

COMMITTEE 2019

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CO-OPTED	Mrs Jenny Gascoigne
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Derbyshire Group

NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2019

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PROGRAMME 2019

Jan 19	The Wonderful World of Weeds	Sally Smith
Feb 16	It's Not All About Flower	Paul Green <i>Green Leaves Nursery</i>
Mar 16	Growing & Showing Herbs	Malcolm Dickson <i>Hooksgreen Herbs</i>
Apr 27	Topical Tips	Andrew Mikolaiki
May 18	Plant Fair 11.00 am – 1.00 pm	

***** SUMMER BREAK *****

June 7	Day Trip 1	Castle Ashby Gardens (Northants.) and Thenford Arboretum & Gardens (Banbury)
Jun 14 – 17	Long W/end	Devon & Somerset
July 11	Day Trip 2	Morton Hall Gardens (Redditch); Hillers Farm Shop and Meadows Farm Gardens.

Sep 21	The Patch: A Garden for All Seasons	Jim Almond
Oct 20	t.b.a.	
Nov 17	t.b.a.	
Dec 8	t.b.a.	

Items in RED indicate a change from the usual.

HERE WE GO AGAIN!!

January 2019 and I am itching to get started in the garden. Even though the winter has been quite mild so far. Except for about 2 dozen or so night frosts, the days haven't been too cold and wet.

Saying that, my back garden is very heavy clay and exposed to the winds and frosts so gardening in the winter is very problematic. Do I cut things back or leave them? Do I just cut the leaves that are lying on the ground or do I resist treading on the soil and compacting the already wet ground? So - leave them!

I know. I will do something in the greenhouse. After 10 minutes or so at looking at plants that are ticking over without needing anything doing to them it's back into the house **bored**. (*This is so like my wife, too – Ed.*)

What now? Sort the seed box out! That made me sow some of the seeds that I had collected from the garden last year. *Antirrhinums*, *Hibiscus trionum*, *Abutilon*, and *Delphiniums*. The heated propagator was on with some cuttings so they could go in there. Also there were some various berry seeds that I had collected earlier this year so they were sown in trays of compost and put in the corner of the cold frame.

Some of the packets say 'sow anytime' so now is as good time as any. *Banana Musa Velutina*, *Tacca Nivea*, and *Mimosa nuttallii* were sown (I never tried anything like those before so I will be really pleased if I am successful). Every year I do say that I am not going to sow as many seeds, nor buy as many plants but that is all forgotten when I either see the seed catalogues or the plants for sale.

I don't think I will alter now. Saying that, less than 10 years ago, my idea of mowing the lawn was putting one of the goats on it to eat it down. Gardening was a chore which was to be avoided as much as possible. Now I am a self-confessed 'Plantaholic' and enjoying every minute of it (mostly).

Pauline Holmes

FROM THE CHAIR

I write for the first time in my new capacity of HPSD Chairman, having been relieved of my treasury duties by Sallie Vardy. I wish her well and hope that she enjoys the banter with you at the admission table as much as I did. Please treat her gently: it takes time to learn everyone's name. I am very proud of my new role and title (it will look good on my CV) and hope that I can maintain the high standards set by my predecessors

By now you will have almost certainly enjoyed hearing speakers using our new microphone: quite a de-luxe model for a group our size. We are greatly indebted to John Marshall for sourcing this and for his, and his team's, ongoing diligence in setting the sound equipment up at each meeting and then 'sampling' it from various points in the room. John and his team are long overdue our vote of thanks for their efforts.

As we grow older, it seems to become ever more difficult for our loved ones to find an appropriate surprise Christmas present. I was pleased, therefore, to receive a handy hint from a fellow member in January. He had bought his wife, also a member, eight tons of manure as her Christmas surprise. Much to his disappointment, however, he hadn't managed to find a suitably large bow! Fortunately, this did not destroy matrimonial harmony, and they will be working in tandem again in the garden this year. Surely, this is the essence of love, and Christmas: *a L'eau de Poo*.

One of our most enjoyable and successful activities are the day trips and annual holiday; I greatly look forward to them. Our trip to the garden at Thenford Gardens and Arboretum, Northamptonshire, this year is particularly intriguing since it is the home of Michael Heseltine. Please respect the owner's sensibilities, however, and wear shades of blue if possible. Be aware that red clothing could result in the brandishing of the replica mace!

As I write this article in January, I am relishing looking through seed catalogues and finding something new to grow in 2019 alongside many old favourites. I think that this applies to most gardeners: the anticipation of new foliage and flowers and the challenge of growing 'something different'. I ordered seed from the HPS seed distribution scheme last year with only moderate results, and I put this down to my own inadequacy rather than the lack of viability of the seed.(Contd. on p.11)

THE LONG WEEKEND 2018 – DAY 1

RHS Garden Wisley

On our way to Worthing, we stopped for a few hours at Wisley. It is a huge garden so we had to be selective on what we had time to see. Our stomachs decided that we should head to the 'Honest Sausage' for their delicious sausage and/or bacon baps.

We walked up through a delightful long double herbaceous border, and then through the new exotic garden, which tested our powers of recognition. We then went by way of the orchard where we tried some of the fruit that had been left out for sampling.

We visited the alpine house where potted alpine plants including many cyclamen species and miniature bulbous plants were sunk in sand on the exhibition benches. Several greenhouses were devoted to keeping an ever-changing supply for display. Outside the alpine house, there was a living wall and many ideas for displaying alpine plants.

There was a sculpture trail around the gardens and Sheila would have loved to come home with an elephant. After that, we headed down the hill to the massive new tropical glasshouse next to the water. Inside there was a waterfall and pathways at different levels through the tropical trees and shrubs.

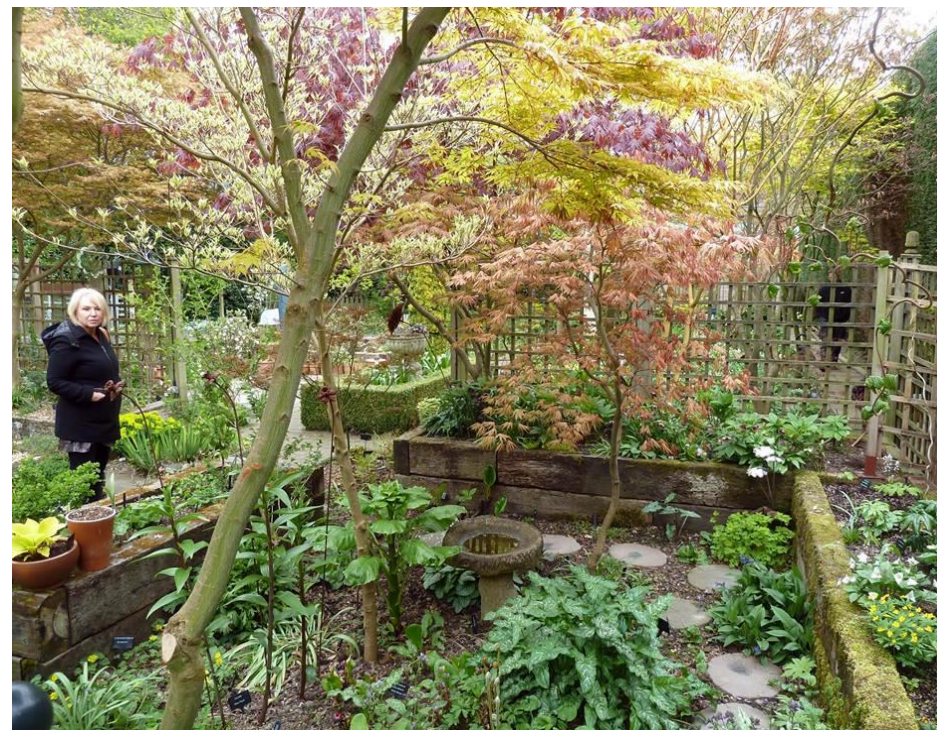
Time had passed very quickly and we had to dash back for the coach without time for the shop.

There are plenty of reasons to go back again.

Peter James

My mix for these 'special' beds ended up as roughly 2 parts leaf mould mixed with potting bark, 1 part JIP Ericaceous compost and 1 part coarse grit/sand. These ingredients were all hand-mixed, mainly by my wife Sharon, in what seemed like endless wheelbarrow loads...a test of marital devotion if ever there was one.

After all this work, the next stage I needed to address was: what was I going to plant in these new raised beds and how they would take to my hopefully '5 star' growing environment? Well the results were interesting and at times unexpected, but perhaps I'll save that story for another time.



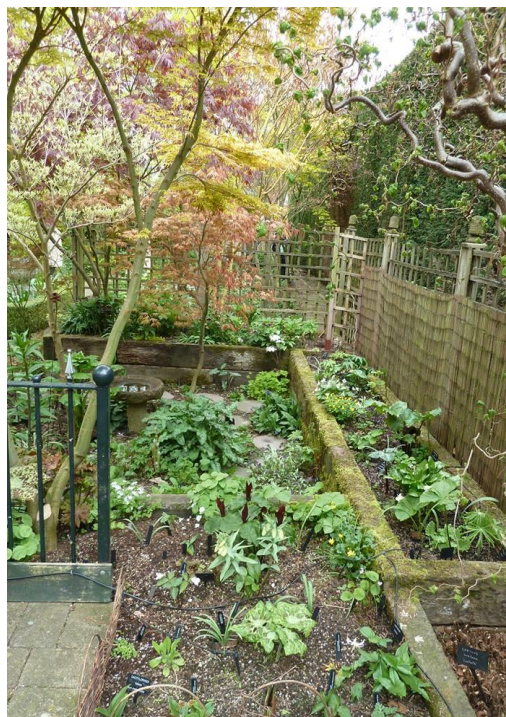
Nigel & Sharon Parkes-Rolfe

bed dimensions, made long pilot holes with a suitably long and expensive drill, then pinned them together using steel reinforcing rods. The rods had to be hammered home and any bits left sticking out were duly and laboriously hacksawed off. Nothing much wider than a metre is a good guideline for any raised bed which can only be accessed from one side I think. I wanted to back the beds with posts and trellis so that I could also grow some woodland climbers I had read about. A couple of other 'tips' here just to underline the dismal handyman that I am: a budget cordless drill doesn't even look at timber like this and neither does a handsaw unless you have very strong arms and a lot of time to spare!

The soil to go into these raised shade beds was another important matter for consideration.

I wish I could regale you with tales about locating, transporting, then hand-sieving loam gathered from molehills out in the countryside and sacks of leaf mould collected from local parks and woodlands after due permission had been sought.

Alas, the truth is I opted mainly for bagged commercial products; an expensive option I know, but I felt the quality, consistency and convenience of the materials was worth it. However two very kind neighbours did donate a lot of home processed leaf mould to me as well.



THE LONG WEEKEND 2018 – DAY 2

ARUNDEL CASTLE

The heavy rain which greeted us at Arundel didn't stop we Hardy Planters from venturing forth, armed with raincoats and umbrellas, to explore these magnificent gardens.

The towering medieval castle has been the family home of the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk for 850 years. The present gardens were designed by Isobel and Julian Bannerman, who have added a contemporary twist to many replicas of some of the original plans of Inigo Jones, with Jacobean and Italian influences.



Walking into the 'Collector' Earls Garden, I was struck by the regal design of this walled garden with the castle on one side and Arundel Cathedral on the other, cleverly framed by an arch of *hornbeam*.

Even though I was very wet by this time, one of my favourite aspects of the garden was the use of water! There were cascades and fountains at every turn, lavishly embellished with gold, which complemented the purple and blue planting. The structure of the garden is divided into courts using clipped *yew*, with

large domed pergolas of weathered *oak*. I imagine these look spectacular during the summer and I would love to see which climbers were used to adorn these structures.

The surprise element was a Tufa grotto, lined with mother of pearl. In true Bannerman style, standing proudly in the middle of this structure was a stalagmite fountain with a gilded coronet dancing playfully on the top of the jet of water.

Moving on, I walked through dripping palms of *Trachycarpus fortunei*, *date palms*, *Phoenix carianensis* and *Catalpa bignoniodes*, all very tropical! In amongst the plants were *Tree Tomatoes*, a plant from South America which I came across on a visit to Ecuador last year. The shelter from the walled garden and hedges must be conducive for this plant to grow in our climate.

On my way to get the cup of tea for which I was by now yearning, I paid a quick visit to the 14th Century Fitzalan Chapel to see the White Garden leading up to its entrance. Although small, this garden offered a peaceful contrast to the splendour of the Collectors garden. There were still some plants flowering, including white *sweet peas* and a lone white *flag iris*, nestling amongst 'Winchester Cathedral' and 'William and Catherine' *roses*. This was a lovely prelude to the tranquillity of the chapel.

The garden and grounds were well worth getting wet for..... and I still had time for my cuppa!

Lyn Wood



None of my original garden soil was exactly brilliant. So the only ritual I have observed from the beginning was that I planted each tree or shade plant both individually and well...and by that I mean in a good sized hole along with my own woodland planting mixture of 1 part each of JIP2, grit/sand, leaf mould/ potting bark. Whether my special mix made the difference of not, I have to say that the beds flourished and the response of *Hellebores*, *Trilliums*, *Epimediums*, *Dactylorhizas* and various *Erythroniums* was excellent.

I had always been interested in growing alpiners, and had developed the sunnier parts of my garden with raised beds and troughs amongst other things. In my ignorance I had failed to understand that many shade loving plants could also be classed as alpiners. I found a book published by the Alpine Garden Society (AGS), called "The Woodland Garden" by Jack Elliott and reading it was a revelation...so many genera of plants I had never even heard of and where I recognised the genera there were lots of species I still had no clue about.

Suddenly plants like *Podophyllum*, *Diphylleia*, *Cypripedium* and *Hepatica* became desirable things that I wanted to grow just because I had read about them and their descriptions sounded wonderful. I started to track down the nurseries selling such plants and commenced buying from them, mainly at RHS and AGS shows. Although I also have to admit to furtively organising some family holidays near to nurseries I fancied visiting in the flesh so to speak.

Now something I realised early was that many so-called 'woodland gems' come at quite a price and therefore perhaps needed to be displayed and cosseted better than some of my more rugged shade plants that were in the open garden. As a result I decided they would be heading for my railway sleeper raised beds. These beds were between 30 – 60 cm (1 - 2 feet) deep and suitably filled I hoped they would create that precious but elusive combination of consistently damp but well-drained soil. For anyone wanting to construct something similar I just arranged the sleepers to the desired

previous house...if I tell you it was made of log roll reinforced with bits of untreated 2" by 1" timbers you will no doubt guess it wasn't very successful...or indeed stable for that matter! This was a plan for the future though and in the meantime I wanted to start shade gardening with what I had.

Our original shade plantings were created by removing the top layer of turf from large areas of the 'lawn' and stacking it covered and grass side down for a year then digging it back into the beds. Any leaf mould, old compost and sand I could lay my hands on also went into the beds. We also purchased pulverised bark and top dressed the beds over several years...until the bark became difficult to find, due to it being increasingly used as a constituent of more environmentally friendly peat free composts.

Around that time I also had the opportunity to purchase some small but relatively cheap grafted *Acer* cultivars from a local grower supplying through Reuben Shaw's nursery. They were £8 each but don't tell my wife...and besides this was before I discovered *snowdrops*, which made the *Acers* look a positive bargain. These were planted with the longer term aim of providing a more dappled garden shade away from the hedges. Some years later on now and the lower branches have been pruned away to allow for underplanting.



HAWKEYE

In mid-August we were invited to join a trip to Southport Flower Show organised by Nigel and Jean, for the **South Normanton Garden Club**.

It was a very long, but most enjoyable day. The Southport Show proved to be a different sort of show from any other that we had visited, covering a vast variety of interests and unusual offerings. Among these we found a kite, which when flying looked and behaved like a hawk, particularly when tethered to a 6 metre lightweight, collapsible fibreglass mast!

For most of this year we have been plagued with a family of about 10 magpies, several crows and pigeons who had all decided that our garden made a great playground. It never seemed to have that quiet serenity which we previously had enjoyed.

We both looked up to the dipping and diving behaviour of the tethered hawk, and "bingo" we had to have it! A day later, **Hawkeye**, as we affectionately call him, was launched above our garden. — Magically, the magpies have gone, the crows with them, **AND** the pigeons too! Needless to say, we don't miss their lack of 'toilet training'.



In the time to date (about 6 weeks), he has broken his tether twice, and escaped into our neighbour's garden, but he was soon back. The most amazing thing is that **the small birds are still with us, BUT in greater numbers.**

Well done Hawkeye, and well done Nigel for the trip to Southport; our garden is once again the tranquil space we so enjoy being in.

Martin & Chris Brown.

BEST (?) NEW PLANT

I know how it started. I'd seen a photograph of a beautiful new *foxglove* "*Pink Illumination*" which had won the Chelsea award 'Best New Plant' in 2012! I simply had to have one and pretty soon the adverts started appearing and I ordered from a well known Seed supplier. This was the first time I had bought plants by mail as I like to inspect before purchase and although some of the reviews were not very complimentary, my plants arrived on time and looked very healthy.



I potted them on and in the autumn planted them out in what I thought was a good position. They thrived through the winter and in the following spring looked promising, had grown taller and bigger than anticipated. They flowered in June, better than the advert. I took a lot of photos then cut back after flowering as I didn't want them to produce seed although they were described as perennial.



In the meantime I had read the one of the parents of this new digitalis was *isoplexis canariensis* (now *digitalis canariensis*) which I also grow and know to be definitely not hardy. I have to overwinter them in a cool greenhouse and take cuttings in spring. Not surprising then the following spring there was no

trace of my beautiful new plant.

While this was going on I noticed a new *anemone Wild Swan*, bred by Elizabeth McGregor and which had also won 'Best New Plant' at Chelsea in 2011. It had received unanimous approval and it wasn't long before I acquired my first (of many) new plant. I have tried this plant in every situation in the garden but I can't even keep it for 12 months. Should I try it again? Probably, if I could get a vegetatively grown one but, unfortunately,

GARDENING CAN BE A SHADY BUSINESS!

Sharon and I purchased our current house back in March 1999. It came as a bonus that it had a decent sized back garden roughly 100 feet long by 50 feet wide which was completely untouched. This area consisted of rough meadow grass which the estate agent seemed convinced was a lawn. This was surrounded by very, very overgrown but original mixed hedgerows on one side and a *Leylandii* hedge on the other. None of the hedges were actually ours but we negotiated them down to a height of around 4 metres/13 feet...this gave good shelter but like it or not, shade was a factor in this garden for us from the beginning.

I had read some books including ones by Margery Fish and Beth Chatto which were really useful in opening my eyes to the wider ranges of plants that could be grown in shade. We had also been to Chelsea on our one and only visit in about 1996 and that was the first time I can remember being completely 'blown away' by a plant. It was a *Trillium grandiflorum* on Carol Klein's Glebe Cottage Nursery stand in her pre-TV fame days. Now was my chance to grow such a thing of beauty and hopefully a few more of similar ilk besides. These were days when I knew little about getting hold of specialist plants and before I had discovered the Plant Finder. I searched far and wide but strangely the first time I was able to buy this plant was from Bob and Dorothy Straughn's sadly missed Highgates Alpine Nursery on Crich Lane, Belper!!

We had never had to think seriously about gardening in shade before and I think, if we are honest, we didn't really have much of a clue what to do. I initially cut out some round beds in the 'lawn' but soon realised this 'blobby' effect wasn't doing much to enhance the look of the garden or the plants. I also discovered that the soil nearer to the house was a mixture of blue clay and hard-core courtesy of the original builders back in 1988. This area, which covered both shady and sunny areas, was going to have to be thought through a bit more and that was the time that I first considered that raised beds might be the answer. I had built a small raised bed for alpine at our

INSPIRATIONAL GARDENS - 3

On 1st October, we revisited the **Old Court Nursery** and the renowned and highly regarded **Picton Garden**, at Colwall near Malvern.

This garden has had some remodelling and rearranging in the last few years, but remains one of the best Autumn gardens we have ever seen.

It specialises in autumn *Asters* (the National Collection of *Michaelmas Daisies*) and has vivid Autumn colour, packed into one and a half acres. The colour palette, purples, mauve, pinks, whites, blues, is outstanding, and the variety beyond imagination. This was particularly so when we were blessed with a bright Autumn sun, low in the sky, which reflected and intensified the wide range of colours. What a treat so late in the season.

This is a garden which is well worth visiting over and over again, particularly at this time of year.

Martin and Chris Brown



they are sold under PBR and there are none to be had.



In 2014 we visited a plant Fair on one of our HPS trips and I happened upon *mahonia Soft Caress* which had won Chelsea 'Best Plant of the Year' in 2013 - I think you can see where this is going. Well, I bought one, and it wasn't cheap £20!

I kept it in its pot for 12 months because I didn't know how hardy it was. It didn't do anything at all, just sat there. Another 12 months and then I asked Bob Brown, from whom I'd bought it, when could I expect it to flower. He said he hadn't any idea as his hadn't flowered either!! Eventually, I planted it in a well sheltered spot and ignored it. Well surprise, surprise here is a success story. In July 2016 we visited Taylor's Clematis nursery on the way to Breezy Knees and they just happened to have a few of their new *Clematis Koreana Amber*, which had won 'Best Plant of the Year' at Chelsea the same year. I don't have room for another Clematis as I already have about twenty, so I bought one. Well we do don't we? I found a place for it climbing through the one *acer* that didn't have one and it flowered again in September as it said on the label and has continued to do well ever since.



In the following years I have not been tempted!!

In 2017 the winner was a small *mulberry* and last year a *hydrangea*. All I can say in retrospect is that winning the best plant at Chelsea isn't the same as an AGM award from the RHS and I shall have to bear this in mind before jumping in when new plants appear.

PS - After four years the mahonia produced a couple of flowers, it might be thornless but it has no scent and is nothing to write home about. Happy Gardening to all.

Janet Norman

THE TWELVE PLANTS OF CHRISTMAS



We are often told that our climate is getting milder nowadays, and the truth of this statement was reinforced when we opened the door of our cold greenhouse on Christmas Day. Albeit that they were hardly bearing a profusion of blooms, nonetheless six different types of plant were still (just, in most cases) in flower: *agapanthus*, *fuchsia*, *rehmannia*, *alstroemeria*, *geranium* (i.e. *pelargonium*, not the hardy outdoor type) and *salvia confertifolia*. We think that *alstroemeria* can

be somewhat demanding and have previously had little success with them. However, the curse of the HPSD holiday struck and we found ourselves leaving Marchants Hardy Plants near Lewes, Sussex, in September with a variety named *Red Elf* which seemed just too pretty not to buy. On Christmas day it still had three good flowers and another bud. Let's hope it continues to flourish when planted outdoors next spring. The tender perennial *salvia confertifolia* had teased us all summer. It was a gift from friends and fellow members David and Jean Andrews in spring, and from midsummer we have eagerly awaited its vibrant red flowers. Although prone to an odd leaf die-off, it has been potted up and grown into a sturdy plant, but right into autumn it still refused to flower, although it wasn't helped by us taking several cuttings (to no avail, bar one). Just when we thought that we would have to wait until next year to see its blooms, it relented and yielded several flower spikes in a distinctive shade of red. You can see what a strong plant it has made in the photo above, since it dwarfs our resident reindeers, Rudolph and Blitzen. Its leaves are an added bonus with a felt-like feel which surely contributes to the plant's alternative name of red velvet sage. Fifty per cent of us are so taken up with the plant that they even like the somewhat pungent smell of these leaves, which

definitely won't be utilised by Chanel any time soon. Yet another must-have plant. Where can we put them all?

Flushed by success, we wondered if we could find another six plants flowering outdoors to yield a seasonal 'twelve plants of Christmas'. We literally just managed it by scouring the garden and finding the following plants with flowers clinging to life or starting to flower prematurely despite one or two mild frosts, namely *anthemis kelwayii*, *penstemon*, *primrose*, *Christmas rose*, *nicotiana langsdorfii* and *camellia hiryu*. The last named is the plant which Lark Hanham of Hayloft Plants gave to members when she spoke to us in January, 2018. It is dainty compared to spring flowering *camellias*, but has a strong red/pink colour and is a little charmer. The first named came from that well known nursery Morrisons and has bloomed all summer long: yet more reasons to shop at Morrisons! Surprisingly, there were two varieties of *penstemon* still blooming with a little vigour: King George V and Rich Ruby, I think. What a lovely Christmas treat.

For good measure, both of our varieties of *photinia fraseri*, Red Robin and Pink Marble, also had some fresh, unscorched leaves virtually as brightly coloured as many flowers. Isn't nature wonderful?

Nigel and Jean Needham

Continued from p.3.....

I have been tempted by a Thompson and Morgan internet special offer this year, however, and not ordered HPS seed. Doubtless more seed will follow from other sources, a higher authority permitting. Nonetheless, it would be very interesting to hear of your experiences of HPS seed growing. Can you write a brief article on this for our next newsletter, either on HPS seed germination generally or about a particularly good plant you have grown from HPS seed? Do try: you only have to put in writing some of the experiences which you happily talk about at our events: we will all then learn from each other's experiences. Happy gardening.

Nigel