



# HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

## Dorset Group Hardy Times Newsletter

March 2022 - Issue 169  
email: [dorsethps@gmail.com](mailto:dorsethps@gmail.com)  
[www.dorsethps.org.uk](http://www.dorsethps.org.uk)

### Change of March Speaker

Sadly, due to unforeseen circumstances, we have a change of speaker on Saturday 26th March at Colehill Village Hall.

We have been extremely lucky to book Heather Goddard-Key from Fibrex Nurseries in Stratford upon Avon, who is going to talk to us about 'All things Pelargonium for the Garden, House and Home'.

Heather is part of the family owned and run Fibrex Nurseries who, until recently, held the National Collections of Pelargoniums and Hedera. These collections have now moved to & been split between RHS Gardens.

Fibrex are multiple medal winners and have been regular exhibitors at Chelsea over the past 50 years. The nursery also holds possibly the largest collection of hardy ferns in the country.



Their website [www.Fibrex.co.uk](http://www.Fibrex.co.uk) is excellent and well worth a look if you have time.

Heather will be bringing plants to sell (indoors)

We hope to be able to re-book Terry Baker for a future date.

### Trial Meeting Timings

For the next few meetings we are trialling a short comfort break in the middle of the meeting – we know that sitting for a long time can be difficult, so you will have 15 minutes to stretch your legs or get another cup of tea and more cake!

Gates open at 1.45pm. Talk to start at 2.30pm.

The meeting should be finished by 4.30pm

**Your help to put chairs away is much appreciated.**

### Members only at Meetings

Please remember that, until further notice our meetings are 'members only'.

### Plant Sale – Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May at Colehill Village Hall - 2 30 to 4 30pm.

**Admission £1. Cash only please. Refreshments.**

The plant sale tables will be set up in the car park, with refreshments in the hall. Posters will be available at the March meeting to display in your local area.

If you would like to book a table to sell your own plants, there will be a flat charge of ten pounds per table (you can bring your own 6ft table) The flat fee replaces the commission sometimes charged.

Please contact:-

Liz on [lizunderwood@gmx.co.uk](mailto:lizunderwood@gmx.co.uk) or

Helen on [h.mcillmurray@btinternet.com](mailto:h.mcillmurray@btinternet.com)

Also contact Liz or Helen if you would like to donate plants for us to sell.

### Gardens of Suffolk, our own

#### Dorset HPS Holiday : 19<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June

We still have a few places left for the holiday to Suffolk. So please consider coming, we are visiting some gorgeous gardens, some that are not normally open to the public.

See the Events table at the meeting or our website.

Gardens we will be visiting during the 4 days:-

- **Snares Hill Cottage**, Essex, a quirky 1.5 acre garden with a natural swimming pool, herb garden and Shepherds Hut.
- **Wyken Hall Gardens**. The gardens here nestle around the old Manor House. The herb and knot gardens lead to the rose garden and there is also a beech maze and an orchard.
- **The Priory**, Stoke by Nayland. The owner has been gardening here for 40 years and there are 9 acres of woodland, lakes and lawns to explore with a superb fully stocked Victorian greenhouse.
- **Polstead Mill**, a garden which has been developed since 2002. It has a wildflower meadow, a large productive kitchen garden, a mill pond and herbaceous borders. It is featured in The Secret Gardens of East Anglia.

- **The Moat House**, Little Saxham. It is set in a 2 acre partially moated site and has been developed in the last 20 years. There is a small arboretum with rose and clematis borders and a new parterre.
- **Fullers Mill**, a 7 acre garden on the River Lark, owned and managed by the charity Perennial. It combines light woodland, unusual shrubs, marginal plants and walks over bridges and along the streams with views across the lake.
- **Columbine Hall** is a historic moated house with a walled garden, bog garden and vegetable garden. It has featured in Gardens Illustrated, The English Garden and Country Living magazines.
- **Helmingham Hall**, owned by the Tollemache family for hundreds of years. Features are a knot garden, apple tree walk, a stunning walled kitchen garden and a parterre with hybrid musk roses, all surrounding the moated hall and deer park.
- **RHS Hyde Hall, in Essex**, with its iconic dry garden. Other features here include an Australia and New Zealand garden, a rope rose walk and a Queen Mother's garden.

### Suffolk Holiday – Payment Balance Due

A gentle nudge to those who have paid their deposit for the holiday, that the balance will be due at the end of this month. You will be emailed soon with details of the amount and how to pay.

### Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July – Day Trip to Malverleys and Houghton Lodge Gardens

Malverleys - a new English Flower Garden set within the grounds of a country estate. Begun in 2010, the 10-acre gardens have been designed by Matt in conjunction with the owners and are influenced by Great Dixter in Sussex and the writings of iconic gardeners such as Christopher Lloyd, William Robinson and Vita Sackville-West.

Houghton Lodge Gardens - recently shown on Gardeners World, and used on countless photo shoots for films and dramas. Situated above the River Test the lodge exemplifies the 'picturesque' genre of the late 1700's.

Brochures and more information on the Events table at our meetings.

Members £41 Non-members £46

### Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> Sept – Day Trip to two Sussex gardens - Sussex Prairies & Borde Hill Garden

Two very special gardens, our visit is perfectly timed to see the Prairies at their best and is the day before it's open to the public!

Borde Hill Garden is a heritage garden set within 200 acres of traditional parkland with views over the Sussex high Weald. The 17 acre garden includes a rose garden, Italian garden, Paradise Walk, Dell and a Midsummer Border.

Brochures and more information on the Events table at our meetings.

Members £34 Non-members £39

### Jobs for the month

- Plant out Autumn sown sweet peas in deep, enriched soil with sturdy supports, I like hazel bean poles.
- Time soon to cut back salvias, penstemons and hydrangeas.
- Continue seed sowing in the greenhouse gradually starting the tender fast-growing plants (eg Cosmos), and prick out those sown a few weeks back.
- Begin to plant out summer bulbs such as gladioli and Acidanthera.
- Pot up dahlias. Keep them under glass, they will need full light for 4 to 5 weeks after potting up, when shoots start to appear.

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Welcome to my March articles, do continue to send items to me at:- [Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com](mailto:Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com)

### History of the Hardy Plant Society

*My thanks to Pat Haskell for helping me research this article.*

A meeting with the RHS at Vincent Square 64 years ago saw the birth of the Hardy Plant Society with the formation of the first group in Suffolk and Norfolk, founded by Alan Bloom with the legendary Arthur Hellyer, Will Ingwerson and John Sambrook. Other local groups formed, and one great attraction was the formation of specialist groups, for example Hardy Geraniums, a group that locally has many fans!

By the eighties we had our first thriving Dorset HPS group led by our lovely Anne Stevens, of the iconic Ansty Cottage (right).

It was a very watery garden and Anne held the three National Collections, *Caltha*, *Lobelia* and *Trollius*.

She was a garden writer, author of a book on the Cottage Garden, opened for the National Garden Scheme and managed her immaculate garden that was generously planted with rarities.

We all loved to visit her, she was so generous with her plants and advice. We would all flock to her October plant swap that was held on her drive and come away with some real treasures.



Anne was running the Dorset Hardy Plant Society group practically solo but the National group preferred to run it on more formal lines, like the other groups. She discussed it with her membership, they all agreed they liked the relaxed yet efficient way she ran it, so she closed it down as a Hardy Plant Society group but kept it going as the renamed Dorset Perennial Group which still runs today. Sadly, in 2018, Anne passed away and the gardening world lost a legend.

After a brief hiatus our current Dorset HPS group was formed in 1989 - almost a quarter of a century ago! Long may it thrive!

#### **This was great era for new societies....**

- In 1978, the inaugural meeting of **Plant Heritage**, then called the NCCPG, was called for by the RHS following a conference at Kingston Maurward about conserving plants. Its Dorset group was set up in 1979 and membership grew. In December 1989 an East Dorset group was set up following a launch with information boards and a plant display at Haskins, (at its old site at Trickett's Cross, I wonder how many of you remember those days?). This was to the benefit of the main group as it attracted new members from the conurbations in the east and west Hampshire, too. In 1990 we held the first East Dorset meeting at the Allendale with Anne Stevens as the speaker. I had the joy and privilege of helping to run this group for many years.

- In 1982 the **Cottage Garden Society** was formed, with its Dorset group starting in 1996 (I also helped to run this group!). Like HPS it has a fabulous seed swap scheme.

- In 1989 the **County Gardens Trust** was formed, and we also have a large, thriving local group of that.

It is impressive to think how many large garden societies there are in Dorset plus all the little garden clubs. When Pat and I were speakers it certainly kept us busy.

*\*\*Pat and I would love to hear from any of you who belonged to the original Dorset HPS group.*

#### **Plants of the Month**

**Violets, pulmonaria, primroses, brunnera and omphaloides.**

All the above were on sale from Dorset Perennials at the recent successful NGS open day, it was nice to see some of our members there. I did succumb.

#### **Siberian Bugloss, or Brunnera**

Brunnera are a vast group enjoying damp shade, having some tolerance of dry soil. For lush leaves they do best in damp conditions. It is this foliage that tempts most of us to grow them. The biggest hosta-like leaves belong



to *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Alexander's Great' and a very pure silver is found on *Brunnera m.* 'Jack Frost'. We used both in the dry shade of Barbara's garden at the library so do take a look.

You can get the delightful forget-me-not like flowers in white or blue. I bought two, the white flowered 'Mr Morse' and 'Silver Spear' with a silver well marked pointed leaf. In the picture *Brunnera m.* 'Silver Heart'.

#### **Violets**

This is such a vast subject and the range available in the average garden centre is limited, if it is there at all. National Collection Holders, Groves at Bridport have a wonderful selection for sale, including highly scented Parma Violets, so it well worth a trip to stock up.

#### **Omphaloides**

This sweet little unassuming forget me not look-alike, native to the British Isles, scores by having *really* intense blue flowers, once again, it enjoys damp shade.



Two are readily available, *Omphaloides cappadocica* 'Cherry Ingram' (above) the best blue, and one with starry markings called *Omphaloides c.* 'Starry Eyes'. Go to a website such as the Beth Chatto Nursery and you find the white *Omphaloides nitida*, *Omphaloides verna* and *Omphaloides verna* 'Alba' and 'Elfinauge.' There is a short-lived but beautiful annual form, white with silvery foliage called *Omphaloides linifolia* or Venus's navelwort (I know, what a name!)

#### **Pulmonaria**

This genus was well covered last March but I must mention the strong pink *P.* 'Shrimps on the Barbie' (right). Sue and I bought one. Sue said it was such a silly name she is not going to label it in her garden!



#### **Primula**

These were featured in April 2020. I have to say they are stunning this year in my garden, the warm not too wet winter helped plus I am working on really enriching my soil.

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