



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

June 2022 Issue 171

email: dorsethps@gmail.com

website: www.dorsethps.org.uk

Editor: Diana Guy

Welcome to the Midsummer Special edition of the Hardy Times. Please send items for future issues to me at: -

Diana.kitemoor@btinternet.com.



Our native dianthus, the Cheddar Pink, grown from HPS seed from the seed exchange.

Local non DHPS events

Saturday 2nd July from 2 to 4.30 pm.

James and Sheila's Open Garden

Longstanding members, Sheila and James Westgate, are opening their lovely garden which is full of plant interest, at **83 Hayes Lane, Colehill, BH21 2JD**.

For more information call Sheila on 07596 068263. All proceeds go to Bowel Cancer UK Reg. Charity no.1071038. If you are unable to attend but would like to donate please go to www.justgiving.com/fundraising/clairtaylorlight Refreshments available and plants for sale.

Sunday 24th July from 1pm

Fay Clifford's Garden Party

Fay will be holding her second garden party of the year in aid of Dorset Cancer Care and Wimborne Scout Group at her garden **Brackenwood, God's Blessing Green, Holt BH21 7DD** next to Stewarts Garden Centre, Broomhill.

Live music, plants for sale, arts and crafts, refreshments, on-site parking and a lovely garden with lakeside walks to relax in.

Dorset HPS Speaker Events

Our autumn speaker meetings start again in September, with our usual location at Colehill Village Hall. More detail in the next issue of Hardy Times.

Saturday 24th September – Tim Stretton Head Gardener at Folly Farm in Berkshire will be talking to us. Further information regarding timings to follow nearer the date.

Saturday 22nd October – Paul Lewis will be talking about 'Crocoshmia & Gladioli: From Breeding, getting a plant to market and field judging for the RHS.'

Saturday 26th November – Celebrity Speaker

Nick Bailey – '365 days of colour'

By Ticket Only £6. Currently for members only, will be available from the next meeting and from the plant stall at Manor Farm NGS open days.

Day Trips

These are currently fully booked, so we have waiting lists for the two day trips, Malverleys/Haughton Lodge on 26th July, and Sussex Prairies/Borde Hill on 8th September. For more information please contact Judy on judyspratley@outlook.com or Debbie on debbie.steel@outlook.com

Open Days at Manor Farm (NGS)

We are running the plant sales tables again at Manor Farm NGS Open Days on

Sunday 17th July and Sunday 7th August from 1pm until 5 pm.

Teas in aid of Dorset Lupus Groups.

Manor Farm, Hampreston, BH21 7LX

Articles on Recent Events

The May Plant Sale

We all thoroughly enjoyed our annual May Plant Sale, members offered a very wide range of plants between them and we had lots of happy customers. We would like to thank all of you who donated plants, these alone raised over £100. The final total was a splendid £396.72. Our thanks to Liz and Helen for organising it.

The 2022 Dorset Hardy Plant Society Holiday to Suffolk – 19th to 23rd June



As always, there were concerns “would the gardens be good enough?”, “would the weather be favourable to us?”, “will enough people book?”. However in the end we need not have worried. The sun shone, the gardens were beautiful, and everyone who came seemed to enjoy themselves. Even the nursery, added at the last minute, was a delight with a variety of different plants, but at prices that would compete with our usual Plant Stall! With fewer travellers than usual (36), but a bigger coach than usual (59 seater) we had loads of room to spread out, and plenty more room for plants in the hold.

On travelling to each garden, I kept being told “this is a wonderful garden but so different from the last”. So, all good to hear. There was such a range from private gardens, to a rose garden that even competed with Mottisfont. Then a huge greenhouse stuffed full, mainly of pelargoniums, but did include *Datura*, *Streptocarpus*, *Plumbago* and *Strelitzia regina*, to name a few. I just can’t understand it but most were running around then going back in for a second look. I only got this picture once everyone went off to eat their cake or visit the toilet.



Greenhouse chock full

The private gardens at Polstead and the Moat House were beautifully planted, both with swimming pools, and both providing excellent food. We certainly didn’t go hungry.

The third day we visited the Perennial Garden, Fullers Mill, which did not disappoint either. I am not good at writing up about the gardens as I have always left that to others, but it is true to say that each garden had its own personality and character, making each one a pleasure to visit. Even the local park, Abbey Gardens, in the centre of Bury St Edmunds was well worth visiting. Our planned café on the itinerary had burnt down earlier in the year, so this was another last minute adjustment. Many of the locals were there enjoying their sandwiches. It was nice to see such a supported local amenity. It also gave us the opportunity to pop into the Cathedral to see where the Flower Arranger Group were setting up an exhibition. See what value you get on an HPS holiday!

Columbine excelled itself for the historical building, and its setting, and the fact that their fruit cake won “Best Cake of the Trip”. Then off to Helmingham Hall – which won the “Best Garden of the Trip” Award. We had some time to enjoy the Walled Garden behind the Hall, then the Rose & Herb Garden in front before collecting together for our evening meal. This, like all the food throughout, was of a very high standard. Well no one complained to either me or Judy. With the prosecco flowing, and lots of raucous laughter, our last evening was a success.

Unlike last year, where we had had to keep everyone in the same groups because of covid, we had the luxury of being able to mix and it was like old times, where friendships (hopefully) flourished

and you will remember one another when next you meet.



Sweet pea tunnel at Helmingham Hall

RHS Hyde Hall was as expected – an immaculate RHS garden where the Dry Garden did not disappoint, although I did notice they were watering with hoses (but not on the Hilltop).

So, another success to add to the list. Phew! Judy & I needed just a day or two to recover. Thank you everyone who came along and fully immersed themselves in the experience. It was a good one!

Debbie

Editor's Note: Our group has now organised 8 holidays, and we must thank the events committee ably led by Judy and Debbie for their many years of hard work researching and organising these fantastic holidays. I only managed one holiday, but the memories are still with me, held very dear.

Colehill Open Gardens last weekend

We were asked to provide a plant table for the Colehill Open Gardens, that took place last Saturday, the 25th June. Judy, Jane, Sue and I arrived to put out the plants from 9.30am, and within minutes people were itching to buy them! We were by the library, where most were buying their tickets, and were able to explain to some about how we had helped create Barbara's (Gooch) Memorial Garden, on 2 sides of the library, with volunteers from both the HPS and the library. It was nice to see it still going well 2 years on.

All funds raised were for the Colehill Community Library. Stewarts Garden Centre sponsored the event, as they had done for The Gadabout that Barbara and I had organised in June 2016. Was it really that long ago?

Anyway we contributed to the overall amount collected, which I believe to be £1,570, with 160 tickets sold throughout the day – a tremendous achievement. Thanks to everyone who opened their gardens, and to those who came along to have a look.

Debbie

Editor's Note: At the plant stall there was a lot of very positive feedback about all the gardens, I was only able to visit two gardens, one belonged to Anne Prince, one of our members. I had heard all about her recent landscaping project, which was much admired. The garden is prone to flooding by springs, and the whole project was well documented in her very smart new garden room. A dappled shady corner housed an impressive collection of acers, grown lovingly over the years from tiny plants.

The other really lovely garden I visited was in Middlehill Rd and, it had teas and live music and a huge Cedar of Lebanon. Features included the clever use of artefacts and stunning containers many of which were planted with a wide variety of pelargoniums, which were also housed in a fabulous decorative little glasshouse.

Anne's 'Tricks of the Trade'

(Anne Trehane of Manor Farm)

We have all admired Anne's amazing borders on her NGS days this year, and she has kindly agreed to elaborate on how she achieves such success in borders.

First of all: **Staking**. Through the winter months, after plants have been cut back, divided and replanted, Anne sets to with the staking and probably about 90% of plants are given sturdy, generous stakes. She uses various methods to suit the needs of the plants. A few have bamboo canes and a network of string, others have link stakes which can also criss-cross to work in the same way. Taller plants such as dahlias have sturdy wooden stakes and string. Guy spent a long time in the winter producing lovely half hoops out of steel rods, this requires a lot of strength as sturdy steel needs to be used and it is bent over a proforma such as an iron barrel (you might have seen Monty Don make them on television).

I used to buy mine from Snape Cottage and they have lasted over thirty years whereas some cheaper ones I have bought barely lasted two

seasons before they snapped, so choose wisely and let me know which brands work for you.

Secondly: **Mulching** with manure from their farm is evident, it protects the ground from drying out, suppresses weeds, improves the texture of the soil and provides an element of nourishment. In addition Anne has installed a watering system.

Finally: **The 'Hampton Hack' – cutting back both spent blooms and foliage in June/July** is going on right now to ensure a lovely fresh display and good late summer colour into the Autumn. Some plants will not re-bloom but the fresh new foliage will tidy up a border. (This would be a good time to dig up and split such plants to give more space in the border, but only attempt it in a cool damp spell.)

Here is Anne's list for a hard cut back: hardy geraniums, brunnera, astrantia, nepeta, heuchera, tradescantia, and tiarellas. From my garden I would add aquilegias, violas and any wilting pulmonarias, anthemis and herbs.

This follows the **'Chelsea chop'** on late flowering perennials, which she has already performed a month ago. It goes alongside normal deadheading which is ongoing throughout the growing season.

Thank you, Anne, for sharing that with us.

Plant of the Month

Geums

For many years we only really ever saw the bright yellow semi-double **Geum 'Lady Stratheden'** and the vivid red semi-double **G. 'Mrs Bradshaw'**. Both were awarded AGMs because of their good performance in the garden, where sometimes, dead heading will give a second flush.

Some of us know and grow the native water avens, **G. rivale**, giving a clue that Geums do like a bit of moisture in the soil. If you have soil which is on the dry side, beef it up with garden compost and grow them in semi-shade. Closely related to



the species are the shorter, newer apricot and copper toned forms such as

G. 'Mai Tai', **G. 'Coppertone'**, and **G. 'Petticoats Peach'** (left) useful because although they are

quite short they will tolerate quite a bit of shade. I

find **G. 'Mai Tai'** a useful very floriferous plant flowering only once but for quite a long time.

The big change in the Geum world was the introduction of sterile hybrids which will flower all summer long as they do not set seed. They do, however need regular deadheading to ensure months of flowering.

The most popular of this new tribe has to be **G. 'Totally Tangerine'**. The flowers are fairly small, single, and held on well branched tall wiry stems. It is quite possible, with a little care and attention to have this in flower for months on end, starting from mid May.



Other sterile Geums include the brighter orange **G. 'Prinses Juliana'**, and **G. 'Blazing Sunset'**



with larger semi-double flowers. **G. 'Blazing Sunset'** (left) will flower from May until September.

There is an interesting series of Geums called the 'Tempest series' comprising of 'Scarlet Tempest', 'Tropical Tempest' and 'Fiery Tempest, all quite bright and showy.

Liz grows 'Tropical Tempest' (right)



All geums look good with grasses, which is why I started to grow them. I was creating a prairie style bed and I wanted plants that would give colour early in the season and as I find it easy to introduce flowers for late summer.

Pelargoniums

Since the fabulous recent talk on pelargoniums, interest in these delightful plants seemed to be on the increase. Judy has built up an impressive collection and she is selling fabulous plants,

hopefully there will still be some at the next plant sales tables at Manor Farm.

On a recent trip to the Lost Gardens of Heligan I was knocked out by the pelargonium display in one of the lovely old greenhouses. However, we have a member who has a display that could rival Heligan! Member Janice Walters writes....
"As a young gardener I used to rather scorn pelargoniums as old ladies' flowers. Now I am an old lady, I understand their appeal! The recent talk on pelargoniums was so interesting and useful and made me more of a fan".

Editor's Note: 'Here! Here'

Here are two views from the kitchen of our small conservatory, which is extremely low maintenance.



Pelargonium 'Appleblossom Rosebud' was a favourite of Queen Victoria

Janice adds:

Here is a fascinating read, which surveys all the latest research world-wide about the amazing ecosystem below the surface of the soil. To quote just to give you an idea;

"There are more living things in a teaspoon of healthy soil than there are humans on Earth"
The most vital part of the book covers ways in which soil can be kept healthy and productive and outlines the idea of regenerative farming and gardening. The science is brilliantly explained, up to date and accessible and the book is a brilliant read.

The title is "**Soil**" by **Matthew Evans**. It was published in 2021 by Murdoch Books.
ISBN 978 1 91166 819 0 UK

Janice Walters.

Useful Bulbs

Jane Norris's lovely pictures remind us that bulbs and corms are not just for Spring.



Alliums

For example, choose Alliums carefully and you can have different varieties in flower from May until late August.



The J. Parkers Wholesale catalogue has just arrived and they list an amazing **57** different alliums including **3** new ones for this year. To obtain the catalogue ring 01618481124 or look online at

www.dutchbulbs.co.uk

(Above) *Allium 'Mount Everest'*

***Gladiolus byzantinus*,**

It is tricky to obtain the genuine article, many companies, including Parkers, have the paler form not the vibrant magenta one we know as 'Whistling Jacks' that grow very well in Cornwall and on the Isles of Scilly. Avon Bulbs stock the sought after form, also some small Cornish nurseries which have limited stock, so do some research now and pre-order. Or you could ask for divisions from friends that have well established clumps in their gardens. Please let me know if you have found a reliable source of these delightful flowers.



***Gladiolus murielae* (syn. *Acidanthera*)**

One of the latest corms to flower, from August until October, is the lightly perfumed *Gladiolus murielae* (syn *Acidanthera*), another favourite of the Victorians. They are not hardy, so need to be lifted and dried off when they have finished. They can be grown in borders or containers. Avon bulbs have very good sized corms and they are also available from Parker's Wholesale catalogue.



Jobs for the Month

- Time to remove honesty and foxgloves as they go over, just leave one or two of the colours or forms that you liked best to set seed so you can and shake the plant either into paper bags, or directly over the border in a few weeks time. The subsequent seedlings will give you give you plants for 2023. I have cosmos and zinnias waiting in the wings to go in the spaces.



- You just about have time to sow biennials such as digitalis or you may already have little biennial seedlings emerging, that you might want to move around to where you want them to grow and flower next year. Do so in a cool damp spell. You can only move honesty once as it develops tubers that easily break off.
- As well as cutting certain plants hard back (see the article on Manor Farm) it is important to keep up with regular deadheading unless you especially wish leave seed heads for collection purposes, or seasonal interest. Roses will always benefit from a midseason feed and good watering.
- Gather the seedheads of Alliums just before they are completely ripe, then dry them out indoors to use for decoration purposes. They look stunning sprayed gold or silver for Christmas.
- Shrubs that have finished flowering can be pruned now, some examples are forsythia, deutzia, philadelphus and lilac. They too will benefit from a good watering and a feed.
- You just about still have time to prune Group one clematis such as *C. montana* and *C. armandii*, but do not hesitate or you will lose all of next year's flowers. Best to just trim back to fit the space you wish it to occupy.

Next Issue

Topics we would like to look at in the September Hardy Times include:

- How are you getting on with peat free composts, are you having problems and which brands do you recommend?
- What do you do about lily beetles, I have a rather drastic solution which I shall share.
- Which plants have grown particularly well for you this year?

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