



*Southport Flower Show 2019 - Theme: The Garden Party
Lancs & NW CGS stand and garden
awarded Large Gold Medal*

Lancashire and North West Area Group

Newsletter No. 46 Autumn/Winter 2019

THE COTTAGE GARDEN SOCIETY

www.thecottagegardensociety.org.uk

The Society was formed in 1982 for the benefit of owners of small gardens who want to keep alive the tradition of gardening in the cottage style and to encourage an interest in old fashioned flowers of merit and their varieties and cultivars. We aim to be a friendly and informal Society, bringing together amateurs and experts who share an enthusiasm for this type of gardening.

It is not necessary to live in a country cottage to be a cottage gardener. Each one of us can create in our own way, wherever we live, the natural and informal style associated with the cottage gardens. Many of the old fashioned flowers are still available; a few now have to be searched for in specialist nurseries. We will try to help you to find these.

Members give seed from their own gardens, enabling us to offer hundreds of varieties through our annual seed distribution scheme. We also have a propagation scheme for more unusual plants. Other benefits include a national newsletter, garden visits and every spring, a list of cottage gardens to visit comprising members gardens which other members can visit.

The Lancashire and North West Area Group

www.nwcgs.org.uk

This friendly, local group was formed in February 1996 and now has around 130 members scattered throughout Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cumbria. We have in common a genuine enjoyment of our gardens and an enthusiasm for sharing our knowledge of gardening and plants, including the triumphs and disasters of our mutual hobby. We organise talks, events, garden visits, plants sales and produce a regular newsletter for the benefit and enjoyment of our members. We enjoy sharing our love and knowledge of cottage gardening through information stands and displays or show gardens at local shows, such as Southport and Chorley Flower Shows. Please let us have your ideas for future programmes or newsletter articles by contacting the Secretary



WELCOME TO OUR AUTUMN/WINTER SEASON...

Dear members,

We now have a record 130 members in our local group so thank you to all members for making our group so friendly, inviting, fun, informative and special. As always, a warm welcome to all our new members and to our 3 new committee members: Sandie Birks, Keith Birks and John Holland.

As you can see from various items in the newsletter our local group is growing and doing well. We are a very active group of gardeners and it is always a delight to read of your activities and interests. In this edition there is a mini theme of sowing seeds and gathering seedlings to await the outcome with delight and awe. Please do write about your gardening experiences and interests and the gardens and nurseries you visit and send them to me for inclusion in the newsletter. We will all enjoy reading them.

Have you looked at our website lately? There are lots of photos, information and useful links. Do let the committee know your thoughts about the website and any aspects you would like to be included.

Apologies, I omitted Peter Wiseman's name in the previous newsletter for his submission of Lynda Thacker's funeral poem 'Gardener's Lament'.

Happy gardening, Editor August 2019

Please send me all articles, information and photographs for the next edition - **to be received by Friday 31st January 2020 at the latest**, or anytime from now.

A LETTER FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN...

Hello everyone,

Out last meeting, which was the AGM, was well attended, possibly due to the fact that John Foley came to give us an interesting talk after the meeting formalities. So thank you all for coming. We then broke up for the summer. Unfortunately the weather was quite a mixture, from the record heatwaves to heavy rain and thunderstorms. Our events and garden visits have been very enjoyable and well supported, starting with the annual Plant Sale which was a huge success. So thank you to all who contributed, helped and supported it. We had a wide range of plants to choose from, all reasonably priced and in excellent condition. The gardens we visited were a credit to their owners, they all had their own character and were well kept.

The next Important event was the Chorley Flower Show. The weather was terrible! This did not put the public off and those who went saw a fantastic show. Our group did extremely well and we were awarded a Gold Medal for our efforts which displayed what cottage gardening is about.

The last thing we did before restarting our monthly meetings in September was to make our display garden at the Southport Flower Show, which we have become renowned for. The public look forward to seeing our creations. Again we did extremely well with another Large Gold, the second one in a row.

We did have a scare, with less than 20 hours to go before the show opened and the judging took place, as the rain came and put our



display under about 3 inches of water. But with a lot of luck the water had drained away and no damage had been done. So another huge thank you to our team and of course our helpers.

Well done everyone, you are a credit to the Cottage Garden Society, especially our group.

George

EVENTS

Unless stated otherwise all events are at Haskayne Village Hall starting at 7.30pm.

Haskayne Village Hall's address is 109 School Lane, Haskayne, Nr. Ormskirk, Lancs. L39 7JE (off A5147)

Wednesday 18th September 2019

'The Undercover Gardener' by Barry Grain

Members: £1.50, non-members: £3.00, including refreshments.

Raffle and plant sales table

Indoor plants have generally come back into fashion, from the succulent revival to the current millennial obsession with tropical house plants. Whatever the size of your collection, a few pots on a windowsill or a well-stocked conservatory, providing the right growing conditions is important for the plants to thrive.

Barry Grain is from Cholmondeley Castle, Cheshire .

Wednesday 16th October 2019

‘Travels to Canada’ by Andrew Tumilty

Members: £1.50, non-members: £3.00, including refreshments.

Raffle and plant sales table

Andrew has been growing ornamental plants from an early age, even selling home-grown bedding plants and baskets outside his parents’ house while still at school. This passion then led to his setting up Sunnyfields in Hightown in 2002 and members will remember his great enthusiasm and commitment to developing this business which he described to us when he first spoke to our group last October. This is the sequel talk which tells of his travels on a horticultural grant with his sister Anna discovering various ways of enhancing plant production.

Wednesday 20th November 2019

‘Rock Gardens, Currant Buns or Naturalistic Sculptures’ by Michael Myers

Members: £1.50, non-members: £3.00, including refreshments.

Raffle and plant sales table

Many of us incorporate a rock garden into some part of our garden.

Michael Myers a horticultural lecturer from Craven College, Harrogate will trace the history and development of rock gardens, their different types and suggest suitable plants to be included in them.

Wednesday 18th December 2019

Christmas Social, Buffet and talk

‘Amazing Amazonia’ by Peter Wiseman Raffle



Last December Peter visited one the last great unexplored regions of the world, the Peruvian Amazon. Travelling deep into the protected Pacaya-Samiria Reserve he had the opportunity to experience the abundant wildlife and natural beauty of Amazonia, learning about her ecosystems, wildlife habitats, botany, and cultural traditions.

BOOKING ESSENTIAL - Booking form to be returned to Peter

* After reviewing our local CGS accounts for the past 3 years the *
* committee feel it is good practice to give something back to *
* members. As such, the committee agreed free entrance to *
* indoor events (talks) for 12 months in the first instance from *
* January 2020. Visitors will continue to pay the stated entrance *

Curl by Saturday 7th December.

Wednesday 15th January 2020

“Once Seen Never Forgotten” by Don Witton

Members: FREE, non-members: £3.00, including refreshments.

Whether it is unforgettable garden scenes, beautiful flower blooms, bizarre artefacts or hilarious encounters, this talk has an eclectic mix of images caught on camera during my garden travels around this country and further afield. A colourful and entertaining talk that will last long in your memory. A very popular talk.

Wednesday 17th February 2020

“Fantastic Plants of Ness” by Tim Baxter

Members: FREE, non-members: £3.00, including refreshments.

Raffle and plant sales table

Tim Baxter the Botanist from Liverpool University's Ness Gardens talks about Arthur Kilpin Bulley, the founder of Bees Nursery and creator of Ness Gardens and his insatiable appetite for new plant species brought home by the plant hunters George Forrest, Frank Kingdon Ward and others whose expeditions to China and the Himalayan regions he financed.

Wednesday 18th March 2020

‘Making the Most of Your Garden’ by Jane Allison

Members: FREE, non-members: £3.00, including refreshments.

Raffle and plant sales table

Looking at ways of maximising the potential of your garden, whatever its shape, dimensions and personal requirements. The talk begins with a look at three of my garden designs from start

to completion. Also covered are planting ideas, the use of containers, wildlife considerations, water features, where to site fruit and vegetables, and choosing the right plant for the right place. A wide-ranging talk, covering a lot of ground

Wednesday 15th April 2020

“Clematis” by Richard Hodson PLUS AGM 7.15pm EARLY START

Richard founded his business over 25 years ago at Hawthornes Nursery, Hesketh Bank. He specialises in Viticellas and holds the national collection, 200 of which are planted in his garden. Richard can tell you anything you need to know about Clematis.

May 2020 Plant Sale.

Please see photos in middle pages of this magazine of some of the wide selection of plants that were for sale in 2019. We had 390 people, excluding children, through the gate. Expert advice is offered by our friendly and knowledgeable stall holders. Indoors we have stalls selling, for example, lovely hand-made craft items and books. The refreshments are ever popular and receive many compliments. These include



Marilyn Tippet serving delicious cakes at the 2019 Plant Sale.

SERENDIPITY IN THE GARDEN

When I was younger, (a lot younger!), I dreamed of following in the footsteps of the great plant hunters and discovering exciting new plants. This never happened of course but I did discover that you don't have to travel far to search for new plants. Our own gardens are crammed full of plants with the potential to produce something different, and it is just a question of keeping your eyes peeled and your fingers crossed.

There is a sycamore tree in the grass verge outside my front garden so of course there are lots of seedlings which I remove. But I noticed that one of the seedlings had variegated leaves, so I decided to grow it on to see if it retained this variegation. It did, and now it is about five feet tall and still in a pot and I'm not quite sure what to do with it.

The yellow Welsh poppy doesn't fill many gardeners hearts with joy, but years ago on holiday in Somerset visiting a nursery I came across a double orange version of this which was much nicer. The two versions of *Meconopsis cambrica* grew happily together in my front garden, and thanks to the bees I started to get crosses between the two. Single, semi-double and double versions of yellow and orange started to appear much to my joy, the only snag being that I had to allow all the seedlings to flower before I could remove the unwanted.

I grow *Campanula trachelium*, one of our native wild flowers, which will grow practically anywhere, and it proves this by seeding profusely. Two of these seedlings have double flowers, very like

'Bernice', but I have never grown this plant so I know they haven't arrived this way. I am hoping they will cross with the white *Campanula trachelium* I grow and produce a white double.

Finally, sometimes it pays not to remove seedlings from pot plants we buy unless we are absolutely sure they are weeds. I bought a Hemerocallis and didn't get round to planting it for over a year. When I did so I noticed another plant growing in with it. I couldn't believe it when it flowered and I discovered it was a *Dactylorhiza*. Truly, serendipity in the garden!

Happy plant hunting to all.

Chris Yates (Hon. President)

Campanula trachelium



Campanula trachelium is most commonly known as the nettle-leaved bellflower. It has nettle-shaped leaves and 3cm long lavender-blue bell shaped flowers from June to September. The flower colour is more intense in deep to light shade. It is a robust, roughly hairy medium tall perennial.

It's natural habitat is dry calcareous soils in woods, hedge banks or scrubby grass but it will tolerate a wide range of soils and habitats.

It can be left to self-seed or seeds can be collected for sowing. Sow seeds in early autumn in fertile soils, either where they are to be grown or in seed trays.

The Rose Day

Every winter the Sarah Raven catalogue pops through my letterbox full of beautiful garden plants and bulbs in glorious colours. The catalogue also includes details of the many courses and events run by Sarah at her garden in East Sussex, from 'Growing Your Own Cut Flowers' to a 'Dahlia Day' and 'Magnificent Pots'.

Last January when my friend Ruth rang to ask if I was interested in going on one of Sarah's 'Rose Days' which included a visit to three beautiful gardens: Pashley Manor, Sarah's garden at Perch Hill and Sissinghurst Castle Gardens. I jumped at the chance. In early June we set off with my husband Brian in the driving seat.

I have always loved roses and one of my enduring memories of childhood is of picking bunches of quartered cabbage roses from my grandmother's garden at home in Ireland, pink and white with their beautiful old rose perfume. Over the years in my own garden I have grown 'American Pillar', 'Zephirine Drouhin' and 'Golden Showers'; all victims of fungal disease. I progressed on to some old roses varieties and David Austin roses; 'Tuscany Superb', 'Madame Isaac Pereire', 'Queen of Denmark', 'Gertrude Jekyll', 'Evelyn' and more.

On a warm sunny morning in mid June we all met at Pashley Manor, a beautiful listed Tudor house and grounds on the border of Sussex and Kent. We started off with a guided tour from the head

gardener who walked us through the garden which is divided into colour-themed areas with a collection of over 100 roses grown with complementary perennials. He recommended 'Dublin Bay' as a good rose for walls. Also, 'Hot Chocolate', a lovely copper-brown coloured floribunda rose I had not come across before and which was proving very popular with rose enthusiasts. All roses were chosen for disease resistance.

After lunch at Pashley Manor we travelled to Sarah Raven's garden at Perch Hill where we were free to wander. I had imagined from photos in her catalogue that the garden would be large but it was actually quite small but beautiful. We had a talk from Sarah and her head gardener Josie. The garden is run organically so roses needing regular spraying with fungicide and insecticide were not to be considered. This all changed with the arrival of Josie who gradually introduced disease resistant roses which were underplanted with *Salvia microphylla*. It is thought that the salvias release a natural fungicide and they are planted throughout the garden. The best salvias to use are compact with strong pungent aromatic smells such as 'Stormy Pink', 'Nachtvlinder', 'Cerro Petosi', 'Tutti Frutti', 'Wendy's Wish' and 'Jezebel'. They now manage to keep most of the black spot and mildew at bay.

Roses were chosen for good performance, length of flowering, range of colour, good scent and good for cutting. Recommendations include 'Hot Chocolate', 'Cinco de Mayo', 'Belle Epoque', 'Just Joey',

Sustainable Eco Gardening

So, on an idyllic summer's evening our group gathered at Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, by then closed to the public. We were free to wander and enjoy the stunning Rose Garden, the White Garden, the Cottage Garden, to walk the Lime Walk and much more. It was all beautiful and set off by the lovely old buildings and warm brick walls.

We sat on the steps and listened to an informative talk from Troy Scott-Smith, the Head Gardener (from Bodnant Gardens), on how he had gradually returned the garden to near the original plans of Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold.

We then listened to a funny, entertaining talk from Adam Nicholson, Sarah Raven's husband, on the history of Sissinghurst, his family home, and in particular his sexy grandmother Vita (his words). The family went from owning much of Sussex in Cromwell's time to hard times (for the aristocracy) with his father's struggles to make Sissinghurst a success before eventually handing it over to the National Trust.

The evening concluded with a delicious 3 course meal with English wine, where the talk and laughter flowed. A very enjoyable end to a wonderful day.

Being gardeners and not wanting to miss an opportunity we looked around for other gardens to visit on the way. We spent a very enjoyable afternoon at RHS Wisley and on the way back we visited Great Dixter which was just beautiful.

To add to the advice on peat-free and environmentally friendly compost in the previous edition of our local newsletter I would like to share the following :

Ericaceous compost Dalefoot ericaceous wool compost is from a local Lake District farm . The base ingredients are potash rich bracken and herdwick sheep wool for water retention and slow release nitrogen.

Dalefoot Farm, Heltondale, Nr Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2QL. Telephone: 01931 713281 www.dalefootcomposts.co.uk

Dalefoot sell a variety of composts for different purposes. If you buy direct there is a price scale for bulk buying and they can home deliver for a reasonable charge.

In addition, there are Lancs and Mersey stockists if you wish to buy and take home with you: Bradshaws Tel 01995 603737 Garstang TR3 0LP, Cotton and Cloth 01254 825000 Clitheroe BB7 2BB, Daisy Clough Nurseries 01524 793104 Scorton PR3 1AN KD, Freeman Brothers 0161 3364377 Denton M34 3EN, Monkley Ghyll Farm 01524 811352 LA2 6PH, The Plant Place 01253 856414 Thornton-Cleverley FY5 5NS, Harefield Gift and Plant Centre 0151 3781344 Prescot L35 6PG. There are also lots of Cumbria stockists including Beetham Nurseries 01539 563630 Milnthorpe LA7 7AP

RHS Offer advice on their website: Rhs.org.uk/advice and search 'peat-free-growing-media'.

Which Magazine Recent peat-free compost trials results: Waitrose and Melcourt are best for all types, except ericaceous which was awarded to Dalefoot.

If anyone has any snippets of current news or advice in relation to environment friendly gardening then please send them to the Newsletter Editor who can combine them and keep this page going. *Anne Porter*

Perennials to extend colour & interest in autumn borders

Whether your garden is a small yard or a large acreage, it is prudent to search for perennials to extend the season of interest in the garden for as long as possible. This bequeaths added pleasure for the gardener & also provides food for the birds when their former ample food supply becomes scarcer as temperatures fall & days shorten.

Every plant in the garden should aspire to earn its keep & there are numerous autumnal perennial plants you may want to consider for generating a final boost of colour in the garden.

Heleniums produce bright orange/yellow daisy flowers which bloom for many months. *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowerer' is one of the very best. It can commence flowering as early as June & will continue for many weeks especially if the old blooms are removed to encourage fresh new flowers. A new variety called *Helenium* 'Short & Sassy' is perfect for smaller gardens or those exposed to strong winds because it reaches a maximum height of 45cm but doesn't compromise on flower power.

Rudbeckia fulgida var. *deamii* is an excellent form of this traditional late summer/autumn flowering plant. Its bright yellow petals shine like rays of sunshine & contrast well against the dark brown cone centres.

At the opposite end of the colour wheel, rich purple asters complement the Heleniums & Rudbeckias perfectly. There are

many asters to choose from but it's worth remembering the *amellus* varieties are much less prone to mildew especially in hot, dry summers. Another noteworthy form is *Aster* × *frikartii* 'Mönch' which is used in many of the RHS floral displays. It has large, lilac daisy flowers above soft green mildew-free foliage. A less well-known *Aster* is *macrophyllus* 'Twilight' (syn. of *Eurybia* × *herveyi*) which is perfect for dry shaded areas under trees. Slightly smaller petals above stiff stems perform well year after year. They make a valuable contribution to the late summer/autumn flowering borders.

Daisies have an abundance of open flowers which not only look wonderful, they are attractive to pollinators. The seed heads provide a banquet for the countless bird species that will visit the garden. Butterflies & bees will linger on the open daisy petals which are a valuable source of nectar as the temperatures drop.

The flowers I have mentioned so far are all daisy forms & as much as I love daisies, they need to be integrated with other plants to create interest & form. For example, the sword-like leaves of *Crocsmia* provide an interesting contrast to daisy petals. They encourage the eye to rest & linger & eliminate immediate dismissal of a border due to lack of shape & form. The vibrant red flowers of *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer' are impossible to ignore. *Crocsmia* 'Okavango' is also a particularly garden worthy variety. Its compact, prolific flowering form enhances the autumn border for many weeks & this cultivated form shouldn't be confused with the old fashioned montbretia *Tricyrtis* 'Pink Freckles', which is commonly known as the toad lily,

due to the mottled marking in the shiny leaves, is an excellent late summer performer for a moist, shaded spot in the garden. The flower's exotic orchid-like appearance belies its toughness.

Schizostylis, or the perhaps better known Kaffir lily, has now been renamed *Hesperantha coccinea*, is a wonderful addition to the late summer/autumn border. The pink, red or white flowers resemble dainty miniature gladioli in appearance & flower for several weeks. They also make a good cut flower to bring colour into the house especially on the days which are less tempting for venturing outside all day.

Grasses such as the tactile *Stipa tenuissima* 'Pony Tails', dark stems of *Molinia caerulea* 'Edith Dudsus' or *Sanguisorba tenuifolia* var. *alba* will encourage movement in the garden which is a valuable, & often neglected feature in a border. They will sway gently, even in the slightest breeze, contributing life to an otherwise static border.

Seed heads look amazing glazed in a layer of sparkly, white frost & provide much needed nourishment for the finches that will grace the garden in wintertime so try to resist the temptation to tidy up the whole garden before winter sets in. Small birds such as goldfinches, greenfinches, blackbirds & robins will appreciate the plethora of seeds & berries available in a well-stocked garden.

There are many more perennials which will bring late summer & autumn colour to the garden but hopefully you might consider obtaining some of the stalwarts I have mentioned. You definitely won't regret planting them!

Sue Gillon



Aster × frikartii 'Mönch'



Aster macrophyllus 'Twilight'



Tricyrtis 'Pink Freckles'



Hesperantha coccinea 'Sunrise'



Helium

'Sahin's Early Flowerer'
Photos Sue Gillon



Rudbeckia fulgida var. *deamii*

Plant Sale May 2019 - selection from all outdoor stalls



Erodium 'Bishops Form'

Lancs & NW CGS



Salvia nemerosa 'Sensation Rose'

John Baldwin



Doronicum

Lancs & NW CGS



Lily of the Valley

Lancs & NW CGS



Cardamine pratensis 'Flore Pleno'

Chris Yates



Garden Upcycling for Macmillan Cancer Care

John Baldwin



Geum cucullatum 'Kai'

George Owen



Digitalis 'Summer King'

George Owen



Agapanthus 'Queen Mum'

Malcolm Milner



Poppy, allium & camassia

Tina Lloyd, Moss House Plants



Penstemon

'Sour Grapes'

Malcolm Milner



Garden ornaments

Paul Curl



Dicentra spectabilis



Astragalus 'Gill Richardson'

Sue Gillon, Meadow View Plants



Chaerophyllum hirsutum 'Roseum'



azaleas & rhododendrons



Hosta 'Empress Wu'

J&A Japonicas



various

Tina Lloyd, Moss House Plants



vegetable plugs,
unusual houseplants and
standard lilac Syringa 'Palbin'



Painted Lady at sea
(right)

Painted Lady wing
underside (middle
left)

Painted Lady and
Peacock showing
wing underside
(middle right)

Painted Lady on
Verbena b. showing
upper and under
side of wings (mid



Peacock (left) Comma (bottom)



Photos
Anne
Porter



Painted Lady, Peacock and Comma

I'm sat on the deck of a ship in the Skagerrak Sea between Denmark and Norway on 28th July 2019, enjoying the warm sunshine and reading a book, when I'm politely informed by my husband that a butterfly has landed on my head. Carefully he proffers his index finger and the butterfly daintily steps on to it. It remains there while we silently shriek with delight and examine it to capture an image of its detail in our minds and on camera. It is a beautifully marked Painted Lady with the tip of one of its forewings torn off. I am particularly fascinated by the pearly antennae tips and the detail of the body parts which we could easily see at such close quarters. 'My butterfly' rests for 10 minutes and then flies off, hopefully to find a rich breeding ground and food source.

We arrive back home and to our delight we find many Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*) butterflies in our garden enjoying a menu of nectar from a range of flowers; *Buddleja davidii* 'White Profusion' and purple *Verbena bonariensis* being the most popular.

This year it is considered to be a 'once in 10 years' episode with a mass migration of Painted Lady butterflies arriving in Britain from their places of origin, usually northern Africa but possibly the Middle East and Central Asia. The migration period to Britain is usually late May and June and sometimes early spring. In autumn they migrate back to their country of origin or die if they remain.

The female butterfly lays her small green eggs preferably on thistles

(*Cirsium* spp. and *Carduus* spp.) but also on stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*), Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) and mallows (*Malva* spp.) as this provides a preferred food source for the caterpillars. The hatched caterpillars, which are spiny, black, speckled with tiny white spots and a yellow stripe down each side, eat the undersides of the leaves. As they grow, they create a shelter of folded leaves tied with their silk. The caterpillars pupate within this and remain suspended until the adult emerges in August and September. In a 12 month period the whole of the Painted Lady life cycle is complete.

The Peacock and Comma butterfly are regular visitors to my garden, and both were active in very early spring due to the unseasonal hot weather; although this didn't stop them from resting, wings open, on the flat rocks in my garden to absorb the heat from the sun-soaked rocks. Both have now joined the Painted Lady butterflies in enjoying the fruits of my garden this summer.

The distinctive markings of the aptly named Peacock butterfly (*Aglais io*) are easy to identify. The large peacock-feather-like eyespots are used to startle, scare or confuse predators. When its wings are closed they show the very dark underside; these are often described as well camouflaged... but not on my white buddleia! At 63-69cm the wing span is fairly large and they are strong fliers which allows them to range widely, not only in gardens but on the outer edges of woodland.

Batches of up to 500 eggs are laid in May. The hatched caterpillars, which are black with speckled white spots and short spines, spin a communal web in which they live and feed on stinging nettles (*Urtica*

dioica). As they grow, they increasingly live out in the open. They pupate alone and emerge in July to make the most of the abundant food sources before they winter hibernate in any crevices, holes or outbuildings.

The Comma butterfly (*Polygonia c-album*) makes me smile. It is beautiful in a raggedy, scruffy way with its irregular scalloped wing edges and cryptic colouring which are camouflage efficient when hibernating in dead leaves. It has a white 'comma' on its underwing. Its flexible life cycle enables it to make the most of favourable conditions as it did very early on this year and now in the sunny, dry summer. Comma butterflies prefer open woodland and wood edges for breeding and hibernating but are often seen in other habitats as they search for nectar and fruit such as fallen plums and blackberries. The Comma is now making a comeback after a severe decline in the twentieth century.

Cleverly the Comma larvae too have a degree of protection as they are brown and flecked with white markings, resembling bird droppings. The caterpillars feed on Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Hop (*Humulus lupulus*) mainly, elms (*Ulmus* spp.), currants (*Ribes* spp.), and Willow (*Salix* spp.).

Knowing more about these beautiful creatures will certainly make me more aware of how to be butterfly friendly when gardening. I wonder where 'my' maritime Painted Lady has made its home?

Useful websites: butterfly-conservation.org

Anne Porter www.woodlandtrust.org.uk and rspb.org.uk/birds

Bee facts

One bee will make 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey in its life.

It takes 1 thousand bees visiting 4 million flowers to make 1kg (2.2lb) of honey.

Bees are the only insect in the world that makes food for humans.

Not all bees make honey.

Bee friendly

The Woodland Trust (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) suggest the top 9 bee friendly wildflowers to grow in your garden are: Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), Clovers (*Trifolium sp.*), Greater knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*), Hellebore stinking (*Helleborus foetidus*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) and Wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*).

Friends of the Earth (friendsoftheearth.uk) advise that these trees and shrubs offer food and shelter for a wide range of bees that are active in different seasons: Pussy Willows, Lavender, Abelia (bee bush), Mahonia, Apple/Crab Apple, Hawthorn, Honeysuckle and Ivy. Bees also need water.

Offer a warm S/SW facing B&B for solitary bees! Hang up a home-made or shop bought 'bee hotel' which has tubes of several diameters for the discerning bees to choose to lay their eggs in. The bee will build cells in the tube and lay eggs in them, leaving pollen and nectar for the grubs feed on and grow. The bee plugs the tube end with mud or leaves. The bees will hatch the next year.

Sowing

It was a perfect day

For sowing; just

As sweet and dry was the ground

As tobacco-dust.

I tasted deep the hour

Between the far

Owl's chuckling first soft cry

And the first star.

A long stretched hour it was;

Nothing undone

Remained; the early seeds

All safely sown.

And now, hark at the rain,

Windless and light,

Half a kiss, half a tear,

Saying good-night.

Poem by Edward Thomas (1878-1917).

Edward Thomas was already a successful novelist, essayist and literary critic when he wrote his first poem in December 1914. The above poem was written in 1915 shortly before he enlisted in the British Army. He was killed in action in the Battle of Arras, France.

Volunteering

Walking through Hesketh Park on Albert Road in Southport I used to take the route through the Rose Garden. Set in a hollow it was a very sad looking place and my one desire was to get into the beds and prune the roses. This was just prior to the days when the local council had a team of paid gardeners - remember when?

Well, wishes can come true and the sign at the entrance to the rose garden was saying "These roses need you". Through the National Lottery a considerable sum of money had been allocated and £17,000 was awarded which was used to replace the beds, renew the soil and plant a mixed variety of David Austen roses. The volunteers meet at 10 o'clock, once a week (Thursday) and there is a steady team of 7 who prune, mulch, and dead-head for 2 hours, followed by a chat and a well-earned cup of tea.

Donations of seeds are sown in the polytunnel in the spring time, the little plants are then sold in the park in May and June, the money raised being used to buy compost, plant food and tools for use by the volunteers.

As I was pruning last season I used to pick up any little rose hips that I found. Placing these in my pocket the intention was to sow them and grow more roses!!!

In December whilst emptying pockets in the gardening coat I came across the hips and put them into a plastic container which I then placed in the fridge (rosehips need a period of at least 6 weeks in extreme cold). Then in February I placed them into a container of seed compost, crossed my fingers and waited.

Some 6 weeks later 20 little fingers of green appeared and then they started to grow. Success!! At the time of writing 15 of the plants have survived and are looking very strong - 7 have produced flowers.. I can't wait for the next year's growth.

What to call them? Walk in the Park? Hesketh Walk? Volunteers Dream? Suggestions on a postcard, please.

Although we manage with our team of 7, we do believe in the adage "The more the merrier" - if you have a few hours to spare, why not join us any Thursday morning 10 - 12 o'clock during February - September.

We are part of the Britain in Bloom enterprise and have been awarded Flourishing - why not join us and help Hesketh Park Rose Garden become Outstanding?

Ann-Marie Hutson



Pete's Pantry:

Sticky Date and Walnut Cake with Maple Syrup Icing

1. Chop the dates, place in a small bowl and cover with 150ml



Ingredients	
250g plain white flour	
250g dates	
150g butter, softened	2 eggs, beaten
100g soft brown sugar	1½ tsp baking powder
4 tbsp maple syrup	1½ tsp mixed spice

boiling water. Leave until cool to allow them to soften. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C/ Gas 4. Line a rectangular tin, about 30x20x3cm, with baking parchment.

2. Beat the sugar and butter with a wooden spoon or electric whisk until pale and fluffy. Spoon in 2tbsp syrup, then gradually add a little flour and egg alternately, beating well after each addition until combined.
3. Stir in the baking powder and spice, two-thirds of the walnuts and all the dates with their soaking liquid. Mix until thoroughly combined. Tip into the lined tin & level with a spatula. Bake for 45-50 minutes until a skewer inserted comes out clean. Lift the cake out of the tin and put on a cooling rack
4. Combine the icing sugar with the remaining syrup until smooth, adding a little hot water as necessary. When the cake is completely cool, remove the paper, then drizzle the icing generously over the top. Scatter with the remaining chopped walnuts and cut into squares.

Enjoy! Pete Wiseman

The Next Chapter... somewhere in rural France

When you get your garden just where you want it to be what's the next step? Well most of you would probably reply it's never quite where you want it to be, always something to develop, change, add in, a plant out of place here, a shrub growing out of control there.

But the main structure, the formation, the planting scheme, the original plan (albeit adapted and changed many times) has come together. Time to sit with a glass of something cold and revel in your magic.

Or not. Perhaps instead, whilst admiring all that hard work, you drink another glass of wine and agree that moving to rural France where the land is plentiful, the growing season longer and crucially the wine is cheaper is actually a good idea. Before the dust has settled from the last guests leaving the Open Garden one beautiful day in June we had sold the house, found our dream home in France, packed up and moved on.

Good grief I hear you gasp. Well, not only did we sell the house in a week we had a retirement party to organise,(30 years in the fire service for hubby must not go unrecognised), a big trip to Thailand and a summer of farewell events. After many tears (mainly at leaving behind that beautiful viburnum lace waiting patiently in a pot in the border due to lack of space in the very cramped box van) we arrived in France with half the furniture still in Southport and as much of the garden as I could cram in instead. (Obviously my dear fellow gardeners, you will completely be on my side here. Priorities?!)

The dream house and land soon became a reality and the enormity of what we had done dawned on me. How on earth am I to transform this

sloping site (I say site due to its lack of any floral attributes) into something that will resemble a garden. The house has its problems that need urgent attention before any digging can be considered. In particular a rather lovely water feature in the main roof space that transformed the internal chimney breast into something resembling the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

So, of course the first thing I do is create a nursery bed to transfer the abundant cuttings, shrubs and perennials that survived the cull of the move.

Dismay is upon me as I soon realise that my pretty, little suburban garden has not transferred well to our new land. The smattering of perennials carefully split and the roses transplanted are lost in the vastness of the slope. Its soon apparent that the few, now pitiful looking offerings, will not a garden make, much more will be needed as each precious plant is lost in this expanse of soil. They looked so big in the pots during the move.

So, I begin to look with fresh eyes and stop trying to emulate my pretty suburban garden and get on with the job in hand. First things first. The enormous sapin (fir tree) which is dangerously close to the power lines must be topped. (Good timing for the Christmas season, that would save us a bob or two)

My French not being as wonderful as I thought, somewhere along the line removing only the 'tete a l'arbre' resulted in the whole magnificent beast being felled, filling the ground with enormous branches and removing any hope of doing anything this side of Christmas with the garden. As we have no central heating the compensation would be a steady supply of wood for the log burners. Lesson no.2 Spruce

cannot be burned in the house. Actually, any trees we need to fell have to be seasoned for two years. Enter Brian and his knowledge of pallet furniture building; we need a wood store!

Moving swiftly on and French lessons full steam ahead we progress to trimming the 100+ hornbeams and making good friends with neighbours who own super chainsaws (guess what Santa brought Brian for Christmas?!).

The orchard has not been pruned for many years and during one stormy night we lost a very large old apple tree. This prompted us to start pruning the other 11. Enter most helpful Tree Surgeon, Monsieur Paysage (Who incidentally is called Monsieur Asseline. Apparently Paysage means landscapes. So Asseline landscapes. Who knew?).

Lots of friendly advice later and much hilarity at the attempts of the novice English townies to shape apple trees and we are now the proud owners of the largest woodpile in the village and nowhere to store it!!!

So those hazy days in autumnal sunshine dreaming of pretty cottage borders seem a distant past, in the frost and the ice of the Normandy winter.

On my journey to and fro the channel to work in Jersey, I contemplate planting my Jersey royals smuggled across on the ferry. I walk past the blooming magnolias and the delicate camelias filling the air with perfume in the lanes of Saint Helier. And I anticipate with great excitement how I can transform my French rural field without the benefit of the jersey gulf stream. But there's a tale for another day...

Jeanette Grimley

The Battle of the Eryngium

In my garden I have one small knee-high sea holly. There used to be a pair of them but one gave up the ghost yet the remaining one looks like it might be winning the battle for survival after 3 years. I love it - no ifs, no buts. My husband loves it too for its looks except he hadn't realised how stiff and spikey it was, which he discovered when clearing away the lawn edge grass cuttings. I love its colour and sculptural form and firmly believe it deserves its own space and pride of place at the front of the border but I think I might have planted it in the wrong place (according to him) yet now I don't want to move it in case it decides to go and meet its partner in Eryngium heaven. Let battle begin!

My plant label says 'Eryngium bourgatti'. I don't know which variety. Is it 'Picos Blue' with its white veined leaves and deep blue, narrow rays of its starchy, thistle like form? Or perhaps because the flowers have a violet hue to the blue (but is that because of fading) it may be a Graham Thomas' selection E. bourgatii with grey-green leaves marked with white midribs? So now I'm fighting my own battle to name it and need to draw in reinforcements to help me identify it. So if you know which it is, please tell me. The flower stems are



a strong, bright blue.

Sorry, no room left on the colour pages for photos, which would have



been more help to you :(

I really appreciate the way Eryngium's form contrasts with the shapes of other plants in the border. In addition its seed head continues to give pleasure and presence as do the flowers' basal bracts as they fade to

silver. So really, a most desirable and magnificent plant (in my opinion).

Hence my executive decision to make cunning, secret plans for a strategic and selective invasion of Eryngium into a new sunny island bed I am intending to create, featuring mainly summer to autumn flowers. I shall be sensitive and considerate and plant them in central spaces so they do not attack my husband who will surely retaliate.

So I have started my research because, as you can tell, I know very little about them. I now know there is a group of evergreen rosette-forming eryngiums which form small clusters of teasel like flowers. These need humus rich soil and good drainage and a warm position so the leaf rosettes survive. It is advised to be prepared to protect the rosette with fleece or straw...Not sure my 'do or die' attitude to gardening will cope with that. However, E. pandanifolium (AGM) is said to be imposing. In late summer it produces stems to 2.5m with branches for the whole length carrying small, round purplish-grey flowerheads. The stems are cut back after flowering.

The easiest eryngiums to grow are the perennials such as E. bourgatti. Hardy biennials should also be considered. A well-known variety is *Eryngium giganteum* 'Silver Ghost' AGM (syn, 'Miss Willmott's Ghost') which should be planted on well drained, dry soil in sun as its taproot ensures a drought resistant plant and the dry soil a rigid plant with a steely patina- a perfect match for my flowerbed conditions. It grows to 60-90cm. The blue cone-like flowers, loved by pollinators, have silver ruffs and appear in mid summer on silver stems. Eventually the flowerheads fade giving months of pleasure, before the plant dies down for the winter. The bonus is it will seed readily so remember to look for seedlings.

So what is there not to like? And that is my battle plan. So who do you think will win?

Anne Porter



'The Garden Party'

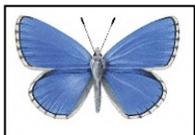
To celebrate the 90th birthday of the Southport Flower show the theme was 'The Garden Party'. We in the Lancs & NW Cottage Garden Society have endeavoured to recreate a feeling of a relaxing summer's afternoon in a walled garden, surrounded by colourful flowers, the hum of bees and bird song.
(See photos on front and back covers)

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Meconopsis



Campanula trachelium



Dactylorhiza

Photos Chris Yates



Variegated sycamore seedling

Photos Marian Jones



Rosa 'Queen of Denmark'



Rosa 'Shropshire Lad'



Roses in mixed planting -

(Below) More photos of 'The Garden Party' photos Anne Porter



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