



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY



Gardening with hardy perennials

HAMPSHIRE GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Bearded Irises at The Dower House

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Front cover picture Iris Collection at The Dower House, Headbourne
Worthy Martin Ward

Indoor meetings are charged at £2 per member (guests £5) and held at St. Boniface Centre, Hursley Road, Chandlers Ford, beginning at 7.30pm and preceded by tea and coffee. Where the speaker has brought plants for sale, these will be available after the talk.

Plant Labelling

We do our best at our Plant Sales and Raffles to ensure plant labelling is correct. Occasionally, plants are donated with the wrong plant name. Also, some plants grown from seed are not always marked accordingly and there is no certainty that they will come true, even when grown from HPS supplied seeds. The Society cannot always guarantee accuracy but we will continue to vet all labels to the best of our ability.

The opinions expressed by the authors are their personal views and not specifically endorsed by HPS Hampshire Group. All illustrations are copyright to the author of the article unless otherwise indicated. The editor reserves the right to edit contributions as necessary.

Contributions for the Autumn edition of the Newsletter should be sent to the editor by 30th September 2019

Editorial

Welcome to the Summer edition and my first Newsletter as editor. Looking back over past issues, I have a hard act to follow. Chris Smith did an excellent job for over five years and Peter Hart who, after doing it for more years than he cares to remember, stepped in to put together the Spring issue while I enjoyed a wonderful holiday in New Zealand. Thank you for that Peter. I have a lot to learn, but hopefully I will do justice to the kind people who have provided me with copy to put into this issue.



A recent innovation for the Hampshire Group of the HPS is Helen Cleare's enthusiasm for social media and Facebook. Helen has shot some great short videos and I want to encourage you to have a look at them. As we only publish hard copies of the Newsletter it is difficult to link the text with the video. I am therefore going to experiment with QR Codes. These are the little square barcodes that you see everywhere these days. If you have a smartphone or an iPad with a camera you can probably read these QR Codes. Focus the camera on the barcode, enlarge if necessary, and a small message should come up and say "Do you want to go to..." Confirm by tapping the message and you will be taken straight to the Facebook or webpage. You don't have to sign up to Facebook but just watch the videos and enjoy some of the write ups with photographs. It is as easy as that!!! Just try this one.



As Peter said in the last Newsletter I will be very grateful for any articles or contributions, no matter how small. Here are some suggestions – news about how your own garden is progressing; have you had some great successes or perhaps failures; plants you can recommend or steer clear of; or some useful tips to help us all? Have you visited any interesting gardens, perhaps on holiday, or treasures of some out-of-the-way nursery or a foreign holiday with exotic plant life? We would all like to read about it. Perhaps you can help with a brief write-up of our programme of visits and open gardens? Pictures are also always welcome, and don't worry about the style and format, we can deal with that. This all makes for an interesting newsletter and your help will be most appreciated.

Martin Ward

Chairman's Thoughts

The strawberry bed is now free from its attachment to our national collection of bindweed at least for a day or so. Sadly just as our cultivated plants love the alternation between rain and sun so do the weeds. I find weeding frustrating but also therapeutic as one discovers that plants written off as lost have somehow survived hidden away – a new beginning. On that theme the mind wanders whilst weeding and three thoughts have been in my mind; Chelsea Flower Show, School Half Term and the Group's Propagation morning. I found a connection between them which may not be obvious.



We went to a pre-Chelsea evening at Hillier Botley where we had a talk on their display at Chelsea. Having seen it in all its glory I can vouch for the claim that it is a new beginning for the nursery. It was very different to what one has come to expect, but looking through the screens of running water I thought the display was impressive and presumably the judges agreed adding yet another gold to their collection. Given the level of competition it is 'brave' to try something new, but a great example for renewing and updating ones garden.

So what about Half Term; well as a change from i-Pads and the like we have introduced two of our grandchildren to the world of gardening. For a generation that seems to depend on instant results planting seeds or seedlings and waiting for the results is a challenging concept. We have started with vegetables and soft fruit to appeal to their 'inner self' but hope to progress. It is great to see them enjoying the experience and as the RHS has been championing lately, we do need more young people to take an interest in horticulture. For them the promise of vegetables and soft fruit (birds and slugs permitting) from their own garden, is something they look forward to.

My final thought is about the Propagation morning led by three members of the Group which saved us a lot of work in pruning plants! The morning got off to a great start aided by tea, coffee, delicious cream cakes and very yummy jam doughnuts. The session was a trial but the different techniques and skills Olenka, Ali and Jenny brought to the occasion made it all the more interesting. The barn and garden were soon hives of activity, but for me Martin's bargain propagator from Ikea was something to get. I just hope many of the cuttings people took will

turn into new plants and foster the delight of sharing. Will we repeat in the future, possibly at a different time of year? I hope so.

Best wishes to all Hampshire Group members for an enjoyable summer and a special thanks to both the Committee and Groups Members who have helped organise meetings and clear up afterwards. Visiting speakers have commented to me on this and I for one really appreciate the lighter work load for all. Please do continue to help at future indoor meetings.

Mike Maunder

Propagation Workshop

Led by Olenka Snell, Jenny Maunder and Ali Fletcher

On Saturday 4 May, 12 HPS members gathered at Hill House Farmhouse, Mike and Jenny Maunder's home. This delightful venue was to prove an opportunity for not only a fabulous garden visit, but a place where many cuttings could be taken, from choice perennials, shrubs and climbers. In particular a large specimen of *Daphne* 'Jacqueline Postill' and a fabulous *Clematis* 'Duchess of Edinburgh' caused great excitement and provided good propagation material for the morning.

On arrival we gathered in the kitchen for tea, coffee, cakes and a chat. Olenka had brought along her own recipe gluten free coffee and walnut cake, Ann Lyman had provided a delicious gluten free Victoria Sandwich cake, Ali Fletcher had stopped off at the bakers in Fair Oak and bought a dozen fresh doughnuts, and Jenny had made apple cake and cream cakes. Mike was in attendance with offers of fresh coffee and mugs of tea. The air of excitement was electric!



Jenny Maunder and the cakes
© Helen Cleare

Olenka, provided several bags of cuttings, pots of plants and a selection of her own garden collected seeds. When propagating or repotting, she uses a potting mix made from a variety of materials, and brought along large trugs of: John Innes Number 2; horticultural coarse sand; a peat based multipurpose compost; horticultural potting grit and horticultural coarse grit.

Helen Cleare took a video of Ali Fletcher explaining how to make a standard cuttings mix from these



ingredients. This interesting video is now shown on the Hampshire HPS Facebook page.

Jackie Jack supplied plants, including *Chrysanthemum* 'Innocence', an unnamed dwarf Aster, a large pot of *Phlox paniculata* 'Bosvigo Pink', a large clump of *Sempervivum calcareum* 'Sir William Lawrence' and a selection of her own garden collected seed.

Mark Lyman provided a selection of seeds from *Delphinium elatum* hybrids, all from the pink flowering variety with some dark brown eyes. Seed from a cross of 'Beryl Burton' x 'Lucia Sahin' and some other open pollinated varieties including some more pink varieties. It was exciting to imagine the range of flower possibilities that this seed may offer!

Annette Neuber brought along a super salvia variety, Amistad for us to propagate from. Martin Ward brought along an interesting hydroponics propagation unit bought from Ikea.

After a brief welcome and introduction to the workshop given by Jenny we moved into the garden to take cutting material and select some of the many seedlings Jenny had grown, before regrouping in the Barn for the propagation workshop. It was an interesting and fruitful morning with lots of discussion about the how's and why's and best methods of propagating and all members, with a range of knowledge and skills, benefitted from the session. Members took home many potted cuttings of new plants and some old favourites.

The feedback on the session was positive and talk of another workshop was already being discussed.

Olenka Snell

Peonies and Irises - Talk by Susannah Applegate

Susannah Applegate was an extremely engaging speaker who came to our February meeting. She is based at Greenshutters Garden Centre, near Taunton, (greenshuttersgardencentre.com). I noticed that the website posts are written by a Roger Eavis. The slightly unusual surname rang a bell and I scratched my head but had to resort to the internet. Of course, Michael Eavis runs Glastonbury festival.....! Perhaps they are related, both being Somerset based.

Unusually for us this talk included a practical demonstration at the end of the meeting. This was about dividing irises (note to myself – do this in July!). There is

a short film of this on our Facebook page if you did not attend the meeting and you would like to see it.



As a summary of Susannah's advice regarding propagation; irises make roots as the leaves are dying back and the energy is then going into the rhizomes. Each rhizome only flowers once so there is no point in keeping it, so you need to sever the babies from the main plant to allow them to develop. The little plants can go onto sharp sand if available. Make sure that new rhizomes after they have developed roots are put on the surface of the soil so that they can bake.

Recommended varieties for good perfume are Langport Chapter and Rouge-Gorge. Susannah says that their perfume is very similar to lily of the valley. She spoke also about bearded irises and explained how the plant is divided into the petals, the falls (the bit that hangs down) and the beard. Modern breeders tend to select beards that are bushier.

There are 3 main groups : the dwarf varieties flower in the 3rd week of April, the intermediates at the end of April and the tall follow in May and June. Hopefully by the time that the tall are out the winds won't be strong enough to blow them over. Some flowers do not rise above the height of the leaves; this gives further protection from the wind. Bearded irises like a feed of wood ash and do not like their feet in water.

Susannah also spoke about peonies and we were reminded that the HPS has a Peony group. They are after any James Hellways' varieties if members can help out with those at all.



Peonies love winter and if they aren't given a good cold rest then they don't tend to do so well when they flower, due to their Himalayan origination. The five types of flower are simple to complex types, which include imperial and a full double. They are fairly difficult to propagate as only 10% of seeds will germinate and they take 3 years to do so. We then have to wait a further 7 years to see a flower so these plants are not for the instant gardener. Don't

good things come to those who wait?

Susannah appeared on Gardener's World shortly after her visit which of course can be viewed on the marvellous BBC i-player.

Helen Cleare

Two Different Approaches to Creating Gardens

Talk by Andrew Humphris

Andrew Humphris has worked for both the National Trust and at Windsor Great Park so has certainly had a good grounding in horticulture throughout his career. More recently he has gardened at private houses and he gets to work at some utterly 'goluptious' places. He gave us an insider's view of Wollerton Old Hall in North Shropshire, where he worked from 2004.-2016 Added to that, we explored West Lodge in Dorset where he currently works and lives.

A tale with a happy ending belongs to Wollerton Old Hall. In the 1950's the house was lived in by the Jenkins family, including the young Lesley. The family moved out after her mother had started some work on the garden. Many years later, Lesley spotted that the house was for sale. Along with her husband she made the decision to purchase the house and the sale was rushed through within 2 days! The lack of a survey of course meant that they had to deal with a few surprises.....However the yews planted by her mother are still intact and exist in the current form of the garden.

Lesley started with the then fashionable 'Bressinghamesque' island bed, but replaced this later for a knot-garden to reflect the origins of the house. Likewise, a white garden was created, which was later replaced by a Well Garden – so called for obvious reasons.



Yew and beech hedges, topiary and wooden structures . Wollerton Old Hall
© Marianne Majerus

The garden now benefits from repetition throughout with beech and yew hedging, topiary and wooden structures. They grow 110 varieties of salvias and 150 clematis along with a number of phlox. *Achillea* 'Gold Plate' and A. 'Red Velvet', *Delphinium* 'Butterball' and the blue geraniums are stalwarts along with phlox and dahlias. *Thalictrum delavayi* 'Hewitt's Double' has done very well. Andrew believes that the yellow (Group 3) clematis 'Bill

Mackenzie' has the longest flowering period of any clematis as it starts in June and keeps on flowering until early October.

Moving on to West Lodge Andrew told us of the garden he moved to in 2016 which was in the middle of an extensive design and build project over a huge area of mainly grassland when he joined. The house was originally owned by a Mr Hall of Hall and Woodhouse fame and from the house, the Isle of Wight can be seen over 35 miles away.

The land is on deep chalk so this has been improved with tons and tons of topsoil. The owner was 'underwhelmed' by the current borders and told Andrew that he favoured purple. So in came lots of *Verbena bonariensis* and *Agastache* 'Blue Bower' (which is bigger than Blackadder). A lawn area was given interest by the arrangement of box balls of differing sizes in the corner which was very unusual and quite striking. The roof of the swimming pool was covered in 4,500 thyme plants – Andrew was meticulous in calculating the exact number required. 4 olive trees which were at least 150 years old were purchased. Do you see a theme running through this garden? Money is no object! Andrew warns that creating the garden is the easy bit but keeping it looking good is the real challenge.

We were shown a few of Andrew's favourite planting combinations ; *Aruncus* go together well with *Rosa* 'Rhapsody in Blue' and *Rosa* 'Madame Butterfly' (pink) with *Astrantia*. He also showed us some *Salvia* and *Euphorbia* which blended well. Overall Andrew gave us a thoroughly interesting and insightful talk.

Helen Cleare

Women and the National Trust

Talk by Judith Plante-Cleall.

Our April meeting was a little different from most, as it focussed on people and properties rather than plants. Our talk was all about the National Trust and the contribution made by women and our speaker was a retired head teacher, Judith Plante-Cleall. She had been on the South West regional committee of the NT for many years – apparently the maximum is meant to be 5 years, but she managed 20 years in total ! So there can be few people who know the properties in that area as well as she does.

Judith's first point was that many of us remember the name of the woman who was a founder member of the National Trust but not the name of the men involved. This was of course Octavia Hill, whose legacy was far greater than just founding the Trust – she was also a campaigner, social reformer and philanthropist who

created many open spaces for the poor in London. We might call her a 'Victorian Wonder Woman' suggested our speaker, and I think that really sums her up quite well.

We were told also about Blaize Hamlet which is a small collection of quite lovely cottages built for retired gentlefolk, the majority of whom were of course likely to be women. John Nash was the architect and he set to work on his designs during the early part of his career when he was using the Vernacular Style. Later on he designed such classical gems as Regent Street, Marble Arch and Buckingham Palace. He was one of the most successful classical architects during the Georgian period. For this early project, near Bristol, he focused on a pressing problem, how to stop women gossiping at their front doors. So he made the front entrances face away from each other! I had not heard the term 'Women gossip, men confer'. I was speechless (no pun there)! These days of course planners are more likely to favour developers who encourage social interaction between inhabitants. How times do change.

Brownsea Castle owned by the National Trust is leased to the John Lewis Partnership for use by their staff. The castle has a fascinating history, including acting as a decoy during WW2 so that bombs were dropped on it rather than on Poole itself. Baden Powell used the island for some of his first scout camps at the turn of the 20th century. The island was bought by Mary Bonham-Christie who evicted the majority of islanders and banned most visitors. We were not given any idea of whether her management of the island was seen as a success or not – many of the buildings were devastated by a fire in 1934 and not much happened in terms of rejuvenation until the Trust took over in the 1960's.

The Countess of Shrewsbury, Bess of Hardwick Hall, was a woman very much involved in the building and design of her estates, which are now in the hands of the Trust. A woman who knew how to pick a husband, she accumulated enormous wealth in the 1500s and was as shrewd a business woman as there ever was. Hardwick Hall, 'more glass then wall', was her most famous home. Keen to follow new architectural trends she ensured that the best materials, methods and designs were used to create this well known masterpiece. The rooms on the first floor were unusually tall and were made so in order to display her tapestries, which in her day were more valuable than silver.

Our talk was brought to a close by the speaker's husband who reminded her that they needed to be back to their hotel in time for dinner!

Helen Cleare



Hampshire Gardens Trust

Hampshire Gardens Trust

Join the Hampshire Gardens Trust and help protect Hampshire's parks, gardens and green spaces for future generations, and receive exclusive membership privileges

The Hampshire Gardens Trust is the only voluntary organisation in the county to identify the needs and opportunities to conserve, protect and enhance its rich heritage of parks, gardens and designed landscapes. We offer expert, free advice and appropriate project grants to raise awareness of the value of these special places.

Ted Wake has recently become the new Chairman of the Trust. He is an experienced and enthusiastic gardener and has been creating a new garden over the last 15 years where he lives near Winchester.

Ted has been a life member of HGT for several years and says 'I am delighted to accept the role of Chairman for Hampshire Gardens Trust. The HGT includes a team of enthusiastic and expert volunteers who share a passion to research, monitor and protect Hampshire's finest gardens and the wider landscape. The support that the HGT is able to offer helps owners and custodians of these special gardens and landscapes to nurture and preserve this vital element of our heritage for the benefit of all. Furthermore, the HGT is able to provide vital planning advice on public spaces, landscape and private gardens to the County Council and local councils at a time when Hampshire is under pressure from a growing population that needs housing and infrastructure that meets local and national needs.'

Membership offers you:-

- A chance to have an input into conserving Hampshire's green heritage for future generations
- The satisfaction of helping young people appreciate the value of private and public gardens
- An opportunity to use your skills working alongside those committed to the same goals

- An opportunity to visit gardens and attend lectures, where you can meet other members socially



An organised visit to Broughton Grange © Jo Bolt

For further information and to find out how you can become a member visit our website www.hgt.org.uk. The office is based in Jermyns House, Ampfield.

You can contact us by calling 01794 367752 or by emailing admin@hgt.org.uk.

Jo Bolt

Administration and Membership

The Delphinium Society at The Chelsea Flower Show 2019

As many of you know I've had the privilege and pleasure of building the Delphinium Society's stand at Chelsea for the last seven years. Building also comes with the design element and, rather more of a challenge – growing the plants.

To begin with, I must say that it's not just me that grows and builds. We have a fabulous team in place. First and foremost is my wife Anne, who in addition to an amazing amount of tolerance, isn't a bad waterer either! We also have a growing and build team of Jackie Jack, Joan Taylor and Ali Fletcher. Then of course there are the numerous lovely people who staff the stand during the week. Thank you all – quite simply there would be no stand without you.

The stand build itself starts a couple of weeks prior to the show, as the various components are brought together and prepared. A Luton hire van is collected and

loaded on the Thursday night and driven to the show on the Friday. Should you see me in said van – keep well clear.... It's usually mid-day before we get into the show and by the time we leave (get thrown out) at 8pm it is pretty much built. A return on the Sunday sees final touches, such as labelling, touching up and laying the paving. Yes, we have stone flooring – it is Chelsea after all, darling.



Chris Beardshaw at The Delphinium Society's Stand
© Mark Lynam

Hardy plants have always featured in our exhibit. Prior to our involvement the delphs were the only plant featured. One of our key aims was to show the delphs in the context of a garden setting and other plants. We've tried all sorts over the years and have now settled on a palette that is both easy to get to flower in time for the show and has a long season of interest. These include *Brunnera*, *Erysimum*, *Polemonium*, *Artemisia*, *Aquilegia* and *Allium*. We've also now settled on *Orlaya grandiflora* - yes, it's an annual. It is though very reliable and draws massive interest from the people at the show.

Onto the delphs... whilst they're not too hard to grow in the open ground, they're a tad trickier to get to flower in pots and in time for the show – about a month ahead of the normal flowering time in the garden. That said, we've always managed it – just don't mention 2015 when we had a beautiful collection of buds. Again, we have settled on a smallish group of cultivars known for their early flowering and grow a number of plants of each. Around 60 large pots go into the greenhouse at Christmas time. In a 12 by 8 greenhouse they're pretty rammed. Then as they come into growth any weaker plants are weeded out, leaving 40 or so to grow to flower. Given that 25 delphs are used on the stand, this isn't a bad hit rate.

We're already busy thinking about 2020 and how we might improve the overall look of our stand. New signage and perhaps even lighting are on the agenda. I never stop with the plants and, aside from growing on cuttings, I'm forever looking at how to grow better plants. Currently under trial are air pots, compost mixes and even jackets for the pots to help keep the plants' roots cool.

Mark Lynam

Garden Visit to The Dower House

Saturday 1st June 2019

As a change to the more usual garden visits, a tour of the Dower House gardens, at Headbourne Worthy, was arranged for the Group. The Dower House is a private nursing home set in five and a half acres of landscaped gardens. The proprietor, Mrs Judith Lywood, takes a great personal interest in the garden and the grounds form very much part of the nursing home care and well being for the residents.

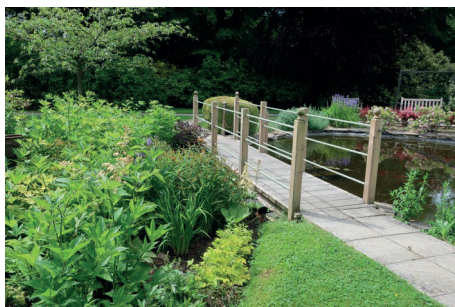
A good group of us met in front of the reception where we feasted our eyes on a wonderful collection of bearded irises in full flower (picture on the front cover). We learnt from the Head Gardener, Ben, who was our guide for the afternoon, that this year was the big year for dividing the irises. How envious we were when he said that most of the mother-plants would end up in the skip but how grateful we were that we didn't have to do the dividing and keep the different varieties separate from each other! Plenty of calls "let me know when you are throwing them away?".



Beside the front drive was a neatly trimmed box knot garden with recently planted cosmos and the skeleton of some yew topiary—in years to come a flying bird. One plant that caught my eye was the perfect mound of a shrubby clipped *Lonicera* possibly *L. nitida* or *L. crassifolia*. Always hard to imagine that the majority of species in this genus are the climbing honeysuckles which we all love.

The meandering path took us through a shrubbery of Viburnums and Cornus with a *Buddleja alternifolia* in full flower and a creamy white standard Wisteria. The pond had been recently cleaned and was still settling down but many were fascinated by the goldfish swimming as a perfectly coordinated shoal.

Across the bridge up to the bluebell wood, as Ben remarked "no bluebells left and a few trees" The garden had some interesting trees and a large specimen of the Indian Bean Tree, *Catalpa bignonioides* with last year's pods hanging down



and name more of the plants.

majestically though this year's leaves. After quickly looking at the hardy geranium bank, which had just received a severe (Chelsea) chop we were invited back down to the nursing home for a very pleasant cup of tea and cake. An interesting afternoon with beautiful weather, it would be good to have more time to wander through the grounds to try

Martin Ward

The Ikea Hydroponics System

There have been some comments in the Newsletter about a propagator which I took to the Propagation Workshop. This is sold in Ikea as the VÄXER an indoor cultivation kit. In its simplest form it is a tray for the water with an insert for 50 rockwool plugs and a lid which costs about £6.50 (plugs extra £2.50). If you want to go more sophisticated you can buy a unit with LED grow-lights and what I found surprising was that I was allowed to bring this unit into the house and put it on the sideboard (doesn't look too bad)! If you want to see seeds germinating to big



band swing music watch the Ikea video.



Rooted cuttings in the propagator

The VÄXER is sold for germinating seeds which you then grow on so you have an indoor hydroponics system for herbs and salad leaf. I have been experimenting and rather than using it for seed I have been using it to strike cuttings. This works remarkably well and my success rate for softwood cuttings such as *Fuchsia*, *Diascia*, *Nemesia*, *Dianthus*, *Dahlia*, *Salvia*,

Chrysanthemums and various herbaceous perennials has been excellent. Starting with good material 80—90% success rate is easily achieved after 2-3 weeks.

I have recently been more ambitious. I installed a small aquarium heater on a time switch to see if that makes any difference. I have also started using semi-ripe

cuttings of *Clematis*, *Hebe*, *Euonymus* and *Exochorda*. I have just had the first roots poking through with some clematis and the *Exochorda*! One of the useful features of the system if you are impatient or just inquisitive like me, is you can easily lift the plug up and see if there are any roots without disturbing the plant.

Some tips

Use a sharp point to make a hole in the rockwool before inserting the cutting. I use sharp forceps or a narrow scissor blade. The cutting needs to fit snug into the hole but not damaged by forcing it in. I have always covered the ventilation slots on the propagator lid with cling film; I don't know if that is essential or not. The use of hormone rooting powder is a personal choice and depends on the species. Do not leave the plugs in the propagator too long once the cuttings have rooted. The water roots are not very well adapted to growing in compost so weaning the young plants is a critical stage. I use a multipurpose compost with perlite but I have found the most important thing is to make sure that the rockwool plugs are covered with compost. Don't bury the plants but the plugs need to be covered otherwise they dry out and its difficult to rewet them. I plant the cuttings into plastic module inserts (24 per seed tray) which helps the establishment of a good root ball around the plants and they can be planted out in the garden or potted on once you have a tray of healthy young plants. Covering the young plants with a plastic lid propagator for a few days after the rooted cuttings come out of the propagator does seem to help and I wouldn't put them outside for at least a week.

Well that is it—have a go and let me know how you get on—we can learn together.

Martin Ward

A Tale of Two Botanic Gardens

Our recent trip to New Zealand in February and March enabled Martin and myself to undertake whistle stop tours of Singapore and Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Hesitantly, since some members will know these gardens as well, here are some of our impressions.

Singapore's Botanic Garden is a jewel set in busy, crowded Singapore Island. Much of the garden itself is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but it also plays a significant role in botanical and horticultural research as well as providing a key leisure spot for Singapore residents to relax in its spacious, well maintained grounds.

One of the interesting areas for us was the Ethnobotany garden. This was only

opened in 2018. It showcases and explains the use of plants which are deeply seated into the traditional cultures around Singapore Island: the Malay Archipelago, Indochina and South Asia. We spent a while in the ginger garden too, wondering which Zingibers and Hedychiums would survive our temperate garden climate.



On to the main focus of our brief visit: the National Orchid Gardens. Unfortunately, we chose a time when parts of this garden were under renovation, but the orchids were spectacular. We wandered around the trails, trying to take in as much as possible. Martin's photographs show just a little of the intense colours and forms which presented themselves. Unfortunately few of them were labelled. One fascinating area is the VIP Orchid Garden. Special visitors to Singapore are rewarded with their own, named orchid. I wondered how diplomacy had a say in which colours and forms were chosen for which VIP.



Time moved on faster than we did, but we did manage to wander gently round the six hectares of primary rain forest which the garden is preserving and which contains over 300 species within its ecosystem. Memories of botany lessons and lectures came back in fragments, seeing the ecosystems of climbers, shrubs, ferns and epiphytes under a canopy of enormous trees. Then a quick yomp back to the underground, wishing we'd left more time for the visit.

Five weeks later, to the day, we were in Christchurch Botanic Gardens. Like Singapore, this is an open access garden, free of charge. It too, is right in the middle of an urban environment and provides an important leisure space as well as botanical centre.

It also had a key public focus. We visited just a week after the Christchurch shootings and our very first impressions were the wall of flowers and tributes to the victims, just outside the main gates. These were several feet deep by the time we arrived and being constantly refreshed by families, groups and individuals, old and young, all desperately sad that such a dreadful thing had happened in their peaceful, open country.

The Christchurch gardens originated as a space to recreate the civic gardens which early settlers had left behind in Europe. It's easy to trace that heritage in the formal beds and layout around the main entrance and the European style border

leading into the heart of the garden. In March, this was early autumn after a hot, rainless summer and many of the herbaceous plants were not looking their best.

The gardens are bounded by the Avon River which provides a good perimeter walk and access to the New Zealand Garden which was developed by Curator



Diminish and Ascend - Staircase Sculpture
Christchurch Botanic Garden © Martin Ward

James Young in the early 20th century. There are several ornamental lakes in the gardens and we were particularly struck by the modern staircase sculpture leaning out into Kiosk Lake.

Over several decades these gardens have evolved into a fine collection of New Zealand species, interwoven and overlaid with new extensions. They provide a

canopy of mature trees such as kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*), different species of Southern beech (*Northofagus*). There is of course the native Kauri tree, (*Agathis australis*) which is the subject of much replanting and conservation after being almost wiped out by early settlers for ship building. It is amazing how so much of the native flora has found its way into our gardens such as species of *Pittosporum*, *Hebe*, *Leptospermum* and the ubiquitous New Zealand flax - *Phormium tenax*.

There's a very modern visitor centre with interactive displays describing the origin of the unique New Zealand Flora (and an adjacent restaurant serving delicious cream cakes). Perhaps more interesting are the conservatories towards the centre of the garden. These are interlinked and were damaged by the severe 2011 earthquake but have been stabilised. They contain a rich, very well maintained, if more traditional, display of tropical and sub-tropical plants.

We ran out of time again but are already planning our next visit to New Zealand, in early summer (November 2021). Christchurch Botanic Garden deserves to be seen at its best; and maybe we'll stop off and see the rest of the Singapore Botanic Garden too.

Margaret Ward

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 6th July 2.00 - 5.00pm - Garden visit: Roret Blue, 40 Raymond Road, Shirley, Southampton SO15 5AL

Friday 19th July 2019 - This meeting has been cancelled.

Saturday 7th September 10.00am - 12.00am - Conservation Group meeting. Large Hall/Prior Hall next to St Boniface Church, Chandlers Ford.

Friday 20th September 2019 at 7.30 pm - 'Making the most of your Bulbs' at talk by John Gibson.

John is a RHS Daffodil Society speaker and judge and a member of the RHS bulb committee. He has been hybridizing daffodils for over thirty years and runs a mail order bulb business. His talk will cover Daffodils, Tulips, Hyacinths and other bulbs including propagation, planting and growing conditions.

Friday 18th October 2019 at 7.30 pm - '51 Years of Ashwood Specialties' a talk by Howard Dury

Howard's talk will look at the many speciality plants such as cyclamen, Lewisias, Primulas, Salvias, Hydrangeas, Hepaticas and Anemones which Ashwood Nurseries have developed and how to grow them in your garden or greenhouse.

Friday 15th November 2019 at 7.30 pm - AGM followed by 'Hampshire Group's Holidays 2018 and 2019' a talk by Dawn Trenchard.

Including bring and eat refreshments.

Saturday 18th January 2020 at 2.30 pm (Please note this is a **Saturday afternoon meeting**) - 'Growing Old Fashioned Flowers' a talk by David Standing