



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Dorset Group *Hardy Times*

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Gardening with hardy perennials



Our speaker today – and our last this year – is Neil Lucas, owner of Knoll Gardens & Nursery in Stapehill. The title of his talk is **“Using Perennials in the Modern Garden”**.

Neil, as we know, is an international authority on ornamental grasses, and author, RHS Council Member and

Senior Judge, as well as a winner of ten Gold Medals at Chelsea. He is a very entertaining speaker and we always enjoy welcoming him to HPS. Knoll Gardens is a local treasure, 4 acres of wonderful planting in a naturalistic gardening style with plenty of ideas of right plant/right place for our own gardens.

One surprising thing which I’ve already learnt from Neil is that leopard slugs are our friends! I really dislike slugs and although I find it impossible to kill anything, I happily chuck mine over the hedge into the road and hope that cars will do the job for me. Especially those enormous orange ones. But apparently it’s the small black ones living in the soil that do the most damage and leopard slugs eat them! They only eat rotting vegetation too, not fresh! So here’s a picture of my new best friend.



Don’t forget to pick up your **2017/18 HPS Dorset Group magazine** this afternoon. It gives details of next year’s outings and holiday. As usual, Angela

will be in charge of holiday bookings and will be accepting them **from 1st January**. Anything arriving before that date will be held until the New Year. **No bookings will be taken for the outings until January either – income for 2018 must not go into the bank in 2017!**

2018



We begin again next year, on 27th January, with Helen Yemm talking on **‘Inspiration for Late Summer Colour’**. She describes herself as “just a passionate muddy-gloves-and-wellies gardener blessed with the gift of the gab”. She writes the regular Thorny Problems column for The Telegraph.

Our AGM will be in February, at 2 pm before the meeting. The Dorset Group of HPS is attracting more members, we now number over 200, while other similar organisations are failing. The success of the Group is down to the enthusiasm of the committee who book excellent speakers, arrange great events and organise the meetings so that they are fun to attend. Committee members now retire after three years and so new members will always be needed – remember, no committee means no group. If you would like to know more about the running of the group, please talk to Debbie.

Pennard Plants’ Potato Day (organised by Blandford’s Victorian Museum Garden) is becoming a regular event for those of us who grow a few vegetables, in the flower beds or elsewhere, they certainly do well in pots. Once again it will be held in Pimperne Village Hall (DT11 8UZ, ample free parking) from 10.30 am until 1.30 pm, this time on Sunday, 28th January, the day

after our next meeting. They will have numerous varieties of planting potato for sale by the single tuber, onion sets, shallots, garlic, Heritage seeds, fruit trees and soft fruit, and lots, lots more. Entry 50p – and soup and refreshments for sale.

RHS Advice suggests that planting anything green can help capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and that the best way to ensure captured carbon stays in the soil is to mulch with organic matter, and avoid digging soils. What to use? Your own compost, mushroom compost, well-rotted manure, composted bracken or bark, used multipurpose, etc., etc. Apparently this year has the worst peat harvest in five years and the cost of alternatives is much higher than the cost of peat, so with the rise of the euro and the increase in the price of plastic packaging, our bags of potting compost are going to be more expensive – and we must watch out for poor quality substitutes for peat. I use peat-free anyway, having been a great fan of Geoff Hamilton. *The Garden* also suggests that, to reduce our carbon footprint, we should use natural fertilisers derived from plant or animal sources, e.g. seaweed, comfrey or fish. Or speak nicely to Debbie and she'll sell you a bottle of worm wee!

Jobs to do in the Garden

- Cut back old hellebore leaves and mulch around the plant (don't put the leaves on the compost pile).
- Still time to plant tulips, any left in the shops are usually half price now.
- Still time to plant garlic apparently, I harvest mine at about the same size they are planted.
- Ideal time to take hardwood cuttings. As soon as the leaves have fallen, take cuttings at pencil length and pencil thickness – make a straight cut immediately below a bud and a sloping cut

above a bud to tell top from bottom. Plunge to half their depth in sandy compost or a trench in open ground, they should be rooted by spring and ready for potting up by mid-summer.

- Once the leaves are off, it's time to prune your shrubs and fruit trees.
- Bubble-wrap your greenhouse, even if it's heated.
- Give protection to all your tender plants, tubers like cannas and dahlias don't need light so can go in a garage.
- Rake up the leaves and store them in black bags or a wire cage, they will rot down into mineral rich leaf mould, only 2-3 years to wait!

Melianthus major (AGM)



I planted the exotic-looking Melianthus major about five years ago and it has struggled. Last year it grew with more confidence and this year it is about 6ft square and has produced six of these 'interesting' flowers. I understand it has become quite a pest

in its native South Africa, I certainly wouldn't mind if it spread through my garden, but then the Victorians may well have said that about Japanese Knotweed!

Grow it in well-drained soil in full sun, ideally against the shelter of a south-facing wall. Alternatively grow it in a container, which you can move indoors in autumn. To stop it getting leggy, cut it back in early spring and that's when you should split it to sell at the Plant Fayre!

Please note that Mayfields are still very kindly offering 5% discount to all Dorset HPS members!

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Programme to all tables