



Derbyshire Group

NEWSLETTER



Spring 2022

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FROM THE CHAIR

It has been so good to return to 'normal duties' after my enforced absence, so I must begin by thanking everyone for their kind words and good wishes prior to and since my return; they were greatly appreciated.

It doesn't seem five minutes since I was writing my previous 'From The Chair' article anticipating our winter programme. Well, it has not disappointed.

Topics have been coast to coast gardens, roscoeas and other woodland plants, a calendar of colour, and cyclamen in the wild and cultivation, and the speakers, without exception, have proved knowledgeable and entertaining.

Well done, Celia. If you haven't done so already, do have a look at the reports of the talks on our Facebook page by our Facebook 'controller', Ann Franks.

These summaries are both enjoyable and comprehensive. I guess that Ann must make notes during the talk, as, I note, several female members do. I tend to think that this is unnecessary because I will, of course, remember relevant talk details. Thus, it's strange that when I later read Ann's reports, I find nuggets of information that seem news to me. Is it an age or gender problem or both, I wonder?

As you know, Ann is also our publicity officer, and she makes a cracking job of this too, so much so that she has been persuaded to become the HPS national publicity officer: that's a feather in her cap and, by association, HPS Derbyshire Group's too. Congratulations, Ann.

On the subject of post holders, we are pleased to welcome the return of Mike Bone as our treasurer. Mike was the treasurer immediately before I took on that role around twelve years ago, so it will be just like old times for many of us to see Mike back in the saddle. I relinquished the treasury when I became chairman three years ago with Sallie Vardy succeeding me. Sallie has done a sterling job but has stepped down on health grounds. We thank her for her diligence and hope that her health improves.

Meeting attendances have naturally been adversely impacted by Covid. We have had attendances of around fifty people for meetings up to December, but, encouragingly, 73 people attended our January meeting; we hope that this trend continues. Nonetheless, we still have lost ground to make up as we were averaging attendances in the eighties pre-Covid. Monthly indoor meetings continue until April, as usual, and resume in September. I am aware that there is an issue regarding meeting room ventilation at the time of writing. Some of

you think that our practice of leaving doors open makes the room too cold for you to attend. Conversely, others have specifically requested ventilation, along with other precautions, to facilitate their attendance. We are thus in a no-win situation. Please bear with us. We are obliged to act responsibly and err on the side of caution, but we will return to normal conditions as soon as we feel that it is safe to do so.

As planned, we visited Anglesey Abbey and Cambridge Botanic Garden on 9th February. There were 45 travellers so, unusually, the coach was not quite full: Covid strikes again, I suspect. Those who did not go missed a treat: both venues had exceptionally good winter gardens, with Anglesey Abbey having the bonus of an extensive snowdrop collection with an optional guided snowdrop walk, and Cambridge Botanic Garden, courtesy of Simon, one of the gardeners and an old friend of Ian and Anne, an optional talk about the rockery and a behind-the-scenes look at the alpine nursery. A feature of both gardens, particularly Anglesey Abbey, was the almost overpowering scent of *sarcococca*. It was really strong. I'm not greatly enthused by the appearance of *sarcococca*, but I have to admit that I did appreciate its heady scent on the day and may yet have to yield to Jean's suggestion that we indulge in this plant. My remaining excuse, however, is that we haven't the space to plant with the density seen at Anglesey Abbey to produce a comparable strong scent. The morning weather at Anglesey Abbey was beautiful, with winter sunlight and crisp, clean air. This really attracted the crowds and I twice heard visitors bemoaning the fact that they had chosen to come on such a busy day. By afternoon, light cloud had descended and around the time that Simon was telling us how low the annual rainfall was in Cambridge, a light drizzle descended. Some things never change at HPSD! Nonetheless, it didn't last too long and certainly didn't spoil our day.

On the return journey from Cambridgeshire Ian announced that he was considering another day trip this summer and would welcome suggestions for a venue. By the time you read this it may well be that the destination has been chosen, but I feel sure that Ian would still welcome suggestions for other future trips. All participants will also be looking forward to the group's annual holiday, organized by Ian, in June. Our last one was in 2019, thanks to Covid. The planned 2020 holiday to Kent had to be cancelled and also the planned holiday to Herefordshire in 2021. Now we're back to the gardens of Kent for 2022. You have to admire Ian's resolution!

Another future event to look forward to is our plant fair which, Covid permitting, will be resumed after its enforced absence for the last two years on Saturday, 21st May, 11.00 am to 1.00 pm. Please consider bringing plants for sale to help raise some money for yourself and our group and, above all, to contribute to an enjoyable day and an excellent showcase for HPSD. If you can arrange the display of one of our plant fair flyers in a suitable location, please ask for one when you next attend a meeting: it would be greatly appreciated.

As I complete this article on a cheerless February day, summer seems a long way off. However, it will probably be September when I am producing my next chairman's article, so do have a good spring and summer and enjoy your gardening.

Nigel Needham

EDITOR's NOTES

Welcome to the spring newsletter

Again, thank you for your various contributions to this newsletter. Given the restrictions on our gardening adventures since last November, it is unfortunately a bit 'thinner' than usual, but I hope you enjoy the various articles and newsy bits.

Most of you will again receive this newsletter electronically, but if you would like a printed copy, please let us know. We do print some copies for those, who do not use emails.

Please send items for the next newsletter to wiesehofer@btinternet.com.

Please make sure you provide your complete name, as attribution is not possible without this

Cover picture: Daphne

Daphne, in Greek mythology, the **personification of the laurel** (Greek daphnē), a tree whose leaves, formed into garlands, were particularly associated with Apollo. When the god pursued her, Daphne prayed to the Earth or to her father to rescue her, whereupon she was transformed into a laurel.

Apollo in his grief declares, “With your leaves, my victors shall wreath their brows.” Daphne is the symbol for **immortality**, while the laurel symbolizes victory.

Welcome on Board

**Welcome to Mike Bone who has agreed to be our treasurer,
and to Trevor Edwards, who has taken on the role as
conservation Officer.**

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

March 19th - Vicky Fox (Plantagogo) **A Passion for Heucheras**

Vicky and Richard Fox established Jubilee Cottage Nursery in 1990. By 2000 they were specialising in Heucheras, Heucherellas and Tiarellas and have continued collecting these species ever since.

To promote their new website, Plantagogo, they started attending flower shows. In 2007 they were showing their plants in Floral Marquees.

Their first Chelsea gold medal was won in 2009 and in the same year both of their National Collections of Heucherellas and of Heucheras were approved.

This was followed by approval of their National Collection of Tiarellas two years later.

Vicky and Richard continue to show plants and gain many prestigious medals.

April 23rd - Paula Dyason (Strictly Daylilies) **The Day of the Daylily**

Paula and Chris Dyason own and run a nursery in the village of Histon, just north of Cambridge. It's called Strictly Daylilies as they only grow Daylilies (Hemerocallis), no other plants.

The nursery was started in 2012 and covers 5 acres. Paula and Chris grow and sell approximately 2000 varieties of Hemerocallis by mail order. They have open days at the height of the flowering season in July.

Paula has a Master Gardener qualification, she is an American Hemerocallis Society garden judge and a member of the RHS Forum for assessing Hemerocallis in RHS trials.

May 21st - Plant Fair 11.00 – 13.00

September 17th - Karen Gimson - **My Life as a Garden Designer**

Karen has been a travelling head gardener for estate gardens and is an award winning garden designer. She writes for Radio Leicester and for Garden News Magazine. Karen volunteers for charities and is a Hardy Plant Society trustee.

October 15th – Colin Hickman (Hoyland Plant Centre) **Cultivation and Propagation of Nerines, Tulbaghia, Dierama and Associated Plants**

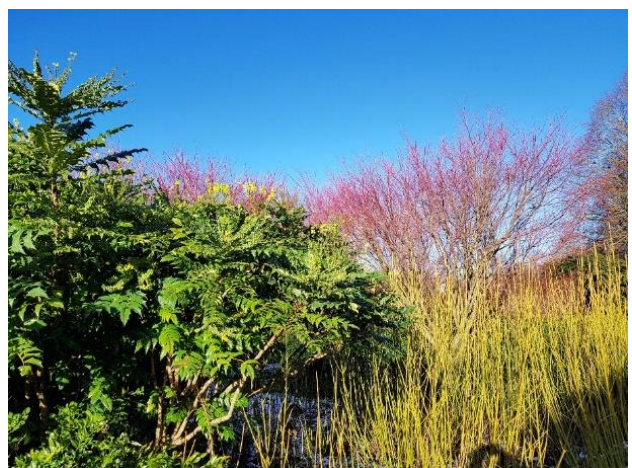
Colin and his Dad run a family nursery situated at the foot of the Pennines in South Yorkshire called Hoyland Plant Centre. They hold National Collections of Agapanthus and of Tulbaghia.

In addition to these they cultivate Amarines, Nerines, Clivia and Dierama. Shows have been attended and many medals won including 3 Chelsea Golds.

GARDEN VISITS – PAST AND FUTURE

Past -Anglesey Abbey and Cambridge Botanical Garden

Our trip on the 9th of February was attended by 43 group members. The journey to our first destination was slightly delayed, but we arrived in bright sunshine. I belatedly booked myself in to the snowdrop tour, believing that the focus was, well,



snowdrops. But I got far more than I had expected- namely a guided tour through the wonderful winter garden on the way to the snowdrop collection.

The garden is divided into a number of avenues, walks, vistas, and gardens, with close on 200 classical statues. The winter garden was opened in 1998 in memory of Lord Fairhaven, who gifted the property to the National Trust.

Either side of the winding path to the snowdrop collection were carpets of hellebores, irises, cyclamen, and snowdrops with the scent of different varieties of Daphne, *Sarcococca hookeriana* and winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*) wafting through the air.

I was a little surprised to see gardening volunteers digging up what would have been treasured irises *reticulata* still in bloom in my garden. They are apparently stored for planting out again in autumn. I guess that is one of the differences between a private and a public garden, which has to look pristine at all times and so gets a seasonal makeover in a way that would be impossible to achieve in our own gardens. But I made a mental note to plant far more spring flowers into my 'woodland' garden.

I loved the group of Himalayan birches, which, we were told, get pressure washed in the autumn, and the use of trees and shrubs such as dogwood to provide a dramatic contrast of colour and structure.



I commented on the vigour of the many different hellebores and was told that all foliage is removed in November each year to allow all the energy to be used for flower production. I will apply this in my own garden.



We did, eventually, arrive at the snowdrop collection, which unfortunately had to be fitted with a CCTV camera, following a recent theft of one of the most valuable snowdrops.

I soon gave up trying to remember the names and varieties, realising that I will probably never remember the difference between a 'Melanie Broughton',

‘Winifred Mathias’ or ‘Angelsey Abbey’, or the 19 species and over 4000 varieties of snowdrops. What I do remember, though, are details of the best conditions: they want rich soil, ideally no competition from grass, and want sunshine only in autumn and spring.

Planting under deciduous trees is therefore ideal. I also didn’t realise that they want to be planted deeply. And of course, the importance of multiplying them by splitting and planting clumps ‘in the green’, just as the flowers are going over.

The tour lasted somewhat longer than anticipated. That meant there was no time to grab any lunch or a drink before our departure to Cambridge Botanical Gardens.

Mental Note: Learn from the ‘seasoned’ garden visitors, who came prepared with sandwiches and thermos flasks



By the time we reached the Botanical Gardens, a drizzle had descended, which soon turned into more persistent rain. It didn’t deter our group from exploring the glasshouses containing different temperate ‘zones’. Nor did it interfere with the guided tour of the rock garden, which is planted to reflect different climates and regions around the world.

It was interesting to discover that the substrate used for the rock garden is Derbyshire limestone. We were treated to a glimpse of the Alpine yard and the collections of species tulips, saxifrage and alchemilla mollis. The species tulips need sharp drainage and do best in a scree garden, which was news to me, as I have always planted mine in very fertile soil.

The collections are cultivated in pots for display in a cool glasshouse so they can grow under controlled conditions and are protected as the open flowers



can be damaged in the variable spring weather. Many also grow well on the Limestone Rock Garden, including *Tulipa clusiana* and *Tulipa dasystemon*.

The National Collection of *Tulipa* is believed to be the only surviving collection in the country recognised under the Ministry of Agriculture's special collection scheme that was introduced after the Second World War. The origins of the collection, however, go back much further and lie in a tragedy. William Dykes, master of Charterhouse School, keen amateur gardener and botanist, and Secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society

(RHS), was a passionate collector of two bulbous genera, *Tulipa* and *Iris*. Sadly, in November 1925, only a week after receiving the Victoria Medal of Honour from the RHS, Dykes was killed in a motoring accident.

The Cambridge collection concentrates purely on the species, representing about 60 of the 100 or so that occur in the wild, distributed across Europe to Central Asia, where they reach their greatest diversity.



Saxifrage collection

There are about 440 *Saxifraga* species worldwide, but the focus in Cambridge is on the 100 or so European species, which grow in the high mountains of the arctic tundra as well as shady rock faces in southern Europe. They include *Saxifraga longifolia*, *Paniculata* and *Gymnoper*, commonly known as 'London Pride'.

The name *Saxifraga* is from the Latin meaning 'stone-breaker'. This, however, refers to its ancient medicinal use for treating urinary stones, rather than the habit of many growing in and fragmenting rocks .

The collection was established to provide a working collection for taxonomic study and to safeguard stocks of correctly identified material of known origin for conservation purposes. It also had another goal to act as a pilot scheme to test the feasibility of maintaining collections in botanic gardens over a period of time. Over 30 years later, the collection is still held by the Garden.

Given the wide-ranging distribution and ecology of the species, not all have been successfully cultivated in Cambridge, for example those from the high arctic regions that require cool, moist conditions or from wet boggy areas. To provide the right conditions, the collection is grown between the protection of the mountains display in the Glasshouse range and the Alpine Yard behind, and on and around the Limestone rock garden.



Saxifraga paniculate ssp lolenatiana

Some of the most successful species are the silver saxifrages (section *Ligulatae*), which are primarily found through the mountains of southern Europe. These species form evergreen rosettes of thick, stiff leaves with typical lime-secreting pores on the margins. The lime they secrete can encrust the leaves giving rise to the name 'encrusted' or 'silver' saxifrages. They produce delicate sprays of white flowers that erupt from the centre, although each flowering rosette then shrivels and dies. In most species, spent, flowered rosettes are replaced by a side rosette.

Saxifraga paniculata is apparently one of the most hardy and persistent species from which it gets its common name, 'Lifelong Saxifrage'. The silver rosettes coalesce into mats shown to their best advantage grown trailing over rocks.





Section *Gymnopera* ('London Pride' saxifrages) are tough and dependable. To my surprise I discovered that they prefer shade and woodland, on shaded banks or, in more exposed sites, growing in the shelter of rocks (mine are in full sunshine!).

I also had no idea that saxifrage species tend to have enormous roots.

Note to myself: evaluate whether mine are actually in the best positions in my own garden.

Many saxifrages are mountain plants with narrow distributions, often facing threats from habitat destruction. The prospect of climate change could be an even bigger threat to some species in the wild, notably those that are found on mountain tops. The original conservation aim of this collection may hence prove even more important in the future than first thought.

Future: Weekend Trip to Chatham

From Friday, 17 June, to Monday, 20 June, 2022 (3 nights)

There are still a few places left on this trip, which had to be postponed from 2020 due to the Corona virus. Accommodation is at the Bridgewood Manor Hotel near Chatham, which also boasts a spa for that extra bit of pampering after the garden visits (see pictures).

Th brief itinerary below might interest some of our newer members to come along (or persuade some of our regular members to book)



DAY ONE Pick-up at the **Alfreton Travelodge** at 7.30 am. We will spend most of the day at **Hyde Hall**, the RHS garden in Essex, which has been extensively developed over recent years. A restaurant is available for lunch.

DAY TWO The morning visit is to **Sissinghurst**, one of the National Trust's great gardens, created by Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicholson and now lovingly restored. Lunch is available in the Granary restaurant.

The afternoon visit is to **Penshurst Place**, a 14th century manor house which once belonged to Henry VIII. The gardens are divided into "rooms" by a series of yew hedges and, although we will probably be too late to see the famous peony border, the rose garden will be at its best.

DAY THREE The morning is spent at **Goodnestone Park** which lies between Canterbury and Deal. Despite being one of the most beautiful gardens in Kent, it is rarely included in garden tours because of its remote location. The house was a favourite place to stay for Jane Austin. Lunch is available in the Old Dairy Café.

After lunch we travel to **Hole Park**, a restored, privately owned manor house near Benenden with gardens which were voted Visit Kent's "garden of the year" in 2016. A cream tea is included in the price here.

DAY FOUR This morning visit is to **Great Comp** gardens near West Malling, a wonderful garden with the extra attraction of being the home of Dyson's Nursery, a mecca for all salvia lovers. A wide range of rare hardy and half-hardy plants is also available.

The afternoon visit is to **Pettifers** Garden near Banbury, a relatively small garden but with a big reputation

We aim to arrive back at Alfreton at around 7 pm.

The price for the trip is £360 per person with a £40 single supplement at the Bridgewood Hotel. The hotel will be half board. The only other included meal is the cream tea at Hole Park. Insurance can be provided by Roberts Travel Group from £25 per person. All tips are included.

Contact Ian Evans

tel: **01332 558194**

mob: **07890347446**

e-mail: c.i.l.evans@gmail.com



for further details and to book a place

The early bird..... prepares for Spring 2023

It may sound somewhat premature to think about next year, but by the time you get this newsletter its probably high time to divide your snowdrops and to plant up offspring of winter aconites, hellebores and cyclamen.

WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE HPS PLANT FAIR?

The annual plant fair in May is no doubt one of the highlights in our events calendar. Apart from providing a valuable opportunity to acquire a wide range of unusual plants, it also acts as a significant fund raiser to pay for the excellent speakers we so enjoy, for the hire of the hall and other expenses.

If you have ever considered being a 'seller' rather than just a buyer, maybe this is the year you decide to take the plunge and take part?

You can reserve a full table or half a table. To help us with planning the event, you will need to let us know by the beginning of April how much space you would like.

Your plants will need two labels each. One with the plant name and the second label with your name on one side and the price of the plant on the other side. This second label will be kept at the pay point, where the total sales for each seller are added up at after the sale. This is quite a time-consuming task, so please be patient. But you will receive a very welcome cheque in the post. The amount you receive is 2/3 of the total, with 1/3 being contributed to the group's funds.

If you are still unsure, come and talk to one of the committee members during the March meeting or email one of the committee members.

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

PUT IT DOWN TO EXPERIENCE Nigel Needham

The September 2021, edition of SAGA magazine announced a poetry competition for readers, with three prizes, the first prize being for £500. An

original self-written, unpublished poem had to be submitted with a maximum of forty lines on the subject of experience. Now the last time I wrote a poem was, I think, for school homework when I was about twelve years old. Undaunted, and with pound notes flashing before my eyes, I thought 'easy peasy', as a SAGA reader (junior wing) I can win this. Now what experience could I write about? Well, my gardening experience, naturally. In producing my masterpiece, I was quite surprised that I was soon approaching the maximum permitted forty lines: I do find brevity a problem. Thus, I drew to the concluding lines asap and penned my worldly conclusions about the enrichment that gardening brings to our lives. All that was left to do was to submit my entry and await the cheque in the post after the competition results were announced in the December edition of the magazine: so, I did.

December duly arrived, but not the cheque. Where did the judges go wrong? I can only imagine that it was because I do not have a literary-sounding name: after all many writers use a nom de plume to improve their sales prospects. After much thought about a horticultural sounding moniker, and given my talent for inducing IT catastrophes, I have decided that the next time I enter a SAGA literary competition I shall call myself Spam Payres. Do you think that I will be on to a winner? I invite you to share my bewilderment about my abortive competition entry by reproducing the poem in question below.

A Garden of Memories

With lowered head, so shy, so coy
Her feminine wiles she does employ
With speckles spread upon her face
She is our hellebore, Aunt Grace

Much bigger, bolder, by a country
mile

A joker to produce a smile
So brash, so chirpy, so in your face
Friend and sunflower, Johnny Race

Erect and stately, self-assured
The habit of a gracious lord
Colour blue like sunlit sea
Our delphinium, Uncle Lee

So shimmering on approach of night
Italian buckthorn, a true delight
A wraith-like presence standing
guard
A gift from Sally Appleyard

In autumn twinkling stars so crazy
Of course, the flowers of
michaelmas daisy
Over the years they've slowly
spread
Good-humoured souls, like
neighbour Ted

Daffodils, the heralds of spring
 Golden yellow blooms they bring
 A harbinger of joys to come
 A tearful eye, I think of Mum

And then, of course, there's dear
 old Dad

The best a boy has ever had
 Picking sweet peas by the fistful
 Thoughts of him are truly wistful

For years we've honed our garden
 skills
 Through sun and rain and wintry
 chills

Each hour we've spent has been a
 pleasure

To us our garden is a treasure

But more than this, it helps recall
 Kind friends, relations, one and all
 Their plants provide relief from
 strife

They truly have enriched our life

We hope our experience will
 produce
 Our successors a garden which will
 seduce

For what is life if we don't pass on
 A platform for others when we are gone

HIDDEN DEPTHS IN THE GARDEN

ANN FRANKS

Taking over an existing garden is full of challenges, not only do you inherit mature trees and shrubs planted without rhyme or reason, but you also unearth the buried rubbish of previous generations. At our first house we dug out old bedsteads, fire surrounds and bedsprings out of the garden. I've even heard of people digging up cars and electrical goods. I guess before dump-it sites your garden pit was where you disposed of broken household items.

I had an overgrown area in the garden that was part rockery and part shrubbery. In my usual over-optimistic way, I thought it would make a lovely seating area to gaze reflectively over the pond surrounded by billowing nectar rich plants to attract butterflies and bees. I spent some lovely winters days drawing up, designing the area and putting my planting plan together.



Fig 1: a thumb nail sketch of my dream

So, on a lovely summer's day I started to dig up the shrubs which were old and woody but also pinned down at the roots by huge boulders. Added to that bumble bees had taken up residence in the crevices between the stones and rocks. I beat a hasty retreat and waited for winter. Coming back to the project with my husband for moral support and muscle, we removed the remaining roots and large rocks

Fig2: Digging out the rocks.



I then spent the early (hot) part of last summer digging and sifting the soil as I reduced the levels by about a metre and half. It created mountains of rock and the stones bagged by size. Finally, I hit the base of two old walls and a stone floor, the archaeological remains of the old pigsty. I guess over time

the building had fallen in on itself and rather than remove it was covered in soil and stones placed strategically around it as some sort of garden rockery.

Fig 3: Hitting the pigsty floor

Having found my levels, (I must confess I was never going to dig it all out! I like to say it is preserved for future generations), it was a case of marking out the beds, reintroducing the sifted free draining sandy soil and then reintroducing the graded stone into the area to be paved.



Fig 4: Planting areas and hard landscaping marked out



The position of the bench and planting has changed and the planting has taken on a silver and purple theme, Including Lavender (Munstead), Nepeta (Six hills giant and Walkers low), Perovskia (Blue Spire), Artemisia (Powis Castle and Nana) and Lambs ears.

Fig 5: Aug last year planting completed

This year I hope to finish the hard landscaping with gravel and brick pavers and then maybe I can finally sit on my bench and gaze over the pond.



Fig 6: Maybe my plant fillers got a bit too big!



We would love to hear about your garden projects in the next newsletter.

LOGGING OUR WAY THROUGH LOCKDOWN – DORRELL AND EMMA HARRISON

The Apprentice Gardener

When walking the dog over a very foggy and soggy day over the Christmas period, I began to reflect on how my gardening activities had changed over the Covid lockdown. I have not been able to raise my stature in the garden above apprentice level for the last 58 years, mainly due to my 'reckless' style of pruning. During 2020, I was quite excited to be furloughed for half a day a week to play in the wood. My daughter Emma and I had planned for some time to thin out some of the holly, allowing more wildflowers to flourish and compliment the wonderful show of bluebells that we have in the wood most years.

Thorpe Wood is a mixed wood, mainly made up of Oak, Larch, Sycamore, Silver Birch and Holly, many over 60ft high. Once we started it quickly became a 'must do' session every week, organised by Emma who had also been furloughed. We managed to thin out about two acres of woodland, allowing the sun to filter through the canopy onto the woodland floor. It was noticeable that in 2020 there had been a bumper crop of acorns, and hundreds of them had now taken forming a green carpet all around.



One quite 'exciting' time was when a 30ft tall tree started leaning across the footpath that runs through Thorpe Wood. I was on my own, and being an impulsive 83-year-old, I decided to get out my chainsaw and deal with it. Unfortunately, when I cut it, the trunk of the tree wedged in the fork of a nearby tree, swinging violently across the footpath. I dare not leave it fear it fell on one of the many walkers who frequent the wood. The only action I could take was to try swinging the tree until it broke free and then run for it before it could fall on me.

Not to be recommended!

The most ambitious plan was to reduce the overhanging branches around the perimeter of the east side of the wood, these branches had grown 8m into the field. This took Emma and I, both armed with chainsaws, several days to complete – we were asked several times what we were doing. The biggest problem was getting rid of all the brash, at one point the heap was almost 100m long, so we decided to sort out most of the straightest limbs and make a dead hedge behind a stock-proof wire fence. This turned out to be quite successful and after tidying up the stone wall that runs down the side of the wood, the project manager gave it the ok. The remainder of the brash we had to burn, so we had an early bonfire night.



After installing a compost toilet in early summer of 2020, Emma had the idea of letting some of the space out for wellbeing activities. So, one Saturday several people turned up and we had demonstrations of yoga, natural movement, meditation and green wood crafts. Following this we had a few more yoga sessions, and one group had an evening yoga session followed by hot drinks around the firepit (they told me it was only cocoa - what a good crowd of ladies we have in Fritchley!).

During the summer holidays a small group of local school children, along with their volunteer helpers, visited the wood and spent time identifying trees, building dens, making bug hotels and painting stones. They had a lot of fun and hopefully they will come again in the school holidays.

One weekend a handfasting ceremony was held in a clearing in the wood. About 20 people attended, and the 'bride and groom' looked splendid with Viking runes painted on their faces. Afterwards they had a picnic in the field, fortunately the weather was kind to them!

Our next project will be renovating two old stone barns at the edge of the wood. This will give us more space and shelter than the current Nissen hut allows. Still, more of this later...

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK COMMUNITY

ANN FRANKS

We would love to see you on Facebook

Our Facebook page has a growing following and seems to be well liked. However, we would like it to be more representative of our membership. At

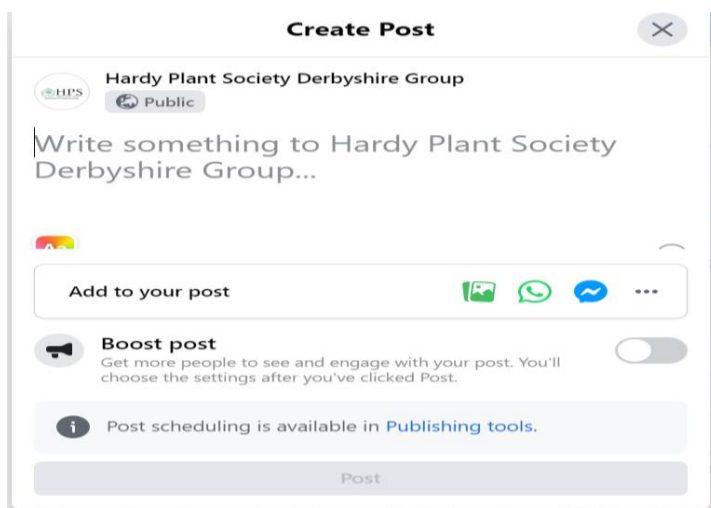
the moment, it is mainly Nigel and I that post on the site. Although to be fair Celia was incredibly brave and produced a lovely video clip of her garden.

We know a Facebook page is not the most user friendly of media, but we would love to hear from you and see photos of what is happening in your garden.

You can find us by searching your web browser for **hpsd2** or search Facebook for **Hardy Plant Society Derbyshire Group**.

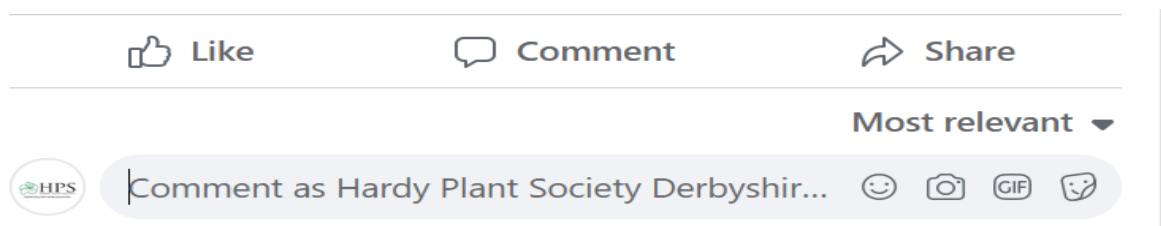
There are a few ways you can post

1. Go to posts, look for the Create post write your post if you want to attach a photo use the picture icon it will need to access your photo library and then post



There will be a slight delay while I move it from visitor posts to the main posts.

2. Please feel free to comment on any post on the Facebook page , you can attach photos of your plants and your garden by clicking the camera icon.



3. If you don't use Facebook or are not sure what to do, send your message and photos to derby@hardy-plant.org.uk and I'll post it on your behalf. Please can you write 'Facebook' in subject and Celia will know to forward it to me.

Finally, if you are a regular Facebook user and want to get involved with our Facebook page I'd love to hear from you. The more people involved with the page the better it will be. Looking forward to hearing from you

RESPONSIBLE HPS GARDENING

For Peats sake follow up by Christine Hibbert

“Protecting and restoring peatlands is one of the most important things we can do in the fight against climate change.” (Quoted from the winter edition of the magazine of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)



According to the organisation Plantlife, amateur gardening accounts for 69% of peat compost used in the UK. Three billion litres of peat are used annually in our gardens.

I recall gardening programmes in the 1980s in which Geoff Hamilton was vocal in decrying the use of peat-based composts and encouraging viewers to find alternatives. The wheels of change grind pitifully slowly but we are now becoming more forcibly alerted to the climate emergency, of which peat use is a part.

Here are a few facts:

- Peatlands cover only 3% of the world's land area yet hold nearly 30% of soil carbon. They store more than twice the carbon stored in all the world's forests.
- It grows by only 1mm per year. Commercial peat extraction can remove over 500 years of growth in a single year.
- Peatlands damaged by extraction release millions of tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere each year.
- Left undisturbed, peatlands play a valuable role as natural flood defences and help filter drinking water. Importantly, they are sites rich in biodiversity.

Even before the climate crisis reached the current critical stage, I made the change to peat free compost. It was a few years ago, after hearing a talk at Derbyshire HPS. Unfortunately, I cannot find the note I made at the time, so

the speaker's name and the topic of the talk are lost! I recall that he was an established name in horticulture having had charge of various nationally known gardens. In an aside during his talk, he mentioned that we had all probably had difficulties with the commercially available peat-free composts. He said that the Melcourt range of peat-free composts were now becoming widely used by the many professional horticulturalists and small specialist growers with an environmental conscience. It is the only compost used by the RHS.

I had to try it! I have been very satisfied and now will use nothing else, but wonder if other members responded in a similar way.

The problem is getting hold of a supply. Blue Diamond Garden centres are supposed to stock it, but in our area, the best value is found at the Derby branch. Apparently, they now stock it at Matlock and Chatsworth but without the best value multibuy.

Another source of good compost is Gro-well horticultural supplies at Peasehill, Ripley. Their own brand of peat-free compost has no recycled waste in it, so it was a safe choice for use in our projects with the children at Lea school.

It would be wonderful if we could claim to be a Peat Free society.

Editor's Note

There are several other alternatives to the ones mentioned above and most garden centres now stock peat free compost. Not all of them are truly environment friendly, especially if they contain coir, which is shipped halfway round the world and so creates a considerable amount of pollution in its transportation. It also encourages monocultures in those countries that supply the coir.

Getting more out of your plastic

The latest national newsletter contained an interesting article, alerting us all to just how much plastic we all use in our gardening. It also highlighted the damaging effect we have on the environment when our plastic products disintegrate and become micro-plastics that are then ingested by plant and animal life – including humans.

The article has galvanised me into finding better ways of re-using the plastics I already have, rather than adding them to landfill sites. Here are some of my ideas for re-using. Let us know some of your ways of reducing or re-using the plastic products in your garden.

Using mushroom punnets-

Put a layer of horticultural grit into the bottom of a brown mushroom punnet. Make some drainage holes into another brown punnet, fill it with compost and place it on top of the first punnet. Fill with compost, sow your seeds.

Place two brown punnets next to each other and cover with a clear large mushroom punnet to act as a propagator. Place somewhere warm until seedlings emerge.

The mushroom punnets can also be used to grow micro-greens or a succession of lettuces.

Create mini cloches using shower caps -

When staying in a hotel, I always take the shower caps back home and have asked fellow travellers to do likewise and pass them on to me. They make lovely little cloches.

HPS Members' Gardens open as part of the National Garden Scheme:

Sue and Richard Bold –
Sun 24 April 2022, 1 Highfield Road,
Nuthall, Nottingham
Opening time: 10 – 4



Hildegard Wiesehofer –
Sat 4/ Sun 5th June and Sun 28/ Mon 29 August
12 Water Lane, Middleton- by-Wirksworth
Opening time: 11 - 5

If there are other members, who open their garden for charity, please let us know so that we can highlight at our monthly meetings and on our Facebook.