



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

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Special Edition 10

Welcome to our tenth special newsletter. Please keep sending items to me at:- Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com.

Please let me know all about your successes and failures this year, tips, advice and suggestions of places to visit.

Autumn in our gardens

Such busy times! Under glass it is time to dismantle the tomatoes and my husband is giving half the greenhouse its autumn clean. Then we can set up the benching and transfer everything over from the other side and clean that.

As always, I sowed my sweet peas on October 1st to be planted out on March 1st. I sowed four different varieties and all but one germinated within days. 'Spanish Dancer', for some reason totally failed. I still have half a packet left so I shall re-sow but I suspect it may be dodgy seed.



September cuttings are rooting nicely, mainly *Ageratum petiolatum* and *Argyranthemum* 'Jamaica Primrose'



Over the past few months we have had a resident mole and I rejoiced because we have a massive leatherjacket problem. I am sure huge numbers have now been consumed as there were noticeably less crane flies flying around the house this year. Now we are repairing the lawn through patching and seed sowing, giving it a low nitrogen autumn feed, and then once again, will apply nematodes, *Steinema feltiae*. There will be another application next May.

I did not Chelsea chop or stake my tall asters and they have flopped all over the border like a sort of floral "Mexican Wave". It looks wonderful and the same thing has happened to the hardy Chrysanthemums, lining up for the last hurrah. I will show you them flowering in the November issue of Hardy Times.

News from the Chair

Hello everyone. Having kept quiet for a couple of months I would now like to update you with what has been happening behind the scenes.

Unfortunately we are still not in a position to restart our Speaker Meeting Programme. With the Hall reopening, they will only allow 36, and it is still uncertain whether we would come under the Rule of 6 regulations. Either way, it makes it impossible for us to go back at this stage. However it has been encouraging to see other Groups offering Zoom Meetings. I attended one myself only the other evening – with Hampshire Hardy Plants Group. It was most interesting and worked well. Not the atmosphere of the Hall, but certainly a way of keeping things going. Later on in this Hardy Times Diana lists some of those talks available, and my question to you

"If we organised a Zoom Meeting with a speaker, would you attend?"

If you are a member there would of course be no charge, unless it was the celebrity speaker. If you have not used Zoom before the guy at Hampshire has worked wonders with their group-and he has offered to help us. We have a full exciting programme for next year...and don't know if we will get to see anyone!

Photographic Competition

The photos have been coming in and I do hope you have had a chance to look at the website to see them. What a difference between March and September! We closed the competition at the end of September – thank you to all those who took

part. Due to the present circumstances, the current committee are all selecting their favourite 3 photos, and placing them in order. I shall collate them all and announce the winner of the Photo Competition in the next Hardy Times. Not as we had planned but the best we can manage under these strange times.

A.G.M.

We already have the AGM in our sights. All the current Committee Members have confirmed that they are willing to stand another year in their current positions. Liz Underwood is happy to cover Refreshments when we get back to some sort of normal. I would like to give notice that I will stand down at the 2022 AGM as I will have done the maximum 5 years as Chair, added to the earlier 3 years as Treasurer. We were wondering if anyone would be interested to stand as Vice Chair and shadow me, with a view to taking over the following year.

Obviously all these positions are not automatically transferred over each year so if you feel you would like to get more involved with the Committee then please contact me. Don't forget we also need help with the **Website** – no one has been forthcoming about that or **Conservation!**

Well that is all from me for now, but please let me know your views on a Zoom Meeting.

Debbie Steel

Potato Day News from Elaine

Potato Days, as we know them, will not be happening in 2021. Pennards have decided to sell next year by mail order only, through their website. There will be a 15% discount on most items including potato tubers, onions, shallots and garlic sets, rhubarb, fruit, herbs and their vast range of flower and vegetable seeds.

As a regular host of these events, Blandford Museum Victorian Garden will be given a code to trigger the discount, so that sales can be tracked. This code will be published in a forthcoming edition of Hardy Times for Group members' use and can be used multiple times.

Please contact Elaine on 01258 451580 for further details.

Elaine Lofthouse

Jane's Journal

As summer has turned into autumn I wonder what successes and failures you have had in the garden

and what do you want to grow next year. This year I tried some seeds which were new to me. The first was seen last year on the Hardy Plant holiday –



Alonsoa 'Salmon Beauty' (right). The seed was available from Chilterns.

Well the plusses were that it germinated a treat and grew on easily. However, planted at the front of the border, it proved disappointing - rather pale and uninteresting. It is still flowering. Annoyingly Sarah Raven promotes the scarlet variety of this plant which looks much better.

The next "new to me" was a great success *Panicum elegans* 'Sprinkles', again from Chilterns. (Ed.note: also sold as



'Frosted Explosion'. This grass is often seen in professional bunches of flowers. Again germination was excellent and I pricked it out and grew it on in modules and repotted again. It was really lovely. I will do that again.

Third lot of new seeds were *Tithonia* 'Torch'. Monty Don regularly sings their praises. The plants grow tall and are quite airy, but there is lots of dead heading. They are however really lovely and very bright orange, if you like that sort of thing. I will certainly grow that again. Good for bees as well!

Now flowering in the garden, in two places because I didn't want all my eggs so to speak in one basket, is *Sternbergia lutea*, or the winter daffodil - but it looks more like an autumn crocus, a brilliant bright yellow. One position is really dry and stony and one more shady. Both are doing well with lots of flowers. The Michaelmas daisies are all lovely – I can't call them by their new name. 'Helen Picton' is a lovely deep mauve blue and 'Alma Potschke' a bright cerise pink but neither of these two are alright without support. All asters are good for butterflies, bees and hover flies. The garden has been full of pollinating insects and I look with pleasure at the buzzing, and with disgust as yet another front garden is being turned into a car park. Oh Dear!

Jane Norris

A Tulip Teaser



'Café Noir' from Parkers Wholesale, is new to me this year.

Bulb planting is in full swing. Every year I face the same conundrum with tulips. It suits me well that they should not be planted in the borders until November, or even December, as I am never cleared and ready until then. It is all about preventing Tulip Fire, a soil born fungal disease called *Botrytis tulipae*. It is less active when tulips start into growth in colder soil.

Pots, however are another matter! I need to plant them up by mid October whilst the soil is still warm and the 'topping' plants, such as violas and other winter bedding, are readily available in the garden centres. Planting them out beyond mid October means they will not get away very well in the cold soil and give such a good display. Many of us like to plant up 'lasagne' pots and do not want to see the little bulbs that will layer up with tulips, lurking around and drying up.

So is there any danger if we are using fresh potting compost, straight from a new bag, and mixed with grit?

This year I am planting up mixed pots through October to see what happens. One or two pots are not yet ready to be emptied out and replanted yet. So for those pots I am reserving tulips and planting up the accompanying bulbs in small pots, to get them going. I am also potting on violas etc. to get them established too. These will all be added to the pot when the tulips are planted in a month's time.

I would love to know what other members are doing.

Successes in your garden

Lovely to read about the plants that have done well for Jane. I have been asking around to see what has pleased other people this year.

Sue Collins said it was her best ever year for Dieramas, which grow in gravel. She decided to cut some hard back this September to rejuvenate them, because that is what they do at Wildside (every three years). She tells me they are already showing nice new growth.

Pat Haskell tells us about an unusual dandelion, Hieracium Lanatum (woolly hawkweed.)

'I bought a tiny little seedling off one of our plant stalls at Plant Heritage many years ago. It has spread into a handsome clump which is truly herbaceous as it disappears completely in the winter. It has the usual hawkweed flowers which are a good lemon yellow.'



Unlike some of the grey leaved plants, its thick velvety leaves never suffer from powdery mildew. It was many years before it self-seeded and these I have gratefully dug up and spread around the garden. This year has become one of the hottest, driest summers since we came here fifty years ago, but this super plant has looked great and performed really well'.

Liz Underwood

'In my garden salvias and agapanthus were great and currently the acers and cercis are looking great.'

Liz volunteers at Knoll Gardens (below) where many of the volunteers are also HPS members. They missed all the spring and early summer colour, but since returning, have planted up a new dry meadow which is filling out now and the Nepeta and Echinacea pallida have been gorgeous. Autumn colours this year have been stunning.



Knoll Gardens is open from 10 until 5 Tuesdays to Saturdays, (no need to book) and will be glorious for weeks to come.

Also worth a visit is **Edmondsham House**. There is still a lot of colour with the salvias looking especially good and I saw fabulous clumps of sternbergia (right).





In my own garden (left) so many things have loved the warmth and the wet, just when we needed it, and many people

have agreed with me when I said how well dahlias, cosmos and salvias have been this year. For some reason a lot of us struggled with courgettes!

Finally..... a big disappointment

I love to participate in the HPS seed exchange and back in February or March, when the seeds arrived, I was delighted to see I had been allocated *Lavatera maritima*, a particular favourite of mine that I had not grown for years. The seeds germinated well and grew rapidly, indeed, worryingly so, and at around six foot the plants stopped and branched out with massive hollyhock shaped leaves. No flowers of course. I did some research. It was the rather coarse wild mallow *Lavatera arborea* or a rather coarse although lovely biennial - Tree mallow, often seen growing at the coast. If I still had a big garden with wilder areas, I would keep it but sadly it is for the chop. I need the space for more refined treasures!

Do not let it put you off using the Hardy Plant seed scheme though. I am a great fan and it is like Christmas when the envelope bulging with treasures arrives in Springtime.

Enjoy the shortening days.

We are so lucky that as gardeners we automatically spend as much time as possible out in the fresh air in the gardens working, or visiting other gardens, as the weather allows. The benefits to physical and mental health are well documented as many of us find our hobby is getting us through difficult times. Nothing beats a small (6 or less) get-together with gardening pals, poring over plants, digging things up to swap etc.

Here are some reminders of other gardens to visit.

Abbotsbury Sub-tropical Gardens

Open daily, but book a slot. It will be looking wonderful with autumn colour. Always a joy to visit.

Exbury Gardens

Visit before the end of the month (book a slot) and you will catch the fantastic display of Nerines in the Five Arrows Gallery (right).



Furzey Gardens (right)

In the New Forest. It is open until November 1st (book a slot online) and is offering 20% off plant sales in October. It houses the Chelsea Garden, designed by Chris Beardshaw, that won gold a few years back.



Online Talks

On gloomier days, why not enjoy a Zoom **lecture**? Plant Heritage have run several over the past few months, highlighting their National Collections. I am really looking forward to the one on Hardy Chrysanthemums by Collection holders with **Judy Barker** and **Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries** (who have come to talk to us at Colehill, and whose nursery we visited on one of our group holidays). A real treat will be on November 12th when of our favourite speakers, **Timothy Walker** will be giving a talk entitled "Paradise lost and Restored: 400 years of Garden Design in Oxfordshire". These talks are only £4 each and can be booked via the Plant Heritage Website.

There are now 12 zoom lectures available to hire from **Great Dixter** at £15 each. They are live for one week so you can share them with a friend. The latest is called "Dixter Tricks".

Online Zoom talks are also available by the **Alpine Groups**. Dorset and Hampshire have combined together and will be having a talk by David Hughes on the "Alpine Flowers of Yunnan" this Thursday at 7 for 7.30. Email them on cchughes1@waitrose.com for more details.

This will get you thinking! One of our members, Robert Plummer, has written a poem for us

The Hardy Times is a wonderful little magazine, full of useful information, wonderful pictures and everything possible uplifting. By contrast, I thought it might be fun to have something which might point to the darker, more horrible side to gardening?

Robert Plummer

MASSACRE

that was the day of the blade
bright cold steel: Japanese made
fifteen inch and folds into stock
a jagged edge for maximum shock
not a point to stab or edge to slice
but rips across – oh so nice

I brought *them* in to join the crew
then, in that way they do
they reached out one to the other
as a family, brother to brother
I, engaged in life elsewhere,
ignored what they were doing there

then I became too well aware
of their covert grabbing affair
how could I simply have allowed
my crew to become so deeply cowed
they must pay was my reaction
now was time for some firm action

their stilettos would be a threat
amongst them I would feel beset
so, to avoid their satisfaction
I took care to wear protection
then I took each one with care
using my blade to rip and tear

the job was done, I must confess
it came hard to clear the mess
She, who had gifted me the blade
as we stood there in the shade
said, 'it gives me bumps
to see so many scars and stumps'

'will they die, is what I fear
or live to see another year?'
I was very pleased to give
a clear assurance they would live
the Hawthorns are a hardy clan
and will bloom in May with fresh elan

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