



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

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Ed. Barbara Gooch

Gardening with hardy perennials

Next meeting – 25th March

'Dealing with Plants that Behave Badly'

Ken Thompson is a biologist with a keen interest in the science of gardening. He's a Telegraph columnist, he lectures extensively and he's written four gardening books, including 'Compost' and 'No Nettles Required'. This talk is linked to his book 'The Book of Weeds'. He likes to persuade people that gardening is pretty much the best thing ever – good for your health, your soul and the natural world. This can, he admits, be an uphill struggle. "It's seen by the non-gardening public as just a bit odd, a bit quaint," he says. He has strong views: any gardening advice from someone trying to sell you something should be approached with great caution; planting by the moon is always a waste of time; nest boxes for bumblebees don't work; buying boxes with bees already inside is a waste of money; forest gardening is a very inefficient way to grow food; most 'unusual' fruits aren't worth growing, and for most people, buying vegetable plug plants is a bad idea. And last but not least, most of us, most of the time, use too much fertiliser!

Hellebores were certainly the plant of the moment – members Anne Trehane and Diana Guy both opened their gardens to showcase their fantastic collections of heavenly hellebores. It's because they are so colourful, so varied, so long-lasting and so early that we are so passionate about them. I've



always understood that hellebores don't like being moved, but Anne split and moved a great many of hers last August and they are all flowering happily again. Timing is vital – August/September, before they start into new growth.

Our **May Plant Fayre** is an important annual event for our Group and some of us are very busy propagating plants for sale – but we do need more! There must be some interesting plants in your garden that have outgrown their space and need splitting – or spare seedlings you have grown – or plants you no longer need. Please save them for us and bring them along on the 13th May. We would like your help too, selling plants or selling teas – it's fun! Please volunteer to help – just email me. Even better, if you propagate enough of your own plants, you could have your own table to sell them, please email Jane ().

Planting snowdrops in the green

Snowdrops have been fantastic this spring. We have been told for years that snowdrops should be divided and moved in the green – just after flowering – but is this the best advice? Snowdrops are true bulbs, but, unlike tulips or daffodils, they do not tolerate storage for a long time, it's not a good idea to buy them dry. Unlike herbaceous perennials many of which readily form new roots if lifted and replanted, once the roots of a bulb are broken they do not regrow that season so the plant becomes dormant earlier. The current advice is to replant individually when the bulbs are fully dormant, i.e. summer. But Monty Don said after flowering and in large clumps – what are we to do?

Plant Heritage has Cleve West as a celebrity speaker at the Allendale Centre, Wimborne, on Friday, 2nd June at 7.30 pm. His talk is called 'From Spuds to Chelsea' and 'Horatio's Garden'. We are selling tickets and HPS members can buy them for £8 – non members £10.

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 good speakers you'd 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!

Topical Tips from our Experts

- Pot up Dahlia and Canna tubers and put them in the greenhouse to start into growth.
- Check through your seed packets and sow what needs sowing now.
- Stop cutting hedges as birds are nesting.
- Divide perennials and pot up some good bits for our plant sale in May!
- Carefully mulch beds with manure to give plants a feed as they start into growth. Chuck some chicken pellets around.
- Gladiolas can be set up on compost and rooted a few at a time to give a longer flowering season. Harden off sweet peas.
- Carefully split large clumps of snowdrops and replant (see above!)
- Sow annuals - cosmos, African marigolds, morning glory, etc.
- Most vegetables can be sown, good idea to cover soil in vegetable garden to warm it up.
- Tomatoes potted on and cucumbers and courgettes could be started.
- Hard prune last year's growth on Buddleias, hardy fuchsias, Leycesteria and Romneya.

Potatoes

Some say St Patrick's Day and some say Good Friday but this is the month to plant potatoes. I bought some Premier and some Sharps Express from the Pennards' Potato Day and a friend gave me some Jazzy which I had wanted to try but which Pennards didn't have this year. Usually I plant them in tubs as I don't have much room but I shall try a few in the ground as well this year. I also bought some purple

asparagus which I shall have to wait a year or two for.

Slugs – Nematodes

I've never tried them, but one of our members swears by nematodes and says he had no trouble with slugs last year when most of us had serious problems. Here's what the RHS has to say:

'Nemaslug', specific to molluscs, with no adverse effect on other types of animal, is available in the form of a microscopic nematode or eelworm that is watered into the soil. The nematodes enter slugs' bodies and infect them with bacteria that cause a fatal disease. A moist warm soil (temperatures of 5-20°C (41-68°F)) is required, therefore control is most effective during spring to early autumn. Best results are achieved by applying in the evening to moist but well-drained soils; control may be less successful in heavy soils, such as clay. The nematode is available from refrigerated cabinets in some garden centres or by mail order.

Knoll Gardens is holding its annual spring plant fair on Saturday, 22nd April, 10 to 4. The garden will be open free of charge. HPS will be having a stand there and would like some volunteers to help, just to talk to visitors about the HPS and hand out leaflets. Please let me know if you can join us.

HPS Holiday to Norfolk

The balance is due this month – please send your cheque to David Burnham-Slipper or use BACS to pay into our bank account. Only 14 weeks to go!

April meeting – Saturday, 29th

'Stars of the Spring Garden'

Kevin Hughes, owner of Heale House Nursery at Middle Woodford, a specialist nursery stocking quality hardy plants, including many wisterias, clematis, trilliums and over 80 magnolias.

The Trehane's sale (see below) starts on **25th March**.



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