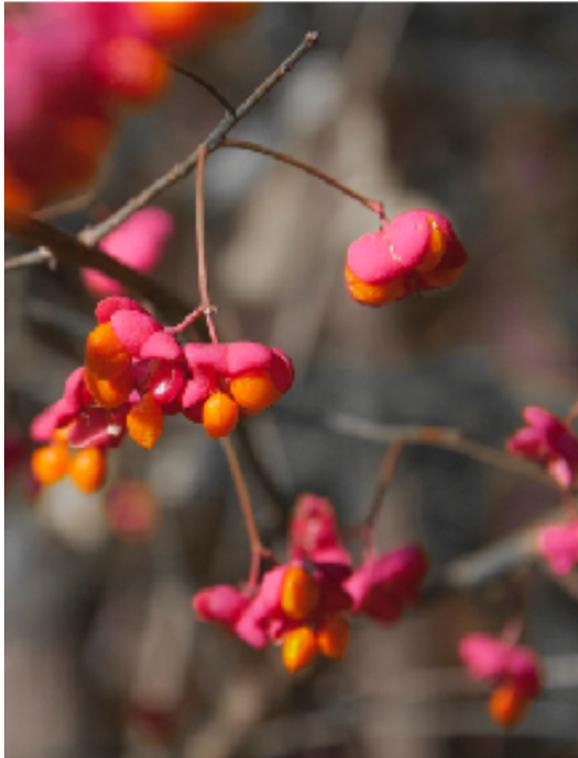




The HPS Hertfordshire Group Newsletter – Autumn 2017



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Editor's Introduction

Happy Autumn HHPS members – welcome to the second Newsletter of 2017.

It is commonly acknowledged that, as a nation, we share a preoccupation with the weather, and how much more are we gardeners affected by the excess and shortage of sun and rain – we need them both but in the right proportion. More than any other single factor the weather affects our gardening successes and failures. We seem to have had a particularly odd year and one can't help thinking that climate change has some influence – an un-typically warm period in early spring and then a very dry period in late spring and early summer brought significant challenges. The early leaf fall which is already underway seems a further symptom of this strange year.

The HPS & HHPS have had a great year and we hope that the Anniversary publicity brings new members nationally and locally and that our own interesting programme for the autumn will ensure good attendance at all our meetings. As always there will be plants to buy from our speaker's own nurseries and from our own plant table. Beryl will be delighted if everyone can have a good session of splitting and dividing as the autumn progresses as it will enable her to raise valuable funds from all your roots and shoots. Happy autumn gardening!

Susanna Geoghegan

Chairman's Report

As you get older the time seems to fly more quickly and so it is with my role as Chairman. Our group is now in its 29th year and I have been chairman for 5 years. Continuity is important but so is change. I first joined the Committee in 1994 so I must be well past my sell-by date. On the other hand, if I had not enjoyed the roles or the companionship I would have given up long ago. Being on the Committee has been a way of being involved and of making new friendships and a way of meeting and really getting to know an interesting and talented set of people.

Of course, we all work as a team, another reason why it is enjoyable: everyone plays a part and hopefully no-one finds their role too onerous. I want to thank each member of my Committee for their part in making the running of our group go so smoothly. Being on the Committee is also an opportunity to learn new skills – we oldies are perhaps not as comfortable with computers but it is possible to master some of their intricacies. At one stage, I became the Newsletter Editor because I wanted to learn the necessary programme and managed it with the help of other members and now look how professional, with the input of later editors, our Newsletter has become. When I became chairman, I had to get up and speak in public, a somewhat daunting task the first time. What I'm trying to say is, don't be afraid to join the Committee, it can be a very worthwhile experience.

Over the years we have tried to organise varied programmes that all the members enjoy. This year, being the Diamond Jubilee of the founding of the HPS, has been particularly busy with a number of regular and special events.



There was the seedling exchange held on a beautiful warm spring day hosted by David & Jane Singleton in their lovely Wheathampstead garden.

Keen seedling exchangers

Chairman's Report

Then open gardens in the summer, a wonderful opportunity for three of our members to show their gardens to a wider public and to raise some funds for their chosen charity.



Our plant sale was a great success. The good organisation, the willingness of members to grow and donate lovely plants and to help with the sale raised over £1200. The funds allow us to book a wide range of

eminent and specialist speakers for our winter meetings.

We had a most enjoyable coach trip to beautiful gardens on a wonderful sunny day. It's always a treat to go somewhere special where you can get a lovely lunch then tea and cake whilst admiring another person's hard work and the pictures they evoke with plants and landscaping. Of course, there are also precious new plants to bring home.



HHPS members enjoying the colourful border at Bourton House

Chairman's Report



There was more to come. Thanks to the generous hospitality of Madeleine & John McCormack and the Committee of Reveley Lodge we held our HPS Diamond Jubilee tea there on a sunny Sunday afternoon in August. Appropriately over 60 members joined in the celebration and we toasted the 60 years of the Society with glasses of bubbly and beautifully decorated cakes.

As we move into the autumn we can look forward to a super series of monthly talks, including the Diamond Jubilee talk by Anna Pavord, all organised by Alison King, who will be retiring from her post as Speaker Organiser at the AGM.

As I make plans to relinquish my role as Chair too I am cognisant that the Committee needs new blood and new members to step up to keep the local group going. We have nominees for some of the Committee roles that are falling vacant but we need some additional new members who may like to just dip their toes in the water playing a supporting role without total commitment. Potential future Committee members would be most welcome to come to Committee meetings to 'try us out' or shadow a role to see if they might be interested.

So, it is with some sadness that I am stepping down from the Committee but I will continue to value all the new friendships I have made during the course of my tenure.

Irene Cowan

Gold Rush

For those long-standing HHPS members the name and face of Annie Godfrey will be very familiar as she was our HHPS Chair from 2007–2011. Annie has a plant nursery near Hertford called Daisy Roots and in 2014 she gave our group a talk entitled 'The Show Must Go On' that focused on the 'behind the scenes' challenge of a small plant nursery exhibiting at the major garden shows – Chelsea/Hampton Court etc. It was abundantly clear what an immensely demanding and stressful business exhibiting is – in her case competing with the 'big boys' who have every facility available to them while she was rearing her plants in an unheated polytunnel at her nursery. At that time she was feeling terribly disappointed at having been repeatedly awarded Silver Gilt medals. Most of us would be very proud of that but for the serious contenders only GOLD will do!



What a difference three years can make! 2017 has been an amazing year for Annie and her nursery. At the RHS Chelsea Flower Show she was awarded her first Gold and then three weeks later she exhibited at the NEC Gardener's World Live Show and got not only another Gold but an award for the 'Best Summer Flowering Display' in the marquee. Then came RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show and Gold Medal number three – wow, what an achievement.

Annie is quoted as saying, "By now I was beginning to feel that I had woken up in some sort of

golden parallel universe where I didn't really belong. My dream has always been to get 'the hat trick' but I never thought for one second it would happen in the same year that I got my first Gold Medal."

HHPS can take pride in having contributed in a very small way to Annie's success – she says "without the help of Hertfordshire HPS members it would be nigh on impossible for me to attempt Chelsea" – their help is invaluable!

HPS Specialist Groups

When new members join the national HPS they are given, with their 'starter pack', some information about the HPS Specialist Groups but, quite naturally, new members generally like to become familiar with the activities of their local group before getting further involved.

Perhaps due to the fact that the promotion of these Specialist Groups only occurs at the initiation of national membership it seems that only 10% of the total membership belong to any of the Specialist Groups. This is a shame because joining these groups requires minimal cost and time commitment and the group events are fun, lively, interesting occasions drawing together real experts and enthusiasts within their particular specialism.

The different groups with contact details are listed on the HPS website but this article from the secretary of the Ranunculaceae Group provides a typical overview of their group's activities.

"Ranunculaceae derives its name from rana, which is Latin for frog (hence our logo of 'Buttercup' the frog) and as you know frogs like cool damp places and this is where majority of the Ranunculaceae family thrive.

Some of these plants will be familiar to you such as Aquilegia, Aconitum, Clematis and Delphinium to name a few. However, this is a very large family and there are many less well-known ones which make good garden plants, so why not join our group and find out more about this intriguing family.

We have one meeting a year, but depending on what time of year we choose, it may or may not include the AGM. The venue also changes each year as we try to accommodate our members in different parts of the country. Our two newsletters are circulated in spring and autumn and they include articles on different species in the genus, visits and other general information.

This year our meeting, attended by 66 members, was held in Hampshire and in the morning Jennifer Harmer (HPS Historian) and Sue Ward delivered a most interesting and informative lecture on the World of Ranunculaceae – its plants and people.

Later in the day we visited the wonderful West Green Gardens, where we were given an introductory talk on the history of the house and garden, by the owner Marylyn Abbott.

HPS Specialist Groups



Photo courtesy of Dawn Trenchard

This was followed by a tour of the garden and we ended the day sitting in the magnificent conservatory enjoying a delicious cream tea and chatting to old friends.

For our 2018 meeting we are going to East Sussex and the village of Laughton, which is home to Graham and Lucy Gough's garden and nursery. We will be visiting the garden and nursery in the morning and then in the afternoon we will go to Laughton Village Hall for our talk, which will be presented by Gill Regan, who you might know, as she was a past Chairman of the Kent Group.

Gill's talk will be on 'Buttercups and their relatives', and as we know Buttercups are recognised all over the world, but what about

their relatives? We will find out more from Gill during the afternoon.

If you feel you would like to join our group, details can be found on the

HPS website under Specialist Groups or you can email me

susanahough@gmail.com for an application form. We would love to see

you in September 2018 in East Sussex."

Sue Hough

Following this overview from Sue you will hopefully be encouraged to look at the website entries for the other groups and maybe considering joining one or two of them depending on the areas of gardening that interest you most. You will, without doubt come into contact with some extremely knowledgeable members happy to share their experience and expertise.

Susanna Geoghegan

Membership Matters

A warm welcome to new HHPS members Andrew & Penny Large, Liza & Bob Askew-Marchant, Alex Burman, Joyce Oliver, Freda Hunkin, Anastasia Rezanova & Keith Robertson and Liz Atkins – all of whom have joined us since the last Newsletter. We're also delighted to welcome back Judy Summers and Anne & John Murray who have recently rejoined.

Herts Group Subscription Renewals for 2018

To save postal costs we are enclosing with this Newsletter your personalised 2018 Renewal Notice. Subs are due on 1 January 2018 and you can pay by online bank transfer, by cash or cheque at a meeting, or by sending a cheque to the Membership Secretary (details on the form).

Please return the completed Renewal Form, even if you renew in person or online. It's really helpful to have all your ideas for future speakers, outings and events, to help the Committee produce a programme that interests as many members as possible. Do help us to keep your contact details up to date by notifying the Membership Secretary of any changes.

Why can't I pay just one subscription for the National and Herts Groups?

The reasons are due to different legal statuses and taxation. The National Hardy Plant Society is a charity registered with the Charity Commission. This gives certain benefits and a requirement to report on the public benefit of activities. As a charity, the National HPS has to demonstrate that it is delivering public benefit, so educational displays at shows, publications and bursaries are important. Charitable status also attracts reduced VAT on subscriptions and the ability to reclaim Gift Aid.

Local groups, which share a common interest in (some of) the HPS charity objects, can register as a Group of the HPS. Registered local groups are separate legal entities and are not charities. Although National HPS approves our constitution as a condition of registration, National HPS does not own the local groups; our assets and liabilities are ours alone and there is a clear separation of finances. The National HPS turnover is over £85,000 (threshold to be VAT-registered) so VAT is paid on our subscriptions. Our local turnover is nowhere near the VAT threshold so your Herts subs do not attract VAT. This is why both subscriptions cannot be rolled-up and collected together.

Alison Tracy

Good Autumn Neighbours

Some trees to complement late-flowering perennials

Trees are generally welcome in all but the smallest gardens, although for hardy planters and alpine gardeners alike they need to mind their Ps and Qs. Those that fit best in (or adjoining) beds and borders are generally of small to medium size, upright or nearly so; roots mustn't be too invasive or greedy for moisture, leaves must rot quickly and discreetly, and above all trees must harmonise with the beauty and interest of the perennials without casting a pall of heavy shade over them.

Deciduous trees that mix well with perennials – in the same bed or nearby – tend to have small leaves that move easily in light breezes, providing the dappled sunshine that is both pleasing to the eye and gentle on the plants beneath. The choice of shape and habit depends on the space available; the growing availability of fastigate (columnar) trees make them obvious candidates, giving height to borders and beds but creating little shade.

Weeping forms such as the silver-leaved pear *Pyrus salicifolia pendula* are another option although tending to appear more like shrubs than trees. The dainty slow-growing Japanese maples tend to be overshadowed – submerged even – by larger perennials and best placed elsewhere.

Height and spread apart, the qualities of leaves and flowers, fruit and bark will largely determine one's choice of tree. Understandably popular are the smaller types of birch, maple, crab apple, cherry, hawthorn, dogwood and rowan, all hardy, easily managed and largely disease free.



Pyrus Salicifolia Pendulav

So much for the generalities, but which trees provide the best supporting cast for late-flowering perennials?

Good Autumn Neighbours

The latter are a varied lot, but tend to be relatively tall and sturdy, and to boast large, richly coloured flowers – think Helianthus and Helenium, Aster and Anemone, Eupatorium and Chrysanthemum. Some, as the days shorten, need as much sun as possible while others manage comfortably in light shade.

Trees chosen to provide autumn interest rely mostly on the harmonious turning of their leaves. Trouble is, autumn leaf colour is a hit and miss business in the UK (unlike, say, North America), depending critically on our mercurial weather; light overnight frosts followed by sunny windless days are most effective in producing and holding the colours we crave. Species will often disappoint if the weather is disobliging (watch our woodlands go straight from tired green to dull brown), whereas careful selections from good nurseries provide at least some assurance of more consistent autumn colour, good year or bad. Generally reliable for good leaf colour are the wide choices of maples, rowans and birches.



Acer griseum

Leaves apart, it's bark and fruit that can be chosen to complement late-flowering perennials. Fruit tends to be red or yellow, often in handsome clusters, although these can be stripped by birds well before autumn ends. Some of the showiest and longest-lasting fruit is white, orange or purple.

Bark can be found in many shades of brown and beige through to white. The many selections of birch, such as *Betula ermanii* and *B jacquemontii*, are especially engaging, as is the delightful *Acer griseum*, the paperbark maple, outstanding for its peeling light

cinnamon bark and orange to rich red autumn leaves.

Of the ornamental rowans, *Sorbus* 'Joseph Rock' is deservedly famous for its orange, red and purple autumn leaves and bright yellow berries, but it is sadly susceptible to fireblight.

Good Autumn Neighbours

Stately *S. cashmiriana* has blue-grey leaves that flare to crimson and gleaming, pearl-like white fruit. *Sorbus commixta* can make a spectacular display of red and gold leaves in October, enhanced by small clusters of deep-red fruit. *Sorbus folgneri* 'Emiel' has narrow, light green leaves which turn brilliant glowing amber, orange and red in autumn, matched by small orange fruit.

Very suitable maples include two Chinese species, now very rare in the wild – *A griseum* (noted above), and *A triflorum* with rugged bark and fine yellow, orange to red autumn colour. Whereas the native field maple, *A campestre*, might seem an unlikely candidate for a major supporting role, 'Evenley Red', is a lovely form with rich red autumn colours.

Amelanchier lamarckii, the snowy mespilus from North America, has white flowers in spring, red berries much appreciated by birds, and fine red to purple autumn colour. A recent selection of its cousin *A canadensis* has a narrow habit and leaves that turn brilliant red, orange and yellow – hence its rather dramatic name of 'Rainbow Pillar'.

The winter-flowering cherry, *Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' not only has narrow, elegant leaves that turn all manner of tawny shades in autumn; the tree then produces small pink-tinged blossoms that linger over winter on its bare branches. The Tibetan cherry, *P serrula*, can only offer yellow autumn colour but boasts gleaming dark brown bark.



Amelanchier canadensis 'Rainbow Pillar'

Last but not least come the subtle autumn charms of *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*, its pink arbutus-like berries and long-lasting vivid orange and red autumn colour making a fine garden tree.

Sowing Beauty

I am not sure when the new, dare I say, trendy enthusiasm for wild flower meadows really began but Sarah Raven is quoted as saying that when Britain hosted the Olympics in 2012, she “heard almost as many people talking about the colourful meadows at the Olympic site as about Sir Chris Hoy and Mo Farah.”

The idea of perennial wildflower displays for the reclaimed Olympic site in Stratford was developed by James Hitchmough, the very well-regarded professor of the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield. For the Olympics he designed 25 acres using British native perennial wildflowers – all carefully timed to come into bloom together in a colourful whoosh over the period of the Games. The press coverage and the public’s appreciation were unanimously joyous.

The response really popularised a ‘movement’ already well under way which aims to augment the threatened and diminishing natural habitats so vital for the life cycle of insects and in particular honey bees, so crucial to most plant pollination – a reaction to the alarming fact that the UK has lost more than 97 per cent of its wildflower meadows since the 1930s, an area equivalent to one-and-a-half times the size of Wales. Nature-focused charities/gardening journalists and writers have made a sustained effort to encourage us all to create bio-diverse mini wild flower areas on a domestic scale and, on a larger scale, local councils are moving more and more to sustainable planting schemes using seed rather than annually reared nursery plants. Many of us have enjoyed the wild flower city roundabouts that are becoming a common sight in early summer.

That was a rather long preamble to what was meant to be a short article bringing to your attention a wonderful festival held annually in Herefordshire called Gardening in the Wild – the relevance of the intro is all in the name.

Having tried myself, without a great deal of success but with a great deal of cost and effort, to develop an acre site as a wild flower meadow I am obviously the type of person the festival is aimed at, but there were many attendees at the weekend-long event who were just enthusiastic gardeners and nature lovers but not those necessarily owning or contemplating a meadow. The festival is the brainchild of the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and a committee of local enthusiasts who want to support and promote the work of the Trust and to that end they organised a jam-packed programme.

Sowing Beauty

Herefordshire is a beautiful, rural county and particularly rich in ancient grasslands that have been grazed as meadow pasture without interruption, meaning that they have never been ploughed or had any herbicides or fertilisers applied and it is on these sites that the greatest biodiversity exists – it's an ideal location for the festival's celebration of wild 'gardening'.



The event was actually held at the Whitfield Estate near the Welsh border and the speakers included Anna Pavord talking about her book 'Landskipping' which celebrates our relationship with landscape, Mary Keen talking about the popular drift to more naturalistic planting schemes and Sarah Price, the garden designer responsible for the planting schemes at Stratford. A series of private gardens that had serious eco credentials were open in the area and there were talks about a wide range of more practical subjects like the science and health of soil – fascinating! And lots of shopping temptations – lots of plant nurseries alongside other garden-related merchandise and lovely pop-up food stalls. What was not to like?

It is heartening to see the wild garden movement gaining momentum, spurred on by our need to reconnect to nature and enjoy its mental and physical health benefits. Only this spring the nature charity Plantlife called for every farm to plant one wildflower meadow because animals that graze on species-rich natural meadows of flowers, herbs and wild grasses consume far more minerals, proteins and amino-acids, making them healthier and their meat more nutritious.

<http://www.gardensinthewild.org/gardens-in-the-wild-festival-events-17>

Susanna Geoghegan

Christmas Present in a Sweet Box

I first encountered Sweet Box (*Sarcococca spp*) in the Winter Gardens of NT Anglesey Abbey, one fine and sunny February day. I didn't see it – I smelt it. A delicious honey scent was everywhere. A search through the garden guide identified the culprit – *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem'. Also known as Christmas Box, for its scent emerges soon after that time of year, it doesn't look like true Box at all.



S. hookeriana var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem'

You don't know the meaning of embarrassment until you've had to explain to your wide-eyed garden centre manageress that you want a *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem', and she calls over all the other girls for a giggle.

A few years on, and I have almost all the hardy members of the genus and varieties of *Sarcococca*, from the ubiquitous *S. confusa* through *S. hookeriana* var. *humilis* and *S. hookeriana* 'Winter Gem' to the rarer *S. orientalis* and *S. wallichii*. All are hardy, evergreen, trouble-free shrubs that are untouched by Box Blight and Box Tree Moth. They are able to grow in those dry, shady, forgotten corners of

the garden in poor soil. Neutral to alkaline pH is preferred, so ideal for Hertfordshire. Most are fragrant, some extravagantly so. Some species get quite large (up to 3 metres high and wide) and others have a tendency to sucker, but it's easily controlled. I treat them as ready-rooted cuttings.

The flowers are insignificant, but their glory is the time they open – January and February, but species range from October to March – and their pervasive perfume. The scent is best if they have full winter sun. Mine flower just after the start of the Snowdrops, convincing me that winter has ended in mid-January.

It must be said that some species smell better than others. The best by far is *S. hookeriana digyna* 'Purple Stem'. *S. ruscifolia* is second, *S. confusa* is a poor third; *S. hookeriana* var. *humilis* and *S. saligna* vie for last place. I've yet to see *S. wallichii* and *S. orientalis* flower.

Christmas Present in a Sweet Box

Sarcococca follow their scents with attractive glossy berries ranging from black to red. Time for a list of the genus:

- *Sarcococca confusa* is ubiquitous. It's non-suckering with dark green, small wavy leaves, amongst the most insignificant flowers followed by glossy black berries. Could be used as a hedge.
- *S. hookeriana* comes in several varieties, all of which sucker, flower in January-February and have glossy black berries.
- *S. hookeriana* var. *hookeriana* has 4cm lanceolate leaves and fragrant white flowers. Up to 1m high.
- *S. hookeriana* var. *digyna* has green or purplish stems, lanceolate mid-green leaves and clusters of small, creamy-white, fragrant flowers. Its berries are black. It is smaller and hardier than the type.
- *S. hookeriana* var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem' has purplish new shoots which fades as the stems mature. It has slender, dark green leaves and the best scent. Imagine orange blossom honey pumped out under pressure from a fire hose. Up to 1.5m high and wide.
- *S. hookeriana* var. *humilis* is a compact, dense shrub with glossy, almost apple-green leaves. Often sold as *S. humilis*, its scent is an acquired taste. It barely reaches 60cm high.
- *S. hookeriana* 'Schillingii' is one of my few missing jigsaw pieces. It has narrow, willow-like leaves and flowers tipped with reddish purple. Up to 1m high.
- *S. hookeriana* 'Winter Gem' is a hybrid of *S. hookeriana* var. *digyna* 'Purple Stem' with *S. hookeriana* var. *humilis*. It has larger leaves and flowers with pink anthers, followed by red berries that ripen black. 1.5m



Sarcococca Hookeriana 'Winter Gem'

Christmas Present in a Sweet Box

- *S. orientalis* is a small upright shrub with stout green shoots. Its fragrant white flowers appear before Christmas and are sometimes tinged pink and followed by black berries. Discovered in China by Roy Lancaster in 1980.
- *S. ruscifolia* is small, slow-growing evergreen shrub with several varieties. All have small, teardrop-shaped, mid- to dark-green leaves attractively arranged on the stem and dark red berries.
- *S. ruscifolia* var. *chinensis* is more vigorous. Collected by Roy Lancaster from Yunnan province. Slightly longer leaves. Said to be confused with *S. confusa* – no pun intended, folks.
- *S. ruscifolia* var. *chinensis* ‘Dragon’s Gate’ is another find by Roy Lancaster. He found it growing by the Dragon Gate temple. It has a small leaf and an attractive growth habit. Much more vigorous. Flowers mid December. About 0.5m high and wide.
- *S. saligna* hails from Pakistan. It has attractive narrow, mid-green leaves longer than those of other species, with prominent midribs. It flowers earlier than most. Smells like aniseed twists crushed underfoot on an antiseptic hospital floor by a bored schoolboy visiting his Nan. Nice-looking plant, though.
- *S. wallichii* is a sturdy species discovered by the Danish surgeon Nathaniel Wallich in 1821, but didn’t get to the UK until 1994. Large, glossy, bright green leaves. From the mountains of Darjeeling, so hardy here. White flowers from October. Not quite 2m high.

There are species from subtropical regions, suited to a warmer spot in the garden. Newer introductions, so trickier to find as well as grow:

- *Sarcococca balansae* has interesting leaf venation, so a foliage plant too.
- *Sarcococca trinervia* has wavy, deep green leaves and green-tinged flowers. An attractive combination.
- *Sarcococca vagans* gets big, with 2.5m stems, blushed red.
- *Sarcococca zeylanica* gets even bigger, with 10cm long leaves on 3m stems. Buttermilk flowers.

All in all, if you haven’t got a Sweet Box, you’re missing out. Give these unfussy fragrant shrubs a try, by the front or back door. You won’t regret it, when the winter feels like it’s dragging on too long.

AGM 2017 Agenda

TWENTY-NINETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held on Saturday 4th November 2017 at 2.00pm
at the Memorial Hall, Wheathampstead.

AGENDA

Apologies for Absence

1. To approve the minutes of the 28th AGM held on 5th November 2016
2. Matters arising
3. Chairman's report
4. Treasurer's report and approval of accounts for the 12 months ending 30th September 2017 (to be laid round).
5. Election of Chairman for the ensuing 12 months
6. Election of Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer for the ensuing 12 months (en bloc)
7. Election of Committee for the ensuing 12 months
Five committee members are standing for re-election and there are vacancies for Vice Chair, Speaker Booking and Publicity. Nominations would be welcome.
8. Election of Examiner of the accounts.
9. Any other business

*Please submit NOMINATIONS for members of the Committee in writing
to the Secretary by Saturday 14th October 2017
(20, St Stephens Avenue, St Albans, AL3 4AD)*

Prior permission of any person nominated must be obtained.

Heather Osborne, Secretary

AGM Minutes 2016

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HERTFORDSHIRE GROUP OF THE HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Memorial Hall, Wheathampstead on Saturday, 5th November 2016

Present:

Irene Cowan
Elizabeth Egré
Heather Osborne
Mary Robey
Alison Tracy

Committee Members

Officers

Chair
Vice Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Membership Secretary
P Bennetts, S Geoghegan, D Singleton,
A & E King, M Lacey and 47 HHPS Mbrs

Apologies: Pauline & Michael Foers, Chris Graves, Janet Horton, Yvonne Mansergh and Rita Woodward

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the 27th AGM held on Saturday, 7th November 2015, which had been circulated, were agreed and signed as a correct record. Proposed by Chris Carnaghan; seconded by Margaret Bardell

2 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

3 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chair referred to her report as published in the Newsletter, and repeated her thanks and gratitude to the Committee who all do a wonderful job. She appealed to members to come forward to serve on the Committee and reminded everyone that the Constitution states that the Chair and members of the Committee should only serve for three years, whereas many, including herself, had served for much longer.

On a positive note, Susanna Geoghegan has kindly agreed to take over publishing our Newsletter as well as her role as joint Refreshments Coordinator. It is hoped that members will support her by contributing articles. These need not be long, sometimes a snippet can be a lifesaver when compiling the text.

We have also been very lucky that Mike Crabb (our Membership Secretary's husband) has volunteered to run the website, and indeed has already taken over from Bill Hodgson in a seamless way. Keeping our website and communications up-to-date will be needed more than ever as we have an especially exciting programme of talks, celebrations and outings in 2017 to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Hardy Plant Society.

First, our coach trip on 12th July to is to Broughton Grange with lunch at Batsford Arboretum then on to Bourton House.

AGM Minutes 2016

The next highlight will be a garden party at Reveley Lodge on 20th August. We celebrated 50 years of the HPS there very successfully and hope that as many as possible will attend. Reveley Lodge has a fascinating history, and several HHPS members are helping to restore and maintain its large garden. The HPS Jubilee Open Garden Scheme will operate over the summer, where members volunteer to open their gardens to share their love of gardening and plants with others.

We also have a celebrity lecture on 7th October given by Anna Pavord with special guest National HPS Chair Cathy Rollinson. Our final meeting in 2017 is a talk 'From Diaz to Diamonds' by the ever popular Timothy Walker – a great way to finish this Diamond Jubilee year for the HPS.

Proposed by Dennis Sandor; seconded by Margaret Easter

4 **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Treasurer reported that it had been a fairly even year financially. The Plant Sale raised a total of £1,406, and the expenses of £200.90 included the purchase of material for durable tablecloths, leaving a net profit of £1,205.10. The very enjoyable Coach Trip made a small loss due to lower numbers than anticipated. Costs and expenditure have been similar to previous year and a healthy bank balance has been maintained despite the small deficit.

Proposed by Dennis Sandor; seconded by Judy Barker

5 **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Irene Cowan, Elizabeth Egré, Heather Osborne, Mary Robey and Alison Tracy were re-elected en bloc to serve as Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively.

Proposed by Diana Barry; seconded by Lesley Hopkins

6 **ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Penny Bennetts, Susanna Geoghegan, Beryl Davis, Alison King, Ed King, Maggie Lacey and David Singleton were re-elected (to serve respectively as Refreshments Coordinators, Plant Sales Coordinator, Speaker Bookings, Publicity, Coach Trip Organiser and Hall Manager).

Proposed by Dennis Sandor; seconded by Koomi Sullivan

7 **ELECTION OF EXAMINER**

Michael Foers was re-elected as independent examiner of the accounts

Proposed by Angela Wimpenny; seconded by David Singleton

8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Chris Carnaghan proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee.

The meeting closed at 2.11pm.

Looking Ahead

All meetings start at 2.00 pm followed by tea and cakes.

Saturday 4th November

Adrian de Baat – *Late Summer Colour*

A long-term member of our group, Adrian is a very enthusiastic gardener greatly influenced by the work of Piet Oudolf, the eminent Dutch garden designer who's been referred to as the godfather of the European 'New Perennial Movement'. In an article in Gardens Illustrated magazine in 2011, James Alexander-Sinclair wrote about his garden, "Adrian's garden is full of dreamy, naturalistic combinations of elegant perennials and grasses".

Saturday 2nd December

Timothy Walker – *From Diaz to Diamonds & Christmas Party*

A Fellow of the Linnaean Society and a lecturer in Plant Conservation at Oxford University, Timothy's talk is about the Western Cape region of South Africa – one of the most botanically diverse areas of the world. This talk takes a route from the southernmost tip of Africa to the border with Namibia looking at the plants and the ethnobotany of one of the most fascinating countries in the world.

2018

Saturday January 6th

Nick Wray – *The Evolution of Flowers*

Nick is the curator of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden where he has worked for more than 30 years. He has recently been awarded the RHS Associate of Honour in recognition of his services to horticulture.

www.bristol.ac.uk/news/rhs-nick-wray

Saturday February 3rd

Andrew Brogan – *Hardy Exotics*

Andrew established and runs Henstead Exotic Garden near Beccles in Suffolk, as he describes it, a garden of giants! Plants for sale

www.hensteadexoticgarden.co.uk

Looking Ahead

Saturday March 3rd

Alun and Jill Whitehead – *Iris*es for the Natural Garden

Alun and Jill created their 3-acre Aulden Farm Garden near Leominster in Herefordshire as a private garden but it is regularly open to the public who visit to see, amongst other things, their National Collection of Siberian Irises. Their talk will cover other Iris species too. Plants for sale.

www.auldenfarm.co.uk

Saturday April 7th

Dianne Nichol-Brown – *Barking up the Wrong Tree*

Dianne and her husband David run Polemonium Plantery in County Durham where she lectures on various horticultural subjects and offers Bed and Breakfast.

This talk will demonstrate the benefit of trees in the garden and will suggest suitable ones as well as what not to plant. Plants for sale.

www.polemonium.co.uk

Saturday October 6th

Marcus Dancer – *Scented Plants throughout the Year*

Marcus runs a nursery in Hampshire specialising in Clematis and is a lecturer at the English Gardening School. His talk will focus on shrubs, perennials and climbers that will bring scent to your garden all year round. Plants for sale

www.clematisplants.co.uk

Saturday November 3rd

Peter Osborne – *St. Stephens Compost – Making Friends with the Worms*

Those of you who have been to Heather and Peter Osborne's garden, which is regularly open with the NGS, will have marvelled at the system they have for producing perfect garden compost. In this talk, which will follow the AGM (see page 19) Peter will 'show and tell' how he does it!

Saturday December 1st**Bob Brown – *Geraniums, Restraint and Discrimination***

For our last meeting of the year we look forward to a return visit from Bob who needs little introduction. A visit to his famous Cotswold Garden Flowers Nursery is on the wish list for all perennial gardeners. Given the vast array of geraniums available it will be interesting to hear which have his seal of approval. www.cgf.net

The December meeting will also be the occasion for our **Christmas Party** – members are invited to bring savoury or sweet nibbles and this usually results in a magnificent spread.

A date for your 2018 diary is the HHPS Coach Trip on Sat July 7th

**Stone House Cottage Garden & Nursery, Worcs and
Ashwood Nursery & John's Garden, West Mids**

Stone House Cottage Garden was created from an old walled kitchen garden in 1975. Although only 3/4 acre it appears to be much larger as it is divided by hedges into smaller 'rooms'. The nursery specialises in unusual shrubs, herbaceous and climbing plants, many of which can be seen growing in the garden. www.shcn.co.uk

Ashwood Nurseries and John's garden are situated in a canal-side setting amid open countryside. The large nursery is renowned for the quality of its plants, especially hellebores, hepaticas and hydrangeas. We shall be given a guided tour of John's garden, after which we shall be able to explore at our leisure. There is an excellent restaurant on site.

www.ashwoodnurseries.com

Role	Name	Contact
Chairman	Irene Cowan	
Vice Chairman	Liz Egré	
Treasurer	Mary Robey	
Secretary	Heather Osborne	
Newsletter	Susanna Geoghegan	
Membership Sec.	Alison Tracy	
Refreshments	Susanna Geoghegan Penny Bennetts	
Plant Sales	Beryl Davis	
Coach Trip	Maggie Lacey	
Programme	Alison King	
Technical Manager	David Singleton	
Conservation	Malcolm Stodell	
Website	Mike Crabb	
Publicity	Ed King	

Please see website committee page for current contact details and use the contact form if you need to know the password, quoting your membership reference.

Obituaries

We were very sorry to hear of the recent deaths of two loyal members of HHPS.

Jean Harvey of Letchworth was a member from the early days of the HHPS. A committee member for some years and always willing to help with anything that was needed, Jean was unfortunately unable to come to the group meetings in her last years but all those who knew her will miss her greatly

Denise Gray of Totteridge was also a long term member of HHPS having joined over 20 years ago. Despite battling with ill health for several years she was always smiling, cheerful and upbeat. She belonged to several horticultural groups and her enthusiasm for plants (and buying yet more plants!) never stopped.