



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

Staffordshire Newsletter

Autumn 2022 Issue No. 52



Welcome

We started our year in January, with a Zoom meeting presented by Samantha Hopes, and in February there was a cancelled meeting, due to the unseasonal high winds, which impacted on ourselves and also the speakers. Trees were sent toppling, so travelling on a dark night was very risky, and we were all much safer inside, while listening to the raging gale outside.

We did however return to a meeting in the Village Hall in March and April, and for the first time in two years our May Plant Sale. The Plant Fair at Sandon, Rode Hall the County Show, Eccleshall Show and also the Farmers Markets, allowed the Group to gain added publicity and to also sell members plants which added to the Groups funds. A lifeline for the Group in meeting our speakers costs.

Our first coach trip took place for the first time since 2019. A band of Hardy Planters braved our coming out of our covid restrictions, and we headed south to the Evenley Wood Plant Fair on a plant raiding mission. See page 24 & 25 for Jackie Burwood's view of our day.

As I omitted some of Katie Holmes' article of her '25 years of Memories with the Staffordshire Hardy Plant Group' in the last edition, I am therefore re-printing the article in full.

Included in this edition is a very informative article by David King, who wrote this article for the Galanthus Group, on 'How To Take A Good Snowdrop Picture'? So with David's kind permission, you can read the article on page 29-31

There is a bumper crop of articles from other members in this edition:- there's Jackie Hemingway and a twenty year wait for her Aeonium to flower, 'the only way is up' for Jackie Burwood, who prefers to upsize on her garden space... and at Jackie's age! (Jackie's words not mine). Rosie Knight has given me an article remembering her tales of 'Adventures at Plant Sales'. And Helen Harrison puts pen to paper (literally) and takes us on her travels with her coach trip....

I hope you share my enjoyment in reading our own members articles...Please do keep them coming for the Spring edition.



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Chairman's Letter

by Jackie Hemingway



Its not often I am happy to be banished indoors due to heavy rain, but after a long summer of carrying buckets of water to a dry roasted and shrivelled garden it warrants celebration!

We've certainly had a lesson in what plants perform well in a drought. Dahlias, Crocosmia, Rudbekia, Verbenas, some ferns, Sedums and Pelargoniums all managed to put up a colourful show in my garden despite the extreme heat and dry. Roses have managed a faltering stream of blooms reduced in size and number but flowers on my lavender hedge shrivelled away prematurely, despite their Mediterranean origins, and my small clump of Helenium's have only pulled through due to copious amounts of water and mulch. There will be much news and information to share on the subject when we meet for our Autumn lecture programme starting on Friday 16th September. Doors open at 6.30pm for plant sales and a chat with tea, coffee and biscuits available followed by a speaker at 7.30pm. We continue to meet every third Friday of the month except December when we meet on Friday 9th December i.e. the second Friday for our special Christmas meeting.

Members have had a very busy and successful summer with numerous plant sales at locations such as Sandon Hall, Rode Hall, Staffordshire County Show, Little Haywood Fete and also Eccleshall Show and, as well as running a stall every 2nd Saturday of the month at Stafford Farmers Market and our own Annual Plant Sale at Colwich and Little Haywood Village Hall.

Funds raised at these sales help towards costs enabling the group to attract many high profile speakers for our winter programme. Many thanks to all who have been involved, as well as those who have supported us, particularly all those wonderful cake bakers who provided for our annual sale.

Chairman's Letter

by Jackie Hemingway



Members also supported the Girlguiding at the Unity International Camp in August, held at Kibblestone near Stone. A Sensory Garden was constructed with guidance, plants and helping hands from members of the HPS committee. Helen Harrison organised a Garden Holiday to Yorkshire in July, to run jointly between Staffs. HPS and Stone Dahlia and Chrysanthemum Society. (See reports on both of these in this issue).

And finally, a 'Thank You Supper' was enjoyed at my own house and garden near Uttoxeter for members who went out of their way to support the group during the pandemic. What a busy summer!

On top of all that a number of members also opened their own gardens for the National Garden Scheme. I hope you managed to visit some of them.

We welcome two new members onto the Committee, Rosie Knight will be our new Catering Officer and Clive Plant, already Editor of our Newsletter, has stepped up to be vice Chairman. Please give them all the support you can. Any help you can provide is much appreciated, a few minutes in the kitchen, a few extra plants to sell, a hand with putting chairs away after meetings. I look forward to seeing you all this Autumn and catching up!

Until then, happy mowing and weeding!

Jackie

The Staffordshire Hardy Plant Group working with Creating a Sensory Garden at the Kibblestone Girlguiding Camp

By Bernie Norbury



An international camp is held every 4 years by Girlguiding Staffordshire. Rangers and Young Leaders (14-25 years) were involved in a service project to create a fire pit with a sensory garden, whilst on their week's camp at Kibblestone, Stone. HPS members responded to a request for plants, which were incorporated in the raised beds and shrubbery that surrounded the fire pit. The valuable knowledge of members helped to place plants according to each bed, as well giving advice and support for planting in the very dry ground. The Unity 22 fire pit and sensory garden will go on to be appreciated for many years to come.



It is surprising how our love of plants might influence other choices in our lives. No, I hadn't the William Morris wallpaper or fabrics in mind.

Judging a book by its cover is a little closer, as my choices of fictional reading have recently been subliminally influenced. "The Lost Apothecary", by Sarah Penner, led to a sinister world of murderous activity based on the quantity and type of plant material.

On a lighter note the "Language of Flowers", by Vanessa Diffenbaugh, has led to further research about the Victorians, who gave their posies filled with particular flowers that held meanings beyond the sweet scents or interesting forms.

This Floriography was a silent language where words could not express the feelings of the giver or receiver. Our new Monarch, King Charles, is often seen sporting buttonhole blooms, blue cornflowers and dianthus.

Are these for their scent, or seasonal availability or simply his favourites? But Floriography might show other meanings.



Definition : Floriography is a coded communication where each flower and colour holds symbolic meaning. Stemming back thousands of years, the language of flowers reached a pinnacle of popularity in the Victorian era. Intentional flower combinations allow the giver to send a message without uttering a word.

Garden Humour

Summer jaunts along the canal engaged our conversation spied in gardens as we passed by. The photo shares our favourite.

'The Grand Bug and Pest Hotel'

We would love you to share your favourite?



Perhaps you have a snapshot from your travels this summer, such as the oversized wellingtons from Breezy Knees Nursery seen on the HPS holiday?

Adventures at Plant Sales.

by Rosie Knight

There is great satisfaction when you manage to raise young plants either from seed or plugs to the point where they are old enough to leave their mothers. This can quite literally be true when as a member of the HPS you decide to send them on to new pastures by selling them at one of the events which occur through-out the summer months and at the winter meetings. There is great camaraderie among our fellow plant growers. As well as much eating of cake and drinking of tea. The first big event of the year is the May Member's Plant Sale which is held at the Little Haywood Village Hall.

This year we managed to sell over a whopping 1000 plants.



Every plant raised 40% for Staffs HPS and 60% for the individual growers. Many people contributed their time and effort to make this sale a great success... from the plant advisors, plant sales ladies, cake bakers, parking marshals, back room money counters and of course the plant growers ,without whom there would not be a sale.

Next it was off to Rode Hall at the end of May and our furthest flung sale the other side of Stoke. Set in beautiful grounds, the Hall is famous for its winter snowdrop walk and attracts a wide range of gardeners with all sorts of interests and abilities. We were lucky with the weather as early rain lifted. We were very pleased because we had return customers who complemented us on how interesting the stock was and we enjoyed discussing the plants and what they were going to do with them.

The first week in June was a busy week in Plant Land. On Tuesday a pleasing number of growers brought material up to Stafford County Show ground for the two day event. It takes a lot of organisation as volunteers are needed for both days. Ruth and Clive Plant have to work particularly hard with all the booking, passes and volunteers, being there for plant drop off and building the stall. Not to mention their interesting array of plants which they drive to the show in two car loads. Everyone works hard for the show.

Adventures at Plant Sales.

by Rosie Knight

As it is home ground so to speak, it is ideal for promoting the Society which is just as important as the plant sales themselves. It was a very successful two days. The judicious handing out of the flapjack definitely encouraged the announcer to give us some excellent publicity. Well done to everyone who contributed and made it possible to have enough stock to last out the two days.

We were busy again on the Saturday of that week attending The Haywood's Platinum Jubilee Fête. It was an ideal opportunity to promote the Society on very local ground, as of course we meet in Little Haywood. This turned out to be so true for not only were there people who had not heard of us, but we also saw members and lapsed members at the event. It was a little bit rainy but that didn't put people off as over a thousand people attended.

Again it was great publicity. Also worthy of mention are the monthly attendances at the Stafford Farmer's Markets, every second Saturday in the month. Plant sales are steady. If you would like to bring material along to these markets, you would be very welcome. Again it is another opportunity to promote the Society and it also contributes to the funds we require to allow us the best quality of speakers at our autumn and winter meetings.



The winter meetings also facilitate plant sales and purchases of some very interesting plants. Thanks to the snowdrop growers I now have over 20 varieties of snowdrops in the garden. Oh well, only another 1980 to go!

The plant sales are not just a means to an end, they also raise funds and spread the news of our Group and the Society to a much wider audience than we would otherwise be able to reach. They also spread the plants into many gardens, thus ensuring the survival of a wider variety of material under different conditions. This is particularly true if we have heritage plants for sale. Also important is the collective knowledge which members willingly impart.

So, if you have never taken part in a sale, now might be the time to start. Whether you have half a dozen well grown plants or several trays full we would love you to join in.

Grafton Cottage – ‘The Early Years’

by Peter and Margaret Hargreaves

Margaret and I moved into Grafton Cottage in 1975, when we were married.

The garden had been changed in the late 1960s from the back garden being all produce (we still have the Rosey Bradley apple tree), and with a small front garden, planted with cottage garden flowers.

In the war, the garden was home to a resident pig, and also bees. The pigsty is now Margaret’s potting shed!

Looking out from the back of the house, our view was somewhat restricted through an 18 inch window. The windows at the front are north facing, overlooking open fields.

When we came here there was a lean - to garage on the side with no back, so we could drive the car through and drop off the monthly shop at the back door. The front was paved, which gave us space to park a second car.

Soon the front concrete was removed and a wall built, and beds made (similar to what we have today, but fewer plants)

The back had 6 ft high hedges, 3ft deep, with minimal borders and a lawn all the way to the bottom.

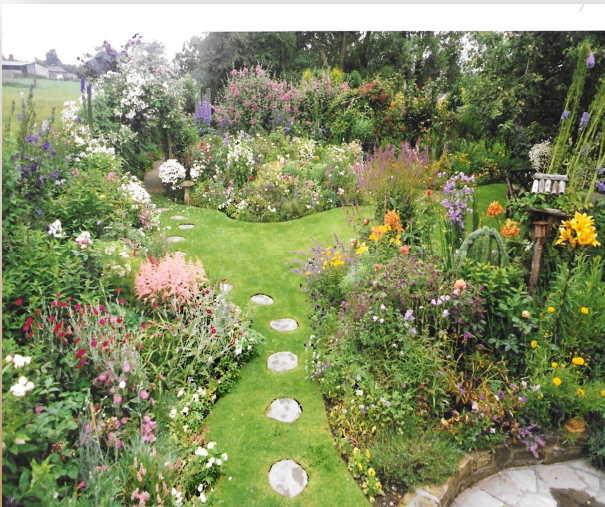


This picture shows Margaret [looking towards Rex] relaxing...which she does not have time for now!

Grafton Cottage – ‘The Early Years’

This Photograph was taken 30 years ago, the year we first opened Grafton Cottage garden for the National Garden Scheme. We were both working at the time, so we opted to open by appointments only. However.....

No appointments were made!



This picture was taken in 1988.

Grafton Cottage – ‘The Early Years’

This we soon changed to flower boarders, with trellis half way and vegetables in the bottom half and a row of leylandii hedging, with conifers on the east side



Looking towards the original back door

Half the leylandii trees were removed for Margaret's first greenhouse.

The garden has changed gradually over the years, with the addition of land to the west



Part of the lawn , with achilleas

This year our 30 th year we had part of our funds matched by Barclays Bank and gave £2,234 to Alzheimers Research (a charity we have supported for over 10 years, having the money allocated for research work at Nottingham University).

We also gave £3,107 to the National Garden Scheme charities



Taken last week after our final opening

Gardens of Yorkshire June 2022

by Helen Harrison

As we came out of lockdown your committee's thoughts were, bus trips & Holidays! At the time I was the chair of both The Staffs HPS and the Stone Chrysanthemum & Dahlia Society so, after some discussion a 5 day joint holiday was arranged through Regent Travel of Stone. This to include gardens large & small, new & more established.



Brodsworth Hall

On Monday morning after an early start we stopped for coffee at Denby Pottery where we had the only significant rain of the week. Our afternoon was spent at Brodsworth Hall where there was a lot of replanting going on as it was recently used for a film set!

Our home for the next four nights was the Bridge Hotel & Spar at Walshford. If we needed, it had a fitness centre....maybe not!

On Tuesday we visited Daleside Nurseries a family owned business and then went on to the splendid RHS gardens at Harlow Carr.

Wednesday saw a change as we visited Golden Acre Park in Leeds, 179 acres with a number of trial beds, and free of charge with a good café.



A Border at Daleside Nurseries

In the afternoon we visited York Gate which is one of the Charity Perennial's gardens, although it was originally created by the Spencer family in 1951-1994. This was a repeat visit for me and there were many improvements and changes on site, including a very good plant nursery.

Gardens of Yorkshire June 2022

Thursday was to be a day of Waterlilies, viewing the National collection at Burnby Hall, and more at our afternoon stop at Breezy Knees Nursery.

At Burnby we were surprised at the transformation of the famous Pocklington Rockery, all replanted, and a renewed herbaceous border, which will be worth watching as it develops.

Burnby Hall is on the revisit list.



Breezy Knees Nursery

Breezy Knees is 20 acres created from farmland starting in 1999, which is now a world renowned garden. There were many good plants there and a lot of shopping was going on I noted!



The National collection of Water Lilies at Burnby Hall

Friday was our last full day and the Bus Driver and Courier were worried, as we had filled the suitcase space with plants! We were advised that if we wanted to take everything and ourselves home we might have to ease back a little?

Gardens of Yorkshire June 2022

Anyway we packed our cases and squeezed in, and set off for Stillingfleet to be warmly welcomed by Vanessa Cook & her husband. The family garden has been planted over the last 40yrs with each month an “Artist in the Café” featured, and excellent cake, jams and pickles available. By now some of our suitcases were on the back seat!

Our last visit was to Don Whitton’s Firvale Allotment with his National Collection of Euphorbia, and it was a great way to round off the holiday.

We were a group of 30 mixed travellers some from the clubs and some friends and visitors. We all owe our thanks to the couriers Lyn and the Driver Ian (Robin Hood Coaches) who unpacked our plants nightly and watered them. That’s above and beyond the call of duty isn’t it?



Some familiar faces having a break from the plant shopping..

All 300-400 plants arrived safely home (as did their owners and suitcases) and that works out at about 10 plants bought by each of us!

We are working on a holiday for 2023 so next time do come along if you can, we had a great holiday and made some new friends.

Gardens of Yorkshire

The Album



A Group picture at Daleside



A Conifer collection at York Gate



A view at Burnby Hall



York Gate



Coach members at Daleside

My 25 Years of Memories with the Staffordshire Hardy Plant Society Group

It is almost exactly 25 years ago this month that the National Society printed an appeal in their Spring Newsletter 1997 for any members living in Staffordshire, who might be interested in forming a Staffordshire Group, to make contact with Jean Harris. Jean—who is now sadly deceased, was the Group Co-ordinator for the National Society. Trevor and myself, along with Adrian Hubble, Janet Broome, Margaret and Michael Stapleton and Marie Lowe, met Jean at the Crown Public House in Stone, and formed a committee to set up a Staffordshire Group.

We had our Inaugural meeting in March 1997 at Sandon Village Hall and the Staffordshire Group was formed.

Sandon Village Hall was too small for the many members who joined the Group and so, by the autumn of 97, we moved to the Colwich & Little Haywood Village Hall for our meetings—we have been there ever since!

Adrian Hubble was our first chairman, elected in 1997, followed by Ben Green, Margaret Stapleton, Trevor Holmes, Ben Green (2nd term), Ruth Plant, Fiona Horwath, Helen Harrison and Jackie Hemingway (current).

During the 25 years of the Staffordshire Group's existence we have built up a very impressive portfolio of organising national events, as well as group events, taking part in many national and local shows and plant fairs.



The Group Plant Sale Table at the Stafford Farmers Market...it never fails to look good on the eye.

25 Years of Memories (cont'd)

We organised the Autumn Weekend in 2007—also on behalf of the National Society, and we were oversubscribed with applicants – with a waiting list of members desperate to join the weekend event! We were able to showcase many of the beautiful gardens on offer in our lovely county of Staffordshire.

The twice yearly Newsletter has been printed every spring and autumn. From its humble beginnings of being a basic photocopied magazine in black and white, it has developed into a superb colour magazine which we all enjoy. Newsletter editors over the years have included myself (at the beginning), followed by Dick Hope, Jacky Hewitt, Yoke Van de Meer and to the current editor, Clive Plant.

The monthly lectures have been outstanding over the 25 years and well worth coming out on a Friday evening for.

Carol Galley has been mainly responsible for organising and vetting the speakers and continues her good work to this day.



25 Years of Memories (cont'd)



Our stand at the Shugborough Weekend Show in 2005. The theme for the stand was

‘The Eastern Influence in Our Gardens’



The Malvern stand in 2010. The theme, **‘It’s All in The Soil’** for which we were awarded an RHS Silver Medal

We have been hugely successful in the various Horticultural Shows we have taken part in. We started by taking part in the Shugborough Gardening Weekend Shows in 2003/2004/2005. From there we moved on to the higher echelons of the Malvern Autumn Shows of 2006/07/08/09/10. We succeeded in being awarded many awards for our stands. The teams involved in building the stands had great fun, and we all increased our plant knowledge in the process. I remember on one occasion, after setting up the stand for one of the Shugborough Shows, the team were all tired and hungry, so we despatched one of the team to collect an Indian take-away meal then settled ourselves around a table in the back of the hired van to enjoy a meal together! We had lots of laughs as you can imagine!

25 Years of Memories (cont'd)

The Group have had a number of holidays, the first being **Cornwall in 2002** (including the Eden Project and Lost Gardens of Heligan) **Kent in 2003** (including Sissinghurst and Great Dixter) **Dublin and East of Ireland in 2004**(including Helen Dillon's garden, Mount Usher & Dublin Botanical Garden) **East Anglia in 2006** (including Bressingham, Beth Chatto's and Glen Chantry) **North Devon in 2009** (including Rosemoor, Hestercombe and Marwood Hill) **Northumberland in 2010**(including Alnwick, Wallington and Cragside) and lastly, **Wiltshire in 2017** (including Abbotsbury, Iford Manor, and East Lambrook Manor).



Alnwick Gardens – visited in 2010

Garden Cottage in Northumberland—



Enjoying coffee and cake while sitting in the sun at The Pound House in Wiltshire 2017



25 Years of Memories (cont'd)



We have also been involved in the BBC Gardeners' World Live Shows in Birmingham.

In addition to the gardening holidays we have, over the 25 years, visited beautiful gardens all over England and Wales.

We organised four National Study Days—including **Hellebores** held at Ashwoods Nursery in Kingswinford, **Herbs**—held in a member's garden in Leek, **Snowdrops and Spring Bulbs** organised in conjunction with the Worcester Group and also held at Ashwoods Nursery, and **Salvias** - held at Rodbaston College in Penkridge. These study days were always fully booked and were extremely successful.

The Group has held an Annual Plant Sale every year since we began in 1997, and has increased in popularity each year. The event is held in May at the Village Hall in Little Haywood and we always have members of the public (many returning year after year) queuing outside waiting for the doors to open. In addition to the annual plant sale we have the monthly plant sales table at our meetings, and many of us have managed to acquire extra treasures here to add to our collection of treasures in our own gardens.

We are so proud of all that the Staffordshire Group has achieved, the number of members has remained high—even during the pandemic, and we hope we will continue to be the successful group that we have been for the last 25 years.

Katie Holmes

Remember my article in the Spring Newsletter which described taking rose cuttings and ‘sticking’ them into a potato.

This caused some concern to Anita Wright, who wondered if the potato would grow?

Of course it would Anita!...and provide a hearty meal for a Sunday roast no doubt.

Think I will stick them into sharp sand though in future ..



My apologies go to Katie Holmes on her article of ‘25 Years of Memories with the Hardy Plant Society Group’. I somehow omitted the full article, so in this edition I thought it only fair to run Part One & Part Two, which include some memorable pictures of past Malvern Stands & Coach Outings.

Hopefully covid is fast becoming distant memory, and so in 2023 it would be



very rewarding for our group to fill a coach for a day out for members and friends. Fiona Horwath would just love us all to support her effort in organising her next trip? We don't want to lose the ‘Coach Trip’ after all these years, so a half-empty coach is not an option. Let us all come together for a future grand day out.

There is a lot of chatter on social media and gardening columns at the moment, regarding the usage of peat free compost. We have tried it at Yew Tree Cottage, and we find that some plants like it, where as others are not so happy, even dying altogether. We now use both peat based and also peat-free compost.

So what happens in 2024 when it's peat free only?

Have you had an experience good or bad in using peat free compost? Then why not share it with us. Just let me know in time for the next Newsletter.

Evenley Wood Coach Trip on 3rd April 2022

by Jackie Burwood



We departed from Stafford on a cold dull morning but we all know this is not a problem to Hardy Planter's. and after a quick stop at Warwick Services for a Coffee, we arrived at the Plant Fair at just after 10am.

Then it was onto the stalls where it was nice to see some stall holders I knew, but also the one's that I didn't know.

Where to go first? I think the logical thing to do is to traverse down one side, then shimmy up the other.

After a few trips around the stalls it was time to go and look in the woods.

A lot of the very tall Magnolia's had been caught by the frost but a lot of the smaller trees and shrubs had some protection. I was keen to find the *Erythroniums* in the wood but it was on my last walk that I found them. Silly me, but I had left my camera on the coach at lunchtime.. so no *Erythroniums*!



I also came across one of my favourite Camellia's a small dainty white with a touch of pink called '*transnokoensis*'. Another notable tree which was an enormous '*Acer negundo*' with it's pink racemes looking like dangling earring's.



Before it was time to leave there was a shopping frenzy to get all that was left. I think Bob Brown at Cotswolds Flowers was almost cleared out.

It was a lovely day out and judging by the amount of plants that came out of the coach on arrival back at Stafford, I wasn't the only one who enjoyed it!

Evenley Wood Picture Gallery



Speakers for 2022/23

2022

- 16 Sep . Diane Clement
"Alpines in the Wild and Cultivation"
- 21 Oct . Andrew Ward (Norwell Nursery)
"Brilliant Borages and Pulchritudinous Pulmonarias "
- 18 Nov. Dr Peter Thomas
" The Value of Trees "
- 9 Dec . Ruth Plant.
"Adventures in Scotland - In Pursuit of the Blue Poppy".

2023

- Jan 20 Eddie Roberts
"Snowdrops , From Landscape to a Cabinet of Curiosities"
- Feb 17 Timothy Walker
"Spring into Gardening again".
- March 17th Duncan Coombs
'Flowers of the Steppes & Mountains of Central Asia Part 2'
- April 21st Gary Leaver (Avondale Nursery)
'Perennials for a Shady Border'



Summer Activities With The Staffordshire Group



April 3rd...Our first coach trip for three years took a small group of our members to Evenley Wood Plant Fair.

Check out Jackie Burwood's recollection of the day on Page24

April 24th & 31st...'Sandon Hall Plant Fair'...we are regulars at this one and just love to set out our plants...a garden on tables has a irresistible draw..



May 22nd..Our Group Plant Sale after a three year absence. We all wondered if our old customers would return after 3yrs absence.. and they did in droves!.... So good to be back....





Summer Activities With The Staffordshire Group



May 29th.. 'Rode Hall Plant Fair'.. attending for our second year...always plenty of interest in our plants..

June 2nd & 3rd.. Staffordshire County Show... a second visit for the group...a big effort from our members to do this one , but as we are almost the only plant stall on site it's a win, win for the Group...



June 4th.. Little Haywood Fete.. A pop up invite for the Group...lots of interest in our own back yard from the local Villagers...

Lastly, on September 3rd , a favourite return to the Eccleshall Show to end the year....

Get away from automatic and take control of your camera...

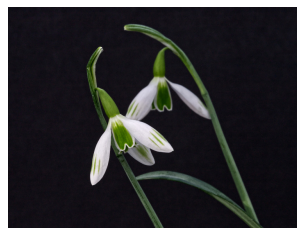
How do you take a good snowdrop picture? Lots of people take photographs, or snaps as a friend of mine calls them, but how many take a really good photograph? Indeed, what is a good photograph? Isn't beauty in the eye of the beholder so determining what is good will vary from person to person and I for one would hesitate in telling you what is good or not. You may have watched the Snowdrop presentation given by my partner, Brian Ellis, which included photographs taken by both him and me. One of the questions asked was how do you take a good picture of a snowdrop? How long is a piece of string?

I have been taking photos on and off since I was nine and haven't had a lesson in my life so why on earth should you listen to me I ask? I am told I have an eye for a picture. Whether that be true or not I cannot answer but I know what I like in a photograph. Having spent my career in the advertising industry and being surrounded by creative types I suppose something about design and layout must have sunk in over the years. As far as I am concerned there are two major factors in taking a good photograph, the person behind the camera and the glass in front. Of these the glass, or lens to give it its correct name, is probably the most important. A really good lens on a camera will always pay dividends. They are not, of course, cheap but will help produce the results.



G. 'Brian Ellis'
(Copyright by David King)

My main camera is a Canon EOS 6 Mark II. It is a full frame camera. In other words it has a sensor the same size as a camera using film producing a slide as we had previously. Remember those? Point and shoot compact cameras have a crop sensor which means your picture will be



G. 'Brian Ellis'
(Copyright by David King)

cropped producing a tighter field of view and smaller than that of a full size sensor. Full frame cameras have bigger, better pixels which means they capture more information and with greater efficiency with much less noise and can deliver a much better picture at a higher ISO than the small sensor. ISO refers to the sensitivity of the sensor and is used to control the exposure of the photograph along with the f/stop and shutter speed. ISO originally was shown on the box containing your film. It is a measurement of its ability to gather light.

How do you take a good snowdrop picture? (cont'd)

A good photograph is one where the subject is in focus, sharp and the exposure is correct using manual settings. Get away from automatic and take control of your camera as then you can use a combination of ISO, shutter speed and exposure whether it be a snowdrop or anything else. If you get those right you should have a good photograph. So that answers the question - there is a bit more to it than that.

If you want a portrait of a snowdrop, for example on front of a colour background - I favour black because it shows the white subject up better - then you need a studio. You may wonder why I say that. My 'studio' is as simple as it can be. I take the individual pots into the greenhouse as it has good light and no breeze to move the flowers. My 'studio' is in the potting tray with a large black card held upright with a box of fertiliser. The pot stands on top of that, although depending on the size of plant I may need more or less height. A tripod and preferably an electronic release are needed so there is no movement. I then set up the camera so that it is at a comfortable height and I can see the snowdrop flowers in the view finder. The distance between your camera and snowdrop will be dependent on the focal distance of the lens. If you want to know more of that Google it otherwise I will write a book! I use a 24mm x 105mm zoom lens on my camera as it is a good walking around lens. and for most of my snowdrop portraits I use that. Occasionally I do use a 100mm macro lens for close-ups. I set the ISO, it need not be high in the studio because there will be no camera shake on the tripod with an electronic release. I set a small aperture (high number ie. F18 perhaps sometimes more) as this gives a bigger depth of field (what will be in focus) as with close-ups not much will be. From the point you focus on remember that one third of the distance that will be in focus is in front of that point and two thirds behind. The big advantage of an SLR is you have a choice of focal points which is useful as you want at least one bloom in sharp focus I always select the mark on the chosen flower to focus on. Release the shutter using the electronic release and voila! When you look through the viewfinder you can alter the timing of the shot and this will lighten or darken the picture. I always take at least 4 shots at various speeds and use the best or normally work on the result in other software.



G. 'rosemary Burnham'
Copyright by David King

I assume most people deliver jpegs through the camera and many small cameras will only do this. The problem with a jpeg is that the camera doesn't record every piece of information it receives. Should you then put the picture through software to improve the result it will lose even more information and quality every time you press save. You may not notice it initially but continual saving will lose more and more. Therefore it is destructive. I use a RAW setting. That means the camera records every piece of information it sees and that information is non destructive. In other words putting it through other software to improve or crop it loses nothing each time it is saved. Finally it can be saved as a perfect jpeg having lost no information or you can leave it in RAW. A RAW picture is a very big file so a jpeg is probably preferable. What I have said above applies to compact cameras too as long as they are set to manual. What is more difficult is taking a studio shot as not every small camera has the ability to be joined to a tripod and also there is unlikely to be a connection point for an electronic release.

So I am going to assume most small cameras will be used in the garden to take a snowdrop picture mostly in clumps and sometimes individual flowers. Using



G. 'Prague Spring'
Copyright by David King

manual settings I would try setting ISO higher, possibly up to 2000. You will have to judge the results of this as on a small camera you may get more noise in the picture which is not attractive. It will also depend on the day itself whether it is bright, sunny or dull. Going higher will allow you to use a smaller aperture (high number) and the shutter speed can be faster so, hopefully, eliminating camera shake. It is very difficult to hold a small camera absolutely still and get a truly sharp picture. Some can do it to a good degree but many cannot. White is a difficult colour to take because it reflects light. Strong sunlight is an enemy. I prefer a bright cloudy day or if it is sunny early in the morning or later in the evening when the sun is low. Of course we cannot always do that. A photographer friend of mine said, and I think this is good advice, get the exposure and focus on the subject correct and let the camera do the rest. If the result is a snowdrop or group of snowdrops perfectly exposed but the background slightly darker then so be it. If you want a really good photograph of a snowdrop or clump then you must get down low to take them. Shots from above or crouched are fine if that is what you want but so much better from a lower view. I have a kneeler you can get for weeding, which folds up, and I find that useful for near ground level shots. Sometimes, I lay flat on the ground which does produce some of the best results. I often use two boards to keep dry. Hopefully some of this has helped. There, no doubt, will be plenty who disagree and that is fine by me. This is what I do and hopefully it will suit you as it suits me. (Published by kind permission of David King)

Conservation Corner

(by Clive Plant)

Chrysanthemum 'Beechcroft'

Date Introduced 2021

Introduced by Conservation Co-ordinator, Sally Adams

Reason for Inclusion

An older, tall, hardy cultivar. Bred by Halls of Heddon in the 1970s and named after Rosie Hardy's mother's house.

Verification

Judy Barker, National Collection holder

Brief description of plant

A true herbaceous perennial with duplex, sometimes single flowers.

Height x Spread 90cm x 60cm

Flowers Orange-pink buds opening to paler pink

Foliage Mid-green, taking on a red tinge in autumn

Flowering Time Oct - Nov



Soil type Free-draining and moisture retentive

Aspect Full sun

Pests and diseases

Slugs, eelworm, rust, leaf spot

Cultivation

Grows best in a sunny border. Use a general fertiliser in the spring, and may benefit from a light drench of liquid seaweed in June. Hardy to H4 (-10c to -5c / 14f to 23f)

Propagation Divide every 3-5 years, or propagate by cuttings.

Greenhouse Tasks for the Winter — by Olive Plant

While winter is the quietest time in the greenhouse in terms of active plant growth, there is still plenty to do as the temperature falls and the days draw in. With winter closing in, now is the time to make sure that tender plants are adequately protected from the cold frosts to come, and that the last cuttings and sowings of autumn are looked after until the time comes for them to be planted out.



The L.E.D.Grow Lights at Yew Tree Cottage....

Managing the Winter Greenhouse

One of the first jobs to prepare for winter is to clean off all the shading, and make sure that the greenhouse glass is kept clean to let in as much light as possible, the plants needing all they can get at this time of the year.

As winter begins to bite in December – the darkest month – plant growth slows accordingly and a little patience is called for until the days slowly begin to lengthen again. In the run-up to winter, greenhouse heaters need to be checked to make sure that they are working efficiently and insulating the greenhouse with bubble-wrap can be a relatively inexpensive way to help keep things warm and reduce heating bills. As a result, it need not cost a great deal to be able to keep things ticking over in the winter greenhouse – a night-time temperature of around 7 °C, for example, will enable perpetual-flowering carnations to provide a floral display throughout the year.

Ventilation remains as important as ever and on sunny winter days, the greenhouse can be ventilated freely, though it is important to watch out for cold breezes which can quickly chill things down and remember to shut the vents before the temperature falls in the late afternoon. The greenhouse will need to be kept shut, however, on windy or foggy days and if either persists for any length of time, the plants may need additional insulation to keep them safe.

Onions : pricked out in January



The winter of 2022 will test most greenhouses...will we be able to protect our plants with heating costs on the way up?.....

Staffs. Group 2022 Picture Competition

The Autumn reminder that the 2022 Picture Competition closes at the end of the year on December 31st.

It's a good idea then, to sit down with your computer, or smart phone, and sift through those snapshots you took during the year. It is usual from the past competitions that most of the entries land on my desk during December. In fact Christmas week seems to be the week to sort those 'winners' out! Just don't leave it too close to the deadline as the pictures are quickly sorted and passed to our judge in early January.

There are **three** categories for Members to enter into:

- A Flower Portrait
- A Garden Landscape
- Wildlife in the Garden

There will be prizes in each category.



a 'Laburnam Arch'
by Hanna Clendon'
Entry in our 2021 Photograph Competition

Don't forget you can only submit **one** picture in each category...
so send your pictures to me.....Clive...at **Pottyplantz@aol.com**

The results will be announced in February 2023 by our usual Friday meeting or by e-mail. Not forgetting that your pictures are used in next year's group publicity.

10 Years On...by Jackie Burwood

I moved to Stone to find a project, as the cottage outside Market Drayton had reached the point where I couldn't do any more and, as all my pussycats had gone, I was inundated with rabbits, so where as most people of my age would be looking to downsize, I was looking for a challenge. I also wanted to be able to walk into town.



This was the only house I came to look at and the first thing that attracted me to it was, although it was on an estate. I have open fields and farmland right outside. The other things were the fact that the soil is heavy clay and stony but all I could see was all the plants that I couldn't grow before and a stream that ran through the bottom. This was just the field where the houses had been built in 1997 so the only bit of garden was at the top, which was a strip of grass and then it just dropped down to the stream.

The first priority was to terrace from the house, down to the stream and clear all the rubbish out and then some sort of blank canvass appeared. It has not been an easy job as when you are planting anything you are always on a slope . The main aim was to have interest all year round and I have quite a lot of named Snowdrops which, thanks to Margaret Owen, are the things which draw me out when it is cold.

The other thing is I have a passion for are Trees and Shrubs ,so I have tried to plant as many of my favourite Acers & Betula for their winter bark and also a few Salix down by the stream. It has been hard work and dare I say, I am now finding it hard to Plant new Trees as the space is filling up fast.

To try and give you an idea a few pics of the beginning and a few current.



A Comet in My Greenhouse

By Jackie Hemingway

*....my eye was caught
by
numerous triffid like
creatures.*

When I first visited Fiona Horwath's garden in 2018, I was very taken with her beautiful greenhouse. The inside was as delicious as the exterior. Crammed full of hundreds of seedlings and cuttings, warm, steamy and lightly shaded I could almost hear the plants singing.

In particular, my eye was caught by numerous triffid like creatures dancing in pots on the tiled floor, elbows out, multiple arms twisting and curling, their shiny red and black faces skewed around in all directions, in some sort of intergalactic jive. A quick bit of research on my iPhone informed me that these were *Aeonium arboreum* Schwarzkopf and native to Morocco, not outer space. Fascinated and then captivated, I immediately knew that I **must** have one. Stealing was not an option, my handbag wasn't big enough and I thought they might scream or even bite. Imagine my delight, when, at the plant stall by the exit there were babies for sale. Only 3 or 4 inches tall they looked quite harmless so I bravely purchased just the one and made my escape. At home, the new baby was carefully placed on the windowsill whilst research was rapidly undertaken to identify its origins and draw up a care plan.

There are around 35 species of *Aeonium*, all native to the Canaries, Madeira and North West coast of Africa. Some varieties are tiny and some giants growing up to 6ft tall. They are succulents and can survive prolonged periods of drought. They are happiest between 12 –24°C but can tolerate cooler temperatures if kept frost free in a well drained gritty compost. The stems should be planted deep in a low nutrient medium to encourage good wide root development which is needed to support the tall varieties .



A Comet in My Greenhouse

A wet, windy, Staffordshire hillside on deep claggy clay did not sound ideal. The baby continued to live on my windowsill nursery for a year and potted on several times as it grew. Meanwhile, outside, a greenhouse was built with a



Aeonium arboreum Schwarzkopf

raised bed filled with homemade compost, leaf mould, top soil left from digging the foundations and a barrow load of sand and grit. Late spring and now a year old the baby was planted out in its new home and it grew at cosmic speed. It didn't bite or wail and seemed very happy.

Alas, after a cold spell the following winter the plump shiny leaves withered, dried up and eventually fell off. I was left with a 3 foot

stump with a soggy top. In the spring I went to clear the space for tomatoes and spotted dozens of tiny little sprouts erupting from the stem, my Martian was alive! As temperatures rose, sprouts grew out sideways on their own stems, twisting in weird directions, some breaking off. These were pushed into the soil, soon rooted and also started to grow. Within the season I had my very own party of jiving aliens. The following winter I fleeced them as extra protection against cold. They didn't get frosted, instead the heads went mouldy, rotten and dropped off.

Spring 2022, a new cycle of bare winter stems sprouting side shoots, some plants reaching 4 feet tall. Fiona came to visit her offspring and observed something strange afoot. There seemed to be buds forming between the leaves and a few weeks later these came into flower. The bright yellow stars shone out from a dome of black and ruby red leaf like a comet and lasted over 2 months.

I consulted an Aeonium expert at RHS Malvern Spring Show who said I was extremely lucky, as this was a once in 20 year event!

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