Hardy Times

Spring 2023

Send your articles to the Editor at:
comms.dorsethps@gmail.com

HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY
Dorset Group

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Hardy Times.

Though I'm not sure about 'Spring', at the moment as it feels like we're living in a fridge all the time! I fear that some of our borderline hardy plants will succumb to the prolonged periods of freezing or near freezing temperatures! I've 'rescued' so many of these and stuffed them into my cold conservatory in the hope they'll come through ok… but only time will tell!

When the temperatures do finally start to improve I'm sure I'll be asking you for lists of those plants that have NOT survived … so please bear this in mind, and perhaps keep a pen and paper handy and make notes. There's still a fair bit of winter to go yet - as I write this temperatures are plummeting again!

*We now have a dedicated email address for you to send articles to... **comms.dorsethps@gmail.com** or you can still use the Group Secretary's email.*

What do we have for you this issue?… Many thanks to all contributors… read on… Ed.

Plants for Pollinators in a Natural Garden

Last summer I had some time to stand and stare at many of the plants in mine and many other gardens which attract insects of all shapes and sizes.

Butterflies, hoverflies, bees, beetles and Hummingbird Hawkmoths have entertained me on many occasions. Watching a butterfly probe deep into a single *Phlox* flower, the Hawkmoth darting quickly between *Salvia* blooms, bees queueing to have a turn on the flower head of an *Echinops ritro* (below) and many others, have proven the value of our garden plants to wildlife.

I garden In Hampshire where we have had a 'no mow' May for many years, so we now have many *Ajuga reptans* (bugle) a bee favourite, *Leucanthemum vulgare,* Ox-eye Daisy, and many *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Common spotted orchid) which attract day flying moths.

It was fascinating to visit our French garden after a prolonged period away to see that 'Wasp Spiders' *Argiope bruennichi* had taken up residence in our Yew (*Taxus baccata*) cones or more precisely between them. The large females (right) had made their orb webs between the unpruned branches of the plants. Silk egg sacs were present and small brown males were in evidence waiting to take their chance. They are tiny compared to the females… and have to wait until she is mature with soft mouth parts, so they do not perish while trying to reproduce! I understand that this species is now present in Southern England, mimicking wasps to avoid predation - they are harmless to us.

Yellow seems to be a marmite colour for many gardeners but is extremely popular with our pollinators. *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Goldsturm' and *Ligularia dentata* are three that had many visitors. A less well-known plant which should be more widely grown is the 'Yellow Ironweed' *Verbesina alternifolia* a prairie type plant self-supporting and with good flat flower heads which are a reliable source of both nectar and pollen.

Echinacea varieties are a classic go to plant for the bee, but also good are the *Verbena hastata*

varieties, shorter and better-behaved self-seeding wise compared to the ubiquitous *V. bonariensis.*

Do not forget the value of native plants – the flowers of the blackberry *Rubus fruiticosus* attract many pollinators and if you have an untidy corner in your plot are valuable for those visitors as well as for us when we can collect the fruit in the autumn.

Roses can also be insect friendly, especially the single bloomed varieties. This *Rosa* 'Golden Wings' (below) has a Spotted Longhorn Beetle *Rutpela maculata* on the flower, *R.* 'Mermaid' is another

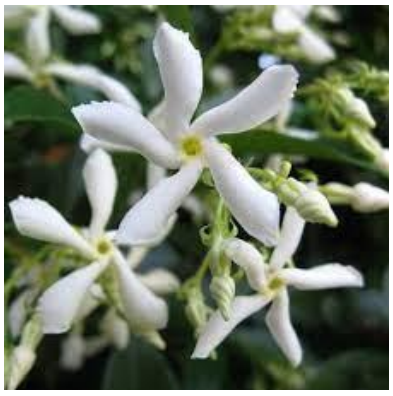
good example and many of the *R rugosa* types such as *R. '*Scabrosa' are great for pollinators too. This is just a small selection, but all these are garden worthy plants and, without exception, have stood up to the rigours of the difficult summer last year.

Gillian Taylor

Trachelospurmum jasminoides (Star Jasmine)

If ever there's a plant you should have in your garden it's this one!

An evergreen twiner with white jasmine scented flowers in summer and glossy green leaves many of which turn orange/red in winter (note, if this continues into summer this could be a sign of dryness or needing nutrition).



But, its value is much more than these...

One plant will easily cover 3m x 3m, train horizontally like a rose, or over an arch. It's very well behaved and just needs a trim (shears will do) in mid spring. The long new growths just need tucking in horizontally to encourage new shoots. It 'clothes to the ground', meaning you don't have bare stems for the bottom 2 or 3 feet. It loves being in the sun, but will grow in other positions too but these may not produce as many flowers (I have one on a north-east wall, where its leaves are a dark green all year, it does flower but not quite as much as the others).

In Italy it's grown everywhere! Twining round poles; tree trunks, and even as a beautiful flowering scented hedge on chain-link fencing, again, trimmed neatly with the shears.

I have five in my garden! Three climbing up posts in full sun; one which only gets morning sun, and finally the one already mentioned on the north-east wall. Just gorgeous.

Viv East

Drying Pussy Willow

At this time of year you can dry the stems of Pussy Willow, usually *Salix caprea*; a few straight stems look lovely in a tall, narrow necked vase.

To dry, stand dry stems in a warm place such as an airing cupboard, where they should be dry in 1-2 weeks. They may bend if laid down to dry.

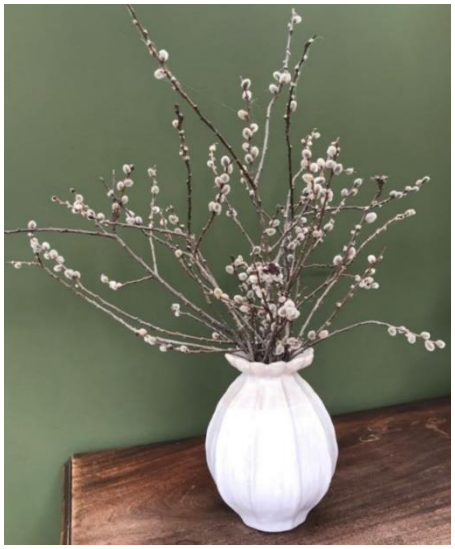
Alternatively small branches will dry arranged upright in a vase with a drop of water. Similar to drying hydrangeas they will slowly dry out at room temperature as the water evaporates.

In many European countries they are used as religious decorations at Easter. They look good on their own but can be used to hang small decorations at Christmas or Easter.

For either straight or branched stems make sure all the 'catkins' are fat and furry before starting the drying process.

They could last 3-4 years, like these dried in 2020, but will probably be too dusty to keep by then!

Elaine Lofthouse



Old and New - Changing Plant Names

We've all been moaning "why do they keep changing plant names". This has been happening quite a lot in the past decade or so, because just as DNA has come to the fore in the human world, plants have been having their DNA tested, and this brings clarification that a plant previously thought to be in one genus, should actually be in another. A good example of this is that *Rosemary officinalis* has recently been moved into the *Salvia* genus, and is now officially known as *Salvia rosemarinus*.

Plant Labelling

Most plant labelling is still going by the old (pre DNA) names, but as the 'post DNA' names become more common do be very careful…. you could end up buying two seemingly different plants which turn out to be identical!! (Yes, I've already been caught out on this!)

Heather Wyeth

Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR) - What Does This Mean For Us?

Plant Breeders' Rights (PBRs) are rights granted to the breeder (upon application) of a new variety of plant to give the breeder exclusive control over the propagating material (including seeds, cuttings, divisions and tissue culture) and harvested material (cut flowers, fruit, foliage) of the new variety. It's all about protecting the investment made by the breeder. PBR means that nobody can, without the breeder's permission (licence), use their plant species for:

- production or reproduction
- selling or offering for sale
- altering so it can be propagated
- exporting or importing
- keeping a stock of the plant

These rights last for 25 years for plants, and 30 years for trees, vines and potatoes.

NB: Be warned - by implication, this means if you or I have a plant that is protected by PBR, we should not propagate it to sell it at our Plant Sales table or Plant Fair in May. Do please check the RHS website, those plants with Plant Breeder's Rights should have PBR by their name.

Workshop - Propagating Snowdrops via Twin-Scaling

Jane will be holding this workshop especially for Dorset Hardy Plant members. To express your interest in please email the Group Secretary. **June/July – date TBA – 'Propagating Snowdrops using the method of Twin-Scaling'**. This method can be used to increase the number of bulbs and ensuring an exact replication of the bulb.

Damping Off

Damping off disease will devastate germinating seeds, seedlings and young plants. The source of this fungal disease is often water from a water butt. Always use mains water for plants at the vulnerable stage, avoid overwatering and provide good ventilation.

Stand your watering can in the greenhouse for a while to take the chill off before use, mains water can be very cold!

Old, not very sterile compost, dirty pots and trays can also be a source of the disease but less of a problem than dirty water. Save the rainwater for established plants outdoors in summer.

Growing from seed is great fun - don't spoil it for the sake of a can of water!

Andrew Haynes

Ed. Cold water straight from your tap at this time of year may 'shock' your house plants too - give tap water a chance to come to room temperature.

Leggy Seedlings?

- Don't start your seeds off too early unless you have grow-lights, seedlings need a minimum of 12hrs of daylight (ideally 14-16), and 6hrs of dark for something called respiration. The spring equinox on the 21st March is where there is 12hrs of day and 12hrs of night.
- If growing on a windowsill light will be coming from only one direction, so try reflecting that light by lining a three sided box with foil (or silver plastic foil from the inside of crisps or tea packets and doesn't rip as easily as baking foil)
- Leggy seedlings in a closed up greenhouse may be caused by a lack of carbon dioxide from poor ventilation. The solution? Get some fresh horse droppings in a bucket, cover with cling film and pierce a few holes. As the manure decomposes it gives off carbon dioxide (CO^2) - remember your biology? ... plants take in CO^2 and give out Oxygen.

The 'Quick Cook' Method of Compost Making - from Ray Broughton

There are many methods of making successful compost, the quick cook method has been developed to have the following advantages:-

- Almost all plant material can be placed in the compost heap. Woody material up to 1 cm in thickness can be included. Do not include hormonally treated (herbicide) grass clippings.
- No turning of this compost heap is necessary.
- Plant pests, diseases and weeds are successfully killed with this method.
- Vermin are not attracted to this compost heap, even if edible material ie waste fruit and vegetables are placed in it. (Note: As with any compost heap it is not advisable to place any meat products in the compost heap).
- The compost will be available for use in three or four months. Observations: The compost heap can be built up over a period of time, but for optimum efficiency should be made over a period of three months maximum.

The concept behind this method of composting is that bacteria and fungi will break down very quickly, the plant material producing humus which will hold on to plant nutrients. The compost heap will reach temperatures of up to 80°C. Pests, diseases, weeds seeds, rhizomes and stolons of weeds are successfully killed.

How to construct the compost heap:-

1. The base to the compost heap must be solid ie paving slabs, to prevent nutrient loss into the soil and to prevent worms moving into it.
2. As with all compost methods it is important to ensure that oxygen is present in the compost heap. Only a small amount of oxygen is required as the compost is bulky and therefore will trap lots of oxygen as the plant material is incorporated onto the heap. Only small holes are necessary on the side of the compost heap.
3. Place plant material into the compost heap up to a height of one third the height of the heap.
4. At this stage (the one third) place two shovel loads of good quality soil onto the compost heap and add two handfuls of Nitrogen fertiliser eg. Ammonium sulphate or Hoof and Horn. If using organic fertiliser please ensure that it is ground up into a fine powder. Note: the amounts are designed for compost heap which is 1.5m x 1.5m in size.
5. Add more plant material until two thirds in height is reached. At this stage add one shovel load of ground limestone (Calcium carbonate). This is essential to add as it will prevent the compost heap from becoming too acidic which is a common fault with compost heaps.
6. When the top of the compost heap is reached add soil and Nitrogen fertiliser at the same rates as the one third in height.
7. There is no need to cover this compost heap.

Final notes: The quick cook method is very fast and efficient, but it is essential that the instructions here are followed carefully. It is also useful to know that clay soils prefer a compost which is not completely broken down in order to assist aeration and drainage when incorporated. Sandy soils prefer well-rotted organic matter containing a high percentage of humus, this will assist the attraction of water and nutrients to these soils.

Our Nurseries Map – coming soon

Many thanks for your suggestions for our 'Nurseries Map', see the current list below, please let us know soon of any others you know or aware of.

Barthelemy & Co, Wimborne
Beecroft Nurseries, Wimborne
Bleak Hill Plants, Harbridge
Brackendale Nurseries, Wimborne
C W Abbott Garden Centre, Langton Long
CB Plants - Lower Severall Nursery, Crewkerne
Champion Plants, Crewkerne
Cherry Tree Nursery, Northbourne
Chestnut Nursery, Poole
Cranborne Garden Centre, Cranborne
Dobbies Garden Centre, Owermoigne
Dorset Perennials, Sherborne
Forest Edge Nurseries, Wimborne
Forgetmenot Walled Garden, Blandford Forum
Glenholme Herbs, Sherborne
Groves Nurseries & Garden Centre,
Hansfords Plant Centre, Dorchester
Island Garden Nursery, Upwey
Knoll Gardens, Hampreston
Koirin Azalea Centre,
Little Groves Nursery,
MacPennys, Bransgore
Mills Nursery, Owermoigne
Naked Croft Nurseries, Corfe Mullen
Oasis Plant Centre, Child Okeford
Peake Perennials - online only,
Potting Shed, Sherborne
Toadstall Plants, East Howe
Trehane Nursery, Hampreston
Wolvercroft Garden Centre, Fordingbridge