



# HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

## Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

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Our celebrity speaker on Saturday is James Alexander Sinclair and this is a ticket-only event so will be organised slightly differently as the hall will be full. Although there will be no plant sales and no membership table, there will be an extra special raffle and the usual high quality cakes! The refreshments will be available from 2 pm as our speaker prefers not to stop for an interval and anyway we couldn't manage a queue of 160 people! So please try to arrive on time so that you have an hour to socialise and enjoy the refreshments (included in the price of your ticket). The talk will begin by 3 pm.



We begin again next year, on 26<sup>th</sup> January - Lyn Miles with a talk entitled '**For the Love of Snowdrops**'. Lyn has been acquiring snowdrops for many years and now has a collection of over 200 named varieties, plus drifts of singles and doubles throughout her garden, which she opens every year for other galanthophiles. **Our AGM will be held at that meeting and will start at 2pm, before her talk at 2.30 pm.**

The Dorset Group of HPS is attracting more members, while other similar organisations are failing. The success of the Group is down to the enthusiasm of the committee who book excellent speakers, arrange great events and organise the meetings so that they are fun to attend. Committee members now retire after three years and so new members will always be needed – remember, no committee means no group. If you would like to know more about the running of the group, please talk to Debbie.

### **Dorset HPS Group 2019**

Instead of our usual magazine, this year we have prepared a brochure which simply lists our meetings and events for 2019. Don't forget to pick up your copy at the meeting. Members not attending the meeting will receive them through the post.

### **Holiday 2019**

Elaine will be in charge of holiday bookings and will be accepting them **from 1<sup>st</sup> January**. Anything arriving before that date will be held until the New Year. **No bookings will be taken for the outings until January either – income for 2019 must not go into the bank in 2018. (NB Sue!)**

**Pennard Plants' Potato Day** (organised by Blandford Museum Victorian Garden Club) is becoming a regular event for those of us who grow a few vegetables, in the flower beds or elsewhere, they certainly do well in pots. Once again – its 8<sup>th</sup> year! - it will be held in Pimperne Village Hall (DT11 8UZ, ample free parking) from 10.30 am until 1.30 pm, this time on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> January, the day after our next meeting. They will have numerous varieties of planting potato for sale by the single tuber, onion sets, shallots, garlic, Heritage seeds, fruit trees and soft fruit, and lots, lots more. Entry 50p – and soup and refreshments for sale. NB no debit/credit card well signed from all the access roads around Blandford and through Pimperne to the Village Hall, where there is ample free parking.

### **Specialist Nurseries**

Chris Ireland Jones of Avon Bulbs gave an interesting talk to Plant Heritage recently on the demise of the specialist nursery. Liz Underwood and I have been trying to source the true 'Whistling Jack' - gladiolus communis ssp byzantinus. So many companies offer it, but supply gladiolus italicus instead, a much weaker plant. We found a small specialist nursery in Somerset – Great Western Gladiolus – and they managed to source some excellent bulbs for us. Their service was very impressive and they stock much more besides gladiolus. They have a website. If you have had a good experience of a nursery, please let me know so that I can spread the news.

## This is so important that I'm repeating it from last year:

RHS Advice suggests that planting anything green can help capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and that the best way to ensure captured carbon stays in the soil is to mulch with organic matter, and avoid digging soils. What to use? Your own compost, mushroom compost, well-rotted manure, composted bracken or bark, used multipurpose, etc., etc. Apparently this year has the worst peat harvest in five years and the cost of alternatives is much higher than the cost of peat, so with the rise of the euro and the increase in the price of plastic packaging, our bags of potting compost are going to be more expensive – and we must watch out for poor quality substitutes for peat. I use peat-free anyway, having been a great fan of Geoff Hamilton. *The Garden* also suggests that, to reduce our carbon footprint, we should use natural fertilisers derived from plant or animal sources, e.g. seaweed, comfrey or fish.

Kevin proposes to get bags of well-rotted horse manure for sale again next year, but he would prefer to do it to order. So please let us know if you would like some.

## "Letters to a Beekeeper"

ISBN 978-1-78352-116-6 [www.unbound.com](http://www.unbound.com)

After a chance meeting at the Edinburgh Festival, Alys Fowler and Steve Benbow, who had existed on the proceeds of honey made by his bees in hives on London rooftops, agreed to help each other. Steve would introduce Alys to beekeeping and Alys would help Steve to plan and plant a bee friendly garden. The staff garden at the Tate Britain Gallery had been generously offered to Steve as a site for his wild-flower patch. This book is a charming record of their correspondence and progress and friendship, with photographs by Steve. It would make a great Christmas present for a wildlife gardener or you could drop some heavy hints and get someone to buy it for you!

*Janice Walters*

## Kevin's Krafty Korner

Hope everyone is enjoying the mild (and wet) weather, and taking the opportunity to work in the garden. November/December is still a busy time. I've

been collecting leaves like mad, and mulching the garden with compost. I've just finished pruning the apple and pear (but not plum) trees, just starting on the roses (taking the opportunity to take some hardwood cuttings), and have planted garlic, onion sets, sweet peas and Aquadulce broad beans for overwintering. Now is a great time to plant bare root roses and trees, and I'm now bringing all the tender plants indoors, and insulating the greenhouse. Lots of cuttings already done (not always successfully I'm afraid), and don't forget our speaker Ray Broughton's big Xmas tip, to jet spray any evergreen bushes or shrubs near any of your tender perennial plants, as overwintering bugs aren't very 'sticky' at that stage (a great Boxing Day activity), and can easily be knocked off, which can reduce damage from pests by 80%. Most importantly, a Happy Xmas and New Year to all our readers.

*Kevin Steele*

## Jobs to do in the Garden

- Cut back old hellebore leaves and mulch around the plant (don't put the leaves on the compost pile).
- Still time to plant tulips, any left in the shops are usually half price now.
- Still time to plant garlic apparently
- Ideal time to take hardwood cuttings. As soon as the leaves have fallen, take cuttings at pencil length and pencil thickness – make a straight cut immediately below a bud and a sloping cut above a bud to tell top from bottom. Plunge to half their depth in sandy compost or a trench in open ground, they should be rooted by spring and ready for potting up by mid-summer.
- Once the leaves are off, it's time to prune your shrubs and fruit trees.
- Bubble-wrap your greenhouse, even if it's heated.
- Give protection to all your tender plants, tubers like cannas and dahlias don't need light so can go in a garage.
- Rake up the leaves and store them in black bags or a wire cage, they will rot down into mineral rich leaf mould, only 2-3 years to wait!

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