



**HPS**  
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

## Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

November 2020 Issue 155

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[www.dorsethps.org.uk](http://www.dorsethps.org.uk)

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## Special Edition 11

Welcome to our ninth special newsletter. Please keep sending items to me at:- [Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com](mailto:Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com).

Please send me your news, tips, advice and suggestions of places to visit.

### Autumn in our gardens



We live in wearisome times, when many people struggle with the thought of having nothing to look forward to as we are unable to make future plans secure. But this, of course, does not apply to

gardeners. We have plenty to look forward to and many tasks to complete over the coming months. We know for sure that winter will come bringing all its beauties with snowdrops and hellebores leading the way.

Indeed the *Cyclamen coum* (right) are already starting to appear in garden centres and they offer a wonderful range of leaf shape and colour as well as a colour range from white and pale pink to deep pink tones.



We know the days will lengthen and Spring will follow. Birds will sing, and the sun will strengthen. Luckily this time round we can still get to the garden centre and how lovely and quiet it is there without the lunch and coffee brigade, and no Santa! Although sad for those that see refreshments as an essential part of the visit and sad that the garden centres will lose income.

Having a bit of extra time to spend in the garden this month is a blessing and we have already had

some lovely warm dry days in which to work, after the wet and wind of October.

Having the first frost neatly drew a line under the remnants of summer as the summer annuals disintegrated and dahlias blackened (at last we can lift them, they were so scruffy!). I do lift all the dahlias in my back garden as the clay soil gets really soggy throughout the winter, but in the front



garden where conditions are quite different, the species *Dahlia merckii* (left) sails through winter and despite its frail, juicy looking foliage

seems to bat off slug damage too! This dahlia has an AGM for its foliage.

Now the quandary is what to cut down and what to leave. Do we follow the Knoll example where pretty much everything is left for wildlife until February? Or do we belong to the tidy tribe that revel in 'slash, burn and mulch and put the garden to sleep' action. Either will allow you to take a back seat for the worst of the winter months, but I suspect most of us combine the two methods, preferring to be active whenever the weather allows, slinking off to the shed or greenhouse on dreary days.

Already the goldfinches are on the *Rudbeckia deamii* eating the seed, and I know it is important to leave leaves, that have blown into corners, and hollow stems for overwintering insects. One whole bed in the front garden will be left pretty mulch untouched over winter, but the nearest bed, that I look out onto every day, will be tidied up.

One large bed in the front has had a real "going over", where everything was cut down and the unwanted *Helianthus 'O Sole Mio'* dug out and

given to a neighbour- it was too tall, (the plant not the neighbour).



This left me with a decent area for bulb planting. I used *Cammassia leichtlinii*, (left) dutch iris, *Triteleia* 'Queen Fabiola' a great little bulb for summer interest resembling a miniature agapanthus. I also added various narcissi, tulips

and alliums.

I cleared the area under a *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' that is now spreading nicely but was spoiled by messy under-planting. It now presides over a carpet of Cyclamen coum.

Removing the dahlias will release more spots for the final burst of bulb planting, we should be done by the end of the month.

All the tender plants are in now, just in time to miss the frost. The greenhouse heaves with tender succulents, notably aeoniums, so I do hope we will have plant sales next year!

The hardy chrysanthemums are still looking perky, below is my 'mexican wave' of unstaked plants dramatically flopping and spreading over the border!



### PROGRESS WITH ZOOM

Thank you to everyone who has responded to my email, after the last Hardy Times, asking you about whether you would like us to host Zoom Speaker Meetings. The response has been so varied, but it is good to hear that so many of you are all missing our meetings and are looking forward to us returning to some sort of normality.

Having received a response from 69 of our 200 members in just 8 days (as I write this) the results are not conclusive. In fact there is almost a 50:50 split. I am attaching a report from David Burnham-Slipper, who managed to get tickets to the Bob Brown talk to share his experiences with you. I would still love to hear your opinion either way so please keep in touch.

We have decided not to hold any zoom meetings for the present, but to review this on a regular basis as the votes come in. However we shall of

course let you know as we find out about other plant groups' meetings on Zoom. I shall also put them on the **Calendar of Events on the website** in between Hardy Times.

### Photographic Competition 2020



Well done to Helen Powell, the winner of our 2020 Photographic Competition. Well done Helen! She was delighted with her £25 National Gardening Voucher.

I would like to thank everyone who sent us photos of their gardens and garden visits. I hope you all enjoyed watching the changes throughout the seasons in 2020.

### WINNING PHOTO:

#### BEES ON ERYNGIUM SILVER GHOST



### Photographic Competition 2021

After the success of our competition, we decided it would be nice to restart the competition, but with a winter theme. You can start anytime, but the closing date will be the 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2021. However, this time we don't want to make it too easy, so there is a theme. It is **"WINTER BEAUTY"** so good luck and let's see your photos. I shall put them on the website as before.

### 2021 A.G.M.

It is looking unlikely that we will be having meetings in time for our AGM, scheduled for Feb 2021. We therefore plan to hold it on Skype/Zoom, a week earlier than usual, so as not to clash with the Manor Farm NGS Open Garden. So it will be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> Feb.

The Reports will be issued to you in January. Nominations for positions on the committee, together with any questions for the Committee must be submitted by 13/2, in time for the AGM.



So we need a **Vice Chair**, as highlighted in the last Hardy Times, and someone to **learn and update and the website**. I shall be standing down in early 2022 and it would be disappointing not to be able to have a handover period, especially as the group has been so successful in the past. More details for each will be put in the next Hardy Times, as this one is rather large but, if you do have any interest whatsoever please contact me direct.

*Debbie Steel*

### Membership Renewals for 2021

2020 seems to have whizzed by - COVID lockdowns notwithstanding - and the time for HPS membership renewals is here. We can't yet anticipate what will be on offer through 2021, but as you will have seen in this newsletter, there are options to join online talks arranged by other groups if you wish, and as Debbie has recently said, we will consider arranging some of our own if there is sufficient demand from you. We also continue to email out this newsletter each month - with huge thanks to Diana Guy and everyone who contributes to it.

So until the public health advice permits us to return to our normal activities, Dorset HPS continues in a quieter way. Consequently, you may prefer to delay renewal of your membership until meetings and excursions resume. You will not be penalised for doing so, and will continue to receive newsletters etc. However if you would like to renew your membership now or in January, please feel free to do so. For anyone who does not have a standing order already established, you can choose either to make your payment directly into the Dorset HPS bank account by BACS, or you can pay by cheque.

Whichever option you choose, you will need to complete the Dorset HPS Group Membership Renewal form now available on our website <http://www.dorsethps.org.uk/> You can use this form to renew your Dorset membership and also your national membership if you wish.

If you choose to renew by BACS, please email the completed form to me at [rm.jecock@gmail.com](mailto:rm.jecock@gmail.com).

If you choose to renew by cheque, please send your completed form and cheque to me at the address on the form.

I look forward to seeing you all again sometime next year.

*Rowena Jecock*

### Blandford Potato Day Update

Potato Days will not be happening in 2021. Pennard Plants has decided to sell this season by mail order through their website [www.pennardplants.com](http://www.pennardplants.com). By using the discount code **pimperne22a** you will receive a 15% discount on most items. The code can then be used multiple times from 1st November until 31st March 2021. Further details can be found at [www.blandfordtownmuseum.org.uk](http://www.blandfordtownmuseum.org.uk) or by reading the poster at the end of this publication.

*Elaine Lofthouse*

### Jane's Journal

Now is the time to review your garden and be critical. I have been looking at plants that have not been moved for some time and they have definitely outgrown their allotted space. *Rudbeckia deamii* is lovely but mine had encroached so has been dug up, along with Vinca Illumination. This is a variegated variety and some of it had reverted, so that needed sorting. Some of the asters had outgrown the space allowed, although spring is a better time to split. Borage, sisyrinchium, hares tail's grass, and some very rampant hardy geraniums have all been moderately weeded out.

With global warming, snowdrops are coming out earlier than ever. *Galanthus* 'Barnes' is expected in November, along with 'Peter Gatehouse' and *Reginae Olga*, but they were all out in October!



This year I increased my collection with three new snowdrops. 'E.A Bowles', (left) 'South Hayes', and a yellow one, 'Madeleine'. Three quite different snowdrops.

'South Hayes' is known as a poculiform otherwise meaning a little cup. On the whole those splashed with green seem to be strong growers.



'Madeleine' is of the same



variety as 'Wendy's Gold'. The snowdrops with yellow ovaries are lovely and desirable but very pricey. The ones I have which seem to do well are 'Wendy's Gold', 'Blonde Inge', 'June Boardman', 'Lady Elphinstone' and *Sandersii* 'Lutyens'. The list of other yellow varieties that I

desire is beyond my housekeeping! Owing to lockdown a great deal of time has been spent cultivating the little darlings. Heather Marrow has given me some lovely leaf mould which has been spread over them.

Depending on the covid situation I am hoping to have some snowdrop openings in aid of Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance in the New Year. I have a few surplus snowdrops for sale so watch this space.

*Jane Norris*

### **Report on a Zoom Meeting**

We attended our first HPS Zoom meeting on Saturday 14 November, given by the Monmouthshire Group of the HPS and featuring Bob Brown of Cotswold Garden Flowers. It was that Groups' first attempt at a Zoom Meeting, and it was Bob's Brown's first as well.

Monmouthshire Group charged £5.00 to HPS members and £7.00 to non-members and also £1.00 per raffle ticket, if you wish. A few days before the meeting the Group secretary sent details of the Group's bank to those who had expressed an interest in attending, and we paid our dues, along with 2 raffle tickets. We were told the meeting started at 2.30pm, and that the 'doors' would be open from 2.00pm to log everyone in in time. I set up our lap-top so that we could sit in comfort, and made sure that the camera showed us without too much personal goings on in the background. Some who attended did not take that trouble and found that all that showed was the top of their heads! I suggest that eating and drinking should be out of the way before logging on.

The logging in process was reasonably quick and efficient, even though there were 137 attendees to log through. Judging by the questions after the meeting, people attended from as far afield as the Lake District, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Kent, Hampshire and of course good old Dorset. The Group had given all the details of how to log on and were available if anybody found difficulty. While the log-in process was going on we could look at their information pages about the Group and their future programme, all on Zoom as well.

Bob Brown was himself on Zoom and gave the talk on 'Plants that have grabbed my attention'. He was a word perfect speaker, very experienced and really you would not have known that he was delivering to an audience where there was no feed back to him - quite difficult for an inexperienced speaker. He was able to show all his slides and talk us through them all. The talk lasted about an hour

and questions followed. I should say that we were all 'muted' during the talk, and any questioner had the mute removed, and then replaced once the question was delivered. We could see the questioners, provided their cameras were on, although many who attended did not do so. We were told in advance that recording the talk was not permitted.

The raffle, which sold 204 tickets, took place at the end of questions, the prizes being garden centre vouchers, 2 of £5.00, 2 of £10.00 and 1 of £20.00. It was drawn by a random number generator (like ERNIE), where each ticket had its own number. The prizes would be posted to the lucky winners.

Of course, the meeting did not match up to a normal close contact meeting with tea and cakes and plants to buy, and people to chat to, but to keep the society alive and ticking over was a good experience.

Certainly, it is a suggestion worth further consideration, but subject to the proviso that the speaker must be capable of speaking to and have a rapport with an audience that is not physically present.

Both Monmouthshire Group and Bob Brown said they would definitely repeat the experiment.

*David Burnham-Slipper*

### **Plant of the Month Hesperantha**



The plant that is the very last to come into flower in my front garden is my *Hesperantha* 'Pink Princess', a real beauty. I bought it on a Hardy Plant Society coach trip last year.

They were originally known as Kaffir lilies, and native to South Africa there are in fact over 60 species.

I must admit I rather loathed the plant until recently, because of their sprawling, spreading manner. Rather like the older crocosmias, they tended to send up wispy green shoots just where you did not want them. They love the heavy clay soil here in my garden and I was forever pulling them out. I had inherited the bright orange *Hesperantha coccinea* 'Major'.



There are far more refined varieties to choose from now, although I suspect many members still have the Major marching through their Borders.

Wanting to find out more I discovered that Plant World seeds offer the very pretty *Hesperantha cucullata* (left), a highly scented spring flowering variety from the Western Karoo in South Africa. Now I wouldn't mind giving that a go!

### Where to visit

Meeting one friend for a walk means you could together visit a garden or park, and most National Trust properties are remaining open but you must book ahead. Currently no shops, café or houses are open but the grounds are accessible and you may find take away hot drinks available.

**Stourhead** is closed as they undertake path maintenance but they are hoping to open for their Christmas illumination event on Dec 4<sup>th</sup>. Nearer to home **Kingston Lacy** grounds remain open and bookings have started for a brand new Illumination event starting early December, called "Ignite: Fire and Fantasy". Many slots have already gone so book promptly, it looks like a very uplifting experience. **Mottisfont** is open and has a fabulous winter garden, and later lots of snowdrops. Well worth a visit.

**Free Entry** to the lovely gardens at **Holmes for Gardens** at Wareham, available from now until the end of February. No need to pre-book. This is a lovely garden centre where you will often find something unusual. The adjacent farm shop is well worth a visit.

**Free entry for RHS members** has started for the winter months at **Knoll Gardens** and **Compton Acres**, neither need pre booking. Also free entrance to RHS members at **Abbotsbury** but you do need to book. Otherwise there is a reduced winter rate of £5 to include free hot drink as the café is still operating as a take away.

Finally, who can resist **Hilliers Gardens** at Romsey? These extensive gardens offer much to see at any season and have a well-established highly regarded winter garden. Take away refreshments and drinks are available, but you must book in advance to visit the garden.

**5% Discount at Mayfields still available to HPS members, but I ran out of space!!!!!!**

### Masks

A timely reminder from a member that we should always wear a face mask when handling compost whether turning or spreading home-made compost or working with bought potting compost. Some of us have seen family members or friends contract nasty lung conditions after handling compost, including my husband a year or two back! DIY masks are best but our usual fabric or paper masks are better than nothing.

### Upcoming Plant Heritage Zoom Lectures

**Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 'A Plant Obsession' by Jimi Blake from Hants Plant Heritage at 7pm**

Jimi spent the last 25 years discovering stand-out plants which he grows in dynamic and innovative ways at his fabulous Hunting Brook Gardens near Dublin in Ireland. His book is 'A Beautiful Obsession': A plantsman journey in his own garden.' Tickets are free for PH members, and £5 for everyone else. Visit <https://www.plantheritage.org.uk/events/hamps-hire-isle-of-wight/a-plant-obsession-by-jimi-blake/> to register beforehand.

**Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 for 8pm 'Heuchera and Heucherella** by Vicky Fox, Nurserywoman and National Collection Holder of Heuchera, Heucherella and Tiarella. Held by Plant Heritage. Contact [sonia.a.chapman@talktalk.net](mailto:sonia.a.chapman@talktalk.net) for more details.

**Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2pm 'The Discovery and Development of the Garden at Plas Cadnant'** by Anthony Tavernor. Held by Plant Heritage. Contact [sonia.a.chapman@talktalk.net](mailto:sonia.a.chapman@talktalk.net) for more details.

**Nov 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm 'The Schachen Garden'** by Jenny Wainwright-Klein, the Supervisor of The Schachen Garden, part of Munich Botanic Garden high in the Wetterstein Alps. Held by the Alpine Garden Society. You will enjoy stunning photography of wonderful alpine plants in an alpine setting. The garden is at an altitude of 1860m and encompasses alpine plants from around the globe from the Alps to the Himalayas.

**Dec 5<sup>th</sup> at 2.30pm 'Planting Pots for Spring'** by Whichford Pots Head Gardener Harriet Rycroft. £2. Held by Devon HPS so register at [devon@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:devon@hardy-plant.org.uk)



# Blandford Museum Victorian Garden Virtual Potato Days 2021

***Because of potential problems likely to arise with Covid19 and possible shortages due to Brexit, Pennards Plants decided that there will be **NO POTATO DAYS in 2021*****

Pennard Plants will run a Virtual Online Potato Period, which will be administered through the Pennard Plants website and will offer a 15% online discount on the price of most items that were available during the past years' Potato Days, obviously depending on availability.

- Discounted products will include, but are not limited to; UK sourced potato tubers, onion and shallot sets, 'planting garlic' bulbs, rhubarb, herbs, fruit, and of course the vast range of vegetable and flower seeds.
- Potatoes will be offered in 1Kg bags priced from £3.95 depending on variety.
- Several 'Collections' each made up of 5 tubers of 4 varieties will also be available at £5.95
- No further discounts will apply during this period.
- Discounts will be valid from 1st November 2020 until 31st March 2021, online ([www.pennardplants.com](http://www.pennardplants.com)) with the discount code **pimperne22a** entered in the 'Shopping Cart' page when ordering. The website will take care of discounting. Please type the code in lowercase without spaces.
- Postage & Packing and Gift Vouchers, plus a few odd things are not discounted.
- The code can be used multiple times as needed during this period.
- Please be patient on packing & shipping times; you are not the only one ordering!

[www.pennardplants.com](http://www.pennardplants.com)

Pennard Plants, East Pennard, Somerset

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1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021  
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