

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society

Affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society

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‘Planting Happiness’: A Three-Day Trip to Herefordshire

by Jill Ambrose

Our first garden, Pettifers, in the pretty Cotswold village of Wardington, was entered through an ivy-clad narrow archway, where we saw a stunning vista as this one-and-a-half-acre garden stretched to the rolling farmland of the Cotswolds. It had a cottage style-look, with very wide borders filled with tall grasses, alliums and *companula lactiflora*. Standing outside the honeyed 17th-century stone house, the dominating colours were blue and purple. The plot slopes down to a formal enclosure of topiary and eventually down to an orchard.

The next stop was the RHS Centre at Pershore College, where we met Duncan Coombs, our guide for the tour. He showed us the small animal centre and the eco-friendly accommodation as well as the rose and alpine gardens.

Travelling to Hereford in the late afternoon sunshine with views of the Malvern Hills was delightful. Being high up in the coach, we could appreciate the stunning views from the ridge and the road we travelled along was still lit by the original gas lamps, now electrified. In the Ledbury area, we could see fields growing wheat, potatoes, hops and blackcurrants and cider orchards as well as villages with their pretty black-and-white buildings. Staying in central Hereford gave us the opportunity to visit Hereford Cathedral.

Stockton Bury Gardens at Kimbolton was our first visit the next day. This is part of a traditional mixed farm with a tithe barn, where we later had a delicious lunch. On the walls of the cider press grew a very unusual pink hydrangea. The Pigeon House Garden was dominated by blue and white colours. Again *companula lactiflora* was in abundance. After seeing the large walled kitchen garden we walked to the dingle, a series of pools covered in water lilies. I loved seeing the peeling bark of the *Betula*

birch and the striking yellow and orange colours near the pond of the Primula Floridae. Our short visit enabled us only to see briefly the gardens designed as rooms but we all saw the Pillar Garden, the Secret Garden and the Sunken Garden.

Hergest Croft Gardens at Kington was a complete contrast. Four generations of the same family had created a 70-acre garden in the heart of the Welsh Marches with more than 5,000 rare trees and shrubs, including the National Collection of maples and birches. Some of our group walked to Park Wood to see them, while others relaxed and had tea. Everyone's eyes lit up in the plant sales area as the prices were very reasonable!

By the time we reached the Laskett Gardens, the home of Sir Roy Strong, it was drizzling. We were met by Sir Roy but left to wander with our audio guides. Sir Roy and his late wife Julia Trevelyan Oman had created a series of garden rooms over a four-acre site. The inspiration for Laskett came from the gardens of the pre-1914 era and from those of Tudor and Stuart England. As you walk through the rooms you see the strong architectural structure with many statues and urns bearing inscriptions from classical poets and renaissance writers. There is even a Diamond Jubilee urn for Queen Elizabeth II in 'pop art' colours. Everywhere you look there is amazing topiary and every corner turned brings a new vista. It is evident that the gardens celebrate Sir Roy and his wife's lives in the arts as well as showing their love of their cats.

On the last day we visited two private gardens, both designed by Tom Stuart Smith. The first was Brockhampton Cottage, approached by a long drive full of herbaceous plants and grasses. The house is covered in clematis and Albertine roses and has a magnificent view of the surrounding hills and farmland. To reach the house we had to walk up a wide-stepped grassy terrace. The walk down to the lake contained a wild style of planting with the grasses 'babbling' out into the landscape and this was to echo the nearby rolling hills. When we walked around the lake there was plenty of flowering rush and many American plants and trees such as the North American wing nut with its long fronds. They were planted to reflect the owner's American nationality. The cornus by the lake must be a beautiful colour in the winter.

From here it was a short drive to Grendon Court, where the owner, Kate Edwards, cooked us an excellent lunch, which many of us ate in her 18th-century dining room. The two-acre garden on red loam has three sections. The lower garden has a large rectangular lawn (for playing cricket) with huge hardy perennial beds on each side and, at the far end, are hedges designed like wiggly worms with prairie-style planting in between. This garden was designed to be seen from above so we were all invited to view it from the owner's bedroom! The middle garden consisted mainly of tall grasses with pathways and the top garden (the swimming pool garden) had been created to give the feel of an Asian paddy field.

The last garden of our trip was Derry Watkins at Special Plants near Chippenham. Her south-facing garden is a windy one on heavy clay on a steep slope, where she has cleverly created several gravel gardens below her barn conversion house. This was obviously a garden run by a *plantaholic* with a variety of beds. The circular hedging of beech (the 'empty quarter') was an interesting feature and contrasted with the area by the circular pond. Time didn't allow us to explore this garden thoroughly but we

all managed to buy unusual plants to take home.

To see such contrasting gardens in three days was a great pleasure for me as well as having such wonderful company and, as one of Sir Roy Strong's inscriptions said, 'They who plant a garden, plant happiness.'

Autumn Flower Show

by Yvonne Oliver
Vice-Chairman and Show Co-ordinator

What a great show! The Free Church Hall was filled to capacity with excellent entries in all categories: Cut Flowers, Pot Plants, Fruit, Vegetables, Photography, Cookery and Preserving.

There were 47 individual competitors and 120 visitors and we gained several new members. The garden was packed with people of all ages enjoying the wonderful sound of the Grimsdyke Brass Band, this year generously sponsored by Ellis & Co. Barbara Perry and her team served dozens of teas and delicious home-made cakes.

A lovely selection of high-quality spring bulbs was on sale and Terry Rand sold excellent strawberry plants in aid of Médecins sans Frontières. 'Best in Show Certificates' were awarded to: Ken Murrell (Best Cut Flowers), Adrienne Franklin (Best Pot Plant), Ken Murrell (Best Fruit), Chris Page (Best Vegetables and Best Horticulture Exhibit), Judy Blendis (Best Cookery) and Gill Read (Best Preserving).

Thanks as always to all who helped set up and clear up and worked all day to keep the show going! We do have really big shows and they couldn't happen without your help. Complete show results will be on the website or you can contact me on 020 8455 8741 or at yvonne.oliver@virgin.net and I'll send you a copy.

A Visit to Two Gardens in Essex

by Judith Woolman

On an unseasonably crisp August morning, we left Temple Fortune for the Beth Chatto Gardens, which we found bathed in warm sunshine. The conditions were excellent for exploring the extensive Gravel Garden, where it was fascinating to see the variety of plants that flourish in this very dry part of the country without being watered.

Down some stairs and across an amazingly velvety area of lawn, one comes to the huge *Gunnera manicata* and the four large ponds which are the focus of the main part of the garden. In August foliage and trees rather than flowers predominate and this engenders a feeling of great peace and harmony. Nevertheless, there were hundreds of flowers to engage the attention and, unlike Hampstead Garden Suburb, no hedges to throw shade onto the beds. Each plant is labelled, which is of great value to the keen gardener since the variety of fauna is extraordinary. In the woodland garden, for

instance, I spotted an *Arisaema tortuosum*, an imposing, shade-loving tuberous perennial originating in the Himalayas or western China which rarely flowers in southern England. The entire garden is evidently the expression of one person's vision and it's only when you read up on it that you realise quite how much work (and bark mulch) has gone into its creation.

There was plenty of time to explore the nursery area, where the plants are clearly classified according to growing conditions. The nursery stocks over 2,000 varieties, most of which are propagated on-site. It must be one of the best and most extensive in the country and it's extremely good value. It would have been impossible to go away empty-handed so it was fortunate that the coach had plenty of luggage space. The Mail Order plant list was well worth taking away as a memento of a really memorable visit.

Essex is a huge county and it was about an hour's journey on the coach from Elmstead Market to the RHS garden at Hyde Hall. The contrast between the two gardens was marked, not only in design but also in soil type - gravelly near Colchester and clay near Chelmsford. I saw only one rose bush at Beth Chatto, while Hyde Hall boasts three rose gardens: the Rose Rope Walk, which features ramblers and climbers, a garden which mixes roses with established shrubs, and one which comprises several strictly geometrical beds edged with box. Here the roses were mostly propagated by David Austin. These, according to one of the gardeners we saw, have the best resistance to disease. All were flowering abundantly and looked extremely healthy.

On arrival at Hyde Hall, the windswept site seemed somewhat unpromising but, as one climbed towards the top of the garden, where the main areas of planting are to be found, it was much more sheltered since the hillside faced south-west. The conditions were optimal therefore for another extensive dry garden, rather different from Beth Chatto, though in both gardens architectural plants such as *Melianthus major* and *Euphorbia characias wulfenii* flourish as well as the lovely blue *Salvia uliginosa* and the imposing *Echinacea purpurea*, with its pink petals and orange cones (giving the lie to Monty Don, who recently stated on *Gardeners' World* that pink and orange don't go well together in a garden). One of the main features of Hyde Hall is a colour-themed herbaceous border, where the late-flowering perennials were putting on a dazzling display.

Garden Suburb School Vegetable Club

by Patricia Major

The start of the new autumn term has brought with it glorious weather and the children are finding it hard to understand why they can't plant beans, squash and seeds directly into the empty planters. We have discussed seasonal vegetables and so have planted cabbages and kale, rainbow chard, overwintering onions and garlic to fill the beds over the winter.

The Autumn King carrots we sowed during the last week of the summer term are looking very healthy and should be ready to harvest in October.

We have one empty bed reserved for broad beans. These will be the last crop we sow in 2014.

I discovered that the children don't take kindly to pulling up spent plants. This has been accompanied by plaintive cries of 'I planted that!' and I realised just how proud they are of their efforts.

The year 2014 has been a wonderful one for the children of Garden Suburb School. The lunch-time Vegetable Club has become a firm favourite and the children's work was justly rewarded once again at the Hort Soc's Autumn Flower Show.



Garden Suburb School Wild Garden

by Ruth Beedle

The Gardening Club is thriving and we are now into the third year, where small groups of children aged from seven to eleven come and discover nature, growing and gardening.

It is a terrific learning project for the children and they learn different things in different ways. From a science-curricular point of view, they learn about life cycles and seasons, they are recycling the autumnal leaf falls, composting and feeding the beds. They learn about life cycles of animals, watching with disbelief as the tadpoles slowly metamorphose into frogs. There are many valuable connections with structured learning in the classroom: 'This is just like when we saw the chicks hatching in school!'

They noticed that the 'pretty blossom' on the trees slowly turned into fruit and delighted in eating the plums when they had matured sufficiently, with a few trials on unripe ones to check beforehand! 'Don't you have to wash them? They're dirty!'

As with the produce from the vegetable garden, there are many opportunities for cross-curricular initiatives such as using the fruit in the school kitchen to make pies, crumbles or jam: 'I just saw vegetables in supermarkets and didn't know how they got there!'

They also learn many practical skills in the garden and use a variety of gardening tools. Unsurprisingly, their favourites are the secateurs and the lawn mower.

The magic of growing is always a surprise and a few days ago we planted 200 bluebell bulbs thanks to Hort Soc. Every term a different group of pupils come to Garden Club so the group of children who planted them visit in spring and see them in flower to ensure continuity.

Some children have been chosen by the teacher to join us – they benefit from the small group and come out of their shells. Few of the children have gardens themselves: most live in flats.

Over the weeks the children develop confidence in engaging with the sights, sounds and excitement of the natural world. They learn to touch the earth without fear of illness or danger, put their hands in ponds and experience the unusual slimy texture of pondweed and look for pond animals. Many start off being fearful of sudden movements and insects. The dragonfly was particularly scary judging by the screams! ‘I never dared to touch a worm before!’

Similarly, just sitting quietly and actively listening has been a wonderful experience for them: ‘I can hear so many animals and plants all around us when I listen properly!’

We are keen to make further links with the school curriculum in other areas such as literacy and art and one of our current aims is to create a natural outdoor classroom, with a circle of log seats for lessons such as story time and art.

Watch out for changes next time you’re walking along the Childs Way path to Willifield Green!

Gardeners’ Question Time

by Mary Whiting

Three experts, almost a score of questions, lots of solutions, tips galore, plus humour! What could have been better for a roomful of HGS gardeners?

Jim Buttress, from London Gardens Society, Stephen Crisp, head gardener at the US Embassy residence in Regent’s Park, and Robert Player, a professional gardener with a private business, were an entertaining and extremely informative panel. Have a problem? They had a reassuring answer.

Hydrangeas losing colour over the years? Simple: feed them! Fish-blood-and-bone twice in spring and twice in autumn – and chuck down some sulphur chips in a thick layer of mulch to intensify the colour. Mildew on a vine and disfigured oak tree leaves? No problem – it was just the weather this year. But look out for caterpillar ‘nests’ on oak trees and seek professional advice. Poor crop on an ancient James Grieve? Don’t worry, probably a one-year ‘off’ – but feed calcium in early spring. Rose suckers? Rip them off but plant roses with the graft ball just *under* the soil (or according to Stephen Crisp, avoid roses altogether as too many chemicals are needed ...) A permanently non-flowering hibiscus? Bin it – and then buy ‘Bluebird’, good even on clay soil. Nasty spreading weeds? Glyphosate ‘em!

And tips came thick and fast too. When digging a planting hole, mix in plenty of soil with the compost or you'll create a sump. And feed trees with fish-blood-and-bone at the limit of their canopies, not around the trunk. Tomatoes? Water them twice a day, including the foliage (a new idea to me!) and leave the pots in saucers to trap the water and nutrients.

And so on and so on. Really, we could have listened into the wee small hours!

London Garden Society Awards 2014 at The Guildhall, City of London

Congratulations to our HGSHS members who participated in the competition.

Diane Berger	1 st Place for Large Garden category
Barbara Perry	3 rd Place for Small Garden category
Caroline Broome	Highly Commended for Large Garden and Patio categories
Rosie Daniels	Highly Commended for Large Garden and Patio categories
Marjorie Harris	Highly Commended for Large Garden category
Yvonne Oliver	Highly Commended for Large Garden category

Library Workshop

by Marjorie Harris



Ten young members of Garden Suburb Community Library enjoyed a summer holiday workshop organised by HGS Horticultural Society.

Led by Yvonne Oliver and supported by Gladys McLeod and Katja Goldberg, the youngsters made miniature gardens in metal containers, all of them turning out very different from each other and showing great creativity. Afterwards, they got their

hands dirty by planting up pansies in pots, which they were then able to take home. Several of the children brought their miniature gardens to the flower show a week or so later.

Both Library team and Horticultural Society were delighted that the children enjoyed themselves so much and hope to repeat this co-operative venture next summer.

Save Your Seeds!

by Ruth Beedle

Following the success of the previous Seed Swaps, the Allotment Committee and Horticultural Society have planned a collaborative evening on 26 February next at 7.30 pm at Fellowship House.

You are invited to come along and pick up or exchange locally grown seeds including flowers, vegetables and herbs. There will also be a panel of celebrated Flower Show prize-winners who will give their tips for successful growing and answer your questions.

Seeds are expensive, there is often a surplus after planting, there are many interesting varieties to share and it's fun!!

The simplest way to save seed is to cut off the drying seed heads and keep them in paper bags in a dry place until they are completely dry.

There will be a Deposit Seed Bank at Horticultural Society events.

If you would like a leaflet about general rules for seed saving, or envelopes for saving seed, or further details about the evening, please contact me at ruthbeedle@tiscali.co.uk

SO PLEASE SAVE YOUR SEEDS!!

Garden Girl

by Caroline Broome

THREE THINGS TO DO THIS AUTUMN

Lawn maintenance

Autumn is the perfect time to revitalise your lawn, which, after such a dry summer, is likely to be in poor condition. Rake out thatch and moss and add to the compost heap. Treat extensive moss with a moss killer first. Improve drainage and aeration on compacted lawns by making deep holes with the prongs of a garden fork every 10cm across the entire area, then brush in a sandy top dressing and, finally, apply autumn lawn feed. Any bald patches can be reseeded now. For the best results, loosen up the bare soil, then mix your lawn seed with some fine dry soil before application to ensure a more even spread. It also disguises the seed from opportunist birds! Water in well.

Make leafmould

Leafmould adds structure and organic matter to your soil. Most leaves from deciduous trees and shrubs will rot down in a couple of years, although some take longer than others. Oak, beech and hornbeam rot more quickly than sycamore, walnut and chestnuts. Don't add evergreen leaves as they are very slow to decompose - shred them and add to the compost heap instead. Clear up fallen leaves from lawns, ponds and beds regularly. Construct a large bin out of wire mesh in a sheltered spot to collect your leaves in or, if space is limited, simply use plastic bin liners with holes punched through the sides for ventilation. Fill with shredded leaves and sprinkle with water. If you are using a leaf bin you will need to remember to dampen the leaves occasionally if they become too dry but, if you are using bin bags, simply tie up their tops, stack them out of sight and forget them for two years. Once the leaves reach a crumbly texture they can be spread as a mulch throughout your borders.

Spring clean your greenhouse in autumn

Cleaning out your greenhouse will help reduce overwintering pests and diseases as well as make you feel virtuous! Remove plants before sweeping out any plant debris. Be ruthless – sling out those damp half-used seed packets from the year dot, rotting cardboard cartons full of solidified fertiliser, banned pesticides, rusted old hooks, and bits of long discarded tools. Using a hot solution of garden disinfectant such as Jeyes Fluid, wash the glass, flooring and staging, then ventilate your greenhouse well over the next couple of days to dry it thoroughly. Throughout the quiet winter months, wash out pots and seed trays in preparation for spring sowing and planting.

THREE EVERGREEN CLIMBERS

Clematis Cirrhosa Freckles flowers from November through to February. Colourful Freckles can reach a maximum height of 12ft if planted south or west, sheltered from strong winds. It is also suitable for a large container.



Abutilon megapotamicum is frost-hardy and grows to 6ft. If you have a sheltered spot in your garden it may do well here. I have it on my patio in a large container and it flowers on and off throughout the year. Although it prefers full sun it has performed perfectly well in part shade.



Trachelospermum jasminoides is not the hardiest of evergreen climbers, but encourage it to twine itself around a pergola upright and it could well give you several years of pleasure. The purest white flowers in late summer are very scented and, for additional seasonal interest, why not plant 'variegatum' for its glossy oval leaves, margined and blotched with creamy-white, tinged reddish in winter.



THREE PLACES TO VISIT

Apple Day at Forty Hall Farm

Sunday 19 October, 10.00 am - 4.00 pm

<http://www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk/events/apple-day-at-forty-hall-farm.html>

Celebrate National Apple Day at Forty Hall Farm. Visit rare-breed farm animals, enjoy a tour of the award-winning community vineyard and orchard, and take home some treats from one of the local food stalls. There will also be apple tasting, apple bobbing, apple juicing and lots of activities for young and old.

Christmas Fair at Chelsea Physic Garden



Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 November 2014, 10 am - 4 pm

<http://chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk/special-events/christmas-fair/>

Why not come and sample the delights of the Christmas Fair in the lovely environment of the Chelsea Physic Garden, the perfect place to shop for gifts and delicious festive treats?

This annual event is held in heated marquees with a carefully chosen selection of over 80 stalls. The range of products sold will include plants, jewellery, cashmere, unusual gifts, garden objects, silverware, chocolates, clothing and much more. All products are chosen to represent style and good value with emphasis on supporting independent producers. The Growing Friends and volunteers of the Physic Garden have also organised part of the marquee area for their sales.

The proceeds of the Christmas Fair contribute to garden projects.

Carol singing at Kenwood

Friday 12 December 2014, 7:30 - 9 pm

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/events/carol-concert-Ken-12-12-2014/>

Join in the Christmas celebrations at Kenwood with carols sung in the stunning surroundings of the Orangery. A glass of wine or soft drink is included in the ticket price. Purchase your tickets by calling Ticket Sales Team on 0870 333 1183. Booking is essential.

Sue Sigrid Rees 1947-2014

An appreciation by Joan Rees Phillips, Vice-President and former Honorary Secretary of HGS Horticultural Society

On 18 August the Suburb lost one of its keenest gardeners following a valiant three-year struggle with cancer. A long-time member of the Horticultural Society, Sue Rees took over as Show Secretary from Len Potiphar in 1991 and served in this capacity until 2000 under the chairmanship of Norman Wheatley.

The task entailed an enormous amount of planning before the three shows held then, with cards in place for the exhibitors in many classes. These included flower-arranging, which alone took up one-and-a-half sides of the main Free Church Hall at that time. I well remember her exhibiting the most beautiful delphiniums, her pride and joy.

Sue was born in Minnesota in the USA and came to the Suburb in the 1970s with her husband Robert. Plants were her passion and she created a magnificent garden at their house in Hampstead Way, which she loved sharing with friends.

Sue held an annual garden lunch for her many Horticultural Society friends and former Committee colleagues and we enjoyed visiting the garden. Many descendants of her prolific collection of plants can now be found growing in other Suburb gardens. May she rest in peace. Our condolences go to her husband Robert and sons Joel and Hugh.

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 16 October

'Seven Flowers and How They Shaped Our World': a talk by Jennifer Potter
Free Church Hall, 7.30 pm. Members free, non- members £3.00

Saturday 1 November

Winter Fair in aid of Combat Stress
Free Church Hall, 11.00 am - 4.00 pm
Includes plants for sale

Tuesday 11 November

100th AGM and Prize-giving
Free Church Hall, 7.30 pm

Saturday 6 December

Buffet Supper Party
Further details to be circulated to all members

Thursday 26 February 2015

Seeds Swap
Fellowship House, 7.30 pm

Wordsearchers

Apologies to all those enthusiastic Wordsearchers for the error in the last Newsletter.

Web links to the gardens visited during our Herefordshire trip....

<http://www.pettifers.com/>

http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/colleges/pershore_college.aspx

<http://www.stocktonbury.co.uk/>

<http://www.hergest.co.uk/>

<http://www.thelaskettgardens.co.uk/>

<http://www.tomstuartsmith.co.uk/projects/private-gardens/brockhampton>

<http://www.specialplants.net/>

<http://www.blackpitts.co.uk/pdf/gi-goldentouch.pdf>