



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

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Ed. Barbara Gooch



This will be the first full meeting with Debbie as Chair, she took over at the AGM in January. Eric stood down after leading our Group for 18 years. In appreciation of his long and steadfast service, Eric was presented with a planter with a slate inscription.

February meeting – 25th February 'New Tricks for Old Gardeners'

Our speaker is Katherine Crouch, winner of both the BBC Gardener of the Year and Gardener of the Decade. She will be bringing plants from Avon Bulbs with her.

A quote from Lyme Regis Hort.Soc: "I have rarely seen the club so amused, engaged and lively. Her particular brand of humour (Sandi Toksvig combined with Victoria Wood) was most entertaining but does not obscure her superb knowledge of plants and gardening."

This will follow the fifth **Hellebore event** at Anne and Guy Trehane's, Manor Farm, Hampreston, from 10am to 1pm – so you can make a day of your visit to Wimborne! This event will also be on the following day, Sunday the 26th (1 to 4pm). Lupus UK will be offering hot soup as well as tea and cakes. **Dorset Perennial Plants** will be there selling a large range of hellebores and other plants. This is an NGS event and admission will cost £3.50.

March meeting – 25th March 'Dealing with Plants that Behave Badly'

Ken Thompson is a plant biologist with a keen interest in the science of gardening. He writes (Telegraph columnist) and lectures extensively and has written four gardening books, including 'Compost' and 'No Nettles Required'. His latest book is 'Do We Need Pandas? - the Uncomfortable Truth About Biodiversity'. This talk is linked to his book 'The Book of Weeds'.

Members

Last year we asked you to let us know what you thought about our speakers. Thanks to the few who took the trouble to respond: but can I please have more. Also any dates of gardening-related events in your area which you'd like us to mention, or speakers you've heard and would like to recommend to James, our Speaker Secretary. Or gardens you'd like to visit. Or even any comments about the group in general. **Let's have a bit of interaction!**

2017 is a year of anniversaries: 90 for the NGS, 60 for the HPS, even 65 for the Queen's reign! Next year will be the Dorset Group's 20th Anniversary and we are already thinking of a special celebratory event. We would like ideas from our members!! Something outside the box (as they used to say).

HPS DORSET GROUP CONTACTS

President	Andrew Haynes		
Chairman	Debbie Steel		
Secretary	Sheila Westgate		
Treasurer	David Burnham-Slipper		

Plus James Westgate, Lyn Ovens, Janice Walters, Hugh Walters, Barbara Melton, Roger Melton
Co-optees: Barbara Gooch, Roy Hole, Jane Norris

The **NGS Yellow Book** is now available, there will be copies of the Dorset booklet on the desk in the lobby of the Memorial Hall.

The local **Alpine Society** has its Annual Show and Plant Sale (including Chris Birchall, our January Speaker) at the Allendale Centre, Wimborne, on 25th March, open to public when judging is finished, usually 11.30 am.

HPS Plant Fayre 13th May

Please consider this year's Plant Fayre. All the plant sales we hold help boost our finances and hence the quality of our speakers. We would be grateful if you could help us out by potting up the various plants you dig up or divide in the next month or so. If you could offer help on May 13th by selling plants or making tea and coffee, please talk to any of the committee. Even better, if you propagate your own plants, you could have your own table to sell them, please email Jane ().

One of the nurseries who supported us at our last Plant Fayre, **Peake Perennials** is opening to the public for the first time – from 4th February at the Oasis Plant Centre, Shaftesbury Road, Child Okeford – Mon-Fri 9-5, weekends 10-4.

Stewarts at Broomhill begin their Thrifty Thursdays again on 2nd March from 9 to noon. A good place to get plant bargains – but not as good as our Plant Fayre!

Diana Guy, hellebore expert, will be opening her garden for the National Gardens Scheme on Saturday, 4th March and Sunday, 5th March from noon to 4 pm. As well as hellebores there will be soup and teas for sale. She lives at Kitemoor Cottage, Manswood BH21 5BQ.

Topical Tips from our Experts (*much the same as last month, so if you haven't done it yet*)

* While the garden is still in its winter state it is easy to see troublesome weeds such as brambles, docks and tree seedlings. Seek and destroy now! After March new root growth will make them harder to remove.

*Prune Wisteria, apples and pears.

*Climbing roses need pruning - all side shoots should be cut back to within three buds and last season's strong new stems need tying in.

*Check through your seed collection to see what needs sowing first.

*Keep feeding the birds.

*Check for vine weevil and use Provado if you see the little horrors.

*Tidy greenhouse, clean pots and seed boxes.

*Weed vegetable patches.

*Dig a trench in readiness for beans and fill with kitchen refuse compost and/or manure.

Pruning Clematis - There is a very simple rule of thumb that can be applied to pruning clematis if you have lost a plant label and/or don't know what the plant is called. Only lightly prune clematis which flower on the previous year's growth, i.e. before June. Hard prune clematis which flower on the current year's growth, i.e. after June.

This second category should be dealt with NOW and includes the late large-flowered hybrids and the small-flowered *viticellas*, *orientalis* and *texensis* groups. These plants flower on the new season's growth. Start at the bottom of the plant and work your way up the stem to the first pair of plump, healthy buds. Prune the stem above the buds and remove everything above the cut. Treat each stem in a similar way. Feed and mulch. The plant will be encouraged to make strong new growth and an abundance of flowers.

Slugs (really bad last year apparently) - Be quick, February is the month to control those slugs, using the **John Newbold method**: water Slug Clear over and around the crown of vulnerable plants, preferably before the shoots are visible. You will kill the majority of the small slugs that live underground around the plant – the ones that do most damage to potatoes as well. A few added slug pellets will help if over-wintering eggs do hatch.

The **Sir Harold Hillier Garden & Arboretum** has the largest winter garden in Europe and it is a joy to visit on a sunny day, with its great swathes of Cornus, massed snowdrops and Cyclamen coum and wonderful trees at every turn. Plenty of hellebores too but so many dark colours difficult to see against the mulch. It's free to members of the RHS in February, so hurry!

Heale House Garden is always a joy to visit, although its displays of snowdrops and aconites covering the banks of the Avon are wonderful, it doesn't open until 1st March. However, I bet it's still worth the drive, even if only for the excellent tea shop and the nursery run by Kevin Hughes who is our speaker in April (**NB** Saturday 29th – this was given as Wednesday 26th in some of our publicity.)