



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

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Editor: Diana Guy

Special Edition 8

Welcome to our eighth special newsletter. Please keep sending items of interest, including your favourite books and news of your garden or others you have visited to me at:- Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com.

News from the Chair

Hello everyone and welcome to yet another edition of our **Special Hardy Times** edited by Diana Guy. I know a lot of you have fed back to me that this has kept you going through those long isolating days when we were in complete lockdown. It was lovely to see some of you at Manor Farm over the past month – it was even beginning to feel like old times. However we are not quite there yet.

I am afraid my next announcement will not be welcome, but I am sure will also not be a surprise! The Committee have decided that, in these uncertain times, as recommendations change regularly, it is difficult for both the Hall and ourselves to be reliant upon anything in the near future. In order to keep you all protected, we have decided to cancel the Day Trip to West Dean, and all the remaining Speaker Meetings in 2020 with a view to making 2021 a “bumper” year. The holiday has already been postponed until July 2021, and we are hoping that the Day Trips can be replicated too, but no promises at this stage.

I am sorry that it has come to this but we really feel that this is the safe option at this time. Refunds, of course will be made for both the Day Trip and also the Celebrity Talk, Nick Bailey. Richard Cooke, our Treasurer, will be going through the list of those who have booked, so he will be able to refund some of you straight away as he already has your details, but can I ask those who have not been refunded for the other day trips, to contact him on richardcooke101@btinternet.com to let him know

your bank sort code and account number so we can BACS the money to you.

It is not so difficult for West Dean as we have your booking forms, but the Celebrity Talk is just on a ticket basis so we cannot chase you. There are also 11 non-member tickets sold – these would normally be bought by a member so please contact Richard if you have 2 tickets – then he can reimburse you for the other ticket as well. We have a list to check you off, but not always contact details unless you are a member.

Please do however keep your thoughts and experiences coming to Diana so we can all keep in touch at these difficult times.

Debbie Steel

Nurturing Nature in my garden



My house, Meadowside, lies on the chalk ridge between Blandford Forum and Winterbourne Stickland. It is close to Broadley and

Bryanston woods and surrounded by organically farmed fields. My garden is cultivated mainly for wildlife. This isn't incompatible with including a large range of hardy plants although I do prefer those with single flowers that provide good sources of nectar and pollen.

This season has been one of prolific blooming and abundant cherries. I have a large wild cherry tree and a smaller eating one. Both trees looked wonderful laden with bright red jewels. The birds prefer the wild cherries as they can grab them in passing and swallow them whole. The larger eating cherries are more difficult – they hang on precariously to snatch just a peck. This year the wild cherry acted as a decoy and I was able to harvest a good crop of eating cherries.

As a member of Garden Bird Watch for many years I've been keeping a record of birds seen each week. It's a citizen science project run by the British Trust for Ornithology and helps track changes in behaviour, health and population, both nationally and locally. Most weeks I log around 20 different species using my garden and some weeks some exciting rarer visitors.



A Viburnum near the pond died a few years back and I left it as a bare skeleton. This is perfect for birds to dive into after bathing or if there's a

Sparrowhawk around. Lately I've been treated to good views there of adult and juvenile Yellowhammer, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat and Linnet.

July is usually the best month for butterflies and so far I've seen 17 different species. They're attracted by the abundance of nectar and the plants they like to lay their eggs on. In addition to herbaceous borders I have 'mini-meadows' of chalk grassland plants and others of long grass, and different varieties of buddleia that flower in succession. Among the more unusual species to visit gardens have been Ringlet, Silver-washed Fritillary, Marbled White and Green-veined White.

While volunteering at Blandford Museum's Victorian Garden in central Blandford a couple of weeks ago I got very excited to spot a White Admiral butterfly, a species not usually seen outside of woodland. Dorset Butterfly Conservation were equally excited when I reported it and have added it to their county records. They've also persuaded me to return a form at the end of the year summarising my garden butterfly sightings. Sadly I didn't get a photo of the White Admiral as I had my hands full topping and tailing gooseberries!

The slower pace of life during lock down and after gave me more time to watch what's going on in my garden. On a large scale I've appreciated watching the seasons change with a succession of beautiful flowers and interesting wildlife. On a smaller scale I've been learning more detail of interactions, and of the numerous species that inhabit it.

We are all so lucky to have gardens to occupy us and to enjoy, especially in the current situation. I'm hoping that there'll be greater general awareness of our place in the intricate web of nature as a

result of the recent change of focus in most people's lives.



A White Admiral

This stunning photograph came via Butterfly Conservation with permission but I later found out that

it was taken by John East, an HPS Dorset member!

Mary Phipps

WANTED URGENTLY

Someone to take over as WebMaster for our Website. It has become an important central reference point for all that we do and all that we are

*No experience necessary but a willingness to learn essential

*Immediate start

*Training will be given if required

Please apply to Debbie on Debbie.steel@outlook.com for more details

Conservation Scheme

The national HPS runs a plant Conservation Scheme, which aims to identify and preserve at least some garden-worthy plants that are in danger of being lost. Members of the scheme grow the plants in a variety of places across the country, report back on how well the plants have grown for them and also propagate them to be passed onto other groups. There is a National Co-ordinator who oversees the Scheme and each group involved has a group coordinator. Members who wish to be involved in the scheme are asked to record their experience of growing and propagating a conservation plant, reporting back annually on how it has performed for them. There is an annual group coordinators' meeting, where Conservation Scheme plants are exchanged with other groups, so that growers in other parts of the country can also try it.

The Dorset Group was involved in the scheme several years ago, but the committee is wondering

if there is sufficient interest amongst our members for the group to join again. There is lots more information on the main HPS website (<https://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/about-plants/conservation>). If any of you are keen propagators and would like to become involved, then please email me on pen.il@hotmail.com, so we can gauge interest and decide on where we go from here.

Penny Cleaver

Barbara's Memorial Garden

You will know, by Debbie's updates and pictures on the website, that great progress is being made with the memorial garden outside Colehill Library where our dear Barbara was a volunteer.

I thought it would be a good time to reflect on exactly how this came about, thus sharing Barbara's original vision with you all.

A year ago I sat in Barbara's summerhouse to discuss planting ideas about a garden that for some time Barbara had wanted to create at the library. There were two main considerations - the very challenging conditions at the site, which is heavily wooded (mainly pines that constantly shed needles) with dry sandy acid soil, and the fact that the garden must 'go' with the environment. She envisaged a woodland garden, a tapestry of greens with a gentle splash of subtle seasonal colour via bulbs, hellebores and cyclamen. Member Sue Collins, a great plantsperson, was there too so we shared ideas and came up with a planting list of good "doers", which I refined and turned into a simple design.

We are using ferns, shade tolerant grasses, *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae*, *Pieris* 'Little Heath', *Liriope* 'Big Blue', *Pachysandra terminalis* variegata, *Myrrhis odorata*, *Galium odoratum*, (can any reader give us a piece of this?) *Geranium* 'Rozanne' (one of Barbara's favourites which we are using from her own garden), various vincas and lamiums, *cyclamen hederifolium* and with a *Fatsia japonica* and *Pittosporum* 'Irene Patterson' and *Fuchsia* 'Hawkshead' as accent plants. *Sarcococca confusa* will bring scent in the winter air.

Bulbs, including the shade tolerant *Tulipa sylvestris*, alliums and narcissus along with choice hellebores (another favourite) and *Cyclamen* coum will be added later.

We are grateful to the members who have kindly donated plants.

For various reasons the garden plans went on a back burner, although approval was given last autumn. However, when Barbara sadly died, the library team were keen to get the garden started, in her memory and asked us to get involved. Despite lockdown, the planning began and the rest is history!

Sourcing quality plants in August, especially this year, is a bit tricky but Barbara is worthy of the best, and we are getting there.

The bulk of the planting up should be completed by the end of the month. Aftercare will be undertaken by the group of library volunteers who undertake the maintenance of the library grounds on a regular basis.

It has been said that we must be mad to plant up a garden in August, but we are planting into lovely enriched mix topsoil and it is, of course, a shady site. To get plants off to the best possible start we are using a methodology based on what I call the 'Edmondsham Method' see below.

When it is finished do pop by and see what you think of it when you are next in Colehill.

Gardening in Hot Weather - The Edmondsham method

Sometimes it is necessary to plant something, or even move an established plant, (although not a tree or a large plant) when the weather is hot.

I have watched our President and Edmondsham House Head Gardener, Andrew Haynes, demonstrate 'puddling in' on many an occasion and this is my adaptation.

- First of all, soak the plant well and dig a generous hole.
- Repeatedly fill the hole with water until it stops draining away rapidly and begins to hold water. This may take several cans.
- Place the plant in the wet hole and 'puddle it in' by rapidly emptying a can of water round it, this washes the roots down towards what is now a vast reservoir of water beneath the plant which it will soon start to seek out.
- Cover the plant over with dry soil and do not water again for several days or even a week or two. The dry soil on the top stops the precious water evaporating. **If a newly planted plant is watered little and often straight after planting the roots take the**

easy option and grow upwards to seek moisture and then these new roots die when the soil becomes dry and water does not magically appear every day.

In July I used this method to move a large dahlia, a big cosmos and a tall aster. They are all still perky.

This is not what you see on T.V when a certain gardener cheerfully bungs a plant into a dry hole and says "I will give this a good soak later".

The Much Maligned Montbretia

We have all seen the 'montbretia' growing rampantly across the hedgerows in the south west and in every old neglected garden making unproductive leafy clumps. This is *Cocosmia x crocosmifolia* and is, in fact, listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act making it an offence to plant it in, or let it escape into, the wild because it is spreading so rapidly. It is smothering out native flora.

However there are many garden friendly cultivars worth growing, such as my favourites Limpopo (right) and Severn Sunrise which have a softer, more coral tinge than the more strident oranges.



In my garden Limpopo is growing with the late *Hemerocallis* 'Sammy Russell', a superb old cultivar and the two give a real warm zing beside a *Cornus controversa variegata*.

One of the first to flower is the tall, vibrant red 'Lucifer', an old variety bred in the 1960's by Alan Bloom who bred so many excellent plants.



The yellows are gaining popularity. 'Pauls Best Yellow' is highly regarded but 'Walberton's

Yellow' (above) looks even better.

This new cultivar is a result of a breeding programme lasting many years by David Tristram of *Helleborus* 'Walbertons Rosemary' fame. If it is half as good as this stunning hellebore it will be a winner.

Bronze leaf forms such as C. 'Solfataire' tend to be slightly trickier and not so hardy.

They all hail from South Africa (as you will have recently seen on Gardeners World) and are a great asset to the high summer garden.

A charming old common name for crocosmia is 'Falling Stars'.

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