to great effect in gardens. He's been responsible for the HPS display at Tatton Park flower show over a number of years.

See [hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk](http://hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk) for details of their programme and drop an email to [monmouthshirehps@gmail.com](mailto:monmouthshirehps@gmail.com) if you'd like to be added to the distribution list of its monthly newsletter and programme invites.

## JUNE TOUR LINED UP

A five-day tour of gardens in the Mid-Shires is in prospect for members of Sussex Group this summer. Among the places on their end-of-June itinerary across Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland are Coton Manor, Barnsdale plus other, smaller, private gardens as well as the Norwell nursery and garden of Andrew Ward.

## BONFIRE NIGHT BOOKING

Shropshire HPS has arranged its talks for 2022 – including a Bobby Dazzler of a speaker on Bonfire Night.

Tom Hart-Dyke is the man in question and the subject of his talk on November 5, starting at 2.30, will be *From Captivity to Castle*. As a trainee at RHS Wisley, Tom was captured and held prisoner for months while on a plant hunting trip in the Colombian jungle in 2000. After his release, he has created a garden at his ancestral home Lullingstone Castle.

Elsewhere, East Yorkshire Group has the pleasure of a talk from Gail Harland, author of the HPS booklet on peonies, at its June 9 meeting, a week later than usual this year because of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations, and Troy Scott Smith is their October 6 booking.



## Collector searches for rarer plants

Plant fanatic David Simpson has appealed to hardy planters to help close a few gaps in his national collection of hardy Tradescantia, commonly known as Spiderwort.

David, from Cheltenham, started his national collection two years ago and it has already grown to 46 different cultivars in raised beds at his half-acre garden. He now wants to find some of the rarer varieties and has listed his top 10 priorities, all Andersoniana Group varieties.

They are...

- 'Mariella' ● 'Chedglow' ● 'Croftway Blue'
- 'Gisela' ● 'Lilacina Plena' ● 'Melissa'
- 'Purple Glow' ● 'Red Grape'
- 'Regal Charm'

"They were all once listed in Plant Finder

and available from independent nurseries some years ago, but have slipped out of favour. I've always been attracted to certain species of plants – dahlias and hemerocallis for example – but my latest obsession is Tradescantia. So many of them are just lovely, they are easy to maintain and propagate and are far less trouble than other genera. The missing ones must be in members' gardens up and down the country, I just need to find them!"

David says he is happy to pay for plants and postage – or to swap for varieties he already has. He may even collect them within 50 miles of Cheltenham.

If you can help, please contact him initially by email at [spiderwort.collection@gmail.com](mailto:spiderwort.collection@gmail.com) or call 01242 224747

## From the Office

All enquiries concerning Hardy Plant Society matters and membership renewals should be addressed to the Administrator during office hours (Monday to Thursday 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Friday 9.00am – 1.00pm), please note there is only one telephone line into the office, therefore, if I am already on the telephone your call will go straight to answerphone, so please leave a message and I will call you back as soon as possible: 01386 710317. You can also email: [clare@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:clare@hardy-plant.org.uk)

### Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due by 1st January each year, however, renewals may be sent from 1st October, the annual subscription rates are £17.00 for single membership or £19.00 for two members at one address (joint membership), with an optional charge of £10.00 for overseas members outside Western Europe, who wish their mailings to

be sent by airmail. If you wish to subscribe to Cornucopia please add £3.50 UK, £5 Overseas. Subscriptions should be sent to The Administrator, 3 Basepoint Business Centre, Crab Apple Way, Evesham, WR11 1GP. To save on admin costs you are encouraged to pay your future subscriptions by Standing Order through your bank or building society. You can request a form from the Administrator, by email or post, or download it from the website (Join the HPS on the Home Page).

Please note as of June 2019 we are no longer able to accept telephone card payments.

### HPS Booklets

Please order from the web: <http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/publications/booklets> or use the order form in the newsletter.

**Clare Powell, Administrator**

## Contact Information

**Administrator:** Clare Powell, 3 Basepoint Business Centre, Crab Apple Way, Evesham WR11 1GP.  
01386 710317 clare@ / admin@

### Officers

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**Vice-Chair:** Position vacant

**Hon. Secretary:** Helen Curtis, 07768 567685,  
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**Hon. Secretary:** Linda Hall, 01379 641519,  
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**Hon. Treasurer:** Stuart Senior, 01823 442344,  
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**Librarian/archivist:** Brian Hackett, 01484 865269,  
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**Journal Editor:** Souren Ala, 01635 298131,  
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**Kenneth Black Bursary Fund Co-ordinator:** Heather Farquhar, 01522 778667, bursary@hardy-plant.org.uk

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**Photo Librarian:** Matthias Dejaegher,  
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**Publications Co-ordinator:** Jan Craig, 01604 740401,  
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**Seed Distribution Manager:** Diane Puncheon,  
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**Website Content Co-ordinator:** John Dyson,  
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**Website Manager:** Colin Doughty 01242 241035  
website@hardy-plant.org.uk

## Special Interest Groups

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Hardy Geranium	Tricia Newton	07799 177507	hardygeranium@
Peony	Caroline Stone	01566 785706	peony@
Pulmonaria	Barry Street	01494 713476	pulmonaria@
Ranunculaceae	Susie Mitchell	01327 843426	ranunculaceae@
Shade & Woodland	Diana Garner	01494 758347	shade@
Variegated	Brian Dockerill	01443 402999	variegated@

## Trustees

	End of Trustee Term
Karen Gimson	2022
Peter Howard	2022
Catherine Part	2022
Keith Scott	2023
Lynne Hackett	2023
Tricia Newton	2023
Sally Adams	2023
Graham Farquhar	2025
Heather Farquhar	2025

## Officers

	End of Term
Pamela Clark	Annual re-election
Helen Curtis	Annual re-election
Stuart Senior	Annual re-election
Linda Hall	Annual re-election

## Group Contacts

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Devon	Helen Brown	01404 850941	devon@
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Nottingham	Carol Jones	01159 142474	notts@
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South Pennine	Judy Coulson	01142 351290	spennine@
South Wales	Chris Moon	01656 645012	swales@
Southern Counties	Sarah Wilson	07932445868	scounties@
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Sussex	Chris Hart	01444 457230	sussex@
West Midlands	Bridget Hardstaff	01564 205363	wmids@
West Yorkshire	Pat Hunter	07776 300580	wyorks@
Western Counties	Catherine Part	Do not print	wcounties@
Wiltshire & Avon	Pat Hammersley	01249 782079	wilts@
Worcestershire	Lyn Maile	01905 820267	worcs@



Gardening with hardy perennials

## HPS MEMBERS ONLY BOOKLET ORDER FORM (POSTAL OPTION)

- Please print this form out and fill in the fields below
- Post it to the HPS Office (address below) with a cheque if appropriate

Title	Price	Number Required	TOTAL
Ferns	£5.50		£
Geraniums	£5.50		£
Peonies	£5.50		£
Chrysanthemums	£5.50		£
Pulmonarias	£5.50		£
Euphorbias	£5.50		£
Penstemons	£3.00		£
Border Phlox	£5.50		£

All booklets are available to non-members – the cost for each booklet is £7.50 except for Penstemons, which costs £4.

ORDER TOTAL £  
Postage and packaging is free to members

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Number (6 Digits) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Tel No (for queries) \_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT VIA ONLINE BANKING

- Make payment to “The Hardy Plant Society”
- Account number: 30212407
- Sort Code: 40-11-60
- Use the first 4 letters of your surname with your 6 digit membership number as a reference
- Post this form to the office (address below) advising that payment has been made by online transfer & include the date of the transfer

The Administrator: 3, Basepoint Business Centre, Crab Apple Way, Evesham, Worcestershire. WR11 1GP.

Payment by cheque should be made out to “The Hardy Plant Society”

Queries? Please call the administrator on 01386 710317 Mon – Fri 9am – 1pm.