



Plant Heritage

**Surrey Group
Newsletter 2021**

Your Chair's Welcome



As I write this basking in warm autumn sunshine, I look back over another extraordinary year. The weather for the south east was most challenging; from a drought in early spring to a very wet and cool summer.

The damp brought blight, wiping out whole garden and allotments worth of tomatoes and potatoes whilst the north east of the country had drought and hot conditions all summer which brought them bumper crops.

COVID-19 brought similarly harsh conditions to our social lives but, with it, opportunities that we would never have been able to predict 18 months ago. Our

meetings became virtual and ushered in the possibilities for people to join us not just from across the county but across the country and, indeed, the world. We were able to welcome folk from as far afield as Scandinavia and the USA and hopefully will be able to do so again as we begin to 'live broadcast' our meetings in Cobham via Zoom.

In terms of our ability to fund-raise, thanks to the kerbside sales from Wendy Bentall, Claire Davitt and a small contribution from myself we were able to transfer £10,000 to help support central office last year. As far as I am aware a record for the Surrey Group. This year, it looks as if we may well be in a position to help the national endeavour by a similarly substantial contribution. However, this year we will be keeping a little aside for investment in the technology to enable us to more successfully Zoom our meetings in Cobham.

Thanks to Gillian Spencer and the team, our first tentative steps back into the world of post-COVID Plant Fairs was a major

success. Our Fair in May, being one of the first opportunities to meet in person since the easing of lockdown, was exceptionally well supported. In addition, our August Fair was also a major success and we raised in excess of £2,700 for our efforts at Denbies this year.

We were also able to begin to get 'back out there' to physically help look after National Collections with a day spent at Squires Garden Centre, Milford helping to maintain the *Kalmia latifolia* collection.

The Plant Exchange made a welcome return in 2021 as rare plants were ferried between members up and down the country. In addition, this year saw the birth of 'The Great Surrey Share' allowing members of the Surrey Group to meet up and swap plants at one of three plant hubs across the county.

Meetings back in Cobham have resumed and it is my hope that we may soon be attracting as many of you back to our meetings in Cobham as we were able to, pre-epidemic.

So, a huge 'Thank You' to everybody involved with the Surrey Group especially to those who work so hard to make the Surrey Group so successful and enjoyable. And a big 'Thank You' to all our members in Surrey who continue to support the important work of Plant Heritage.

I hope to see you at our fascinating series of talks in Cobham.

Wishing you all Happy Growing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David". The signature is stylized with a long, sweeping underline that curves to the right.

A Surrey Group Year in Photos



Above: After a brisk day's selling (and chatting) at the Plant Fair at Denbies in August.



Above and left: Clare Davitt's imaginative creations helped raise funds for Plant Heritage at her Kerbside Plant Stall.

Right: Breaking News; Wendy Bentall makes the front page of her local paper with the re-opening of her Kerbside Plant Stall (see opposite, bottom right).

Wendy's plant stall open again with new stock

A CHOBHAM garden is again selling plants to raise money for a charity which promotes the cultivation of unusual species.

Wendy Bentall has built up her supplies so that she can respond to demand outside her garden gate in Winklesham Road.

She used seed of vegetable and flower plants and seedlings in April from green tomatoes to several pelargoniums - raising several thousand pounds for Plant Heritage.

People turning to their gardens to keep busy during the coronavirus lockdowns snapped up bargains at £2 and £1 a pop.

"It's unbelievable how many plants I have now, and they have come from as far away as Suffolk," said Wendy, who lives at Henage Farm, opposite Burrow Hill Green.

"They have all been donated and some of them quite rare."

"It's the same system as before. Put the money in the letterbox and everything goes to Plant Heritage."

The charity's aim is to ensure that cultivated plants grown now will be available to future generations for cultural, medical, culinary and aesthetic use. It supports the diversity of garden plants and national collection holders.

"Everyone thinks this is done by the RHS or Kew Gardens," said Wendy, who is a former Chobham parish councillor.

"But Plant Heritage does a lot to preserve rare and unusual species and is well worth supporting."

Wendy has also been running socially-distanced propagation classes for novice gardeners, charging £10 a session in aid of the charity.

"People who have attended have gone home with several pots of cuttings and hopefully a taste of what they can achieve in their own gardens," she said.

Wendy intends to keep running fortnightly classes into the autumn if there is a demand.

Anyone interested in taking part can call her on 01276 858256, or send an email to wendybentall@gmail.com.



Above: Not only did **Wendy Bentall** receive a Plant Heritage Honorary Membership, she was also awarded the RHS Banksian Medal by Chobham Agricultural and Horticultural Society for her outstanding fundraising success during Lockdown.

Left, top to bottom: **Suzy Hughes** spotted this rare *Maggie Inkcap* fungus whilst out walking, *Galanthus* enthusiast **Gillian Spencer** shared this photo of her beautiful blooms, **Rhona Frayne** brought armfuls of gorgeous cut Dahlias from her garden to brighten the stall at Denbies in August.



Great Plant Mistakes?

Himalayan Balsalm

Surrey Group Committee Member **Dr Sue Davidson** takes a look at this fascinating yet much-maligned plant

Apart from being one of our more invasive species, I didn't know that much about the Himalyan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. A visit to the RHS Library at Wisley stirred my interest though.

As is often the way, it was initially a welcome introduction as a garden plant and was grown in the RHS gardens.

(See below)



IMPATIENS glanduligĕrā.

Glandular Balsam.

PENTANDRIA MONOGYNIA.

Nat. ord. BALSAMINEÆ (GERANIACEARUM mera sectio).

IMPATIENS. Linnæus.

I. *glanduligera*; annua, erecta, foliis verticillatis ternatis ovato-lanceolatis argutè serratis serraturis baseos glandulosis, stipulis teretibus clavatis glandulosis, pedunculis axillaribus subterminalibus 3-floris, sepalo dorsali integro mutico, calcare brevi inflexo, petalorum lobo altero rotundato altero dimidiato oblongo obtuso subfalcato, fructu brevi obovato.

I. *glanduligera. Royle Illustrations, &c. of the Himalaya Mountains, 151. t. 28. f. 2.*

This fine Balsam is the largest of the four Indian species raised in the garden of the Horticultural Society last year, it having attained upwards of twelve feet in height by the end of August, although the seeds were not sown before the end of May. It is not so hardy as those with the long fruit,



The Edwards Botanical Register Vol III written by John Lindley and published in 1840 sang the praises of “*this fine Balsam*”. It does look rather magnificent in their illustration (above).

Its rapid growth rate is one of the main problems. Lindley notes that although the seeds weren’t planted ‘til May, the plant reached 12 feet by the end of August. Perfect for the back of a bed?

However, its size means that it crowds out other native plants and when it dies back it leaves the ground bare.

This is a problem on the banks of rivers and streams because bare ground rapidly erodes. Himalayan Balsam can also clog waterways. This is because its seeds, viable for up to 3 years, can float on water. Each plant can grow 3m tall and release up to 800 seeds catapulting them up to 7m away. Hence the classification as an invasive species.

However, Himalayan Balsam is brilliant for pollinators and the seeds can be used in curries or to make wine. The people of the Himalayas have used them in their cooking for centuries.

I like the sound of HB Gin, made by steeping the petals in plain gin and lime juice. Magically, it only turns pink when you add the tonic!



With thanks to the staff at RHS Wisley Library for their help, and for allowing me access to the fascinating, newly-digitized Edwards Botanical Register.

Earning Some Green Credentials

Surrey Group Vice-Chair **Wendy Bentall** shares her thrifty ideas

Spending on gardening bits and pieces can add up, is not very green and we all want to do our bit for the planet. For instance, plant labels; Plastic ones are not good for the planet, wooden ones don't last the course, metal ones cost too much. However, I 'think' I have solved the problem, though I haven't tested their longevity, by cutting up a plastic 2.2 litre milk bottle into strips, I can make 33 plant labels, that at least makes them no longer a single use item and reduces the amount to go into the bin.



Faced with my sweet peas, growing in old loo roll middles of course, I needed a cold frame, which I don't have; instead I tried a plastic storage box with a broken corner to protect the plants, which seem to be growing happily.



In the kitchen, my seedlings are happily thriving in their mini cloches made from plastic soup containers, placed upside down with the pots standing on the lids (see above).

That gazebo which blew down in the wind, ripping the cover and twisting the supports into an un-mendable mass of rods, once unscrewed, these make ideal plant supports, wire supports for my compost pile and uprights for netting covers.

Last year I marked the rows of vegetables with broken upturned clay pots inscribed with marker pen, an idea pinched from the potager at Hampton Court, I also took the opportunity of putting a few slug pellets underneath, it looked really smart and kept my slimy friends at bay.

Probably the biggest saving in miles, but not time, is to make your own compost. I'm a novice composter, but a born again one at that. With the arrival of my beehive-shaped composter I have set out to 'do it properly'. First lay a layer of Amazon packaging, then start building up, a layer of compost from spent pots, a layer of manure, (thank you to the horse who left that just outside the gate), a layer of weeds, a layer of kitchen scraps, a layer of wet leaves, plus an old sock lying in the garden abandoned by the dog, a shredded egg box, more chopped up garden, and so it goes on everything finely chopped, it's quicker to make a cake, but this is starting to look good and it's quite addictive.

Now what else can I add?

A Warning...

If you thought tomato blight was bad enough...

Some years ago, I had a greenhouse full of dead and blighted tomatoes. I'd left them there until the day came to have a clear out and throw them on the bonfire. As I carried them out however, I was unknowingly breathing in the fungal spores as I went.

Three days later I was lying in a hospital bed fighting for my life. The doctors were scratching their heads about the cause. It turned out I was suffering from *Mycobacterium gordonae pulmonary infection*, most likely caused by breathing in the spores from the tomatoes.

So remember, wear your face mask if you are handling blighted tomato plants!



Hippeastrum - Home Cultivation

Surrey Group Chairman **David Ford** shares his Growing Guide



A few years ago, I was privileged to be invited to join a RHS Forum to trial hippeastrum. After the trial,

I was asked to write some home-cultivation notes to be used as a guide for amateur growers.



The following guide is for the growing of hippeastrum in the domestic environment, perhaps it should be subtitled 'growing in less than perfect conditions'!

For more specialist growing advice, Veronica M. Read's '*Hippeastrum - The Gardener's Amaryllis*' in the RHS Plant Collector Guide series is an excellent source of information.

Hippeastrum make interesting and, when in bloom, spectacular houseplants although they can look a little untidy for their growing season in summer. It is possible to grow these plants simply as spring 'bedding' for the house and disregard them after flowering but there is no reason why hippeastrum cannot bloom year after year.

This guide is aimed particularly at the cultivation of the large flowered hippeastrum hybrids commonly available to the amateur grower.



Hippeastrum 'Evergreen' (Cybister Hybrid)

A note should be made that the cybister hybrids, which can also be found in garden centres, require slightly more specialised conditions and do not generally make as successful house plants as their larger flowered cousins.



Hippeastrum 'Très Chic'

Selecting a Good Bulb

- Bigger is better, a larger bulb means more scapes (the stems upon which the blooms are carried) will be produced. On a large flowered hybrid the maximum number of scapes is generally three though the smaller multiflora hybrids have been developed to produce a considerably greater number of scapes.

- Should be firm to the touch, not damp or soft and especially not soggy.

- Should feel dry.

- Exhibit no sign of mould or fungus.

- The basal plate, the disc beneath the bulb from where the roots form should be dry and intact. It is preferable but not essential that a number of live, fleshy roots are still attached to the basal plate in order to allow the bulb to establish quickly.

NB: Some growers routinely remove the live roots, particularly if the bulb is old and basal plate has become large and congested. Powdery, dry roots are dead and will not revive and should be gently removed.

The Container

- Should ideally have an inside diameter which is 4-6cm larger than the diameter of the bulb.

- Preferably deep, hippeastrums are relatively deep rooted and will thrive best in a narrow but deep container.

- Should not be too large in circumference because it will lead to the compost remaining too moist and not drying out sufficiently between waterings.

- It is better for a hippeastrum to be rootbound rather than grow in a container which is too large.

- A heavy container rather than a light plastic works best since the developing scapes can make the plant a little top heavy which can cause them to topple over if the pot is too light. Plants rarely escape such a fall without damage and often the fall has fatal consequences for the blooming scape.

Compost

A multipurpose compost with added horticultural grit to ensure good drainage should suffice for the home grower.

Situation

- Hippeastrums originate mainly from South America, where they receive high levels of strong light. The parents of the cybister hybrids grow in mountainous areas thriving in comparatively harsh conditions where they receive particularly high levels of UV light. Trying to replicate this on a windowsill in the home is quite challenging but a south-facing window makes the most suitable domestic location. Leaf scorch from direct sunlight is not generally a problem in the home.

- Flower colour and intensity are affected by the quantity of light the plant receives, low light levels will lead to less intensity in the colour of the blooms. In some cultivars the difference between low and high levels of light can be quite marked e.g. *Hippeastrum* 'Apple Blossom' AGM, which is significantly paler, almost pure white, if started early in the year when the plant receives less light.

- Low levels of light, in extreme cases, will lead to scape collapse during blooming and leaf collapse at other times during the plant's growing season.

- To promote a strong straight scape, it helps to give the container a 90° turn on the



windowsill each day. This ensures that the scape does not develop at an angle and so make the plant more likely to topple as the blooms develop.

When to Plant

- Although most bulbs in the UK tend to be sold for Christmas this is a little early to start growing since the short day length means the plants can suffer from receiving insufficient light.

Ideally start bulbs at the end of January or the beginning of February so that they can benefit from naturally higher light levels.

- Cybister hybrids require an even longer dormancy period than the large flowered hybrids and in addition require higher light levels. They are best started into growth as late as April in the UK.

Watering

- When a new bulb is rooting and beginning to grow and produce its first scape it is important that the compost be allowed to remain moist, but never wet, to encourage the production of new roots. Once a bulb is established in its container it will require watering only when the top centimetre of compost has become completely dry. For this reason the rate of watering will depend very much on ambient growing conditions and the plant's current rate of growth.

- Some home growers water their plants from the bottom in order to discourage sciarid fly. However, hippeastrums are prone to root rot if their roots are

allowed to stand in water, so watering from the top may be best practice for the amateur grower in the home.

- Always water the compost and never water directly onto the bulb as this can be a cause for the bulb to rot.

- Always use tepid water, during the colder months of the year leave the water to stand and attain room temperature before applying to the compost.

Feeding

- Hippeastrum are hungry feeders, a good proprietary plant food is quite adequate for domestic cultivation and ideally should be administered in low doses with every watering.



Hippeastrum 'Flamenco Queen' AGM

Old Leaf Removal

- Remove old leaves during the growing season only once they have dried naturally and become brown and brittle. Any flaky, brown outer parts of the bulb can also be removed to prevent the crown of the bulb becoming congested and to help prevent bulb rot arising from the damp and dead outer layers of the bulb.

Dormancy

As a home grower, dealing with bulb dormancy can be the most challenging issue concerning the cultivation of hippeastrums. This is particularly true since there are substantial quantities of conflicting advice for cultivation during this period of the annual growth cycle. Hippeastrums are generally spring flowering, summer growing plants.

Christmas blooming in the UK is induced by an early cold period or in some cases importation from the southern hemisphere and is not easily replicated in the home.

The dormant period should be started at some point during late September or October. If September is proving to be very bright and sunny it can be left until later. If September is dark

and cloudy it is best to start the bulb's dormant period earlier. The home grower has three options;

1. Total Dormancy

This is the state in which bulbs are sold to the general public and is the method favoured by commercial growers. It is the cultivation method which is suited to all hybrids and is essential for the cybister hybrids in order to ensure repeat flowering. The larger flowered hybrids do not require total dormancy and will thrive given the second option of a Cool Period which is easier for an amateur grower to achieve and has the benefit of avoiding root disturbance leading to stronger growth the following year. To encourage total dormancy, move the plant into a position where it receives less light and cease watering. The bulb is then dried off at room temperature, allowing the foliage to begin to yellow and die. When the compost is completely dry, the bulb can be knocked out of its container and the compost gently removed from its roots. The bulb can then be stored in a cool, dark and dry environment to be potted up the following year. Initially storage can be around 15°C but this can be lowered to around



5°C after a couple of months. It is important not to 'shock' the bulb with sudden drops in temperature.

Advice about length of dormancy differs widely but in general beginning the process at the beginning of October and re-potting in January or the beginning of February works well for most large flowered hybrids. Cybister hybrids often require a longer dormant period and can be re-potted again towards the end of March or early April.

Repotting bulbs which have been over-wintered in a dormant state is the same as that for a new bulb. Any dead leaves should be

removed as should all dead roots, taking care to allow live fleshy roots to remain intact before potting up in a suitable container.

2. Cool Period

This treatment suits most large flowered hybrids which can generally be understood to be evergreen in nature. Towards mid-October, or earlier if the days are particularly dark, the plants can be moved to a well-lit but cooler environment around 13-15°C would be ideal but in the home environment not always possible to achieve. Water sparingly when the plant is very

dry and do not apply feed at all during this period. This will result in a general collapse of foliage with some leaves yellowing and dying back. However the bulb may continue to grow, at a much reduced rate, and can even produce some new leaves during this period.

At the end of the cool period, after around a minimum of 10 weeks, remaining leaves can be removed by a diagonal cut about 12cm above the top of the bulb. This action is somewhat detrimental to the bulb which would continue to use these leaves and is done for purely aesthetic reasons since it allows the scape and new leaves to emerge without the clutter of the old foliage. The cut new foliage can 'bleed', if the cut foliage becomes soggy it should be gently removed but outer leaves may well brown and become dry and can be removed when they are brittle.

3. Evergreen House Plant

In some domestic situations it may not be practical to use the Cool Period method of cultivation but many of the large flowered hybrids will grow and bloom well if left in their summer conditions. This treatment works well for

some hybrids but others may not repeat bloom as reliably. Watering continues during the winter for this method of cultivation but feeding is substantially reduced. Growth will continue but at a slower rate. Commence feeding again in January as the higher light levels prompt the plants back into growth. Foliage is not generally cut back for this method of cultivation since the plants never really cease growing so when the scapes emerge the foliage can look somewhat untidy however good repeat blooming can be expected from some cultivars using this method of cultivation. Hippeastrum 'Red Lion' AGM, 'Lady Jane' and 'Grand Diva' are all known to respond well to this method of cultivation.



Repotting



H. 'Charisma' before old root removal



H. 'Charisma' after cleaning

If following cultivation methods 2 or 3, Cool Period or Evergreen House Plant, the bulbs will need re-potting every 2-4 years. Although hippeastrums like to be somewhat root bound, annual growth of the bulb, the production of small bulbs around the parent bulb and the accumulation of old roots within the pot means that a repotting regime is essential for the continued health of hippeastrum bulbs.

One sign the bulb needs repotting is a difficulty in watering the plant, water from the top appears to run straight through the container and water from the bottom is not taken up sufficiently. This is due to the

accumulation of dead root material within the container.

Repotting is best carried out during the dormant period in winter and before the plants begin active growth. The bulbs should be gently tapped out and all old compost removed. If new bulbs have been produced from around the basal plate of the parent bulb, their roots need to be carefully untangled before they are free to be potted up individually.

Old roots, which will be brown and powdery, should be gently removed if still attached to the basal plate. The bulbs can then be repotted into a suitably sized new container.



Hippeastrum 'Merengue' AGM (Cybister Hybrid)

Pest and Diseases

Aphids and Whitefly

These can be treated with a proprietary insecticide spray widely available at garden centres and supermarkets.

Sciarid Fly

These can be considered more of an annoyance than an actual pest as the larvae generally feed in the decaying outer layers of the bulb and in compost which has remained damp. Removing any loose material from the neck of the bulb and from around its outer circumference where it comes into contact with the soil may help. Bottom watering of the plants, although not ideal because of the risk of root rot, will prevent the top of the soil from

becoming too moist and will considerably impact the sciarid fly population. Sticky traps or appropriate insecticide sprays are also effective controls.

Other Pests:

Mites, Scale Insect & Mealybug

These pests, once they have infected a bulb, are particularly difficult for the home grower to eradicate, insecticides are often ineffective since the pest exists not only on the leaves but actually within the scales (layers) of the bulb itself. Unfortunately, with this type of infection, control rather than eradication is the most likely outcome of treatment and it may be wiser to destroy the bulb in order to prevent the pest spreading to other specimens.

All Photos: David Ford

Plant Exchange: Facts & Figures

Surrey Group Plant Exchange Coordinator **Debbie Steer** explains all

1990's

The beginning of The Plant Exchange (PE) came from an original idea of Jen McGrady and the North East Group, they thought to share rare and unusual with other groups to ensure their conservation across the country. It became formalised with plants verified as suitable for the scheme by The Plant Collection Committee (PCC).

2002/03

343 plants were exchanged between 15 groups

2009

Plant Heritage set up the Threatened Plants Programme (TPP) with the aim of tracking the location and availability of garden cultivars and to work out how rare or threatened they are, or if a cultivar is no longer available. The PE proved a useful resource for the new TPP.

2012

Lloyd Kenyon of the Shropshire group (and also a previous Chair of the PCC) took over the organising and running of the

Plant Exchange. He tweaked the format into the current system with separate lists for 'offers', 'requests', 'allocations' etc all now on excel spreadsheets for better information gathering and records. Having been Chair of the PCC he was used to verifying correct names/genus of plants offered.

2016

Lucy Pitman (Plant Conservation Officer at Central Office) started working with Lloyd to link the PE with the Plant Guardian scheme (PG), identifying plants eligible for the PG so that members were made aware of this on receiving their exchange plant. There was now good communication pathways between the PE and TPP and PG.

2018

This was the best year for numbers as 1257 plants were offered for PE and over 300 were registered for the PG scheme.

2019

Sadly, Lloyd Kenyon died, he had been a fount of botanical



Surrey Group's offer including 24 Abutilons from Hampton Court

knowledge and had overseen the PE develop and expand. He had been a hub for group PE coordinators to turn to. Fortunately, Lucy Pitman, who had worked closely with him was able to step in and take over.

2020

The 'offers' and 'requests' lists had been submitted and Durham had been selected as the venue for the AGM and PE when the first lock down occurred due to Covid19. All plans were put on

hold and those of us lucky enough to have gardens discovered the joys of chilly garden coffee mornings with a friend!

2021

Having had a year of Zoom meetings, buying plants online, propagating our plants with no outlet to share these plants, members of the PE were determined to hold some form of exchange. Lucy put out a request for suggestions of suitable

venues and ideas for methods of getting plants to and from exchange.

Lists of offers and requests had been held over from 2020 and these were updated and distributed following some hard work on the allocations.



Sorting plants for the Exchange at Hillside Close Gardens

Rosemary Mitchell, a Warwick PH member and trustee of The Hillside Close Gardens in Warwick offered these gardens as a suitable venue for the PE. Great cooperation and innovation was shown by all the groups in getting plants to and from Warwick. Yorkshire volunteered to meet members from Galloway and Dumfries and transport their plants, Kent and Sussex got together and took their offerings

to Central Office and Surrey collected the London allocations and so on.

A grand total of 869 plants were exchanged with 18 groups participating, a fantastic result.

Surrey Group and its part in the Plant Exchange
Surrey contributes a large number of plants and we have a higher than average number of members involved. We are in the top 4 for offering plants, but we are also top in requesting plants! I would encourage everyone who has received a plant from the PE to propagate it

and offer it back for a future PE and, where applicable, to register it for the PG scheme. You will be putting your plant on the map and helping fulfil the aim of Plant Heritage to conserve the diversity of our garden plants.

In 2017, 4 Surrey Group Donors offered 71 Plants and there were 155 Plant Requests submitted.

In 2018, 9 Donors offered 60 plants and there were 109 Plant Requests.

Lockdown Gardening Plus....

Wendy Bentall developed a new gardening skill during the Lockdowns and it involved Internet Shopping.

Lockdowns one, two and three, provided plenty of time to get out into the garden and reconsider how it looks and operates. Plus, with no more 'whoopie parties' in the pub, there was more time and money to spend on our favourite hobby. Enter 'Lockdown Garden Purchase Syndrome'.

Dark Winter evenings saw me browsing catalogues and the Internet and some *interesting* purchases winged their way through our gate. Or, more often, *over* it (the delivery man's preferred method it seems).

While others bought trampolines, pizza ovens and outdoor heaters, I was ordering parcels of bulbs and a collection of Austin peonies. I then moved onto structure and widgets. It started as a slow trickle; fleece for the apricots, vegetable seeds, a couple of sprinklers (both of which failed to do the job properly), a sprinkler hose (which worked better), couplings to join them together, a new spade to replace the one I broke trying to lever out a reluctant plant. Note

to self - Don't jump on the wooden handle, it will snap!

As the seasons progressed and the Lockdowns went on longer, so did the flow of parcels and my ambition; Seed envelopes to store those collected from the garden. Run out of twine and marker pens? Send for them. Need another propagating tray? Send for one (that landed with a thud over the gate incidentally).

I did consider, but resisted buying; structures for the clematis, one of those plant-tying gadgets and various propagating heaters. I was even tempted (only tempted!) to abandon the lawnmower for a robotic version!



Read about my adventures in composting on page 9.

Finding that Silver Lining

Surrey Group Membership Secretary **Rhona Frayne** reflects on Gardening and her Plant Heritage roles in recent times

For me, one of the most rewarding parts of being a member of Surrey PH is getting together with like-minded people to enjoy talks, outings and chat about all things plants and gardening but this last 18 months has brought a huge change to our lives. The way everyone socializes and communicates has had to transform.

It is always good to try and find a silver lining to the lows in life. For a lot of us its been having more time to spend tending our plants, my garden last year never looked so good! Covid-19 pushing us into a whole new world on-line wasn't the low we thought. Luckily, our Chair David is very tech-savvy and quickly organized speakers to give talks via Zoom. It has meant members who can't always get to the church hall and distant visitors have been able join in with the group. Our own Zoom talks along with national office organizing so many wonderful webinars has meant we have been able to 'see' friends and keep our gardening enthusiasm

flowing. Fingers crossed the Wi-Fi at the hall allows us to carry on offering that to members.

As membership secretary for Surrey PH part of my role is to welcome new members to the group. I am also involved with the Members & Supporters Panel at Plant Heritage national level. The group is made up of Gill and Julia from central office, some of the membership secretaries from across the country and Catherine Penny, a Trustee, is the Chair. The Panel is a forum for central office to report on recruiting and for the exchange of ideas around membership. It is an opportunity for the groups to discuss how best to engage with the members and of course, recruiting new ones. The topics are wide and varied, including;

- How best to keep in contact with members by email, phone or letter, 'Zooming'; press and social media coverage; 'Facebook' pages; groups' activities, payments using a touch card and good speakers to mention a few.

Catherine Penny then reports to the Trustees on the Panel's behalf. If you have any suggestions as to how we can improve the membership experience, small or large, let me know, your feedback is a staple part of what we do as a group.

In the Surrey Group we've been fortunate as lots of activities and opportunities for involvement have developed over the years, including;

- Fascinating Speakers
- Garden Trips and Visits
- Plant Sales
- Propagation Workshops
- Plant Exchange and Plant Swap
- Seed Shop
- Plant Guardianship
- Summer Socials
- Assisting with maintenance of National Collections.

We are dependent on volunteers to run the group's activities and events, if you are able to spare the odd hour, we would be grateful. However, there is no pressure to do so and you are welcome to join in whatever interests you.

I've been in this Surrey PH role for a few years now (6 I think!) and a member for slightly longer. On a personal note, I enjoy gardening but am no expert. I have plants that die for no good reason (providing an excuse to buy a replacement) and weeds that won't!

What I can say is that in the Surrey Group, I've learnt a lot from speakers and visits but also a great deal from chatting to other members who are always willing to discuss anything to do with plants, gardening and conservation.

I hope you are enjoying being a Surrey member and if so, putting my Membership Secretary's hat back on, please tell your friends!



Photographic Competition 2021: “Weather”

Our Annual Photographic Competition has been going from strength to strength in recent years.

The theme for this year’s Photographic Competition is “**Weather**”.

The Competition is open to all members of the Surrey Group.

Members can submit only one photograph each and prints must be no larger than A4.

Digital enhancement is permitted; we are Plant Heritage, not purists!

Entries will be displayed and judged by members at the AGM in February 2022.

The winner will receive a £15 Garden Gift Token and get to hold the *Rachel Thomson Crystal Bowl* for the year.

Entries may be reproduced in Surrey Group Newsletters.

Some of last year’s entries on the theme of ‘*Where did **You** come from?*’ are reproduced below and opposite.

Peter Badger’s winning photograph from 2020 features on the front cover of this Newsletter.

Good Luck!





Dates for your Diary 2021/2

Thursday 11 November

Surrey Group Talk

Matthew Biggs – The Wonder of Plants

This lecture is an opportunity to look closely at the complex survival mechanisms of plants and to marvel how they survive in extreme climates and integrate with other wonders of the natural world.

There's much more to the botanical world than meets the eye. Welcome to the wonderful world of plants!

2022

Thursday 10 February

Surrey Group AGM Meeting and Quiz

Our AGM, presentation of the Flower of the Month/Meeting Competition Prize, Photographic Competition judging and prize-giving and fun quiz. Plus the Surrey Group annual feast!

Thursday 10th March

Surrey Group Talk

Russell Bowes - The Tale of the Tulip

In the middle of the 14th century, a beautiful and exotic visitor from

the east set foot on European soil for the very first time. Her beauty became the stuff of legend and she could bring prestige and riches to anyone who courted her favour. But within 150 years she would fall from grace within the course of a single week. The Tale of the Tulip follows the spectacular rise and fall of this beautiful garden flower.

Wednesday 6 April

Winter Flowering Heather Cutback

Come and help **Mark Tuson** (Team Leader, Welcome and Riverside) cut back the winter flowering heathers in the National Plant Collection held at RHS Wisley and perhaps some re-planting if weather and time permits. Great fun, no experience necessary and all welcome. Meet at the Entrance to RHS Wisley at 09:45. If you would like to help please contact Suzy Hughes
suzyhughes0@gmail.com

Thursday 14 April

Surrey Group Talk

John Hughes – Adventures in Ecuador

As a non-driver, John relied on public transport to get to the

Dates for your Diary 2022

seldom-explored, varied habitats of Ecuador. He does admit to having taken a taxi to Cotopaxi though! The talk will explore the highs and lows of being a lone traveller in a country with an amazingly rich and varied flora.

John is a 2021 recipient of the RHS Veitch Memorial Medal for his outstanding contribution to the practice of horticulture.

Sunday 1 May

Plant Fair at Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking RH5 6AA

Specialist nurseries plus our own plant stand. If you could possibly help, either to provide plants, to help set up, break down or help run the stand please contact surreyph@gmail.com. Sales to the public 10:00 to 14:00

Sunday 21 August

Plant Fair at Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking RH5 6AA

Specialist nurseries plus our own plant stand. If you could possibly help, either to provide plants, to help set up, break down or help run the stand please contact surreyph@gmail.com. Sales to the public 10:00 to 14:00

Thursday 8 September

Surrey Group Talk

Dr. Peter Herring - Fascinating Fungi: Our Friends or Foes?

We see them all around us in the garden but what should our relationship be with these fascinating organisms. They are not in the plant kingdom and are surprisingly closer related to animals. Some feed us, some heal us and some can kill us. So what should our relationship be with these fascinating organisms?

Saturday 10 September

Behind the Scenes at Hampton Court with Martin Einchcomb - A Fundraising Event

A behind-the-scenes tour of the Hampton Court Palace glass houses and nursery areas, not normally accessible to the public. This will be followed by a guided tour around the Palace Gardens. (The tour does not allow access to the Palace itself.)

Hampton Court Palace Gardens is home to three Plant Heritage National Plant Collections; Heliotropium, Lantana and the Queen Mary II Exotics Collection.

Dates for you Diary 2022/3

Open only to Surrey Members, the ticket price is £40. Due to the limited spaces on this tour, please register your interest by contacting Suzy Hughes Suzyhughes0@gmail.com. Strictly one application per member.

A Draw to select the 20 successful applications will take place at our AGM on 10 February 2022.

Thursday 13 October

Surrey Group Talk

Tony Kirkham – Trees A Cut Above The Rest

A topical talk about trees and issues concerning them. Retired Head of Arboretum, Gardens and Horticultural Services at Kew Gardens, **Tony Kirkham** talks all things trees; From plant collecting, propagation of rare species, tree planting and pruning. It promises to be a lively and enjoyable evening with one of our country's foremost arboriculturists.

Thursday 10 November

Surrey Group Talk

Ben Pope – Creating Movement Whilst Frozen Still

A seasonal talk looking at the winter garden and how to achieve movement and interest during the cold months. The talk begins by looking at what gives a garden structure, interest and movement during winter, whilst exploring how to develop it. It then moves onto identify plants that are of interest during the winter months, detailing any specific cultural needs or aesthetic uses.

2023

Thursday 9 February

Surrey Group AGM Meeting and Quiz

Our AGM, presentation of the Flower of the Month/Meeting competition Prize, Photographic Competition judging and prize-giving and fun quiz. Plus the Surrey Group annual feast!

Thursday 9 March

Surrey Group Talk

Mark Tuson - The Heather Collections of RHS Wisley

RHS Wisley Team Leader, **Mark** will talk about his experience of propagating, planting, growing and maintaining the three heather National Collections held at RHS Wisley: Erica, Calluna and Daboecia.

Surrey Group Talks

Talks start at 19:30 - Doors open at 19:00

All Talks include a Plant Sale, a Raffle and our *Flower of the Meeting* Competition. Refreshments are provided at a nominal cost.

A suggested donation of £5 for non-members is requested at the door. All meetings are free to members and everyone is welcome.

Venue: St Andrew's Church Hall, Churchgate House, Downside Bridge Road, Cobham KT11 3EJ.

For full details of all events, please refer to the Surrey Group Events page on the Plant Heritage website.

Surrey Group Committee

Chair

David Ford

23 Shirley Avenue
Old Coulsdon
CR5 1QZ
drofd@btinternet.com
0208 645 5185

Vice Chair

Wendy Bentall

wendybentall@gmail.com
01276 858 256

Hon. Treasurer

Anne Mathieson

amath@globalnet.co.uk
07768 476 720

National Plant Collections

Coordinator

Anne Clifford

anneclifford666@gmail.com
07908 285 204

Sue Davidson

drsdavidson@btinternet.com
07968 980 249

Publicity

Claire Davitt

clairebiggs@yahoo.co.uk
07769 650 493

Membership

Rhona Frayne

rhona.frayne@btoopenworld.com
01483 282 501

Virginia Lloyd-Owen

vlloyd3owen@googlemail.com
01483 730 241

Secretary (Minutes)

Jean Mills

jean.mills2@ntlworld.com

Plant Fairs

Gillian Spencer

gillian.spencer@dial.pipex.com
01483 503 180

Plant Exchange

Coordinator

Debbie Steer

deborah.steer@tiscali.co.uk
07930 507 732

All Committee Members:

surreyph@gmail.com

Non-Committee:

Communications, Trips & Visits

Suzy Hughes

suzyhughes0@gmail.com

Newsletter Assistant

Editor (Layout)

David England

lavenderday@btinternet.com
07743 272 707



Photo: David England