



SOMERSET

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Editor's Note

Thank you to all contributors to this newsletter. The deadline for the Autumn Newsletter is 1st September 2012. Please send contributions to me at barbara@satsib.plus.com

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Welcome to the second season of the gardening year. I write this because autumn must be the first since it is when we prepare for the other seasons be it digging, planting of spring and summer bulbs or new perennials and bare root shrubs and trees.

My mind has been wandering recently; I don't think it is day dreaming. For instance it was announced by a B.B.C. weather forecaster on a day in January that the previous day had a day time temperature 10 degrees higher than the same day the year before. So much for global warming you might think. Well, not really, because what we experience is weather not climate. The latter is the result of many decades of weather. It would appear that the modern trend to seek taste and quality in our food is having a small effect on the offering of the seed companies since I note that one such is selling the broad bean Epicure, a red seeded variety which tastes like chestnuts and which, if steamed, keeps its colour – delicious!

It was good to see so many members at the A.G.M. and to have the participation of new members in debate. The various reports from officers illustrate how hard the committee works on our behalf. The compilation of the list of nurseries has been a mammoth task and has entailed many miles as each has been visited. I sincerely hope that we have a new secretary in place very soon since it would be a great pity if our presence, written or otherwise at Council was lost. Rosie is to be praised for continuing to represent us there and to keep us updated on the many communications she receives from other sources.

I hope that those plants which were brought forward by the unusual warm January, have not suffered terminal damage and that there are sufficient undamaged buds on the camellias to give you a show. We are a sanguine lot are we not?

Alan Shepherd

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Spring again and, although it has not been a particularly cold one, it does seem to have dragged on a bit. The sight of the bulbs pushing through the ground is heart-warming and gives a feeling of good things to come.



At long last the Somerset Specialist Nurseries Guide is finished and has one of John Vanderplank's beautiful photographs on the cover. I hope you'll like it and we look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions for the next one. If this one goes well we shall have to start on a new one quite soon and shall need lots more photographs not only from National Collections but members' photographs of meetings, plant sales and holidays. We'd also like more advertisements—any suggestions? I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Yvonne Radford for her tremendous hard work in the preparation of the Guide. Without it, I'd have been lost and the printer would have been tearing his hair out.

We would also like some interesting articles for this Newsletter. We have approached the Collections Holders but I'm sure that many of you have stories to tell about interesting plants you have grown or failed to grow! Please don't wait to be asked. We don't know who you are anyway!

The Collection Holders' lunch was again a great success and we had a long and sometimes heated discussion afterwards which has given us food for thought. It would be nice if more of you made the effort to visit the Collections in order to encourage the Holders. As members you should know all about them so that you can spread the word. Noni would like some encouragement too, so let her know when you want to go visiting and she'll be there to help.

Please would you make a really good effort this year to donate plants for our outside Sales. We must raise money and this is our only real way of doing so. Well grown and well presented plants can be delivered to any member of the Committee or to any of the venues. Remember, one can sell almost any plant with a flower on it! This year we are trying out a new venue at Brent Knoll in the garden of Sue Boss. This might be a little nearer for those of you who live in the north of the county.

Numbers have been up for our meetings lately. Keep up the good work. We love meeting you all.

Mary Sephton

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

Odette Badman	Glastonbury
Jennifer Bayford	Chilton Polden
Rosemary Bulled	Stawell
Lady Rosemary Fitzgerald	Lilstock
Katherine Howe	Clevedon
Tracey Morgan	Washford
Sheila Tucker	Shurton
Hilary Tudgee	Edington
Mike Werkmeister	East Lambrook
Jeremy Wright	Baltonsborough

FROM YOUR TREASURER

I have passed my second AGM without any complaints so hopefully all is well.

I will mention another event I have learnt about since being on the committee. There is a perk to being Treasurer. I was invited to the collection holders' lunch. Noni created this annual event and invites all the collection holders and the committee, not to a hastily organised get together but a gastronomic delight with much thought and preparation going into its success. Several other committee members worked very hard too. No one could have failed to have a good time. All sorts of valuable conversation took place over coffee; how best we can support our collection holders, their problems, and our problems. I had Elizabeth Honnor on my right which was very useful, as she was a founder member and was able to answer all my questions and fill me in on some background.

Do you know we have an interest table at the Edington meetings? Do you look at the interest table? Do admire the lovely tablecloth. If you don't have anything interesting, bring a flower you are pleased with.

Penny Berry

THE SOMERSET COLLECTIONS

Spring is always an exciting time for people who garden, and we are lucky in Somerset that we have two Collections that are at their best in the Spring.

At Broadleigh Gardens in Bishop's Hull, Lady Skelmersdale has a Collection of Alec Gray hybrid *Narcissi*. Alec Gray was a breeder of many beautiful *Narcissi* in the 1940's, including the ever popular 'Tete-a-Tete'. We are lucky that Lady Skelmersdale, as well as running a busy Nursery and exhibiting at all the major shows, makes the time to preserve such an historic collection.



A garden worth visiting in late March and early April is the Greencombe Garden Trust in Porlock where Joan Loraine has her National Collections of *Erythronium*, *Gaultheria*, *Polystichum* and *Vaccinium*. It is not often that so many unusual woodland plants can be seen together in such a lovely, natural setting. Joan recently applied for a Bursary for the maintenance of her Collections from Brother UK and was granted £350. I am hoping that this will encourage other Collection Holders to apply next year. Brother UK is an enthusiastic supporter of Plant Heritage and their Bursary is a generous gesture towards the hard work that Collection Holders put in to the maintenance of their Collections.

We have two possible new Collections in the pipeline. Sheila Tucker has submitted her application for a National Collection of *Epiphyllum* and I am waiting to hear when her application will be considered by the Plant Conservation Committee (PCC). I recently visited Pheasant Acre Plants in Bridgend where Rob Evans is hoping to achieve National status with his Collection of *Gladioli*. At this time of the year there are no flowers to be seen, but anyone who visited Rob's stand at the Taunton Show cannot fail to have been impressed by the range of his stock. I am hoping that his application will be completed shortly.

We had another very successful Collection Holders' lunch earlier this month, in the Edington Village Hall. It was encouraging to see so many of our Collection Holders gathered together and it was a good opportunity for a lively discussion of problems and ideas. This annual get together, with its emphasis on the Collections and Plant Heritage, is a very important part of what we are trying to achieve here in Somerset and provides an opportunity to exchange information and emphasise the importance of our National Collections and their holders.

Noni Bemrose, Collections' Co-ordinator

The Gardener's Morning

The robin's song at daybreak
Is a clarion call to me.
Get up and get out in the garden,
For the morning hours flee.

I cannot resist the summons,
What earnest gardener could?
For the golden hours of morning
Get into the gardener's blood.

The magic spell is upon me,
I'm glad that I did not wait;
For life's at its best in the morning,
As you pass through the garden gate.

- Howard Dolf



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NECTAR PLANTS: HEBE

Every garden needs a few shrubs to give structure and a sense of permanence, and ever-green ones are particularly useful as they maintain this effect through winter. If, in addition, the shrubs have attractive flowers that provide nectar for butterflies they are more or less indispensable! Hebes fulfil all these criteria and most are easy to grow, tolerant of drought and chalky soils, and hardy. In fact, they come in such a wide variety of forms and flower colours that you could almost have a garden planted exclusively with them. (There is, in fact, a Hebe Society: the genus is one of the few with a society devoted exclusively to it.) For the butterfly enthusiast, of course, hebes alone would provide too little variety but there is no doubt that some hebes are very attractive to butterflies, and I wouldn't want to garden without them.



Hebe salicifolia

As there are about 100 species in the wild, and many more hybrids and selected forms in cultivation, this article can only scratch the surface. Garden centres usually stock a good range, especially of the dwarfier forms, so it is perhaps best to see them in flower (any time from early to late summer) and pick those you like the look of. However, there are a few that have been particularly successful in my garden. Top of the list from the point of view of attracting butterflies is one already in the garden when we moved to our present house. It was unlabelled, so I cannot be sure of the name, but it seems to match the description of *Hebe salicifolia*. It has narrow leaves and white flowers which completely cover the bush in mid-summer. (When we used to get Small Tortoiseshells in the garden (remember them?) they couldn't stay away from it.) It has

made a shrub some 10 feet high and across, but with regular pruning could be much smaller.

A smaller plant with more compact flower spikes which shade very prettily from pink to white as the individual flowers mature is H. 'Nichola's Blush'. For something darker, try H. 'La Seduisante', where the purple flower colour is also present in the leaves, which have a purple tinge when young.

Foliage colour and form is another important contribution which hebes can make to the garden. There are several variegated forms, and others with congested glaucous foliage

making dense compact domes. There are even varieties, like *Hebe ochracea* 'James Stirling', one of the so-called whipcord hebes, which look more like golden dwarf conifers (although with these the flowers are relatively insignificant). If space is limited, the compact growers are certainly worth considering. *H.* 'Baby Marie' has only grown to 3 ft high and across in nine years.

Cultivation, as I mentioned earlier, is generally easy. Good sun and reasonable drainage are necessary, and some shelter from the coldest wind will help avoid winter damage. Many hebes can put up with very dry situations, including those created by competition from tree roots. Pruning is sometimes said to be difficult, or to be avoided, but this is not necessarily true. Tidy up the bushes immediately after flowering to remove unsightly dead flower spikes, or prune hard in spring to reduce the size significantly. Some hebes will certainly regrow even if cut back to a stump, although this can be a risky operation. As late-summer cuttings usually root easily, a bit of planning could provide good insurance against killing a plant which does need severely cutting back, as well as providing plants to give to friends.



Hebe 'Baby Marie'

For more detailed information on this and all other aspects of growing hebes, the Hebe Society website is a good place to start. But beware: you could, like the Small Tortoiseshells, easily get hooked!

©Jeremy Spon

N.B. The last two winters have caused quite a few losses of hebes even in the South of England. In general the varieties with narrower leaves are the hardiest.

This article was originally written in 2009 as one of a series on nectar plants for the Newsletter of the Kent Branch of Butterfly Conservation. Visit www.butterfly-conservation.org for more information.

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Council met three times in 2011, in April, July and November. At the November meeting we re-elected our Chairman Prof. Michael Alder for a further three years.

Finance

The financial situation has improved over recent years thanks to the hard work of National office staff and volunteers

2008 deficit £69,000

2009 “ £10,000

2010 surplus £36,000

2011 was much the same as last year with the overall budget where we expected but there would probably be a deficit as there had been no unexpected income such as last year's legacies. The board has put a focus on fundraising for next year hoping to find alternative sources of income. The national office does spend very carefully to keep costs down and works hard to raise money. They rely on group donations a good deal.

Fundraising

A new source has come from some groups who have taken up the Waitrose "Community matters" scheme with Suffolk raising over £500 and Surrey £160. Where there is a Waitrose in our area maybe we should try it but it was suggested we should try to choose a time when no other very popular charities are among the choices. Next year we will receive the last donation from the Esme Fairburn Foundation £20K. £500 was raised with give a car scheme (Scrap car for charity) and Chelsea flower show cloakroom raised £4.600 in donations.

Membership

Fell below 4000 this year but back up to 4091 in October. Recruitment was up 50% on last year and fewer members were lost. Subs. have remained static for over three years. Council discussed the possibility of raising subs. but left it unchanged for this year but it will almost certainly have to rise next year in order just to stand still.

AGM

2011 was held in Worthing and NW group is organising this year based on Lancashire and the Lake District. Council have been considering the future and may try to reduce costs and perhaps list cheaper alternative accommodation round about if delegates did not want the expense of full residence. The possibility of maybe just holding the AGM without a weekend was discussed but it was felt more people would attend if the weekend was continued.

PCC

Details of the 2015 review were explained and it was emphasised that it was designed to make collections better not get rid of them. They were considering the possibility of different standards of accreditation. Steve Thomson suggested that 95% of members were not Collection Holders but must be maintaining plants. He wants to form a rare plant register and would welcome ideas on how to run it and to co-ordinate with National office.

The 2011 Brickell award went to Margaret Easter for her work on *Thymus*.

In 1985 there were 245 Collections which has increased in 2011 to 646.

TPP

The new TPP co-ordinator, Kalani Seymour, has made life easier by persuading the RHS to send her most of the Plant Finder information online so we have much less to collate. We only have to add the information in the printed Plant Finder not shown online. She has developed comprehensive information pages on the National website under 'Find out more' on the TPP home page. There are 1068 genera in Plant Finder and so far 205 have been chosen. Some are at stage 2 and have been sent to experts. The project will make a big contribution to plant conservation.

Education

Eight groups marked Plant Conservation Day in May, Somerset being one of them. The Committee wants any interesting plant stories (not just National Collections) which can be used for publicity. They are thinking about how they can advance education and about the possibility of a part-time education officer. They want to include colleges and students more. It was suggested we should try to have a college staff member on committee. A new college membership package is proposed.

Publications Committee

Has reviewed the bi-annual Plant Heritage Journal, conducting a survey by 83 members and had received a good response. They were also looking at the possibility of producing joint booklets with the RHS. Genevieve wished to know if any Collection Holders had booklets in the pipeline. It was known that Somerset's Jane Lindsay was preparing one on *Passiflora*.

Shows Committee

Reported on successes especially the Plant Heritage marquee at Hampton Court which was awarded Best Feature in show. The TV and press coverage was excellent but the medal count was down. There were some complaints about the method of judging and it is hoped to alter this in 2012. The seed shop is a huge draw and any spare home collected seed is well received. 59 new members were recruited at the show and a total of £11,362 was added to funds from donations from Collection Holders in the marquee, membership fees, seed shop, sale of goods and reimbursement from the RHS.

Rosie Lishman

NEWS FROM THE PROGRAMME MANAGER

SHOWS AND PLANT FAIRS

There has been an excellent response to our meetings at Edington so far this year and I know that members will enjoy our next meetings at Edington up to the August and September break for the Taunton Show (Friday and Saturday 3rd and 4th of August) and Nynehead Court Autumn Plant Fair (Saturday, September 8th). Helpers for both these shows will be needed and very welcome. Please sign up to help at these events when you come to meetings or telephone Pauline on 01278 451631, and also to offer your help for the new show at Copse Hall, Brent Knoll on Saturday July 14th, to be held at the kind invitation of Sue Boss. We hope to make this high summer show a great success, and as we are also having our usual stand at the Cannington Spring Fair on Saturday and Sunday, May 19th and 20th (ring Joan Warren 01278 683494) and our biggest Plant Fair of the year at Lower Severalls on Saturday, April 14th (ring Pauline), we shall need plenty of plants to sell. If you are splitting perennials and grasses this spring or pruning and taking cuttings (especially box and myrtle and other useful shrubs) or sowing seeds, please think of our fund-raising efforts and do some extra ones for our stands and Plant Fairs. You will help your own gardening fund, for members receive 75% of the price of their plants sold, though, of course, outright donations of plants will also be gratefully received!

NURSERY VISIT AND A PUB SUPPER

The New Year Lunch at the King William Inn was particularly enjoyed this year and I have had sundry requests to do it again in the summer as well as next New Year. On Tuesday, July 24th, at 6.30p.m. we are having an evening visit to Desert to Jungle at Lower Henlade, Taunton, TA3 5NB to visit their well-known nursery of exotic plants (free visit), followed by a pub supper at the Half Moon pub, just up the road in Stoke St Mary. Those of you who came to visit Rebecca Pow's garden about four years ago will remember the excellent food and ambiance we enjoyed at this pub, which is next door but one to her house - lucky Rebecca! I promised you I would arrange another visit in the near vicinity, so that members could enjoy another lovely meal, so you see I am keeping my promise! You will pay for your meal at the pub on the evening, but I will need to let the pub know how many to expect in our party, So please sign up at meetings or telephone me (01278 451631) as soon as you can. I will let you have menu choices nearer the time.

OXFORD TRIP NEWS

The trip to the Gardens of Oxford on June 20th to 22nd will probably include, on the way home, a visit to Asthall Manor, near Burford, the childhood home of the Mitford sisters of literary fame (and some political and other notoriety) before the Second World War. The garden is famous for its roses, which should be at their best for our visit.

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Plant Heritage Somerset Group

PROGRAMME 2012

All indoor meetings are held at Edington Village Hall
(north side of A39 between Bridgwater and Street) unless otherwise indicated

Members' plant sale one hour before each lecture

Admission free for members, £4.00 non-members except where stated otherwise
Please contact **Pauline Clapp** for details of trips and Visits **Early booking essential!**

Saturday 14 April
10.00—3.30

Spring Plant Fair Lower Severalls, Crewkerne
Specialist nurseries 1 mile NE of Crewkerne.

Saturday 5 May

1.30
2.30

Plant Sale
Mike Horobin, Lonsdale Nurseries, 'Fuchsias, Angel Pelargoniums & Professional Ways with Hanging Baskets'

Wednesday 20 June

Visit to the **Gardens of Oxford**

Saturday 7 July

1.30
2.30

Plant Sale
Nigel Palfrey, Garden and Architectural Design and Garden writer.
'Curios for the Garden'

Saturday 14 July

10.00– 3.30

Plant Fair, Copse Hall, Brent Knoll
Entry £3 and £2 for members

Tuesday 24 July

6.30pm

Visit to **Desert to Jungle, Henlade, Taunton.**

**Friday/Saturday 3
& 4 August**

Taunton Flower Show

Saturday 8 September
10.00—3.30

Autumn Plant Fair, Nynehead Court, Wellington

Saturday 6 October

10.30
11.00

12.15
2.00

Autumn Day
Members' Plant Sale and Coffee
David Burgess, Japanese Teahouse builder. 'The Gardens of Kyoto and the development of Japanese Garden Design'
Bring and Share Lunch.
'Chinese vs Japanese Gardens'

Saturday 17 November

- 1.30 Plant Sale
2.30 **Chris and Judy Yates.** Nursery holders.
'Roses Old and New'

Saturday 1 December

- 11.30 Members' Plant Sale and coffee
12.00 **AGM**
1.00 Bring and Share **Christmas Lunch**
2.30 Chris Smith on **'Ivies'**

OXFORD TRIP NEWS /cont

Final payments due to Bakers Dolphin for the coach, hotel and entrance to Blenheim Palace and Gardens will be available to members at the next meeting on March 24th. Any envelopes not collected will be sent to you. Please return payments (cheques payable to Bakers Dolphin) to me promptly, so that Bakers can pay for your accommodation by the deadline. I hope to be able to give you the cost per head of the garden entrances and tours by the next meeting. The payment for this part of the trip will be by cheque payable to NCCPG. Arrangements and times for picking up and dropping off will be given out at the May 5th meeting at Edington.

TRIP TO THE GARDENS OF AMSTERDAM, MONDAY, APRIL 22ND TO FRIDAY, APRIL 26TH, 2013

Hotel

Holiday Inn, overlooking the Marina at IJmuiden, the seaport for Amsterdam. The hotel has all modern facilities. The rooms are all air-conditioned and en-suite and have tea/coffee making facilities, hair dryers, satellite T.V. desks, safes, windows that open and trouser presses. Accommodation will be half-board. The hotel has a fine restaurant and a roof terrace which overlooks the Marina, the nearby National Park and the town with its famous Cathedral of St Bavo and Zandvoort beach.

If we have a party of 40, the cost for the hotel, coach, and Channel crossing, (probably by ferry to allow the coach driver, and us, some rest time and a meal) before the drive through Belgium and Holland, will be £458. This will be payable by cheque to Bakers Dolphin sent to me. An initial deposit cheque of £50, payable to Bakers Dolphin, should be sent to me as soon as possible. Please mark the cheque Amsterdam Gardens Trip on the back. Single supplement will be £105, but this does not have to be paid with the initial deposit. We have initially 11 single rooms available to us. I would advise single room travellers to reserve a

place as quickly as possible. There has already been great interest shown and 15 places have already been requested. Booking forms for this trip will be available at the next meeting on March 24th. Everyone must have travel insurance in place. This can be paid for via Bakers Dolphin and should be paid for with the initial deposit. I will have the cost of this at the next meeting.

Roy Cheek, a founder member of Plant Heritage and the Somerset Group, an experienced horticulturalist who famously lectured at Cannington College for 21 years, creating a diversity of gardens and landscapes that included 10,000 different kinds of plants and 8 National Collections, has been a member of both hardy and tender plant committees of the R.H.S. and is presently Vice-Chairman of the R.H.S. Floral Trials, will be our guide. Since retiring, he has taken up horticultural advisory work, including the new glasshouses at Wisley, opened by the Queen in 2007, London Zoo gardens and worked on the B.B.C. series on 'the Victorian Garden' (which we may have to beguile us on our outward and homeward journeys). He now travels the world as a guide on Horticultural tours. He has planned an itinerary as follows;

Tues.23rd April

A.M. Keukenhof

P.M. Thijsseshof Bloemendaol, near Haarlem ,(I think!)

Weds.24th

A.M. Hortus Botanicus, Amsterdam

P.M. Frankendael Amsterdam

Thurs,25th

A.M. Hortus Bulborum, Limmen

P.M. Canal cruise in Amsterdam, then visit to Van Loon museum, Amsterdam, to see a typical patrician Dutch town house and garden, or visit other sites of interest, such as the Anne Frank house, the Rejksmuseum to see the Rembrandts or the Van Gogh museum.

Admission to gardens, museums and canal cruise.

As for the Oxford trip, such costs will be payable separately to NCCPG, as will costs for the guide. I expect them to be in the region of £5.

Pauline M. Clapp,
Programme Secretary.

ILMINSTER WOMAN HELPS BRING ACCLAIMED RESEARCH TO GARDENERS



Gardeners across the world can now tap into the unique horticultural research papers of Andrew Chatto – the late husband of famous plantswoman Beth Chatto – thanks in part to a woman from Ilminster.

Jenny Hawksley, from Ashill near Ilminster, volunteered to help out in this historically-important and time consuming project to transfer Andrew's research notes from paper to the internet. Jenny answered an advert in a gardening magazine appealing for skilled copy-

typists, all of whom had to be familiar with scientific plant naming. As one of only eight chosen, she spent two months transcribing the meticulous research notes, many of which had been written over 30 years ago. They can now be found on line at www.bethchatto.co.uk and look set to be used by gardening fans across the globe.

Jenny said: "I saw an article in the Hardy Plant Society newsletter asking for volunteers to type up the notes Andrew Chatto made following his numerous trips overseas to study plant habitats. Being a native of East Anglia and having a mother who was equally fascinated by plants, I had visited Beth Chatto's garden in Essex in the 1960's so the thought of being involved in this project was very exciting.

The timing was fortuitous as I was about to embark on a three-year course at Hestercombe on Heritage Horticulture and Garden History, an important part of which was the plant hunters and the plants they brought back from all parts of the world. I thoroughly enjoyed typing up the notes as the subject matter was so fascinating. It was an honour to be part of such an important project and I was thrilled to receive a personal letter of thanks from Beth Chatto."

Andrew Chatto was married to Beth, one of the most influential gardeners of the last half-century; her garden, writing and lecturing has had a major impact both in the USA as well as here. It seems obvious now, but back in 1960 when she started her garden at Elmstead Market in Essex, the idea that garden plants thrive best in situations similar to their original natural environment was a novel one. Beth's earliest books for gardeners, which are best sellers, say it all: *The Damp Garden*, *The Dry Garden*, *The Shade Garden*.

But how did Beth know what to plant and where, in her rather challenging garden (much of it too dry, too wet or too shady for conventional gardening)? The answer was that Beth relied heavily on her late husband Andrew's knowledge of plant ecology. Those in the garden world knew that Andrew spent a lot of time researching the writings of plant hunters, travellers, scientists – in French and German, and that he taught himself Russian, in order to read the literature on the plant ecological associations of the vast Russian-ruled USSR where many good garden plants come from.

Now, thanks to the Internet, and some enthusiastic typists, we can all read what Andrew Chatto wrote. When he died in 1990 he left behind some half a million words on the ecology of the plants around most of the temperate world. Not just notes, but eloquently, at times poetically, written text. He would take a place: Japan, the Altai Mountains, The Caucasus, and trawling through a great many sources would summarise the climate, a basic description of the vegetation and list of prominent plants, especially the ancestors of garden plants. When Beth got hold of a new plant he could look it up and tell her where it came from and what its habitat was like. So... the idea of 'the right plant for the right place' was born.

For many years, Beth wondered and worried about what to do with Andrew's text. She discussed it with well-known garden writer Noel Kingsbury, who suggested that he could help. A note in the newsletter of the Hardy Plant Society brought forward 55 responses, from which he selected eight to type up the notes into a digital format – mostly retired people, skilled copy-typists, all familiar with scientific plant naming. The next stage was to put the text online, so that anyone can read it. It is hoped that in the future plant names can be checked and brought up to date. It is also possible that the Andrew Chatto papers could be the basis of a Wiki-project, whereby others might continue the research into the natural homes of plants enabling us to give them the conditions to which they have become adapted, especially with global warming in mind.

Gardeners reading Andrew Chatto's work will understand so much more of where their plants come from. Anyone who travels with an interest in ecology or plant life or just wild places will find much to interest them, and perhaps to provide them with a way of understanding what they see. They will do so in the knowledge that Andrew Chatto put in place what before would have involved a whole library.

A NEW SEASON BEGINS



What a difference 12 months can make, from the doom and gloom of this time last winter with temperatures dropping well below freezing up until the second week of March, to this year when we have hardly seen a frost, and a gas bill looking less scary with so little fuel used.

Good light levels since Christmas has made it feel as if spring has arrived much earlier than normal with the temperatures remaining at consistent levels the temptation to start potting cuttings in early February and to tidy up the collections of *Passiflora* cvs and *Jasminum* was almost too much to bear. However, common sense prevailed with the voices in our heads consistently reminding us that we can still have a frost into May!!!!

‘Show Season’ is now fast approaching with RHS Cardiff starting on the 20th April, so it is now time to roll up our sleeves and start potting and preparing in earnest.

The Passion flowers and Jasmine have over wintered beautifully this year with no losses in either of the Collections. As always we take many cuttings during the late Summer and Autumn months to root and over winter, also keeping a collection of plants in smaller pots to ensure both survive intact. Due to the number of shows we attend throughout the season we have many plants growing in pots, both Passion flowers and Jasmine are quite happy to be pot grown but the secret is to keep their roots slightly restricted and to keep the watering to minimum during the winter months, when light levels are poor. Once they start showing signs of re-growth then it is time to remove any dead wood and give them a light feed.

The biggest worry of the year is getting plants ready for RHS Chelsea Flower Show, the largest spectacle of the show season. The plants for this years show were potted as early as last spring. A certain amount of skill is required to get them to look A1 for judging on the Monday morning. I have to confess weather plays the largest part in this – not too hot, not too sunny and not too wet, there is no pleasing us gardeners!

The RHS, last year started a new judging format, discarding the old system, where there were twelve or more judges on each panel and a show of hands to indicate the medal awarded. The new format involves fewer judges and a chairperson, comments and points



Jasminum angulare

must have a total of 11 or 12 points, Silver Gilt 8-10 points, Silver 6-7 points, Bronze 3-5 points, No Award 0-2 points.

For both of us, the challenge of staging an exhibit with the stress and worry involved in doing so is all soon forgotten if we are rewarded with a Gold Medal. It makes it all worth while and brings a smile to our faces for the rest of the show. Jekka McVicar of Jekka's Herbs once said to us on achieving our first Gold Medal that it would be the easiest one to obtain and that all others would become harder as you set your standards of perfection higher – Never has a truer word has been spoken!

Having worked with climbing plants for over 25 enjoyable years, our range has extended beyond the two National Collections to include a wide range of many different climbers.

Thank you to members of the NCCPG and customers who have very kindly sent us many plants and seeds from all over the world. It is very much appreciated. We look forward to seeing you all once again throughout this forthcoming show season.

Happy Growing

Jane Lindsay and Toni O'Connor

now written down for exhibitors to see, and exhibits judged in three categories:

1. Plant Quality – colour, texture, quality, health and nomenclature
2. Overall Impression – Impact, balance, design and finishing – Pots, edging and labels. Scale of Endeavour – Difficulty in creating the display, props, difficulty in growing plants, creativity.

A maximum of 4 points are awarded for excellent, 3 points for Very Good, 2 points for Good, 1 point for Satisfactory and 0 points for Poor.

To achieve the accolade of Gold Medal you



Passiflora caerulea

DROSERA CISTIFLORA

Drosera cistiflora is one of those species that everyone is familiar with, but unfortunately is grown in very few collections, because of the unavailability of plant material, and also in part to the rather unfair reputation it has of being difficult. Admittedly, it's not as straightforward as many of the commonly grown species, but is worth the extra little effort.

It is a native of the Cape region of South Africa, and inhabits seasonally wet areas, with the wet season being the cool damp winter months. It is the growth pattern of this (and indeed all species) that one should consider when trying to understand the best way to succeed with cultivation. Firstly, as it grows in the winter months in the wild, so it will in the confines of a greenhouse giving a welcome breath of life at a usually dull and lifeless time. While the *Sarracenia* are cold and static, this plant bursts out of the soil anything from late September through until early January, with an erect green shoot that opens revealing the first sticky carnivorous leaves. These initial leaves reflex downwards and produce a small rosette, but subsequent growth takes on a different form, with a vertical stem reaching skywards, interrupted at regular intervals by 3cm leaves held at somewhere between 30 and 45 degrees (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Plants in cultivation

The stem itself varies in height from a few centimeters, up to over 30 cm (some populations considerably more) decorated with their glistening leaves. The main claim to fame of this species is however the flowers, considered by many to be the largest in the genus. From my own experience these are up to 5 cm in diameter, and when seen for the first time cannot fail to impress even the most hardened of botanical philistines.

I currently have three types which have flowered for me. My first plants which are now some 13 years old are completely reliable, and every year produce 3 cm diameter pink flowers with white petal bases darkening to a green centre. The plants themselves are rather wiry, and unusually continue to produce a growing stem from the last leaf axil below the flower which forms another 2 or 3 leaves. This characteristic has led to this plant being given its own specific rank-*D. variegata* Debbert. These plants originate from Gifberg.

A couple of years later I had success with a white flowered form from Darling, which like the last has become a regular performer. This is an altogether shorter stockier form to 20cm

in height, and without the wiry appearance of the pink form. The flowers are larger at about 4 cm in diameter, and although I call it white, there is an element of very pale yellow in the mix, which contrasts perfectly with a dark green centre. (Figure 2).

A few years ago, I was treated to one of those rare moments when you are literally stopped in your tracks. A supposedly red form of this plant, also from Darling, had been in bud for some time and on this particular morning was the first thing to catch my eye as I walked in to the greenhouse. I had heard that the colour of these plants could be intense, but in nearly 30 years of growing carnivorous plants, I have yet to see a flower which could rival what this plant had produced. At a little over 5 cm in diameter, this is the largest *D. cistiflora* flower I have seen, and sported a colour I can best describe as pillar box red with a dark green centre (Figure 3). All of the images I took at the time show the flower as being somewhat orange-red. The plants when they flowered were approximately 25 cm in height, with pink tentacled leaves. Unfortunately, this flowering has yet to be repeated, and I have noticed that the plants are smaller than they were then. Perhaps a lack of food, or maybe I allowed them to dry out too much? I shall experiment with feeding them to see if the flowering is as a result of available food stored in the roots.



Figure 2. The white flowered plants from Darling

After flowering, the plants gradually yellow and die back as the sun becomes stronger and the days become longer and drier, eventually losing their visible parts and retreating underground to survive the hot dry summer months as thick, fleshy roots. Here they remain while the ground above them bakes solid, only re-emerging with the returning rains and cooler temperatures to begin their growth period once again.

In cultivation, they should be kept in a little water whilst in growth, and this should be allowed to be taken up by the plants before replenishing, taking care not to allow them to dry. Once they begin to die back, reduce the watering gradually so as to allow them to dry slowly until they disappear completely. Over the summer months, they should be given an occasional quantity of water to their bases, not enough to soak them, but sufficient to prevent the roots desiccating. For this reason, it is wise to grow them in large pots with room for their roots to spread around, in a compost of 8 parts silver sand to 2 parts moss peat.

The best way to propagate this species is by seed, and it was thought that as they are winter growers, the seed should be sown in the autumn. However, as I stated earlier let's consider

their wild growth cycle. The plants flower and set seed at the end of their growth period before the onset of warm spring weather and as their soil is drying. The seed then sits in its dormant state through the fierce summer heat, only germinating after the first rains and when the temperature is a little more conducive to growth. Therefore, I now sow seeds of this and other winter growing species in the spring, at the time they would naturally be shed by the parent plant, and allow them the hot dry desiccating summer they need before autumn germination. Once they are soaked through in September or October, many tiny green shoots can be seen in a matter of only a few weeks. The first year is the most critical for these plants, as they take a while to develop the substantial roots required to sustain them through the summer, and you can easily destroy them at this stage if they dry too much.

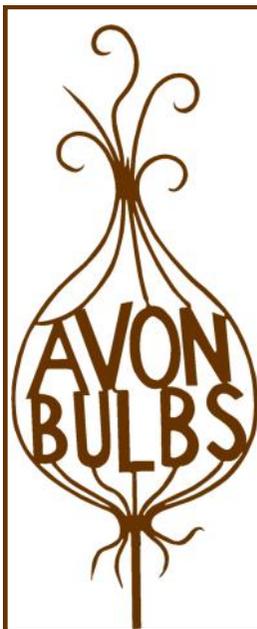


Figure 3. Stunning red flowers!

I have also had success with smoking the seeds in a barbecue with smoldering peat over night. This replicates the bush fires that are a vital part of so many eco-systems in South Africa. Simply sow the seeds in pots and wet thoroughly, light the peat (this can be the tricky part), and when smoking well, position the tray well above. Cover and leave. This can be done in the autumn, and is another way of unlocking the inherent dormancy the seeds have.

Although as I said earlier, there is more care required, the extra effort is well worth the kind of reward that these incredible plants can repay.

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Bulbs all shapes and sizes

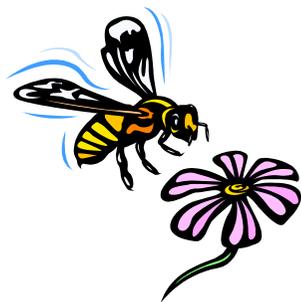
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