



Derbyshire Group

NEWSLETTER



Spring 2026

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FROM THE CHAIR

Last time I wrote in the newsletter we had had months of sun and very little rain; this time we have had months of rain and very little sun. I wonder how our plants cope but cope they do, and they surprise us with their resilience. I have managed to get into the garden at last and have been busy weeding around the pond. I usually keep this area a little wilder than the rest of the garden and the excuse I give visitors is that it's for the wildlife. However, the buttercups had started to stretch out into the pond and had twisted around the roots of Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum × hybridum*) and the Hellebores. So, it was time to take back control and stop making excuses.

It was great to hear Nick Hamilton talk at our December meeting and I enjoyed Martin Stott 'The Story Tellers Garden' in November, I hope you did too. Linda has some lovely talks lined up for us going forward including Steve Bustin, Chair of the HPS, in March and Timothy Walker talking about gardening in the 21st century in April. Please note our April meeting is a week later than planned, it is on the 25th of April. Going forward we have Green Leaves Nursery for October and Ruth Platt, with the National collection of Dierama, booked for our November meeting.

May of course will be our annual plant fair, which is our group's main fundraising activity. If you would like a table to sell plants, please put your name on the list at either the March or April meeting. We operate a two-label system to ensure the funds get back to growers and the cashiers know what to charge. We have increased the percentage going back to the plant growers, this will be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the price, not the traditional $\frac{2}{3}$ ds.

Ian has done an excellent job of organising our trips, we have one on 27th May to Doddington and Easton and one on 1st July to Birmingham. Pauline is also planning three 'meet at destination' trips over the summer.

We are lucky to have such a great team of volunteers at the Hardy Plant Society, but we need a few more members to offer to help. Ian would like a deputy in place for the trips, Anne would like to hand over the sales and raffle tables from September, and my three-year term comes to an end in September. I have had a fantastic time in all my volunteer roles for the HPS at both national and local level. You meet so many nice people and they all love plants which is even better.

if you think you may be able to help, please let me know, my e mail is afranks700@gmail.com

Happy Gardening

Ann Frank

EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello from your editor. Foreign trips and local flowers feature as well as HPS news. Many thanks to those who contributed articles.

COVER PICTURE: CAMELIA DONATION

Camelia Donation

This camelia has outperformed itself this year. It has so many flowers you really cannot see the foliage. I put it down to severe pruning two years ago and a very hot summer last year.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

21st March – Steve Bustin, Chair of the National Hardy Plant Society – ‘Open for Pleasure’. A look at gardens that are open for visitors

25th April – Timothy Walker – ‘How to be a 21st Century Gardener’. **Note this meeting is a week later than usual.**

16th May – Plant Fair – 1100 till 1230

19th September - speaker tbc

17th October – Green Leaves

21st November – Ruth Platt - Dierama

12th December – speaker tbc

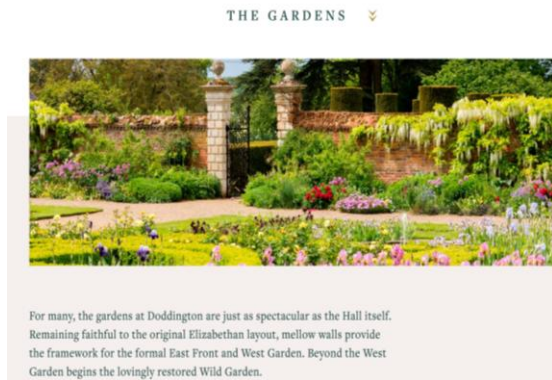
Please check on <https://hpsderbyshire.co.uk/meetings/>

Events can change over time but this webpage will have the latest information

COACH TRIPS

27th May Doddington Hall and Easton Walled Garden

This trip is full but there is a reserve list.



1st July Birmingham Botanic Gardens and Winterbourne House

We have the opportunity to take more visitors on this trip, sign up at the March/ April meeting.



MAD garden visits

(For anyone new to HPS MAD means Meet At Destination, so no transport is provided, just a nice trip out at a nice garden with nice people.) Ed

There will be 3 trips this year in June, July and August.

Trips will all cost around £10.00 - £12.00, final details will be circulated when available.

WILD FLOWER TRIPS TO GREECE

Over the past 10 years, Anne and I have made several trips to Greece to see the native flora. Our first visit was to Crete, followed by the Peloponnese, Parnassus, Epirus, Thessaloniki and



Rhodes. All the trips were arranged by a travel company called Travel Editions and were run by the best tour manager we have ever had called Jane Freeman (not Ivy, the Jane Freeman who runs the café in “Last of the Summer Wine”). We also had the benefit of the services of a botanist called Graham Kendall, who specialises in the flora of Greece. Graham has now retired and volunteers at Dyffryn Fernant, a garden some of you may remember

from our week-end trip to West Wales in 2017.

On our first such trip to Crete in 2013, we stayed in Rethymno in north-west Crete, which is much nicer than the capital, Heraklion, and has lots of good restaurants. We went out to different regions of western Crete each day. The range of flowers was magnificent; from the common salsify (*Tragopogon porrifolius*)



Tragopogon Porrifolius flower



and seedhead

to the exotic dutchman’s pipe (*Aristolochia cretica*), this variety being native to Crete, and *Dracunculus vulgaris* (the dragon arum).



Aristolochia cretica



Dracunculus vulgaris

On a trip to the famous Samaria Gorge in southwest Crete, we saw the native Peony, which is as good as any hybrid variety.

Our second trip was to the Peloponnese where, as well as a plethora of flowers, we had the chance to visit the medieval town of Mystras, full of ancient Byzantine churches and palaces. We stayed on the Mani peninsula, which is the middle of the three peninsulas extending southwest into the Aegean sea. It is a wild and rocky area, and the local story is that when God created Greece he had some rocks left over, which he dumped on the Mani! A well-known village on the west coast is Kardamyli, which was the home of the English writer Patrick Leigh Fermor. He was made an honorary citizen of Kardamyli for his participation in the Greek resistance during the second world war.



Hagia Sophia at Mystras



Scrub on the Mani

In 2018 we went to the mountainous region of Epirus in western Greece. We stayed in a small village called Monodendri (which belies its name by being in the middle of a huge forest). From Monodendri one can explore the Vikos gorge, which is one of the deepest in the world. This is one of the most beautiful regions we have visited, so green, so quiet and smothered in butterflies in the summer months. There are a group of 40 villages in this area, known as the Zagoria, which are all built of the local stone. Monodendri is typical. The region is also known for its wonderful arched bridges.

Wild tortoises were quite common.



Monodendri



Bridge in Epirus

Again, the variety of flowers was amazing. The most common is Orlaya, which occupies the niche held by cow parsley in the UK, forming immense stretches of white on the meadows. There are a wide range of orchids, one of the more unusual being the Lizard orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum*.



Orlaya



Lizard orchid

In Parnassus we saw a wide range of orchids. Including bee orchids (*Ophrys*) and the aptly named naked man orchid (*Orchis italica*).

We visited the temple of Apollo at Delphi, where there is a very good archaeological museum



Ophrys scolopax



Orchis italica (naked man orchid)

Other visits were to the northern lakes of Greece. Near Thessaloniki we went for a boat trip on Lake Kerkini, which is quite a large lake but is very shallow, a perfect habitat for flamingos and pelicans. We also saw cranes and spoonbills.



Meadow



Lake Kerkini – flamingos and pelican

Our last wildflower trip was to Rhodes where, again, we saw a wide range of species. The highlight was on our last day, when we spotted a colony of the rare *Fritillaria rhodia*, endemic to Rhodes, a beautiful little yellow fritillary.

*Fritillaria rhodia*

Ian Evans

LESSONS IN GROWING SEEDS

There is nothing more satisfying than growing plants from seeds, it's the action of plunging them into potting compost, watering and nurturing them. It's the closest thing to alchemy I'll ever get.

For me, it all started with a packet of mixed herb seeds in my parents' greenhouse. They made lovely presents in little terracotta pots but once they had grown and been repotted, for expediency I threw the spent compost into the rose bed. The following summer the roses had to compete with a forest of dill plants. The lesson being that some seeds remain dormant longer than others, and my dad didn't appreciate any green stuff in with hybrid tea roses, although I thought it looked attractive.

As a thrifty Yorkshire girl with my first real garden, I saw a chance to grow many plants at minimal cost. At the time I had a love affair with Hardy Geraniums and signed up for the



HPS and Hardy Geranium Group seed scheme. The next lesson I learnt was that the bees have a nasty habit of mixing the pollen. I grow many species geraniums which come true, but I also fell for by the romantic names of cultivars. How many blue Geranium Pratense can a garden take! I have learnt that 'ex' before a cultivar name on a seed list means it may or may not grow to look like its parent.

Lesson three, there are the seeds that with one sowing are with you for life. These are the self-seeders. For me, these include *Digitalis purpurea* 'Alba', *Erigeron karvinskianus*, *Verbena bonariensis* and *Lychnis coronaria* 'Alba'. I also found that adding seed heads to the compost bin guarantees you a million new seedlings every year.

My final lesson is my weakness for gardening books. I read 'Scent Magic' by Isabel Bannerman and fell in love with her romantic planting. So, I grew a number of plants on her recommendation from seed including *Dianthus superbus* (well behaved and lovely plants) and *Nicotiana sylvestris* 'Only the Lonely' which all propagated and grew fast and furious.



What I had underestimated is the space that was needed for these statuesque plants. Which were indeed handsome in the Bannerman's rolling acres but less so in my narrow small garden.

Of course I don't always learn my lessons. I have read 'The Diary of a Keen Gardener' by Mary Keen over Christmas and she recommends *Erigeron annuus* grown from seed, what do you think I am going to do?



From the editor - an extra point of interest:

Some seed lasts for ages, some have short viability. I sowed ten-year-old (at least) clarkia seeds which did very well last year. I also sowed the remnants of a large number of “salad” crops in a couple of pots in the greenhouse last autumn, and I have been enjoying tasty fresh leaves throughout the winter. For once it is me nibbling the leaves not some greedy pest!

MOVING LARGE PLANTS

Moving plants is a subject very dear to my heart at the moment, as I hope I will be moving from a large established garden to a much smaller plot albeit with a view.

Common sense would suggest that I leave it till I move in, wait a year and see what comes up.... but it is not that simple, is it? I have a huge range of plants gathered over the years including significant collections of snowdrops and trilliums. Also, many of my plants are quite special, some hard to source, some expensive, some with memories and some quite large.

I started in earnest in the autumn and then the sale fell through, but I have continued again this spring, more hopeful. As I have gone along, I have learned (or not) that to move large plants, you need large pots and a quantity of growing medium. You also need some storage space and some muscle, your own or others.

Even so there are ways to increase your chance of success. As my friend Reg said “a plant has two choices, it can live or it can die”; plants really want to live so you need to help them along as best you can; some plants just are not suitable for moving such as Witch Hazel, Cercis and Daphne; they resent root disturbance and just turn their toes up and die. I have added choisya to that list this month, a slow lingering death, I fear.

If you google “plants that dislike root disturbance”, included on the list is roses, I am very dubious about this, roses are sold bare rooted, often with not much root at all, I will be trying to move some of my roses, including Lady Emma Hamilton, which is no longer produced by David Austin Roses. Move it or lose it!

Some are just not easy to move and take ages to recover, like shrubby salvias and fuchsias, they are cheap enough and easy to obtain so I won't bother with them.

So, you have a large plant to move, a big pot and some growing medium. First of all, if you have time, think about **when** to move this plant; for most plants Spring and Autumn are the best times. You are likely to lose about a quarter of the roots so ideally you want to be able to prune off a quarter of the top growth, but some plants such as acers bleed at certain times of year which is very harmful to them. One way to improve your chances is to cut

deeply round the plant through some quite big roots in the previous season, this will stimulate fine roots to grow which will make transplanting easier, also consider pruning the plant quite hard. Another tip is to wrap up the rootball to avoid loss of soil. My garden soil is quite heavy especially after this wet winter, so I need to replace some of the lower soil with some well drained growing medium; I use a small border fork to gently tease out the wettest, claggy, clay to be replaced with a well-drained mix, avoiding damaging the roots.

My preference for medium is 25% soil, 50% organic matter and 25% sand or grit, I wouldn't recommend using multi-purpose compost, especially in the Autumn, as it doesn't have enough drainage; John Innes compost would be better but more expensive.

In summary, choose the right plant, the right time of the year, the right size pot and compost. Good luck

Pauline Little

FOREIGNERS INVADE AN INAUGURAL MEETING

Ed: My apologies to Mike and Sallie for forgetting this article last year.

Sallie and I had been Hardy Plant Society members for some years and had wanted to join a local group. Living as we do in Nottinghamshire, the obvious one to join was the Nottingham group. However, they met in the evening in West Bridgford, three quarters of an hour's drive from where we live, and we didn't fancy driving there and back in the dark in the winter. South Pennine similarly met in the evening, at that time I believe in Bents Green, Sheffield, which was a similar distance to drive, added to which we weren't sure how welcome we'd be being out of the area, so we kept putting off joining either group.

Then we read a notice in the HPS Newsletter about a meeting at Darley Dale to gauge the support for a Derbyshire group. The meeting was on a Saturday afternoon, and Darley Dale was quicker and easier for us to get to than Nottingham or Sheffield. We decided to see if we could join if the group was formed.

So, just after lunch twenty-five years ago, a little nervous because we wouldn't know anyone and living over the border in Nottinghamshire, we weren't sure that we'd be accepted, we set off for Darley Dale. We found the hall virtually full, so we crept in at the back and tried to be unobtrusive.

Ann Livermore chaired the meeting. We'd seen Ann through visits to Dove Cottage but not to speak to and we knew no-one else who was present. The meeting agreed to go ahead with the formation of a new group and we decided that if we qualified, we'd like to join. Everyone we spoke to turned out to be friendly, so we gave our names in at the end of the meeting. Our address caused some bemusement, but we kept a note of the next meeting and made sure then that we were on the membership list with the correct address.

We remained on the fringes of the group, the main people driving things seemed to know each other, and we were glad to be able, just to come to meetings. We enjoyed mixing with like-minded people who, like us, loved to grow things. It helped that we spoke the same language, though with slightly different accents!

After twenty-five years my memory falters, but I think that the first “celebrity” speaker was Rosie Hardy, who, I believe, was Ann Livermore’s sister-in-law. I also seem to remember that Rosie won her first Chelsea gold medal, which I think was the subject of her talk. I also remember Bob Brown coming and keeping everyone amused, but that’s as far as my memory will take me.

Since then, we haven’t been to every meeting over the twenty-five years, but we’ve always looked forward to Saturday afternoon in the winter. We’ve made some wonderful friends, listened to and learned from some amazing speakers, and stocked our garden with great plants both from our speakers, and other members. It’s been a pleasure and a privilege to be part of such a great group.

The group has given us so much that we eventually felt that we needed to put something back in. When the membership secretary post became vacant, a few years ago, Sallie and I decided that we should take it on. It’s been one of our better decisions. Sallie also took over as Treasurer for a few years. We’ve enjoyed getting to know members better by name and playing a part in helping the group function. Everyone who joins the group should take on a post at some time.

We decided though that this was the year to step back from membership, and the commitment it entails, but to still make ourselves available to help where needed. We hope to remain members and come to meetings for years to come. We won’t be here in twenty-five years’ time, but we sincerely hope that the group will still exist and be thriving.

Sallie and Mike Vardy



Articles Needed for the HPS Newsletter.

Please send to

plittle@hotmail.co.uk

It is very noticeable that all the articles in this edition have been written by current or past committee members, this is disappointing and reduces the quality of the publication. Please consider what you might have to share with other members.