



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

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Special Edition 1

To help us keep in touch we plan to send you regular newsletters that hopefully, you will find informative, amusing and uplifting! Thanks to all of you who have sent Debbie or me items to include. Keep them coming! Some of your photos have been put on the website so do look at it regularly. Please send newsletter items to me at:-

Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com

Honesty grown from seed collected in Corfu so I suppose it is **Corfu Blue**, gorgeous, shrub like, almost perennial. I have seed if you would like some. (Diana)



Where to buy plants and garden sundries.

*I feel we **MUST** stress that where a nursery is offering a 'pre-pay and pick up at the gate' service we will **NOT** encourage you to break government guidance by going off on a plant buying jaunt **BUT** if you pass the places mentioned on your way to and from work or your local supermarket, you could collect plants on your way home.*

For example, I bought lovely fuchsias from a little smallholding nearby in Broomhill, whilst out on my daily walk. From Wimborne it could be on your way home from Sainsbury's, so do keep your eyes open for 'roadside' plants buying opportunities.

Peake Perennials operates out of Child Okeford and Helen, the owner, lives in Poole so she can deliver plants if you live on her route to and from work. That would include areas such as Child Okeford, Blandford, Corfe Mullen, Broadstone, Poole and possibly the Corfe Castle area. She might veer from this route for a big order. Look at her plant list online. The **Oasis Garden Centre**, where

she is based, will be doing bedding etc. which she could deliver, but they do not have a plant list. Contact Helen on 07708 872918 or 01202 244510 for more information.

Northbrook Nursery could also do 'remote' selling if you live in Broadstone. Contact them on marg@northbrooknursery.co.uk

Macpenny's of Bransgore can offer pre-pay and collect at the gate. Contact them on 01425 672348 **Canford Magna Garden Centre** are setting up online shopping and deliveries. Look at their website <https://canfordmagna.com/> for more details.

Sundries

For those of us not being shielding, many supermarkets do sell plants, sundries, seeds and compost, let me know what you have found. **Wilkos** is also useful for small bits and pieces including seeds. Do not forget **Mayfields of Parkstone** are still delivering composts etc, see their ad. At the bottom of this newsletter, and don't forget the 5% HPS discount. They warn of potentially longer waits than usual, but my shingle arrived in less than a week and social distancing was observed at all times (Debbie).

Seeds

Many of the bigger companies are overwhelmed with orders and there can be delays, many others are not taking orders. Do not forget smaller companies such as **Sow Seed** for wildflowers and veg. **Derry Watkins, Special Plants** is mailing out seeds, plants and cuttings.

BE INVENTIVE I swapped a tin of tomato puree with a neighbour for half a packet of carrot seeds (she threw in two tins of "government issue" tinned peas from her ration box)!



Tulip 'Green Dance' from Parkers Wholesale



Tulip 'White Liberstar' from Farmer Gracy (look at their website)

Dorset Plant Heritage have cancelled their May Plant Sale at Athelhampton and are compiling a list of small nurseries that can still offer plants online and this will be shared with you.

Jane's April Doings

It seems such a shame that as Hardy Planters we can no longer meet up. This is what I have been up to. No plant sales alas! This year I was all set to grow more and different plants. Instead of destroying them I have given many away and put a line of plants on the pavement. New seeds I have tried this year are *Panicum elegans* a very pretty annual grass, *Nicotiana mutabilis*, Alonsa a very pretty pink annual and Bellis Tasso a perennial gentleman's button. All germinated very well, but despite using vermiculite on the Alonsa, there has been a desperate damping off.

I always keep a beady eye out for any insects flying about and was excited to see *Bombus Agrorum* on aubretia. I hadn't a clue what it was and rushed for the bug book. It was very easy to identify, looks like a torpedo with a long proboscis. This bee is otherwise known as a Carder Bee and it makes nests of grass or moss similar to a small bird's. Bumble bees have been trying to commit suicide in my conservatory and I have now resorted to a crab net to get them back outside.

Spent some time planting *Leucojum autumnale* - September snowdrop, now renamed *Acis*. I have planted them in aquatic baskets so they don't get lost. They are drought tolerant so am hoping to get a colony going.

I can't think why, but I have taken quite a lot of Angel Pelargonium cuttings, some of which are showing signs of roots. Cuttings are so satisfying!

Jane Norris

Thoughts from Sheila

This morning we received our copy of the Spring issue of the Hardy Plant Journal. Just flicking through two things caught my eye, first was an article by Heather Booker, "Design? What design?" - I haven't had time to read it all but quote "The rest was luck and a willingness to move any plant that didn't look happy, or was aesthetically in the wrong place, to a different spot." This struck me particularly as we have been doing just that, really unsure how it will work out, but fed-up with the way things were - our Camellia, Yuletide, has a new home and we hopefully, will have flowers this coming Winter!

The second was Roy Lancaster's final comment in his leading article - always a great read - "As I write these notes in early January of the New Year, the weather continues in its extremes of wind and rain. The politics meanwhile, who knows? Like most gardeners I shall be relying on the world of plants and plantspeople to provide the positive and pleasant highlights in my life; that, together with a loving family." I think we will all say 'Amen' to that!

Sheila Westgate

Plant of the month.

Primulae are a vast family with a wide range of species and cultivars to grow. There are bog lovers, diminutive alpines, and many delightful, collectable plants.

Currently bedazzling us in garden centres are bright modern hybrids in six packs. I think of these as 'raffle primroses'. Generally these are not long lasting and best treated as bedding, useful for instant, cheering colour in containers.

The more expensive individually potted primrose can be worth growing. If split regularly they can go on for quite a few years. My 'Neon Violet', is still going strong after three years as is one of the 'Primlet series'. The older more reliable varieties can go on for years, indeed decades.

A friend of mine grows the lovely mauve double 'Quaker's Bonnet' (*Primula lilacina plena*) (see



left), splitting it regularly and it is still going after a dozen years. It dates back to the 18th century.

Many interesting old varieties have altered or distorted calyxes such as 'Jack - in - the - Green' galligaskins and Jackanapes. The name refers to the loose fitting breeches worn in the 16th and 17th century, a clue to just how old these primroses are! The calyx can be coloured and streaked to match the petals. I grow a form with red flowers and calyx markings. When the flower petals drop off, the coloured calyxes give the impression that the flower is still blooming, thus giving many extra weeks of interest. This vigorous form has been with me for twenty years. The modern, cream double 'Dawn Ansell' has a huge green ruff. Many of the modern doubles are micro-propagated as they do not set seed.



Another interesting form is the 'Hose in hose' where one flower appears to grow out of the middle of the original flower. Again the name is a reference to the habit of wealthy men wearing two pairs of hose, with one turned down to show the other, thus dating this variety back to the same era.

Primula juliae 'Wanda' is very well known, every cottage garden will have sported this for over a hundred years now. *P.juliae* was only introduced in 1900 from the Caucasus, so this is a comparatively modern primrose.

I bought mine last year at our plant sale and is thriving, a real good doer. At garden centres you

will find jewel like 'Wands Series' nothing like the original but quite nice.

For some of the most enchanting modern varieties we must look to the famous Barnhavens. Florence Bellis started her breeding programme in Oregon, Pennsylvania in 1936. The primroses continue to be grown and developed at Barnhaven Nursery in France. They will mail order you plants or seed. Their range is quite extraordinary, do look at their website. If you ever see any for sale at a specialist plant sale do buy them.

If you would like a piece of Jackanapes, let me know I can pot up a few for the Autumn.

Finally a poem from the 1930's, proving that some things never change!

The Old Story

He stands, this simple son of toil,
His feet half-rooted in the soil.
He has a mild, reflective eye;
Rather than cheat you he would die.
Even his whiskers seem to say:
'This man is cast in honest clay'.

He has a shrub reserved for you:
'No, madam, *not* the common blue.
The common blue is just a joke,
Suited to ordinary folk;
But worthless to the likes of you-
No, madam, *not* the common blue'

The time has come to say farewell
To that fair shrub he shouldn't sell.
(You feel he will be surely sacked)
And, when his prodigy is packed,
The parting causes him such pain,
He nearly takes it back again....

*But six months later, you will find
That you have got the common kind.*

Reginald Arkell
(1882-1959)



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